

OPINION

THE CHRONICLE
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Celebrating 41 Years of Community Journalism

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Our Mission

The Chronicle is dedicated to serving the residents of Winston-Salem and Forsyth County by giving voice to the voiceless, speaking truth to power, standing for integrity and encouraging open communication and lively debate throughout the community.

Serious issue of poverty deserves serious effort

The Watergate scandal put a blot on Richard Nixon's tenure as president, but he had some good ideas during his time in office. One of them was a way to fight poverty.

Rob Schofield of N.C. Policy Watch reported that in 1969, Nixon gave a televised address to the nation in which he proposed to establish a minimum, federally funded family income. Nixon recognized the power of money to combat poverty.

Schofield mentioned a recent article in the Washington Post titled "The remarkable thing that happens to poor kids when you give their parents a little money." It talked about a study that showed that the lives of people, including children, improved when parents had an increase in income.

Schofield said "the implication of these findings for public policy ought to be clear: The simplest, most efficient and best thing that state and federal leaders can do to combat the scourge of poverty and its devastating long-term impact on children is to craft and enact policies that lift the incomes of the poor."



Joines

Winston-Salem officials have decided that they want to fight poverty, but as a groupthink project. They believe a 21-panel group initially will get the ball rolling, then hundreds more people will be able to join in to help solve the issue of poverty in Winston-Salem. And the process could take five years just to cut some of the poverty in the city, which by the way, is at more than 24 percent, or a quarter of the population of 235,527 (which is an estimated population figure as of 2013). That means 58,882 people are in poverty if the 2013 figure is used.

Winston-Salem Mayor Allen Joines on Oct. 29 led the announcement of the formation of the Winston-Salem Poverty Thought Force. The group will hold a series of community meetings to ask residents for input on how to tackle various aspects of the poverty problem. Another organization will provide data analysis and look nationwide for examples of what has worked and what has not worked.

In the end, the panel will come up with a list of recommendations and set a percentage goal to reduce the poverty rate.

Why is a panel needed, and such a large panel at that, to work on ending poverty in Winston-Salem?

A broad range of civic and academic leaders makes up the 21-member panel. It will be chaired by Wake Forest University Provost Rogan Kersh, who is the same person who in September chaired the public "hunger talks," otherwise known as Feeding Change: an Interactive Community Conversation on Hunger. We are still waiting on the results from that meeting.

Kersh said that the Thought Force will have five subcommittees that focus on various aspects of poverty: health and wellness; housing and homelessness; jobs/workforce development; education/life skills; and hunger/food insecurity. These subcommittees will hold meetings to gather information and ideas from the public and from people who work in these areas.

Now, look at how Winston-Salem handled the homeless veterans problem.

The Winston-Salem/Forsyth County Commission on Ending Homelessness announced that it has ended veteran homelessness. This was its first goal as part of its overall drive to end chronic homelessness in Winston-Salem and Forsyth County by 2016. Was a 21-member panel used to reach that goal, which took about a year to achieve?

The issue of poverty is serious and real in the city. The question is, why don't city officials treat it that way?



LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Sad day for hard-working citizens

To the Editor:

Dear Members of the Forsyth County Community,

The passing of House Bill 318 represents another sad day for many hard-working citizens of our State. This intentionally deceitful legislation is titled the Protect North Carolina Workers Act. Many in our community are out of work and still looking for jobs every day without much luck. By Gov. McCrory signing this bill into law, these extremely vulnerable citizens face a pathway to starvation.



Hanes

Adults that were not disabled and looking for work were, under previous law, able to apply and receive a small allocation of food stamps. That is no more. HB 318 also makes it more difficult for local police and governments to protect and serve the public while making it easier for exploitation of immigrant workers. One of the primary sponsors of this bill, Debra Conrad, is actually among our delegation from Forsyth County. We respect the right of all members of the delegation to voice their opinion through legislation. We cannot in good conscious, however, support a bill that will starve and disenfranchise children for the political amusement of those who no longer wish to adhere

to a simple and age-old American adage: This land is your land ... this land is my land.

Those whose compassion for our citizens still living on the margins are deeply grieved about this abusive law. We know how much people depend on a little boost when they are down and out, lose a job, do day work, or work fewer than twenty hours a week. These affected members of our community are invisible to some. They are not invisible to us. We respect them. We know that they count.

This unbridled abuse of and disregard for the basic tenants that have made this country the greatest in world, an international melting pot, will not last forever. We urge everybody to use your power to vote while you still have it. When we as a community believe in the Power of One, all things will become possible.

Regards,

The Forsyth County Legislative Delegation
 Rep. Edward F. Hanes Jr., Co-Chairman
 North Carolina General Assembly, District 72
 Rep. Evelyn Terry, District 71
 Sen. Paul Lowe, District 32

Publix should reconsider not joining fair food coalition

To the Editor:

While visiting my daughter or my sister-in-law in Jacksonville, Florida, I have often shopped at a wonderful Publix there. I was delighted when I saw that a Publix would be opening in Winston-Salem.

But then came the surprise. I learned that Publix, a wealthy, privately-owned, giant grocery store chain, will not support a 1 cent increase per pound in the price of tomatoes and join the Coalition of Immokalee Workers (CIW) Fair Food Program. The CIW is a well-respected farm worker rights organization in Florida. Their Fair Food Program is an innovative partnership among farmers, farm workers and retail food companies that ensures decent wages and humane working conditions on participating farms.

The program has been lauded by



the Washington Post as "one of the great human rights success stories of our day" and recognized for its effectiveness by the United Nations. Despite what seems like a no-brainer, Publix refuses to sign on and support a 1 cent increase per pound in the price of tomatoes. The increase would insure that there is no market for tomatoes which have been produced in Florida on farms where slavery and sexual harassment are well documented. Other major companies have joined the Fair Food Program including McDonald's, Taco Bell, Burger King, Trader Joe's and Whole Foods. Since Publix will not join them, I cannot in good conscience peruse the aisles of what I am sure will be a beautiful store. Publix, please reconsider your decision, and do the right thing for the farm workers who put food on our tables.

Sara Swann Watson

We Welcome Your Feedback

Submit letters and guest columns to letters@wschronicle.com before 5 p.m. Friday for the next week's publication date.

Letters intended for publication should be addressed "Letters to the Editor" and include your name, address, phone number and email address. Please keep letters to 350 words or less.

If you are writing a guest column, please include a photo of yourself, your name, address, phone number and email address. Please keep guest columns to 550 words or less. Letters and columns can also be mailed or dropped off at W-S Chronicle, 617 N. Liberty St., W-S, NC, 27101; or sent via our website, www.wschronicle.com.

We reserve the right to edit any item submitted for clarity or brevity and determine when and whether material will be used.

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