

DEDICATED TO THE PROMOTION OF TOWNS COUNTY OPINIONS & COMMENTARY

From the desk of STEPHEN ALLISON

February 5th marked Legislative Day 13, putting us more than a quarter of the way through the General Assembly's 40 day legislative session. This week debates continued on the House floor, committees considered dozens of bills and the House Appropriations committee delved further into the budget. The House of Representatives is expected to vote on the amended budget next week, which will set state spending levels through the end of June.

Over the past year, banks have also felt the pinch of the economic downturn. This week, the Georgia House of Representatives debated House Bill 926, which would allow state-chartered banks to more easily renew loans or lines of credit to customers in good standing. This is a necessary step to help Georgia's banks, businesses and citizens who rely on them. Current law prevents state-chartered banks from renewing or restructuring loans or credit for any customer if it would cause the bank to exceed the amount it can lend to a single borrower. House Bill 926 will assist Georgians by giving banks more flexibility and helping to ensure that financially responsible Georgians have the loans and credit they need to ensure their businesses can grow. The House also passed a series of education-related measures this week to give local school boards more flexibility and the tools they need to make the best decisions for their students, teachers, and schools. House Bill 905 extends sunset provisions for the school

construction capitol outlay program from June 15, 2010 to June 30, 2015. This measure will enable school systems to continue to earn and use Advance Funding, Exceptional Growth, and Low Wealth School Capital Outlay Grants.

These bills, as well as all other legislation that came before the House floor this week, passed with overwhelming support. Each piece of legislation will now move to the state Senate and be studied by committees before moving forward in the process.

Finally, I would also like to mention a piece of legislation that was just introduced this week. As you know, water is such a crucial issue for our state. In the last few years, Georgia faced a devastating drought and ongoing litigation between Alabama and Florida that brought this issue to a head. In 2008, a law was passed to help build reservoirs throughout the state and improve conservation efforts. This week, House Bill 1094, the Georgia Water Stewardship Act, was introduced as a result of the hard work of Georgia's Water Contingency Task Force. I look forward to learning more about it as it makes its way through the committee process, and evaluating whether this bill is right for us in the mountains.

As we continue to move bills to the floor for a vote, I would like to know your opinions on these important issues. Please feel free to call me with any questions or comments that you might have regarding legislation or issues under consideration at the state capitol. You can reach me at my Capitol office at 404-656-0177. Thank you for your time.

The Middle Path

by Don Perry

Some days... some months, some years it is hard to avoid a certain cynicism with regards to the human condition that results from human action. Ecclesiastes tells us that all is vanity and vexation of spirit, but we know that this is not the whole of the truth so we keep trying, in faith and in hope that somehow our actions, in some small way, may serve some greater purpose. It is faith that sustains us when the results of our actions are not immediately apparent and when the cost of our material pursuits is our health and peace of mind. The ancients were wise in warning us that the fruits of our labors do not belong to us and that any action for the sake of reward is futile; that indeed the act itself must become the reward.

Five years ago we began this quest to communicate with the words of Samuel Adams who said, "It does not take a majority to prevail, but rather an irate, tireless minority keen to set brush fires in the minds of men." This was a journey born out of a widespread frustration with the condition and the direction of American life, disgust with American political theater and dismay at the dumbing down of the American mind.

It was a brushfire indeed that swept the Republicans out of power and brought "change" to America, but like a brushfire that burns along the surface of the ground, the fuel was quickly consumed and the fire went out. Very little has changed in any way that really impacts our lives. Some things are worse, and as the economy continues to wind down and unemployment goes up, fires are kindling once again. We will undoubtedly "punish" Washington once again by electing Pepsi instead of Coke, and again, at least for the time being, nothing will change.

The thing that makes

the coffee bitter this Monday morning is the realization that after it is all said and done and regardless of the speeches and the promises that any politician will make from behind the facade of any political party, the debt of the United States is now mathematically impossible to pay. The debt of the United States now exceeds the combined assets of the citizens of the United States.

Our choices in this matter are few. We can default and deal with the unraveling of the world economy or we can unleash the hounds of hyperinflation, already straining at the leash. Neither alternative will be a pleasant one. Unfortunately, my good neighbors and friends, I do not see a path that will avoid the undiscovered country of this wilderness that looms in front of us. We have allowed in the generations since World War II a government to develop that exists primarily to protect international business. It addresses the wants of the population only to the extent of what is needed to avoid anarchy and it gives lip service to social reforms as far as is necessary to swing blocs of voters. The actions of the Obama Administration in rescuing Wall Street on the heels of and in spite of the sentiments of the millions of voters that put them in office should illustrate clearly where we are on the list of priorities. It matters little whether Obama is a cynical front man for banking or a misguided idealist who truly

believes that what is best for corporate America is also what is best for the country.

