

# VIEWPOINTS

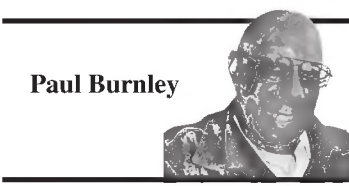
## Where's the outrage?

Hoke County people seem to have the collective personality of a llama. Nothing seems to stir them to action. Take the revelation a few weeks ago that DSS hired a convicted felon who had been suspended four times in a previous job. The response? Yawn. What else you got? The DSS director defended it,

and the DSS board remained mute and hid below the radar. And the board of county commissioners is nowhere to be found. They're on to the citizens around here. Wait a few weeks, we'll talk about the Turkey Festival instead, everyone will get reelected and it's all good. Where is the outrage, people?

## If we approach it well, hospitals will be economic boon to area

A few weeks ago, I spoke of the advantages of the two hospitals being built here in Hoke County and how our citizens should prepare themselves to be able to take advantage of the opportunity of the jobs that will be available. Another advantage of these hospitals moving to our area is that there will be other businesses that are associated with the hospitals and medical services that will also be coming to Hoke County.



Paul Burnley

There will be a need for housing for patients' families who need long-term treatment at the hospitals. Motels or hotels will be needed. Restaurants and "fast foods" along Fayetteville Road will be needed also. Every hospital must have a medical supply store to service the needs of those discharged. There are a number of different businesses associated with hospitals that will come to our area that will need employees. If the residents of Hoke County are unable to fill these positions, the economic value of these hospitals locating here will be lost. These two hospitals will be major employers of the county, which will increase the revenues for the county. But the most important issue is that it will bring jobs to the people of this area. This is why it is so important for the citizens of our county to be

prepared to fill these positions by enrolling in classes to assure them an opportunity to obtain the jobs that will be available.

This is much more important to our area than it seems to be. If jobs for these hospitals are filled by those outside Hoke County, this means the revenue earned will be taken and spent in other areas. If Hoke County residents fill these jobs, the revenue remains in Hoke County to benefit the merchants and businesses in our area, which in turn may enable them to hire more personnel.

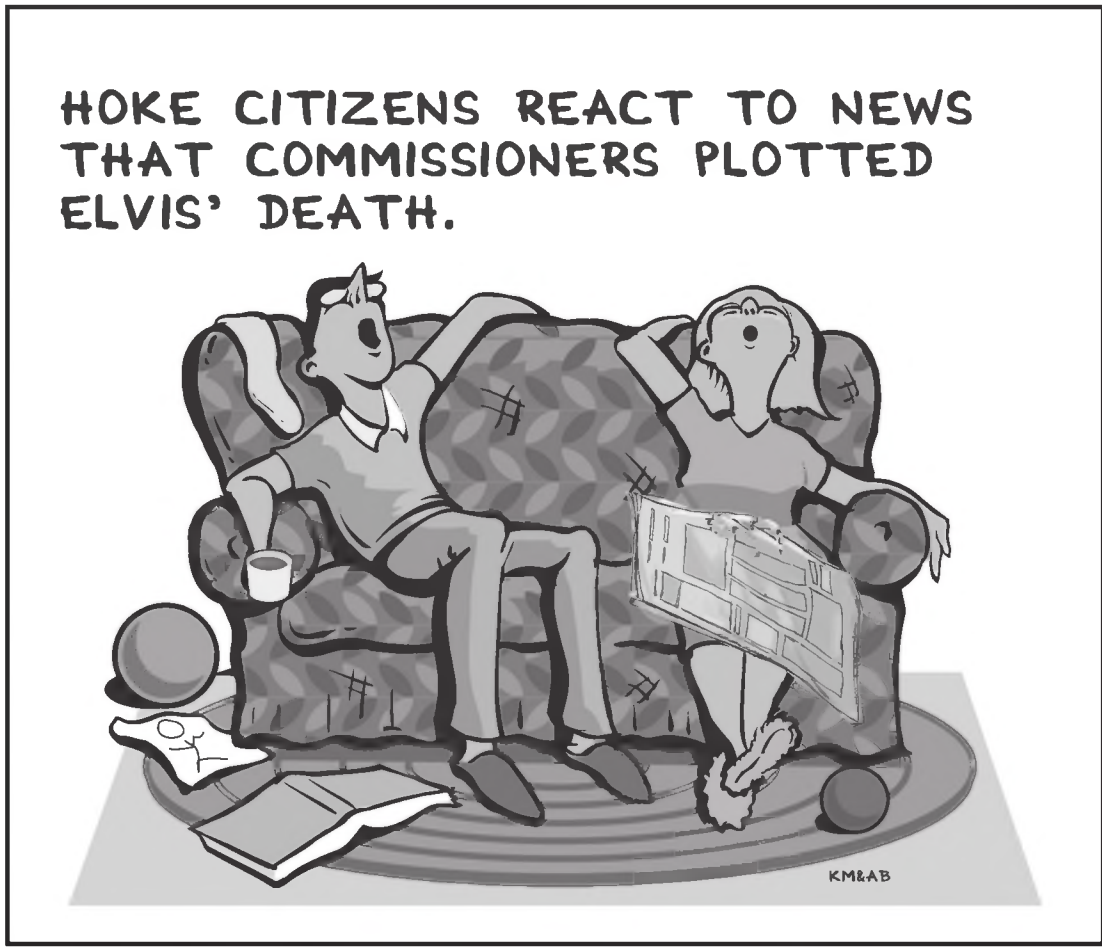
The building of these two hospitals in Hoke County will attract more businesses as well as new citizens to our area. This could be a brilliant opportunity for Raeford to become a major influence in the state. New businesses and a growing population will give us a stronger voice in Raleigh when it comes to obtaining needed services to improve the standard of living for the residents.

