

# FORUM

## More bad news from General Assembly: Teachers and state employees lose out



**Chris Fitzsimon**  
Guest Columnist

The state budget is now 59 days late. That makes it the second latest two-year state budget since at least 1961 and probably ever. And

this from Republican leaders who promised to make government more efficient and transparent.

The House and Senate passed another continuing resolution this week that keeps government operating until Sept. 18. The latest resolution comes amid speculation that House and Senate budget leaders are closing in a final agreement on a two-year spending plan. This week the two sides announced they had settled the issue of raises for teachers and state employees.

Most of them will not get a salary increase and will instead receive a one-time \$750 bonus toward the end of the year. Legislative leaders have not decided on any cost of living increase for state retirees, and it's hard to be optimistic they will come up with the money for one.

Budget subcommittees also received their spending targets, almost all of which were lower than the original House budget, which itself made inadequate investments, particularly in education and human services.

Now presumably the subcommittees will begin ironing out the details of a final agreement with major questions remaining, including funding for teacher assistants (TAs) and teachers. The Senate budget cuts 8,500 teachers over the next two years and uses some of the money saved to hire more teachers to reduce class size in the early grades.

The House would leave TA funding the same, though it's been cut dramatically in the last few years. And the funding that is at stake is for the school year that started Monday, Aug. 24, leaving local officials and thousands of teacher assistants wondering about their jobs.

It's also hardly a forgone conclusion that the agreement on the non-raise and other target numbers means lawmakers will pass a final budget by the new deadline. The two sides have dozens of budget items in dispute big and small, maybe the most contentious of which will be tax changes.

Both budgets include another decrease in the corporate income tax rate but Senate



*The Follies*

NC Policy Watch

leaders want to reduce the personal income tax rate, too. That might hold up a final budget. There are changes in Medicaid, local sales tax distribution, and Gov. Pat McCrory's bond proposal. None of those are in the budget document at this point, but Senate leaders said this week that they are all still connected.

If the General Assembly fails to pass a budget by the new Sept. 18 deadline and takes another week, it would be the latest a two-year budget has passed in modern history. And don't bet against it.

There's a reasonable chance that a budget deal is coming soon, but there is still a lot of animosity between the House and Senate that will make it a challenge to wrap things up.

Meanwhile, teachers, teacher assistants, students and parents wait and worry.

### Bad news for McCrory in right-wing poll

The rough summer for Gov. Pat McCrory continues. Not only do lawmakers still seem lukewarm about his top priorities for this legislative session, a poll from a right-wing group generally supportive of McCrory shows him trailing Attorney General Roy Cooper, his likely 2016 opponent, among independent voters.

The Civitas Institute, where McCrory's

Chief of Staff Thomas Stith used to work, issued a press release Friday morning with a headline downplaying the findings.

"Civitas Poll Shows McCrory Support Shifts in Key Voting Bloc" was how it was billed and what the poll apparently found was that McCrory now trails Cooper among unaffiliated voters 34-32 percent.

McCrory was the choice of 44 percent of unaffiliated voters in a June Civitas survey.

You would think that the headline of the release might be, "Cooper pulls ahead of McCrory with unaffiliated voters," but that probably wouldn't sit too well with the

McCrory camp. The poll also found that 50 percent of unaffiliated voters in the state approve of the job President Obama is doing while 48 percent disapprove.

Forty-six percent of the voters surveyed have a favorable opinion of Obama and 44 percent have an unfavorable view of him while only 36 percent of voters view McCrory favorably while 43 percent

have an unfavorable opinion.

So not only McCrory is losing to Cooper among the all-important unaffiliated voters, he is significantly less popular with them than Obama, who's still bitterly attacked every day by groups like Civitas. A tough summer indeed.

Another week and the Confederate flag is still flying on North Carolina license plates

And in case you are wondering, the State of North Carolina is still selling license plates that feature the offensive Confederate flag, now more two months after Gov. Pat McCrory said in the wake of the Charleston shootings that the state should stop selling them.

