

# Opinion

## THE FIRST AMENDMENT

Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or the press, or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances.

When it's summer, you can count on peculiar news, Carlson says PAGE 30P

OP

LETTERS 20P | ROSES & THISTLES 20P | KATHIE OBRADOVICH 30P | NATIONAL COMMENTARY 40P

DesMoinesRegister.com/opinion

### Iowa View

## Ag's huge challenge is growing ever more larger

My friend Rekha Basu wrote a tough column in the June 30 Sunday Register that was sharply critical of the World Food Prize for recognizing three pioneers in biotechnology as our 2013 laureates. It was headlined "World Food Prize Goes Too Far in Honoring Monsanto," reflecting that one of our laureates is the chief technology officer of that company.



**KENNETH M. QUINN**, a retired U.S. Foreign Service officer and the former ambassador to Cambodia, now is president of the World Food Prize Foundation in Des Moines. Contact: kquinn@worldfoodprize.org.

From the title of Rekha's article, you might think that the World Food Prize is giving our award to the Monsanto company. That is not the case. The World Food Prize does not recognize any company or university or organization with which any of its laureates are associated. I wish that had been made clear in her article.

Rather, what we are recognizing this year is the basic science these three individuals, working separately on two continents in the 1970s and '80s, accomplished to help us better understand how plants work, how their cells and genes function, and how their traits are manifested in nature.

**What we are recognizing** is that their research led to new technologies that are now integral to plant breeding, which result in crops with better yields, increased resistance to pests and weeds, and greater resilience to adverse environmental conditions (such as those that held up under last year's drought in the Midwest).



**Dr. Norman Borlaug**

I have high regard for Rekha and respect her views and passion. In this case, I think her argument is with the late Dr. Norman Borlaug, the founder of the World Food Prize, Iowa's greatest hero, and the man who saved millions from famine and death in India and Pakistan. I was sorry she did not mention him by name, because his legacy and his passion to alleviate human suffering is critical to this debate and our decision to recognize these individuals.

### The Register's Editorials

# LOSING SIGHT OF WHAT IOWA NEEDS



## Branstad fails to grasp EMS problems

**I**f Gov. Terry Branstad experiences chest pain in the middle of the night at Terrace Hill or during the day at the Iowa Capitol, he is only a couple of miles from a hospital, and Des Moines Fire Department paramedics will whisk him there in minutes.

However, for many people, especially those living in small towns or rural sections of our state, they do not have such ready access to emergency medical services. Most of the time, they will have to rely on trained volunteers to man the ambulance and provide that emergency medical care.

We applaud those volunteers for their public service. But in some communities, it's becoming increasingly difficult to ensure there are enough of these trained volunteers available to respond to the calls for help. There may not even be an EMS provider. Iowa law gives cities, counties and townships the option of choosing whether to provide emergency medical services at all.

Yet the governor does not seem to understand these very real, everyday issues that confront people living, working and traveling through large parts of our state. Were he fully cognizant of the life-and-death reality that exists, we would like to think he would not have vetoed legislation approved by the Legislature earlier this year that would have paid for a study of the problems facing Iowa's system of emergency medical services.

These problems were laid out earlier this year in an investigation by Des Moines Register reporter Clark Kauffman. His report revealed concerns about the availability of EMS in some places, the lack of background checks on EMS providers, a handful of EMS workers not being disciplined for violating laws and regulations, and staff reductions in the state EMS bureau. Volunteer emergency workers are so scarce in some communities that high school students are called out of class to respond to 911 calls. The state has never imposed a fine for any ambulance service violation, including those judged to have put patients at risk.

Iowa lawmakers listened to the concerns and voted to direct the Iowa Department of Public Health to create a task force to study

## Governor's veto opts for secrecy, not transparency

**B**efore it adjourned in the spring, the Iowa Legislature passed legislation creating a committee of citizens and state officials to study alternatives to housing violent criminals in nursing homes. Gov. Terry Branstad vetoed the legislation, however, because he said it would have duplicated the efforts of a "work group" he created within the executive branch.

