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LETTERS

Context needed on Greensboro/Weaver

Lies obviously pollute discourse; fortunately this tends to make their damage self-limiting. More insidious are claims that are truthful only when considered in the strictest isolation. In *The Citizen's* Feb. 16 "Letters," statements were made regarding the northwest corner of Greensboro and Weaver that demand context.

Steven Schrenzel complains "Weaver Street Market ... did nothing with it." Well, not for lack of trying. While they owned it, WSM (of which I am

a member) repeatedly worked with the community to develop the south part of the block so as to benefit both Carrboro and WSM. Their efforts were repeatedly rebuffed by many of the same folks currently opposing downtown Carrboro development, particularly the "Center Street Preservation Trust" (CSPT). Eventually WSM sold to service debt once the current recession hit.

That is a matter of public record; for details, one could probably consult the folks at the Village Project, who facilitated much of the public process. Evidence regarding the next matter is less well documented, so I'm forced to rely on hearsay, and on the extent to which those accounts are consistent with public statements and behavior. Do your own research, and feel free to rebut.

The developers to whom WSM sold (initially Mark Pantlin of Raleigh, a CVS associate) attempted to assemble the entire block bounded by Center, Short, Greensboro and Weaver. They were able to buy everything except 102 Center St. (better known as the Curl Up & Dye salon, aka Orange County PIN 9778862651), the owners of which are the core of the CSPT (notably, Jane Hamborsky). Whether the latter held out to block development or just to get a better deal, I don't know. But it thus seems more than a bit misleading for Michele Rivest and John Alderson to object that Curl Up & Dye will be "like an island in the midst of the proposed commercial development." Especially given their characterization of Curl Up & Dye, a business with its own large parking lot, as "a residential home with office space."

There are legitimate, or at least reasonable, objections to downtown Carrboro developments, particularly Greensboro & Weaver. But given the conduct of development opponents (notably the CSPT) over the past decade, to complain that WSM "did nothing with" that corner, or that Curl Up & Dye will be "like an island" on it, is rather like demanding mercy as an orphan after killing one's parents.

TOM ROCHE
Carrboro

RENCI offers valuable learning

Girl Scout Troop 3064 would like to send a special note of thanks to Jason Coposky and everyone else at the Renaissance Computing Institute (RENCI) in Chapel Hill. Our troop was very fortunate to visit RENCi and learn about their visualization group. We were able to experience first-hand a number of really cool scientific applications that the group has created. Among the many RENCi creations that we explored are: a Social Computing Room filled with panoramic images of the bodies of the solar system, a view of London from the very top of St. Paul's Cathedral and high-resolution cancer images, taken from multiple viewpoints; a 3-D Room filled with "magic" recreations of an F3 tornado, two colliding galaxie, and a journey to the black hole at the center of the Milky Way; and a "4-D" Dome in which we "immersed" ("immersion" being the take-home word of the day) ourselves in simulations of high-speed driving, the inner anatomy of the human body and an entertaining cartoon on visual illusions related to size, mass and distance.

Our visit to RENCi was a fantastic learning experience for our girls, as well as a wonderful opportunity for them to consider what is possible for their future.

Thank you, Jason and RENCi.

