

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Medicare needs to be expanded

This past spring, my wife and I were overjoyed to be blessed with a new granddaughter. Pretty much all went well, except shortly after her birth, the obstetrics team recognized that her bones were not all where they should be, and she was diagnosed with hip dysplasia, a condition we were told was not altogether uncommon due to her breech position. Thankfully, her parents had good insurance through their employment, and steps were taken (she was to wear a corrective brace until her hip socket fully developed), and she is well on her way to a complete recovery.

Our little granddaughter and her parents were fortunate to have insurance coverage through their employment to help her along medically and also financially.

More than one million North Carolinians lack the kind of insurance coverage that our granddaughter and her family have, so one can only guess how many children here will grow up hobbled by a correctable condition, or how many parents have to choose between paying for medical treatment and food, or rent, or other necessary expenses. But a simple and humane solution exists: expand Medicare, as has been done in 38 other states.

Medicare expansion will not cause a rise in taxes. Most North Carolinians support expanding Medicare. Governor Cooper is in favor of expanding Medicare. The State Senate approved expansion last June. But the Republican ("pro-life?") House seems stubbornly opposed.

Paul Glaser, Biltmore Lake/Candler

A good day for democracy

While many of us wish we would have Cherie Beasley as senator representing North Carolina instead of a false-information, big-business-focused guy, I believe it is beneficial to embrace President Biden's message that Nov. 8 was "a good day for democracy."

Many extremist candidates outside of NC did not do so well, and for that I am grateful. <https://www.politico.com/news/2022/11/09/2022-election-results-analysis-and-takeaways-00065878>

We have healing to do. Then we need to get things done!

It is time for Republicans to step up, contribute ideas, stop whining and start to work.

After all, the majority of Americans (not just Democrats) want:

- women to be able to make their own reproductive decisions
- affordable health care, insulin and prescription medicines
- renewable, clean energy and clean water to reduce climate change
- affordable housing and accessible broadband
- sound immigration reform and laws
- return to civility, rule-of-law and cooperation toward goals
- bans on assault weapons and better gun control legislation
- criminal justice reform
- limit control of corporate power and encourage fair wages
- an end to the violent rhetoric and extremism
- easy-to-vote, free, fair elections

Together we can do this while working to reinforce our democracy.

Peter David, Hendersonville

Russia scoring victories by terrorizing

In his seminal work "Democracy in America," Alexis de Tocqueville astutely observed that while the Americans were pushing west in North America, the Russians were simultaneously pushing east in Asia. At this time Comanche warriors were regarded by many as comprising the finest light cavalry in the world. Just the same, the Native American population was conquered not so much by military victory but by the wanton slaughter of North American buffalo herds. Moreover, textiles contaminated with diseases infectious to non-immunized Native Americans precipitated the death of thousands.

In a similar vein, the Russians may be scoring victories not militarily but by terrorizing and slaughtering thousands of Ukrainian civilians through infrastructure destruction leading to infirmity, homelessness, malnutrition and despair. The push to colonize the West ended over a century ago in America. However, its eastern counterpart is still alive in Russia. As countless European monarchies collapsed years before that of Russian czars, the Russians are still using war terror tactics condemned by the West over 100 years ago.

Jamie Blount, Hendersonville

Medicare Advantage may be a scam

Thanks to an Oct. 9 New York Times article, attention has been drawn to the Medicare Advantage (MA) scam and we are better informed about where our Medicare dollars go.

We have seen how MA insurers persuade otherwise intelligent seniors to sign up by offering freebies like gym memberships, zero premiums and discounts on hearing aids, eyeglasses and dental care. We all know there is no free lunch, and it's now obvious that this swag is paid for by bilking taxpayer-funded Medicare into giving the for-profit MA companies much more than they need to provide health care while they restrict access to many out-of-network doctors and hospitals. Those insurance companies make you look "sicker" on paper by a process called "upcoding" to have Medicare pay them more for your medical care



Medicare expansion will not cause a rise in taxes. Most North Carolinians support expanding Medicare. Governor Cooper is in favor of expanding Medicare. The State Senate approved expansion last June. But the Republican ("pro-life?") House seems stubbornly opposed.

Paul Glaser, Biltmore Lake/Candler

The REACH program requires no further Congressional approval. The only way to stop it is pressure from the Medicare recipients. Find out more at ProtectMedicare.net. Call the White House directly to demand an end to the REACH money-grab from the Medicare fund.

