

# EDITORIAL PAGE

## HEALTH CARE

### Contraction?

Over the course of Virginia’s protracted dispute about expanding Medicaid, Republican opponents repeatedly have warned about getting stuck with a big bill the state cannot afford to pay. Looks like they could be right.

Under the Affordable Care Act, states could expand Medicaid coverage at nearly no direct cost to them: After picking up the full tab initially, Washington would gradually lower its funding support, but only to 90 percent. Even after the full phase-in, every state dollar spent on expansion would bring a \$9 return. Seemed like a sweet deal. Thirty-one states took it.

Virginia didn’t, thanks to GOP opposition. Democrats have made much of all the supposedly free money the state has left on the table, but of course the money isn’t free: It comes from the taxpayers. What’s more, there is no giant pot of dedicated federal expansion money that Washington divides among however many states expanded Medicaid. Virginia’s decision not to expand Medicaid does not mean Virginia’s share of the pie goes to other states. It means the money the commonwealth would have received simply goes unspent.

With a Republican — at least a nominal one — in the White House and majorities in Congress, the GOP is now considering various ways to unwind the Affordable Care Act. A few concrete proposals have surfaced, but a consensus has yet to coalesce.

One bone of contention concerns Medicaid. Some Republicans in Washington want to roll back Medicaid expansion. Last week Republicans circulated a policy paper suggesting that the federal government gradually dial back the higher reimbursement rate for the expanded portion of Medicaid to the standard rate that applies to the non-expansion portion. (In Virginia, that’s about 50 cents on the dollar.) That would force expansion states either to drastically increase spending or to contract Medicaid and throw people off the rolls.

Sound arguments for expanding Medicaid — both fiscal and humanitarian — still exist. And Democrats are right when they point out that Virginia participates in many federal programs whose future funding by Washington is not guaranteed either. Nevertheless, Virginia Republicans’ warnings about the fickleness of federal policy are starting to look prescient — and they might prove true sooner than anyone could have expected just a few years ago.

## EDUCATION

### Dean’s list

Anne Holton lived in Virginia’s Executive Mansion as the daughter of a governor and as first lady. During her father Linwood’s gubernatorial term, she attended the city’s public schools. Other white families fled the city for the suburbs. Local schools prepared Holton for academic rigor. She attended Princeton University and Harvard Law. In Cambridge she met Tim Kaine, her future husband.

The family settled in Richmond and sent their children to public schools; the youngsters prospered there. Holton has devoted much of her life to education. As a young lawyer she clerked for Judge Robert Merhige, author of the controversial busing ruling that sought to integrate the region’s public schools via cross-jurisdictional transportation. The issue went to the U.S. Supreme Court. Holton served as a judge on the juvenile and domestic relations court. Gov. Terry McAuliffe named her Virginia’s secretary of education. Although she remained committed to academic rigor, she expressed her fears that schools were teaching to the tests rather than pursuing a comprehensive approach. The testing regimen has indeed gone too far. Standards can be maintained without a plethora of tests that subtract from classroom time spent on creative instruction. Holton resigned her position when Sen. Kaine became Hillary Clinton’s running mate.

McAuliffe has appointed Holton to Virginia’s Board of Education. She is an excellent choice. Her temperament and experience qualify her for the job. Holton will assume her position as Virginia and other states adjust to the Obama administration’s rewrite of George Bush’s No Child Left Behind approach. Betsy DeVos’ confirmation as Donald Trump’s secretary of education ensures that the schools will serve as ideological battlegrounds. Kaine opposed DeVos’ nomination; Holton likely will oppose federal initiatives but will do so, we believe, from a principled standpoint. DeVos supports school choice, a cause that has not caught on in Virginia. On this, she represents the vanguard.

The governor also named Jamelle Wilson to the state board. She, too, is a valuable addition. Her background includes time as a teacher, principal and superintendent. She rose to the top in Hanover, a county proud of its schools. Wilson’s service as dean of the School of Professional and Continuing Studies at the University of Richmond attests to her scholastic skills and inclinations. We welcome her and Holton to the board.

