

OP/ED



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Common Core, White Power

Parents have been advised to expect their kids to bring home lower End-of-Course (EOC) and End-of-Grade (EOG) scores when they are released around Thanksgiving.

Lower proficiency scores are expected statewide as a result of the implementation of **Common Core** for English and math and the N.C. Essential Standards in all other subjects. By all accounts, the new standards are higher, so, as Winston-Salem/Forsyth County Schools Superintendent Dr. Beverly Emory, states, students have not learned less over the last year, the bar has just been upped a notch or two.

So is that a good thing? Many Tea Partiers say no, and the ranks of Common Core naysayers have swelled beyond conservative Republicans.

Common Core was developed by the National Association of Governors as a way to create uniformity in education standards across the nation while also raising the standard of learning to make American students more competitive with their counterparts around the world. Common Core has been adopted by 45 states, including N.C., whose Board of Education signed on in 2010.



Big government-despising Republicans, loud mouth Glenn Beck among them, have called Common Core nothing short of a nationalized education system and, of course, have accused the Obama White House of trying to nationalize the nation's schools.

After the kinks are ironed out and teachers and students adapt, Common Core could turn out to be a good thing. But will it make it that far? N.C. Lt. Gov. Dan Forest has become a vocal opponent of the standard and wants it reviewed by the newly-appointed Republican members of the State Board of Education.

Regardless of how you feel about Common Core, it can't be a good idea to keep moving the goal post for students. Let's not make them political pawns. Common Core is a path they just set down. Let's hold the detours until we have a firmer grasp.

Cory Booker is now one of just two African Americans in the **U.S. Senate**. The Democrat and former Newark mayor was selected by the people of New Jersey last week during a special election held to fill the seat of the late Frank Lautenberg. The last African American to win a U.S. Senate election is now in the White House. U.S. Sen. Tim Scott (R-S.C.) was appointed by Gov. Nikki Haley earlier this year to finish the term of Jim DeMint and won't face voters until November 2014.

Of the 98 other U.S. Senators, only three are people of color - Asian American Mazie Hirono (D-HI) and Hispanic Americans Marco Rubio (R-Fla.) and Ted Cruz (R-Tx).

So much is made about the nation's first black president that it is easy to forget that there is still a great dearth of minority decision makers on Capitol Hill. Governor's mansions lack black and brown inhabitants as well. Massachusetts' Deval Patrick is the only black governor. Nevada's Brian Sandoval and New Mexico's Susana Martinez are Hispanic, and South Carolina's Haley and Louisiana's Bobby Jindal are Indian American. All of the minority governors, save Patrick, are Republicans.

The election of President Obama was said to be a game-changer, but the game is stubborn. The browning of America is happening everywhere we look - our schools, neighborhoods and even on our television screens. But where it really matters - in boardrooms and legislative halls (the true bastions of American power) - the good ol' boys are holding firm.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

I Support Rep. Watt

To the Editor:

For over 20 years, Congressman Mel Watt has been a true champion for middle class families. When President Obama nominated him to be the first confirmed Director of the Federal Housing Finance Agency (FHFA), I was encouraged that middle class families across the country would have a proven advocate leading FHFA.

I was deeply disappointed last week when Senate Republicans blocked Congressman Watt's nomination to serve as Director of the FHFA. I was proud to join my North Carolina colleague, Senator Richard Burr, in introducing Congressman Watt at his confirmation hearing earlier this year, and I was pleased that the Senate Banking Committee approved his nomination.

The bipartisan support for Congressman Watt from the North Carolina delegation is a testament to Congressman Watt's ability to work across the aisle and shows that Congressman Watt deserves an up or down vote.

Congressman Watt's background, skills and track record of bipartisanship make him an immensely qualified nominee who, if confirmed, would confront the challenges that face our recovering housing market and strengthen the backbone of our current housing finance system.

As a member of the House Financial Services and Judiciary Committees, Congressman Watt has been a steadfast advocate for affordable housing in North Carolina and across the country.

Congressman Watt's nomination is supported by over 50 community and advocacy organizations, by industry groups such as the National Association of Realtors and the National Association of Home Builders, and by respected business leaders like former Bank of America Chairman and CEO Hugh McColl.

Congressman Watt's strong record of working with industry leaders, consumer advocates, Democrats and Republicans proves that he can deliver results for middle class families in North Carolina and across the country.

We need Congressman Watt at the Federal Housing Finance Agency. I know he will work successfully with Congress to strengthen the backbone of our housing system. He deserves an up or down vote, and I will continue to advocate for his confirmation to this critical post.

U.S. Sen. Kay Hagan (D-N.C.)

Medicare Help Available

To the Editor:

The next month marks a crucial period for Americans who have recently or are about to turn 65. From Oct. 15 through Dec. 7, the Medicare Open Enrollment (also called the Annual Election Period) is held. This is the only time in 2013 that those 65 and older may make changes to their health and prescription drug coverage plans. And with the hundreds of insurers offering coverage, it is imperative that seniors choose the plan that best suits their needs.

To make matters even more complicated, the nation's healthcare system is in a state of transition due to the Affordable Care Act, and there is much misinformation circulating about it. For starters, Medicare's Open Enrollment is not part of the Affordable Care Act's new Health Insurance Marketplace, and people with Medicare do not need to do anything with Marketplace plans.