As I have reported, many Southern cities that were once considered farming and textile

communities have transformed themselves into growing and prosperous regions by entertaining new ideas and attitudes. One of the major obstacles for these cities was the lack of cooperation between its people. There were differences economically, politically, and racially. But once these obstacles were set aside and the people began to focus on what was best to move the entire population forward, it was found to be beneficial to all citizens.

This happened in cities such as Birmingham, Atlanta, and Dallas, which were some of the most segregated cities in the country as well as some of the most backward cities in the country. They understood by working together the entire population would prosper. This should be a lesson not only for Raeford and Hoke but others in the state that wish to move forward.

This is an opportunity for Raeford to become a major player in the future of North Carolina. To do that we must put aside our differences in politics, race and economics and concentrate on interests we have in common. By working together, we all can benefit from the advantages new businesses and revenue these hospitals and the associated businesses will bring to our area.



## Will legislators repair damage?

ROB THOMPSON

North Carolina legislators return to Raleigh this month and, whether they like it or not, they will make a host of decisions that will have a profound impact on children's lives. In 2011, lawmakers took several steps that rendered the programs serving our state's most vulnerable kids even more underfunded and threadbare than ever before. The question now is: Will they repair some of the damage they inflicted or make matters even worse? At this point, the outlook is not particularly encouraging.

Here are some of the areas and programs that cry out for more resources and attention:

### Early Childhood Education

Since leaving town last summer, leaders of the North Carolina House have proposed narrowing eligibility for the NC Pre-K and fully privatizing the program. Advocates were able to beat back these proposals at the time, but they expect the legislature to make another run at restricting eligibility this summer when the session reconvenes.

In addition to potential policy changes, legislators must also address the issue of funding for NC Pre-K and Smart Start. Last year, the legislature cut both programs by 20 percent, leaving thousands of children without access to a high-quality early education. The Governor took a positive step this spring by funding more than

2,000 new NC Pre-K slots, but it was just a fraction of what is needed. The fundamental question remains: Will the General Assembly continue to cut early childhood programs or will they begin to reinvest in our youngest learners?

### The Earned Income Tax Credit

In North Carolina, one in every four children lives below the poverty line, an unacceptable number for a state with so much wealth. The state Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) is a refundable tax credit for low-income working families and is a proven tool for lifting families and children out of poverty. North Carolina's EITC is scheduled to sunset this year. Legislators will have to decide whether to extend this tax credit or make the decision to, in effect, raise taxes on poor families. The outcome is far from certain.

### Medicaid

Nearly one million children in North Carolina rely on Medicaid for their physical and behavioral health care. Unfortunately, many of these children, especially in rural parts of the state, are finding it more and more difficult to access care as a result of another overhaul of the state's mental health system and years of funding cuts. In fact, the state's Medicaid program faces a shortfall of nearly \$250 million heading into 2013. Legislators will need to address

this shortfall to ensure that it doesn't impact care for children, but without new revenue this will be extremely difficult.

### Juvenile Justice

For years, child advocates have urged legislators to stop prosecuting all 16- and 17-year-olds as adults, regardless of the severity of the crime. North Carolina is one of only two states left in the country with this unfair and ineffective policy. State House leadership has pledged to give a committee hearing to legislation that would raise the age of juvenile jurisdiction, and it's our hope that 2012 will be the year that legislators implement this long overdue policy change.

### K-12 Education Reform

In late April, Senate President Pro Tem Philip Berger proposed a new initiative to significantly alter our public school system. His recommendations include a new focus on literacy for children entering the fourth grade, greater accountability for students and schools, and the elimination of teacher tenure. While many of the goals of Senator Berger's reform package are laudable and some of the ideas are solid, the package itself fails to pair adequate resources with the new mandates. We can do a better job with our public schools and children's advocates look forward to providing guidance and feedback as the Senate debates its plan.

