

COLUMN



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We’ve forgotten how to share

Traveling through the U.S. is a unique experience, one that mixes cultures, languages and types of folks who — until recently — shared a common interest in the livelihood of one another. Our history shows we’ve had our differences, but we’ve managed to live together and thrive.

But in my last four years at UNC, it would seem that we have lost the American exceptionalism, the unyielding belief in the unity that built the Hoover Dam during the worst economic climate in history. This determined quality inspired the creation of this great public institution in 1789.

But the American populous has lost the basic empathy for their fellow patriot — the empathy necessary to end unyielding political stalemate.

The proposals to perpetuate the Bush tax cuts for the most prosperous Americans give life to the blind, isolated selfishness and greed that has held us back. This should be plain to see.

Many of us can remember our first experience with “sharing.” And whether we stomached the thought of passing the plate of cookies or letting someone else have a chance on our favorite swing set, we learned our lessons along the way.

The rhetoric in Washington today would lead most to believe that many on both sides of the aisle fail in the sharing department. The notion that giving tax breaks to America’s most affluent will somehow alleviate the burdens of swelling poverty, urban homelessness and educational inequity makes no sense.

Certainly some would give their monetary gains toward charities and small business ventures. But, I say the federal government is a better arbitrator of this solution than the moral consciousness of America’s gentry elite.

It’s as if we are back in that kindergarten classroom, giving the entire cake to the greedy kid with the overactive sweet tooth, expecting to get a slice of the pie. Nothing about this makes sense.

Still, our poor track record of caring for the “other” in our midst continues. Just this month, not a single Republican — in an overwhelmingly male Senate — voted for a bill that would have ensured equal pay for men and women. And even now, as the wealth gap between the rich and the poor is greater than ever before, many are calling for the defunding of life-saving social programs and vital public schools.

Of course, the private sector isn’t all bad. Private businesses feed and clothe our nation. But allowing private, profit-driven industry to hold the keys to education and health care seems a bit too far.

Private insurance companies deny coverage to thousands of Americans each year for a litany of ridiculous “pre-existing conditions,” all the while charging us more.

It would be utopian to think a growing American elite would raise all boats when — since the 1980s — so many of our ships and livelihoods have gone under. But this simply isn’t the case.

There are people of all income levels who abuse the law, acting to protect their own interests. But, for many, the American dream really isn’t a possibility. The demonization of government and its programs has only taken attention away from an obstructionist Congress and reality of inequity in almost every social institution. Voting aside, we have lost our common denominator, we are losing our identity and we — the youth — are certainly losing hope.

I want and need a president ready to invest in my future. And giving the reigns to private enterprise alone isn’t a guarantee of equity and prosperity for all. Without a check, there is no balance. Without investment, there simply is no future.



EDITORIAL

State budget shows values

Voters must hold N.C. lawmakers accountable in November.

The budget passed by the state legislature last week demonstrates just how far the values of our lawmakers in the N.C. General Assembly are from those that built North Carolina.

They have exhibited complete disregard for our schools — the edifice upon which our state was built — depriving children and young adults and compromising future economic prosperity.

This budget is terrible for the future of North Carolina. As citizens deeply affected by it, we must affirm our commitment to the value of education by holding those representatives up for re-election accountable this November.

The current crowd in Raleigh first raised questions about their priorities in the 2011-2013 biennial budget, passed last June. It featured substantial cuts to the UNC system. UNC-Chapel Hill suffered a reduction of 17.9 percent, or more than \$100 million.

This past year, students and faculty have experienced the

consequences of that decision, weathering severe cuts in classes and personnel, as well as difficulties retaining professors and losing even more in federal grant money.

The Board of Governors was forced to raise tuition to help staunch some of the bleeding, pricing out prospective students. While legislators claimed their 2011 budget would not cost any K-12 teaching jobs, approximately 3,000 teachers and teaching assistants were cut.

This year, the N.C. General Assembly — with a Republican majority in both houses — passed a bill modifying the biennial budget, which sets our K-12 education system up for an even bleaker situation this coming year.

The budget does not allocate enough to make up for expiring federal funding, ultimately reducing overall educational spending by an additional \$189 million. Between the 2009-10 fiscal year and 2012-13, the total amount of decreased school funding — what schools actually receive — comes to \$520 million.