That might be fine, except that the governor has taken the position that meetings of his "work group," which consists of the heads of four state agencies, are not open to the public. The committee proposed by the Legislature would have done its work in public.

This issue has public interest because, as the Register has reported, dozens of sex offenders have been living in Iowa care facilities along with vulnerable, disabled adults.

Iowa's open meetings law says that any "advisory board, advisory commission, or task force created by the governor or the General Assembly to develop and make recommendations on public policy issues" is a public body. That means its meetings must be open to the public. Under the governor's definition, however, his "work group" has refused to open its meetings to the public.

This makes too much of the difference between "work group," which does not appear anywhere in the open meetings law, and "task force," which does. The meetings



larger

My friend Rekha Basu wrote a tough column in the June 30 Sunday Register that was sharply critical of the World Food Prize for recognizing three pioneers in biotechnology as our 2013 laureates. It was headlined "World Food Prize Goes Too Far in Honoring Monsanto," reflecting that one of our laureates is the chief technology officer of that company.



**KENNETH M. QUINN**, a retired U.S. Foreign Service officer and the former ambassador to Cambodia, now is president of the World Food Prize Foundation in Des Moines. Contact: kquinn@worldfoodprize.org.

From the title of Rekha's article, you might think that the World Food Prize is giving our award to the Monsanto company. That is not the case. The World Food Prize does not recognize any company or university or organization with which any of its laureates are associated. I wish that had been made clear in her article.

Rather, what we are recognizing this year is the basic science these three individuals, working separately on two continents in the 1970s and '80s, accomplished to help us better understand how plants work, how their cells and genes function, and how their traits are manifested in nature.

**What we are recognizing** is that their research led to new technologies that are now integral to plant breeding, which result in crops with better yields, increased resistance to pests and weeds, and greater resilience to adverse environmental conditions (such as those that held up under last year's drought in the Midwest).



I have high regard for Rekha and respect her views and passion. In this case, I think her argument is with the late Dr. Norman Borlaug, the founder of the World Food Prize, Iowa's greatest hero, and the man who saved millions from famine and death in India and Pakistan. I was sorry she did not mention him by name, because his legacy and his passion to alleviate human suffering is critical to this debate and our decision to recognize these individuals.

If he were here, Dr. Borlaug would remind us that just over 7 billion people currently inhabit this planet, but one in eight do not have enough food to eat. Estimates show that by the year 2050, our population will have climbed to 9 billion. Ensuring adequate, nutritious food for all of these people in a sustainable way represents the single greatest challenge in the history of human agriculture.

It is a challenge made even more difficult as the world's farmers experience increased demands on our finite water supply and increasingly volatile shifts in weather, which can bring droughts, floods or both. Dr. Borlaug believed that biotechnology plays a critical role in meeting this challenge, and before he died, he specifically told our selection committee that he endorsed these

# SIGHT

OF WHAT  
IOWA NEEDS

## Branstad fails to grasp EMS problems

If Gov. Terry Branstad experiences chest pain in the middle of the night at Terrace Hill or during the day at the Iowa Capitol, he is only a couple of miles from a hospital, and Des Moines Fire Department paramedics will whisk him there in minutes. However, for many people, especially those living in small towns or rural sections of our state, they do not have such ready access to emergency medical services. Most of the time, they will have to rely on trained volunteers to man the ambulance and provide that emergency medical care.

We applaud those volunteers for their public service. But in some communities, it's becoming increasingly difficult to ensure there are enough of these trained volunteers available to respond to the calls for help. There may not even be an EMS provider. Iowa law gives cities, counties and townships the option of choosing whether to provide emergency medical services at all.

Yet the governor does not seem to understand these very real, everyday issues that confront people living, working and traveling through large parts of our state. Were he fully cognizant of the life-and-death reality that exists, we would like to think he would not have vetoed legislation approved by the Legislature earlier this year that would have paid for a study of the problems facing Iowa's system of emergency medical services.

These problems were laid out earlier this year in an investigation by Des Moines Register reporter Clark Kauffman. His report revealed concerns about the availability of EMS in some places, the lack of background checks on EMS providers, a handful of EMS workers not being disciplined for violating laws and regulations, and staff reductions in the state EMS bureau. Volunteer emergency workers are so scarce in some communities that high school students are called out of class to respond to 911 calls. The state has never imposed a fine for any ambulance service violation, including those judged to have put patients at risk.