Maybe those unaffiliated voters are looking for a governor who takes decisive action, not someone who makes a statement and doesn't follow up on it.

### From the Fringe

It has been a while since there's been a From the Fringe segment of the Follies and this one is a doozy. It comes from George Leef who posted on the primary blog of the John Locke Foundation this week that Florida International University Law Professor Elizabeth Foley "nailed it" in her take on the horrific murder of two journalists at Roanoke television station.

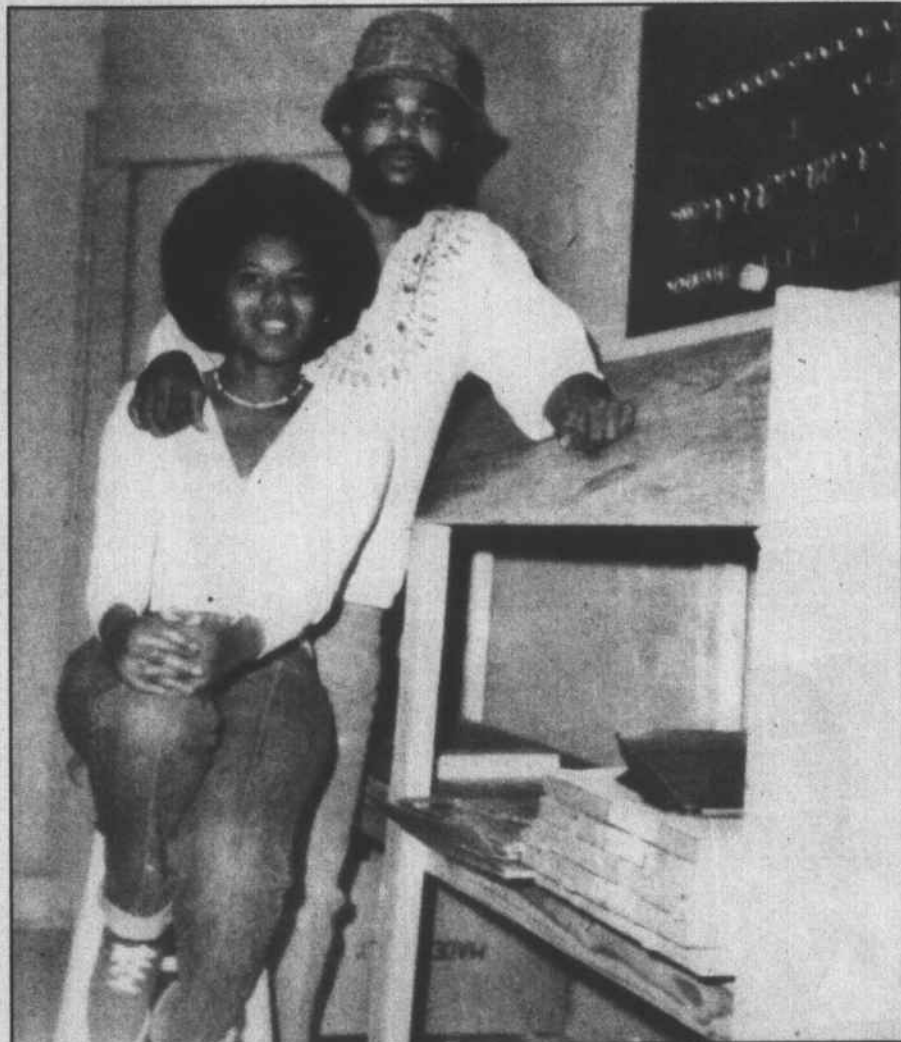
Foley's post that Leef was so taken by described the obviously troubled suspect who was a former employee of the station and shot himself after the murders, as "a sad but ineluctable product of the progressive left's incessant race-baiting and claims of minority entitlement. He is essentially, the love child of Al Sharpton and President Obama (with Elizabeth Warren as the surrogate)."

