

Viewpoints

Registration on the rise

The controversy caused by the liquor by the drink issue has had one surprising side effect — more people are registering to vote.

Although specific numbers are not available, voter registration has increased dramatically, according to Board of Election officials, in the weeks since the mixed drink referendum was turned down by the Board of Commissioners.

It took an emotionally charged, highly sensitive issue, but voters have taken notice of the upcoming election. It's disappointing to realize voters need a controversial issue before they take advantage of one of the most fundamental rights of a free society — the right to vote.

Voter turnout in the city elections was

dismal. In last year's mid-term elections, it was less than 40 percent. Maybe the issue — which seems to have split the Board of Commissioners as well as the rest of the county — will encourage people to take part in their government.

After all, if you don't vote, you can't complain about the decisions made by elected officials. If you don't vote, you can't be guaranteed the officials represent your values or beliefs — or the county's best interests.

There's still time to register before the May primary. Regardless of whether or not the mixed drink referendum will be part of that ballot, vote. It's the only way to ensure a fair, democratic government.

—Amy Clarkson

Letters

Aluminum cans help burn center

To the Editor:

The Hoke County Firefighters Association wishes to thank everyone who has helped in collecting aluminum cans and donating them to help support the North Carolina Burn Center in Chapel Hill.

So far we have collected 3,600 pounds of cans since the beginning of 1995 for a total of \$1,602.

It's always sad to know a loved one or friend who gets burned and has to go to the burn center. But thanks to everyone, we can say, "Hey, we are helping" and it's nice to know that people are involved, even in small ways.

The Jaycees are also working with us and helped us to get organized. Please take your aluminum cans by Gentry's Tire Company in Raeford, the Jaycee Hut or Rockfish Fire Department. Let's make 1996 better than 1995 and support the burn victims.

Thanks,

Todd Wood
Hoke County Firefighters Association

Commissioners bend to special interests

Dear Editor,

I missed writing you last week, I want to compliment your paper on the fine job that it is doing in reporting the news. I realize that you can't get everything into the paper that you would like, but at least you try.

Now for the eye opener this

week. I have had conversations with everyone from Commissioner

McLaughlin on down to friends on the street, about the petition drive. McLaughlin's biggest problem in his conversation with me seemed to be the various religious factions that he is bowing to over the liquor issue. I thought that when you were elected into a position such as the chairman of the Board of Commissioners, your job was to look out for the people and the county in a business way, not in a religious way.

I truly believe in God and try to get to church on Sundays. I don't get the rest of the week as I either spend time with my family or have other meetings and work charitable in nature. This county needs desperately to be run as a business, not a church! Wake up commissioners, starting looking at Hoke County and what ways we can attract business. I will say that whatever the county commissioners have been doing so far in attracting new business has not produced any real results. By the way, I, as well as other tax payers are still waiting for the end result of the trip to Russia (1994!) What's that old line from Burger King — "Where's the Beef?"

Speaking of new businesses, there is a new Applebee's Bar & Grill which just opened on U.S. Highway 1. Aberdeen is doing a brisk business, the parking lot is full about every night. Just think of the money that was invested to buy the land, build the building,

hire the employees (about 50) and guess what Applebee's paid taxes to the city of Aberdeen and Moore County for all that! I guess that there probably is not that much revenue coming in from that establishment. I don't know, what do you think? I spoke to a non-drinking friend of mine this evening and he told me how he and his wife went to Applebee's and said the food was outstanding. Remember he is a non-drinker.

In summary, no reasonably sane business is going to spend \$250,000, hire 50 people to open a place like Applebee's in Hoke County if there is no liquor by the drink. Maybe the Hoke Chamber of Commerce could find out business-wise what happened when Laurinburg and Fayetteville went from dry cities to wet cities. I would bet that businesses doubled, unemployment dropped and revenue directly and indirectly from the sale of alcohol was generated. It is time to change the guard, we have some fine candidates for county commissioner running this time, with new fresh ideas. The county has gone the route set forth by its current sitting commissioners and it obviously has not worked.

Robert E. Vaughn II County economics in trouble

To the Editor:

We, as taxpayers of Hoke County, need to really look at the overall future of our county's economic situation.

We are almost last in the state in every financial statistic taken in

(See LETTERS, page 3A)

Joys of being a granddad

One of the joys of being a grandfather is not knowing how your grandchildren are going to use you next.

My youngest one, who is a grown-up 8-year-old, informed me that her daddy and brother were going to the race at Rockingham on Sunday. It was the day her Brownie Scout troop was to go to the club "Midnight Rodeo" for a lesson in line dancing. She further stated that she had volunteered me to be her escort, since her daddy was gone.

