

EDITORIALS

# MORE TAX PER PACK

To protect public health and to provide education funds, the N.C. General Assembly should increase its ridiculously low cigarette taxes.

Anyone with even a passing interest in the N.C. General Assembly knows it's pretty hard to teach an old legislator new tricks. A lottery is up for consideration yet again, and a bill proposing a student vote on the UNC-system Board of Governors is still stuck in committee.

It's an unfortunate trait for a body that has significant sway over the movers and shakers in Chapel Hill. And it could explain why lawmakers are unwilling to let go of the past and approve a hike in the cigarette tax with some umph to it.

The recently approved House budget calls for increasing North Carolina's levy on a pack of cigarettes by a quarter. Representatives must now square that number with the Senate's proposed 35-cent hike.

Both numbers are too low. It's as if lawmakers — spurred on, no doubt, by powerful tobacco lobbyists — live in an alternate reality where smoking isn't a serious public health concern, the state has enough money to fund all its priorities and people can still light up wherever they please.

No doubt some of Jones Street's good ol' boys long for those days. But they're as much of an anachronism as North Carolina's 5-cent tax on a pack of smokes — now the lowest in the country. There's no

better way to ensure that the rest of the nation continue to think of N.C. as a redneck-infested, backwoods, Confederate cesspool.

It's not as if the state — or the University, for that matter — couldn't use the money. UNC has done well by the legislature, but cash from a higher tax could aid enrollment growth and fill some holes created by budget cuts. That translates to higher faculty pay, smaller class sizes and more course sections.

Gov. Mike Easley's budget suggested raising the cigarette tax by 45 cents over two years. An increase of that magnitude would bring in \$280 million annually.

Bring the levy to the national average of roughly 85 cents, which is what legislators should do, and that's almost a half-billion dollars every year.

There are also health concerns to consider. Advocates say any sort of major increase will help teenagers — and, one suspects, many broke college students — kick the habit. They'll be at a much lower risk for lung cancer, emphysema, heart disease and other maladies that will kill them too soon.

To be sure, the golden leaf held up this state for a long while, and lawmakers ought to honor that tradition. But they also need to learn when it's time to let go.

# GIVE THEM A BREAK

Lawmakers and student leaders should give the Board of Governors the opportunity to reform itself instead of imposing reform legislation.

Whether it's former Senate candidate and White House Chief of Staff Erskine Bowles, an N.C. academic or an administrator from another state's education system, the next UNC-system president has a lot of work to do.

Beside dealing with issues of tuition, autonomy for the flagships and charting the course for the system and its 16 institutions, the new president will have to lead the Board of Governors in reforming itself, lest the N.C. General Assembly take care of it itself.

Sen. Tony Rand, D-Cumberland, and other members of the legislature want to reduce the number of members of the BOG because the governing body could be more efficient. Rand and his supporters received much-appreciated news when the American Council of Trustees and Alumni released a report this month calling for a restructuring of the BOG. The Council recommended that the number of voting members of the BOG shrink from 32 to 15.

At the same time leaders of the UNC-system Association of Student Governments are pushing legislation that would give the organization's president a voting seat on the board. Currently, the ASG president is a nonvoting member of the board, but legislation is sitting in the hands of a Senate committee that would give the 193,000 students in the

UNC system a voting representative.

The BOG should take the concerns of Rand and the ASG very seriously, and they owe lawmakers some form of response to their concerns. The board could very well run more smoothly if it were to reduce the amount of members — after all, it is a very large group, and a student vote could be beneficial — as has been the case with the UNC-Chapel Hill Board of Trustees.

Regardless, Rand and the ASG should give the BOG an opportunity to take care of its own business and evaluate itself. After finding a new system president, BOG Chairman Brad Wilson could convene a special task force to look at these issues. Until then, lawmakers and activists should take a break from legislation and wait until the board is stabilized with a new leader.

This issue proves that the next UNC-system president needs to be someone who not only understands how to guide a large university system to further greatness, but grasps the intricate political system of the state. He or she will need to balance the needs of many people, work well with both students and the General Assembly and push the BOG to evaluate itself and recommend changes where necessary.

# AN ALUMNUS' ADVICE

Guest columnist feels that current students should take cues from the Class of 2005's experience with the job search in today's market.

When I graduated from UNC this May, I thought that I had life all figured out. I decided to move to Washington, D.C., and find a job working in government or public policy.

Many of my friends were rushing to graduate or law school, but I thought I would take a few years to discover what type of work I liked and then seek further education. Because most graduate programs prefer that applicants have experience before applying, I was convinced it would work out.

