

OPINION

THE CHRONICLE

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We need lottery now



Val Atkinson
Jones Street

On Sept. 29 Gov. Jim Hunt asked state agencies to cut their operating budget by 1 percent.

These funds will be used to offset the devastation caused by the remnants of Hurricane Floyd. All agencies, large and

small, will have to ante up. Even the University of North Carolina and her 16 constituent institutions will have to do some belt tightening.

We all know how crucial it has become to do everything we can for our neighbors down east but an across-the-board 1 percent reversion hits some of our universities too hard, especially our historically black colleges and universities.

I applaud the governor's attempt to lighten the impact on education by asking for only 1 percent from the State Department of Public Instruction, community colleges and the university system - but that's too much when you're already hurting. All other agencies will have to revert 1 percent plus the average of the last five years' reversions. The total amount reverted will vary widely among agencies.

The number crunchers at the State Budget Office project that the mandatory reversions will generate \$200 million. These funds will be used to match funds from the Federal Emergency Management Agency. FEMA requires North Carolina to match 10 percent of all FEMA funding. Experts say it may take as much as \$5 billion to restore the impacted area to normal. If FEMA made \$5 billion available to North Carolina, the state would have to cough up \$500 million as our matching share.

Just where will we get another \$300 million? The State Employee Incentive Bonus Program is saving the state a lot of money, but nowhere near \$300 million. The Rainy Day Fund won't cover it, and a tax increase will probably be out of the question, which leaves only two other options.

The first would be a deeper cut in state operating budgets, which would almost certainly lead to layoffs. This would be painful and unwise. It would be like robbing Peter to pay Paul - depriving one family to help another.

The other option is a real possibility. The Legislature could pass the North Carolina State Lottery bill. We have two bills already submitted; one by Sen. Tony Rand, D-Fayetteville, and the other by Rep. Toby Fitch, D-Wilson. The time has really come for a state lottery.

We have the need and the purpose, we have the people behind it, and all we need now are the will and the votes of the Legislature.

Please, no more legislative maneuvering, no more resolutions and no more referendums; let's just pass the bill. The people have already decided. Poll after poll after poll has yielded the same results - North Carolinians want a state lottery.

Higher taxes are not the answer. Budget cuts will hurt everyone, and we definitely can't afford to take any more away from education.

The state lottery is not a panacea but it is what the people want and right now it's what the people need.

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To the Editor:

The Wake Forest University Chapter of the American Association of University Professors (AAUP) has established a Legal Defense Fund for any staff members of WFDD who have acted on behalf of freedom of speech and journalistic integrity. As faculty, we insist that all members of the Wake Forest University community enjoy the most basic of rights, that of freedom of expression. Anyone wishing to donate to this cause can send a check to the Legal Defense Fund, c/o Central Carolina Bank & Trust Co., Reynolda Manor Branch, 2804 Fairlawn Dr., Winston-Salem 27106. Please endorse the back of the check with "Deposit to Legal Defense Fund."

Simone M. Caron
 Associate Professor of History
 Treasurer, WFU-AAUP

To the Editor:

I read with interest your letters on your editorial page last week from Madge Hanes and Ruby Rodney in reference to Alvin Schexnider. It makes one wonder just how far people will go to support a person who mis-



uses North Carolina tax dollars for their own personal use. Schexnider was entrusted as chancellor of Winston-Salem State University, a state-supported university, to use taxpay-

ers' money wisely. I wonder if Madge Hanes and Ruby Rodney would be upset if Schexnider or anyone would access their bank accounts and begin to spend at will. Would they be so quick to

forgive? The same principle applies. You are using money that does not belong to you.

James Swaggart
 Winston-Salem

Congress must make hurricane aid its top priority



Senator John Edwards
 Guest Columnist

When Hurricane Floyd made its run up the East Coast, wreaked havoc in Eastern North Carolina and continued into New England, it drove more than 2 million Americans from their homes - the largest evacuation in U.S. history.

Streets were flooded, forcing residents onto rooftops. Homes were washed away or rendered uninhabitable. Airports were closed. Millions of people went without power or running water. Worst of all, more than 70 people were killed.

There is little that mankind can do to quell Mother Nature's occasional outbursts of fury. Congress cannot alter the laws of meteorology. What we can do is provide disaster victims with hope, emergency assistance and a chance to rebuild their lives.

