

OPINION

THE CHRONICLE

617 N. LIBERTY STREET
336-722-8624
WWW.WSCHRONICLE.COM

Celebrating
41
Years
of Community Journalism

ERNEST H. PITT Publisher/Co-Founder
DONNA ROGERS Managing Editor
ELAINE PITT Business Manager

Our Mission

The Chronicle is dedicated to serving the residents of Winston-Salem and Forsyth County by giving voice to the voiceless, speaking truth to power, standing for integrity and encouraging open communication and lively debate throughout the community.

GUEST EDITORIAL

Open and honest government seems elusive

How open and honest is state government in North Carolina? Not very, according to a new report from the Center for Public Integrity.

The center's 2015 State Integrity Investigation gave our state a D grade. In part, that's because there's a pretty significant gulf between what the law requires and what state agencies actually do. State records laws are specific about what's public and what's not.

But heel-dragging in producing documents is routine. And no state official or board has the power to compel compliance. If you can't get the documents you want, you've got to go to court, which many individuals can't afford. And even when institutions like the news media do file suit, the courts move slowly.

"We're hoping our lawmakers will feel a new incentive to create more open government, thanks to the UNC Board of Governors' actions in closed meetings that led to the selection of a new system president and substantial raises for a dozen chancellors."

Then there are the disclosures that lobbyists are required to make about spending, donations and other efforts to influence the passage of legislation. The disclosure laws are pretty good, but budget cuts in the past few years have eliminated nearly half of the staff charged with reviewing the reports. Bills can be passed and signed into law before the public knows what special interests were behind them.

[Consider the 2013 measure restricting voting rights. Many lawmakers say they even didn't have time to study the measure before it was put to a vote.]

And consider judicial oversight, which has all but collapsed behind a secret curtain. Until 2013, we had a state Judicial Standards Commission that disciplined judges for wrongdoing. Much of its proceedings were public. But the General Assembly handed judicial oversight to the state Supreme Court and made disciplinary hearings private. Case records are confidential unless the high court takes disciplinary action.

All of that is eye-opening and discouraging. But what's really remarkable is that North Carolina's D grade is pretty good, if we put it in national context. We rank 18th out of 50 states. And if you grade on a curve, a D becomes a B, because not one state got an A or a B and only three got C or C-minus grades — Alaska, California and Connecticut.

We're hoping our lawmakers will feel a new incentive to create more open government, thanks to the UNC Board of Governors' actions in closed meetings that led to the selection of a new system president and substantial raises for a dozen chancellors. The secrecy infuriated top legislative leaders, who had called for an open selection process and imposed stringent spending limits on the university system. We hope their outrage leads to cutting the fog of secrecy that hides too much of our government.

Remember those two words: Our government.
The Fayetteville Observer



LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

ACGG condemns inhumanity to humanity

To the Editor:

The ongoing atrocities against humanity being committed in Paris, Nigeria and Burma cannot be justified by any measure of a civilized society. When an innocent life is taken from society, it is the same as taking the life of the whole society,

and when an innocent life is saved, it is the same as saving the life of the whole society. These recent barbaric cowardly acts deserve to be condemned by humanity and declared as acts of inhumanity to civil society.

