

## Survey: Readers prefer community paper for news

Readers in areas served by community newspapers continue to prefer the community newspaper as their source of local news and advertising, according to the 2011 results of an annual survey conducted by the National Newspaper Association (NNA) and the research arm of the Reynolds Journalism Institute at the Missouri School of Journalism. The survey is in its sixth year.

Following consistent trends, the study shows that 74 percent of people in communities served by a newspaper with circulations under 15,000 read a local newspaper each week. They prefer the printed copy to the online version, with 48 percent saying they never read the local news online. They prefer to receive advertising through the newspaper (51 percent) instead of on the Internet (11 percent). And only about a quarter of respondents said they had found local news through a mobile device in the past 30 days. Slightly more (38 percent) said they had received local shopping information by mobile device.

They also have a strong preference for government accountability through newspaper public notice, with 80 percent saying the government should be required to publish notices in the newspaper.

NNA President Reed Anfinson, publisher of the Swift County Monitor-News in Benson, Minn., said the study demonstrates that citizens believe in newspapers.

"The survey indicates a majority of respondents believe that the newspaper does a better job, provides more background and depth and is more useful to them personally than other news sources," Anfinson said. "It reinforces not only the strong bond between local communities and their newspapers, but it demonstrates that people do value good journalism."

Since 2005, NNA has done research on how people read and what they think about their local newspaper. Results have been consistent over the years, even as sample and community sizes have been adjusted slightly.

The local community newspaper is the primary source of information about the local community for 51.8 percent of respondents compared to seeking information from friends and relatives (16 percent) and TV (13.2 percent.) Readers are seven times more likely to get their news from their community newspaper than from the Internet (7.4 percent). Less than six percent say their primary local news source is radio.

