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Easley Ends Lawsuit, Gets Deal on House

Bald Head Island developer inks deal after suit settled

By DON CARRINGTON
Executive Editor

RALEIGH

In June 1996, one year after N.C. Attorney General Mike Easley settled a lawsuit and granted exceptions to state beach-erosion laws for homeowners at Bald Head Island, the island's developer sold Easley and his brother a new home — for at least \$70,000 less than a comparable home.

The Easleys' \$250,000 purchase is now valued at \$1,129,270.

The lawsuit against the state was filed by millionaire Walter Davis, who was seeking to stop beach erosion at his Bald Head Island home. Davis,



CJ photo by Don Carrington

Bald Head Island Limited sold a home to Easley and his brother in 1996. Records show a purchase price of \$250,000 — \$77,000 less than a comparable home on the same street.

other beachfront homeowners, and development company Bald Head Island Limited all benefited when the attorney general's office settled the lawsuit in 1995. The state made an exception to environmental laws and agreed to al-

low beach protection structures to be installed.

Bald Head Island Limited sold the new home to Easley and his brother Henry and their wives. Public records show a purchase price of \$250,000

— \$77,000 less than a comparable home on the same street, and sold at the same time by the same developer.

The Bald Head Island beach erosion issues were detailed in a 1996 Democracy North Carolina report, "The Pollution Lobby: Shoreline for Sale, Whatever Happened to the Year of the Coast?" The report claimed that political pressure was behind the state's settlement with Davis. The organization is a nonprofit, nonpartisan organization that studies the flow of political money.

The report made no mention of the Easleys' real estate transaction. Bob Hall, executive director of Democracy North Carolina, told *Carolina Journal* recently that he did not know about the Easleys' home purchase until he was told by a reporter. The 1996 report can be found on the organization's website.

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Smithfield Man Scours Pacific for Buffalo Soldier Legacy

By HAL YOUNG
Contributing Editor

RALEIGH

In 1913, the highway from Smithfield to Raleigh was a dirt road. One day that year, Wesley Bell, a man who still bore scars on his back from whippings he suffered as a slave, turned his mule-drawn wagon off the road onto the land he had just purchased. Picking a likely spot on high ground, he began clearing his own property to build a home for himself and his family.

Ninety years later, Bell's great-grandson lives on part of the land his



Joseph Avery on recent trip to the Philippines

ancestors who stayed in the Philippines after serving in the Spanish American War.

ancestor paid for with bales of cotton. After moving his family 400 miles to reclaim part of his heritage, Joseph Avery of Smithfield has crossed the Pacific twice to help strangers reclaim part of theirs — the legacy of American Buffalo Soldiers who stayed in the

Avery is a local business owner and vice chairman of the Republican Party for the 2nd Congressional District. He grew up in New Jersey, but his parents were from Johnston County and brought Joseph to visit family as a child.

Like many others, Joseph Avery Sr. left the farm he sharecropped and moved north after World War II, seeking higher-paying industrial jobs. In the mid-1980s, his son decided to return to the family's old home in North Carolina. He purchased part of the 225 acres once owned by Bell.

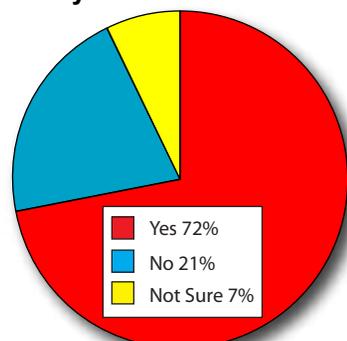
"That part of the county is still

called 'Bell Town' by the neighbors," he said, in tribute to the family that lived there for many years.

Some of the family's memories, though, run deeper and more troubling. Just as many white Southerners have family traditions about relatives who served with Gen. Robert E. Lee, or what happened when Gen. William T. Sherman passed through the area, Joseph said his family passed down traditions about the other side of that culture.

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Do you support increasing the mandatory school attendance age from 16 to 18 years old?



John William Pope Civitas Institute Poll, March 2007

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Easley Settles Suit, Gets House Deal

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year, *CJ* reported two other favorable real estate transactions that developers gave Easley.

In 2001, shortly after Easley started his first term as governor, Wilmington real estate developer and builder Charles "Nick" Garrett began remodeling the Easleys' home at Southport. Garrett or someone else provided construction financing for the \$250,000 project. Builders normally do not finance the construction of projects that large. Easley took out mortgages on the property, but not until eight months after the project was completed. The home has a current tax value of \$1,149,510.

Easley later appointed Garrett to the N.C. Board of Architecture and to the Clean Water Management Trust Fund Board. The N.C. Department of Transportation awarded Garrett a franchise for a state license tag office, even though a DOT supervisor said a new office was unnecessary.

In December 2005, the same year Easley started his second term as governor, coastal real estate developer Randy Allen sold Easley a choice waterfront lot in the Cannonsgate community in Carteret County. Public records show that Easley paid \$549,880. A recorded deed of trust shows he secured a \$494,000 loan from Branch Banking & Trust Company. One year later the county tax office revalued the property to \$1,198,245. Allen, whom Easley appointed to the Wildlife Resources Commission earlier in 2005, has four large coastal projects under development in North Carolina.

Easley also owns a home in Raleigh. He has mortgages on all properties except the Bald Head Island home. Easley's press office will not make him available for an interview and will not respond to questions from *CJ* about the governor's real estate transactions.

Bald Head Island

Bald Head Island is an incorporated village in Brunswick County with its own municipal government. It is normally accessible only by private boat or a private passenger ferry from Southport open to the public.

Bald Head was a separate island until 1999 when Hurricane Floyd deposited enough sand to turn it into an extension of the Fort Fisher State Recreation Area. It is now connected to the southern end of New Hanover County by a thin strip of land. Four-wheel drive Bald Head Island Police vehicles periodically



Above, on left, is Gov. Mike Easley's home in Southport, which has a tax value of \$1,149,510. At right is a sign for the Cannonsgate subdivision in Carteret County. Easley bought a waterfront lot there in 2005 that has a current tax value of \$1,198,245. (*CJ* Photos by Don Carrington)



patrol the connecting run along the beach, but signs warn private vehicles to stay away.

It is considered one of North Carolina's most exclusive resort areas. Only 2,000 of its 12,000 acres are scheduled for development. The balance

will remain natural areas. There are no high-rise buildings and no billboards. With the exception of a few construction and emergency vehicles, there are no cars allowed on the island. Transportation is by foot, bicycle, or golf cart.

In 1983 Bald Head Island Limited, owned by the George P. Mitchell Family, took control of the island. The company has more than 300 employees involved in real estate development, sales, and island operations.

1995 environmental issues

According to Democracy North Carolina's "Shoreline for Sale" report in 1996, the following took place:

- Campaign reports show that Bald Head Island landowners donated at least \$800,000 to state-level politics from 1989 to 1995. Gov. Jim Hunt received \$100,500 and Easley received \$50,600. Davis gave \$169,500 during that period, including \$12,500 to Easley.

- Bald Head Island Limited bought the undeveloped land from Davis and his partner, James Harrington, in 1983.

- The southern beach of Bald Head Island was rapidly eroding because of natural forces, possibly combined with the regular dredging of Wilmington's shipping channel. Davis and other Bald Head leaders advocated periodic sand renourishment and the construction of hard structures, or groins, to impede the

erosion. The groins are large, sand-filled tubes stretching 300 feet from the beach into the ocean. North Carolina had banned sea walls and other hard structures since 1985, and only a few exceptions had been made.

- Frustrated with efforts to protect the beach in front of his beach house, Davis sued the state in 1994. Easley's office led the state's defense.

- The same year, Bald Head's government applied for a permit to renourish the beach. The state agreed to the renourishment, but not to the groins.

- In early 1995, Davis met with Hunt to make his case for the hard structures. Later, Davis met privately with the attorney general's lawyer leading the state's defense. An agreement was worked out in which Davis agreed to drop the lawsuit and the state agreed to allow the groins along the beach as well as to lobby the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to provide the sand.

- By May 1996 the sand and 16 groins were in place. Periodic renourishment continues today.

CJ asked the N. C. Department of Justice for access to the file on the Davis lawsuit, but department officials said they could not find the file. "From what I have been able to find out, it appears the lawsuit was never filed, so our office would not have had a case file on it," spokeswoman Noelle Talley said after searching for the file.

1996 beach home sale

In April 1985 Easley and his wife, Mary, bought a waterfront home at the mouth of the Cape Fear River in Southport. At the time, Easley was district attorney for Brunswick, Columbus, and Bladen counties.

In 1993, after he was first elected attorney general, Easley, and his wife bought a home in Raleigh. They consider the Southport home their primary residence. Bald Head Island sits about two miles across the river from the Easleys'

Continued as "Easley," Page 3

Smithfield Man Scours Pacific for Buffalo Soldier Legacy

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Some of his ancestors were likely among the last Africans brought to America at the end of slave trade. "When Pricilla was just a girl, she and her two sisters were stolen, crossed a 'very big pond', and landed in Virginia," he said. "They were all sold to different families, and she ended up in the Garner or Clayton area." Bell's father, Young Bell, told his children to never forget they were Ibo, from a tribe living on the Nigerian coast; according to records at the Johnston County Heritage Center, Young Bell was married as early as 1835, so he might have been native African or first-generation American himself.

Wesley himself was a slave in the Selma area, and was freed only at the end of the Civil War. "He said he was glad that he would never have to get on the auction block and be sold again," Joseph said. Although he was never literate, Wesley was considered prosperous as a black landowner, and reportedly was the first black man to serve on a jury in Johnston County.

Joseph's elderly relatives could point to fields that their grandparents, or even their parents, had cleared and cultivated while they were slaves. Joseph's grandfather was the illegitimate son of the slave owner himself. Joseph said he had a chance encounter with one of the planter's white descendants who still lives in the area, and cautiously mentioned he'd heard a tradition that the two families, black and white, were related at that point. To his surprise, the other man confirmed that his family had the same story, and that his ancestor had a reputation for chasing the slave women. He laughed it off, saying "it was just a roll in the hay to him," Joseph said.

"I could have hit him," he said. "How would it feel to have someone speak about your great-grandmother that way?"

Still, Joseph takes satisfaction observing how the cultural field has leveled in the last century.

"The granddaughter of that man was a classmate with my daughter at Smithfield-Selma High School," he said. "The descendant of slaves and the



Joseph Avery on a visit to MacArthur Landing Memorial National Park in Candahug, Palo, Leyte. The park commemorates Gen. Douglas MacArthur's famous return to the Philippines in 1944. (Submitted photo)

descendant of slave owners went to the same school, got the same education, both graduated with honors, and both went to college.

"I think that's an example that maybe we're getting closer to what Dr. King was talking about."

Buffalo Soldiers abroad

A few years ago another door opened for Joseph to pursue another sort of heritage. He discovered the history of black American soldiers who settled in the Philippines after the Spanish-American War, but he found that many of their descendants are likely unaware of their own family's history.

Joseph's son joined the Army in 2004, and when he came home for Christmas after basic training, Joseph gave him Kai Wright's book, *Soldiers of Freedom: An Illustrated History of African Americans in the Armed Forces*.

"When he returned to his unit after Christmas, he left the book behind," Joe said with a laugh. "I picked it up and the more I read, the more intrigued I became."

The so-called Buffalo Soldiers, members of four all-black infantry and

cavalry units after the Civil War, were known for their service in the American West. The Plains Indians, impressed with their tenacity, toughness, and fighting spirit, named them after the animal they revered. The soldier's curly hair, like the buffalo's, only made the connection more obvious.

They also have a North Carolina connection. One of the original units, the 25th Infantry, was made up with soldiers from the 39th Colored Infantry, a black regiment that served in final Carolina campaigns of the war, then with the federal occupation of Raleigh afterward.

Joe's special interest lies in their later assignments. At the turn of the century, all four units were deployed in the Spanish American War. The 25th fought on San Juan Hill next to Theodore Roosevelt's Rough Riders—he mentions them with approval in his book about the war—but all were eventually sent to the Philippines.

"This was the first deployment of black troops outside the U.S.," Joseph said. "The military sent them thinking that their African blood would give them more resistance to tropical diseases like malaria." That was a mistake.

But after the war, a number of the soldiers stayed in the Philippines and raised families there. Curious about their descendants, Joseph decided to visit the islands himself.

Joseph found signs the Buffalo Soldiers had made a cultural impact that was now submerged. When Joseph asked a Filipino associate whether there was a local word for biracial children of black American servicemen, he was told, "Oh, sure – we call them buffaloes." Joseph said that "there are no buffaloes in the Philippines."

Joseph found a monument commemorating a Filipino victory in the war; the figure of a black soldier was chosen to represent the American army. In Leyte province he found bronze statues of black soldiers, set up before 1920, but with inscriptions so eroded from the tropical rains they were illegible.

"No one remembered why they were there," he said.

He knew he had have to get off the tourist route to dig up this history, so Joseph contacted U.S. Sen. Elizabeth Dole's office and asked for a letter of introduction to prove his bona fides to government officials. The senator's office did one better and connected him with their immigration counsel, Carol Armstrong, "because everyone wants to talk about immigration," Joe said.

Joseph used the letter, and Ms. Armstrong's business cards, to open doors in the villages he visited. One elderly official hastened to show him his well-thumbed U.S. Army manual on counterinsurgency operations, given to him by an "advisor" decades before. It was a trusted reference, still in use.

More typically, Joseph saw the impermanence of records in villages. Researchers in America can draw on census reports and other paper documentation, he said, but the Philippine government does not conduct a decennial census, and the bamboo huts common in rural areas deteriorate and need replacement every few years. Old photographs and manuscripts don't have much chance of survival in that environment, he said.

"There are many people there

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Easley Settles Lawsuit, Gets Deal on Beach House

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Southport home.

The Easleys' home on Isle of Skye Crescent at Bald Head Island comprises 1,336 square feet and has four bedrooms.

It sits on a bluff and appears to have an ocean view. A state-owned maritime forest preserve adjoins the rear of the property.

There is no recorded deed of trust associated with the purchase, indicating

that no money was borrowed. Easley's economic interest statements show no rental income from the property, indicating the property is strictly for the use of his and his brother's families.

When the completed home was added to the tax records, the Brunswick County Tax Office assigned a value of \$329,440, or \$79,440 more than the amount the Easleys paid for the home.

The day after the Easleys' deed was recorded, a deed from Bald Head Island Limited to another island resi-

dent, Donald C. Kolasch of Maryland, was filed. The 1,348 square-foot, four-bedroom Kolasch home was also new and situated on the same street as the Easley house.

Records show Kolasch paid \$327,000. The tax value assigned to his home was \$335,360, or \$8,360 more than he paid.

As of Jan. 1, 2007, the tax office conducted a countywide revaluation and placed the market value of the Easleys' home at \$1,129,270. The new

value of the Kolasch home was set at a nearly identical \$1,124,750.

Last week Bald Head Island Limited's Sales Director Jeff Leonard told CJ he would research the price difference issue and try to provide an explanation.

He subsequently called and left a voice message that said even though the properties were the same size, the Easley property sold for a lower price because it doesn't have the same view.

"Our company will stand behind anything we have done," he added. CJ

Mecklenburg Sheriff Urges Law Agencies to Use 287(g) Program

By PAUL CHESSER
Associate Editor

RALEIGH
Mecklenburg County Sheriff Jim Pendergraph says a federal enforcement program has enabled his department to deport 860 illegal immigrants.



Mecklenburg County Sheriff Jim Pendergraph

The four-term sheriff, speaking Feb. 19 at a luncheon for the John Locke Foundation, said about 600 additional lawbreakers in custody await deportation. In the nine months that Mecklenburg has had the program, about 10 percent of the aliens have been re-arrested.

"What does that tell you about our border security?" Pendergraph asked rhetorically.

The 287(g) program, named for the section in the 1996 Federal Immigration and Nationality Act where the program is described, deputizes local and state police officers as agents of the U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement. Local law enforcement agencies apply to participate in the program, and those accepted have their personnel trained "to identify, process, and when appropriate, detain immigration offenders they encounter during their regular, daily law-enforcement activity."

Mecklenburg County sheriff's deputies completed training last spring,

Pendergraph said he had noticed increased numbers of suspected illegal immigrants among suspects in Mecklenburg County about seven years ago. He said most of them would enter the jail system unable to speak English, get fingerprinted, post a small amount of bail, and then get released.

and, Pendergraph said, officers in Alamance and Gaston counties have just completed training for their own programs.

Pendergraph said he had noticed increased numbers of suspected illegal immigrants among suspects in Mecklenburg County about seven years ago. He said most of them would enter the jail system unable to speak English, get fingerprinted, post a small amount of bail, and then get released.

Pendergraph said he was disturbed by the trend, and believing the only true information he was getting about offenders was their photo and fingerprint, thought there had to be a better way to



Hispanic immigrant workers crowd the Mexican consulate on Six Forks Road in Raleigh seeking services. (CJ file photo)

identify people. He learned about the 287(g) program from Orange County, Calif., Sheriff Michael Carona.

Pendergraph, who said, "I'm a taxpayer too," reported that he has seen the effect illegal immigration has had on emergency rooms, education and law enforcement, increasing costs and straining public resources. He said he is "appalled" that the number of local law-enforcement organizations that won't sign on to the 287(g) program, including one in his own county — the Charlotte Police Department.

"If 3,000 sheriffs in these United States did this," Pendergraph said, "could we make a difference? You better believe it."

Still, the sheriff said he is frustrated by the inaction of President Bush and Congress over the problem with lax U.S. border security.

He said he has pleaded with both directly, but the 10 percent recidivism he has seen of jailed aliens demonstrates that national enforcement is not a priority for national political leaders. *CJ*

Smithfield Man Scours Pacific for Buffalo Soldier Legacy

Continued from Page 3

who look like my cousins," Joseph said. "There are obviously groups with African descent, and some of them are descendants of the Buffalo Soldiers. I keep hoping to find someone with a photograph of 'Grandfather' in his American uniform, but it hasn't happened yet."

He has been talking with Catholic clergy and building up a network of friends among elderly schoolteachers. He is hoping their long contact with large numbers of families will bring someone to light.

Joseph said the Filipinos were uniformly friendly and interested in his project, with one exception.

On his return trip in January, Joseph was near a heavily Muslim area in the south. He was trying to avoid the mountain regions where antiterrorist forces include "advisors to the American government" that are "cleverly disguised as businessmen on vacation," he said.

When he made a wrong turn, though, he suddenly found himself escorted back to the roadway.

"Police, and others, told me there were very militant groups in the region, and I fit the profile of someone who might be spying for the U.S.," he said. "I didn't want to be mistaken for that, especially since I didn't have the army to back me up."

Otherwise, Joseph said, the Filipinos "treated me like royalty." When he heard Bob Marley's song "Buffalo Soldiers" on the radio, he called the station to ask about it; he ended up with a guest appearance on the afternoon talk show. Villagers invited him to stay in their homes, though he was taken aback the first time a host asked if he would mind buying the family's groceries that evening.

When they reached the market, Joseph realized that they lived on less than \$4 a day. He said he learned something about the definition of poverty across economic and cultural lines. The average day laborer takes home about

\$2 a day, he said. By comparison, even a budget traveler from America is "an instant millionaire."

"I decided whatever was good enough for them was good enough for me. I spent many nights on bamboo beds that were pretty uncomfortable," he said, rapping the tabletop for illustration, "but if they had electricity someone would bring me the luxury of a fan to sleep under."

A different discovery

To avoid attracting attention, Joseph was advised to "dress down," leave his jewelry and valuables in the hotel safe, and downplay his American citizenship.

He was surprised, however, at the number of T-shirts and hats he saw in the Philippines expressing open support for the United States. "It was more than you'd see on the Fourth of July here in Smithfield," he said. "They revere Americans over there."

"The people there are very grate-

ful for what we've done," Joseph said. "They remember that Americans helped them get free from the Spanish, and then we freed them from the Japanese later on."

In one place, people pointed to a statue of Douglas McArthur and said, "He told us he would come back. You are coming back, too, fulfilling that same promise."

He plans to continue connecting the dots to form a picture of the black Americans' particular contributions to the Philippines, and hopes to share a new aspect of their heritage with the descendants they left.

They are already thankful, though.

"Whenever I asked them, they never knew about the Buffaloes' descendants, but they always knew we Americans had been there," he said. "They have never forgotten the work that was done."

"I wonder if the same thing will be true in Iraq, years from now," he said. *CJ*

WFU Scientists Find Non-Embryonic Stem Cell Source

By DAVID N. BASS
Contributing Editor

RALEIGH

Researchers at the Institute for Regenerative Medicine at Wake Forest University School of Medicine recently discovered a new source of stem cells that avoids the ethical controversy surrounding human embryonic stem-cell research.

Dr. Anthony Atala, a pediatric surgeon and lead researcher at IRM, said that his team has found a stem-cell population in the placenta and the amniotic fluid that surrounds the developing fetus in the mother's womb. Researchers have already used the new stem cells, called amniotic fluid-derived stem cells, to create a variety of specific tissues, including liver, muscle, cartilage, bone, and nerve, Atala said.

"We are extending that list of tissues at this point and also advancing on to where we've gotten a specific lineage of matching nodes as well," Atala said.

The discovery is particularly significant since Atala thinks that amniotic stem cells resemble the positive aspects of embryonic stem cells while avoiding the unstable side.

"They grow in a similar manner to human embryonic stem cells — they double every 36 hours," Atala said. "But unlike the human embryonic stem cells, they don't form tumors when planted in tissue. They resemble human embryonic stem cells in the way they grow, but they resemble adult stem cells in the fact that they don't form tumors."

The breakthrough comes while Congress continues to push for lifting federal funding restrictions on embryonic stem-cell research, which supporters say could lead to treatments for a host of ailments. In early January, the U.S. House approved a measure, H.R. 3, that would overturn embryonic stem-cell funding restrictions established by the Bush administration in 2001. Advocates contend that such research could result in cures for diseases such as Parkinson's and Alzheimer's.

Atala, who is one of the top researchers in the regenerative medicine field, has high hopes for the practical use of amniotic stem cells, since they originate from a plentiful source. "It's an easy resource to get cells," he said. "In other words, there are over four million births per year, so every birth would be potentially a resource for stem cells."

