

Opinions

Everybody has one...

Transportation tax goes to Senate

House District 8 State Rep. Stephen Allison (R-Blairsville) voted no in regards to the Transportation Funding Act of 2015. Rep. Allison heard the voices from his constituency. To be honest, Rep. Allison has heard several ways to address the funding shortage for the Georgia Department of Transportation. We've heard those same ideas and we're none too pleased with any of them. The bottom line is that GDOT has lost credibility with the general populace. What Rep. Jay Roberts and the others who sponsored this legislation don't realize is that taxpayers have been funding transportation in Georgia forever. And now, those 123 House lawmakers that passed this legislation last week are telling Georgians that the state is digging a deeper well to mine for dollars to pay for transportation projects.

Straight Shooting

Charles Duncan



Over the years, we've never heard of an accounting of how transportation dollars have been spent. Beginning in 2006, we began to hear rumblings that the transportation well had run dry and long-range projects would not be completed. We've been subjected to a toll bridge on Georgia 400, one that finally is gone. If we travel to Metro, we're subjected to HOV lanes that charge based on the traffic count, and now, we have the Transportation Funding Act of 2015. Basically, if this most recent legislation passes the State Senate, we'll be force-fed a tax that this group of legislators say is not a tax. That is, if Gov. Nathan Deal signs this legislation into law.

We applaud Rep. Allison for voting no on this piece of legislation. He truly represented his House District, which includes Union and Towns counties. We understand that there needs to be a definitive way to fund transportation costs. However, we believe that methodology should include improving roads, bridges and other transportation needs in Northeast Georgia, not just Metro Atlanta.

The legislation defines transportation as roads, bridges, public transit, trails, airports, buses, seaports, and all accompanying infrastructure and services necessary to provide access to these transportation facilities, including general obligation debt, revenue debt, and other multiyear obligations issued to finance such purposes. Honestly, we don't have public transit, rail, or seaports in the mountains. We know this legislation is geared toward the Metro and Port of Savannah. That's why we don't support it. It's time to stand up for the Mountain counties in Northeast Georgia. Thank you State Rep. Stephen Allison.

"Goodness!"

"I'm good" has become quite the humorous way to buffer a "No!" When asked if we want something, the negative response is "I'm good." Such as, "Do you want a coffee?" "I'm good." Or, "Let's walk on the ice over that lake!" "I'm good." The idea of goodness has worked its way into the conversation about the existence of God. Philosophers have posed the question, "Can we be good without God?" I would be out of my league to engage those thinkers, but some thoughts come to mind. Perhaps this will get you to thinking, too. Notice the question doesn't demand belief in God. Sure, there are non-believers who do good things. The question is really about how we know what is good.

All Things New

Wayne Fowler



The secular answer is that our morals come from ourselves and whatever evolution has built into us, including survival of the fittest. As products of random chaos humans have no more intrinsic value than other species. So the value of a person and her morality are subjective. What or who she values is her choice. The theist responds, how do you define good? When you acknowledge good and evil, that's a moral law. Skeptic philosopher Immanuel Kant said, "Two things awe me most, the starry sky above me and the moral law within me." If there's a moral law, there must be a moral lawgiver. Moral law is innate to the value of a person. Where could that value and the moral law within us come from, if not God? Could molecules or chance do that? If there is good, there is God, so we cannot be good without Him.

The God Christians know is loving and just. His moral commands are not arbitrary or random, but are an expression of His character. We are accountable, and our choices have eternal consequence. He values us enough to provide a Savior to balance the scales of justice, and enable us to live lives of moral consequence today. William Lane Craig wrote, "If God does not exist, then it is plausible to think that there are no objective moral values, that we have no moral duties, and that there is no moral account-

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Questions and Answers

Q. The Road Dept did an exceptional job on our roads. Can you thank them for us?

A. I want to thank the many folks on Facebook, the *North Georgia News*, and on the streets who have offered up congratulations to me on behalf of the county employees. They have indeed done an exceptional job during the past two weeks of winter weather. I also want to thank the Fire and Rescue Department volunteers and staff, E-911 and our outstanding dispatchers, our Sheriff's Department, Ambulance Service, and other staff members who helped in any way.

Q & A from Union County Commissioner

Lamar Paris



Q. How difficult is it to drive a salt spreader truck?
A. Until you have ridden in a salt spreader truck most of a night, beating your body as you go over the many bumps in the roads caused by the snow and ice, going up the side of dark mountain roads in thick fog and snowy conditions, backing up when you can't see what is behind you, deciding whether it is better to scrape only, spread gravel and salt only, or do both, will you have an appreciation for what these guys at the Road Department do for you. It is extremely difficult and can be quite dangerous.

