

Opinion

NC SPIN

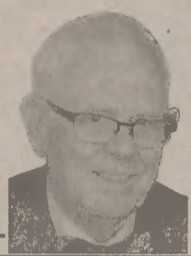
Do they need a curfew...

"Nothing happens on the streets of this town after midnight that you need to be a part of," my parents told me as a teen. Concerned I had neither the experience nor the judgment to impose this discipline on myself, they imposed a midnight curfew on me. I didn't like, it but came to understand its wisdom. I remembered this experience after our state Senate's 3 a.m. budget vote. Seldom does anything good result from these late-night sessions.

Repeatedly we've witnessed legislation

"I didn't like it, but came to understand its wisdom..."

-TOM CAMPBELL



approval in order to pass a budget, meet a self-imposed deadline or to adjourn. Only later were lawmakers (and the public) shocked to learn what mischief was contained in these late-night votes. It is not good government and no way to conduct "the people's business."

The process started badly, as neither rank-and-file Senators nor members of the public even saw the 800-plus pages of budget documents crafted behind closed doors until Wednesday morning, when various subcommittees essentially rubber stamped them. The \$23 billion dollar budget subsequently came to the floor for passage Thursday. When Democrats objected to provisions and attempted to add amendments, Senate leadership abruptly called a recess until 2:30 a.m. When the session reconvened, punishment, in the form of reduced or eliminated funding for programs, was aimed squarely at certain Democrats.

Upon reflection, some of the Senate's recommendations are good, but the process is the problem. Anyone criticizing these late-hour shenanigans is quickly reminded that when Democrats ran the legislature they were equally vindictive, dismissive and mean-spirited toward Republicans. Usually the critic is asked why we - the media - didn't raise a ruckus then. The record will show that we did, on TV, on our website and in written columns. It was wrong then and is just as wrong now.

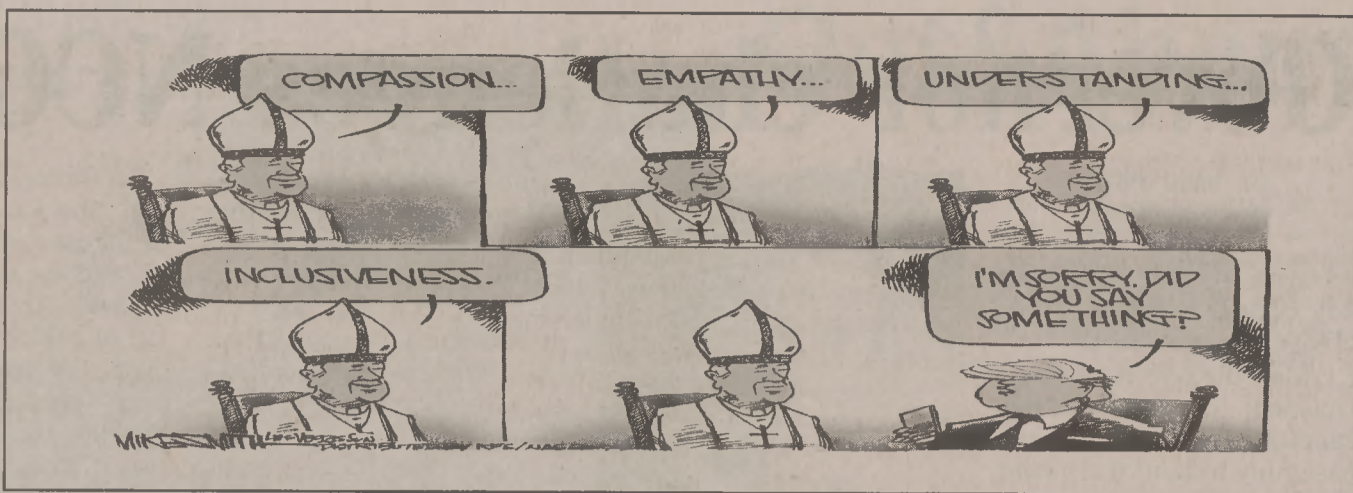
Longtime political reporter and columnist Paul O'Connor recently quipped that what goes around still comes around. He remembered how Democratic leadership in the '80s and 1990s ran roughshod over Republicans, stripping the Lieutenant Governor of power, refusing to allow input from GOP lawmakers on legislation and making decisions in small groups behind closed doors. The symbol for the Republican Party is the elephant, reputedly with long memories, and even though many current legislators were not in office at that time they remember (or have been told) the treatment received at the hands of Democrats. What goes around comes around.

If the pendulum swings and Democrats once again attain majorities in one or both chambers of our legislature, will they have learned from their recent treatment by Republicans and change the way things are done, or will they just resume ways of punishing the minority party? An interesting question to ponder.

Whether or not that ever occurs, the fact remains that when lawmakers are tired at the end of a long day, when changes are hurriedly made without due deliberation and when important decisions are at stake, these late-night sessions generally result in bad legislation. Given their recent performance, perhaps our lawmakers would be well served to impose a curfew upon themselves. What harm would result in waiting another day or two before taking action? A little rest and reflection might result in better decisions, but most assuredly a better process.

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 a.m. on WFXI. Contact him at www.ncspin.com.

The fabric of Bertie County since 1832



FARM LIFE WIFE

The lure of addiction...

I have a 15-year-old addict in my home.

