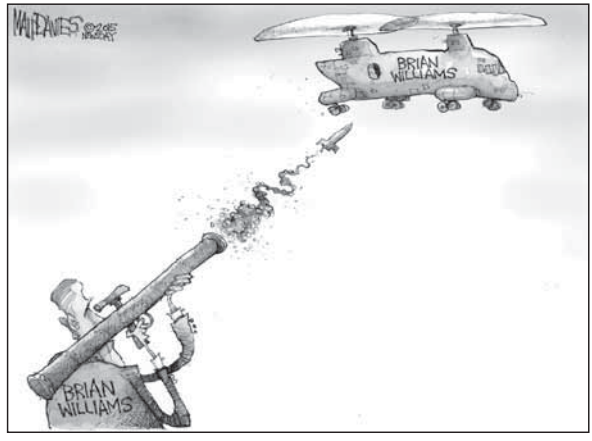


DAILY UNION OPINION PAGE



Remember all who serve

Last March, the Jefferson County Sheriff's Office received the go-ahead to construct a memorial to the department's fallen K-9 officers. It will salute the five dogs that have served the county and passed away, reaching their "end of watch." Those include Labrador retriever Redman and German Shepherds Jahn, Deuce, Ahron and Jasko. The office also had a bloodhound, Ellie Mae, now retired.

Located on an island of greenery in the courthouse parking lot, the memorial will consist of a concrete statue of a German Shepherd in front of a wall of engraved bricks with memorial information for the dogs that have died.

The sheriff's office has had its K-9 program since 1991; however, dogs have been used by law enforcement, the military and customs agents for centuries. Of course, many also serve as helpers for persons with disabilities and as therapy dogs.

While we all appreciate the skills and comfort these dogs provide, many people feel that isn't enough. Thus, as we report on page A1, the Fort Atkinson Kennel Club has lobbied to give canines serving in the armed forces their own holiday.

State Reps. Andy Jorgensen and Cody Horlacher plan to introduce a nonpartisan legislative resolution in the Assembly to set aside March 13 as the day to honor the service of all military working dogs. That was the date in 1942 the U.S. K9 Corps was founded, although dogs were used by America in World War I, as well.

It was Mabel Schumacher, retired Fort Atkinson school district director of instruction and current treasurer of the Kennel Club of Fort Atkinson, who brought the idea before club members and then contacted the Assemblymen and state Sen. Steve Nass to promote the idea. So far, it has received support from 47 of the 99 Wisconsin Assembly members and nine of the 33 state senators.

Mabel tells us that K-9 Veterans Day is intended to honor military dogs, as well as canines working with police, customs, the border patrol, service and therapy. And even if the resolution does not get to a vote in time, a celebration recognizing the first K-9 Veterans Day will take place March 13 at the American Legion Dugout.

The Kennel Club also hopes to place a memorial in McCoy Park in the future to recognize the day, not unlike the one remembering our county's canines.

This is a wonderful idea. Dogs have been used in wartime, search-and-rescue, for protection and for countless other tasks since ancient times. They help protect our nation's borders, guard officers and find the missing... as the search dogs did amid the rubble of the Twin Towers.

And during the Vietnam War, about 4,900 military working dogs served in the U.S. military and were credited with saving more than 10,000 human lives. A total 232 military working dogs and 295 servicemen serving as dog handlers were killed in action during the Vietnam War, including U.S. Marines Lance Cpl. Terrence Daniel Beck of Fort Atkinson.

Terrence was only 18 years old when he began his tour of duty as a rifleman in the Scout Dog Platoon Oct. 5, 1967. Not even three months later, on Dec. 20, he was fatally wounded by gunfire in Thue Thien Province.

By recognizing the canines that have put their lives on the line for us, we also recognize the handlers who, like Lance Cpl. Beck, sacrificed their lives for this nation.

We encourage our state representatives to advance the K9 Veterans Day resolution as soon as possible. March 13th is coming up soon, and another year should not pass before we remember everyone — two-footed and four-pawed — who has served.

Both GOP, Dems facing risks as healthcare law court case nears

WASHINGTON (AP) — Twenty-two out of 24. And 206 to 96.

Those numbers tell much about the political impact of a Supreme Court case in which conservatives and Republicans hope to demolish a pillar of President Barack Obama's health care overhaul. The justices hear arguments next week.

