

U.S. should better fund Alzheimer's research

The president's recently proposed 2008 budget once again underfunds medical and scientific research. Such research can be the only hope for families with loved ones afflicted with debilitating and fatal diseases such as Alzheimer's. Adequately funding that research can lead to treatments to delay, halt or reverse the progression of dementia and other life-threatening diseases and decrease the costs associated with their care.

As many as 5 million Americans are diagnosed with Alzheimer's. In 2000, there were 65,000 people in Iowa with this disease and by 2010 there will be 69,000. Given that baby boomers are getting older and that this is the only major disease that is increasing, Iowa's health care systems and long-term care facilities will not be able to keep up. We must fight this disease with our best weapon: research.

What the president has proposed for medical research is far too little compared with the enormous financial strain and impact that will occur on Medicare and Medicaid, and on families as they try to care for the increasing number of aging boomers. Investing in research to end Alzheimer's is a prudent, cost-effective bargain, as well as a compassionate one. It can save lives and billions of health care dollars.

Anne Salamon
Cedar Rapids

To improve city, council should look at big picture

Raise property taxes and utility rates. Spend money on brownfields and out-of-state consultants. Sell public property. Build trails disguised as sidewalks. Build more bridges so pedestrians and bicyclists have their own.

Leave the Cedar Rapids streets in the worst shape they have been in for a very long time.

What is the majority of this City Council thinking? You want people to move here, you have to give them more than downtown apartments, future Osadas, trails, a riverwalk and other unneeded projects. Don't you think they'll take into account how our streets are not maintained? Cedar Rapids, Home of the Potholes.

Glad to see that Sheriff Don Zeller agrees with me that we don't need more bridges and that a pedestrian bridge behind the Linn County Jail would cause a security problem.

Chuck Wieneke is the only one I've seen on the council who seems to see

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the big picture.. Maybe they should learn not to get too many irons in the fire, plus prioritize and get the most important projects done first.

Time you started looking out for all of us: Young, old, retired, still working, rich, poor, black, white, yellow, etc.

Jim Cannon
Cedar Rapids

National health care must be priority

When the issue of universal health care is addressed, the response widely varies, usually because some can afford it and others cannot. Those opposed to such a national plan almost always bring up the cost. Yet while this is a reasonable concern, this country seems to have little problem coming up with ways to maim and kill people, so why not a way to help and heal people? A national health care system seems complicated: so does sending a shuttle into outer space (which we can do).

One way we can start is easy: contact politicians on every level and petition them to look into it. We can ask them to find out how much it will cost to implement a better health care system on the city, state and national levels. Healthy people tend to be happy people. Happy people tend to work more and better, tend to commit: less crime against others, tend toward tending to others.

In order to accomplish this, mental and emotional health must be examined alongside physical health. Thus by prioritizing whole-health, we can greatly reduce, if not eliminate, other difficulties (such as certain preoccupations with in-utero blastocysts and ex-utero terrorists).

Yet first we must care about our health.

Matthew Burrier
Cedar Rapids

Tough economic times call for budget cuts

The residents of Johnson County can no longer afford the voracious appetite the Johnson County Board of Supervisors has for taxpayer money.

The board has proposed a more than 13 percent increase over last year's budget, which includes a 6 percent pay raise, a skywalk and furniture buys.

As a result, property taxes will go up, significantly.

On top of that, the Conservation Board has requested and the board has OK'd, to ask taxpayers for \$20 million to buy land.

According to the experts, we're headed for tough economic times, does the board not understand that?

Everyday Joe and small

businesses have to get lean, while the government gets fat?

That's unacceptable.

Down economic times mean budget cuts, not increased taxes. You can voice your concerns to the board by contacting Supervisor Pat Harney, the only one who seems to appreciate the value of your money, by e-mailing him at pharney@co.johnson.ia.us

Mike Thayer
Coralville

LIFTS provides a service that taxis cannot

I am writing in response to the Jan. 28 letter "County LIFTS program needs fiscal makeover."

In March 1993, I suffered a stroke that paralyzed my right side. Only through years of professional rehab and rehab on my own can I walk and have limited use of my right arm. I could only get to these rehabs by LIFTS. I pay \$2 a ride, not 80 cents. Evidently that writer doesn't want to help the disabled and the elderly. I would truly like to see how a taxi could hold a 300-pound motorized wheelchair or their drivers transfer people from a wheelchair to the back of a taxi. Dialysis patients also ride LIFTS; for them is it life or death. LIFTS staff members, from the director down to the drivers, who are professional, courteous and truly concerned about their riders, should be owed a huge thanks for a job well done.

As far as running it like a business, I should point out that it is not a business. LIFTS is a service provided by the county for its residents. I did not realize the county was supposed to make money. Perhaps when it snows and if that letter writer happens to live on a country road, he can shovel it himself and save some tax dollars.

Rodney Clark
Marion

It's a grand time to be rich, powerful in U.S.

Isn't it wonderful? ExxonMobil Corp. recently announced that its profit for the past quarter of the year was \$10.7 billion.

And also, recently the oil companies announced that, because of the lack of a special additive needed for "summer fuel," we should expect gas prices to reach \$3.50 per gallon within a few months.

Add to this the already huge subsidies given to the oil companies by the government and its Republican leaders. It sure is a grand time to be rich and powerful in America. Not so grand for the rest of us.

Randy Russo
Cedar Rapids