“An Alabama Firing Squad” Should Not Be A Circle

By David G. Bronner

During my tenure at the RSA, I have defended public employees, Alabama taxpayers, and the RSA against real New York City mobsters, local crooks, and a few legislators and governors who either had a corrupt political agenda, were self-serving, or just did not want to understand the purpose of the RSA.

To be honest, trying to work with some governors has been a challenge. In my early years at the RSA, all the Democrats strongly believed I was a nasty conservative Republican because of my work with Wall Street. In recent years, the Republicans consider me a hard-core, nasty liberal Democrat.

As I said decades ago, my mother was a Democrat and my father was a Republican, while I have always been an Independent. No way was I choosing between Mom or Dad, nor the 300,000+ members of the RSA who are both. My political interests are the RSA and Alabama and what I can do to improve both.

I could care less if you love or hate Obamacare! My dad would tell me “no matter what problems you have today, the sun will rise tomorrow.” But to stick our head in the sand and think we are helping ourselves or the 300,000+ Alabamians by rejecting the expansion of Medicaid is simply nuts!

Alabama would be rejecting $1.5 billion per year for three years with NO requirement to spend any state money over the 100% federally funded expansion. By not accepting OUR money to help OURselves, we might as well form “a circle for a firing squad” of our personal and state interest.

Alabamians have 60 days to politely help the current governor, “Doc” Bentley, remember what was the best virtue of the first governor I worked with. Governor Wallace, like all of us, made lots of mistakes. The one mistake he did not make was that he always cared for the poor of Alabama because he grew up dirt poor.

Let’s help not only Alabama’s poor but all Alabamians by offering better health care and creating jobs and economic growth. Please encourage our governor to stand up for all Alabamians and sign on to BRINGING BILLIONS OF OUR DOLLARS HOME with Medicaid expansion.
I t has been said more than once that the South will rise again.

If Ol’ Dixie can just get Virginia and Tennessee to reject Obamacare’s Medicaid expansion, the Confederate States of America will be intact with the exception of those turncoats in Arkansas.

Texas, Louisiana, Mississippi, Florida, Georgia, South Carolina, North Carolina and Alabama have elected not to help their poor and low-to-moderate wage earners receive health care through expanded Medicaid.

Decisions are pending in Virginia and Tennessee.

These are not the only states that have turned down the plan; 10 other states, mostly in the West and Midwest, have done the same.

But the fact that the Deep South has united in opposing the health care plan when the region is inhabited by so many poor and unhealthy people is worthy of further examination.

What — other than geographical proximity — unites us in this crusade to prolong the physical, mental and financial anguish of our people?

On an individual basis, the South is filled with generous individuals who are willing to help those who are less fortunate.

But providing affordable health care is well beyond the capabilities of generous individuals.

The fact that we live in the midst of the Bible Belt does not explain our collective lack of compassion. Didn’t the Son of Man encourage his followers to feed his sheep?

Even a Samaritan can understand the concept of treating, rather than ignoring, the sick.

One could argue that the Southern heat has baked the brains of our Republican governors, but their counterparts in states with equally warm climes have retained their mental acuity. They are willing to buck their own party for the good of their people.

It might appear that Southerners possess an aversion to federal funds, which would pay for almost all of the Medicaid expansion. But we are more than eager to take federal handouts for rural electrification, military bases, highways and just about everything else. In Alabama, we receive $1.66 for every $1 we send to Washington, ranking us seventh among deadbeat states.

So, what explains our failure to take advantage of expanded Medicaid for our people? Maybe we just don’t want anyone telling us what to do, even if it’s in our best interest.

Maybe we’ve been smarting for a rematch with the federal government ever since Gen. Lee surrendered at Appomattox. Maybe we’ve been spoiling for a fight ever since those liberal Kennedy brothers sent their federal men down here to remove our fine governor from the schoolhouse door.

