

DEDICATED TO THE PROMOTION OF TOWNS COUNTY OPINIONS & COMMENTARY



Letters to The Editor

Compassion much appreciated

The family of Viola "Odie" Vandiver would like to express our many thanks to everyone for the calls, visits, cards, food, flowers and prayers during the sickness and loss of our mother who went to be with Jesus on December 15, 2009.

We appreciated Dr. Edwards and Chatuge Regional Hospital staff for being so kind, loving, and professional during her last few days with us.

Our special thank to Rev. Ray Potts and Rev. Jerry Young for their messages, comforting words, and prayers so graciously given; and for the beautiful music and songs provided by Rev. Chris Rumpfelt, Lucas Phillips and Chelsea Phillips during our mother's service. We also want to especially thank the member of Zebulon Baptist Church who prepared a meal for our family after the services.

May the many blessings of God be with you all,
Bonnie Sue Vandiver, Judy Berry,
James Thomas, and family

New Year's observations

1) As we approach our New Year's resolution to lose weight, remember a waist is a terrible thing to mind, but we've got to do it.

2) For Towns County Man of the Year for 2009, I nominate Sheriff Clinton. He listens and is not afraid to try to improve his already good administration.

3) For Towns County Woman of the Year for 2009, I nominate Cathy Cox, YHC President. Her initiative, innovation and leadership are remarkably extraordinary.

Claudos G. Spears
Young Harris

County meeting on FEMA and Georgia Floodplain Mapping

There will be a second hearing on Floodplain maps on Thursday Jan. 21, 2010, at 5:30 p.m. in the Courthouse.

Georgia's Floodplain Mapping Program is an agreement between Georgia and the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) for the development and updating of Digital Flood Insurance Rate Maps (DFIRM).

During the first hearing at a County Meeting it was established that the maps have erroneously listed many homes and properties, especially around the lake, as being in the flood zone that clearly are several feet above the flood zone.

The Commissioner's office is providing services through the Towns County 911 mapping to any citizen who wishes to come in and determine if the proposed FEMA map has your home or property listed in the floodplain by error.

Towns County is re-

quired to adopt the new digitally formatted flood maps in order for citizens to receive the lower insurance rate afforded by the Flood Insurance Rate Maps.

Commissioner Kendall stated it is of the utmost importance that the most accurate data possible be used in order to keep property out of the flood map zone because of mapping errors. To have citizen's property erroneously listed in the flood zone could lead to higher cost of insurance and diminished property value.

The Commissioner is exploring the feasibility and cost to the County of providing more accurate data to FEMA if they will agree to use it to adopt new and more accurate maps. Citizens are urged to come out to this meeting, familiarize yourself on this matter and have input into resolving these issues.

Anyone having questions on this matter may call 706 896-2276.

The Middle Path

by Don Perry

The snow last week was a late Christmas present for many of us. Schools and offices closed and people grabbed milk and loaf bread and went home early to spend some unexpected free time with their families. After a holiday season encumbered by economic hardship and tedious travel, a little down time at home mandated by Nature herself was a welcome relief. Snow is good for the mountains and the creatures that live amongst them. It melts slowly, deeply replenishing the water table in the high country. It enriches the soil and kills a host of pests and parasites. Here in the South, where snow is an exception rather than a rule, it just makes us feel good.

Not everyone enjoyed the Alberta Clipper that forced the homeless into shelters and froze fruit in Florida. Cold-damaged crops and trucks unable to roll will add to our grocery bills for some time to come, and winter is just getting started. The higher price of strawberries and orange juice was to be expected, but while buying groceries yesterday I was again reminded of the gradually rising cost of living which is being skillfully applied to the consumer as quietly and unnoticeably as a leech attaching itself to an ankle.

Case in point, a can of tuna fish costs more than it did last year, but the new cans hold a full ounce less than the old. The new labels are almost identical and the diameter of the new cans is the same, but they are just a bit shorter, a fact which is easy to miss at a glance. Breakfast cereal is higher in price also - and in many cases the amount of food in the box is less although the packaging looks the same at a glance. Manufacturers of grocery items are required to list the ingredients and the weight or volume on the package but many types of containers which look the same from the outside have developed a bulge or concavity on the inside which reduces the volume - and many shoppers never read labels at all. A host of other items in the supermarket fit this description - the same or higher price but less food in a container.