## Richmond Times-Dispatch

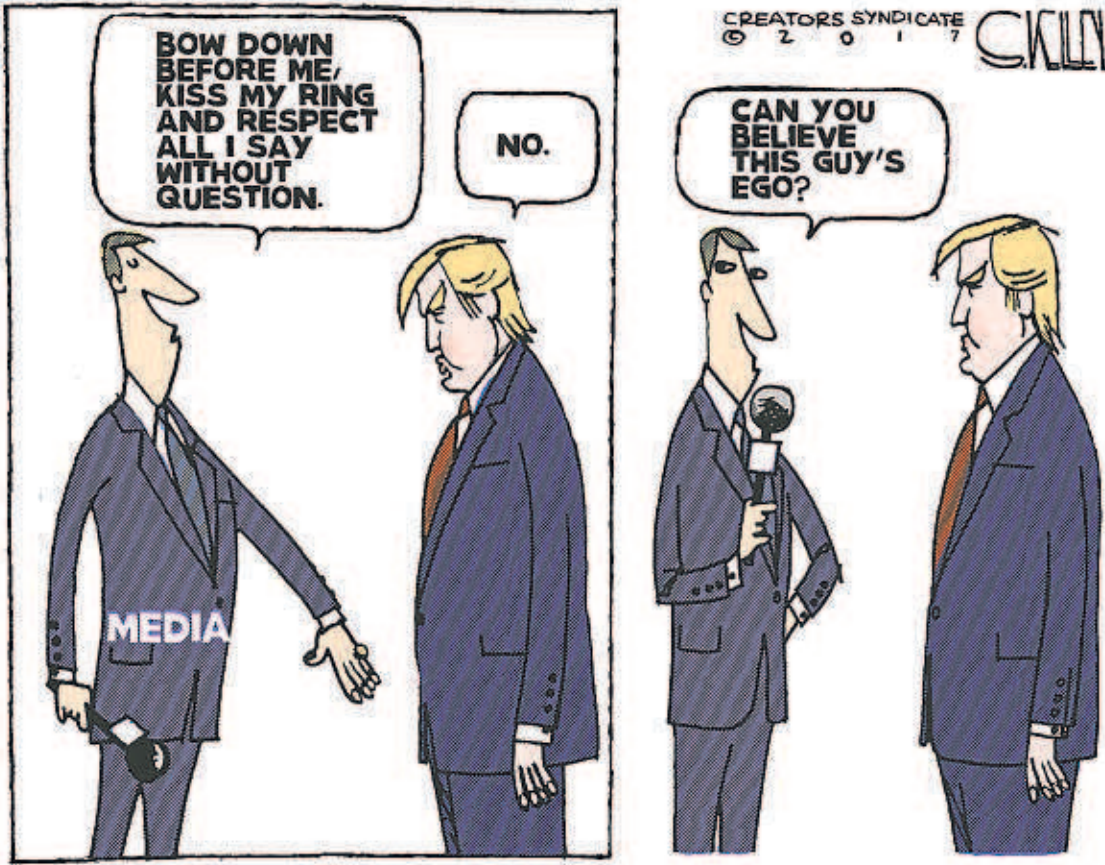
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## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### Let’s end poverty at its source

EDITOR, TIMES-DISPATCH:  
We read and hear almost daily of fighting to end poverty. Let’s examine some of the reasons it continues to exist. Having children one cannot afford puts the burden on others. But with so much help offered from so many sources, where is the incentive to not have these children? There are shoe drives, coat drives, churches helping at Thanksgiving and year ’round with food and clothes. Free meals are provided at school and there is food to take home. Help is available from so many sources, why save to provide for your own children? These pregnancies are intentional. Birth control is available but not used.

I am not suggesting we not help the children already here but that the approach be concentrated on trying to end the continued creation of poverty. Most helping hands are downstream trying to rescue those in need. Go upstream and try to get those who are jumping off the bridge to change their behavior. This may give the school systems and taxpayers a chance to catch up. Otherwise, the situation as it currently exists will continue.

We continually hear those who help others in need say it makes them feel good. This may be, but it helps those in need to continue creating that need.

GENE BARHAM,  
RICHMOND.

### Russia was caught off guard, too

EDITOR, TIMES-DISPATCH:  
If the editors of The Times-Dispatch wish to advance the “Russia hacked the election” narrative (“Kremlingate”), some more dot-connecting is in order. Missing from the picture is how Russia helped Donald Trump in any meaningful way in an election where he did not win the popular vote.

Also missing from the picture are the millions of dollars Russia invested in Hillary Clinton via the Clinton Foundation. The money spent by Russia on Clinton is well-documented in Peter Schweizer’s book, “Clinton Cash.” Not even a hint of a corresponding trail of foreign cash has been suggested regarding Trump.

