

DEDICATED TO THE PROMOTION OF TOWNS COUNTY OPINIONS & COMMENTARY

Letters to The Editor

School Super addresses \$\$\$ cuts

Federal, state and local cuts in revenue for the Towns County School System this year.

The negative changes in the economy have had troubling effects on all areas of the country including local school districts. This year state and federal financial support for the Towns County School System (TCSS) has been in a constant state of flux. In the past, when the State of Georgia reduced funding, they notified the local school districts prior to the year they planned to cut revenues. This enabled school boards to plan accordingly and adjust their budgets in a way that minimized the negative impact on students. Unfortunately this school year, the state has experienced drastic cuts in revenue which led to immediate cut backs in state funding for the current school year. State officials contacted the Towns County School Board last fall and told them to expect funding cuts for this school year of about \$79,000.

The state financial condition continued to deteriorate with the estimated state cuts in funding for TCSS falling even lower to approximately \$387,000 for this school year. In addition, year to date county general fund school sales tax revenues have dropped well below last years level by \$266,246 or approximately 16%. The school board anticipated these reduced revenues and adjusted the current year budget last year accordingly; however, local tax revenues have slowed down falling below expectations. The combined loss of projected revenues for the current school year is expected to exceed \$500,000 or approximately 5% of the budgeted revenues.

State and Federal government officials will meet this month to determine the amount of stimulus funds the local school districts will receive and the conditions tied to those funds. These revenues will be distributed to the counties during the current and following school year.

On the expenditure side, the Towns County Board of Education has been working since last fall with the school administrators to cut operational costs. Cuts have been made throughout the system in personnel, transportation, energy and maintenance to offset these losses in funding.

Richard Behrens
Superintendent Towns County Schools

GSBA opposes school vouchers

Where is the Accountability and Transparency in the Voucher Proposal?

Georgia is facing the most critical financial crisis seen in many years. Revenue is down and all areas of government – state and local – are facing deep and, in some cases, scarring budget cuts. In the face of these facts, some lawmakers are proposing that we use scarce public dollars to subsidize private school tuition in the form of vouchers.

The Georgia School Boards Association is opposed to vouchers at any time because every voucher proposal we have seen is bad public policy. It is interesting that, in a time when there are furious outcries over the lack of accountability and transparency in how our federal tax dollars are being spent, we have a state proposal to send tax dollars to the private sector with no plans for ensuring we know how *this* money is spent.

If taxpayer dollars follow the child, why wouldn't taxpayer standards such as requiring certified teachers, test-based accountability measuring student achievement, and publishing how the public money was spent? Public results and accountability in exchange for public funding would seem to be a minimum requirement for any program; yet it is not a part of the voucher discussion.

Georgia's 180 public school systems serve 92 percent of the state's students. Parents of these students can easily access information to evaluate and compare public schools on a number of measures on several websites. Parents need more than a check to make good, informed choices for their children. They need quality, comparable data to make those choices, and the public deserves to know how their investment in education is being used.

Do not be lured by quick sound bites or political rhetoric. Ask your legislators where the accountability and transparency is in the voucher proposal. It's a simple concept.

Jeannie M. (Sis) Henry, Georgia School Boards Association Executive Director

Julia Bernath, Georgia School Boards Association President and Fulton County Board Member

Remembrances

*Brasstown Manor resident
92-year-old
James Parker
recalls his
childhood in
Honea Path,
South Carolina*



Lucy Fleming

Lucy Fleming was Bert Fleming's daughter and our next door neighbor. Lucy was a young girl when I first knew her. Her mother was in the state hospital in Columbia for mental problems. Lucy took the

place of her mother, cooked and helped raise all her siblings, and she worked in the fields.

Every Saturday in the summer she would sweep her yard with a broom made of cane or dogwood. This was before grass got popular for yards. One morning as she swept her yard, I heard her singing, "I'd rather be somebody's darlin' than a poor girl nobody knows." I guess she was never anyone's "darlin'", but she was a pillar for her family.

In later years she was a comfort to my mother by her visits.

The Middle Path by Don Perry

When someone steals from us the offense invites a variety of responses. We can feel violated, angry and in some circumstances even stupid. The act of theft etches our idealistic views like battery acid on a new paint job. We want justice, or at the very least vengeance.

The theft of trillions (that's twelve zeroes) of dollars from the American taxpayer is an offense on such a large scale that it's hard to wrap our minds around it. It seems remote and unreal and impersonal and it is those very qualities which make any hope of justice or compensation unlikely.

In fiscal year 1999 the Defense Department reported \$2.3 trillion of undocumented transactions. In fiscal 2000 it reported \$1.1 trillion and in every year since then the DOD has declined to produce audited financial statements as required by law. If we add to that all the money which has

disappeared out of pension funds and investors' accounts with the manipulation of Internet and telecom stocks, the manipulation of the precious metals markets, the movement of gold stores at below market prices and the bait and switch of the housing market, according to one estimate over \$10 trillion has been siphoned out of the American economy and into private hands in the last decade.

Yes, but change has come to America. Indeed, from 1997 to March 2001, the Under Secretary of Defense who was the chief financial officer for the DOD was William J. Lynn III. He was the chief financial officer for the Department of Defense and the principal advisor to the Secretary and Deputy Secretary of Defense for all budgetary and fiscal matters precisely during the time that at least \$3.4 trillion disappeared from the books at the Pentagon. In 2005 Lynn

became the chief lobbyist for Raytheon. In February of this year Lynn was confirmed as President Obama's new Deputy Secretary of Defense.

