

BOARD EDITORIALS

AVOID MORE CUTS

With unexpected corporate tax revenue in state coffers, legislators should steer clear of the University when leveling large budget cuts.

UNC-Chapel Hill can hardly afford another round of cuts. After enduring years of simultaneous tuition hikes and budget cuts, students and administrators are finding themselves in a bind once again.

The University has had its budget cut by \$100 million and is waiting on another round of cuts that amount to \$10.5 million.

The last few years' budget cuts, while unpleasant, have been somewhat understandable since the state has faced budget shortfalls of \$850 million in 2000-2001, \$1.6 billion in 2001-02, and \$221 million last year.

But legislators cannot continue using the UNC system to shoulder their mistakes without doing significant damage to its operations.

UNC-CH Provost Robert Shelton told The Daily Tar Heel on Tuesday that next year's budget cuts will manifest themselves visibly in many different forms on campus.

"Something will have to give," Shelton said. "Classes may get larger. Sections may be cut.

"We can't keep taking money away and not see any effects."

Ironically, The Associated Press also reported Tuesday that North Carolina's revenue collections are up, approaching today's tax deadline.

The AP article reported that the state has taken in \$112.5 million more than projected for the first nine months of this fiscal year with the year-to-date surplus standing at \$35.9 million.

The article continued by suggesting that legislators are optimistic about the potential to help pay for state employee pay increases, teacher bonuses and school enrollment increases during the next fiscal year.

Certainly, these are important priorities for legislators and for the state of North Carolina.

But the N.C. General Assembly has bled the system for the past three years while shifting a substantial

amount of the financial burden onto students.

This trend must come to an end. Legislators should use any new funds to help relieve the financial pressure that is forcing the University to choose which important positions to eliminate.

Shelton said losing faculty members is the greatest danger for the University if it faces another round of cuts.

He said that even with a 1 percent budget cut, currently employed faculty might have to be cut in addition to the 10 to 30 vacant faculty positions expected to be eliminated next year.

Furthermore, Shelton told reporters that 30 to 90 support services positions are at risk of being eliminated for next year.

Tony Waldrop, the vice chancellor for research and economic development, told the DTH on Tuesday that budget cuts would reduce the number of research opportunities offered through class credits, of which 30 percent of UNC-CH students take advantage.

Stephen Jarrell, interim vice chancellor for information technology, said budget cuts could limit services offered in his department.

"It would affect our help desk operations and the hours we would be able to offer support," he said.

"We wouldn't be able to upgrade equipment in dire need of upgrade, and we would have to reduce our staff."

The University system needs its faculty and staff to make progress on its goal of becoming the top public university in the nation.

North Carolina should make investments in its future work force a top priority for any surpluses that might arise in the budget.

Budget cuts have put academic achievement at the University at risk.

Legislators should take advantage of this rare opportunity to remedy that problem.

FAIR AND THRIFTY

If N.C. lawmakers reform sentencing laws and make rules for habitual felons more fair, they could save at least \$1.3 billion over 10 years.

In an effort to protect better its citizenry from the threat of crime, North Carolina and other states have established mandatory minimum sentences for habitual felons.

The idea seems fair and practicable at first glance: It guarantees that repeat offenders will be put away behind bars for longer periods of time, keeping such individuals out of public life where their consistent illegal actions could harm others.

As pointed out by advocates of sentencing reform Tuesday, however, mandatory minimums place an excessive burden on the state while doing out punishment that often does not fit the crime.

Reforming the state's policy for repeat offenders, while lessening sentences for small-time criminals, would provide state officials with more than \$1 billion to help suffering state programs.

Repeat offenders are sentenced to terms typically reserved for violent crimes no matter the nature of the offense.

The problem lies in the fact that 87 percent of those who fall under the habitual label are serving time for nonviolent crimes, mostly dealing with drugs, theft and property damage.

If the state were to take the advice of the reformers and enact a state commission proposal from two years ago, the nonviolent offenders would not face the mandatory minimum sentences.

Average sentences would change from about five to nine years in prison, and punishment for violent crimes would not be altered.

The N.C. General Assembly would not put others in danger by adopting the reforms and would alleviate many of the state's budget woes at the same time.

The costs of maintaining correctional facilities are tremendous and are exacerbated by the longer sentences created by the habitual offender require-

ments. North Carolina spends approximately \$21,000 every year to house each inmate in prison.

Last year, plans were approved for three new prisons at a cost of \$234 million. Given the massive price tag associated with building prisons, the state can expect to spend much more as time progresses.

The money certainly could be put to better use. North Carolina's tight budget of the past few years has meant less spending on many of the programs necessary to make life better in the state.

Higher education in particular has not been adequately funded, a deficiency that directly affects students in the form of tuition hikes.

Taxpayer money that is being spent on prisons and inmates could be budgeted for education, health care and transportation.

