

The Philadelphia Inquirer

OPINION

Letters to the Editor | Nov. 22, 2024

Inquirer readers on RFK Jr. as health chief, senseless wars, and reckless cabinet picks.

Questionable ratings

In the Nov. 13 article, "[Financially Fragile](#)," The Inquirer explored the use of the Financial Viability Index, a tool that essentially takes a few years' worth of data from any given college or university and generates a snapshot designed to show that institution's viability. As a higher education professional invested in elevating student outcomes and experiences for more than 20 years, I find this tool too simplistic to even approach accuracy.

There is no question that higher education is at an inflection point, facing head winds perhaps unlike any other in our nation's history — just consider the abrupt shutdown of the University of the Arts in June, and the ongoing closures of institutions like Cabrini University. In this climate, there is real concern that reliance on such tools as the index used by The Inquirer will hinder, not support, the industry in surmounting challenges and staying the course of growth.

Not only that, but a single tool such as the index cannot provide certainty and alleviate anxiety by generating a rating that only tells a partial story. For example, when looking at the institution that I lead, La Salle University, how does the index tool measure [the 2024 fall incoming class of freshman and transfer students](#) that was the largest in four years, a 23% increase from the previous year? Can the index take into account retention rates that improved nearly 8 percentage points in the last four years? Can the index calculate the impact of philanthropic support of alumni and friends that amounts to nearly \$45 million dollars in the past four years?

There is a reason that analysts from internationally known and respected rating agencies spend weeks reviewing not only an institution's financial health but the history of a school and how it is executing on its strategic plans. While perhaps interesting for discussion, no one tool should be used to predict the current or future viability of an institution. Doing so lacks anything that resembles the type of rigor we expect on our campuses.

Daniel J. Allen, *president, La Salle University*

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inquirer.com/opinion

The Inquirer offers news, which strives to present unbiased, factual reporting, and opinion, which showcases viewpoints. Here is what you'll find on these opinion pages.

Editorial
An opinion about a matter of public interest or policy that is researched and written by our Editorial Board, a group of journalists separate from the newsroom who meet frequently to discuss and debate issues. Unlike news stories, which are fact-driven and written by reporters, editorials advocate, champion, argue, critique, and offer solutions.

Column
Columnists are allowed to include their opinions and viewpoints when presenting their reporting. Inquirer columnists include Will Bunch, Trudy Rubin, Helen Ublinas, and Jenice Armstrong.

Op-Ed
An op-ed — a name taken from their traditional placement in newspapers "opposite the editorial page" — is an essay or commentary piece that presents the opinion or perspective of the author. Many are submitted to us by Inquirer readers and writers with insight on the news, but we also solicit op-eds from authors on specific topics.

Letter to the Editor
A reader's written opinion submitted in response to an article in The Inquirer or another issue.

For more on how we work
The Editorial Board includes the managing editor for opinion, columnists, and opinion writers and editors. The board routinely discusses issues of the day to decide what to editorialize about and, during election campaigns, which candidates or ballot

EDITORIAL CARTOON

Bob Englehart



LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Send letters to letters@inquirer.com. Limit length to 200 words and include home address and day and evening phone number. Letters are published in The Inquirer six days a week on the editorial pages and online at www.inquirer.com/opinion/letters/

Public health risks

President-elect Donald Trump's nomination of Robert F. Kennedy Jr. — who has no medical experience or education — as secretary of the Department of Health and Human Services poses a catastrophic risk to public health. Kennedy is well-known for discouraging vaccine use and calling for the elimination of fluoride in public drinking water. Just as troubling, Trump has openly stated his intention to repeal the Affordable Care Act (ACA). His first attempt in 2017 fell short by just one vote in the Senate. Now, with Republicans controlling both the Senate and the House of Representatives, Trump is emboldened to try again and this time, he may very well succeed.

