

● Guest Viewpoint

Missed shot

Why health care reform missed the mark on prevention

By William Johnson

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On Jan. 19, the U.S. House of Representatives voted to repeal the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act, or as it is more commonly known, health reform or Obamacare. This largely symbolic act is surely aimed at voicing disapproval at the set of mandates and so-called reforms made to our national health insurance systems.

The Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act is a set of insurance reforms. It is not a reform on the true root causes of the problem for insured and uninsured Americans — health care costs.

This set of reforms, mandates and their implementation can be allegorical to the famous quip from Rodney Dangerfield. He “went to a fight the other night, and a hockey game broke out.” While the public rallies around political ideology, the root causes are going largely unaddressed.

Make no mistake. There is a desperate need to address health care costs for businesses and families. The best way to address the real issue of reform is to focus on the cost of care, not on the cost of insuring. What good is a mandate for coverage if a business or individual can't afford the premiums, deductibles, co-pays, and other expenses?



Bill Johnson

Consumers pay for health care costs in three ways: taxes, out-of-pocket expenses, and premiums. If the cost associated with care becomes too large, then the methods of payment no longer matter. This is where the act missed the mark completely. Our personal

health and the financial health of our nation depend on addressing the causes of the chronic diseases that we are experiencing.

I have always supported a bi-partisan approach to health care reform. I appreciate the discussion. Now, it is on the front burner, for all to see. We should not, and can not, lose focus of the issue. It is essential to our long-term health as a nation to address what is causing this escalation in costs, but the reform as it is does little to lower costs. On most levels, costs will continue to rise for employers and employees alike.

We can truly reform how we address the cost of health care. If we all take personal responsibility for our health and address prevention, it not only saves dollars but also lives.

Educate in self care

• Reward health-conscious lifestyles.

Encourage and reward those who take responsibility for their own health. Pay for or provide tax incentives for health club memberships, cooking classes, stress reduction classes, smoking cessation programs and weight loss programs. Many health plans cover wellness screenings, but when the need for lifestyle changes are presented, few plans pay for the action needed.

• Reimburse practitioners for their time in prevention and management of chronic disease.

The current health care model is focused on crisis and disease, and not on intervention, prevention and long-term management.

• Use the precautionary principle in everyday life.

When an activity raises the threat of harm to human health, precautionary measures should be taken. Maybe it's not such a good idea to ski the black diamond runs as a novice, or run out and try the newest health supplement. Remember fen-phen?

• Educate health care practitioners and doctors in nutrition, exercise, stress reduction and natural remedies.

Hundreds of billions of dollars are wasted by doctors who practice defensive medicine to protect themselves from malpractice liabilities. This leads to unnecessary tests, over-prescribed drugs, and unnecessary procedures to satisfy legal, but not health, concerns. Educating doctors to start with the least expensive, harmful, and invasive treatments would address unnecessary expense as much as tort reform would, especially if they were compensated for prevention and intervention.

• Feed our children healthier.

Serve fresh unprocessed foods for school lunches. Paying taxes to subsidize unhealthy lunches, and then paying taxes to subsidize the medical care related to unhealthy food choices seems crazy. Get rid of candy, chips, and pop machines in schools. Ban the advertising and the marketing of junk food to children. Over \$13 billion is spent on this marketing annually in the U.S. We ban cigarette and alcohol advertising to kids.

• Protect our food supply.

The precautionary principle needs to apply to our food production also. Local farmers and farmers markets should be actively supported and encouraged, and pesticides and additives should not be used until proven safe.

• Subsidize health foods.

Most of the billions in government farm subsidies go to large agribusinesses that produce feed crops, such as corn and soy. By funding these crops, the government subsidizes factory-farmed dairy and meat products, as well as high-fructose corn syrup. Fruit and vegetable farmers receive less than one percent of government subsidies. Switch these two.

• Remove corporate influence from health care.

There are 4 lobbyists for every Congressperson on the Hill. Stop direct-to-consumer drug advertising and severely limit the \$30 billion that is spent annually by pharmaceutical companies on marketing their wares to physicians.

• Provide freedom of choice.

People must have the freedom to choose the method and course of treatment. Whether it is conventional, alternative, Western or non-Western, patients should not be economically punished for exploring less invasive and less costly courses of treatment.

There are other ways to address these costs, like increased taxes on alcohol, tobacco, soft drinks and other unhealthy products. The Congressional Budget Office estimates that an excise tax on sweetened soft drinks would generate \$50 billion over 5 years. What would that do to reduce the amount of people with diabetes or weight-related, chronic illnesses due to unhealthy food choices?

