



# viewpointsaturday

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The Arizona Department of Health Services awarded in March a contract for delivering public mental-health services in Maricopa County to Mercy Maricopa Integrated Care. Magellan Health Services, which has delivered behavioral-health services for the poor in Maricopa County since 2007, is protesting the award of the ADHS contract.

Two longtime advocates for the mentally ill, Joe Prawdzik and Joanie Flatt, see the contract controversy differently.



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## Finding the best option for mental-health care

### Maricopa County should stay course, move forward

I have been an advocate for individuals living with mental illness in Arizona and other states for many years. I consider myself engaged and aware of the realities of the mental-health system in Maricopa County — both past and current.



**MY TURN**  
JOE PRAWDZIK

To that point, I became concerned when I read a guest column in this paper about the status of the system of care presently. It characterized the system as being in limbo and held hostage (“New care system is critical to mentally ill,” Opinions, July 8).

I don’t believe this to be true; it’s not what I’ve seen for myself. The guest columnist left out important details about what those who access the system routinely are really experiencing.

For nearly six years, I’ve witnessed a system of care by Magellan Health Services that is making progress. There are still aspects of the service delivery that I think need continued, focused work, but much forward momentum has been achieved, and the people served are benefiting.

See PRAWDZIK, Page B11

### Switching to local provider will protect patient services

While lawyers and bureaucrats battle over what entity will serve as the Maricopa County Regional Behavioral Health Authority, citizens with mental illness are suffering as funds are cut for behavioral-health services. This means that some patients are losing services, while others are having their services significantly cut. This is a dangerous situation, and real people are getting hurt.



**MY TURN**  
JOANIE FLATT

In late March, after a competitive procurement process, the Arizona Department of Health Services awarded the approximately \$1.3 billion contract for management of the publicly funded behavioral-health system in Maricopa County to a new vendor — Mercy Maricopa Integrated Care. This system delivers mental-health, substance-abuse and crisis services to about 720,000 adults, youths and children.

MMIC proposed a new model of integrated care, providing both behavioral-health services and primary health care. For people with serious mental illness, who in Arizona have a life

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### OF THE MOMENT

A collection of voices, tweets and posts from the week



Robert Reich Paul Bentz

### They said it

“Just because the legislature has ceased to function doesn’t mean our government has. Political decision making has moved to peripheral public entities, where power is exercised less transparently and accountability to voters is less direct. What we’re losing in the process isn’t government — it’s democracy.”

**Robert Reich**, Former Labor secretary

“The knowledge that you might be stopped and frisked, especially when you might have one or two convictions in your past or might be on parole, has almost certainly suppressed and prevented criminal activity in the city.”

**John Podhoretz**, New York Post

“There were never any true liberals in Egypt. The Muslim Brotherhood was never moderate. The revolts were driven by economic failure, not a craving for democracy. Democracy failed because nobody in Egypt truly understood or wanted it to begin with.”

**Stanley Kurtz**, National Review

“Edward Snowden has put words in President Obama’s mouth. Words like transparency, reform, openness, and debate.”

**Major Garrett**, National Journal

### Top tweets

**John Glenn @JohnGlennPhx**  
Oh goodie my third email of the day from the Phx Council dist 6 race and it’s noon.

**Paul Bentz @prbentz**  
You know what makes news stations love you and want to report fairly about you? Banning them. Works like a charm.

### Into the mind of...

## Cecil Ash

The former legislator explains why getting smarter on crime is better for society than getting ‘tough’ on crime.

**What’s your reaction to Attorney General Eric Holder’s proposal to do away with mandatory sentences for some non-violent offenders?**

My first thought was, “Good!” I have not agreed with many things this administration has done, but they are on the right track following the lead of conservative states like Texas, Missouri and other reforming states that have recognized this problem. This should be a bipartisan effort.

### Why is it a good idea?

Because it will not only reduce the overall cost of government but, if done properly, will prevent wasting the lives of those who do not need incarceration to be rehabilitated. In many instances, incarceration prevents rehabilitation.

**You pushed similar reforms to reduce the prison population when you were in the Legislature. Why?**

I talked with many sources about prison populations, from legislators in states like Texas, to inmates in Arizona, to current and former corrections officers. The consensus I heard is that 20 percent of the prison population should never be released; 20 percent should never have been incarcerated; the remaining 60 percent, it depends what we

do with them while they’re in prison.

**The argument for mandatory sentences is it brings equity to justice and keeps judges from going soft. Isn’t that a good thing?**

Where did the idea come from that all criminals should be treated alike? They’re individuals, and their crimes are as different as they are. Their backgrounds are different. Their attitudes are different. Their willingness to reform is different.

Mandatory sentencing creates more injustice than justice. In my experience as a criminal defense lawyer, there is no abundance of “soft” judges. Many judges are former prosecutors.

