

Opinion

Telling Iowans' stories has been an education for Basu, she says PAGE 30P

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DesMoinesRegister.com/opinion

OP

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.

The Register's Editorial

Expanding Medicaid makes fiscal, moral sense

Iowans are counting on Branstad to change course

Gov. Terry Branstad has resisted an opportunity to provide thousands of Iowans health insurance through Medicaid. Snubbing this opportunity in the health reform law does not make fiscal or moral sense. The governor should rethink his opposition and agree to participate.

Earlier this year, the U.S. Supreme Court upheld the Affordable Care Act as constitutional but ruled that states have the option of expanding Medicaid to cover more residents. The governor's knee-jerk response when the decision was announced: He doubted Iowa would do so. He said this without consulting Chuck Palmer, the director of the Iowa Department of Human Services, which oversees Medicaid.

Even as hospitals, physicians and businesses disagree with Branstad's position, he has dug in his heels. That's unfortunate because expanding Medicaid will save the state money.

Iowa would insure about 100,000 more people and spend about \$30 million less per year if the state expands Medicaid, according to a November report by the respected Kaiser Family Foundation.

Why? Medicaid is jointly financed by the state and federal governments. For every dollar Iowa spends, the federal government provides about \$2. But that rate increases dramatically for low-income adults who will be newly eligible for coverage under the health reform law. According to the Kaiser foundation, the federal government pays 100 percent for new enrollees for 2014-16 and at least 90 percent thereafter. The cost of administration is generally matched at 50 percent.

This higher matching rate is especially beneficial for Iowa, which has insured more people in recent years through special programs. Many of these people would be considered "newly enrolled" in Medicaid and would bring the higher federal matching rate if Iowa expands its Medicaid eligibility.

When it all shakes out, Iowa would see a 2.6 percent reduction in state spending on Medicaid, according to the Kaiser foundation report.

The question one year before the expansion would be available to Iowans is this: Will the governor change course?

Let's hope so. The health and lives of more than 100,000 Iowans depend on it. These include low-income parents, the mentally ill and foster children who have aged out of the state's foster care assistance program. The 100,000 Iowans include thousands of older people now using a Medicaid waiver. All these people and more can be covered under Medicaid beginning in 2014 if Iowa agrees.

This country has left millions of people uninsured for decades. This contributed to bankruptcies, lost productivity and early deaths. Iowa was among the states that cobbled together programs to get them help, sometimes straining the budgets of county governments and state agencies.

The American people demanded reform. In 2010 Washington delivered it. ObamaCare will insure 17 million more Americans through the existing Medicaid program. It raises taxes and

INSIDE

The health reform law creates exchanges where thousands of Iowans will comparison shop and buy insurance. Page 40P