Focusing on health care access without having a conversation about health care costs is akin to, as one of my colleagues put it, “Rearranging the deck chairs on the Titanic.” We are perpetuating a costly and severely flawed health care model, and the reform does not reduce that burden on us, our children, or our children's children. There is an economic time bomb that needs to be diffused and replaced by an all-out assault on why we are in this situation in the first place.

Bill Johnson is founder and Chief Executive Officer of CIBC of Illinois, Inc., a Kankakee-based employee benefits consulting firm. Bill has over 25 years of experience delivering employee benefit solutions to companies located in Kankakee County, across Illinois, and around the U.S.

● Weekly Reader

The search for young love

The insecurities of wondering if you appeal to others

By Phil Angelo

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In a world that's drenched with sex, here comes a book about college life that focuses on relationships.

The work is “Love on the Big Screen” by Olivet Nazarene University alumnus William J. Torgerson (February, 2011, Cherokee McGhee, \$16.95, 214 pages).

“Love on the Big Screen” follows the amorous adventures, no, the amorous efforts of Eric “Zuke” Zaucha, an end-of-the-bench basketball player at a small college.

Zuke's view of relationships is largely shaped by the romantic movies he's seen. The novel is set in the early 1990s, the prime time of Molly Ringwald and “Sixteen Candles.”

Films have always helped shape, or reflected, America's view of sex and romance. In the back of many a young man, he's Bogart with Ingrid Bergman. The use of the film references is sort of a double-edged sword, though. If you know the references, you get it. If you don't, the cultural context can be puzzling.

Zuke faces the eternal love triangle — double-sided. He seeks one girl, who might be his soul mate. Yet she is the steady to another, the big basketball star, and, thus, unavailable. On the other hand, another young lady wants to build a relationship, going so far as to ask him out on the college's TWIRP (Sadie Hawkins Day Weekend), where girls ask the boys out.

Should Zuke pursue the one he might never get? Should he accept the one who wants him?

In a show of morality that comes across as entirely worthwhile, our hero opts for as much honesty as a good man could muster. All of this is played out in a chaste background. So much college humor, particularly on the male side, is



‘Love on the Big Screen’

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Cherokee McGhee
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about “scoring,” bluntly sex. These are couples here, seeking romance and relationships, wondering about the dynamics of a lifetime. It's refreshing to read.

The Zuke is not the only charac-

ter. The book chronicles his roommates and some teammates. As college boys, they are not fraternity members, but occasionally indulge in hijinks reminiscent of low fraternity life. There's penny pitching, air guitar, hiding in dirty clothes and mild hazing.

While the book is about relationships, it's told largely from a male point of view. It's also somewhat autobiographical. Torgerson has changed the name of Olivet to Pison, one of the four rivers that flow into the Garden of Eden in the Bible. Bourbonnais becomes “Beau Flueye,” French for beautiful river. But it's really clear that Torgerson is writing about the Olivet campus. He also was a benchwarming basketball player at Olivet.

To his credit, he touches on a couple of unexpected relationship topics — interracial dating and homosexuality, with tolerance. These are not main themes of the book, but they do come up.

Torgerson's writing style is very introspective. There's a lot of discussion inside the characters' heads, particularly Zuke. You see how characters wrestle with simple moments, like ordering off a menu.

Torgerson's work is at its best when it focuses on those moments — the insecurities we all feel as we try to do our best, while building a bridge to others.

About the author

William Torgerson is a 1994 graduate of Olivet Nazarene University.



Originally from Winamac, Ind., he came to Olivet to play basketball. He never saw a lot of playing time, but stuck out all four years and was team captain by his senior year. After graduation, he was an assistant coach for Ralph Hodge for a year. Torgerson completed his student teaching at Bradley-Bourbonnais Community High School. He spent 11 years teaching and coaching basketball in Indiana and North Carolina.

The son of two English teachers, he majored in English Education. He's now an assistant professor in the Institute for Writing Studies at St. John's University in Queens, N.Y. He has a masters in English Education from the University of North Carolina-Charlotte and a Masters of Fine Arts in creative writing from Georgia College and State University.

Briefs

● EMMETT TILL CASE

Library, KCC presentations

On Thursday, the community is invited to two programs focused on the historical events that followed the August 1955 murder of Emmett Till.

The presenter will be Christopher Benson, J.D., an associate professor of African-American studies and journalism at University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. Along with Till's mother, Mamie Till-Mobley, Benson is co-author of “Death of Innocence: The Hate Crime That Changed America,” (Random House, October 2003). “Death of Innocence” was an Essence bestseller about Till's life and death, and the history-making changes that followed.

