

## EDITORIALS

## C'EST LA VIE

The General Assembly leaves this year's session with many basic tasks finished but still leaves some important threads dangling.

To borrow a quote from writer Lewis Lapham, "The supply of government exceeds the demand." Such was not the case when the gavel sounded for the last time this session at the N.C. General Assembly this past weekend.

As legislators began their summer adjournment, the tasks left unfinished looked longer than a week-end to-do list. To give a brief overview of the highlights: next year's budget is shaky at best, and a shortfall could lead to cuts later in the year. The House failed to approve funding for a \$180 million cancer center at UNC.

The \$14.8 billion budget — passed right on deadline — is one boat that will struggle to stay afloat and keep all its passengers onboard this fiscal year.

In these tight economic times in North Carolina, the budget was crafted around an estimated 5.5 percent growth rate. During budget negotiations, Gov. Mike Easley threatened to veto any budget that did not meet his "reality test." He specifically pointed to the high estimate for the growth rate and a \$400 million discrepancy between budget conference reports.

That threat quickly evaporated as the deadline came and the General Assembly appeased Easley with an additional bill that created a "rainy-day account" from which Easley can take funds to cover a decrease in the estimated growth rate.

But additional cuts might be needed to shore up expenditures, and legislators might find themselves dreading back to Raleigh to help Easley make those tough decisions.

Other unfinished business included the emotional issue of a UNC cancer center that was not approved by the House and therefore could not be pushed into existence by the Senate.

The House refused to pass the Senate's proposal for the center and adjourned after its ultimatum was not met.

Senate leader Marc Basnight, D-Manteo, remarked sadly that an opportunity had been lost to have a positive effect on North Carolina residents.

COLIN SUTKER  
EDITORIAL PAGE EDITOR

Another important tidbit not passed by the House was a study on the death penalty in the North Carolina justice system.

The Senate had approved a two-year moratorium on the death penalty to look into allegations that the system is error-prone.

Many groups have come forward in support of the study. Opponents of the death penalty in North Carolina say the system is fraught with prosecutorial misconduct, racism, class bias and inadequate legal representation.

At least one of those concerns is valid. As recently as this year, death row inmate Alan Gell was granted a retrial by Attorney General Roy Cooper as a result of misconduct by Cooper's office. Cooper's office wrongfully withheld evidence from Gell's defense team.

But moratorium supporters did not leave the capital completely discouraged. If the bill had come before the House, it likely would have been defeated. A defeat would have prevented the bill from resurfacing for two years. Now the bill still has a shot when the General Assembly reconvenes for a short session.

Each year, it seems, legislators do what they can to take care of necessary business-as-usual chores, but when it comes to the areas in which the state can excel, they nod their heads in dissatisfaction and mutter: "If we only had the time."

There are important chores the General Assembly needs to take care of, such as the \$700 million last-minute bill that approved funding for road maintenance and public transit projects.

But it loses a great opportunity to fine-tune our state into what it could be.

With precious time taken up by long debates over a complex budget that came down to the wire and debates over a UNC summer reading book, legislators leave Raleigh once again with the edges still a little bit rough.

Colin Sutker can be reached at [cosu@email.unc.edu](mailto:cosu@email.unc.edu).

## SIXTEEN WORDS

As criticism of President Bush's State of the Union speech grows, the opposition's reasons might not be as altruistic as they would appear.

Sixteen words were all it took to set off a firestorm of controversy and political maneuvering.

ALLIE PERRY  
EDITORIAL WRITER

When President Bush stated, "The British government has learned that Saddam Hussein recently sought significant quantities of uranium from Africa," it is doubtful that he could have anticipated the swell of contention that would follow.

But the controversy has more to do with political ambitions than a sincere concern about the government's reasons for invading Iraq. Even the most uninformed citizen probably could explain the United States' reasons for liberating Iraq, and that explanation most likely would not include details about African uranium.

Assuming that the United States invaded Iraq based on intelligence from a forged document indicates either a political motive or a complete misunderstanding of the issue — we've long known of Saddam Hussein's plans for a nuclear weapons development program.

In addition, nothing implied or stated explicitly in that sentence is false. In fact, the British have stood by that statement, which is not surprising since it was based on more than just the documents the French evidently forged. Many intelligence analysts continue to back reports that Hussein has been trying to acquire nuclear material from other countries, such as Namibia, Gabon, Russia and Serbia.

