

EDITORIALS

KEEPING HIS PLACE

The campaign trail takes up time for presidential hopeful Sen. John Edwards. But he has a state and duties to fulfill while still senator.

As the old saying goes, there are two ways to look at a glass of water filled to its middle: If you're in a good mood, the glass is half-full, and if you are feeling pessimistic, it's half-empty.

If you were to take that same glass of water and replace it with Sen. John Edwards' voting record for the month of June, that same dilemma presents itself.

A little more than a week ago, Edwards, a North Carolina Democrat, was on track to miss more than half his Senate votes — missing 16 of 30 — in a single month for the first time since launching his 2004 presidential campaign.

But a flurry of votes, and Edwards' flawless attendance record last week, left North Carolina's senior senator back on top. Now, Edwards has been present at 44 of the 60 votes cast in the Senate.

So although Edwards was able to salvage his voting record by month's end, we're left with an interesting question: at what point should Edwards' Senate work take a back seat to his bid for the White House?

Truth be told, the state's senior senator has a better record when compared to other Senate Democrats vying for the presidency.

Through June 20, Edwards had missed 20.3 percent of Senate votes, compared with 21.2 percent for Bob Graham, D-Fla., 26.7 percent for Joe Lieberman, D-Conn., and 41.4 percent for John Kerry, D-Mass. (Note: This is not the total June vote tally. The figures for Graham and Kerry include votes missed while each was recovering from surgeries.)

And Edwards did rush back to Washington, D.C., from a Charleston, S.C., campaign stop to participate in a party-line vote on a Senate budget resolution.

Plus, Democratic candidates are in the midst of a crowded race for their party's nomination, with close to a dozen hopefuls vying for the nod. So it makes sense for Edwards to spend a lot of time on the campaign trail if he truly is serious about run-

ning for the presidency.

But there should be a limit. Although running to become our nation's chief executive is a truly worthwhile goal, Edwards should not forget that one of his top priorities should be serving the needs of the state's residents by being present in the Senate.

One of the major complaints aired toward Sen. Elizabeth Dole, R-N.C., during the race to succeed the retiring Jesse Helms was that she might use the position as a political stepping stone in a future run for a higher office.

That fear was enough to rile the suspicions of many residents and political pundits, and the same scrutiny should be aired toward Edwards — if not for the state's benefit then for Edwards'.

A shoddy record representing North Carolina not only is a disservice to the state's residents but provides a negative glimpse into what could happen should Edwards become president and have aspirations toward re-election.

With more than a year left until Election Day, it goes without saying that the race for the presidency will pick up speed and that Edwards will need to spend more time on the road.

Still, being present to cast Senate votes is only part of the solution. Edwards also should find ways to reconnect with state constituents, whether it's through more town hall meetings or simply letting residents know his numerous campaign stops will benefit them.

There's a lot of time left until Election Day. This means that Edwards still has several months to prove to the average Joe or Jane of North Carolina that despite his dreams of landing in the Oval Office, we're still among his top priorities.

Unfortunately, right now, things aren't looking that well.

April Bethea can be reached at adbethea@email.unc.edu.

ON THE DAY'S NEWS

"The heart of a statesman should be in his head."

NAPOLEON BONAPARTE, FORMER FRENCH EMPEROR



COMMENTARY

Female athletes' choice: Win or become sex symbol

This week, Wimbledon — one of the four annual major tournaments on the Women's Tennis Association Tour — is taking place. One of the most-watched matches in the early rounds was the first-round contest in the women's singles bracket between Ashley Markleroad and Maria Sharapova. Harkleroad, ranked 39th in the world, is an 18-year-old American with a career record of 13-14 in professional matches entering the tournament.

Sharapova, ranked 91st, is a 16-year-old Russian with a career record of 5-8.

Why, you ask, was this one of the most-watched matches? Visit <http://www.ashleyharkleroad.com> or <http://www.tennisrulz.com/players/sharapova> to see. (Be sure to check out the pictures section.)

Yes, people watch them because they are hot.

And not only are they hot, their playing outfits show just enough skin in just the right places. Sometimes, they even show too much skin. A British tabloid ran pictures of the women's underwear, which showed when their short skirts flew up during play to give the audience glimpses of the goods. (By the way, Sharapova won, 6-2, 6-1.)

Thanks to the financial success of stars such as Anna Kournikova, many people think women's sports have evolved into contests of who looks the best, not who can win the most. Budding stars such as Harkleroad and Sharapova think that's the only way to get noticed.