DIPLOMAT SAYS IGNORING INTELLIGENCE REPORTS CAN LEAD TO TRAGEDY

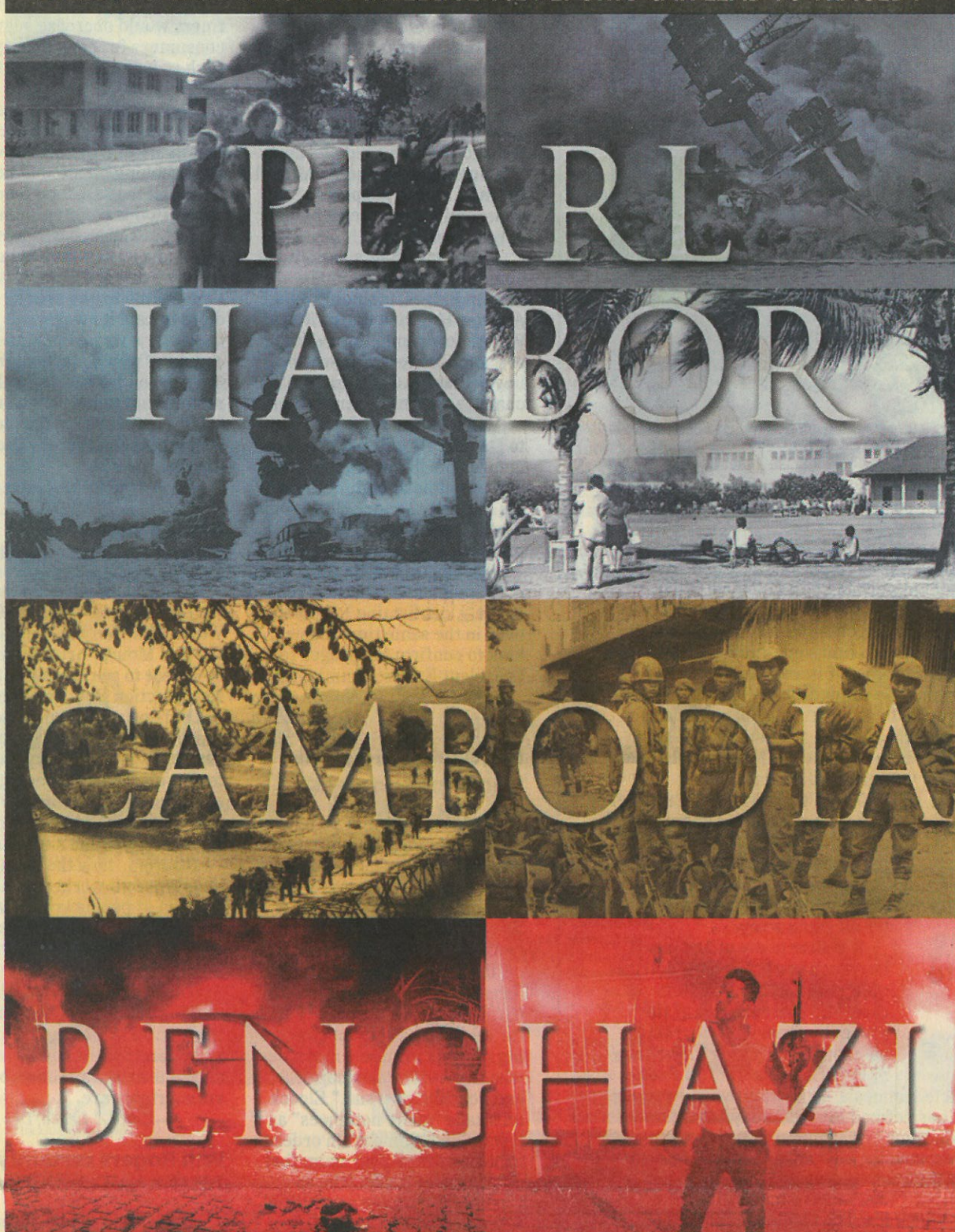
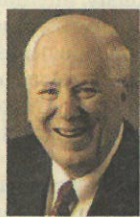


PHOTO ILLUSTRATION BY MARK MARTURELLO FROM GETTY AND REGISTER FILE PHOTOS

NO ONE PAID ANY ATTENTION

At 6 p.m. on Jan. 27, 1941, a communicator at the U.S. Embassy in Tokyo dispatched a classified, encrypted message to the State Department in Washington, D.C., with the following information: "... the Japanese military forces planned, in the event of trouble with the United States, to attempt a surprise mass attack on Pearl Harbor using all of their military facilities ..."



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

That's right. Almost 11 months before the Dec. 7, 1941 surprise attack on Pearl Harbor that launched the United States into World War II, a State Department Foreign Service officer, in what was arguably the single most important intelligence report ever submitted in our country's history, had provided the exact target that Japan would actually strike.

This information had been obtained, not by any sophisticated technical intercept nor a spy, but rather by an American embassy officer from a "diplomatic" source — i.e., another foreign diplomat, one who had close relations inside the Japanese government. The information had been obtained at a cocktail reception.

Once received at the State Department, the cable was routinely shared with appropriate offices in the government, including in the intelligence community and the military command.