Amniotic stem cells hold the potential to serve as a life-long warehouse of treatment options, Atala said. "Basically, there are two ways to use the cells," he said. "One way is to actually store the cells at the time of birth. Then you would have a natural repository from which stems could be obtained during the life of the child and the patient. But that doesn't help us for our life now, so the concept there would be to start a bank of approximately 100,000



Dr. Anthony Atala in his lab at Wake Forest University Baptist Medical Center.

specimens, and by doing so, you could supply potentially 99 percent of the U.S. population with a perfect genetic match for transplantation."

Ever since scientists reported the creation of the first embryonic stem cells in 1998, the battle over state and federal funding has been a growing schism in American politics. The National Institutes of Health reports that pluripotent human embryonic stem cells could potentially offer a "renewable source of replacement cells and tissues" capable of treating illnesses. The issue is expected to feature prominently in the 2008 presidential election.

But prolife organizations say that research on human embryos is unethical and unnecessary because of numerous treatments developed by using stem cells from the organs and tissues of adult patients. This method, known as

adult stem-cell research, uses sources such as bone marrow and cord blood rather than human embryos to retrieve stem cells.

Despite the promises of amniotic stem cells, Atala has made clear that he still supports lifting federal funding restrictions on research involving human embryos. "It is essential that National Institute of Health-funded researchers are able to fully pursue embryonic stem cell research as a complement to research into other forms of stem cells," Atala wrote in a Jan. 8 letter to U.S. Reps. Diana DeGette, D-Colo., and Michael Castle, R-Del. Atala also pledged his support for H.R. 3 and said that the bill "would speed science in the regenerative medicine field."

But Atala also believes that alternative stem-cell sources exist that side-step the ethical quandary. "As a practice, I support all research," he said. "But there are new ways now that are being devised to obtain human embryonic stem cells without sacrificing the embryo. So, personally, I think that that would be a good venue, because it would solve some of the challenges that we have right now. There are ways right now scientifically that are being worked on where you can get a human embryonic stem cell without damaging the embryo."

In addition to amniotic stem cells,

Atala has experienced other successes in the field of regenerative medicine. He created the first laboratory-grown bladders in 1999 and successfully implanted them in patients suffering from poor bladder function. The organs were created from the patients' own cells in order to avoid rejection. Atala described the newly minted bladders as "functional" and "durable," according to an IRM press release.

The process for growing the bladders began with taking a biopsy of the patient's tissue, Atala said. The tissue was

then teased apart into its individual cell components, and the cells were grown in culture until enough existed to create a biodegradable "scaffold" in the shape of a bladder. The newly grown organ was implanted shortly afterward.

"The whole process from when you take the biopsy to the time when you put the organ back into the body is about six weeks," Atala said.

For the future, Atala hopes to expand the use of amniotic stem cells and move beyond the experimental phase. "We know the stem cells can go to liver, bone, muscle, cartilage, blood vessels, and other structures, but we want to keep pushing those so that we can keep advancing," he said. "Lots of things have to happen before you can get [an organ] into a patient." CJ

"They grow in a similar manner to human embryonic stem cells — they double every 36 hours."

Dr. Anthony Atala
Wake Forest University
Baptist Medical Center



Tao Xu, Ph.D. at work in the cell culture room, where cells are expanded and then coaxed into becoming a particular cell type. (Submitted photo)

NC Delegation Watch**Jones: Limit Mexico trucks**

In a Feb. 26 letter to Department of Homeland Security Secretary Michael Chertoff and Department of Transportation Secretary Mary Peters, Rep. Walter Jones, R-3rd, expressed his opposition to the Department of Transportation's recent announcement of a year-long pilot program to allow 100 Mexican trucking companies unlimited access to U.S. roads to haul international cargo. The program extends the Mexican companies' access beyond the currently permitted 20 to 25 mile zones along America's Southwest border.

"This pilot program not only poses a serious threat to our national security and the safety of American drivers on the road, but endangers American jobs and our economy," Jones wrote. "Given the serious concerns of American citizens who are troubled by our weakly defended borders and the threat of terrorism from Central and South America, how can our nation allow trucks from Mexico to have unfettered access into our country and onto our highways?"

"Any experiment that poses a safety hazard to the American public – and could possibly aid terrorist activities, the entry of illegal drugs and illegal human smuggling – is unacceptable. For the sake of our national security and the safety of our citizens, I urge you to reconsider the implementation of this pilot program."

Hayes: Expand Berry

Rep. Robin Hayes, R-8th, re-introduced the Berry Amendment Extension Act to expand the Berry Amendment to the Department of Homeland Security (DHS). The legislation would prohibit the DHS from procuring certain items "directly related to national security" unless the items are domestically produced and manufactured products, most notably clothing, fabrics, and sewn products. Hayes succeeded in expanding and providing more transparency to the Berry Amendment for Department of Defense purchases in December when his changes were approved in the fiscal 2006 Defense Authorization.

"We must expand this requirement to not only protect American jobs, but provide the assurance that terrorists and other adversaries cannot obtain critical security uniforms to facilitate their actions," Hayes said. *CJ*

Bill would end secret ballots in union votes**NC Democrats Sponsor Union Card Check**By **PAUL CHESSER**Associate Editor
and **JON HAM**
Publisher

The U.S. House on March 1 passed a bill that would simplify the process in which workers could indicate their desire to unionize, but opponents of the measure say the changes would leave other employees vulnerable to pro-union intimidation tactics.

The legislation, the Employee Free Choice Act of 2007, would enable unions to collect worker signatures on cards — called a "card-check" — to determine whether a majority in the workplace want to unionize.

The change would replace the current secret ballot system, which maintains the anonymity of employees. Virginia Rep. Eric Cantor, Republican chief deputy whip, led the opposition against the bill. He coined a nickname for the bill, calling it "The American Worker Compulsion Act."

"This bill is bad for America and Americans don't want it," he said in a statement. "Nine in ten Americans agree that workers should have the right to vote privately when deciding to organize a union."

The House passed the bill by a 241-185 vote, with most Democrats (except for two) supporting it and all but 13 Republicans opposing it.

"If they sign a card, everybody knows," said Rep. Buck McKeon, R-Calif., "and that opens up intimidation from both sides, so we believe very strongly in the workers' rights to have a secret ballot."

Votes on the bill by the N.C. delegation were divided along party lines. Democrats supporting the bill were 1st District Rep. G. K. Butterfield; 2nd District Rep. Bob Etheridge; 4th District Rep. David Price; 7th District Rep. Mike McIntyre; 11th District Rep. Heath Shuler; 12th District Rep. Mel Watt; and 13th District Rep. Brad Miller. All of the state's Democratic House members, except for McIntyre, also were cosponsors.

Though co-sponsoring the legislation, none of the Democrats featured their support on their Web sites. H.R. 800, as the bill is called, does not show up on the "Co-sponsored Legislation" lists of Butterfield, Etheridge or Miller. Watt has no list of co-sponsored legislation on his site, and while it shows on the lists of Price and Shuler, it is not mentioned elsewhere on their sites.

"It is ironic that Democrats who campaigned last November on promises to protect America's privacy rights are now supporting a bill that will strip workers of the right of secret ballot voting," Cantor said. "This is clearly a Democrat payoff to unions instead of good policy for America."

Shuler in particular was targeted



Rep. Mel Watt, D-12th



Rep. Heath Shuler, D-11th

by the bill's opponents. Radio advertisements sponsored by the Coalition for a Democratic Workplace, an alliance of hundreds of probusiness groups, were run in his district. Shuler defeated former Republican Rep. Charles Taylor in November, in a campaign in which he emphasized a moderate-to-conservative agenda. Todd Harris, a spokesman for the Coalition, told *The New York Times* that Shuler and some other recently elected Democrats are in districts that are more conservative than they have claimed to be themselves.

Organized labor says that without a card-check, employees are subject to threats by businesses that don't want to

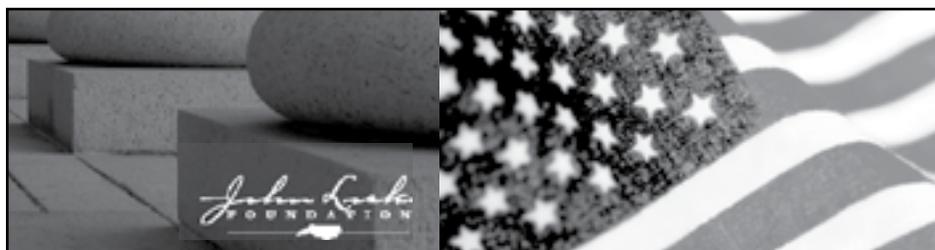
negotiate with unions.

"The current system for forming unions and bargaining is broken," says a statement on the Web site of the AFL-CIO in support of the legislation. "Every day, corporations deny workers the freedom to decide for themselves whether to form unions to bargain for a better life. They routinely intimidate, harass, coerce and even fire workers who try to form unions and bargain for economic well-being."

According to a report in the *Washington Times* on March 2, the legislation faces an uphill battle in the Senate and the Bush administration has said it will veto the bill if it gets that far.

"We will not allow the progress already made on behalf of U.S. workers to be undone, nor will we allow coercion by employers or unions," Senate minority leader Mitch McConnell, a Kentucky Republican, said to the *Times*.

The N.C. Republicans who opposed the bill were 3rd District Rep. Walter Jones; 5th District Rep. Virginia Foxx; 6th District Rep. Howard Coble; 8th District Rep. Robin Hayes; 9th District Rep. Sue Myrick; and 10th District Rep. Patrick McHenry. *CJ*

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National Review's Byron York Handicaps the '08 Primaries

Byron York, White House correspondent for *National Review*, recently addressed a John Locke Foundation Headliner luncheon in Raleigh. He also discussed the 2008 presidential campaign with Mitch Kokai for Carolina Journal Radio. (Go to <http://www.carolinajournal.com/cjradio/> to find a station near you or to learn about the weekly CJ Radio podcast.)

Kokai: First, should we be surprised that this presidential race is so hot in early 2007?

York: Well, you know, I'm a little surprised. I mean, it was funny — the candidates who wanted to wait for a decent interval actually waited until after the November 2006 elections. I mean, if it weren't for that, this might have been going last year. I mean, part of it is that George W. Bush is clearly a lame duck, and he's not going to run again, so it's wide open on both sides. And the other part of it is, I think, we're just in an increasingly fast cycle in which television, the Internet, all of these things have come together to intensify people's interest in politics. And the other thing is there's a lot going on. There's a war going on, there are a lot of questions to be talked about, we have a new Democratic majority in Congress, and so it's a very political time.

Kokai: Well, the topic is the presidential contenders and their prospects, so let's go ahead and start with the Republicans. What I seem to be hearing and reading is the big three, and then some others, with Newt as a wild card. What can you tell us?

York: The big three and the wild card, that's exactly right. Well, if you look at the polls right now, Rudy Giuliani is pulling ahead, and I have to say he's having one of the biggest and longest and best "up" cycles that I've ever seen. I mean, he's getting a lot of good coverage, and he's not getting much bad coverage. People are focusing on his very impressive record; I mean, he has a really, really impressive record as mayor of New York prior to Sept. 11, in dealing with welfare, crime, and budget. So he has a very good platform on which to run, but he also, you know, he has troubles. He has a tumultuous personal life, he has all sorts of businesses that we don't know anything about, and as far as the Republican electorate in the primaries is concerned, of course he has his position on social issues. He's pro-choice. He's not pro-gay marriage, but he's sort of pro-civil unions. He's been in favor of gun control. So, you know, at some point he's going to come down. It just has to happen. So Giuliani is doing, you know, extremely well.

The next is John McCain, who's having kind of a long "down" cycle. I mean, he has not been the old McCain



Byron York, White House correspondent for *National Review*, spoke at a John Locke Foundation Headliner event in Raleigh on March 14 and appeared on Carolina Journal Radio. (CJ photo by Don Carrington)

lately, it seems. He's been sliding in the polls. He's looked tired a few times. People worry about his age, and he would be 72 on Inauguration Day in 2009, which is two years older than Ronald Reagan was when he took office. He's trying to get his mojo back. He's going on the campaign trail more. He announced his candidacy on David Letterman, and frankly I didn't really get that one, but he did, and so, you know, I think McCain — just like Giuliani is due for a "down" cycle, I think McCain is due for an "up" cycle.

And then the other one is Mitt Romney, who's really far behind the other two. It's not as if it's a big three. It's kind of like a big two and another guy way back. And he's been having a "down" cycle as well, and his problem is that his past is catching up with him. You know, he ran for the Senate in 1994 in Massachusetts, and for governor, successfully, of Massachusetts in 2002, as a strong pro-choice candidate, and he went out of his way to stress his pro-choice credentials. And as he explains it, he did not really change to a strong pro-life position until November 2004. That's very recent. I mean, it's just really recent, and for the portion of the primary electorate for whom abortion is a big deal, perhaps even a threshold issue, there are serious questions now about Romney.

And then, as you suggest, the wild card is Newt Gingrich, who is polling much better than Romney right now, and not that far behind McCain. And the interesting thing about Newt is that he electrifies conservative audiences. We had a meeting called "The Conservative Summit" in Washington a few weeks ago, sponsored by *National Review*. Jeb Bush came there, gave a good speech — good reception. People like Jeb Bush, but a lot of the Republican electorate is

saying, "No more Bushes. I'm never going to vote for another Bush, and I mean it." OK, good speech. Mike Huckabee was there, workmanlike speech, good reception. Mitt Romney was there. He disappointed a lot of people, did not give a very good speech. Newt Gingrich was there and blew them away. I mean, the crowd absolutely loved him. He is going to be a factor in this race, no matter what he does. Staffers from two competing campaigns told me, "Look, if he enters the race, he will dominate the debates," because he's very, very good. Now, they don't believe he can win, because he is in a situation kind of like Hillary Rodham Clinton: half the people who know about him like him, and half the people don't like him. So, you know, he's got baggage galore from the 1990s, but he is definitely going to shake up the race, if he chooses to.

Kokai: Okay, let's flip to the other side of the ledger, then. For the Democrats, you hear Hillary Clinton, Obama, and the third name that I usually hear is our own North Carolina former Senator John Edwards.

York: Well, Mrs. Clinton is still ahead in the polls. She has all the strengths that we know about, which is she has a lot of money, and she has the former president strongly on her side. But I think what we've seen lately, in this whole thing with David Geffen, the Hollywood mogul who criticized her, is that Obama has really gotten under her skin, and she is reverting to this kind of 1992 Clinton behavior. I guess the quickest way to summarize it is this: If somebody criticizes you, you knock them flat. And I'm not sure that's going to work with Obama. It has made Mrs. Clinton seem a little reactive and a little scared and a little overly aggressive. So, you know,

I think right now she is having a bit of a "down" cycle, because when David Geffen came out and talked, he was only saying the things that Democrats are saying privately among themselves about Sen. Clinton. So, you know, I think she's in for a bit of a "down" cycle.

Obama — his entire campaign has been an "up" cycle. He has had extraordinarily good press. His approval rating is huge. The number of people who say they don't have an opinion of him has gone down a lot. It was 33 percent in December, and now it's 16 percent, so people feel like they're getting to know him a little bit. So he's very, very strong. And when he will have a "down" cycle, I don't know.

And then the last one is John Edwards, who is trailing the other two but has worked very hard in Iowa, where he might do well, worked very hard in Nevada, where he might do well, popular with the service employees' unions out there, and he might do well in South Carolina, which he won in 2004. The thing about Edwards is I believe he is a candidate who is addicted to promising radical change. You know, the whole "Two Americas" thing, and now he's big on the war and wanting to get out of the war immediately. It's kind of a weird campaign when a candidate is going around saying, "I made a mistake! I made a mistake! I made a mistake!" — which is what he's doing at every opportunity.

Kokai: "But vote for me!"

York: "But vote for me!" I think voters really don't want radical change, and I think there's a lot of research that shows they really don't want radical change at any given moment, so I think Edwards' appeal will ultimately fail. The interesting thing about all these candidates is they've all got a problem. I mean, McCain has his baggage, and Romney has his flip-flops, and Gingrich has his baggage, and Giuliani has his social positions, and Hillary has just being Hillary, and Obama has inexperience. They've all got problems, but somebody's going to win, and my guess is, on the Democratic side, it will not be John Edwards.

Kokai: For the political junkies in the audience who like to follow this, what should we be watching in the next few weeks and months?

York: I think you should watch how Hillary Clinton handles Obama. She's got to find a better way to handle him, and I think you need to watch that. And then the next thing is to watch for scrutiny of Rudolph Giuliani. When does that start, and how intense is that, and especially how does he react to it? Does he react in a thin-skinned, angry way, or does he take it in stride, like a candidate who really is ready for the first tier of the presidential race? CJ

State School Briefs

Forsyth vocational track

In August 2009 if everything goes according to plan, students might be walking into a high school with a program that is unlike anything else in the Winston-Salem/Forsyth County school system, the *Winston-Salem Journal* reports.

The school would offer 400 students the chance to take vocational classes for all four years of high school. Academic classes would be offered at the same school, and some classes would revolve around the students' chosen vocations.

"We want to make sure that at the freshman level, at the earliest level, kids can be taking hands-on lessons," Superintendent Don Martin said. "I think we need more alternatives to keep kids in school. There's clearly an employment need in this community for a number of high-skilled jobs in various kinds of trade industries of all sorts."

The new high school would not replace the current career and technical education classes, which are offered at the Career Center in 11th and 12th grades.

The new high school might offer classes in health fields, hospitality industry, construction, design or other fields, said Kay Rogers, the school system's career-technical education director.

Lawsuit rejected

The state Court of Appeals on March 20 affirmed a lower court's decision to reject a lawsuit from parents trying to bar the Wake County school system from leasing land at the DuBois Center in Wake Forest for a modular school, *The News & Observer* of Raleigh reports.

The court ruled that the school system did not violate state law by signing the lease deal. The court also noted that the lawsuit is moot because the modular school has been in operation since August 2005.

In 2005, the school board agreed to use the DuBois Center to house temporarily Forest Pines Elementary School while its permanent building was under construction. Forest Pines' permanent building in the Wakefield area is scheduled to open in August.

A number of Wakefield, Wildwood Forest, and Wake Forest Elementary parents whose children were reassigned to Forest Pines argued that the DuBois Center site was unsafe. They filed a lawsuit claiming that the lease deal was illegal because a school district can build schools only on land it owns. *CJ*

Good Bond Rating Spurs Talk of \$2B Bond Issue

By JIM STEGALL
Contributing Editor

RALEIGH
When State Treasurer Richard Moore released his 2007 "debt affordability study" showing that North Carolina could afford to take on a limited amount of new debt, a host of state agencies, civic organizations, and special-interest groups were quick to suggest worthy projects for any new money the state might borrow.

State lawmakers must now sort through the various spending proposals this summer to decide which ones to place before the voters. As they do, the competition between these groups likely will grow intense.

Moore's report, released Feb. 1, said the state could afford to borrow up to \$384 million a year for the next 10 years without putting its triple-A bond rating in jeopardy. As one of only seven states that maintain the highest bond rating, North Carolina is able to borrow money at a slightly lower interest rate than those with lower ratings.

The treasurer's forecast is based on predictions of continued strong revenue growth and low interest rates. The report concludes that even with the new borrowing, debt repayments will take up about 4 percent of general revenues, below the recommended cap of 4.75 percent.

It didn't take long for word of the new debt capacity to inspire plans for using it. Three weeks after the treasurer's report became public, Gov. Mike Easley presented a budget calling for more than \$1.4 billion in general obligation bonds. Under Easley's plan, voters would be asked to approve bonds to pay for new buildings at universities, new prisons, new state office buildings, and various water resource projects.

The announcement of his bond proposal disappointed educators and transportation officials, who had hoped to stake a claim to a substantial part of any new bond. Anticipating the negative reaction, the governor argued at his press conference that state bond money must go to pay for things that only the state is responsible for, such as university buildings.

Education and transportation, he said, have other dedicated sources of income to pay for capital needs.

For instance, local education capital needs are normally funded by counties. If counties need more money, they can also authorize their own bonds. Transportation needs generally are met using dedicated taxes such as the gas tax, and the Highway Trust Fund. Certain transportation projects are also eligible for federal money. By contrast, if the state doesn't construct buildings on university campuses or state agency office buildings, chances are they don't get built.

Not everyone buys that argument, however. The most visible competitor to the governor's bond proposal is a

"The current revenue structure is not capable of meeting our growing infrastructure need."

Beau Mills
North Carolina Go

\$2 billion plan being advanced by the "Education: Everybody's Business" coalition. The coalition is composed of organizations representing school administrators, school boards, and business groups such as the N.C. Chamber. The group cites a 2006 study by the Department of Public Instruction that showed more than \$9 billion worth of school construction and renovation needs across the state.

To dramatize their case, the coalition has sponsored several public forums where speakers testify to the urgent need for more school construction money. Lobbyists from several education groups allied with the coalition have been carrying portfolios and sporting stickers that read "Crisis in the Classroom: Support a \$2 Billion School Bond" in the Legislative Building.

Not to be outdone, transportation enthusiasts have come up with their own bond proposal. North Carolina Go, a coalition of groups that includes local governments, chambers of commerce, and others concerned about the worsening state of transportation infrastructure, is lobbying for a \$1 billion bond to be targeted on the worst bottlenecks.

Spokesman Beau Mills said North Carolina desperately needs "improvements in delivery, efficiency of projects,

and additional revenue sources" to deal with its rapidly expanding demand for highways.

"The current revenue structure is not capable of meeting our growing infrastructure need," he said. "We've got to do something different, unless we want to see more potholes and traffic." He said that because of rising prices for steel and concrete, highway construction costs have risen by 45 percent in the last three years.

State agencies that would benefit from the governor's proposal haven't been quiet about their needs, either. Erskine Bowles, president of the UNC system, told lawmakers during a hearing March 6 that the 12 new buildings the bond would fund are critical to the system's continued development. The most expensive project would use \$120 million of bond money to erect a "genomic sciences" building on the campus of UNC-Chapel Hill. An additional \$87 million would go to build a school of dentistry at East Carolina University.

Department of Correction spokesman Keith Acree makes an equally compelling argument for directing \$237 million in bond money to the prison system. "The inmate population is growing by over a thousand a year," he said. Citing longer sentences mandated by the legislature, he said, "the trend will continue if the laws don't change."