KARA FECHO AND KRISTEN ZUCO
Girl Scout Troop 3064

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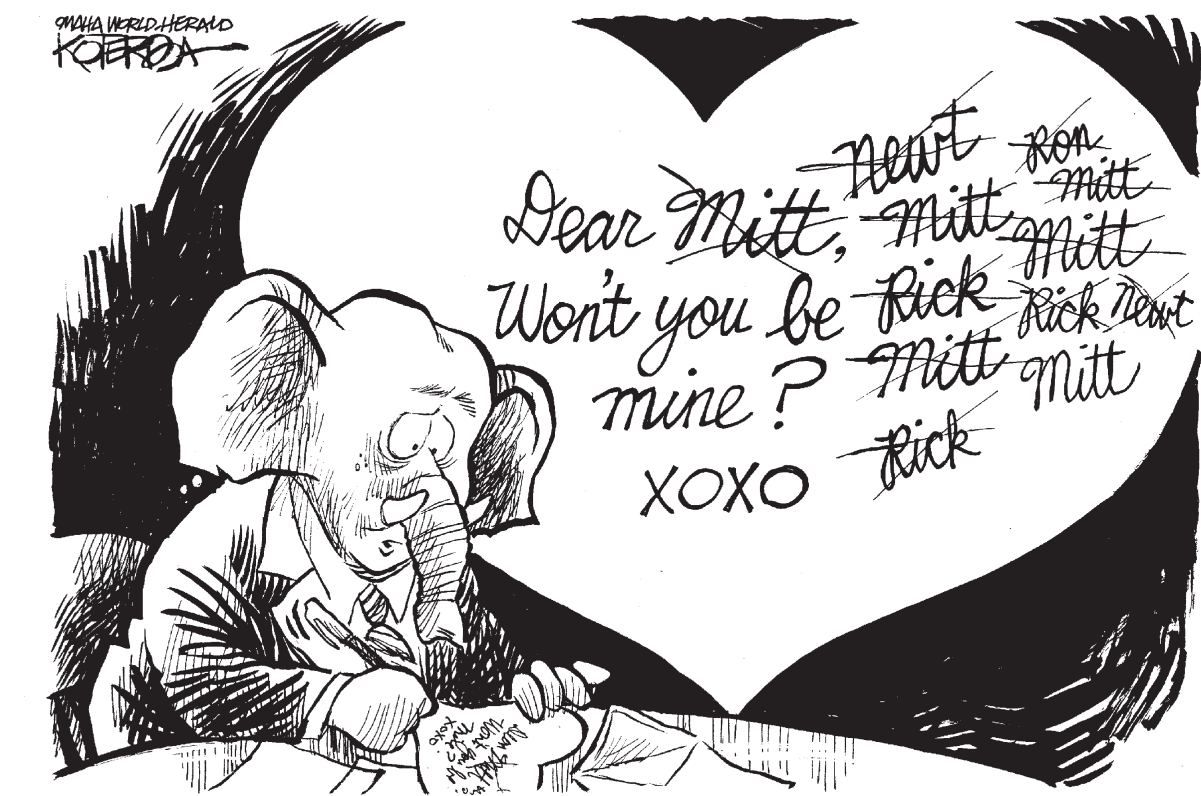
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Opinion



JFK and the proposed marriage amendment

LYDIA LAVELLE

In the pulpit recently, Catholics were urged by a letter from the bishops of Raleigh and Charlotte "to protect traditional marriage" by voting in favor of the proposed amendment to the North Carolina Constitution on May 8, 2012. The bishops said more information would be forthcoming, and that they wanted to "engage the debate in a manner that never diminishes the inherent dignity of any person." They said their position was "a principled one based on eternal and divine truth."

I felt a sense of sadness when I read this letter. I spent the greater part of my young life attending St. Paul's Catholic Church in Athens, Ohio, where, growing up, I methodically marched my way through the sacraments (baptism, confession, communion and confirmation). Sadly, however, I knew the next step in the church – marriage – was one I would never be allowed to take. I was also sad because although I respect the Catholic Church and appreciate the manner in which church leaders pledged to engage in this debate, I strongly disagree with their support of this amendment.

I now attend a church that opposes the amendment. Like many other faith communities, my church advises that our faith calls us not to judge one another but to love one another. But my personal opposition to the amendment is further informed by my professional life, where I study principles of federalism, and state and local law and policy. The proposed amendment seems to put little stock in the constitutional principle of the separation of church and state. And yet, as evidenced by the need for churches to state their positions – both for and against the amendment – in 2012, we seem not to be able to separate church and state.

We have no proof about how John F. Kennedy, the nation's first and only Catholic president, would feel about this amendment that would influence the legal rights of gay and lesbian citizens. We do, however, have his own words (from a 1960 address to the Greater Houston Ministerial Association) to remind us of what he said in an era when people

in this country were concerned about having a Catholic as our commander-in-chief, and I believe those words provide some indication as to what his opinion might be. He said:

"I believe in an America where the separation of church and state is absolute; where no Catholic prelate would tell the president (should he be Catholic) how to act, and no Protestant minister would tell his parishioners for whom to vote; where no church or church school is granted any public funds or political preference; and where no man is denied public office merely because his religion differs from the president who might appoint him or the people who might elect him.