And yet, as U.S.-Japanese relations deteriorated during the year and the day of the attack grew close, with intelligence "chatter" in intercepts suggesting pos-

READ HIS REPORT

The analysis of the threat posed by the Khmer Rouge that Kenneth Quinn wrote in 1974 is now declassified and can be read at DesMoinesRegister.com/Opinion.

brought to the attention of the president, the secretary of state, the secretary of war, nor any senior military commanders. Nor apparently was it ever referred to within any of the analytical estimates being produced inside the United States government.

And so when the Japanese planes shattered that sunny Honolulu morning, it came as a total shock to virtually everyone in government. Thousands died who perhaps might have been saved had the information in that report been heeded and U.S. Naval ships dispersed.

How could that have happened? How could it be that neither President Franklin Roosevelt nor anyone else in the U.S.

QUINN

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foreign affairs hierarchy knew about the Jan. 27 embassy cable?

The answer appears to be that State Department reporting — “humint,” as it is called — was not, and still is not, accorded the same status as CIA, Defense Intelligence Agency or National Security Agency signals intelligence (called “sigint”) or information from controlled intelligence assets, which are called spies.

That Tokyo report had been filed away and never referred to again.

I confronted the same syndrome three decades later in 1974 while stationed virtually alone along the remote Vietnam-Cambodia border.

There, by interviewing refugees and piecing together bits and pieces of information, I was able to put together a lengthy analysis showing that the Khmer Rouge were a radical, extremely violent Communist Party with a plan to turn Cambodia into a totalitarian, genocidal killing field.

But no one in Washington believed what I had documented. Indeed, not even my superiors in Saigon accepted what I had discovered.

Despite my efforts when back in Washington to convince people of this incredible threat, no one really listened. And so, just like that prescient cable from Tokyo, my report was filed away.

When, a year later, Pol Pot and his Khmer Rouge followers captured Phnom Penh and imposed their genocidal regime — which would take the lives of two million Cambodians over the next four years, just as I had outlined — Washington and the world were incredulous.

Reflecting the continued low

BONUS COLUMN

Kenneth Quinn, the author of this Iowa View article, has written a bonus column that appears on DesMoinesRegister.com/opinion. In that column, he tells the story of his own heart-stopping, undercover moment in 1983 in war-torn Lebanon that is similar to the hair-raising covert operation in Iran in 1979 that is told in the new film, *ARGO*.

priority assigned to State Department reporting, over the past 30 years our country has systematically degraded our diplomatic collection system by closing consulates all over the globe and eliminating political reporting positions in embassies.

As a result, we did not have the assessments of emerging radical fundamentalism in the Middle East that language-trained officers traveling in the countryside, as I did with Cambodia, might have provided about the emergence of al-Qaida in the 1990s and the plans for the 9/11 attacks on America.

It was likely an effort to gather such critical reporting that motivated Ambassador Chris Stevens to open a diplomatic outpost in Benghazi, Libya, where he was killed.

There is much debate about who will be the new secretary of state.

But to whomever occupies that proud office, I hope that one of your first acts will be to send a strong signal to the U.S. Foreign Service about how much you value the information that embassy officers can develop. I hope that you will revamp the way diplomatic reporting is evaluated and used by the intelligence community.

There could be no more fitting tribute to Ambassador Stevens. And, it might just head off another attack on our country or prevent another genocide.



Kenneth Quinn greets President Gerald Ford while assigned to the White House's National Security Council. WHITE HOUSE PHOTO

HIS REPUTATION STRETCHES AROUND THE GLOBE

Kenneth M. Quinn grew up in Dubuque and graduated from Loras College. But those who now know him for his work as the president of the World Food Prize Foundation in Des Moines may not realize that he was one of our nation's most decorated diplomats during his earlier career.

BACKGROUND: After leaving Dubuque, Quinn spent 32 years with the U.S. Foreign Service. Among his assignments was serving as U.S. ambassador to Cambodia. He is fluent in Vietnamese, and during his career, he became one of our government's leading experts on Indochina.