To make matters worse, the prison population is getting older. The number of prisoners over the age of 50 has grown by 61 percent in the past five years, while the general inmate population is up only 16 percent.

That's a problem because older inmates tend to have more serious health problems. Two of the major projects in the governor's bond plan involve new health facilities at state prisons. *CJ*



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N.C. Supreme Court Widens NBPTS Eligibility in Schools

By MICHAEL LOWREY
Associate Editor

RALEIGH

The N.C. Court of Appeals recently ruled that a career development education teaching coordinator at Onslow County Schools was eligible for pay raises that are awarded to teachers after being certified by the National Board for Professional Standards.

Under former Gov. Jim Hunt, the state adopted a policy of encouraging teachers to obtain NBPTS certification. Left unanswered was a question of who was eligible for the higher salaries that come with the certification.

Was it classroom teachers only? Or were licensed teachers in career development positions also eligible? The answer, according to the state Court of Appeals, is that career development coordinators were eligible, and that the Department of Public Instruction has been wrong in not granting the higher pay since 2000.

Madeline Tucker, the coordinator, filed a lawsuit saying she was denied the pay raise although DPI officials had assured her that she would receive a 12 percent pay increase if she were certified. Tucker attended a seminar sponsored by DPI in October 1999 on NBPTS certification. Tucker received the certification in November 2000.

Tucker is also licensed by the Department of Public Instruction as a mentor, career development coordinator, and business education teacher in grades nine through 12, and career exploration teacher in grades six through nine.

DPI officials refused to award Tucker a raise, claiming that the stipend was available only to classroom teachers, media specialists, and school counselors. Tucker and two others contested the DPI decision. Though an administrative law judge ruled in favor of the school employees, the department refused to adopt her ruling.

Tucker challenged DPI's actions in the courts, including appealing to the Court of Appeals, after Superior Court Judge Howard Manning Jr. ruled in favor of the department.

The Court of Appeals ruled against the DPI.

"Respondent's interpretation of N.C. Gen. Stat. § 115C-296.2 conflicts with the language of the statute, as enacted by the General Assembly," Judge Rick Elmore wrote for the court. "Accordingly, we hold that respondent improperly withheld the salary increase

from petitioner and we reverse the judgment of the trial court."

The NBPTS statute contains an explicit statement of the state's policy: "It is the goal of the State to provide opportunities and incentives for good teachers to become excellent teachers and to retain them in the teaching profession; to attain this goal, the State shall support the efforts of teachers to achieve national certification by providing approved paid leave time for teachers participating in the process, paying the participation fee, and paying a significant salary differential to teachers who attain national certification from the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards[.]"

The key element to the three-judge panel of the appeals court was that the Assembly used the phrase "teaching profession," not "classroom teachers."

"Although respondent maintained throughout its brief that the purpose of the statute was to retain teachers in the classroom, such a goal is not reflected in the statutory language enacted by the General Assembly. Rather, the goal is to encourage excellence and retain excellent teachers in the 'teaching profession.' This language makes no mention of 'classroom teachers,'" Elmore wrote.

The appeals court also noted that the legislature created two distinct ways of become eligible for the extra pay associated with NBPTS certification, a "classroom instruction" criterion and an "other than direct classroom instruction" criterion. DPI argued that the other-than-direct classroom instruction criterion applied only to media specialists and school counselors.

"The National Board does not classify its certification areas as 'classroom' areas of certification and 'other than classroom instruction' areas of certification. Thus, placing areas of NBPTS certification in these categories must come, if at all, from the language of our statute. We find no language which limits the 'other than classroom instruction' to media and school counseling," the court wrote.

Court of Appeals rulings serve as precedent; its interpretations of N.C. law are binding upon lower courts and state agencies unless overturned by the N.C. Supreme Court. Because the appeals court ruling was unanimous, the Supreme Court is not required to take the case should DPI ask it to review the decision.

The case is *Rainey v. N.C. Dep't of Pub. Instruction*, (05-1609). CJ



Commentary

Making Schools Safer

Many parents worry about school safety, more so in the wake of deadly attacks in Colorado, Wisconsin, and Pennsylvania. Despite these incidents, most U.S. schools are relatively secure places to learn, statistics show.

According to the National Center for Education Statistics' report, *Indicators of School Crime and Safety: 2006*, victimization rates for students ages 12-18 generally declined between 1992 and 2004. Between 2004 and 2005, 21 children were killed on U.S. elementary and secondary school campuses, more than in 2000-01, but less than during most of the 1990s.

But while national school violence statistics are reassuring, they're also overly optimistic. The federal No Child Left Behind Act requires states to report school violence, providing school choice to students who are victims of violent crime or who attend "persistently dangerous" schools. Unfortunately, the law gives states free rein in setting "persistently dangerous" definitions. Not surprisingly, it's a label most states would rather avoid: Last year, only 29 of the more than 90,000 public schools were classified as "persistently dangerous." According to an article by Lisa Snell of the Reason Public Policy Institute in 2005, 44 states and the District of Columbia did not report a single unsafe school in 2003-04.

North Carolina claims to be one such bastion of school safety. But consider this caveat: Before violent offenses can be used to classify a school as "persistently dangerous," local districts must affirm that "conditions that contributed to the commission of those offenses are likely to continue into another school year." In other words, something terrible can happen, but unless administrators think there's a high probability of recurrence, the school isn't labeled "persistently dangerous." With loopholes like these, it's no wonder we have so many "safe" schools.

Fortunately, the 2005-06 *Annual Report on School Crime and Violence* from the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction provides a reasonably accurate snapshot of school safety. According to DPI, school substance abuse is on the rise: Since 1998-99, statewide possession of controlled

substances has increased by 46 percent, while possession of alcohol has gone up 12 percent. Possession of a weapon on school property has also increased 24 percent.

The good news is that many North Carolina schools are free from violence: 43 percent (998 schools) of 2,322 public schools reported no offenses in 2005-06. Only 2 percent (54 schools) of public schools reported more than 30 offenses. But while these statistics are heartening to many families, they're cold comfort to students trapped in chronically troubled schools.

What can we do to make schools safer? For starters, schools should have the flexibility to choose their own violence prevention programs, rather than being forced to adopt a "one-size-fits-all" approach. But that's not enough. Parents also need choices in their child's education. Forced school assignments increase the likelihood of a mismatch between school programs and student needs, triggering boredom, detachment, and in some cases, violence.

School choice, on the other hand, reduces the likelihood of violence. Research shows that choice schools themselves are safer schools, even in crime-prone urban areas. According to a March 2007 report from the National Charter School Research Project, "Urban public charter schools appear to be safer and experience fewer discipline problems than their traditional public school counterparts."

Choice also fosters competition between schools, galvanizing administrators into action. After all, if they want to retain students, school leaders must work that much harder to reduce violence. And if they don't get the job done, choice provides students with an escape hatch.

In the end, here's what we know for sure: If students are ever to learn well, safe schools everywhere are an imperative. Restoring peace on school campuses is not for the weak-willed, however. Parents must expect to fight back and fight hard. And in the battle to reclaim our schools, knowledge and choice are the heavy artillery. CJ

Lindalyn Kakadelis is director of the North Carolina Education Alliance.



Lindalyn
Kakadelis

School Reform Notes

College for high-schoolers

Beginning with the class of 2012, N.C. high school students will be required to complete a college-bound course of study, even if they have no plans for pursuing higher education, the *Citizen-Times* of Asheville reports.

Members of the state Board of Education hope its new high school core course of study will make students better prepared to compete in a global economy. The board approved the plan in December. Some parents have complained that not every child is college-bound and that the new requirements might make it more difficult for some students to finish high school.

N.C. high school students now choose from four courses of study, sometimes referred to as tracks or pathways to graduation. Those include college and technical college tracks. Students planning to enter the workforce after graduation can pursue a career track. An occupational course of study exists for certain students with disabilities.

The new curriculum will require all students to take four units of math and two units of a foreign language.

Faith leaders help schools

More than 400 school and faith leaders came to Waddell High School March 19 to talk about helping high-poverty schools, the *Charlotte Observer* reports.

"We hear so much about the separation of church and state," Charlotte-Mecklenburg Superintendent Peter Gorman said. "It's time we talk about the connection of our faith community and our public schools."

Gorman isn't inviting religious volunteers to preach or proselytize. Instead, he wants an army of caring adults reaching out to students who need hope. Churches already send volunteers, money, and supplies into public-school classrooms. Gorman wants to build on that.

"We need you to help us lift children over the barriers that poverty puts in the way of learning," he told the crowd, which nearly filled the 600-seat auditorium in southwest Charlotte. About 150 were from CMS.

The Rev. Tim Moore, pastor of Sardis Baptist Church and co-chairman of CMS's Interfaith Advisory Council, said helping schools holds natural appeal. "To help a student learn to read, you're giving that student a future — which, I'm telling you, beats handing out \$5 on a street corner any day." CJ

Integrity, excellence valued

Colleges Recruiting Homeschool Graduates

By DAVID N. BASS

Contributing Editor

At first glance, UNC-Chapel Hill sophomore Charissa Lloyd might seem like a typical college student. Her schedule is crammed with campus activities — everything from participating in Intervarsity Christian Fellowship to serving on the staff of *Rival Magazine*. She enjoys academics, too, and hopes to one day become a social worker involved in pro-life causes.

But at least one aspect makes Lloyd unique from most of her classmates: By the time she graduated from high school in 2005, she had already accumulated 60 credit hours and a 4.0 GPA from a local community college. What gave her the flexibility to pursue college-level courses while still in school? Another attribute differentiates her from most other students: She was homeschooled from kindergarten through the 12th grade.

With the increasing number of parents pulling their children out of traditional public schools in favor of home education, Lloyd's success story is quickly becoming commonplace. Each year, colleges and universities across the nation enroll an increasing number of home-school graduates. According to research conducted by Dr. Brian Ray of the National Home Education Research Institute, 75 percent of all home-school graduates have at least some college experience, compared to about 50 percent in the general population.

That trend is indicative of the higher academic and moral values that home-school students leave home with, according to Christopher Klicka, senior counsel for the Homeschool Legal Defense Association.

"Homeschoolers are head and shoulders above the norm because they have mastered the tools of learning," Klicka said. "They tend to really understand how to write and read and do math. You throw in self-discipline and good character, and you can apply yourself to just about any subject that there is at the college level, even if you didn't have access to the fancy laboratories and the other equipment that they have in the public schools."

A major concern among home-school families in the early 1980s was that colleges would refuse to admit home-educated graduates later in life, but today that fear has been "tremendously diminished," Klicka said, because universities no longer block homeschool graduates.

"They are all receiving homeschoolers with open arms," he said.

Admitting homeschoolers

Many parents and home education experts agree that homeschool graduates are not only surviving but

thriving in higher education. Spencer and Debbie Mason of Charlotte have two homeschool graduates in the university system. One child graduated with a four-year degree from Grove City College in Pennsylvania and now attends Regent University School of Law; the other is enrolled as a junior at North Carolina State Uni-

versity and plans to begin work on his master's degree next year.

Spencer Mason said that it's no longer necessary to be concerned about homeschool graduates being turned down by colleges. "There are some colleges that actually have admissions counselors that specialize in homeschoolers," Mason said. "You'll find a lot of the Ivy League and tier-one colleges are very open to homeschoolers coming."

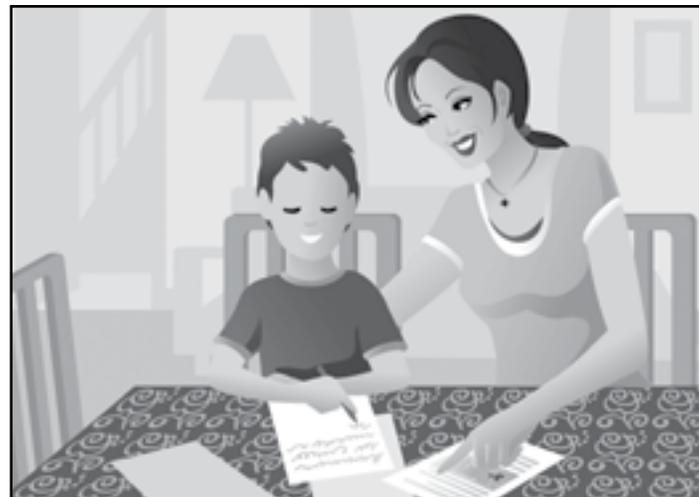
Hal Young, education vice president for North Carolinians for Home Education, said that some Ivy League schools are actually admitting homeschool graduates at a higher percentage than students in the general population. "A lot of colleges are saying that [homeschoolers] are a good population to pursue," he said. "They've had positive results dealing with home-educated students, and so they actively go out and look for them."

More college Web sites are employing separate pages specifically designed for home-school applicants, and some private colleges in the state are actively recruiting, Young said.

Klicka, who has advocated for the legal rights of home-school families for 21 years, said representatives from colleges are appearing at home-school conventions to recruit. Given home education's academic track record, universities view homeschool graduates as a "good risk," Klicka said.

Social and academic life

One of the most common objections levied against home education is that homeschool students lack exposure to different social settings, but Young said that graduates integrate well into the campus environment. "Homeschooling is individual, but it's not isolated," he said. "Most homeschoolers that we hear from are pretty well networked in support groups, church activities, Scouting programs, and sports programs...so when they get to the college campuses where there are other groups around, that's just another day in life."



Charissa's mother, Teresa Lloyd, said that her daughter is actually "over-involved" in campus activities. "When I was in college, I was ready to get out of the dorms, but [Charissa] has enjoyed that," Lloyd said. "She really sees it as an opportunity to make a positive difference in people's lives there, and it's such a big campus that she has been able to find some like-minded individuals and people who share her interests."

Academically, several universities have conducted internal research and discovered that homeschool graduates have GPAs above the college average, Klicka said. One four-year study conducted by Drs. Rhonda Galloway and Joe Sutton comparing homeschool college students with private and public school students found that homeschoolers ranked first in 10 out of 12 academic indicators.

Such research, mixed with "an unbroken track record" of success on achievement tests including the SAT, causes colleges to accept home-school graduates, Klicka said.

Admissions discrimination?

Today, college admission departments by and large are no longer "putting up barriers" for homeschool graduates, Young said. "Some have in the past required additional testing simply to validate the kind of grade that students had on their transcripts, but if a student has college work from a community college or some other kind of outside class, that would tend to validate the transcript that is created by the parents," he said.

Klicka said that the last barrier was torn down when Congress passed the Higher Education Act in 1997. Discrimination was fairly common 10 years ago, Klicka said, but now it is as "rare as a comet."

"We've had other issues that have popped up from time to time with discrimination, but pretty much it just takes a phone call, a little bit of persuasion, and a little bit of facts and figures, and the colleges say we don't need to keep this up," Klicka said. CJ

WakeCARES Group Sues Wake County School Board

By KAREN McMAHAN
Contributing Editor

RALEIGH

Following the lead of parents in California, Texas, Colorado, New Mexico, and others, a coalition of parents is suing the Wake County School Board over its plan to expand mandatory year-round conversions for 2007-2008.

Parents reached "their breaking point," said Kathleen Brennan, co-founder of WakeCARES, which filed the lawsuit March 13.

The lawsuit, filed in Wake County Superior Court, seeks an injunction to stop the board from converting 22 elementary and middle schools to a year-round calendar. The lawsuit asserts that the 2007-2008 Growth Management Plan, or GMP, is "an illegal attendance system" that abridges the "parent's right to direct their children's education and to be in charge of decisions critical to familial relationships."

The board has a long history of breaking promises and ignoring parents' concerns, the parents say. A major point of contention for parents before the school bond vote in November was that "WCPSS officials and FOWC members promised to consider alternatives to the mandatory year-round conversions, if only the voters would vote for the bond," Brennan said.

Parents publicly and vigorously protested through letters, meetings, and public hearings. They also presented statistics to the board from the school system's own records and an independent audit to show that the mandatory conversions were not necessary in order to increase capacity. Yet the board continued to implement its plans.

Some people have attempted to



Web site for WakeCARES is wakecares.com. The group's blog is at wakecares.blogspot.com.

portray those who opposed the mandatory year-round calendar as disgruntled "parents wanting only to preserve their summer vacations," Brennan said, but the issues are much larger. She stressed that the aim of the lawsuit is to ensure educational excellence and opportunity by giving parents a greater voice in policies and practices that are in the best interest of "students and families of Wake County."

Not all parents in WakeCARES are against a year-round calendar, Brennan said, but rather they oppose forced conversions. Proponents of year-round schools say, among other things, that students perform better academically and that schools operate more efficiently and at a lower cost. A growing body of evidence, however, disputes these claims and find that mandatory year-round has profound negative effects.

In 2004, parents in California (*Williams v. California*) sued, forcing the state to phase out multitrack, or year-round, schools by 2012. Sworn testimony showed that year-round schools

widened the achievement gap, created inequities in educational opportunity, and failed to improve capacity or significantly reduce costs. An unexpected outcome reported by officials in Los Angeles was an increase in gang activity because latchkey youths were left alone and roamed the streets.

Robert Hunter Jr., and Bill Peaslee, lawyers for WakeCARES, also cited inequities in educational opportunity. The letter to the Wake County Board of Education dated Feb. 9 said that "the year round calendar denies students in Wake County the enriching benefits of extra-curricular opportunities of (sic) afforded to students in Wake County which remain on a traditional school calendar." By forcing some but not all elementary and middle school students and their families to adapt to a year-round calendar, the school system is failing to provide them the uniform school system guaranteed by North Carolina law, Hunter and Peaslee said.

A study by Gene Glass (2004) reported that promised gains in instruc-

tional time of 10 percent to 15 percent "would be expensive and would not be expected to produce appreciable gains in academic achievement." Among his conclusions were that "the productivity of schools is not a matter of time allocated to them. Rather it is a matter of how they use the time they already have."

Just as the system's own figures show that mandatory year-round conversions in Wake County would not provide the promised capacity gains or enrollment efficiency, a N.C. Department of Education study (McMillen, 2000) disputes claims of improved educational outcomes. Findings from the study of 345,000 students showed "no statistically significant difference in reading or math scores" when comparing traditional calendar students with year-round students. While the study did find a statistically significant interaction for lower-achieving students in year-round schools, McMillen said the effect was "probably educationally insignificant by most standards."

Even more revealing is that WCPSS officials have been well-aware of the disruption and ill effects from mandatory year-round schools. In a letter posted on SOS Wake County, Louise Lee, a former Wake County schoolteacher and founder of Save Our Summers, excerpts findings from a 2005 WCPSS PowerPoint presentation about mandatory year-round schools.

Among them are "mandatory year-round has not been successful in other districts; the districts who use year-round as a choice option are the most successful; increased transportation costs; child care problematic; difficulty scheduling extra-curricular activities because one track is always out of school." CJ

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Course of the Month

Silly sexuality studies

Five years ago CM noted the proposal of a "sexuality studies" program at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. We highlighted the four justifications being made for it: It will make homosexuals feel more comfortable; podunk colleges have sexuality studies; UNC-CH already has special programs for women and blacks; and if you don't study sexuality, you're ignorant.

The program is apparently struggling. Witness the following online petition being circulated among the UNC-CH community—and whoever else in the world who'll sign it without disclosing their email or physical addresses or pledging financial support. CM quotes it in full:

We the undersigned students at UNC-CH believe that the University's Program in Sexuality Studies is an essential component of UNC's curriculum. The opportunity for focused study in areas of gender and sexuality is a great benefit for many students at the University, and this Program also serves as a clear demonstration to the entire UNC community that the University is committed to fostering a vibrant intellectual community that welcomes diversity.

We are deeply concerned, however, about the lack of administrative support for the program in Sexuality Studies and about the current administration's failure to fulfill previous promises of support for that program. We strongly urge the College of Arts and Sciences to restore the previously granted course release to the director of Sexuality Studies so that he or she will be able adequately to fulfill his or her responsibilities of planning the SXST curriculum, organizing the workshops and lecture series associated with the Program, coordinating with Student Advising, the LGBTQ Office and departments across campus to promote the program, advising minors, and working with alumni and donors to develop an endowment for the Program. We also advocate granting the previously promised second course release.

Finally, we are distressed that the administration's refusal to provide promised support has meant the program was without a director for the 2006-2007 school year. We encourage the College to follow through on promises and move quickly in their actions to provide support for the Sexuality Studies program."

Four silly justifications might not be enough to save the program. Perhaps a fifth will. CJ

John Locke Foundation Research Editor Jon Sanders tracks down the monthly course of dubious value.

Critics see lack of parity

Flagship Universities' PACs Coming Under Fire

By JANE S. SHAW
Contributing Editor

RALEIGH

The tacit agreement that underlies the unified structure of UNC—the understanding that all campuses will speak with one voice to the state legislature through the university administration—might be beginning to fray.

Two political-action committees representing the flagship schools within the University of North Carolina system—North Carolina State University and UNC-Chapel Hill—have been lobbying for unique treatment of their own campuses for some years now. Some of those efforts have been chronicled, and criticized, in the media, but now the PACs are beginning to get some heat from students.

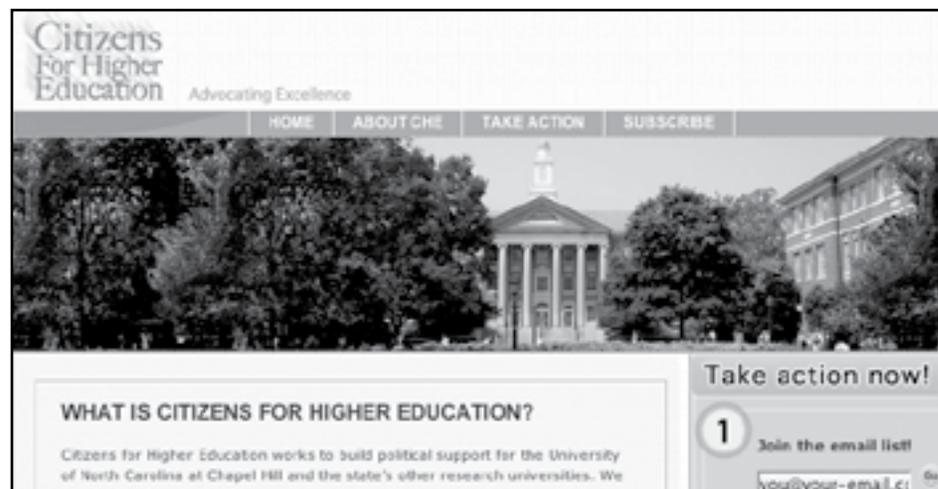
On Feb. 28, at least 20 students from four historically black colleges and universities went to Raleigh to ask legislators to distance themselves from those two committees. One committee is the Citizens for Higher Education, which seeks support for UNC-Chapel Hill. CHE officials say their goal is to "build political support for the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and the state's other research universities." The other is the Economic Development Coalition 2000, which aims to do the same for N.C. State.

