

Opinion

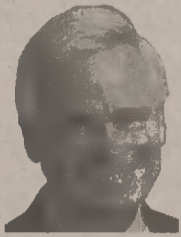
ONE-ON-ONE

Lesson from Tillis...

Can lessons learned in a successful effort to provide compensation for victims

"This is what a pull quote could look like."

D.G. MARTIN



of state-sponsored sterilization help solve the problem

HB2 (the bathroom bill) is causing North Carolina?

In his recent book, "Rage to Redemption in the Sterilization Age: A Confrontation with American Genocide," John Railey, editorial page editor at the "Winston-Salem Journal," showed how a determined legislative leader can persuade colleagues to put aside opposition to legislation that would remove an ugly stain on North Carolina's reputation.

As Railey explains, during the last century, North Carolina had one of the nation's most aggressive eugenics programs. It provided for the sterilization of people with diminished mental capability or who were determined for other reasons that they should not have children.

Railey writes, "The program was a betrayal of the picture North Carolina was presenting to the world, that of a Southern state forward-thinking on business, transportation and race relations, more progressive than its neighbors Virginia and South Carolina, more enlightened than Mississippi or Alabama."

He follows the efforts of sterilization victim Nial Cox Ramirez to secure compensation for herself and others for the wrong the state inflicted on her. Those efforts were floundering even though Gov. Michael Easley had apologized for the state's role in the sterilizations and appointed a commission to study the matter of compensation. But he and Gov. Beverly Perdue were unable to persuade the Democratic-controlled General Assembly to act. However, when U.S. Senator Thom Tillis was speaker of a Republican-controlled House of Representatives, he promised Railey, "If I don't get compensation ratified this session, I'll consider it a personal failure."

Without that high-level commitment from a leader at the top of the legislative food chain, North Carolina's reputation would still be carrying the burden of its failure to ameliorate the consequences of unfairly treating some of its citizens.

Is there a legislative leader today who can follow Tillis's example and lead us out of the mess HB2 is causing North Carolina?

Can that person find a way to persuade the National Basketball Association, National Collegiate Athletic Association and the Atlantic Coast Conference to take North Carolina off their blacklists and bring back the sports contests that North Carolinians love and that bring millions of dollars and favorable attention to our state?

Can that leader find a way to remove the HB2 barrier to companies that bring new businesses and new jobs to our state?

It would not be easy.

While some Republicans in the House favor repealing HB2, most do not. As a general rule, House Republican leadership requires a majority of GOP members' support before they allow a bill to be considered by the entire House.

Assuming, as many believe, that a bill to repeal HB2 would pass if all members vote, Moore's task is simply to persuade the majority of Republican House members to allow the matter to come to the floor.

