

The Charlotte Post

The Voice of the Black Community
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EDITORIALS

Endorsements in the interest of constituents

From Charlotte to Washington, races will shape public policy

The Nov. 7 elections won't determine the next president or U.S. senator from North Carolina. There's no hot-button referendum to consider or polarize voters. Yet, Tuesday's balloting will help determine the balance of Congress in Washington and the General Assembly in Raleigh. Ballots will also determine the makeup of state judgeships on the N.C. Supreme Court as well as the Court of Appeals.

Below are The Post's endorsements, which we feel will best represent Charlotte, Mecklenburg County and North Carolina:

U.S. House of Representatives, District 8

Larry Kissell is a first-time congressional candidate, but he has shown a willingness to listen to constituents and protect the interest of the 8th, which includes urban Charlotte east to rural areas near the Sandhills. The district has its share of challenges, including the dying textile industry and job loss, but we feel Mr. Kissell would provide the kind of leadership necessary to boost the district's economic standing.

U.S. House of Representatives, District 9

Sue Myrick is best known these days as a crusader for immigration reform, but the six-term Republican representative has shown more willingness to go against the GOP grain at times, a refreshing change from her more partisan days.

U.S. House of Representatives, District 12

Mei Watt is the most liberal member of the N.C. delegation and as chair of the Congressional Black Caucus has emerged as a national figure on issues of interest to cities and underserved populations. His opponent, Dr. Ada Fisher of Salisbury, is a feisty campaigner with some good ideas, but we feel Mr. Watt is a better match for the 12th.



Watt

N.C. Senate, District 40

Malcolm Graham has proven to be a conscientious representative who brings energy to the job. We feel his growth will prove to be an asset to not only his district, but the Charlotte region.

N.C. House of Representatives, District 100

Jim Black has been besieged by bad news with several associates either convicted or indicted for serious misdeeds related to creation of the N.C. lottery. But Black, speaker of the N.C. House, hasn't been indicted or convicted of anything. Until that happens, the Matthews Democrat deserves the benefit of doubt.



Samuelson

N.C. House of Representatives, District 103

Jim Gulley

N.C. House of Representatives, District 104

Former Mecklenburg County commissioner **Ruth Samuelson** has shown an astute knowledge of issues and needs of her district and flexibility to develop working consensus with others.

We believe she'll do the same in Raleigh.

Mecklenburg county commissioners at large

Incumbents **Wilhelmina Rember**, **Jennifer Roberts** and **Parks Helms** stuck to their 2004 pledge to beef up funding for public schools and social services. Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools is just starting to tackle its most pressing needs, which require smartly-crafted outlays of public funds. These incumbents delivered what was asked of them two years ago, and deserve the opportunity to continue.

Mecklenburg county commissioners District 2

Norman Mitchell

Mecklenburg county commissioners District 4

Dumont Clarke

Mecklenburg County sheriff

Jim Pendergraph has handled the difficult task of managing an increasingly crowded jail system as well as implementing a program to identify illegal immigrants who are brought to custody. Mr. Pendergraph has sounded the alarm for more programs and jail space, and we feel he's been an excellent steward of law enforcement.

N.C. Supreme Court chief justice

Sarah Parker of Charlotte is the first woman to be named chief justice and this publication is of the opinion that she will continue to do a fine job of leading the panel.

N.C. Supreme Court associate justice (1)

Mark D. Marín

N.C. Supreme Court associate justice (2)

Patricia Timmons-Goodson of Fayetteville is the only African American on the state's highest court, but she also has a breadth and depth of experience we feel would further the cause of justice in North Carolina.



Timmons-Goodson

For a state that is 20 percent black, not having an African American on the bench not only robs the state of a different point of view, it does little to address the need for equal justice under the law. Gov. Mike Easley was wise to appoint the former prosecutor to the position, and the state's voters should follow suit.

N.C. Supreme Court associate justice (3)

Robin Hudson

N.C. Court of Appeals judge (1)

Bob Hunter

N.C. Court of Appeals judge (2)

Linda Stephens

N.C. Superior Court (26B)

Richard Boner

N.C. District Court judge 26th District (2)

Tim Smith



Ward Connerly: Weapon of distortion

After Proposition 209, the anti-affirmative action ballot initiative passed in California, the number of African-Americans enrolled in public universities dropped to about half of its previous levels.

There was also a dramatic decline in the number of government contracts issued to people of color and women as a result of the ban on considering one's race, gender or



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ethnic origin along with other factors when evaluating qualified applicants.

Now, Ward Connerly, the chief architect of Prop 209, is leading another

crusade in Michigan to replicate what he did in California and the state of Washington. And like those previous campaigns, he is proving again that he will go to any length to distort the definition and benefits of affirmative action. Let's start with the definition of affirmative action. The U.S. Commission on Civil Rights defines it as a contemporary term that encompasses any measure, beyond simple termination of a discriminatory practice, which permits the consideration of race, national origin, sex and disability, along with other criteria, and which is adopted to provide opportunities to a class of qualified individuals

who have either historically or actually been denied those opportunities, and to prevent the recurrence of discrimination in the future.

Admittedly, that's a long definition, but it is a clear one that strips the debate of inflammatory buzz words calculated to turn the public against affirmative action. That's why it was misleading for President Bush, in announcing his opposition to the two University of Michigan cases that found their way to the U.S. Supreme Court, to characterize them as "quota" programs. In fact, Executive Order 11246 specifically forbids quotas. So, it should not even be part of the debate.

