

Protest focuses on Burr's Medicare history

BY TODD LUCK
THE CHRONICLE

A protest on Thursday, Aug. 4, in front of Sen. Richard Burr's Winston-Salem field office tried to draw attention to his support of increasing privatization in Medicare.

The protest, organized by the N.C. Democratic Party, had about 30 people holding signs on the corner of Miller and First streets. There was a table set up with mock coupons for Medicare. It was a reference to the Seniors Choice Act, a 2012 proposal by Burr and Sen. Tom Coburn to give seniors a fixed amount that could be applied toward a private plan or a government plan modeled on Medicare. Protesters chanted "Medicare now, coupons never!"

William Dworkin, president of North Carolina Alliance for Retired Americans, told his fellow protesters he was afraid that such a plan would not cover the entire cost of insurance, especially for

those in bad health.

"I want it to be simple, comprehensive and standard," he said.

Matilda Phillips, president of North Carolina Senior Democrats, and Fred Terry, president of Forsyth County Senior Democrats, also spoke on their fears that future coverage might not be complete and comprehensive if the program shifted toward privatization.

"What we have now, we paid for, and what we have now must continue," said Terry, a former city council member.

As of 2015, more than 55 million Americans were covered by Medicare, but the Congressional Budget Office has forecasted it will become insolvent by 2026. Burr's proposal in 2012 was touted as a way to prevent insolvency. Along with the choice of plans, it also proposed gradually raising the retirement age to 67, increasing Medicare Part B premiums and having out-of-pocket protection so seniors wouldn't pay more than \$7,500 per

year in medical expenses.

Burr said at the time he hoped it would act as blueprint for legislation, but his campaign site makes no mention of it, simply saying he would "fight to protect our retirement programs so that America's seniors can continue to count on these benefits being there for them."

The protest was held on the same day that Democratic nominee Deborah Ross attacked him on Social Security and Medicare at an event in Fayetteville. Ross was recently endorsed by the non-partisan National Committee to Preserve Social Security and Medicare because, according to the organization, she understands and supports "the critical roles that Social Security and Medicare play in the retirement and health security of our nation's older citizens and their families."



Photo by Todd Luck
William Dworkin, president of North Carolina Alliance for Retired Americans, speaks to fellow protesters outside of Richard Burr's office on Thursday, Aug. 4.

My Brother's Keeper looks to inspire students on first day of school

100 Male Reception Tunnel to usher in the start of the 2016-2017 school year at Ashley Academy

BY TEVIN STINSON
THE CHRONICLE

My Brother's Keeper (MBK), a male mentoring initiative designed to empower young men of color, is trying to make sure the first day of school is one the young men at



Williams

Ashley Academy will remember. On the morning of Monday, Aug. 29, MBK is planning a 100 Male Reception Tunnel to greet young men as they enter the area of learning to jumpstart the new school year.

The purpose of the welcoming ceremony at Ashley is to inspire students to start on the right foot and help them carry that momentum throughout the year. During the event, professional men will offer words of encouragement during an assembly at the start of the school day.

MBK was launched by President Barack Obama to address persistent opportunity gaps faced by boys and young men of color and ensure that all young people can reach their full potential. At the local level, director Rev. Dr. Lamonte Williams and other members on the committee have been working to ensure those in Winston-Salem and Forsyth County reach their potential.

Williams mentioned the event will also give students an opportunity to connect with possible mentors who will work with students throughout the school year.

"The first day of school is very important; that's why we feel it is important that we are there to welcome them with open

arms," Williams said during a MBK committee meeting held last month.

"We want the boys and young men of color to know that we are here to support them," he continued. "That's what this initiative is all about, making sure our young men stay on track."

While MBK will begin the school year at Ashley, that is only the beginning. As the school year progresses, the mentoring program will look to make an impact in every elementary school and surrounding communities in the district. Williams said MBK will first focus on elementary schools because so many in the area are performing below the state average.

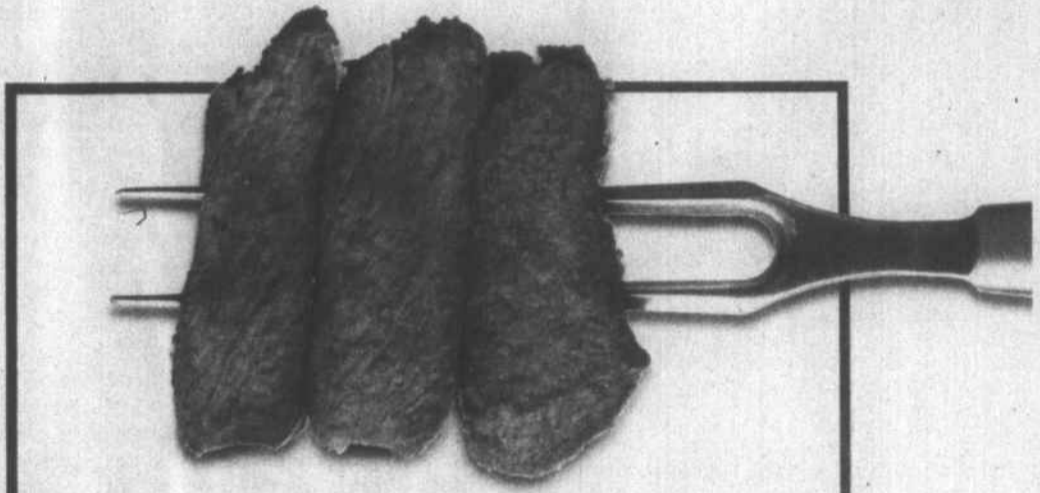
"We won't be finished after we touch the students at Ashley," continued Williams. "The purpose of this initiative is to change the lives of all boy and young men of color and that's what we intend to do."

While the purpose of the welcoming ceremony and the mentoring program is to inspire students, a number of parents said they were also excited to see how the initiative will impact the community. When told about the plans for the first day, Adriana Ross, whose son is a third grader at Ashley, said she was interested to find out more.

"That program seems like a perfect fit for schools like Ashley," she continued. "A lot of these young men come from single parent homes, so for them to see successful black men on the first day they go back to school is amazing."

"I am excited to see how the program works in this community."

If you are interested in participating in the 100 Male Reception Tunnel, or becoming a male mentor, contact MBK committee member Aretha Garr at 336-871-6307.



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