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Spending Prompts Fears of Shortfall in '07

By MITCH KOKAI
Associate Editor

RALEIGH

Blessed with a \$2.4 billion budget surplus this year, N.C. lawmakers increased government spending by nearly 10 percent over last year and might have set the table for a budget shortfall as early as 2007.

That's the fear of critics who voted against the new \$18.9 billion budget in the House and Senate. "The main red flag is the overall increase in spending and using nonrecurring money to fund recurring expenses," said Rep. Paul Stam, R-Wake. "That is like using your grandmother's inheritance to buy groceries."

Lawmakers use the words "nonrecurring funds" to describe money that's available for just one budget year. The budget that took effect July 1 uses \$407 million of the onetime funds to pay for recurring, or ongoing, state expenses. That includes state employee salaries.

The budget also increases annual state government spending by about



Members of the State House listen as their colleagues debate bills in the closing days of the 2006 legislative session. (CJ Photo by Don Carrington)

\$1.6 billion. That's an increase of 9.7 percent.

"It is irresponsible to increase spending for state government by 10 percent when inflation is only 2 to 3 percent," Senate Minority Leader Phil

Berger, R-Rockingham, said in a prepared statement. "The unnecessary and misguided spending increases will result in future deficits and tax increases."

Response to the surplus also concerns John Locke Foundation fiscal

policy analyst Joseph Coletti. "The state collected more money than it expected coming into the year," Coletti said. "So the economy was doing well. But when you have that, you also have a responsibility to ensure that you don't overspend going into the future. With an \$18.9 billion budget, they overspent going into the future."

Democratic budget writers disagree. "The budget gives back to the people," said Sen. Walter Dalton, D-Rutherford. "I think it's a very good budget, and one that invests for the future. Overall, I think it's one of the best budgets I've seen since I've been here."

"We put \$323 million into the 'rainy day' [reserve] fund, another \$20 million for a contingency fund," Dalton said. "The rainy-day fund is the healthiest it's been in many, many years. We were able to give state employees and teachers a salary raise this year, and I think that will provide benefits for us in the

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Attempts to Address Lobbying Reform Called 'Bizarre'

By MITCH KOKAI
Associate Editor

RALEIGH

As state lawmakers debated a series of ethics, campaign finance, and lobbying reform bills this summer, some lawmakers worried that the cure might be worse than the problem.

"Every time they do something on the sly — and very quickly — we should be concerned," said Rep. Louis

Pate, R-Wayne, referring to the process legislative leaders used to approve reform bills. "It's been very bizarre to see how things have merged and separated themselves out."

Scandals linked to N.C. House Speaker Jim Black prompted the emphasis on reform. Black faced no criminal charges as the legislative session started in May, but state and federal investigators had spent recent months looking into issues surrounding Black's office.

Among them were the creation of a state lottery, the work of Black's unpaid political director as a lobbyist, the creation of state-funded jobs for Black's political allies, and campaign finance issues linked to optometrists and the video poker industry.

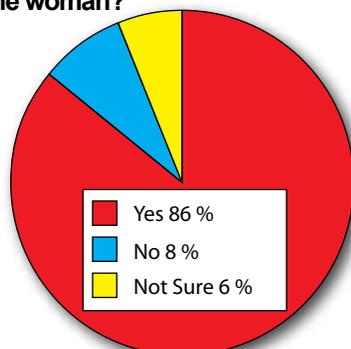
Black asked House colleagues to study issues surrounding ethics, lobbying, and campaign finance rules. The speaker offered his own recommendations for reform.

The House Select Committee on Ethics and Governmental Reform responded with a series of bills. Nine bills filed on May 9 targeted topics such as blank campaign checks, limits on uses of campaign funds, and training for campaign treasurers.

"I think it's very important," said Rep. Hugh Holliman, D-Davidson.

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Should the N.C. Constitution define marriage as between one man and one woman?



John William Pope Civitas Institute Poll, July 2006

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future. We need to get more people going into education, so we tried to give some incentives there."

Budget writers could have supported a spending increase within more reasonable limits, Stam said. "If this budget had increased by the sum of population increases plus inflation, it would have increased by about 5.65 percent. The surplus could have been used to straighten out future structural deficits."

Berger questions the use of the term "surplus." He credits the \$2.4 billion to a series of tax and fee increases adopted since 2001. Those increases generated an "excess collection of taxes." Democrats decided 92 percent of those excess taxes should support government programs, while just 8 percent returned to taxpayers, Berger said.

"Republicans introduced bills to return this 'surplus' to the people in the form of significant tax cuts or a tax rebate," he said. "Democrats have refused to consider those bills."

The Democratic majority in the House and Senate squandered the surplus instead, Berger said. "It perpetuates a structural deficit," he said. "Recurring expenses exceed recurring revenues. This year, that deficit is more than \$400 million. The General Assembly's Fiscal Staff estimates that it will grow to \$1 billion next year."

Increased spending in the new budget covers items such as pay increases for teachers and other state workers. Teachers will reap the largest increase: 8 percent. Most rank-and-file state employees will get their largest pay increases in years: 5.5 percent.

"What we've tried to do with this budget is look after, first of all, our people," said Rep. Jim Crawford, D-Granville, a chief House budget writer. "They've been ignored for several years. Our educators, our teachers, have a fine raise. Our state employees have a good raise. We're excited that they were our first priority."

The budget also includes more than \$200 million for construction projects and \$160 million to cover the costs of 27,000 new students in North Carolina schools.

Education retains the largest piece of the state budget pie. Education programs will get an extra \$943 million in the next year. That includes the salary increases.

"We've taken care of a lot of capital areas, and we've taken care of a tremendous number of needs throughout state government," Crawford said. "When you don't fund items for four or five years, a surplus doesn't go very far. But we've tried to patch the holes that are most needed, and I think you'll find that this is a lean and mean budget."

The budget addresses critical issues, Dalton said. "We invested in mental



Senate Majority Leader Tony Rand, D-Cumberland, (left) discusses strategy with his brother Walter (center) and Sen. Clark Jenkins, D-Edgecombe (right). (CJ Photo by Don Carrington)

health," he said. "Our mental health system has had some problems over the past few years. So we were able to address community-based services."

Lawmakers also tackled justice and public safety needs, Dalton said. "We added 92 assistant district attorneys and 16 district judges to help with domestic-violence cases, methamphetamine cases."

The General Assembly's chief budget writers say they disagree that this year's use of nonrecurring money will cause long-term problems. They've addressed the issue in two ways.

First, the budget sets aside about \$560 million in reserve funds. Lawmakers could tap the reserve next year if they face a budget cap. Second, budget writers say they used conservative growth projections. If the state's economy grows faster than projections, the extra tax revenue would cover the gap.

Rep. Nelson Dollar, R-Wake, questioned those assumptions during the House's debate on the final budget

deal. He asked Crawford what would happen if the state faces an economic downturn.

"If the economy doesn't hold, there's nothing we can do," Crawford said.

This year's spending increase raises red flags, Coletti said. "When you increase spending as much as they did, you make it difficult not to turn around and increase taxes when the economy starts to slow down," he said.

Budget negotiators also chipped away at some worthwhile ideas for spending reserves, Coletti said. "The governor and each chamber started off with a reserve for utility and fuel costs for a lot of the agencies," he said. "That makes sense, given that gas prices have increased so much. Natural-gas prices are expected to go up. Oil prices haven't fallen. But the final budget takes away just about all of that reserve."

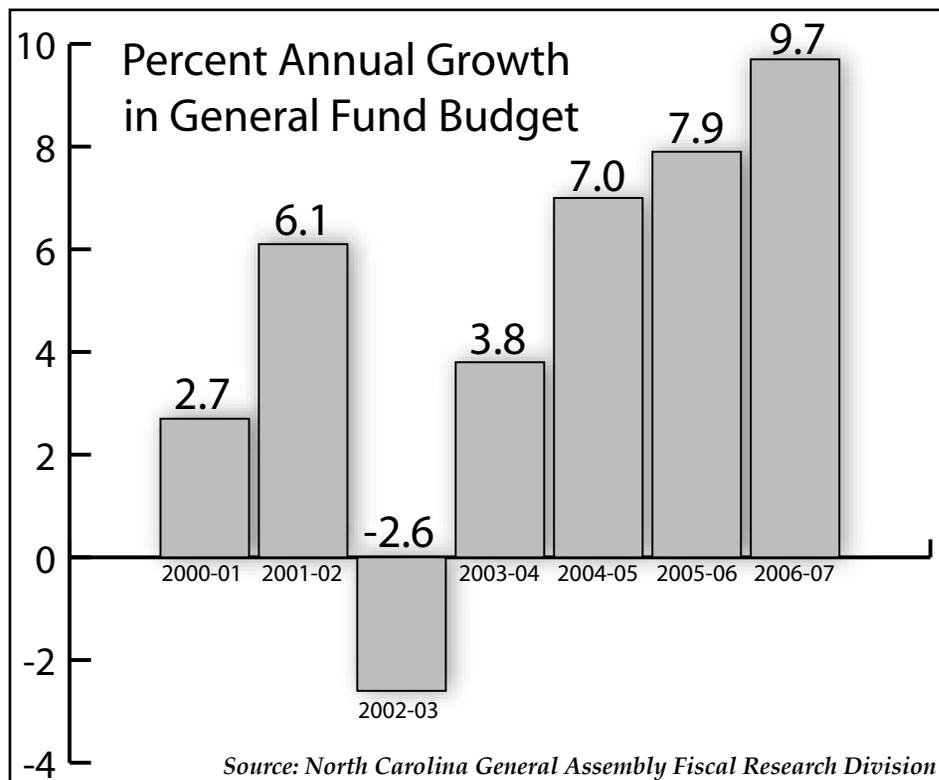
Democrats overwhelmingly supported the new budget, with help from some Republicans in both the House and Senate. In their final vote July 6, senators voted, 31-15, to approve the plan known as the budget conference report. Twenty-seven Democrats and four Republicans voted for the plan. Every "no" vote came from a Republican.

The House voted, 83-31, to approve the conference report. Like their counterparts in the Senate, every Democrat who voted cast a "yes" vote. Republicans voted, 31-22, against the plan.

Gov. Mike Easley signed the budget bill in a public ceremony July 10. The governor praised the bill, especially noting the absence of some "pork-barrel" projects.

The new budget includes two highly publicized tax cuts. Most consumers will see the sales tax rate dip

Please see "Spending", Page 3



Process confuses lawmakers

Attempts to Address Lobbying Reform Called 'Bizarre'

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"I think the people of North Carolina want us to put these ethics standards into play and expect us to live by them. And I think we will."

As those bills moved through the legislative process, even the most interested observers had a hard time following the debate.

"This is definitely the sort of sausage-making portion of democracy," said Bob Phillips, director of N.C. Common Cause and one of the leading voices in the N.C. Coalition for Lobbying Reform. "It's not Civics 101, where everything is rolled out at the same time for everyone to thoughtfully consider and debate."

That makes it difficult for the public as well as the participants to know what's going on. "It's very hard to follow," Phillips added. "It's very confusing. Committees in each chamber are looking at some of the same things and combining bills."

House bills numbered from H.B. 1843 through H.B. 1851 all dealt with proposed reforms. Each bill started its journey through the legislative process in the House's Judiciary I committee.

But the bills faced various twists and turns in the House and Senate. "It's confusing to start with because many of the things in the bills just don't make any sense," said Sen. Tom Apodaca, R-Henderson. "It's overreaction to some problems that have been had. And we all agree there are some problems. We ought to fix those problems. But this has gone way overboard. What we all fear — regardless of our party — are the unintended consequences."

Across the political aisle, Sen. David Weinstein, D-Robeson, offered a different take. "You don't sneak too much by people, if they read their bills."

But Weinstein worries about the volume of proposed reforms. "We don't need all these rules and regulations

"This is definitely the sort of sausage-making portion of democracy. It's not Civics 101, where everything is rolled out at the same time for everyone to thoughtfully consider and debate."

**Bob Phillips
Director
N.C. Common Cause**

because we don't understand them," he said. "I think we're being punished for the transgressions of one or two people."

H.B. 1847 offers an example of the winding road legislation can take. The original bill was designed to improve training for campaign treasurers. The House approved the measure with a 105-9 vote May 30. Rather than address H.B. 1847 in its original form, Senate

leaders stripped the treasurer training language.

Senators then used H.B. 1847 as the vehicle for a different reform bill targeting so-called 527 political groups. The new bill placed more restrictions on those groups in election campaigns. A House bill on the same topic sat untouched in committee. But the Senate's

procedural maneuver allowed House supporters to avoid a committee vote and possible amendments.

Critics noted their concerns during a House debate. They urged colleagues to reject a "concurrency" vote that would accept the Senate's changes.

"I regret that this bill came over the way it did," said Rep. John Blust, R-Guilford. "It is prohibited by our rules, if you look at the rules carefully. By concurring today, we are letting the Senate do that in a way that doesn't permit any member of this body to try to influence the content of that bill. So we are powerless at this point if we concur."

House members ignored Blust's argument and voted 87-27 to approve the new restrictions. As lawmakers waded through reform measures, Gov. Mike Easley warned them against sleight of hand. "Don't do anything that just tries to pull the wool over people's eyes," Easley said during a July 13 news conference. "They'll pick it up, and they'll just have less confidence in state government than they do now."

Some lawmakers worried about end results. GOP leaders sent a news release July 20 titled, "Senate misses opportunity for meaningful ethics reform." *CJ*

Spending Prompts Fears of a Shortfall in 2007 State Budget

Continued from Page 2

from 7 percent to 6.75 percent Dec. 1. For instance, that would save a consumer 25 cents for a \$100 purchase.

The tax rate for families in the state's highest income-tax bracket will fall from 8.25 percent to 8 percent Jan. 1. Those changes shave about \$160 million off the budget.

Both cuts represent partial rollbacks of sales and income-tax increases adopted in 2001. At that time, lawmakers called those tax increases temporary. Both tax increases were scheduled to disappear in 2003, but legislators extended the increases in 2003 and 2005.

"Democrats failed to keep repeated promises to finally end sales and income tax hikes enacted in 2001," Berger said. "If they will not remove temporary taxes when there is a \$2.4 billion surplus, will those taxes ever end?"

Budget writers want to know how their critics would have cut the budget.

"Those people who say we should have done more tax relief, where would they have not spent?" Dalton asked. "Would they have not done the mental health reform that we did? Would they have not put the district attorneys in the courtrooms and the judges behind the desks? Would they have not done the salary increases? Would they have not invested in education as we did? What

"The budget continues to spend and accrue hundreds of millions of dollars in ineffectual and discriminatory corporate giveaways."

Rep. Paul Stam, R-Wake

would they have done differently?"

Dalton also points to other tax benefits. "There's a tax credit for small business owners that provide health insurance for their employees."

A budget provision allows the state to borrow \$672 million through 2010 for a number of construction projects. They include an expansion of the N.C. Museum of Art in Raleigh, a new public health laboratory, Central Prison hospital, and replacements for mental hospitals in Goldsboro and Morganton.

Berger criticized that budget provision, and he said the conference report "supplants education funding with lottery proceeds and pushes at least \$160 million in unfunded mandates to local governments."

Budget writers conducted more

open-door meetings than in past years, and, they said, they worked to keep controversial nonspending items out of the conference report. "If there's any policy in this budget, it slipped by, because we tried to pull out all policy," Crawford said. "We tried to make this strictly a budget of dollars and cents."

Despite the changes, Berger referred to the budget process as a "closed-door, invitation-only affair."

"The budget process must be reformed," he said. "It is critical that we take a comprehensive look at state spending, establish priorities, eliminate ineffective and redundant programs, and fund successful programs performing the core government functions including education, road construction, and public safety."

Criticism of the budget extends beyond the size of the spending increase. The budget includes \$27.4 million to cap counties' Medicaid payments. That money does not provide meaningful relief, Stam said.

"The House version used recurring money to cap county Medicaid payments," he said. "But the conference report uses onetime, nonrecurring money for a onetime, one-year cap."

Stam also criticized increased spending on programs that offer targeted tax incentives to individual businesses. "The budget continues to spend and accrue hundreds of millions of dollars in

ineffectual and discriminatory corporate giveaways," he said. "This budget even adds another \$10 million in giveaways for a new grant program."

The budget makes no long-term commitment to cap the state's gasoline tax, Stam said. "The budget leaves in place the additional tax that was added January 1," he said. "And the cap expires June 30, 2007. The only effect of the provision is to prevent announcement of an increase next October — right before the elections."

The budget also ignores a large-scale, long-term structural problem, Stam said. "Fiscal staff has estimated that the unfunded liability for retired state employees' health insurance premiums is about \$13.5 billion," he said. "To amortize this over 30 years would cost about \$1.5 billion per year. This budget takes no steps to resolve this structural problem."

This year's surplus contrasts sharply with the state budget debates earlier in the decade, when North Carolina's tax collections were running in the red. Critics such as Berger said they think the latest budget sets the stage for another round of budget problems.

"Without structural reform to the budget process and our tax code, without discipline in spending, and with continued one-party rule, North Carolina's people will continue to be stuck with a repeat of the recent cycles of boom or bust budgets," Berger said. *CJ*

*Ownership still unclear***SAS Officials Revealed to Have Role in Southport Marina Deal**

By DON CARRINGTON
Executive Editor

RALEIGH

Officials of the Cary-based software company SAS have acquired a role in operating the state-owned Southport Marina, even though SAS's involvement was not publicly mentioned in January when Gov. Mike Easley coaxed a new lease through the approval process.

After repeated requests by *Carolina Journal*, SAS officials refused to disclose details on the new ownership of Southport Marina Inc., the company that now has control of the property until 2040.

The Town of Southport sold the 45-acre site on the Cape Fear River to the state in 1963. The property, under control of the State Ports Authority, is leased to SMI to operate for a profit. Unhappy with the previous owners of Southport Marina Inc., state officials negotiated a tentative new lease contingent on the company being sold to new owners, but the owners have never been clearly identified. The state never put the contract for operation of the marina out for bids.

Under the terms of the lease, the state will receive \$160,000 per year with a 3 percent increase per year after that. SMI must spend at least \$2.5 million on improvements and be responsible for all maintenance, repairs, and construction of new buildings. Jerry Miller, a member of a group of Southport citizens opposed to the new lease, said that the current annual revenue stream from slip rentals and other services is estimated to be between \$1 million and \$1.5 million, but *CJ* has been unable to confirm those numbers from another source.

On Jan. 10 the Council of State approved a new lease contingent on the sale of SMI to new owners. The council, made up of the governor and the other nine independently elected executive branch officials, is required to approve most state real-estate transactions. The private sale of the company took place in February.

From July 2005 through February 2006, several news reports said Wilmington real estate developer Charles "Nick" Garrett and his two partners, Raleigh-area developers Julian "Bubba" Rawl and Tim Smith, were in control of the lease.

"We all recognize that the previous lease was a bad one, but all-new people have come in. These are different people you're dealing with, though the company name is the same," said Easley, as reported by the *Wilmington Star-News* the day after the lease deal was approved. But Easley has never made it clear who all the owners are.

A *CJ* story in March suggested Easley might have had a conflict of interest in the lease approval process by not disclosing his personal business relation-



Ownership of Southport Marina (shown above) remains unknown due to the ability of limited liability corporations (LLCs) to hide their actual owners. All that is clear about the marina is that SAS officials had a role in the lease deal. (CJ Photo by Don Carrington)

ship with Garrett at the time the lease was approved. Five months after Easley became governor, Garrett's construction company began a substantial remodeling of Easley's Southport home.

Garrett becomes issue

Since that story was published, through various spokespersons, Easley has said that Garrett is not one of the new owners, but Garrett's name continued to be associated with the marina after the council approved the lease.

A Jan. 11 letter from Assistant Attorney General Dennis Meyers, who represents the N. C. Ports Authority, transmitted the new lease to Garrett. "As I am sure you are aware, the Council of State approved the lease between the State Ports Authority and Southport Marina Inc. on Tuesday, January 10. However, the approval of the lease was made contingent upon the completion of the transaction whereby ownership of the corporation is transferred to you and your associates," the letter said.

A Feb. 17 letter from SMI lawyer Gary Joyner to Meyers confirmed that the ownership change of SMI had been completed. Rawl, Smith, and Garrett were noted at the bottom as receiving copies of that letter.

A Feb. 28 letter from SMI to boat-

slip owners listed Garrett as one of the new owners. On June 2, Garrett told the *Wilmington Star-News* that he would be the general contractor of a new restaurant at the marina.

Even though Garrett's role in the project remains unclear, he does have a significant financial relationship with Rawl and Smith. On Oct. 6, 2005, doing business as Jamesborough Properties LLC, Garrett granted Rawl and Smith a deed of trust secured by a small housing project in Wilmington named Jamesborough Court Condominiums. The amount of the loan to Garrett was

\$2.9 million.

In an affidavit signed by Garrett on Feb. 22, 2006, and filed in conjunction with a divorce property settlement case, Garrett listed his personal debts, which included two unsecured loans totaling another \$1.05 million plus interest to Rawl that Garrett received in March 2005. Garrett said the money was needed to buy out his wife's interest in his develop-

ment company, NGDI. He also said the money "must be repaid in the next year."

The Committee to Save the Southport Marina filed a complaint with the State Board of Ethics about Easley's role in the new lease. The complaint claimed Easley should not have participated in the lease decision since Garrett had remodeled Easley's home. Easley's office

said he did not actually vote on the lease, but merely presided over the meeting, and that Garrett was not involved in the marina. The board dismissed the complaint at a June 7 meeting.

SAS Connections

Public records filed with the N.C. secretary of state after the lease was approved show that SAS Chief Financial Officer Donald R. Parker and Chief Legal Counsel John Boswell have roles in two companies involved in the marina operation. Parker, the SAS CFO, along with Rawl and Smith, appeared as member managers in the first annual report for Southport Acquisitions LLC, filed with the N.C. Secretary of State's Office Feb. 22.

