Written by administrator Wednesday, 03 October 2007 02:15

I find it is disgusting when insecure people regurgitate the ancient fables of the Bible as a justification for their bigotry. I would like to address the Rock Island man who, in a letter to the *Quad-City Times* 

, was criticizing the print media for not mentioning "Christians" in their coverage of the court rulings regarding gay marriage in Iowa. I would remind him that our Constitution guarantees our freedom from a theocracy (in spite of the Bush administration).

Individual rights cannot be revoked because of interpretations of religious teachings. Why is it when we agree with a court's decision the judge is protecting our rights and the Constitution, but when we disagree, they become "activist judges"? Religious sects are not being compelled to perform ceremonies that are against their teaching, but government must guarantee equal rights and protection to all citizens, regardless of their beliefs, or interpretation of Biblical teaching. The lowa court has made the correct decision, and now it is the choice of "Christians" as to whether they do the right thing.

**David Fletcher** 

Rock Island

# **Don't Protect Insurance-Company Profits**

Congress recently voted to expand SCHIP and make affordable health insurance available to

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millions more kids while also strengthening Medicare. In response, alarmists have made the outrageous claim that expanding the State Children's Health Insurance Program (SCHIP) will " crowd out" private insurers. For decades, Medicare and SCHIP have made health care accessible to millions of Americans more efficiently than private insurers ever could. Protecting insurance-company profits must take a back seat to the health-care needs of real Americans.

Currently, taxpayers overpay private insurance companies providing Medicare Advantage plans an average of 12 percent over the cost of covered services. This amounts to \$54 billion in unnecessary costs over the next five years. The House version of SCHIP-expansion legislation ends these overpayments and shifts government's role in health care from corporate welfare agent to efficient administrator of affordable health-insurance programs for the people who need it most: kids, seniors, and people with disabilities.

The real question is why private insurance companies are averse to competing on a level playing field with Medicare and SCHIP. Perhaps this is because private insurance companies have consistently failed to make high quality, affordable insurance available to working families.

Today, more children than ever need the affordable health insurance SCHIP provides. The Census Bureau recently reported that for the sixth year in a row the number of uninsured has risen, with the number of children without health insurance growing to 8.3 million. This means that at least one in nine American children will be uninsured if SCHIP is not expanded.

Citizen Action/Illinois applauds the SCHIP expansion and Medicare protection passed by the U.S. House of Representatives. These programs work and are a good investment of taxpayer dollars.

**Katie Coombes** 

Written by administrator Wednesday, 03 October 2007 02:15

Organizing Director, Citizen Action/Illino	<b>Organizing</b>	Director,	Citizen	Action/Illino	is
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Chicago
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### Tax at a Criminal Level

The U.S. Congress passed a revamp of the SCHIP federal insurance plan for children and the poor. But in some cases being poor can mean making up to \$82,000 a year and still have coverage. Partially paying for this all is a proposed 61-cent-per-pack federal-excise-tax increase on cigarettes.

Here we go again.

It is beginning to look like government has taken on the tactics of the very people they love to hate and put in prison: drug dealers.

Isn't it the nature of drug dealers to keep raising the price of their product, after their consumer has gained an "appreciation" of it, to insane levels? Welcome to America in the new millennium, a nanny scolding state that treats the freedom to smoke and smokers like toxic waste. Smokers should be among the most celebrated groups around because they are paying a higher percentage of *your* bills!

Prisons are built to protect good people from the bad, as it should be. But what happens when the policymakers act like criminals and tax at a criminal level? Where are the prisons for

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them, and who will put them there? This behavior is wrong on so many levels. But who will slam on the brakes? What happens when the poor, the ones who struggle to put food on the table and a roof over their heads, get smacked by every taxing authority above them by never-ending "feel good" and healthful excise-tax increases on tobacco? Too much of this kind of health is a hazard to it. Shall we just quit playing with words and tell it like it is? This is a *Quit smoking, damn it!* tax proposal. Where is free will in all of this?

Every July 4 we as a nation celebrate Independence Day, a day to remember the freedoms America affords, if you can afford them. Freedom means very little if lawmakers on *all* levels say you're free but pass laws and levy taxes that squeeze you 'til you have little choice but to live their version of your life. Government spends fast and loose, and if things get tight, they hit up smokers first. And if you don't like it, quit!

A government for the people? Smokers say, " With friends like this, who needs enemies? "

**Dave Pickrell** 

**President, Smokers Fighting Discrimination** 

Katy, Texas