

## Letters from our readers

## Stop litter, help the planet

## To the Editor:

We have been having some problems with the Earth. One of them is littering. People are throwing rubbish out of their cars. Please pick up after yourself! Recycle what you can.

Litter pollutes our rivers and streams. This also kills birds, animals and fish. It's also not good for our drinking water. We don't want toxins in our water. We don't want to cut our feet with broken glass. If everybody starts to litter then our world will be trashed. So please keep our world cleaner. You can recycle bottles, paper, plastic bags and cans.

Jennifer Rios  
Oeanna J. Ackley  
Third graders  
Instilling Goodness Girls'  
School

## State budget undermining local health services

## To the Editor:

At the end of February, California signed a midyear budget deal. It's a bad deal for local health care providers, pushing them into an increasingly precarious financial position via a "check-write delay" to all Medi-Cal-reimbursed institutional providers (e.g. health centers, hospitals, convalescent homes).

For two weeks beginning in March, and likely again for two weeks in June, the State will withhold reimbursement for medical, dental, and mental health services provided to Medi-Cal beneficiaries. The State profits from the delay by accruing interest on the money they withhold, while vital health institutions are left to scramble to meet payroll.

This is not the first time that health centers have had to contend with a moneysaving maneuver of this type: Institutional providers experienced a two week check-write delay during last summer's budget impasse. A new an unsettling precedent accompanies this delay: The late-February decision to withhold payment for services goes into effect in mid-March, with meager notice to affected institutions. The State's two-week notice does not allow community health institutions time to adequately prepare to accommodate this significant budget shortfall. The scramble to cover key operating costs through short-term loans is happening now, at a time when bank credit systems have come to a halt.

Locally, the delay places Mendocino County's health centers in a uniquely difficult financial chokehold since, by law, they are required to provide healthcare services regardless of whether they are being paid. Even without the mandate, community health centers are committed to continu-

ing to provide care. However, the revenue they use to pay staff and purchase medical supplies will be absent. In the March withhold alone, they'll be denied an estimated \$625,000. This significant amount represents our county centers' payroll and operating costs.

Mendocino County's community health centers urge you become a healthcare advocate on behalf of those institutions that serve your family and neighbors: Go to [www.ruralcommunityhealth.org](http://www.ruralcommunityhealth.org), and click on the link that says "Become a health center advocate." You may also contact Governor Schwarznegger, Senator Pat Wiggins and Assembly Member Wes Chesbro; let them know that they must find a path to financial stability that does not threaten healthcare in our rural communities.

Margaret McClure  
Alliance for Rural  
Community Health (ARCH)  
Ukiah

## Not all county workers sacrificing

## To the Editor:

In Barack Obama's inaugural address he spoke of being humbled by the task before us, grateful, for the trust bestowed and mindful of sacrifice.

I feel like I could have made a similar speech recently when I had to address hundreds of my co-workers and ask that they voluntarily (if you call it that) take a reduction in pay through MTO. Now more than ever as the ink dries, I am mindful of the impact on those of you willing to make this monumental sacrifice. Further he stated our economy is badly weakened as a consequence of greed and irresponsibility. This also rings true, of individuals who "held out" by refusing to be part of the solution.

I would like to express my heartfelt appreciation to those of you willing to make this sacrifice for the betterment of your community, the people we serve, and your fellow co-workers. In the same breath I can only express my bitter disappointment, and disillusionment with Law Enforcement Management Association, and the Mendocino County Public Attorneys Association who selfishly have not contributed, and remain resolved not to do so.

I personally won't diminish the sacrifice of my coworkers by being antagonistic or disruptive however, when your co-workers are making hard choices about paying PG&E or buying food for a child, or an additional job that could have been saved is lost.

What will you do? Hold your head up high and say: "mission accomplished we got over on them?" What do you hope to gain? Will you gain the respect of your coworkers, confidence from your subordinates, your integrity?

Jacqueline Carvalho  
Ukiah

## WHERE TO WRITE

**President Barack Obama:** The White House, 1600 Pennsylvania Ave., Washington, D.C. 20500; (202) 456-1111, FAX (202)456-2461.

