

National News

Lack of Insurance Kills 18,000 Annually

Lack of reasonable health care kills 18,314 uninsured adults (8,219 in the 55-64 age group) in the United States each year, according to "Care Without Coverage: Too Little, Too Late," a report by the National Academies' Institute of Medicine.

The main findings of the report are that the 30 million working-age Americans without health insurance are more likely to: receive too little medical care and receive it too late; be sicker and die sooner; and receive poorer care when they are in the hospital, even for acute situations like a motor vehicle crash.

Uninsured people with colon or breast cancer, for example, face a 50% higher risk of death, due to delayed diagnosis. Uninsured trauma victims are 37% more likely to die of their injuries—even when in the hospital—because they receive fewer diagnostic and treatment services. And about 25% of adult diabetics without insurance for a year or more went without a checkup for two years, boosting their risk of death, blindness, and amputations resulting from poor circulation, according to the report.

Being uninsured also increased the risk of death and disability for chronically sick and mentally ill patients, poor people, and minorities.

Texas: 11 More Executions by August

The state of Texas was preparing to execute Napoleon Beazley, age 25, on May 28. Beazley was convicted of a murder stemming from a botched carjacking, when he was 17 years old. The former class president and football star, whose father was the first black City Council member of Grapeland, Texas, had no criminal record before his arrest, though he reportedly later told authorities he had sold crack and owned a gun. Beazley was convicted in the 1994 slaying of Texas businessman John Luttig, 63, the

father of Judge J. Michael Luttig of the Virginia-based U.S. Court of Appeals for the Fourth Circuit.

After seeing a significant decline in the number of executions in 2001, when Texas executed "only" 17 people, and, for the first time, slipped into second place behind Oklahoma, with 18, this year's numbers are approaching those of 2000, when George W. Bush's home state put 40 people to death—an all-time record. Of the 777 inmates executed since the resumption of the death penalty 25 years ago, Texas has carried out 278 lethal injections since 1982—more than one-third the nation's total executions. So far this year, Texas has carried out 12 executions, out of a national total of 28, with 11 more scheduled before the Summer is over, a rate of killing that promises to break the state's previous record.

The European Union, the American Bar Association, and Amnesty International, among others, have called for Beazley's life to be spared because of his age at the time of the crime; they have asked the Supreme Court to use Beazley's case to revisit the issue of whether the Constitution permits minors to be executed. Of the 38 states that allow capital punishment, 17 allow 16-year-olds to be executed; 16 set the age limit at 18; while five, including Texas, set it at 17.

1990s Left Households Deep in Debt in U.S.

The *Washington Post* for May 19 reported a new study of debt and middle-class households, recently released by the Consumer Federation of America (CFA) and the Credit Union National Association, showing that one-quarter of America's households came out of the 1990s "wealth-poor," meaning that they have net assets under \$10,000. This is a far larger portion of the population than the 10% of households that are "income-poor," earning below the poverty level of salaries and other sources of income.

Those households that lack net assets and are also income-poor, represent a growing number of American families, described by CFA Executive Director Stephen Brobeck as "only a layoff or emergency expen-

diture away from financial disaster."

The study found that the majority of "wealth-poor" households were young middle-class households, often with over \$50,000 a year in salaries, but also caught up in steep amounts of debt. As *Post* writer Albert Crenshaw noted, there is a wide gap between the perception of the 1990s as a "golden era" and the reality, in which "millions of households, including many with incomes well above the poverty line, were not able to save or invest in any meaningful way."

CBS's Rather Warns Of War Censorship

In an interview with BBC's "Newsnight" on May 17, the CBS news anchor warned of censorship during the post-Sept. 11 "war on terrorism." Dan Rather said: "It is an obscene comparison, . . . but you know there was a time in South Africa that people would put flaming tires around people's necks if they dissented. . . . And in some ways the fear is that you will be necklaced here; you will have a flaming tire of lack of patriotism put around your neck. . . . Now it is that fear that keeps journalists from asking the toughest of the tough questions, and to continue to bore in on tough questions so often.

"What we are talking about here—whether one wants to recognize it or not, or call it by its proper name or not—is a form of self-censorship. I worry that patriotism run amok will trample the very values that the country seeks to defend itself." Rather, who had received anthrax through the mail after his reporting on the devastation of Sept. 11, added, "Our biggest problem today is not anthrax. Our biggest problem is fear. . . .

"There has never been an American war, small or large, in which access has been so limited as this one." Rather blasted "the growing Hollywood-ization," epitomized by what he called "militainment"—entertainment programs about the military, which are produced in conjunction with the Department of Defense. This "militainment" has been offering "documentary makers" unprecedented access. For example, the producer of "Military Diaries," a 13-episode

documentary, was allowed to hand out 80 digital cameras to service personnel to record their “feelings” for broadcast, including during Operation Anaconda in Afghanistan. A spokesman for the Pentagon said that now they give more “combat footage” and general access to producers of “militainment” than they do to “reality TV” newscasters.