Iowa lawmakers listened to the concerns and voted to direct the Iowa Department of Public Health to create a task force to study ways of ensuring the future availability of quality emergency medical services for the state. The committee was supposed to report back with recommendations to improve EMS in Iowa.

It makes sense for the state to take a closer look at a system Iowans rely on for help in life-or-death situations. But that isn't how the governor sees it. "An additional task force, growing the size, scope and cost of government is not an effective use of taxpayer dollars at this time," Branstad wrote in his veto message.

Isn't emergency care for Iowans who fall victim to accidents or face medical emergencies a fundamental service the public would expect government to provide? Is EMS care less of a role for government than government being a provider of loan money, tax credits and other financing for businesses?

The savings from the veto represents pocket change for the state. Lawmakers provided \$28,600 for the study from a budget surplus of nearly \$1 billion. That's the equivalent of an Iowa family with a \$5,000 savings account spending 15 cents on something.

"His motivation was to save \$28,000, but in the long term, I think this will cost Iowa far more than that," said Brian Donaldson, the director of emergency medical services in the northeast Iowa town of Sumner. "We won't have the kind of expert guidance the profession needs right now."

Officials of Iowa's EMS organizations supported the study. Iowa lawmakers should authorize the study again next year — and this time, Branstad should put away his veto pen.

## Governor's veto opts for secrecy, not transparency

Before it adjourned in the spring, the Iowa Legislature passed legislation creating a committee of citizens and state officials to study alternatives to housing violent criminals in nursing homes. Gov. Terry Branstad vetoed the legislation, however, because he said it would have duplicated the efforts of a "work group" he created within the executive branch.

That might be fine, except that the governor has taken the position that meetings of his "work group," which consists of the heads of four state agencies, are not open to the public. The committee proposed by the Legislature would have done its work in public.

This issue has public interest because, as the Register has reported, dozens of sex offenders have been living in Iowa care facilities along with vulnerable, disabled adults.

Iowa's open meetings law says that any "advisory board, advisory commission, or task force created by the governor or the General Assembly to develop and make recommendations on public policy issues" is a public body. That means its meetings must be open to the public. Under the governor's definition, however, his "work group" has refused to open its meetings to the public.

This makes too much of the difference between "work group," which does not appear anywhere in the open meetings law, and "task force," which does. The meetings law was intended by the Legislature to be read broadly in the interest of open government. But by any interpretation, the law should cover a group of state officials formally created by the governor to make policy recommendations. In any case, Branstad's "work group" should meet in public, whether the law requires it or not.

Branstad makes a point of bragging about his administration's transparency, which by and large is true. But in this case, he chose a secretive process that has now been going on for nearly two years with little or nothing to show for it. At least not publicly.

The Legislature's proposed committee would unquestionably have fit the legal definition of a public body, meaning it would be required to hold public meetings. Legislators should resurrect the bill, and next time, the governor should sign it.



from Venezuela. Then the tweet was deleted and the official word was that there was no official word.

Whatever happens, one thing is obvious: Wherever Snowden goes, he has no intention of coming home to answer for what he did.

One struggles to know how to feel about that.

Many of us, after all, believe he struck a blow for freedom in leaking classified information revealing the breadth and depth of government spying on private citizens. But he seems not to have thought through the implications and likely outcomes of that act. How else to explain the fact that he has wound up trapped in the international transit zone at the Moscow airport, unable to enter the country, yet unable to leave because he has nowhere to go?

Well, that's not quite accurate. Snowden is reported to be fielding offers of asylum from several nations, including, besides Venezuela, Bolivia and Nicaragua. It is worth noting that these would-be benefactors all have problematic recent relations with his own country. Surely that plays a part in their eagerness to get their hands on him.

One wonders if he understood what he was getting into. Civil disobedience is never without risk, and one accepts this going in. To practice civil disobedience is, after all, to break the law in the conviction that doing so serves a higher moral law.

