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OUR VIEW: TITLE X

Funding cut a blow to women's health care

If you or someone you know uses Planned Parenthood in Mankato for birth control, cancer screening, testing or disease treatment, all will soon be paying more for those services.

That's due to federal orders that prohibit local clinics that get Title X funds from referring people to a doctor for an abortion. Planned Parenthood of Minnesota will feel the cuts worse than most as the nonprofit serves 90 percent of Title X patients in the state.

Why it matters

A Trump administration rule against informing patients about abortion services could be a \$260 million blow to women's health care across the country.

At Mankato's Planned Parenthood clinic, which doesn't perform abortions, about 43 percent of patients are covered under Title X.

Clinics had to agree to the new rules set by the Trump administration or lose their Title X funding. Nationwide that could be a loss of up to \$260 million and Minnesota clinics could lose \$2.7 million.

Planned Parenthood officials refused to comply with what they call a "gag order" because it would be unethical to not tell patients about all their options for treatment and care.

Abortion opponents applauded the Trump administration rule arguing taxpayer funds should not be used directly or indirectly for abortion services. It has been against federal law for years to use the funds to directly fund abortions, but opponents have often argued the money goes into the Planned Parenthood account and thereby indirectly supports abortions.

We believe that's always been a bit of an intellectual stretch. It would be difficult to fund a democracy if everyone were able to withhold their taxes for parts of programs with which they disagreed. Unfortunately, the argument plays well politically. And unfortunately, the taxpayers won't make up the difference in this case, but the cost burden will now fall on patients, many of whom go to Planned Parenthood because its costs are affordable.

Already, Planned Parenthood officials say patients have walked out of appointments or canceled knowing they will not be able to pay for those services.

That's likely to create more health problems that will be even more costly. Imagine a woman foregoing a cancer screening and ending up with years of costly treatment. And the policy may indeed cause more unwanted pregnancies, something abortion opponents say they also oppose.

We urge the Minnesota Legislature to consider making up for the loss of federal funds. In the long run, it will support women's health and leave the choice to have children between a woman and her doctor and not the federal government.

OTHER VIEW

Trump's callousness displayed

San Diego Union-Tribune

President Donald Trump's apparent view that Americans want a federal government that abandons humanitarian norms is once again on display with two more decisions about the treatment of detained unauthorized immigrants.

The first is the Trump administration's attempt to nullify a 1997 court agreement, known as the Flores settlement, that put a 20-day limit on detaining minors in immigration detention centers and set standards for how such children are treated. The new rule would establish minimum standards for conditions at the detention centers while allowing families to be detained indefinitely. It would take effect in late October if it survives expected court challenges.

It's hard to accept at face value the claim that this new rule would make the Trump administration do more to improve conditions. Instead, the rule appears to be a continuation of Trump administration efforts to discourage unauthorized immigrants and refugee seekers by treating them poorly.

The second decision got less attention but is similarly dubious and mean-spirited. Officials with the Customs and Border Protection agency announced that migrant families being held in detention centers near the southern border won't be given flu vaccines even though, as CBS News reported, three migrant children have died while in U.S. custody from the flu in the past 12 months. People are likely to die as a result of this decision.

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Our imprisoned thoughts on race

A remarkable community meeting at Centenary United Methodist Church Thursday evening offered a stark realization that unjust imprisonment of people of color resembles a modern-day system of slavery.

But even more remarkable was the fact the community corrections and law enforcement leaders seemed to agree with the basic premise that mass incarceration is justice denied.

Centenary hosted a showing of "13," the compelling Netflix independent documentary on the state of mass incarceration of people of color in the United States. Riveting testimony from victims, a solid recitation of the facts and insightful commentary from experts laid bare this problem that gets all too little media publicity.

A panel discussion after the showing included Mankato Director of Public Safety Amy Vokal, Blue Earth County Community Corrections Director Josh Milow and Sherrise Truesdale Moore, associate professor and coordinator of the Minnesota State University corrections program.

The panel spoke passionately about the very real consequences of the problem, local racism and the difficulty in overcoming some of the barriers to resolving the larger problems of racism its connection to imprisonment. The loss of human capital is astonishing as a prison industrial complex gets richer and fuels political fires.

While the Mankato Department of Public Safety established a Race, Equity and Leadership Team about five years ago, progress, said Vokal, has been "very slow to come," with "minor victories."

"We are moving too slow," said Vokal, who had a student of color live with her and her husband for three years. She recalls walking into a Mankato convenience store where she

was well known with the student and people automatically assumed he was under arrest.

"That left a hole in my heart," said Vokal, who noted the young man was a good student with a big heart.

Milow saw the film for the third time. "I can't say it's any less disturbing. We've gone backward since the Civil Rights movement," he said.

As director of community corrections he sees firsthand the injustice in a Minnesota probation system that gives some offenders 40 years of probation, a figure he sees as just setting people up to be in jail again and again. Many of the violations of probation can be considered "technical" rather than egregious, yet the incarceration continues.

In Blue Earth County, Milow said, he works with the judicial system to reduce probations and get treatment and diversions, especially for younger people. He's troubled by the fact that when a 16-year old is only arrested and not charged, it shows up on their permanent record, making getting a job difficult.

Prisons don't make people better, Milow said. The best they can do is teach inmates marketable skills so they have a chance for jobs when they get out.

Truesdale-Moore worked in the youth corrections program in Maryland and with the U.S. attorneys of-fices also. African Americans through history have built up a distrust of mostly white institutions be they police or health-care providers. Those things are not easily overcome.