Even Dominique de Villepin, the French foreign minister, recognizes that Hussein has used chemical weapons on his own people, that he admitted to having biological WMDs and that he wanted to build a nuclear program. In order to build this program, Hussein needed uranium, and the most likely vendor was Niger. Perhaps this explains the reason behind Hussein's "trade delegation" that was dispatched to Niger in 1999.

If that is not enough reason to suspect Hussein's government, Human Rights Watch estimates that there are 300,000 people missing in Iraq, and new mass graves are being discovered daily.

Despite this intelligence, many politicians are trying to use the president's address as a tool for polit-

ical ladder climbing. Presidential hopeful Sen. Bob Graham, D-Fla., has asked, "Would not a president who knowingly deceived the American people about something as important as whether to go to war meet the standard of impeachment?"

Where were these calls for impeachment when President Clinton mistakenly bombed an aspirin factory in the Sudan and attributed the mistake to faulty intelligence?

The problem with politicizing matters of national security is that it challenges the credibility of elected leaders who are privy to a great deal more intelligence than the average citizen. So when Graham calls for President Bush's impeachment, he is committing the most dishonorable kind of malfeasance. He is playing upon our ignorance of privileged national security information and using his influence to convince us that President Bush intentionally misled the nation.

Instead of futilely spotlighting 16 words out of Bush's State of the Union address, we should focus on the big picture: The United States has led the world in the war against terrorism and will continue to do so. We have brought democracy to a war-torn country and have sacrificed many of our troops so the Iraqi people can have a chance at a prosperous future.

We have persisted even in the engagements that were not popularly supported and have tried to influence the rest of the world to take action against terrorism. Even today we are engaged in a struggle to persuade Russia to cut off Iran's nuclear program. We're also actively trying to convince European countries that Hamas is a legitimate threat.

Not every engagement has been a successful one, but the truth is distorted when 16 words are taken from the president's State of the Union address and sold as premeditated deception.

Ill-begotten attempts at discrediting both President Bush and CIA Director George Tenet eventually will be revealed for what they are — political smoke and mirrors.

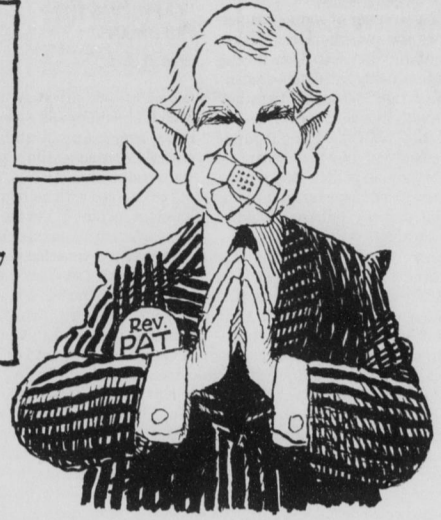
Allie Perry can be reached at [aiperry@email.unc.edu](mailto:aiperry@email.unc.edu).

## ON THE DAY'S NEWS

"If you won't be better tomorrow than you were today, then what do you need tomorrow for?"

NAHMAN OF BRATSLAV, RABBI

"With the jawbone of an ass have I slain a thousand men."  
Judges 15:16



MARLETT ©2003  
TALLAHASSEE DEMOCRAT  
405.941.1033

## COMMENTARY

## Appearance of objectivity affirms trust in journalists

It's been a rough year for the newspaper industry.

The nation's flagship newspaper, The New York Times, was humiliated when reporter/crime novelist Jayson Blair was busted for writing many stories about the Washington, D.C., snipers that were riddled with fabrications.

The paper's executive and managing editors later resigned in embarrassment.

How can the public ever trust a newspaper again?

If this can happen at the Times, couldn't it happen easily at The Washington Post, The Scotch Plains-Fanwood, (N.J.), Record-Press or even The Daily Tar Heel?

To rectify the situation, the Times named a new executive editor as a "reaffirmation of the Times' core journalistic values," as described in the paper's article about the hiring.

The choice: former editor and columnist Bill Keller. Keller's credentials are impeccable: more than 30 years in the industry at several respected publications, extensive experience reporting from Moscow and Johannesburg and a 1989 Pulitzer Prize.

He is definitely professionally qualified.

But as an opinion columnist for the Times, Keller wrote several strong columns about controversial issues.

Anyone who read these columns is very clear on his stances: support workplace smoking bans, support affirmative action and oppose the war in Iraq.

Some would say it is good that we know Keller's stances on these issues.