"Why must our chests gain attention instead of our groundstrokes?" they must wonder. "How can we put our serves and volleys into the limelight instead of our T&A?"

One word: win.

Serena Williams, also an attractive woman with a very athletic body, is dominating women's tennis. Her and her top rivals — Venus Williams, Justine Henin-Hardenne and Kim Clijsters — are all known for their numbers: world rankings, not bra sizes.

Consider Steffi Graf, a retired

attractive women's tennis star. In many years following sports, I have read many articles about her style of play, her tournament victories and her place in the record books. It was only when she chose to pose in the 1997 Sports Illustrated swimsuit issue that her looks became a topic of conversation. Until then, it was tennis.

This phenomenon is not only seen in tennis. Consider Annika Sorenstam, one of the best female golfers of all time. She made headlines this year for playing in the Colonial Open, a men's event, in May. I never knew what she looked like before May, though I respected her as a golfer. After seeing her picture on the front page of every sports section and magazine for two weeks, I realized that she is a very pretty woman. I (and the rest of the sports world) still respect her as a golfer. Her looks are not an issue.

I can continue. Brandi Chastain took off her jersey on the field after her 2000 World Cup-winning goal, and the talk was about the goal, not her breasts. Figure skater Michelle Kwan has been in the public eye for a decade, and everyone roots for her to finally win an Olympic gold medal, not show more cleavage with her skating costumes.

Hell, UNC alumna Mia Hamm is talked about as the Michael Jordan of women's soccer, not the (insert your favorite hot celebrity) of women's athletics.

Sports fans like sports. We respect athletes. If it were all about hot women, surfing would be the popular sport — a bunch of tan, fit women in swimsuits showing off.

That's not the case. On the other hand, women's tennis, basketball and soccer have all been shown in prime time.

And sports fans respect female athletes as athletes when they give us something to talk about.

The Harkleroad-Sharapova match was June 24. Sharapova didn't lose until Monday in Wimbledon's fourth round, hav-

ing defeated Harkleroad, Elena Bovina and Jelena Dokic.

Monday night I scoured the entire Associated Press wire for any article, column, even sentence about Sharapova's beauty. All I could find were comments about her play, her future in tennis, her youth and her status as one of five Russian women in the quarterfinals. No mention of looks.

Why? She was winning.

But if women keep going out there wearing next to nothing and losing, the talk will revolve around looks. Look at Kournikova: she has become a household name for her looks because her world ranking is only 70. If she gave us something else to talk about, we would discuss it.

Hopefully, Sharapova and Harkleroad can do what's in their power to avoid that path.

On a completely different note: This past weekend was Gay Pride weekend in San Francisco. The main event was a parade Sunday that drew an estimated 750,000 people. I went to enjoy a unique cultural experience and because I thought it would be great fodder for a column.

Unfortunately, there will be no column about the event. The things I saw were beyond words. You have to see it to believe it. I don't mean the event was beyond words in a bad way; it was very interesting, and I got a true taste of the city.

One snapshot I can print in the newspaper: I was walking behind a woman holding her girlfriend's hand. Both had on shirts with pictures of rainbows, the symbol of the LGBT community. With her other hand, the woman held a leash attached to a tiny brown dog. The dog had a rainbow scarf tied around it.

For me, this couple summed up the whole event — a day of acceptance, openness and an awesome "I don't give a s---" attitude. It was something you have to see to believe.

Rob Liechner can be reached at dhubie44@hotmail.com.

PRESSURE COOKER

The General Assembly was able to get a budget in before deadline but will catch heat with Gov. Easley if a poor economy leads to shortfalls.

There's nothing like a little pressure to get the job done.

COLIN SUTKER
EDITORIAL PAGE EDITOR

This is a lesson the N.C. General Assembly and Gov. Mike Easley recently have learned in great detail.

With a partial shutdown of the state's government as well as the potential loss of \$384 million in tax revenue on the table, legislators quickly were realizing that time was running out.

The \$14.8 billion budget does include key education programs, such as a second-grade class education initiative, and still includes bonuses to schools for performing well on state tests. Aside from that small amount of good news, many positions, both within individual classrooms and on the state level, will be cut, leaving open the possibility that schools could be understaffed to meet growing needs.

At universities, a nice little 5 percent tuition increase will accompany students to class next year. This measure will take another \$24 million out of students' pockets. To counter the increase, the budget includes an increase of \$5.1 million in student aid. Hopefully, students will be able to handle the \$19 million difference.

