

OPINION

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COMMENTARY | JAY AMBROSE

'Comprehensive,' a four-letter word

Obamacare appears to be headed for still another Supreme Court visit, and one reason is clear. It suffers from comprehensiveness, a legislative affliction viewed by many as remedy and fervently sought whether the subject is health care, financial institutions, immigration or you name it.

This is no small thing, this comprehensiveness.

It fills hearts with unrealized expectations, launches thousand of pages worth of bad laws and can easily diminish the national future.

How might this phenomenon be more fully described? Let's call it the presumptuous goal of being hurriedly exhaustive. We see it when our leaders try to do just about everything they think needs being done on a major matter through a solitary measure, aiming, in one fell swoop, to solve every related puzzle from A to Z. They generally let little get in the way, often not the Constitution and certainly not common sense advising that no group of politicians and experts has knowledge enough to pull this off, just vanity enough to try.

Then, after the passing of legislation few members of Congress had time or inclination to read and that may have been barely understandable anyway, we get the massive, suppressive, regulatory addenda of the bureaucrats. Before too much longer, there are boulders hurtling at you, your neighbor, everyone in sight - the inescapable avalanche of unintended consequences.

Obamacare is guilty of all the above and more. President Barack Obama admitted he was wrong in saying you could keep your insurance policy if you liked, but the additional truth is that this country won't keep much of anything in the health care world as it was. We've already seen some of the hurt that can ensue along with some positives that could have been more simply achieved, and we've seen confusion and court involvement. Now comes another court ruling that could ultimately mean no one will get an insurance subsidy in the 34 states that set up no exchanges themselves, simply relying on the federal government to do the job.

There's been lots of righteous indignation about that ruling, but the careful analyses of some make a persuasive case that, in order to get the states to set up their own exchanges, the law does prevent their residents from receiving subsidies if they turn to federal exchanges instead. Even if those analyses are right, some argue it would still be permissible for judges to junk this part of the law, which would be equivalent in principle to junking Congress. We may see if the Supreme Court does or does not like the idea. In the meantime, the subsidies will stay in effect and we can ponder how comprehensiveness bred befuddlement enough that Congress may well have enacted clauses unaware they were even there, which hardly makes them nil.

Now, for another legislative experiment demonstrating how devastating comprehensiveness can be, consider the 2,300-page, 2010 Dodd-Frank act re-regulating financial institutions in response to the 2008 financial crisis. It itself is a crisis, as Peter Wallison of the American Enterprise Institute makes clear in a Wall Street Journal piece. He says the act has lessened economic growth through an immensely fattened regulatory state beating up unproductively on the financial industry. It is so poorly written that bewildered, deadline-missing bureaucrats have only finished translating its verbiage into slightly more than half the required new rules, he shows. When we get the whole package, run for the woods.

The next comprehensive travesty some have in mind is immigration reform. If done prudently, one limited, well-considered, easily reviewable step a time, reform could lead to a virtual end of illegal entry, economic blessings as we profit from more emphasis on attracting those most likely to thrive and less hardship all around. Done the Obama way, the Democratic way, the everything-at-once way some Republicans also endorse, we could risk far-reaching harm.

How about quitting such nonsense?

Jay Ambrose is an op-ed columnist for McClatchy-Tribune.

COMMENTARY | STATE SEN. TOM O'MARA

Donations that save lives

In 2012, New York State approved a new law in tribute to a 12-year-old heart transplant survivor, Lauren Shields of Rockland County, in an effort to encourage more New Yorkers to become organ and tissue donors. At that time, New York ranked 47th nationally in state organ donation.

Lauren received her heart transplant in 2009, and she and her family became instrumental and well-known donor advocates. Her story was inspirational.

"I don't know who my donor was but I hope to find out some day. They are the angel that saved my life," Lauren said at the time the legislation named in her honor was first introduced in the State Legislature in 2011.

Her mother, Jeanne, added, "As a parent it was so difficult to watch my daughter's health go from perfect to failing so quickly. While she lay on life support, I looked out the window many nights wondering if it would be the night that she would be saved. Words cannot express how grateful we are to the donor's family."

Very simply, "Lauren's Law," which remains in effect, prohibits a driver's license application from being processed unless the organ donation section is filled out. Applicants have to check a box stating "yes" or "skip this question." Prior to the adoption of the new law, the application included an organ donation section, but filling it out was optional.



TOM O'MARA

As time goes on, Lauren's Law will undoubtedly have a greater and greater impact and remain a positive force in New York's overall strategy to encourage more organ and tissue donations, but according to a recently released study, "Far fewer New Yorkers have signed up as organ donors than Americans as a whole." In fact, the most recent statistics show that 22% of New Yorkers are in our donor registry compared to an average of 48% for states nationally. And we're far, far behind the state of Montana, for example, where 84% of adults have registered to donate.

The study also revealed that in 2013 more than 500 New Yorkers died awaiting a transplant. Nationally, there are more than 120,000 men, women and children waiting for organ transplants. Every 11 minutes, a new name is added to the national waiting list and, each day, 18 people die because of the lack of donated organs.

Based on statistics from the 2013 Donate Life America state-by-state comparison, New York State has the third-lowest rate of donor registry signees. And keep in mind New York has the third

most number of people - 10,150 - awaiting organs, behind only California and Texas.

