THE DAILY CLIPS

April 21, 2009

News, commentary, and opinion
compiled by the East Carolina University News Bureau from:

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The New York Times
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Political passion

Several years ago, some protesters gathered at the North Carolina General Assembly to let their elected representatives know just what they thought about a tax hike.

The protest was organized by some of the same people behind the recent tax tea parties.

After some grub, sign-waving and speeches out behind the Legislative Building, a few dozen protesters trooped inside to watch the House floor session. A handful then decided to let their displeasure really be known.

They tossed six or eight tea bags from the gallery onto the legislators below. Predictably, security whisked them away. One legislator yelled at them. Other legislators denounced the scoundrels.

If they crossed a line that day, it’s a line that’s been crossed many times in America and crossed in the best traditions of political dissent.

And this country does embrace political dissent, doesn’t it?

You wouldn’t know it from all the hubbub created when some protesting students at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill recently shouted down, intimidated and ran off a Colorado congressman.

Republican U.S. Rep. Tom Tancredo is a fierce opponent of illegal immigration. He had been invited to speak at the UNC-Chapel Hill campus by a student group. Some other students and a few professors weren’t too pleased that he was there, and so began chanting and yelling at the congressman. Police broke up the melee with pepper spray. Tancredo never got his chance to speak.

The hand-wringing began shortly thereafter.

Chancellor Holden Thorpe apologized to Tancredo. He told students to recommit themselves to the ideals of free speech and silent protest (huh?). He said criminal charges would be pursued if warranted.

Editorial writers called the episode a black eye for the university, comparing the students’ actions to the speaker ban law of the 1960s. The American Civil Liberties Union called it “de facto censorship.”

It seems to me that there’s a lot of confusion here about who’s who and what’s what.

The students aren’t the university and the university is not its students. The students certainly aren’t the government, with its constitutional obligation not to abridge free speech.

If the university has a black eye, it’s because administrators failed to establish adequate security for the visit by Tancredo, a man once condemned by Jeb Bush after calling Miami “a Third World county.”

Some words inflame. Rightly or wrongly, the student protesters see Tancredo’s words as hate speech which shouldn’t be given a platform on the campus.

So they were raucous, unruly and crossed a line that’s been crossed many times before.

At least they were passionate.

They shouldn’t let a bunch of comfortable stuffed shirts sitting behind desks try to take that away from them.

Scott Mooneyham writes about North Carolina government and politics for the Capitol Press Association.
A new look at N.C.'s coast

Change comes fast in North Carolina. We were still a relatively poor state in the 1950s, when it could take all day to get from my hometown of Greensboro out to the Outer Banks, longer still to take the ferry across Oregon Inlet and across Hatteras Inlet to Ocracoke.

But you knew what you'd see: Modest wooden cottages with broad porches, fishing boats tied up in tidal creeks, mom-and-pop restaurants that thrived in the summer and closed for the year after Labor Day. Working folks still could buy a beachfront lot and put up a little house. Fishers and shrimpers could afford to live near the oceanfronts where they made their living.

Those days are long gone as prosperity has remade the state from one end to the other.

Now oceanfront mansions have reshaped the skyline on many beaches. Watermen and their families live well inland now, trailering their boats to the sounds and coastal rivers to seek their daily catches.

And private property owners and local governments alike spend enormous sums trying to hold back the encroaching seas.

They did so because the normal processes of the beachfronts and barrier islands had changed so dramatically. Before oceanside development began, beaches moved with nature's aims, eroding on the ocean side but building up on the sound side. Inlets would open and close as storms directed. No one worried much about beaches washing away. They'd be back in time. Wise Outer Bankers lived on the sound side, away from the ocean's appetite.

With prosperity came development, better roads and a tourism industry that lured happy vacationers and beach house buyers who loved spending time at the coast. They built ever-larger homes and hotels and restaurants, developed a year-round economy and wrung their hands when nor'easters and hurricanes gobbled up beaches and cut new inlets.

