

The Daily Tar Heel

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Ax the Tax

The state's tax system needs some major revamping. Getting rid of the food tax is a good place to start.

Many areas of North Carolina's tax system favor rich citizens. The state's regressive, 4 percent food tax is biased against poor residents who tend to spend a larger percentage of their income on food, a commodity that is obviously a necessary part of life.

Sen. Patrick Ballantine, R-New Hanover, has written a bill to totally eliminate the food tax. Repealing the food tax is a good first step toward reforming North Carolina's tax system, even though it doesn't solve all the problems of an unfair tax process.

The food tax was proposed 38 years ago as a temporary tax to boost funding for education. The tax started at 6 percent, and since then, the N.C. General Assembly has whittled it down to the present figure. On May 1, the food tax will drop to 2 percent, thanks to lawmakers in last year's budget process.

Ballantine's proposal would eliminate that 2 percent, which goes to county and local governments, and make up the difference by giving counties an additional portion of the state sales tax.

The state's 6 percent sales tax is distributed in the same way the original 6 percent food tax was: 4 percent goes to the state and 2 percent to the counties. Ballantine's proposal would split sales tax revenue evenly between the state and counties.

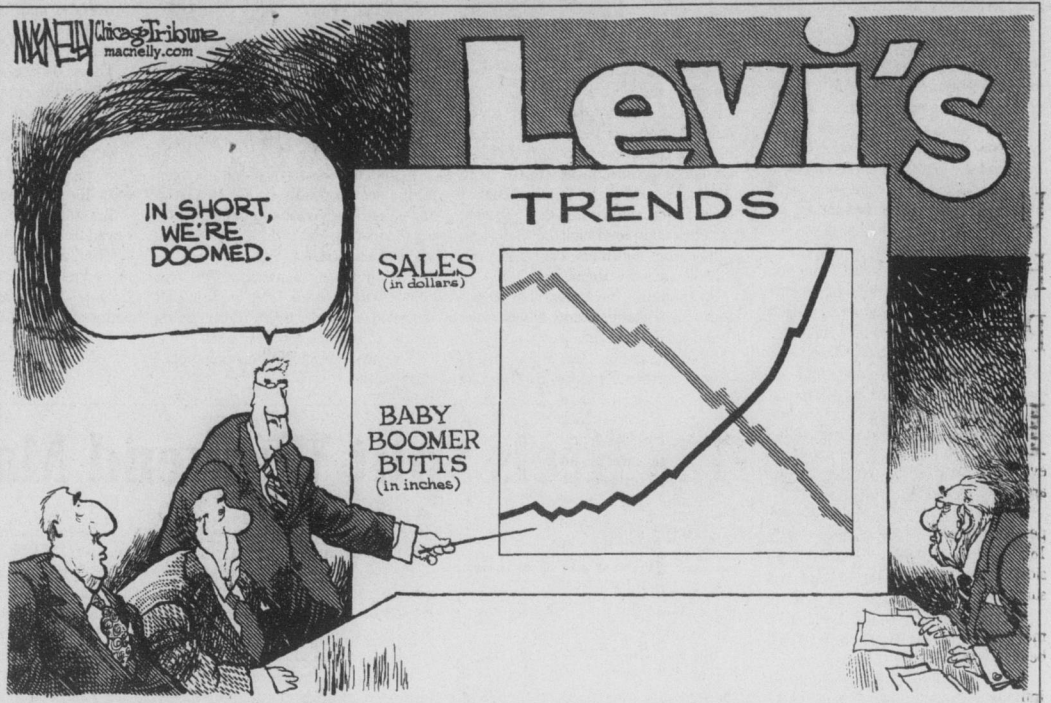
Other lawmakers agree that sweeping changes are necessary to the tax system but

worry that Ballantine's bill would cost the state too much revenue. Right now, counties get an estimated \$180 million in food tax revenue, money they would lose if their portion of the tax is cut. But by giving the counties the additional 1 percent of the sales tax, they'd gain approximately \$650 million, which would have gone to the state. Lawmakers contend that the state budget can't handle such a loss.

Those lawmakers want more sweeping reforms to the tax system to save families more money than if the food tax is eliminated - a typical family would save about \$80 a year if the food tax is repealed. Other, more beneficial methods to help low-income families could include eliminating the cap on North Carolina's income tax, which would allow wealthier residents to pick up more of the tax-base burden, or dropping the low limit on taxable luxury items. Right now, the owner of a yacht or expensive sports car could pay the same property tax as the owner of a Buick.

