

# **Newsletter of the LCHR and BRCHR**

Louisiana Council on Human Relations and the  
Baton Rouge Council on Human Relations

Dr. Paul Y. Burns, Editor

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This newsletter contains two notices and some thoughts for the year 2014.

## **I. Notices:**

### ***A. Next LCHR Board Meeting***

The LCHR will hold its next board meeting on January 25, 2014 at the home of Mr. Anthony Navarre in Lafayette.

### **B. Your Dues May be Due**

At the last LCHR Board meeting, it was decided that since the Annual Meeting of the Council is held in June, dues will become due on July 1<sup>st</sup> of each year. Since the BRCHR often holds a joint Annual Meeting with the LCHR, this same policy will apply for the dues of the BRCHR. Thus, if you have not paid dues since June 2013, your dues are now due.

**See the last page for submitting dues.**

Several members of the LCHR and the BRCHR have given financial support beyond the requested \$15.00 for single membership or \$20.00 for family membership. We are very grateful for that support. Your dues are used mainly for the cost of Newsletter mailings and for the purchase of plaques for persons being honored at the Annual Humanitarian Award Programs (held by both the LCHR and the BRCHR).

## **II. “Thinking Out Loud” for Some Issues to be Faced in 2014 by James E. Cross**

The website <http://c2.com/cgi/wiki?ThinkingOutLoud> says “Thinking out loud is the act of expressing in recoverable and external form new thoughts which you encourage your mind into exploring. Often these

lead to new avenues of thought. When you think out loud you detect and explore ideas and concepts which are either unknown, or as yet unexplored. This exercise can be the first step in moving from a mental doldrums into new paths of exploration.” As such, this is to encourage you to permit your mind to explore new and creative thought paths. I am thinking out loud.

### **A. Concerning the War on Poverty**

President Reagan once gave a speech where, in effect, he said “The government declared War on Poverty and poverty won the war”. Some would say that this is not a war that government should be fighting but it should be a war fought under the banner of a free enterprise system. Reagan reportedly said "government is not a solution to our problem; government is the problem". President Lincoln said “The legitimate object of government, is to do for a community of people, whatever they need to have done, but can not do, at all, or can not, so well do, for themselves - in their separate, and individual capacities. In all that the people can individually do as well for themselves, government ought not to interfere." Lincoln clearly recognized that government can play an important role in society. Considering the statements from Reagan and Lincoln, perhaps a combined force of the government and the free enterprise system might win some battles against poverty. It is encouraging that politicians who continuously say what they will do to make the middle class more affluent are occasionally mentioning some things they will do to assist those who are living in poverty. It has been mentioned that many of the working poor qualify for and receive food stamps, housing, and other government support. Some

people argue that since these working poor are receiving public support in this manner, why not raise the minimum wage to assist them in this manner. This argument should be evaluated.

## **B. Concerning War and Peace**

An army officer teaching a ROTC (Reserve Officers Training Corps) course for college students said we can expect a war every ten or fifteen years or so. He said that if you have a highly trained military force and they don't have an enemy to fight, they will eventually begin fighting among themselves. Considering this, what can we expect from our military with the war in Afghanistan winding down? Do we need to create a "paper tiger" for the military to fight? How about fighting a "War on Poverty"? Well, maybe not. Then, how about fighting domestic and world disasters? What do you think about this idea? First, have the National Guards in the various states fully prepared to respond to domestic disasters (such as Katrina) and then have a dozen or so aircraft carriers stationed in the oceans fully prepared to respond to any disaster in the world. Just "thinking out loud".

## **C. Another Dimension of the Affordable Health Care Act and the Politics of Health Care**

The various views we hear on the Affordable Health Care Act (ACA) seem to be presented by well prepared lawyers who are experts at presenting only one side of an issue, the side for which they are being paid to advocate. But we need to move beyond politics when it comes to health care. Do we believe that Universal Health Care is a concept we should be espousing to implement? If not, we should all agree that health care needs to be improved.

