

FORUM

Democrats should wake up



Val Atkinson
Jones Street

The federal Justice department has finally spoken and decided to let Judge Knox Jenkins' redistricting plan stand. Republicans are so giddy they can hardly stand themselves. And they should be giddy. After all, they walked up behind the Democrats and sucker-punched them in the back of the head, and all the Democrats did was get up, brush themselves off and continue on their way as though nothing had happened. Well, they didn't exactly take it without saying a word; they did say that they were "disappointed." Democrats are gonna have to be more than disappointed if they're gonna play hardball with the Republicans.

The Republicans' approach to redistricting and the lottery were wakeup calls. And for Democrats, it's not just time to wake up; it's time to get out of bed, put on your clothes and go out and kick some ass. After all, the party logo is an ass, which symbolized truculence, immovability, willfulness

and outright stubbornness. Democrats are gonna have to become more of an ass if they wanna start winning. And winning is still a reality for the Democrats.

Democrats have an excellent opportunity to win big in November, but it's not a given. In the U.S. Senate race, Dan Blue or Erskine Bowles can defeat Liddy Dole. In the new 13th Congressional District race, Bill Martin, Robin Britt or Brad Miller can defeat any candidate the Republicans have to offer. House Speaker Jim Black could increase his margins in the House and Basnight could hold on to his comfortable state Senate margin. And don't give up on the lottery just yet. All these things are possible if Democrats want them bad enough and convey their desires in terms of motivation and excitement.

RACES TO WATCH

U.S. Senate races:

Currently there are no African Americans serving in the U.S. Senate. N.C. senatorial candidate and former Speaker of the House Dan Blue and Texas senatorial candidate and former Dallas mayor Ron Kirk are the only two viable African-American candidates for the U.S. Senate. Kirk is leading in the polls but the real poll won't be taken until Nov. 5.

Blue is not leading in the polls but has an excellent chance to "steal" the election, especially since it appears that there will be no second primary race. African Americans generally make up between 25 percent and 33 percent of the N.C. Democratic primary vote. With all the wrangling over redistricting, election dates and the like, a low primary turnout is expected. And in a low turnout anything can happen.

13th Congressional District:

The Democratic primary has a full field of candidates right now - and I emphasize "right now" - because the filing period has been reopened and candidates who previously filed will have the right to withdraw from the office they sought (and be reimbursed); they will also have the right (along with all other qualified citizens) to file for offices that they had not filed for previously.

This means we won't know what the final list of candidates



Senate hopeful Dan Blue

File Photo

will look like until July 27. But I think you can expect state Sen. Bill Martin (Democrat from Guilford County) to be a candidate for the new 13th District come hell or high water. He says he's "in it to win it" and that's refreshing to hear from a candidate.

Martin says he will run an aggressive campaign, he won't roll over and he won't take sucker punches. Hallelujah for Martin! He appears to be the kind of candidate who wants to stand up and fight. Win or lose he wants to fight. And everyone wants a representative who'll stand up and fight for their causes and issues. Martin says he wants to do just that.

Contact Val Atkinson at: JonesStreet@nc.rr.com.

The truth about the unjust tax cut



Marian Wright Edelman

Guest Columnist

Americans with average incomes over a million dollars will be handed an astonishing \$121 billion in tax cuts in the year 2010 - alone more than all the rest of American taxpayers combined, according to a new analysis of the 2001 Bush tax cut issued by Citizens for Tax Justice for the Children's Defense Fund. It is morally wrong and economically irresponsible for the Bush administration and some in Congress to say we cannot afford to provide more children a head start this year, or a single new dime for child care for children in working families over the next five years or for those standing in unemployment lines, while lavishing billions in new tax cuts for millionaires and multi-millionaires.

"2006 to 2010 are the scandal years of the tax cut," according to Robert S. McIntyre, director of Citizens for Tax Justice, who did the year-by-year analysis of the tax cut. "For the top 1 percent, the vast majority of the Bush tax cuts won't be phased in until after 2005. In contrast, 99 percent of Americans have already received almost all of what they'll get from the Bush tax cuts. Since the tax cut is already essentially frozen for most of us, why not extend the freeze to the top 1 percent too?"