Currently, 45 million Americans rely on the ACA for



Robert F. Kennedy Jr. is President-elect Donald Trump's choice for Health and Human Services secretary. Alex Brandon / AP

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Matt Drozd, retired, Lt. Col. USAF, Pittsburgh, mdrozd@verizon.net

state of the Republican Party as it exists today.
David W. Williams, Media

Questionable ratings

perspective of the author. Many are submitted to us by Inquirer readers and writers with insight on the news, but we also solicit op-cds from authors on specific topics.

Letter to the Editor

A reader's written opinion submitted in response to an article in The Inquirer or another issue.

For more on how we work

The Editorial Board includes the managing editor for opinion, columnists, and opinion writers and editors. The board routinely discusses issues of the day to decide what to editorialize about and, during election campaigns, which candidates or ballot measures to endorse. News reporters and editors do not participate in these discussions. The board's opinions are not a consideration in news coverage.

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Currently, 45 million Americans rely on the ACA for their health care coverage, the highest number of subscribers on record. This includes 435,000 Pennsylvanians. So far, Republicans have not proposed any concrete or workable alternative, only "concepts of a plan." Without the ACA there will be no law requiring insurance companies to provide coverage for individuals living with a preexisting condition. Preventive care and essential screenings for breast, colon, and prostate cancer would end, putting lives at risk. Coverage for dependent children up to age 26 would also be stripped away. If you have a chronic condition like diabetes or heart disease that requires costly treatments, insurance companies would once again be allowed to impose a lifetime cap of \$1 million.

Both Trump and Kennedy say their priority is to make America healthy again when it is apparent their mission is to save money, not lives. As nurses, we must bring our advocacy to elected officials, as their policy decisions ultimately impact the quality and safety of our nursing care. We will confront injustice, hold power accountable, and fight for what matters. As the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. said, "Our lives begin to end the day we become silent about things that matter." Together, we will not be silent.

Donna A. Gaffney, Pacific Palisades, Calif., and Teri Mills, Tualatin, Ore. The writers are members of the group Nurses for America.

Senseless wars

Why have we allowed mindless politicians in Washington to send thousands of our youth and innocent noncombatants to their death for senseless wars that we cannot win and are not a threat to our national security? Our so-called leaders should never have committed troops and resources to such wars unless they themselves are willing to get on the front lines. While on active duty at the Pentagon I visited our war memorials. If those who are honored by those monuments could speak today, I am certain they would echo my sentiments. To protect those in uniform, we must demand from our elected leaders that they will never again



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A preview

Philadelphians don't have to look far to see how major long and drawn-out construction projects damage small businesses. When the upgrade of the Market Street Elevated train project was completed, you could drive along Market Street from 46th to 63rd Street and see dozens of businesses that were closed and never reopened. The same will happen in our historic Chinatown, especially in a city with antiquated traffic engineering.

Len Trower, Philadelphia

Reckless picks

I have been watching House Speaker Mike Johnson and other Republicans contort themselves into pretzels to show support for Donald Trump's ridiculously unqualified cabinet candidates. Matt Gaetz (since withdrawn) as attorney general, Pete Hegseth and defense secretary, Tulsi Gabbard as director of national intelligence, Kristi Noem as secretary of homeland security, and Robert F. Kennedy Jr. as secretary of health, to name a few. They argue that Trump won a mandate this election and deserves to have top advisers "that he's comfortable with." Each candidate should receive full consideration, and indeed, that is the custom, they say.

I waited (fruitlessly) for news hosts to ask a question like this one: If a child were to be elected president, shouldn't that child have highly qualified people as his principal advisers or is it more important that he have fellow children to play with? Yet most of these candidates will fly through a Republican-controlled Senate. Why? Because the U.S. is in a state similar to that of the Cold War in the 1960s, where most people felt that if Russia was for it, we're against it and if they're against it, we're for it. This new cold war is between red state Americans and blue states. The Trump base is for anything that the heathen Democrats are against. So even though the candidates are so unqualified as to be dangerous, voting them in will be big pokes in the eyes to the libs. That is the

state of the Republican Party as it exists today.

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Feeling thankful?

Thanksgiving is next week, and we want to hear whether and why you are feeling thankful this year. Send your letter to the editor to opinion@inquirer.com. Please limit length to 150 words and include a day and evening phone number.