

Cooper wrong, McCrory right on rainy day fund

RALEIGH — The aftermath of Hurricane Matthew is devastating. The images are heartbreaking. The numbers are overwhelming. Dozens of lives lost. Hundreds of serious injuries. Thousands of people displaced into shelters. Tens of thousands still without basic utilities. Hundreds of thousands still recovering from costly disruptions of their businesses, schools, and everyday lives.

North Carolinians are resilient. We will comfort the mourning, help the needy, and rebuild the economic, social, and governmental institutions that make North Carolina a special and wonderful place.

State government will have a critical role to play. For example, it is fully or partially responsible for public assets valued in the many billions of dollars — roads, bridges, classrooms, and other facilities. Across dozens of eastern counties, much of this infrastructure will have to be repaired or replaced.

Fortunately, the state has some \$1.6 billion in disaster-relief and rainy-day funds set aside for just such an emergency. This is no lucky break. It is the result of prudent leaders making difficult decisions over the past three years that earned them no

political favors. In fact, Gov. Pat McCrory and the Republican-led legislature received mostly scorn from liberal politicians, newspapers, and special-interest groups for saving North Carolina's higher-than-expected revenues instead of bestowing virtually all of them on spending lobbies of various kinds.

The Democrat who wants to replace Gov. McCrory, Roy Cooper, has been one of those critics. Just a few weeks ago, he blasted McCrory for "building up the rainy day fund in excess of what's necessary for the state," and for letting the money "just be sitting there" rather than spending it. Cooper's allies and surrogates have said the same thing for months.

These Democrats miscalculated, both fiscally and politically. Now, with an ever-escalating price tag for cleaning up after Hurricane Matthew, they've tried to distract attention from their poor judgment by demanding that McCrory and legislative leaders immediately call a special session — in order to appropriate the very rainy-day funds that they said were excessive before

COLUMNIST



JOHN HOOD

the storm hit!

It was a shameful political stunt, staged even as flood waters were still rising in Kinston, Lumberton, and other communities. Of course the General Assembly will need to act. But lawmakers need a thorough damage assessment and spending plan first. And many senators and representatives from eastern North Carolina are otherwise occupied. When Hurricane Floyd did its worst in September 1999, then Democratic Gov. Jim Hunt and a Democratically controlled legislature waited until

December to hold their special session. Are we to believe they didn't care about the suffering of North Carolinians and the state's infrastructure needs?

Speaking of that event, the Floyd reconstruction illustrates precisely why North Carolina needs the large rainy-day fund that Roy Cooper and other Democrats foolishly opposed. While Gov. Hunt and state lawmakers did come up with a large amount of money, about \$840 million, to fund recovery efforts, they had to cobble it together from several different sources, including re-

verted funds from the operating budget. As a result, the state had inadequate reserves in 2000-01 when a recession bit into state tax revenues, creating budget deficits. How did North Carolina Democrats respond? In large part by raising sales taxes. (It's what they do.)

Given historical patterns, it is highly likely that America's economy will dip into at least a modest recession in the next couple of years. Because Pat McCrory and legislative leaders have wisely built up \$1.6 billion in rainy-day reserves — plus another \$400 million in reserves specially earmarked for Medicaid — the state will be able to finance its responsibilities for Hurricane Matthew recovery while also funding schools, prisons, and other basic services if a national recession materializes.

Politically, the easier call for McCrory during the budget surpluses of the past three years would have been to spend the extra revenue. That's what Roy Cooper has said he would have done as governor. It would have gotten effusive praise from liberal newspapers and special-interest groups. And as we now know, it would have been the wrong decision.

John Hood is chairman of the John Locke Foundation.

Letters to the Editor

FBI Director Comey lost his reputation with his decision

Dear Editor,

The single most consequential decision in this presidential cycle was made by FBI Director James Comey. His decision not to recommend prosecution of Hillary Clinton removed the major roadblock to the presidency. On the other hand, a recommendation to prosecute would most likely have assured Donald Trump's election. One may justly wonder which consequence motivated Director Comey. Personally, I think he was motivated by politics: he wanted to save his job. The clues are everywhere.

One. We now know that the case for prosecution was solid.

