

VIEWPOINTS

Former governor: We've got to raise teacher pay

By JIM HUNT

Editor's note: This article was written by former N.C. Governor Jim Hunt and first appeared in the Raleigh News & Observer, but he has permitted its wider distribution.

As North Carolina enters 2014, I have a New Year's resolution for our state. In the next four years, let's raise the pay of our public school teachers to the national average. Not talk about it, or vaguely promise it, but do it.

Our hard-working teachers deserve it. Today their pay ranks 46 among the 50 states. They could make as much as \$10,000 a year more just by moving to South Carolina, Virginia or Tennessee to teach.

To reach this big, bold goal in four years, four things need to happen.

- North Carolina residents must see it as critical to the success of every child in our state. We the people must want to do it, we must speak up for it and we must pay for it.

- The governor and the General Assembly must believe it is necessary and must pass a law this year to do it.

- The governor and the legislature must appropriate the substantial money required each year to reach the goal.

- Over the four years of this effort, as we close in on the national average, the State Budget Office must calculate how much additional funding is required each year in light of the other states' raising their own pay levels.

These funding commitments must be very large, so the governor must recommend money each year and the legislature must appropriate it.

This may sound daunting. It is. But North Carolina did it before, and we can do it again.

Here's how we did it in the 1990s.

In 1996, I ran for a fourth

term as governor on a platform of raising teacher pay to the national average. During the campaign, I talked with people all over the state about raising pay and improving teaching for all children. When North Carolinians elected me, they voted for that goal.

In 1997, I proposed the Excellent Schools Act to the General Assembly. The act, which raised standards for teachers and focused on greater learning by students, made a historic commitment to raise teacher pay to the national average in four years. It had powerful bipartisan support. It was co-sponsored by House Speaker Harold Brubaker, a Republican, and Senate President Pro Tem Marc Basnight, a Democrat. Democrats and Republicans supported it. The CEOs of 15 top North Carolina businesses went to the Legislative Building and strongly endorsed it. They knew it would boost economic growth and create jobs.

The bill passed overwhelmingly. We made the commitment. Then we put up the money.

Over the next two years, we raised teacher pay by 6.5 percent each year. We created a new teacher-salary schedule. The cost was \$170 million each year – including bonuses for teachers who achieved National Board Certification.

And we appropriated \$72 million of ABC incentive funds for teachers in schools where annual student learning increased markedly. Every teacher in those schools could earn an extra \$750 or \$1,500 a year, depending on whether students met or exceeded learning goals.

In the years 1999-2001, we raised teacher pay 7.5 percent each year, at a cost of \$240 million per year. We also appropriated an additional \$140 million for teacher incentive awards.

And in all four years, we paid teachers more for extra days worked and greater profes-

sional development.

By the year 2001, teacher pay in North Carolina had reached the national average. The average teacher's salary went up more than a third – from \$31,000 to \$42,000. We rose from 43 in the national rankings to the top 20.

Student learning went up, too. Our average SAT scores rose 40 points, more than any other state. Our students made the highest gains on the National Assessment of Educational Progress of any state.

