

OPINION

Thomasville Times

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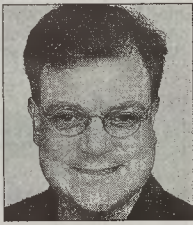
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For Veterans Day -
 real troop support

VIEWPOINT



TOM PURCELL
 Syndicated Columnist

Ah, Veterans Day is upon us. What better time to show our support for our men and women in uniform?

But have we really been supporting them?

Sure, we thank them when we see them at the airport.

We attend parades and Veterans Day events to show our appreciation.

And with good reason.

According to the Department of Veterans Affairs, nearly 42 million American men and women have served during wartime.

Nearly 1.2 million died while serving. Nearly 1.5 million were wounded.

Since 9/11, more than 5,200 have died in Iraq and Afghanistan. Nearly 36,000 have been wounded — many have debilitating injuries that have changed their lives forever.

We may debate the rightness or wrongness of various engagements, but we know that freedom comes at a steep price — and we honor those who have secured it for us.

But are we really supporting the troops?

During the peak of World War II, American defense spending was 42 percent of our gross domestic product.

Everyone — those who served as well as those who stayed home — needed to unite and sacrifice.

Today, defense spending is around 3 percent of GDP. The wars in Iraq and Afghanistan have required little or no sacrifice from most.

We haven't paid higher taxes to fund the wars — our government continues to borrow the money for that.

We haven't needed to buy war bonds or work long hours at a factory to produce tanks and planes.

We haven't given up vacations, new cars, gasoline, meat, sugar and the hundreds of other items that were rationed during World War II.

Most haven't done so for

a simple reason: Our support of the troops has not been a matter of need, but a matter of choice. Aside from our goodwill and appreciation, the fact is this: Many have chosen to not support the troops much at all.

As you read this, thousands of soldiers are serving in hostile conditions. Some will be badly wounded — some won't make it home.

They don't want our pity, to be sure. They are trained warriors. They volunteered to serve.

But they could use a little support — and we don't have to sacrifice much to provide it.

"There are many small things people can do that can make a world of difference," says Jerry Newberry, director of communications for the Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW).

Such as assisting the family of a service member who has been deployed.

"Family members go through a long period of wondering, worrying and waiting," says Newberry. "But they still need to deal with the car breaking down, a child getting sick, a death in the family. If you know of such families, reach out to them."

Or write an e-mail. The troops — particularly those recuperating in military hospitals — love receiving e-mails (www.ourmilitary.mil), letters and care packages.

Donate time. Your local Veterans Affairs office, VFW and other legitimate organizations are in need of volunteers.

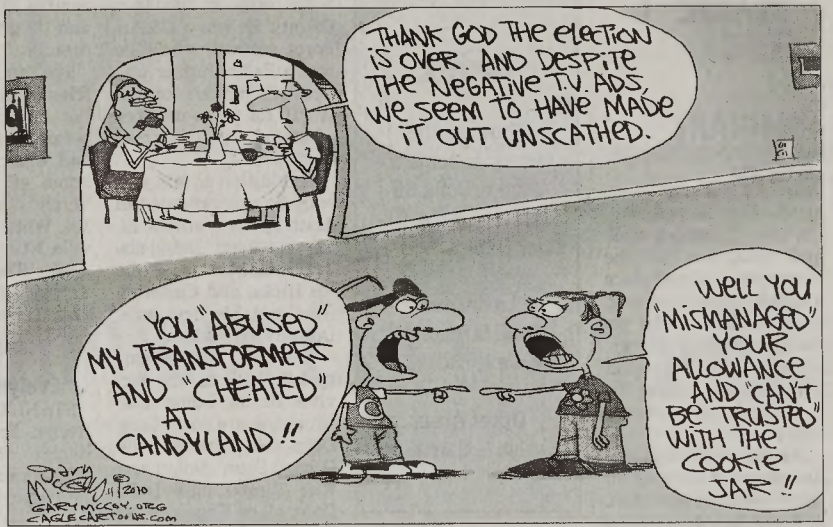
Organize a toy drive for children of deployed soldiers. Support the Marine Corps Toys for Tots program. Provide gift cards to troops through aaafes.com.

Donate money. You can give to a variety of needed services for military members — or support the Red Cross to provide basic necessities to service members in military hospitals.

Just go to vfw.org and click on "Donate" or "Troop Support."

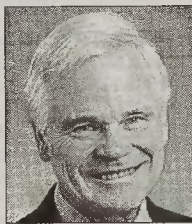
Hey, Veterans Day is upon us. What better time to offer real support to our men and women in uniform?

Tom Purcell, a humor columnist for the Pittsburgh Tribune-Review, is nationally syndicated exclusively by Cagle Cartoons newspaper syndicate. For more info contact Cari Dawson Bartley at 800 696 7561 or email cari@cagle.com.



Election leaves more questions than answers

VIEWPOINT



D.G. MARTIN
 N.C. Columnist

What did last week's election mean, really? Was it a seismic shift, a permanent one, to long term Republican/Tea party dominance? Or, was it merely a tidal movement, part of a regular predictable ebb and flow, shifting temporary control from one group to another?