Corporations are good at math; much better, in fact, than the average consumer, mortgage or credit card holder. We have been conditioned to judge our transactions according to how we feel about them, postponing the math for

balancing the check book (and with the advent of debit cards, many of us don't even do that anymore.) Marketing attempts to influence us to substitute good feeling for good math and to postpone the cold equations for as long as possible. For example, a month ago at a large chain pizza restaurant I spent a little over twenty dollars for pizza, chicken wings and two drinks. Now the same chain is advertising any size pizza for ten dollars, so yesterday my wife and I ordered a pizza thinking that we were about to save some money on lunch. However, the cost of the drinks and the wings had gone up enough that the total cost of the meal was actually higher than it was a month ago.

Many factors have contributed to the continuing rise in prices. A very visible culprit

has been the unprecedented transfer of wealth from private individuals (tax payers) to corporate entities through corporate welfare programs which began under the Bush Administration and were escalated by Obama and the current Congress. But every corporation is not a bank "too big to fail" or a giant multinational behemoth; most businesses, in fact, are small to medium sized companies or proprietorships. The rise in prices that we see at the grocery store, the hardware store, the retail store and everywhere else that we like to spend our dollars results from causes that are systemic in nature. We are part of a global economy whether we want to be or not and a growing world population is demanding diminishing resources at a time when energy is no longer cheap.

Americans can afford to eat less pizza, buy smaller packages of food and tighten our belts without suffering any ill effects. We will, in fact, become healthier by

embracing a leaner lifestyle. As the national belt tightens, however, the competition for our diminishing dollars will reach new heights, or depths, as the case may be, and marketing techniques will be applied to us all the way from the grocery store to the White House. The holiday season began before Halloween last year in the hopes that we would substitute good cheer for good math in enough numbers to carry many struggling businesses through the winter. As the last of the snow melts away from our extended holiday, cold equations will begin to be revealed for many of us, and colder weather may put the results of those equations beyond the ability of many to pay. On my next trip to the grocery store during this first winter of a new decade, I plan to carry an extra coat, a pair of warm gloves, and a calculator. Math is much better for balancing a checkbook than the "too good to be true" feeling offered by advertising.

Nathan Deal on your payroll



U.S. Rep. Nathan Deal represents Georgia in the Ninth Congressional District. He was first elected to Congress in 1992 and today serves the citizens of 15 North Georgia counties.

U.S. Rep. Nathan Deal, R-Ga., recently took to the House floor to speak out in opposition of, and to ultimately vote against House Speaker Nancy Pelosi's government takeover of taxpayer healthcare. His floor speech was followed by applause from his colleagues and people observing in the House Gallery. The bill, which was drafted behind closed doors by the Democrat leadership, will lead to more lost jobs, higher taxes, fewer choices and the elimination of the freedoms and liberties which are essential for patients and their providers.

Rep. Deal, ranking Republican on the Energy and Commerce Subcommittee on Health, presented nu-

merous amendments during consideration of the measure at the Rules Committee, which would have prevented American taxpayers from being forced to finance benefits for illegal aliens and protect the ability of states to make independent decisions without the heavy hand of the federal government interfering with critical healthcare policy-making. Unfortunately, these amendments were rejected, leaving in place the same flawed bill that

Democratic leadership single-handedly crafted over the several weeks behind closed doors.

Despite 176 Republicans and 39 Democrats voting against the bill, H.R. 3962 passed by a vote of 220 to 215.

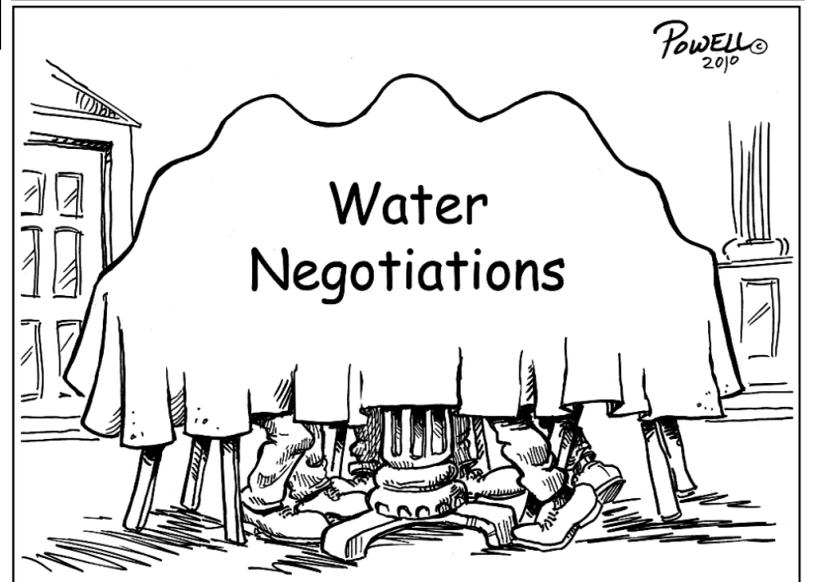
The congressman's floor statement is as follows: "I rise in opposition to this bill and I express three major concerns.

