

# Rioters don't get a veto in Charlotte, elsewhere

**R**ALEIGH — North Carolinians have learned a lot in the past few days — about law enforcement, race relations, cynical politics, media memes, and the need for wise leadership during crisis. But the cost of our education has been far too high.

Dozens of police officers, journalists, and citizens were injured during the riots that broke out after a black officer shot and killed Keith Lamont Scott, also African-American, last Tuesday. One protester, Justin Carr, was killed. Some businesses were looted. Others shut down or instructed employees not to venture uptown. The damage, physical and otherwise, was extensive.

Despite receiving our expensive lessons, there's one thing North Carolinians don't yet know for certain — exactly what transpired at the scene of Scott's death. Kerr Putney, chief of the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Police Department, says the physical and testimonial evidence indicates Scott was armed, resisting arrest, and perceived to be an imminent threat by the officers on the scene.

On Friday, Scott's wife released her own cellphone video. A day later, Putney released the police department's videos. Millions of people then watched, studied,

and drew their own conclusions. Because none of the footage showed the entire incident, at a high-enough resolution to see everything clearly, these conclusions were inevitably speculative and subjective. The authorities — and a judge and jury, if charges were ever brought — could use other evidence not yet available for public inspection.

What's more certain is that the riots that rocked Charlotte on Tuesday and Wednesday were not caused by the city's refusal to release its videos immediately. How do I know that? Because on Thursday and Friday, before the footage was released on Saturday, Charlotte experienced largely peaceful protests, not riots.

The critical factor was that on Thursday morning, city officials finally accepted the offer Gov. Pat McCrory had made early the previous day: the declaration of a state of emergency and the deployment of state troopers and the National Guard. Overwhelming force is what deterred additional crimes against police, property, and innocent civilians.

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**JOHN HOOD**

Charlotte station WBTV reported that Charlotte Mayor Jennifer Roberts initially refused McCrory's offer because she worried that a state of emergency would look bad. Publicly, she stated that in the aftermath of the initial rioting on Tuesday evening, she still believed the Wednesday protests would be peaceful. At best, this was a disastrous error in judgment.

It wasn't the only one. Reckless allegations inflamed the situation. A group of clergy led by NAACP state president William Barber stepped forward to help restrain protesters, and may have had that effect in some cases. But they also irresponsibly blamed police for "provoking" the riots. And they trafficked in a range of conspiracy theories — such as claims that Carr was killed by police, or that officers may have planted the gun attributed to Scott — that made themselves look ridiculous and their cause look political.

Indeed, Barber even used his moment in the media spotlight to talk about Medicaid expansion and other political disputes far afield from the case — but conveniently

linked to Republicans in Raleigh rather than Democrats in Charlotte.

When it comes to freedom of speech, there is a key distinction between expressing an opinion and shouting down someone else expressing an opinion. The latter is called the "heckler's veto." In Charlotte, some people angry about the Scott case, or about race and justice issues in general, seemed to believe they enjoyed a "rioter's veto."

They thought they could interrupt the normal investigative process and insist that unless the city released its videos immediately — even though such a premature release might influence the testimony of witnesses still being interviewed — the unrest would continue. "No tapes, no peace!" they shouted.

Absolutely unacceptable. Peace and security come first. Then, presentation of facts. Then, discussion about what those facts mean and what response is warranted. This is the sequence civilization requires. It is the responsibility of leaders, public and private, to insist on this sequence. Some did, such as Putney and McCrory. Others didn't. They should be embarrassed. Alas, they won't be.

*John Hood is chairman of the John Locke Foundation.*

## Letters to the Editor

# Child care rebates just another entitlement for America

Dear Editor,

We may soon see a new entitlement piled on top of the mountain of entitlements contributing to America's massive debt. This one may be named for the next president's daughter. No, not Chelsea Clinton, but Ivanka Trump. If Trump is elected president, Ivanka will likely be the face of a new entitlement providing child-care tax rebates or, for those who pay no income taxes, an increase in the earned-income tax credit.