And the modified budget could cost up to 3,400 additional teaching jobs, a cut this

state simply cannot afford.

But let’s not stop there. The nationally recognized Teaching Fellows program was cut, along with the Teacher Cadet Program — designed to encourage high school students to consider teaching — and the dropout prevention programs, Communities in Schools and Tarheel Challenge Academy.

Such destructive actions beg the question: if Republicans in the N.C. General Assembly don’t believe public education needs their support, what does?

The answer: a tax cut for small businesses that make up to \$825,000. Only they subsequently removed the cap, cutting taxes on 400,000 of the state’s wealthiest. This amounts to a tidy \$336 million in lost revenue, which would go a long way toward helping our schools recover.

North Carolina distinguished itself from the rest of the South by smart investing in education and infrastructure. We attracted the cutting edge of business because of those investments. Now we all need to fight to preserve what is great about this state by showing our values with our votes this November.

COLUMN: THE OTHER SIDE OF THINGS

Spending isn’t the solution

Budget cuts are a necessary solution to America’s ongoing economic crisis.

Forty-eight years ago, Lyndon B. Johnson — much like President Barack Obama — stood as the incumbent Democratic candidate vying for another term in the Oval Office during an election year. It was during that 1964 presidential race that Johnson first mentioned the “Great Society,” a vision for a more socially equal America through increased domestic spending.

Johnson’s colossus was created with the best of intentions. It represented a social initiative even wider in scope than Roosevelt’s New Deal. But the inherent economic flaws of Johnson’s programs, as well as those that have followed, have been systematically ignored by some of America’s political elites, who have opted instead to allow these programs to continue.

It’s a hole that Obama has fallen into.

One of the nation’s largest public health care initiatives, Medicaid, was established in 1965 as part of Johnson’s “Great Society.” The program aims to provide health services for those who could not afford private insurance plans.

In 1978, during the period of stagflation and general national

malaise that characterized the latter half of the decade, 9.1 percent of the U.S. population received Medicaid benefits. By 2010, that number had increased to 15 percent.

By the year 2020, Medicaid coverage is projected to jump to 144 percent of its 2011 level in the wake of legislation passed under Obama. This leaves an overextended, debt-financed federal budget to foot its \$871 billion future bill.

Total federal spending for the 2012 fiscal year was set at around \$3.8 trillion. Of that, 62 percent was allotted for spending on Medicare, Medicaid, Social Security and various other welfare and entitlement programs.

The estimated revenue of \$2.5 trillion puts us in the red by more

than 50 percent of our annual revenue.

Meanwhile, our debt-to-gross domestic product level is expected to reach 70 percent for the federal government’s accounts alone by the end of 2012, with the total national debt sitting at a whopping 101.5 percent of GDP.

As a nation, we must be adaptable enough to consider significant budget cuts — the elephant in the corner of the room — as a potential solution to our fiscal crisis.

The U.S. economy is in a fragile state of recovery. President Obama’s suggestion of attempting to cure our fiscal woes by spending our way out of the hole we’ve already dug is flatly unacceptable.

We’ve been down that road already. The lipstick is off the pig when it comes to the stimulus packages. They failed.

I want and need a president who will pursue measures to reform bloated entitlement programs and reign in out-of-control government spending.

A practical approach to long-term fiscal stability couldn’t come at a more critical time in this nation’s history.

President Obama’s 2008 campaign mantra rings true today. It’s time for a change.



Weekly QuickHits



Spice Girls Musical

A Spice Girls musical “Viva Forever!” opens in London in the fall. Imagine Legally Blonde meets Abba meets leopard print. “Wannabee” as a dance number? Bad idea. Period.

Fourth of July

Fireworks and fun are in store again in Chapel Hill. Kenan Stadium promises to be the site of fireworks this year. They'll start shooting off at 9:30 p.m. So cookout, chill out and get ready to celebrate America.

Michael Phelps

We’re excited to see Team USA swim in the Olympics. But it looks like Phelps has some competition. We know you’re getting old, Mike. But we need you to turn into the human shark again. Pronto.

QUOTE OF THE DAY

“In 1974, the activists were talking about the Ice Age coming in. What has happened, has the Ice Age come in?”

Rep. Pat McCrraft, on why sea level may not rise as much as scientists fear

Kvetching board™

kvetch:
v.1 (Yiddish) to complain

To the CTOPS guy from Maine who said it was “really hot” when the high was 80: Get ready for a fun four years, bro.