RECOGNITION: He was honored for the role he played in humanitarian endeavors, as well as for his actions in dangerous situations around the globe. He received the Secretary of State's Award for Heroism and Valor for his efforts to protect American citizens exposed to danger in Cambodia, as well as for four lifesaving rescues in which he participated while stationed in Vietnam. He is the only civilian to ever receive the U.S. Army Air Medal for his participation in combat operations in Vietnam while assigned there by the State Department. Also, he is the only Foreign Service officer ever to be a three-time recipient of the American Foreign Service Association's awards for intellectual courage in challenging U.S. government policy.

KEY ROLE: While assigned along the South Vietnam/Cambodia border in the early 1970s, he warned U.S. government officials of the genocidal threat posed by the Khmer Rouge, the ruling party in Cambodia in the 1970s. Quinn is widely acknowledged as the first person to report on those “killing fields” policies of the Khmer Rouge.

ASSIGNMENTS: During his State Department career, he served as a rural development adviser in South Vietnam's Mekong Delta; on the National Security Council staff at the White House; as a narcotics counselor at the United Nations in Vienna; as chairman of the U.S. inter-agency task force on American prisoners and missing-in-action Americans from the Vietnam War; and as director of Iowa SHARES, a humanitarian campaign that sent Iowa doctors, nurses, medical supplies and food to starving Cambodian refugees. He was President Gerald Ford's Vietnamese interpreter at the White House and negotiated the first entry by U.S. personnel into a Vietnamese prison to search for U.S. POWs.

PERSONAL: Quinn and his wife Le Son have three adult children.

Roses & Thistles

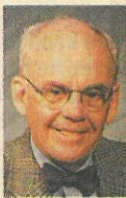
By the Register's editorial staff

At least his name was not misspelled



A rose to Michael Gartner, who survived a brush with death recently. The

Weekly Standard magazine referred to “the late Michael Gartner” in a piece speculating on the sort of journalists who might have been in line for the editorship of the Washington Post 20 years ago. Gartner, of course, is alive and well and living in an undisclosed location near downtown Des Moines. And we're glad he's still with us, writing a weekly gossip column in City-view under the nom de plume (or is it nom de guerre?) of Civic Skinny where he regularly pokes at the Register (some that sting, some that don't, but unanswered either way). It's good to have an alternative weekly that does that sort of thing, even when it stings.



Michael Gartner



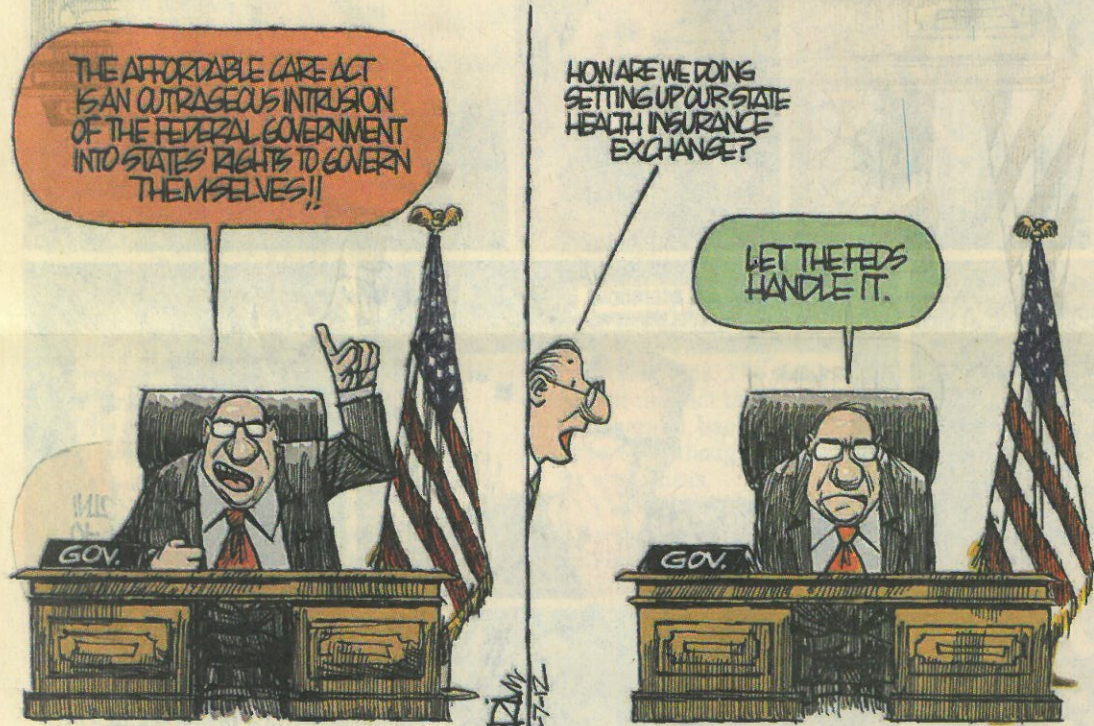
A thistle to Iowa Secretary of Agriculture Bill Northey who apparently

