Leatrice Welch

Leatrice Welch Leatrice "Lea" Welch began her journey through life on this earth in 1922 in Halifax, where she was born to the late William Carr and Daisy Whitley. In 1952, she and her husband, Joe, married and began their family in Maryland. They raised four children together and returned to North Carolina in 1974, where they owned Joe Welch Chrysler-Plymouth in Farmville. Through most of Lea's career she was a valued secretary in Washington DC for the United Mine Workers and in Greenville where she worked for the ECU School of Home Economics. She was a member of the Walstonburg American Legion Auxiliary and was a former member of the Greenville Moose Lodge as well as the Women's Service League. Although her professional accomplishments were plentiful, she was proud of her family above all else. She was preceded in death by her husband, Joe Welch, in 1985 and by her daughter, Sandy Whitley of Farmville, in 2006. She is survived by her daughter, Brenda Maulding and her husband, Gary, and their daughter, Stephanie Maulding of San Jose, Calif.; son, Joe Welch Jr., his wife, Maria, and their children, Logan Welch, Krisann Spain her husband, David, and their children, Zackary and Michael Spain of Raleigh and Jason Thayer of Houghton, N.Y.; stepdaughter Mary Jo Thaxton and her husband, Dennis, of Charlotte and their daughters, Shell Thaxton of Chapel Hill and Kerry Thaxton of Richmond, Va. Lea's journey to Heaven began on the sunny morning of June 3, 2009. The birds chirped loudly as she left this world peacefully, eager to one day be reunited with her family in Heaven. She spent her last months in comfort, surrounded by her loving family in Raleigh. Service will be held Saturday at 11 a.m. at the Walstonburg Cemetery. The family will receive friends and family tonight from 7 to 9 at Mitchell Funeral Home, 7209 Glenwood Ave., Raleigh. Lea and her family requests that, in lieu of flowers, memorial contributions be made to either the American Cancer Society or Hospice of Wake County, who cared for her compassionately through her recent illness. Condolences to the family can be sent to www.mitchellraleighmemorial.com, (under tributes.)

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ECU prof to dine with Biden

Submitted by nyanteaguebeckwith on June 4, 2009 - 11:03am.
Tags: East Carolina University | Jody Baumgartner | Joe Biden | Under the Dome

Vice President Joe Biden wants the advice of Jody Baumgartner, an East Carolina University political science professor.

Baumgartner is one of six experts on the vice presidency who have been invited to have dinner with Biden next Tuesday at the vice president's house, Rob Christensen reports.

Baumgartner and the other professors are expected to discuss how past vice presidents have used the post.

He is the author of numerous articles and a book on the vice presidency including "The American Vice Presidency Reconsidered" and "Scoundrel or Uber Lieutenant? The Vice Presidency of Dick Cheney."

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Cuts worry state health chief

Fears new flu strain in fall

BY RAY MARTIN, Staff Writer

RALEIGH - Deep state budget cuts could strip crucial resources from public health agencies and hospitals just in time for the expected arrival of a potentially nastier version of the H1N1 flu virus this fall, North Carolina's public health chief warned Thursday.

Dr. Jeffrey Engel, director of the N.C. Division of Public Health, said he expects a second strain of the unique virus will surface as colder weather starts to chase people indoors, making it easier to spread flu in offices, schools and other public places.

This second strain could be worse than the relatively mild H1N1 virus now circulating the globe, Engel said, causing more people to get sick enough to require hospitalization. That would place a heavy strain on public health departments and hospitals that he says already lack sufficient resources and may also be dealing with severe cases of seasonal flu.

If a second strain of the H1N1 flu virus causes a more severe pandemic, those hospitals would likely see a dramatic increase in emergency room patients, exacerbated by the uninsured who can't afford to get treated elsewhere.

This threat makes potential budget cuts now under consideration in the N.C. House to be particularly worrisome, said Engel. House Democrats are expected to unveil a plan next week to cut thousands of state jobs.

"If you think emergency room wait times are bad now, just wait until a pandemic spreads," Engel said. "The perfect storm would be mass budget cuts and a widespread pandemic. And all jobs are being threatened by state budgets."