If there is any truth in Obama's speeches of recent weeks then what follows in the coming months may look something like this. Obama has spoken often of increasing exports and making American companies more competitive in order to rescue the economy, but in order to accomplish this, wages of American workers must adjust downward towards the wages paid by our "competitors" in the developing world.

Americans are not likely to readily accept a drastic cut in pay, "for the good of the country," but millions of workers unemployed for months on end may have little choice. The good paying job with benefits, already harder to find, may become scarce in the United States. Do not look for any meaningful action addressing unemployment in the short term.

Yes, problems we have aplenty. It is easy to find a problem. It is much harder to find a solution. In reviewing the archives of this column over

the last several years we observe that our middle path has veered often towards the problems we face as a society and as a nation and we have sometimes followed that path without looking for alternate routes that were more hopeful.

We do not like the way that even a hint of cynicism and despair flavors our coffee and with your permission we would like to begin steering our efforts towards a more hopeful direction. Hope is not to be found in Washington, nor in Atlanta or even in Hiawassee. Hope begins with the individual and grows outward into the family, the church, the school, the community and onward. As best we can in the coming months we would like to speak more of those who have found solutions and renewed their hopes. We suspect that those who have - have done so by changing their attitudes, their habits and their expectations. We believe that there is a new paradigm growing in this country that is smarter, leaner and more flexible. We expect to be pleasantly surprised.

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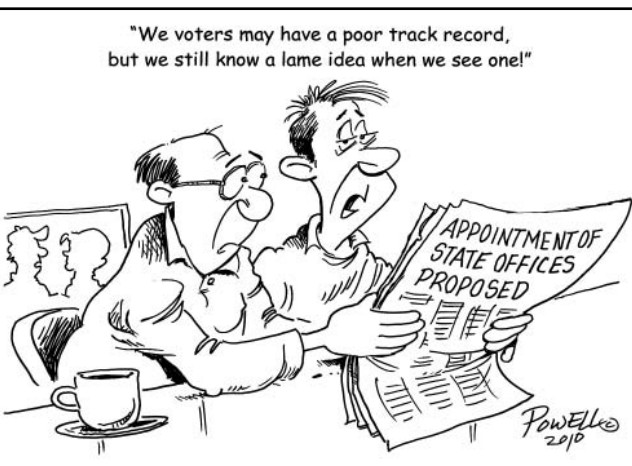


Elected Officials

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Governor Sonny Perdue, Georgia State Capitol Atlanta, GA 30334, 404-656-1776
Sen. Johnny Isakson, U.S. Senate, Washington, DC 20510, 202-224-3643
Sen. Saxby Chambliss, U.S. Senate, Washington, DC 20510, 202-224-3521
U.S. Congressman Paul Broun, 10th District, Washington, DC 20515, 202-225-4101
Rep. Stephen Allison, Georgia House of Representatives, 404-656-0177 or 0185
Sen. Jim Butterworth, Georgia State Senate, 404-463-1367
Towns County Commissioner Bill Kendall, 706-896-2276
Clerk of Superior Court Cecil Dye, 706-896-2130
Tax Commissioner Bruce Rogers, 706-896-2267
Magistrate/Probate Judge David Rogers, 706-896-3467
Sheriff Chris Clinton, 706-896-4444
Coroner Ricky Mathis, 706-896-6254
Enotah Circuit District Attorney Stan Gunter, 706-896-6489
Board of Education: 706-896-2279, Michael Anderson, Donna Hedden, Bob Gibby, Larry Kimsey, Emily Phillips. Superintendent: Dr. Richard Behrens
Hiawassee Mayor Barbara Mathis, 706-896-2202
Hiawassee City Council: Janet Allen, Jay Chastain, Joan Crothers, Howard Cunningham, Annie Johnson
Young Harris Mayor Andrea Gibby, 706-379-3171
Young Harris City Council: Terry Ingram, John Kelley, Donald Keys, Matthew Miller, Jennifer Mulkey, David Sellers



Towns County Herald
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GUEST COLUMNS

From time to time, people in the community have a grand slant on an issue that would make a great guest editorial. Those who feel they have an issue of great importance should call our editor and talk with him about the idea. Others have a strong opinion after reading one of the many columns that appear throughout the paper. If so, please write. Please remember that publication of submitted editorials is not guaranteed.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR SHOULD BE E-MAILED OR MAILED TO: Towns County Herald, Letter to the Editor, PO Box 365, Hiawassee, GA 30546. Our email address: tcherald@brmenc.net. Letters should be limited to 200 words or less, signed, dated and include a phone number for verification purposes. This paper reserves the right to edit letters to conform with Editorial page policy or refuse to print letters deemed pointless, potentially defamatory or in poor taste. Letters should address issues of general interest, such as politics, the community, environment, school issues, etc. Letters opposing the views of previous comments are welcomed; however, letters cannot be directed at, nor name or ridicule previous writers. Letters that recognize good deeds of others will be considered for publication.*
Note: All letters must be signed, and contain the first and last name and phone number for verification.

