The Looming Health Insurance Disaster for 2018

Congress seems determined to make healthcare either unavailable or unaffordable for most families on the Eastern Shore. Both the House bill (which even President Trump says is “mean”) and the Senate version will cut off access to Medicaid in coming years. They also propose to cut money to help with the opioid drug crisis, eliminate many safeguards, and drop coverage for maternal care and emergency room care. At the same time they eliminate the requirement for people to buy health insurance and cut taxes that helped pay for the Affordable Care Act (Obamacare), both of which will send insurance premiums higher.

Our own Congressional Representative, Andy Harris, has basically supported these changes. And the Democrats in Congress condemn all this, but they have not come out with their own proposals to fix Obamacare.

It seems clear that we need to pull together in the 2018 elections, regardless of party, to elect someone who will actively fight for the needs of the Eastern Shore—on healthcare and in other areas as well.

EPA Cuts Restoration Funds: The Future of the Chesapeake Bay Is in Doubt

The Environmental Protection Agency has long supported efforts to protect and restore the Chesapeake Bay. But the current head of the Agency, Scott Pruitt, has proposed to eliminate all funds for the Bay in next year’s budget. He has also fired all of the agency’s scientific advisory boards and cut technical staff; instead, he is getting his advice from representatives of the oil and chemical industries. Would you like to see oil rigs drilling in the Bay? All limits on fishing and crabbing, or on farm run-off into the Bay, dropped?
Could a Warming Climate Submerge the Eastern Shore?

Climate change is hard to grasp, but rising sea levels are much more tangible. Scientists studying the frozen ice sheets that cover Antarctica report in the National Geographic that glaciers there are now melting "crazy fast" because of the warming ocean. Last week a gigantic piece of that ice broke off, creating an iceberg the size of Rhode Island—a trillion tons of ice.

The best scientific estimates are that sea levels could rise 3 to 7 feet by the year 2100, but the melting won't stop there. Scientists agree that the collapse of many major Antarctic glaciers is now unstoppable. Some 125,000 years ago, when the Earth was only slightly warmer than today, global sea levels were 20-30 feet higher than at present. Most of the Eastern shore is less than 30 feet above current sea-level. So while the next several generations that live here may be ok, the Eastern Shore is likely to disappear beneath the waves in the 22nd or 23rd century, along with Annapolis, Baltimore, and other coastal cities around the world—a consequence of the heat-trapping gases that human activities release into the atmosphere.

Maybe solar panels and electric automobiles wouldn't be so bad, after all—and maybe we should ask our government to take climate change a bit more seriously.

Community Solidarity is Key to Creating More Jobs

A nationwide study of communities that were successful in overcoming adversity and jump-starting their economies and their civic health, reported in the Atlantic Monthly, found that they had several things in common. Foremost was community solidarity and the ability to reach past political labels or ethnic differences. That coupled with strong local leadership helped hundreds of rural communities turn themselves around, attract or invent new sources of livelihood, and feel good about themselves again. (Having a local craft brewery seemed to help, too).

Certainly the stalemate at the national level—marked by a deep freeze in partisan relations—is a strong example of how not to make progress. What could we do on the Eastern Shore to get our communities and our Counties moving again? Maybe just start talking to each other?

Fast Internet Access for the Eastern Shore

Kent County is starting to enjoy the benefits of fiber to the home and to the business. In particular, a number of new businesses are looking to relocate or expand into the county to take advantage of the very high speed (gigabit) connectivity. Queen Anne’s County is close to signing a similar contract. But the core resource—a ring of hundreds of dark fibers—runs all the way down the Eastern Shore and over to Virginia Beach. So other ES counties could bestir themselves and reap the same benefits. Ask your county commissioners what they are doing about this, why your county isn’t planning to join the internet age and reap the entertainment and economic benefits too.