

OPINION

THE CHRONICLE

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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.

Vote to restore Voting Rights Act to its past

The federal judge ruled last week against the organizations and citizens seeking justice regarding the 2013 North Carolina law that strips away voting rights and adds voting problems.

Judge Thomas Schroeder of the U.S. District Court in Greensboro held two trials in Winston-Salem to consider lawsuits challenging the changes. Republicans who control the General Assembly orchestrated those changes.

In a post in Progressive Voices on the N.C. Policy Watch website, Steve Ford, former editorial page editor at The News & Observer in Raleigh, says the judge doesn't think the changes prove an undo burden on minorities.

Schroeder's ruling "that upholds changes in North Carolina election laws, despite their effect of making it harder for some citizens to vote; seems to rest on his conclusion that, well, there's no reason to get all upset about a little inconvenience."

Ford says the "raft of provisions" clearly weigh more heavily against minority voters - "whose right to have an equal say in elections is protected under federal law and ultimately by the Constitution."

Schroeder's exhaustive, 485-page opinion was released on April 25.

Ford says "Schroeder found that the legislature had acted within its proper authority, and that whatever negative effects the changes might have on minority voting don't rise to a level of legal or constitutional concern."

"He was dismissive of the notion that racial bias could still play any sort of noticeable role in the state's policy-setting."

Schroeder says: "There is significant, shameful past discrimination. In North Carolina's recent history, however, certainly for the last quarter century, there is little official discrimination to consider."

The plaintiffs, who seek freedom, justice and constitutional rights, appealed the ruling immediately.

Ford says: "It's doubtless true that the 1965 federal Voting Rights Act and the passage of time since the segregationist outrages of the Jim Crow era have worked in minority residents' favor. But it's also true that the legislature approved the contested election law changes in 2013 only after a key protection in the Voting Rights Act was rashly lifted by the U.S. Supreme Court."

North Carolina regained its place as part of the United States of America after seceding generations ago, although it hasn't acted like part of the Union much lately. North Carolina snubbed its nose at the Constitution again when it passed the 2013 restrictions and voter ID law.

Schroeder says: "In sum, Plaintiffs established that some segment of the State's African-Americans endure socioeconomic disparities that can be linked to State discrimination and this may make it more difficult for them generally to participate in any electoral system."

"Plaintiffs, however, failed to show that such disparities will have materially adverse effects on the ability of minority voters to cast a ballot and effectively exercise the electoral franchise ... within the multitude of voting and registration options available in the State, especially given that the 2014 turnout data show increased participation among African-Americans" under the law enacted the previous year.

The key to this voting rights drama lies with the federal government.

Supreme Court Chief Justice John Roberts wrote in 2013 that Congress remained free to try to impose federal oversight on states where voting rights were at risk, but must do so based on contemporary data, the New York Times reported. To date, no such action has been taken by the Republican-controlled Congress.

Let's change that phrase, Republican-controlled Congress. Let's vote despite the obstacles for people who will get to Washington and work on restoring the Voting Rights Act to the level it needs to be to really serve the citizens of the United States. Then, there will be no more need for appeals.



LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Urgent need to ban dog tethering

To the Editor:

The recent arrest of a Selma woman on cruelty to animals charges after police reportedly found a dead dog chained in her yard, as well as other malnourished animals, highlights the urgent need to ban dog tethering.

Chained dogs are often deprived of adequate food, water, shelter, and veterinary care and are exposed to all weather extremes. Many chained dogs have been shot, stabbed, poisoned, and set on fire, among countless other cruel fates, including hanging themselves over fences. They are also vulnerable to mange, heartworms, and other maladies.

Unattended chaining is also a public safety hazard: Confinement and deprivation can make chained dogs aggressive and overly territorial. Chained dogs are nearly three times as likely to attack as dogs that aren't tethered. Many children and senior citizens have been mauled or killed after venturing onto a chained dog's turf.



More than 200 cities and counties around the country, including more than 20 in North Carolina, have enacted tethering ordinances. It is time for all municipalities that have not taken similar measures to protect dogs to join them.

Ashley Rhodes
Community Outreach Liaison
Cruelty Investigations
Department
People for the Ethical Treatment
of Animals (PETA)

Carolyn Highsmith deserves our vote in new South Ward election

To the Editor:

I would like to offer support for Carolyn Highsmith of the South Ward. She's the only one that is helping the people there with all of their needs.

She is a community leader, a Democratic Party precinct chair for #606, a great organizer, and a great in-service educator for the FC Senior Democrats. She helped the Konnoak Hill area through a series of fights against commercial rezoning of Peters Creek Parkway and efforts to reduce crime.

She has a history of helping the middle class. The 2013 tax evaluation that lowered residential homes and assets, she took it upon herself to advertise for anyone that wanted their homes re-evaluated to contact her. She had long lines at East Winston, Mazie Woodruff, and the central libraries, also the Carl Russell Recreation Center. Seniors had their homes re-evaluated and they won. She also helped with investments in urban schools as Winston-Salem Forsyth County School Board considered a bond referendum this year.

She's very concerned about how employment opportunities were lost and the big companies that left this area. She's worried that the biotech jobs may not benefit the middle class and that they will end up still with the low-paying jobs.

She's very concerned about the past election and of all of the errors because of unqualified poll workers that could have stopped some of the errors if they had been trained properly.

I feel that it's very unfair that the South Ward will have another election and the large amounts of ballots that were thrown out. These people voted and their vote will not count and nothing is being done about this, mostly because of poll workers not

trained properly. I suggest that you compare resumes for both candidates and see which one will help the South Ward more, then make your decision at the polls.

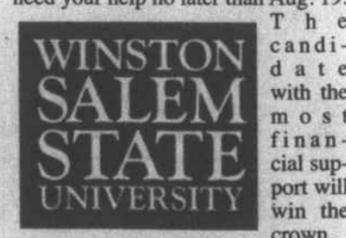
Constance Bradley
Winston Salem

Candidate for WSSU Mr. Alumni seeks support

To the Editor:

I am Mr. DeValdean Penn, Class of 1974 at Winston-Salem State University. I am running for Mr. Alumni 2016. This scholarship event will raise money for students to attend Winston-Salem State University and complete their education. I am asking for your financial support. No amount is too small.

The event in which Mr. Alumni 2016 will be crowned will be during Homecoming festivities in October. I need your help no later than Aug. 19.



Your tax deductible contribution may be sent to Mr. DeValdean Penn, 525 Rockcliff Court, Winston-Salem, N.C. 27104. Please make your check out to: WSSU National Alumni Association or (WSSUNAA).

Thanks for your support.
DeValdean Penn
WSSU Class of 1974
Winston-Salem

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.

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