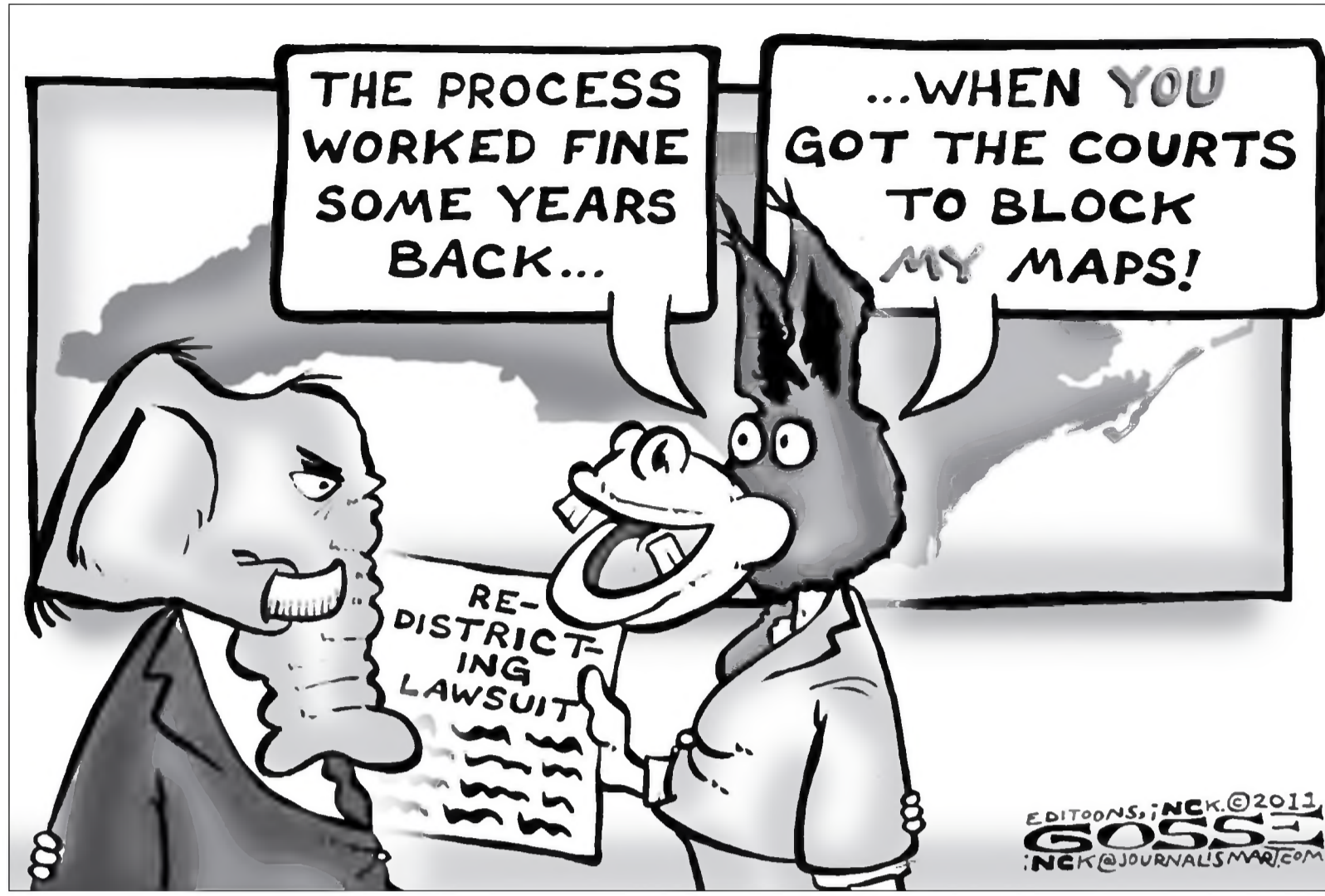
### About

#### LETTERS

The Courier-Times invites letters to the editor. The rules are simple:

- To be published, a letter must bear the signature of the writer. A typed or printed name alone is not sufficient. Unsigned letters will not be published.
- The writer's address and phone number should appear on the letter to allow for verification. The phone number will not be published.
- Maximum acceptable length is the equivalent of two typewritten pages, double-spaced, or about 500 words.
- Letters are accepted via e-mail but to comply with the signature requirement, writers should print out and sign a hard copy of the letter and mail or FAX it to the newspaper. The letter will be considered for timely publication upon receipt of the signed copy.
- Poetry and letters to third parties generally are not published.
- Letters endorsing political candidates or stating positions on referenda will not be published in the two issues immediately preceding an election.
- Generally, the paper will print only one letter from the same writer within 30 days.
- The Courier-Times reserves the right to edit letters for grammar and length and to edit or reject letters that are libelous or of questionable taste.

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#### LETTERS

Our readers have their say

### Please consider donation to Person County United Way

To the editor:  
It is said that what goes around come around.

I know that's true when I contribute to Person County United Way.

When I make my yearly pledge to the United Way, I am making an investment in the community in which I live and work.

Person County United Way supports my agency, Learning Connections, with a \$750 grant to purchase books, consumable supplies such as paper, and other learning materials.

Learning Connections supports parents and teachers in our local community by providing a free resource center where educational games can be constructed or books and puzzles can be checked out to be used at home to work on skills needed to prepare children for school.

Parents have constructed some fantastic games and homemade books over the past years.

When children enter school ready to learn, achievement levels go up, and eventually so does the graduation rate in a community — my Person County community.

Person County United Way provides funds for so many great agencies and touches ap-

proximately 18,000 lives each year.

This could not happen without your support.

As 2011 draws to a close, please consider making a contribution.

Your donation is tax deductible and almost 99 percent of the funds stay right here in Person County.

**BARBARA J. AREL**  
Resource Educator, Learning Connections

### American Legion grateful for support to assist USO Club

To the editor:

We at American Legion Post 138 wish to express our sincerest thanks to everyone who gave unselfishly to our effort to help stock the pantry at the USO Club at Raleigh-Durham International Airport Terminal 2.

Among the many items furnished to the USO were foodstuffs, toiletries, paper products, computer supplies, snack items and juices.

Each year we try to assist the USO in its mission to support the troops through this small project.

With this year's visit, we got the opportunity to speak with a bunch of young Marines who had left Camp Lejeune and were on their way to various bases to continue their train-

ing.

