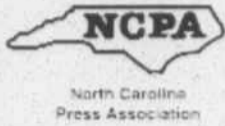


OPINION/ FORUM

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General Assembly leaders taking N.C. in wrong direction



Gov. Bev Perdue
 Guest Columnist

When the General Assembly convened on Monday, it marked the 100th legislative day since Republicans took control in January.

The new Republican leaders are heading in a direction that is wrong for North Carolina. I do not share their values.

First and foremost, the new leaders are moving backwards on our state's historic commitment to education. They've made sharp cuts to all levels of education:

- They made deep and shortsighted cuts to K-12 schools that were as harmful as they were unnecessary. As a result, we've suffered the loss of thousands of teachers and teachers' assistant positions.

- They also made deep cuts to early childhood education, including SmartStart and NC Pre-K (formerly known as More at Four). In fact, their cuts to NC Pre-K were so reckless that a North Carolina judge has ruled that they violate the state constitution.

- And they slashed funding for public universities, including historically black colleges and universities. These reckless cuts have forced the university system to lay off more than 3,000 people.



In addition to their harmful choices on education, the new Republican leaders have been wrong for North Carolina in other ways too:

- They passed a "voter ID" bill—which I vetoed—that would have unnecessarily and unfairly disenfranchised many eligible and legitimate voters.

- They passed partisan redistricting maps that unfairly clustered African American voters and arbitrarily cut across county lines in an attempt to lock-in Republican control of the General Assembly.

- And their budgeting mistakes created a \$139 million shortfall in Medicaid this year that could inflict painful cuts on services for the most vulnerable among us.

As I said before, I have different values. I believe that we must invest in our public schools in order to ensure that all of our citizens have the opportunity to get a quality education.

I developed "Career and College Promise" to provide high school students with a clear and affordable path for success in college or in a career. The program gives eligible high school students the opportunity to earn either 44 hours of college credit tuition-free, or valuable career training that will help them get a job after high school.

Also, I have urged the General Assembly to reverse the deep cuts they've made to NC Pre-K.

I sent a letter to the General Assembly a few weeks ago in which I identified \$30 million in existing funds that could be re-directed to NC Pre-K. This would enable us to serve an additional 6,300 at-risk students next year. These are existing funds, so we could serve these additional children without raising taxes, without putting the budget out of balance and without damaging other critical priorities.

This is an investment worth making: NC Pre-K is an academic program that prepares four year olds to succeed once they get to kindergarten. It improves children's language, math and social skills, and it has been shown to help close the achievement gap. I hope the General Assembly will partner with me to help ensure that all of North Carolina's children enter kindergarten ready to succeed.

These are challenging times; they call for leaders who are focused on helping all of our citizens compete in the 21st century global economy. I will continue working every day on behalf of North Carolina's families.

Correction

In last week's *Healthbeat* briefs, a clip about Wake Forest Baptist Health's new Radial Lounge contained a photo of former School of Medicine Dean Dr. William B. Applegate, instead of one of Dr. Robert J. Applegate, a cardiology professor who was quoted in the clip. *The Chronicle* apologizes for the error.



Dr. Robert J. Applegate



Quiet Powerhouse



Marc Morial
 Guest Columnist

"Work is the only meaning I've ever known. Like the man in the song says, I just gotta keep on keepin' on."
 — Joe Frazier

Years ago in a Philadelphia slaughterhouse, an aspiring young boxer trained in the early mornings by punching sides of beef. He would run up and down the steps of the Philadelphia Art Museum.

The world associates these images with a fictional boxer, Rocky Balboa, but they were part of the fascinating life of Smokin' Joe Frazier, who died earlier this month at the age of 67.

In many ways, the appropriation of Frazier's early training days is emblematic of how, even at the height of his career, he was overshadowed by the slicker, brasher media favorite, Muhammad Ali.

Although their animosity



defined an era of boxing. Frazier boycotted the 1967 heavyweight elimination tournament to find a successor to Ali, and Frazier personally petitioned President Richard M. Nixon to have Ali's license reinstated. While Ali was banned from boxing, Frazier lent him money to pay his bills.

"I've never fought anyone

with a will so strong." Ali would say of Frazier.

I've always been an Ali fan myself, but the only time I ever rooted against Frazier was when he fought Ali. Frazier, in comparison, was a man of few words, who proved himself with hard work and action in the ring. He let his boxing speak for him.

In many ways, Frazier's very life, more than anything he said, defined the struggle of black America. He was self-taught and self-reliant. He rose from crushing poverty in Jim Crow-era South Carolina, one of 14 children born to struggling sharecroppers. He worked the fields from the age of seven until he, like so many who are part of the Great Migrations of the 20th century, hopped a Greyhound bus to New York City before making his way to Philadelphia.

After he retired from boxing, Joe Frazier's Gym became an important part of the Philadelphia neighborhood. Though it's no longer a training facility, fans and former students flocked to the building upon learning of Frazier's death. It had been a safe haven for young people, a center of the community. In contrast to the violence and sometimes hopelessness of the streets outside, young people learned discipline and hard work, and their lives were changed forever thanks to Smokin' Joe.