The principal mailing address for the LLC, or limited liability corporation, is SAS Campus Drive in Cary, the corporate headquarters of the software company.

On May 25, Boswell formed another company, S. Port Marina LLC. On June 6, he formed Southport Marina Operations LLC.

Both Boswell and Parker listed their address as SAS Campus Drive in Cary. Reached at his SAS offices, Parker said that SAS as a company was not involved in the Southport Marina, but he refused to confirm the names of the investors in SMI.

In July, Rawl said that he, Smith, and SAS executives James Goodnight and John Sall currently own the company, but he would not provide documents supporting his statement. He also said Garrett was not one of the owners but acknowledged it was Garrett that got him and the others involved. He said he did not know why Garrett had allowed himself to be listed as an owner in several news stories.

Easley Thwarts Berry Request

Easley, saying proper procedure had not been followed, thwarted Labor Commissioner Cherie Berry's attempt in a Council of State meeting July 11 to identify the owners of SMI.

When Berry tried to raise the issue at the meeting, Easley would not allow it. He told Berry that she "didn't allow enough time" for her request to be put on the agenda, though she said she had made the request five days before the meeting.

Easley indicated that her request would be taken up at the next meeting Aug. 1.

Berry said she wanted the individuals involved in the marina deal identified because she said the public has a right to know. She also said full disclosure is necessary so state officials can avoid a conflict of interest when voting on real estate matters. *CJ*

"We all recognize that the previous lease was a bad one, but all-new people have come in. These are different people you're dealing with, though the company name is the same."

Gov. Mike Easley
In Jan. 10, 2006 statement

Blamed on miscommunication

'Gay Teenager' Seminar Was Held Despite School Promises

By PAUL CHESSER

Associate Editor

RALEIGH

A Department of Public Instruction official told a parent in 2004 that "homosexuality would not be a topic of instruction" at the Governor's School of North Carolina, yet despite that assurance, the onsite director at the Winston-Salem program allowed a seminar last year entitled "The New Gay Teenager."

W. David Mills, former section chief for the Exceptional Children Division, which oversees the six-week summer program for gifted students, told *Carolina Journal* in June that his promise not to hold the gay-teen seminar came in response to a parent whose child attended the 1997 Governor's School West.

The mother, whose son had embraced homosexuality during that time period, contacted division officials in 2004 over concerns about instruction and films that had been shown in 1997. She said her son saw the 1988 film "Torch Song Trilogy" while attending the Governor's School, which she said helped influence him favorably toward the lifestyle. The mother and DPI officials could not determine whether the school showed the R-rated movie or whether students viewed it elsewhere while in attendance.

The mother, who was granted anonymity for this article because of the sensitive nature of her relationship with her son, said a seminar in 1997 also promoted the gay lifestyle, although officials did not confirm that. She blamed the Governor's School for pushing him into the adoption of a homosexual identity.

"The school had exposed him to gay doctrine," the mother told *CJ* in an email message, "and encouraged him to



"Regrettably... 'The New Gay Teenager' was offered at the Governor's School West during the 2005 session without making the parents aware of the offering. I have expressed my concern to the parent, whom I know has lost confidence in my word."

W. David Mills
Former Section Chief
Exceptional Children Division
Governor's School

explore homosexuality and homosexual issues, without offering any alternatives to homosexuality or presenting the ex-gay perspective."

After meeting with the parent in August 2004, Mills said he told her that homosexuality would not be the subject of any seminars or classes at the Governor's School. He explained that the onsite director of the Governor's School West, Lucy Milner, denied hearing any such instruction from Mills or other DPI officials. Milner approved the "New Gay Teenager" seminar last year with only one week to go in the session.

"Regrettably... 'The New Gay Teenager' was offered at the Governor's School West during the 2005 session without making the parents aware of the offering," Mills told *CJ* in an email. "I have expressed my concern to the par-

ent, whom I know has lost confidence in my word."

The parent contacted Mills earlier this year after learning from a *CJ* article about the Burrows family, whose son attended the Governor's School and the "New Gay Teenager" seminar last year and returned home saying he was confused about sexual identity issues. The Burrowses demanded that sexuality not be included on the Governor's School agenda, and also consulted with the Alliance Defense Fund, a Christian law organization, about the legality of the "New Gay Teenager" seminar in light of the state's abstinence-only sex education laws.

The mother of the student who attended in 1997 said she was "livid" when she learned that homosexuality was addressed again, without warning

parents, as a topic last year.

"I was assured that this would stop," she said.

The parent said her son had returned home from the Governor's School in 1997 dramatically changed, both in physical appearance and in his behavior. As Christians, she said she and her husband were shocked that the school showed R-rated movies to students, which they had never permitted themselves.

"He went to the Governor's School and decided this is what he must be," she said. "He literally changed overnight."

"It did not cause him to think he was gay. It exacerbated his confused feelings. It is indoctrination when there's not balance."

The Governor's School began its 2006 sessions in late June with promises to notify parents in advance about optional seminars and films, giving them the opportunity to prevent their children from participating in programs they deem objectionable. The Web site for the school now has a section devoted to updating information as the six-week sessions progress. The Governor's School conducts two separate programs each year, at Salem College (West) and Meredith College in Raleigh (East). Apparently it is up to parents to contact Governor's School officials to register any disapproval of subject matter to be discussed.

"We are hoping that this parent's faith in the goodness of the Governor's School can be rebuilt by the measures we are attempting to put into place this summer," Mills told *CJ* in an email, before he left his position with DPI. "We will have a more thorough process for reviewing seminars before they are approved and a way for parents to be informed of the films and seminars before they are presented." *CJ*

Governor's School Makes Last-Minute R-Rated Movie Switch

By PAUL CHESSER

Associate Editor

RALEIGH

The Governor's School West, during the first week of this year's session at Salem College in Winston-Salem, decided not to show the sexually explicit and graphically violent film "American History X," which may have been in response to the threat of legal action from the Alliance Defense Fund.

The 1998 movie was scheduled to be shown at 6 p.m. June 22 as the first installment of the school's "Race and Film Series." According to the Internet Movie Database, the film is "Rated R for graphic brutal violence including rape, pervasive language, strong sexuality and nudity."

A CNN reviewer called it "one of

the most nauseatingly violent films I've ever seen."

The Governor's School is attended by some of the state's most intellectually gifted 15- to 17-year-olds.

After he discovered the planned showing, ADF lawyer J. Michael Johnson faxed a letter on the day it was scheduled to Special Deputy Attorney General Thomas Ziko, who handles legal matters for the Governor's School. Johnson warned "if the film is shown as planned, we intend to take appropriate legal action in response." Johnson's legal assistant Kathy Sanders told *Carolina Journal* the following day that Ziko left a message saying the film would not be shown.

ADF officials have squabbled in recent months with Ziko and with officials from the Department of Public In-

struction over seminars conducted at the Governor's School. ADF was drawn into the issue by James and Beverly Burrows, who complained about a seminar conducted in 2005 entitled "The New Gay Teenager," which their son attended. DPI oversees the taxpayer-funded program, which also conducts a six-week summer session simultaneously at Meredith College in Raleigh, through its Exceptional Children Division.

DPI spokeswoman Vanessa Jeter explained that "American History X," a story about neo-Nazi skinheads, was replaced by a 2002 Australian film "Rabbit-Proof Fence," which is rated PG.

"When a broader cross-section of faculty reviewed the selection," Jeter said, "they made a different choice."

Jeter said she wasn't told that the change was made in response to ADF's

threats of legal action.

Mrs. Burrows said her son told her that "American History X" was shown at the Governor's School West last year, but Jeter said she wasn't aware of that and couldn't comment any further on the reasons for the change.

A woman who answered the phone at the Governor's School on June 23 confirmed that "American History X" was not shown the previous day. Asked whether someone could answer questions about the change, she replied, "No sir, thank you very much," and hung up.

Probably because of the lateness of the decision, the switch to "Rabbit-Proof Fence" was not posted on the Governor's School Web site to advise parents. That film is rated PG for "emotional thematic material." *CJ*

NC Delegation Watch

Bioterrorism bill passes

The Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions on July 19 unanimously approved the Pandemic and All-Hazards Preparedness Act authored by NC Republican Sen. Richard Burr.

The bill reauthorizes the Public Health Security and Bioterrorism Preparedness and Response Act of 2002, which was signed into law following the terrorist attacks of 9/11 and expires at the end of September 2006.

The law improved the ability to detect bioterrorist attacks and to care for a greater number of patients in an emergency, Burr said.

"We have learned from Katrina and 9/11 that we must do more to improve our public health and medical response systems must respond faster," Burr said. "This legislation will enhance training and planning for health care providers to ensure emergency medical care is delivered more rapidly during a disaster."

The legislation identifies the Secretary of Health and Human Services as the lead federal official responsible for public health and medical response to emergencies including a flu pandemic.

Foxx backs offshore drilling

Rep. Virginia Foxx, R-N.C., took action in late June to change restrictive government policies that have stifled domestic energy production for years. She voted to pass the Deep Ocean Energy Resources Act, which, she said, will help America decrease its dependence on foreign energy sources by permitting the use of more energy sources from the Outer Continental Shelf.

"I cannot stand by and watch my constituents suffer the negative effects of a volatile world energy market when part of the solution to our energy crisis lies miles off our coasts," Foxx said.

"That is why I support the DOER Act, which re-examines energy production in the Outer Continental Shelf and opens it up to oil and natural-gas exploration."

Currently, coastal states have jurisdiction over the waters that extend three nautical miles from their coastline.

The DOER Act gives these states more control through complete authority to permit or restrict energy production up to 100 miles away from their shores. CJ

N.C.'s 11th District

Taylor vs. Shuler Race Draws National Notice

By PAUL CHESSER

Associate Editor

RALEIGH

U.S. Rep. Charles Taylor, R-N.C., has faced well-financed challengers and been considered vulnerable before in his eight previous House campaigns, but a confluence of events and a high-profile candidate might make 2006 especially challenging for him.

Why? Because unlike previous elections in which his Democrat opponents have been lesser-knowns who hailed from (relative) metropolises Asheville and Hendersonville, this year the party has recruited someone a lot like Taylor, from a small town in his sprawling, mountainous district. And this time the challenger also has star power: former University of Tennessee quarterback Heath Shuler.

"Heath is a different kind of Democrat," said his campaign's communications director, Andrew Whalen. "He's from the western part of the district (Bryson City in Swain County). In the past, Democrats have been hurt in the rural part of the district."

True enough, because even though strongly Democratic Buncombe County, which includes Asheville, contains about one-third of the district's voters, Brevard resident Taylor has been able to hold the seat since 1990. However, his average winning percentage has declined from a high of 60 percent in 1994 to 55 percent in 2004. That's his lowest election margin since he first won the seat in 1990, when he got 51 percent of the vote.

Whalen, and national Democrats, think Shuler's background and his conservative views on some significant issues make him one of their strongest competitors in the country against incumbent House Republicans. Few congressional districts, because of gerrymanders, are thought to be winnable targets that could help Democrats win back the House.

In the recent past, North Carolina has seemed to be devoid of such potential for either major political party to swing a seat back into their column. Eighth District Rep. Robin Hayes, R-N.C., has been thought to be vulnerable this decade, but Democrats have failed to mount strong enough challengers there. Meanwhile, Taylor has been considered a relatively safe incumbent.

No more, as national political handicappers rate the 11th District race as the most competitive in North Carolina. Even Charlie Cook, who publishes the widely respected *Cook Political Report*, in July moved the Taylor/Shuler race from his "Leaning Republican" column to a "toss-up."

Larry Sabato, director of the University of Virginia's Center for Politics, said a Democratic tailwind that is expected to last into fall could swoop



11th District Democratic challenger Heath Shuler



Republican 11th District incumbent Charles Taylor

Shuler to victory.

"Taylor has never faced an atmosphere quite as adverse to his party as 2006 presents," he wrote in his most recent update on the 11th District race.

That adversity largely has to do with public perception of the Iraq war's prosecution; high gasoline prices despite a good economy; President Bush's low approval ratings; excessive spending by Congress including funding for pork projects; and scandals that include campaign contributions from Indian tribes affiliated with former lobbyist Jack Abramoff, who was convicted in a scandal.

Shuler hasn't hesitated to cite the scandals and the Republicans' national problems as reasons for change.

"These things are still sort of hanging over Taylor," said Andrew Taylor (no relation), a political science professor at North Carolina State University. "You could say this fits with the basic story about Republicans."

Gibbs Knotts, a Western Carolina University political science professor, said Taylor has weathered such allegations in the past. "He's had some tough races before, but he always seems to pull them out," Knotts said.

But even Taylor sees a more challenging electoral outlook this year for the GOP. "The generic ballot and the general political environment show that it's going to be a tough year for many Republicans all across the country," he said in e-mailed answers to questions from *Carolina Journal*. "But this race will be run on the issues that matter here in Western North Carolina — creating jobs and economic opportunity, strengthening our families, fighting threats like illegal immigration, and protecting our mountain heritage and resources."

It's on immigration that Taylor in July launched his first radio campaign advertisement, nationalizing the issue and painting Shuler with a Democratic

broad-brush. According to the *Asheville Citizen-Times*, Taylor's ad accuses Shuler and Democrats of wanting to secure the votes of illegal aliens by keeping the borders weak. Shuler strongly denied the charges made in the ad.

"I support all measures to secure our borders and stop the flow of illegal immigrants," Shuler said in a statement July 10. "I oppose any type of amnesty for people who have entered our country illegally and believe illegal immigrants should be deported as soon as they are found."

For their part, Democrats planned to spend \$400,000 on radio ads in seven congressional districts, including North Carolina's 11th, the Associated Press reported. The ads call attention to Republican opposition to a minimum-wage increase. Shuler piggybacked on the ads with further criticism of Taylor on the issue after the General Assembly approved a \$1 increase of the minimum wage last month.

Taylor says he is confident that his constituents will return him for a ninth term, if for no other reason than to avoid placing liberals that he says control the Democratic Party in positions of congressional power.

The tree farmer from Transylvania County might feel the need to tie Shuler to the national party because so many similarities exist between the two, as the *Citizen-Times* explained

"If the Republicans lose that seat, it's an indicator of a pretty poor year."

Andrew Taylor
N.C. State Political Scientist

in late June. Both are strong Second Amendment supporters; are pro-life (Taylor wants *Roe v. Wade* overturned, while Shuler allows for exemptions in the cases of rape, incest, and when the life of the mother is at risk); oppose same-sex marriage; and have strong immigration control stances.

That leaves both candidates to differentiate themselves on economic issues such as the minimum wage and jobs, as well as creating a referendum on their respective parties' national performance. Both have said they will spend whatever it takes to win. After the second quarter of this year, Shuler reported \$668,745 in cash on hand, while Taylor had \$237,924 on hand. Taylor has vast personal wealth, however, and hasn't hesitated to use it in the past.

Andrew Taylor said the race is clearly a bellwether for both parties' national fortunes this fall. Incumbency should favor Rep. Taylor, he said, despite his seemingly stronger opponent.

"If the Republicans lose that seat," he said, "it's an indicator of a pretty poor year." CJ

Former Speaker Gingrich Sees Tough Road in 'Winning the Future'

Newt Gingrich helped lead the 1994 Republican Revolution that swept the GOP into power in Congress. He steered elements of the Contract With America through the U.S. House as speaker. Now Gingrich is promoting a 21st century contract through his book *Winning the Future*. He discussed that book with *Carolina Journal* associate editor Mitch Kokai for Carolina Journal Radio:

Kokai: First of all, is America on the right track or wrong track politically?

Gingrich: I think we have a lot of wrong tracks right now, and there's a lot of change we need to get back to a lot of the patterns that worked for Reagan and that worked with the Contract with America.

Kokai: You've also been quoted recently as saying the public is smart to be apprehensive about the future, especially the economy.

Gingrich: It came from a *Wall Street Journal* poll where people were asked, 'As you think about the future of the economy — not the present, but the future of the economy — are you more apprehensive or are you more certain?' And by 77 percent to 19 percent, they said they were more apprehensive. And The White House thought that was an excuse that what we needed was happy talk. And I tried to get across to them that, look, if you rely on Venezuela, Nigeria, Saudi Arabia, Iraq, Iran, and Russia for your oil supply, you ought to be a little apprehensive. If you're going to compete with China and India with our current school system, you ought to be a little apprehensive. If you're going to deal with the scale of modern science with a tax code that discourages investment, you ought to be a little apprehensive. I said I think the American people kind of have it right. It's not that we can't fix all these things. But these are real changes. These are not just Band-Aids. They're significant changes.

Kokai: You also blast conservatives for engaging in what you call "happy talk."

Gingrich: If you know as a fact that only 21 percent of the entering freshmen in Detroit graduate — and that's assuming that the diploma's worth something — that still means that four out of five young people in Detroit are being cheated and are being faced with probably going to prison or probably being unemployed or probably ending up on welfare because in the information age in a global market, if you can't even get through high school, you have a big challenge earning a decent living. Now that's a fact. Only 21 percent of the entering freshmen in Detroit get through and graduate from high school. That



Former U.S. House Speaker Newt Gingrich speaks at a John Locke Foundation Headliner Luncheon at the Charlotte Westin Hotel on June 29 (CJ Photo)

requires real change. And I think conservatives ought to be advocating real reforms. We need to fix Social Security now before the baby boomers bankrupt it. We need to transform health care now before Medicaid gets so expensive. It's already projected to be six times as expensive as Social Security. We need a real energy strategy for renewable fuels, conservation, for the use of nuclear power, for things that will enable us to become relatively independent from Saudi Arabia, Venezuela, and Russia. And we need that now. So these are all changes. And I think that a Reagan/Contract with America-style, change-oriented conservatism could easily be the governing majority. But I think a happy-talk, avoid-the-hard-work, don't-make-the-changes conservatism is inevitably going to fail.

Kokai: You've written a book called *Winning the Future*. It outlines several threats the U.S. faces. What are some of those threats?

Gingrich: Let me give you three quick examples: the threat of the courts trying to create a secular America that forgets that our rights come from our Creator, the threat of the lack of border security and illegal immigration, and the threat of the irreconcilable wing of Islam trying to destroy us — literally destroy us.

On the first one, I think it's a very serious challenge. We have a lot of secular judges who completely misrepresent the history of America, who want to take — for example — "One nation under God" — out of the Pledge of Allegiance, who believe that you can't have a cross on a historic monument in San Diego. These things are nonsense. They are a direct assault on American history. And so in *Winning the Future* we have a chapter which is a walking tour to God and Washington, which enables

you to see from the Declaration of Independence, which says we are endowed by our Creator with certain inalienable rights, to the Jefferson Memorial, to the Lincoln Memorial, to the Washington monument. You see again and again the role that our greatest leaders thought that God played in the life of America.

Second, we have an absolute requirement for national security to control our border. It is a terrible risk for the U.S. to have people crossing the border without knowing who they are. And we've had this recent focus on a North Korean missile potentially threatening us. But if the North Koreans could rent a truck in Mexico and drive it across the border, all the money we're spending on missile defense is wasted. So we have to get control of the border. We have to recognize that the word "illegal" is the key word in the term "illegal immigrant" because if you break the law to get here, I think there's a real question about how you're structuring citizenship for the future. I also think we have to insist that to become an American citizen, you can pass a test on American history in English. I would abolish multilingual ballots because government and politics in America should be in English. I very much respect people having many national origins and many home national languages that [represent] the countries they came from, but they're not the country they came to.

Finally, we have to buckle down and recognize that we have not had any kind of significant reform in intelligence. We have not really adjusted our ability to project American capabilities worldwide. And we're going to be in a long war that could last 50 to 70 years with the irreconcilable wing of Islam, the people who would not allow women to be in public meetings, the people who would impose the Shari'a, which is a medieval Islamic law, the people who believe that it's alright for a father to

kill his wife or daughter, or for a son to kill his mother or sister because honor killings are a legitimate part of that world view. These are folks we are not compatible with, and one side or the other is going to win. And I think we should pick us.

Kokai: You've alluded to this. Your book suggests the nation could be at war until 2070.

Gingrich: I'm not talking now about Iraq or Afghanistan. I'm talking about the total war. When you learn that there are 18 terrorists arrested in Canada, there were seven terrorists arrested in Miami the other day, the British Home Secretary has said he thinks they have 20 terror organizations in Britain — with maybe as many as 1,200 terrorists — this is going to be a long, painful, difficult struggle.

And I think the American people can get used to that, and they can deal with it, and they can support their government in winning it. But they need to be told the realities of what's coming down the road. And we need to make the decision that we're going to win, that it's important for our civilization. I have two grandchildren — Maggie, who's six, and Robert, who's four. I want them to live in the strongest, safest, freest country in the world. And that's going to take real effort and real change on our part.

Kokai: What's the key to fixing what your book calls an "absurdly bloated, undisciplined" federal government?

Gingrich: I think the Congress and the president have to get serious about real change. Let me give you just a couple immediate examples. Part of the Katrina emergency funding paid for a sex change operation. Now that's absurd.

Part of the funding for Katrina paid for 72 days in a Hawaiian hotel. It was clever of somebody to figure it out, but it's stupid for the U.S. government to do it, and it's outrageous for the taxpayers to have to pay for it. One person filed under 13 different Social Security Numbers — all using the same address — and was paid, I think, \$139,000. And nobody at Social Security runs a computer that is modern enough to have instantly picked up that you just got 13 Social Security Numbers from the same address getting money. I mean the degree to which the current bureaucracy is broken, obsolete, and out of touch with the modern world is breathtaking.

And the Congress and the president have to tackle it head on. I'm very proud — by the way — that Sen. [Susan] Collins and Sen. [Joseph] Lieberman have held 26 hearings on Katrina and have issued a report calling for the complete replacement of FEMA. And I think that's an example of starting to move in the right direction. CJ

State School Briefs

Reassignment suit

In a case that could have major repercussions, an Apex family is challenging the Wake County School Board's student assignment powers on the grounds that the board is interfering with their daughter's religious liberty, *The News & Observer* of Raleigh reports.