"I believe in an America that is officially neither Catholic, Protestant nor Jewish; where no public official either requests or accepts instructions on public policy from the Pope, the National Council of Churches or any other ecclesiastical source; where no religious body seeks to impose its will directly or indirectly upon the general populace or the public acts of its officials; and where religious liberty is so indivisible that an act against one church is treated as an act against all.

"I believe in an America where religious intolerance will someday end; where all men and all churches are treated as equals; where every man has the same right to attend or not to attend the church of his choice; where there is no Catholic vote, no anti-Catholic vote, no bloc voting of any kind; and where Catholics, Protestants and Jews, at both the lay and pastoral level, will refrain from those attitudes of disdain and division which have so often marred their works in the past, and promote instead the American ideal of brotherhood. ... That is the kind of America in which I believe."

President Kennedy, this is the kind of America I believe in, too.

Lydia Lavelle is an assistant professor at N.C. Central University School of Law and a member of the Carrboro Board of Aldermen.

Top 10 Tillis tales

CHRIS FITZSIMON

It has been a little more than a year since the Republican majority elected Thom Tillis speaker of the House, making him the most public face of the first Republican-led General Assembly in North Carolina in 140 years.

Tillis began the 2011 General Assembly session promising to focus on creating jobs and touting his business consulting background, leading some in Raleigh to predict a more conservative, but not a radical, legislative session.

The predictions were wrong. Tillis has presided over a House that has passed some of the most extreme, far-right social legislation in the country, not to mention the draconian budget cuts to education, human services and environmental protections.

And Tillis himself has become an issue. His behavior as speaker and a series of troubling statements he has made in town hall appearances make last year's hopes for thoughtfully conservative leadership seem hopelessly naïve in retrospect.

Here are 10 tales from Tillis' first year as speaker. Not the dreadful legislation he engineered – that's another disturbing list – but his remarks, decisions and actions that set the tone for the radical legislation the General Assembly approved and continues to consider. This is by no means an exhaustive list.

1. The divider and conqueror of the poor – Here's what Tillis told a group of Republicans in Madison County in October:

"What we have to do is find a way to divide and conquer the people who are on assistance. We have to show respect for that woman who has cerebral palsy and had no choice in her condition that needs help and we should help. And we need to get those folks to look down at these people who choose to get into a condition that makes them dependent on the government."

2. The unannounced midnight session – Tillis and his fellow members of the House leadership convened a special session after midnight Jan. 5 to override Gov. Beverly Perdue's veto of legislation that banned teachers from paying their NCAE dues by payroll deduction. The midnight session prompted widespread criticism across the state. Even Republican gubernatorial candidate Pat McCrory has condemned it.

3. Vengeance on an open microphone – Tillis told the Republican House caucus in June that he was targeting the NCAE because of their opposition to the Republican budget. The microphones in the meeting room were left on and his comments were inadvertently broadcast to the pressroom on the legislative sound system.

4. The double standard for citizens in the Legislative

Building – Members of Tillis' staff called the General Assembly police to disperse a group of peaceful protestors gathered on the second floor of the building before last Thursday's special session, citing an obscure law that is rarely enforced. Lobbyists were allowed to remain. Video has surfaced showing Tillis addressing Tea Party protestors in exactly the same spot in the building in March of last year.

5. The end of public schools – Tillis admitted in a town hall meeting in Asheboro earlier this month that his top lieutenant, House Majority Leader Paul Stam, wants to eliminate public schools in North Carolina.

6. Admittedly making it harder for people with disabilities to vote – Tillis said at a town hall meeting he had been willing to compromise on voter ID legislation because people in the disability community brought "legitimate" concerns about the impact of the bill on people with a disability who try to vote. But when the compromise negotiations with Democrats fell apart, Tillis rammed the extreme voter ID bill through the House, ignoring the concerns he admits are real.