A more likely scenario is that Russia acted as typical lobbyists and attempted to influence both sides. However, following the money shows the Russians were clearly betting on Clinton. Russians were just as surprised as everyone else when Trump won. They should ask for their money back.

THOMAS J. KUNSITIS,  
RICHMOND.

### Choice schools won’t work in 7th

EDITOR, TIMES-DISPATCH:  
Virginia’s 7th District Rep. Dave Brat and Secretary of Education Betsy DeVos are teaming up to advance an agenda for Virginia’s public schools based on applying market-based theories to public school children as if they were being sold in a bazaar.

## CORRESPONDENT OF THE DAY

### Kremlin didn’t want Trump to win

EDITOR, TIMES-DISPATCH:  
The left’s about-face regarding Russia has been jarring. The false narrative that somehow the Kremlin wanted Donald Trump to win the presidency doesn’t pass the smell test. From Hillary Clinton’s Russkie reset to President Obama’s whispered entreaties to Dmitri Medvedev, it was crystal clear that the previous administration had nothing but warm fuzzies where Vladimir Putin was concerned.

Now the usual suspects in Washington and the media have walking nightmares of Boris Badenov leaking emails and rigging elections. Other than disruption for disruption’s sake, why in the world would Russia want to upset the international apple cart? Look at what it has accomplished with Obama at the helm — certainly a continuation of his administration’s feckless global detente would have suited the Russians far better than a loose cannon like Trump.

It’s clear that desperate Democrats are loath to let even a manufactured crisis go to waste. I’ll leave you with a 2012 quote from a noted geopolitical expert, Barack Obama: “The 1980s are now calling to ask for their foreign policy back because the Cold War has been over for 20 years.”

TOM EATON,  
CHESTERFIELD.

Our children deserve better.

As lifetime educators, we’ve learned that effective schools benefit from research-based policy and practice. No reliable, summative, national studies show that choice efforts, taken on the whole, yield more productive outcomes than traditional public schools. We challenge Brat to provide evidence otherwise. It is easy to cherry pick and promote model schools of any type, but what might vouchers or charter schools really look like in the 7th District? We know such schemes would undoubtedly siphon funds from already strained public education budgets.

Vouchers limit at-risk and disabled students and don’t pay all the costs of private education. Disadvantaged students are typically screened out and frequently lack transportation. Those benefiting the most often come from more affluent homes.

Moreover, we must protect students with disabilities from overzealous ideologues monkeying with the Individu-

als With Disabilities Education Act of 1975 (IDEA), a law that has guaranteed rights to students with disabilities for more than 30 years. To parents, educators, school board members and others: We fear Brat’s vision of choice, tax incentives and vouchers will bring the same chaotic, failing educational environment of DeVos’ home state of Michigan right to the school doors of the 7th District.

We ask Brat to hold open, unstaged, centrally located town halls to discuss public education. We request that he conduct face-to-face interaction with constituents in a large enough venue to accommodate them. If he believes in these aforementioned economic notions so strongly, we challenge him to debate us publicly and defend them.

HAROLD “BUD” COTHERN,  
SUPERINTENDENT, RETIRED,  
GOOCHLAND COUNTY SCHOOLS,  
GLEN ALLEN.  
SHARON DE FUR,  
PROFESSOR, RETIRED,  
COLLEGE OF WILLIAM AND MARY,  
HENRICO.

### Immigrants shouldn’t be used as a foil

EDITOR, TIMES-DISPATCH:  
I read your editorial “DEFCON1” about the response of Corey Stewart to Mayor Levar Stoney’s decision to not participate in undocumented immigrant witch hunts. Stewart uses inflammatory language to reinforce his image as fear-monger and deporter-in-chief to propel himself into the governor’s mansion. This is nothing more than an effort to whip up fear and loathing on the part of some Virginians nervous about increasing diversity in our commonwealth.

Immigrants should not be used as a political foil. As is the case of many of our ancestors, the immigrants of today have come to work, raise their families and be accepted as Virginians. Those who are undocumented should have a path toward citizenship and not be subjected to hatred to serve a political agenda.

THOMAS F. HERBERT,  
HENRICO.

### Contact us

We welcome expressions of all points of view. Letters should be no longer than 300 words and exclusive to THE TIMES-DISPATCH. Each submission must carry the writer’s name (preferably a signature), full valid address and daytime phone number; each must appear over the writer’s name. We cannot acknowledge submitted letters and will not publish more than one letter from the same writer in a 60-day period. Published letters may appear on our website. We reserve the right to edit for accuracy, brevity, clarity, legality and taste.

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