A visitor from China once asked Bernard Lafayette with some amazement how such a thing could be justified. Was that not a recipe for chaos? If every citizen can choose for himself or herself which laws to obey and which to ignore, does that not show disrespect for the very rule of law? Lafayette, a hero of the civil rights movement, said no, because civil disobedience does not seek to evade punishment. One shows one's respect for the rule of law, he said, by submitting to the penalties prescribed for breaking it.

Daniel Ellsberg would likely disagree. He supports Snowden's flight to elude U.S. authorities. Ellsberg famously leaked the Pentagon Papers in 1971 and faced a possible 115-year sentence for doing so. Charges were dismissed in 1973.

In an op-ed published Sunday by the Washington Post, he argued that Snowden's situation cannot be compared to his — different circumstances, different era. Snowden, he writes, would likely be disappeared into solitary confinement if returned to these shores and have little chance to contribute to the debate on government surveillance.

**Perhaps. But here's the thing:** Civil disobedience is, almost by definition, an act of faith. Not faith in government, nor even faith in law, but faith in vindication. It is an act that says, I am right, so I refuse to obey this law and will take my medicine until you see that I am right.

Snowden is not willing to do that, not willing to stand, with head held high, upon the courage of his convictions. There is something unseemly about that. It makes his action feel unfinished. And undermined.

Yes, there's also something unseemly about some guy sitting safely behind his desk smugly advising some other guy to put the rest of his life at risk for the sake of principle. But consider the alternative. Should he go to some unfriendly nation and become a propaganda tool against his own country? No. There are no seemly options here — only a narrowing range of unseemly ones.

So Snowden should come home. You may say that is the worst possible choice, and you'd be right. It is the worst.

Except for all the rest.



Edward Snowden

**LEONARD PITTS JR.** is a columnist for the Miami Herald. Contact: lpitts@miamiherald.com.



Iowa diplomat Ronald McMullen, center in background, was there when South Africa President Nelson Mandela and U.S. Secretary of State Warren Christopher, right, met with reporters in Cape Town, South Africa, in 1996. SPECIAL TO THE REGISTER

# MANDELA'S CHARM RECALLED BY IOWAN

"I'm from Iowa," I told President Nelson Mandela, as he offered me a tray of cookies and asked where I was from.

"What's Iowa like?" he asked.

I replied, "Iowa's got the richest soil in the world, friendly people and first-rate schools."

"Well, I hope you enjoy serving in Cape Town and getting to know our land and our people," he added, smiling warmly.

This unexpected conversation with Nelson Mandela took place in Cape Town, South Africa, in 1996 during a visit from Secretary of State Warren Christopher. I was a mid-level American diplomat serving in Cape Town.

Secretary Christopher hoped to enlist President Mandela's support for the proposed African Crisis Response Initiative (ACRI). A few years previously, the United States had intervened in Somalia to alleviate a humanitarian crisis, but pulled out after the "Black Hawk Down" tragedy. The next year we sat on our hands during the Rwanda genocide and 800,000 people perished.

President Bill Clinton proposed that African countries organize first-responder units to deal quickly with natural or man-made crises. The U.S. would help provide training and equipment under the ACRI, and would hopefully not have to send U.S. troops to troubled African countries.

President Mandela opposed South Africa's involvement in ACRI, as the country's military was undergoing a difficult transition to reflect the composition and objectives of the new South Africa. We had informed Washington that Mandela was not keen on the ACRI, but Christopher



**RONALD K. MCMULLEN**, a native of Northwood and a graduate of Drake University, was a diplomat for 30 years with the U.S. Foreign Service. He now is a visiting associate professor at the University of Iowa. Contact: mcmullenrk@gmail.com.

came anyway.

Once in Cape Town, Christopher's meeting with Mandela was the last thing on the secretary's schedule before his departure. As a relatively junior diplomat, I had no expectation of being asked to join the meeting. My job was to help coordinate logistics, protocol and security at the venue.

When the State Department's note-taker failed to arrive on time, I was asked to step in. I grabbed a pen and a notebook and followed Christopher into the posh conference room.

