

Who brought down the black jobless rate?



3rd Quarter Defeat

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Board moving on early voting

BY TODD LUCK
THE CHRONICLE

The Forsyth County Board of Elections (BOE) will begin considering early voting sites for the midterm primaries starting on Feb. 8, as the state awaits court orders on election boards.

The primaries will be held on May 8, with early-voting taking place between April 19 to May 5. In order to give staff enough time to contact chosen sites, the board will be holding a special meeting to begin early-voting discussions on Feb. 8 at 5 p.m., followed by its regular 5 p.m. meeting on Feb. 15. All BOE meetings are held

at the Forsyth County Government Center.

This comes at a time of uncertainty for BOEs across the state. Since last April, the State Board of Elections has been empty as a law attempting to change its composition was debated in court. The legal battle made it so county



Tsujii

BOEs remained with their Republican majority boards from 2016 until the matter was settled.

In a 4-3 decision down partisan lines on Jan. 26, the Democratic majority of the state Supreme Court invalidated Senate Bill 68, passed by the GOP-dominated General Assembly shortly after Republican Gov. Pat McCrory lost to Roy Cooper in 2016. It merged the state Board of Elections with the State Ethics Commission, creating a new state agency and board in charge of North Carolina elections.

SB68 also changed the composition of all BOEs in the state to be evenly split

between the two major parties, and gave county boards four members, before it was struck down.

"It's my understanding that the N.C. Supreme Court remanded the case to the three-judge panel lower court to decide on the matter of the composition of the county boards," said Forsyth BOE Director Tim Tsujii. That panel is expected to get the case by Feb. 15.

They are expected, per the High Court decision, to order county BOEs to continue to have just three members, with the majority being Democrat, because Cooper is now governor.

See Voting on A10



Photos by Tevin Stinson

Desmond Howell looks through the collection of neckties following the First Impressions Seminar at Sprague Street Community Center on Saturday, Jan. 27.

Community center prepares residents for career fair

BY TEVIN STINSON
THE CHRONICLE

Ahead of the career fair today at Sprague Street Community Center, residents and others in the community had the opportunity to brush up on their interview skills during the First Impressions Seminar last weekend.

The seminar, which was free, was designed to give attendees the opportunity to improve their chances of becoming the "perfect candidate" for job openings.

Held on Saturday, Jan. 27, the event featured informative sessions on a number of topics including the general application process, resume writing and interview preparation.

Guest speakers Marlin Wilkins, Mary Clark-Jackson and Linda Davis, director of human relations at Bradley Law Firm, gave advice on things to do before walking in for the interview.

Wilkins, who is the CEO of Freedom Bail Bonding and a life coach, encouraged attendees to be confident. He told them to remember that they are interested because they were asked to come in for the interview.

"Remember that you're there to get a job. They have a

See Career fair on A10



Mary Clark-Jackson shares tips for preparing before an interview during the First Impressions Seminar at Sprague Street Community Center on Saturday, Jan. 27.

ANALYSIS

GOP designs on 2018 elections tested in courts

BY CASH MICHAELS
FOR THE CHRONICLE

First there were congressional and legislative redistricting maps by the Republican-led N.C. General Assembly that have been successfully challenged in court. Then there is the law passed last year by the legislature eliminating judicial primaries in an attempt to either redistrict judicial elections, or establish a legislative merit selection process for judges. Prior to all of that, a voter ID law was struck down by a federal court as a tool of voter suppression.

And just last week, while Democrats were in federal court challenging the judicial redistricting law, the state Supreme Court sided with Gov. Roy Cooper, agreeing that the legislature overstepped its bounds and usurped his power, when it passed a law right after he took office last year merging the state Elections Board and the state Ethics Commission into one bipartisan governmental entity.

"This was a pre-emptive response to Cooper's promise to roll back existing voter suppression measures that had passed when the Republicans had control of the whole state government," wrote Charles P. Pierce for an article titled, "North Carolina's Voter Suppression is a Lesson for the Rest of the Nation" in this week's Esquire Magazine.

"The new policies almost guaranteed a permanent partisan gridlock, which would maintain the status quo." What the GOP is ultimately hoping for, political observers say, is for the federal courts (at least one of the redistricting cases has now gone to the U.S. Supreme Court) to agree with them that their maps are constitutional, and reflect the will of "most" North Carolinians because, after all, Republicans were voted, and then re-elected, into the majority in both the Congress and N.C.

See GOP on A10



Strach



Gov. Cooper

Forsyth County suing drug companies over opioid crisis

BY TODD LUCK
THE CHRONICLE

The Forsyth County Board of Commissioners will be hiring law firms to help it sue opioid manufacturers and distributors.

"It's the board's intention

to join in the litigation that a number of counties have joined into to hold those manufacturers and distributors

of opioids responsible for what, I think the sense is, the inaction or improper action of some those companies," said County Manager

Dudley Watts during last Thursday's county commissioners briefing on Jan. 25.

Big pharmaceutical companies' tactics in marketing and distributing highly addictive prescription opioids have been widely blamed for starting the cur-

rent nationwide crisis of opioid addiction. Watts said that the commissioners plan to vote today to enlist law firms Simmons Hanly Conroy LLC, Crueger Dickinson LLC and von Brieson and Roper, s.c in the suit. The law firms would be paid out

of the damages awarded, so the suit won't cost taxpayer money.

The exact claims and targets of the lawsuit will be determined by the lawyers, but judging from what the state and other county gov-

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