As I sought answers to these questions last week, I got only a few cautious observations and lots more questions.

I will share a few of them with you.

The question I hear most often is, How were North Carolina Democrats able to protect all but one of their congressional representatives and at the same time get clobbered in the state legislative races — all this when the election was supposed to be about national issues and anger at Nancy Pelosi and Barack Obama?

The answer? The best I have is, North Carolina is different.

Is there any good news for the Democrats on the national level? Noted presidential historian William Leuchtenburg told me that Democrats should take cheer from their statewide victories in the big states of California and New York. Assuming those states are "in the fold" for 2012, the Democrats have a head start in the presidential election of about 85 electoral votes.

Is there any good news

for the Democrats at the state level? In the short run, maybe they can be happy to shift to Republicans the responsibility of making the drastic cuts that have to be made next year.

In the long run, population growth in the state's urban areas might give a glimmer of hope. Although Senator Burr won a solid statewide victory in his reelection campaign, Elaine Marshall would have won the election if it had been held only in the major urban areas like Mecklenburg, Guilford, and the Research Triangle counties, the parts of the state that are experiencing most of the state's population growth.

What will be the result of the Republicans taking complete charge of the post-2010 census redistricting? Will they be able to gerrymander the congressional and legislative seats to lock in their victory for another 10 years? The power to redraw these district lines may be the sweetest reward for state Republicans. When they can, they will shift Democratic voters from "toss-up" districts to solid Republican districts, giving assurance of more safe Republican seats. For instance, look for movement of Democratic voters from Representative Kissell's, Schuler's, Miller's and Etheridge's (Ellsmer's) districts to adjoining safe Republican districts. In redistricting state legislative districts Republicans will be constrained by a court decision that requires respect for county lines when practical. Look for a lawsuit before it is all over.

Will there be a rush of new legislation on social issues? At the polls on Election Day, a woman who was working for Republican legislative candidates told me she was angry because a bill to permit "right to life" auto license plates had been "stuck" in committee under

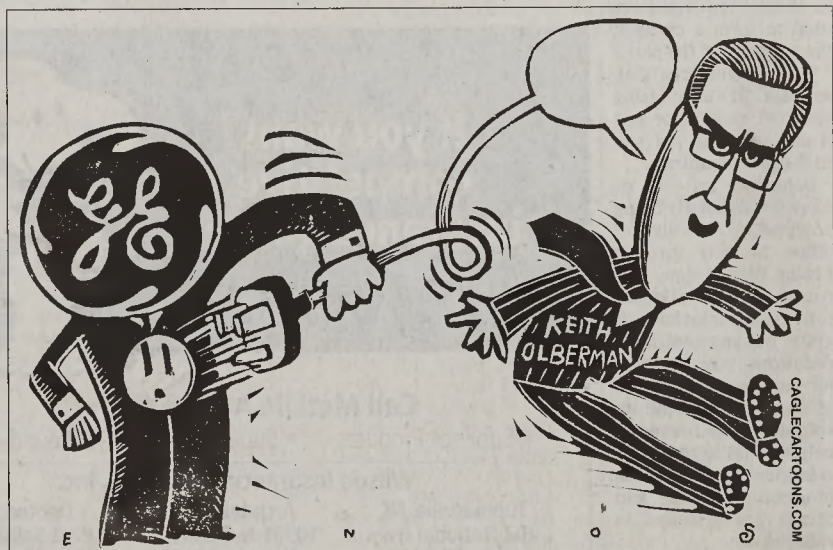
Democratic leadership. That bill will be reintroduced, get a prompt hearing, and will almost certainly pass under the new Republican leadership. Will that bill just be one of many that will attempt to enact a conservative social agenda by adding restrictions on abortions and family planning efforts?

How will the universities do under a Republican controlled legislature? Democratic senate leaders Marc Basnight and Tony Rand were soldiers for the universities, especially UNC-Chapel Hill. Without their powerful support, state universities will be in trouble. Cuts required to balance the budget will be painful and could be devastating, but universities may face even more fundamental challenges. Some conservative Republicans view the universities as "left wing bastions" where liberal faculty members indoctrinate their students and punish dissent in the classroom. These attitudes could translate into efforts to control or balance the ideology of the faculty and curriculum.

More questions in a future column.

D.G. Martin hosts UNC-TV's North Carolina Bookwatch, which airs Fridays at 9:30pm and Sundays at 5pm. For more information or to view prior programs visit the webpage at www.unctv.org/nbookwatch/. This week's (Friday, November 12, and Sunday, November 14) guest is Gary Pearce, author of "Jim Hunt: A Biography."

From an earlier column: "Jim Hunt: A Biography" by long time Hunt aide Gary Pearce. Pearce's good storytelling skills make for a good read as he explains how and why Hunt became the most successful North Carolina politician of all time. It is must reading for politics-loving Republicans and Democrats.



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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

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EDITORIALS

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