OPINION

"Which do the residents of Madison want? To dig up the streets again, or to have the unsightly wires overhead?"

JUDY SCHWARTZ, Your Views

TUESDAY

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OUR OPINION

Leavitt should leave it alone

ou'd think it would be easy to convince the federal government to maintain Wisconsin's SeniorCare prescription drug program.

That's because Wisconsin's 5-year-old program for lower-income people age 65 and older actually saves the federal government money.

SeniorCare costs the federal government hundreds of dollars less, per participant, than the federal government would otherwise spend on its own program, called Medicare Part D.

But instead of thanking Wisconsin for the savings, the feds are threatening to pull the plug on SeniorCare and force 110,000 Wisconsin participants into the more complicated and costly federal plan.

The U.S. Health and **Human Services** secretary should allow the SeniorCare prescription drug plan in Wisconsin to

continue.



That's wrong.

And that's why U.S. Health and Human Services Secretary Mike Leavitt should pledge to keep SeniorCare going when he visits Wisconsin this week.

Wisconsin officials of every political stripe are asking Leavitt to grant a

three-year extension for SeniorCare. Without the extension, SeniorCare would end on June 30.

Instead of sacking the successful and popular SeniorCare plan, federal officials should use Wisconsin's experience to improve Medicare Part D.

SeniorCare is superior to Medicare Part D because it is easier to understand,

requires less paper work and covers more cost for the vast majority of participants. SeniorCare saves money by aggressively negotiating with the pharmaceutical industry to get volume discounts on drugs.

SeniorCare costs Wisconsin taxpayers around \$40 million a year. But the extra cost to the state, supplemented by the dollars the federal government would spend anyway, has been worth it. More people living on tight household budgets in Wisconsin have been able to afford their medications during their golden

Leavitt plans to visit Milwaukee on Wednesday to tout the Bush administration's laudable efforts to encourage more hospitals to release price and quality information to the public. Leavitt will highlight efforts in Wisconsin that are working to make the health care industry more transparent and efficient.

But Leavitt shouldn't stop there. He should acknowledge that SeniorCare is working in Wisconsin. And he should pledge to let SeniorCare continue.

Wisconsin had been a national leader in helping its oldest and most vulnerable residents afford prescription medication.

Leavitt should let Wisconsin continue to lead.

Wisconsin State Journal

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BROOKS

Congress for 14 years. He was

the energy secretary (energy's

He's a successful two-term

governor who was re-elected

with 69 percent of the vote in

He was U.N. ambassador.

New Mexico, a red state.

Moreover, he's a governor

with foreign policy experi-

He worked in the State De-

partment. He's made a sec-

tators like Saddam, Castro

and Kim Jong Il. He negoti-

ated a truce in Sudan.

ond career of negotiating on

special assignments with dic-

Most of all, he's not a sena-

tor. Since 1961, 40 sitting sen-

ators have run for president

and their record is 0-40. A

senator may win this year,

but you'd be foolish to as-

When it comes to policy

for president. He served in

kind of vital).

o there I was, sitting in my office, quietly con-templating suicide. I

was watching a cattle call of

Democratic presidential can-

didates on C-Span. In their

five-minute speeches, they

were laying it on thick with

cliches of the Our Children

Are Our Future variety.

poll-tested, consultant-driven

The thought of having to

spend the next two years lis-

tening to this drivel set me

wondering if it was literally

Then Bill Richardson

walked onstage. He was

dressed differently — in

possible to be bored to death.

slacks and a sports jacket. He

told jokes that didn't seem re-

peated for the 5,000th time.

human, unlike some of his

over-polished peers. He gave

the best presentation, by far.

Richardson does this well at

imagine him as a leading can-

picture him rising toward the

top. He is, after all, the most

experienced person running

When you think that way, it

didate for the nomination?

becomes absurdly easy to

entered my head: What if

forums for the next 10

months? Is it possible to

Then a heretical question

He seemed recognizably



YOUR VIEWS

Streetcar or trolley? Both bad choices

Thich is it — a streetcar or trolley? It seems that people are using streetcar and trolley interchangeably. They are not.