Donald Trump is looking for ways to ingratiate himself with

women. But does the cost of this new idea have to be piled on top of existing entitlements and social programs, the chief causes of the nation's unsustainable debt? Trump says he will pay for his new program with a reduction in fraud and abuse. Wishful thinking. A drop in the bucket at best.

Given our presidential candidates' opposition to reforming Social Security and Medicare, there is only one way to reverse the stampede to national bankruptcy: Growth. Under President Obama GDP has risen by less than

2 percent annually. What we need is for growth to be 3.5 percent at a minimum.

So how do we remove the impediments to growth we have seen under Obama? Two ways: tax reform and regulatory reform.

Growth can only happen if the private sector creates new jobs. The single most desirable tax reform would be a reduction in the 35 percent business tax that has forced companies like Apple to move overseas to avoid this massive tax burden and major employers like Ford to move plants

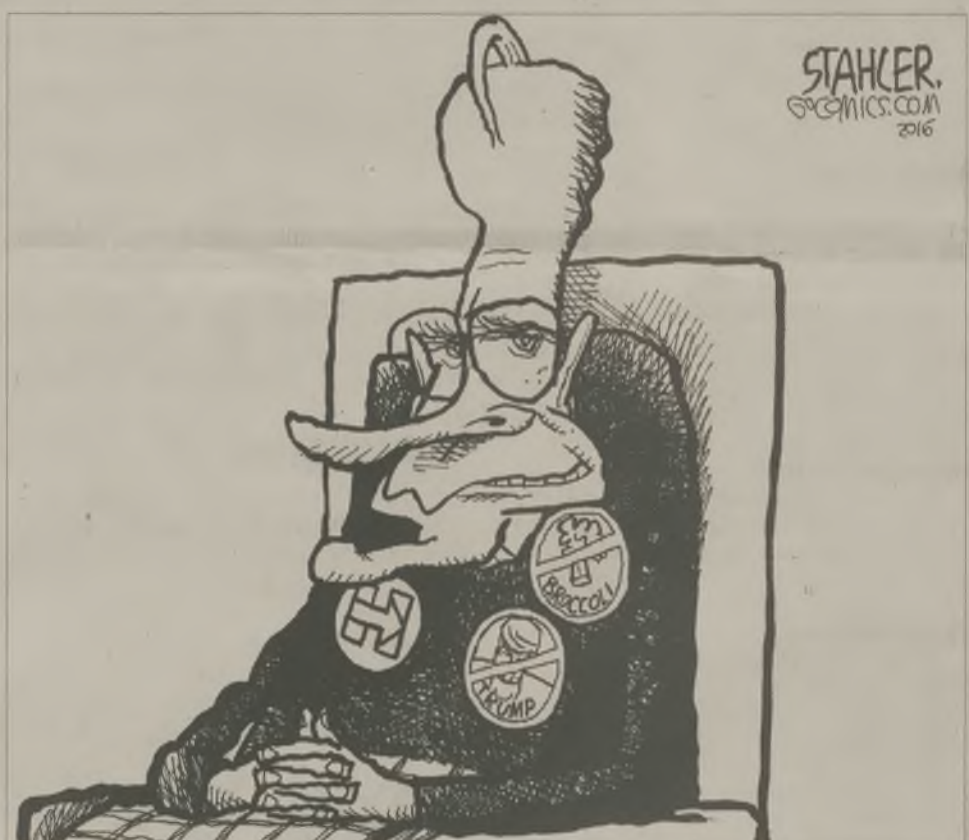
to Mexico to take advantage of cheap labor. Common sense reforms to reduce labor costs domestically would help, but nothing will persuade companies to remain in America more than tax reform.

We must also reduce the burden of regulations that cost businesses billions of dollars in compliance and prevents start-ups from creating new jobs. In 2015 the federal government wrote 5,712 rules and regulations totaling 81,611 pages. And that wasn't even a record for an Obama Administration intent

on regulating everything from smokestacks to puddles. This year will probably end up being worse.