7. Boasting about targeting a state agency – Also in his remarks to Madison County Republicans, Tillis gleefully described how Republican Rep. Mitch Gillespie has a target on his window aligned with the building that houses the Department of Environment and Natural Resources.

8. Admitting that Republicans let 1,200 jobs go to South Carolina – The House and Senate refused to go along with an industrial recruitment package to lure Continental Tire to build a facility in southeastern North Carolina that would have meant more than 1,200 jobs for the region.

Senate President Pro Tem Phil Berger and Tillis implied that lawmakers did not approve the package because Democrats owned the land the company would use for the plant. Tillis later admitted the land issue had nothing to do with it. The jobs went to South Carolina.

9. Refusing to disavow the extremists in his own party – Tillis has remained silent when members of his own caucus have made offensive remarks or proposed extremist legislation. Tillis said nothing when Rep. Larry Brown made homophobic remarks last year or when Rep. Larry Pittman said in a recent email that doctors who perform abortion services should be executed by public hanging.

10. It's all the media's fault – Tillis routinely complains about coverage in the mainstream media, at one point comparing the *Charlotte Observer* to road kill for its coverage of the midnight session. Dozens of editorial pages across the state, liberal and conservative, also blasted legislative leaders for holding the session.

It has been quite a year. Stay tuned for more.

Chris Fitzsimon is the executive director of N.C. Policy Watch.

A statement of principles for athletics at UNC

The following statement was developed by an informal group of faculty members at UNC regarding the future of athletics at UNC, and has been endorsed by 112 faculty members.

At a time when both the emphasis on Division I athletics and the scandals that are associated with the athletics enterprise have presented new challenges to many universities across the country, we the undersigned faculty at UNC encourage the Board of Trustees, the chancellor, the athletic director and the entire UNC community to join with us in working to ensure that the athletics program operates in ways that enhance and complement the University's core mission:

"The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, the nation's first public university, serves North Carolina, the United States, and the world through teaching, research, and public service. We embrace an unwavering commitment to excellence as one of the world's great research universities.

Our mission is to serve as a center for research, scholarship, and creativity and to teach a diverse community of undergraduate, graduate, and professional students to become the next generation of leaders. Through the efforts of our exceptional faculty and staff, and with generous support from North Carolina's citizens, we invest our knowledge and resources to enhance access to learning and to foster the success and prosperity of each rising generation. We also extend knowledge-based services and other resources of the University to the citizens of North Carolina and their institutions to enhance the quality of life for all people in the State.

With *lux, libertas* – light and liberty – as its founding principles, the University has charted a bold course of leading change to improve society and to help solve the world's greatest problems."

(Approved by the UNC Board of Governors, November 2009)

Sports are worthwhile activities in themselves, and a robust athletics program underscores the University's commitment to excellence across the spectrum of human endeavor. Fielding competitive teams can help build community cohesion among students, faculty, staff, alumni, and all who have interests in the University. We are justly proud of UNC's record of integrity and success in intellectual and athletic life. In light of recent developments, however, we insist that the pursuit of athletic excellence at UNC-Chapel Hill must rest on a foundation of academic integrity and should always reflect the following three principles:

1. Institutional Openness: The University should confront openly the many conflicts created by its commitment to winning in the athletic arena. The University must commit itself to honest, open, regular conversation about the divergent imperatives, and competing values, that drive athletic and academic success. All data needed to understand the athletics department, and to address the issues raised by its operations, should be readily available.

2. Educational Responsibility: The University should commit itself to providing a rigorous and meaningful education to every student. All students should be integrated fully into the life of the campus, and they should be well prepared for life after college. All students – those who participate in sports and those who do not – should be permitted and encouraged to take full advantage of the rich menu of educational opportunities available at UNC.

3. Mission Consistency: Athletics must be integrated into the common enterprise of the University. Faculty committees and administration must be empowered to oversee athletics and ensure that it supports and remains in alignment with the University's core missions. In times of hardship, the University must consistently work to preserve these core missions, even if such preservation comes at the expense of athletic success.

For a list of the 112 faculty members endorsing this statement, visit carrborocitizen.com