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October-November 2014

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THE PITIFUL WHIMPER OF 2014

A HEADLINE FROM THE *NEW YORK TIMES*; NOVEMBER 2 2014

The election just completed has perhaps reached an all-time low in substance. More money was spent saying nothing meaningful than at any time in the past. If any of our readers heard any candidate, local or national, substantively talk about anything remotely related to serious solutions for handling the growing senior population please let us know by mail or email at the address shown above.

There has been a shift in control of the state senate, with the Republicans holding a one-seat majority. The Senior Lobby is a non-partisan organization and we are equally adept at working with either party.

In the past four years, with one party in control of both houses and the governorship, we have not made the kind of progress that prepares the state for the year 2030. We ask both parties to seriously consider the impact of the senior population, growing each year at a significant rate. The party that recognizes this critical nature will be the party that aggressively moves forward with meaningful solutions, and will obtain an advantage in support from the senior community.

IT IS TIME THAT WE DEMAND BETTER FROM OUR POLITICIANS. THIS AFFECTS US ALL. WE WILL ALL HOPEFULLY BE SENIORS SOMEDAY. EVEN IF NOT CURRENTLY A SENIOR, MANY MIDDLE-AGED PERSONS HAVE A DIFFICULT BURDEN OF PROVIDING ASSISTANCE TO AGING PARENTS.

WE NEED TO MAKE IT CLEAR TO OUR LEGISLATORS THAT THIS IS A CRITICAL SITUATION AND NEEDS IMMEDIATE SOLUTIONS.

THIS CANNOT BE KICKED DOWN THE ROAD ANY LONGER.

Reproduction of newsletter provided by Ed Shackelford,
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National Award Winner, Premier Service

The pleasure of remembering had been taken from me, because there was no longer anyone to remember with. It felt like losing your co-rememberer meant losing the memory itself, as if the things we'd done were less real and important than they had been hours before. ~ John Green, The Fault in Our Stars

There are two topics that on occasion are mentioned whenever the discussion of senior issues is broached. Neither of these topics deals with meaningful solutions for many seniors.

PROPERTY TAX RELIEF – This is frequently referred to as the primary funding benefit provided to seniors by the state. The cost to the state is just under \$100 million each year when fully implemented. This is very important to some seniors. But there are significant limitations.

It only applies to seniors who have lived in their home for at least 10 years. This benefit is also not available to those who rent. It discourages seniors from downsizing to a smaller home, and perhaps one more user friendly for seniors.

It is also available to all seniors who qualify, including those who may not need this benefit. But it is not available to many who are most in need. When the argument is made that the Legislature is looking out for the best interests of seniors, be very skeptical.

This is not a long-term solution for many seniors.

ENTITLEMENTS – This is a word that should be removed from any political discussion.

Social Security is no more an entitlement than is a 401k. In both cases money was put aside for future use. What politicians won't tell you is that since the 1960s the significant surpluses in Social Security were used to mask the size of the deficits in other areas. Now that the surplus is small, or perhaps there are even deficits, this has forced a more realistic look at the federal budget.

Medicare – Nationwide, medical expenses currently comprise approximately 18% of Gross Domestic Product (GDP). The next largest amount for other developed countries is approximately 12% of GDP. There should be no discussion of reducing Medicare benefits until health costs are brought in line with the rest of the world. Currently the constantly increasing cost of medical treatment has been slowed. But, there is still a long way to go, and this may be only a short-term situation.

Reducing these benefits is not a long-term solution.

ISSUES FOR 2015

Those areas where we focus our attention and interests are always subject to change. There is no way to anticipate all that will happen but at this time these are the issues and actions that we consider most important.

Long-term financing for the Older Coloradans Act:

This is not a new issue. Every year we review the financing and feel that it could be structured in a better way. At this time the legislature has not committed to arranging the financing so that it will be reasonably reliable over an extended period of time.

