

## Ethics, not corruption, should govern politics

There is a term that is often thrown around after such incidents as the recent "Bridgeghazi" and Virginia Governor Bob McDonnell's egregious cronyism — "ethics," specifically, "political ethics." People across the nation are disgusted and angered by these politicians' behaviors and actions.



**BY ADITYA GARG**  
Staff Writer

However, politicians have committed crimes and masterminded schemes for decades. "This is not a new phenomenon," said Visiting Assistant Professor of Political Science Robert Duncan. "Political corruption has existed since the founding of the republic."

"These problems are widespread and can be found in almost every one of our political and economic institutions, including Guilford," said Joseph Cole, visiting assistant professor of philosophy.

However, should the public accept this is a part of life?

Some have stated that American politics is not broken because we have so many scandals, but because we simply do not have enough. Deals, earmarks and under-the-table transactions, such as those sponsored by Governor McDonnell, arguably move along legislation and encourage compromise.

After all, as Duncan pointed out, "Politics is blood sport."

To survive, politicians must occasionally commit their own Bridgeghazis or accept a few undisclosed donations — that's part of the job description, right?

After all, when and if these scandals are revealed, they provide nice humor and a topic for dinner table conversations. Certainly, conversing over the political impacts of such events is much more interesting than the usual topics of business and family life.

Anyway, the only thing politicians lose in the process is voter confidence — as if that really mattered to them.

Maybe it's time that it did. The aforementioned justifications are simply too often used to be of much merit, and if the public comes to accept them, it will only exacerbate the problem.

"Saying that it is inevitable makes it more likely to happen because people are less likely to be held to account if their behavior is normalized," said Chair and Assistant Professor of Political Science Maria Rosales.

Politicians and the individuals they represent lose much more than a few votes for such actions.

"Corruption and abuse of power tends to solidify inequality and unearned privileges," said Cole.

By secretly negotiating deals and contracts, politicians are not only undermining the very people they depend on to attain their position, but also show blatant disrespect for the institution of which they are a part. They fail to uphold the basic tenets outlined in the very Constitution that they vow to adhere and uphold.

However, admittedly, there is one exception to the violation of American law.

"The only time a politician would be justified in engaging in such a scandalous affair would be if he/she is the President of the United States and is acting in the interest of national security," said Duncan.



**ROBERT McDONNELL**  
GOVERNOR OF VIRGINIA

### PUBLIC FIGURE PROFILE

- MARCH 2013, REPORTS SURFACE OF ROBERT McDONNELL ACCEPTING DONATIONS FROM JONNIE R. WILLIAMS SR. FOR HIS DAUGHTER'S WEDDING, TRAVEL, PERSONAL GIFTS, AND MORE
- FBI INVESTIGATION AND GRAND JURY PROBE BEGIN
- McDONNELL REPORTS THAT ALL LOANS TO WILLIAMS HAVE BEEN REPAYED AND GIFTS RETURNED TO WILLIAMS
- McDONNELL AND HIS WIFE ARE INDICTED ON FEDERAL CORRUPTION CHARGES
- JUDGE LIMITS WHAT McDONNELL AND HIS WIFE CAN TALK TO FAMILY AND FRIENDS ABOUT BEFORE TRIAL BEGINS

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"For example, I think that though President Obama did violate Pakistani sovereignty during the raid on Bin Laden's compound, he was acting in the best interest of the public and thus was justified."

But engineering elaborate plots to exact political revenge on an unsupportive mayor or accepting funds and gifts for the sole purpose of promoting certain businesses is simply unacceptable and unjustifiable.

Such actions only illuminate the true character of a person and his beliefs, and we cannot accept or forgive them.

As Cole said, "Much work is left to be done to build ... just and ethical political and economic institutions."

"Part of the challenge is to embrace a new model of leadership as service and stewardship instead of leadership as power and personal enrichment."

## McCrory attacks poor, cuts unemployment benefits

House Bill Four has been signed into law by Governor Pat McCrory, slashing unemployment benefits and cutting 170,000 unemployed North Carolinians from the program with no hope of receiving federal aid.



**BY EMERSON SANTIAGO**  
Staff Writer

Justifications for this sudden shift in economic policy are flimsy at best, ranging from McCrory's illogical allegations on worker migration to the House and Senate's fiscally questionable explanations of the state debt.

"We had the ninth-most generous unemployment compensation in the country, and we were having a lot of people move here ... to get unemployment and then work other sectors and survive," said McCrory during an interview on NC Spin.

Unfortunately for McCrory's case, North Carolina's unemployment law requires residents to be employed in a state for a minimum of six out of the last 15 months to be eligible for benefits.

For a worker to move in-state, find a job and work for six months only to quit their job to receive unemployment benefits is an absurd proposition at best — one that cannot possibly justify the drastic changes brought about by House Bill Four.

Two senators who voted in favor of the bill presented a different angle.

"If the General Assembly had failed to act, the state's debt would not be paid off until 2019," said Senate Leader Phil Berger and Senator Thom Tillis in a joint statement issued on Jan. 6.



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The bill aims to pay off a \$2.5 billion loan from the federal government, given to North Carolina to help maintain unemployment benefits during the economic recession. Taking into consideration the recent cuts, North Carolina is projected to pay back the loan by 2016, a three-year reduction. However, Professor and Chair of Economics Bob Williams

said, "Those who saw benefits cut, cut back on spending and go into their savings or debt."

This decrease in consumer spending would only further destabilize our state's already fragile economy.

Josh Weil, president of the Guilford College Democrats club, said that he found the cuts "hard to justify."

"We will be in debt for a long time," said Weil. "What about the single mother ... or father with three children? What about right now?"

In addition to slashing state unemployment benefits, these cuts also render North Carolina the only state in the U.S. whose residents are ineligible for long-term federal benefits.

"It's not just a fiscal issue ... it was a mean move," said Williams. "It was basically saying, 'We are not going to let people get federal benefits.'"

Since the fiscal justifications for these cuts have fallen flat, why were these changes really made?

While there have been allegations that the cuts were motivated by racial factors, I would argue that classism played a much larger role.

By shifting the burden of the state debt onto the unemployed, these cuts reduced taxation on wealthy upper class citizens, bloating economic inequality to massive proportions.

"This decision was part of a whole bunch of decisions that were focused on helping the affluent and harming those who are not," said Williams.

I, for one, am disgusted by our state's decision to leave 170,000 people hopeless and destitute, and I hope to see public backlash strong enough to reverse these cuts to unemployment benefits and battle against economic inequality in North Carolina.