Although lawmakers are correct in advocating more extensive tax reform, they should not hesitate to eliminate the food tax immediately.

Organizations as diverse as the conservative John Locke Foundation and the liberal N.C. League of Women Voters support ending the food tax. In the nation, 39 other states have eliminated their food taxes because of the unfair burden on poorer residents. While the state's tax system certainly needs extensive revamping, cutting the remainder of the food tax is a good way to start.



Reviving 'Spice of Life' at UNC

How dull the University has been lately? Roads are going untrampled, student body presidents are not being compared to devils and when the hell are we going to get another hurricane around here? We need more excitement and adventure around campus. We need a driving force to make us pull more wacky stunts. In response, I offer these ideas to add the spice of life back to UNC.



HARPER GORDEK CIDER TOWN

1) "Hey, you never know" - The problem with advising is not the fact we have too few advisers to help the students. It's that we have too many students who can't help themselves. When their sophomore year rolls around, they go running to the advisers screaming, "Oh me, oh my. What should I be, what should I try?" (OK, maybe they don't rhyme.) Eventually they get placed into biology, political science or communications.

To avoid this ugly scene, if you haven't selected a major by the end of your third semester, you would be forced to enter the Advising Raffle. Held every January on the steps of the South Building, Chancellor Michael Hooker would draw majors from a giant barrel, handing them out indiscriminately to the next person in line. Not only would this be humorous ("PUPA? I don't know what it is, but it sounds disgusting"), it would be a good way to fill out all those rarely chosen majors like Sanskrit and Harpsichord Playing.

2) Crusades '99 - There seems to be a greater feeling of togetherness in colleges with one organized religion. And often such a bond leads to more effective frivolity. But at UNC we remain factionalized, separated by the very faiths we hold dear. How sad.

But that would change with the introduction of the "ReligiOlympics" (copyright 1999)! The annual event will occur in the classroom as well as the sporting field as every religion fields a team to save its way of life. Hurdles, mathematics, Monopoly, bake-offs and a

series of mental and physical challenges will show which followers, and by extension which faith, are the best. The rest of the campus will be forced to follow the winners' religion until the next games.

Close your eyes and feel this rush. "Shwartzstein and Abdul-Muhammad head down the final stretch! They lean into the finish! And it's Shwartzstein by a nose! Looks like it's Judaism again for UNC! The crowd goes wild! Shalom! Shalom!"

3) Win or you're out of the family - there is obviously a glut of sports teams here at UNC. Fencing? Crew? And since when did women start playing basketball? To cut out the fat from the system and generate much-needed Olympic sports excitement at the same time, I propose the "Mark 50" Plan. Every team would have to win 50 percent of its games or be forced to have the program cut - forever.

Obviously, basketball and football would be excluded (they bring in more money than you and I will see in our lifetimes), but imagine the tension generated. "Twenty seconds to go in this tie game here at Navy field. Johnson heads down the sideline. Passes to Smith. Four. Three. He shoots! He scores! Men's lacrosse is saved for another year! The crowd ... doesn't give a damn."

4) West Coast? No, South Campus! - The Residence Hall Association is always trying to foster campus unity, especially in the resi-

dence halls. Well, pizza parties and ice cream socials ain't cutting it. The only true way to be bonded is through horrible initiations and a legitimate fear of being killed. Gangs!

Every residence hall will have its own separate colors, handshakes and a small army next to the vacuums and videos. I can see it now. ... "Yo, that bitch from Ruffin threw her frisbee on our Manly turf." "Then let's put a cap in her flat white ass." I'd sure feel closer to my hallmates if they had to cover me every time I went to the Circus Room for Pop Tarts.

5) Two pornos in every garage - everyone noticed last year when Playboy came to town. There were protests, letters and, most importantly, nudity. But as quickly as it came, it was gone, like the soft-core wind of the east, Mariah Carey.

I suggest a recapturing of that spirit with an open invitation for all "magazines of ill-repute" to shoot here. After Hustler and "I Swear She Was 18" magazines finish shooting and proclaim how helpful we were to them, more magazines will visit campus for layouts, flooding much-needed money into the UNC coffers.

Eventually this build-up will lead to the first hard-core movie shot at UNC, "In My Mind I've Gone to Her Vagina," which would easily surpass Patch Adams in number of students wanting to be extras.

If these suggestions are followed, there should be no more semesters like this one. Everyday will be filled with more than enough things to talk about. Of course, there will be some downsides to the moves, but what's more important, safety and security of sex and violence? I'll see you at the 100-meter dash.

