

## Readers write for Jan. 25, 2011

January 24, 2011

### END-OF-LIFE CARE

#### A lack of planning complicates matters

In health care, a surrogate is a patient's agent and, as such, must act according to the patient's instructions, known preferences and best interests (["Little progress on end-of-life care,"](#) editorial, Jan. 22).

When a surrogate exceeds the scope of her authority, she can and should be replaced.

Granted, health care providers were ultimately unsuccessful in the Wanglie case and similar medical futility disputes during the early 1990s.

But more recently, there has been a string of cases in which courts replaced surrogates who were demanding inappropriately aggressive end-of-life treatment.

Still, surrogate selection remains only a partial solution to intractable futility disputes. To replace a surrogate requires evidence of a contradiction between the surrogate's decision and the patient's instructions, known preferences and/or best interests.

But because too few of us engage in advance care planning, providers will often lack enough evidence of patient instructions or preferences to demonstrate surrogate deviation. And many surrogate decisions will often actually be in harmony with patient wishes.

Surrogate selection may be the solution in the Albert Barnes case. But because such action cannot resolve significant categories of end-of-life conflict, we must still develop dispute resolution mechanisms to handle those remaining disputes in which providers conflict with "irreplaceable" surrogates.

THADDEUS MASON POPE,

SWARTHMORE, PENN.

The writer is a professor at the Widener University School of Law.

### DAY CARE

#### Kids in day care full time may not be OK

Children from middle- or upper-class homes who are left in day care full time do suffer from achievement gaps and behavior issues.

Children from poverty do not, the difference being that these families are under large

amounts of economic stress.

This is a significant difference from a recent Star Tribune headline ("[Even if they go to day care, the kids are OK](#)," Variety, Jan. 22) that seems to be trying to help middle-class mothers feel less guilt.

Our community needs to be aware that full-time day care can have a negative effect, especially when it is a choice rather than a necessity.

Let's not forget the simple truth that time with our children forges strong emotional growth, which correlates with cognitive growth and creates a well-rounded child.

AMBER LAMPRON, EDINA

## **ABORTION**

### **Legislation may not be the best strategy**

How many of those who support such new restrictions on abortion ("[Abortion foes begin new battle at Capitol](#)," Jan. 23) also support services that provide financial and other assistance to women who choose life? I am prolife, but I don't believe that legislation to restrict or outlaw abortion will solve anything.

The problem with abortion isn't that it's legal -- rather, that it's desired or, for many women, is seen as the only feasible option. If we truly want to eradicate abortion (or at least make it rare), then we need to reach out with compassion to women considering it and present them with help and resources so they'll want to choose life.

JENNIFER MOREAU, COON RAPIDS

## **STATE OF THE UNION**

### **Everyone in Congress has a home state**

Bipartisanship is in the air in advance of the president's State of the Union address. In a symbolic act of solidarity, many Republicans and Democrats are pairing up, pledging to sit together rather than following the traditional divide along party lines.

As usual, these pros are making a simple exercise complicated. Might I recommend that members of each state's delegation sit together? In addition to demonstrating unity, it may remind them of the citizens they are in Washington to represent.

KYLE CHRISTENSEN, LAKEVILLE

## **BACHMANN FOR PRESIDENT?**

### **Here's another 'strong opinion'**

I enjoyed the article about U.S. Rep. Michele Bachmann's exploration of a run for president ("[Testing the waters](#)," Jan. 22), and I was curious about political science Prof. Larry

Sabato's use of the word "dynamite" to describe her. That word can be interpreted a couple of ways. Sabato may not want to elaborate.

I was disappointed only in the paragraph about Bachmann's "strong opinions." She said that "Barack Obama has accumulated more debt in one year than all past presidents combined." That is a "strong opinion"?

If politicians can say whatever they want, regardless of facts, and all the newspaper does is call their statements "strong opinions," what constraints are they ever supposed to feel regarding responsibility or the truth?

JOHN SHOCKLEY, MINNEAPOLIS

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