



Blood-sucking bad ideas reappear in rearview mirror

By Jim Waters

Not even the arrest of “if-he-did-it” icon O.J. Simpson last week completely overshadowed Hillary Clinton’s attempt to replay the nightmare that Americans escaped the first time around – a government takeover of the nation’s health-care system. She first proposed her European-style health care model during the heady days of her husband’s presidency.

“Clinton II: The Sequel” fits with her recent rejection of an “ownership society” in favor of a “we’re all in it together” world. That sounds good on the surface – sort of like her idea for “universal health care” did at first.

But a closer look reveals that the “we’re all in it together” society really means stealing hard-earned bread from hard-working people in the form of higher taxes, massive increases in government spending and bloated bureaucracies.

Tradition says doctors used leeches to try and bleed disease from President George Washington when he developed pneumonia and a throat problem. Elisha Dick, the youngest physician attending Washington, suggested a tracheotomy.

After Washington died, history determined that Dick was right. A simply tracheotomy would likely have saved the life of the Revolutionary War’s greatest hero.

We can’t really blame the older doctors. They genuinely believed – based on widely accepted techniques of the day – that applying fish bait to his throat would save Washington.

Hindsight usually does offer “20-20” vision — apparently in every area except the failure of so-called “universal health care.”

Enter Hillary – and her Kentucky blood brother, gubernatorial candidate Steve Beshear, who must hope voters forget about our state’s first experience with “universal” health care.”

Let’s give Hillary a pass for a day. She’s more like those old doctors that treated Washington. She sees a serious problem. She genuinely wants to fix it – the only way she seems to know how.

But Beshear? He has the benefit of hindsight, yet opts for leeches.

Like those old doctors didn’t know too much about a tracheotomy, most hard-working Kentuckians forgot that the disastrous health care “reform” bill pushed by Gov. Brereton Jones and passed by the General Assembly in 1994 was based on making Clinton’s first nightmare a reality.

It was called the Kentucky Health Care Reform Act. And it destroyed the state's health-insurance system. Within a couple of years of passage of this government invasion, all except one of the state's providers left Kentucky.

During this year's primary, several of the Democratic gubernatorial candidates indicated they don't really believe that the market can effectively solve our health-care challenges.

If that's so, why is it that competition lowers costs and improves quality and service in every other venue of our society – where it's allowed to work? Why should Kentuckians prefer a government-run system when premiums skyrocketed and service diminished after 45 providers left the state – essentially eliminating competition altogether – following passage of the reform act in 1994?

Kentucky never has recovered from “Brereton Care.” A few providers have since come back, but some went out of business altogether. As badly as they wanted to survive, leeches in form of state political and governmental bureaucracies sucked the life out of them.

Premiums jumped between 36 percent and 165 percent, which resulted in fewer – *fewer* – Kentuckians with the capability to afford health care coverage. Ironically, *more* people went without coverage. Today, 19 percent of working-age Kentuckians – more than a half-million workers – go without.

And it's not because the market failed. It's because government interfered, using blood-sucking leeches rather than surgeon's scalpels.

Many states don't know about that. “Shrill Hill” might not know.

But a Kentucky gubernatorial candidate? He should know, and we should remind him: We tried “universal health care.” It failed. Look forward, not back.

Such nonsense created more bad memories in a week filled with them.

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