The H1N1 virus is genetically different from the seasonal flu strains familiar to human
immune systems. That difference makes existing flu vaccines ineffective. The version now circulating is relatively mild, causing symptoms similar to seasonal flu, and responds well to antiviral drugs.

But public health officials and scientists point to past global outbreaks, including the 1918 Spanish flu pandemic that killed as many as 50 million people worldwide. In that and less deadly pandemics in 1957 and 1968, a mild flu virus evolved into something more virulent.

Five new cases of the virus were confirmed in North Carolina on Thursday, bringing the state's total number of cases to 35, state health officials said.

Two of the newly confirmed cases are in Wake County: a 39-year-old resident and an 11-year-old elementary school student. The new cases double Wake County's total to four.

The 11-year-old attends Laurel Park Elementary School in Apex, the school's principal said, and is the second Wake student to be confirmed as an H1N1 flu case this week. The other sick student, confirmed as an H1N1 flu case on Wednesday, attends Reedy Creek Middle School.

Despite the new cases, Wake school officials said they're not going to shut down schools. Michael Evans, school district spokesman, said that normal cleaning procedures are sufficient to deal with the virus. But

Gail Turner, the Laurel Park principal, said the school was contacted by county health officials Thursday about the student at her school with a confirmed case of H1N1. Letters were sent home with students, and parents were encouraged to keep students who don't feel well at home, Turner said. Staff members who feel sick were also encouraged to stay home.

Engel said the current H1N1 strain will likely continue to spread at a low level through the summer.

"Pandemics come in waves," he said. "We don't know how many waves there will be. But the second would come in the fall when we enter the normal flu period."

Engel's concerns are consistent with a report released Thursday by Trust for America's Health, the Center for Biosecurity and the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation -- all national health advocacy groups. The 23-page report details lessons learned from the first strain of the virus and makes recommendations to Congress, health experts and the public on how to prepare for the potential second round of a flu pandemic.

"The first strain showed that the public health infrastructure is severely constrained at this point," said David Fleming, director and health officer of Seattle and King County in Washington and co-author of the report. "It's getting tough on the front lines in this country now."

Because of recession-driven belt-tightening by state and local governments, Fleming said, many public health nurses and officials nationwide received layoff notices two weeks after they began to treat H1N1 patients.

Health officials nationwide are racing to develop an H1N1 vaccine and hope to have one available by fall. But Engel thinks this is a difficult goal because it will take a long time to develop a vaccine and perform clinical tests to make sure it's safe. The new vaccine will likely be made available to those who are most susceptible to flu, he said.

"We're hoping the vaccination will be the life preserver," Engel said.

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Cut aims at series Easley runs at NCSU

BY J. ANDREW CURLISS, Staff Writer

RALEIGH - A week after N.C. State University officials moved to block the largest part of former first lady Mary Easley's job, lawmakers on Thursday cut money for a substantial part of her workload that is still intact.

A House budget committee voted to eliminate any money for the high-profile speakers series at NCSU that Easley was hired to oversee since 2005. The committee approved a $105,000 reduction in the university's budget to accomplish the action, an amount that matches what officials said was spent from state funds on the speakers series in the current fiscal year.

That money would be redirected to three community college programs for deaf students that faced cuts in next year's budget, which begins July 1.

The change at NCSU was sponsored by a freshman Republican lawmaker from Burke County, Hugh Blackwell, who said that state money would be better used on helping hearing-impaired students than on the program run by Easley, who has been the subject of public scrutiny for nearly a month.

"I wanted to restore the programs for the deaf," Blackwell said. "The focus recently on her position helped me identify a source of funds to do it. ... N.C. State is certainly free to pay for its speaker program from private funds."

The vote was 7-6, with approval coming from Blackwell, four other Republicans and two of the three Democratic co-chairmen on the House budget committee that deals with education concerns. The six "no" votes were all Democrats, who sided with arguments that no evidence had been produced to show that the speakers series at NCSU was unsuccessful or poorly run.

"My concern was how much into the micromanagement of the university do we want to get into," said Rep. Rick Glazier, a co-chairman of the committee, who opposed the amendment.

Glazier said he personally agrees with numerous calls from NCSU and UNC system leaders for Easley to resign her position. But he did not think it was appropriate to target the speakers series funding as a way to remove her.