Maybe we are determined to carry out a second wave of attacks against the feds through gerrymandered districts and rules that make it more difficult for certain people to vote.

Maybe we are simply marching back onto the same old battlefield.

The South keeps rising again and again to fight on the wrong side of history.

Republican Governors Support Obamacare

Pennsylvania Republican Governor Tom Corbett became the 10th Republican governor to support Medicaid expansion to 682,000 people in Pennsylvania.

Kentucky’s Democratic Governor Steve Beshear says it will help 308,000 people and inject $15.6 billion of federal money into the Kentucky economy.

Governor Beshear does not name names or call people out directly, but his New York Times article is a brilliant implicit condemnation for the behavior of most of the Republican governors around the country. The attitude they have taken is that since no Obamacare is better than even the best possible version of Obamacare, they should try to engineer the worst possible version of Obamacare in order to hasten its demise.

As Chernyshevsky and Lenin said, “The worse, the better.” And that attitude, really, has always been one of the worst sins in political radicals of different stripes. A callous willingness to sacrifice concrete human interests in the here and now in pursuit of long-term ideological ends is a great way to make sure people end up worse off than the otherwise could be. Beshear is trying to act like a proper public official and make things go well for people in Kentucky. Too many governors are hoping to make things go poorly and then point fingers.
“Your Hospital” & Medicaid Expansion

By Kim Chandler, AL.com

... Hospitals are also encouraging Bentley to change his mind, said Mike Horsley, CEO of the Alabama Hospital Association.

Hospitals are concerned about planned cuts to federal payments they get for the uncompensated care of poor patients. The funds, known as Disproportionate Share Hospital allotments, are scheduled to decrease as those low-income individuals presumably gain health coverage through a Medicaid expansion.

Without an expansion, Horsley said hospitals could be left on the hook for millions of dollars in uncompensated care. That, combined, with Medicare cuts, he said could be fatal blows to some rural hospitals.

Alabama is expected to lose $14 million in DSH dollars next fiscal year. The amount of future reductions hasn’t been decided yet.

There is no deadline for the states to make a decision. But Dr. David Bronner points out by waiting, the state is turning down federal dollars.

“His big thing is economic development. Well, buddy, we can’t do anything in about six counties in the state because they don’t have a hospital. When we start closing the other ones, who in the world would bring their company to a county where the hospital is closing. No businessman in America with any brains would do that,” Bronner said.

A study commissioned by the Alabama Hospital Association predicted that expanding Alabama’s Medicaid program, under the Affordable Care Act, would create 30,700 new jobs over the next six years.

The report conducted by researchers at the University of Alabama’s Center for Business and Economic Research estimated the number of new jobs could climb to 51,918 if all eligible individuals enrolled in an expansion.

“The report concludes that ‘from an economic perspective, Alabama will significantly gain jobs and the associated income, grow its GDP, increase business activity, and generate much-needed tax revenues if it chooses to undertake Medicaid expansion under the ACA,’” Mike Horsley said in a statement.

Projected State Costs for 2014-15

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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>Total</td>
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Projected Insurance Employer Cost Retirement Systems of Alabama (Amounts in millions)

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<tr>
<td>PEEHIP (Teachers)</td>
<td>$876</td>
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<td>SEHIP (State Employees)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total Insurance Cost</td>
<td>$1,181</td>
<td>$1,198</td>
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Note: PEEHIP numbers include amounts from Universities for retiree costs and for 2 Universities participating in PEEHIP with both actives and retirees.