If we know where the editor's heart lies, the logic goes, we can take this into account when we evaluate the credibility of the newspaper.

I disagree. Objectivity is the most important criterion for evaluating a newspaper's credibility, and Keller is no longer objective to the public.

ROB LEICHTNER  
COLUMNIST

Let me explain.

There is an unspoken contract between newspapers and their readers.

Editors and reporters have a duty to present the facts in a fair, objective manner.

As long as members of the journalism community do not make their opinions known, readers accept that a newspaper is doing its best to be objective.

The main issue is not the actual objectivity of a given newspaper but the appearance of objectivity.

There always will be debate as to the credibility of journalists, but it will be two-sided.

For example: At UNC, we (correctly) think that Dick Vitale is Mike Krzyzewski's biggest fan and favorite bed partner, while at Duke they think Vitale was born with a Carolina blue bonnet on his head.

This debate is healthy, and it gives journalists the impetus to present facts fairly.

When journalists' opinions about the issues they will be covering are known, the balance between newspapers and their readers is upset.

If we honestly knew that Dick Vitale were a Duke fan, nothing he said about college basketball would carry any credibility because he would be saying it from the Duke point of view.

But if we honestly knew he were a Carolina fan, we would treat him like another fan, not a journalist. Either way, the credibility is gone.

Back to Keller.

He will be heading a newspaper that will be covering the Iraq situation intensely despite the fact that everyone who reads his column knows he opposed the war.

If a front-page story is about our soldiers' dismay instead of our advances against Saddam Hussein, we will wonder if that is really the most important news.

If a headline reads "America, Iraq versus Bush," we will wonder if it is reporting the news accurately or trying to sway opinions.

If Keller never had written columns about the war, he might have made the same decisions he will make now. But his contract with the Times' readers still would be intact, and the debate would be two-sided. It would be healthy.

I am not saying that editors and reporters should not have opinions. They all do.

All the writers and editors on the University Desk of the DTH form opinions, and most of them vote in campus elections.

I voted in the student body president election in March and covered the race that night.

In the newsroom, we often would have conversations about the positives and negatives of each candidate.

Ultimately, we probably were the most informed voters on campus.

Does the fact that I voted mean I did not give a fair, objective representation of Election Night?

I don't believe so. Does the fact that nobody knows who I voted for help my credibility with readers?

Yes. That is why University Desk staffers are not allowed to wear campaign buttons, sign petitions or even hang posters in their rooms supporting candidates.

To uphold our end of the contract, we must appear objective. I am not saying that The New York Times will lose its place in American journalism for promoting Bill Keller.

What I am saying is that his hiring sets a dangerous precedent.

If newspapers pass off as objective people who have voiced their opinions strongly, they will lose credibility — and the public will feel as if it has no place to turn to receive true, unbiased news.

The contract will be broken.

Rob Leichtner can be reached at [dhubie44@hotmail.com](mailto:dhubie44@hotmail.com).

## READERS' FORUM

## Summer Reading Program flawed in its organization but has potential for expansion

## TO THE EDITOR:

Now that the second annual brawl over the required summer reading for incoming freshmen is under way, it may be useful to look beyond the daily headlines.

For several years, students packing up for Chapel Hill have been told to include a book that bashes Western civilization — a preview of what they'll encounter later. At some point during fall orientation, students are supposed to get together for a couple of hours with a volunteer faculty or staff member and discuss the book. Most apparently don't bother, and for good reason.

Last year in the court hearing, the UNC lawyers claimed that it wasn't required (not true) and that half the students didn't show up anyway.

My own very small and unscientific survey among colleagues suggests that the percentage of no-shows is higher. Concerns like mapping routes around campus construction sites and checking Franklin Street bars to see where a fake ID works apparently outweigh a chat session under the guidance of someone who almost certainly knows no more

about the book in question than the handful of students who choose to show up.

The real question is what these seminars are supposed to accomplish. Are you really going to learn anything useful about the distribution of wealth in the United States or the problems of Islam from this exercise? Or the problems of Guatemala from a book purported to be written by an oppressed native that was later shown to have been ghostwritten mostly by a couple of European literary Marxists?

Even as a training exercise in how college is supposed to work — you read something, then get together and discuss it in a civilized fashion — it leaves a lot to be desired. Don't they do that in high school?

Given the state of secondary education, anything that gives students any understanding of just about anything is worth considering, but the current reading program is more like MTV with ideology than liberal arts education. Here's a suggestion for an alternative.