**Governor Arnold Schwarznegger:** State Capitol, Sacramento, 95814. (916) 445-2841; FAX (916)445-4633

**Sen. Barbara Boxer:** 112 Hart Senate Office Bldg., Washington, D.C. 20510; (202)224-3553; San Francisco, (415) 403-0100 FAX (202) 224-0454

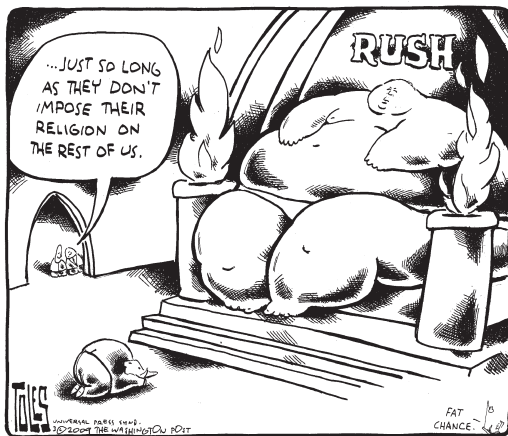
**Sen. Dianne Feinstein:** 331 Hart Senate Office Bldg., Washington, D.C. 20510, (202)224-3841 FAX (202) 228-3954; San Francisco (415) 393-0707; senator@feinstein.senate.gov

**Congressman Mike Thompson:** 1st District, 231 Cannon Office Bldg., Washington, D.C. 20515. (202) 225-3311; FAX (202)225-4335. Fort Bragg district office, 430 N. Franklin St., PO Box 2208, Fort Bragg 95437; 962-0933.FAX 962-0934;

[www.house.gov/write rep](http://www.house.gov/write rep)  
**Assemblyman Wes Chesbro:** State Assembly District 1, Capitol, Rm. 4146, Sacramento, 95814. (916) 319-2001. Ukiah field representative Ruth Valenzuela is located at 311 N. State Street, 463.5770, 463.5773 (fax) For email go to web site: [assembly.ca.gov/Chesbro](http://assembly.ca.gov/Chesbro)

**Senator Pat Wiggins:** State Senate District 2, Capitol Building, Room 5100, Sacramento, 95814, (916) 445-3375 Email: [senator.wiggins@sen.ca.gov](mailto:senator.wiggins@sen.ca.gov). In Ukiah: Kathy Kelley at 200 S. School St. 468-8914, email: [kathy.kelley@sen.ca.gov](mailto:kathy.kelley@sen.ca.gov)

**Mendocino County Supervisors:** Carré Brown, 1st District; John McCowen, 2nd District; John Pinches, 3rd District; Kendall Smith, 4th District; David Colfax, 5th District. All can be reached by writing to 501 Low Gap Road, Room 1090, Ukiah, 95482, 463-4221, FAX 463-4245, [bos@co.mendocino.ca.us](mailto:bos@co.mendocino.ca.us)



From the desk of



GEORGE WILL

## Corn-fed nation

We're from I-o-way, I-o-way.

State of all the land

Is on ev'ry hand.

That's where the tall corn grows.

-- Iowa's unofficial song

Tom Vilsack, Iowa's former governor, calls his "the most important department in government," noting that the Agriculture Department serves education through school nutrition programs and serves diplomacy by trying to wean Afghanistan from a poppy-based (meaning heroin-based) economy. But Vilsack's department matters most because of the health costs of the American diet. If Michael Pollan is right, the problem is rooted in politics and, in a sense, Iowa.

Pollan, author of "The Omnivore's Dilemma" and "In Defense of Food," says that after World War II the government had a huge surplus of ammonium nitrate, an ingredient of explosives -- and fertilizer. Furthermore, pesticides could be made from ingredients of poison gases. Since 1945, the food supply has increased faster than America's population -- faster even than Americans can increase their feasting.

Agricultural commodity prices generally fall. But when a rare surge in food prices gave the Nixon administration a political scare, government policy, expressed in commodity subsidies, has been, Pollan writes, to sell "large quantities of calories as cheaply as possible," especially calories coming from corn.