Q. Do all counties have the same level of snow removal as Union County?

A. I can assure you that no other rural county provides the level of snow removal that your county does, nor do they have the equipment we have. This is not meant to be negative on other counties because I know many of them do a good job. There are only a few mountain counties that are faced with this problem on a regular basis and most do not have the miles of roads that we have.

Q. What is the hardest part of dealing with severe winter weather?

A. The hardest part to me is the pressure. We can handle snow, but ice is a different story. We do not want to end up in a position like Atlanta last year during the ice storm, where there was total gridlock on the highways and people stranded or in accidents. When a county is unprepared or caught off guard, not only

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Letters to the Editor ...

The rest of the story

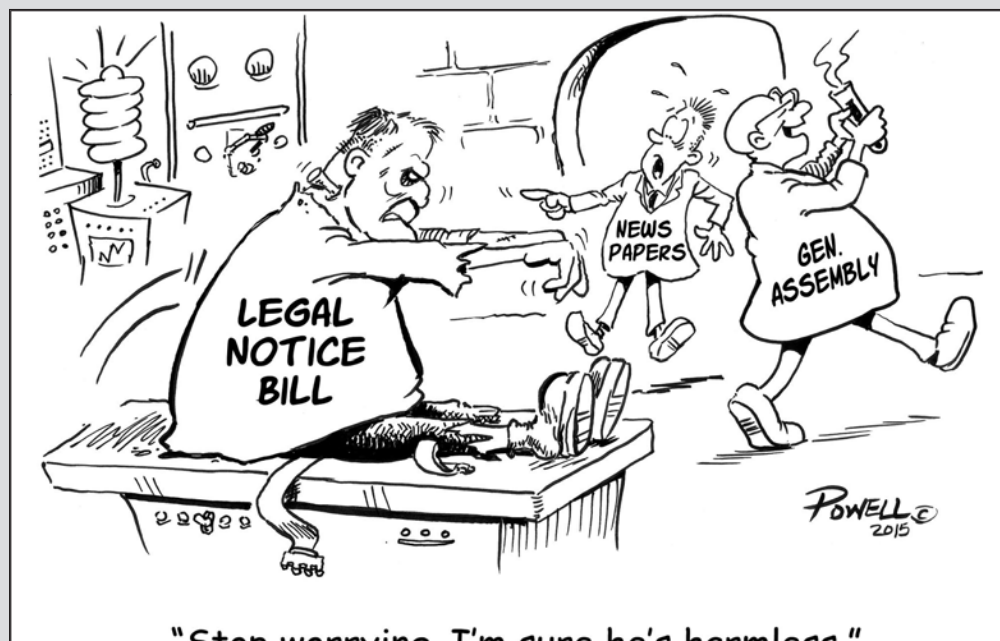
Dear Editor,
"It's a formidable insurer and well respected until you actually have a claim," I added. "Then you find out the hard way what they'll do to make sure you don't get what you've paid premiums for." This passage from Patricia Cornwell's mystery novel, *Flesh and Blood*, has been my recent nightmare regarding my own home. For 18 weeks, my insurance carrier destined that I "live" in a partial home (due to water damage) because it initially refused to pay for any repairs. I have been with this company since I was 17. Imagine the horrible shock when I was told by my contractor that it would cost me personally \$28,000 to repair my "insured" home. My insurance company betrayed my trust. It was only after I secured an ATL attorney that suddenly my insurance firm decided to pay. My suggestion to all of you: Run, don't walk to your insurance agent. Insist that your agent cover every single element of your home and automobile: up, down, in, out, and through. Even if a human or animal leaves an odor in your home,
See Ashurst, page 5A

I am now informed

Dear Editor,
It is gracious of the *North Georgia News* to publish my ramblings. I am also obliged to those who voluntarily read my letters and provide both compliments and criticisms. I do find it somewhat unusual to receive so personal and scathing a letter as was recently directed to me by Ms. Maloney via a newspaper's "Letters to the Editor," especially when it violates the "praise in public, chastise in private" axiom. Is it possible that "the pot is calling the kettle black" and its author should re-evaluate her news sources? The credibility of her information is certainly in question when she states, "Obama passed a Republican health care plan?" However, it is truly comforting to know one can always depend on those more enlightened, objective and reasonable than himself to correct the errors of his ways and return him to the path of reason and righteousness. Until now I really had no idea of all of the accomplishments of the Obama administration, especially given his stalled Senate blockaded by Harry Reid and his rigorous golf and fund raising schedules. But now that I have become
See Fiser, page 5A