In a lawsuit filed in early July in Wake Superior Court, David and Rhonda Bailey want the school board to allow their daughter, Brittany, to stay at Middle Creek High School. They contend that reassigning Brittany will prevent her from attending a private class before school that is important to her religious beliefs.

"If they really thought about what was in the best interests for my child, they wouldn't have done this," said Rhonda Bailey. "The religion issue is really important. They're denying her the ability to exercise her rights."

William P. Marshall, a UNC-Chapel Hill law professor and expert on constitutional law, was skeptical of the Baileys' argument. But he said a victory for them could make it possible for other families to demand a school assignment on the grounds that it's convenient for them, whether or not it's for religious reasons.

Sanctions possible

This school year, North Carolina must for the first time slap entire school districts with sanctions for failing to meet the testing goals of the federal No Child Left Behind law, *The News & Observer* of Raleigh reports.

Durham and Chatham public schools and 25 other North Carolina school systems face federally mandated "corrective action" if they fall short of necessary achievement gains when test results are released this fall.

Reading results came out in July, but math scores won't be available until October because the state used new tests this year.

The law allows state education officials to choose from a list of options of varying severity, but North Carolina officials say they have no intention of meting out punitive sanctions — for now.

Leak said her office will likely recommend to the State Board of Education the most lenient sanction, which calls for the state to help districts improve curriculum and provide teachers and principals with better staff development. *CJ*

Digital age blamed

Employee Communication Skills Worsening

By KAREN McMAHAN
Contributing Editor

As globalization and technology drive an ever-increasing demand for employees with sophisticated communication skills, employers point to a disturbing trend among recent college graduates and employees overall — a steady deterioration in communication skills. While this trend has been occurring for more than a decade, the proliferation of electronic communication, technology, and productivity aids, such as grammar and spell checkers, has only exacerbated the problem.

The accelerated pace at which business operates in the global marketplace makes communication virtually instantaneous, underscoring the urgency for employees to have proficient oral, written, and interpersonal communication skills. Electronic communication, through instant messaging, text messaging, e-mail, videoconferencing, virtual meetings, and blogs, means that one poorly worded communiqué in a moment of frustration, or an inappropriate gesture during a sales presentation via videoconference, can easily sabotage a key customer relationship and cost a company millions of dollars.

Ironically, in the information revolution, poor employee communication skills are sending the wrong message.

Sloppy Writing

People have become sloppier in their writing as the need for and the ability to produce communication quickly have superseded thoughtful, deliberate communication. In what amounts to little more than stream-of-consciousness writing, employees often type whatever comes to mind, then rely on grammar and spell checkers for proofreading. Many employees mistakenly believe that a computer program will automatically highlight and correct any mistakes they might have made. Why take a few extra minutes to read through what they have written when a program will do it faster and better? Or does it?

In reality, these programs do not replace human cognition or reasoning, at least not yet. Even with differing rules for writing levels, grammar and spell checkers at best often flag phrases or words that are correctly used and miss those that are not. These programs are meant to be used as productivity-enhancing tools to catch careless errors quickly, not as substitutes for careful proofreading.

In software development, the presupposition is that the user has both the knowledge and ability to decide whether a highlighted word or phrase is correctly used or spelled. The program merely

indicates a possible error based on a complex set of parameters. Determining its validity is up to the user. Sadly, as many business communications indicate, people lack the skill to make such decisions. If the program highlights "you're" in "you're order has been received," and the writer doesn't know the difference between "you're" and "your," the customer letter or e-mail is sent out with the error.

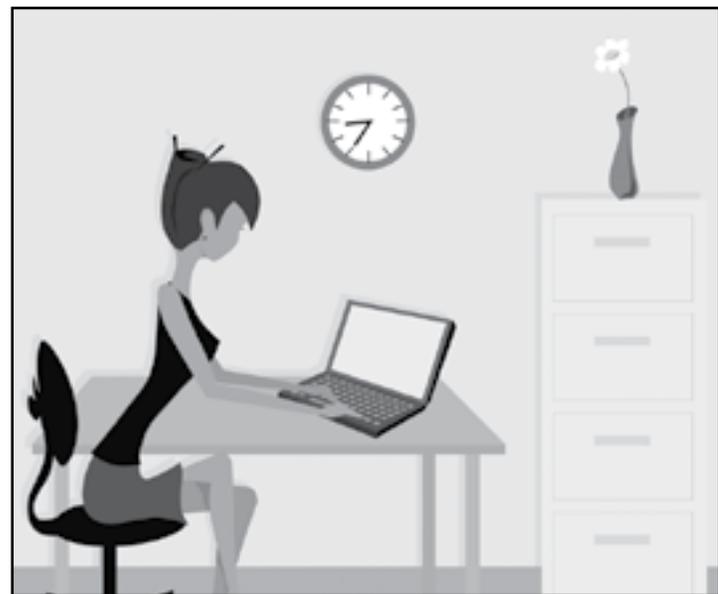
Emmet Furlong, center manager of the RTP location of Regus Instant Offices Worldwide, is also a former labor contract negotiator with experience in Germany and Eastern Europe. He said that the "the skill levels in some areas have increased dramatically in the sense that younger employees, or people entering the job market particularly now, have much stronger technology skills than ever before. However, with that has come a drop in other skill levels, and these would be primarily in oral and written presentation, particularly in the written presentation skills."

He also reports a continuing increase in the number of résumés from candidates, "most of whom have college degrees, which contain what would be considered by many 10 to 20 years ago and even today as cardinal sins—spelling mistakes, the use of overly familiar language, and basic grammatical errors"—in other words—"what once was considered the basics."

Leslie Samet, owner of the HUMAN approach, an HR consulting firm, also notes a decline in employee oral and written communication skills. She indicates that business leaders are beginning to focus on increasing the quality of communication, including how it's done electronically or otherwise.

Cost of poor communication

Employers agree that electronic communication is a primary culprit in the deteriorating quality of written communication. Furlong says that "e-mail correspondence has become a strong driver of informal writing." Samet goes further, stating that electronic communication allows people to create distance, adding to a sense of disengagement. Younger staff members particularly, Furlong said, lack the ability to distinguish between the written and spoken word.



Apart from serious spelling, grammatical, and structural weaknesses, employees face challenges in vocabulary usage, conciseness, approach, tone, and clarity. The important difference between written and spoken communication is the "absence of body language to give context and tone" to written communication, Furlong said. As the volume of electronic communication increases, the need for effective written communication skills has become more vital.

Written communication can easily become impersonal, sounding curt or even unfriendly. Given the global business environment, the content and tone of communication might be inappropriate for internal and external customers of different backgrounds, languages, values, and worldviews, leading to confusion rather than understanding. The message people intend to send or think they are sending is often not the message that others receive.

Furlong praises his staff as good to excellent employees but cites written communication as their greatest weakness. While employees often think they are the only ones whose skills don't measure up, he is quick to point out that this perception is flawed. A lack of writing skill is common among employees, he said, particularly younger employees in their 20s and early 30s.

The real cost of poor communication skills might be harder to measure. While employers expect to invest in their human capital as a normal cost of doing business, the large amount of time and money it would require to teach writing fundamentals and "overcome educational deficits would be substantial," Furlong said. He estimates he spends an extra 10 to 12 hours of managerial time each week reviewing all official external communication to ensure its correctness.

The demands of competing in a

See "Employee," Page 9

Employee Communication Skills Worsening Due to Technology

Continued from Page 8

global marketplace pressure companies to drive productivity, optimize costs, innovate, and create superior customer value. Samet agrees, adding that businesses recognize that employees have communication skill deficits, but they struggle to balance those needs against the challenge to add shareholder value, sustain competitiveness, and achieve greater financial goals. Both Furlong and Samet say that businesses are too embroiled in day-to-day "firefighting" to address the underlying causes. Moreover, Samet thinks there is a disconnect between what upper management communicates as important and what employees value, creating a disengagement that adds to the problem.

Business leaders simply give up trying to solve the underlying problem and resort to leveraging technology as a Band-Aid approach. Furlong, for example, has developed templates for nearly all of the sales process, allowing associates to send personalized, error-free client communications with a single mouse click. He acknowledges it's a short-term fix for a long-term problem, but businesses ultimately make decisions based on their return on investment. He also adds that this extra attention to communication pays off because clients appreciate the professionalism, and it serves to differentiate them from their competitors.

Long-term Consequences

Like other business leaders, Mark Parbus of Unlocked Potential, a performance management consultant firm, cites communication skills, particularly interpersonal skills, as the greatest weakness across industries and organizational levels. To succeed, people must be able to communicate a point in a presentation or a meeting, but communication also includes knowing how to deal with people.

To illustrate his point, Parbus relates an experience that happened when he recruited for sales positions at Smith-KlineBeecham (now GlaxoSmithKline). The company recruited at the top Ivy League schools to find high-potential candidates.

"I still remember looking at this résumé, and this guy had a perfect index, absolutely perfect. Played football and

played baseball. I was just expecting to be knocked out of the chair with [his] brilliance and potential. . . . He couldn't verbalize anything, any of the questions I gave him. . . . It was a shame, really, because he was really intelligent and had a high team-player mentality, but if he couldn't get what was in his head out of his mouth, it was going to be very, very difficult to share that with people."

"He couldn't verbalize anything, any of the questions I gave him. . . . It was a shame, really, because he was really intelligent."

Mark Parbus
Management consultant

With a strong recruiting background, Samet also cites candidates' inability to verbalize their skills and strengths. She said many candidates, whether internal or external, lack the skill to communicate their value to employers. When asking questions in interviews, she feels like "she's pulling teeth" because that's how hard it is to get meaningful information from candidates.

Young kids are natural networkers, but they aren't taught early in life to make the connection between their social lives and how to network to maximize performance. Parbus said young people must get prepared early to connect "hanging out with their friends as something they'll do the rest of their lives—business networking." Even as early as high school, young people can learn that interacting in social circles is networking and understand how that relates to business. They must gain a business perspective as early as possible, but even business schools are failing to teach these skills.

The disparity in the number of startup and early-stage companies versus mid- and late-stage technology and biotechnology companies in the Triangle, Parbus said, can be attributed to managerial skills required to move companies to different stages.

Entrepreneurial ventures and early-growth companies benefit from their founders' scientific and creative vision. Over the long haul, many ventures are unsustainable because the managerial team lacks the business skills to sell the mission and vision, create investor interest, communicate value, and so forth.

Writing was once emphasized in all courses, from first grade through high school and beyond, to college and graduate school.

That's no longer the case. Educational policy changes and technological advances have led to a steady decline in communication skills. Business leaders agree that change must begin in the schools. CJ

Commentary

After All, It's Your Money

Living on a budget is hard to do. Consider the following tongue-in-cheek commentary on the predilection for overspending, issued by 20th century poet e. e. cummings: "I'm living so far beyond my income that we may almost be said to be living apart." In the modern-day world of education, officials across North Carolina are finding themselves in a similar (but less humorous) financial pickle. Instead of tightening the belt, however, their response has been to push for ballooning budgets.

But while many public administrators would rather not reconcile education wish lists with reality, voters are increasingly leaving them with little choice. Nowhere is this more apparent than in the area of school construction. In 2005, 57 percent of Mecklenburg County voters rejected a \$427 million school bond referendum — noteworthy since school bonds rarely fail at the ballot box. Interestingly, polling information revealed the defeat was due primarily to a lack of trust in the school board. The additional 10.6 percent increase in 2005 county property taxes couldn't have helped build voter support either.

Lest you think these voters care little for education, consider that Mecklenburg County has spent more than \$1.7 billion on school capital needs since 1991 — certainly not chump change. The current administration's 10-year plan is forecast to top out at \$1.9 billion.

County commissioners, school board members, and the chamber of commerce all got a clear message: Shift course and think outside the box. As a result, officials have been open to innovative funding discussions. This past March, I was asked to serve on a 35-member School Building Solutions Committee formed by the Mecklenburg County Commission. Our committee was tasked with the following: Come up with a school construction plan that could unify voters. No small job, but certainly a necessary one: After all, Mecklenburg must accommodate almost 5,000 new students each year, and many facilities are already in need of renovation.

Our committee considered how to resolve questions such as: What alternative funding streams (besides property taxes) could be

used to fund school capital needs? What cost-saving construction methods could be employed? Can we afford to continue building \$20 million elementary schools, \$30 million middle schools, and \$60 million high schools? And is the

cap on charter schools an impediment to the goal of creating more spots for students?

Despite 16 energetic meetings, in the end, our committee opted for the status quo — a clear repudiation of voter concerns. The adopted resolution recommended \$172 million in certificates of participation and a 2007 school bond referendum not to exceed \$400 million. (By way

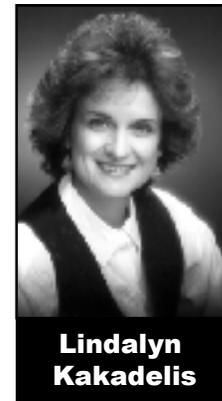
of background, county commissions respond to school boards' capital budget requests by either going to voters with a general obligation bond referendum or borrowing money without voter approval using certificates of participation. Either way, property taxes pay the mortgage.) While supporting statements in the final document did encourage alternative approaches to capital needs, concrete recommendations failed to reflect any new funding other than property taxes, nor did they change the budgeted amounts of projects posted before the 2005 bond referendum.

Eight dissenting members and I authored a minority report encouraging specific actions such as reducing all new construction by 10 percent, as well as lobbying the General Assembly to remove the mandated cap on charter schools. However, these recommendations carry no authority.

While the committee's findings are disappointing, citizens still have the final say in determining how Mecklenburg County responds to its capital needs crisis. Taxpayers mean business and will not stand for unabated spending.

This fall, major school bond referenda will appear in counties across the state. As citizens and voters, remember that you hold the purse strings. Whatever your views, be sure to speak up — after all, it's your money they're spending. CJ

Lindalyn Kakadelis is director of the North Carolina Education Alliance.



Lindalyn
Kakadelis

School Reform Notes*New school chief cites goals*

New Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools Superintendent Peter Gorman set a high bar July 12, saying he knows the community demands "urgent improvement," the *Charlotte Observer* reports.

Areas he will consider: changes in district leadership, ways to improve high school test scores, and whether low-performing schools should be shut down.

"I'm being allotted a very short honeymoon," Gorman said at the first of what he says will become weekly press briefings.

For now, Gorman repeated that he is "listening and learning." More details will likely be announced in October, after he's been in Charlotte about 100 days.

Gorman has unveiled what he calls an "entry plan" that explains his goals for his first five months in charge of a district under pressure to change.

One idea calls for determining ways to turn around "chronically under-performing" elementary, middle, and high schools. One option: close them.

"Start over," he said. "Sometimes you have to shut the school down for a year."

Tale of two lagging schools

To understand North Carolina's broken high schools, look no further than Durham's Hillside and Southern, two that reveal the stories of the others, *The News & Observer* of Raleigh reports.

Students are concentrated in racially segregated or high-poverty schools. Teacher turnover is high, and principals come and go, leaving many classrooms staffed by inexperienced, underqualified instructors. Parents are seldom involved, and students often misbehave. Promises of improvements have been made but not kept.

Many say a fog of low expectations has encompassed schools filled with poor kids.

"We've used poverty as an excuse, and I have used it myself," said Eddie Davis, president of the N.C. Association of Educators and a former Hillside teacher. "If the community doesn't rally behind all of its schools, then the community is saying the affluent schools will thrive and the poor will always be with us."

It has continued for so long that 17 of the state's worst high schools, including Hillside and Southern, are now threatened with being shut down. CJ

*Costs continue to rise***Education Requires Energy — And Lots of It**

By HAL YOUNG

Contributing Editor

CHARLOTTE

Phil Berman is not a teacher, but his job is crucial to the effectiveness of Charlotte's public schools. Berman is the executive director for building services, overseeing the maintenance and operation of more than 150 school facilities across Mecklenburg County.

"We have to create an environment conducive to learning," he said, and that takes an increasing amount of effort and expense. Utility costs are part of the operation and maintenance budget in most districts, and it is a significant portion.

Like other school systems across the state, Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools are facing a continuing rise in energy costs, even after conservation measures are factored in.

The solution? It's more maintenance and better controls.

More than 30 percent of the maintenance budget for New Hanover County schools last year was electricity, a total of \$3.54 million in an \$11.4 million facilities budget. This was only a 2.5 percent increase over 2004-05, though natural gas doubled in cost that same year.

Other districts are feeling more pressure. The Wake County Public School System is estimating a 16 percent increase in electrical costs over the next two years, from 86 cents per square foot in 2005-06 to more than a dollar by 2008. Coupled with an expected 10 percent growth in school facilities, the county expects to spend more than \$20 million a year on electricity alone by 2009.

But Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools, the largest system in the state, has already reached that level. In 2005, the schools reported composite utility costs for natural gas, electricity, and water had increased by 14 percent over the previous year. Costs today run about \$1.19 per square foot, and Berman expects that climb to reach \$1.28 this year. While natural-gas prices have risen the fastest, the largest part of the utility cost is electricity. CMS budgeted \$17.3 million for electric services last year; most of it, 86 percent, is paid from county revenues.

The Charlotte-Mecklenburg school system is one of the largest in the country, with enrollment expected to reach 130,000 students this year. Berman said the system maintains more than 160 facilities, including 152 schools, on a relatively tight budget of \$68 million. That sounds like a lot, but Berman said CMS's per-pupil maintenance spending is only half the national average. That can cause some repairs to be delayed, which has an impact on operating expense in turn.

"What we're dealing with is a very diverse mix of facilities and systems,"

"The challenge we have is that we're not adequately funded for preventive maintenance, and that's a necessary part of any energy management system."

Phil Berman
Mecklenburg County Schools

he said. Some of CMS's facilities date from the 1920s and 1930s and suffer from aging equipment and outdated design. "Some of the older facilities, for example, were not designed for proper ventilation and air exchange," he said. "There are problems with carbon dioxide levels building up in some places."

Cost improvements will ride on the ability to maintain and upgrade existing systems. Berman pointed out that energy usage can't be controlled if the mechanical systems such as chillers, boilers, and air handlers are not in good order.

"The challenge we have is that we're not adequately funded for preventive maintenance, and that's a necessary part of any energy management system," Berman said. "The linkages and dampers which that system controls have to be kept up, too."

Berman's staff is using internal studies to prioritize critical maintenance and focus on the least-efficient buildings first.

"We're not doing enough life-cycle preventive maintenance," he said. "We are focusing on the easy things such as demand lighting and improving lighting efficiency." The past four years, CMS has budgeted nearly \$1.5 million in capital improvements to the schools' electrical systems. Savings from lighting improvements are helping offset costs to upgrade heating and ventilation systems, Berman said.

Shedding light

That's a good place to start. According to the Department of Public Instruction's School Construction Office, lighting can account for as much as 40 percent of a school's electrical demand, and air-conditioning to offset the heat created by light fixtures may be 10 to 20 percent of the total in turn. Some schools have appointed student "energy patrols" to check for lights left on in unoccupied classrooms.

Other solutions are more complex but come with a guarantee. Ameresco Energy Services is a consulting firm with

offices in Massachusetts and Charlotte. Lighting control is a frequent part of their recommendations as well as new or better-managed HVAC systems. Even humidity control comes into play, such as covering indoor pools to reduce evaporation when the pool is not in use.

They have just completed a major project with the Alleghany County Schools system in the North Carolina mountains; part of the proposal was a guaranteed 25 percent reduction in energy costs. Other projects under way include a community college and proposals for large public school systems across the state.

"The K-12 market in North Carolina is really just evolving," said Executive Vice President David Anderson. "California and the Northeast have done more due to higher energy costs. Now everyone is feeling the pinch."

Anderson says that while there are obvious benefits to replacing old equipment with more efficient designs and modern controls, many times new construction has problems as well. High-efficiency windows and roofing systems, for example, are sometimes sacrificed to save on capital expense. This simply drives costs to the operations and maintenance ledger, he said, rather than making the investment up front with the expectation of lower energy costs when the building is commissioned.

"We have worked with some new construction, but typically we do retrofits of existing buildings. And definitely, some of them are only three or four years old," he said.

Getting more can take more

Ironically, getting the most out of public school facilities will drive more costs back into the system.

Although Charlotte has no year-round schools, it already shoulders much of the expected cost of a 12-month schedule because of extended learning programs and community use of the facilities.

Berman notes the number of summer programs in the schools has grown to the point that larger maintenance projects such as carpentry and flooring replacement are losing their accustomed time slots. About 30 percent to 35 percent of the facilities he manages have classes scheduled during the summer now. In addition, community groups such as pre-kindergartens, day-care programs, and churches are making use of the facilities whenever students are not there.

"The schools are basically in seven-day utilization already," he said. Berman estimates the operating costs after fees are a million dollars annually, but raising the fees to cover actual costs would likely drive out some of the groups that are now using the schools. CJ

Training for Easley's Literacy Coach Program Costly

By JIM STEGALL

Contributing Editor

RALEIGH

North Carolina will spend \$10,000 each to train 100 literacy coaches that Gov. Mike Easley called for in the fiscal 2006-07 budget.

The cost would have been nearly twice as much had a key lawmaker not intervened during late budget negotiations. But the official in charge of the training insists that it's necessary and vows to "document every penny" spent on the training to prove the point.

The budget for public education contains an appropriation of \$4.7 million for Easley's literacy coaches program. This program, along with an average 8 percent pay increase for teachers, was the centerpiece of the governor's public education agenda during the short session of the General Assembly.

Under the program, the State Board of Education will identify the 100 schools with the lowest-performing eighth grades, measured by end-of-grade reading tests over the last three years. Those schools each will select one teacher to receive training from the North Carolina Teacher Academy as a literacy coach. The North Carolina Teacher Academy is a professional development program established and funded by the legislature through the UNC system.

A separate line item in the budget for the UNC system allocates \$1 million for the North Carolina Teacher Academy to design, develop, and implement both online and face-to-face training for the selected teachers. Once trained, the literacy coaches will work with their principals and fellow teachers to develop and implement a plan for improving reading at their schools.



