

The never-ending search for balance in our state

Lately, I've been thinking about the word balance.

We refer to a well-balanced life as one with equilibrium between work, family and recreation. A well-balanced diet includes a proper mix of the food groups. In government we talk about the balance of power, indicating that the three branches – legislative, executive and judicial – have checks and balances so that no one branch becomes too dominant. Balance is a good thing.

North Carolina has been seeking balance since our earliest times.

Shortly after the Declaration of Independence, and in anticipation of statehood, North Carolina's 5th Provincial Congress tasked Richard Caswell to head a drafting committee to write our first Constitution, which they presented in December 1776. That document expressed the belief of most colonists that no one person (in their case the British king) should have too much power over their affairs. Accordingly, our first constitution established the three branches of government, but gave the true power to the Assembly, the only leaders then elected by the people.

By 1835, people determined the power equation was out of balance, especially

those in the growing Piedmont and Western sections of the state. Eastern legislators dominated the agenda, and the other regions felt their interests weren't being heard. A state constitutional convention was called that year and, among amendments later approved by the voters, the governor became an elected, not appointed official. It was hoped this would result in a better balance of power.

North Carolina has been blessed with examples of wise leadership from our General Assembly, but there have been times when they wielded too much power. Seeking to rebalance the power scales, in 1996 North Carolina became the last state in the union to give the governor the power to veto legislation.

From its inception there have been 99 gubernatorial vetoes, 64 of them issued by Gov. Roy Cooper since he took office in 2017. Since 2018 all his vetoes have been sustained because enough Democrats were elected to negate absolute power by Republicans.

GOP legislators maintain Cooper has



Columnist
Tom Campbell

been a stumbling block to passage of good legislation. Many others just as steadfastly believe that most of those vetoes were justified and our balance of power equilibrium was restored.

I subscribe to the latter. Jim Martin, a Republican, became governor and even with what can only be described as a "hostile" legislature dominated by Democrats, had a very good record for passing legislation. Martin was a conservative, but also a pragmatist and adept at getting votes from Democrats. During Martin's tenure moderates of both parties dominated on Jones Street and lawmakers could sometimes be persuaded to put aside party loyalty for the good of the state. Not so much today.

Whereas Caswell and the drafters of our first constitution never envisioned political parties, or the resultant lockstep allegiance and votes from them, we are now experiencing factions within each party, creating another form of imbalance.

In 2010 Republicans convinced the state's voters that Democrats had ruled our legislature too long and they could be

more responsive and accountable. The first couple of years they passed some good legislation, but then the extreme faction of their caucus started demanding and taking control. HB2, the so-called bathroom bill, passed in 2016 is a poster child of unbalanced power. There are current examples, such as the "Parents Bill of Rights" legislation I wrote about last week and blatant power grabs to remove or minimize the governor's ability to appoint public boards and commissions. Need we remind you what has happened with the UNC Board of Governors, Community College, Board of Elections and now is being hinted to be done with the State Board of Education?

What will it take to restore equilibrium?

There is only one solution to power imbalances in state or local governments: Voters. The 7,312,000 voters of our state need to be reminded that THEY, not the governor or our legislators, are the ones with real power in North Carolina. They have the chance to restore balance in November at the ballot box.

Tom Campbell has covered North Carolina public policy issues since 1965. Contact him at tomcamp@carolinabroadcasting.com.

Letters to the Editor

A shining example of good works

To the Editor:

United Christian Ministries has recently celebrated 35 years of serving Jackson County. A dedication was held this past week of the new addition that will allow UCM to distribute food more efficiently.

I am blessed each week as I volunteer to see fellow volunteers from a variety of churches who come together to pass out food. These individuals are UNITED in their efforts to share food with those in need. The financial support from local churches, generous individuals, and produce from Food Lion and Walmart keeps the food pantry up and running.

There are local folks like a young man who pulls up regularly in his work truck and donates \$100. He does not leave his name – he wants no recognition. Churches with small congregations regularly bring trunk loads of food to share with those in need. Jackson County is blessed to have so many generous residents. Christians are often cited for their disagreements and division and rightly so. Yet United Christian Ministries is a shining example of what can be accomplished when folks put aside those differences and unite to serve. Jesus Christ came to serve and lived that example. I know that He is pleased that United Christian Ministries bears His name and follows His example.

Gayle Woody,
Dillsboro

Seeking input on broadband gap

To the Editor:

We are a nonprofit, independent and investigative news organization. As a public service, we are hoping to find out where news gaps are within communities without strong and fast broadband and what nonprofit news organizations like ours can do to help. We hope this research will help identify trends among news needs of Jackson County residents and, we hope that we can take the information and use it to develop new ways to serve you.

Results are beginning to come in from our "NC Connection: Closing the News Gap" project survey, and we are excited to begin analyzing this data. We'd like more participation from across the state in order to be as representative as possible of North Carolina's rural communities. The survey can be delivered to you by email or text; and you can take it in under 10 minutes. To take it now, please follow the link to <https://bit.ly/cppgni22> or text survey to 866-716-1266.

COVID made us all aware of a digital divide in N.C. – the fact that many households – a large number of them in communities like Jackson County – lack reliable internet access, cannot afford an internet subscription or do not have an adequate device. When there's a crisis like COVID, lack of internet service becomes a critical need.