"Thanks to the Affordable Care Act, Medicare remains strong with more benefits, better choices and lower costs to beneficiaries," said Marilyn Tavener, administrator at the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services. "Seniors and people with disabilities have the opportunity to find and compare the best plan for them. Coverage options and costs can change each year, and everyone should evaluate their current coverage and choices. If people with Medicare are satisfied with their current coverage and feel it will meet their needs for 2014, they do not need to do anything."

If, however, one is a first-time enrollee, feels that his or her coverage is inadequate or that his or her needs have changed, where does one turn? How does one navigate through the maze of plans in order to find the one tailored to their specific needs?

One option has been provided by the Winston-Salem Urban League, which has launched a campaign called "The 10,000 Seniors Challenge." During the open enrollment period, the goal is to reach 10,000 area seniors and provide them with help in choosing which plan best fits their situation. Toward that end, they have partnered with Senior Advisors Group, which has a proven track record of asset protection and financial advice tailored for seniors and retirees. The Senior Challenge has been endorsed by the 32-member Ministers Conference of Winston-Salem and Vicinity.

To request a consultation with a licensed agent or for further information, please call 1-800-828-3792 or email senioradvisors-group@gmail.com. There is no obligation and all information is free.

Ogi Overman,
Winston-Salem Urban League



DD Adams (seated, second from right) celebrates her victory with her supporters.

Council

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percent of the vote, respectively.

The only newcomer to the Council is Jeff MacIntosh, who overcame his Republican contender, Lida Hayes-Calvert in the race for the Northwest Ward with 58 percent of the vote. MacIntosh, a realtor for Leonard Ryden Burr said the good news was still sinking in as he took a much needed break from the campaign alongside family members and supporters at Bull's Tavern Tuesday night. The father of two said he believes his decades of service to the community prior to the campaign were what tipped the scales in his favor in the end.

"I think it just speaks to how long I've worked. I've lived in the ward for 30 years and I've been engaged for 30 years," said MacIntosh, who will succeed fellow Dem Wanda Merschel on the Council. "Lida is a strong candidate. She worked very hard, so that's what I attribute it to."

The Council remains heavily Democratic. Its only Republican member - West Ward representative Robert Clark - faced no opposition Tuesday. East Ward representative Derwin Montgomery also had no General Election challenger.

With decades of public service under her belt, Mayor Pro Tempore Vivian Burke is the most seasoned member of the Council, but longevity is common among the group: Mayor Allen Joines and Besse have both served for more than a decade. Burke was elected for her 10th consecutive term on Tuesday.

"When you talk about the years somebody served, if they are good years, they pass and they pass fast," she told supporters at her celebratory gathering at the Ramada Inn (formerly Sundance Plaza) Tuesday night. "...



Jeff MacIntosh celebrates his victory with his wife, Susan and their son Collin.

I have reached across generations. There are some people I have stood with as children and I worked with their parents, and now they are the adults."

Despite her storied career, Burke says she never takes an election for granted. She checked frequently with her smartphone-wielding supporters on Election Night to gauge turnout. In the end, she commanded a comfortable lead with more than 75 percent of the vote, despite being the only incumbent on the Council who faced opposition from both a Republican and an unaffiliated candidate (Keith King). Though she has been roundly criticized by some for not passing the torch to a younger candidate, "age is just a number," Burke said. She thanked her supporters and constituents for giving her another term.

"I stand here because of you and most of all because God had this wonderful plan for me," she declared. "I am so grateful to each one of you... You're in my heart and I carry you in my heart all of the time. I love Winston-Salem, and that means that I love the people of Winston-Salem and I'm grateful to the people of the Northeast Ward for having confidence in me."

Whoops of excitement and cheers of acclamation went up as the official results rolled in at the Election Watch Night Party at North Ward Council Member Denise "DD" Adams' home on Marlowe Avenue. A visibly moved Adams made her way around the room, embracing family members and friends who came out to support her. Adams, who had to miss months of meetings earlier in the year because of health concerns, said the challenges she has faced made her success even sweeter.

"It humbles me," she said of her first reelection victory. "It has been a very challenging year for me and a lot of people I saw today, they prayed for me and I thanked them for that as well as for their votes... If it had not been for my family and friends who came to my support, I could not have done it."

The Southeast Ward's James Taylor Jr. made several stops on Tuesday evening, taking time out to share the celebratory moment with colleagues from across the city.

"It feels good being approved by the people you've represented," said Taylor, who has led the ward since 2009. "I'm happy to be reelected but there's more work to be done... I'm excited to be back in, but the excitement will be short lived. Tomorrow, it's time to get back to work."

PUBLIC MEETING

Reynolds Park Road Bridge Replacements

The City of Winston-Salem Public Engineering Division will hold a drop-in information session to update residents and answer questions about plans to replace two bridges on Reynolds Park Road between Peachtree Street and Martin Luther King Jr. Drive.

Date: Tuesday, Nov 12, 2013
Time: 5 to 7 p.m.
Location: W.R. Anderson Jr. Recreation Center,
 2450 Reynolds Park Road, Winston-Salem

A map showing the proposed project will be available. City representatives will be available to discuss the proposed replacement plan and answer questions about the project, including detours and timetables.

For additional information contact:
 Alan Temple, City of Winston-Salem Engineering Division
 P.O. Box 2511, Winston-Salem, NC 27102
 phone: 336-747-6844, fax: 336-727-2361, email: alant@cityofws.org.

