

The Pueblo Chieftain

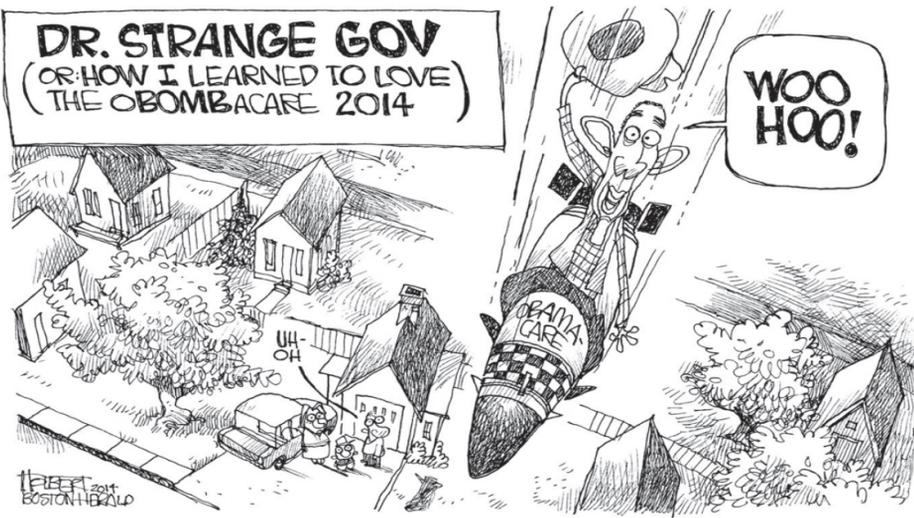
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EDITORIALS

Make it quick

IF THE Eilers neighborhood has to be Colorado's next Superfund cleanup site, we join the residents in telling the Environmental Protection Agency to make it quick.

We still suspect the EPA was precipitous in herding Pueblo officials into buying the Superfund cleanup story before all the evidence was in on possible century-old smelter contamination in the venerable South Side neighborhood.

At first we heard scary stories about lead and arsenic levels, yet testing evidently didn't uncover enough dreaded arsenic to cause alarm. So, if elevated levels of lead were the problem, who's to say the culprit wasn't lead-based paint rather than slag piles dating back more than 100 years?

Now, after more than 18 months of trying, the EPA and local health director

Chris Nevin-Woods have prevailed upon Pueblo City Council and county commissioners to prepare the obligatory letter to Gov. John Hickenlooper, seeking Superfund status.

Seeing the handwriting on the wall, even skeptical Eilers residents seem resigned to the inevitable. They have asked — and we readily agree — that the letter include assurances the cleanup will be done as fast as possible, be thorough and completed at no cost to Eilers residents.

These are eminently reasonable requests that deserve to be added to the Superfund request.

So we challenge those EPA bureaucrats to resist their inclination to dilly-dally and thus stretch out the federally funded work.

If Eilers has to be stuck with a Superfund project, EPA, then make it quick.

Drone control

THE CITY has begun enforcing a state conservation easement on the old Honor Farm property that surrounds Pueblo Motorsports Park.

Apparently bikers and off-road vehicle riders have been using the land for recreational purposes, even though the state prohibits such uses if the activity negatively impacts the land.

The city purchased the 2,350-acre property in 2001 from the Colorado Division of Parks and Wildlife on the condition that the city maintain a state conservation easement. State officials recently inspected the land and determined that motorcycles and all-terrain vehicles are tearing up the Honor Farm site and noted the city was violating its easement agreement.

The city had little choice but to follow through with state requirements and restrictions for the land. Warnings have been posted on the property and off-roading has been banned.

Trouble is the Honor Farm is an expansive piece of property and effective patrol of the area would be costly.

We have a suggestion, however. Perhaps Pueblo could invest in drone technology and assign an officer to fly the drone above the Honor Farm to seek out scofflaws. Pictures of vehicles and license plates could be taken, and warnings or citations could be written and mailed out. After all, we do something similar to traffic light scofflaws.

Drone technology is relatively cheap these days, and remote-control patrols would save the community thousands of dollars in the long run.

Of course the long-term solution to the off-road problem is the future development of a master plan for the Honor Farm that could include trails and amenities geared toward off-road enthusiasts. The city has debated such improvements to the property, but budget constraints have kept the parks department from moving forward with the idea.

The property requires an effective management plan that ensures safety and prevents erosion so that the Honor Farm is protected for future generations.

TELL IT TO THE CHIEFTAIN

Gun ownership

In a letter published in *The Pueblo Chieftain* on Sunday (Dec. 22, 2013), Ms. Shari Malloy of Longmont decries "bullying" by the National Rifle Association during the recent recall actions in Colorado. She also describes as "sensible, incremental" legislation passed this year to restrict firearms freedoms in Colorado. I'd like to reply to these assertions.

The recall of two senators and the campaign to recall a third were not instigated

by the NRA. These were the purest form of "grass-roots" politics, initiated and conducted by local citizens who correctly knew they were not being represented by their elected officials. In fact, Michael Bloomberg and others poured money in from outside Colorado to fight the recalls. Who would one say was the bully in that case?

As to "sensible, incremental" restrictions preventing mass violence? There is simply no logical basis for the assertion that restricting firearms from law-abiding

citizens prevents violence.

In fact, more and more studies are showing that, despite the desires of people like Ms. Malloy, an increase in firearms ownership and carry has resulted in a general decrease in firearms violence and deaths. The "sensible" restrictions imposed in Colorado have not had, and will never have, any other result than to further burden lawful gun owners while having no effect on crimes of violence.