Thankfully his obsession does not involve controlled substances.

It involves rattle traps, beetle spinners and sexy dogs.

Anglers will know exactly what I am referring to.

My question is - just how many lures must one own to catch fish?

My son long ago lost count of how many lures he hoards in stacks and stacks of plastic lock-top trays, filled to the brim with hooks attached to feathers, glittery rubber squiggly things and plastic moulds of every imaginable color in nature.

These trays are meticulously organized - much neater than his room ever has been.

Every last dime he earns becomes a \$25 trip to Walmart.

Each lure he buys, I suppose, holds the promise of a bigger catch, an easier bite, of fooling even the most elusive fish.

I personally think they are called lures because, it seems, those lured are the fishermen.

My son was offered the opportunity this past holiday weekend to go deep sea fishing.

It truly was a case of being in the right place at the right time. He was (surprise) in the fishing lure section at Walmart when an acquaintance happened by. He had just found out a buddy who was supposed to go to the coast

"Being down below was not the place I wanted to be."

DEBORAH GRIFFIN



with him had to back out. Would he like to go?

The look on my son's face said it all.

Bewilderment gave way to elation.

Alas, the addiction grows deeper.

I have had the honor of going deep sea fishing. Twice. Which, it turns out, is all I needed.

When I worked for the Baptist Children's Homes of North Carolina, a generous donor allowed some of the children to board the Capt. Stacy out of Atlantic Beach to deep sea fish.

I was assigned to go along to photograph the children having the time of their lives.

The first year, it was a gorgeous day. Fishing was good, as well as the photographs.

The second year - not so much. The day started out cold.

When we were miles out from dry land, I noticed the horizon teeter-tottering.

The color drained from my face and I knew photography for the day was over. I ran down below, where the smell of diesel fuel hit

me full in the face. This, mixed with the smell of fresh-cut, inky squid bait that had squished beneath my cute new deck shoes I bought just for the occasion.

I searched the nearest thing into which I could ease my upset tummy.

A small, empty chocolate milk carton was on the floor. I quickly ripped open the neatly folded top and tossed my breakfast.

The smell of chocolate milk turns my stomach even today.

Being down below was not the place I wanted to be.

I rushed back upstairs to the rail, hoping the fresh air and the saltwater from the waves would ease my uneasy feeling.

Not so. I leaned over the rail, and hurled, and not for the last time that day.

I turned to my right and looked down the line of adults trying to keep their breakfast down. It was like a chain reaction of vomiting people.

There is a song from the 70's that encourages listeners to not spit in the wind, along with other sage advice.

When we finally de-boarded late that afternoon, I checked the rearview in my car and realized why that advice is so wise.

Don't hurl into the wind, either.

Deborah Griffin is a Staff Writer for the Bertie Ledger-Advance. She can be reached via email at dgriffin@ncweeklies.com.

OUT HERE IN LEFT FIELD

The definition of insanity...

I long ago learned the definition of insanity.

It's doing the same thing over and over and expecting a different result.

By that definition, Republicans in the N.C. General Assembly have slipped over the precipice into insanity.

No matter how many times the group of legislative leaders are rebuked by courts for passing legislation that is unconstitutional, they seem undeterred.

Last week, Copy Editor Lanny Hiday authored a story about the U.S. Supreme Court's rebuke of the congressional districts drawn by Republican leaders. It had already been declared unconstitutional and new districts drawn, but the legislature continued to fight it in court. (Full disclosure: I went to college with Rep. David Lewis who led the House side of drawing the districts.)

This week, I authored a story about N.C. Governor Roy Cooper's taking the legislature to court to protect the executive branch's authority. You'd think that may be no surprise since he's a Democrat.

Unfortunately for those of you who would defend the legislature, part of the filing is to make the NCGA comply with a court order from when Republican Governor Pat McCrory took them to court.

In fact, according to WUNC,

"It's time for them to be strong and to govern."

- THADD WHITE



since taking power in 2011 (six years ago), the Republican majority has seen 14 laws they passed "either overturned altogether or had key provisions struck down."

The Voter ID law was struck down because the U.S. Court of Appeals said it targeted African American voters "with almost surgical precision."

While some may believe in some form of Voter ID law, I don't believe there are many North Carolinians who want valid voters to be prevented from casting a ballot.

Many times, the state courts have struck down laws where the legislature has tried to usurp the power of the executive branch, because those powers are clearly defined in the North Carolina Constitution.

Other laws in which they've lost court battles include combining the State Board of Elections and the Ethics Commission to attempt to keep Gov. Cooper from appointing elections commission members as every other governor has before him.

Others include the courts:

- * blocking an attempt to change

the Greensboro Council elections;

- * striking down judicial retention elections;

- * ending a law requiring abortion providers to show women an ultrasound before performing an abortion;

- * overturning a law forcing teachers to give up career status; and

- * blocking an attempt to take away control of Asheville's water system from the city.

Those are just a few of the things our Republican-led General Assembly has done that have been declared unconstitutional.

Its time for the Republicans, who likely will keep control of the N.C. General Assembly into the foreseeable future, to begin to act like legislators instead of children who are minding the house until the parents get home.

It's time for them to be strong and to govern - and it's fine if they govern by their own beliefs - but it is not okay to continually side-step the state and national constitutions to do so. And we'll talk about the expenses of defending their unconstitutional laws another day.

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