Community Calendar

Towns County Water Board Meeting 3rd Monday of each month at 7 p.m. in the TC Water Office Building.

Mountain Community Seniors meet the second Thursday of each month at the Senior Center in Hiawassee at 2 p.m. Luncheons are held at 1 p.m.

Towns County Democratic Party meets at 6 PM every 2nd Thursday of the month at Crossroads Restaurant. Meeting begins at 6. Please call Kim Bailey @ 706-994-2727 OR 706-896-6747

Towns County Republican Party meets the 1st Tuesday of each month from 5 p.m.-6 p.m. Dinner at Daniels Steak House, 6:30 p.m. - 7:30 p.m. meeting, 896-7281.

Towns County Planning Commission is held the 2nd Monday of each month at 7 p.m. in the Courthouse.

Towns County Commissioners meeting is the 3rd Thursday at 5:30 p.m. in the courthouse.

School Board Meeting, 2nd Monday each month at 7 p.m. in the auditorium.

Hiawassee City Council 1st Tuesday of month 4 p.m., at City Hall.

Young Harris City Council, 1st Tuesday of month at 7 p.m., Young Harris City Hall.

The Hiawassee River Valley Kennel Club meetings are held at 7 p.m. the 1st Monday of each month at Brother's Restaurant on Hwy 64 in Murphy, NC. Call President Kit Miracle: 706-492-5253 or Peggy Moorman: 828-835-1082.

The Unicoy Masonic Lodge #259 meets on the 2nd Monday of the month at 7:30 p.m.

Board of Voter Registrars meets the 3rd Wednesday of the month at 4:30 p.m., Courthouse.

Towns County Board of Elections holds its monthly meetings on the 2nd Wednesday of each month at 4 p.m. at the Elections Office (Old Rock Jail).

Towns County Historical Society meets the 2nd Monday of each month at the Senior Center in Hiawassee at 5 p.m. Annual dues \$15, PO Box 932, Hiawassee, GA 706-896-1060, www.townshistory.org

Bridge Players intermediate level meets at 12:45 p.m. on Mondays & Fridays at the Towns County Health Dept. Call Eden at 706-896-6921.

Mountain Regional Arts and Crafts Guild, Inc (MRACG) meets the 2nd Tuesday of each month at ArtWorks Artisan Centre, located at 308 Big Sky Drive (behind the Holiday Inn), Hiawassee. Refreshments at 6 p.m. & the meeting begins at 6:30 p.m. Contact us by calling 706-896-0932, mtnregarts-craftsguild.org. mtnregarts-craftsguild@hotmail.com.

VFW Post #7807 Fish Fry will be 2nd and 4th Friday of the month, 4:30-7 p.m., \$9 a plate, all you can eat.

Mountain Computer User Group meets the 2nd Monday of each month at the Goolsby Center at YHC. Q & A at 6 p.m., meeting at 7 p.m.

FPL Retirees Breakfast will meet the 2nd Tuesday of each month at the Hole in the Wall Restaurant on the square in Blairsville at 9 a.m.

Chattahoochee-Nantahala Chapter, Trout Unlimited meets 2nd Thursday of each month at Cadence Bank in Blairsville. 5 p.m. Fly Tying - 7 p.m. General Meeting. Everyone welcome. www.ngatu692.com.

Military Officers Association of America (MOAA) meets the 3rd Monday of each month at various area restaurants. For information call John Quinlan at 706-896-2430 or visit www.moaa.org/chapter/blueridge-mountains.

Alcoholics Anonymous: 24 hour phone line 828-837-4440.

Mothers of Preschoolers meets on the third Thursday of each month at First Baptist Church of Blairsville from 6 - 8 p.m. Call the church office at 706-745-2469 for more information.

Chatuge Regional Hospital Auxiliary on the 3rd Monday of each month, except the months of July, October and December, in the hospital cafeteria at 1:30 p.m.

Old Fashioned Square Dance Lessons each Mon. in Hiawassee, GA, 6 p.m. at the Senior Center (2 blocks south of the town square, beside the Courthouse) Hiawassee, GA 706-896-1060

Mountain Magic Table Tennis Club meets 6 p.m. Thursdays at Pine Log Baptist Church Fellowship Hall in Brasstown. Ping Pong players welcome. Call Lee (828) 389-0924.

Mended Hearts Support Group meets the 2nd Monday of each month at Chatuge Regional Hospital Cafeteria from 5:30-7 PM. For information contact 706-994-6988.