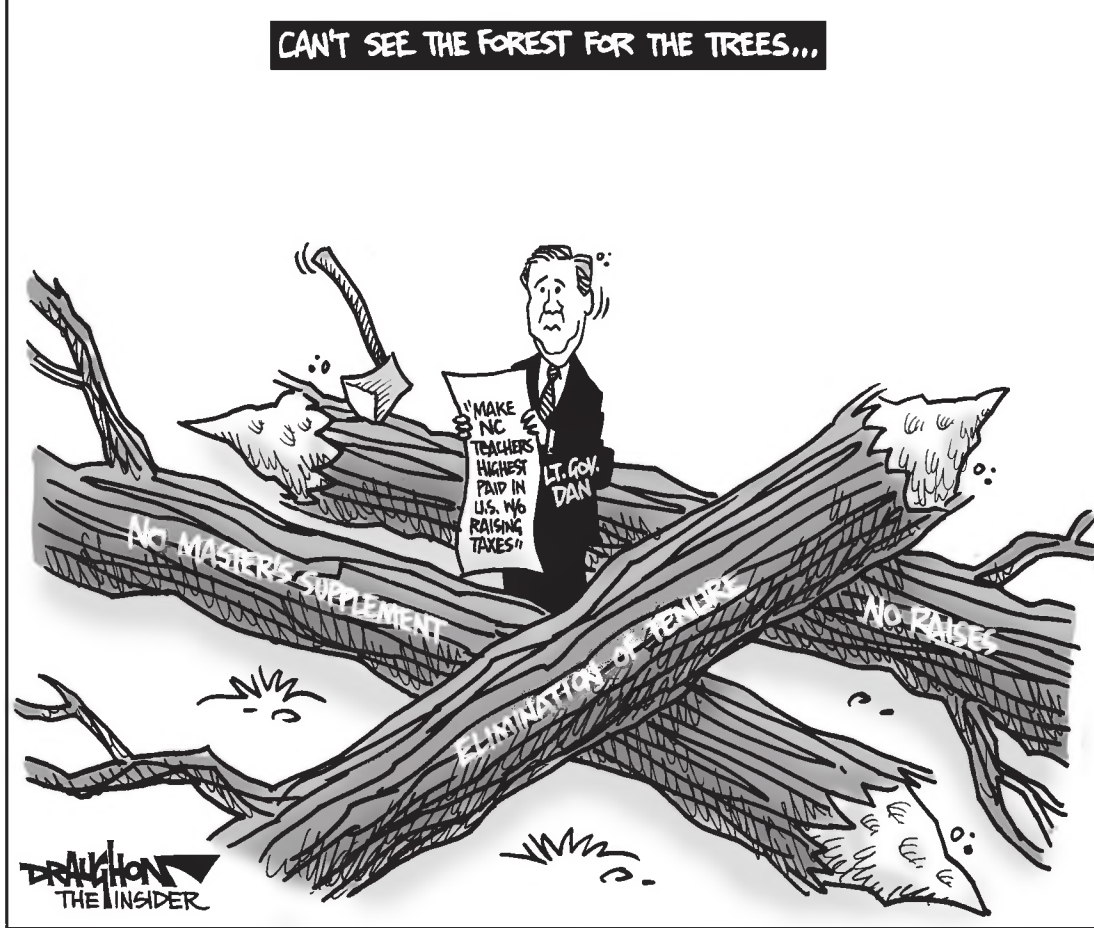
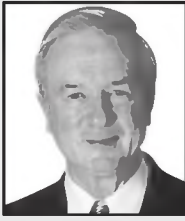
We proved we could do it, and we proved it was a wise investment. Now we need to do it again.

I talk to too many school teachers who are discouraged and demoralized. One Forsyth County teacher with 18 years' experience worked a second job over the holidays, selling shoes in a mall. Some teachers make so little they qualify for Medicaid. Many teachers spend hundreds of dollars out of their own paychecks to buy classroom supplies.

We owe them a fair salary, and we owe it to their students. After all, the purpose of improving teaching is to help students learn more. We want to prepare each student in each school to be successful in a competitive world.

I believe North Carolinians want their teachers to be paid at the national average. They want our state's elected leaders to commit us to this goal. They want our state to make a bipartisan, iron-clad commitment this year to raise teacher pay to the national average in four years.

Jim Hunt, a Democrat, served as North Carolina's governor from 1977 to 1985 and from 1993 to 2001.



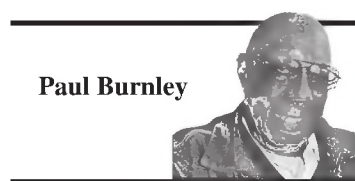
Why watch that 'foolishness' on TV?

A friend asked if I watched or enjoyed any of the "reality shows" that are all the rage on the networks today. When I told him that I only have seen a few and I was not interested because the few that I have seen are so ridiculous, he seemed surprised. I told him that I feel that television has lost its opportunity to inform, enlighten and educate the public and has become more of a trash dump.

During the morning, after the network news, they move to the stupid talk shows, where people not only bare their souls but make fools of themselves just to be seen on TV. Some of these people have made up stories to travel to New York, Chicago and other cities where these shows are staged, to make a fool of themselves for their 15 minutes of fame. It doesn't matter how much they embarrass themselves, their friends and families, it is their moment in the spotlight.

Although these people receive a free trip to a large city, a few days in a hotel and an appearance on TV, it is the producers that push them to say or do ridiculous things to boost the ratings of their shows.

There was one show where the host opened the contestants' travel bag as they were leaving to reveal items they had stolen from



Paul Burnley

the hotel where they were staying. In the majority of these shows, the participants air all their dirty laundry and personal problems. It seems the more bazaar these shows are, the more the public enjoys them. I think the people that watch these programs feel that their lives are not so bad after hearing these people's stories.

Then there are the courtroom or "judge" shows. First, I would like to know where these people come from. Most of these cases have no merit or any reason to be heard in a court of law. These people only want to be seen on TV. The way that some act and are dressed, they should be arrested for disorderly conduct and indecent exposure.

The only reason these shows remain on the air is that this is what the public wishes to see. I cannot understand why the public has become so obsessed with the problems of others. It could be that by seeing and hearing these problems, theirs do not seem as bad. People that watch these types of shows waste a lot of time they could be using to correct

and solve their own problems. We read every day of how overweight the population is becoming. Much of it comes from sitting in front of the TV while snacking and watching this foolishness.

