

OPINION

THE CHRONICLE

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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.

Lack of knowledge of basic civics threatening democracy

On Thursday, Oct. 20, Rachel Maddow revealed on her MSNBC television show that retired U.S. Supreme Court Justice David H. Souter gave a warning about our democracy on Sept. 14, 2012. That was four years ago.

Souter was speaking about the Constitution. He was speaking about "civic ignorance," when people don't understand how government can and should function.

He says he sees "the pervasive ignorance of the Constitution of the United States and the structure of government" as the most significant problem in American politics today.

His words appear a bit eerie after Donald Trump made his declaration that he will wait and see whether he will accept the results of the General Election before conceding if he loses. The United States has always had a peaceful transfer of government. Trump's declaration appears to threaten that.

Souter's warning:

"What I worry about is that when problems are not addressed, people will not know who is responsible and when the problems get bad enough ... some one person will come forward and say 'Give me total power and I will solve this problem.' That is how the Roman republic fell. Augustus became emperor not because he arrested the Roman senate. He became emperor because he promised that he would solve problems that were not being solved.

"If we know who is responsible, I have enough faith in the American people to demand performance from those responsible. If we don't know, we will stay away from the polls, we will not demand it, and the day will come when somebody will come forward and we and the government will in effect say 'Take the ball and run with it, do what you have to do.' That is the way democracy dies.

"And if something is not done to improve the level of civic knowledge, that is what you should worry about at night."

United States forefather Thomas Jefferson said: "If a nation expects to be ignorant and free in a state of civilization, it expects what never was and never will be. If we are to guard against ignorance and remain free, it is the responsibility of every American to be informed."

When asked what kind of government the United States would have if the Constitution is approved, forefather Benjamin Franklin said: "A republic, if you can keep it."

Souter said: "You can't keep it in ignorance."

Trump supporters appear to be looking for that person to solve all their problems instead of trying to understand how our democracy works.

Souter was a guest on a new program in his native New Hampshire called "Constitutionally Speaking: How Does The Constitution Keep Up With The Times." The show was partly supported by the then-newly established NH Institute for Civic Education, which provides professional development opportunities to New Hampshire teachers so that civics education becomes a reality for all public school students beginning in kindergarten and continuing through graduation from high school.

Civics lessons were taught in schools across the United States at one time. What happened? Why does New Hampshire have to make a big deal about training young people about civics when it should already be taught in the schools?

Just as the closing of newspapers is a threat to democracy, the lack of civics education in schools is a threat, too.

We all should make it a point to rid ourselves of ignorance of civics. The Chronicle is helping with its Voter Guide, published last week and inserted into the newspaper.



LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Vote John Larson for Winston-Salem City Council

To the Editor:

Nearly a year ago I became a member of the committee to elect John Larson to the City Council. I have known John for years as a casual friend who was always responsive when I asked for help with an activi-

CAMPAIGN



This last year working with him on his election committee has of course increased facts I know about him, such as his 40-year residency in the South Ward, his 37-year tenure at Old Salem, and his significant volunteer ventures.

In addition, I learned to appreciate his high energy about matters of importance to him, his keen insights about issues related to the South Ward, his skill assessing and problem solving, and his ability to listen to what others had to contribute.

In short, John Larson has enjoyed being a candidate, including the stimulation and challenges inherent in the role. During the long campaign he has knocked on over 4,000 doors in the South Ward, trying to get a clear picture of this very diverse part of our city. He has expressed his surprise and delight over that diversity.

Throughout the campaign, John's love and appreciation for the South Ward, Winston-Salem, and Forsyth County was unmistakable. We are fortunate to have a candidate who, after his retirement from Old Salem in December, will without a doubt continue to be a creative, dedicated, enthusiastic, and insightful advocate for the people of the South Ward as well as the entire city.

Anne Griffis Wilson
Winston-Salem

Marilynn Baker is right person for House Dist. 74

To the Editor:

I am writing to recommend Marilynn Baker for House District 74, who is running against incumbent Debra Conrad. The time has never been better to remove ineffective Republicans who have been too long in office and replace them with strong and educated leaders such as Marilynn Baker.



I know Marilynn Baker and see how hard she works, taking an active role to make our community better, from helping coordinate and generously supply the Educators Warehouse with supplies to help teachers who are facing budget cuts from the state, to working through her church to support those less fortunate in our community.

She does not just write a check, but rolls up her sleeves and gets to work to serve where she sees a need. She has listened to seniors and met with the regional AARP associate state director for advocacy and outreach to learn what our legislature needs to do to support our elderly citizens.

Marilynn clearly demonstrates the selfless servant leadership N.C. needs now.

The lines may be long to vote in this critical election, and the ballot is long, but it is imperative that we all take the time to vote and support our Democratic candidates who offer strong, sane leadership in these turbulent times.

Judie Holcomb-Pack
Winston-Salem



Eric Morgan should remain as county judge

To the Editor:

I have known countless superior court judges throughout this State during the many years that I have practiced law and Judge Eric Morgan is unquestionably one of the best.

The really good superior court judges study and understand the law, listen and understand the arguments of both sides before ruling, strive to be fair and impartial whatever the consequences, and treat everyone in the courtroom with respect. Those are the qualities of Judge Eric Morgan. It is not an easy job.

Judge Morgan has a strong education and experience foundation which prepared him to be an excellent superior court judge: Reynolds High School, Phi Beta Kappa at the University of Virginia, University of Texas Law School, with honors.

He has practiced law in Forsyth County beginning in 1991 and has served as a judge since 2014.

Judges and judicial candidates in North Carolina are rated in a survey by the N.C. Bar Association. Judge Morgan had the highest rating in the State in the five contested superior court races.

It is sometimes difficult for voters who aren't lawyers to know which judges to vote for, but this one is easy. It isn't even close. Judge Eric Morgan is one of the crown jewels of the North Carolina judicial system that we need to keep.

Richard V. Bennett
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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