

## Everything We Learned In Kindergarten Not Working In Health Care Debate



by  
Pettus Read

Read All About It

I have been keeping up with the town hall meetings going on around this country concerning health change and I have to admit that World Championship Wrestling is going to lose its viewer market if this thing is not settled in some other manner. I know reality TV is something a lot of folks enjoy, but I have yet to see reality presented in a sane and courteous manner in some of these knock-down and drag out venues. These things have gone well beyond a debate and resemble more the crazy political conventions we see in the summer every

four years. A few years ago, a book came out entitled *Read*, "Everything I Know, I Learned In Kindergarten," and I'm thinking a lot of the people at the town hall meetings were from my generation when kindergarten wasn't available. My reason for this thought is that the direction taught in kindergarten relates to a child being taught how to share, being polite to others, and taking turns in daily tasks. Many of the town hall meetings I've witnessed have been anything but something that was taught in kindergarten. I think a lot of the methods of communicating were more like things learned in a tough daycare where everyone looks out for self, more so than the well-being of

everyone.

I admit the health care debate and what to do to reform our current system is a tough one. In fact, I'm writing this article sitting in a hospital room waiting for my wife to get back from surgery. We are dealing with cancer and I've seen health care at two different hospitals in the last two weeks and understand the confusion that many folks have on what to do next when dealing with the system. I have health insurance and have paid for it for many years, but would give anything not to have to be using it now. But, I have also been in emergency room waiting areas over the last few weeks and seen a lot of people without health coverage, in many cases at no fault of their own, face some really tough decisions and circumstances. Something does need to be done, but not at too rapid of a pace that could cause even more

problems.

Having worked with our state's many farmers for the past 40 years and continuing to do so, I know that they purchase their health insurance in the individual marketplace due to their being self-employed. With current discussions in Washington, many of our food producers are concerned about the affordability of health insurance for them in the future. Proposals being considered in Congress include, among many other troubling aspects, the concepts of Guarantee Issue and Community Rating. Guarantee Issue requires insurers to provide health insurance coverage to anyone at any time. Community Rating limits premium differences across policies and forces a one-size-fits-all approach to health coverage.

Tennessee Farm Bureau President Lacy Upchurch recently said, "Requiring

these types of mandates - though they may sound good at first glance - or forcing insurers to cover everyone will mean higher insurance premiums. We're trying to protect those individuals who have sought to do the right thing by maintaining personal health care coverage and paying the full cost of that coverage. Currently only New York, New Jersey and Massachusetts have both Community Rating and Guarantee Issue laws and these states have the most expensive individual insurance markets in the country."

Upchurch was referring to the efforts being implemented by Farm Bureau in contacting Congress to express the organization's concerns in health care reform. They want to share the goal of reining in health care costs, but would rather see health care reform that improves and builds on the current health care delivery

system.

Increases from such mandates could make private health insurance unaffordable for many farmers. Due to the business nature of farms, they cannot pass those cost increases on to customers like other businesses.

Back in 1994, Tennessee implemented a government run health care program called TennCare, which I'm sure many of you remember. That program ignored the basic principles of insurance management incorporating unlimited coverage, rich benefits and subsidized by the state over and beyond good business practices. It put Tennessee in the tank with the budget and caused some folks to look at an income tax for the state that sent horn-honkers circling the Capitol. I don't want to imagine what could happen if the same thing comes true for the nation.

It's time for kindergarten training to kick in during this discussion process. Let's take a look at health care reform slowly and attempt to keep coverage affordable for everyone. Everyone is entitled to their say, but not always their way.

- Pettus L. Read is editor of the Tennessee Farm Bureau News and director of Communications for the Tennessee Farm Bureau Federation.

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*Editor's Note: We all know someone who has been affected by cancer. It is a terrible thing to go through and to watch others experience as well. September 6, 2009, The People News columnist Pettus Read lost his beloved wife of 36 years, Judy Read, to this devastating disease. In his words, "Just as many of you have faced this life destroyer, we have also come to grips with trying to make heads from tails in how our life has suddenly been changed." Our prayers are with Pettus Read and his loved ones.*

Special people you meet in life are admired for their angelic personality. One angel I knew was Judy Read, Pettus' wife, and as Pettus put it, "my Judy went home to be with her Lord at 3:15" last Sunday afternoon (September 6). Pettus has refer-

## One Less Angel!

by Guest Columnist Julius Johnson,  
CAO, Tennessee Farm Bureau

enced Judy's recent health issues for his readers in recent articles.

God blessed Judy and Pettus so much. Even in death, Judy suffered from the cancer -- but not long. She informed her family after the final diagnosis that this was what she had worked for all her life to obtain -- Peace with her Lord.

Devoted Pettus was by her side all the way and pushed the pain medicine button when he thought she needed it. In the end, Pettus said he had been blessed with an unbelievable feeling of peace about it all. Their faith endured and carried them through the process.

Bill Read's (nephew) wife, Janet, wrote the following about Judy and Pettus in an email, "They are a precious couple—they've been married for 36 years with two children (Shane and Nina) and a new grandbaby -- Allie. Judy is a total caretaker and one of the sweetest and most genuine people I have ever met. They have a strong relationship with each other and with the Lord. If anyone can

beat this dismal diagnosis, Judy can. Just last month she had a double mastectomy for breast cancer. This was something they had been watching because of a family history. She was doing incredibly well when she began to have some pain."

Pettus, Joe, Bobby, John and I were on the Farm Bureau fieldstaff together before we started the upward transition to more responsibilities. We were close as a group. Brothers—nearly! Our children played together at meetings and we kept up with each other's families. The wives were close. Pettus became the Farm Bureau Director of Communications and started a new column "Read All About It". Judy was always there in the background reacting to his ideas and proofing. You just knew they were a team put together in heaven.

You need to know that for those of us close to Judy, she was an example to be admired even in death. She reassured her family even though they were hurting.

She rejected needless prolonging medicines. She received her passing with peace and grace. Don't we all want this peace? Her faith carried her and Pettus' faith carried him and they were one in the same. I pray you understand.

I know you hear stories of strong "people of faith" every day. Well, here is another one. Genuine, angelic, a sustaining faith, a feeling of peace are words that described Judy Read.

We will miss her.



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