

Old Country Lawyer, May 2009
A Crisis Is a Terrible Thing to Waste

Media coverage of the H1N1 influenza has inspired a variety of public-policy activities. Single-issue activists have again managed to seize the initiative, having the ability to move quickly unencumbered by reflective thought processes.

Some Mexican farm laborers with legal U. S. temporary work visas were prevented from entering the U. S. the last week in April, apparently at the request of certain State agricultural officials, because of influenza concerns raised by anti-immigration activists. This results in the Spring harvest of berries in Georgia coming to fruit unattended. It remains to be seen if unemployed Atlanta city folk are willing to work fields for immigrant wages, or the berries will feed the birds and fresh fruit prices will go up.

In Ohio, a Free Medical Clinic which had been anticipated to provide medical services without charge on May 2 and 3, to thousands of folks who don't have medical coverage, was cancelled. County officials announced the cancellation was due to concerns of transmitting contagion among lots of poor folks, notwithstanding that the event organizers had made specific arrangements to have folks with possible flu symptoms directed to a separate building.

But the most notable example of taking advantage of the flu publicity comes from Egypt. The government of Egypt on April 28 ordered all the pigs in the country to be killed and the remains destroyed. There had been no suggestion that there was any threat of H1N1 transmitting from pigs to humans, nor was there any evidence that any pigs in Egypt were infected with H1N1. On reflection, one considers that Egypt has a predominantly Moslem population, who do not keep pigs. On further investigation, one discovers that the population of Egypt has a 10% Christian minority dating to the ministry of St. Mark the Evangelist in the first century of the Common Era. Guess whose livestock-raising livelihoods were eliminated by the government-ordered pig destruction.

One hopes that, before the media gets bored with publicly mourning the very few Americans whose deaths are attributed to H1N1, President Obama will have focused enough support among members of Congress and among the ephemeral online activist community to get long-lasting improvements legislated into the system for delivering health care to Americans. Meanwhile the Administration is to be complimented that Homeland Security Secretary Napolitano absolutely stonewalled the attempt by anti-immigration activists to "close" the border with Mexico. The Administration is to be further complimented that the Department of Health and Human Services has capably responded to the H1N1 publicity under the management of the career scientists and health professionals, prior to Congress finally approving the President's appointment of Secretary Sibelius on April 28.

So as not to waste the crisis on a local level, Portage County Health District residents are urged to vote FOR the four-tenths mill additional tax levy on May 5, for current expenses of the County Health District.

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