Webster's dictionary defines streetcar as "a large coach or car on rails that provides public transportation along certain streets," and trolley car as "an electric streetcar that gets its motive power from an overhead wire."

Which do the residents of Madison want? To dig up the streets again, or to have the unsightly wires overhead? Some choice!

— Judy Schwartz, Darlington, formerly of Madison

More on public finance resolution

The following should be added to the resolution to set up a committee to propose a method of public financing for Madison political campaigns:

• Committee membership: The three organizations already named to have participants (Wisconsin Democracy Campaign, Common Cause, League of Women Voters) are strong adherents of the concept of public financing. Who will be there to propose a system that protects the taxpayers? Let's add a member from the Wisconsin Taxpayers Alliance or similar organization.

• Public hearings: The resolution should state that the committee should hold two public hearings, one at the beginning to solicit ideas, and one after they have published tentative recommendations. The best way to get full public support is to have public input

• Referendum: The committee should be directed by the resolution to discuss and recommend whether a referendum should be held. In this precedent-setting endeavor, it will be extremely important that the process has maximum public input and results in a measure that has broad measurable support.

— Paul Malischke, Madison

Murtha seeks to protect troops

U.S. Rep. Jack Murtha's legislation is meant to assure that any troops sent to Iraq and Afghanistan are fully trained and equipped. It is insanity to call such an idea "anti-troops." In fact, the opposite is anti-troops. Would we knowingly send men and women into harm's way without the proper equipment or the

training they need to survive and succeed? The inadequate body armor that cost the

The Democrat most likely to rise is Richardson

positions, he's perfectly posi-

tioned - not by accident -

pendents. As governor, he's

covered the normal Demo-

teacher pay, he expanded

children's health insurance,

he began programs to stall

global warming, he built a

But he also cut New Mexi-

co's top income tax rate from

8.2 percent to 4.9 percent. He

stimulate economic growth.

completely invulnerable on

ports free trade, with reserva-

On cultural issues, Richard-

handed out tax credits to

(He's the only Democrat

the tax cut issue.) He sup-

balanced the budget — he

son has the distinct advan-

tage of not setting off any

Boys, not Janis Joplin.

Eugene McCarthy.

culture war vibes. He was in

college in the late 1960s, but

he was listening to the Beach

He was playing baseball in

the Cape Cod League, not

going to Woodstock. He idol-

ized Hubert Humphrey, not

Richardson is actually

something of a throwback pol

- a Richard Daley or Fiorello

tions. And he not only

also ran a surplus.

cratic bases: He raised

light rail line.

to carry liberals and inde-

lives of so many U.S. soldiers has been well documented. But the military has also borrowed equipment from units stationed at home to meet the needs of those overseas. All this does is make the Armed Forces less prepared in the event of another military threat around the world.

Murtha's legislation is meant to prevent such things from happening. Every official who opposes this bill is in effect saying we should send our forces into a war zone without the tools and talent they need to get home safely, let alone get the job done.

- Michael Kruse, Madison

What if Bush girls deployed?

I just came back from where my son is stationed. I watch "The View" daily and heard a clip about a gag order on the media regarding the facts about our troops in Iraq and Afghanistan. The reason? Because it will cut down on enlistments.

The sooner this administration gets out, the better. What else are they not telling us? I'm reading a book called "Down Range to Iraq and Back," which explains things that affect our loved ones mentally. Why don't we hear more of this from the president?

Sending our troops back more than two or three times is really too much. They come home, try to get their lives back, and are sent over again. My son says that if we pull out now, his comrades died or were injured for nothing. He is all for finishing it for that rea-

Mr. President, stop listening to your daddy who started this years ago, and let our troops come home. Send your daughters to the front line and we'll see how long we last over there.