Judges are in the best position to administer justice. Not prosecutors. Not legislators. Guidelines are appropriate, but a judge’s hands should not be tied.

**Prosecutors argue that long prison sentences reduce crime. You disagree. Why?**

In some cases that is true. Incarcerating that 20 percent who should never be released reduces crime. But in other cases, it increases crime.

One former inmate told me he went into prison with a bachelor’s degree in

crime and came out with a doctorate.

**You’ve also been an advocate for increased rehabilitation programs. Why are they a good idea?**

Because they make our communities safer. Sadly, we’re simply warehousing many of our inmates. We’re not doing nearly enough to rehabilitate or educate.

Remember, most inmates will eventually be released. Who would you rather have released: an unskilled, violent predator or a stable, educated ex-offender with a future?

**After you left the Legislature, no one took up your fight. Surprised?**

Not really. Most legislators work on what they understand. Educators work on education. Businessmen on business and tax issues. Farmers on rural issues.

It’s difficult to understand the magnitude of the problems without experience in the criminal justice system. Few legislators have that experience. (Of course, some legislators find out about it just before they have to resign, but then it’s too late.)

Inmates can’t vote, and their families generally have little clout. So for most legislators and their constituencies it’s out of sight, out of mind.



“Who would you rather have released: an unskilled, violent predator or a stable, educated ex-offender with a future?”

**CECIL ASH**  
North Mesa justice of the peace, former state legislator

# Naming baby: Stop parental wrongs

A Tennessee judge's decision to change a baby's name from Messiah to Martin got the Constitution thumpers at the American Civil Liberties Union riled up about free speech, freedom of religion and that old-American ideal of equal justice.

That's good. Government is supposed to be theology-neutral.

But what about the kid? If you doubt that a name can come to define a person in unflattering ways, consider Anthony Weiner.

OK. It was the potential for blasphemy, not sexting, that concerned Tennessee Child Support Magistrate Lu Ann Ballew.

She changed Messiah's name because "the word messiah is a title, and it's been

earned by one person, and that one person is Jesus Christ." Amen, Sister!

But wait. She's running a courtroom, not a tent revival.

The stuff about earning one's title is pure obfuscation. Did anyone check the royal certification on Queen Latifah or Prince? Raise your hand if you remember King Donovan.

This was about religion. One religion. In a nation of many.

Jews, Hindus, Sikhs, Muslims, Pagans, Buddhists and other non-Christians aren't seeking a born-again experience when they go to court. Neither are atheists.

The mother of the Baby Formerly Known as Messiah, says, "I didn't think a judge could make me change my baby's name because of her



**linda valdez**

religious beliefs."

She's appealing the decision.

Ballew's inability to separate her religious views from her role as a judge is offensive. But the issue of giving kids dumb names shouldn't get lost in the outrage. Johnny Cash's song about "A Boy Named Sue" comes to mind.

On a more scholarly note, Slate magazine's Dahlia Lithwick wrote a piece citing a 2011 article by University of California-Davis law professor Carlton F.W. Larson on "Naming Baby: The Constitutional

Dimensions of Parental Naming Rights."

The professor says the right to name your child is fundamental under the First and Fourteenth Amendments, but the government has an interest in protecting children from "abusive names." This tender balance has not been fully sorted out by the courts.

If Baby Messiah becomes the test case, the focus will be on parents' rights rather than the plight of kids with dingbat names. After all, his name wouldn't offend most people.

Professor Larson says Puritans used names like Fear-Not and Praise-God. Messiah fits right in.

But this isn't just about a judge who is clueless to the fact that modern America has more diverse religious beliefs

than in Puritan times.

Larson's horror stories of names include Adolf Hitler Campbell, whose father was turned away from a New Jersey bakery in 2008 when he tried to get his kid's name on a birthday cake. Adolf and his siblings (also named for Nazis) were subsequently removed from the home because of the parents' physical and psychological disabilities.

Larson lists other atrocious baby names, including Ghoul Nipple, Satan and Toilet Queen. Parental rights are one thing. These represent parental wrongs.

It's in everybody's interest to save kids from that kind of stupidity.

Reach Valdez at [linda.valdez@arizonarepublic.com](mailto:linda.valdez@arizonarepublic.com).

[opinions.azcentral.com](http://opinions.azcentral.com)

## Transparency is needed on collection of Yarnell aid

It's too bad that the Federal Emergency Management Agency determined that displaced Yarnell residents would not receive federal aid. But when all those fundraising efforts started, the plea was to help all those affected by the Yarnell Hill Fire. I understood that to mean the families of the killed firefighters and the families who were burned out of their homes.

Also, I have not seen any accounting of the total amount of money raised, how it is to be distributed and by whom.