Our position is that it is a known certainty that the senior population is growing larger every year and putting pressure on the resources that support their basic needs. This includes such popular programs as Meals On Wheels and transportation. These are examples of things provided by funds from the Older Coloradans Act.

This is one of the more significant cost containment programs that the state has. Approximately \$10 million in funding is done by statutory funding. Approximately \$6 million is funded through the Long Bill. We support increasing the funding by \$4 million and having all funding in statute not just a provision of the Long Bill. *(This is just a current need. A legislator who is forward-thinking will provide for expansion of statutory funding yearly, to keep up with the growing population.)*

The significance of this is that statutory funding occurs automatically, but can be overturned by specific legislation. Funding through the Long Bill is reviewed every year by the Joint Budget Committee (JBC). This funding is subject to the vagaries of the current JBC and Legislature. Because it is projected with great reliability that the senior population in Colorado increases each year, the cost-effective action is to provide ongoing, reliable funding for the future, keeping pace with the expanding population. This is COST CONTAINMENT.

The cost benefit of the Older Coloradan's Act is significant. This program can keep people in their home for a few hundred dollars a month. Contrast this with the cost of keeping someone in a nursing home — at a cost of approximately \$8,000 per month.

The next time you're looking for a way to encourage creative thinking while also lightening your staff's mood, take a lesson from a first-grade teacher who presented her class with the first half of some well-known proverbs and asked them to finish the sentiments. Here's what they came up with:

- Better to be safe than ... to punch a big kid.
- Don't bite the hand that ... needs to be washed.
- You get out of something ... what's pictured on the box.
- A penny saved is ... not enough.
- Lie down with dogs and you'll ... smell bad in the morning.
- Strike while the ... fly is close.
- When the blind lead the blind ... get out of the way.

Every month we keep someone in the home of their choice delays the time when they will rely on Medicaid to pay for a nursing home.

Reducing the cost of Medicaid is key to providing senior services in an environment where funds are limited.

The Impact of Alzheimer's: The potential impact of this disease is widely recognized. *Business Week* predicted that unless solutions are discovered, this disease alone could overwhelm the federal budget. The Anschutz Medical Campus is one of the leading research institutes for solutions to prevent/cure this disease. Additional funding by the state could go a long way in making progress to reduce the impact of this disease. We would like to see additional funding of approximately \$20 million over the next 5 years — with half provided by the state and half by other sources. This is the year to get serious about this disease. The potential for future savings to the state are enormous.

Long-term solutions affecting the expanding senior population: This needs to be done carefully so that it results in specific action plans and implementation. There is always the great risk that there will be meetings and reports, but in the end no implementation

There is a growing consensus for the need for a strategic planning group focused on long-term solutions. Basically, the concept is to have one similar to the task force that was effective in passing the elder abuse reporting legislation. We are concerned that without specificity in the legislation, the strategic planning group will not be effective.

People of excellence go the extra mile to do what's right. —Joel Osteen

I am among those who think that science has great beauty. A scientist in his laboratory is not only a technician: he is also a child placed before natural phenomena which impress him like a fairy tale. —Marie Curie

Things that fundamentally affect the seniors in the future are very diverse. Our concept, in rudimentary form, is the need for nine to ten task forces or perhaps subcommittees of an overseeing master task force. Each of the nine sections would be headed by a leading business representative and a representative from government/non-profit. This detail needs to be specified in legislation. Otherwise, it may be just another study going nowhere.

One of the strategies to think about is the example from the 1960's when the Governor convened a group of business leaders. The group included many senior executives such as Bill Coors and Otto Butterly (managing partner of Price Waterhouse & Co). Otto devoted almost full-time to this effort. The group came up with a multitude of recommendations for improving efficiency in government.

This issue is currently being considered by the Colorado Senior Lobby. At this time the organization has no official position.

Who's Rich And Who's Poor?