CHE is better known, since it is the second largest PAC in the state, trailing only the political-action committee of the North Carolina Association of Realtors. (CHE also has its own Web site and recently used former Chapel Hill athletic coaches to recruit members in an advertisement in the *Carolina Alumni Review*.) According to the State Board of Elections, CHE gave \$425,000 to legislative candidates in the 2006 election cycle.

Common Cause North Carolina, which promoted the students' position, said the money went to 109 legislators. For 47 of the legislators, the CHE donation was their largest. NC State's PAC donated \$84,050 in the 2006 election cycle, according to the State Board of Elections.

CHE has had its successes. Its lobbying usually gets the credit for a 2005 state budget provision that changed scholarships for out-of-state students to equal in-state tuition. This means that the same amount of scholarship money can support many more out-of-state students with scholarships—but the taxpayer, not the scholarship donors, must pay the extra costs of tuition. Reps. George Cleveland, R-Onslow, and Pricely Harrison, D-Guilford, are leading an effort to overturn the provision.

On the other hand, CHE failed in an effort to obtain freedom for the two flagship campuses to set their own tuition. The Board of Governors must



Web site of Citizens for Higher Education, the political-action committee that works on behalf of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

approve all tuition increases.

"Not Any Parity"

The students challenging the PACs attend North Carolina Central, Winston-Salem State, North Carolina A&T, and Fayetteville State. They argued that the PACs influence legislators to direct dollars to the two flagships at the expense of other campuses in the system.

Jessica Hill, a student at N.C. Central and president of the campus branch of Common Cause, said at a press conference that the historically black schools "have fewer alumni to finance PACs." She doesn't want to reduce quality at UNC-Chapel Hill or N.C. State, but wants the other campuses "to be able to rise to that same high standard through fair access to state resources."

Rep. Larry Womble, D-Forsyth, said in support of the students that the historically black schools don't have hotels or businesses on their campuses, as the other schools do. "A blind man can see that there's not any parity," he said.

The students want the legislators to sign a statement calling individual campus PACs "unhelpful" and "potentially harmful" and to urge the Board of Governors to bar members from donating to PACs that support individual campuses. There are no restrictions on political activities by members of the Board of Governors.

CHE Responds

David Rice, a spokesman for CHE, responded to the criticism with two major points. Rice noted that CHE supports greater funding for many projects that benefit all the schools as well as Chapel Hill, such as increasing faculty salaries throughout the university system.

He also said PACs are vehicles for people to "aggregate their voices and try to make themselves heard." Any campus can start a PAC. Opposition to the two PACs is tantamount to saying that "anyone but the two largest institutions

has the right to free speech."

The fact that a campus does not have a PAC does not mean that it lacks influence in the legislature, of course. The proposed dental school at East Carolina University, the Center City campus at UNC-Charlotte, and the pharmacy school at Elizabeth City State all show that other campuses are able to wrest substantial funds from the General Assembly.

Controversy is not new to the PACs, especially the CHE. (N.C. State's PAC has operated in more obscurity.) *The News and Observer* of Raleigh editorialized in 2006 against the PAC on the grounds that it "insults the parent university system by playing big-money politics" and is "only too willing to cross palms with silver."

In March, the newspaper wrote an editorial favoring the position taken by the students from historically black colleges and universities, saying that it was an "embarrassment" when members of one public institution think they must "cross the palms of members of another public institution, the legislature, in order to get the attention and support of lawmakers."

The newspaper also said flatly that the Board of Governors will never agree to any conflict-of-interest rules, "because the members of that board tend to be affluent and often socially connected to the boosters who started [the] PACs." Each PAC has a member on the board, sources say.

Whatever the merits of the statements, PACs are legal. Stopping people from joining together to make themselves known to legislators would violate rights free speech, petition, and assembly. The students recognize this, but they also want the legislature to acknowledge what one student called the need for "equity for all 16 campuses." CJ

Jane S. Shaw is the executive vice president of the John William Pope Center for Higher Education Policy (shaw@pope-center.org).

Easley's Plan Would Establish Statewide Scholarship Program

By SHANNON BLOSSER
Contributing Editor

CHAPEL HILL
Following states such as Georgia and Tennessee, North Carolina is jumping into the statewide scholarship business. Whether the program will avoid some of the funding problems that other states face remains to be seen.

In February, Gov. Mike Easley announced plans to create the Education Access Rewards North Carolina Scholars program. The scholarship, based on financial need, would give two years of tuition to low-income students.

The only requirement to receive the scholarship, according to available budget information, is that the student comes from a family that earns less than 200 percent of the national poverty level. Based upon the current poverty levels, that would mean that a family of four making less than \$40,800 would qualify for the scholarship. Easley has said

"It [the Education Access Rewards N.C. scholars program] will make a great difference in North Carolina."

Erskine Bowles
UNC President

that students would also have to work for 10 hours a week while receiving the scholarship, saying that it was not "a free lunch."

"You have to earn it," Easley said.

Easley included the scholarship in his budget recommendations for the 2007-09 biennium to legislators. It was not in the University of North Carolina budget request, but UNC President Erskine Bowles has told legislators that he supports the creation of the scholarship.

"It will make a great difference in North Carolina," Bowles told legislators.

Easley seeks \$50 million in fiscal 2008 and an additional \$100 million in fiscal 2009 for the program. There is also \$29.5 million in the governor's budget for other need-based financial aid.

The combined \$150 million would give eligible students \$4,000 each year for two years of higher education, at either a community college or a UNC campus. Presumably, the student would still have to cover costs such as books, room, and board.

Representatives from Easley's administration have said that 25,000 students would be eligible for the scholarship. That number is based on calculations by UNC and the State Education Assistance Authority.

Easley and others have touted the program as a natural progression from the Learn and Earn program, which his

administration started. Learn and Earn is an initiative that allows a student, at participating schools, to graduate from high school with both a high school degree and an associate's degree, thus achieving the first two years of college without paying college tuition. If the student received the EARN scholarship, he or she could avoid paying tuition altogether and graduate "debt-free," the governor has emphasized. Learn and Earn is expected to receive an increase in funding so that more campuses will be added and, Easley hopes, ultimately it will become statewide.

The EARN program would fund only students within the UNC and community college system. Two-thirds would go to UNC students, the rest to community college students. However, Hope Williams, president of the North Carolina Independent and Private Colleges, wants the scholarships for students at private colleges as well. At a March

meeting of the joint appropriations subcommittee on education, Williams said it would cost an additional \$5 million to fund private college students. "It's a great program," Williams said. "We would just like to be a part of it."

Easley's scholarship plan differs from the state scholarships that proliferated in the 1990s because they were primarily merit-based. The genesis of the scholarships was the HOPE Scholarship, created by then Georgia Gov. Zell Miller, in 1993, which, unlike Easley's plan, is available to all qualifying students, regardless of income. It led to the creation of similar plans in Tennessee, West Virginia, and other states.

But demand for the scholarships has led to funding problems. In 2005, the Hope Scholarship was sent into financial crisis when lottery proceeds, which fund the scholarship, declined. To reduce costs, caps were set on what fees the scholarship would pay, and the GPA requirement was tightened to a 3.0 average based on a 4.0 scale. Other states have also changed program requirements.

If approved, the EARN Scholarship, although paid for by the General Fund, could face similar funding problems during lean budget years. CJ

Contributing Editor Shannon Blosser manages the Chapel Hill office of the John William Pope Center for Higher Education Policy.

Commentary

N.C. Wesleyan Proposal's Impact May Be Overblown

Business and political leaders from Rocky Mount and eastern North Carolina have championed the idea of transforming North Carolina Wesleyan College into a public institution within the UNC system. Supporters are already referring to the school as "UNC-Rocky Mount."

Their argument is that a public institution would spur economic development in Rocky Mount and eastern North Carolina and give more students access to higher education.

Before the state commits to spending a substantial amount of money making a private college, affiliated with the United Methodist Church, into the 17th UNC campus, the costs and benefits should be carefully examined.

First, let's look at economic development. Supporters claim that the new university would draw companies to Rocky Mount, providing new jobs and opportunities for residents. *The Rocky Mount Telegram* quoted Charlie Harrell, chairman of the Edgecombe County Board of Commissioners, "Education is the only sure thing to pull you out of poverty." And it quoted Nash-Rocky Mount Public Schools Superintendent Rick McMahon: "A university changes the whole community."

But promises of prosperity stemming from a bigger college campus might be overblown. Although it has been studied for years, economic development remains a mystery. People know that high-tech industry grew up around Boston's Route 128 area and California's Silicon Valley, and they give credit to the large numbers of universities there.

But there's even doubt about that. A new report from the Brookings Institution points out that industrial towns as close as 35 miles from Boston have not benefited from Boston's technology boom.

Here in North Carolina, businesses are not flocking to other small towns with UNC schools, such as Elizabeth City or Pembroke. Why would Rocky Mount be any different?

You don't have to travel far outside Greenville, the site of East Carolina University, to find very poor communities. If a large university such as ECU, with 18,000

undergraduates, can't erase poverty, it's unlikely that "UNC-Rocky Mount" would.

Making NC Wesleyan public and expanding it (currently it's under 800 students) would bring more state dollars into Rocky Mount. The influx would benefit companies

that do business with the university, such as textbook suppliers, food vendors, and construction companies. More professors, students, and administrators would probably drive up real estate values somewhat. Some people would benefit, but not the whole town, much less the region.

Now to the second question, would many more students be able to earn college degrees?

The crux of the issue appears to be tuition. Tuition at North Carolina Wesleyan is \$17,600, substantially more than at most state institutions. If Wesleyan were a public school, tuition would go down, making education more affordable for students — but adding a significant burden to taxpayers.

It's a mistake, however, to think that students in the area who can't afford to go to N.C. Wesleyan are without options.

There are five UNC schools in eastern North Carolina (East Carolina, Elizabeth City State, Fayetteville State, UNC-Pembroke, and UNC-Wilmington), as well as 25 community colleges, where the cost is low.

With all of these affordable educational choices available to people in the eastern part of the state, it's impossible to see that the establishment of "UNC-Rocky Mount" would solve any problem.

This is especially the case given UNC President Erskine Bowles' emphasis on online education. Already, N.C. Wesleyan is cooperating with ECU and North Carolina State University by opening the Gateway Technology Center on its campus, which gives access to online courses from ECU and NCSU. Other universities are doing the same.

Given the costs, a "bricks and mortar" expansion in Rocky Mount looks decidedly behind the times. CJ

Contributing Editor Shannon Blosser manages the Chapel Hill office of the John William Pope Center for Higher Education Policy.



Shannon Blosser

Bats in the Belltower

'Greatest Love of All'
Sure Is Full of Itself

Learning to love yourself is the greatest love of all." That's what anyone who was unable to escape pop radio in the 1980s would have heard, over and over and over again, the summation of Whitney Houston's anthem to narcissism.

That song, originally written by Michael Masser and Linda Creed and recorded by George Benson for a 1977 flick about Muhammed Ali, also begins with one of the most banal statements ever in a genre that prides itself on banality: "I believe the children are our future." Masser and Creed's lyrics

put in song form a credo galloping through education circles: *Above everything else, kids need to be taught to love themselves.*

Which, when you think of it, is about as silly as saying kids need to be taught to love pizza and bathroom humor.

At some point, once the haze of pot smoke dissipated somewhat, the addled brains in the hippie cultural vanguard that brought us the "Me Decade" and glommed onto the education system took stock of the upcoming generation and apparently were shocked to find the youngsters less self-infatuated than (hic!) they. In short, it was the fight they were born for. They launched the Self-Esteem Movement to combat that "problem."

A study released last week by San Diego State psychology Professor Jean Twenge and four other psychologists underscored the movement's overarching success. Twenge et al. have polled college students annually since 1982 using an assessment called the Narcissistic Personality Inventory. The study has college students respond to statements such as, "If I ruled the world it would be a better place," "I think I am a special person," and "I can live my life any way I want to." Their responses are rated on a narcissism scale.

This year's study measured the highest amount of narcissism among college students since the studies began. Two-thirds of college students scored above average on the NPI, an increase of 30 percent since 1982.

This is not to say that

Twenge's results were surprising. About the only surprise surrounding the study is that its findings haven't been blamed on global warming—yet. After all, the popular navel-gazing web sites MySpace and YouTube by themselves suffice to demonstrate the problem. Then there is the seemingly inexhaustible supply of self-impressed bozos willing to debase themselves nationally, either as the butts of "reality" TV shows, as hooting-fodder for Jerry Springer-esque talk shows, or as voice-cracking early castaways on "American Idol" and other talent shows.

Also there are the self-pitying parents on shows such as "Nanny 911" who aren't satisfied with just embarrassing themselves but must publicize their own children's tantrums to the masses. It takes a special kind of self-absorbed sot to humiliate one's own kids before millions of people for attention.

Of course, being self-centered is, in the words of the song, "easy to achieve." (By way of comparison, learning to love others, especially when they're unlovable, is rather difficult to achieve.) As Twenge told the Associated Press in February, criticizing the Self-Esteem Movement's teaching, "We need to stop endlessly repeating, 'You're special,' and having children repeat that back. Kids are self-centered enough already."

It's patently clear that "our future" have been taught "the greatest love of all." It's less clear that they know its logical end. Whitney sang about it, in the seemingly triumphant climax of the song:

*And if by chance, that special place
That you've been dreaming of
Leads you to a lonely place,
Find your strength in love*

In other words, once your insufferable self-infatuation drives off everyone else in your life, at least you'll have your love to keep you warm. CJ

Jon Sanders is research editor for the John Locke Foundation.



Jon Sanders

Gov. Easley's Bond Package
Would Fund Higher Education

By SHANNON BLOSSER
Contributing Editor

CHAPEL HILL

Come November, North Carolina voters may be asked to approve the second higher-education bond package in this decade.

When introducing budget recommendations for the 2007-09 biennium, Gov. Mike Easley also proposed raising \$1.4 billion in general obligation bonds to pay for projects within the University of North Carolina system and other government agencies. The bond would fund projects for juvenile services, corrections, and administration among others.

Easley's administration opted for the general obligation bond because the bonds are typically cheaper than other bond options. The state has the highest bond ratings given out by most bond rating organizations. Easley's recommendations for the bond package would include 24 projects, 12 of which would benefit the UNC system.

It's up to the General Assembly to decide, however, whether the projects will be placed before voters. The vote, if approved, would likely come in November. Because only municipal elections will be conducted this year, a lower voter turnout is expected, increasing chances for approval. In 2000, more than 1.8 million voters approved the higher-education bond that provided \$2.5 billion in bonds for UNC projects and \$600 million for community colleges.

All 16 campuses were included in the 2000 bond package. Only 12 campuses, however, are included in the governor's proposed package. The four campuses left out are Elizabeth City State, North Carolina Central, UNC-Charlotte, and UNC-Wilmington. Last year, the legislature authorized a special indebtedness of \$45.8 million for UNC-Charlotte's Center City classroom building, which will house the architecture, economics, and engineering programs.

More than \$200 million of the proposed bond package is connected to two projects at UNC-Chapel Hill and East Carolina University.

UNC-Chapel Hill would receive \$119 million for the construction of a genomic sciences building. The 210,000-square-foot building would house 400 graduate and undergraduate students, as well as laboratories, lecture halls, and seminar rooms.

The General Assembly has already approved \$28 million for planning and UNC-Chapel Hill will contribute \$12 million.

East Carolina would receive \$87 million in the bond package to construct a school of dentistry. However, improvements to UNC-Chapel Hill's dental school were left out.

The Board of Governors had requested an additional \$99 million for improvements at UNC-Chapel Hill. Those improvements were part of a joint effort between ECU and UNC-Chapel Hill to increase dental education in North Carolina — ECU would get the state's second dental school, while UNC-Chapel Hill would be able to expand. The board approved the plan in November, and \$7 million was appropriated last year in planning funds that were to be split between the schools.

Administration officials said the governor included in the bond package programs that have already received planning money and were listed as the school's top priority.

Even though improvements to the UNC-Chapel Hill dental school received planning funds last session, they were not the school's top priority. The genomic sciences building was UNC-Chapel Hill's top priority. CJ

Shannon Blosser is manager of the Chapel Hill office of the John William Pope Center for Higher Education Policy.

Proposed Higher Education Bond Projects

SCHOOL	PROJECT	AMOUNT
Appalachian State	College of Education Building	\$34 million
East Carolina	School of Dentistry	\$87 million
Fayetteville State	Science & Technology Complex	\$22.6 million
N.C. A&T	General Classroom Facility	\$25.8 million
NCSA	Library	\$24.9 million
NCSU	Companion Animal Hospital	\$38 million
UNC-Asheville	Rhoads Hall, Tower Renovation	\$8.7 million
UNC-CH	Genomic Sciences Building	\$119.6 million
UNC-G	Academic Classrooms, Offices	\$45.2 million
UNC-P	Residence Hall	\$19 million
Western Carolina	Gerontological Health Building	\$43.8 million
Winston-Salem State	Student Activities Center	\$18.7 million

Source: Office of State Budget and Management

CELS could be new model

Can the U.S. Have a Champagne Education on a Beer Budget?

By **GEORGE C. LEEF**
Contributing Editor

In a recent commentary, I lamented the fact that when higher-education types get together to talk about the problem of affordability, they almost always conclude that the solution is to spend more government money to further subsidize college attendance. Rarely do they consider ways of delivering education that will cost less.

At least one professor has given this some serious thought, however. Vance Fried, the Brattain professor of management at Oklahoma State University, has set forth a proposal that he thinks will enable students to get “champagne education on a beer budget.”

Fried proposed the College of Entrepreneurial Leadership and Society as a new model for undergraduate education that will give students more educational value for less money. His idea caught my interest.

Fried begins by setting forth the three-fold “value proposition” of CELS:

- It will provide useful education for a productive and balanced life. No college can be ideal for all students; the target market for CELS would be those who are interested in professional success, but don’t want their education to be exclusively utilitarian—in other words, those who want an educational experience that’s somewhere in between a vocational school and the ivory tower.

- Much of the student’s learning will be outside the traditional classroom. The kind of student sought wants to be actively involved in his education, so professors will ensure

that they have meaningful out-of-class experiences.

- Provide students with the best value possible. Those who want a “no frills” college won’t be interested in

CELS and neither will students who want the “fully loaded” version. For students in the mid-range target market, however, this model will provide high educational value at the lowest cost.

That brings us to the next crucial question — what will the curriculum consist of? This is where the high cost of most colleges and universities is rooted. If professors are allowed to teach just a few small classes that they’re particularly interested in, then labor costs will go through the roof. Fried knows that and envisions a curriculum that will serve the needs of the students rather than the desires of the professors. The curriculum at CELS, he writes, would provide students with appropriate technical skill for entry-level jobs along with foundational skills and knowledge for life outside work. Program offerings would include such fields as communication arts, education, engineering, information technology and science and technology. The courses taught would give students the skills they need, but would be more than just “job training” since students would also be exposed to the intellectual and social history of the profession and questions of ethical responsibility.

The CELS model would have a core



curriculum comprising about half of the credits needed for graduation, covering the social sciences, humanities, and entrepreneurial leadership. The remaining courses would be divided evenly between major requirements and electives.

By sticking to its mission, a CELS-type college could, Fried said, “teach the entire package of eight programs with about one-fourth the number of courses that a top liberal arts college would use to provide a much narrower product line.” Knowing what we do about the proliferation of niche courses at many colleges and universities and the corresponding mushrooming of the faculty, that sounds entirely plausible. If a CELS school were begun and if its leadership could resist the almost inevitable pressure from faculty members to start adding pet courses for them to teach, it could undoubtedly deliver a solid education at a significantly lower cost than is now typical.

Well, it sounds nice in theory, but could it work? Fried has some impressive data to support his idea. The National Center for Academic Transformation, a nonprofit organization funded by the Pew Charitable Trusts, has been studying the impact of course redesigns for several years. Based on 30 instances at a wide variety of institutions, it found that costs were lowered by an average of 37 percent, while student learning increased. One of the fascinating conclusions drawn from those course redesign experiments is that small classes are

usually neither educationally necessary nor beneficial; they simply drive up the cost tremendously.

CELS is a model for undergraduate education only; students wanting to do graduate studies would have to look elsewhere since graduate and professional programs add to costs while distracting the institution from its mission. Furthermore, faculty research would be kept to “modest levels” because it too raises costs and distracts from the mission.

Fried thinks this model would work best for a fairly small student body ranging from 600 to 2,000 students. It could be a free-standing institution, or it could be established within an existing college or university. Fried suggests that CELS could be an attractive opportunity for a “social or for-profit entrepreneur interested in starting up a new independent college,” and that it might also work as a radical design change for a struggling school that wants to become more successful.

Higher education in the United States seems to be about where the communications industry was in 1980 — poised for dramatic change. Dissatisfaction with the status quo is widespread and ideas for improvement are in the wind. The CELS model might prove to be the higher-education equivalent of the cell phone. If some innovator takes this idea and runs with it, the results will be very interesting. *CJ*

George C. Leef is a contributing editor of Carolina Journal and vice president for research at the John William Pope Center for Higher Education Policy.

North Carolinians for Home Education

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Town and County

Brunswick revaluation

Property values in Brunswick County, which reassesses property every four years, have soared in recent years.

"I've been the tax administrator for 10 months, and I've been saying that the tax base is going to double," Tax Administrator Tom Bagby said to the *Wilmington Star-News*. "Never before have Brunswick County values more than doubled in four years."