Dennis Chappell
Pueblo

MALLARD FILLMORE

By BRUCE TINSLEY



OBAMACARE

Stop the bailout — now



CHARLES KRAUTHAMMER
Opinion

WASHINGTON — First order of business for the returning Congress: The No Bailout for Insurance Companies Act of 2014.

Make it one line long: "Sections 1341 and 1342 of the Affordable Care Act are hereby repealed."

End of bill. End of bailout. End of story.

Why do we need it? On Dec. 18, the chairman of the Council of Economic Advisers was asked what was the administration's Plan B if, because of adverse selection (enrolling too few young and healthies), the insurance companies face financial difficulty.

Jason Furman wouldn't bite. "There's a Plan A," he replied. Enroll the young.

But of course there's a Plan B. It's a government bailout.

Administration officials can't say it for political reasons. And they don't have to say it because it's already in the Affordable Care Act, buried deep.

First, Section 1341, the "reinsurance" fund collected from insurers and self-insuring employers at a nifty \$63 a head. (Who do you think the cost is passed on to?) This yields about \$20 billion over three years to cover losses.

Then there is Section 1342, the "risk corridor" provision that mandates a major taxpayer payout covering up to 80 percent of insurance-company losses.

Never heard of these? That's the beauty of passing a bill of such monstrous length. You can insert a chicken soup recipe and no one will notice.

Nancy Pelosi was right: We'd have to pass the damn thing to know what's in it. Well, now we have and now we know.

The whole scheme was risky enough to begin with — getting enough enrollees and making sure 40 percent are young and healthy. Obamacare

is already far behind its own enrollment estimates. But things have gotten worse.

First, it postponed the employer mandate. Then, it exempted from the individual mandate people whose policies were canceled (by Obamacare). And for those who did join the exchanges, Health and Human Services Secretary Kathleen Sebelius is "strongly encouraging" insurers to — during the "transition" — cover doctors and drugs not included in their clients' plans. The insurers were stunned. Told to give free coverage. Deprived of their best customers. Forced to offer stripped-down "catastrophic" plans to over-30 clients (contrary to the law). These dictates, complained their spokesman, could "destabilize" the insurance market.

Translation: How are we going to survive this? Shrinking revenues and rising costs could bring on the "death spiral" — an unbalanced patient pool forcing huge premium increases (to restore revenue) that would further unbalance the patient pool as the young and healthy drop out.

End result? Insolvency. Solution? A huge government bailout. It's Obamacare's escape hatch. And — surprise, surprise — it's already baked into the law.

Which is why the GOP needs to act. Without viable insurance companies doing the work, it falls apart. No bailout, no Obamacare.

Such a bill would be overwhelmingly popular because Americans hate fat-cat bailouts of any kind. The GOP House should pass it and send it to Harry Reid's Democratic Senate.

Do you really think vulnerable Democrats up for re-election will vote for a bailout? And who better to slay Obamacare than a Democratic Senate — liberalism repudiating its most important creation of the last 50 years.

Who can argue with no bailout? Let the Senate Democrats decide — support the bailout and lose the Senate. Or oppose the bailout and bury Obamacare.

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POLITICAL CORRECTNESS

Retreating from bad duck call



MIKE ROSEN
Opinion

Disclosure: I have no moral or religious objection to homosexuality. I favor legal recognition of civil unions for same-sex couples. I agreed with a judge's recent ruling that a baker cannot refuse to sell a standard wedding cake to a gay couple in a business legally regarded as a place of public accommodation.

I am not homosexual but I'm not anti-homosexual. I am rational and I detest political correctness founded on the absurd notion that in a free society you have cause to be protected from any remarks you hypersensitively deem to be offensive.

A&E's knee-jerk decision to remove "Duck Dynasty's" 67-year-old patriarch Phil Robertson from its fabulously successful reality show was an overreaction. Robertson's crime was to be himself in a frank interview in GQ Magazine (formerly known as "Gentleman's Quarterly").

Robertson certainly doesn't fit GQ's standards of what makes for a "gentleman" nor does he fit the magazine's culture or its metrosexual audience. They selected him precisely because they regard him as an odd duck with unhip "retrogressive" values.

Unlike, I suspect, most people with an opinion on this affair I actually read the entire interview in GQ. Robertson's

remarks were characteristically "course" but they weren't hateful or even objectively offensive.

About homosexuality, he proclaimed his biblically-based view that this is sinful behavior of a kind with adultery, idolatry, prostitution, greed and several other ungodly acts. Billions of religious people in the world agree with him.

On the subject of blacks, Robertson shared his personal experience hoeing cotton alongside them in the old south. Describing himself as "white trash," he said, "I'm with the blacks." His context dealt with their personal demeanor and godliness in humble circumstances. He didn't address or defend the injustice of Jim Crow laws or segregation.

A&E reacted rashly to a joint letter of complaint from the NAACP and the Human Rights Campaign, a gay activist group, expressing their "outrage" at Robertson's "racist, homophobic and ill-informed remarks."

While it's illegal to discriminate against homosexuals under certain laws, it's not illegal or outrageous for someone like Robertson to disapprove of their lifestyle.

Predictably, the rest of the Robertson clan stood by their old man and threatened to take their show to another network. Just as expectably, A&E backed down and lifted Robertson's suspension.

For once, the noisy wheel of political correctness didn't get the most grease.

Freelance columnist Mike Rosen's radio show airs weekdays from 9 a.m. to noon on 850-KO.