The Republic's editorial "End acrimony over benefits," (Opinions, Aug. 9) made a good suggestion in advising that a larger amount should go to survivors of the part-time firefighters, since they weren't qualified for the full-time benefits package. But shouldn't some of those funds raised go to the other people that were affected by the fire, giving a larger amount to the families that didn't have fire insurance?

I wish I could see published an itemized list of how much money was gathered by all of the fundraising efforts and how these funds are going to be distributed. People always clamor for transparency; I think we should have some on this issue as well.

— Ron Katsich, Casa Grande

### Airlines' merger will hurt Valley

I disagree with your editorial on the merits of the US Airways and American Airlines merger ("Public interest ignored," Opinions, Wednesday). This is not in the best interests of Phoenix-area travelers.

In the history of airline mergers and acquisitions, assets are reallocated away from the smaller airlines' original homes, and service deteriorates.

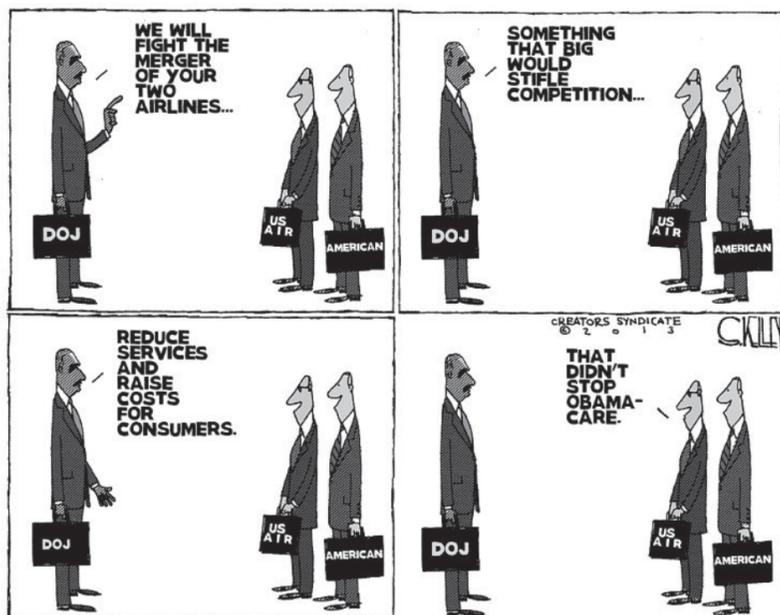
In Phoenix, Hughes Airwest was acquired by Republic Airlines and the Phoenix hub evaporated. The West Coast once was dominated by PSA Airlines, which was acquired by US Airways.

The assets moved east. American bought AirCal and moved the flying east. Delta Air Lines merged with Northwest Airlines and greatly diminished the flying out of Minneapolis.

By combining the airlines, and moving the headquarters to Texas, hundreds if not thousands of local jobs will be lost. If this is like every other merger that has happened in this industry, Phoenix will lose many non-stop flights, and travelers will be forced to connect in another hub.

— Gordon Barnard, Gold Canyon

## another view



### MAILBAG

Changes to *The Arizona Republic* were the most popular topic for letters to the editor this week, with 104.

Also popular: the debate over providing benefits to the part-time firefighters who died in the Yarnell Hill Fire, with 45 letters.

Other topics included President Barack Obama, 22 letters; "dreamers," 17; Jane Fonda's portrayal of Nancy Reagan in "The Butler," 12; "Obamacare" and the US Airways-American Airlines merger, 10 each; and the killing of a mountain lion in Peoria, seven.

For the week, we received 390 letters.

### 'Obamacare' ensures coverage

Regarding "Coverage not contingent on law" (Opinions, Wednesday):

The letter writer referred to a healthy man of 21 getting coverage very cheaply. Try using as an example a man of 21 who has health problems from when he was a baby or a teenager. No insurance company wants to insure him without a rider on

### 'SUNDAY SQUARE OFF'

The Justice Department's efforts to block the US Airways-American Airlines merger leads the discussion on 12 News' "Sunday Square Off" this weekend. *Arizona Republic* reporter Dawn Gilbertson and Arizona State University law professor Adam Chodorow join host Brahm Resnik to discuss the latest developments. Also, immigration attorney Jose Luis Penalosa discusses "dreamers," and the 100 Club's Sharon Knutson-Felix describes efforts to help the families of the fallen Granite Mountain Hotshots. "Square Off" airs at 8 a.m., following "Meet the Press."

the insurance policy that states anything that happens to him that may be related to past health problems will not be covered.

The Affordable Care Act will make it possible for people with pre-existing conditions to be insured.

— Ronnie King, Cottonwood

### Obama crossed limits of office

Several letter writers have expressed delight in the fact that the Environmental Protection Agency is writing regulations, under orders from the president, that will destroy the fossil-fuel and power industry.

