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## OPINION

To Build A Better World, Start In Your Own Community

## EDITORIAL

Protect  
birds,  
honeybees  
and bats

Environmental dangers on a grand scale make headlines, but it is an environmental threat on a small scale that may have an immediate effect on your life.

If we fail to comprehend the value of pollinators — bees, bats and birds — we stand to lose the abundance of fruits, nuts and vegetables we enjoy.

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A study released last week by the National Research Council noted that populations of pollinators are in decline.

In the past 20 years, the American honeybee population has fallen 30 percent, in part because of Varroa mites that suck the blood from bees and tracheal mites that suffocate them.

Likewise, bat populations are succumbing to the loss of habitat, in part because of vandalism in caves.

Hummingbird populations are in decline, also, because of the loss of habitat in Mexico.

The importance of these animals cannot be overstated. American honeybees alone pollinate more than 90 domestic commercial crops, and worldwide, animal pollinators fertilize more than 187,500 types of flowering plants, according to the NRC report.

The Longmont-based National Honey Board — which promotes honey consumption — continues to finance research into the control of mite populations in bees, recently testing a fungus that kills the Varroa mites. But that method, while successful in controlled settings, has failed to affect the mites in natural hive conditions.

The NRC recommends the following actions to halt the decline of key pollinators:

- an annual census of domestic honeybee populations;
- prohibit the introduction of new parasites that can be introduced with imported bees; and
- develop strains of bees resistant to pests and diseases.

Bees, bats and pollinating birds are rarely noticed, but they are critical to the health of America's agricultural industry. As the beneficiaries of their work, humans must work quickly to see that these animals are protected.

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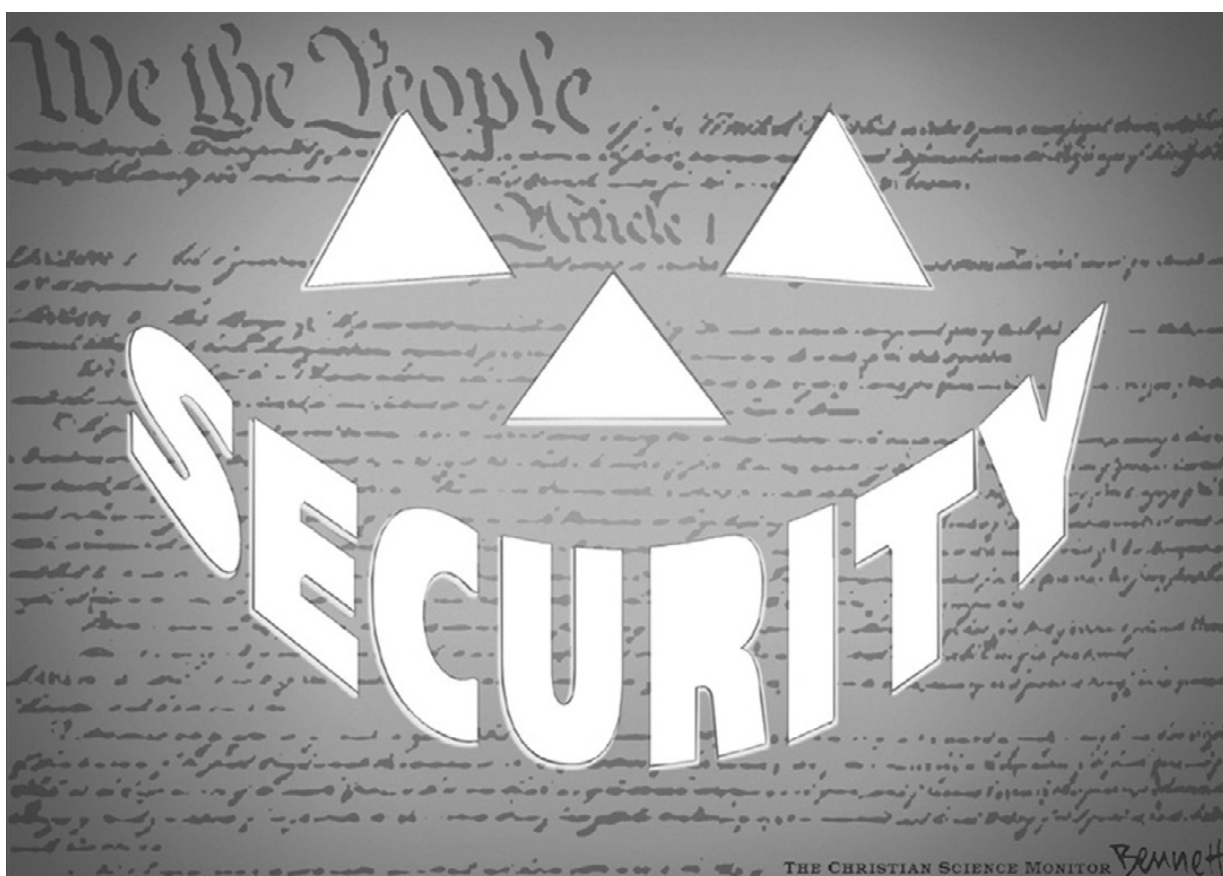
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## Health care for America

