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NEAL MIDDLE SCHOOL BRIDGE COMPETITION WINNERS - From left to right are: Vance Jenkins, James, McFarland (Coach-Southern High School); Odell Hill, Jr., Zachary Young, Roderick Forrest, Jr., David Williams, January Pleasant, Peter Adetunji, Brandon Minor, Cameron Hicks, Paul Adetunji, Andre Campbell, Jr., and Ms. Ursela Jones (Coach-STEM Scholars). (Photo by Billy D. Barrier, NCDOT)

Bid to redistribute NC sales tax money praised, panned

By Emery P. Dalesio

RALEIGH (AP) - A legislative proposal for the state to take away the local portion of sales taxes highlighted two undercurrents in Raleigh - the increased clout of rural Republicans and their conflicts with Gov. Pat McCrory, a fellow Republican who was formerly Charlotte's mayor.

The state Senate is proposing to strip away some of the revenues of vacation destinations like Dare County and richer locales like Charlotte. Senators say the intent is to redistribute money from some of the "haves" to help poorer, rural counties. That should attack a problem that has festered for decades - urban centers growing in size and wealth while most of the state lags behind, the bill's sponsor said.

"These inequities lead to a vicious cycle that forces rural counties to fund their public schools and basic infrastructure needs through sky-high property taxes," said Senate Majority Leader Harry Brown, R-Onslow. "Sky-high property taxes in much of rural North Carolina create another major obstacle to new industry locating and creating jobs there."

McCrory says revamping and redistributing the local chunk of sales taxes is a bad idea. His home county of Wake County is forecast as one of the eight counties losing money while 91 other counties gain, according to figures provided by Brown's office and legislative fiscal researchers. Wake County was to see no change.

Dare County, where beaches draw vacationers from along the East Coast, is projected to lose almost 60 percent of the local portion of sales tax revenue collected there. The other losers once the plan is phased in by 2018 and the money redistributed based on population are Currituck, Carteret, New Hanover, Watauga, Buncombe and Durham counties.

Currituck County officials say it could lose more than 50 percent of its current \$48 million operating budget, forcing a sharp cut in services or a property tax increase. Other counties would share revenues with cities and towns based on population, not as some do now based on property values.

The Senate plan "will cause great harm to the economic engines of this state. It would actually raise taxes on millions of citizens and job creators throughout this state. We cannot afford to have this bill passed," McCrory said of the proposal.

Brown said McCrory apparently didn't really understand what the plan would do, and anyhow, it's likely to be tweaked heavily in the weeks ahead.

(Continued On Page 3)



Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. was assassinated: April 4, 1968, Memphis, Tenn. He was a Nobel Peace Prize winner and was a major leader in the fight for Civil Rights in America. He was born January 15, 1929 and a national holiday is named for him.

All Eyes Fixed on Ferguson's April 7 Election

By Freddie Allen

NNPA Senior Washington Correspondent

WASHINGTON (NNPA) - If the black residents of Ferguson, Mo., want to radically reform the political climate that encouraged police to disproportionately ticket, fine and arrest them to collect revenue for the city coffers, they'll have to do more than embrace non-violent acts of civil disobedience and peaceful protests - they will have to vote.

In the north St. Louis suburb that is nearly 70 percent black, five of six city councilmembers are white and the mayor is a white Republican. The police force is almost 95 percent white.

On April 7, voters in Ferguson will go to the polls in a round of highly-anticipated elections for three out of the six of the city council seats.

"We are in the process now of preparing people to go to polls so that we can turn the tide of the council, where the real power lies in Ferguson," said Rev. Traci Blackmon, (Continued On Page 3)

Regional Winners of the NCDOT Model Bridge Competition Advance To Finals

RALEIGH - The N.C. Department of Transportation invited all North Carolina middle and high schools to participate in its 16th annual Model Bridge Building Competition. The contest is designed to give students a hands-on opportunity to apply their science, technology, engineering and math skills to a real-world scenario.

The event features teams of students designing and building a model bridge. The bridges are tested by NCDOT engineers, with the engineers and representatives of engineering companies serving as the judges.

The regionals were held at four locations across the state on Friday, March 27, and the winners below have advanced to the finals on April 17 in Raleigh:

Region One:
Middle School - Beaufort Middle School of Beaufort High School - CamTech High School of Camden
Region Two:
Middle School - Neal STEM Academy of Engineering and Design of Durham
High School - Franklin Academy High School of Wake Forest

Region Three:
Middle School - Westmoore Middle School in Seagrave

High School - North Moore High School in Robbins
Region Four:
Middle School Winner - Polk County Middle School, Mill Spring, NC

High School Winner - Polk County High School, Mill Spring, NC

The first place winners in last year's competition were Franklin Academy High School in Wake Forest and Polk County Middle School in Mills Springs.

This competition is intended to get students excited about STEM courses (Science, Technology, Engineering and Math). The objectives of the competition are to encourage students to pursue engineering careers and ultimately lead them to positions with NCDOT.

To learn more about the competition check out the Model Bridge Building event video on YouTube, or contact event organizer Gail Herring via email at gherring@ncdot.gov or (919) 707-4442.

Register To Vote