RETIREMENT SYSTEMS OF ALABAMA
201 SOUTH UNION STREET
P.O. BOX 302150
MONTGOMERY, ALABAMA 36130-2150

HOW JAPAN’S FORCES STACK UP

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Active military personnel</th>
<th>More than the UK</th>
<th>Personnel numbers are estimated.</th>
<th>$</th>
<th>Defense spending</th>
<th>First increase in 11 years</th>
<th>U.S.</th>
<th>$</th>
<th>U.S.</th>
<th>S. KOREA</th>
<th>VIETNAM</th>
<th>PHILIPPINES</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Japan</td>
<td>243,000</td>
<td>217,000</td>
<td>655,000</td>
<td>482,000</td>
<td>125,000</td>
<td>330,000</td>
<td>166.1 billion</td>
<td>31.6 billion</td>
<td>3.3 billion</td>
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<td>S. Korea</td>
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Source: Japanese Ministry of Defense; SIPRI; ISS; Center for Strategic and International Studies; World Bank

ENJOY YOUR WINTER! A SPECIAL DEAL FOR RSA MEMBERS

The Battle House, A Renaissance Hotel $109

- November 3-7, 10-14, 17-30 • December 1-30
- January 1-2, 6-7, 12, 30-31

Riverview Plaza $99

- November 3-7, 10-14, 17-29
- December 1-30 • January 1-2, 6-7, 12, 30-31

Marriott Grand $109 plus a 15% resort fee

- November 10-11, 17-21 • December 1-5, 7, 15-22, 27-30
- January 1-2, 5-9, 12, 19-23, 26-30

Marriott Grand $109 plus a 15% resort fee – Promotional code – R2A

- November 10-11, 17-21 • December 1-5, 7, 15-22, 27-30
- January 1-2, 5-9, 12, 19-23, 26-30

Marriott Shoals $99

- November 8-11, 24-30 • December 1, 8, 22-28
- January 1-5, 12, 19, 26

Renaissance Ross Bridge $109

- November 1-5, 7, 10-30 • December 1-5, 7-13, 15-31
- January 1-2, 5-9, 12-16, 19-21, 26, 30

Opelika Marriott $99

- November 3-14, 17-19, 22-28 • December 1-12, 15-31
- January 1-31

Prattville Marriott $89

- November 1-2, 5-12, 15-17, 22-26, 29-30
- December 2-3, 6-9, 11-13, 16-19, 24-26

Renaissance Montgomery $109

- November 1-5, 7, 9-10, 14, 16, 19-20, 22-26, 29-30
- December 3-4, 7-8, 13-15, 18-31
- January 1-6, 8-11, 15-16, 19-20, 25-27, 31

Renaissance Montgomery RSA Spa Package $189

Promotional code – R2A

- November 5-6, 14, 19-20, 26 • December 3-4, 18-19
- January 8-9, 15-16

Specific room requests may require additional charge.
Rates available the 1st of the month and are not applicable to groups.
800-228-9290 Ask for RSA rate. Promotional Code: R2A on www.rsaal.gov/hotels.htm
Book Online and Save RSA $4.

Source: Southern Legislative Conference 2012 report on Corrections
*Virginia includes 1,578 private prison beds

Alabama prisons not only were more overcrowded than any other Southern state, they also were more than twice as crowded as prisons in 11 Southern states, according to a Southern Legislative Conference 2012 report. The closest states to Alabama’s 199 percent occupancy were Kentucky at 105 percent and Arkansas at 104 percent.

Ten states where individuals’ medical out-of-pocket spending is highest*, as % of income (75th percentile)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State</th>
<th>% of Income</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mississippi</td>
<td>19.9%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Wyoming</td>
<td>19.3%</td>
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<td>Utah</td>
<td>19.2%</td>
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<td>Montana</td>
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<td>Idaho</td>
<td>19.1%</td>
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<td>Arkansas</td>
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<td>Oregon</td>
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<tr>
<td>Kentucky</td>
<td>18.9%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Nevada</td>
<td>18.6%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tennessee</td>
<td>18.5%</td>
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Where not to get sick

The Battle House, A Renaissance Hotel $109

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Marriott Grand $109 plus a 15% resort fee

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- January 1-2, 5-9, 12, 19-23, 26-30

Marriott Grand RSA Golf Package

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- January 1-2, 5-9, 12, 19-23, 26-30

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