If the reform proposals were enacted, the shorter sentences and less substantial prison population would allow a dramatic reduction in correctional spending.

It is estimated that the reforms would prevent North Carolina from having to build at least five prisons during the next ten years, saving the state a minimum of \$1.3 billion.

The state must evaluate its priorities and consider the sentencing reforms.

Are we as a society better off by imprisoning someone with three convictions of drug possession for a longer sentence than many violent criminals receive?

Are we better off stuffing an ever-expanding prison system to the gills while not adequately funding the social programs that directly improve lives?

For the sake of higher priorities and practical government, the General Assembly must reform the state's sentencing policy.

EDITOR'S NOTE: The above editorials are the opinions of solely The Daily Tar Heel Editorial Board, and were reached after open debate. The board consists of seven board members, the editorial page associate editor, the editorial page editor and the DTH editor. The 2003-04 DTH editor decided not to vote on the board and not to write board editorials.

READERS' FORUM

Playboy debate misses out on issue of woman's choice

TO THE EDITOR:

I would like to praise Linda Shen's story on Chelo, a hair and makeup artist for Playboy.

It seems as though in our society a woman's body is the physical incarnation of both Satan and chauvinism.

I think people have morally and politically analyzed this situation to a point where even the cotton-tailed icon is rolling her eyes and stamping her foot on the ground.

Although I don't regularly read the magazine and don't always approve of the method in which they display women, I don't feel as though Playboy, or even the porn industry, is in any way responsible for sexual assault crimes.

That's like blaming the tragedy at Columbine on television shows like Buffy the Vampire Slayer. This is nonsense.

For some strange reason, women are not allowed to be proud or even comfortable with their bodies. For centuries we have been forced to hide our natural being underneath our clothes. Why is it that what is natural is also indecent? I do not feel that Playboy represents chauvinism in any way; I think it represents women who are confident enough to bare all, regardless of society's standards.

Also, I thought feminism was about a woman's right to choose.

Why are feminist organizations condemning a woman's decision to expose her body in this magazine? It seems as though feminism on this campus has become quite the paradox.

I applaud the women brave enough to participate in this program.

We should all appreciate their courage and confidence for it's not every day that one of the most popular magazines comes to UNC. I wish these women luck in their futures.

Carly Triche
Dramatic Art
Junior

Freshmen should attend 'Crunkfest' at Morrison

TO THE EDITOR:

Well, first years, we've made it. Our GPA wasn't axed by Econ 10, we found the third floor in Venable Hall and we now know how to correctly pronounce "Dey" Hall.

Now to show that we are ready to move onto our sophomore year, we must demonstrate our mastery of one last skill: socializing.

On Thursday, April 15th, student government's Freshmen Focus Council and the Black Student Movement's First-Year Class Committee, along with Morrison Residence Hall Association will host the '07

Crunkfest, celebrating the completion of our first year at UNC.

The event will be held on the Morrison Blacktop from 6 to 8 p.m.

Yes, every first-year student is invited. Yes, there will be free food and music. Yes, we're asking you to party on a Thursday.

This is your last chance to come hang out with your friends and classmates before exams.

If you're not there, you should probably go to Dook. See you there.

Doug Orloff
Sophomore
Chemistry

March on Washington, D.C., to demand choice, rights

TO THE EDITOR:

On April 25th, thousands of organizations concerned with civil liberties and women's issues will march on Washington in solidarity, demanding the preservation of reproductive rights in the U.S. and the improvement of reproductive health care availability worldwide.

With a goal of one million individual participants, this march promises to be the largest for women's issues in history.

The ACLU, Black Women's Health Imperative, Feminist Majority, NARAL, National Latina Institute for Reproductive Health, NOW and Planned Parenthood are

all involved as principal organizers.

The timing of the march is critical.

President Bush's administration has been launching assaults on women's rights for years, starting with the introduction of the global gag rule less than three days after his inauguration in 2001.

More recently, the so-called "partial-birth" abortion ban became the first federal bill in history to criminalize a medical procedure even when it is lifesaving.

Laws such as this send the message that women are not worthy to be in control of their own health-care decisions, and with vague and general language, the bill is a setup for further blows to Roe vs. Wade.

The current Supreme Court votes in favor of a woman's right to choose, but only by a slim margin. If new appointments are made under the current administration, over thirty years of progress in reproductive health will be for naught.

For this reason, it's vital that the March for Women's Lives is well attended.

This issue truly affects everyone; if not directly, then through mothers, sisters and friends.

Showing support for this critically timed activism effort is a powerful way to help make an impact.