Some of their upcoming training included tank crewmember and helicopter maintenance.

Many of these young men may very well be serving in Afghanistan in just a few months.

The USO provides a place of respite for military and their families during their travels. This particular USO has a new facility with relaxation areas, TV, computer rooms with Internet access, children's play areas and plenty of food, including hot food from a new kitchen.

Out hats are off to the Carolina Hurricanes for providing travel kits and to Lenovo for providing the computer area and computers at the RDU USO Club.

A special thanks to the USO volunteers who keep the place going.

As the holidays arrive, there is much to be thankful for, including the return of our military from Iraq.

However, we are also mindful that there are still places in this world where our folks are put in harm's way.

If you have the opportunity, spend a morning at this facility and just speak with those who serve our country so that we may celebrate the season in freedom.

You will not forget the experience.

**RICHARD VINING**  
American Legion Post 138

### 'May you remember the miracle of Jesus' birth and his love'

To the editor:

In shopping for Christmas cards this season, all I could find in the department stores were "Happy Holiday" cards with no mention of Jesus Christ and the real meaning of Christmas.

When I turned these cards over and looked on the back, what I found was, "Made in China."

I refuse to buy or send these happy holiday messages that come out of Communist China.

Happily, I have found the religious bookstores have not forgotten the true meaning to Christmas.

They sell cards that share the love of Jesus Christ and the joy of his birth.

Please do not send me a meaningless happy holiday message made in China by slave laborers who are not allowed to hear the message of Jesus Christ.

May you remember the miracle of Jesus' birth and his love and that a happy holiday message made in China is no message at all, but hypocrisy perpetuating the slavery of people being denied the Christian message.

**FRANK TURBEVILLE JR.**  
Milton

# The conspicuous case against tax increment financing

RALEIGH

Perhaps asking North Carolina voters to undo an egregious wrong that they did to the state constitution just seven years later is seen by legislative leaders as distasteful.

Of course, voters didn't really do this egregious wrong.

When they approved inserting tax increment financing into the state constitution in 2004, the amendment was so poorly worded that most voters probably didn't understand the harm being done.

The folks in Roanoke Rapids understand the harm.

For the next 10 or 20 years, they will be paying off \$12 million on a boondoggle theater that they soon won't even own.

To pay off the debt, their property taxes will invariably be higher, their government services less robust.

It could have been worse. The town's city coun-



TODAY IN NORTH CAROLINA

SCOTT MOONEYHAM

cil — whose members are mostly new after the old ones were booted for the poor decision — reached an agreement to sell the theater to a private investor for \$7 million.

The theater was originally financed for \$22 million, but in a buyer's market, you take what you can get.

Back when the project began, town leaders were sold a bunch of snake oil that this theater, just off Interstate 95, would be the lubricant that would bring other development to town.

The town used the new provision in the state

constitution to borrow money without voter approval and set up a special property tax district around the theater site.

That's the theory behind tax increment financing: a public investment attracts private investment, then the additional property taxes from those private investments are used to pay off the public investment.

In reality, in Roanoke Rapids, one hotel showed up in the new taxing district. Its owners may feel as snookered as the town's residents, but at least it can attract some travelers off I-95.

Back when tax increment financing was put to voters in 2004, I wrote that taking power away from the people to approve borrowing was a bad idea and that the financing scheme would open the door for bad decisions by local governments.

Supporters, including the N.C. League of Municipalities and the North Carolina Chamber, took issue with that criticism, saying property taxes wouldn't rise.

Really?

Tell it to the folks in Roanoke Rapids.

Earlier this year, state legislators considered a bill that would have allowed the town to impose a special one-cent sales tax to pay off the debt, an attempt to avoid property tax hikes.

The idea was eventually dropped, but so much for the "self-financing bonds" tag that supporters invented to dupe voters seven years ago.

What legislators should do is try to prevent future harm to other local taxpayers the next time a snake oil salesman comes peddling a tax increment financing project to some other town desperate for jobs and economic development.

The Republicans who now control the legislature tried to undo plenty of longstanding public policy this past year.

It's too bad they didn't start in a place that has caused some conspicuous harm.

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