

DEDICATED TO THE PROMOTION OF TOWNS COUNTY

OPINIONS & COMMENTARY

Letters to The Editor

Dear Editor,
 Prior to the momentous decision in National Federation of Independent Business v. Sebelius, a news anchor was interviewing a Republican senator about the Affordable Healthcare Act (AHA). The senator enunciated three questions for addressing the AHA. Is it constitutional? Can we afford it? Is it the right thing to do? I want to briefly address his questions. It IS constitutional? Yes, now we know. The Court, led by Chief Justice John Roberts, has declared that the AHA is constitutional. Can we afford it? How can anyone question whether we can afford it when we afforded trillions for three unfunded and albeit immoral wars? [BTW did you realize that the acronym for Operation Iraqi Liberation is OIL?] How ironic! Stop for a minute—we can afford wars but not healthcare for our citizens! Something is drastically wrong here. Second, how can you question whether we can afford it when Republicans passed an unfunded, faulty Medicare part D prescription plan that sucks many into the vortex of a costly doughnut hole? Is it good policy? How can the richest industrialized nation not provide access to health care for every American citizen when every other industrialized nation has found ways to do it? Contrary to some news sound bites, I have found that people in Canada and Ireland like their government driven healthcare plans. We claim to be a Judeo-Christian nation. The Judeo-Christian code clearly tells us that we will be held accountable for how we treat the least among us, including those who do not have health insurance or those who cannot afford to pay for it. The common good must trump rugged frontier individualism. With regard to policy, what is wrong with covering pre-existing conditions, preventing insurers from dropping people or drastically increasing rates when they get sick or extending coverage for children, many of whom are heavily burdened with education debt, until they are 26? The Court has defined the penalty for not having health insurance as a tax. So be it; however, paying charges inflated to cover costs for those without insurance also functions as a “tax”—it takes money out of my pocket.

I must take exception to the argument that the AHA takes away my freedom. What freedom? Is my freedom infringed because the state requires motorists to have auto insurance? I know that involves the states; however, on a weightier issue, it is the proper role of the federal government to provide access to universal healthcare. My freedom is impinged every time I use medical services because part of what I am paying is an involuntary co-payment for those who cannot afford health coverage. That affects my freedom to spend MY money as I choose. I am on a Medicare Advantage plan and I am still free to choose my own doctors and hospitals.

The AHA is constitutional. We can afford it if we want to afford it. And, finally, it is the right thing to do.

J. Patrick Mahon

To the Editor:

As of now, this will be my last letter to the Editor in reference to the TSPLOST penny tax and why I side with Commissioner Kendall in voting “no.” In my opinion, when a tax goes into effect, it very rarely goes away! This penny tax would do absolutely nothing for Towns County. All it would do is raise the price on essentials like food. I was raised in a very small town in Illinois where the earth is black as coal and the abundance of corn, cattle and soybeans was our mainstay. I still have friends in Illinois who are farmers experiencing a sizeable drought. This translates to a much lower yield on their corn and soybean harvest. Thus, the price of groceries and gas will continue to climb.

Common sense dictates that this penny tax will not benefit Towns County. However, to listen to the ads in the Atlanta area saying that if we build “just a few more roads”, we will have less traffic and more jobs? Just remember, “pennies chasing dollars!” Vote NO on July 31st.

Ben Sutton

RARE KIDS; WELL DONE

By Don Jacobsen

I am impressed with the number of kids I see who are beginning to discover the electricity that is generated in their own lives when they invest themselves in others. I know, there are still a lot of self-centered ones among us — this is the human race, after all.

But I'm reading about a 9-year old who raises money to dig wells in Africa; about a 16-year old who collects coats to give to kids who don't have them; about a 14-year old who has as his personal goal to stamp out human slavery in our world; about an 11-year old who sets up a lemonade stand in front of the local ice cream shop to raise funds so an injured, homeless kitten could get veterinary help; about a 13-year old who raises \$6,700 to send 13 kids to blind camp. I could fill pages with these kinds of stories because when I started looking for them I started finding them.

Zach Hunter wrote his first book at the age of 12. It's entitled, “Discovering a Passion That Changes You and the World.” He asks, “Do you want to find a reason to get out of bed in the morning? Do you wish you were so excited about a project or a purpose that you had a hard time getting to sleep at night?” It really energizes me when I see this kind of stuff growing out of this generation of kids.

My wife and I recently read a book by Dr. Earl Henslin, entitled, “This Is Your Brain on Joy.” Here are a couple of sentences: “Surprisingly, few... studies show a greater rise in pure happiness than when you are involved, in some way, in voluntarily helping someone else... One study in England found that people living in areas where the citizens routinely volunteered their time for charitable causes ‘enjoyed better health, suffered less crime, and claimed to be ‘very satisfied’ with their lives.’ Students also achieved higher grades.”