FBI agents are telling us that the vast majority of investigators were convinced of that fact, in spite of actions by the Justice Department to impede the investigation, especially by preventing the interrogation of immunized witnesses. Yet, Director Comey went against the recommendations of his own investigators.

Two. President Obama did not want Hillary Clinton to be prosecuted for two reasons: 1) As his successor, she would continue his policies, thereby protecting his legacy, and 2) A grand jury investigation would reveal his complicity in the email scandal (see my letter in the 10/5 issue of this paper).

Three. When Director Comey said that no reasonable prosecutor would take this case, he was right: prosecutors in the Department of Justice work under Loretta Lynch who works directly for the President. Clearly, there was no way she was going to implicate her boss in this scandal; she did not want to make a decision that would cost her her job, her reputation, or both. She needed a scapegoat.

Four. Even though it wasn't his role, Director Comey recommended against prosecution. By doing so, he took Loretta Lynch off the hook and enabled her to close the case without getting her hands

dirty. You can bet that when she had that little meeting with Bill Clinton she knew what Comey would do. The fix was in.

Director Comey saved his job. But his reputation for integrity has been shattered. He will have to live with that.

Claude Milot
Hertford

Conditions at Cedarwood Cemetery are horrible

Dear Editor,
It is with pure frustrations and disgust that I write this letter to

you. I am appalled at the Town of Hertford for the care and consideration that they give in caring for the Cedarwood Cemetery.

We put flowers on graves in memory of our loved ones only for them to sit in high grass; unless, like myself and others, have taken it upon ourselves to cut the grass and weed eat our own plots. This is totally wrong.

Don't those who pass before us deserve better than this? Shame on you Town of Hertford for disrespecting those we hold dear.

Monica Ranhorn
Elizabeth City

Vote, it can make a difference

Dear Editor,

The Presidential Election is on Nov. 8. The polls will be open from 6:30 a.m. to 7:30 p.m.. If you are a Perquimans County resident, you can see a sample ballot on the Perquimans County Board of Elections website at <http://www.perquimans-countync.gov/departments/board-of-elections.html>. The website also lists the polling places.

Voters will not be required to present photo identification at the polls. This requirement was struck down by a federal court of appeals in July.

You must register to vote. The one-stop early voting

and same-day voting registration period begins Thursday October 20 and ends on Saturday Nov. 5. During this period you can register to vote the same day you vote.

The hours for early voting and same-day registration are generally 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. On Nov. 3 and 4 the hours are extended until 7 p.m. On Saturday Nov. 5 the hours are 8 a.m. to 1 p.m. To confirm the hours please call the Perquimans County Board of Elections at 426-5598.

The deadline for submitting an absentee ballot is 5 p.m. on Tuesday November 1. The Perquimans County Board of Elections web-

site has an absentee ballot form you can print and submit. This form may be mailed, faxed, emailed, or delivered in person. Call the Perquimans County Board of Elections if you have any questions about submitting an absentee ballot.

For those individuals who are hospitalized or living in nursing homes or other care facilities, please call the Perquimans County Board of Elections for assistance.

Please register and vote. Your vote can make a difference.

Nancy Theodore
Hertford

You can only vote for one

Dear Editor,

As the final election day for many federal, state, and local offices draws ever so near, I feel the need to help educate and inform the local area citizens of the county regarding our current process at the local level.

Perquimans county currently has a commission board comprised of six total seats which serve four-year terms. Most boards or councils have odd numbered seats of 5 or 7. In my opinion having an even numbered board allows for more 3-3 split votes and no changes being implemented.

The Chair person elected by the board should assume the responsibility of moderator and facilitate the proceedings, and only vote when another member is absent or recused. Every two years, three of the seats become available through election. This year we have four candidates running for those three seats. Due to voting equality concerns and complaints in early 1990, the local board adopted several changes that are still currently in place.

There are no districts in the county and all seats are "at large". Although

there are three seats available, you may only vote for one candidate. While I don't agree with being allowed to vote for only one candidate, since there are three seats available, it is the current law and design. I hope this helps some of the local voting citizens be better prepared when they go to the polls this year. When casting your vote this year, please remember who is helping to keep the public informed and educated to the processes and systems in the county.

Alan Lennon
Hertford



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