Taxes are necessary to run the government, and some regulations are needed to maintain order and safety for the citizenry. But government must stop micromanaging every aspect of our lives and just get out of the way so we can break the shackles of debt and get back to rebuilding a prosperous nation.

**Claude Milot**  
Hertford



# Voters in other states decide on ballot referendums

**R**ALEIGH — North Carolina voters won't decide any statewide ballot referendums or initiatives in November.

In most other states, residents will vote on issues such as legalizing recreational or medical marijuana, raising the minimum wage, increasing cigarette taxes and prohibiting large-capacity ammunition magazines.

North Carolina is boring this year in that regard (but not in other ballot items, such as the presidential and gubernatorial races).

The Tar Heel state, unlike many others, doesn't allow citizen-driven initiatives on the ballot. Many ballot questions you'll read about below ended up before voters through a process started by residents, not necessarily because the state legislature decided they should be there.

The N.C. General Assembly considered a few referendums this year, including enshrining in the N.C. Constitution the right to hunt and fish, as well as a limit on spending growth. None of the ideas made it through the legislative process.

The following information comes from a database from the National Conference of State Legislatures.

Voters in Arizona will decide whether to legalize marijuana for adults 21 and

older and tax sales at 15 percent. They'll also vote on whether to raise the minimum wage to \$10 in 2017, then to \$12 by 2020. The current minimum wage there is \$8.05. (North Carolina's is \$7.25.) Voters also are expected to decide whether to legalize recreational marijuana in California, Maine, Massachusetts and Nevada. Proposed minimum wage hikes also are on ballots in Arizona, Colorado, Maine and Washington.

Arkansas voters are expected to decide whether to allow the opening of medical marijuana centers to treat patients with certain conditions.

Voters in Florida and North Dakota also will consider medical marijuana initiatives. The N.C. legislature held a public hearing on the medical marijuana issue in early 2015, but lawmakers quickly killed a proposal to legalize it.

In California, an initiative called the "Legislative Transparency Act" would prohibit the state legislature from passing any bill unless it's been in print and published online for at least 72 hours before the vote, except in cases of public emergency. (Anyone else just think of House

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**PATRICK GANNON**

Bill 2?)

Also in California, the "Safety For All Act" would prohibit possession of large-capacity ammunition magazines and require most individuals to pass background checks and obtain Department of Justice authorization to buy ammo. California voters also will decide whether to increase cigarette taxes by \$2 a pack, with revenues paying mainly for anti-smoking programs. Voters in Colorado and Missouri will also decide whether to increase tobacco taxes.

A Colorado initiative would permit mentally capable adults who are terminally ill to receive prescriptions from doctors for medication to end their lives. N.C. Democrats filed a similar bill in 2015, called the "Death with Dignity Act." It didn't go anywhere.

Voters in Indiana and Kansas will consider right to hunt and fish amendments.

In Louisiana, a referendum would authorize a property tax exemption for surviving spouses of individuals killed in the line of duty as members of the armed forces, law enforcement officers or fire fighters. Virginia voters will consider a

similar referendum.

In Massachusetts, voters will decide whether to phase out extreme methods of farm animal confinement.

In Nebraska, a referendum will determine whether to repeal a 2015 bill that eliminated the death penalty there.

In Oklahoma, an initiative would increase sales taxes by 1 percent for an education fund to increase teacher salaries, address teacher shortages, improve reading in early grades and increase access to early learning for low-income children.

In Oregon, voters will decide whether programs to help veterans should be the beneficiaries of 1.5 percent of the proceeds of the state lottery.

South Dakota voters will decide whether a redistricting commission, rather than the legislature, should draw districts for state Senate and House seats. That's a big topic here, too.

In Washington, a ballot initiative would allow police or family members to get court orders to prevent access to guns by people exhibiting mental illness or violent behavior indicating they might harm themselves or others.

Oh, what could have been in North Carolina.

*Patrick Gannon is the columnist for the Capitol Press Association.*

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