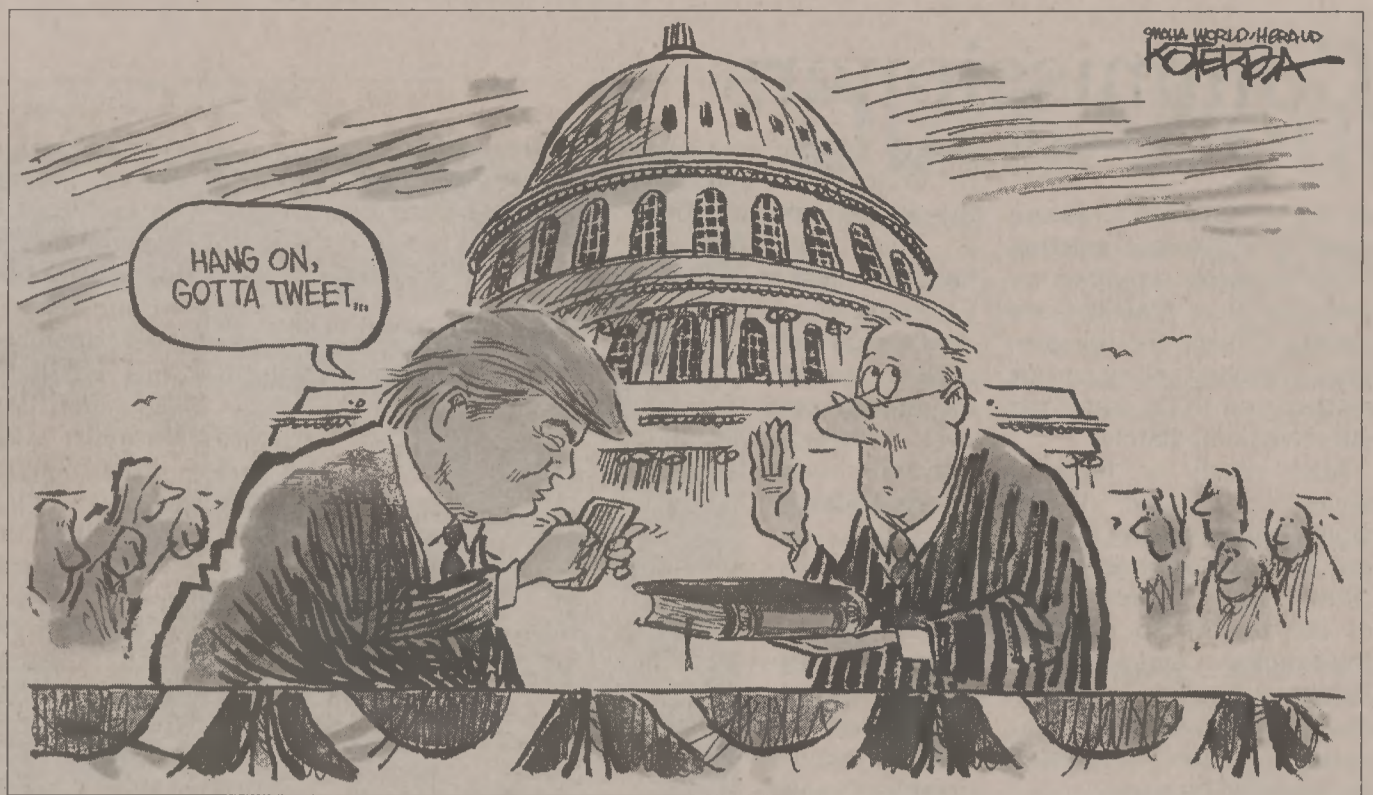
It would be a tough task. A persuasive Moore would say, "I know you can't vote for the repeal. You don't have to. Just let us bring it to the floor."

If he were successful in the House, Moore would have to help the Senate leader, Phil Berger, pull off something similar in the Senate.

If Moore and Berger are willing to go forward and find a way to repeal HB2, they should get the same kind of praise that Tillis earned when he removed a stain on North Carolina's record.

D.G. Martin hosts "North Carolina Bookwatch" on UNC-TV on Fridays at 8 p.m.

The fabric of Bertie County since 1832



FARM LIFE WIFE

Being in the minority...

I seem to be in the minority here in Eastern North Carolina in my love for snow. Growing up in the Midwest we had enough snow for it to be exciting when it came, but not enough to grow tired of it before Spring.

Of course, the snow of my childhood was of a more powdery consistency. Rarely did we get the ice like we had this past weekend.

As a child, I still remember waking in the middle of the night to look across the lawn to see if there was any sign of even the smallest flake.

By morning time, I could tell if it had snowed before I even opened my eyes.

There was a certain brightness my room would take on when the world outside was wrapped up in white. I knew before I threw open the curtains from the pallor of my bedroom.

A double treat would be that ambiance mixed with glow from the outside Christmas lights at night.

My room would be so bright, I could barely sleep.

This might be debated, but I am certain snow has a smell. Maybe,

"The smell is crisp and clean and cold."

- DEBORAH GRIFFIN



that is something only noticed by those who truly love it.

The smell is crisp and clean and cold.

When the snow came, it was measured by inches and feet, not by tenths of inches.

Big, fat flakes blanketed the world as a shaken snow globe.