But I had not counted on what I now call "the mismatch" — while graduate schools are insistent upon their incoming students having extensive hands-on experience, many employers only want candidates who already have graduate degrees.

Feeling rather emboldened by years of working and internships, I thought that I would easily be able to overcome not having a graduate degree. Unfortunately, as my daily job search continues, that does not seem to be the case.

Am I telling you that you should definitely rush right into graduate or professional school? Certainly not. Many of you will have careers in which your merit and ability are what will qualify you for positions, rather than the difference between B.A. or M.A. But for those of you on paths wherein that

one letter will make a difference, I've got a few suggestions.

Brush up on technical skills like Web site building, quantitative analysis and accounting. Another important part of getting an interesting job with a B.A. is foreign language skills. While writing is important, all employers will expect you to be a good writer.

Also, remember what your professors have taught you. Do not just learn the materials so that you can pass a test or write a paper. Countless times during my searches for the perfect job I have come across requirements that I used to know, but have since forgotten.

So learn from my mistakes. Study hard while you are at Carolina. Do well. But remember that success is not just measured just by test grades, how high your GPA is nor how many organizations you lead.

Recognize now that success is based on excellence and mastery of all that you do and care about, and that will be the most important lesson.

**EDITORS' NOTE:** The above editorials, with the exception of the guest column, are the opinions of solely The Daily Tar Heel Editorial Board, which were reached after open debate. The board consists of three board members, the editorial page editor and the DTH editor. The 2005 summer DTH editor decided not to vote on the board and not to write board editorials.

READERS' FORUM

## Columnist misrepresented the future of the Democratic Party

**TO THE EDITOR:**

I read Derwin Dubose's columns with great interest and often with great agreement. However, I believe he was way off-base in his latest one from June 16.

One of his main arguments was that the Democrats were disorganized and not united. I would argue that we are more organized and united than we have been in years. Thanks to the work of such people as N.C. Democratic Party Chairman Jerry Meek and Democratic National Committee Chairman Howard Dean, we now have well-funded grassroots organizations in such unlikely places as Mississippi and Wyoming.

If it were not for the extraordinary leadership of Senate Minority Leader Harry Reid, D-Nevada, the Democrats would not have been able to stop President Bush from ignoring the Senate to install radical judges in important courts that protect Americans' civil rights.

And one just has to look at the latest polls to see where the Republicans' supposedly unified, values-based leadership stands with the American public. One such poll reported that 44 percent of Americans believe Democrats better reflect their

values, versus 40 percent who believe the same of Republicans. Bush is at his lowest approval rating of his presidency, and the GOP-led Congress at its lowest in 7 years.

Another of Dubose's arguments is that the Democrats have no ideas of their own to offer. As James Carville once said, "When your opponent is drowning, throw the (guy) an anvil." It is not politically advantageous for Democrats to put forth a full agenda now. In September 1994 when the Republicans were in the minority in Congress, Newt Gingrich came out with the Contract for America less than two months before the election that gave them the majority.

Right now the Democrats are laying out their differences in contrast to Bush and recruiting candidates for next November's midterm elections, when they will reveal a national agenda that, believe me, they already have prepared.

Also, Derwin, I encourage you to read the Young Democrats e-mails to find ways you can help us get Democrats elected and enact a liberal agenda.

*Dustin Ingalls  
Public Relations Director  
UNC Young Democrats*

## McCain is becoming the clear choice for the next U.S. President

**TO THE EDITOR:**

Sen. John McCain, R-Arizona, is emerging as Republicans' 2008 presidential nominee, and moderate Republicans should be encouraged. He seems the most plausible and viable candidate for GOP success versus Sen. Hillary Clinton, D-New York.

In a recent "Meet the Press" poll McCain held approval ratings of 56 percent from Republicans, and 50 percent from Independents and Democrats. Americans do not need an extreme left or right; Americans need a uniting leader in the Oval Office.

*Dane Anderson  
Junior  
Economics and Political Science*

**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).

ON THE DAY'S NEWS

*"We spend half our time crying for leaders, and the other half nailing them to the cross of prejudice."*

ANONYMOUS

EDITORIAL CARTOON

By Philip McFee, [pip@email.unc.edu](mailto:pip@email.unc.edu)



COMMENTARY

## Fanfare for the average man: mantras for the unexceptional

I am "that" guy. I am every guy who has ever been "just another guy." What I quip so shall we all quip. When I shrug, so do we all.

What the heck, I celebrate myself and sing myself. I loaf and invite my soul, and our duet will be "The Fanfare for the Average Man."

I, now twenty-one years old and in moderate health — former failer of the Presidential Fitness Test — do begin, hoping not to cease 'til death, to sing the praises of mediocrity.