La Guardia

as a moral

this year.

paign, he has some advan-

tages as well. He won't have

the \$150 million war chests

that Hillary Clinton and Bar-

ack Obama will have. On the

fundraising on that scale re-

paigns may be bloated, over-

ardson has the potential to be

managed and remote, Rich-

Furthermore, he could

generate waves of free media

the way that John McCain did

in 2000. He's a reporters' fa-

vorite — candid, accessible

real person, not canned. I

advisers. I'm a little over-

and fun to be around. "I'm a

don't have a whole bunch of

weight, though I'm trying to

dress better," he told me last

week. So far, rumors of per-

sonal peccadilloes are un-

gigantic apparatuses that

quires. While those cam-

small and nimble.

other hand, he won't have the

who doesn't

treat politics

crusade. That

might appeal

and bolts of

On the nuts

— Cheryl Lytle, Poynette

Finally, there is the matter

of his personal style. This is

baggy-faced, sloppy (we like

his biggest drawback. He's

our leaders well groomed),

shamelessly ambitious and

once a century or so the

Democratic Party actually

erage person would like to

have a beer with. Bill Rich-

ardson is that kind of guy.

touchy-feely (to a fault), a

little rough-edged and com-

fortably mass-market. He's

doesn't hurt that he's His-

panic and Western.

Budweiser, not microbrew. It

In short, when you try to

think forward to next winter,

you see that this campaign

will at some point leave the

"American Idol"/"Celebrity

Clinton-Obama psychodrama

may cease to fascinate while

the sheer intensity of cover-

age will create a topsy-turvy

wouldn't count him out. At

the moment, he's the candi-

Brooks writes for the New York Times.

I wouldn't bet a paycheck

series of revolutions.

on Richardson. But I

date most likely to rise.

Deathmatch" phase. The

He is garrulous, amusing,

inelegant. On the other hand,

nominates somebody the av-

GUEST COLUMN

Please help end senior

By RITA GIOVANNONI

n March 1965, the U.S. House of Representatives passed the first version of the "Older Americans Act," which was signed into law four months later by Lyn-

don Johnson. This significant legislation created the Administration on Aging and authorized programs to assist older adults to live their lives with

Giovannoni

honor and dignity. Meals on Wheels is one of those programs. Every March, Independent

Living Inc. celebrates March for Meals, an initiative of the Meals on Wheels Association of America, to raise awareness of the growing problem of senior hunger, recruit volunteers to deliver meals, and raise funds to help subsidize meals for people who can't afford them.

Living delivered more than 53,300 meals throughout Dane County, 6,000 more than in 2005.

In 2006, Independent

Helping us to achieve these goals this year are the Wisconsin National Guard, Professor Mike Leckrone and the UW Marching Band, who will be delivering meals in various neighborhoods.

Mayors Dave Cieslewicz of Madison, Joe Chase of Sun Prairie, Jon Hochkammer of Verona, Doug Zwank of Middleton, Robb Kahl of Monona and Tom Clauder of Fitchburg are all participating in "Mayors for Meals" and will deliver meals in their communities.

Hunger is an emotional and physical stress on the elderly that can cause serious health problems and a substantial loss in the quality of life. Our Evening Meals on

Wheels program promotes their nutritional well being and enables them to stay independent longer through better health.

Each weeknight, more than 200 nutritious, chef-prepared meals are delivered by caring volunteers to these vulnerable community members. In 2006, Independent Living delivered more than 53,300 meals throughout Dane County, 6,000 more than in 2005.

This service is not only a source of quality nutrition and a safety check. For many recipients, it also provides the only human contact they will have that day. I urge you to participate in

March for Meals. Volunteers are needed to deliver Evening Meals on Wheels throughout Dane County, but particularly in the Deerfield, Sun Prairie and Cottage Grove areas.

You can also support March for Meals by sending a contribution to Independent Living Inc., 815 Forward Drive, Madison. The telephone number is 274-7900, or you can donate by visiting www.indepenliving.com.

March for Meals is a team effort among Independent Living staff and volunteers, the many businesses and individuals whose generous giving has made it possible, and Midwest Family Broadcasting and WISC-TV.

Please help us end senior hunger in our communities.

Giovannoni is the chief executive officer for Independent Living Inc., Madison.

SEND US YOUR VIEWS

What's on your mind? We welcome your views of 200 words or less. Submissions may be edited; not all can be published.

E-mail

wsjopine@madison.com. No attachments, please.

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founded.

Richardson

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