

OPINION

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The affordable care act, aka Obamacare, hangs on for dear life



By Emily Weathers Kennedy

In a recent op-ed Lamar Alexander made some bold claims. He notes that insurance rates have risen in Tennessee over 176 percent since EVERY Democrat (and no Republican) voted for The Affordable Care Act (Obamacare). Parsed out, he is telling each and every person who didn't have health insurance but now qualifies for it that you have Democrats to thank.

Of course, this is not what Alexander meant. He was blaming Democrats for the rising costs of insurance, a real fallacy. Insurance prices are rising because insurance companies want more profit. Period.

Alexander's other claim is bizarre since Republicans had NO PLAN after years of promises to replace Obamacare. They wanted to repeal it and push millions of people off health care first, I suppose allowing folks to flutter in the wind. Of course Democrats said NO!

In our little neck of the woods, Obamacare has changed people's lives. People who were denied insurance because of pre-existing conditions can

buy it now. In Lawrence County, more than one friend has come to me with life-saving stories, including a liver transplant patient who would have died without Obamacare.

Another Lawrence County friend recently had a serious accident without insurance. She wasn't denied it, oh no. She was priced out of the market with a pre-existing condition. It seems that protections against skyrocketing premiums and erosion of the mandate under a Republican-held House and Senate have destabilized the market, which was the intention of these folks all along. Now they are working to eliminate pre-existing conditions as covered by law. More people, like my friend, will be priced out of insurance altogether if not denied coverage. People will die.

Here's an idea. Stop propping up health insurance companies. If they are not willing to lower rates then enact what the Democrats wanted all along: a single payer health insurance system that would allow people to BUY insurance at a lower price because of the larger pool of insured individuals.

Emily Weathers Kennedy, a Loretto native and a graduate of Vanderbilt University, is a freelance writer and photo stylist. You can read more of her work and contact her at emilyweatherskenedy.com.



We're seeing why Tennessee will lead in jobs

May Report

By Tennessee Governor Bill Haslam

We have seen a surge of job announcements in our state in the last several weeks, yet another sign that Tennessee will lead the nation in workforce development.

While Nashville made a big splash this month by landing a new corporate headquarters for global asset management firm Alliance Bernstein, bringing more than 1,000 high-quality jobs to the state capital, many of our other job announcements recently have been in some of the state's more rural areas.

Most notably, since April 30, in West Tennessee alone:

In Lake County, Excel Boat Company announced it would invest \$9 million and create nearly 200 jobs in Ridgely over the next five years.

In Weakley County, home appliance and automotive supplier Dong-A Hwa Sung said it will locate its first U.S. operations in Martin, creating more than 200 new jobs and investing \$13 million. That move, by a South Korea-based company, shows continued foreign direct investment in our state. We have more than 140,000

Tennesseans employed in foreign-owned companies.

In Hardeman County, defense contractor Chemring Group said it would expand its Kilgore Flares operations, investing \$40 million and creating approximately 100 jobs in Toone. That was a great example of an existing Tennessee business staying put and expanding right where it is.

In Shelby County, Engineered Medical Systems, a medical equipment manufacturer, said it would invest \$10.5 million and create 40 high-quality jobs in Bartlett.

In McNairy County, we celebrated the expansion of a manufacturing facility by Monogram Refrigeration, which is creating approximately 200 jobs in Selmer, an investment of \$9.3 million that was announced last year.

Elsewhere in the state, RMC Advanced Technologies said it will locate its U.S. headquarters and establish a manufacturing facility in Surgoinsville in Hawkins County. Pet products manufacturer Ware Manufacturing, also in Surgoinsville, announced it will expand there on a \$1.1 million investment. Black Rifle Coffee Company will locate its new operations in Manchester

in Coffee County, creating more than 50 jobs.

Smalticeram USA, a ceramic and tile ink, glaze and pigment producer and distributor, will invest \$4 million and create 26 jobs in Mount Pleasant in Maury County. Petoskey Plastics will invest \$29.6 million to expand in Morristown in Hamblen County. Coil Design Corporation will invest \$3.4 million to establish its corporate headquarters and create nearly 70 jobs in Dayton in Rhea County.