Coastal communities began spending millions, sometimes in taxpayer money, to replenish beach sand; others explored building groins out into the ocean to trap sand and, they hoped, reduce erosion. But these groins almost always had the effect of building up sand on one side and allowing the ocean to scour away the beach front on the other — protecting some property while damaging property down the beach.

It is folly to try to stabilize barrier islands because they must be allowed to grow and shrink with natural processes, says coastal geologist Stan Riggs. With hardened structures that impede that process, he says, "You end up signing a death warrant for the barrier islands."

When the Coastal Resources Commission was created in the 1970s to bring some sense of order to topsyturvy coastal growth, one of its wisest policies was to sharply limit the use of hardened structures such as groins and jetties. That policy has allowed North Carolina's coastline to escape the nightmarish step-step effect that groin fields have produced along part of New Jersey's coast. It has also limited the height of buildings and governed how close to the beach houses can be built — or rebuilt — after storms.

But property owners concerned about losing beachfront homes and familiar shorelines have pressed the General Assembly to alter state law and allow the use of groins to stabilize inlets, slow down beach erosion and build up beach fronts. While coastal geologists say it won't work, coastal engineers argue that stabilization ought to be given another chance.

A bill to allow the Coastal Resources Commission to permit groins goes before a Senate committee today. It has a fair chance of passage; a bill to study such groins passed the Senate two years ago. It went nowhere in the House.

Now state Sen. Clark Jenkins, D-Edgecombe, has come up with a proposal aimed at a rethinking of how North Carolina manages its coast. It's a good idea. The coast now faces more than just erosion due to tides and storms. Rising sea levels, experts say, could reshape the barrier islands, immerse low-lying areas and ultimately turn a coastal gem into a ragged string of pearls, Riggs says.

Jenkins' bill would temporarily halt the commission from requiring removal of temporary erosion control sandbags. That would allow time for a study to examine how the state can best develop "a long-term beach management strategy that recognizes and protects the environmental, recreational and economic value" of the beaches to make sure they remain open and accessible.

The idea is to examine land use policies, financing, relocation of threatened structures and other ways to cope with rising seas and development pressures.

"I don't know what the answer is," says Jenkins. "I think beach nourishment is probably better than hardened structures, and this gives them time to look at what their alternatives are."

There hasn't been a major overhaul in the way the coast is managed since the creation of the Coastal Area Management Act more than three decades ago. There has been plenty of tinkering, and there surely will be more.

But at least Jenkins' bill offers an opportunity, as N.C. Coastal Federation director Todd Miller recently put it in another context, to develop "a vision for the future that promotes sustainable development on barrier islands."

It's high time.
The Birmingham News

UAB boosts tuition for medical, dental and optometry schools
Optometry, dental fees rise

Saturday, April 18, 2009

HANNAH WOLFSON

News staff writer

The University of Alabama at Birmingham is hiking tuition for medical students by 9 percent and for dental students by 15 percent to help make up for state cuts and keep up with technology costs, officials said Friday.

In addition, optometry students will see tuition rise 8 percent.

The moves will generate a combined $1.6 million in additional revenue, UAB Provost Eli Capilouto told the UA System Board of Trustees, which approved the plan Friday at its meeting in Huntsville.

Capilouto said that's only about a tenth of the hit these schools - the most expensive at UAB - have taken in state budget cuts.

"You can't close the gap with tuition increases," he said.

Starting with the 2009-10 academic year, medical school tuition for in-state students will increase from $15,254 per year to $16,627. Out-of-state tuition will jump from $45,762 to $49,881.

In-state tuition for the fourth year of the dental school - which charges different rates depending on year - will go from $7,745 to $8,907. Out-of-state tuition will go from $23,235 for the final year to $26,721.

In-state tuition for the optometry school will cost $4,803 for all classes. It was previously $4,447 for first-year students and $3,335 for other years. Out-of-state tuition is more complex because some states without optometry programs pay for their students to attend UAB, Capilouto said.

