

Let me get this straight

July 16, 2011

Sometimes I get confused and it helps to just air things out to see if the fog lifts. A few items have fogged my brain of late. (Please feel free to insert joke here.)

Let's start out with the new statewide school district that Governor Snyder is proposing. In this big government program, the state would put underperforming schools in the Detroit system plus schools in the bottom 5 percent in the rest of the state into an Education Achievement System district. The new district would be run by a new state bureaucracy.

Now, part of the new deal would be that private funds would be raised so students graduating from the new district would be guaranteed a scholarship to a two-year college (which would eventually expand into a four-year scholarship guarantee). (Detroit Free Press)

So let me get this straight. If you live in a district (like Detroit) that has squandered its money through greed and corruption, has an elected school board that is completely irresponsible and inefficient, has massive budget deficits, and whose parents have stood by and allowed this to happen — your "punishment" is that your children will now get a free ride to college.

On the other hand, if you live in northern Michigan and your school district has done everything possible to properly budget, your school board has acted responsibly on behalf of students, and your district's parents have

been supportive in an effort to assure your schools are not in the bottom 5 percent — your "reward" is that you get to pay your own college costs. No scholarships for you!

I also might ask: Is this college guarantee going to be granted to incoming kindergartners (in which case it's a 14-year commitment by the state)? Who is going to be in charge of funding this thing way out in the future (because many of the geniuses in the legislature voting on it now will be dead by then)? Since supposedly this will be funded by donations, will a whole new Department of Fund Raising be a cabinet level post in state government? Are there telethons in our future?

Moving on but still in the realm of politics, keep an eye on the Flint mayoral election coming up next month. One of the candidates, Eric Mays, says if he's elected he has a way to create 4,000 jobs immediately. His plan is to have everyone who wants a job sell bottled water. Basically, they would pay the Watergalore company \$12 for 10 bottles of water and then sell each bottle for \$1.50 per bottle, thereby netting a \$3 profit. Bingo! Instant jobs!

Hmmmm... Let me get this straight. He's going to unleash 4,000 unemployed peo-



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ple onto the streets of Flint all at the same time and all of them will be selling the same thing. Nothing could go haywire with this concept, eh? Oh, by the way, perhaps you should know that the water is bottled in Memphis, Tenn., and the Watergalore company is owned by (you guessed it) Mays. (MLive.com)

Speaking of money, according to the Department of Health and Human Services,

uninsured Americans leave hospitals with unpaid tabs of \$49 billion per year. The government winds up paying at least 75 percent of these unpaid bills. The bottom line is that taxpayers are, in effect, paying health care costs for all the uninsured who don't (or can't) pay their bills.

So, let me get this straight. We're already paying \$49 billion every year. According to the Kaiser Foundation (using the Massachusetts model) covering all uninsured American would cost around \$150 billion per year. My calculations tell me that we're already spending one-third of that \$150 billion anyway, so the task is to come up with the other \$100 billion every year.

We've already spent more than \$433 billion on the war in Afghanistan and \$787 billion in Iraq. That total is escalating by the minute, as

you can see at Cost of War (<http://costofwar.com/en/>).

The point is the money is there and is already being spent. Right now the discussion that needs to happen is what's better for the United States in the long term, providing health care for all citizens or continuing the two wars.

Finally, this just in from our neighbors in Indiana. "Schools in Indiana will no longer have to teach cursive handwriting starting this fall (Fox 59 News)." Apparently keyboard proficiency is now deemed more important. For everything else printing by hand will do, supposedly.

Let me get this straight. Now that kids won't even know how to produce a signature you mean no one will think to use a keyboard or be able to duplicate common printing in order to forge names on documents? Is everyone going to go back to signing "X" or will they be creating a whole new set of strange characters?

I'm sorry, as an old curmudgeon I think this is a bad idea. I spent endless hours perfecting my handwriting under the watchful eyes of Dominican nuns and I have the scarred knuckles to prove it. A nun with a wooden ruler is an ominous force indeed. They taught me this and I agree 100 percent: "Printing is for children and serial killers. Everyone else must use cursive writing."

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