Clearly, more needs to be done. This year's state budget included funding to transfer the administration of the state's donor registry to a not-for-profit organization. Eight of the top ten states in donor registration (each of which, by the way, has a 60%-plus rate of registration) have turned over the operation and promotion of their registries to not-for-profit organizations. Numerous other large states, including California, Texas, Illinois, and Florida, have also taken the step of enlisting a not-for-profit organization to operate their registries. The belief is that by contracting with a statewide not-for-profit organization, with a mission dedicated to saving and improving the quality of lives through organ, eye and tissue donations, New York State can increase enrollment by streamlining the registration process and creating new avenues for promotion.

It begins, in other words, with greater public awareness and education. Organ and tissue donation is one of the most life-saving actions that any individual can take. To find out more and to sign up, visit my Senate website, www.omara.nysenate.gov, and click on the "Donate Life" icon in the left-hand column of the home page.

You can also find out more from Donate Life America at www.donatelife.net, which

states, "Transplantation is one of the most remarkable success stories in the history of medicine. But despite continuing advances in medicine and technology, the need for organs and tissue is vastly greater than the number available for transplantation."

One more timely reminder on donations that save lives. The middle of summer is also an urgent time to donate blood. According to the American Red Cross, which this year is running a "100 Days of Summer. 100 Days of Hope" public awareness campaign, blood donations decrease significantly in the summer and shortages can reach critical and emergency levels.

As a result, numerous blood drives are taking place throughout the month of August across the Southern Tier and Finger Lakes regions. You can also go to my Senate website to find a link to the American Red Cross where you'll find a comprehensive listing of upcoming regional blood drives. Or contact any of our regional Red Cross chapters directly, including the Greater Steuben/Sullivan Trail Chapter (877-754-3711), Tompkins County Chapter (607-273-1900) and Yates County Chapter (315-536-6841).

State Sen. Tom O'Mara, R-Big Flats, represents New York's 58th Senate District, which includes Steuben, Chemung, Schuyler and Yates counties, and part of Tompkins County.

GUEST VIEW | ROLLAND KIDDER

Gas a source of real economic growth

If you live in New York City or the suburban counties that surround it, you need not worry that a drilling rig will pull up to explore for natural gas. Geologically, these areas are not known to produce it.

However, the geology of New York changes if you live west of the Catskills and south of the Adirondacks. Here, in the Appalachian Basin, Mother Nature deposited some thick shale deposits which can produce natural gas in great quantities. These natural gas resources in New York extend all the way to Syracuse, Buffalo and west to Chautauqua County where I live.

Since the 1970's, natural gas has been produced in upstate and was set to continue to grow until the state decided to shut it down by imposing a moratorium on permits. With new technology, wells could be drilled in

this area which are 30-50 times more productive than the old vertical gas wells drilled in the 1970's and 80's. Instead, we are told that casinos should become our economic lifeblood. Nothing is mentioned that casinos are only profitable when more people lose money than win, or that the average casino job in New York pays \$38,000 per year. Nor is it mentioned that in nearby Pennsylvania an average job in the natural gas extraction industry pays \$109,000 and the average job for natural gas "support activities" is paying \$74,000 per year! (Bureau of Labor Statistics for 2013)

It is true that some of the jobs created in finding and producing natural gas occur during the initial finding and exploration phase of the process. However, it is also true that the subsequent economic benefits

to local communities in the form of real property tax payments and production-related and support jobs extend long after the drilling rigs leave.

Politicians from downstate seem to get their common energy advice from people who are pushing a certain political agenda which promises that all energy can come solely from renewable resources. They dwell on a "star wars" scenario which contemplates huge polluters who are out to wreck the world. The environmental and economic benefits of natural gas are not mentioned though even its opponents continue to benefit from its use in heating and providing electricity to their homes.

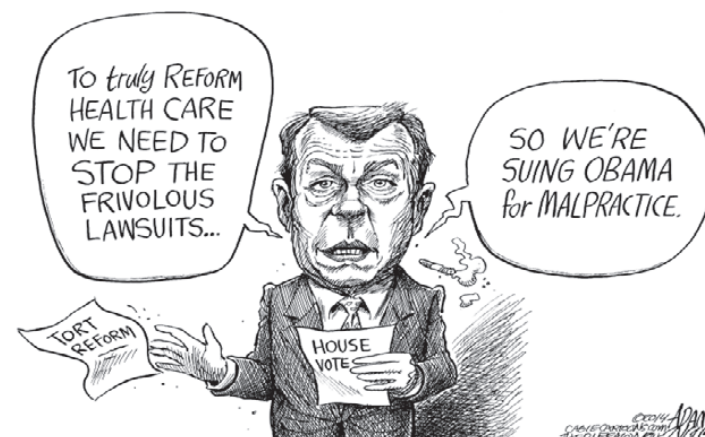
Those of us who live in "upstate" know that we will forever be in the minority with our urban cousins. (There are 95 Assemblymen living

south of the Tappan Zee Bridge and it only takes 76 to pass a bill.) However, it is in every New Yorker's best interest that the energy resources we have in the state be reasonably and prudently developed. Right now, the state imports virtually all of its natural gas from neighboring states.

My mother used to say, "The Lord helps those who help themselves." Shouldn't we New Yorkers help supply our own energy needs? Upstate needs the jobs, we all need the natural gas. If politicians want to help upstate, let upstate produce natural gas.

Rolland Kidder is a former Democratic member of the New York State Assembly (1975-82) and of its Environmental Conservation Committee; former owner and CEO of a Western New York natural gas exploration and production company.

ANOTHER VIEW



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 of the press, or the right of people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances.



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