

OPINION

THE CHRONICLE

ERNEST H. PITT
Publisher Emeritus
1974-2015

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



ELAINE PITT Business Manager
DONNA ROGERS Managing Editor
WALI D. PITT Digital 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.



Kim Porter speaks to protesters gathered outside Winston-Salem City Hall on Tuesday, Nov. 1, 2015.

Livable wage shouldn't be just for city

Lately there has been a good deal of talk about poverty. A nonprofit asked for money to fight poverty in its year-end appeal for funds, for example. Mayor Allen Joines, who is running for re-election, has said he has formed a 21-member panel to fight it.

Recently, in a discussion among people who help people in poverty, an interesting phenomenon came to light. This phenomenon seems to be a key element for people who are in poverty. It's a cycle of poverty.

This concerns the working poor. When people are not making enough money to make ends meet, they seek help from social services. Food stamps and welfare help these people make ends meet. But when the people are fortunate enough to make a little more money that puts them over a threshold, those social services are cut. The people are worse off than they were before they received more money in wages. So, there is no incentive for people to make more money to make ends meet.

Social services are governed by laws, mostly state laws. Rob Schofield, in his Forum column, talks about how North Carolina legislators and Governor McCrory have cut those services drastically over several years. In the meantime, the number of jobs available in the state has not grown to meet the number of people who are seeking jobs. This makes it harder for people, especially those in poverty, to move up to jobs with livable wages.

A livable wage would help bring people out of poverty. It is such an important issue that Council Member Derwin Montgomery advocated a \$15-an-hour wage for city workers after a protest supporting a livable wage showed up on the steps of City Hall in November.

A livable wage is needed for all kinds of workers.

The key is having people in elected offices who will make the laws governing social services and livable wages favorable toward people who need help.

This year, citizens have the chance to put people into office who can change lives for the better. The N.C. General Assembly is full of people now who don't seem to have compassion for its poorest residents. As Rob Schofield says: "The plain and unavoidable truth is that state leaders did precious little in 2015 (or 2011, '12, '13 or '14, for that matter) to improve the lives of average North Carolinians."

Kim Porter, a community organizer for N.C. Waste Awareness and Reduction Network who led the rally in November, said: "Our elected leaders must work for working people, immigrants and people of color. We're going to make our voices heard in this election."

Feb. 19 is the deadline to register to vote in the March 15 primary. Education is the key to selecting candidates who can change the direction in which we are going. Start now determining who those candidates are so that Winston-Salem and North Carolina can reverse the downward direction lawmakers have been taking us. Make your voices heard.



LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

CBC commends Obama's efforts to make us safer

To the Editor:

Congressional Black Caucus (CBC) Chairman G. K. Butterfield (NC-01) and co-chairs of the CBC Gun Violence Task Force, Reps. Robin Kelly (IL-02) and Brenda Lawrence (MI-14) released the following statement in response to President Obama's executive actions to reduce gun violence:

Gun violence has taken its toll on communities across America, and has particularly had a disproportionate impact within the African-American community and urban areas across the country. We have long witnessed the impact of horrific events that have unnecessarily taken the lives of countless individuals and it is time for sensible gun laws to help lessen the burdens that such violence has created. Over the past decade, more than 100,000 people have been killed as a result of gun violence and many of these incidents could have been prevented. Today's executive action to reduce gun violence is a step in the right direction and members of the Congressional Black Caucus commend President Obama on the resolve to keep communities safe and keep guns out of the hands of individuals who never should have had access or the ability to purchase a weapon in the first place.

CBC Chairman G. K. Butterfield, NC-01

I applaud President Obama's bold executive actions taken today (Jan. 5). These policies will have an immediate impact by keeping guns out of the hands of criminals and dangerous individuals and preventing gun trafficking, while also protecting the Second Amendment rights of responsible, law-abiding citizens. While President Obama's executive actions are crucial steps in reducing the senseless gun violence plaguing our nation, they do not absolve Congress of its responsibility to act. There are gaps in existing gun laws that leave us all vulnerable to gun violence, holes that only Congress can plug. With over 30 Americans being killed by a gun every single day, inaction is not an option. Congress has a moral

obligation to address the public health epidemic of gun violence in America, and the CBC Gun Violence Task Force will keep pushing to pass reasonable and responsible gun safety laws to save lives.

U.S. Rep. Robin Kelly, IL-02

I strongly support the President's proposal to address gun violence, by providing for new ATF and FBI resources and staff as well as support for mental health programs and reviews. Nothing in the president's proposal restricts our Second Amendment right to bear arms or our right to privacy. It does, however, address several loopholes that bad apple gun dealers have been able to exploit for far too long. It also addresses the appalling lack of access to information related to people who have been legally determined unfit to purchase firearms. This includes felons, those convicted of misdemeanor domestic violence, and people who have been found to be a risk to themselves and others and prohibited from possessing a firearm for mental health reasons.

U.S. Rep. Brenda Lawrence, MI-14

Rep. Adams lauds Obama's action on gun violence

To the Editor:

[Studies show that every day when background checks are used, more than 170 felons, 50 domestic abusers, and nearly 20 fugitives are prevented from buying a gun. Currently, background checks are not required for those purchasing a gun from a gun show, through the Internet, or through a classified ad. U.S. Rep. Alma S. Adams (NC-12) applauded President Obama's announcement to take executive action to prevent gun violence in America.]

Far too many innocent lives have been taken at the hands of guns. I applaud President Obama for this historic step to curb gun violence in our country. The president's action not only helps strengthen the background check system but fuels research to make guns safer, expands mental health services and helps to keep ille-

gal guns off the streets.

I have long advocated for increased gun safety measures and introduced several pieces of legislation in the North Carolina General Assembly aimed at preventing gun violence. This is why now, as a member of Congress, I believe we can't continue to stand idly by. We must bolster the president's efforts by passing solid legislation to keep guns out of the hands of criminals and the dangerously mentally ill, while also protecting gun rights for law abiding citizens.

President Obama's executive action on gun violence:

- * Provides new guidance on existing federal laws, clarifying that any individual in the business of selling firearms must obtain a license through the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF) and conduct background checks on prospective gun purchasers;

- * Increases funding to hire more ATF agents, provide resources for tracking illegal online firearms trafficking and strengthen domestic violence outreach efforts;

- * Invests in resources to expand access to mental health care;

- * Removes barriers that prevent the reporting of mental health information to the background check system; and

- * Directs the Departments of Defense, Justice and Homeland Security to conduct or sponsor research into new technology to make firearms safer.

U.S. Rep. Alma S. Adams (NC-12) Washington, D.C.

[More than 30,000 people die from gun violence each year. Adams is a cosponsor of H.R. 1217, the Public Safety and Second Amendment Rights Protection Act of 2015, bipartisan legislation to expand the existing background check system to cover all commercial firearm sales, including those at gun shows, over the Internet or in classified ads while providing reasonable exceptions for family and friend transfers. She has also cosponsored the Gun Trafficking Prevention Act of 2015, the Protecting Domestic Violence and Stalking Victims Act, as well as a resolution to create the Select Committee on Gun Violence Prevention.]

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.

Send us a tweet on Twitter.

We are at twitter.com/WS_Chronicle.