One day a rich man took his son on a trip to the country with the purpose of showing his son how fortunate he was, and how poor many other people were. They spent a day and night at the home of a humble farmer. When they got back from their trip the father asked his son, "How was the trip?"

"Very good, Father," replied his son.

"Do you now see how poor people can be?" the father asked. "Yes," said the son.

"And what did you learn?"

The son answered, "I saw that we have a dog at home, and they have four. We have a pool that reaches to the middle of the garden; they have a creek that has no end. We have imported lamps in the garden; they have the stars at night. Our patio reaches to the front yard, and they have a whole horizon."



"We have a small piece of land to live on and they have fields that go beyond our sight. We have servants who serve us, but they serve others. We have walls around our property to protect us, and they have friends to protect them."

When the boy finished, his father was speechless.

His son added, "Thank you, Father, for showing me how poor we are."

What do you count as your riches?

Bad Stuff That Used To Be Good

Our knowledge of what's healthy and not healthy changes all the time. Here are three substances that physicians once thought to be beneficial to our health:

- **Soda.** Pharmacists began adding herbs, medicines, and sugars to carbonated water in the 1800s, creating homemade "health drinks." Nowadays, sodas are linked to obesity and diabetes.
- **Cigarettes.** Physicians once touted the benefits of a relaxing cigarette or two, prompted by tobacco companies and advertising executives. That ended in 1964 with the US Surgeon General's report on smoking that linked tobacco use to cancer.
- **Cocaine.** Derived from the coca leaf and used as a stimulant, cocaine was famously touted by pioneering psychologist Sigmund Freud as a cure for depression and sexual dysfunction--until 1922, when it was made illegal.

**WANTED:
OLDER ADULTS
TO WORK WITH CHILDREN AND YOUTH**



DO YOU LOVE CHILDREN AND ENJOY BEING WITH THEM?

ARE YOU 55 YEARS OLD OR OLDER?

DO YOU HAVE A LOWER INCOME (UNDER \$22,980 FOR A SINGLE PERSON HOUSEHOLD, UNDER \$31,020 FOR A TWO PERSON HOUSEHOLD)?

COULD YOU USE A LITTLE EXTRA MONEY TO HELP COVER YOUR LIVING COSTS OR FOR EXTRAS YOU CAN'T AFFORD NOW?

DO YOU LIVE IN ONE OF THESE COUNTIES: ADAMS, ARAPAHOE, BOULDER, DENVER, JEFFERSON, EL PASO OR LARIMER?

ARE YOU CAPABLE AND ABLE TO VOLUNTEER FIFTEEN (15) HOURS A WEEK HELPING CHILDREN LEARN AND SUCCEED?

IF YOU ANSWERED YES TO ALL THESE QUESTIONS, YOU NEED TO CALL US, SO WE CAN HELP YOU START TO HELP CHILDREN!



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El Paso County, Kathy Bell

719-632-1448 or FGPColoSpgs@voacolorado.org

SAVE THE DATE

SENIOR DAY AT THE CAPITOL

Date is set

Wednesday, April 1, 2015

We have typically had more attendees than the Old Supreme Court Chambers could hold. It is important that we hold the meeting at the Capitol and this has been the largest room available.

In the past we have not been permitted to have voice transmitted to a “back-up” room, but will also continue to pursue this possibility.

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*The ultimate folly is to think that
something crucial to your welfare is being taken
care of for you.*
—Robert Brault, American operatic tenor

“Healthy citizens are the
greatest asset any
country can have.”
— Winston Churchill

Go Green:

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or coworker.

Colorado Senior Lobby — Nonprofit, non-partisan, volunteer organization

MEMBERSHIP: Single \$30 Family \$40 Organization \$75 \$ _____

Organizations: Attach three names and contact information

Additional contribution to support our vision for seniors' quality of life \$ _____

Total (This payment is not tax deductible) \$ _____

Name/Business/Organization: _____

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