That's an amazing payoff. Who of us wouldn't like to realize those benefits in our communities, in our schools, in our homes? So, mom, dad, let's not just give our kids a new assignment and tell them we've discovered a way they can be happy. Rather, let's lead the way, let's set the pace, let's give them some inspiring role models. Let's see who we can find to bless today.

Send your parenting questions to: DrDon@RareKids.net.

Towns County Herald

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T.C. Herald Editor Don't waste my vote!

By Charles Duncan

It was born in Atlanta, and must be sent back to Atlanta with a resounding ‘no’ from voters. The Transportation Special Purpose Local Option Sales Tax is flawed. I have friends who support this measure. I can't and won't. I have my reasons.

First, it's an infringement on the voting rights of residents in small communities throughout the state.

If Hall and Forsyth counties pass this referendum in our region, we're stuck with it, no matter how many ‘no’ votes come out of the mountains.

It's designed so that counties with larger populations can pass it whether we (counties with less population) like it or not. It imposes a tax on food at a time when we can least afford it. It imposes an extra 1-cent tax on heating oil, electric bills, medical supplies and other necessities that families simply can't live without. It penalizes poor families because they pay the same amount of tax on food and other necessities than as folks with much more money to play with. It's a never-ending tax.

Proponents say it will only last 10 years. By design, that's true. However, this is something that the Georgia Department of Transportation is banking on from now until Kingdom Come.

Georgians should send

the proposed T-SPLOST to a solid defeat for other reasons. It benefits larger counties and don't think the projects on the table in our communities will receive a dime until those larger counties are taken care of first. It's a bad deal for the mountain counties — period.

Our state lawmakers need to roll up their collective sleeves and come up with a solution that doesn't impose on families at a time when they can least afford it. Hitting wage earners, many who don't have jobs, with a sales tax that everybody pays is not a solution, rather, it's state lawmakers landing a slap in the face of the very people who send them to the State Capitol.

High praise goes to State Rep. Stephen Allison, (R, Blairsville) who had the foresight to vote against T-SPLOST in the State House.

Bottom line, our economy has been in the ditch for several years now. How dare the Georgia General Assembly send a sales tax referendum to the voters asking for another penny. All we hear at the State Capitol is how lawmakers are bound and determined to not raise taxes. Ladies and gentlemen, this is a tax increase. I ask that you treat it as such at the polls. Send it back to Atlanta. It should have been a statewide vote to begin with or no vote at all.

Odds and ends from the Board of Elections

Towns County has 7,342 active voters, and rates as one of the highest in voter turn-out, due in part to our Tate City precinct. They have had as few as 22 active voters and 18 of them casting a ballot. That's 82% folks.

Last week was the first week of advanced/early voting and despite all the rain Irma Nichols, the chief registrar, and her crew had 314 people show up to cast their ballots. They have also been mailing requests for paper ballots. Just a reminder, you can also order a paper ballot on line at www.sos.ga.gov and click on MVP (my voter page).

This is the very first year that our service men and women and citizens that reside permanently out of the county can cast their ballot electronically. This will eliminate any concerns about receiving their ballots back in a timely manner. For information go to www.sos.ga.gov or drop by and see me at the elections office.

Moving on to another bit of important information concerning T-SPLOST. I have received questions from several people regarding the preamble to the transportation bill. Linda Ford, Director of Elections, Secretary of State Office, forwarded a reply from Secretary Kemp stating the wording came from the original bill from three years ago.

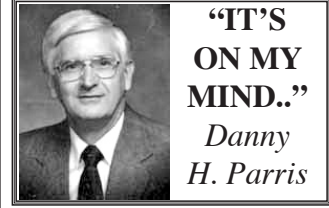
GUEST COLUMNS

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 EMAILED OR MAILED TO:

Towns County Herald, Letter to the Editor, PO Box 365, Hiawassee, GA 30546. Our email address: tcherald@windstream.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.