Of course, these issues are certainly not the only ones facing children in 2012. Many others - from funding for tobacco prevention and cessation to infant mortality prevention to higher education - are also critically important.

One question, however, lies at the heart of the debates surrounding virtually every such matter: Will North Carolina lawmakers work to repair and rebuild the public systems and solutions that give vulnerable children a fighting chance or will they continue the general retreat they sounded in 2011? Those who care about our state's future should pay close attention.

Rob Thompson is the Executive Director of the Covenant with North Carolina's Children.

## We Get Letters

### Christians are backed into corner

To the Editor: The loss of magnificent people like Raz Autry throughout history is possibly the reason society coined the contradictory term "bitter-sweet" - how bitter our loss—how sweet this heavenly reward. I read this weekly column religiously and responded occasionally in letters to the editor before my long period of difficulty. I was so impressed with his political reasoning in one column that I nominated him for president in my next letter. In his next column, he graciously declined with a typical humorous "Will Rogers"-styled explanation. I never met Raz personally, which was my tremendous loss; how much greater a loss all of you must feel.

tween one man and one woman is the only domestic legal union that shall be valid or recognized in this state?" Why doesn't it read: "Marriage between same sex couples shall not be valid or recognized as domestic legal unions in this state?"

Another sentence reads: "This section does not prohibit a private party from entering into contracts with another private party; nor does this section prohibit courts from adjudicating the rights of private parties pursuant to such contracts." Contracts? Fornicators sign contracts before they fornicate? Is fornication a lesser sin than homosexual activity? But whether intentionally or inadvertently unmarried opposite sex partners produce children, which society demands and law requires them to be as responsible as they possibly can.

Prohibitive laws did not stop fornication any more than the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah stopped homosexuality. Although laws against both have been modified if not removed for the most part, American society is more tolerant of opposite sex fornication. Entertainment and music encourage sinful opposite sex relations, and the commercial system uses sexual innuendo in general advertising and even promotes products to make people appear "Sex," rather than be righteous. Americans no longer exercise the former "Scarlet Letter" mentality, which is good, but fans of unmarried superstars rejoice in the births of their children, which the news media reports as glorious news.

Perhaps because God destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah but Jesus forgave the woman caught in "the very act of adultery," some conclude that immoral sexual activity between members of the opposite sex is a lesser sin. Although the biblical account addresses homosexual activity, Sodom was destroyed because ten righteous people could not be found. In summation, is the amendment unclear simply because it is not specific in identifying the same sex partners but leaves "domestic legal union" open to future interpretation, which might lead to unintended consequences concerning children born due to fornication, which many if not most Americans tolerate more than homosexuality?

Think about it please. Robert C. Currie Jr. Laurinburg



## Letters policy

The News-Journal welcomes letters to the editor and encourages readers to express their opinions.

Letters must be signed and include an address and phone number. The street address and phone number will not be published, but are required so we may verify authenticity. The name of the writer

and, in some cases, the town the writer is from will be published at the end of the letter.

We are not able to publish letters that are essentially thank-you cards.

We reserve the right to edit letters for grammar, as well as those that exceed 300 words. We will not

publish letters that we consider to be in poor taste or libelous. In some cases we may add an editor's note as a postscript when we believe a correction, explanation or amplification is warranted. We may also, at our discretion, limit the number of times an individual writer may submit a letter for publication.

## The News-Journal

Published every Wednesday by Dickson Press, Inc. Robert A. Dickson, President • Anne Dickson Fogleman, Secretary/Treasurer 119 W. Elwood Avenue, Raeford, NC 28376 • (910) 875-2121

Home Page: [www.thenews-journal.com](http://www.thenews-journal.com)



Ken MacDonald (ken@thenews-journal.com)..... Publisher  
Catharin Shepard (cshepard@thenews-journal.com)..... Reporter  
Hal Nunn (hal@thenews-journal.com)..... Sports Writer  
Hal Nunn (hal@thenews-journal.com)..... Sales Representative  
Wendy Tredway (wendy@thenews-journal.com)..... Sales Representative  
Sheila Black (sheila@thenews-journal.com)..... Office Manager  
Robin Huffman (robin@thenews-journal.com)..... Composition Design/  
Legal Advertising

email ads to: ads@thenews-journal.com  
email classifieds to: classifieds@thenews-journal.com  
email legals to: robin@thenews-journal.com

Periodical Class Postage at Raeford, N.C. (USPS 388-260)

Postmaster: Send address changes to: P.O. Box 550 Raeford, N.C. 28376

## Editorial Deadlines

Friday 12 Noon:

Calendar Items • Social Items • News Items

Monday 12 Noon: Letters to the Editor