President Mandela greeted each of the Americans with a handshake and a smile and asked us our names. He seemed in a relaxed, chatty mood. Soon the lawyerly secretary of state moved impatiently toward the negotiating table. President Mandela then exclaimed, "Oh, I forgot that our kind staff has prepared light refreshments." Waiters brought tea, and President Mandela himself picked up a silver tray of cookies and began serving the guests.

He spent a few minutes talking with each American, asking us where we were from and how we liked South Africa. The secretary glanced at his watch, scowling as the minute hand approached his scheduled de-

parture time.

Finally, Mandela guided us to the negotiating table. I whipped out my pen, ready to take notes.

Due to time constraints, the secretary gave an abbreviated pitch on the ACRI. President Mandela listened attentively and finally commented that, "This is a very important and complex issue. My colleagues and I will need more time to study it thoroughly, but thank you so much for stopping by."

He got up and escorted us out for a photo opportunity. Mandela beamed widely and Christopher put on a waxy smile. He knew Mandela had run out the clock on him, and that he was returning to Washington without South Africa's support for ACRI.

We walked out of the meeting like we were walking on air. President Mandela had spoken individually with each of us and even served us cookies! It didn't seem to matter that Christopher had been bested by Mandela's smooth approach. A lesser statesman than Mandela might have refused to meet Christopher, or railed against U.S. policy when pressed to join the ACRI.

But Mandela met cordially with the American delegation and succeeded in protecting the reorganizing South African military from an unwanted burden. He did this without ever saying "no" and had charmed us all (well, maybe not Christopher).

Someone once told me that diplomacy is the art of someone telling you to go to hell in a way that makes you look forward to the trip. If that's so, Nelson Mandela was a world-class diplomat.

## QUINN

Continued from Page 10P

three individuals by name to be our laureates at some point in the future.

**I had Norm's views in mind** on June 19 as I stood with Secretary of State John Kerry at the Department of State in Washington, D.C., to announce that the World Food Prize is honoring three pioneers in biotechnology as our 2013 laureates: Marc Van Montagu of Belgium, and Mary-Dell Chilton and Robert T. Fraley of the United States.

As we face these critical challenges of the 21st century, I believe that Dr. Borlaug would tell us it is our responsibility to use the power of science, as these laureates have, and to work collaboratively with others around the globe to find solutions. And he would add that it is our responsibility to innovate in all the best possible ways to nourish mankind, especially the nearly 1 billion peo-

ple who are still suffering from hunger and food insecurity every single day.

The question was posed about whether contributions made to our foundation by two companies with which our new laureates are associated may pose a conflict of interests or have led to their selection. It is a fair question. My staff and I do raise money from companies and foundations to fund our youth education programs, our symposium and operation of our Hall of Laureates.

**I want to make it absolutely clear** that neither I nor anyone on my staff has any vote or voice in the selection of our laureates. This is done precisely to avoid any conflict of interests from occurring. Rather, our laureates are chosen by the World Food Prize Laureate Selection Committee, which is comprised of a diverse array of highly distinguished experts from around the globe. It is chaired by the most respected agricultural scientist in India, and possibly the world, Dr. M.S. Swaminathan. I was dis-

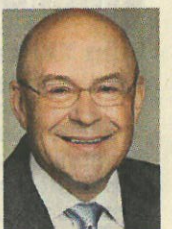
appointed that his role in this process was not mentioned in Rekha's article.

Many who are critical of our choice of laureates are also adamantly opposed to crops that are enhanced or genetically modified through biotechnology. To them, I think Dr. Borlaug would urge that they think about the hard-working farmer in sub-Saharan Africa who, although she works day after day, cannot grow enough food to feed her family because of pests, disease, heat waves or drought or saltwater intrusion as the seas rise. Think about how her life might change if she suddenly has access to seeds and plants adapted by biotechnology to the harsh conditions she experiences.

So the bottom line question that Dr. Borlaug would ask Rekha and all others is this: Are you really prepared to completely exclude biotechnology and genetic modification as a possible way to assist that poor farmer and all of the poorest farmers in the world as they face these enormous environmental challenges?



Mary-Dell Chilton



Robert Fraley



Marc Van Montagu