Let's indulge for a moment in a game of "what if." What if we were a nation's central bank and a privately held corporation which grew weary of the democratic process and decided to accelerate the process of profit making. What if, when the host (as opposed to parasite) nation's currency was strong, we bought up currency and assets of weaker economies. No one noticed all the money leaving out the back door because everyone was apparently prospering in the bubbled up economy. Interest rates were held low; consumers were encouraged from the top down to borrow and spend and the price of gold was suppressed, shutting down the early warning system that would otherwise tell the nation

that something was amiss. What if jobs and resources were shipped overseas to the very places where our overseas investments were made, further increasing the value of those investments. What if, when the bubble finally burst in the host nation and the weaker currencies we had bought up became stronger, our profits increased even more. Meanwhile, as stock prices dropped and millions lost their homes and pension funds, what if we engineered a recapitalization plan funded with paper printed from our own presses and charged to the American taxpayer and his or her descendants. As we rescued and "stimulated" the economy we could end up directly or indirectly controlling about half of the residential mortgages in the country.

Yes, change has come to America, and the emperor has a brand new suit of clothes.

Filling Up Empty Space

By David Seckinger



That darn cat

It looks like I am going to have to start dating again. Apparently I can't tell the difference between girls and boys anymore.

Last Christmas an abandoned cat showed up to my front door. It was a full-grown orange tabby, about a year old, I figured, very affectionate, but terrified of being indoors. I unsuccessfully tried to get the cat to stay indoors on a freezing night, but the cat turned wild trying to get out. Anyway, it was best the cat stayed outdoors because the landlady had a no pets policy.

After seeing the cat was an adult female, I immediately began to worry she would get pregnant, and I would end up feeding five or six hungry cats. Even cute little kittens are not that easy to give away.

Well, it just so happened that the Humane Society's Mountain Shelter offered help getting local animals fixed during the month of February. One day Barbara DeYoung came into the office with a Humane Society press release when I told her about my new abandoned cat and worries about an unwanted pregnancy. Mrs. DeYoung and all the good folks at the Mountain Shelter (including Amanda and Helen) went beyond the call of duty to set up an appointment to spay the cat.

The day of the operation, I dropped the cat off early in the morning. When I hadn't heard anything by mid-afternoon, I began to worry. I finally got a call a little before 5 p.m. telling me the cat was fine and I could get him whenever I wanted. When the woman said "him" instead of "her," my first thought was the Humane Society has switched my cat.

But no, they had the right cat. It seems I was the one confused. You see, the cat was

a neutered male. In my defense, when I did not see any testicles on the cat, that appeared to be fairly straightforward evidence the cat was a female. I don't know if it was laziness or bashfulness, but I went with my first impression rather than giving the cat a thorough medical exam.

A co-worker thought it was the funniest thing when learning of the mistaken identity. She said the cat must have been asking himself, "How many times can they do me like this?"

I have learned a valuable lesson from my mistake. This is the reason I should never pick up a one-night stand in Atlanta, Georgia. I would be thinking it's a girl, but I am liable to end up with another neutered Tom.

And I would like to once again thank the Humane Society's Mountain Shelter. Not only were they cheerful and courteous, but they truly showed me the error of my ways concerning one particular cat.

In conclusion, if there are any women out there possibly interested in dating an obviously lonesome newspaper reporter with questionable eyesight, then drop by the Towns County Herald office and please bring your birth certificate.

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Lt. Gov. Cagle Statement on the Passage of the Amended Budget

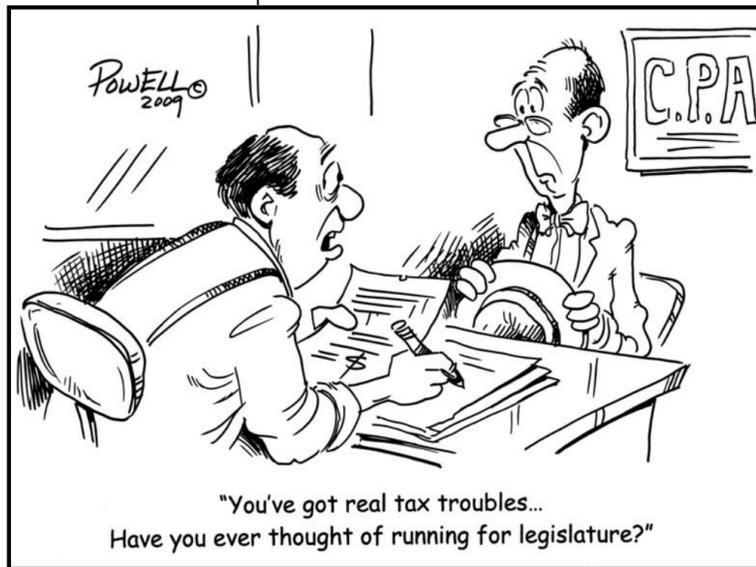
Budget Cuts Nearly \$2 billion of State Spending

(Atlanta, GA) – Lt. Governor Casey Cagle released the following statement regarding the Senate's passage of the amended budget:

"We are very pleased with the fiscally conservative budget that passed the State Senate today. While we met the most pressing needs of our state including education and public safety, we have cut nearly \$2 billion of unnecessary state spending and provided the people of Georgia with real savings. This is especially significant considering

the multiple revenue reductions that have impacted this budget.

"In this tough economic time, it is more critical than ever to produce a clean budget that prioritizes our spending and cuts wasteful excess. Appropriations Chairman Jack Hill led the effort on this bill and I commend his solid work. We greatly appreciate the efforts and collaboration of House leadership as we have worked together on this budget and look forward to our continuing this effort on the 2010 budget."



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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.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR SHOULD BE E-MAILED OR MAILED TO:

Towns County Herald, Letter to the Editor, P.O. Box 365, Hiwassee, GA 30546, Our E-Mail Address:

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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.
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