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Regarding the April 4 editorial "The last mile":

Polio's global eradication should be put on urgent track for two sensible economic reasons. First, the savings from success will dwarf any higher costs we must pay now. According to a 1997 Government Accountability Office report, the global eradication of smallpox had saved over \$17 billion in U.S. health-care expenditures up to then; today continued savings would be over \$30 billion. The final stage of smallpox eradication had difficulties as well.

Polio eradication was originally targeted for eradication in 1990 for the year 2000. Then 2003. Then 2010. We're close, but further delay could be catastrophic if the virus significantly mutates. As long as a single polio virus remains in the human population it has the capacity to mutate into a new strain rendering our current vaccine and vaccination efforts useless. A new global campaign would need to be launched and a far more expensive domestic vaccination campaign funded.

We can pay a little more now or pay a great deal more in economic and human costs later. It is hard to conceive of a greater case for government action, public education and the use of force where necessary.

Chuck Woolery, Rockville

The writer was issues director of the Global Health Council from 1995 to 1997.