Although literacy coaches may also work directly with schoolchildren, their primary duties will involve working with other teachers to help them incorporate literacy skills training into their lesson plans. Ideally, the coaches will show other teachers how to integrate reading activities into their specific content areas, no matter what they are, with a goal of strengthening students' overall reading skills. It is hoped that this will also boost student test scores.

During conference committee negotiations over the budget in late June, Rep. Rick Glazier, D-Fayetteville, questioned the line item for training of the coaches. At that time, the request was for \$1.9 million. Noting that the figure worked out to \$19,000 per teacher trained, he asked why the training would be so expensive.

The governor's chief education adviser, J. B. Buxton, was present in the room but was unable to explain the request when called upon. No representative of the Teacher Academy was present. Glazier then asked the committee to reduce the figure to \$1 million.

Contacted for this story, Julia Kron, director of the Teacher Academy, said that training a literacy coach was a much more complicated task than simply conducting on-site workshops. In addition

to the direct costs of training, there are significant costs involved in developing the curriculum and administering the program, she said.

While the final curriculum is still being worked out, prospective coaches will be required to attend 12 to 16 days of training. The training will be conducted over the course of the school year and will involve teachers having to travel to training sites on some weekends, and trainers having to travel to schools during the week. Some money will be used to cover travel and lodging expenses.

Years of experience training teachers have shown that a series of weekend training events produces better results than a single two-week "cram course," Kron said. Another advantage of splitting the training up is that the teachers, who have other duties at their schools in addition to literacy coaching, will not miss time from class.

Still, critics of the program note that \$10,000 is enough to pay for a year's tuition, books, and board at most UNC system schools. Even taking into account curriculum development and administrative costs, and travel and lodging expenses, the \$1 million cost seems excessive to some. Kron insisted that the amount is appropriate, given the type of training being provided.

Critics also note that there is no provision in the law requiring teachers to continue serving as literacy coaches after receiving the training. If the program is to continue year after year, new literacy coaches will have to be trained each year to replace those who leave.

Apart from concerns about the cost, many educators have been cool to the concept of literacy coaches. While the use of literacy coaches in middle schools is a growing trend in the United States,

there seems to be little hard data on the effectiveness of the approach.

A study in Boston showed that content-area teachers were often reluctant to accept assistance from literacy coaches assigned to help them integrate reading instruction into their lesson plans. Subject teachers often are comfortable with the techniques and lesson plans they have used for years and bridle at the idea of having to change, especially to accommodate priorities outside their field, the study showed. Teachers of math and science must prepare their students for end-of-course (and other) tests and might resent having to spend some of their limited class time teaching reading comprehension and other literacy skills that students should have mastered years earlier.

For the program to work as intended, teachers selected for training as literacy coaches must have excellent leadership and collaboration skills and be recognized by their peers as outstanding teachers, Kron said. The Teacher Academy will not make the selections of teachers to be trained; that task will be the responsibility of the schools and school districts from which they are to come. But the academy will work closely with school districts to ensure they understand the qualities that successful literacy coaches must have.

The academy will recommend that each teacher selected for the program commit to at least three years of service as a literacy coach and that districts make this one of the criteria they use in making selections, Kron said. The academy is also working on a suggested job description for the districts' use.

"We will spend every penny on training, and we will document every penny spent," Kron said. CJ

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Bats in the Belltower*Next Up: Ugly Studies?*

Could there be a more emblematic example of the problems with American higher education — with its glut of worthless degree programs, grade inflation, student- and T.A.-led “instruction,” professors off researching bizarre and irrelevant subjects to fulfill the publish-or-perish demands, narcissistic “studies” courses and departments, rapidly rising college costs to students and taxpayers, and administrators shrieking that “there’s nothing left to cut” when tax revenues disappoint budget writers — than “Fat Studies?”

In late June, the *Chronicle of Higher Education* reported about a woman who was, the article said, “a leading player in an emerging academic field called fat studies.”

The *Chronicle* proceeded from that bland statement into the rest of the article. In its defense, however, its readership is steeped in that through-the-looking-glass land that is American academe, a place where something like “fat studies” would seem commonplace but where, for example, the attempt to create an academic program to study Western Civilization at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill developed into this century’s biggest academic controversy at that “public ivy.”

It gets better. Turns out the “emerging academic field” was so commonplace that the reason the *Chronicle* found it noteworthy to report upon was just because the woman at the focus of the article, Kathleen LeBesco, author of the 2004 book *Revolting Bodies? The Struggle to Redefine Fat Identity* (Univ. of Mass. Press) who has spoken out on the topic of “I’m Here, I’m Sphere, Get Used to It: Being ‘Out’ As a Fat Professor” — well, she lost weight. A lot of weight. So much weight, in fact, that the *Chronicle* reported uncharitably that, “over the last year and a half she has lost 70 pounds — putting her in the uncomfortable position of being at the forefront of a field for which she no longer fits the profile”

As for the bulk of fat studies, the *Chronicle* reported that “the field takes its cues from queer studies and disability studies” — of course — “subjects pursued primarily by activists who feel they have been discriminated against because of their identity.” CJ

John Locke Foundation Research Editor Jon Sanders compiles the monthly *Bats in the Belltower*.

*Looking to the future***Draft Previews Higher Ed Report’s Findings**

By SHANNON BLOSSER

Associate Editor

CHAPEL HILL

Higher-education institutions in the United States must improve in “a drastic way,” according to the draft of a report that analyzes the future of universities. A final version of the report is expected later this month.

The draft began to make its way around higher-education circles in late June. A national committee is producing the report on the future of higher education. U.S. Secretary of Education Margaret Spellings initiated the report. Among the members of the commission is former North Carolina Gov. Jim Hunt.

All aspects of the draft are up for consideration and change, but, among other problems, the draft shows that commissioners think that students are unprepared for college, that costs are too high, and that college students waste their time.

“In the face of such challenges, this Commission believes change is overdue,” the draft says. “But when it comes — as it must — it will need to take account of the new realities that are sometimes overlooked in public discussions about the future of higher education.”

The draft does list some goals as to what commissioners think higher education should look like. Those goals are:

- A “world-class higher education system that educates its citizens and creates new knowledge”
- An accessible system for all students regardless of age or financial status
- College and universities to be more productive and efficient
- A system that is more accountable and transparent in its operations
- A system that gives people workplace skills
- A system that contributes to “global competitiveness.”

“We have no illusions that the necessary adaptation, evolution — and in some cases, transformation — will come easily,” the draft says. “But we do have confidence, based on the rich history of post-secondary education in this country, that our nation’s colleges and universities are up to the challenge.”

Findings

The report is specific in problems and other findings that commissioners see in higher education and makes several recommendations for change. It paints a picture of higher education that is failing in its core mission of educating and being affordable to students.

Regarding access to higher education, commission members discussed a growing problem of students entering college unprepared for the rigors of

What the report found

- While college enrollment has increased, so has the number of students who have to take at least one remedial course. K-12 graduation requirements should be more closely aligned with college and employer expectations.
- To improve affordability, need-based financial aid should be increased and the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) should be eliminated.
- Eliminate barriers to transferring credit from different kinds of post-secondary education.
- Provide more clear and accessible information about colleges and universities.

higher education. The report says that while the proportion of high school students going to college increased between 1970 and 2004, there has also been an increase of students taking at least one remedial education course. Currently, 40 percent of four-year college students and 63 percent of two-year college students take at least one remedial education course.

“State’s K-12 graduation standards must be closely aligned with college and employer expectations, and states should also provide incentives for post-secondary institutions to work actively and collaboratively with K-12 schools to help underserved students improve college preparation and persistence,” the report says.

To address affordability issues in higher education, commission members think an effort that focuses on cost cutting and productivity improvements is needed. They also want an increase in need-based financial aid and overhaul of the federal financial aid program, including the elimination of the FAFSA.

Commissioners wrote that this would help those who fund and pay for college costs.

“While consumers bear the immediate brunt of tuition increases, affordability is also a crucial policy problem for those who are asked to fund higher education, notably federal and state taxpayers,” they write in the draft. “We believe that affordability is directly affected by colleges’ and universities’ failures to seek institutional efficiencies and by their disregard for improving productivity, since the current system provides institutions with few incentives to do either.”

In the draft, commissioners combined quality and innovation under the same heading. Here they focus on the weakening literacy skills of college graduates and graduation rates among higher education’s shortfalls and its lack of new ideas to work toward eliminating those problems.

“[W]e urge post-secondary institutions to make a commitment to embrace new pedagogies, curricula, and technologies to improve student learning,” the draft says. “We also propose a concerted effort to eliminate existing

barriers to transfer of credit between different kinds of post-secondary institutions. More broadly, policymakers and educators must work together to develop a national strategy to promote and facilitate lifelong learning, which is an ever more important component of keeping our nation at the forefront of the global knowledge economy.”

Commissioners also write that there is a “a remarkable shortage of clear, accessible information about crucial aspects of American colleges and universities.” This includes financial aid and graduation rates among information on other documents that would allow some sense of accountability in higher education.

Commissioners think this lack of information makes it difficult for policymakers to determine which programs work.

“While higher education prizes transparency of information, precision of data, and rigorous analysis in its own scholarship, as an enterprise it has failed to apply the same standards to itself,” the draft says. “Some colleges are beginning to experiment with new assessment tools, but most make no serious effort to examine their effectiveness on the most important measure of all: How much students learn.”

Commissioners made one observation about how the report’s findings and initial recommendations might be received when they become final this month.

They think higher education officials won’t “easily accept either our diagnosis or our prescriptions.”

“But we would note that past reforms that later came to be recognized as transformational for American society were not initially embraced by the academic establishment,” the draft says. “The G.I. Bill, for instance, greatly worried such 20th-century academic luminaries as Robert Maynard Hutchins, president of the University of Chicago, and James B. Conant, president of Harvard University, each of whom fretted that newly returned veterans might overwhelm campuses and be ill-suited to reap the benefits of higher education. In retrospect, such concerns seem positively archaic.” CJ

Blue Ridge CC Under Scrutiny

By SHANNON BLOSSER

Associate Editor

FLAT ROCK

Only months after the Halifax Community College investigation had been put to bed with the termination of President Ted Gasper, another community college come under investigation regarding financial irregularities.

Add Blue Ridge Community College to the mix of schools that have caught the ire of state board officials after two audits showed financial mismanagement with the school's baseball program and other departments within the school. The investigation reached a boiling point when school officials refused to let inspectors into the school, and the state threatened to withhold the salary of President David W. Sink Jr., the *Asheville Citizen-Times* reported.

No resolution to the case is expected until the investigation has been completed. Some of the same officials who investigated financial concerns at Halifax Community College are also investigating Blue Ridge Community College.

The situation with Blue Ridge Community College comes as the North Carolina Community College System

comes under increased scrutiny to control financial irregularities within the system.

This scrutiny first appeared in a special audit recommendation by State Auditor Les Merritt in October after the release of the Halifax Community College findings. In May, the state board released its response after a task force looked into the recommendations, said Hilda Pinnix-Ragland, chairwoman of the State Board of Community Colleges.

The five recommendations listed in the auditor's report would provide more checks and balances in the Raleigh office. They focused on more training on financial issues as well as reviews of all presidential contracts and by-laws.

In each recommendation, state board officials agreed with the recommendations and made plans that would allow for more oversight by the state board.

"We hope the response and actions we have defined are indicative of the importance we attach to this review of our governance and oversight practices, and to the opportunity for continuous improvement offered through the audit process," Pinnix-Ragland wrote to auditors. CJ

List now at 24

NCAA Targets 2 Prep Schools

By SHANNON BLOSSER

Associate Editor

CHAPEL HILL

Athletes from two North Carolina prep schools will have a harder time preserving their college eligibility after the NCAA said in July the schools did not meet the association's academic standards. Another school is still having its credentials reviewed.

New Horizon Christian Academy in Conover and Word of God Christian Academy in Raleigh were among 15 schools that were not cleared for initial eligibility determination, according to the NCAA. This takes the list of prep schools the NCAA will not recognize in the initial eligibility stages to 24.

Also, athletes from 22 schools, including Laurinburg Institute in Laurinburg, are eligible to enter in fall 2006 without any problems. However, it is only a one-year reprieve, because those schools are still having their certification reviewed.

Students from New Horizon and Word of God and similar schools may still participate in athletics and have their transcripts reviewed, the NCAA said. But the decision by the NCAA will most likely bring more scrutiny upon the academic course load for those students.

According to Kevin Lennon, the

students who will be most affected "will be those who fraudulently obtained their academic requirements."

Specific reasons were not given as to why New Horizon or Word of God were among the 15 schools, but Word of God officials in a *News & Observer* of Raleigh article called the NCAA's actions a "miscommunication." According to the NCAA, schools that were among the 15 that will not be included in the NCAA Clearinghouse to determine athletic eligibility were invalidated because of three reasons: those that did not adequately respond to requests for information, those about which the NCAA still has some questions, and those in which the school did not meet NCAA standards.

The action is part of an ongoing effort by the NCAA to increase academic standards among prep schools that are notorious for being athletic training centers, such as Oak Hill Academy in Virginia. In December, the NCAA initiated a panel to examine these schools. The panel included UNC-Chapel Hill Athletics Director Dick Baddour.

In February the committee's findings concluded that the problems with these schools are hurting not only athletics, but also academic standards, throughout higher education. CJ

Commentary

Fear Factor 101: Freshman English

When I hear the parents of a university freshman crow that their son or daughter is taking English 101 with a "specialist in composition theory," I have a dilemma. If I seem pleased for Jen or John, I dissemble—but give two proud parents the endorsement they seek. On the other hand, if I say what longtime teachers really think of the new "specialists," I turn a pleasant chat into a lecture on why student literacy has declined on the theorists' watch—and alarm two parents in the process. My cocktail-party persona always opts for the pleasant chat, but the teacher in me longs to give those parents three good reasons to protest what's become of English 101 since the theorists took over.

First, I would let parents know that grammar instruction has disappeared from freshman composition because the theorists have decided that grammar drills actually impair student writing. In 1985, the National Council of Teachers of English made official the theorists' new position: "The use of grammar and usage exercises not supported by theory and research is a deterrent to the improvement of students' speaking and writing." What the theorists don't say is that the demise of grammar instruction coincided exactly with an increasing diversity among college enrollees, many of whom did not grow up speaking or writing standard English. To avoid branding those students with an unjust stigma, the NCTE simply told all teachers to soft-pedal grammar and "permit students to set goals for their own improvement." A decade later, the architect of UNC-Chapel Hill's freshman program declared that usage "rules and principles may prove confining" for student writers. The fact is that Jen and John's failure to write correctly will prove even more confining in the long run—when they're struggling to advance in a high-pressure job.

I would also tell parents that 101 enrollees won't study works by great writers, either, because the theorists have decreed that English 101 is "No Place for Literature." They say that reading literature invites too much "teacher talk," but something odd and unprecedented is going on in English departments nationwide. Scholars who themselves were grounded in

great works now see Shakespeare and his ilk as conveyors of Western values—as a roadblock in the way of multicultural equality. That would be reason enough to ban great works, but the theorists don't stop there. Some think that reading literature would actually "silence students' voices" when they sat down to write. So says the same UNC-Chapel Hill theorist who called usage rules "confining"—and a North Carolina State theorist adds

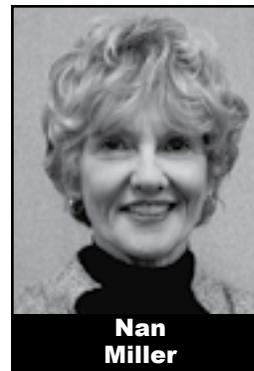
that students "may feel so intimidated by published readings that they will dismiss their own texts as unworthy." Today's university freshmen will complete a unit on "Pop Culture" instead.

I also would inform parents what else freshmen will be studying in their "postmodern" writing

class. English 101's new mission is to have students "writing in the disciplines," so freshmen now read essays from the sciences, social sciences, and humanities and study the "discourse methodology" of each discipline before they try to write similar "texts," e.g., interpretations of music, analyses of data—even law firm memoranda! In essence, the new approach to teaching writing asks freshmen to learn language that is foreign to them before they have learned the basics of clear writing (which students don't get in high school, either). The new approach also asks English instructors, many of whom are rookies or graduate students, to teach content outside their own field. The same logic, applied in the sciences, would have first-time physics instructors teaching Hamlet—but logic seldom intrudes upon a theorist's thinking.

If Mom and Dad remain unconvinced, just one e-mail from their university freshman might rest my case: "Hi peeps, Yes, my English class is great! Watched an episode of Fear Factor in class today. Paper due tomorrow on hyposalinity. Don't worry. Teacher doesn't know what it is either. Ha! Gotta run. Me and Pat's headin to a mixer. Hope your doing good. Later — J." When Mom and Dad receive such a missive, just one word from me will suffice — protest! CJ

Guest columnist Nan Miller is a retired Meredith College professor of English.



Nan
Miller

Course of the Month

Green Orthodoxy: Turning N.C. Into a Geological Seminary

Historically, a major academic-freedom concern held by the American Association of University Professors was the intrusion or imposition of political, ideological, or religious orthodoxy on the classroom unrelated to the subject matter. But what if the subject matter is itself political, ideological, or religious orthodoxy?

For example, consider **Communication 75 (Environmental Studies 75) "Environmental Advocacy"** from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. Here we have a course with a purpose that is expressly political. It is geared to produce environmental activists — not scholars seeking answers to probing questions on environmental matters, but activists seeking, in the words of the syllabus, "to become more effective, ethical communicators by actively engaging them in reflective activities and readings that lead to a greater understanding of various advocacy processes."

Of course, what the students are to communicate is already decided. UNC-CH's "Environment Advocacy" focuses on ways students can best communicate orthodoxy, and it gives them field practice to boot. Essentially it's not much different from, say, Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary's M4010 "Expository Preaching and Lab I."

The course syllabus states:

Activism involves thinking/theorizing and doing. It is important for us to remember that activism is political, it is social, and it offers no guaranteed outcomes.

We cannot effectively learn about social change if we are not actively involved in the process of doing it. Service-learning experiences invite us to reject the easy answers and to instead focus our creative and intellectual energies on participating in the processes of social change and of generating complex answers. Service-learning encourages us to be "public intellectuals" who are sensitive to the fact that some of the most valuable lessons are not necessarily in our textbooks. Service-learning is not inherently activism, nor is it an internship or volunteer work: service-learning experiences lead to greater political knowledge, personal development, and a greater respect for alternative

career paths.

The capstone experience of this course will be the planning and execution of either an Issues Forum or a Teach-In that will be held outside of class toward the end of the semester (in conjunction with Earth Day 2006). This event will be fully organized, publicized, and produced by COMM/ENST 75 students. This mode of service-learning enables students to move beyond the classroom and the partner organizations, and to be responsible for the creation of a public rhetorical act of environmental advocacy of their own. Here, we will draw on our texts, reflective activities, classroom experiences, field trips, and service-learning experiences to make broader connections to our roles

as members of local, regional, state, national, and global communities. Students will synthesize what they have learned in all venues and use good judgment to construct their own moment of rhetorical possibility in Chapel Hill.

Those "partner organizations," of course, are professional environmental activists. Such groups are frequently the beneficiaries of "service learning" courses; they receive valuable grunt-work services from student "volunteers," who receive compensation in the form of college credit from a major research university.

Students for Academic Freedom, who are today on the front lines protecting academic freedom, describe the problem posed to academic freedom by a decidedly political program of study. "The use of academic incentives and disincentives to advance a partisan or sectarian view creates an environment of indoctrination," states the Student Bill of Rights, available on SAF's web site (www.saf.org). SAF calls it "unprofessional and contrary to the educational mission" and also "a violation of students' academic freedom."

"The creation of closed, political fiefdoms in colleges, programs or departments, is the opposite of academic freedom," the Student Bill of Rights states, "and does not deserve public subsidy or private educational support." CJ

Jon Sanders is research editor for the John Locke Foundation.



Jon Sanders

Higher-Education Institutions Recipients of Bountiful Budget

By SHANNON BLOSSER
Associate Editor

CHAPEL HILL

Higher-education institutions in North Carolina received a significant increase in funding this year as legislators approved adjustments to the fiscal 2007 budget. Gov. Mike Easley called it one of the best education budgets he has seen.

The budget adjustments were approved a few days after the start of the fiscal year and signed into law July 10. UNC's budget was increased by \$128 million to take its total appropriation to \$2.2 billion. Community colleges received a funding increase of \$64 million to take their total budget to more than \$831 million.

In all, the increase in education spending, when including the Department of Public Instruction, was \$1.4 billion. Increases in education spending would help economic development efforts in the state, Easley said.

"Our continued commitment to progress in education, coupled with our top-ranked business climate, makes North Carolina one of the best locations to grow and expand a business not only in America but the world," Easley said in a released statement.

However, like any government budget, this one is filled with pork-barrel projects that took advantage of the \$2.4 billion budget surplus for this fiscal year. The surplus was used to fund programs that had not received state funding in previous years, as well as programs that fall outside the realm of education.

Among the biggest pork-barrel projects in the higher education budget was a \$50,000 request to study whether North Carolina Wesleyan, a private college in Rocky Mount, should be added to the UNC system. The funding for the study, according to the budget provision, must come from the system's own funds.

Rocky Mount-area legislators, who pushed for the provision, think that adding the school to the UNC system will increase economic development in the eastern part of North Carolina.

Legislators also approved a \$7 million request to study plans for additions at UNC-Chapel Hill's School of Dentistry, as well as to provide initial

investment funds for a similar school at East Carolina University. Funding for the project came out of the capital needs budget.

The state budget also included funding for a program that had lost private grant money. The DESTINY science program at UNC-Chapel Hill, a traveling science laboratory that attempts to enhance science education in schools, had been privately funded since its inception

but recently lost some of its grant funding. After a presentation to the State Board of Education and others by program officials, legislators approved a \$500,000 recurring budget item to make up for some of the lost funding. The \$500,000 is considerably less than the initial request by Easley of \$2 million.

