

Third-party candidates aim to fill myriad niches

Brown, Cobb, Nader are N.C. write-ins

BY BROOKE M. GOTTLIEB
STAFF WRITER

N.C. voters will not have the option of voting for candidates backed by the National Barking Spider Resurgence Party or Party X this November.

But they will have the option of supporting other third parties.

The N.C. Board of Elections has approved independent candidate Ralph Nader, Walt Brown of the Socialist Party and the Green Party's David Cobb as write-in candidates for the presidential election.

In North Carolina, a candidate must collect 500 signatures from registered voters in order to qualify as a write-in for the presidential ballot.

The three write-in candidates all advocate progressive policies, but their goals differ.

"(Nader's) main reason for running is to ensure that the progressive issues are included in the presidential discussion this year," said Kevin Zeese, spokesman for the Nader campaign.

The proposals of the Nader campaign include withdrawing U.S. troops from Iraq, increasing the minimum wage, establishing universal health care, repealing the USA Patriot Act and legalizing same-sex marriage.

Third-party candidates often struggle for recognition on ballots and for the opportunity to debate with major-party candidates.

Zeese said current requirements hinder them from doing both. Qualifications for place-

ment on the ballot vary in each state, and candidates must win a relatively high percentage of votes to be eligible for debates.

The Socialist Party, which promotes anti-war foreign policy, this year nominated Brown and Mary Alice Herbert as its candidates for president and vice president.

"We both believe that our country is moving in a dangerous way and needs democracy," Herbert said.

"In a democracy, government is really (the people)."

Herbert said she and Brown differ from Nader and Cobb because they want to reform capitalism, whereas her party wants to abandon it.

"I think we've been conditioned to believe that it is fine to have a few rich people at the top, and the money would trickle down to the bottom," Herbert said, adding that the gap between economic classes creates social turmoil.

The Green Party has selected Cobb and his running mate, Patricia LaMarche, for its 2004 ticket.

Blair Bobier, media director of the campaign, said that though similar policies exist between Cobb and Nader, their long-term goals differ because Nader does not belong to a party.

"We are organizing a movement and a party that is and will continue to be the force challenging this two-party system," he said.

"The Green Party is the only party giving a voice to ordinary people."

Ferrel Guillory, director of UNC's Program on Southern Politics, Media and Public Life, said that the two-party system creates difficulties for third parties but that it also provides American democracy with stability.

He added that third parties can still express their opinions. "The two big parties tend to respond when third parties have captured an emotion of the time."

Although Herbert does not support the two-party system, she said third parties can influence the agendas of Democrats and Republicans.

"I have to admit, I do hope Kerry gets (the presidency). ... I hope that the left keeps on pressing the issues," she said.

Zeese said the Democratic and Republican parties do not provide people with diversity of opinion. "Both parties are rushing to the center to get more centrist voters."

And many third-party candidates dismiss Democrats' concerns that their efforts might take votes from Kerry.

"If the Democrats can't get their own people to vote for them, why should alternatives help them out (by not running)?" Herbert said.

Sixty-nine other third-party candidates are competing for the presidency nationwide.

"It's really urgent that we get out there and try to get our ideas heard and try to influence the future," Herbert said.

Contact the State & National Editor at stntdesk@unc.edu.

Lawyers seek execution's stay

BY HILARY HELLENS
STAFF WRITER

A man's walk down death row has once again become the center of the conflict surrounding the death penalty as North Carolina gets ready to execute its first prisoner in nine months.

Sammy Perkins of Greenville is scheduled to be executed Friday for the 1992 murder of 7-year-old Lashenna "Jo Jo" Moore. He was sentenced Dec. 15, 1993, in Pitt County Superior Court.

Perkins' lawyers challenged the lethal injection process in North Carolina on the grounds that it violates the constitutional prohibition against cruel and unusual punishment.

The execution was originally scheduled for May 21 but 10 days earlier was postponed.

Now, Perkins' lawyers are working to commute his sentence before Friday's 2 a.m. deadline.