My two cents

Dear Editor,
I have been away from Blairsville for over 15 years now. I continue to receive the *North Georgia News* through the mail to Hawaii. It is usually 3 to 4 weeks late arriving and issues do not always arrive in order in which they were sent-so sometimes I get quite confused, especially when reading the letters to the editor-as the underlying issue will not be clear to me until the previous issue of the paper arrives which a letter is responding to. Thus is the case with the EMC stories. I have been following the EMC scandal and would like to add my two cents worth to the issue. First I would like to admit that at times I had problems paying my electric bill and was oftentimes late, even to a point of having my service disconnected. While I was going to college and my wife was expecting our second child my veterans' education check was interrupted for many months, due to a reporting mistake by the school I was attending. My electric service was disconnected and my mortgage company was threatening foreclosure. Having no way to pay these payments I sought assistance from Sen. Nunn's office to get my VA payment restored. Sen. Nunn's office was very fast and efficient in contacting both the BRMEMC and my Mortgage Company in obtaining time for me to pay
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My list of concerns

Dear Editor,
Rep. Doug Collins sent me an e-mail asking which of four issues I'm most concerned about. First was "Protecting Second Amendment Rights." In view of the erroneous decision by the right wing majority on the Supreme Court, which ignores the obvious fact that the Second Amendment deals with militia and not the general public, that's like beating a dead horse. Doug, nobody is trying to take away your gun collection. Second is "Illegal immigration." People from Mexico and central American, looking for a better life, have been illegally entering the U.S. for many years. Reagan, Bush I, Clinton, Bush II and the U.S. Congress have all failed to deal with the problem. President Obama, while sending many of them home, has made a reasonable proposal. Doug Collins apparently prefers inaction to reasonable proposals. "The President's refusal to identify Islamic Terrorism." That one is absurd. President Obama has suggested, quite correctly, that we should remember that although ISIS and other terrorist groups are Muslim, most Muslims are not terrorists. The fourth "issue" suggested by Collins is "Cutting Federal Spending to Balance the Budget." Actually, the deficit has been reduced during the Obama administration. Where were Collins and his fellow Obama haters when George W. Bush, lying about weapons of mass destruction, made what many observers describe as the
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Sean is a blessing

Dear Editor,
A few comments, if I may, in response to the recent scowl-o-gram from Ruth "Sunshine" Ramsey: First, the duties of Walmart greeters extend beyond saying "hello" to customers. Greeters are responsible for rounding up and organizing shopping carts and electric scooters in the store's entryway and lobby, and for keeping the floors in those areas tidy. Our local store is blessed by a young handicapped man named Sean, who diligently performs those tasks from his wheelchair, all the while welcoming each shopper with a smile. This fellow's disabilities are so severe that I suspect he'd have a hard time holding a more demanding job. Sean's genuine friendliness has boosted my spirits for several years, each time he and I exchange greetings. Second, it seems highly unlikely that a Muslim could or would hold a job as a Walmart greeter. The commandments of Islam's prophet, as clearly expressed both in the Qu'ran and the scholarly hadith, forbid equality between Muslims and peoples of other faiths, or those of no faith. In such a scenario, the "infidel" is to be converted to Islamic belief, taxed if a Christian or Jew, or exterminated if deemed an apostate. Kinda goes against the grain of "have a blessed day," would you not agree?
Best Regards,
Roger Beal

Ronald

The year of 1975 gave many special memories. Not the least of which was a young man by the name of Ronald. Ronald had just become engaged to his future wife Annie. Ronald came forward one morning to receive Christ and asked my father about being baptized into our church. Ronald and Annie were baptized and became staunch members of Center Grove Baptist Church. After the two were married the young couple began teaching our youth Sunday School Class. Every kid in the class loved Ronald and Nancy. They were special people and all of us looked up to Ronald and Annie. After he began teaching our class Ronald offered me a job working in his tomato field. So, from July to mid-August I picked tomatoes for Ronald. I had a wonderful summer the year I worked as a tomato picker. As time went by Ronald became more and more involved with our church. He was there each time the door was open. One Sunday morning Ronald came forward at the end of our service and with tears streaming down his face he announced to the congregation his calling to the ministry. So, the church set aside Ronald as a potential minister. During this time Ronald was counseled and taught the Southern Baptist doctrine. After a time he was also asked to give his very first sermon as a minister. The church wanted to hear the young man give a sermon. Before we get to the sermon please let me remind you of what happens to a young man after he marries a good cook. When Ronald married he weighed 175 pounds. But, every day Annie made biscuits for breakfast and by the end of winter Ronald had gained about 45 pounds. So, by the time of his first sermon at Center Grove Church Ronald had become quite pudgy. Ronald stood up behind the pulpit and was so nervous he dropped all of his notes at the beginning of his first message. The young minister bent over to pick up his notes and everyone in church heard the splitting of the seam in his pants. The seam ripped from the front button of the pants down past the zipper between the legs and up to his back belt loop. The only thing holding his pants together was the belt. There was only 1 person in the church of 250 people which did not hear the pants ripping. That 1 person was Ronald. Annie was sitting beside my mother when Ronald's pants split. The look on her face was priceless. After the initial shock was over she began making hand gestures to Ronald. She eventually held up a note with big letters which read "Your pants are ripped". He looked at his wife and even though he was on his first point immediately stopped the sermon and said, "Let us pray". After the prayer everyone looked back toward the pulpit and saw that Ronald had removed his jacket and tied it around his waist.
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Around The Farm