Also, at UNC-Chapel Hill the state approved \$1 million for construction of a family house

for UNC Hospitals that has received a large amount of private donations. The building would provide housing for families of critically ill patients at UNC Hospitals. Construction fundraising has, according to legislators, brought in \$4.3 million in private funds of the needed \$6.3 million.

Other projects that could be considered as pork in the UNC budget were \$200,000 in nonrecurring funds for the North Carolina in the World project and \$500,000 for the Hunt Institute.

North Carolina in the World attempts to improve world knowledge among K-12 students. It is operated through UNC-Chapel Hill's Center for International Understanding and gives teachers the resources to teach global education principles.

The Hunt Institute is a private organization that is named for former Gov. James Hunt. According to its Web site, the organization based at UNC-Chapel Hill "engages governors and other leaders in strategic efforts to advance and sustain state-level education reform." The money in the budget provides operational support for the institution with nonrecurring funds.

UNC system schools were not the only ones to have a variety of pork projects in the budget. Community colleges received their fair share as well, with the most obvious being a program aimed at workforce development. CJ

"Our continued commitment to progress in education, coupled with our top-ranked business climate, makes North Carolina one of the best locations to grow and expand a business not only in America but the world."

Gov. Mike Easley

Can't resist demagoguery

Edwards Wants Greater College Access — Good Policy or Bad?

By **GEORGE C. LEEF**
Contributing Editor

In an interview published in the July 7 *Chronicle of Higher Education*, former U.S. Sen. John Edwards of North Carolina set forth his views on higher education, arguing in favor of federal policies to make college education nearly as universal as K-12 is, with the government picking up the expense for students who can't afford it.

The first question from the interviewer asked how important a college education is for the poorest students to succeed. Edwards replied, "It's everything.... Education is absolutely critical... and that's going to be more intensely true going forward than it is today...."

Immediately, we confront a difficulty. Edwards speaks as though "education" by itself will enable people to get and keep good jobs. What people need, however, are skills.

Formal classroom education is not the only or necessarily the best way for people to acquire skills. One important fact is that the typical undergraduate "education" these days at many colleges and universities has been so watered down that students often graduate with weak abilities in reading, writing, and basic math. What most employers want to see in applicants is evidence that they possess the basic skills and are readily trainable. At one time, possession of a high school diploma was a good proxy for basic skills and trainability, but now even a college degree is doubtful in that regard.

It's a bad mistake to equate formal education with productive skills. Today you can find college graduates

earning meager paychecks doing work such as ushering in theaters or selling coffee. You can also find non-graduates earning impressive paychecks as auto mechanics or precision machinists. People

don't get paid for having sat through classes. They get paid because they can do useful things.

Edwards is concerned that a college education is becoming too expensive for people from poorer families. For that reason, he has set up a privately funded program to assist high school graduates in Greene County, which has low-income and low-education levels. This program began only last fall, and we have no idea how well it will work. Nevertheless, Edwards is eager for a national program to do the same thing, making college education nearly as much an entitlement as is K-12.

Asked about the expense, Edwards replied, "It's just a basic, fundamental judgment about where higher education fits on the spectrum of priorities. I mean, if we as a nation commit that this is at the top of the list, then lack of money won't be an issue." But there are always tradeoffs when it comes to the use of resources. Getting even more students into college might be a very high priority to Edwards, but if taking college courses doesn't necessarily do much to enhance the productivity of people, then spending more on higher education is a poor use of resources.



True to form, Edwards can't resist a bit of populist demagoguery: "But if on the other hand we think our priority is to give tax cuts to rich people, then the money won't be available...." I presume that

Edwards understands that rich people often finance productive investments that provide employment opportunities and new products and services that benefit rich and poor alike. Unfortunately, he can't admit that publicly without damaging his credentials as a champion of "the little guy." Democratic presidential aspirants can't ever toss away the envy card.

Edwards also argues that our ability to compete in the international economy depends on doing more to make college "accessible." He states that, "If we are not competing, particularly in areas like math and science and technology, places where the Chinese in particular, but India and others that are putting an enormous amount of effort and money, it makes it very hard for America to be competitive economically over the long term. Colleges are the places where we ensure that America is competitive."

Let's assume for the sake of argument that Edwards is right that our future prosperity depends on producing more college graduates with math, science, and technology backgrounds. Is there any reason to believe that his policy of subsidizing higher education

so that more students can attend will do anything to keep the United States economically competitive?

I don't think so. Among the marginal students who might be drawn into college instead of entering the job market or the military after high school, the likelihood that we would find any who would become mathematicians or scientists is remote. It takes a strong academic background to pursue a course of study leading to a degree in math or the hard sciences, and we're already putting all of the students with such ability into college. If it's true that American firms need more scientists and mathematicians, it makes infinitely more sense to rely on them to create incentives that will steer more of the academically strong students already in college into those career paths than for government to subsidize college for more academically marginal students.

Rather than shooting for a big, expensive expansion of higher education, people like Edwards who say they're concerned about the ability of poor people to make progress ought to advocate the following: 1) dramatic K-12 change so that high school graduates will have the basic skills that will make them attractive to employers; 2) the elimination of regulations that impede the ability of people to start businesses and enter occupations; 3) the creation of alternative credentialing mechanisms to the increasingly meaningless BA degree. CJ

George C. Leef is executive director of the Pope Center for Higher Education Policy.

North Carolinians for Home Education

The MISSION of NCHHE is to:

- PROTECT the right to homeschool in North Carolina.
- PROMOTE homeschooling as an excellent educational choice.
- PROVIDE Support to homeschoolers with conferences, book fairs, and other resources.



The IDEALS of NCHHE are:

- Educational excellence.
- Parental authority and responsibility for education.
- Protection and promotion of the family.
- Diligence in moral and ethical instruction.
- Responsible citizenship.
- Freedom of choice among educational alternatives.
- Defense of Constitutional rights.

Over 9000 people will attend the annual conference and book fair in Winston-Salem May 26-28. For more information about NCHHE, you can call the office at **919-790-1100** or visit the website at www.nchhe.com

As of January 2005, there were over **60,000** homeschoolers registered in the state of North Carolina.



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Town and County

Gastonia image change

Gastonia is trying to change its image, *The Charlotte Observer* reports. The city hopes to develop a new brand for itself by next year, the 130th anniversary of its founding.

"It will help others understand who we are," said Mayor Jennie Stultz, "and what we have to offer as a community."

Politicians and civic leaders met with representatives of three local marketing firms, who will present suggestions along with possible marketing plans to City Council. Re-branding can include new logos, slogans, and promotional materials.

"It's not just about looking good and cool," Sherrè DeMao, president of SLD Unlimited Marketing/PR in Denver DeMao said about brand identification.

"It's all about being unique," she told the newspaper.

Gastonia is North Carolina's 12th largest city and situated in the fast-growing Charlotte-Gastonia-Concord Metropolitan Statistical Area. Despite this, recent years have not been particularly good for the city and county; Charlotte's growth hasn't spilled yet into its neighbor to the west. Net migration to Gaston County is estimated at less than 300 people between 2000 and 2005.

Subdivision moratorium

North Carolina's inland coast has become a popular location for second-resort homes. One small town is responding to the growth by imposing a six-month moratorium on new subdivisions.

"These subdivisions were just coming at us rapid fire," Bath Mayor Jimmy Latham said to *The News & Observer* of Raleigh. "We just wanted to make sure what we are doing is right for the area. When that development train leaves the station, it's not coming back."

The town will use the six months to review its ordinances and fees.

"They inflicted the moratorium on us the same day they were supposed to be approving our subdivisions," Raleigh-based developer John Baldwin said. Baldwin is behind Bridgewater North and Bridgewater South, two waterfront subdivisions with 103 lots. Some of the vacation houses Baldwin is proposing would be up to 4,000 square feet and sell for as much as \$1 million to \$2 million each. The developer has proposed two additional subdivisions. CJ

N.C.'s County Jails Filling With Illegal Immigrants

By KAREN WELSH
Contributing Editor

RALEIGH
County jails throughout North Carolina are stressed to the limit with illegal immigrants, law-enforcement officials say.

With the lack of immigration control to deal with the estimated 460,000 illegal immigrants residing in the state, it probably won't get better anytime soon.

Kevin Jastzabski, prison captain for the Lee County Sheriff's Department, said the number of Hispanics clogging the county's system gets larger every day. "We do have a problem, and it is going to keep on growing," he said "It doesn't look like it's going to slow down any time soon."

Randy Jones, director of public information for the Alamance County Sheriff's Department, said about 40 percent of the inmates in the county's jail are Hispanics and most of those have illegally entered the country.

"It's draining the system, and you're looking at disaster," he said. "Some of the public is just coming to grips with (illegal immigrants). Right now, there's not a way to solve the problem until the government solves the problem. The issue needs to be addressed on both the federal and state level."

It's not racial discrimination, as some have feared, but cultural differences that are putting most of the illegal immigrants behind bars.

The arrests are legitimate, Jones said, and arise mostly from drug trafficking or driving under the influence of alcohol in Alamance County. DUI is the number one killer of Hispanic males in the state, he said.

"There are cultural differences," he said. "They drink and drive. It's culturally acceptable for them to do that. When we bring them in, they are usually double the legal limit. But law-enforcement officers have been called racist and have been accused of singling out Hispanics. Now the statistics are showing we were probably right from the onset — law-enforcement-wise."

Illegal drug use and smuggling is also a problem among those illegally living in North Carolina. Sheriff Steve Bizzell of Johnston County addressed this topic during an Issues Forum on Illegal Immigration at the North Carolina Leadership Conference 2006. Eighty percent to 85 percent of drug trafficking in his jurisdiction is committed by Hispanics, he said.

A growing wave of gang-related violence, including murders and armed robberies, is also cropping up in rural counties. In an ABC News report, Sheriff Jimmy Thornton said Sampson County is trying to deal with a surge of Hispanic gangs.

"They think they can set up their gangs in these rural areas and really get by with more," he said. "They don't

think that the small-town departments have the sophistication and the ability or the personnel to handle what they're coming in here with."

Another problem plaguing jails throughout the state are repeat offenders, who are virtually given a "get out of jail free" card when they are deported. It doesn't matter whether they were apprehended for serious or violent crimes, U.S. officials drop the charges and send them back to their own country. It's usually only a matter of days before they cross the border back into the United States again under a different name, officials said.

Julia Rush, director of communications for the Mecklenburg County Sheriff's Department, estimated that illegal immigrants comprise 15 percent of the county's inmate population. Some repeat offenders have been jailed as many as 22 times, she said.

Jim Kouri, the fifth vice president of the National Association of Chiefs of Police and a writer for New Media Alliance, said this is not uncommon.

"In the population study of a sample of 55,322 illegal aliens, researchers found that they were arrested at least a total of 459,614 times," Kouri wrote, "averaging about eight arrests per illegal alien."

Although it might be a losing battle for now, Rush said, Mecklenburg is trying to make improvements. The county is part of the Section 287(G) Program, designed to keep better track of illegal immigrants. Together, the county and the

Immigration and Customs Enforcement are fingerprinting and photographing the hundreds of illegal aliens arrested in the area each month.

James Jay Carafano of The Heritage Foundation said Section 287(G) is vital because both state and local law enforcement are critical in aiding federal immigration investigations.

"Section 287(G) of the Immigration and Nationality Act (INA) provides the legal authority for state and local enforcement to investigate, detain, and arrest aliens on civil and criminal grounds," he wrote. "Any comprehensive border

and immigration security legislation by Congress should include provisions for strengthening and expanding programs authorized under Section 287(G)."

Although Section 287(G) has been in existence since 1996, Mecklenburg is the only county east of California that has the program in place. There are others trying to help rectify the situation.

Rep. Charles Taylor, R-N.C., recently announced a regional plan for eight counties in western North Carolina to deal with illegal immigrants.

Rutherford County Sheriff Philip Byers was pleased with the new plan.

"This will allow us to enforce the laws that are already on the books," he said in a press release. "We welcome legal immigrants, but want to deal with those who break the laws to get here and especially those who sell drugs, drive without licenses, and commit other crimes while here." CJ

"It's draining the system, and you're looking at disaster."

Randy Jones
Alamance County
Sheriff's Department



Agenda 2006: A Candidate's Guide to Key Issues in North Carolina Public Policy (By JLF Public Policy Analysts, with an introduction by Dr. Roy Cordato)

Freedom Budget 2006: Providing Relief to North Carolina's Counties and Taxpayers (Spotlight #291 by Joe Coletti)

North Carolina Convention Centers: Important Lessons for Asheville and Wilmington (Policy Report by Michael Sanera and Travis Fisher)

Illegal Immigrants and Driving: N.C. Legislature Should Stop Helping Illegal Immigrants Obtain Licenses (Spotlight #293 by Daren Bakst)

Visit www.JohnLocke.org. Click on *Policy Reports* and *Spotlights*.

CATS

Selling a Rail Line To Various Constituent Groups Difficult

By MICHAEL LOWREY

Associate Editor

CHARLOTTE

Charlotte Area Transit System officials expect the next few years to be busy at the transit agency. In addition to a light-rail line under construction, CATS officials hope to begin work on four more lines by about 2010, the CATS Web site says.

That appears unlikely to happen.

Getting a rail line built involves selling the project at different times and in different manners to different groups. It also often involves offering hope for projects that are unlikely to be built in the real world. The benefits of transit are oversold initially and the costs understated to get local approval for projects. Attempting to get the federal money required to build a system typically involves refining projects to a smaller scope than what communities were sold on earlier.



Overselling the rail dream

That a transit project might initially have been oversold or costs underestimated to get the project approved should come as no surprise.

In an influential 2002 paper, three Danish researchers demonstrated that transportation infrastructure projects almost always come in over budget.

Writing in the Summer 2002 issue of the *Journal of the American Planning Association*, Bent Flyvbjerg, Mette Skamris Holm, and Søren Buhl described their statistical analysis of 258 transportation projects costing \$90 billion over the past 70 years. The authors found that costs were underestimated in 86 percent of projects, with the amount of the average overrun varying by project type. Rail projects came in on average 44.7 percent over their estimated costs, a larger cost overrun compared to fixed-link (tunnel and bridge) (33.8 percent) or road projects (20.4 percent).

Based upon their analysis, the authors concluded that the original cost estimates were off not because of methodological errors, but rather because the forecasters and promoters of the projects were engaging in deception to get favored projects approved.

In line with Flyvbjerg, Holm, and Buhl's research, the cost of the CATS system grew soon after the Mecklenburg County voters approved an extra one-cent sales tax to fund transit in 1998. What had been sold as a \$1 billion system soon became \$3 billion and then \$6 billion.

At the core of the proposal are five transit corridors running out from uptown Charlotte. These corridors are: to the south, along South Boulevard toward Pineville, to the west to Charlotte-Douglas International Airport, to the north parallel to I-77 toward Huntersville and Davidson, to the northeast toward UNC-Charlotte, and to the southeast, along Independence Boulevard (U.S. 74) toward Matthews.

Importantly, the specific mode of transportation — rail, in either light rail or commuter rail incarnations, or buses using dedicated busways — was not specified when voters were asked to approve the tax. Rail service is generally regarded as being more desirable than buses, but it is also more expensive to build and maintain.

The undefined nature of the corridors was a key selling point in 1998, allowing voters to think they had a chance of obtaining rail service for their part of town.

That possibility still officially exists, at least in theory, today for all five corridors. Public outcry after CATS recommended bus service for the west and southeast corridors caused the commission overseeing CATS to reconsider the decision; planning is under way for both rail and bus service. A decision is to be made later.

The end point of the various corridors was also not certain until recently. For example, there was talk of extending the north corridor beyond Davidson to Mooresville in Iredell County. The Southeast line might have reached Matthews and south line Pineville. The northeast line could go beyond UNC-Charlotte to Lowe's Motor Speedway and an amphitheater.

Selling it to the FTA

CATS is now in a very different second stage of selling its proposed transit lines. One great appeal of transit projects to local governments is that they might have to pay only one-fourth or less of capital costs. Indeed, if local governments had to pay for their proposed rail transit networks by themselves, most would be unaffordable.

The key is getting the Federal Transit Administration to commit to a project and pay 50 percent or 60 percent of a line's cost. The FTA, however, has a limited amount of money available to fund new lines. It has also instituted a rigorous modeling and scoring system, based in large part upon the cost-effectiveness of a proposed line. CJ

Commentary

High Cost of Accommodation

One of the oft-overlooked components of the great Immigration Debate of the 21st century in North Carolina is the cost of servicing a second language. That's an oversimplification, but I'm referring to the cost of delivering city, county, and state services in more than one language.

All levels of government are moving toward, without legislative mandate, true bilingual service delivery. We are even moving toward Spanish voter registration forms. This perspective is costing taxpayers a bundle and not helping those individuals to become more self-sufficient by speaking English.

Lest folks want to start hurling racial and cultural barbs in my direction, let me first say I spent many of my early years in Puerto Rico and another year in Del Rio, Texas (on the Mexican border). Puerto Rico is a U.S. territory and does not do a great deal to assist you if you don't speak Spanish. If you want to function in that society, you learn to speak Spanish. Mexico is even less accommodating. Growing up bilingual was an asset, not a burden.

If you were to walk into any courtroom in North Carolina, you will find most commonly used forms are printed in both languages, ditto for health departments and social services. If you need an interpreter, one will be provided. Designing forms, printing forms, and providing interpreters cost money. If employees are bilingual, they can demand higher salaries. So, there is a cost to providing the same service to individuals who speak a different language.

Many of the county health departments across the state already have their official patient documents in both languages. Some even produce educational documents in both languages, including televised information.

But beyond the cost of designing is the fact that Spanish comes in a wide variety of dialects (far more diverse than simply a Southern vs. Northern dialect, as in the United States). As such, many of the forms can be potentially useless to Spanish speakers from various countries or regions. I learned this with

difficulty as a child; Puerto Rican Spanish is far different from northern Mexican Spanish. One has to ask how far down the path to Babylon we will go before we consider that maybe we're making a mistake.

Beyond the intricacies of form development and the cost to provide all forms of communication in duplicate, we must also consider what one Social Service director recently shared with me. "There is always such a push to make sure we have things in Spanish, when no one has stopped to think that a very, very high percentage of those coming into our offices are illiterate," the director said. In that instance, regardless of the form, it would not have made a difference.

The entire issue is a serious one that needs serious debate and consideration. The state has passed an almost \$19 billion budget, and we've had discussions about illegal immigration and even about the impacts on our schools. But this slow creeping cost to provide all services in multiple languages is not healthy. One need only look to Miami to see the ever-escalating cost of being America's first bilingual city. If one wants to see a more accurate modern Babylon, we need only look to Los Angeles, where there are more than 160 languages with which to contend.

As policy makers (state and local) come to terms with the magnitude of the Hispanic influx, it is important for us to look at what we are doing and how much it costs. What is particularly troubling here is that while we move headlong into the bilingual world of government service we aren't really focusing on the actual costs or the benefits. We need to be cognizant of these issues always, lest we face the next influx of folks who speak yet another language. In a nation and state as great as ours, it isn't a matter of whether people will come, but from where and how many. CJ

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



Chad Adams

Local Innovation Bulletin Board

The Evil Cul-de-Sac

For many families, cul-de-sac living represents the epitome of suburban bliss. But thanks to a growing chorus of critics, ranging from city planners and traffic engineers to snowplow drivers, hundreds of local governments from San Luis Obispo, Calif., to Charlotte have passed zoning ordinances to limit cul-de-sacs or ban them in the future, the *Wall Street Journal* reports.

According to the Census Bureau, the population of U.S. suburbs grew by 12 percent from 1980 to 2000, while the total population in center cities grew by 1 percent.

The influx of homes in the suburbs, and the traffic they bring, has become the chief concern of planners across the nation, many of whom are struggling to mitigate the impact of car culture.

In Oregon, about 90 percent of the state's 241 cities have changed their laws to limit cul-de-sacs, while 40 small municipalities outside Philadelphia have adopted restrictions or bans.

For all the criticism aimed at them, cul-de-sacs do seem to have one last defender: the free market. Real-estate brokers say that despite the recent opposition by policy makers, homes on cul-de-sacs still tend to sell faster than other homes — and often command a comfortable premium.

Ralph Spargo, the vice president of product development for Standard Pacific Homes in Irvine, Calif., said his company charges as much as 5 percent more for a home situated on one.

The high price of planning

The San Francisco Bay Area is one of the most expensive housing markets in the nation, but as recently as the 1970s, Bay Area housing was as affordable as many other parts of the country, Randal O'Toole, director of the American Dream Coalition, writes in the *San Francisco Chronicle*.

So what happened to make Bay Area housing so unaffordable? In a nutshell: land-use planning. These restrictions included urban-growth boundaries, purchases of regional parks and open spaces, and various limits on building permits.

The regulations created artificial land shortages that drove

housing prices to extreme levels. Planning-induced housing shortages added \$30 billion to the cost of homes that Bay Area homebuyers purchased in 2005.

Today, residents of Houston can buy a new four-bedroom, 2 1/2-bath home on a quarter-acre lot for less than \$160,000.

But that same house would cost more than five times as much in Marin or Contra Costa counties, seven times as much in Alameda County, and eight to nine times as much in Santa Clara, San Mateo, or San Francisco counties.

Of mice and men

Today, the biggest issue in Denver is the plight of a tiny mouse, Stephen Moore says in the *Wall Street Journal*.

In 1998, the Preble's meadow jumping mouse gained protective status under the 1973 Endangered Species Act and caused 31,000 acres of local government and privately owned land in Colorado and Wyoming to be quarantined from all development.

Eventually, the cost to landowners will reach \$183 million, but now the Preble's mouse is imposing huge costs on local communities.

A Colorado water district was recently required to build two tunnels under a man-made pond to spare the critters the inconvenience of having to scurry around it; in the end, the water project cost more than \$1 million.