Marc Morial is the president and CEO of the National Urban League.

The Legacy of Jesse Jackson



George Curry
 Guest Columnist

Al Sharpton has patterned his career so closely after the Jesse Jackson model that he could be justifiably charged with identity theft. Like Jackson, he began wearing a Martin Luther King medallion around his neck. Like Jackson, he started his own civil rights organization. Like Jackson, he ran for president of the United States. Like Jackson, he now has his own radio and television shows. And like Jackson, he has become a confidante of the man who occupies the White House.

At a ceremony last week at Georgetown University to celebrate Jesse Jackson's 70th birthday and a half century in the civil rights movement, Sharpton proved that he not only had studied Jesse Jackson, but the civil rights movement just as carefully.

"We try to go from '68 to '08 — like we leapfrogged from Dr. King to the president of the United States, Barack Obama," Sharpton explained. Much of the progress in Black economic and political development between the time Dr. King was assassinated in Memphis and the election of Obama in 2008 should be largely attributed to Jackson, Sharpton suggested.

Jesse Jackson was among the handful of top aides to Dr. King. When King was killed in Memphis, Ralph Abernathy succeeded King as president of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, but it was Jackson who assumed the mantle as Black America's top

civil rights leader.

Jackson, who was selected by King to head Operation Breadbasket in Chicago, challenged major corporations to not only hire more Blacks, but to expand opportunities for African-Americans to own automobile dealerships, fast food franchises and provide goods and services to Fortune 500 companies.

Sharpton listed Richard Parsons, former CEO of Time Warner, and American Express CEO Ken Chenault as beneficiaries of Jackson's early work.

"There would not have been anybody in the corporate elite had it not been a movement led by Jackson to say you can't put a glass ceiling on how far we can go," Sharpton explained. "It wasn't that Blacks weren't qualified to be chairman of major corporations until the '80s. There was no movement that had broken the ceiling."

Lifting the ceiling from national politics was also part of the Jesse Jackson legacy. Although other African-Americans had run for president — including Frederick Douglass, Shirley Chisholm and Dick Gregory — none were as successful as Jackson in 1984 and 1988.

Georgetown University Professor Michael Eric Dyson, who organized the appreciation event with his wife, Marcia Dyson, who served as Operation PUSH Trade Bureau's first chief of staff, said what many in the audience were thinking: "Without Jesse Jackson, there would be no Barack Obama."

The Jackson-Obama relationship turned sour after Jackson was recorded saying that the then-presidential candidate talks down to African-Americans and he would like to dismember a certain part of



Obama's body. While that crude comment hurt Jackson's standing among African-Americans excited about the prospect of electing the nation's first Black president, it does not alter the fact that Obama would not be in the White House without Jackson's presidential campaigns.

Sharpton was uncharacteristically diplomatic in how he addressed the relationship between Obama and Jackson, noting that after Dr. King had helped Carl Stokes become the first Black mayor of Cleveland, he was excluded from the victory celebration.

"The misnomer is that students watching think because you weren't at the party that you had nothing to do with the achievement," Sharpton said. "Don't get confused by the invitation list to the party with those who created what you are celebrating."

At the tribute to Jackson, he was celebrated for developing a long list of leaders, including Sharpton, Former Secretary of Labor Alexis Herman, political strategist Donna Brazile, activist Marcia Dyson, Assistant Agriculture Secretary Joseph Leonard, Black Leadership Forum Executive Director Gary

Flowers, ACLU Washington Director Laura W. Murphy and Lezli Baskerville, president of the National Association For Equal Opportunity (NAFEO).

Rev. Freddie Haynes of Dallas, in what he called an oratorical thank-you note to Rev. Jesse Jackson, spoke about the impact of Jackson's presidential campaigns.

Looking at Jackson, he recalled: "After your speech I was in the barber shop — and you know how we kick it in the barber shop in the 'hood — and some brothers were talking about, 'Did you hear Jesse?' Jesse. Jesse. Jesse. And I wasn't feeling them disrespecting Rev. Jesse Jackson like that. So I said, 'Do you know Rev. Jesse Jackson?' And the brother jumped right back at me and said, 'I don't know Jesse, but Jesse knows me.'"

Sharpton said Jesse Jackson led the way in urging children to spend less time in front of TV, curbing violence in the Black community and getting youth to believe that "I Am Somebody."

Sharpton stated, "In many ways, I would say that from the economic fights from the end of the decade he started in the '70s to the political empowerment that resulted in the first Black attorney general and the first Black president to the whole concept of coalition building, he has defined the last part of the 20th century and the first part of the 21st century."

Michael Eric Dyson put it this way: "Like Muhammad Ali, he shook up the world."

George E. Curry, former editor-in-chief of Emerge magazine and the NNPA News Service, is a keynote speaker, moderator, and media coach. Reach him at www.georgecurry.com.