The point should not be lost that even though the Supreme Court struck down Michigan's numbers-oriented undergraduate admission, the Republican-dominated court upheld the concept of affirmative action and approved of the University of Michigan's Law School approach to affirmative action. But you'd never know that judging by the comments of President Bush, Ward Connerly or their right-wing allies.

Not surprisingly, Connerly has linked up with Jennifer Gratz, the lead plaintiff in the Michigan undergraduate suit, as they campaign in support of Proposal 2, which will be on Tuesday's ballot. In railing against affirmative

action, Connerly and Gratz have become weapons of mass distortion.

They consistently portray the Michigan undergraduate admissions process as being race-based. Of course, affirmative action has never been only for African-Americans. As the official definition makes clear, it seeks to benefit women, the disabled, immigrants and people of color. More important, unlike alumni preference programs, it seeks to benefit only those who are qualified for college enrollment, government contracts and employment.

Even the University of Michigan program struck down by the Supreme Court was not race-based, though one might not know it from media coverage of the issue. Nor has the cause been helped by news media's willing use of "preferences" and other loaded language that obfuscates the real issue.

A guide used by the University of Michigan at the time presents a clearer view of the admissions process. Yes, African-Americans could get 20 points toward admissions. But that was only part of the story. Twenty points were also awarded to any disadvantaged student, regardless of his or her color. Thus, a disadvantaged white applicant could get the same number of points as the black applicant.

Scholarship athletes were automatically awarded 20

points under the plan. The provost could award a discretionary 20 points as well. Yet, the undergraduate admissions program was portrayed as being race-based when nothing could be further from the truth.

But Ward Connerly is not interested in the truth. He doesn't even like to admit that before he became an opponent of affirmative action, he personally benefited from a California set-aside program. In fact, in the 1970s, Connerly & Associates, a housing and community development consulting firm, which he owns with his wife, who is white, received more than \$1 million in state business after he signed up as a minority contractor. Of course, he is not the only black Republican to ride the affirmative action train, only to jump off after they've reached their desired destination.

Supreme Court Justice Clarence Thomas and HUD Secretary Alphonso Jackson followed similar paths.

But affirmative action is not about Ward Connerly, Clarence Thomas or Al Jackson, though they clearly benefited from it. It's about opening up the doors of opportunity to all, not just a select group.

GEORGE E. CURRY is editor-in-chief of the National Newspaper Publishers Association News Service and BlackPressUSA.com.

North Korea has reasons to be concerned

I offer another take on the North Korean nuclear situation. The day of the announcement of North Korea's first nuclear test, a specialist on North Korea



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was interviewed on a Public Broadcasting System television program. The gentleman said that he had visited North Korea immediately prior to the illegal U.S. invasion of Iraq. In the course of a conversation with a North Korean official he was told by the North Korean: "We see what you are about to do in Iraq and we will not let you do it to us."

The statement by the North Korean official confirmed a conclusion that I had come to about the Iraq crisis. Contrary to everything that President Bush stated about showing force in order to stop the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, the U.S. invasion of Iraq sent a very different, but quite simple message: obtain weapons of mass destruction as quickly and quietly as you can in order to discourage big powers from pushing you around.

In the U.S. media the North Korean crisis has focused on the alleged madness of the current leadership of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. That is both speculative and fundamentally irrelevant. The U.S., contrary to what many of us may believe, was the first power to introduce nuclear weapons onto the Korean peninsula. These weapons were introduced back in the 1950s/1960s and were allegedly tactical, but they were still powerful enough to make one glow in the dark. The reported paranoia of the North Korean government could certainly have a bit to do with having experienced nuclear weapons pointed at them.

Have the North Koreans been sneaky? I suppose the conclusion is "yes," but here's the interesting point: so have been both the Indians and Israelis. While North Korea did sign the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (later to drop out of it), India and Israel both possess nuclear weapons and neither of them are signatories to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (indeed, Israel will not admit to having weapons of mass destruction even though the South Africans blew the

whistle on them some time ago). Yet, the Bush administration seems to find a way to play paddy-cake with them. What sort of signal is the Bush administration conveying when they reward countries that have not signed the NNPT?

It is also a bit odd that after North Korea exploded its nuclear device, countries that possess nuclear weapons and have taken few, if any, steps to de-nuclearize (something that is supposed to take place under the provisions of the NNPT) started yelling about another country possessing nuclear weapons. Perhaps if there was an example of major nuclear powers eliminating nuclear weapons the protests against the North Korean test would be a bit more credible.

The North Koreans have almost literally begged the United States for one-on-one talks. The Bush administration refuses to talk with them unless there are six party discussions (involving China, Russia, South Korea and Japan). The North Koreans have been insisting on direct talks with the U.S. because they are extremely fearful that the U.S. is going to attack them. Paranoid? With the US contemplating

the construction of a new generation of allegedly tactical nuclear weapons and implying (or stating outright) that they could be used against North Korea, and with the example of the illegal invasion of Iraq, why should this be surprising?

Should North Korea possess a nuclear weapon? The short answer is, in my opinion, "no." The entire Korean peninsula should be free and clear of nuclear weapons. That said, we in the USA have to understand that our government speaks with forked tongue when it comes to nuclear weapons. President Bush wants to decide who can have and not have weapons of mass destruction, and then threatens war against those he has chosen as the undesirable. Such an approach lacks any maturity, not to mention common sense. Backed up against a wall, any opponent—legitimate or illegitimate—in seeing no way out will decide to maximize their ability to hit back. The consequences can be catastrophic.

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