

The fabric of Bertie County since 1832

Opinion

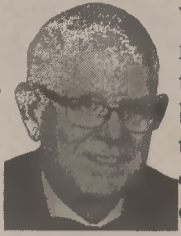
N.C. SPIN

Looking to 2017...

The best word to describe the year 2016 is unsettling. We barely had time to break

"Court decisions will be prominent."

- TOM CAMPBELL



our New Year's resolutions before the year crashed down on us.

So let's look to 2017. Republicans hold political control of our state and will continue to flex their muscles. Look for frequent disagreements between the legislature and Governor Roy Cooper but lawmakers will override gubernatorial vetoes. We do expect some compromise on HB2, likely not a full repeal, but an attempt to stem the economic and image damage done our state. The legislative session will feature drawing new legislative districts, regulatory reforms, perhaps some minor tweaking to tax codes and putting more money into reserves to stave off the next recessionary period.

Governor Cooper will push for Medicaid expansion but the legislature will balk. He will urge more increases in teacher pay but don't expect big movement; instead pay increases for principals will be enacted. Cooper will also advocate for a large Transportation bond package. It has some legislative support but is problematic for a referendum in 2017.

Newly elected Republican Council of State members will assert themselves. Treasurer Dale Folwell will move quickly to reduce management fees and improve earnings on public investments. His biggest challenge is the state health plan, particularly the \$30 billion unfunded liability and rising premiums. New Commissioner of Insurance Wayne Causey will face pressure from insurance companies to allow more flexibility and profitability. Most will be watching newly elected Superintendent of Public Instruction, Mark Johnson, armed with more powers than has been seen since "education czar" Craig Phillips.

Court decisions will be prominent. Appeals courts will likely uphold the redrawing of legislative districts, however they might back away from requiring new legislative elections this coming fall. We will also see further actions on elections laws and separations of power cases. Court reform will become a big topic; expect legislative action.

Look for big changes in Healthcare. The Trump administration and Congress are determined to repeal and reform Obamacare and federal changes will require state responses. The legislature is likely to ease Certificate of Need laws and relax regulations on Direct Primary Care, nurse practitioners and physician assistants.

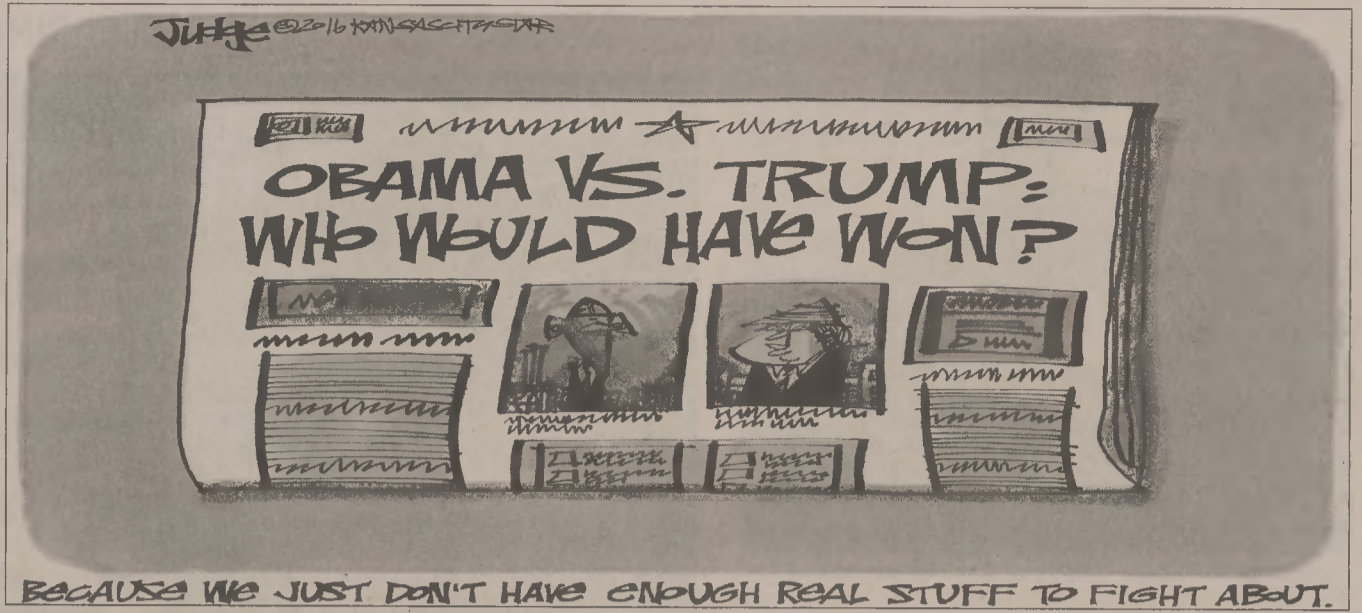
Our economy will continue improving, but gaps between urban-rural areas and among some demographic groups will grow wider. North Carolinians, wanting some respite from the tribal politics and ugly, partisan rhetoric, may find little relief in 2017. At the least we hope it will not be a repeat of 2016.

Tom Campbell is former assistant North Carolina State Treasurer and is creator/host of NC SPIN, a weekly statewide television discussion of NC issues airing Sundays at 8:30 a.m. on WFXI. Contact him at www.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

The Bertie Ledger-Advance encourages Letters to the Editor. Letters should be on topics of public interest to Bertie County, and writers must have a connection to our circulation area. Letters should have the writer's name and hometown as well as including a telephone number for verification purposes. Letters should not exceed 500 words. For a full list of criteria, please contact Editor Thadd White at twhite@ncweeklies.com.