sees no problem asking taxpayers to help pay for pollution solutions the state refuses to require. In a budget hearing last week, the ag secretary asked for nearly \$7 million in taxpayer money to help Iowa farmers pay for conservation efforts. This is the same guy who insists farmers should not be required to practice good conservation, despite ample evidence that farming is fouling waterways all the way to the Gulf of Mexico. This budget item might go down better with taxpayers if they had some confidence the state would require farmers to practice good conservation, not just ask nicely.



A rose to Iowa voters, all 1,588,899 of them, who exercised

their right to vote on Nov. 6. That was a record turnout for a presidential election in this state, according to Secretary of State Matt Schultz's report last week. The presidential election process is much criticized, but it is worth celebrating when nearly half of all Iowans — more than seven in 10 eligible voters — participate in a free election to choose leaders of their government. **Fayette County voters** won the prize for the state's highest turnout with 84.5 percent of eligible voters casting ballots. It's also worth noting that nearly half of all votes were cast on absentee ballots, many of those well ahead of the election. Whether that explains the turnout, the state should be careful not to do anything to discourage use of this convenient alternative to Election Day voting.



MorinToons Syndicate

JIM MORIN/MIAMI HERALD

A Better IOWA
Your ideas, opinions & solutions

SHARE YOUR THOUGHTS ON THESE TOPICS

Take some time this weekend to visit A Better Iowa, our online meeting place where Iowans can turn to learn about, and discuss, important issues affecting Iowa. You will find it at DesMoinesRegister.com/ABetterIowa.

Here's some of what you will find there today:

State overtime falls: Last year, the number of overtime hours in state government dropped by almost 25 percent and the cost of overtime to taxpayers fell by nearly \$7 million. What happened?

From Iowa Watchdog: Special education spending in Iowa has reached record levels in recent years. This comes at a time when enrollment has dropped and test scores remain stagnant.

We've collected the best of the state's columnists and bloggers writing about the issues that are important to you. You will also find a gallery of political cartoons from across the country.

Many Iowans' insurance fate in Branstad hands

When fully instituted, the health reform law will insure millions of Americans through new health insurance exchanges and by expanding Medicaid eligibility.

The exchanges will be marketplaces where individuals and small businesses can purchase private health insurance. No one can be denied coverage due to health problems, and many will receive help paying for policies.

States have much latitude in crafting their own exchanges, but Iowa has made no significant progress toward doing so. Deadlines have been missed. In his opposition to the entire health reform law, Gov. Terry Branstad bears much responsibility for Iowa's lack of action.

But it doesn't matter what he does. If Iowa doesn't create an exchange, the federal government will do it. Iowans will still have the opportunity to finally buy affordable and comprehensive coverage. The Register's editorial board has written before that Iowa is better off letting Washington figure this out.

The Medicaid expansion is another matter. The federal government will not step in and expand the program if a state doesn't do so. Sen. Jack Hatch, D-Des Moines, said lawmakers will attempt to pass legislation to get it done. Like all legislation, it will need the governor's signature. If that doesn't occur, lawmakers will need to muster the backbone and vote to override a veto to help Iowans.

— Register Editorial Page Staff