Go Voodoo!

Harper Gordek is a senior biostatistics major from Wallkill, N.Y. Reach him with comments at harper@email.unc.edu.

Freedom Quelled

Chris Crotty was only trying to raise money to help his cancer-stricken mother. But apparently University officials believe profit margins come before Crotty's mother's health and his First Amendment rights. When officials found out late last week that Crotty was selling credit cards in the Pit, they kicked him out.

Crotty was accused of violating the Chancellor's Facilities Use Policy. He was told that only the University has the right to sell credit cards on campus and that furthermore, because he wasn't a student group, he couldn't raise money for charitable organizations. His mother didn't count as a charity because she was just one person.

University officials said they were just following the rules. But those rules violate Crotty's First Amendment rights. The Facilities Use Policy is blatantly unconstitutional. The Pit is a public forum with a tradition of hosting diverse speakers and activities. Except for reasonable time, manner and place restrictions, the University cannot regulate such a public forum. Crotty was thrown out for the content of his message, not time, place or manner. Yet, officials unquestion-

ingly carry out the policy to keep the money rolling in.

When students first saw Crotty's table in the Pit, their first response wasn't, "Oh my God, that's money that could go toward paying my tuition!" They felt compassion for Crotty's mother and tried to help.

But University officials, despite what compassion they might have had, pounced when they heard they might lose a few dollars. Waving the Facilities Use Policy in the air, UNC ignored Crotty's rights and told him to go tell it to someone who cared.

This is at least the second time students have been kicked out of the Pit this year for violating the policy. Varsitybooks.com suffered the same fate earlier this year when student representatives tried handing out hot chocolate in cups with the company's logo.

University officials need to seriously reconsider the legitimacy and legality of the Chancellor's Facilities Use Policy, and students should fight for their rights to use the Pit. It's a tragedy that after the tremendous student outpouring of support for Crotty, the University's first response was to protect its finances, even at the expense of free speech.

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Letter Writer Proves Himself a 'Fool'; Pity His Fellow Greeks

TO THE EDITOR:

I am writing in response to Wes Stamey's Feb. 24 letter. Ordinarily, I would allow the scribbles of such a fool to speak for themselves. But sometimes such people have to be put down.

I am sure that all Greeks, after reading Mr. Stamey's letter, wished they had taken a vote to decide which of them should have been allowed to write to the paper. I have never seen such a collection of fragments, awkward phrasing and muddled ideas as are contained in that letter. Aside from his abuse of the English language, Mr. Stamey's mind seems unable to sustain the argument he is trying to make long enough for his hand to put it down on paper. He contradicts himself twice within the same article (paragraphs three and 12!).

Well, that's not exactly true. I think he would have contradicted himself, had he been able to form a coherent sentence in his one-phrase paragraph three.

As for the assertion that membership in a fraternity somehow determines the identity of Fortune 500

CEOs, well, I think we can all agree that Mr. Stamey needs to lay off the keg stands. The heads of the world's largest companies are rich men, who were once rich boys, who, in turn, joined fraternities because they could afford to. Quite frankly, I'm glad; fraternity parties get that type of person off the street. My sister can go out at night now.

One last thing: I remembered, just after reading Mr. Stamey's letter, that the Greek Affairs people had published their list of Dean's List members recently. Sure enough, after checking the list, Mr. Stamey was nowhere to be found - geography major and all. Perhaps he should spend less time "giving shout-outs" and more time in the library.

Josh Fennell Sophomore Biology

'Intellectual Climate' Will Improve if Fees Offered to All Groups

TO THE EDITOR:

Re: The Feb. 22 Op-Ed, "Fighting Over Fees." Whatever happened to the so-called "intellectual climate" that the University is trying to promote?

With this question in mind, I would hope that funding any organization despite its "political or ideological" beliefs will surely contribute to the idea of "intellectual climate."

To simply just cut or discontinue a group's funding just because of its proposal of speaker, choice of programs or out of the norm's belief would truly undermine the goal of the University.

At the same time, no one should be obligated to attend any function. It should be the wills of students to choose which programs spark interests in them.

But definitely, it should be the obligation of all students to ensure that a diversity of programs and speakers exists within the University atmosphere.

We should not be so worried as to what programs are being offered at the University so long as it is done in the spirit of promoting understanding of diversities and appreciation of differences.

Where can we find an atmosphere that will allow and stir discussions and debates for the betterment of human kind of the future generation?

If it's not on University grounds, then where?

Touger Vang Carboro

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