"This is not the way to do it," Glazier said.

Last week, NCSU announced a moratorium on new centers at the university, including a public safety leadership center that Easley was to create and direct. It amounted to 35 percent of the workload on a five-year, $850,000 contract she received last year.

Easley has also led the Millennium Seminars series, a speaker circuit that brought figures such as former President Bill Clinton and former Clinton Cabinet secretaries Robert Reich and Donna Shalala to campus. It is 30 percent of Easley's current workload.

The action Thursday will make it harder for NCSU to keep state funding for the portion of Easley's salary and other expenses that covered the speakers series. To restore that money now, legislators would likely have to find a similar cut somewhere else, said Rep. Mickey
Michaux, a key budget writer.

The provision specifically says that there will be no state funding for the speakers series or the public safety center.

Blackwell said he included the safety center language in the amendment to ensure that the university doesn't change course and add the program later.

"Just covering the bases on that one, so to speak," he said.

The calls for Easley's resignation in recent weeks followed reporting that showed ties between her and a close friend and member of the board of trustees at NCSU, McQueen Campbell. Campbell later acknowledged a role in helping Easley get her job at NCSU in 2005.

Easley has hired a lawyer and says she will not resign. The lawyer has declined to comment on the actions affecting her job.

An NCSU spokesman, Keith Nichols, said it is not clear what the university would do if the speakers series funding cut is approved by the full legislature.

"If they can take away that money," he said, "I don't know whether the university would have to go looking for that funding from other sources, or if at that point we just have to fold our tent."

Staff writer Jay Price contributed to this report.

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The tally

A subcommittee in the state House voted 7-6 Thursday to pass an amendment that would eliminate state funding from NCSU's signature speaker series, led by former first lady Mary Easley.

IN FAVOR: Hugh Blackwell, a Valdese Republican; Mark Hilton, a Conover Republican; Bryan Holloway, a King Republican; Linda Johnson, a Kannapolis Republican; Marian McLawhorn, a Grifton Democrat; Ray Rapp, a Mars Hill Democrat; and Laura Wiley, a High Point Republican.

OPPOSED: Larry Bell, a Clinton Democrat; Rick Glazier, a Fayetteville Democrat; Maggie Jeffus, a Greensboro Democrat; Marvin Lucas, a Spring Lake Democrat; Earline Parmon, a Winston-Salem Democrat; and Cullie Tarleton, a Blowing Rock Democrat.

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- Read the series about perks of Mike Easley's power.

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Scrubtina for pay deals

Golden parachutes typically are provided to people exiting the corporate stratosphere. A lucrative benefits package cushions the fall. Is there an analogy in the academic world? Ask Larry Nielsen.

As the provost at N.C. State University, Nielsen was making a robust $298,700 per year when he decided to relinquish the job and return to a faculty position. Now we find out in The N&O that during a six-month transitional period, he'll continue to be paid as if he still were the provost before his salary ratchets back to $156,000 and he tries to live on that. So in the meantime -- none of the provost's duties but all of the money. That should make for a happy landing.

NCSU Chancellor James Oblinger defends the arrangement, citing what he says is standard practice for administrators resuming work as faculty members. He also says Nielsen's contract entitles him to the extended provost-level pay. Indeed, it's not hard to think of other instances when top university figures were awarded with well-compensated sabbaticals when they left office. Oblinger says that during Nielsen's six-month "study leave," he'll have a chance to consult with faculty leaders in his field (natural resources) and "determine what the best use of his capabilities and expertise will be."

The problem is that this whole deal is so far outside the norm in terms of the kind of treatment that an ordinary employee of an ordinary organization, public or private, could expect that it fairly boggles the mind. What sort of royalty do these university hotshots think they are?

There may be some rationalization for such coddling, perhaps having to do with the importance of recruiting and retaining top-flight administrators. No question that is important. Yet if there's a shortage of good people ready, willing and able to serve in such positions, it's been hard to detect. And of course, Nielsen will enjoy his salary bonanza while the university system and the rest of state government brace for the pain of severe budget slashing.

Nielsen's career path took its latest turn amid the Mary Easley "situation." It was he, while serving as interim provost, who hired the former first lady and then expanded her job, with an accompanying pay adjustment up to $170,000.

