

PIONEER PRESS

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6-7-2009

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Viewpoints

twincities.com St. Paul Pioneer Press

Letters to the editor E-mail: letters@pioneerpress.com

> Letters to the editor

Help with complex health care process

Gaining access to government safety net programs is indeed a complex process ("Snarled in the safety net," May 31-June 3). And for those seeking help for the first time, simply finding information on available options is often very difficult. For information on health care resources in particular, however, there is a place to start.

Portico Healthnet, a nonprofit agency working to reduce the number of Minnesotans without coverage for health care services, provides all comers and callers with an advocate to help them navigate Minnesota's health care safety net programs.

Portico's outreach staff can help Minnesotans statewide determine which programs they and their family members may qualify for. Staff can even walk individuals through the various program application processes and can assist with maintaining coverage once enrollment is complete. All of these services are provided free, thanks to support from the United Way, and the generosity of local corporations and foundations.

I encourage your readers to contact Portico Healthnet at 651-603-5100 or 866-430-5111 if our services would be of assistance.

Debra Holmgren, New Brighton
The writer is executive director of Portico Healthnet.

Connecting with services

Part 3 of the Watchdog series ("As need grows, our safety net shrinks," June 3) provides me with the opportunity to offer some helpful information.

Since 2006, the Metro Center for Independent Living in St. Paul and the Southeastern Center for Inde-

Our goal is to provide information on any topic related to disabilities, chronic illnesses and community resources available.

Help also is available online at www.minnesotahelp.info, and TTY users can access the DLL through the Minnesota Relay (711).

David Hancox, Golden Valley
The writer is executive director of the Metropolitan Center for Independent Living in St. Paul.

Doing the best job the department can

I have never read a more one-sided story with regard to our agency ("Snarled in the safety net," May 31-June 3).

As an employee with 31 years at Ramsey County Human Services, I truly take exception to what was written.

Once again, a government agency is made to look like the proverbial screw-up, with employees with nothing better to do than sit around and collect our paychecks.

Case loads for an individual worker are more than 500-plus, and growing. There are no funds to hire workers, so the workers who are there pick up the slack.

There are eligibility requirements that have to be met; we as workers do not set those requirements, but we do have to enforce them.

If you want to go after someone, then go after the politicians who decide how these programs are to be implemented and leave us to try and do the best job we can.

I am not saying that we are a perfect agency, but we do the best we can with the workers we have.

All that series did was add fuel to the fire, where government agencies are concerned.

Laura McGinn, St. Paul

Health care future

more than \$10 million of our welfare dollars are spent on cash cards in the other 49 states, and our state doesn't even care.

Why do we as Americans want to give our freedoms over to a government that has tax cheats running the IRS, wants a Supreme Court justice who is more concerned about empathy than law, builds a bridge to nowhere in Alaska, digs a multimillion-dollar hole in Boston and can't deliver a letter consistently in one or two days?

I feel so sorry for my children and grandchildren if we allow "Obama Care" to happen in the USA.

Duane E. Johnson, White Bear Lake

Working the levers of bureaucracy

This letter is in response to the Watchdog series covering the difficulties of Linda Powis and Don Gunnon, and Don's legitimate claim to Social Security disability payments ("Snarled in the safety net," May 31-June 3).

On his own, he's unable to work the levers of the government bureaucracy to get the payments he deserves. Yet the Watchdog, "an advocate for individuals who are struggling against government agencies," is able to get his payments approved using "the power of the Pioneer Press."

This frustrating experience provided Gunnon with "a new level of political awareness," as illustrated by his quote, "We're a superpower, and we can't take care of our people ... Other countries manage to give health care to their people, why can't we?"

Given his experience dealing with the government bureaucracy, why in the world would he expect government-provided health care to work any better?

To the Watchdog, where's your sign-up sheet for assistance on getting our soon-to-be "free" health