The best thing about that kind of snow is how it covers everything. Even some of the ugliest spots in the world look pretty with snow.

Our neighborhood would be frosted over, as if with a thick, heavy icing that draped, but not quite dripped, off layers of objects. The yard would be as smooth as frosted Christmas cookies, compelling me and my sister and brother to throw our bodies to the ground and wave our arms and legs wildly to make snow angels, only to be licked on

our already cold faces by Pepper, my beagle-mix buddy I had for 16 years.

Pepper would become like an eight-month old puppy every time it snowed. She and I would trek forever in the snow, me trudging, her hopping like a deer.

Now, as an adult, snow represents to me a (sort of) forced day off; an excuse to play instead of clean; an obligatory reason for the world to slow down; a chance to sit and just read for pleasure without feeling guilty; an opportunity to play with my children and my dogs without that nagging feeling that I really should be doing something else, like starting supper or editing photos.

Snow gives us literally an alternative perspective of our world - a break from the monotony.

By the weekend the snow and ice will just be a memory with the forecaster calling for - ludicrous for winter - 70 degrees.

I can hardly wait for there to be a chance for snow again.

Deborah Griffin is Staff Writer at the Enterprise & Weekly Herald. She can be reached at dgriffin@ncweeklies.com.

OUT HERE IN LEFT FIELD

No more advantages...

There are generally some advantages to being a big guy like me.

One of them is I'm usually able to guide myself over snow and ice just like big vehicles - being big enough to make an impression and stay upright.

Honestly, I've never spent much time worrying about walking in the snow and ice. I just get out, put on my shoes - sometimes flip flops - and head out the door. I'm generally pretty comfortable that I'll make it just fine.

That was the case Monday morning when I gleefully headed to the Bertie Ledger-Advance's the Windsor office to open the doors for the first time in nearly four months. I put on my flip-flops (my feet don't get cold) and headed out the door.

Now, I do have an old SUV, which means I took time to warm it up and get it feeling comfortable. But I also have a large vehicle that I worry about on the snow and ice almost as little as I worry about my own walking.

My truck moved effortlessly over the winter precipitation left in my driveway and out onto the roadway that was, for the most part, clear.

I made my way to Speedway to pick up a Pepsi and a biscuit, got back into the vehicle and headed for the office.

"It may be time to do something about it."

- THADD WHITE



When I arrived in the county parking lot behind our office, my truck slid into the parking spot because of the large amount of sheer ice left there. I thought nothing of it, and simply pulled the parking brake so it wouldn't slide and jumped out to begin my day.

In retrospect, I should not have been so flip about the truck's sliding, but at the time I was much more interested in getting into the office and getting to work.

One of the things I noticed quickly upon leaving my vehicle was the lack of keys to open the office back door. It was a problem that would haunt me in a couple of ways.

First, I trudged around the block to get in the front door which, thankfully, Michelle had opened earlier in the morning. I was careful to walk close to the buildings where the ice and snow were less prominent. I made it in safely.

A few minutes later, I walked to the corner of King and Granville streets to collect my son Camden who would be spending the day

with me. That trip was even less eventful.

Unfortunately, the keys I had forgotten were also forgotten by my wife and oldest son. They turned around to bring them, but said we should meet again at the intersection.

This time I decided to venture further to make it easier. I was - I thought - careful as I stepped off the sidewalk and into the street - quite literally.

I would love to tell you I fell gracefully and landed gently and was uninjured. I'd love to tell you that, but I can't. I fell like an elephant flopping over, with no way to catch myself except with my left arm and shoulder.

I did scramble to my feet to make sure as few people as possible saw me lying in the middle of Granville Street.

Unfortunately, when you're as big as I am you're able normally to move across snow and ice unfazed. When you do fall, however, you leave a large spot in the snow, and injuries to your back.

Maybe since being large has lost another advantage, it may be time to do something about it.

Thadd White is Editor of the Bertie Ledger-Advance. He can be reached via email at twhite@ncweeklies.com.

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