The plaintiffs say subsidies that help millions of Americans afford private insurance are illegal. They say the law limits that aid, paid as tax credits, to people buying coverage from marketplaces established by states, not the federal government.

Democrats disagree. But with a June decision expected, the King v. Burwell case tosses political risks at both parties.

Only 13 states run their own insurance marketplaces, where people who don't get coverage through work but earn too much to qualify for Medicaid can purchase policies. The federal government's HealthCare.gov serves 37 states, which are mostly Republican-run and decided against establishing their own systems.

Of the 11.4 million people who the Health and Human Services Department says have enrolled for coverage for this year, 8.6 million live in states using HealthCare.gov.

Some may eventually not receive policies, but many who do stand to lose them if the plaintiffs win because without federal aid, they couldn't afford coverage.

That pressures Republicans, who uniformly oppose the law, to help the recipients or risk alienating lots of voters.

Here's why. Of the 24 GOP senators facing re-election in 2016, 22 are from states using the federal marketplace. That includes Sens. Marco Rubio of Florida, a possible presidential candidate, whose state saw a

national high 1.6 million enroll for coverage; Richard Burr of North Carolina, where 559,000 signed up; and Patrick Toomey of Pennsylvania, where 472,000 enrolled.

No politician enjoys confronting thousands of constituents who have lost something. Nor do they like facing insurance companies, hospitals and others who would suffer if billions in subsidies for millions of customers vanish.

Perhaps a third of those 22 GOP senators face competitive races next year — enough to put Senate control in play. Republicans have a 54-46 Senate majority, including two Democratic-leaning independents.

In addition, in the 37 federal marketplace states, 206 House members are Republicans and 96 are Democrats, including one GOP vacancy. All House seats are up for re-election next year, though continued GOP control is likely.

Should the court overturn the subsidies, few Republicans would favor declaring victory and letting millions of people lose federal aid and their health coverage. But so far, Republicans are divided over what to do.

"The response can't be, 'Well, some people won't have insurance,'" said Mike Leavitt, a Republican and health secretary under President George W. Bush.

Leading congressional Republicans say they are readying plans to help subsidy recipients temporarily, perhaps until the GOP can permanently revamp the law. They've said little about what benefits they're considering and how they'd pay for them.

Sen. John Barrasso, R-Wyo., is among top GOP senators crafting a proposal he says would retain some level of subsidies, let people buy narrower policies than the law currently requires and give states more

say on health coverage. He sees no broad rewrite of the law soon.

"You really don't accomplish that until 2017 with a new occupant of the White House," Barrasso says.

If the plaintiffs win, Obama and Democrats will want to keep subsidies flowing and protect the law that they enacted unilaterally in 2010. While many Republicans seem willing to help those beneficiaries temporarily, it's unclear what trade-offs they would seek.

The GOP might demand changes like those Barrasso is considering or others like increasing the size of businesses that must offer health coverage. Negotiations could draw in other issues like the impending expiration of health services for children from lower-income families.

Should Obama refuse such demands as undermining his health care overhaul, he risks looking unreasonable in the shadow of a Supreme Court finding that his administration was implementing the law too aggressively.

"I'd sure hope the president was interested in helping those people who have been harmed by his illegal action," Barrasso says.

Congressional Democrats might split, with liberals demanding no concessions but moderates like Sen. Heidi Heitkamp, D-N.D., open to some health law changes. Only three Senate Democrats from states using HealthCare.gov face 2016 re-election, including Minority Leader Harry Reid of Nevada, where 72,000 people enrolled for coverage.

If the court dismisses the challenge, Republicans will have little incentive to revamp the law.

But they will face another campaign season of defending a law that still lacks majority public support.

VERY MISLEADING

Editor, Daily Union: A recent letter to the editor from the Palmyra Village Board president claimed that I had made factually incorrect and misleading statements in recent quotes made in this paper.

I'd like to aid him in his efforts to provide "accurate information" about the current Standard Process-initiated annexation and related issues.

I was quoted as saying that "The town is opposed to having its airport and town hall in the village to appease 'special interests.'"

Mr. Turner says the term "special interest" is misleading. Here is Webster's definition of special interest: "A person or group having an interest in a particular part of the economy and receiving or seeking special advantages often to the detriment of the general public."

I think everyone knows which "special interest" filed the annexation petition with the Village of Palmyra, and stated in its petition that the annexation would allow the Village to control the growth of the town airport. The expensive lawsuit Mr. Turner talks about has not been filed, and he could have checked with the Jefferson County Court before stating this. The town board met on Jan. 28, Feb. 3 and Feb. 23 to discuss annexation issues and possible solutions, without resorting to legal action.