The first program will begin with a reception at 1:30 p.m. Thursday on the fourth floor of the Kankakee Public Library, 201 E. Merchant St., Kankakee. Appetizers will be served. At 2 p.m. there will be a community scholarship presentation followed by remarks by Professor Benson.

The evening program will start at 6:30 p.m. Thursday with a reception in the lower level of the College Center at Kankakee Community College, 100 College Drive, Kankakee. Light refreshments will be served. Closing the black history celebration will be Professor Benson's keynote address, which will begin at 7 p.m. in the KCC Auditorium.

These events are free and open to the public. This Black History Month celebration event is sponsored by the City of Kankakee, Kankakee Public Library, KCC, Kankakee Chamber of Commerce, National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, Brother 2 Brother and Sister Circle organizations.

For information on this event contact Allison Beasley at (815) 939-4564, or Elise Schultz at (815) 802-8482.

● KANKAKEE

Mining census records

On Saturday, Feb. 5, at 1 p.m., the Kankakee Public Library will hold a genealogy program in its third floor meeting room, “Mining Census Records,” which will be presented by Steven Szabados.

Szabados will review information that can be found in U.S. census records as well as discuss ways to find those “missing” census records.

This program is sponsored by the Kankakee Valley Genealogical Society and is open to the public. The Society's membership meeting will follow the program.

Library computer classes

The following free computer classes are being offered this fall at the Kankakee Public Library, located at 201 E. Merchant St. in Kankakee. These classes are designed for beginners. All are welcome to attend, but preregistration is required. Stop by the Library's third floor Adult Services desk or call (815) 939-4564 to preregister for any or all classes:

- Meet Your PC, Tuesday, Feb. 8, 10 a.m.-noon: This class presents basic information on computing, Mousing, Windows, computer terminology and different parts of the computer will be covered.
- Mouse & Keyboard, Wednesday, Feb. 9, 10 a.m.-noon. This hands-on class will include basic computer

terminology and patrons will be shown proper keyboarding and mouse techniques.

- Internet Basics, Tuesday, Feb. 15, 10 a.m.-noon. This class is for the first-time Internet user, covering web terminology, getting connected to the Internet, basic searching, using web pages, determining trustworthy websites, and avoiding web dangers and viruses.

Latin Dance series at library

The Kankakee Public Library will be hosting a series of Latin Dance classes this winter. The classes will meet every Wednesday evening from 6-8 p.m. in the library's fourth floor auditorium beginning Wednesday. The price is \$2 per person, per class, which includes a refreshment to be served at each class.

Dance instructor Summer Frazier will teach merengue, salsa, and bachata. The class will meet on Feb. 9 and 16, and March 2, 9, 16, 23 and 30. Couples or singles may sign up. Singles will be paired with a dance partner. A list of which dances will be taught on each day may be obtained on the library's third floor. This class is for adults and teens ages 16 and up.

Preregistration is required. Register at the library's third floor reception desk. For information, call the library at (815) 939-4564.

● AREA LIBRARIES

Limestone activities

Upcoming events at the Limestone Township Library:

- Tuesday, Feb. 8, 7-8 p.m., Evening Book Club discusses Jodi Picoult's “Change of Heart.”
- Friday, Feb. 11, 6:30-11:00 p.m., Crafting Mavens
- Friday, Feb. 11, 1-2:30 p.m., Grades K-4, Early School Dismissal Movie Day presenting “Despicable Me.”
- Wednesday, Feb. 23, 4:15-5:15 p.m., Grades 3-5, What is President's Day?

For more programming information, log on to: www.limestonelibrary.org

Peotone events

Peotone Public Library District happenings:

- Feb 7, Teen Book Club 4-5 p.m.
- Feb 8, Computer and Internet Basics 11a.m., registration required.
- Feb 9, Valentine's Day Party, 4-5 p.m.
- Feb 14, Computer and Internet Basics 6 p.m., registration required
- Feb 15, Didn't You Know...You're a Famous Artist! 4:30-5:30 p.m., registration required
- Feb 16, Workforce 9:30 a.m.-3 p.m.

Please call the library at (708) 258-3436 for programs that require registration.

Bradley Public Library District

• Thursday, Feb. 10 at 4:30 p.m. Chess Club is open to anyone interested in playing or learning the game. The group meets the 2nd Thursday of each month.

- Friday, Feb. 11 at 4:30 p.m. Art Class for K-3rd grade. Class will cover drawing techniques, shading, proportion, perspective, etc. There is no cost for this class, but you must preregister. Contact the library at (815) 932-6245.

• Friday, Feb. 18 at 4:30 p.m. Art Class for 4th-through 8th-grades. Class will cover drawing techniques, shading, proportion, perspective, etc. There is no cost for this class, but you must preregister. Just contact the library at (815) 932-6245.