By David Doman

Special to The Baltimore Sun

Over the past five years of the Bush presidency, Republican congressional majority and political ascendancy of the religious right, the term "values" has gained currency in our national lexicon. So-called social values issues such as gay marriage, "intelligent design" and the Terri Schiavo case have helped to determine close elections.

During this time, I have been dismayed, as an American and as a physician, that little sustained emphasis has been placed on a "value" issue worthy of our national focus: the lack of health-care access for all Americans.

The case against our great nation is profound. We provide our citizens less health-care access than many Westernized nations. Census data from 2005 show that more than 46.6 million Americans are uninsured. Every year, more than 2 million uninsured Americans are financially ruined by the unexpected cost of profound illness or injury. According to the Institute of Medicine, more than 18,000 Americans annually die needlessly because of a lack of health-care access.

To be fair, bipartisan federal failures for decades have allowed this problem to develop. However, neglect by the Bush White House and Republican Congress has made this national crisis much worse. Indeed, since President Bush's first inauguration, the number of uninsured has risen by more than 6 million.

Bush's recent advocacy of free-market health savings accounts is a Band-Aid solution to a

problem requiring major surgery. The Government Accountability Office determined that, at best, 5 million Americans would benefit from health savings accounts. Bush, by focusing on these accounts, implies that the other 41 million uninsured Americans have "no value."

The Iraq war raises an interesting contrast. Part of the American long-term military plan for that country's reconstruction is the development of a nationwide network of 144 health-care clinics to allow health-care access for all Iraqi citizens, according to media reports.

All people should have access to basic health care. But why is this fundamental human value a component of our foreign policy and not a prominent part of our core domestic agenda?

The objection will be made that we can't afford to pay for universal health care. I would note that we are already paying — but in the worst possible way.

The Congressional Budget Office has estimated that a basic health-care access plan for America's uninsured would cost about \$90 billion annually. That is a lot of money — until you consider the corollary to the CBO analysis: that the annual cost of not insuring all Americans is more than \$150 billion in lost worker productivity and tax revenue.

We need to phase in a two-tiered health-care system in our country, analogous to our education system.

low the voting instructions. But then, maybe a few people also preferred New Coke.

Candidates who use recorded campaign messages must assume that Americans are easily swayed. I can't speak for the more than 142 million registered voters in this country, but my vote can't be influenced by a machine, either political or telephonic. Let me rephrase that: My vote can't be favorably influenced by a machine. I do maintain a certain bias against candidates who annoy me with junk phone calls.

Three years ago, along with millions of other Americans, I added my phone number to the Federal Trade Commission's "do not call" registry. That move has reduced the number of calls at the dinner hour to near zero. We can now be fairly certain of getting through the evening meal without enduring an attempt to pitch insurance, magazine subscriptions, cemetery plots or countless other goods and services that I would never consider buying from a telephone sales rep.

When the system was established, an exception was granted for political messages, ostensibly because the law is limited to commercial speech and political discourse

has First Amendment protections. Somehow it's not surprising that the politicians who crafted the rules exempted themselves. Because politicians make the rules, it's highly unlikely that they would outlaw unsolicited calls from their own ranks. I really don't have a problem with the "do not call" exemption granted to politicians. If any official (elected or wannabe) wishes to phone me, I'd be happy to engage in a discussion of the issues facing the country or my neighborhood. I'm perfectly willing to talk with candidates about policy questions, whether or not I agree with the positions they've taken.