TV programming has had a profound effect on the youth of this country. Many no longer participate in sports or afterschool activities; they spend most of their time watching TV or playing video games. This often influences the actions of our young people.

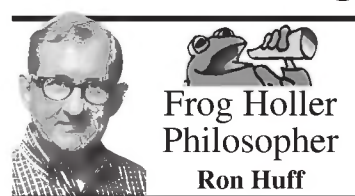
We wonder why many of our young people have gone astray. When they see and hear foul language that now is acceptable on TV, as well as celebrities who state that they are living with their mates and are unmarried, which is seen as "normal" and acceptable, it's no wonder our young people think and act the way they do.

In most instances, the public says that they do not want these types of shows on the air, yet in a poll, it was found that programs with foul language and sexual references were the most watched shows on TV, with the highest ratings and the highest paid performers. It seems that there are many of us who are hypocrites.

Paul Burnley can be reached by email at plburnley@aol.com.

Christmas comes to Frog Holler

Another Christmas has blazed across our lives like a shooting star, burning brightly then disappearing. This Christmas has been another step in the progression that sees Charlotte taking a larger role, and me a smaller one. I love the feel of Christmas but dislike the commercialism and the expectations that come with it. Charlotte revels in the shopping while I revel in the reveling. She does the decorating with her usual flare and I sit back and enjoy them, but not without a small hint of guilt. She buys seemingly for the joy of wrapping everything in fancy coordinated paper and ribbon. This makes for a beautiful display under her beautifully decorated tree. In the past I have done a good bit of wrapping with my own paper, but apparently this did not fit the overall aesthetic. My simply wrapped gifts in unmatched paper with no elaborate ribbons and bows just did not measure up, and so I have allowed Charlotte to take over more of this as well. This is a win-win as far as I am concerned. Every year I lobby for less gifts and every year I lose. At least losing this battle has its rewards! I did get in a small bit of last minute shopping which helps to get me more into the spirit.



Frog Holler Philosopher
Ron Huff

We have developed our own traditions and rituals over the years. It starts with dinner at Mom's house on Christmas Eve with the entire family. When Dad was alive, he started the practice of sharing drinks of bourbon with Wink, his favorite mixer, on Christmas Eve. I recall the small glasses we used in this ritual around the kitchen counter in the house at Ashley Heights. These were rare opportunities to loosen up a little with Dad and I always looked forward to it. I have revived this ritual and bring bourbon and Wink to the dinner at Mom's house. This gets the party going as we give a Christmas toast to Dad.

Dinner is always great, but not traditional, as brother Randy takes on the responsibility for the main dish and is not afraid to experiment, always with excellent results. Everyone pitches in where needed and it is fun to watch a dozen folks doing a dance of preparation and clean up in the small kitchen. Everyone

seems to know just what to do to make progress while staying out of the way of all the others.

Gifts are exchanged and the great grandkids take center stage. Even they are quickly growing toward the end of their Christmas wonder years.

After the dinner, we head for Frog Holler, often getting a little more into the "spirits" of the season before settling down for a long winter's nap. Long gone are the days of lying awake all night in excitement and forcing the issue at the crack of dawn. Now we begin to stir around nine. I put on one of my collection of Christmas records and Charlotte makes the coffee. We don't drink coffee in our house regularly, and I really look forward to a big old mug to sip while we open presents. Charlotte's family started the tradition of having a huge family stocking stuffed with small gifts, each wrapped with care, though it might be only a toothbrush. I remember the delight of my first participation in this ritual with Charlotte and her parents and we have continued the tradition.

Larger gifts follow, as the beautiful wrapping paper becomes a discarded remnant of the season. Oohs and aahs are soon over as we take stock of our good fortune. I can't help but feel a little guilty at the display, but I fight the feeling and replace it with thankfulness.

Dinner on Christmas Day is sometimes at home and sometimes with friends. This year we were hosted by Steve and Krista Duncan in Pinehurst where we had a great time and a great meal, this one with traditional turkey and all the usual trimmings plus some family favorites.

So, another Christmas has come and gone. I hope the spirit will linger for a little while as we forge into a new year. All too soon, the stores will be gearing up for next Christmas.

More later.

TODAY'S HOMEWORK (Notes on Education)

"The reason is simple. Not because it works. No, we do it because it's the easy and efficient way to keep the mass production of students moving forward."

—Set Godin, on use of the SAT, in "Stop Stealing Dreams (What is School For?)"

"We all have different abilities, thought processes, experiences and genes, So why is a class full of individuals tested by the same means? So that means Cherrelle thinks she's dumb, because she couldn't do a couple sums, And if this issue is not addressed properly, it then becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy, Then every school has the audacity to have policy on equality, Huh, the irony!

— British poet Suli Breaks from the YouTube video, "I Will Not Let An Exam Result Decide My Fate."

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



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