Bagby's prediction has proven to be correct: Property values skyrocketed from \$13.7 billion in 2003 to \$31.2 billion this year.

The impact that higher property values will have upon individual taxpayers will vary. Brunswick County's property tax rate is \$0.54 per \$100 of valuation.

County officials said they would like to cut that to a revenue-neutral rate, which would be about 30 cents. In addition, municipalities charge property taxes on top of what the county charges.

Still, a lot of property owners will pay higher taxes even at a revenue-neutral rate, some drastically so, after the revaluation. The increase in property values was sharply skewed toward land values, which were up 214 percent. The value of buildings increased by 41 percent. Land values on the coast increased most of all.

Buying crime reduction?

Charlotte City Council has put off consideration of a controversial proposal to buy out grocery stores in a neighborhood as a crime-fighting measure. The delay follows Mayor Pat McCrory's veto of the measure after council had originally approved it.

Under the plan, \$1.1 million in city money would have gone via a nonprofit organization to purchase up to seven of the 12 grocery stores in the Belmont neighborhood, just outside Uptown Charlotte.

Charlotte City Council voted, 10-1, for the policy Feb. 26. McCrory vetoed the proposal. Council reversed itself and voted, 10-1, to send the proposal back to committee.

"How far do we carry this out?" the *Charlotte Observer* quoted McCrory as asking when vetoing the proposal originally. "When we close these stores, these people are not going to quit drinking. We're replacing enforcing the law with economic development policy as if that's the solution." CJ

JLF Report: Cities Should Focus on Congestion

By MITCH KOKAI

Associate Editor

RALEIGH

Triangle cities should change their transportation priorities, unless they want future road congestion to threaten their economies, a recent Policy Report issued by the John Locke Foundation and the Reason Foundation says.

Raleigh earned a C grade and Durham a C- for their congestion reduction plans. Raleigh's C ranked the city 14th out of the 17 N.C. metropolitan areas. Durham ranked 16th, just ahead of last-place Charlotte's D grade. In contrast, Asheville, Goldsboro, and Jacksonville topped the list with A- grades.

"Raleigh's transportation plans have the potential, in total, to generate considerable savings in congestion delay that can offset the projected growth of the region," said study author David Hartgen, professor of transportation studies at the University of North Carolina at Charlotte. "However, in order for these savings to be realized, the plan must be rethought and be made more objective, projects must be implemented in a timely fashion, regional growth must take advantage of them, and savings must accrue.

"Given the likelihood of slowdowns in implementation, increasing costs of construction, and difficulties with environmental and other impacts, it is more likely that the potential of these projects to reduce projected growth in congestion will not be realized fully," he said. "If that happens, then the 'congestion' future will be bleak."

"While the Durham long-range plan means well and is in some respects superior in analysis, it fails to achieve congestion reduction by: first, diverting funds from projected highway revenues to transit projects; and second, by hugely overspending on the transit side of the ledger," he said. "At stake here is the economic competitiveness of the region. The critical transportation issue in the Durham region is good accessibility of its residents to high-quality jobs in Research Triangle Park and other employment centers. By spending \$2 billion on a transit system that will not do that, the region is dooming itself to rising congestion and to weakened competitiveness against its neighbors."

Congestion in North Carolina will more than double over the next 25 years, Hartgen said. "Raleigh's delay will nearly double, to present-day Minneapolis levels, and Durham's congestion will double, too," he said. "Charlotte drivers will face the same level of traffic delays Chicago drivers face now. Even smaller cities like Rocky Mount will see a significant increase in traffic delays."

State and local planners are not targeting enough transportation dollars toward reducing those delays, said Hartgen, a JLF adjunct policy analyst. "That increased congestion threatens the



"Given the likelihood of slowdowns in implementation, increasing costs of construction, and difficulties with environmental and other impacts, it is more likely that the potential of these projects to reduce projected growth in congestion will not be realized fully."

David Hartgen
UNC Charlotte

state's economic future," he said. "Yet many regions have ignored the problem and propose spending limited transportation funds on ineffective projects that will not likely affect congestion."

The new study builds on a 2006 report Hartgen prepared for the Los Angeles-based Reason Foundation, a nonpartisan, nonprofit organization.

The Reason report showed traffic delays would increase by 65 percent across the United States by 2030. North Carolina needs to spend \$12.4 billion to clear congested urban roads and prepare for traffic growth in the next 25 years, according to that report.

For the new report, Hartgen reviewed more than 1,300 specific transportation projects planned for each North Carolina region's transportation plan. Hartgen evaluated each project based on its likely impact on congestion relief and compared the impact to the congestion growth forecast for the region.

Some regions are devoting too little money to the congestion problem, Hartgen said. The state's largest regions are spending significant chunks of transportation funding on transit instead.

"In the Charlotte region, 43 percent of available dollars are proposed for highway projects, and the road improvements proposed would alleviate only one-third of the predicted increase in congestion," he said.

"Raleigh and Durham are allocating 73 percent and 49 percent, respectively, of their dollars to effective projects. Does Durham really want to spend half of their transportation dollars on 3 percent of commuters? I think not," he said.

North Carolina does not need new funding to address the congestion problem, Hartgen said. "The report recommends using existing planned funds for congestion relief," he said. "In some cities, 'balance' in transportation funding needs to be redefined. Instead of saying that transit programs should get 20 to 50 percent of funds, modes of transportation should get funds in proportion to their demand."

Hartgen's report offers nearly 20 recommendations for the state and more targeted recommendations for the Raleigh and Durham regions. Raleigh recommendations include finishing Interstate 540, developing a sensible widening plan for I-40, and reducing the focus on transit.

Durham recommendations include immediately reviewing the long-range plan for realism, restructuring the plan to devote \$750 million more to road projects in the next 25 years, and rethinking the proper role of transit.

The statewide proposals include: changing the highway distribution formulas to account for congestion; appointing "congestion tsars" and establishing congestion reduction programs for each region; using innovative highway and intersection designs; increasing the weight placed on congestion in selecting projects; implementing flex-time, ride-sharing, and work-at-home programs; removing bottlenecks; improving intersection turns and signal systems; expanding incident management programs; using tolls and public-private partnerships; and planning land use and transportation capacity jointly.

The state cannot afford to ignore growing congestion problems, Hartgen said. "North Carolina is not generally recognized as one of the most congested states, but it is," he said. "My recent national assessment ranked North Carolina 48th among the 50 states in urban interstate congestion."

"Pulled by competing priorities, many communities appear to be focusing largely on other objectives and are de-emphasizing the congestion problem," Hartgen said. "Refocusing efforts on relieving congestion could have a major economic impact by saving travel time. The report estimates the value of travel time saved at about \$855 million annually." CJ

David Hartgen's Policy Report, "Traffic Congestion in North Carolina: Status, Prospects, and Solutions," is available at the JLF Website. For more information, contact Hartgen at (704) 687-5917 or dthartge@email.uncc.edu.

Rates vs. revenue

Tax Assessors Face Challenge As Coastal Property Values Rise

By KAREN WELSH
Contributing Editor

MEMBERS of the General Assembly are working to keep taxes stable for in-state residents along the N.C. coast despite recent 80-percent-to-200-percent increases in property revaluations, an economist says.

Meanwhile, county officials also say they are lowering tax rates to mitigate the rise in property values.

Mike Walden, a North Carolina State University economist, said the skyrocketing tax rates accompany a 25-year trend of booming development on the Outer Banks and other coastal properties.

Newspapers across the state have reported the increases as causing "sticker shock" among retirees and longtime residents living on fixed incomes. Walden discounted the effects of the tax increases, he said, because most of the affected properties are second homes owned by the wealthiest and most mobile generation in U.S. history.

"We've got a very different economy now," he said. "This is all being fueled by Baby Boomers, high-income households, and affluent retirees who have reaped the benefits of a global economy. They can afford to buy second homes, and they've fueled a very elastic increase in demand, especially in waterfront properties because water is a very attractive feature."

As a result, Walden said, the prices along the Outer and Inner Banks have risen dramatically in the past few years.

The hardship on a few longtime coastal residents and retirees living on fixed incomes hasn't gone unnoticed in Raleigh. Walden said some members of the General Assembly are planning to overhaul the taxes. One of the legislators' main concerns, he said, is providing tax relief to those families.

"Many people don't want the state to have a tax system that forces them out of the home," Walden said. "I'm working with a subcommittee right now on this very issue. We're searching for the middle ground. One of the proposals on the table is providing a delay in taxes or a lien on the property that won't

have to be paid until the family sells the house."

Carteret County Tax Assessor Carl Tilghman said his county is currently in the middle of a property tax evaluation cycle. The value of waterfront land and homes has increased by more than 200 percent since they were last evaluated six years ago, he said.

However, Tilghman said, the county Board of Commissioners has responded to the dramatic increase by applying a revenue-neutral rate to the property. This means that residents who paid 44 cents per \$100 of value last year will now pay 22 cents per \$100.

"We're not looking at the rise in property taxes as a windfall to the coffers of the county," Tilghman said. "The overall amount of money that is brought in will remain just the same."

The number of residents in Carteret County seeking homestead exemptions, which allows them to pay a lower tax rate on their property, also has increased, he said.

Currituck County Tax Assessor Tracy Sample said the revenue-neutral tax rate already applies to residents living in the county, where property values along the ocean and waterways increased by 179 percent in last year's assessment.

Property owners who live out of state are affected by the increase, he said, but he downplayed the effect of revaluation on in-state residents.

"Personally, I live on a mainland property, and the tax increase didn't affect me at all," he said. "It mostly affected commercial land and resort properties in our county. Other than that, the property tax increase didn't affect anyone that I know of."

In accordance with the law, Sample said, Currituck County's tax base decreased from 60 cents to 32 cents per \$100 of value. County residents' property taxes will rise by two cents per \$100 of value. County officials approved the increase to help finance the building of a new school.

Onslow County Tax Assessor Harry Smith said the tax rate in his county fell from 67 cents to 53 cents per \$100 of value after property revaluations increased by 80 percent. CJ

"We're not looking at the rise in property taxes as a windfall to the coffers of the county. The overall amount of money that is brought in will remain just the same."

Carl Tilghman
Tax Assessor
Carteret County

Commentary

Moratorium Means Failure

NO concept of local government confounds conservatives and delights those on the Left quite like the issue of zoning. In simplistic terms, zoning regulations govern the types of activities that are acceptable on people's property, as well as the height of buildings, and the amount of parking that must be provided for business endeavors. It sounds so innocent. After all, who wants a chemical plant next to their home?

Zoning fits nicely into the environmental agenda as well, often juxtaposed with development moratoriums to let counties adjust their regulations. In truth, when moratoriums are imposed, it is an admission that staff has somehow failed.

It is also a failure of elected officials to find solutions rather than to completely disrupt the economic progress of their citizens.

Camden County, which has had zoning, has been under a development moratorium for three years. This year, county officials decided to adopt strict "smart-growth" practices to slow down growth and preserve the "rural nature" of the community. Sadly, as nice as this sounds, it ultimately hurts farmers and property owners by limiting their freedom. Minimum lot sizes for a single home in much of the county will now be 10 acres. If you own 10 acres and want to divide it for two children to build houses, that freedom has been forfeited to zoning.

In Carteret County, citizens wanted a development moratorium enacted last February to allow "time for the communities to examine the issue and look at options for protecting down east from unwanted development that can change the nature of the communities and destroy water quality and natural resources."

The commissioners of Jackson County just enacted a development moratorium by a 4-1 vote. Part of the rationale was explained in the *Asheville Citizen Times*, "We are worried about people who would come into Jackson County and ruin our rural way of life," she said. "There are things at stake here larger than an economic hit."

Cabarrus County Manager John Day had this to say on the subject: "I think it's worth considering a countywide moratorium

on residential subdivisions so the community can take the time ... to develop a plan for sustainable and desirable growth."

Again and again you will see people characterize growth as undesirable. They'll try to use phrases such as "desirable growth," and they make allusions to the fact that people moving into the area will "ruin our way of life." Overall,

the moratoriums are usually either a first step or an intermediate step to make strict zoning look like a better option. In Jackson County, the commissioners really needed a slope ordinance but instead opted for a more aggressive action that might affect more than 1,600 jobs in the area.

Environmentalists understand that people are inherently resistant to change. They coerce people into thinking that moratoriums, restrictive land-use planning, smart growth, and strict zoning will protect the environment.

Environmental Defense, the N.C. Coastal Federation, and the Southern Environmental Law Center made it clear in 2003 with a press release that said, "ALL permit for new development projects within the 100-year floodplain should be placed on hold."

Most areas east of Interstate 95 are in the 100-year floodplain. Such an aggressive action would have been more economically disastrous than the hurricanes that preceded such statements.

The Environmental Protection Agency and the N.C. Department of Environment and Natural Resources have strict guidelines that must be adhered to by developers. Removing the fear of environmental damage is simply the first step toward enacting reasonable zoning. Local officials should also resist pandering to the fear of change by thinking that zoning will preserve historical integrity or control growth. In truth, such actions are simply suppressing freedom by preventing job growth and hurting the local economy. The future can be positive if you make friends with change. CJ

Chad Adams is director of the Center for Local Innovation, vice president for development of the John Locke Foundation, and former vice chairman of the Lee County Board of Commissioners.



Chad Adams

Local Innovation Bulletin Board

Five Myths About Suburbia

Suburban sprawl and automobiles are rapidly acquiring a reputation as scourges of modern American society, authors Ted Balaker and Sam Staley say. But of all the myths created by the anti-suburbs culture about sprawl and driving, a few deserve to be reconsidered:

- Americans are not addicted to driving, nor do Europeans have an enlightened culture about public transit. In the United States, automobiles account for about 88 percent of travel. In Europe, the figure is about 78 percent, and they are gaining on us.

- Public transit does not reduce traffic congestion; even if the nation's transit system tripled in size and filled up with riders, according to Anthony Downs of the Brookings Institution, it would not notably reduce rush-hour congestion, primarily because transit would continue to account for only a small percentage of commuting trips.

- Air quality is getting much better, not worse. Since 1970 the Environmental Protection Agency reports a dramatic decrease in every major pollutant it measures, although driving is increasing by 1 percent to 3 percent each year, average vehicle emissions are dropping about 10 percent annually.

- Most people already live in developed areas, so it's easy to get the impression that humans are paving over the United States, yet only 5.4 percent of the nation's land is developed. While the size of houses has increased between 1970 and 2000, the average lot size shrank from 14,000 square feet to 10,000.

- Driving less will not help combat global warming. If all the Kyoto requirements were met, Tom M.L. Wigley, chief scientist at the U.S. Center for Atmospheric Research, calculates that the Earth would be only 0.07 degrees Centigrade cooler by 2050.

Change in homeless policy

The Bush administration is putting substantial effort and resources into proving it can help urban street homelessness through better programs, Julia Vitullo-Martin of the Manhattan Institute, says in *The Wall Street Journal*.

The need to shift directions in strategy comes from the problems homelessness continues to create.

The chronic homeless, those who have lived on the streets for more than a year, make up about 10 percent of the about two million Americans regarded as homeless. They consume a disproportionate amount of public resources, sometimes hundreds of thousands of dollars per person.

The new White House-sponsored programs move away from the traditional "bowl of soup and a blanket" methods, to provide better, more economically feasible results.

Supportive housing, as opposed to shelters, is becoming popular. Studies show that a \$12,000-per-year supportive housing unit was far more effective in keeping people off the street than a \$35,000-per-year shelter bed.

One example, Housing First, does not require psychiatric or substance-abuse training as a qualification for housing, but it does require strict rules of behavior.

Increased counseling has also worked. One model — Ready, Willing and Able — counsels and trains many that have previously been homeless for substantial periods of time, most of whom are out of prison or jail, don't have an education, and do have substance-abuse problems.

Crime predictors

A federal study on crime appears to be ignoring the "huge gorilla" in the midst of a violent-crime increase: boys without fathers, says Patrick Fagan, the William H. G. FitzGerald Fellow at the Heritage Foundation. According to a recent *National Review* article, out-of-wedlock births account for 36.8 percent of all births, an increase of 3 percent since the early 2000s.

The statistics often correlate into increased crime, particularly when fathers are absent in a family. According to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control, about 85 percent of all children exhibiting behavioral disorders come from fatherless homes. Studies going back 25 years show that 80 percent of rapists and 70 percent of juveniles in state-operated institutions came from fatherless homes.

Sociologist Bradford Wilcox said there are good reasons for the correlation.

"Boys that grow up in fatherless homes engage in compensatory masculinity," Wilcox said. CJ

From Cherokee to Currituck

Eastover Seeks to Incorporate

The Cumberland County community of Eastover is seeking to incorporate. Whether it will succeed depends in part on how Fayetteville responds to its incorporation proposal. So far, Eastover and Fayetteville have not been able to come to an agreement, *The Fayetteville Observer* reports.

The dispute has focused on exactly how big an incorporated Eastover would be, and by extension, how much sales tax revenue it would receive. Progress Eastover, the committee organizing the incorporation, has proposed that Eastover cover an area of 18 square miles, which would give it about 4,800 residents. The most recent town to incorporate in Cumberland County was Hope Mills. Its population is more than 12,000 on less than a third as much of the land area as the committee envisions Eastover having.

"I think the most important thing is, it opens the door for meaningful discussion with the city council, and it's a discussion that needs to occur as soon as possible," said Sara Piland of Progress Eastover.

Fayetteville officials have indicated that the proposed town is too big. The move toward incorporating Eastover comes in part in response to Fayetteville's recent history of large annexations. The larger a population Eastover has, though, the larger its share of sales tax collections in the county would be, something Fayetteville officials are keenly aware of. At its current projected size, Eastover would get \$730,000 a year in sales tax revenue, \$250,000 coming at the expense of Fayetteville.

"This is one of those issues that we keep putting off and putting off, and I think every member of council has pretty much made up their mind with which direction they want to go," said Fayetteville Councilman Charles Evans.

Brunswick revaluation

Every four years Brunswick County reassesses the value of property in the county. Property values have soared in the county in recent years.

"I've been the tax administrator for 10 months, and I've been saying that the tax base is going to double," Tax Administrator Tom Bagby said to the *Wilmington Star-News*. "Never before have Brunswick County values more than doubled in four years."

Bagby's prediction has proven to be correct, as property values went from \$13.7 billion in 2003 to \$31.2 billion this year.

The increase in property values was sharply skewed toward land values, which were up 214 percent. The value of buildings in the county increased by 41 percent.

Property values on the coast experienced the greatest increases. Lead-



"I think the most important thing is, it opens the door for meaningful discussion with the city council."

Sara Piland
Progress Eastover

ing the way was Holden Beach, where property values increased by 218 percent overall. Property values in Oak Island increased by 208 percent.

The impact that higher property values will have upon individual taxpayers will vary. Brunswick County's current property tax rate is \$0.54 per \$100 of valuation. County officials have said they would like to cut that to a revenue-neutral rate, which would be about 30 cents. Still, a lot of property owners will pay higher taxes even at a revenue-neutral rate, some drastically so, after the revaluation. In addition, municipalities charge property taxes on top of what the county charges.

Buncombe slope limits

The Buncombe County Commission has tentatively adopted new guidelines on apartments and condominiums built on slopes. The regulations both limit the number of buildings that can be built and how tall they can be, the *Asheville Citizen-Times* reports.

The ordinance would limit construction of apartments and condominiums based upon elevation above sea level. At elevations of 2,500 to 3,000 feet, buildings could not exceed 35 feet in height. In addition, there could not be more than one building per two acres of land. Above 3,000 feet, the maximum building height is only 25 feet, with only one building being allowed per four acres of land.

John Carroll, president of the Asheville-based Council of Independent Business Owners, opposed the measure.

"We've had a lot of knee-jerk, hodgepodge type of ordinances passed over the past few months," he said. CJ

Released Tapes Add Fuel to Greensboro Controversy

By SAM A. HIEB
Contributing Editor

GREENSBORO

The release of tapes at a Greensboro City Council meeting last month added more controversy to an investigation of former top officers of the city's Police Department.

The controversy has been going on since the resignation of Police Chief David Wray in January 2006. The State Bureau of Investigation is wrapping up its investigation of Wray and former Deputy Chief Randall Brady. The results are due later this year. For the most part, the city has resisted calls from the public and the alternative media to release information in the case, citing the ongoing investigation.

But during a meeting last month, City Manager Mitchell Johnson, in the center of the storm since he changed the locks on the door to the police chief's office before Wray offered his resignation, made a presentation to the City Council during which he released three tapes. Council members and the public heard three tapes, two of which were an interview between Brady and agents with Risk Management Associates, the private agency commissioned by the city to prepare a report based on its investigation.

In those tapes, Brady acknowledged he was aware of a "black book" that is at the heart of the case against Wray.

The blackbook allegedly was used to target black officers in a secret internal investigation to check out allegations of inappropriate conduct. While questionable activities have been reported by the local media, no official action has been taken.

But the third tape appeared to be totally out of context with the other two.



"People that swear an oath and wear a badge find that to be one of the most horrendous conversations they've ever heard."

Mitchell Johnson
Greensboro City Manager

It was a conversation between Brady and Officer Scott Sanders, who apparently recorded it without Brady's knowledge. The tape, stored on the hard drive of Sanders' computer, was seized as evidence in the SBI's investigation.

On the tape, Brady is describing a situation to Sanders in which a woman has been harassing Wray, going so far as to move into the condominium next to Wray. Brady describes the woman as a "nut," but also describes her as highly intelligent and articulate, traits that could make outrageous claims against Wray seem credible. The woman had already told a detective in the department that Wray was soliciting prostitutes, a claim later proven to be false.

Brady tells Sanders to prepare a "file" on the woman, telling him "you know what kind of file I'm looking for. I mean, where we can go up there and lay it down and say here's the history of that woman, here's what she's done, and before it's over with, you and I are going to figure out a way to get her kicked out of that freaking place... even if we have to make it look like she's done something."

"It's amazing what I get paid for, isn't it?" Brady concludes, although

when listening to the tapes, it's difficult to tell if he's being sarcastic.

Since the city previously had resisted calls to release the RMA report, citing the ongoing SBI investigation, the sudden release of the tapes prompted charges the city was selectively releasing information to influence public opinion.