The Fish and Wildlife Service has the authority to assess penalties on property owners if they inadvertently spoil mouse habitat; owners can be fined if their cats chase and apprehend mice.

A 2003 survey found that more than one in four landowners affected by the Preble's mouse regulation "admitted to actively degrading habitat following the species listing in 1998."

Here lies the problem: The law tries to achieve the societal policy goal of saving species from extinction by imposing all of the costs on a hapless few.

If society wants to preserve habitat for the common good, then the cost should be borne by all taxpayers, not individual landowners, Moore says. CJ

From Cherokee to Currituck**New Towns, Billboard Rules, New Arts Revenue in News**

By MICHAEL LOWREY

Associate Editor

CHARLOTTE

The General Assembly has approved the formation of a municipality. The town of Midway will cover about eight square miles in northern Davidson County and have a population of about 5,000.

As is so often the case, the incorporation was motivated by the actions of a larger city, in this case Winston-Salem, which is trying to annex 18,000 people in nearby Forsyth County.

"When you have a fairly sizable municipality that starts getting aggressive with annexation, you'll have towns around it seeking incorporation," Sen. Fletcher Hartsell, R-Cabarrus, said to the *Winston-Salem Journal*.

"I would rather be known as Midway than as South Winston," Midway resident and business owner Jim McAlpine said to the newspaper. "I'm not against expansion. I just want us to have our own identity. It's about being your own place and not being a small part of something so much larger."

"If there wasn't the threat of annexation, I don't know that we would really need the incorporation. I just don't want to be called Winston-Salem. I go to Winston. I just don't want to be a part of it. It's a big town, and this, well, this is just home."

Since 2000, eight other new municipalities have been created by the legislature. The most recent was Wallburg, established in 2004 and also situated in Davidson County.

Midway initially will have a tax rate of \$.05 per \$100 of valuation and a town budget of about \$1 million.

Extra revenue for Durham?

Increased construction costs have the city of Durham considering using money from a special fund for downtown revitalization to help pay for a proposed performing arts center. At least one City Council member, however, is questioning the proposal, *The Herald-Sun* of Durham reports.

The possible shift of funds comes in response to a higher-than-expected cost estimate for the building. While the performing arts center had been projected to cost \$32.5 million, a new estimate, which captured recent increases in materials prices, put the cost at \$44 million. A \$200,000-a-year transfer from the revitalization fund would allow the city to issue an additional \$2.6 million in bonds to help pay for the center.

"We said the occupancy tax would be the only public money involved in it, and now we're potentially adding monies to it from the public coffers,"



Councilman Thomas Stith said.

"If in fact we're going to do that, then we need to be up front and disclose that that's what we're doing," he said.

Stith notes that the revitalization fund comes from property tax receipts, and any transfer would increase the likelihood of additional property tax money being used to replenish the fund.

Bill Kalkhof, president of Downtown Durham Inc., contends the center is "exactly the type of project that fund was set up to accomplish."

More clear space for billboards?

The billboard industry is asking the General Assembly to change its rules on how far in front of billboards a tree can be cut down. The current rules allow for 250 feet of cutting in front of billboards; billboard companies are asking that the distance be increased to 500 feet.

The proposed legislation comes after the N.C. Board of Transportation rejected the industry's request for a 500-foot cut zone earlier this year. The state increased the distance from 125 feet to 250 feet in 2000.

"It's unfair to private industry, private corporations that support our economy, to restrict them from cutting to the extent that their product can't be seen," Rep. Nelson Cole, D-Rockingham, who has sponsored a bill to raise the cut area, said to *The News & Observer* of Raleigh.

Environmental groups, among others, oppose the greater cutting area.

"It would have a substantial and adverse impact on the landscape by dramatically reducing tree cover on the right of way," said Molly Diggins, state director of the N.C. Sierra Club.

"Why should the public agree to have its trees removed to increase the profitability of a private industry?" she asked. CJ

Greensboro Voters Face 10 Bond Referenda on Nov. 7

By SAM A. HIEB
Contributing Editor

Greensboro residents will have the opportunity to place a dollar value on culture and entertainment this fall. But they could be spending much more than the cost of the average ticket.

The Greensboro City Council has placed 10 bond referendum items on the ballot for the election Nov. 7. Citizens will be able to vote on the items separately, but altogether the projects would cost a total of \$106 million. Another \$8.6 million for the construction and renovation of libraries is expected to be placed on the ballot later this summer.

Including the amount for the libraries, almost half of the total would go toward projects that would enhance culture and entertainment in Greensboro.

The largest amount, \$36 million, would go toward War Memorial Auditorium for renovations of the lobby, seating areas, and balconies.

Council members voted on each item individually, and the motion to place the auditorium bond on the ballot passed, 9-0.

Even Councilman Tom Phillips, who reliably questions every expenditure of taxpayers' dollars, endorsed the auditorium bond.

"There're not going to be many bonds that I'm going to be supporting tonight, but this is one that I feel we need to do," Phillips said. "I would be looking to go to Charlotte or Winston-Salem to see a Broadway show rather than in our auditorium, because it really is antiquated."

Two other projects that were placed on the ballot will be supplemented by an infusion of private funds. Voters will

decide whether the Greensboro Historical Museum will receive \$5.3 million in bond funds for renovations to provide additional exhibit space, including the acquisition of equipment and furnishings.

Lee Williams, a member of the museum's board of trustees, told the council the museum had raised \$1.5 million of its intended \$1.6 million goal to help supplement potential bond money.

William told the council that the museum had recently been listed as an affiliated site of the Smithsonian Institution, status that would help attract more visitors.

"It will really make this museum a destination site not only for people in Greensboro but for people across the country," Williams said. "We are on the move. We would appreciate your support."

Again, the council unanimously voted to place the museum bond on the ballot.

Another museum received \$5 million. But questions remain about the International Civil Rights Museum, which is still under construction 13 years after its foundation.

The museum appeared to be making headway when water problems were discovered in the basement, setting construction behind even further. It is seeking affiliation with the Smithsonian, so repairs must be done to carefully control heat and humidity according to the institution's standards.

In a phone interview, museum

Executive Director Amelia Parker said the museum still did not have a definite opening date. She also declined to cite specific numbers in the museum's private fund-raising goal, saying a status report would be issued later this summer.

Still she's confident that the museum will achieve its full potential as a community resource. "We are very encouraged by the support we are getting and excited about the potential this holds for our community," she said.

The issuance of the bond is contingent upon the museum raising \$5 million in matching funds. There

was no discussion before the vote, and fellow council members Sandy Carmany and Mike Barber joined Phillips in voting against putting the bond proposal on the ballot.

By far the most controversial proposal was the \$8.6 million bond for the Greensboro Public Library system.

Another proposal was put forth to add \$2 million to the bond so a new library could be built on land slated for a new school in the northeastern section of Greensboro.

Though the proposal passed by a narrow vote, Phillips and Mayor Keith Holliday expressed concern that there weren't enough citizens living in the new Reedy Fork development, where a new library was planned for construction.

"I think it's premature to do the library at this point," Holliday said. "I don't think you've got the critical mass of citizens from Greensboro liv-

ing there."

"It's too early to be doing that," Phillips said. "There's not enough development at Reedy Fork yet."

Phillips was also bothered by the school system's involvement in the project. The proposal, which the Guilford County Board of Education had already signed off on, was for the library to be situated at a new school in the Reedy Fork area, with both students and public using the library.

In such a situation, the library would be open to the public only when school wasn't in session. That's not fair to the public, who would be paying for the library, he said.

He also expressed concern the existence of public library on school property might be a draw for sex offenders.

But in a later phone interview, Phillips said the council had met with school board Chairman Alan Duncan, who answered their questions about the project.

As it turns out, the council decided not to tack on the extra \$2 million after all, Phillips said, because the need wasn't as urgent as originally thought.

"Once our questions were answered, we decided we didn't need to do this," Phillips said.

But he thinks the original \$8.6 million will be placed on the ballot. But that doesn't make him feel much better.

"I personally believe a lot of these bonds need to be put off," Phillips said. "It's not a question of whether they're needed or not. Yeah, we have some areas where we need to build some other branches. But we haven't seen our revenues growing and we've had some real tough budget years. Until we see things starting to improve, I think we need to hold off on a lot of these things. But I'm in the minority." *CH*

"I personally believe a lot of these bonds need to be put off."

Tom Phillips
Greensboro Councilman

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From the Liberty Library

• The notion that Theodore Roosevelt was one of America's greatest presidents is literally carved in stone — right up there on Mount Rushmore. But as historian Jim Powell shows in *Bully Boy: The Truth About Theodore Roosevelt's Legacy*, Roosevelt's outsized personality, colossal energy, and fascinating life story obscured what he actually did as president. What Roosevelt did severely damaged the United States, Powell says. Powell exposes the harm Roosevelt did to the country in his own era, and he examines the lasting consequences of Roosevelt's actions — the legacies of big government, expanded presidential power, and foreign interventionism. Learn more at www.randomhouse.com/crown.

• In *Finding the Target: The Transformation of American Military Policy*, Frederick Kagan describes the three basic transformations within the U.S. military since Vietnam. First was the move to an all-volunteer force and a new generation of weapons systems in the 1970s. Second was the emergence of stealth technology and precision-guided munitions in the 1980s. Third was the information technology that followed the fall of the Soviet Union and the first Gulf War. This last could have ensured the U.S. continuing military pre-eminence, but this goal was compromised by President Clinton's drawing down of our armed forces in the 1990s and President Bush's response to Sept. 11 and the global war on terrorism. Available at www.encounterbooks.com.

• A recent *New Yorker* article called Noam Chomsky "one of the finest minds of the twentieth century." This description is based on the MIT professor's writings on linguistics in the 1950s; but beginning with his criticism of the Vietnam War in the 1960s, Chomsky became much better known for his radical politics than for his theories of language. Over the past 40 years, he has gained a devoted following in the United States and Europe for his increasingly bitter — some say hysterical — censure of U.S. "crimes." Chomsky has complained about being ignored by mainstream publications such as *The New York Times*, but in fact his steady stream of polemical works, like the bestselling *9-11*, have made him the center of a veritable cult. In *The Anti-Chomsky Reader*, editors Peter Collier and David Horowitz have assembled a set of essays that analyze Chomsky's intellectual career and the evolution of his anti-Americanism. Also at www.encounterbooks.com. CJ

Book Review

Founders' Wisdom Applied to Modern Problems

• Richard Brookhiser: *What Would the Founders Do? Our Questions, Their Answers*; Basic Books; 2006; 261 pp; \$26 hardcover.

By MITCH KOKAI

Associate Editor

RALEIGH
What would George Washington think about outsourcing? Would Thomas Jefferson approve of drilling in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge? What would John Jay say about stem-cell research?

Before you start digging through your history texts to find the answers, you might want to consult Richard Brookhiser's latest volume. A senior editor of *National Review*, Brookhiser has made a second career out of writing books about the Founders.

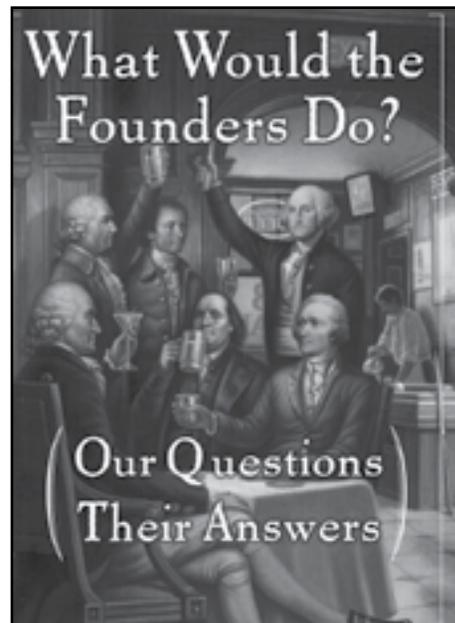
Those books have led him to another line of work. "Over the past decade, I have given hundreds of talks about the founding fathers," he writes on the first page of his latest work. "Every time there is an opportunity for Q&A, there is at least one question of the form, 'What would Founder X think about current event, or living person, Y?' No subject is too trivial, no problem too difficult."

Brookhiser brings experience to the job. He's penned profiles of Washington, Hamilton, John Adams — even Gouverneur Morris, described in a book subtitle as "the rake who wrote the Constitution." That quote offers a clue about Brookhiser's style.

He treats the Founders as more than just marble busts or faces on the walls of our historic buildings. They're real people, with passions, jealousies, and inconsistencies of thought. That's why Brookhiser is not afraid to puncture any pretense of solemn, stale debate about the Founders.

He starts a subchapter on partisanship this way: "Sick of attack ads, spinning, mindless partisanship? The founders hated it as much as you do. They also invented it."

We're also reminded that the "politics of personal destruction" had a much more literal meaning in the Founders' day. "The Revolution gave dueling a big push in American life, since officers care passionately about honor, and they're used to firearms."



One signer of the Declaration and two signers of the Constitution died in duels, Brookhiser warns us. We see evidence of the impact of duels every time we look at the \$10 bill.

Even when political disputes yielded no bloodshed, Founders threw plenty of rhetorical punches. "Some of the founders were among the best writers and talkers America has ever produced, and when they reamed each other

in private, they did it good and hard," Brookhiser writes. "When they wanted to do so in public, they turned to contemptible men of no social standing, that is, journalists."

If you're looking for reverence, try another book. Consider this take on the war on drugs: "Every time I talk about George Washington to an audience that is younger than members of AARP, I get the following question: Did Washington grow hemp at Mount Vernon?"

This irrepressible query is asked by pot-heads, who know that the answer is yes, and want me to say so publicly."

Brookhiser could have waited for his rimshot, then moved to the next subject. Instead he explains that Washington grew hemp for fabric.

He also explains that the Father of Our Country was a meticulous farmer who would have recorded any "intoxicating" or "medicinal" use for any of his crops.

The book asks plenty of questions,

but the author is not afraid to avoid answers. If the historical record offers no clear-cut response to our modern-day questions, Brookhiser says so. He also shows us that Founders disagreed on important topics.

"Founders welcomed new immigrants that met their business needs," Brookhiser writes, adding a specific anecdote about Washington's search for a carpenter and bricklayer in 1784. "If they are good workmen, they may be of Asia, Africa, or Europe. They may be Mahometans, Jews, or Christian of any sect — or they may be atheists." Washington was laying it on for comic effect; he is saying, hire anybody who can put boards or bricks together."

But the Founders disagreed about the residency requirement for immigrants who wanted to serve in the U.S. Senate. Brookhiser also tells us that the French Revolution provoked new feelings of fear about foreigners.

While Adams and his Federalist colleagues boosted citizenship requirements, "The Republicans profited from Federalist alarm by courting the ethnic vote."

Brookhiser also exposes inconsistencies between the Founders' goals and actions. "Thomas Jefferson, and his right-hand man, James Madison, came to office vowing to cut taxes and pay off the national debt," the author reminds us. "They would cut spending and get the debt monkey off the nation's back."

The Jefferson administration made some progress — despite waging war with North African pirates and buying the Louisiana Territory. But the Madison administration laid waste to any savings from the Sage of Monticello.

"Hardest to bear was the wastefulness of some of President Madison's nominal supporters," Brookhiser writes. "'I cannot consent,' [Treasury Secretary Albert] Gallatin complained, to become 'a seeker of resources for the purpose of supporting useless baubles.' The War of 1812 consumed all the accumulated savings of the Jeffersonians, and threw the government back into debt and taxes once more."

This reviewer closed *What Would the Founders Do?* with as many questions as answers to that main question. But that's no flaw. Brookhiser reminds us that the Founders often disagreed about taxes, immigration, war and peace — even democracy.

"They have passed these disagreements, and the disposition to disagree, on to us," according to the book's closing chapter. "Contention is as much a part of their legacy as their principles. It fills our public space, and our minds."

If we are as intelligent, hard-working, and practical as the Founders, Brookhiser suggests, then we are taking from them the lessons that we need most. CJ

'Wilmington Riot' Report Focuses Too Much on Black Failures

On November 10, 1898, a disgraceful event occurred in North Carolina: as part of the White Supremacy campaign of the 1890s, Democratic leaders in Wilmington overthrew leading black and white Republicans to regain control of Wilmington's government.

After a six-year investigation, the 1898 Wilmington Race Riot Commission on May 31, 2006 recommended 15 ways to "repair the moral, economic, civic, and political damage wrought" by the events of that day. Suggestions ranged from incorporating lessons concerning the episode into school curriculums to seizing vacant commercial properties and selling them to low-income residents with guaranteed mortgages.

But the study's recommendations are based solely on the 1897 and 1900 *Wilmington City Directory* and, therefore, inadequately measure any long-term economic impact on the



Dr. Troy Kickler

African American community.

During the 1890s, the Democratic Party lost legislative seats and patronage appointments as Fusion politics — the alliance of black and white Republicans and Populists for political objectives — had gained incremental success. As a result, some black males were elected and appointed to political office. In 1898 Wilmington, where less than 50 percent of the population was white, black men held various elected and bureaucratic political offices.

Many Democrats in Wilmington meanwhile alleged black corruption, and a "Secret Nine" plotted to regain control of the port city. Unwittingly accelerating the white "revolution," Alexander Manly, the black editor of the *Wilmington Record*, enraged many local whites with clever editorials.

On the morning of Nov. 10, whites burned Manly's press. News of the blaze quickly spread, and in the streets whites and blacks confronted each other. Gunfire soon erupted. (Both sides claimed the other fired first.) When the smoke cleared and the gunfire ceased, 22 blacks lay dead, leading black and white Republicans had fled the city, and Democrats had regained power.

What happened in Wilmington, asserts one member of the riot commission, "suppressed the political, social, educational and economic development and aspirations of African-Americans in this state for over ninety years."

To be more comprehensive and accurate, however, the commission should have studied city directories beyond 1900 — especially because Wilmington directories at the turn of the century were published continuously. If it had done so, the commission would have found that, despite the exodus of many of its leaders and professionals after the riot, the African American business community in Wilmington did well.

In 1902, for instance, 25 of 27 eateries were run by blacks, and by 1915, they operated 38 of 39. The number of black grocers from 1895 to 1915 increased four fold, and by 1915, black women increasingly started businesses requiring low entrance costs. This was not new. From 1885 to 1915, black Wilmingtonians started more businesses and increasingly entered formerly whites-only professions.

Although prominent African Americans could still vote in 1901, the passage of poll taxes and literacy tests

eliminated a constituency that elected African Americans. The decrease in African American patronage appointments therefore contributed primarily to a short-term economic setback.

Although after the riot the location of many black businesses moved from its downtown, Wilmington continued providing "a relatively attractive business environment" for African Americans, writes historian Robert Kenzer in *Enterprising Southerners: Black Economic Success in North Carolina, 1865-1915*. Meanwhile, blacks across the state increased "their share of real estate," and the number of black college graduates increased as enterprising black Southerners ensured that their children had opportunities that they did not.

Although innovative blacks worked in unfair circumstances during the late 1800s and early 1900s, the commission's assumptions and recommendations reveal a 1960s revisionist focus on failure instead of an emphasis on black resiliency that enabled African Americans to remarkably achieve economic success. CJ

Troy Kickler is director of the North Carolina History Project.

Don't Bring a Knife



... to a Gunfight

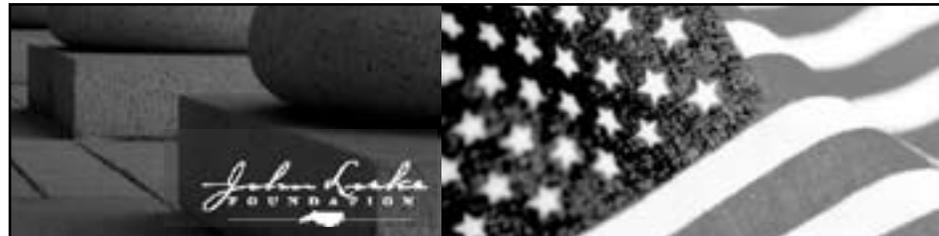
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(Phone 919-828-3876 for ticket information)

Short Takes on Culture

A Great First Half-Hour

• "Superman Returns"
Warner Bros. Pictures
Directed by Bryan Singer

I watched "Superman Returns" hoping for a movie deserving of the title. By the end of the opening credits, I was once again ready to believe that a man could fly.

The Man of Steel's dramatic return to Earth and reunion with his adoptive mother set the stage for great things to come. When Superman reappeared in Metropolis just in time to restore a failed shuttle launch, I was sold. Unfortunately, the rest of the movie didn't live up to the first half-hour. Director Bryan Singer's self-proclaimed sequel to "Superman I" and "II" tries to mimic, rather than expand, the series.

Brandon Routh turns in a mixed performance as the Man of Steel. Routh is at his best as Superman: wooing Lois Lane (Kate Bosworth), battling Lex Luthor, and fighting for truth, justice, and (although the film drops the words) the American way. He falls short as the mild-mannered Clark Kent. Where Christopher Reeve's Kent was shy, charming, and just a bit bumbling, Routh's is lackluster: a weak imitation of the original. Kevin Spacey's performance as the villain Luthor almost disguises the shortcomings of the plot; his character is dark, clever, and sometimes humorous.

"Superman Returns" has its good moments. Modern computer-generated effects make Superman more believable than ever — whether it's his ability to prevent a crash-landing or to repel bullets. If you plan to see "Superman Returns," do so on the big screen. The action sequences will be worth it.

— JENNA ASHLEY
ROBINSON

Some Americans have 'Talent'

• "America's Got Talent"
NBC
Wednesdays at 8:00 p.m.

Does America have talent? Yes. Unfortunately, not every contestant on this variety show and \$1 million competition has talent. Along with the usual group of singers, dancers, comedians, and jugglers, the show features acts that one would likely see at a carnival or, similarly, in Las Vegas. For example, Jay Myl used his nose flute to play "Tiptoe Through the Tulips." Leonid the Magnificent, adorned with angel's wings and little else, performed a balancing act with

knives. Buster Balloon managed to squeeze his entire body into a large pink balloon. Did I mention that there was a break-dancing cow?