Some fees such as recreation fees for each school will also increase, but all at slightly different rates.

Even with the change, Capilouto said, UAB still lands in about the middle of the pack of public medical schools in the South when it comes to tuition. In comparison, he said, the highest rates are at the University of Virginia, $32,650, while the lowest charges are $9,034 at East Carolina University.

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Library Journal honors two N.C. State librarians

Comment on this story

Two N.C. State University staff members were named best in their field by Library Journal, a publication for professional librarians. Tina Adams was singled out as "Library Paraprofessional of the Year" for work she and the N.C. State University Libraries have done to make all course books for university classes available for free on reserve. Kim Duckett
was named a Mover and Shaker in the field for work she and the staff did to put social media to work to teach students information literacy.

**Clinsys Clinical Research**, a contract research organization in Raleigh, announced its partnership with N.C. State University to provide 20 Clinsys employees with Six Sigma Green Belt training.

**Fuentek** in Apex received an Award for Excellence from the Carolina Chapter of the Society for Technical Communication. The award was for its 2007 Accomplishments Report for the Innovative Partnerships Program Office at NASA’s Goddard Space Flight Center. The firm’s graphic designer **Beth Oldham** and technical writer **Nicole Quenelle** both contributed to the report.

Withers & Ravenel engineers **Bradley D. Hart, Patrick L. Covil** and **Christopher S. Johnson** recently became Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design accredited professionals. Hart is a senior project manager, Johnson specializes in roadway design, and Covil specializes in stream modeling for floodplain mapping.

**Hyatt Place Raleigh-Durham Airport** has won the Hyatt Place Ultimate Hotel Award. Hyatt Place Raleigh-Durham Airport was chosen based on numerous guest nominations from 130 hotels nationwide.


**Jamie McCaskill**, an associate in the finance and real estate department of Kilpatrick Stockton’s Raleigh office, has been accredited as a Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design Professional by the U.S. Green Building Council.

The Government and Public Sector Section of the N.C. Bar Association has selected **Jeff Gray**, who manages the Raleigh office of Rose Rand Wallace Attorneys, as the 2009 recipient of its Outstanding Government and Public Sector Attorney Award.

Stewart Engineering announced that the N.C. Society of Surveyors honored **Frank Mundy**, corporate director of Geomatics in Raleigh, and **Steve Amos**, survey department manager in Charlotte, with a President’s Award.

**Myriad Media**, a Raleigh film and video production firm, was named a preferred vendor by IBM for 2009 and 2010. Myriad Media is one of about 15 preferred IBM vendors in the United States.

**Neuse Tile Service** in Youngsville was designated an employer of nationally Certified Tile Installers when four of its team members successfully completed the written and hands-on program of the Ceramic Tile Education Foundation.

The Home Builders Association of Durham, Orange & Chatham Counties **Professional Women in Building** won the National Association of Home Builders Women’s Outstanding Council of the Year. The award is presented to two councils that produce outstanding programs and projects for the membership, the homebuilders association, the building industry and the community.

**Russell S. Thomas**, director of the Center for Genomic Biology and Bioinformatics and senior investigator at The Hamner Institutes for Health Sciences, has received the 2008 Achievement Award from the Society of Toxicology.

**Signal**, a design, marketing and technology firm with studios in Raleigh and Wilmington, won a Gold ADDY for self-promotion collateral along with two judge’s choice awards for individual favorite and for copy at the Triangle Ad Club ADDY Awards.
Firestone Building Products Co. awarded **Triangle Roofing Services** with its 2009 Firestone Master Contractor Award. The award was presented to the firm for its high quality commercial roofing system installations over the past year.

Triangle area outdoor living consultant and personal chef **Wendy Perry** has been recognized with the Centennial Legacy of Leadership Award by the College of Human Ecology at East Carolina University. Perry was selected by the faculty of the college because she has distinguished herself within her field and community.