These are all part of our success in attracting more than 414,000 net new private sector jobs since we took office in 2011. They are also examples of why we must not let up, and we must not slow down. In Tennessee we have momentum and we intend to maintain it.

Early in May, Economic and Community Development Commissioner Bob Rolfe and I traveled for a week to Europe, visiting the United Kingdom, Sweden, Germany and Austria in search of even more opportunities and to share the appeal of Tennessee with even more businesses. We departed, by the way, from Nashville on the new British Airways nonstop flight to London's Heathrow Airport, a connection that will boost relationships between Tennessee and businesses overseas.

We're eager to tell the world about Tennessee, but the last few weeks have told us that businesses already see the great benefits of doing business in our state. They have shown not only that we are a business-friendly state welcoming more investment, but proof positive of exactly why we say Tennessee will lead.

"Grease" turns 40! Peachy Keen, Jellybean!



Tyrades! by Danny Tyree

For your least-favorite local eatery, the headline "Grease Turns 40" might elicit chuckles of "I TOLD you those bribes to the health inspector would pay off" – but for cinema fans, it means the top-grossing movie of 1978 is back in the spotlight.

June 16 marks the 40th anniversary of the nostalgic musical about girl-next-door Sandy Olson (Olivia Newton-John), greaser Danny Zuko (John Travolta, still riding the "Welcome Back, Kotter" and "Saturday Night Fever" popularity wave), Kenickie, Rizzo and the rest of the T-Birds and Pink Ladies of Rydell High.

I've loved the film since shortly after its debut (I had already been blown away a few months earlier by a college production of the 1971 stage musical), even though I'd had no personal experience with drag racing, cigarettes, gang membership, summer romances, hickies, pregnancy scares, joining the track team, mooning or televised dance contests. Or being distinguishable from the wallpaper unless I yawned.

Yes, the film has been a pleasure; but it has always been a GUILTY pleasure, even more so with an impressionable teenage son around. I felt a little less solitarily prudish recently when I read a blog saying that a significant number of OTHER fans are troubled that (SPOILER ALERT!) Sandy finds true love only by ultimately transforming into an aggressive sexpot. (Marie Osmond had turned down the role when the script had called for Sandy to be even edgier.)

I mean, our musical heroines had usually been more chaste than that, hadn't they? Can you imagine the Mother Abbess advising Maria, "Climb every mountain, experience every STD"? Or Nellie Forbush insisting, "I'm gonna wash that DNA evidence right out'a my hair"?

Travolta (who received the inaugural "Variety"

Cinema Icon Award at the 71st annual Cannes Film Festival in May) has been playfully noncommittal about the viral internet rumor that Sandy actually drowned at the beginning of the movie and everything else was just her coma dream.

I am hopelessly devoted to treating the theory as heresy. It would open the door to too many other uncertainties about the "settled science" of our cherished films. Was Hannibal Lecter just a whimsical vegan? Are the Apollo 13 astronauts still up there somewhere? Did Prissy in "Gone With The Wind," despite her protestations of ignorance about birthing babies, actually operate Midwives R Us? Did Forrest Gump's friend Jenny actually shout, "Saunter, Forrest, saunter"?

I know the Fifties weren't perfect, but "Grease" offers a sort of comfort food for the soul. I would hate to see the movie being rewritten to reflect the world of 2018.

Danny would brag of the hot rod Greased Lightning, "This car is automatic. It's systematic. It's hyyyyy-dromatic. It's...still about an hour from being fully charged."

The drive-in scene? Sandy would storm off after Danny let the Uber driver grope her. Instead of declaring, "You can't just walk out of a drive-in," Danny would whine, "You can't just walk out of the Church of Scientology!"

According to USA TODAY, Travolta thinks the characters Danny and Sandy are "the real deal" and are still out there together somewhere in movie land.