"America's Got Talent" also features a peculiar collection of celebrity judges. Anchored by host Regis Philbin, the judges include acerbic Brit Piers Morgan, singer-actress Brandy, and "singer"-actor David Hasselhoff. Unlike "American Idol," there is no chemistry among the three judges and the host. But with acts ranging from bizarre to extraordinary, who cares about the judges?

— TERRY STOOPS

Hopes for 'Pirates' dashed

• "Pirates of the Caribbean: Dead Man's Chest"
Walt Disney Pictures
Directed by Gore Verbinski

I had great expectations of Gore Verbinski's newest addition to the "Pirates of the Caribbean." "Curse of the Black Pearl" is one of my favorite adventure flicks — making it a tough act to follow.

"Dead Man's Chest" starts with an exciting premise: Captain Jack Sparrow (Johnny Depp) owes his soul to Davy Jones, the fiend that presides over evil spirits of the deep. But always a smooth-talker, Captain Jack is determined to find a way to escape his sentence.

Then, the plot thickens — a bit too much. While scheming to save his soul and searching for the Dead Man's Chest, Jack must also avoid the agents of the East India Trading Company, a band of cannibals, and his erstwhile nemesis Commodore Norrington.

The action aboard Jones' ship, The Flying Dutchman, is mundane by comparison. Sluggish and insipid, Jones' barnacle-laden (and slightly gross) shipmates lack the personality of the first film's undead pirates. Jones's sea-beast, which Jack Sparrow and crew battle for most of the movie's climax, is equally tedious. The Kraken, with tentacles like the Hydra's many heads, makes several repetitive attempts on the Black Pearl before the end of the film.

Without a blockbuster prequel for comparison, I would probably call "Dead Man's Chest" the best adventure film of the year. But when compared to "Curse of the Black Pearl," it comes up short. The sequel has little of the energy or wit of the first film.

— JENNA ASHLEY
ROBINSON CJ

Book Review

An Optimist Looks at the U.S.

• Larry Schweikart: *America's Victories: Why The U.S. Wins Wars and Will Win the War on Terror*; Sentinel; 2006; 300pp; \$24.95 hard cover

By MELISSA D. MITCHELL
Contributing Editor

RALEIGH

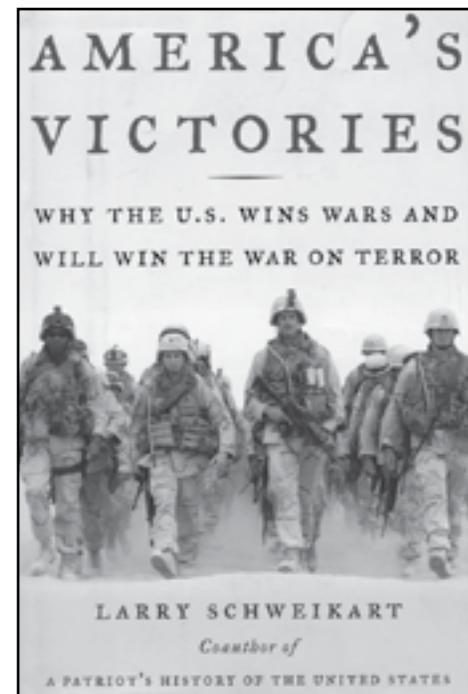
Professor, historian, and coauthor of *A Patriot's History of the United States*, Dr. Larry Schweikart is unusual among his academic colleagues in that he is bullish on America. Schweikart is tired of the negative perceptions of America and the U.S. military that permeate college campuses, the media, Hollywood, and even the halls of Congress.

He sees America as a unique beacon in history. In his newest book, *America's Victories: Why the U.S. Wins Wars and Will Win the War on Terror*, Schweikart traces the history of America's armed services from the Revolutionary War to the War on Terror. He dispels the myth of the United States as a barbaric, bloodthirsty nation of harsh jailers, which has become the mantra of the Left. He provides a historic look at why America's armed forces have become the most lethal and successful military in history.

In dispelling the myth of the United States as a harsh jailer, Schweikart notes that although there are isolated incidences of prisoner abuse, America has always been at the forefront of treating POWs humanely. From Revolutionary times to the present war, he cites many instances where POWs captured by Americans were treated better than captured Americans. Schweikart compares the treatment of prisoners at Guantanamo prison to the Bataan Death March. What the Japanese did was torture, but the alleged mistreatment of the prisoners at Guantanamo — tagged club Gitmo because of the amenities at the prison — consisted of air-conditioning, not working, and the playing of loud music. As Schweikart points out, the real abuse was of the guards at Gitmo who were routinely barraged with feces and urine when they tried to deliver meals.

Schweikart says the Abu Ghraib prison guards "should be given commendations, not jail terms," and notes that the violence in Iraq decreased dramatically after the pictures of Abu Ghraib appeared. He thinks that this is the direct result of the terrorists' lack of respect for women. Since they believe that a woman is not much better than a dog, the terrorists feared being captured and turned over to an American woman.

Schweikart provides a list of historic reasons why America wins wars. All of these ideas are the result of American values and the free market that are a part of the American culture. Because of the American's reverence for life, our enemies, especially the Islamic terror-



ists, see this as a weakness and tend to underestimate the U.S. military.

In many cultures, a mistake brings such shame that they avoid self-criticism, but the U.S. military learns from its mistakes, fixes them, and "trains, trains, trains." Schweikart notes that Americans have an affinity for technology, but he gives credit to our "free-market system that supplies more and usually better weapons than our enemies."

During every war, he says, the United States has had protestors (Schweikart says that the Tories were the Jane Fondas of the Revolutionary War) but their message of emphasizing U.S. casualties has backfired. In the quest to lower the number of casualties, we have become more lethal and efficient.

Schweikart provides a fascinating look into the history of war reporting and Hollywood. There have always been biased reporters, but it was not until the last 40 years that the press became totally anti-military. In his analysis of the makeup of the military, Schweikart found that the field of journalism has the fewest number of employees who have ever served in the military.

One of the most surprising historical facts in *America's Victories* is how Hollywood has changed its view of the military. Schweikart fills 3 1/2 pages with names of Hollywood actors who served in World Wars I and II. "They were actors who became veterans," he says. Movies of the 1940s and '50s featured the military as heroes, not as homicidal psychopaths.

Throughout *America's Victories*, Schweikart provides an outstanding history of the evolution of America's military. Although he provides a realistic picture of America's mistakes, Schweikart also provides a positive factual historical account of the U.S. military on how it won wars and will win this war.

Harvard's Decline Bodes Ill for Other Universities

• By Harry R. Lewis: *Excellence Without a Soul: How a Great University Forgot Education*; Public Affairs; 2006; 305 pp; \$26

By **GEORGE C. LEEF**
Contributing Editor

RALEIGH
People usually wait until they have retired to write books that air a good deal of dirty laundry. Maybe it's a mark in favor of tenure that a professor who is still very much a part of a university faculty can write a book such as *Excellence Without a Soul*.

Harry Lewis, former dean of Harvard College and currently a professor of computer science, has given us a candid and disarmingly frank appraisal of the serious weaknesses he sees in his school. Although a few of his chapters are only tangentially related to his theme of educational malaise, Lewis succeeds admirably in making his point that undergraduate education at Harvard isn't all it is cracked up to be.

Lewis begins with, and focuses much of his attention on, the curriculum. Harvard suffers from the same problem that besets many other colleges and universities — that students can choose their courses from a vast smorgasbord of offerings, usually subject only to the vague guidelines imposed by the school's "distribution requirements."

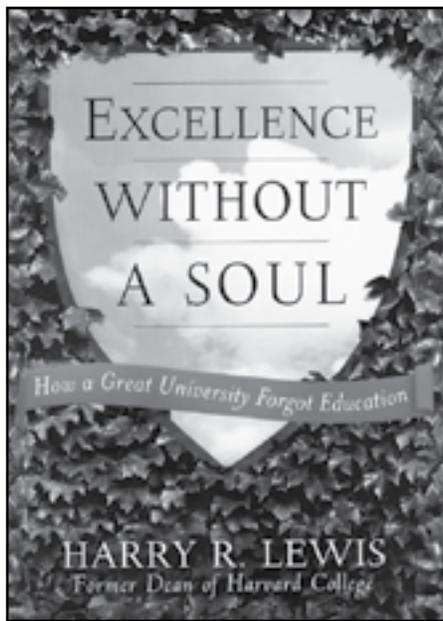
Writing about the curriculum review that Harvard began in 2002, which he found to be an exercise in futility, Lewis says, "The bottom line was that nothing in Harvard's curriculum was held to be more important than anything else. Like a mother of quarreling children, Harvard looked at its thirty-two academic departments and their countless subspecialties and declared that they were all loved equally." After three years of study, the review committee proposed

a new curriculum "with no meaningful expectations at all."

Here Lewis has identified one of the great weaknesses in the modern university. Students no longer have to take the courses that used to be the pillars of a college education. Yes, students can still take courses such as American history and literary classics if they want to (but they might find that what is taught covers only a narrow slice of the subject, corresponding to the professor's particular interests), but they can just as well take many others, including entertaining and easy courses in popular culture.

The problem is that the curriculum is not designed with the intellectual needs of students in mind. Instead, it has oozed into a blob that generally keeps students and professors happy — the former because it's not overly demanding and the latter because they get mostly to teach what they want to teach. It's as if a restaurant had a menu consisting mainly of desserts and dishes that the chefs like to prepare.

Lewis also has sharp words about the indifferent teaching that Harvard undergrads often encounter. He says that "great teaching can be viewed in academic circles as a kind of performance art, fine if you can do it but raising doubts about the teacher's seriousness as a scholar." Harvard, like other research



universities, pays very little attention to a professor's ability to conduct a good class and pays inordinate attention to his publication record. But poor teaching isn't inevitable. "A quarter mile from Harvard Yard, the Harvard Business School puts pedagogy high on the list of institutional missions. Students who move from the College to the Business School are astonished by

the improvement in teaching quality," Lewis notes. It's a question of priorities, and most big universities get the wrong answer.

The education that Harvard has forgotten isn't only the academic kind. It has also forgotten the moral education of its students, Lewis says. Although Harvard (and most other colleges and universities) go to ridiculous lengths to make sure that they have a "diverse" faculty (counting only certain characteristics as relevant and enhancing "diversity"), "Rarely do they even suggest that professors should be responsible for students as whole human beings during their crucially formative years, or that professors should be chosen, trained, or evaluated with that objective in mind," he writes. Now there is a reactionary idea that must have a lot of Harvard faculty members rolling their eyes in disdain.

I also give Lewis a gold star for his willingness to criticize one of the current higher education fads, namely "global

education." He reports that Larry Summers (who receives a number of sharp jabs throughout the book) was worried that Harvard was too "Americanist" and needed to produce graduates with more "awareness" of other nations and cultures. Lewis pummels the notion that study abroad is necessarily a good use of Harvard students' time. The devotees of multiculturalism always hug the warm and fuzzy idea that exposure to other cultures is somehow transformative, but Lewis doesn't buy it.

Where I find the book unpersuasive is the lengthy discussion of grade inflation. Lewis is quite unconcerned about it. He can't find any rationale for grading that, in his view, doesn't have more against it than for it. For example, he pooh-poohs the "nose-to-the-grindstone" rationale.

Lewis' chapter on college sports and half-chapter devoted to the problem of sexual assault on campus are enlightening, but seem irrelevant to the theme of the forgetting of education.

Finally, there is a big omission. Lewis says almost nothing about the great fad of contemporary American education, namely "diversity." It's hard to think of anything more at odds with a commitment to educational excellence than a policy of having considerations of race, class, and gender trump relevant factors when it comes to admissions and hiring, but Lewis steers clear of any criticism.

Still, the book is well worth reading if you are interested in finding out where Harvard — and most other colleges and universities in the United States — are letting their students down. *CJ*

George C. Leef is executive director of the Pope Center for Higher Education Policy.

BOOKS AUTHORED BY JLF STAFFERS



By John Hood
President of the
John Locke Foundation

Selling the Dream Why Advertising is Good Business



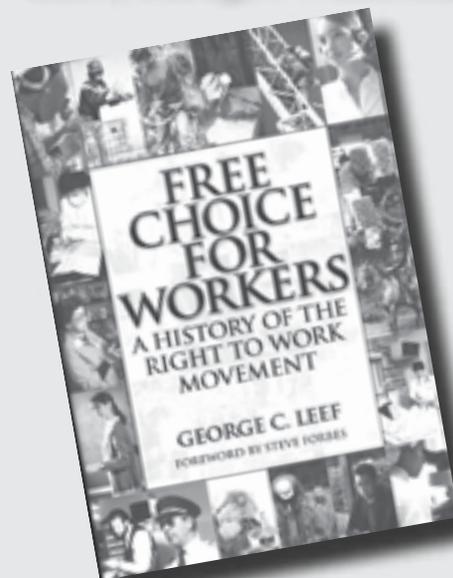
"[Selling the Dream] provides a fascinating look into the world of advertising and beyond ... Highly recommended."

Choice
April 2006

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BOOKS AUTHORED BY JLF STAFFERS

Free Choice for Workers: A History of the Right to Work Movement



By George C. Leef
Executive Director of the Pope
Center for Higher Education Policy

"He writes like a buccaneer... recording episodes of bravery, treachery, commitment and vacillation."

Robert Huberty
Capital Research Center

(Call Jameson Books, 1-800-426-1357, to order)

Commentary

Our Fractured Culture

Welcome to the new America, where we're increasingly divided by culture. And while it's fashionable to talk about "culture wars" between conservatives and liberals, the truth is that new technology increasingly dictates the subdivision of the country into niche markets, with Americans sharing ever-fewer common cultural reference points with each other, regardless of political ideology.

In recent years, technological advances, particularly cable and satellite television, satellite radio, and the Internet have vastly increased people's entertainment and information options. With many more choices available, consumers are increasingly opting for specialized programming that meets their personal array of interests. That has its benefits — and costs.

The most obvious sign of the new, subdivided America might be what we watch on television. Today a hit show for a major network is one that's being watched by 15 percent of those that have their TVs on and are watching broadcast or cable television ("share") at that time. That usually amounts to about 9 percent to 10 percent of all households with TVs ("rating"). Only five primetime shows ("CSI: Miami," "60 Minutes," "Desperate Housewives," and two episodes of "American Idol") during the March sweeps week were the programming of choice of even one of six households watching TV at the time.

Thirty years ago, a far different term was likely to have been associated with a network television show with a 15 percent share: "canceled." ABC, CBS, and NBC combined had about 90 percent of prime-time viewership in the 1970s; a show getting one viewer in six was not pulling its weight. (ABC, CBS, and NBC capture more than one-third of the prime-time audience today.)

The ratings drop over time isn't limited to run-of-the mill TV series, either; special event viewing is down today, too. According to Nielsen Media Research, only once in the past 20 years has a special event made it into the top 10 of network telecasts as measured by percentage of households: a Nancy Kerrigan-Tonya Harding ice skat-

ing session from the 1994 Winter Olympics.

The situation is no different with music. It's hard to talk about "music of a generation" when each member of it is listening to something different on his iPod. Not that long ago, people's access to music was heavily influenced by what they heard on radio. There were

a limited number of frequencies available on the AM and FM dial, so exposure to different artists or even kinds of music was restricted.

While the radio frequencies are just as limited today, there are many additional means available to access music that didn't exist 15 years ago. Satellite radio offers the sort of

variety in programming that cable or satellite television does. You can now buy any of literally hundreds of thousands of songs instantly on line. Myspace.com has more than 400,000 pages on artists classified as belonging to the "rock" genre. There are 21,510 pages on Christian Rap acts, 18,703 pages on Reggae-ton performers, and 192,402 pages given over to the practitioners of "experimental music," whatever that might be.

As for news, with the Internet and talk radio it's possible to get information from just about any possible viewpoint, including with the desired degree of objectivity and shrillness. Conservatives don't have to be exposed to the "mainstream media" if they think it distasteful or too liberal; liberals can get their news from even more liberal sources if they choose.

As a free-market advocate, I like choice. More options certainly are good, allowing people to consume items that better fit their tastes.

At the same time, though, our increasingly subdivided culture is not without its downsides. Shared experiences do facilitate communication and understanding. The phrase "nothing in common" is often used to describe people with whom we just can't establish a rapport. And as our culture continues to subdivide itself, it seems inevitable that we'll literally and figuratively have "nothing in common" with an increasing number of people. CJ

Michael Lowrey is assistant editor of Carolina Journal.



Michael Lowrey



Editorial

Media, Investigate Terrorists

The argument over whether the U.S. Treasury Department should be tracking Americans' overseas banking transactions or whether newspapers should have revealed the program has been off the mark.

Newspapers — notably *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post*, the *Wall Street Journal*, and the *Los Angeles Times* — ignited the firestorm recently when they reported that the Bush administration, in waging the War on Terrorism, has been tracking millions of overseas banking transactions for nearly five years.

One side of the argument, understandably, questions whether Big Brother should be meddling in citizens' personal lives. Critics of the press argue that editors jeopardized the security of the United States during wartime. The critics further contend that perhaps freedom of the press should be restricted.

Actually, the argument should not be confined to one issue. The onus for protecting confidential information lies on government, not on journalists.

Most Americans instinctively fear a government that pries into their personal lives. As it is, there is precious little privacy remaining in a world shrunk by the omnipresence of electronic gadgetry.

Likewise, editors, when they learn of such a program, have an ethical responsibility to consider informing the public of its existence. The right to exercise freedom of the press carries with it serious responsibilities. Editors, not unlike other citizens, should be held accountable for their actions.

Rather than freedom of the press, the primary issue should be the media's lack of credibility since the war started. The media's inanity — and inaction — has been appalling.

Americans, rather than hyperventilating over the latest clash between the press and the government, should consider the media's overall track record in reporting the War on Terrorism. Has

it been accurate? Has it been fair? Has it been balanced?

Most objective observers, we think, would say that all except the *Wall Street Journal* have failed on all three counts. Their reporting and editorials harp on alleged weaknesses, poor decisions, and failures of the U.S. war effort. Over the years, they have questioned the nation's decision to go to war and the length and conduct of the conflict. They frequently have been proven wrong.

In a twisted way, journalists have enthused over waging their own personal war against the United States and blithely jeopardizing the security of all Americans.

Concomitantly, they have protected the identities and "sensibilities" of an enemy that resides furtively, and sometimes brazenly, within our nation's borders.

Through their inaction, editors — perhaps by inexcusable ignorance but probably by design — have failed the public by forgoing investigative reporting of the web of terrorism that has ensnared cities, universities, nonprofit organizations, and businesses across America.

The existence of terrorist cells and their proliferation has been extensively reported by numerous intrepid authors. Yet the media remain asleep at the wheel. Here we have a target-rich opportunity to practice "civic journalism" at its highest order, and editors fall to their knees.

Journalists should re-examine their priorities soon and focus on the real enemy. The fundamentalist Muslim enemy uses subterfuge and cynically exercises freedoms found only in a democracy to undermine those very freedoms.

A little balance in news coverage would assuage media critics who could legitimately ask, "Why isn't comprehensive investigative news about terrorism likewise 'fit to print'?" CJ

Teachers and the Budget

Lawmakers will use the 8 percent raise during fall elections

The North Carolina General Assembly overwhelmingly approved a state budget in July that raises General Fund spending by about 10 percent in a single year, uses hundreds of millions of dollars in one-time revenues to finance ongoing expenses, and fails to repeal immediately the “temporary” tax increases lawmakers first imposed in 2001.

But don’t be surprised if many North Carolinians learn little more about the bill than the fact that it gave public school teachers average pay raises of 8 percent. This fact was probably the single-most reported aspect of the budget. And you can count on legislators supporting the budget to talk up the teacher pay raise big during the fall elections. It may win votes. That doesn’t mean it was the right choice.

On teacher compensation, policymakers and the public alike are under some misconceptions. First, as has been noted repeatedly in the past, North Carolina’s average teacher pay is not below the national average. As far as can be determined, it hasn’t been below average for at least 20 years. Among other adjustments, one must account for differences in the age or experience distribution of teachers in each state (otherwise, fast-growing states that

aggressively hire younger teachers will always look less competitive than they are), and you have to account for variations in state or local cost of living (otherwise, the comparison would be based on the idea that a \$40,000 salary stretches as far in Manhattan as it does in Morganton, which is absurd).

Second, teachers as a whole are not woefully underpaid compared to every other profession with comparable educational requirements.

Third, about that oft-cited teacher-turnover problem, it is exaggerated. To say that a large minority of teachers leave the profession within the first five years is not to say that there is huge turnover in the teaching pool as a whole.

A bit of legitimate good news about the 8 percent teacher-pay hike enacted this year: there is some variation built in, and it makes sense. Specifically, North Carolina public schools do seem to be less competitive in starting teacher pay than are those of neighboring states, and the budget bill directs a sizable share of the pay raise to shrinking this gap.

But it would have been far better to set the average teacher-pay hike a bit lower, closer to the 5.5 percent offered to state employees, and then increase even further the incentives for teachers to fill high-priority vacancies. *CJ*

Philanthropy Can’t Be Extorted

Charity must be voluntary and not coerced by government

Rob Schofield, director of public policy and government relations at the North Carolina Center for Nonprofits, in a recent column in *The News & Observer*, defended the current federal estate tax on the grounds that it benefits nonprofits. The John Locke Foundation is a nonprofit, one that may well benefit from the tax-imposed incentive for people to donate wealth rather than letting it accrue for heirs. Not surprisingly, we find this argument appalling.

To defend the current U.S. tax rate on estates — 46 percent, one of the highest in the world — on the grounds that it motivates individuals to support charitable causes is, essentially, to support the use of government coercion to force people to be philanthropic. It has a whiff of extortion about it, despite the fact that most of the charitable causes in question are worthy ones.