Additional cuts to the UNC system will occur as the year goes on. But the effects already have been felt at UNC-Chapel Hill with the closure of Heels for Health as well as Academic Technology and Networks training labs. Those two areas tell the story for much of the budget: Cuts in many places leave a bare-bones government.

Up until the budget was signed, many were questioning what might have happened if there once again were an impasse between the legislature and the governor. A shutdown only would have led to a tighter budget and more personal attacks.

In the end, the idea of yet another year without a budget passed on time was too much to handle, and compromises were made.

The largest concession granted by the General Assembly was a supplementary bill that calls for the legislature to help Easley make decisions if budget cuts must be made.

This bill widely has been dismissed as a "save-

face" measure, granted only to allow Easley to avoid vetoing the budget without appearing to back down from an earlier pledge to not

sign the spending plan. But for Easley, it is also important political protection. Should the economy turn for the worse, key programs will have to be cut, and the individual who cuts never is a popular person.

But while pressure often can lead to action, it might not lead to acting on the best option.

In the drama leading up to the approval of the budget, Easley vowed to veto the planned budget because he thought it relied on overly optimistic predictions for economic growth.

Legislators countered that they believed the predictions to be correct and eventually passed the same budget.

Predicting the economy can be very difficult indeed, especially a year in advance, and it has the potential to lead to a shortfall.

Easley seems to be planning for cuts coming later on in the year by insisting on the secondary bill.

Thus, the conundrum of setting a tight budget.

As legislators see it, they have two options for cutting programs. If it is the case that there is not enough money for desired programs, they can cut them from the budget now or have them get cut later by Easley.

The first situation is politically disadvantageous to lawmakers. Come election time, they would have explain why certain programs were not included in the budget. The second situation presents a much more amicable solution: the programs get the axe, but it's Easley who gets criticized in the public eye.

Before the passage of this budget, there was very little to prevent the General Assembly from fudging a small amount. It could add a few programs here and there, and when the time came, leave the hard cutting to the governor.

Now, if there are hard decisions to be made, the legislature will be right there with Easley making them — and taking the blame for its own mess.

Colin Sutker can be reached at cosu@email.unc.edu.

EDITORS' NOTE: The above editorials are the opinions of solely the summer editorial writers and do not represent the views of The Daily Tar Heel or its staff. If you have any questions or comments, please feel free to respond through the writers' email addresses.

READERS' FORUM

Abortion bill will prove to be ineffectual in curbing abortions

TO THE EDITOR:

Recently, the U.S. House of Representatives passed a partial-birth abortion ban. This is similar to the ban passed by the Senate earlier in the year. Now the measure must go to joint conference before President Bush can sign it. If it becomes law, it will quickly be tested by the courts and probably found invalid.

Pro-lifers should not get excited about this political folly. Even if it passed, it would not save a single baby. Abortionists would simply perform a different procedure such as a saline abortion, where the child is scalded to death, or a dilation and extraction, where the child is dismembered before removal.

Although partial-birth abortion is gruesome, it is no more hideous than any abortion, in my opinion. Partially delivering a live baby and then crushing the skull at the last minute is no different than an early suction abortion. All abortion is horrific. The reason this bill passed so easily, even by the Democratic probablers, is because they knew it was meaningless.

The Republican "pro-life" leaders who

initiated the useless legislation were trying to appease their pro-life constituents. If Congress wants to pass meaningful legislation, they must pass a human life amendment to the Constitution. This is the only way the holocaust of 1.5 million innocent deaths per year will end.

All human rights initiatives in our country such as women's rights and slavery required amendments to stop the madness.

Thomas Messe
Groton, Conn.

Fast-track bill having a negative impact on neighboring countries

TO THE EDITOR:

As U.S. citizens, we have the responsibility to become educated about the effects of trade agreements and foreign economic policy. If not, new agreements will be railroaded through by the large corporations who stand to gain large profits at the expense of the poor throughout the Americas.

This month I will be traveling on a fact-finding mission to Nicaragua with a non-partisan organization, Witness for Peace. We will be investigating the effects of the push for a Central America free trade

agreement firsthand.

In 2002, a fast-track negotiating bill was passed, enabling our president to push trade agreements through Congress quickly. Fast-track negotiating authority is inherently undemocratic and took away power from Congress and from the U.S. public to influence trade agreements. Impoverished people in Canada, the United States and Mexico have been hurt by the North American Free Trade Agreement while corporations have profited.

The Central American Free Trade Agreement (CAFTA) and the Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA) stand poised to have the same results throughout the entire hemisphere.

Sascha Bollag
Chapel Hill, N.C.

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