Isn’t kvetching about not having a kvetch posted an oxymoron and permissible as two negatives yield a positive kvetch?

Thanks YoPo, for advertising acceptance of credit cards, but failing to mention the \$0.20 fee.

I just submitted three kvetches, can I go back to playing with After Effects and watching my summer TV shows now?

To the lady on Franklin rockin’ the “I’m Fat, Let’s Party” tee: TOPO dance floor Saturday night?

To the girl half naked on MLK Friday night: How did you explain those grass burns the next morning?

To the guy that swiped my boyfriend’s Coca-Cola last Friday night: Enjoy mono.

These summer kvetches are so desolate a tumbleweed rolls by every time I read them.

To the incoming freshmen who stop and look around every time they trip on the bricks: don’t worry, you’ll learn.

Whoever put those sharp bushes along Rosemary where I walk home from bars is clearly unaware of the dangers of a litigative culture. Thanks for nothing.

To the dOOKIE I met in Raleigh the other night: When the phone goes straight to voicemail, it means I ignored your call.

To my old housemate who Facebooked about how much the food sucks in France: You’re in France. STFU.

To my calorie conscious friend: I’m no nutritionist, but I’m fairly certain your portion controlling efforts are negated by the fact that all you eat is Wendy’s.

That awkward moment when your friends discover your anonymous Twitter.

Hosting a cookout this weekend. Guest chef Mother Nature will be serving up her favorite: roasted human beings.

Stilman, can’t you just make basketball your mission?

If you have to ask how to spell a made up abbreviation for a word, you probs should

just use the whole word.

Thank you, Instagram, for filling my Facebook newsfeed with endless artistic photographs of eyeballs, half eaten food and couples’ feet.

Send your one-to-two sentence entries to opinion@dailytarheel.com, subject line ‘kvetch.’

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Professors got facts wrong in Frampton letter

TO THE EDITOR:
I am writing in regards to a letter published here on June 21.

The letter addresses the issue of UNC professor Paul Frampton, who has been held in an Argentine prison since January after being caught trying to leave that country with 2 kg of cocaine.

UNC professors Hugon Karkowski and Mark Williams are asking for donations for professor Frampton, who is no longer receiving his salary from UNC. I find nothing wrong with that.

It is wrong, however, to falsify information.

In the letter, professors Karkowski and Williams refer to Villa Devoto prison — where Frampton is being held — as “notorious” for riots in 1972 (62 dead), 1978 (50 dead), 1990 (33 dead) and 2005 (33 dead).

I wonder where they did their research. Not one piece of evidence here is accurate.

There was a riot at Villa Devoto in 1962 (not ‘72. I guess they mixed the year up with the death toll) in which 24 people died.

The one from 1978 they got right — only it was 60, not 50 dead.

The riot in 1990 was at Olmos, not Villa Devoto, and the death toll 35.

Finally, in 2005 the riot was at Magdalena, again a different prison. This last death toll they got right.

As an Argentine, I find it offensive that the history of my country be treated so lightly. And as a UNC graduate student and Teaching Fellow, I find it appalling that two professors from my institution not only did such poor research, but went ahead and published it.

It is clear that this is not the point, and we all hope professor Frampton is innocent. But it is unacceptable for academics to treat data so lightly and publish falsities.

SPEAK OUT

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- Sign and date: No more than two people should sign letters.
- Students: Include your year, major and phone number.
- Faculty/staff: Include your department and phone number.
- Edit: The DTH edits for space, clarity, accuracy and vulgarity. Limit letters to 250 words.

SUBMISSION

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The Daily Tar Heel

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The Daily Tar Heel

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The Daily Tar Heel is published by the DTH Media Corp., a nonprofit North Carolina corporation, Monday through Friday, according to the University calendar. Callers with questions about billing or display advertising should call 962-1163 between 8:30 a.m. and 5 p.m. Classified ads can be reached at 962-0252. Editorial questions should be directed to 962-0245.

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Chapel Hill, NC 27514-3539



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ISBN #10709436

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Columns, cartoons and letters do not necessarily represent the opinions of The Daily Tar Heel or its staff. Editorials reflect the opinions of The Daily Tar Heel editorial board, which is made up of board members, the opinion editor and the summer editor.