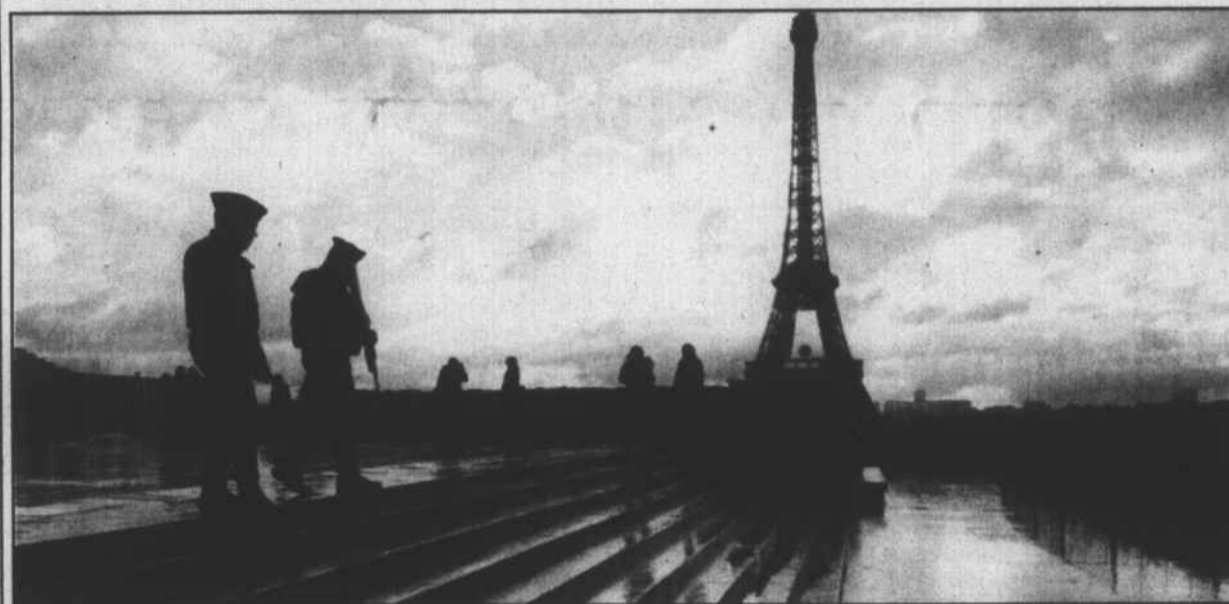
No people of faith or moral conscious can be silent about these ongoing atrocities. No scripture can be used to justify these cruel acts. No religion supports these acts of treason against humanity.

Our prayers and condolences are extended to the families in Paris, Nigeria and Burma. We sincerely hope that a collective effort from all

people of faith will serve as an example to lift up one humanity with a resounding voice to condemn these acts of inhumanity in the 21st century.

Fleming El-Amin
Mid-Atlantic Regional
Coordinator
American Coalition For Good
Government

ACGG is a non-partisan, 501(c) civic education organization. The website is www.theamericancoalitionforgoodgovernment.org.



French soldiers patrol the Trocadero place near the Eiffel Tower, in Paris, Saturday, Nov. 21, 2015. French President Francois Hollande will preside over a national ceremony on Nov. 27 honoring the victims of the deadliest attacks on France in decades. (AP Photo/Laurent Cipriani)

Editorial about poverty panel has errors, mayor says

To the Editor:

Thank you for your recent commentary regarding our initiative to reduce the level of poverty in our community. I did want to address two misstatements in your editorial.

You compare this poverty initiative to our Ten Year Plan to End Chronic Homelessness and state that it did not involve a large panel to work on it and that it was done in about a year. The Ten Year Plan was in fact created by a task force of about 25 individuals and it has taken

eight years to achieve the success it has enjoyed.



Joines

Thought Force will create the same type of plan that was prepared for the homeless initiative that is doable and impactful.

The Thought Force is important because the initiatives undertaken by the Federal Government for the past 50 years have not worked. We need new ideas and I am confident that a workable plan will be put in place.

Thank you for letting me clarify our plan and to assure you that we are very serious in our efforts.

Mayor Allen Joines
City of Winston-Salem

Editor's note: The Chronicle's reference was about the mayor's announcement about veteran homelessness, that "Less than one year after making Winston-Salem a member of the Veterans Housing Network challenge of ending veterans' homelessness in the area, the city and county has reached their goal." There was no mention of a Ten Year Plan or task force.

We Welcome Your Feedback

Submit letters and guest columns to letters@wschronicle.com before 5 p.m. Friday for the next week's publication date.

Letters intended for publication should be addressed "Letters to the Editor" and include your name, address, phone number and email address. Please keep letters to 350 words or less.

If you are writing a guest column, please include a photo of yourself, your name, address, phone number and email address. Please keep guest columns to 550 words or less. Letters and columns can also be mailed or dropped off at W-S Chronicle, 617 N. Liberty St., W-S, NC, 27101; or sent via our website, www.wschronicle.com.

We reserve the right to edit any item submitted for clarity or brevity and determine when and whether material will be used.

We welcome your comments at our website.

Also, go to our Facebook page to comment. We are at [facebook.com/WSChronicle](https://www.facebook.com/WSChronicle).

Send us a tweet on Twitter.

We are at twitter.com/WS_Chronicle.

