

Texas Baptist Forum: Foreign aid

September 3, 2009

Foreign aid

I am writing regarding your recent editorial “Work a little bit while Congress rests” (Aug. 10). This is a crucial time for gaining support for both the Initiating Foreign Assistance Reform Act of 2009 (HR 2139) and the Foreign Assistance Revitalization and Accountability Act of 2009 (S. 1524).

President Obama has made many commitments to fight hunger and poverty in the few short months since he took office. He gathered \$20 billion over three years from the G-8 leaders for a new world hunger initiative to focus on investments in agriculture.

We need better foreign aid that uses the resources we already have in a more efficient way. Secretary Clinton’s recent visit to Africa demonstrates the administration’s commitment to anti-hunger and poverty initiatives. Clinton said the United States needs to use “smart power” in national security, which includes elevating development alongside diplomacy and defense. The Obama administration already has begun new initiatives in food security.

Now, we need Congress on board. Christians must join our voices by writing letters or calling their members of Congress. We are called to help the hungry and poor in whatever way we can, including using our rights of U.S. citizenship to fight injustice. Foreign assistance reform will allow us to use our tax dollars to help many more people than we possibly can on our own.

Three simple letters. That's all it takes to make a difference.

Heather Deal

Waco

Health care proposals

In response to "Health care system broken ..." (Aug. 24), please consider the following:

- Our government-run Social Security system is near bankruptcy.
- Our Medicare and Medicaid are also near bankruptcy.
- All of the poorest U.S. citizens, including illegal aliens, receive health care through Medicaid.
- Any government-run program is more expensive and less efficient than a privately operated system.
- We do not need more government. We need less government.
- Our health care system is not perfect, but is the best in the world.
- People from other countries—Canada, Europe, etc.—come to the United States for medical treatment.

In short, our system is not perfect and needs improvement, but the last thing we need is the government running it. Our deficit spending will be a burden on our children and grandchildren and will lead to innumerable problems in the very near future. The best way to make our government go bankrupt quicker is to have national health care and spend trillions of dollars that we do not have. The billions of dollars we spend on interest on our national debt are growing at an unsustainable rate and will cause our government to be unable to borrow in the near future.

We would love to have free health care for everyone and would also love to have the government buy everyone a new car. But we cannot afford either one and need to use our resources wisely in order for our nation to survive. Our first priority should be fixing Social Security, Medicare and Medicaid. We hope you will see the big picture rather than isolated incidences.

*John & Judy Berry
Kenedy*

Contrary to “Profits at the root of health care crisis” (Aug. 10), insurance is not based on the concept that everyone puts some money in the pot, and when needed, we take some out.

Health insurance policies are legal contracts between insurance companies and an insured or employer group. Insurance is not a lottery or gambling business. Insurance is a type of risk, subject to certain underwriting criteria. Claims are paid on the type of coverage chosen by an individual.

Insurance companies have to pay claims. The Texas Department of Insurance regulates the insurance market on all admitted insurance carriers. A complaint to TDI about a legitimate claim results in a paid claim. The insurance carrier often is required to pay a fine to TDI for refusing to pay a covered claim or violating a regulation.

Reading a policy or asking questions may eliminate misconceptions about coverage. The TDI website offers information about purchasing health insurance with admitted insurance companies. Ask questions of TDI or review coverage with your agent. The person buying insurance has control over the offer.

Irresponsible people generate a big part of the health care crisis. Many people do not want to pay premiums but prefer to use an emergency room in a crisis, which drives up the cost of health care for all of us. Many people simply cannot afford health insurance, and they need help. Baptist

churches do much to help the poor.

Joyce Brumley

Grand Prairie

God's will

The rules (laws) in Scripture have two distinct purposes.

Some laws express God's perfect plan for mankind. Jesus defined the basics for those laws in Matthew 22:36-40.

Other laws address God's permissive will. These laws allow order in a sinful world. Jesus gave an example of permissive will in Matthew 19:8. Some examples are:

- The law directs the Hebrews to kill all inhabitants in Israel, but the greatest law is to love our neighbor. The law to kill permitted Hebrews to escape sin practiced by the current inhabitants.
- The law approves slavery, while this violates loving our neighbor. The slavery laws were to allow order in that culture.
- The law approves men dominating women, while this violates loving our neighbor. This was part of the Roman culture at the time of the Apostle Paul. He described God's perfect will in Galatians 3:28.

When we examine Scripture, we should ask if it addresses God's perfect will or his permissive will. The Ten Commandments are perfect will.

Commandments indicating one person should dominate another are permissive will. Sometimes, we need to follow the permissive laws. When we can live by his perfect will, we must question need for permissive will. In marriage laws, we overlook God's perfect law that the husband should love his wife as Christ loved the church. We say that the wife should be

subject to her husband.

Bill Osborne

Houston

Homosexuality & church

The juxtaposition of “Everybody here just lost a friend” and “It’s time to talk about homosexuality” on the same page of the Standard (July 13) really hit home. I find myself asking how we can aspire to the welcoming Christianity lived by David Pearson while barring church doors to gays.

Years ago, I was friends with two men who, although they lived in another city, for more than a decade helped me in countless ways. When they ultimately told me they were in a gay relationship, we had a constructive conversation and reaffirmed our friendship. Upon reflection, however, I wrote them a letter about what the Apostle Paul said about homosexuality. I haven’t heard from them since.

More recently, several hundred people and I attended the funeral of a childhood friend who had been in a gay relationship with the same man for 25 years. Both compassionate Christian hospice counselors, they helped hundreds of people face the end of their lives with dignity and hope.

Meanwhile, a contemporary book claims my favorite Bible character, Jonathan, was gay, and I find myself asking: If so, so what?

Jesus was silent on homosexuality, but Paul spoke out. I revere Paul but don’t accept everything he has to say about women. Should I accept everything he has to say about homosexuals?

Yes, please, let’s talk before I lose more friends and our denomination loses more souls.

Ann Carson
Amarillo

Women in ministry

“Christian love requires respect for Baptist women in ministry, Oklahoma pastor insists” (Aug. 24) has so disgusted and disappointed me I needed to talk to someone.

I remember the event when Sheri Klouda was dismissed from Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary.

This has struck a nerve with this Baptist. At a time when we are asked to “move beyond our racist past,” should this not include “personal mistreatment, ridicule and harm” to women also?

I have been a part of churches across the United States, and without exception, were it not for the women, some programs would have to be deleted.

If we preach tolerance to the world, we better be prepared to practice it at home.

Betty Westbrook
Allen

What do you think? Send letters to Editor Marv Knox by mail: P.O. Box 660267, Dallas 75266-0267; or by e-mail: marvknox@baptiststandard.com . Length limit is 250 words. Only one letter per writer per quarter.