Nielsen asserted that the hiring decision was entirely his. But then The N&O disclosed that Board of Trustees chair McQueen Campbell -- who had connections to the governor at the time, Mike Easley -- had signaled to Oblinger her interest in an NCSU position. Nielsen, for his part, had catapulted over four other candidates to land the permanent provost's job. All this and some other Easley matters have drawn the attention of federal prosecutors.

Nielsen perhaps can't be blamed for deciding that he didn't need the aggravation that would come with continued service as provost. Unfortunately, his salary deal just keeps a harsh spotlight trained on the questionable chain of events in which he was immersed. Leaders at the level of UNC system president Erskine Bowles now need to ponder how and why such deals became standard procedure and how to put a stop to them. Otherwise, what they
should soon feel is the hot breath of the General Assembly racing to restore some sanity to university executives' pay across the board.

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Why Some New Grads Are Delaying The Job Search

Sunday Journal reporter Jonnelle Marte writes:

After applying for a few more than 10 jobs between January and April, Winnie Yang, a 21-year-old 2009 graduate of George Washington University, is putting her job hunt on hiatus.

She's now in London, kicking off three weeks of traveling with friends, including stops in Paris, Nice and Rome. Then she'll spend three weeks in China visiting family friends.

A friend has accused her of "running away" from the job search, but Ms. Yang says she's just taking her time to do it right — and she isn't alone.

More college grads are putting off the job search this year, according to a recent survey by the National Association of Colleges and Employers. Just 59% of the 16,500 graduating seniors surveyed had started looking for jobs by the end of April, compared to 75% who had started by that time last year and 64% in 2007. Only about 40% have actually applied for a job.

What gives?

Researches and career coaches say recent grads have a lack of faith in today's job market.

"The nature of the economy and the recession that we're in right now, particularly the recession in the labor market is controlling this," said Edwin Koc, director of strategic and foundation research for NACE.

But he warns, "avoiding the job market is not really a solution at this point — You can't find a job unless you try to find a job."

And of course, if you can't find a job, you can't make money — a problem for those with rent, credit card bills and student loans coming due.

The lack of money — or rather promised money in the form of a smaller paycheck — may also be inspiring recent grads to delay their job search. Studies have shown that students who graduate in a recession tend to earn less money throughout their careers than those who graduate in more prosperous times. Could some grads be waiting for salaries to rebound?

Maybe. But predicting a comeback for the job market is a bit like calling a bottom for the stock market — it's a gamble, and the stakes are high.

No one can predict the future, but "I just can't see how the person who sits it out and waits is going to be ahead of the person who started working," says Miriam Salpeter, an career coach in Atlanta.

For those who can afford it, taking time off to volunteer or travel could be a good way to gain the skills or experience needed to snare a dream job — but that time off must be planned carefully, says Ms. Salpeter. Otherwise you risk sinking into debt and setting back your career.

"If [recent grads] just decide to have fun for a year, I think they're making a mistake" and are likely to have greater difficulty finding a job later, says Bud Bilanich, a success coach in Denver.

Ms. Yang, who saved up for her trip by working at a restaurant during the school year, says she is taking a more personalized approach with the job search, and holds that merely submitting a resume and cover letter isn't enough anymore.
"I think these days you have to have a nurtured relationship with people before asking them for a job," says Ms. Yang, who plans to set up informational interviews with companies she's interested in once she returns home to Princeton, N.J. this summer.

Not everyone can afford to take this approach, but some career coaches say she may have a point.

"I think it's not a good idea to just go on to… any of the big job boards and just put your resume on there," says Mr. Bilanich.

Instead, you should research a company and tailor your resume to highlight the skills that make you a good fit. Use active verbs and list specific goals you accomplished. Then go through your network to see if you know anyone who can refer you, he says.

The survey also showed that fewer than half of graduates who received job offers accepted them—a possible sign that the jobs offers today aren't as appealing as they were in previous years, says Mr. Koc.

Career coaches say it helps to be extra open-minded about their first job—to a point.

"I do think that in a down economy it's important to be a little more flexible than in boom years," said Ms. Salpeter. But, she cautions, don't drop all standards. "Then you become a job hopper because as soon as you start it, you're looking for something else," she says.