Lovely.

Chris Fitzsimon, Founder and Executive Director of NC Policy Watch writes the daily Fitzsimon File, delivers a radio commentary broadcast on WRAL-FM and hosts "News and Views," a weekly radio news magazine that airs on multiple stations across North Carolina.

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URL to article: <http://www.ncpolicywatch.com/2015/08/28/the-follies-234/>



Ernie and Elaine in 1974, soon after starting *The Chronicle*.

Chronicle since 1987.

### Committed

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Artist-L. Cornell, Allen Johnson helped launch "Black College Sports Review". He is now the editor of the editorial page at *The News and Record*. Angela Wright who gave the school superintendent so much hell that he called her my "pit bulldog." She went on to the Charlotte Observer.

Kevin Walker, Chronicle Managing Editor for 16 years, led *The Chronicle* in becoming

ing a premiere community newspaper. During the course of publishing, we discovered that the black community was not the only voice neglected in the majority press; there were many small voices. There were numerous nonprofits and small organizations who couldn't compete for the editorial space in dailies. So *The Chronicle* expanded its vision to community journalism to be inclusive and to become a bridge between the black and white communities where advocacy, understanding, and a voice

could make a difference.

Kevin was a master at community journalism; each week he would put together a collage of stories that covered national, local, business, birthdays, and anniversaries. Kevin deferred his dreams of graduate school for many years, but this August, he was accepted to graduate study at American University.

The Chronicle and this community owes Kevin a great deal of thanks for his many years of sacrifice and dedication. We wish him well and know he will make a difference

wherever he decides to go from there.

When *The Chronicle* coverage included the Hispanic community, Dr. Maya Angelou called to say that now she could say that *The Chronicle* was truly her hometown newspaper. Dr. Angelou and I became friends and she later warned me that when I began to advocate for not just black people but poor and disenfranchised people that it could be dangerous. She said that when Dr. King included them his fate became prophetic as well as poetic; she reached out to my wife during my incarceration and sent me an autographed copy of her book as a show of support.

Dr. "A" was so impressed with our mission and commitment to the community she wrote a column for *The Chronicle*. We were the only newspaper in America to have her as a columnist, she charged us \$33 per column. We miss her voice.

There were many other notable editors and community journalists over the years including Yvette Belton, Rudy Anderson, Robin Barksdale Irvin, Angela Wright, Sheridan Hill, Richard Williams, Sam Davis and more recently Layla Garms and Todd Luck.

I didn't have to wear as many hats when Alice Pearson joined our sales team and then Julie Perry.

Circulation Manager Melvin Wilkins and Lynn Hairston led the Chronicle in its first circulation audit. Later Mike Pitt became circulation manager and then advertising manager



Ernie Pitt accepts the top NNPA award for *The Chronicle* in 2008.

before starting his own business.

Business staff like Verisia West, Ericka Asbury, Vicky Warren (deceased), LA Cheryl Mitchell, and most recently Andrea Moses all helped this newspaper better serve our readers, subscribers and advertisers. Paulette Moore continues to be in a category by herself as the consummate ambassador with Chronicle visitors and assisting with community news submissions.

Now, 41 years later we're still here ... stronger than ever thanks be to God. And, we are grateful for the many people who are proud Chronicle readers. They know that they are always welcome in our office and that we always have time for them and the issues that

suffocates and smothers progress in our community.

We are extremely proud and blessed with this issue and we thank our more than 25,000 readers for your continued support of this, YOUR COMMUNITY NEWSPAPER.

May God bless each and every one of you and we expect to be around 41 more years. Make sure you let your children and grandchildren know this story.

Please forgive an old publisher for being long winded in his memories on *The Chronicle's* 41st anniversary (birthday). I am sure I have omitted thanking some people; please charge it to my head and not my heart.

Thank you Winston-Salem for 41 years and an awesome journey in community publishing.