John Hammer, editor of the alternative weekly *The Rhinoceros Times*, wrote that the city is "either horribly incompetent or devastatingly clever when it comes to releasing public information... It appears the only reason for releasing the tapes was to embarrass Brady."

But the city was also involved in a federal case to deny Brady his supplemental retirement benefits because he was engaged in activity that might have triggered his termination.

The problem was that Judge Carlton Tilley had already ruled that the city had to pay Brady his benefits because he legally had met the criteria. The city is considering an appeal, however.

In a phone interview, Johnson said the amount due Brady was almost \$250,000.

"We couldn't effectively explain to the judge the basis for our concerns

without making available the information," Johnson said. "From a public policy standpoint, it seems inappropriate that the taxpayers should be paying for someone for all those years — and it's not an inconsequential amount of money — just because they were able to retire before we could complete an investigation."

Though Johnson admitted that there is no evidence illegal action was taken against the woman accused of stalking Wray, he defended the release of the tape.

"The whole conversation ended up being unnecessary, but that's irrelevant," Johnson said. "What that tape does, in essence, is it shows you there was a willingness on the part of those two individuals to do things that I hope nobody that believes in our justice system thinks are remotely appropriate. People that swear an oath and wear a badge find that to be one of the most horrendous conversations they've ever heard. These are people that have the authority to put you in jail. It's pretty scary."

Amanda Martin, general counsel of the N.C. Press Association, said she understands the legal situation public agencies often find themselves in regarding the release of personnel information, considering the statutes that govern the release of that type of information. Such situations often result in policy decisions that might not be popular with the public.

"From a public policy standpoint, it's a problem to have public officials manipulating the release of information in a sort of halfway fashion," Martin said. "It's appropriate to release information when some issue has arisen that causes alarm or concern about how a public official or a public employee is discharging his public duties." CJ

Since 1991, Carolina Journal has provided thousands of readers each month with in-depth reporting, informed analysis, and incisive commentary about the most pressing state and local issues in North Carolina. Now Carolina Journal has taken its trademark blend of news, analysis, and commentary to the airwaves with **Carolina Journal Radio**. A weekly, one-hour newsmagazine, **Carolina Journal Radio** is hosted by John Hood and Donna Martinez and features a diverse mix of guests and topics. The program is currently broadcast on 18 commercial stations — from the mountains to the coast. The Carolina Journal Radio Network includes these fine affiliates:

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Salisbury	WSTP	AM 1490	Saturdays	11:00 AM
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Southern Pines	WEEB	AM 990	Wednesdays	8:00 AM
Whiteville	WTXY	AM 1540	Tuesdays	10:00 AM
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• When Dwight Eisenhower sent the 101st Airborne into Little Rock to integrate Central High, he didn't know that he was fighting the last, great battle of his career...one that would change the nation. In *Ike's Final Battle: The Road to Little Rock and the Challenge of Equality*, Kasey Pipes tells "how one of America's greatest leaders finally confronted America's greatest sin." Here, for the first time, is the tale of how Ike became a civil rights president. The road to Central High actually began the moment Ike sent black troops to the front during the Battle of the Bulge in World War II. Their performance formed a connection between Eisenhower and the civil rights movement that reached its zenith when he deployed the U.S. Army to Little Rock. More information at www.worldaheadpublishing.com.

• Why have there been no terrorist attacks in the United States since 9/11? Is it possible that there is a simple explanation for the peaceful American homefront? Is it possible that the War on Terror has been a radical over-reaction to a rare event? John Mueller, in *Overblown: How Politicians and the Terrorism Industry Inflate National Security Threats, and Why We Believe Them*, says it is time to consider the hypothesis that dare not speak its name: We have wildly over-reacted. The terrorism industry and its allies in the White House and Congress have preyed on our fears, he says, and it is time to rethink the entire enterprise and spend much smaller amounts on only those things that do matter: intelligence, law enforcement, and disruption of radical groups overseas. At www.simonsays.com. CJ

Movie review

'Amazing Grace' Is a Movie With a Mission

• "Amazing Grace"; directed by Michael Apted; produced by Jeanney Kim, Terrence Malick, Ed Pressman; starring Ioan Gruffudd, Albert Finney, Romola Garai, Michael Gambon, Benedict Cumberbatch, Rufus Sewell, Ciaran Hinds, and Youssou N'Dour; rated PG.

By SUSANNE ROBINSON

Contributing Editor

RALEIGH

In modern-day movies, heroes are often measured by the firepower they deploy or the sizzle they display on-screen. But the real heroes of history are more interesting than Hollywood caricatures, and when filmmakers choose to tell their stories with intelligence and authenticity, such movies have the ability to transcend mere entertainment and exert real power.

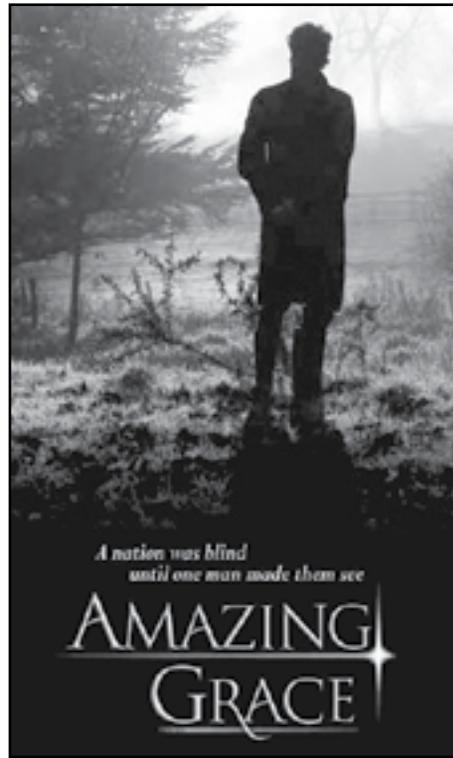
The recently released film "Amazing Grace" is a historical drama on a modern-day mission. It tells the true story of William Wilberforce, the wealthy young British dandy who was driven by his sense of humanity and his deep religious faith to fight the gritty, brutal, and deeply entrenched institution of slavery in late 18th-century England. The release of the movie in February was timed intentionally to coincide with the 200th anniversary of the abolition of the slave trade in Great Britain, and Bristol Bay Productions, the film's producer, has linked its inspiring movie to a social justice campaign to end slavery in the world today.

Though not as well-known as 20th century social activists such as Dr. Martin Luther King, Wilberforce was arguably the most successful social reformer in history. At age 21, he won election to the British Parliament. In 1785, he experienced a conversion to Christianity (what he later called "the great change"), and nearly left the world of politics to become an ordained minister. However, friends persuaded Wilberforce that he could do God's will more effectively in Parliament. After researching the slave trade, Wilberforce stood before the British House of Commons in 1787 and made an audacious statement of life purpose:

"So enormous, so dreadful, so irremediable did the Trade's wickedness appear that my own mind was completely made up for Abolition. Let the consequences be what they would, I from this time determined that I would never rest until I had effected its abolition."

As the movie shows, for the next two decades Wilberforce did not rest. He committed his personal and political life to the antislavery cause, locked in a battle of words and wills against the most powerful political and social forces of his day.

While "Amazing Grace" is never graphic in its depictions of the slave trade, it effectively conveys the brutality



While "Amazing Grace" is never graphic in its depictions of the slave trade, it effectively conveys the brutality.

of an industry that held enormous clout in the British Empire — proportionally equivalent to the defense industry in the U.S. economy today. Wilberforce's unrelenting public assaults on the evils of the slave trade made him one of the most vilified men in England in certain circles. As Wilberforce, Ioan Gruffudd ("King Arthur", "Fantastic Four") gives a compelling portrayal of a man under constant attack, yet unable to let go of his cause, tormented by the unimaginable suffering of African slaves and the cold indifference of members of his own social class.

He was not entirely alone in his campaign. "Amazing Grace" introduces modern movie-goers to some of history's most eclectic and effective social reformers, who also happened to be among Wilberforce's closest friends. William Pitt, who urged Wilberforce to bring abolition bills before Parliament, was the youngest prime minister in British history. Hannah More, the most important female literary figure of her time, was deeply involved in both the abolition movement and in the campaign for the education of poor children in 18th-century England. Henry Thornton was a banker and London economist who routinely gave away 85 percent of his income to social justice causes: At one point his commitment to philanthropy placed him at the brink of bankruptcy.

Olaudah Equiano was a former slave who learned to read and write, recording first-hand accounts of the atrocities of the slave trade. And Wilberforce was deeply influenced to pursue abolition by former slave ship captain John Newton, played by Albert Finney ("Ocean's Twelve", "Big Fish"). In the film "Amazing Grace", Newton speaks of being haunted by 20,000 ghosts — the souls of Africans whose lives he destroyed before converting to Christianity, renouncing the slave trade, and penning the world-famous hymn after which the movie is named.

Along with Wilberforce, most of these people were evangelical Christians — derisively referred to as "lay saints" by their contemporaries, yet each committed to social justice at a depth rarely seen in our own time. The producers of "Amazing Grace" hope to rekindle that spirit of altruism. They want movie-goers to know that beneath the film's lush photography and lavish period costumes beats a modern pulse—there is still much work to be done.

According to the movie's Web site, www.amazinggracemovie.com, more people (about 27 million worldwide) live in bondage today than did in Wilberforce's time. These modern-day slaves include African children who are kidnapped and forced to fight as soldiers in rebel armies, families who toil in rice mills and brick kilns in Asia, and women and young girls who are forced into the sex trade around the globe. These people live in fear and are often threatened and beaten, unable to escape lives of torment and despair.

The producers of "Amazing Grace" want their movie to be relevant to modern times and have used Wilberforce's story in a very intentional way to call up a new generation of abolitionists. They have launched the "Amazing Change Campaign," which has a link on the movie's website. Through this campaign, people can sign a petition, educate themselves about modern-day slavery, and learn how to get involved in social justice organizations to end it.

Wilberforce's passion paid off. He lived to see the fruits of his efforts, but success did not come overnight. Suppression of the British slave trade took 20 years and full emancipation took nearly 50. The abolition of the slave trade in the British colonies passed Parliament just three days before Wilberforce's death in 1833, and opened the way for the eventual downfall of African slavery in the United States.

The movie "Amazing Grace" pays fitting tribute to this remarkable hero of history, and in an ambitious spirit Wilberforce himself would have applauded, it seeks not only to inform and engage its audience, but to launch a modern-day social justice movement of its own.

Amazing, indeed. CJ

Current Protesters Owe Much to Wilmington Women of 1775

Most readers are familiar with the details of the Boston Tea Party of 1773, and properly identify it as a key event in the radical movement that triggered the American Revolution. Many North Carolinians also have heard of the Edenton Tea Party of October 1774, when the leading women of the eastern North Carolina city did not actually dump tea in a nearby sound but did stage one of the nation's earliest acts of political theater by women. But how many are familiar with the far more incendiary Wilmington Tea Party of 1775, also led by women?



Dr. Troy Kickler

Tea parties offered an effective political arena to protest taxation. After a period of benign neglect by British authorities, American colonists grew increasingly frustrated after the French and Indian War with Britain's revived interest in regulating American trade, exemplified by the passage of the Stamp Act of 1765 and the Tea

Act of 1773. Although the tea tax was minimal, it enraged many because tea was the popular non-alcoholic drink of the era. Aware of a potential backlash, British leaders had limited the tax amount in hopes of assuaging disgruntled colonists. British enforcement of trade policies, however, had angered Americans for some time. In short, the timing of the tea tax was foolhardy, and it took on a symbolic value far in excess of its revenue implications.

Many colonial North Carolinians approved of the radical Boston Tea Party in 1773. After that "notable and striking" event, as John Adams called it, revolutionary tea parties occurred across the colonies. Months after the more-famous Edenton event, sometime between March 25 and April 5, 1775, the women of Wilmington actually burned their tea to protest imposing trade legislation and increased taxation. Unfortunately, there are few details known to historians about this event, a major reason for its relative obscurity in the popular understanding of the times.

What we do know is that many were stoking the fires of political agitation in the region. After the Edenton protest in late 1774, the *South*

Carolina Gazette, a Charleston paper that covered news across the eastern Carolinas, encouraged such political protests to take place in the Cape Fear region. Such displays of "public virtue," the reporter claimed March 22, 1775, thwarted corrupt officials' designs to eradicate the indisputable rights of British citizens. As historian Vernon O. Stumpf points out, this plea must have been written before the Wilmington Tea Party took place and influenced the women's decision.

A well-born Scot loyal to her country and king, Janet Schaw, visited relatives in the Cape Fear region during early 1775. She arrived in the town of Brunswick on Feb. 14, and subsequent events soon shocked her. Wilmington was buzzing with political dissent, and Schaw unsurprisingly disapproved. She contemptuously criticized North Carolinians for closing their port to British shipping, and for doing so, when they had an opportunity to corner the North American tea market. Apparently, the "rusticks," as Schaw called Tar Heels, loved liberty more.

The activities of Wilmington's women undoubtedly bothered Schaw. In *Journal of a Lady of Quality*, she records the following: "The Ladies have

burnt their tea in a solemn procession." An appalled Schaw, however, questioned the extent of their patriotism: "They had delayed however till the sacrifice was not very considerable, as I do not think any one offered above a quarter of a pound."

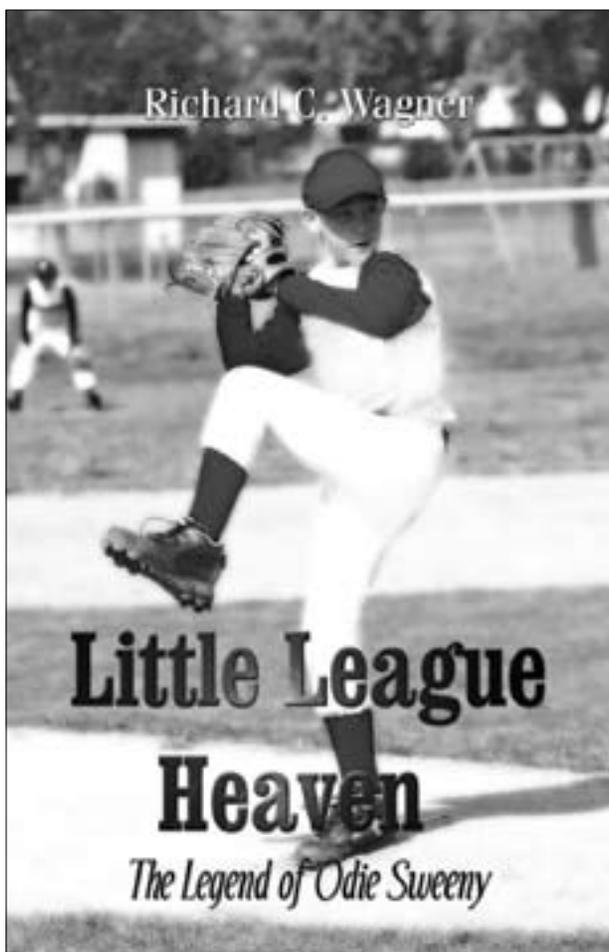
Schaw, never passing up a chance to criticize what she considered an unsophisticated spirit of liberty, did not realize that an eventful and unprecedented event occurred in Wilmington that day. Wilmington women had publicly opposed British trade policies and swore never to buy tea again until such policies were remanded. Their actions showed that, in the spring of 1775, many Wilmington residents, like the counterparts in the other American colonies, opposed increased British taxation and trade restrictions.

When we see contemporary examples of North Carolinians, of all sexes and persuasions, demonstrating in favor of their cherished political causes, we can rest assured that, at least in some ways, their behavior is extremely traditional. Protest is in our blood. CJ

Dr. Troy Kickler is director of the North Carolina History Project.

Little League Heaven

By Carolina Journal Editor Richard C. Wagner



When Lillie Jo Sweeney threw out the first pitch of the game at Houston's Astrodome in 1989, she joined the Astros and thousands of boys and girls in celebrating the 50th anniversary of Little League baseball. The event also saluted her deceased husband, Odie Sweeney, a Little League legend who managed a never-say-die team for 38 years — a record in Texas and one of the longest streaks in the nation. *Little League Heaven: The Legend of Odie Sweeney*, an inspirational biography, serves a generous slice of Americana and traditional values.

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Short Takes on Culture

'Borat' is a Brat

• "Borat: Cultural Learnings of America for Make Benefit Glorious Nation of Kazakhstan"
Fox Home Video
Directed by Larry Charles

Sacha Baron Cohen's game is finally up. He can no longer fool unsuspecting Americans into thinking his alter-ego, "Borat" is a harmless journalist from Kazakhstan. However, the same couldn't be said two years ago, when Cohen was filming "Borat: Cultural Learnings of America for Make Benefit Glorious Nation of Kazakhstan." Throughout the mockumentary, Cohen fools countless hapless citizens across the country, sometimes in cruel, embarrassing ways.

The best word that describes the film is "painful." The humor is juvenile. The guise is shameless. And Cohen routinely takes advantage of the good manners and forgiving nature of the people he encounters in the film. The lowest moments of the film include a hasty retreat from a Jewish-owned bed and breakfast and his fake conversion at a Pentecostal church.

Most surprisingly, in the guise of a traveling journalist and documentarian, Cohen manages to interview ex-congressman Bob Barr and seasoned statesman candidate Alan Keyes, to whom he asks a rather graphic question about homosexual behavior.

The movie is rated R for good reason: pervasive strong crude and sexual content including some very graphic nudity, and foul language. Also, it totally lacks taste and discretion.

The movie's one redeeming feature is the hilarious (and completely made-up) Kazakh national anthem: "Kazakhstan, greatest country in the world/ All other countries are run by little girls."

— JENNA ASHLEY
ROBINSON

• "The Pursuit of Happyness"
Sony Pictures Home Video
Directed by Gabriele Muccino

Graham and Dodd's *Security Analysis* is an unlikely book to figure prominently in one of the most inspiring movies ever, but "The Pursuit of Happyness" is an unlikely story. Will Smith stars as Chris Gardner, a devoted father who could not earn enough to pay rent or taxes in 1981 but became a millionaire stockbroker and launched his own investment firm six years later. Smith's own son,

Jaden, plays Gardner's son.

Gardner took a six-month unpaid internship at Dean Witter after learning that the owner of a red Ferrari was a stockbroker there. He and his 5-year-old son spent nights in homeless shelters and a subway station while Gardner competed against 19 other interns for the one available opening.

The movie breaks a number of other Hollywood conventions. Gardner's wife leaves him, but he keeps custody of their son. Capitalists are shown in the most positive light in a popular movie since George Bailey in "It's a Wonderful Life," not like the villainous Gordon Gecko in "Wall Street" or Edward Lewis in "Pretty Woman." Most of all, the movie does not dwell on Gardner's race or his authenticity, but his success at Dean Witter provides a stark contrast with the Eddie Murphy caricature, Billy Ray Valentine, in "Trading Places." Take a date. Take a socialist. Take a night to see this movie.

— JOSEPH COLETTI

• "The Prestige"
Buena Vista Home Entertainment
Directed by Christopher Nolan

"The Prestige" is packed with a cast of talented actors, detailed costumes and obvious time period set design. This suspenseful film, set in turn-of-the-century London, slowly evolves into a story of two young magicians striving for an act and quickly turns into an unexpected saga of obsession and revenge.

After a tragic onstage failure of their best act, Robert Angier, (Hugh Jackman) and Alfred Borden (Christian Bale) part ways to begin separate careers. However, Angier grows increasingly obsessed with Borden's secret to his best trick and uses Olivia Wenscombe (Scarlett Johansson) to steal his covert act.

The emerging tension between the two main characters captivates and is realistically depicted throughout the film. Angier's mounting madness is represented by his austere demeanor and obsessive actions. Borden's emotional numbness toward his wife illustrates the damage of well-kept secrets. Both characters' burden of untold secrets becomes more and more apparent as their intimate relationships deepen.

The movie itself portrays a performance that purposefully creates an illusion for the viewer. It is a story that will keep you guessing until the last minute.

— JANA DUNKLEY CJ

Movie review

'An Inconvenient Truth' Could Be Inconvenient Platform in 2008

• "An Inconvenient Truth"; directed by Davis Guggenheim; starring Al Gore; now out on DVD.

By SAM A HIEB
Contributing Editor

GREENSBORO

In the wake of his triumphal appearance at this year's Academy Awards, let us pause for a moment to ponder Al Gore.

For more than 30 years, Gore has been working to solve the modern crisis known as global warming. For eight of those years, Gore was vice president of the United States, not a position without influence. Exactly what happened to the environment during the course of those eight years depends on whom you ask.

If you ask certain air-quality experts, they might tell you the environment is getting cleaner. Thirty-plus years of state and federal regulations reducing emissions from automobiles and power plants have done their jobs. So if you believe that, a reasonable person would think Gore should be taking bows not just for his performance in the Oscar-winning "An Inconvenient Truth," but for saving the environment as well.

But that's not the way the liberal politics of fear operate. The mission is to convince Americans that we're doomed, and Gore tries to do that in the Academy Award-winner for best documentary directed by Davis Guggenheim.

It's really a documentary about Gore, with significant parts of his life weaving around his global warming slideshow that, by his own estimate, he's given 1,000 times around the world. It's interesting that Gore is constantly being shown walking through airports, boarding planes, getting in and out of cars, working on laptops and talking on cell phones throughout the movie. You don't see the house with the \$30,000 power bill, however.

We look back on his boyhood in Tennessee, where three months out of the year he helped raise the tobacco that would contribute to his sister's death from lung cancer. We see his efforts in Congress to fight global warming, the near-death of his son in an automobile accident, which gave him pause to ponder life's bigger mission, and, of course, his narrow loss to George W. Bush in the 2000 election, which prompted him to renew that mission.

When watching Gore's slideshow, entertaining as it is, you're ready to just go ahead and pop the cyanide capsule, because you don't want to be around for what's coming. Gore's slideshow is a slick presentation of graphs, charts, photographs, and illustrations with the simple premise that the Earth is getting



warmer because of increased carbon emissions. The graph showing carbon emissions and rising temperatures fits together like the east coast of South America and the west coast of Africa did millions of years ago.

