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With history as a guide, we can count on a few everyday events in the nation's capital on this first day of February.

This being a Tuesday, the city council will convene a legislative meeting, during which it will propose a number of ceremonial resolutions; on Tuesday it will take up "Soul Searchers Band and Chuck Brown as the True Originators of Go-Go Recognition Resolution of 2011."

There's a 50-50 chance at least one person will be the victim of homicide, which is much better than it was 20 years ago, when odds favored a killing a day.

And if the District stays on course, on Tuesday it will have to write off about \$300,000 in funds it could have collected from the federal government in Medicaid reimbursements. In 2008, D.C. failed to collect almost \$110 million in Medicaid money. Do the math: That's about \$300,000 a day and a couple million bucks a week.

If City Council Chair Kwame Brown gavels Tuesday's meeting open at 10 a.m. as scheduled, by 11 a.m. \$12,500 will have gone down the drain because social workers and school officials and various bureaucrats could not complete the simple task of filling out forms for funds due the District.

Having covered D.C. for some 25 years, I can say with confidence that the inability to collect Medicaid funds is neck and neck with the public school system's miserable record of educating our children for scandalous government dysfunction. There's no news in either realm, just a familiar throwing up of hands and a collective: "Not my problem."

Every top elected and public official shares blame and responsibility for the Medicaid mess. Chief Financial Office Natwar Gandhi has added up the cost of Medicaid write-offs and circulated it among the city council. His total came to \$347.4 million over the past decade or so.

Last year the city's Child and Family Services Agency announced its system for collecting federal funds was so screwed up it simply stopped asking for the reimbursements; last month it said it still couldn't ask for the funds.

The school system also has lost between \$10 million to \$25 million a year by not filing the proper forms for services such as providing special education to District students.

"There is no Medicaid expertise at these sister agencies," David Catania says of schools and social services. As the council's health committee chair, he knows the problem and shares responsibility for it. "They have been papering over their incompetence with local dollars."

Catania takes credit for bringing in Angela Avant to clear up the mental health department's Medicaid problem. She did well and was paid well. As for the other agencies, Catania says: "We never made life uncomfortable because people didn't do their jobs."

As in firing people for failing to file correct paperwork. But what about rewarding city workers who actually collect Medicaid funds?

It's worth a try since nothing else has worked.

Harry Jaffe's column appears on Tuesday and Friday. He can be contacted at hjaffe@washingtonexaminer.com.

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