I hope you'll choose to take the survey and make your voice heard. Carolina Public Press has a public service mission to reach all North Carolina communities with news and information that can inform and enhance your life in real ways.

If you need more information or would like to be contacted directly regarding the survey or you'd like to be part of a focus group, please get in touch.

Angie Newsome (anewsome@carolinapublicpress.org).

Angie Newsome
Newsome is founder and executive director of Carolina Public Press, an independent, nonpartisan, nonprofit based in Asheville, carolinapublicpress.org.

Dill made a huge difference in local health care

To the Editor:

If there were a time called the Renaissance Era in the medical delivery system, including hospital facilities and medical providers in the western corner of North Carolina, I believe it was in the 20 years from 1980 to 2000.

It may seem audacious to use the term "Renaissance," but the nuance of that word, to me, implies the blossoming or blooming as it happened here.

In the medical field there were once small hospitals in every town, such as Bryson City and Andrews, with a few family practitioners providing specialty medicine including obstetrics and pediatrics, the most essential services besides general practice. Now there are quite a bit of changes with many small hospitals closing or shrinking their services from inpatient to outpatient only. Most small

hospitals have given up obstetric service.

C.J. Harris, now called Harris Regional Hospital, and medical providers mostly consisted of general practitioners in Sylva and was no different from others until 1980 when more specialty providers were encouraged to move in with a strong push of futuristic planning from the late Don Morgan, hospital administrator.

We had David Daniel, FAAP, well trained from Boston Children's Hospital, probably overqualified to be a pediatrician in a small town, but the increased number of obstetrical service patients from surrounding communities demanded more pediatric specialty practices in Sylva.

Tom Dill, who moved from a group practice in Asheville to Sylva, was the right person at the right time. That was truly fortunate for the expansion of the hospital in Sylva and the community. Not only did he have an aura of confidence in his medical care, but he projected a spirit of teamwork. He was a Southern gentleman if there ever was one, a man with a warm smile and few words. One of his biggest contributions was that he was very instrumental in recruiting other pediatricians, Carol Hagberg and Barry Nathan, both very well trained.

That group practice specialized in neonatology/pediatrics, and improved the quality of care in their specialties and expanded the availability of services needed in the surrounding communities, and provided some assurance in many difficult obstetrical patients for better outcomes in difficult, precarious situations with quality supportive care in the most critical time for any baby – immediately after birth. His practice helped me immensely in providing better care in my specialty.

His kind of medical care and his humanity will be missed. Goodbye, my friend.

Gwang S. Han, MD, FACOG,
Sylva

The good, the bad and the ugly

To the Editor:

The good: Since I'm retired at this particular point in history. I have been able to watch all the televised hearings from the January 6 committee. If you can't watch TV during the day, you should still do everything possible to watch all or part of the broadcasts in some format after work. This is a tipping point in our nation, with our fragile democracy hanging in the balance, and that is not hyperbole. History is being made in real time for the remainder of our generations, and those to follow. History will show whether we survived, or whether the longest existing democracy died like the many other democracies that came before or after ours.

The bad: The hearings have shown, without a doubt, what one selfish life form has done to our government, and many people's lives, all for his personal gain and pursuit of his fantasies. Millions of dollars, time and treasure of federal and state employees have been spent (our tax dollars) forcing them to "prove" that there was something wrong with the 2020 election based on "theories." Innocent people have been threatened, murdered and injured and continue to be threatened today as a result of the pursuit of a fantasy by one being! Anyone else in a similar position of power who told everyone who worked for them that they needed to prove that the sky was orange, when everyone already knew it was blue, would be laughed out of town. There is no difference in what was done, except that the life form tried to use his power, and powers he thought he had, to overthrow the will of the people. The people, all the people, should be thoroughly pissed off! No justice, no peace!

The ugly: Approximately 20 percent of the country actually believes that the sky is orange, for no other reason than that the life form said it was so. So much for critical thinking and reasoning. Even uglier, there is a larger percentage (20 to 30 percent) who believe it's no big deal, it's politics as usual, don't care, don't want to get involved, don't think the threat is real, don't have time to watch or listen, or any number of lame excuses to not help save our way of life. It's incomprehensible that anyone would live in, and enjoy the privileges of living in the United States, and not be willing to protect that privilege with all their being.

Americans have become way too complacent and indifferent. It can happen here! We all need to care and be sure everyone does what they can to hold accountable (prosecute) all those responsible. If not, we are lost and will have no one to blame but ourselves. Vote as if your life depends on it, because it does. Unfortunately, as it appears right now, the words of Han Solo come to mind – "I got a bad feeling about this." I sure hope I'm wrong.

Mark Ballinger,
Sylva

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We want to honor the generosity of people in our community. Let us know what you have witnessed.



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July 4 project offers lesson, treat

With July 4 around the corner, Jack the Dipper of Sylva (along with its four other locations) again will participate in the I Pledge for Ice Cream Project. All day on the Fourth and every Monday and Tuesday in July between 4 and 7 p.m., Jack the Dipper Ice Cream Parlors will give any child (age 12 and under, accompanied by an adult) who can recite the Pledge of Allegiance a free small ice cream cone of their choice. All other participating stores are listed on the program website, www.IPledgeForIceCream.com. The Jack the Dipper web site is www.jackthedipper.com.

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