July 2016



AROUND HERE

My high school days...

The other day I was online and saw an advertisement for a sweat-shirt featuring my high school alma mater.

It only took me a few seconds to decide to purchase the shirt.

I attended Hargrave Military Academy in Virginia in 1979-80 and 1980-81, after two years of high school in my hometown of Smithfield.

For the record, I do not claim Smithfield-Selma Senior High School.

My last two years of high school spent at Hargrave were much more fulfilling.

It didn't start out that way, however.

My parents had warned me that military school was a future possibility after I struggled academically as a freshman.

I improved a bit in the classroom as a sophomore, but apparently it was not good enough for my parents, who decided I needed some academic discipline.

Keep in mind, though, I was not a terrible student. I just wasn't as good as my parents had hoped.

So during the summer of 1979, my parents dropped the bombshell that I would be leaving home and going to Hargrave, which is located in Chatham - almost two and a half hours away.

To say I was unhappy would be an understatement. I promised to perform better in the class-

"It didn't start out that way, however..."

- JIM GREEN



room at SSS, but it didn't work.

For someone who had never experienced being away from home and my parents (save the occasional weekend with grandparents in Roxboro), it was quite the culture shock when I arrived in August of 1979.

Mind you, HMA wasn't the football and basketball factory it is now.

Every minute of your day is planned - from classes, to church services (vespers), to study hall, to what they called "special class."

Special class was for students who made below a 76 in a particular class, or their average dipped below a certain level (I believe that was 76 also).

If such happened, a student would attend the class until the next test, and if he made above a 76, and his average increased above that number, he would resume his normal class schedule. If not, he stayed in the class until he got his average and test scores up.

I was in special class for one

subject for two weeks during the first semester. I made in the high 90s on the next test and, by the end of the semester, I was a teacher's assistant helping teach the class.

I learned how to study more effectively - and became a better student as a result. In 12 semesters, I made the President's List twice and the Dean's List nine times.

I chalk the first semester up to me adjusting to life away from home.

In addition to the academic discipline I so desperately needed, earning student rank was also a highlight of my time there.

I went from private to corporal to sergeant to lieutenant, all within 14 months.

I played basketball at Hargrave, and two of fondest memories were scoring 21 points in one game and hitting the game-winning free throws in another contest.

My personal favorite highlight was meeting my first girlfriend, through her cousin - a day student who is still a friend of mine to this day, more than 30 years later.

I enjoyed my time at HMA, and one of these days, I am going to venture back to Chatham.

I will wear the shirt with pride. *Jim Green is Sports Editor for the Bertie Ledger-Advance. He can be reached at jgreen@ncweeklies.com.*

MY WORLD

Christmas with the cousins...

When our daughters announced to their Tennessee cousins last year that we were going to become permanent neighbors, one of the cousins was a little sad. "We won't get to look forward to seeing you anymore," she said.

I understand. Looking forward to being with cousins is one of the great highlights of childhood, especially during Christmas. It's a thrill even for the cousins who must avoid food before riding up and down a mountain in the back-seat.

This Tennessee Christmas is a little sad for me, too. The second generation of our over-the-mountain-and-through-the-woods holiday family tradition is coming to an end. No more traversing the winding roads between Tennessee and North Carolina to be with cousins.

Raising our kids in North Carolina felt natural to me because I lived the earliest part of my life there. After opening gifts on Christmas morning, we would pile into the old Volvo, and later the new Chevy Impala. It was a long drive from Albemarle to LaFollette, Tenn., where grandparents and cousins and M&Ms and six-and-a-half-ounce bottles of Coca-Cola awaited us.

These were the good old days when interstate travel was not an option and carsickness was an

"We won't get to look forward to seeing you."

- MARK RUTLEDGE



ever present passenger. Stopping for gas meant the service was full and the bathrooms filthy.

Some service station restrooms were worse than others, but when the key was wired to a flyswatter you just knew it was going to be awful.

Highway 441 through the Smoky Mountains was always exciting because we knew Dad would stop in Gatlinburg for white chocolate - which was saved for later when we were not so nauseated.

That same highway is much improved today, with guardrails of stone or heavy timbers. During the 1960s, however, cars negotiated its treacherous twists and turns between short, painted posts. A patch of missing posts meant that a vehicle had plowed through and plummeted down the mountain.

Processing such a tragic event during the delirium of carsickness was almost too much. "What if no one saw the crash? What if the poor souls are still down there, somewhere hidden in the

undergrowth? What if tumbling down the side of a mountain were the only way to make nausea go away?"

Our daughters had similar experiences along N.C. Highway 181 crossing Jonas Ridge between Morganton and Newland. A particularly draining round of Christmas carsickness on that stretch prompted the girls to label it "the curvy way." As in: "Please don't go the curvy way! Please!"

Fortunately, there is an all-interstate route to North Carolina via Virginia. The alternate route is so smooth that we felt safe in starting a new tradition of sharing a big bag of Cajun trail mix from the Flying J at Wytheville.

Since we have Christmas cousins all year now, the girls and I are driving over after the holiday to visit friends in eastern North Carolina. The girls don't know it yet, but Daddy has cooked up a little experiment to see if they've outgrown their aversion to winding mountain roads.

"But the curvy way has no Flying J," the girls will protest.

Not to worry. I've already gotten us a jumbo bag of Cajun trail mix from Walmart. Daddy thinks of everything.

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