The courts are considering the merit of Perkins' claim before proceeding with the execution, and his death sentence has spurred much

debate over the constitutionality of lethal injection.

N.C. Rep. Sam Ellis, R-Wake, said he hopes the execution will take place on Friday, regardless of the controversy.

"I think it is cruel and unusual to have a person that has been facing execution for 13 years, to have them in this period of limbo while they litigate some minor technicality," Ellis said.

There also are allegations that Perkins' mental illness — he suffers from bipolar disorder — was not handled properly during the trial. His lawyers contend that jurors were not presented with an accurate view of the man they sentenced to death.

"We hope ... that we will not have innocent people on death row because of flawed and unfair trials," said Sen. Ellie Kinnaird, D-Orange, a leader in the movement toward a death penalty moratorium.

She said Perkins' case provides a classic example of the flaws in the death penalty.

Alicia Towler, a member of the

campus chapter of the Campaign to End the Death Penalty, said she doesn't see much hope in an appeal for this case.

"The issue in this case represents a disturbing trend in inmates that have psychological problems that weren't addressed in their trial."

Perkins' family has asked Gov. Mike Easley to commute Perkins' sentence to life without parole.

In a report dated May 5, Perkins' lawyers, Ed West and Nora Hargrove, pointed out that no DNA analysis was done in the case. They claim that this fact, among others, provides enough evidence to overturn the death sentence.

"There is a cloud hanging over Mr. Perkins' trial," West said. "There is a serious jury misconduct issue, and there are serious issues regarding the way his mental illness was presented."

"It is never appropriate to execute someone where there are problems like this."

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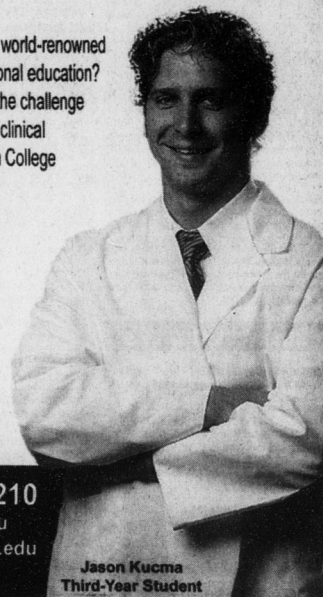
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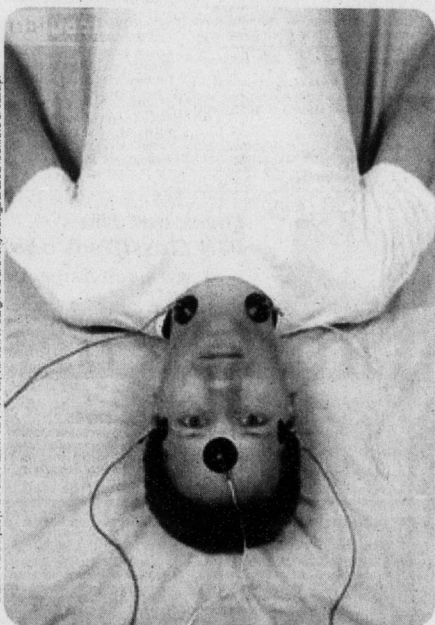
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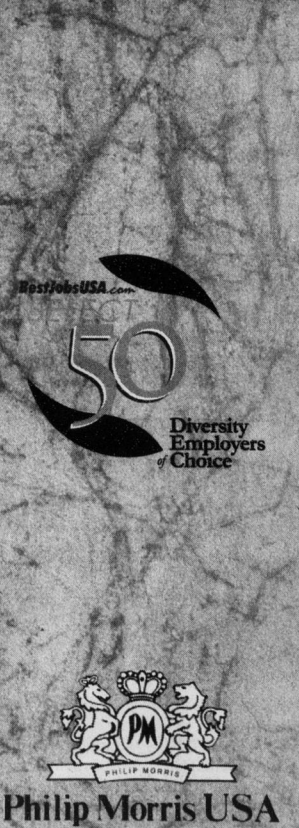
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