**William E. Brewer Jr.** of the Brewer Law Firm in Raleigh is one of 33 professionals from the United States and Europe to be inducted as a 2009 Fellow into the American College of Bankruptcy. The association recognizes and promotes professional excellence and exceptional contributions to the field of bankruptcy.

Eight **Yates, McLamb & Weyher** attorneys were listed in 2009 Super Lawyers. Partner **Dan McLamb** was voted one of the Top Ten lawyers in North Carolina for the third year, and partner **Bonnie Weyher** was voted one of the Top 50 women attorneys in the state for the second year. In addition, McLamb and Barbara Weyher have been included in the 2009 edition of Best Lawyers in America.

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Jobless rate creeps up in N.C., just barely

The good news is losses have slowed considerably. But in S.C., unemployment hits 11.4%.

By John Murawski
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Posted: Saturday, Apr. 18, 2009

After several months of watching jobs hemorrhage at a dizzying rate, North Carolina's unemployment figure for March looks deceptively comforting.

North Carolina's jobless rate crept up just a tenth of a percent in March to 10.8 percent, according to figures released Friday by the N.C. Employment Security Commission. Even though that's another record, it marks a dramatic slowdown from the staggering increases of the past six months.

In South Carolina, the unemployment rate increased to 11.4 percent -- the highest since 1983 -- up from 10.9 percent in February.

North Carolina's incremental increase may be the long-awaited signal that the recession is petering out. But signs of a turnaround have yet to materialize, and the jobless rate is expected to worsen before it improves. The economy is still sending a grim message that legions of frustrated job seekers will understand as code red.

"There's not anything in these numbers that suggest that things are getting better," said Wachovia economist Mark Vitner. "They're just getting worse at a less frantic pace. What glimmers of hope there are, it's that things are not deteriorating as badly as they were."

Last month's unemployment rate ranks North Carolina fifth-highest in the nation for joblessness, and well above the national average of 8.5 percent. South Carolina has the third-worst jobless rate. Nearly a half-million are out of work in the state.

Jobless rates in York, Chester and Lancaster counties in South Carolina all declined -- albeit slightly -- in March, according to data released Friday. But all three counties still have jobless rates higher than the state average of 11.4 percent -- the highest since 1983 -- with Chester's unemployment rate still at more than 20 percent. North Carolina hasn't yet released the individual county data for March.

York County's rate dropped 1.5 percentage points in March to land at 12.7 percent. Lancaster County's rate declined by .3 percentage points and now stands at 18 percent. Chester's at 20.6 percent.

Any drop is considered good news, but officials at local employment offices had cautious optimism Friday.

"I don't think the recovery's here yet. It's on its way, but we'll have to be patient," said Annie Reid, director of the Rock Hill Workforce Center.

North Carolina lost 41,300 jobs in March, the second-highest single month loss since the recession began. Half those losses came in construction, manufacturing and professional and business services. But the true picture of unemployment may have been masked by what N.C. State University economist Michael Walden calls "discouraged
workers" who quit looking for work and as a result aren't counted among the ranks of unemployed. The state's labor force decreased by nearly 31,000 people in March, a decline Walden partially attributes to frustrated job hunters losing hope. Their exit from the labor force reduced the number of people counted as jobless, keeping the March figure deceptively low, he said.

Another telling sign: 134,964 people filed initial claims for unemployment insurance with the state, the fourth consecutive month that the state's jobless logged more than 100,000 claims in one month.

The range of job cuts in the past month alone spans North Carolina's economic sector: technology, pharmaceutical, bedding, electronics, textiles, packaging, housing and furniture. Among the biggest casualties: La-Z-Boy laid off 200 in Wilkes County, IBM cut 334 at its Research Triangle Park facility, and Corning Cable Systems shut down a facility in Catawba County, terminating 208 jobs.

"Things could get worse," said James Kleckley, an economist at East Carolina University. "We're turning a big ship. It doesn't stop on a dime. You have to slow it down to make that big turn. You're seeing that slowing now. It's the first step before things start improving."

The (Columbia) State and Jason Foster of The (Rock Hill) Herald contributed.

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