Of course, the passing years will have made a difference in their love songs. When Danny sings, "I've got chills, they're multiplyin'/And I'm losin' control," instead of passionate necking, there would be an urgent search for adult undergarments and a doctor accepting new Medicare patients. ©2018 Danny Tyree. Danny welcomes email responses at tyreetyrades@aol.com and visits to his Facebook fan page "Tyree's Tyrades." Danny's weekly column is distributed exclusively by Cagle Cartoons Inc. newspaper syndicate.

Tennessee revolutionizes higher-ed with innovation

Bloomberg Opinion

Updated Jun 7, 2018 at 12:34 PM

Since taking office in 2011, Tennessee Gov. Bill Haslam has turned his state into a laboratory for policy innovation. In 2014, Tennessee became the first state to offer free tuition at a community or technical college for every graduating high-school senior. This year it expanded that program to adults over the age of 25 without college degrees. Since 2012, the percentage of Tennesseans with a postsecondary credential has increased from 33.3 percent to 40.7 percent. Haslam has set a goal of reaching 55 percent by 2025.

A Republican who won reelection with more than 70 percent of the vote in 2014, Haslam is limited from seeking another term. As he approaches the end of his tenure, we spoke about raising expectations, connecting education to work, and what leaders in the rest of the country can learn from Tennessee. Here is an edited transcript.

Question: Why did you decide to make access to higher education your administration's signature issue?

Answer: First, we needed to be able to sell our state for economic development. When you're competing for business in today's global environment, the conversation always ends up being about the skill level of your workforce. When I took office, 32 percent of our population had a postsecondary degree, and I knew we needed to be a lot higher than 32.

Second, regardless of what your politics are, you have to admit we have an income-inequality issue in our country. The question is what you're going to do about it. I've always felt the best answer is to give people equal opportunities on the front end to have the training they need to be ready for life, versus trying on the back end to take care of people whom we didn't prepare on the front end.

Question: You've talked about your desire to change the "culture of expectations" in Tennessee. How much progress have you made?

Answer: We have a lot of families in Tennessee who did not think of themselves as the type of people whose family members went to college. The reason we came up with Tennessee Promise is that we had to do something to shock the system, something that would get everyone's attention. Once we said this is an offer of free college for everyone who graduates from high school, that was a message people could grasp easily. Our hope — and what has become reality — was that the dinner-table conversation would change from, "Where are you going to work when you graduate from high school?" to "You can go to college, so where are you going to go and how do we make sure that happens?"

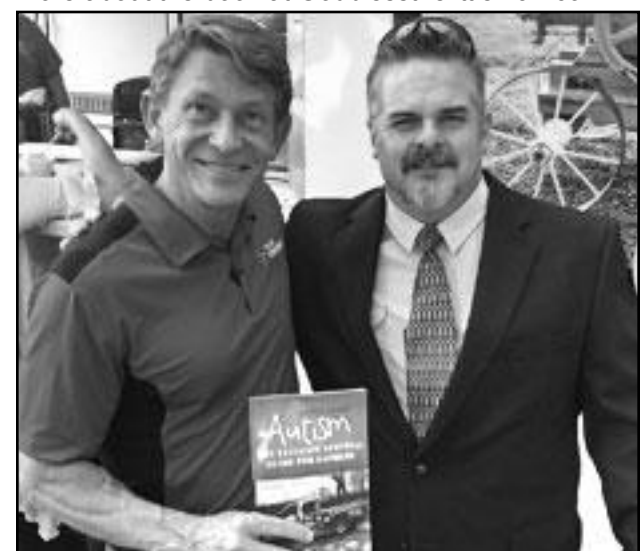
Question: Why did you feel it was important to expand Tennessee Promise to adult learners as well?

Answer: We knew from the very beginning that

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LOCAL AUTISM AWARENESS ADVOCATE Jerry Gowen met with Governor Bill Haslam, Representative Barry Doss (both in town for the groundbreaking of the Southern Tennessee Higher Education Center, HoJo Photo above), and Republican gubernatorial candidate Randy Boyd (local photo below), who recently made a stop in Fayetteville. Gowen is the author of "Autism – The Ultimate Survival Guide for Fathers." Find out more about the book at GodblestheLittleman.com.



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