

OPINION

THE CHRONICLE

ERNEST H. PITT
 Publisher Emeritus
 1974-2015

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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.

Don't look to school board for democracy example

They say one of the best ways to begin a political career is to run for the school board. Winston-Salem/Forsyth County Schools Board of Education member Mark Johnson appears to have taken that to heart.

Johnson ran for North Carolina Superintendent of Public Instruction and won in November. Now he will be going to Raleigh to do who knows what. The Chronicle can't tell you what he will do because he has not responded to requests by one of our reporters to tell us.

Meanwhile, the local school board tramples on democracy in trying to replace him.

At the meeting, on Nov. 29, the school board decided not to open the position to the public and take resumes. No, that would take too much time. Democracy takes too much time. (Is it even taught in the schools?)

Instead, a name was thrown out among the board members, and there seemed to be an agreement that that person should be contacted to see whether she wants to be on the school board - again.

That person just left the school board in 2014. What is this about?

According to the school board's rules, when someone leaves the school board, that person has to be replaced by someone from the same political party. Mark Johnson is a Republican, so a registered Republican has to fill the position. So, why not open it up to such people? Why not open it up so another black Republican can have a chance to be on the school board?

The board says it needs someone who already knows how things work because of the busy year coming up, with all the projects the bond money will produce. If you are not going to open up the position to outside candidates, why not have a list of people to choose from, conduct interviews and make a decision? Why not put John Davenport in the position? He is a black Republican who was on the board before, in fact as a vice chairman. He ran for an at-large seat in 2014 and lost as the other person mentioned at the school board meeting was leaving the school board.

This is the school board that allowed many of the schools in the district to be labeled underachieving in one way or another. This is the school board that allowed an elementary school to be called so bad in teaching students to read that its name was changed to reflect that deficit. The school board did not act until after the state labeled the school a poorly run school.

According to the WS/FCS website, the Winston-Salem/Forsyth County Schools Board of Education is comprised of nine members elected to four-year terms of office. Board members are elected from two districts within the county. Two members are elected from District 1, which is mostly the city of Winston-Salem; four are elected from District 2; and three are at-large seats.

Three of the nine members are African-American. One of those is a Republican who was elected to an at-large seat in 2014.

All seats on the school board expire in 2018. Now is the time for the community to rise up and hold the school board accountable. Now is the time to start grooming candidates to replace the people on the board so that in 2018, they will be ready to run for office and will be able to be elected to the positions.

That's when democracy will return to the school board.



LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Not pursuing charges in Scott death undermines trust in justice system

To the Editor:

Use of deadly force against African-Americans and other minorities by law enforcement remains a crisis across the nation. Today's [Nov. 30] decision not to pursue criminal charges in the death of Keith Lamont Scott [in Mecklenburg County, N.C.] undermines public confidence in the ability of our criminal justice system to produce outcomes that are just and fair.

Here, the District Attorney's Office, with the assistance of the state, described a process that established the prosecutor as judge and jury, having reviewed the facts leading up to death of Mr. Scott without the benefit of a grand jury determination or a trial.

Too often, we find that prosecutors simply lack the political will to seek justice in these cases.

We will continue to push for federal reforms and the systemic changes necessary to ensure that law enforcement agencies across our country maintain constitutional and equitable policing practices that ensure equal justice under law for all.

- Kristen Clarke
 President And Executive Director
 Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights Under Law
 Washington, D.C.

Lawmakers should pass bill to form independent redistricting plan

To the Editor:

Once again, unconstitutional gerrymandering by the legislature has led to litigation and now the need to hold a special election. This is a golden opportunity for state lawmakers to put North Carolina voters ahead of partisan politics and establish an independent process for redrawing the state's legislative maps free from gerrymandering.

Just this past session, a bipartisan majority of N.C. House members co-sponsored House Bill 92, which would have taken redistricting power out of the hands of parti-

san legislators and given it to non-partisan legislative staff.

We strongly urge lawmakers to pass that independent redistricting plan when they return for their new session in January, so that North Carolina citizens can finally have confidence that their legislative districts are drawn in a fair, impartial and constitutional way that avoids further confusion and delay.

Bob Phillips, Executive Director,
 Common Cause North Carolina
 Raleigh

Note: A federal court on Tuesday, Nov. 29, ordered North Carolina lawmakers to redraw the state's legislative districts by March and ruled that a special legislative election must be held in 2017. The decision comes after the federal court ruled this summer that lawmakers had unconstitutionally gerrymandered 28 legislative districts along racial lines, but allowed the already scheduled 2016 legislative elections to proceed under those unconstitutional maps.

We can begin to work toward stronger future in North Carolina

To the Editor:

I am elated to congratulate Governor-Elect Roy Cooper on his recent victory.

The people of North Carolina have spoken and I look forward to working with our new Governor. Together we will continue to grow the economy, strengthen our public education system, invest in infrastructure, and stand up for the rights of all North Carolinians.

We can now put this election behind us and begin working toward a stronger and brighter future for our great state.

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

Educators glad the stall tactics have ended

To the Editor:

Educators across North Carolina congratulate Governor-Elect Cooper on an outstanding victory.

We look forward to a champion for public school students and educators in the governor's office.

We are glad the stall tactics have come to an end because North Carolina educators are Ready for Roy.

Mark Jewell
 President
 North Carolina Association of Educators
 Raleigh

Radical forces outside N.C. defeated McCrory

To the Editor:

North Carolina Values Coalition thanks Governor Pat McCrory for his commitment to the people of North Carolina. His leadership over the last four years will not be forgotten.

Not only has Governor McCrory created a booming economy in North Carolina, where businesses and families thrive, but he has stood strong to protect the privacy, dignity, and safety of our citizens.

Governor McCrory's defeat was orchestrated by radical forces outside North Carolina that poured millions of dollars into the state to "eviscerate" our state's leaders and fundamentally change our state's values. It was an organized and well-funded strategy, laid out in Blueprint, N.C., and supported by left-wing, out-of-state donors like George Soros, Planned Parenthood, and the Human Rights Campaign. They outspent the Governor two to one.

North Carolina Values Coalition will continue to work with the leaders in the House & Senate to assure grown men are never allowed access into women's bathrooms, locker rooms or changing facilities and that businesses are free to live and work according to their deeply held religious beliefs. We want to put Governor-elect Cooper on notice that the citizens of North Carolina will not stand for any attempt by out-of-state interests to fundamentally change our values or compromise the privacy and safety of our children.

Tami Fitzgerald, Executive Director
 North Carolina Values Coalition
 Raleigh

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.

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