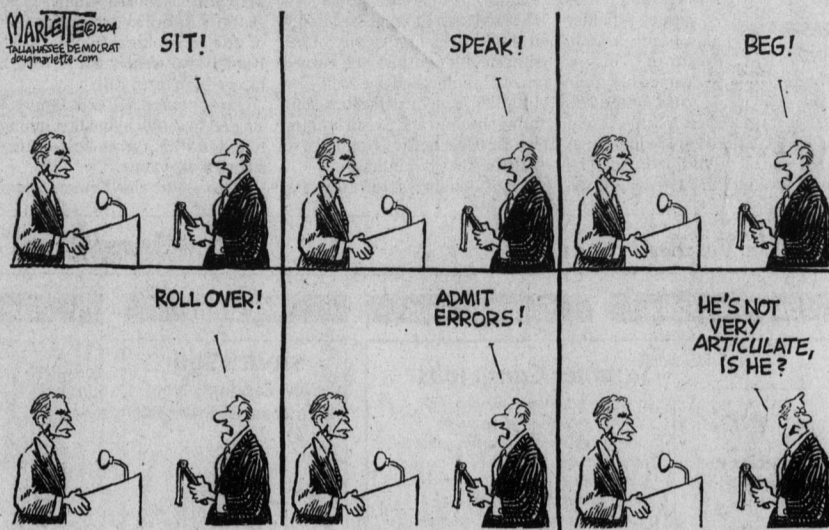
Join fellow UNC students on the bus ride to Washington, D.C., on

ON THE DAY'S NEWS

"To hell with posterity! What's posterity ever done for us?"

UNKNOWN LOUISIANA LEGISLATOR

EDITORIAL CARTOON



COMMENTARY

Uncle Sam takes too much and spends inappropriately

Today marks the one "special" time of the year when all Americans put aside their differences and come together in a unified effort.

Unfortunately, it's a day most Americans loathe.

Yeah, it's Tax Day.

The day in which our same beloved "relative," Uncle Sam, comes to take our hard-earned money from us or at least send the reminder that after each paycheck, we get to donate to the greatest slush fund on Earth.

It's OK though, right? I mean, although everyone rushes to file their tax returns before today's deadline, they can be assured that their forgone income will go toward only worthwhile public investments that are for the public good.

Right. I'm as likely to believe that as much I am to believe that manufacturing jobs are going to return to North Carolina.

Face it — it's just not going to happen. What would make me such a cynic?

Being that I am Republican, one could assume that it's because I favor limited government. In truth, it goes a little further than that.

Let's take a look at some recent examples of corruption that augment my distrust.

Durham's latest scandal concerning the mishandling of taxpayer money exemplifies such corruption. If you don't know what I am talking about, let me provide a quick synopsis.

Durham resident Marlynda Bodison received a loan from the city in 1994 for \$30,000 to pay for her housing.

According to The (Durham) Herald-Sun, the city never made attempts to enforce Bodison to



BRENTLEY TANNER
FRESH OUT OF THE OVEN

pay the loan but instead "responded with kindness, refinancing her loan down to zero percent. And just last month, the city nearly paid for thousands more in repairs and upgrades."

While it was true that the City Council eventually reversed an earlier decision to forgive Bodison of her debt to taxpayers, they did so only because not acting would have been political suicide.

You can best believe that had the information not become public, Bodison would still be enjoying her free residence on Canal Street.

Shocked that something like this could happen?

You shouldn't be considering Durham's track record. According to WRAL news, it was only three years ago that the city was criticized for "failing to collect on more than \$800,000 in small business loans. Many of the small businesses did not even exist."

However, don't think that Durham is the only entity rife with corruption and incompetence.

This week, The (Raleigh) News & Observer reported that State Auditor Ralph Campbell reviewed the spending history of state agencies, primarily ridiculing the Medicaid Program for misappropriating \$414 million from federal funds. Questionable practices include: "formation of a 'liaison committee' to distribute Medicaid disproportionate share funds, using outdated information that

led to overpayments to members of the aforesaid liaison committee, not performing cost settlements since 1996 that resulted in hospitals being overpaid for Medicaid costs, and hospitals that were ineligible for (Department of Health and Human Services) payments received it anyways despite not having required information gathered."

Of course, both Campbell and the DHHS are shifting blame to the other, since neither side wants to be held responsible for the misdeed. Either way, taxpayers deserve better than this.

How about Verizon Wireless receiving money from the Job Development Investment Grant, despite the fact that the company violated the clause in the program criteria that states that "projects for which a grant is not found to be necessary for their completion in North Carolina will not be awarded grants."

Apparently, construction at the site began a month before the grant was approved, leading some to believe that the grant money wasn't necessary or was promised before it was administered.

All in all, the government can't be trusted with your money. Although the aforementioned circumstances demanded attention, they are but a handful of the many instances of corruption that exist in our state, be it because of indolence or pork-barrel spending.

Either way, North Carolina should make sure it uses tax revenue more productively.

That or stop taxing the hell out of people who work hard instead of catering to those who hardly work.

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