

McKNIGHT'S EDITORIAL DIRECTOR JOHN O'CONNOR: There's been a lot of talk lately about what's happening with the CLASS Act. We seem to be getting some mixed signals from the administration. Could you please update us as to what you're seeing and what's going on with your membership?

LEADING AGE PRESIDENT AND CEO LARRY MINNIX: Sure, well first let me thank you, John, you and Jim [Editor Jim Berklan] at McKnight's, you cover everything and I feel like you're part of the family. So I appreciate all the things you do to cover the important issues in our field.

CLASS, the irony of CLASS is this, twofold: One is, you have a problem in the country for how do you pay for long-term care — it will face most every American family at some point — that nobody wants to talk about it.

CLASS, because it was a law, all of a sudden now makes it a hot and controversial topic. My view about that is just spell the name right. As long as it continues its controversy, then people are going to have to talk about these issues.

Now CLASS itself, right now, the messages from the administration are conflicting and a recent kind of communication out of the White House trivializes CLASS.

That is unfair to the people that have helped develop it, to the congressional leadership that brought it forward, and even to the president himself, in my opinion, who stood behind it.

So this is not a trivial issue. It's not a bug on a windshield. It's not a hood ornament, as it's been called. This is very serious business for every American family and we believe could be a signature achievement of this president.

So we're going to continue to fight for it. A lot of the policy issues need to be discussed. That's why an advisory commission provided for in law should be formed. We've got a lot of new information with studies.

So let's put that in the national collaborative arena and then if CLASS needs to be changed, or there's a better way to do it, then somebody show us.

But shutting down — aborting — discussion about it at this point, we believe, is irresponsible and does not serve the public well. We're going to keep it on the radar screen. It's a little, um, a little 'dicey' right now in terms of all the relationships involved.

McKNIGHT'S: Obviously CLASS is the big issue everyone is talking about here, but if you don't mind, could you tell us about what you see as sort of the next big issue that you'll be looking at?

MINNIX: One of the issues that we're talking about with our members, those that are in the healthcare area, those in the non-healthcare area and those that are thinking about new kinds of services ... this is an era of transformation. What we're saying to our members is over the next decade it's probably going to be the greatest change that our members have encountered in generations.

The objective — Dr. Berwick [CMS Administrator Donald Berwick] spoke to it yesterday, the triple aim we've got to really figure out is how to focus on resident-centered care.

We're going to have to figure out how to create much better community approaches to services. And the result of that, we already know through smaller pilot efforts, is that you can increase people's quality of life at less cost. That's really the objective the next decade. What we're wanting to do is get our members focused in that direction.

McKNIGHT'S: Very good. This is the 50th anniversary of your organization's beginning. Certainly, you've come a long way and your members have come a long way through the last half century. Looking forward, what do you see as some of the opportunities and challenges looking ahead?

MINNIX: Well, I think No. 1 is the transformation. No. 2, we've got to look at ways to finance everything we're doing differently. Because of all the access to capital issues as well as payment kinds of

issues, we're really focusing on the human resources, as we call it the 'talent side.' How to attract and retain the next generations. And interestingly enough, how do you attract and retain current generations of people who might normally think of themselves as retired who have an important role to play. So, talent.

Technology: We're about to publish — Dr. Mark McClellan of the Brookings Institute has chaired our CAST Enterprise the last couple of years —and they're about to publish 19 case studies of how members have taken technology seriously and are embedding technology planning in their strategic plans' future.

McKNIGHT'S: Very good. Well, best of luck, Larry. Thank you.

MINNIX: Thank you guys.