"All flesh is grass" says Scripture. Much of the too-ample flesh of Americans (three of five are overweight, one in five is obese) comes from corn, which is a grass. A quarter of the 45,000 items in the average supermarket contain processed corn. Fossil fuels are involved in the planting, fertilizing, harvesting, transporting and processing of the corn. America's food industry uses about as much petroleum as America's automobiles do.

During World War II, when meat, dairy products and sugar were scarce, heart disease plummeted. It rebounded when rationing ended. "When you adjust for age," Pollan writes, "rates of chronic diseases like cancer and type 2 diabetes are considerably higher today than they were in 1900." Type 2 diabetes -- a strange epidemic: one without a virus, bacteria or other microbe -- was called adult onset diabetes until children began getting it. Now it is a \$100 billion-a-year consequence of, among other things, obesity related to a corn-based diet, which is partly because steaks and chops have pushed plants off the plate.

Four of the top 10 causes of American deaths -- coronary heart disease, diabetes, stroke and cancer -- have, Pollan says, "well-established links" to diet, particularly through "the superabundance of cheap

calories of sugar and fat." What he calls America's "national eating disorder" is not just the fact that Americans reportedly eat one in five meals in cars (gas stations make more from food and cigarettes than from gasoline) and that one in three children eats fast food every day. He also means the industrialization of agriculture, wherein we developed a food chain that derives too much of its calories -- energy -- not from the sun through photosynthesis but from fossil fuels.

In 1900, Vilsack says, Iowa's population was larger than California's and Florida's combined. But it is the only state whose population did not double in the 20th century. Yet Iowa's fewer farmers, planting (as government has exhorted) "fencerow to fencerow" and deploying an arsenal of chemical fertilizers, can tickle five tons of corn from an acre.

Corn, which covers 125,000 square miles of America -- about the size of New Mexico -- fattens 100 million beef cattle, and at least that many hogs. Much of the river of cheap corn becomes an ocean of high-fructose corn syrup, which by 1984 was sweetening Coke and Pepsi. Disposing of the corn also requires passing it through animals' stomachs. Corn, together with pharmaceuticals and other chemicals -- a Pollan axiom: "You are what you eat eats, too" -- has made it profitable to fatten cattle on feedlots rather than grass, cutting by up to 75 percent the time from birth to slaughter. Eating corn nourished by petroleum-based fertilizers, a beef cow consumes almost a barrel of oil in its lifetime.

Vilsack's department is entwined with the food industry that produces a food supply unhealthily simplified by the dominance of a few staples such as corn. This diet, Pollan says, has made many Americans both overfed and undernourished.

Hippocrates enjoined doctors: "Do no harm." He also said something germane to a nation that is harming itself with its knives and forks: "Let food be thy medicine." That should be carved in stone over the entrance to Vilsack's very important department.

George Will's e-mail address is [georgewill@washpost.com](mailto:georgewill@washpost.com).

## THANK YOU LETTER POLICY

The Daily Journal welcomes letters of thanks from organizations and individuals. We are glad that so many successful events are held here. However, thank you letters must be kept short. For that reason we have a 20-business name limit per letter. Shorter thank you letters will be printed more quickly. Those wishing to thank long lists of people and businesses are welcome to contact our advertising department for help with a thank you ad.

## LETTER POLICY

The Daily Journal welcomes letters to the editor.

All letters must include a clear name, signature, return address and phone number.

Letters chosen for publication are generally published in the order they are received. We publish most of the letters we receive, but we cannot guarantee publication. Names will not be withheld for any reason.

If we are aware that you are connected to a local organization or are an elected official writing about the organization or body on which you serve, that will be included in your signature. If you want to make it clear you are not speaking for that organization, you should do so in your letter.

All letters are subject to editing without notice. Editing is generally limited to removing statements that are potentially libelous or

are not suitable for a family newspaper.

Form letters that are clearly part of a written campaign will not be published. You may drop letters off at our office at 590 S. School St., or fax letters to 468-3544, mail to Letters to the Editor, P.O. Box 749, Ukiah, 95482 or e-mail them to [udj@pacific.net](mailto:udj@pacific.net).

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