And blatant racism still exists in the corrections field. She told of her Minnesota experience going to a professional conference and hearing a probation officer use the "N" word.

She was thus motivated to teach cultural competence to corrections

students, something everyone needs. "You're only competent in your own culture," she said.

And police-involved shootings of African Americans hit close to home when MSU grad and Columbia Heights police officer Jeronimo Yanez shot and killed Philando Castile in a routine police stop, where Yanez was eventually acquitted of manslaughter charges.

"It bothered me because he was a product of our school," she said, her voice getting louder. In her first class that fall after the shooting, she referenced the Castile case. She told her students: "I don't want another student to come out of this university and do this because it bothered me."

Audience members asked the panel for solutions, and there were few that were easy or guaranteed. Milow called for more training of prisoners and second chances for minor crimes. Vokal said Mankato police no longer will wrestle students in schools who are being disruptive or who won't leave. We need to know more about the neuroscience of bias and discrimination. And she said police need to have empathy.

"I don't know how to teach empathy," she said.

One practical solution might be for people to support youth programs, said Milow. Sometimes a relationship between a caring adult and a troubled youth can make all the difference.

But the solution may lie within our people's collective willingness to face the problem of racial bias and discrimination, though more than one panelist and audience member said President Donald Trump's presence in office is making that difficult.

Some did see a silver lining.

Longtime activist and MSU diversity professor Michael Fagin had this to offer: "Thank God for the president. He's waking us up. He's showing us who we really are."

'America First' in action

WASHINGTON — In a trade war, as in a real one, people are wounded by friendly fire from their side. Consider

some casualties in Donald Trump's "easy to win" — his promise — trade war. Begin with the company whose green machines bear the name of the blacksmith who, in the 1830s in Grand Detour, Illinois, invented a self-scouring plow that could turn the Midwest's heavy black topsoil.

Is the John Deere corporation "tired of winning," as Trump promised that all Americans soon would be? Not exactly. The Wall Street Journal reports that U.S. farmers are purchasing fewer farm machines — Deere's profits from this business are down 24% from a year ago — partly because farmers' incomes have suffered as a result of the tit-for-tat trade spat that Trump started with China, which has included China canceling the purchase of almost 500,000 metric tons of soybeans. Some good news for U.S. farmers: Equipment sales to Brazil and Argentina are up, perhaps partly because China has increased purchases from those nations' farmers, who are American farmers' competitors.

Nowadays, even sensible government actions injure some farmers. Many of them have come to depend on government's misguided mandate regarding ethanol in gasoline, and the Journal reports that 31 refineries have been given ethanol waivers from the Environmental Protection Agency. The Iowa Corn Growers Association says the exemptions could eliminate "nearly one billion bushels of corn demand." Whether ethanol would have achieved sacramental status in Washington if

Iowa did not have presidential caucuses is a subject for another day.

Home Depot, the world's largest home improvement retailer (more than 2,000 stores in North America), partly blames the trade war for its lowered growth expectations. The tariffs, which The Financial Times accurately refers to as "import taxes," will, according to a JPMorgan estimate, cost the average U.S. household "around \$1,000 a year." If so, this Trump tax increase — it

is his alone — is more important to the average American than his (actually Congress') tax cut.

The Financial Times recalls that "hundreds of U.S. companies and trade associations said in a joint communique in June that the proposed duties would cause the loss of two million jobs and reduce U.S. economic output by 1%." The losses and reduction are related to the fact that, as Allan Golombek of the White House Writers Group notes, "Over 60% of U.S. imports are used by businesses in their products and production processes." Hence Trump's tariffs make U.S. goods more expensive, thereby dampening U.S. consumer activity. And exacerbating trade deficits, which do not matter other than as irritants to Trump, who thinks they indicate foreigners taking advantage of Americans by selling them things they want.

Uncertainties infused into the global economy by the trade war between the world's two largest national economies probably have helped to produce a global slowdown and fears, perhaps somewhat self-fulfilling, of an approaching recession. The fourth-largest economy, that of heavily export-dependent Germany, is already

shrinking. There, as The Economist reports, "interest rates are negative all the way from overnight deposits to 30-year bonds. Investors who buy and hold bonds to maturity will make a guaranteed cash loss."

This does not suggest economic health but might produce something pleasing to the president whose macroeconomic theory makes up in brevity what it lacks in nuance: "Low interest rates are good." He is forever hectoring the Federal Reserve to lower rates, which it might again do if it sees a recession tipping toward us. So, a recession would be an interestingly injurious carom — a win, of a perverse sort — from his trade war.

From May 1937 to June 1938, there occurred the "recession within (the) Depression," America's third-worst 20th-century contraction. About the causes of this, as about so many economic events, intelligent and informed people disagree. However, one theory is that capital went "on strike." Rattled and exasperated by the New Dealers' regulatory fidgets, investors flinched from economic activity. If so, this episode contains a warning for protectionists who seem oblivious.

They fiddle with global supply chains, as though the world economy is a Tinkertoy that they can pull apart and reassemble with impunity. Actually, it is analogous to an Alexander Calder mobile: jiggle something here, things wiggle way over there, and there, and there. So: Tariffs on Apple (headquarters: Cupertino, California) iPhones that are made (actually, just assembled) in China might help Samsung (headquarters: near Seoul, South Korea) Galaxy phones sell in America. This is "America First" in practice.

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