

Martin

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fluence.

Richard Vinroot knows about this from firsthand experience in his 1996 gubernatorial primary loss to Robin Hayes. Try as he might, he couldn't modify his moderate, pragmatic views to fit the unforgiving, dogmatic requirements of some of the true-believer voters in his party's primary.

The second big problem for Vinroot, Neely and Daughtry is to hold on to their "Holshouser-Martin" images while they are appealing to those "far-right" primary voters.

Which one of the three stands the best chance of winning the primary?

Vinroot has the edge in name recognition gained in his 1996 primary campaign. But he may have more problems than the other two satisfying the "far right" voters.

Daughtry's long experience in the state legislature—including four years as majority leader in the state House—puts him ahead of the others in understanding the workings of state government. But that "insider" experience can work against him in a primary filled with voters who are suspicious of all government and anyone who is a part of it.

Neely's long time connection with conservative causes might help him gain the support of the most conservative voters in the primary. But the other candidates have a big head start.

I don't know who the winner will be, but the Republicans are fortunate to have three good people running. Any one of them could run a strong general election campaign as a "Holshouser-Martin" candidate, unless—as the

Democrats must hope—they sell their "Holshouser-Martin" moderate souls to the "far-right" devil of the Republican primary.

HEALTH TIP

Learn to recognize early signs that your child may have asthma and seek medical advice from your physician. Symptoms include frequent respiratory infections, coughing episodes at night, wheezing, tightness in the chest, an itchy, sore throat, watery eyes and dark circles under the eyes. The good news is, with proper management, these symptoms can be controlled.



Barred Owls visit Trails

Starting Monday, April 12 and continuing at least through Saturday the 17th, we have had a pair of Barred Owls spend the daylight hours in and around the woods around our side yard. They are actively hunting snakes, skinks and frogs among

big woodpecker holes and, upon investigating, found a female Wood Duck peering out of the hole. I watched her until she left to feed. She was back in an hour and zoomed right into the hole. The Barred Owl was in the same tree and appeared interested. I

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Paris Trail

the leaves (I once catch a small Red-Bellied Water Snake). They perch low in the vegetation and pounce from three or four feet up. They don't bother the birds at the feeder and the birds ignore them. They spend the full eight hours of the brightest part of the day actively hunting; I don't know where they sleep.

Barred Owls are somewhat diurnal and this pair may simply be sharpening their hunting skills on the skinks who hunt among the leaves during the day. While squirrels are a little too big for Barred Owls, I saw one spiral down a tree trying to catch one.

We had just about given up on nesting Wood Ducks when I detected motion in one of the

hope the hole is too small for him to bother her. Barred owls certainly bother Pileated Woodpeckers. We have two big beech trees in the side yard both with Pileated roost sites in them. Both Pileated Woodpeckers left in a hurry when the Barred Owl began to investigate the hollows. The wood Ducks must be a second brood, and the female may still be laying a clutch as I noticed that the male is still flying shotgun.

My Hummingbird feeders have been up for a week and have been used heavily by three scrappy little males. Saturday morning a female showed up and the males put on a show for her - short, sharp dives and lots of twittering; even allowing her to feed unmolested. Looks like it's going to be a good year.

TAYLOR TWIN CINEMA

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TUESDAY NIGHT IS BARGAIN NIGHT — ALL SEATS \$3.50

Beat

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want them.

A doctor's examination and a prescription for oral contraceptives takes very little effort, time or money, particularly when compared with the cost of raising a child. For less than the amount it costs to have a pizza delivered to your door once a week, you can pay for oral contraceptives out of pocket. For those unwilling or unable to pay for a doctor's examination, free or nearly free contraception is available at almost any county health clinic. Birth control pills cost about \$25 to \$30 over the counter. They cost less than \$20 through most HMOs. But county health clinics sell them for as little as \$20 for a year's supply. Some county clinics give them away for free.

This bill would force all insured people in the state to pay for birth control offered over the counter or through HMOs, removing the incentive for women to receive the nearly free contraceptives that taxpayers already provide at local health clinics.

And this transfer of costs could end up hurting those it is intended to help. Insurance premiums are not standard for every person. Insurance companies look at several factors when deciding whether to offer a person coverage and how large a premium to charge. Among the many different factors they use are the cost of previous health problems and whether a person engages in risky behavior such as smoking. In general, women already pay higher premiums for health insurance because women cost more to insure than men.

If insurance companies were required to cover contraceptives, everyone's premiums would rise, but women of child-bearing age could see their insurance premiums rise even more. And higher premiums would mean less access to health insurance as some companies stopped offering health insurance plans altogether and some women opted not to buy

the more expensive birth control-included coverage on their own.

Studies show very clearly that each mandated insurance benefits increase insurance costs for everyone. Forrester says his proposal would increase each North Carolinian's health insurance costs by "only" \$17 a year. But even he concedes that this estimate may not fit for this state. Plus, even if that cost is correct, it will come in addition to the numerous other mandates that are coming down the pipe this year. There are perhaps half-a-dozen new mandates on the way this session. So the contraception mandate must be considered in the context of all the others, not on its own. In total, lawmakers may add more than \$100 to your insurance premiums this year.

The most frightening thing about this legislation is that Forrester has admitted that he has no idea whether the legislation is even necessary. Nobody knows how many people the law would affect. Federal insurance laws exempt large corporations from state insurance regulations. The contraception-coverage mandate would apply only to small and medium-sized regulations. The contraception-coverage mandate would apply only to small and medium-sized businesses, so women employed by large firms would not be affected at all. The National Federation of Independent Businesses says that 90 percent of North Carolina small businesses offer contraception coverage. We also know that 93 percent of all HMOs in the state cover contraceptives.