On the subject, Gore is probably the only man in America who can get a little political dig in on the issue of continental drift. He recalls his sixth-grade geography class when a fellow student asked whether those continents fit together at one time. No way, the teacher told Gore's classmate. The classmate went on to become a drug addict and a ne'er do well, while the teacher went on to become the lead science adviser in the present Bush administration, a punch line that drew laughter from his audience. Evidence of yet another life ruined by the destructive policies of Bush and his cronies.

The hysteria surrounding global warming, much like the hysteria surrounding poverty (as defined by presidential candidate John Edwards) will certainly be a major issue in the 2008 election.

But the question candidates will have to answer, and one that Gore didn't answer in "An Inconvenient Truth," is why more than 30 years of regulation, intervention, and spending on the part of the federal government supposedly haven't worked.

That not only says something about the effectiveness of the policies, but about the individuals putting forth those policies, right? Yet the standard of living among average Americans continues to steadily rise.

That's indeed an inconvenient truth for Democrats seeking the presidency in 2008 with a platform built upon the politics of fear. CJ

Broadwater Illuminates Man Called 'Forgotten Founder'

• Jeff Broadwater: *George Mason, Forgotten Founder*; University of North Carolina Press, Chapel Hill; 2006; 253 pp; \$34.95

By **GEORGE M. STEPHENS**
Contributing Editor

George Mason (1725-1792) has not been accorded the laurels he deserves as a leading founder, although Thomas Jefferson called him "one of our truly great men, and of the first order of greatness." Fittingly, in Jeff Broadwater's biography, his crucial role has been illuminated.

Also, in his native Fairfax County, Va., a university named for him has become a national leader in libertarian studies, especially in economics, so he is today much better known than he was.

In the 1760s Mason became the leader in the House of Burgesses against the Stamp Act and other duties, and he wrote a critique of slavery, focusing on its effect on Virginia's development and on white morality. He later condemned slavery as a violation of human rights, though he never freed his slaves.

By 1775, royal government was collapsing. In May 1776, Virginians asked their congressional delegation to urge Congress to pass a declaration of independence, and its convention began to prepare a bill of rights. Mason prepared his own, the document for which he is most famous.

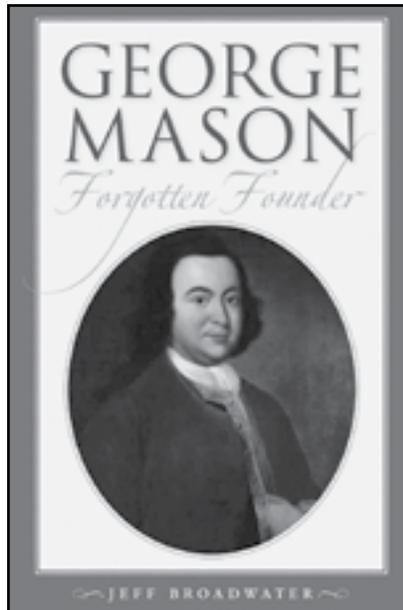
The first draft of his Declaration of Rights combined a succinct statement of the republican principles that underlay the Revolution with provisions designed to protect individual civil liberties. The most notable statement was, "That all men are born equally free and independent, and have certain inherent natu-

ral Rights, of which they can not by any Compact, deprive or divest their Posterity; among which are the Enjoyment of Life and Liberty, with the Means of acquiring and possessing Property, and pursuing and obtaining Happiness and Safety." This reflected Lockean principles.

Parts of the Virginia Declaration resembled a bill of rights. One said "no part of a Man's property can be taken from him, or applied to public uses, without the Consent of himself, or his legal representatives." Twelve years later similar language was incorporated into the Fifth Amendment of the U.S. Constitution's Bill of Rights, but this plain stricture was violated recently in the *Kelo* decision of the U.S. Supreme Court, which corrupted "public use" with "public purpose," thereby giving the federal government broad powers to take a man's property without his consent.

In Mason's Declaration there were also provisions for religious tolerance, for freedom of the press, banning ex post facto laws, and granting broad right of suffrage — 18 articles in all, trimmed by committee to 16.

Following his authorship of the Declaration of Rights, Mason went to work on a constitution for the new state of Virginia, with paramount power in the legislature placed in a bicameral assembly, which would have frequent elections and term limits. There were



separate legislative, executive, and judicial departments (a principle of Montesquieu's). All legislation originated in the lower house. There was a property qualification for the suffrage. From the Continental Congress in Philadelphia, Jefferson sent a similar constitution.

During this period the Revolution was in peril. Washington had retreated to Valley Forge. Details concerning

Virginia's participation occupied Mason in the legislature, along with his running interest in whether his state or the Confederation controlled western lands. He battled against the issuance of paper money because of the threat of inflation.

In 1784 jurisdictional problems on the Potomac resulted in Mason being appointed to a committee to meet with Maryland. Annual meetings of the two states expanded to all states, and in 1787 it became the convention to amend the Articles of Confederation. At the convention Mason was described by delegates as "a man of remarkable strong powers." He was an elder statesman at 62.

His state brought to the convention the Virginia Plan, 15 resolutions drafted by Madison, which called for a bicameral legislature with a veto over state laws, a national executive and a judiciary. Smaller states did not like it that the plan based both houses on population. There was considerable sentiment for

doing more than amending the Articles of Confederation, and the convention voted to start from scratch.

Broadwater provides rich detail on the workings of the convention, principles, opinions, debates, the changing alliances, the political climates of the states. It is certainly among the best descriptions of it, ranking with Bowen's *Miracle at Philadelphia*.

Mason thought that the new national government should operate directly on citizens, who should be represented in the lower house, with the state legislatures choosing the Senate, with the proviso that money and salary bills would originate in the House.

Late in the convention Mason proposed a bill of rights and noted that one could be prepared from state declarations in a few hours. Other delegates said that the national government would have only the powers given it, so no bill of rights was needed. Nevertheless, for lack of a bill of rights and because of power to pass navigation acts by a simple majority, instead of two-thirds, Mason refused to sign the Constitution.

After much debate the Virginia ratifying convention accepted the constitution without rights amendments but had them drawn up and submitted to the convention. They showed Mason's influence.

An early order of business in the First Congress was to submit a bill of rights to the states for ratification. Eight states had them and there was a prominent set from the Virginia ratification convention. North Carolina had refused to ratify without a bill of rights. From these sources, in which Mason's influence was plain, they drafted a set of 10 amendments, which were ratified by the states and became a highly valued part of our Constitution. CJ

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By John Hood
President of the
John Locke Foundation

Selling the Dream Why Advertising is Good Business



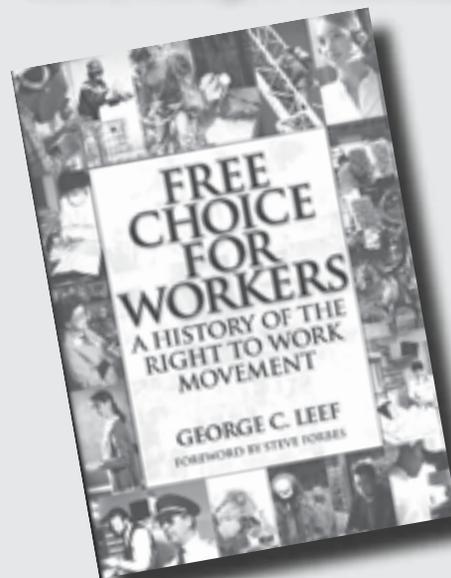
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Choice
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Commentary

Myth of Black's Good Works

Sure, Jim Black broke the law, but that shouldn't take away from all the good things he did for education, for the economy, and for the people of North Carolina."

If you've followed the saga of the former House speaker, you've undoubtedly heard that argument. Black's apologists trotted out those lines as the public learned more about the bathroom breaks, cash pay-offs, and bribery scandal that helped topple one of the state's most powerful elected leaders. We'll hear the argument again when Black heads back to federal court to learn his sentence on federal and state corruption charges.

The appeal to Black's record is understandable. He can't say now that he committed no crimes. Not only has he pleaded guilty to accepting cash from chiropractors seeking legislative favors, but he has also decided to "clearly take full responsibility" for that crime—as he told a Superior Court judge and a phalanx of TV cameras in court.

So now we're left to assess the former speaker's "good works." Didn't he boost the state's education system? What about all those new North Carolina jobs? How about those state policies that made life better for hard-working Tar Heels?

There's one main problem with the appeal to Black's legacy of good deeds: There is no such legacy. Black can take direct credit for nothing good that has happened in North Carolina in the past eight years.

Before I continue, let me mention two possible objections. First, let's throw out actions Black has taken to benefit Charlotte and Mecklenburg County directly. Those in the Queen City who benefited from the speaker's largesse must have valued that service.

But that's different from touting Black's general support for education and other policy issues. Focusing on his local impact also leads to some questions: If Black did so much good for his home county, why do the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools face ongoing challenges? Why does the Charlotte area get such

a horrible deal in state highway funding?

The second likely objection involves my politics. Perhaps I'm piling on criticism just because I disagree with Black's politics. Fine. For the sake of argument, let's assume I agree completely with every action the General Assembly took during Black's tenure. I still would have a hard time finding an instance in which Black took a stand on a major public policy issue different from other House Democrats who could have wielded the speaker's gavel.

Would education budgets be lower if another House Democrat ran the show?

Would the state have rejected tax incentive packages? Would workers still earn \$5.15 an hour today? Certainly there are House Democrats who disagreed with Black's stances on education funding, corporate welfare, and the minimum wage. But those Democrats could not have won caucus support to serve as speaker. Just as important, the House is not the only game in town. No Democratic speaker could have accomplished much without agreement from the Senate and governor.

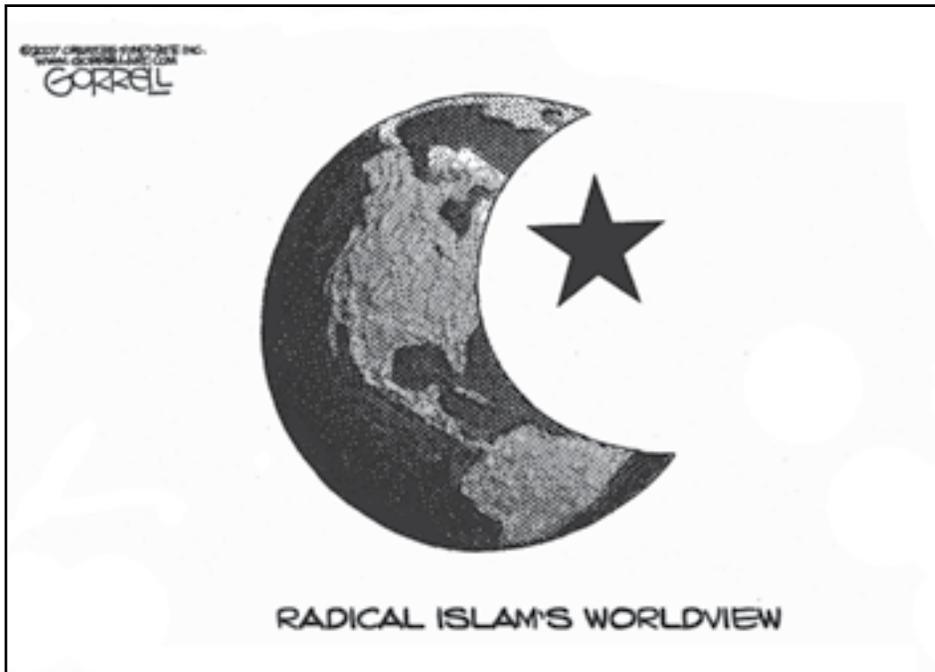
If you look closely at Black's major accomplishments — *his* accomplishments, not those of the legislature as a whole — you find only those items that have contributed to his current legal woes. He blocked a video poker ban. He tried to force kindergarten students to get unnecessary eye exams. He rewrote state laws to help chiropractors. He created jobs for legislative allies who helped him keep power. He bent the rules to enact a state-run lottery, even as a potential lottery vendor employed his chief political aide.

Black's supporters should be careful before they ask people to think about all of his "good works." They'll find that the record is as blank as the payee lines on those famous campaign checks. CJ

Mitch Kokai is an associate editor of Carolina Journal.



**Mitch
Kokai**



Editorial

He's Accustomed to the Place

With the media focused on the legal troubles of former House Speaker Jim Black, who is likely to receive a prison sentence in May, reporters and reformers have spilled plenty of ink over the few ethics and rules changes made by his successor, Democrat Rep. Joe Hackney of Orange County.

Because of the media spotlight on the House, State Senate President Pro Tem Marc Basnight has been able, for the most part, to avoid similar scrutiny. Yet the Dare County Democrat has led his chamber for eight consecutive terms of two years each, and let's just say he's fond of his place, his position, and the privileges that power provides as currently constituted.

Basnight admitted as much, one day after Black resigned his House seat in February and on the same day *The News & Observer* of Raleigh reported that the former speaker would plead guilty in federal court to a felony public corruption charge.

The ethics reform proposal that reporters asked about that day, thanks to outward ponderings by Republicans, was the idea of term limits. Basnight strangled the notion before it could take even its first breath.

"I know the way we operate," he told *The N&O*. "I like the way we operate. I believe the members like the way we operate."

The reasons why Basnight's, and his colleagues', affections for the General Assembly run so deep are numerous. Yet many of those motives seem to have little to do with service or sacrifice for the common good. Consider the following behavioral peculiarities that blossomed on Basnight's (and Black's) watch:

- The proliferation of economic incentives via tax abatements to companies they favor, even to the point of calling special sessions of the legislature

in order to break open the public piggy bank (for the likes of Dell and Merck)

- Thwarting the project development efforts of businesses that refuse to "play ball" with them, such as ethanol company DFI Group

- Misleading the electorate to vote for allowing, through so-called "tax-increment financing," for government to incur public debt without authorizing it through a public vote as the constitution requires

- Using special set-aside funds in various executive branch agencies to fund the pork projects favored by legislative leaders and their supporters

- Steering public funds to their own enterprises, as former U.S. Sen. Frank Ballance did with his nonprofit organization; or to projects favored by their friends, as Basnight did with the unworkable Currituck Sound Ferry

- Drawing themselves into safe districts so as to protect their monopoly on power.

No wonder why Basnight, two weeks after Black's guilty plea, had this to say about banning special provisions, which have nothing to do with the spending, from being added to the state budget bill:

"Does that prevent somebody from breaking the law?" he asked. "I've had no problem with special provisions on my side."

According to *The N&O* Basnight said he supports special provisions because they win passage for important laws, such as Smart Start and the Clean Water Management Trust. But such legislation, if it is so "important," ought to be cleared in the light of day rather than sneaked through in the budget.

In Basnight's world there is just no other way than to take short cuts and avoid accountability. At least Hackney has shown, in a few limited changes, that there is another way. CJ

Get Comfy for Transit Show

Transit tax repeal effort causes panic among Charlotte leaders

Charlotte-Mecklenburg is about to have a spirited, consequential, and slightly silly debate about mass transit and the local tax burden. It's about time.

It looks increasingly likely that voters this fall will have a chance to say yea or nay about Mecklenburg's extra half-cent sales tax, which funds controversial transit projects and pushes the community's combined tax burden well above that of any other urban area in North Carolina. You can tell the referendum is coming not just because the mathematics of the petition drive so far add up to enough signatures by the deadline, but also because Charlotte politicians and transit activists are clearly growing antsy, anxious, and, again, slightly silly.

The story begins in 1998, when a solid majority of voters approved a half-cent increase in the local sales tax to fund a transit plan that included bus corridors and rail lines stretching across the county. At the time, voters were assured that the planned transit lines would bear a modest price tag — about \$1 billion for the whole shebang, including rail and bus lines. The reality has turned out

differently. The initial rail project, along the South Corridor, will cost about half a billion dollars, or double the original estimate. The price tag for the entire plan is now pegged at \$9 billion. Rather than take into consideration Charlotte-Mecklenburg's resulting higher government-cost structure, local elected officials have enacted a series of other tax increases, infuriating taxpayers.

Seeing a clear opportunity to transform public disaffection into policy change, local activists created a Web site, StoptheTrain.com, and an effort to collect enough signatures to return the transit tax to the ballot in November 2007. Originally, local politicians dismissed the campaign. Then they saw the numbers, panicked, and began a hard-charging counterattack.

They claimed that Mecklenburg taxpayers didn't understand the petition language and didn't realize what they were signing. They said that if the tax repeal killed the rail lines, Charlotte's air would get smoggier and the region could lose federal transportation funds.

So find a comfy spot and microwave some popcorn. This is going to be a long, fascinating show. *CJ*

Smoking and Freedom

Smoking issue a good test of one's commitment to liberty

For anyone still unsure how to distinguish warring political camps on the subject of individual freedom, we'd suggest a close look at a proposal in the General Assembly to ban smoking from virtually all buildings, public or private.

Rep. Hugh Holliman of Davidson County, the new House Majority Leader, has long supported state efforts to prohibit tobacco use. A former smoker who lost a sister to lung cancer, Holliman is sincere in his intentions. That doesn't make them any less illiberal (using the correct, older definition of the term). His bill would not exempt restaurants, bars, or even cigar clubs from the prohibition — unless the clubs are nonprofit.

(We'll go out on a limb and suggest that if you ban cigar smoking from cigar clubs, they won't be profitable. That's not what is meant, of course.)

The reason the smoking-ban issue is an excellent test of one's commitment to individual freedom is that smoking does, indeed, pose significant health risks. It's easy to endorse the freedom of others to do what you prefer or think is good for them. What's difficult is to endorse the freedom of others to act in ways you disapprove of or think is harmful to them.

The case for freedom is not based on the absence of moral absolutes or

personal consequences. It is based on the principle that human beings ought to be free to discover these moral absolutes and personal consequences for themselves, as long as their actions do not infringe on other individuals' equal rights to do the same.

In the case of smoking bans, advocates often make several arguments designed to evade the fundamental issue of individual freedom. For example, they argue that smoking is addictive and so smokers are incapable of making free choices. But this misunderstands the meaning of "free choice." A free choice in this context means simply that the action was not taken under threat of legal sanction or other physical force.

Another common argument is to suggest that the employees of restaurants and bars lack the choice to avoid the tobacco smoke, and therefore must be protected by government fiat. But they are employees, not slaves. Of course they have the freedom to choose whether to work in a smoke-filled environment.

Holliman's legislation makes no good-faith effort to accommodate the thousands of North Carolinians who might want to smoke in private bars and clubs. The law ought to at least let private businesses set up member-only enterprises that cater to those who want to actually be treated as adults. *CJ*

Commentary

An Agenda for Legislative Reform

They took their own sour time. But finally, leading members of the General Assembly, the Democratic Party, and North Carolina's commentariat have come out with more-or-less straightforward condemnations of former House Speaker Jim Black and his criminal co-conspirators for hijacking state government and using its power to extort campaign cash, overturn election results, and reward special interests at the expense of average North Carolinians.

It sounds good. Now, what are they going to do about it?

Obviously, the judiciary will decide the proper correctional arrangements of those who have already copped Black-Eye Pleas. And if law enforcement continues along its current path, additional gang members may materialize. But this is not only a criminal case. It's a case of gross abuse of legislative procedure and political power. Lawmakers have the ability to reduce the risk of future abuses.

New Speaker Joe Hackney, a longtime reform advocate, has proposed changes in the House rules. They constitute a promising start on reducing such risks. Still, while the cocoon surrounding the Legislative Building has been pierced, many of its denizens have yet to shake off their somnolence and emerge into reality. They continue to believe that while Black may have strayed, the legislature under his partial leadership "did a lot of good" and that "we shouldn't lose sight of the big picture."

They are in denial. The big picture is that the North Carolina legislature has not conducted its business efficiently and fairly, and has devoted excessive time to overseeing the private affairs of North Carolinians while devoting insufficient time to overseeing the public affairs of state government. The bigger picture is that, for a time at least, the Democratic Party controlled the House not because the public elected them but because Jim Black bribed Michael Decker to switch parties, thus creating a 60-60 split and a subsequent co-speakership. This fact calls into question the legitimacy of the resulting legislation, including the current electoral districts. Sorry, that's part of the current reality, too.

To regain the public trust, and to set right at least some of what has gone so horribly wrong, state policymakers must be forthright, resolute, and bold. They should recognize that corruption has tainted past legislative action, and that in the future their work will be judged not simply by the intended ends but by whether the means used to enact the legislation were just.

Here are some starting points for reform, many of them endorsed by Hackney and the North Carolina Coalition for Lobbying and Government Reform (of which I am a member):

- Ban special provisions in the state budget, "floating" committee members that help ram bills through deliberative committees, and "blank" bills used to circumvent filing deadlines and hide legislative intent.

- Truly do the public's business in public. All committee votes should be recorded and posted on the Internet.

- Take seriously the right of all elected legislators to represent their constituents in legislative debate. That means the presiding officer must recognize any member for a legitimate motion or point of order.

- Ensure robust political competition, which may not be in the best interest of incumbents but is very much in the best interest of North Carolina voters. That at least means a limit of four years on the terms of House speakers and Senate presidents pro tem (though I would go further to limit total service to six years each in the House and Senate).

Robust political competition also means redistricting reform, which would set neutral rules for drawing political maps and entrust the task to an independent commission.

And it means applying the same campaign-finance rules to political-party caucuses, controlled by legislative leaders, as are applied to individuals.

First, the political class in Raleigh was obviously balking.

Now it is talking.

Let's see some walking. *CJ*

Hood is president of the John Locke Foundation.



John Hood

Editorial Briefs

Very, very big corn

Despite the rhetoric about ethanol, it is not the economic and environmental solution to the United States' energy problems, *The Wall Street Journal* says.

The first problem is its inability to compete in the market. Federal and state subsidies for ethanol ran to about \$6 billion last year, equivalent to about half its wholesale market price. Ethanol gets a 51-cent a gallon domestic subsidy, and there's a 54-cent a gallon tariff applied at the border against imported ethanol.

While the subsidies and tariffs help corn farmers, it hurts most everyone else. The price of corn rose nearly 80 percent in 2006, forcing cattle, poultry, and hog farmers to adjust to suddenly exorbitant prices for feed corn. In Mexico, the price of corn tortillas, the dietary staple of the country's poorest families, has risen by about 30 percent in recent months, leading to widespread protests and price controls.