I said, "Peaches, in my day I could handle the 'Jitterbug' and the 'Shag', but line dancing is something I will have to learn. Needless to say, you picked the right man. Let me know what to

for folks like me. Peaches and I cut a mean figure with that slow dance. Unfortunately, it was the only one played all afternoon. Before I could turn around, some young squirt with a cowboy hat, high-heeled boots and a wrap-around mike yelled — "Line up, I am going to teach you to line dance." Everyone of those 1,000 people got on the floor. I looked around to see who was in front of me and discovered there was no one. The whole crew lined up behind me and left me on the front row. For a few moments, I could hear those observing saying, "What is that ol' baldheaded man doing out there?" Let them mumble, they haven't seen this ol' baldheaded

A View from the Country
Raz Autry

wear and I will be ready." Sunday afternoon arrived and my date and I headed out. I failed to ask her if it was just her troop or all the ones in Cumberland. When I saw the 400 cars in the parking lot I had my answer. Once we got in the door, I realized the 400 cars had carried 1,000 people. There were bodies everywhere. I was 45 years older than anyone in the place, not a bald head was visible except mine.

The first song I heard was made

(See JOYS, page 3A)

Which calendar is correct?

Our present calendar system is inaccurate and obsolete. How do I know? Well, it's pretty obvious to anyone who does any kind of shopping at all.

Did you think Easter was still nearly five weeks away? You haven't been to the store lately. Retailers know that Easter really came on Feb. 14. That's when they started stocking the shelves with stuffed bunnies, chocolate eggs and marshmallow chicks. So you see, Easter has been here for close to a month. And by the time we self-deluded consumers file into church on what we think is Easter morning, the stores will be set for Mother's Day/graduation time/Father's Day season. That's one of the seven seasons of the year.

Sampler
Lenore Morales

Don't tell me — you still believe there are only four seasons. Winter, spring, summer and fall, right? Not according to retail America. The seven seasons of the year and their dates of observance are as follows: Valentine's candy-buying season, December 29 through February 13; Easter candy-buying season, February 14 through the day before Easter; Mother's Day/graduation/Father's Day gift-buying season, Easter Sunday through mid-June; Fourth of July

firecracker and vacation trappings-buying season, mid-June through the third of July; back-to-school clothes and school supplies-buying season, July 4 through August; Halloween candy-buying season, September; and last but far from the least, Christmas everything-buying-in-a-frenzy season, October through December 24. Retailers hope to lengthen this last season by another month or so before the year 2000.

What are unenlightening customers to do about this confusion? We could revamp the almanac flip calendars mailed to our walls to match the storekeeper's revised system. Then we'd never feel behind, and we could enjoy the holiday seasons and all their accom-

(See SALES, page 3A)

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How to seek true equity

RALEIGH — If you're looking for a reason why so many state employees are dissatisfied, try "equity," or "the application of common principles" as Webster's defines the word.

One might think that equity would be a good thing in big organizations. Everybody gets treated alike, there are no favorites. But consider some of the drawbacks to equity. In teaching, all public school teachers get the same raise every year. Work hard or go easy, it doesn't matter. All state employees get the same raise every year, whether workers in their field are in high or low demand.

The big ugly hand of equity is reaching out of the mud, right now, trying to pull back a group of state employees who are treated better than others. The Joint Legislative Oversight Committee on Corrections is reviewing the generous Salary Continuation Plan that pays 17 categories of state employees, mostly in law enforcement, up to two years of full pay when they are hurt on the job. This exceeds the workers' compensation that covers other state workers.

Members of the committee may have been playing devil's advocate when they asked why the disparity in benefits exists. What difference does it make to a state employee if he suffered his back injury pursuing criminals or moving a file cabinet? If the injuries are similar, the state employee should get similar benefits, several legislators argued.

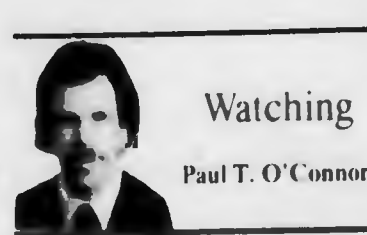
That kind of thinking was clearly behind the provision, slipped into the state budget last July, that ordered the oversight committee to study this program. The provision came without fingerprints. The two committee chairmen don't even know who wanted this issue studied. But the provision asks why the Salary Continuation Plan is available to some, but not others.

Here's the answer.

The 17 categories of state employees — prison guards, highway patrolmen, probation officers and the like — routinely risk physical harm. The threat of physical disability exists every time they go to work. To provide anything less than a generous injury compensation program to these people would be unwise. Officers who worry about both their physical safety and their ability to support their families are not as likely to pursue their duties as diligently as the public needs.

The equity question in state government rarely involves the improvement of a benefit for all employees. That's usually too costly. The question is whether some can be dragged back into an "equitable" position with all others. That would appear to be the case here.

This has not been an expensive program — \$2.8 million from 1992



Watching

Paul T. O'Connor

to 1995 to compensate 882 state

law enforcement officers an average of 121 days each. It would be prohibitively expensive to expand it to all 220,000 state employees, however. And if it were expanded, with everyone treated "equitably," would taxpayers get better service? Probably not.

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