Unfortunately, our reaction to recent calamities indicates that such a goal is easier said than done. In 1997, partisan bickering needlessly delayed \$5.5 billion in important aid for disaster victims in 35 states, including those Americans victimized by massive floods in the Pacific Northwest, the Dakotas and Minnesota.

There was plenty of responsibility to go around for that failure, but Floyd's victims will be better served by change than blame. In the two months

remaining before Congress recesses for the year, the House and Senate must respond quickly to any relief requests and adopt reforms to ensure that we are adequately prepared for future disasters.

These tasks will involve four important steps. First, we must pass hurricane assistance without delay. As they have countless times over the past seven years, Director James Lee Witt and the Federal Emergency Management Agency have responded quickly and valiantly to Hurricane Floyd's devastation. Congress should do the same. If FEMA forwards an emergency spending request to Capitol Hill, both the House and Senate Appropriations Committees should quickly complete work on an aid package that includes emergency cash assistance to farmers.

Second, that emergency aid package should stay true to its name and only provide funding for the legitimate emergencies spawned by Hurricane Floyd. While that directive might appear redundant, Congress has proven adept at burying non-emergency spending items in emergency legislation.

Congressional budget guidelines state that emergency spending must be necessary, sudden, urgent, unforeseen and temporary. For that reason, many assume that it is reserved for natural disasters like hurricanes or floods. But for the last year, Congress has abused its emergency spending powers in a manner befitting the little boy who cried wolf.

In October 1998 it stretched the emergency definition to direct \$3.35 billion to the long-foreseen Year 2000 computer problem. In June 1999, Congress loaded down an "emergency" bill for the Balkans conflict with non-emergency spending items. Congress also considered an "emergency" bill to pay for the 2000 census, which was ordered two centuries ago by our founding fathers in Article I of the U.S. Constitution.

Since all emergency expenditures reduce the federal budget surplus, these abuses have undermined the emergency spending process and weakened our ability to meet legitimate needs in the future. "Clean" legislation for Hurricane Floyd victims would go a long way toward rehabilitating congressional credibility on this subject.

Of course, we would have less need for massive relief packages if Congress realistically funded existing emergency accounts each year. Our third step must be to reverse that trend through preventive budgeting.

While Congress cannot anticipate the precise kind or cost of future disasters, we do know that they will occur. Unfortunately, we're doing very little to anticipate their potentially ruinous financial effects. For example, Congress prospectively budgets an annual amount not to exceed \$320 million for FEMA's disaster relief fund. Yet since Hurricane Andrew, average emergency outlays have exceeded \$1.7 billion each year. By systematically underfunding FEMA's accounts, the House

and Senate have forced us to deplete the surplus in responding to disasters like Hurricane Floyd.

Finally, Congress should encourage FEMA in its efforts to lessen the devastating consequences of hurricanes, floods and earthquakes before they occur. Before Andrew savaged Florida in 1992, FEMA had approximately \$800,000 to spend each year on hurricane mitigation. After Andrew, Congress increased that annual amount to \$10 million.

That investment paid dividends. The New York town of Freeport Village, on Long Island's south shore, has long been susceptible to high winds and flooding caused by hurricanes. But a FEMA mitigation project protected several once-vulnerable properties from flooding during Hurricane Floyd. Congress should build on that kind of success and help FEMA make mitigation a priority for all potential disasters.

On Sept. 7, the House and Senate returned from their August recess amid fears of a fall appropriations meltdown. While we expect grueling negotiations before Congress and the White House work out their differences on the spending bills that have not yet been signed into law, it is vital that there be no rancor over passage of hurricane measures. Floyd's victims deserve our best - and fastest - bipartisan response to their suffering.

Senators John Edwards and Bob Graham wrote this column.

VOICES FROM THE COMMUNITY...

The holiday season is quickly approaching. Soon, people everywhere will be enjoying the smells of Thanksgiving, the merriment of Christmas and New Year's celebrations. We asked locals which holiday were they most looking forward to.



B.J. Jennings

"I am looking forward to Christmas. That's when me and all of my friends gather together and have a good time."



Donald Littlejohn

"Christmas. I plan on getting a lot of presents, so I can't wait for Christmas."



Decaris Graham

"I can't wait for Christmas. I like it and I get a lot of presents, and it's a time for the family to come together and have a great time."



Janay Lash

"I can't wait for New Year's to get here. I'm ready to make my New Year's resolution come true."



Carla Roberts

"I'm ready for Christmas to get here. I want to get some new clothes and spend time with my family."