As for the environmental impact, the indications aren't any better. As an oxygenate, ethanol increases the level of nitrous oxides in the atmosphere and causes smog. Many scientists argue that ethanol energy inputs outweigh the output; even the most optimistic estimate says ethanol's net energy output is a marginal improvement of only 1.3-1. By comparison, energy outputs from gasoline exceed inputs by an estimated 10-1.

On the global-warming issue, ethanol barely makes a dent. Researchers also found that using ethanol to reduce greenhouse gases costs as much as 16 times the optimal abatement cost for removing a ton of carbon from the atmosphere.

Palm oil might be an eco-nightmare

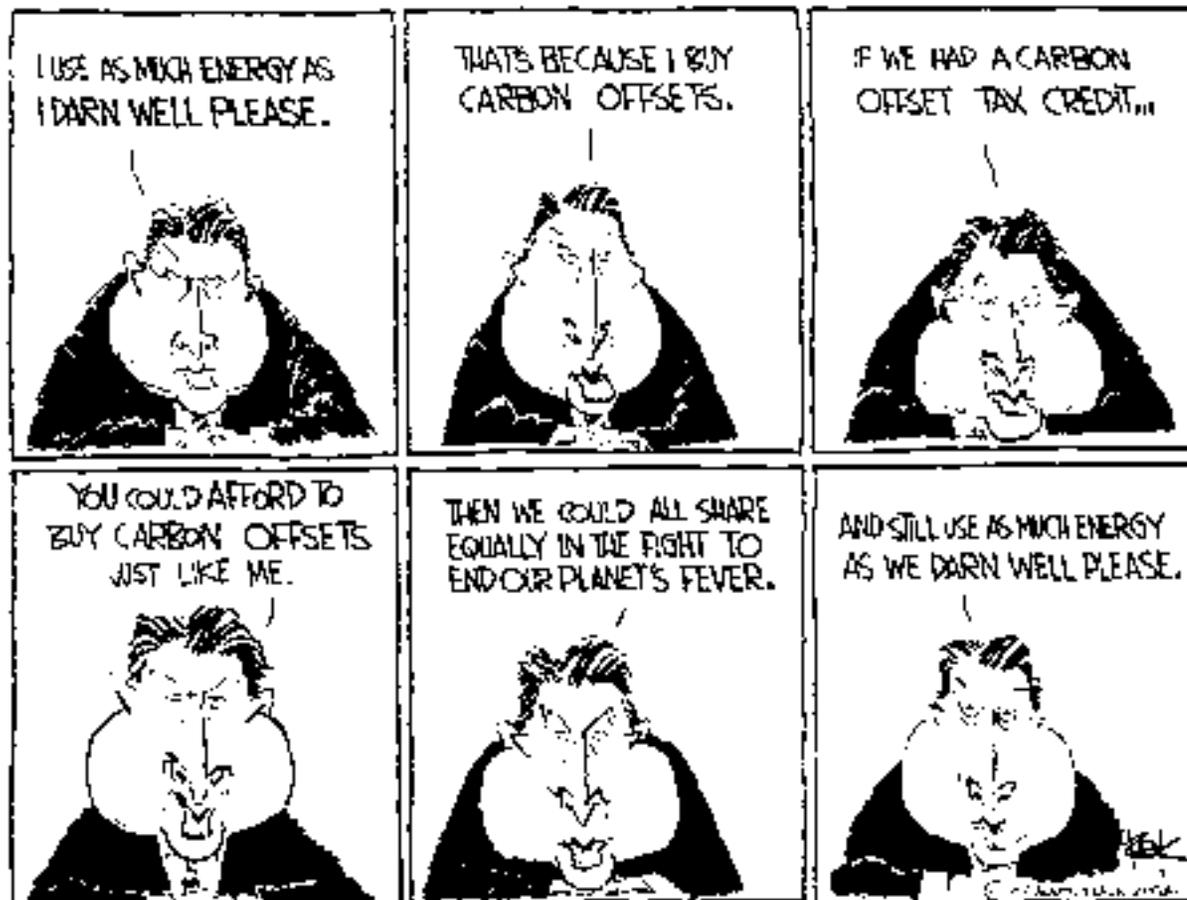
A few years ago, politicians and environmental groups in the Netherlands were thrilled by the early and rapid adoption of "sustainable energy," achieved in part by coaxing electrical plants to use biofuel, in particular, palm oil from Southeast Asia.

Spurred by government subsidies, energy companies became so enthusiastic that they designed generators that ran exclusively on palm oil. The versatile and cheap oil is used in about 10 percent of supermarket products, from chocolate to toothpaste, accounting for 21 percent of the global market for edible oils.

Palm oil produces the most energy of all vegetable oils for each unit of volume when burned; in much of Europe it is used as a substitute for diesel fuel, though in the Netherlands, the government has encouraged its use for electricity.

But last year, when scientists studied practices at palm plantations in Indonesia and Malaysia, this green fairy tale began to look more like an environmental nightmare, *The New York Times* says. Rising demand for palm oil in Europe brought about the clearing of huge tracts of Southeast Asian rainforest and the overuse of chemical fertilizer there.

A Dutch study estimated that the draining of peatland in Indonesia to make room for palm oil plantations releases 660 million ton of carbon a year into the atmosphere and that fires contributed 1.5 billion tons annually. The total is equivalent to 8 percent of all global emissions caused annually by burning fossil fuels. CJ



Is Economics Sabotaging Alternative Fuels?

In his State of the Union address, President Bush called for an increased use of alternative fuels by American drivers. But entrepreneurs haven't waited for this mandate. Across the United States, including North Carolina, alternative-fuel factories are springing up almost everyday.

Yet just when it looks like momentum is in favor of alternative fuels, economics, also known as the "dismal science," rears its head. Changes in two key prices have raised questions about the viability of ethanol and other new fuels.

One change has been in the price of oil itself. Today, oil prices are well below their highs of last summer, due, in part, to the calm 2006 hurricane season and, until recently, the relatively mild winter. Although experts disagree on where oil prices are headed, one fact is clear. The lower oil prices are, the more gasoline prices fall, and the less motivation drivers have to switch to gas alternatives.

The second change has occurred in the price of the major input to the primary gasoline alternative — ethanol. This input is corn, and corn prices have almost doubled in the last 15 months. Higher corn prices reduce the profitability of ethanol and threaten its long-run financial viability.

Why have corn prices risen so much? Is it part of some plot to sabotage ethanol and tie us even more to imported oil?

The answer is more direct and much less sinister. Anytime there's a large and sustained increase in the desired use of some product, the price of the product will rise. Actually, this price increase serves two useful purposes. It ensures the limited supply of the product will go to those who place the most value on it. Also, the higher price will motivate producers to eventually increase its supply, which will cause some decline in the price.

In the case of corn, its higher price has paralleled the heightened popularity of ethanol. Not only has this increased cost added to the expenses of

ethanol producers, but it will also affect food prices. Users of food products made directly from corn, such as tortillas, as well as food products using corn as an input, such as meat, will also feel the pinch of higher prices.

So is this the hand that economics deals us — the availability of more fuel alternatives in exchange for less affordable food? Can't our economic system give us both?

In the short term, the answer is closer to "no." Higher corn prices are likely here for a while as long as ethanol demand remains high. But over the longer term, our economy will adapt. More land will be put into corn production, and as the supply expands, the price will fall. However, this means less land will be available for other uses, such as the production of other crops or livestock or simply unused open space. After all, economics is fundamentally about tradeoffs.

The lesson here is that prices serve as signals. In our economic system, no central authority or "economic czar" dictates what and how much is to be produced. These decisions are made by millions of individual managers and companies. Higher prices are the signal to produce more, while lower prices say move on to something else.

Which brings us back to where we started — the price of oil. It's been the movement of oil prices from \$10 a barrel a decade ago to more than \$70 a barrel last summer that's been at the base of the charge to fuel alternatives. Now, oil prices are below their all-time high. What if they go lower? Will drivers still be interested in ethanol and other fuels? Or, will additional ethanol subsidies or gasoline taxes be needed to maintain the interest in fuel alternatives?

What will be the cost of energy independence? CJ

Michael L. Walden is a William Neal Reynolds distinguished professor at North Carolina State University and an adjunct scholar of the John Locke Foundation.



Michael
Walden

Will Lawmakers Tackle Tough Issues Awaiting Them?

The General Assembly has begun work for the 2007-2008 session.

Before legislators adjourn in late summer or early fall, a budget of more than \$20 billion will pass,

government will grow, and further infringe on our lives. There are long-term problems that legislators might address this session, or they might delay the tough decisions. One thing is certain, however, the problems

won't go away. The most critical are:

- Increased enrollment in schools. According to U.S. Census data, North Carolina will be the seventh most populous state by 2010. As the population increases in North Carolina, school enrollment will increase as well. According to a 1982 U.S. Supreme Court decision, North Carolina must provide every child who lives in the state a sound basic education. More children to educate means more teachers, more classrooms, more schools, more



Becki Gray

textbooks, more buses, and more administrators. Now is the time to seriously look at true education reform to ensure that every child receives the best education possible and every tax dollar devoted to education is spent on education. An increasing amount of money has been thrown at education with disappointing results, low test scores, and high dropout rates. Creative options need to be explored. Charter schools offer choices for parents and a break on school construction costs for taxpayers.

- Mental Health, Developmentally Disabled and Substance Abuse Services:

In 2001, the Assembly decided to move services for the mentally ill, developmentally disabled, and substance abusers out of state-run institutions and into communities across North Carolina. The institutions were closed before the community-based services were in place. The jails, hospitals, and long-term care facilities have become ill-equipped resting places for those in need of mental health care. At least \$500 million will be needed each year to provide services at cur-

rent levels, which are not meeting the needs. Clearly identifying needs and providing services need to be re-examined using business models that work.

- More demand for Medicaid. Medicaid covers almost 20 percent of N.C. residents. As N.C. baby boomers get older, expect Medicaid costs to continue to increase. In the past, legislators have expanded services and expanded the eligibility requirements, increasing the number of people receiving services and the services themselves. Proposals include extending some services to families earning more than \$60,000 a year. Medicaid was established to provide health care to low-income categories of truly needy citizens. Who receives Medicaid and what services are covered needs to be re-examined to include the truly needy.

- Under-funded retiree health plan. The Teachers and State Employees' health insurance plan is under-funded. Pursuant to a federal requirement by The Governmental Accounting Standards Board in Statement No. 45 (GASB 45), all state governments must dis-

close costs and obligations of health benefits of current and retired employees. In an actuarial study prepared for the N.C. State Health Plan, as of Dec. 31, 2005, expected health-care costs for retirees are \$23.9 billion. This figure is essentially what the state "owes" today for future retiree health-care costs. Only about \$139 million has been set aside for those costs, the remaining unfunded liability is \$23.8 billion. Either the fund must be replenished with taxpayers' money or benefits for retired government employees must be cut. The problem gets worse each day as more teachers and state employees retire and tap into the plan. The problem is exacerbated as government grows. Gov. Mike Easley proposes adding 5,800 government employees this year.

There are tough challenges before the legislature. Will lawmakers tackle the tough issues or simply smooth around the edges? *CJ*

Becki Gray is director of the State Policy Resource Center.

Kudos to CJ, Corruption Concerns and Edwards' Home

To the editor,

I wanted to cheer when I read your commentary (by Editor Richard Wagner) in the March edition of the *Carolina Journal*. "They" don't get it on Jones Street, and they truly don't get it on Main Street, either.

In this political climate, nobody seems to care, re-electing the "bad guys" out of laziness, ignorance, or ennui.

When we came to North Carolina in the early '50s, the N.C. Department of Transportation was even then a political plum, overtly misusing state money, the crony system feeding the corruption. Even state employees admit the department is rotten through and through.

The miasma of corruption has spread through the state, being the cause, most likely, of such weak interest in state politics with the exception being the elected officials who benefit the most.

The DOT obtains 99 percent of its highway funds from drivers' taxes, the money to be used for building roads. Yet North Carolina is ranked 42nd in condition of urban interstates, 44th in rural interstates, and 45th in rural primary or farm to market roads. Gov.

Easley, are you listening? Even Mississippi and Alabama are ranked higher in the quality and safety of their roads, and South Carolina is ranked third, and Georgia is fourth.

This is a heart-felt thank you for exposing the rot in our state government. I pray you will next direct your attention to the sorry state of the N.C. Department of Transportation, as it looks as if Speaker Black and his ilk are finally going to "get theirs."

I did the research on this for a letter to the editor for the *Charlotte Observer*. Naturally, they did not print it.

Patricia S. Broderick
Mooreville, N.C.

To the editor,

As long as the Democrats control the jobs in North Carolina from the local ABC stores to the Board of Elections and the judges, people will continue to vote them in for job security regardless of the illegalities of their projects. Term limits and a real "part time" legislature is the only solution to corrupt government.

Joyce King
Ruskin, FL

To the editor,

Democratic presidential candidate John Edwards, who has chosen solidar-

ity with the poor as a centerpiece of his campaign, was recently quoted as saying, "I think that Jesus would be disappointed in our ignoring the plight of those around us who are suffering, and our focus on our own selfish short-term needs. I think he would be appalled, actually."

In glaring conflict with those noble comments, it is interesting to note that Edwards recently completed a new 28,000-square-foot mega-mansion in North Carolina and also owns a lavish oceanfront retreat on the North Carolina coast.

It is a safe bet that the only poor people who ever set foot on either of Edwards' opulent estates are maids, butlers, and gardeners.

John Eidson
Marietta, GA

To the editor,

It is interesting to see that [*Carolina Journal*] is the first to take the aerial photo of the new Edwards home near Chapel Hill. I was photographing him [recently] in New York and the press corps and audience of young Democrats were perplexed that he omitted cancer research and funding to help Americans and others to fight this health issue.

Although he was wearing a "LiveStrong" armband, he lost the bully pulpit opportunity rather than give a

canned liberal New York speech.

As one reporter was heard to say, "How does a country lawyer from a 28,000-square-foot house know about the problems in New York City?" And as the pitch showed, his first event planned after he wins the presidential election is to tour the world for three months to fund primary education and medical care for the world's underprivileged children.

This one might play in the big Liberal Apple but not in the coal mining communities of West Virginia and Kentucky. This review sees no steak and the speech had no sizzle.

Lance Armstrong is still looking for a candidate to team up with, but so far John Edwards has missed the opportunity of a lifetime to really do some good for the country as well as his campaign.

Maybe it is a forest for the trees problem as your photo demonstrates.

Michael Koseruba
Florence, KY

To the editor,

Richard Wagner's article on corruption in North Carolina [*March Carolina Journal*] is excellent and deserves wider publication. This subject needs more public focus!

Will Ferrell
Kernersville, N.C.

'National Average' State Worker Pay Plan Gains Support (a CJ parody)

By MICHELLE BEASLEY
State Government Correspondent

RALEIGH
Wake County legislators are pushing a plan to raise state employee pay to the national average for state government workers. The plan has a current annual price tag of \$500 million.

Raising public school teacher pay to the national average, first championed by Gov. Jim Hunt 12 years ago, has become a popular policy goal for state politicians. The goal is also very popular with teachers.

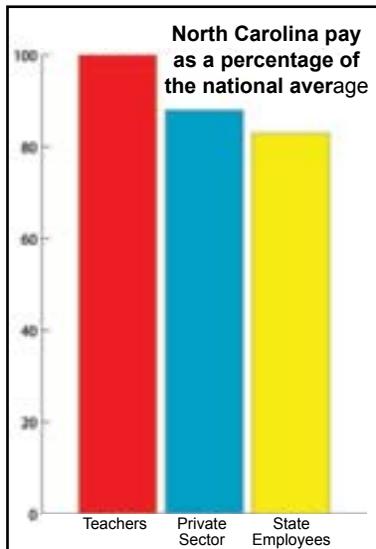
"If raising teacher pay makes for better teachers, raising all state employee pay should produce the same results," Rep. Dan Blue told *Carolina Journal*.

The plan is targeted to the 70,000 state government workers not involved in public education. Data collected by the federal government's Bureau of Labor Statistics shows that in 2004 the national average pay for state employ-

ees was \$42,981, while North Carolina workers averaged \$35,576, which computes to 83 percent of the national average.

A report issued by the General Assembly's Fiscal Research Division put the 2004 price tag at precisely \$481,013,990. Analysts noted that national averages are a moving target and that budget writers should count on a price tag of at least \$500 million.

Gov. Mike Easley said he would oppose the plan. "Everyone knows that teachers are special. We cannot afford to take other state employees to the national average," he said. Earlier, Easley's budget proposed raises of 5 percent for teachers and 2.5 percent for state employees.



Dan Gerlach, Easley's budget advisor, offered a different perspective. He told *CJ* that cost-of-living differences should be taken into account when comparing pay to the national average. He noted that for 2004 North Carolina's \$3.1 million private-sector workers averaged \$34,632, or 88 percent of the national average for private-sector workers.

He said that Easley sometimes isn't very good with mathematical concepts. "I told the governor that this national average teacher pay thing might backfire. I warned him that other state workers would eventually figure it out and demand the same."

Senate leader Marc Basnight said he was skeptical of the plan but would agree to a two-year pilot project involving a small division of employees. "I propose that we try it with the workers in the Department of Transportation's Ferry Division. Lots of those folks are my friends. I will feel more comfortable if we try it on them first," he said.

Basnight said he thinks there might be a link between pay and performance. "If we paid Ferry Division workers more, maybe they won't do crazy things like illegally dredging channels in sensitive marine habitats, or running boats for legislative booze cruises," he said.

State Employees Association of N.C. Executive Director Dana Cope said his members were "cautiously excited" about the plan. "We just hope they don't cut benefits by \$500 million to pay for it," he said. "Many of our members are already making plans as to how they can spend their extra \$7,000!" he said. *CJ*



Carolina Journal Reader Survey



The *Carolina Journal* staff would like your help in evaluating some of our programs and services. Your responses to this brief survey will help *CJ* editors and reporters improve the newspaper's design, organization, and coverage of state and local issues in North Carolina. Please help us by filling out the questionnaire and mailing the completed survey to the address below. We look forward to hearing from you.

- As you know, *Carolina Journal* is a monthly newspaper covering state and local government, politics, education, and other issues. How often do you read the print edition of *Carolina Journal*?
 Frequently
 Sometimes
 Rarely
- How many other individuals – in your family or among your friends and acquaintances – also read the copy of *Carolina Journal* you receive?
 None One Two Three Four or more
- Please rank the regular sections of *Carolina Journal* according to how often you read them, from 1 (most often) to 10 (least often):

<input type="checkbox"/> Cover stories	<input type="checkbox"/> Higher education
<input type="checkbox"/> State government	<input type="checkbox"/> Local government
<input type="checkbox"/> Washington page	<input type="checkbox"/> Learning Curve (Books & the Arts)
<input type="checkbox"/> In-depth interviews	<input type="checkbox"/> Editorials and columns
<input type="checkbox"/> K-12 education	<input type="checkbox"/> Parting Shot (back-page parody)
- What changes, if any, would you like to see in *Carolina Journal's* print edition?
 Reduce pages devoted to the existing sections listed in Question 3, to free up space for more stories on health care, transportation, and the environment. If so, which existing *CJ* section(s) should be reduced in length?
 Add four more pages to the *CJ* print edition to allow for more coverage of health care, transportation, and the environment.
 Publish the *CJ* print edition more than the current 12 times a year.
 Publish it less than the current 12 times a year.
 Put all *CJ* articles on the Internet so readers don't need a print edition.
 Other:
- Carolina Journal Online* is a daily Web site of news headlines, exclusive reports, and editorials at *CarolinaJournal.com*. How often do you visit this web site?
 Frequently
 Sometimes
 Rarely
 I have never visited *CarolinaJournal.com* (please skip to question 8)
- Please rank the regular features of *Carolina Journal Online* according to how often you read them, from 1 (most often) to 6 (least often):

<input type="checkbox"/> <i>CJ</i> Exclusive News Stories	<input type="checkbox"/> Newspaper Editorials/Columns
<input type="checkbox"/> John Hood's Daily Journal	<input type="checkbox"/> Media Mangle columns
<input type="checkbox"/> News Headlines	<input type="checkbox"/> <i>CJ</i> Print Editions Online
- What changes, if any, would you like to see *Carolina Journal Online*?
 Reduce the length of news summaries to allow for more of them.
 Add a regular column on TV and radio media in North Carolina.

- Add a regular column on online media in North Carolina.
 Replace "John Hood's Daily Journal" with a rotating panel of columnists.
 Other:
- "*Carolina Journal Radio*" is a weekly hour-long news and interview program broadcast on radio stations across North Carolina, distributed on compact disc, and podcast at *CarolinaJournal.com*. How often do you listen to the show?
 Frequently
 Sometimes
 Rarely
 I have never heard "Carolina Journal Radio"
 - Please rank the following sources of information about state politics and policy issues in North Carolina according to how much you rely on them, from 1 (relied on the most) to 8 (relied on the least).

<input type="checkbox"/> Local newspapers	<input type="checkbox"/> Commercial television
<input type="checkbox"/> Commercial radio	<input type="checkbox"/> Public television
<input type="checkbox"/> Public radio	<input type="checkbox"/> Web sites and blogs
<input type="checkbox"/> <i>Carolina Journal</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> Other public policy organizations
 - Which category best describes you as a *Carolina Journal* reader?
 Elected or appointed public official Work in government
 Lobbyist or trade association Work in private business
 Work in public-policy nonprofit Work in news media
 Work in political campaigns/parties Interested citizen
 - What is your telephone area code? _____
 - For analytical purposes, we need some additional information about you. This information will be kept strictly confidential.
 a. Please choose your age range:
 18-34 35-44 45-54 55-64 65+
 b. Please choose your income range:
 Under \$25,000 \$25,000-\$49,999 \$50,000-\$74,999
 \$75,000-\$99,999 \$100,000+
 - Please choose the political philosophy that best describes you. Give us your own label if you prefer.
 Liberal Conservative Libertarian
 Populist Moderate Other:

Thank you for your participation in this survey. If you would like to update your contact information, please fill in the form below. Again, your survey responses will be kept strictly confidential.

NAME _____
 ADDRESS _____
 CITY/ZIP _____
 EMAIL _____ PHONE _____
 EMPLOYER _____

MAIL TO: Carolina Journal Reader Survey, 200 W. Morgan St., Raleigh, NC 27601