I don't want to debate fossil fuels. The issue is a president who has publicly stated that if Congress will not pass the laws he wants, he will simply issue executive orders and order agencies to write new regulations.

If the writers agree, why not simply amend the Constitution and get rid of Congress?

Letting the president bypass Congress sounds pretty good when "your guy" is in office.

What happens when a Republican is elected in 2016 and he or she reverses every executive order and oppressive regulation?

Taking the issue further, in 2020, the Democrats again retake the presidency and reinstate all of the orders and regulations.

Maybe a crippled American economy that has no sense of consistency emanating from Washington will force the return of Congress before everything is lost.

I have a better idea. Maybe that constitutional-law professor pretending to be president should reread the Constitution and learn the limits of his office.

— Matthew P. von Gnechten, Scottsdale

### Recall is part of representation

I wish to make two points regarding the attempted recall of Rep. Kyrsten Sinema, D-Ariz. ("Man seeking recall of Sinema over NSA vote," Valley & State, Sunday).

A representative represents the people of his or her district and he or she should be subject to recall as a matter of law.

It doesn't make sense that the people who elect a person to represent them cannot recall that person if the people determine that the person no longer represents them.

If the people were to recall every representative whose vote violated the Constitution, I daresay that virtually every member of the Senate and Congress would have to be recalled.

And the president, too.  
— Neil B. Johnson, Glendale

## Prawdzik

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The key point here is things are moving in the right direction.

A clear example, and one that was mischaracterized in the column, is integrated care services. In 2011, under the leadership of Gov. Jan Brewer, Integrated Health Homes were introduced to the system. My research finds that they operate in at least eight of the 20 mental-health clinics in Maricopa County and, through coordinated care, seek to address the physical- and behavioral-health needs of individuals with severe mental illness. This coordination of care, which has been occurring for two years now, was long overdue, and it's progress to see that it is happening for the many who need it.

Maricopa County residents with serious mental illness are not being held hostage.

Services continue to be delivered, and people are working on their recovery. With the state debating a switch in system managers, the only reality that is important, in my opinion, is the impact that change will have on people receiving services.

From my experienced perspective, change has always been difficult and confusing for those with mental illness and substance abuse. If we have momentum in the system of care, including two years of integrated-care services being delivered, why change?

It is better to build a system slowly — which has been happening since 2007 — rather than to start over every few years, which has been the history of the system to date.

Let's keep the momentum moving forward.

*Joe Prawdzik has worked in the behavioral-health industry for 22 years and is a member of the Magellan Health Services of Arizona governance board.*

## Flatt

Continued from Page B10

span 32 years less than their peers without mental illness, this will mean improved access to care, strengthened coordination of care, reduced overall health-care costs and, most importantly, improved health outcomes.

As Charles Arnold, a prominent Phoenix mental-health attorney, opined on this page, "many in the behavioral health community rejoiced" at the ADHS' choice ("New care system is critical to mentally ill," Opinions, July 8).

But the current behavioral-health contractor didn't rejoice. It protested the award. And it's suing the new vendor, Maricopa County Special Health Care District — dba Maricopa Integrated Health System — and the CEO of MIHS.

This for-profit contractor controlled by an out-of-state parent company doesn't want to

lose its massive profits and turn management of behavioral-health services in Maricopa County over to a local, not-for-profit entity.

This contract is the largest public behavioral-health contract in the United States. According to public records, the current contractor earned about \$63 million in the nine months that ended March 31 in Maricopa County.

Normally, I would applaud any business that can chalk up profit numbers like that. But in the same year that its shareholders were raking in the big bucks, community mental-health providers — the agencies who serve the mentally ill — had their funding cut by a whopping \$75 million.

This is a classic story of winners and losers. The big out-of-town corporation wins by posting \$63 million in earnings. Our citizens with serious mental illness lose out on \$75 million worth of services.

The ADHS made the right decision awarding the contract

to Mercy Maricopa Integrated Care. It's local. It's not-for-profit. It proposed a model of health care that integrates behavioral-health services and primary care. Those are three good reasons MMIC deserves to be the ultimate winner in this battle.

The protest is set to be heard by an administrative-law judge on Sept. 18. The new system was originally set to be up and running on Oct. 1.

Gov. Jan Brewer, with whom I've worked in years past on behalf of people with serious mental illness, should expedite the hearing date and have all affected parties come together to get the matter resolved. Arizonans who need health care should not be held hostage because a corporation wants to continue to rack up huge profits while cutting services to some of our most vulnerable citizens.

*Joanie Flatt has been a longtime advocate on behalf of behavioral-health consumers. She is a past president of the East Valley Partnership.*

# REPUBLIC MEDIA

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