The issue here is not, as some activists would have you believe, women's rights or gender equity. The bill's sponsor has backed up his equity claim with no evidence that insurance companies are treating women unfairly. The real issue here is the proper use of government power. Forcing all insured people to pay for birth control for those insured women who want it is not a proper role for government.

(Parker writes for the John Locke Foundation, a non-profit, non-partisan institute in Raleigh, NC.)

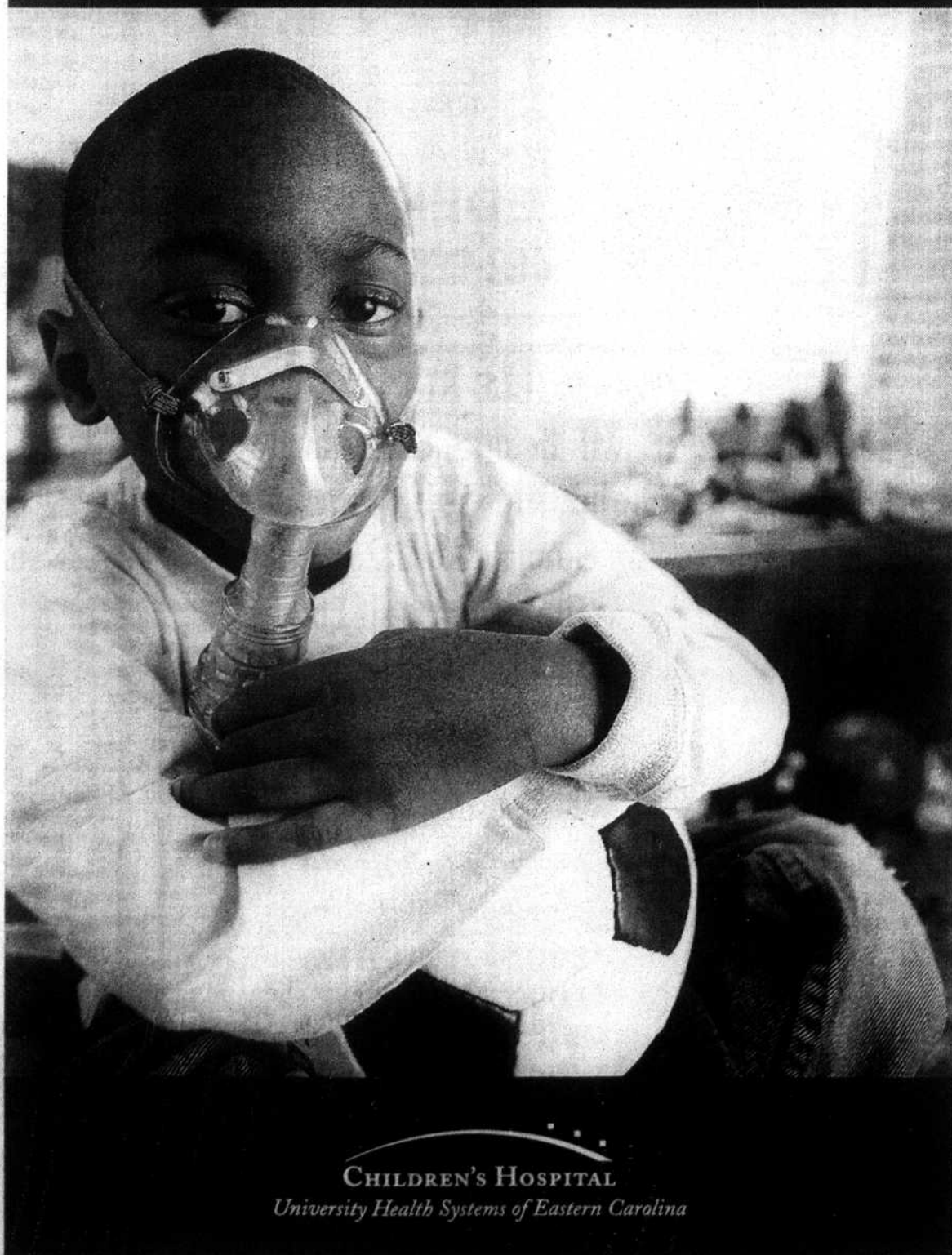
During an asthma attack, the muscles that wrap around the airways leading to the lungs tighten. At the same time, the linings of these airways become swollen and congested, blocking them even more. Breathing becomes very difficult. Asthma is the number one chronic childhood disease and there is no cure.

The symptoms leading to an asthma attack, however, can be controlled. And the Pediatric Asthma Program at University Health Systems of Eastern Carolina in Greenville helps doctors develop action plans for asthmatic children, so that those kids can grow up as healthy and happy as their friends.

The results, so far, have been nothing short of dramatic: Fewer hospital visits, lower school absenteeism and shorter hospital stays.

But because the health of all children

Want to know what it's like to have asthma? Take a deep breath. Hold it. Now read the rest of the page.



CHILDREN'S HOSPITAL University Health Systems of Eastern Carolina

in the area is important to us, University Health Systems' Children's Hospital offers many other services and outreach programs as well. From Education Nurse Specialists who visit schools, emergency rooms and daycare centers, to the only Level III neonatal intensive care unit in the region.

It's all part of a dedication to excellence and a commitment to providing the right care at the right place through a network of outstanding hospitals. For more information on the University Health Systems hospital nearest you, Pitt County Memorial in Greenville, Roanoke-Chowan in Ahoskie, Heritage in Tarboro, Bertie Memorial in Windsor or Chowan in Edenton, call 252-816-4526. Or, if you prefer, visit us at www.uhseast.com. Oh, almost forgot, you can breathe out now.