He says that the community, town and village retain several hundred jobs by keeping Standard Process from relocating. Not that the "community" wants to lose any jobs, but it is highly unlikely any jobs will be lost regardless of how the annexation is resolved.

It is my opinion that only a fraction of these jobs are local, if we still want "accurate information," with the balance of employees coming from outside the community — Larry Kau, Town of Palmyra.

SHAMEFUL GOAL

Editor, Daily Union: The reasoning behind the so-called "right-to-work" legislation is that a person should not be compelled to join and pay dues to a democratically-installed union as a condition of employment.

If that's the case, then why stop there? Why should I be compelled to pay state income taxes as a condition of employment? I should be able to choose not to pay the taxes and still reap all of the benefits of living in Wisconsin.

And why stop there? Why am I required to pay sales taxes as

a condition of a purchase? Why am I compelled to pay property taxes as a condition of owning a home? By the same faulty Republican logic, none of these should be required.

The answer is that we live in a community and also work in communities of workers. We pay for the benefits of those communities even though we might not agree with those currently in power and may not think that we are personally benefiting.

Now I'm certain that Sen. Nass and his cohorts will not be willing to extend the language of their bill to eliminate the requirement to pay taxes, even though it uses the exact same logic. The problem is that "right-to-work" is a lie. And they believe that their constituents are stupid enough to accept their lie as the truth.

The truth is that there are a few wealthy political donors, businesspeople and organizations who absolutely hate the fact that workers should have the right to organize for their rights. They hate the fact that they don't have complete dictatorial rule over their workers.

They hate the fact that these darn unions make them pay decent wages and benefits. They hate the fact that they have to collectively bargain with these unions. So they hide behind some nice-sounding name like "right-to-work."

The true name for this bill should be "Kill Worker's Right to Organize." Our Republican senators and representatives are pursuing a shameful goal. — Sincerely, Randy Golz, Fort Atkinson.

RIGHT-TO-WORK

Editor, Daily Union: What does it really mean when our state's Republican legislators think an individual should not be required to pay union administrative dues for representation by their union?

The representatives of union members receive a wage to help achieve improvements to wages, benefits and working conditions for employees of contractors and companies. When members vote on their representatives' compensation within each union, it is often with the knowledge that union representatives are demanding, and often stressful, jobs.

I ask people to consider if there is a difference between a union representative and a legislative representative. Both are there to represent our individual interests in a collective manner.

I believe if Republican legislators believe so firmly that

paying for union representation should be an option, then it is time for taxpayers, such as myself, to have the same opportunity to decline payment for my representation as a citizen. I no longer want to pay taxes that support the wages, per diems, benefits perks, travel expenses, and office costs of state legislators and their staff. I no longer want to pay toward the governor's salary while he is campaigning in Iowa and New Hampshire, traveling to Europe, or conducting other "representation" responsibilities on my behalf. I want to be given the same option as a state citizen to withhold my financial support for the costs of my representation.

I look forward to fast-track legislation from one of our Republican legislators that gives me the same right-not-to-pay, as those granted to other individuals in our state under the right-to-work legislation.

Let's call it Representation-Without-Taxation. — Brent D. Emons, Jefferson.

POSITIVE DOER

Editor, Daily Union: Kelly Davis is running for a seat on the Whitewater Board of Education, and when I heard about this, I was thrilled, because it is clear to me that there could be no better candidate to serve our school district in this way.

Kelly is mother to three young children, two of whom are ready attending public schools and one who will soon be entering.

In addition to being active in the community and her church, she is highly educated and a career woman, with energy enough to spare for this venture. She participates in worthwhile activities in our city, is active as a school parent, and has creativity that allows her to see the big picture and come up with good ways to solve problems.

Kelly is a positive thinker and a positive doer who still always has time to make a special birthday cake for her child, commiserate with a friend's problems, and make cookies to cheer a sick friend. One word I would use to describe her, besides energy, is integrity.

You will always know that Kelly will make the best decisions that can be made, working creatively and in concert with her colleagues, for the betterment of every student in our school district.

I plan to vote for Kelly Davis on April 7, and she will be a public servant we can be proud of in Whitewater. — Sincerely, Ellie Wilson, Whitewater.

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