Require freshmen to sign up for a one-credit Freshman Seminar modeled on the long-running Great Decisions program. They meet weekly for a lecture by someone who actually knows something about the topic, then break into small groups for

discussion and maybe even write something in preparation. Assigned reading could include as much as two or three books on alternative views of the topic. A semester should be long enough to address even a complex topic in some detail and from different perspectives. And at the end, they would have at least some common academic experience, and a few might be inspired to continue the discussion/debate/dialogue outside of class.

That's more than they have now when they arrive at Chapel Hill and more than they get from the current program.

Robert L. Stevenson  
Kenan Professor of Journalism and Mass Communication

The length rule was waived.

**TO SUBMIT A LETTER:** The Daily Tar Heel welcomes reader comments. Letters to the editor should be no longer than 300 words and must be typed, double-spaced, dated and signed by no more than two people. Students should include their year, major and phone number. Faculty and staff should include their title, department and phone number. The DTH reserves the right to edit letters for space, clarity and vulgarity. Publication is not guaranteed. Bring letters to the DTH office at Suite 104, Carolina Union, mail them to P.O. Box 3257, Chapel Hill, NC 27515 or e-mail forum to: [editdesk@unc.edu](mailto:editdesk@unc.edu).

## The Daily Tar Heel

## PROFESSIONAL AND BUSINESS STAFF

**Business and Advertising:** Janet Gallagher-Cassel, director/general manager; Chrissy Beck, director of marketing; Lisa Reichle, business manager.  
**Customer Service:** Michael Perfetti, Kia Thacker and Tania Vila, representatives.

**Display Advertising:** Heather English and Megan Gilchrist, account executives.  
**Advertising Production:** Penny Persons, manager.  
**Classified Production:** Cindy Henley.

## EDITORIAL STAFF

**Arts & Entertainment:** Michael Abernethy, Grey Huddleston and Michael Sullivan.  
**City:** David Kim, Amanda Jepsen, Jenni Norman and Elizabeth Sherman.  
**Copy:** David Lorimer.  
**Design:** Amy Dombrower.  
**Editorial:** April Bethea, Allison Perry and Jeff Silver, editorials; Rob Leichtner, columnist.  
**Photography:** Sara Abrons, Kate Blackman, Beth Floyd, Shilpi

Paul and Rachel Shockley.  
**Sports:** Michael Clarke.  
**State & National:** Bonnie Kluttz, Joseph Schwartz and Nicole Strachan.  
**University:** Chantelle Hardy, Meredith Oakes, Arman Tolentino and Michelle Williams.  
**Editorial Production:** Stacy Wynn, manager.  
**Printing:** Triangle Web.  
**Distribution:** Triangle Circulation Services.



ISSN #10709436

The Daily Tar Heel is published by the DTH Publishing Corp., a nonprofit North Carolina corporation, Monday-Friday according to the University calendar. Callers with questions about billing or display advertising should call 962-1163 between 9 a.m. and 5 p.m. Classified ads can be reached at 962-0252. Editorial questions should be directed to 962-0245.  
**OFFICE:** Suite 104 Carolina Union  
**CAMPUS MAIL ADDRESS:** CB# 5210, Carolina Union  
**U.S. MAIL ADDRESS:** P.O. Box 3257, Chapel Hill, NC 27515-3257

Established 1893  
110 years of editorial freedom

## The Daily Tar Heel

[www.dailytarheel.com](http://www.dailytarheel.com)

MEREDITH NICHOLSON  
SUMMER EDITOR

NATHAN DENNY  
MANAGING EDITOR

COLIN SUTKER  
EDITORIAL PAGE EDITOR

ELLIOTT DUBE  
STATE & NATIONAL / UNIVERSITY EDITOR

KATHRYN GRIM  
CITY EDITOR

TIM CANNON  
SPORTS EDITOR

BRIAN CASSELLA  
PHOTO EDITOR

BRIAN MILLIKIN  
ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT / FEATURES EDITOR

CHRIS COLETTA  
COPY EDITOR

RANDI DEMAGISTRIS  
DESIGN EDITOR

RACHAEL GORLITZ  
ONLINE EDITOR

ERIC GAUTSCHI  
OMBUSSMAN

If you have any concerns or comments about our coverage, please contact Ombudsman Eric Gautschi at [gautschi@email.unc.edu](mailto:gautschi@email.unc.edu) or 918-1311.