Ellen Kaczmarek, MD, Asheville

(which you don't get). The insurers keep what is not spent on your care.

And now there's a new threat to the entire Medicare program, created in the last months of the Trump administration. Initially called Direct Contracting but renamed REACH (Realizing Equity, Access, and Community Health), this insidious program aims to completely privatize Medicare by 2030.

Wall Street investors are excited by the prospect of profits approaching 30 percent, which can come only by further cheating the government and withholding needed health care from seniors. The program encourages insurers to grow their volume by allowing them to sign up seniors without their permission. The only way seniors can exit the program is by changing primary care physicians, which most are extremely reluctant to do.

The REACH program requires no further Congressional approval. The only way to stop it is pressure from the Medicare recipients. Find out more at ProtectMedicare.net. Call the White House directly to demand an end to the REACH money-grab from the Medicare fund.

Ellen Kaczmarek, MD, Asheville

Airbnb can be beneficial for the community

As a bnb owner for over 12 years, I've seen this enterprise go from the wild-wild-west where nothing was regulated or overseen, to city/county hyper-vigilance, mandatory shut-downs of short term stays in stand-alone houses, fines and finally hotel taxation imposed on bnb income.

I understand the hardship bnbs impose on housing shortages that would otherwise be long-term rentals. I think Asheville has done a good job with regulating bnbs within the city limits. However, we already pay a hefty hotel tax for our bnb income and I feel that extra property tax would be double taxation, which is against the law, right?

Furthermore, I think the bnbs offer us locals an income stream that offsets the burden we all bear by being overrun with tourists, year-round now! The corporate hotels in our community send most of their profits to headquarters which is far far away from where they are reaping the tourism income. Yes, they employ people, but at what wages? And those wages don't compare to what a bnb owner makes and therefore can afford to spend throughout the wider business community for business and personal reasons.

Another benefit bnb owners provide the community is an affordable place for longer term visitors to stay. I've hosted many a traveling nurse for 1-3 months, people here for other temporary jobs, or people house shopping in person and getting a feel for living in Asheville before moving here. I don't think renting a hotel room would be affordable or convenient for those folks.

And lastly, I'd like to see all STR/bnb "hotel tax" revenue go into local coffers for affordable housing usage—NOT into the marketing pot that encourages more tourism.

Kelly Lockamy, Asheville

Climate change must be addressed

Thanks to the Citizen Times for publishing a front-page article on voters perception of climate change issues. While it makes perfect sense that climate change might not be the most important issue on the minds of voters today, the most striking statistic in the article is that 66-80% of Americans support climate change policies.

Policies that continue to help transition our economies away from polluting industries that have served us well for generations, but that are now time to retire, will have incredible secondary benefits for us such as vastly less air and water pollution, little to no noise pollution, amazing improvement in the health of us and our children, and little reliance on autocratic petrostates such as Russia, Saudi Arabia and Venezuela.

Going forward, let us vote only for candidates who will help continue the transition away from polluting fossil fuels and towards a thriving, clean energy economy. Politicians who profess an "all-of-the-above" approach to energy policy are really telling you they want to continue the status quo with coal, oil and gas.

Michael Hill, Asheville

Let God be the judge

Right-wing conservative Christians have the right message but the wrong method when it comes to a broader mind to fair justice. Some laws belong to God's judgment when it comes to a decision as to what we choose to do with governing our own bodies. The local, state, federal nor any religious denomination has the right to govern a woman's decision on the issue of abortion.

I believe that abortions take lives. But in a true democracy I cannot force my ideology upon anyone, whether right or wrong, as long as my neighbor does not trespass and force his or her's upon me. Because of proven circumstances that half of us can't walk in a woman's shoes, we can only give advice that we really don't own our bodies. God is the lender.

My advice is to get out of God's way and allow God to be the judge of the decision a woman makes. People who get in God's way are power seekers.

Jasper M. Hopper, Hendersonville

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR



Dedicated to the rebuilding of Western North Carolina since 1870.

Policy

We invite Letters to the Editor of 250 words or less. Please include your name, mailing address, daytime telephone number and email address.

E-mail: letters@citizen-times.com

Mail to: Letters, Asheville Citizen-Times, P.O. Box 2090, Asheville, NC 28802-2090.

Op-eds are submitted the same way except they should be around 750 words and also include a one-sentence bio and head shot. Submissions might be edited for space and clarity.

Phone: 828-232-5912