Mickey Cummings



We need your opinion

Do you love Blairsville-Union County? Do you want to have input in the future of our County? If so, I have a favor to ask of you this week. The Blairsville-Union County Chamber of Commerce and other local partners would like to get your thoughts and feelings on Blairsville-Union County as we undergo a community branding initiative. Read on to find out more about the project and how to access the short survey.

Blairsville - Union County Chamber

Cindy Williams



The Chamber of Commerce along with Union County, the City of Blairsville, and the Union County Development Authority are working on a community branding project. Under the professional guidance of the University of Georgia's Carl Vinson Institute of Government, we are in the middle of a collaborative effort that engages a variety of public input, including multiple focus group meetings, committee meetings, and interviews. The process concludes in an integrated document that reflects the needs and desires of the community through a brand statement, positioning, slogan, tagline, and implementation strategies. This project will play a large role in the future direction of Union County, so don't miss the chance to be part of the fun! Please take a moment to complete a short and anonymous survey. The collective results will be incorporated into the final recommendations for our community branding. The survey can be accessed from the homepage of our website at www.VisitBlairsvilleGA.com. The Chamber is also happy to provide printed copies or email you a direct link to the survey. To request additional

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More Cheesy Thoughts

Two years ago this May, I fell in love. His name was Andrea Borderi. We met in a stall (Via de Benedictis 6) at the open market in Ortigia, the old town area of Siracusa, Sicily. At first I thought he was just a street vendor that was all charm. Then I tasted his cheeses. There was mozzarella (normal and smoked), then provolone sweet, seasoned, fresh but also provolone Ragusa- from milk of cows only grass and hay fed, and those injected with wine nero d'Avola or squid ink), and the pecorino (salted, herbed, seasoned and hard). He was more than handsome and charming - he was a master cheese maker. The samples of his masterpieces were being hawked by his daughter, Eleftheria, who also serves as the accountant for their dairy, Caseificio Borderi. Two-bite samples of the cheeses were placed in our hands, or if you were fortunate, as was I, fed to you by Andrea, himself. He looked straight in my eyes, watching me swoon as the pungent taste of the aged provolone melted on my tongue, electrifying my taste buds. Then came the samples of the fresh buffalo milk mozzarella. The smoked samples were so much more delicate than American smoked cheeses. On display was a bountiful ball of mozzarella, cut in half to expose that it was stuffed with seasonal vegetables- as beautiful as it was most likely, delectable. Once I was able to take my eyes off the cheese maker himself, I noticed my sister eyeing a culinary sculpture. The flat topped cone shaped cheese was ivory in color at the base and the top looked as if it had been held over a bonfire like a marshmallow, perfectly toasted. The samples came to us on a small wooden board, still warm to the palate. I took a video of my sister taking her first bite of this three times baked fresh ricotta called Tricotta. Viewing it afterwards, she made me promise not to show it to my brother-in-law, for the look of lust on her face would have made any mate homicidal with envy. Andrea seductively cut the wedges of cheese we each selected as our purchases. He wrapped them carefully for our voyage back to the States.
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Farmers Market Moment

JoAnne Leone



North Georgia News

Published since 1909 • Legal Organ of Union County

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Joe Collins Advertising Director Todd Forrest Staff Writer

Lowell Nicholson Photographer

Website: www.nganews.com
E-mail: northgeorgianews@hotmail.com
Mailing: POBox 2029, Blairsville, GA 30514



Publication No: 001505

Advertising, News deadlines Friday at 4 p.m.

Mail Service for all subscriptions except 30512, 30514 & 30572 - 1 Year \$35.00. In county, carrier delivered subscription is \$3. All subscriptions must be paid in advance. NORTH GEORGIA NEWS is published weekly by NGN/TCH, Inc., 266 Cleveland Street, Blairsville, Georgia, 30512. Entered as Second Class Matter as of Dec. 10, 1987 at the Post Office in Blairsville. NORTH GEORGIA NEWS is not responsible for errors in advertising beyond the cost of the actual space involved. Advertising and subscriptions can be paid by cash, check or credit card. Phone: (706) 745-6343 Fax: (706) 745-1830 * P.O. Box 2029, Blairsville, GA 30514