Original energy — shucks, that's too singular — I'm no prodigy here. I fill my song with qualities not fantastic, but admirable. Mine shall be the line of constancy, complacency and poor complexion.

Are you as I am? We are the same, then. The brightest burning star in youth, among the more dazzling stars in adolescence, flickering occasionally in the teenage years only to come to a wavering, gas-station-bathroom level of luminescence after the twentieth year?

Do not hang your undistinguished head, we are brothers. I am the drabber brother — I see the others and am ashamed. But, still, browbeaten as I am, I believe in you, my soul.

This is no country for bold men. Those who excel will lose touch, where as we, in plumbing the depths of our vanilla existences, will come to know the joys of the middling life.

Each instance in which we are passed over is more time we can pursue our own careers as run-of-the-mill islands. Rejoice.

With imagination, brown and black can match. Eating over the sink is the path of least resistance. Sleep is lovely, dark and deep. Shall I compare us all to anything? Sure, why not — we are the mauve wallpaper of the world.

Wholly bland, but we cover the globe. We are the earthy mean: life's par. Our notes may be forgettable, but our unison is overpowering.

I salute the legions of garden-variety folk, for we are all one and all, in essence, no one.



**PHILIP MCFEE**  
OLDE ENGLISH

To the mutual acquaintance, I sing to you.

To the teammate who, like I, has said nervously, "Um ... I'll order it big ... it'll shrink," I sing to you.

To the third wheel, who so half-heartedly insists on ordering the popcorn, I sing to you.

To the cartoonist, I sing to you.

To the introvert, destined to forever be "the friend of the hot one," I sing to you.

To the sophomore, clinging so desperately to that "undecided" status, I sing to you.

To the loafer who has had a friend dedicate a belch to him, I sing to you.

To the columnist who has sacrificed a more difficult idea for an easier, boilerplate piece, I sing to you.

To the slouch who wakes up at 4 a.m. the night before a final, drool-soaked page stuck to his cheek, I sing to you.

To the wallflower, ostracized at parties by being given the "privilege" of being the one who selects the music, I sing to you.

To the oversleeper who leaves five minutes before his first class thinking "clean clothes is the same as showering, right?" — I sing to you.

To the heavy blinker whose car makes him "the one who can get us places," I sing to you.

To the friend, forever destined to take the group picture rather than be in it, I sing to you.

To all of you I sing because I know you and I am you. We are all the tolerable hanger-on, the low-grade wit.

And still I sing.

Two score "laying out" by the pool. Will I remove my shirt? Whoo — whoa — no way! I am the elusive, the rare American

Grizzly. I have no good reason to level in my fuzziness.

And yet I know you, my brothers, feel the trepidation of the unkempt. Homeliness allows no choice — quiet in class or the club — we must love anonymity or die.

When I see a couple of kids and guess he's garden variety and his friend is hungry-looking or wearing a hat, I know this is paradise.

In them I see all of us. We are of the Wonder Bread disposition, as familiar with rejection and dejection as minor accomplishment. We are the manifestations of an infinite lack of initiative.

We stand together, millions as one, in 2005, and know we are — truly — average. We don't follow the procreant urge, we don't understand what we've done or why you're leaving already. We, simply put, just are.

Know what? Tell me a story.

In this time of overachievers, low-carb bric-a-brac and social climbing, tell me a story. Make it of a humdrum somebody who becomes famous, wealthy and fragrant and I'll deem it "feasible" and go with it.

It'll be our chorus, and we'll lift it together. Let us go already, you and I. We have miles to go, I hear, but who's keeping track?

There's no big rush.

We don't have to worry about tending to the lineaments of our symmetrical faces, we're not getting dates anytime soon. We are society's white noise — always present, never pressing.

Blend, blend, blend, always the chief aim of the forgettable.

The road will take us through all life has to offer, but always will be straight and level. And, hey, right now, the trip looks all right.

Wait, how do I look? Don't get pushy, OK? One could do worse than be a writer of verses.

It's not like I'm staring down a lot of options, here. Look on my quirks, ye mighty, and beware.

Contact Philip McFee at [pip@email.unc.edu](mailto:pip@email.unc.edu).

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The Daily Tar Heel is published by the DTH Publishing Corp., a non-profit North Carolina corporation, Thursdays while classes are in session over the summer. 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 2409 Carolina Union **CAMPUS MAIL ADDRESS:** CB# 5210, Carolina Union **U.S. MAIL ADDRESS:** P.O. Box 3257, Chapel Hill, NC 27515-3257

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112 years of editorial freedom

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