“IT'S ON MY MIND..”
 Danny H. Parris

Billboards & bumper stickers

We live in a very verbal society where everyone wants to make a statement. You drive down any street, country road, or a busy expressway and most of them are cluttered with billboards, marquees and posters that promote, proclaim, or protest some product, philosophy, or some political issue. If you are not financially able to purchase a billboard, or you do not have access to a marquee nor can you get someone to allow you to place a poster on his or her property to make your statement to the world, the next best avenue is to print your statement on a bumper sticker. Observe the vehicles that are in front of you. Most of them have a bumper sticker or in some cases the whole rear end of the vehicle may be plastered with signs of all sorts, which can be very distracting and confusing. While living in another city, quite frequently I would see a car that had two stickers on the rear bumper. The one on the far left of the bumper said, “Follow me to _____ Baptist Church.” On the far right the sticker stated, “I had rather be at Six Flags.” I was never sure about that message. Now I must confess that for the most part I enjoy reading bumper stickers. I saw one the other day on a Cadillac, which stated, “If this car were a horse I would have to shoot it.” The message conveyed was “that this car is not very dependable and causes me a lot of trouble.” On a beat-up,

dented, rusted and discolored car I saw this sticker, “Don't laugh, it's paid for;” meaning no one can repossess this transportation. While another sticker on another car indicates the opposite: “I owe, I owe, so off to work I go.” One of the religious bumper stickers states, “Honk, if you love Jesus.” That's good, but I like the next one, which says, “Tithe, if you love Jesus. Anyone can honk.” Most of the time I am amused and entertained by reading bumper stickers. But sometimes I am offended and embarrassed by the vulgarity and profanity displayed by owners of some vehicles. Yes, I understand and respect everyone's freedom, but that still does not keep me from being embarrassed for the drivers of those cars. It indicates very poor taste and expresses a lack of good judgment on the part of the drivers. Most probably it reveals the kind of person behind the wheel. There is a word of caution to all of us who read billboards and bumper stickers. Do not become so distracted by the message that you endanger your life or the lives of others. The prophet, Habakkuk penned these words long ago. The Lord said, “Write the vision and make it plain upon tables, that he may run that readeth it.” (2:2). Did you know that we are a living billboard? Everyone is reading us. What kind of message do you convey on the billboard of your life? For this world that is on the run, can they catch a glimpse of Jesus as they glance at your life? Few people stop and talk theology with us. Therefore, we must proclaim in big, bold print the clear message of Jesus on the billboard of our life for this world on the run. While reading the messages of others, don't forget to make your statement about Jesus!



Community Calendar

American Legion Post 23 meets 1st Tuesday of each month at 6:30 PM at VFW Post 7807, Sunnyside Rd., Hiawassee. Call 706-896-8387 for details. We need your support!

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.

Towns County Democratic Party meets the 2nd Thursday of every month at 5 PM at the Senior Center. Please call Kim Bailey at 706-994-2727 or 706-896-6747 for details.

Towns County Republican Party meets at 6: 30 PM the 2nd Thursday of each month at Daniels Steak House. For more info call 706-379-1371.

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.

Stephens Lodge #414 F & AM meets the 1st Thursday of each month at 7:30 PM in Young Harris.

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 5:30 p.m. Annual dues \$15, PO Box 1182, 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 Recreation Dept.

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, mtnregartscraftsguild@hotmail.com.

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.

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.

We do Family Oral History of all of our residents. If you have not had your family history recorded and would like to do so, please call the Towns County Historical Society at 706-896-1060.

Prostate Cancer Support Group meets the 3rd Monday of every month from 5-6 PM in the Cancer Treatment Center Auditorium in Blairsville. For more info call Steve 706-896-1064.

GMREC Native Plant Garden Tours: Mondays 9 AM-1 PM, May-Sept. (except holidays). 706-745-2655.

The Humane Society Mountain Shelter Board of Directors meets the last Thursday of every month at 5:30 p.m. at Cadence Bank in Blairsville.

The Towns County Alzheimer's Support Group meets the first Tuesday of each month at 1:30 PM in the Family Life Center of McConnell Memorial Baptist Church. Caregivers or family members of those with dementia are encouraged to attend. For further information, call Carol at 706-896-6407.

The Appalachian Shrine Club meets the 2nd Thursday of each month at 6:30 PM at the Allegheny Lodge in Blairsville. For more info call William 706-994-6177.

Georgia Mountain Writers Club meets at St. Francis of Assisi Church the 2nd Wednesday of every month at 10 AM.

VFW Post 7807 will have their all you can eat fish fry on the 2nd & 4th Fridays of each month from 4:30 to 7 PM. \$9 a plate. See you there!

GMREC Garden Tours every Monday 9 a.m.-1 p.m.

Shooting Creek Basket Weavers meets the 2nd Wednesday of every month at 10 a.m. at the Shooting Creek Fire Hall Community Center. All welcome. For more info www.shootingcreekbasketweavers.com.

Friendship Community Club meets the 3rd Thursday of the month at 6 PM at Clubhouse, 1625 Hwy. 76, 706-896-3637.

Goldwing Road Riders meets the 3rd Saturday of each month at Daniel's Steakhouse in Hiawassee. We eat at 11 and meeting begins at 12.