Charity and coercion are not the same. They are not brother and sister. They aren’t even distant cousins. To be philanthropic is to demonstrate one’s love of humanity. If you are asked to give money to the Salvation Army, listing its history of accomplishments and the crucial role it plays in combating

social ills, you are free to say yes or no. If a government official were to demand that you give money to the Salvation Army, however, your decision to do so has nothing to do with generosity. It is not an act of morality or compassion. It is an act motivated by fear.

One may ask whether providing nonprofits (including the John Locke Foundation) various tax exemptions and their donors tax deductions constitutes government meddling in philanthropy. The answer is yes, at least in part. There are aspects of the tax treatment of nonprofits that are troubling.

The most controversial issue may be the tax deductibility of contributions to some nonprofits. What we should really be taxing is consumed income, not income per se. One could argue that giving away money to a charity is not consumption, in which case it shouldn’t be taxed.

There are many possible changes to the system that we would support. But an entirely unacceptable one would be to institutionalize the idea that donors owe charities their hard-earned money, and if the donors won’t pay voluntarily, government has a proper role in forcing them to. *CJ*

Commentary

Between Bruising and Snoozing

In debating issues from the Iraq War to local school construction, I think it is wise to choose the middle course.

No, I don’t mean a middle course on fighting anti-American thugs or housing students. I mean a middle course in the way we debate these issues. At one pole, you have the shrill, mindlessly partisan, intensely personal style of political invective that has unfortunately become ensconced in some of the broadcast media and blogosphere. At the other pole, you have the namby-pamby, shades of gray, can’t-we-all-just-get-along approach that attempts to define differences away in a seemingly endless stream of weasel words and psychobabble.

Neither serves the public interest. Neither keeps the public’s interest. The shrillness gets boring after a time, and the namby-pamby is intentionally boring, right from the start, as a strategy to mute debate rather than air and resolve it.

Based on recent experience with two local citizen panels here in North Carolina, I submit that a middle course of spirited but respectful debate offers the best opportunities for progress. One of the panels was in Charlotte-Mecklenburg, where my colleague Lindalyn Kakadelis served on a committee chaired by former Gov. Jim Martin and charged with the task of formulating a response to last year’s defeat of a school-bond issue. The other panel was the Blue Ribbon Committee on the Future of Wake County, on which I served with 64 other individuals representing a variety of professional and political backgrounds.

The process in both instances may have appeared chaotic from the outside — possibly because each was a bit chaotic — but the experiences were, for the most part, useful. Leaders may have wanted the committees to cohere immediately and achieve premature consensus, but they had the wisdom not to try to force it when push came to shove. And while there were passionate debates and differences of opinion, in each case prompting a group of dissenters to express their alternative views in a joint statement, the discourse remained mostly civil and constructive.

There are voices in Mecklenburg and Wake counties who express disappointment with the outcome of these committee deliberations. They wanted to see consensus. They wanted to see tough, contentious issues go away. Some wanted political cover for expensive projects and tax increases.

Such expectations were unrealistic. We don’t have differences of opinion about how much new schools should cost or how high local tax burdens should be because no one has ever thought to discuss them. These differences are real. They reflect not just different information, but also different preferences and principles.

In the Wake County case, there were at least two different ways that our Blue Ribbon Committee might have reached consensus in a report on county infrastructure needs and how to pay for them. One would have been to fashion a report that made no recommendations and took no positions, but simply laid out a range of alternatives, on the cost side and revenue side, with pros and cons and dollar amounts attached. Another would have been to set specific targets for cost containment and reallocating existing county and state dollars to address our need for schools, roads, and other projects. If serious efforts to reach these cost-side targets still fell short, then the report would have prioritized the revenue options needed to bridge the gap. I was part of a group that tried to make the second option happen, but the magnitude of the issues involved and time constraints conspired to make consensus problematic.

That’s okay. The Wake committee, like the Mecklenburg panel, still served the useful function of describing county challenges and serving as a forum for airing alternative policy responses. No appointed board of citizen volunteers can substitute for elected boards hashing things out and voters making their preferences known. An advisory board can help set a tone, however, a middle course between bruising and snoozing. *CJ*

Hood is president of the John Locke Foundation.



John Hood

Editorial Briefs

Physicians' pay drops

The average physician's net income declined by 7 percent from 1995 to 2003, after adjusting for inflation, while incomes of lawyers and other professionals rose by 7 percent during the period, according to a new report from the Center for Studying Health System Change, highlighted recently in *The New York Times*.

Researchers say the decline in doctors' inflation-adjusted incomes appears to be affecting the types of medicine they choose to practice and the way they practice it, resulting in fewer primary-care doctors and a tendency to order more revenue-generating diagnostic tests and procedures.

Primary-care doctors, who are already among the lowest-paid physicians, had the steepest decline in their inflation-adjusted earnings, a 10 percent drop.

The average reported net income for a primary-care physician in 2003 was \$146,405 after expenses such as malpractice insurance but before taxes. The highest-paid doctors were surgeons who specialize in areas such as orthopedics, who had an average net income of \$271,652.

Doctors are reacting to the financial incentives under the current payment system by choosing to specialize and work in fields where they can increase their income by providing more services, such as diagnostic tests or procedures, said Paul B. Ginsburg, the center's president and a health economist.

According to Cecil B. Wilson, chairman of the board of the American Medical Association, for practicing physicians the survey "confirms what they already know from their own practices: Payments are not keeping up with inflation."

Never-ending subsidies

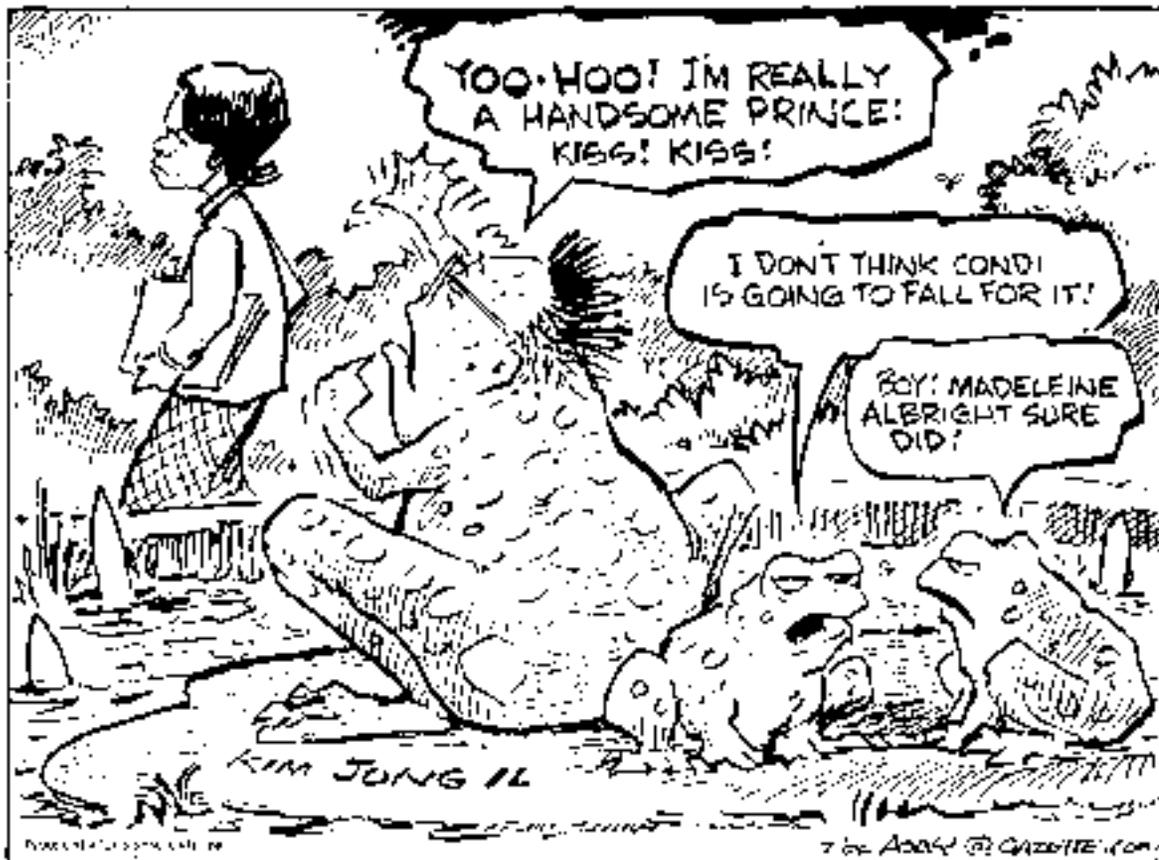
The recent U.S.-EU summit did little to end the finger-pointing over who is more at fault for endangering the Doha trade talks by refusing to budge on farm subsidies.

The real answer is everybody, the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development shows, according to a story this week in the *Wall Street Journal*.

The Paris-based outfit's study shows that developed countries continue to prop up uncompetitive farmers, to the tune of \$280 billion in 2005. The European Union spent the most last year, \$133.8 billion. Next was Japan at \$47.4 billion, and then the United States at \$42.7 billion.

In relative terms, Switzerland, which is not an EU member, spent the most. Subsidies made up a remarkable 68 percent of its farm economy. Next is Iceland at 67 percent and Norway at 64 percent. EU subsidies equaled 32 percent of the bloc's farm economy last year; in the United States, the figure was 16 percent.

More than two-thirds of the support comes in government payments that rise as a farmer's production rises (irrespective of market demand) or that help buy water, seed, machinery and other "inputs" at below-market prices. These are the subsidies that most distort global trade and punish poor farmers in the developing world, says the *Journal*. They also raise prices for domestic consumers. CJ



Surpluses: Here Today, Gone Tomorrow

Budget deliberations this year in the General Assembly were a little easier for one reason — money was plentiful. Going in to the "short" session, legislators were told they would have as much as a \$2 billion surplus. But wasn't it in just the last few years that the state was facing budget shortfalls? What happened to cause the state's fiscal fortunes to turn around?

Before I answer this question, a little background on the meaning of a state budget surplus is useful. North Carolina does budgets for the General Fund (essentially all spending outside of transportation) on a two-year cycle. Last year, during the "long" session of the Assembly, the budget was developed for the fiscal year ending this June 30 as well as for the next fiscal year (July 1, 2006 to June 30, 2007). Revenues and spending had to be projected for both years.

This year the legislature came back for the "short" session, where legislators review the budget they developed for 2006-2007. Between last year when the budget was planned and today, the revenue picture brightened to the point that an extra \$1 billion to \$2 billion is expected for the next 12 months. Rising corporate profits, improved individual investment gains, and better-than-expected job growth are behind the good news.

Yet this isn't the first time the state has experienced an unexpected budget surplus. State revenues generally jump in the years after a recession, just like they plunge when the economy goes into a downturn.

A big reason is how state income tax revenues change with the economy. When the economy is bad, corporate profits plunge and take with them corporate income taxes. Investment earnings also slide, and so individual income taxes stumble.

Both these money sources reverse and boom when the economy pulls out of a recession. Plus, there's one other factor at work to pump up tax revenues. This is "bracket creep." Bracket creep occurs when a booming economy pushes taxpayers into

a higher tax bracket. This means some of the new income generated by the improving economy is taxed at a higher tax rate.

Preventing the "boom and bust" nature of North Carolina's revenue system has been a longstanding issue in the state. Proposals include indexing state income tax brackets to inflation so as to reduce bracket creep, reducing the reliance on volatile revenue sources such as corporate profits and investment earnings, and saving some of the added tax revenues when times are good to be used when times are bad.

The last recommendation has been given various labels, such as "rainy day fund," "business cycle reserve," or "banking the surplus," and it recognizes a standard problem.

When the state is flush with revenues, there is a strong incentive for those revenues to be used on new or expanded programs or on reducing taxes. However, later when the economy slips and revenues fall, budgetary levels can't be supported. The options then are higher taxes or spending cuts, both of which are difficult in challenging economic times.

A rainy day fund, or business cycle reserve, would result from a rule requiring revenue growth above a certain level to be set aside for the next recession. Fully funded rainy day funds could total several billion dollars. North Carolina has a version of this concept, but it has not been funded to the level some financial experts would advise.

So although there's reason to cheer about the state budget surplus, there's also reason to worry — because it won't last. What we do to smooth out future surpluses and deficits may be more important than how we use today's excess funds. CJ



Michael
Walden

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

Readers on Campaign Finance, 'Da Vinci', Reading

To the editor,

The N.C. General Assembly is working on changes to campaign spending laws. While it's good that they are cutting out those who use campaign money to buy themselves cars and retirement packages, however, I don't think they go far enough. The N.C. General Assembly still wants to allow campaign spending on other candidates, their party, and charities. While this sounds good, let me explain the problem.

Jim Black was unopposed in '04, and will win easily in '06, so he can raise lots of money from those that want to buy a speaker of the House, and he can in turn give it to his party or other candidates to ensure their loyalty to him as speaker, as seen by the Democratic caucus voting to keep Black as speaker, despite the scandals.

And the problem with giving money to charities was shown by the secret taxpayer dollars' slush fund of Speaker Black, Representative Morgan, President Pro Tempore Basnight, & Senator Rand, where they gave money to charities in districts of representatives and senators who supported them, effectively turning

Letters to the Editor

these charities into political supporters of the representative or senator who got them the money. I know Rep. Pete Cunningham, my '04 opponent in N.C. House District 107, worked out with Black to have a charity that he was on the Board of get some money. Of course, they're going to support his campaign against me at this point, when charities shouldn't even be involved in politics.

This also reminds me of Cunningham giving the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Black Political Caucus \$20,000 in '02, which got the caucus suspended since it was over the \$4,000 election cycle limit. If someone gave you \$20,000, wouldn't you think your support has been bought by the time the '04 election cycle comes around?

Also, the N.C. General Assembly is talking about expanding the judicial state-sponsored financing to four districts picked at random for the N.C. General Assembly in '08. While this is good, it also falls short. What about those of us running in N.C. House District 105 in '08 who want it, but what is the chance of being picked at random?

Some of us aren't able to raise giant campaign cash from big corporations. Also, if the state wants to finance judges to keep them from being financed by lawyers in their courtrooms, they still have a mistake.

To qualify for the state money, you still have to self-finance enough through donations. That means you're

still beholden to the lawyers that got you qualified. While on the campaign trail in '04, I met a judicial candidate who hadn't gotten enough money to qualify, so that person's name wasn't even on the N.C. *Voter Guide for Judicial Candidates*. Even the current N.C. judicial financing is still geared to the high-rollers who have been bought and paid for. This isn't good for democracy in North Carolina.

Kenny Houck
Pineville, N.C.

In "Da Vinci Code Insults, Doesn't Enhance, Our Intelligence" (July 2006 CJ), Mike Rouse writes that, "Its [the movie's] premise is that Mary Magdalene was not a prostitute as the Bible says." If this is the case, then I don't know what "The Da Vinci Code" is trying to prove since the Bible never states that Mary Magdalene was a prostitute. The Bible states in Luke 8:1-2 that Mary Magdalene had been healed of evil spirits (possession by seven demons).

Unfortunately, the idea that she was a prostitute has been around for centuries due to Pope Gregory the Great declaring this belief in a sermon in 591. It took the Catholic Church until 1969 (nearly 14 centuries!) to officially correct this view and admit that this opinion of Mary Magdalene is not supported by the text of the Bible.

Thank you for allowing me to bring this to your attention. As an aside, if people would just try reading a few books of the Bible, they would find it more interesting than they think -- and hopefully a lot more valuable than "The Da Vinci Code."

Lisa Glover
Lucama, N.C.

My wife was a Reading teacher and Learning Disabilities specialist (M.A., UCLA) for 39 years. She decided to retire when the paperwork became ridiculous, when she was required to teach mathematics rather than reading, when a silly scheme for teaching reading began to be introduced because so many teachers were being hired with no experience or courses in teaching reading, and when she was told that she would have to use this "new" method rather than her very successful method that was turning out L.D. students getting 2's and 3's in the EOG exams.

If students learned to read in 1st and 2nd grade, we would not have this need for "literacy coaches." The money need not be spent if the elementary teachers coming on board were required to have had reading instruction.

John Hubisz
Apex, N.C.

Illegal Immigration the Defining Issue in Campaigns of 2006

The White House and the Senate aren't serious about enforcing the nation's immigration laws.

Consider ...

Recently, White House Press Secretary Tony Snow compared the Senate bill on illegal immigration to a traffic law that allows a speeder to pay a fine and continue driving.

Plain and simple, the bill that 39 Democrats and 23 Republicans just voted to pass is amnesty for illegal immigrants already in this country.

If enacted by the House and Senate conference committee, the Comprehensive Immigration Reform Act would be the most dramatic change in immigration law in 80 years. It would allow more than 66 million people to illegally immigrate to the United States in the next 20 years. This is almost one-fourth of the current population of the nation.

The "temporary" guest workers also would be eligible for citizenship.

If by chance they overstayed their welcome, there's little likelihood that they would be deported. If the Senate bill were to make it out of the conference committee, legislators would be sending the signal that our policymakers view deportation as draconian. Make no mistake about it, "temporary" workers would permanently change America.

Robert Rector of the Heritage Foundation thinks one result would be the largest expansion of the welfare state in 35 years. What Rector is not accounting for is the likely demographic shift in politics that most pundits think would benefit the Democratic Party.

Another possible outcome would be the increased balkanization of the United States as many of the poor and uneducated people that would migrate here would be slow to assimilate, both economically and culturally.

Amendments that were offered by conservatives in the Senate but were defeated included the following:

Sen. Jeff Sessions, R-Ala., wanted to deny illegal immigrants the earned-income tax credit. His argument was that it's one thing to legalize them, but it's another thing to subsidize illegal immigrants.

Sen. Johnny Isakson, R-Ga., offered an amendment to require that enforcement be proven to have succeeded before the amnesty or guest-worker provisions could take effect.

Conservatives have argued that if the Senate were serious about securing the border they would consider following the strategy of attrition: stepping up the enforcement of immigration laws so as to shrink the illegal immigration population over time.

Standing for national sovereignty and in the way of the Senate amnesty bill is the leadership and conservatives in the House. House Majority Leader John Boehner was quoted as saying "that house negotiators will oppose troubling policies that encourage open borders and invite more illegal immigrants into our country."

The lead negotiator from the House in the conference committee will be House Judiciary Committee Chairman James Sensenbrenner. Sensenbrenner thinks that the words "path to citizenship" are buzz words for amnesty.

When asked on "Meet the Press" whether he would accept any immigration law that would put immigrants on the path to citizenship, he answered

with a flat "no."

Some in the elite media tried to portray the House bill as strident and "racist." Conservatives think this is a test for the House and an opportunity for the House to separate itself from the elite establishment that has become the Republican Party.

If the House insists on no deal and no amnesty, then they will be siding with the overwhelming majority of Americans.

As I have written before, there is a disconnection between the elites in the Republican Party establishment and the grass roots.

Illegal immigration will be a defining issue in the upcoming election. Caving in to Sen. John McCain, R-Ariz., and Sen. Edward Kennedy's, D-Mass., amnesty abomination would not only forfeit our national sovereignty and our culture, it might well cause Republicans to lose the House and possibly the Senate in November.

CJ



Marc
Rotterman

Marc Rotterman is a senior fellow of the John Locke foundation and treasurer of the American Conservative Union.

DOT Retrofits Corolla Ferry Boat as Party Barge (a CJ parody)

By ED TEACH
Social Correspondent

MOREHEAD CITY

In an effort to restore confidence in the N.C. Ferry Division, Department of Transportation Secretary Lyndo Tippettt recently announced a new policy on the use of state-owned boats for social events.

"Effective immediately, the only vessel available for government parties will be the Corolla. We really messed up with the tall-ships booze boat. While we have a responsibility to provide nautical entertainment platforms for government agencies, we just used the wrong boat," Tippettt said at a press conference July 20.

More than 200 government officials and their guests used the state ferry Floyd J. Lupton for a lunchtime outing during the tall-ships festival in Beaufort on July 1. The State Ports Authority sponsored the two-hour cruise.

The Lupton was taken out of its regular service crossing the Neuse River near Cherry Point Marine Base. Public outrage has steadily grown after news reports detailed how average citizens, hoping to see the tall ships up close, waited for hours in the hot sun while government officials motored around

Beaufort on a public boat stocked with gourmet food, alcohol, and a steel drum band.

Originally purchased to transport Currituck County schoolchildren across the Currituck Sound, the 50-foot-long Corolla was never put into service. That project was "really a dumb idea and was not technically feasible," but now we have a new use for the boat, Tippettt said.

Tippettt provided reporters with a photo of the vessel that has been secretly outfitted as a party barge and renamed the S.S. Chugalug. The new vessel includes a top deck dance floor, a Tiki bar, a "killer" sound system and space for a steel-drum band. Two high-pressure water cannons and a super sling-shot water-balloon launcher have also been installed. The water weapons will allow passengers to engage in some "harmless, pirate-type fun" with other boats, he said.

Future party excursions will be smaller. The Lupton could accommodate up to 400 people for a party. The Chugalug is licensed for only 50 passengers, but Tippettt hopes to snugly fit as many as 125 people on board by removing the school bus-style seats and adding the second level.



The Corolla, the former Currituck ferry, has been renamed S.S. Chugalug and outfitted as the state Department of Transportation's official party barge. It includes a Tiki bar, two water cannons, a super slingshot and room for a steel-drum band. (CJ Fun Photo Illustration)

DOT Deputy Secretary Roberto Canales will oversee the new party-boat policy. Canales and his family were among the guests aboard the Lupton.

"The Lupton was a great party vessel. I hate to see us downsize, but citizens have a right to expect responsible government spending. I think they will be pleased to see how we use the Corolla," he said.

Canales said a floating party is an excellent economic development tool. Florida-based Blue Hawaiian Fiberglass Pools announced that it will open a plant in Edgecombe County, Canales said, only days after company executives attended the tall-ship event as guests on the Lupton.

"A little booze can go a long way in providing jobs," he said. CJ



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