Although it was widely understood last year that the Bush tax cut plan would disproportionately help the wealthy, information about the share of the rising tax cut going to the top 1 percent in later years was not available when the president's tax cut bill was being debated. This new analysis, which looks at the annual effects of the Bush tax cut over the next decade, shows the true extent of the unjust give-away to the wealthiest, making it one of the most lopsided tax cuts in history:

- From 2001 to 2010 the wealthiest 1 percent of Americans with average incomes over a million dollars would pocket almost a half-trillion dollars from the Bush tax cuts. Each member of this elite group will average \$342,000 in tax cuts over the decade.

- The tax cut keeps skyrocketing for those at the very top. By 2010 it grows to give the wealthiest taxpayers average tax cuts 180 times bigger than the tax cuts for the bottom 60 percent of Americans earning less than \$59,000 a year.

- By 2010, when (and if) the Bush tax reductions are fully in place, an astonishing 52 percent of the total tax cuts will go to the wealthiest 1 percent, whose individual windfall in that year alone will average \$85,000.

- Repeal of the estate tax on very large estates accounts for \$50 billion of the total \$121 billion tax cut for the rich in 2010. A whopping 91 percent of the estate tax cut in that year goes to the top 1 percent.

- A freeze on the tax cuts scheduled in the years ahead for the very wealthiest 1 percent of Americans could provide crucial new investments in early childhood, education, and health for our children and our nation's future. It would allow our country to:

- Provide early-childhood programs for every child who needs them to get ready for school.

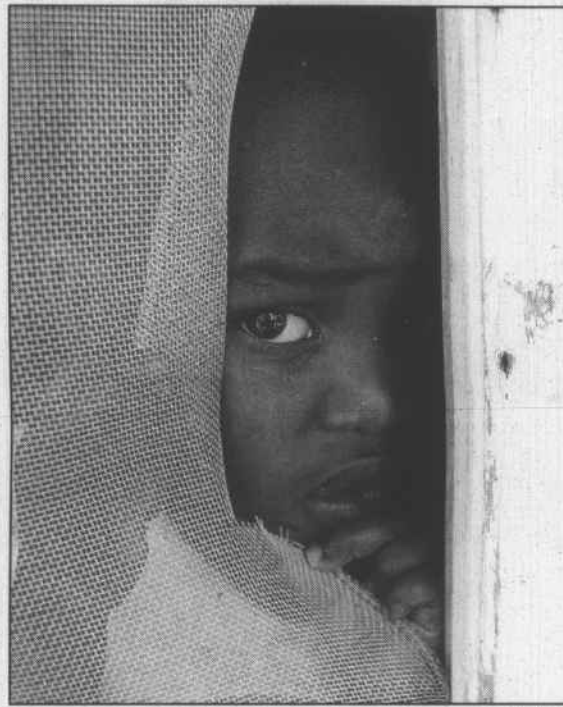
- Improve educational opportunities for all children by decreasing class size, improving teacher quality and accountability, and repairing crumbling school buildings.

- Ensure health coverage for all of our 9 million uninsured children, 90 percent of whom live in working families.

- Create a fairer, fully refundable child tax credit that reaches all poor children and lifts over a million from poverty.

- Spare thousands of children from homelessness.

- Free millions of struggling working families from fears of hunger and eviction by providing job training and other work sup-



File Photo

The head of the Children's Defense Fund says instead of giving tax cuts, the Bush administration should focus on kids.

ports.

The Bush administration's words say "Leave No Child Behind." The Bush administration's deeds say "leave no millionaires behind."

It's time to close the hypocrisy gap. I don't begrudge people their first, fifth, or tenth million or billion if it is earned on a fair playing field and after children's crucial survival needs are met. But something is out of kilter when just three of our wealthiest Americans possess greater wealth than the incomes of 7 million American families combined and the revenues of 19 state governments with 25 million citizens. They and others in the top 1 percent of wealthiest Americans did not and do not need the huge tax cuts the Bush administration and Congress gave them in June 2001. And they do not need these tax cuts accelerated and made perma-

nent, as the Bush administration's budget and the House of Representatives now propose, while there are still hungry, homeless, poor, uninsured, and poorly educated children.

For more information and to learn about the Movement to Leave No Child Behind® and what you can do, call 1-800-CDF-1200, visit www.childrensdefense.org, or write The Children's Defense Fund, 25 E Street NW, Washington, D.C. 20001.

Marian Wright Edelman is president of the Children's Defense Fund (CDF), whose mission is to Leave No Child Behind® and to ensure every child a healthy start, a head start, a fair start, a safe start, and a moral start in life and successful passage to adulthood with the help of caring families and communities.

The deadline for News is Monday at 5 p.m.



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