I expect my phone to ring frequently in the days remaining before the Nov. 7 election. So I hereby extend an open invitation to my senators, my congressional representative and candidates for any office in my area to call me. You already have my phone number. But be prepared to talk with me, not to me. If I pick up the phone and hear your recorded voice, I'll hang up — just as I hung up on the guy selling cemetery plots.

Joseph Lisanti, formerly the editor in chief of Standard & Poor's weekly newsletter, the Outlook, is a financial and business writer.

Re: "Giants' shot on shoestring and a prayer," Oct. 13, Page D1  
Thank you for your article on the movie "Facing the Giants." Thank you to Twin Peaks Theatre, for being one of the 20 theatres in the state to show the movie. Our family liked the movie so well, we went twice. It was so refreshing to take my teenage sons to a sports movie without the usual crummy language, bathroom humor and sexual scenes.

## Universal access a true-values issue

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Judicial  
activism  
hurts our  
courts

By Tom Fitton

Judicial Watch

"The breadth and intensity of rage currently being leveled at the judiciary may be unmatched in American history," former Supreme Court Justice Sandra Day O'Connor recently lamented in a Wall Street Journal editorial. "The ubiquitous 'activist judges' who 'legislate from the bench' have become central villains on today's domestic political landscape."

Although she may need a history lesson, Justice O'Connor knows a thing or two about legislating from the bench. By the time she retired, Justice O'Connor had completed a transition from prudent conservative to full-fledged judicial activist, often casting the deciding vote in favor of issues such as abortion-on-demand, race-based preferences and homosexual rights, to name a few. With help from her liberal allies in the Court, Justice O'Connor repeatedly interpreted the Constitution according to her personal whims.

And she wonders why the American people are upset?

Liberal judicial activists "find" rights where none exist in the U.S. Constitution. They manage social policy through judicial fiat. They use phrases like "evolving standards of decency" to justify their unconstitutional actions. And it hurts the judiciary.

When judges legislate from the bench, not only are they overstepping their authority and violating the separation of powers among the branches of government, but they are also robbing citizens of their right to govern themselves.

In many areas of public policy, especially those involving culture and morality, democratic decisions made by the people are too often scrapped in favor of the political agendas of individual judges. Look no further than the decision this week by the New Jersey Supreme Court, which, through an act of raw judicial power, discovered that the New Jersey Constitution, written 60 years ago, requires that homosexual couples have a right to all the rights and benefits of marriage.

The court has given the legislature 180 days to rewrite laws governing marriage, but why bother? The laws have effectively been rewritten. As one delighted gay activist noted, when choosing between homosexual marriage and civil union, "(Legislators) get to decide between chocolate chip and double chocolate chip."

Judicial activism, in one form or another, has been a factor in American jurisprudence for some time. Roe v. Wade, the "Magna Carta of judicial activism" according to the Wall Street Journal's John Fund, is now more than 30 years old. But there can be no question that incidents of judicial activism are a continuing problem. Liberals, unable to persuade the American people at the ballot box, now must rely on sympathetic judges to advance or protect their agenda. And too many judges are obliging.

"It is part of the new philosophy of the Constitution," said Justice Antonin Scalia, perhaps the Supreme Court's most outspoken conservative, during a recent speech. "And when you push the courts into (politics), and when they leap into it, they make themselves politically controversial. And that's what places their independence at risk."

Judicial activism robs the judiciary of the respect of its citizens. When judges continue to impose their personal politics from the bench, as the New Jersey Supreme Court has done, they are no longer "independent" arbiters of justice. They become unelected politicians in black robes, entitled to no more respect than elected politicians.

If judges continue to play the role of "central villains," crafting legislation at the expense of the Constitution and the democratic process, then the moral and institutional authority of the courts will dissipate. And the American people will become increasingly frustrated. With the courts, less is more. Less activism and more humility will mean more respect from the people and a stronger constitutional system.

Tom Fitton is president of Judicial Watch, a non-partisan educational foundation that fights government corruption. Visit www.judicialwatch.org for more information.

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