Book Reveals Hanssen’s ‘Family Values’

David A. Vise’s book *The Bureau and the Mole* documents in lurid detail the pornographic mind of FBI agent and confessed spy Robert Hanssen, who devoutly attended the ultra-conservative St. Catherine of Siena Catholic Church, along with Supreme Court Justice Antonin Scalia, former FBI Director Louis Freeh, U.S. Solicitor General Ted Olson, and Carlist Fernando Quijano.

The book confirms that Hanssen and his wife Bonnie, who teaches religion and morality at the Opus Dei Oakcrest School for girls, were both members of Opus Dei, the lay religious order founded in 1928, which flourished in Spain due to its close ties with the government of fascist dictator Franco. One of their daughters is now an Opus Dei numerary at the University of Dallas. Hanssen not only betrayed his country, but actively engaged in pornography, while at the same time advocating family values.

Vise documents that Hanssen sent nude photos of his wife to his high school friend Jack Hoschouer, when the latter served in Vietnam. From the mid- to late-1980s and into the 1990s, Hanssen arranged to have Hoschouer watch Hanssen and his wife make love, in person or via a secret video camera. Federal authorities discovered nude photographs of Hanssen’s wife on Hoschouer’s computer hard drive.

Hanssen also wrote and posted pornographic sex stories about his wife on “adult” Internet bulletin board sites in the late 1990s.

Hanssen’s favorite book was *The Man Who Was Thursday*, by the fascist Distributist G.K. Chesterton. Hanssen strongly identified with the main character in the book, Gabriel Syme, a poet turned policeman

turned spy. Hanssen read the book often and shared it with his family; two of Hanssen’s children are studying Chesterton as part of advanced degree programs.

Ohio Election Shock Dumps Free Trader

Democratic Congressman Tom Sawyer, an eight-term incumbent who has been a free-trade factioneer within his party, was dumped by voters in the Democratic primary election in his Akron/Youngstown, Ohio district on May 7. The district had been newly defined after the 2000 census.

Representative Sawyer, an insider in Joe Lieberman’s New Democratic Coalition faction, voted for the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) and other free-trade measures; even so, several national labor unions endorsed him because he was a consistent “winner” against Republicans who also voted for free trade. As a veteran incumbent, Sawyer had a huge campaign war chest. In a primary with several candidates, Sawyer had a six-to-one money advantage over his nearest opponent, State Sen. Tim Ryan, a 28-year-old Democratic legislator. Against Sawyer’s TV ad blitz, Ryan ran no television ads, but simply went to people locally, running a straight anti-free-trade, pro-labor campaign, endorsed by some local unions.

In Youngstown and other depression-wracked steel-mill communities in the Mahoning Valley, NAFTA and “fast track” are the only political issues. Ryan won with 41% to Sawyer’s 28%, with another anti-free-trade candidate getting the remaining 20%. Sawyer’s staff said the outcome was decided on the question of NAFTA and free trade.

Democrat James Traficant, a veteran Congressman recently convicted of graft and expelled from Congress, may run in the district as an independent, but Ryan seems the likely winner in the November general election, in a strong Democratic district. *Nation* magazine commented, “The message from Ohio was a blunt signal for Democrats who side with Wall Street against Main Street.”

THE BANKRUPTCY bill, were it to become law, would have “devastating” effects on more than 1.2 million women, and nearly 2 million children, each year, says Harvard Law Prof. Elizabeth Warren. More than 90% of women who file for bankruptcy, have been hit by some combination of unemployment, high medical bills, and divorce. In the pending legislation, credit-card and car-loan debt would be made “sacrosanct and payable forever,” taking priority over alimony or child support payments from ex-husbands, adversely affecting 200,000 women per year. The bill goes to the House-Senate conference on May 22.

THE BROOKLYN Bridge was shut down for one hour at 5 a.m. on May 22, as part of the heightened “terror alerts” in New York and nationally. The FBI had warned the city government on May 21 that there was a “general threat” to the city’s landmarks, including the Statue of Liberty and the bridge. The May 21 *New York Post* ran a picture spread on five areas of possible attack: bridges, subways, plane hijackings, biochemical attacks, and dirty bombs.

THE TERRORISM watch list of the United States added eight groups on three continents, on May 21. All eight were Islamic groupings, based in Libya (anti-government), Somalia, Tunisia, Pakistan, Kashmir, Bangladesh, Yemen, Malaysia, Indonesia, and the southern Philippines. Most allegedly seek the overthrow of those countries’ governments.

THE VIDEO-GAME trade is holding a show in Los Angeles, where the “big three”—Sony, Nintendo, and Microsoft—are slashing prices on their “game boxes” faster than the slasher monsters in the games, since they make the money on the software games themselves. Sony, now number one, revealed a marked defensiveness regarding the growing exposure of virtual violence, in announcing their new slogan: “Live in Your World. Play in Ours.”