One issue that has stirred up a lot of "political hay" is the Grandfather provision of the ACA that permits people to keep certain plans. Concerning the Grandfather provision, the following information can be found at the website:

<https://www.healthcare.gov/what-if-i-have-a-grandfathered-health-plan/>

"If you are covered by a plan that existed March 23, 2010, your plan may be "grandfathered." You may not get some rights and protections that other plans offer.

Grandfathered plans are those that were in existence on March 23, 2010 and haven't been changed in ways that substantially cut benefits or increase costs for consumers. Insurers must notify consumers with these policies that they have a grandfathered plan. ... **Individual grandfathered plans** can't newly enroll people after March 23, 2010 and have that new enrollment be considered a grandfathered policy. But insurance companies can continue to offer the grandfathered plans to people who were enrolled before that date. **An insurance company can also decide to stop offering a grandfathered plan.** If it does, it must provide notice 90 days before the plan ends and offer enrollees other available coverage options. "

It was the "Grandfather" provision of the law that lead President Obama (with agreement from Senator Landrieu) to say that if you like your health plan, you can keep it, period. It is obvious that the President spoke a bit too fast. In that the law (as shown above) states that "An insurance company can also decide to stop offering a grandfathered plan", the President should have qualified his statement by saying "providing the insurance company does not decide to stop offering the plan". Because many insurance companies decided to stop offering plans that don't meet the provisions of the ACA, the President has been said to be dishonest and is a liar. Concerning why these plans are being canceled, an article from the Washington Post states the following: "These cancellations are, essentially, a lot of grandfathered plans exiting the insurance marketplace. From an insurance company's vantage point, grandfathered plans are a bit of a dead end: They can't enroll new subscribers and are really constrained in their ability to tweak the benefit package or cost-sharing structure. There's not a whole lot of business sense, for a managed care company, in maintaining a health plan that doesn't meet the health law's new requirements."

With the campaign season swiftly approaching, we will continue to hear a lot about health care plans being canceled. It is said that all is fair in love and war, and perhaps we can add politics. But, can't we all get along? Just thinking out loud.

## D. Concerning Education

Louisiana has a low rate of students passing standardized exams. A proposed response to this is to raise the standards. It seems that this will increase the failure rate.

**Danielle Dreilinger, NOLA.com | The Times-Picayune, wrote** "Vouchers, Common Core and MFP were among the buzzwords that mattered in Louisiana schools during 2013. He wrote: "**Common Core** -- The set of nationally shared academic standards, adopted without fanfare in 2010, went from unknown to inescapable. Students returned to school in the fall with new curricula, new tests and often photocopied packets to stand in for textbooks that don't yet exist. Teachers raced to keep up. The state Board of Elementary and Secondary Education refused to roll back the **Common Core** standards but quieted the waters by **delaying consequences** of the new tests for two years. Expect a renewed fight in the Legislature in the coming months."

The plan is to eventually begin testing to the Common Core standard. It has been noted that when students took Common Core tests in Kentucky and New York, the average grade dropped. The same results is anticipated if this plan is implemented here. But some say that the State is already teaching to the Common Core standards. The Louisiana Department of Education on its website at:

<http://www.louisianabelieves.com/academics/common-core-state-standards>

has the following posted:

"The Common Core State Standards are fundamental descriptions of reading, writing, and math skills that focus on the ability to think independently. Here are two examples of these descriptions: **3rd grade math**: Tell and write time to the nearest minute and measure time intervals in minutes. Solve word problems involving addition and subtraction of time intervals in minutes. **5th grade reading**: Compare and contrast two or more characters, settings, or events in a story or drama, drawing on specific details in the

text." From these examples, it seems that the Common Core concept does not have a lot new to offer. Perhaps the material being taught in the schools is not the main cause of the high failure rate. An honest assessment of why there are high failure rates might be made and methods implemented to address the true causes. It maybe that we are afraid to face the real problems that exist in our schools. Just thinking out loud.

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