"First of all, I raise a question. The question is what authority in the United States Constitution gives this Congress the right to mandate that every citizen must purchase a health insurance policy, and upon failing to do so shall be fined and possibly imprisoned? I think the

answer to that question is - there is no such constitutional authority.

Secondly, make NO mistake about it. Illegal Aliens will receive government-funded healthcare under this bill because all they are required to show is a Social Security number and a name. There is no way to prevent the same Social Security number from being used by numerous individuals, and there is no requirement that a picture ID be produced in order to prove that the person is in fact the name which appears on the Social Security card. If you think identity theft is a problem now, just wait until this bill passes!

And thirdly, this bill requires states to increase their Medicaid roles to 150 percent of the federal poverty level. In an ever increasing fashion, states will have to absorb the cost of this burden. I offered an amendment that would have allowed states to opt out from under this mandate, but it has been rejected. In states like mine where we have to balance our budget, right now school teachers and law enforcement officers have to take unfunded furlough days. If this bill passes it will get even worse. We should not be passing a bill that takes days and money out of the paychecks of teachers and law enforcement officers to pay for this piece of legislation."



Elected Officials Elected Officials Elected Officials

- Governor Sonny Perdue, Georgia State Capitol Atlanta, GA 30334, 404-656-1776
- Sen. Johnny Isakson, U.S. Senate, Washington, DC 20510, 202-224-3643
- Sen. Saxby Chambliss, U.S. Senate, Washington, DC 20510, 202-224-3521
- U.S. Congressman Paul Broun, 10th District, Washington, DC 20515, 202-225-4101
- Rep. Stephen Allison, Georgia House of Representatives, 404-656-0177 or 0185
- Sen. Jim Butterworth, Georgia State Senate, 404-463-1367
- Towns County Commissioner Bill Kendall, 706-896-2276
- Clerk of Superior Court Cecil Dye, 706-896-2130
- Tax Commissioner Bruce Rogers, 706-896-2267
- Magistrate/Probate Judge David Rogers, 706-896-3467
- Sheriff Chris Clinton, 706-896-4444
- Coroner Ricky Mathis, 706-896-6254
- Enotah Circuit District Attorney Stan Gunter, 706-896-6489
- Board of Education: 706-896-2279, Michael Anderson, Donna Hedden, Bob Gibby, Larry Kimsey, Emily Phillips. Superintendent: Dr. Richard Behrens
- Hiawassee Mayor Barbara Mathis, 706-896-2202
- Hiawassee City Council: Janet Allen, Jay Chastain, Joan Crothers, Howard Cunningham, Annie Johnson
- Young Harris Mayor Andrea Gibby, 706-379-3171
- Young Harris City Council: Terry Ingram, John Kelley, Donald Keys, Matthew Miller, Jennifer Mulkey, David Sellers

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GUEST COLUMNS

From time to time, people in the community have a grand slant on an issue that would make a great guest editorial. Those who feel they have an issue of great importance should call our editor and talk with him about the idea. Others have a strong opinion after reading one of the many columns that appear throughout the paper. If so, please write. Please remember that publication of submitted editorials is not guaranteed.

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Towns County Herald, Letter to the Editor, PO Box 365, Hiawassee, GA 30546. Our email address: tcherald@brmeme.net. Letters should be limited to 200 words or less, signed, dated and include a phone number for verification purposes. This paper reserves the right to edit letters to conform with Editorial page policy or refuse to print letters deemed pointless, potentially defamatory or in poor taste. Letters should address issues of general interest, such as politics, the community, environment, school issues, etc.

Letters opposing the views of previous comments are welcomed; however, letters cannot be directed at, nor name or ridicule previous writers. Letters that recognize good deeds of others will be considered for publication.*
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