

Opinions

Everybody has one
Proud of our lawmakers

In the early days of 2013, we can be proud of the fact that there are some who are trying to bring some sense to our legislative process.



Charles Duncan

Straight Shooting

First, 9th District Congressman Doug Collins, (R-GA), who represents Union County in the 9th Congressional District, co-sponsored legislation introducing a bill to make the Fair Tax a reality.

Last week, State Sen. Steve Gooch, (R-Dahlonega), who represents Union County in the 51st State Senate District, co-sponsored legislation to phase out the state income tax.

Finally, someone is starting to make sense in Washington, D.C. and Atlanta, respectively.

With all the talk about how many people are beating the federal income tax system, it makes sense to do away with the Internal Revenue Service and implement a consumption tax that will collect tax dollars across the board - no exemptions or loopholes.

That's what a Fair Tax does, it collects taxes based on consumption. The more you spend, the more you pay in Fair Tax.

Meanwhile, if approved by Georgia voters, Senate Resolution 8, cosponsored by Sen. Gooch, would phase out the state income tax completely by the year 2027.

This process would be gradual, reducing the tax rate by a half percent every year until the income tax is eliminated.

It's a Constitutional Amendment, so the voters of Georgia would decide the fate of this legislation. Expect much debate before that happens.

The Georgia income tax rate is 6 percent. Several states do not have an income tax including Florida, Tennessee, Texas, Wyoming, Washington, New Hampshire, Nevada and Alaska.

Other states have the abolition of their state income tax under consideration, including North Carolina, Louisiana and Nebraska.

Ideally, both legislative items would put those tax dollars back in the hands of taxpayers and begin collecting taxes based on consumption or usage by taxpayers.

In case you haven't noticed, the middle class did go over the fiscal cliff. We're paying more in Social Security taxes as is evidenced in our withholding slips.

Congress and the White House are seemingly playing ping pong with the taxpayers of this country. Each week, a new drama unfolds and is hashed out in the national news media.

The financial actions and grandstanding in Washington are an absolute insult to the American people.

That's why it's actually refreshing to see a Congressman do the job that he's paid to do in Washington. Congressman Collins is wasting little time in trying to make an impact for his constituents in the 9th Congressional District.

We salute Doug Collins in Washington and Steve Gooch in Atlanta for looking after the taxpayers that they represent.

Even if little gets done, we know that it takes more than one legislator and that they're going to bat for the people that put them in office.

Times are hard and we think it's likely that taxpayers could put every penny that's put back in their pockets to good use.

It's high time that lawmakers in Washington and Atlanta quit listening to lobbyists and live up to the expectations of the people that put them in office.

"We The People" are much more important than any lobbyist group. It's time to dance with the one who put you in office.

Work Ready, the flu and rain

Q. What does the small Work Ready sign mean that we saw on Hwy 515 just before entering into the City of Blairsville?

A. We are very pleased that Union County has now been designated by the State of Georgia as a "Certified Work Ready" community. This is a program out of the Governor's Office of Workforce Development which was created to make sure that Georgia's workers have easy access to training and job opportunities. The primary focus is the "Work Ready Certificate" that accesses the real world skills of Georgia's workers which they can then present to prospective employers. Being designated a "Certified Work Ready Community" means that we have the skilled workforce that business demands and the educational infrastructure to drive economic growth and prosperity. This is a very important component in bringing new business into our community.

Q. How does a community become certified work ready?

A. To earn this designation, we had to demonstrate a commitment to improving high school graduation rates through a measurable increase. We also encouraged those who have not received a high school diploma to take the General Educational Development program (GED).

Q. If I am looking for work and want to take the "Work Ready" test for my resume, who do I contact to take it?

A. You should call North Georgia Technical College at (706) 439-6300 and ask for Leah Hughes, Student Affairs Assistant.

Q. Do you have any information on how the flu has impacted Union County this winter?

A. Mike Gowder, Union General Hospital Administrator, reports that from November 18th, when they had their first positive flu test until January 15th, they have had a total of 170

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"Lt. Gov. Cagle, I presume?"

Hobbled By Habits

At the beginning of this year it would be good for all of us to check our lives to see if we have some habits or weights that hobble us.

Is there some habit that you have developed over the years or perhaps developed this past year that hinders you from running a successful race?

If there is, you need to deal with it now. None of us need to carry baggage into a new year that might spoil it. We need to cultivate good habits and cast off bad habits.

Years ago when gypsies criss-crossed the country in caravans they would seek out grassy areas for their horses to graze in. When they pitched camp, in order to keep their horses from wandering off, they would hobble them.

Farmers have also used this method to restrict the movement of their livestock. To hobble an animal they would tie the front legs together with a short rope. This would limit the length of steps, but it would allow the animal to graze.

Did you know that a lot of people have hobbled themselves by habits? They are not able to travel very far in life. They have handicapped themselves with habits that prevent them from running the Christian race. When they attempt to run they fall on their faces hobbled by habits.

Someone has aptly said that a habit is like a comfortable bed, easy to get into, but hard to get out of.

Someone else has said that the chains of habit are too weak to be felt until they are too strong to be broken.

Probably the easiest way to break a habit is to drop it suddenly. One lady was talking to a friend about a sleeping pill she took each night to get relaxed so she could sleep. "It's not habit-forming." She explained. "I know, because I've been taking it for 12 years!"

The following poem entitled *I Am Habit*, speaks to all of us. The author is unknown, but the poem should be clipped and filed for future reference:

*It's mighty hard to shake me - in my brawny arms I take thee -
I can either make or break thee - I'm habit.*

*Through each day I slowly mold thee - soon my tightening chains enfold thee -
Then it is with ease I hold thee - Thus is habit.*

*I can be both good and vile - I can even be worth your while -
Or the cause of your bitter cry - I'm habit.*

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The 10 Organizational Myths of Chambers of Commerce - Part 1

I'd be willing to make a bet. Any business owner or organization leader you talk to would say the same thing. No matter how many people you talk to, how many ads you run, how many presentations you give, or how many years you remain in the same location, there are still people who say, "I had no idea you were here!"

When it comes to our Chamber of Commerce, which was incorporated 32 years ago, we hear a similar line, "I have no idea what you do." There are a lot of misunderstandings about our organization and Chambers of Commerce in general. Therefore, over the next few weeks I want to debunk the most common myths regarding the Chamber of Commerce. Let's begin.

Myth 1: The Chamber is an entity of the local government.

Reality: We have a deep respect for and great partnership with our local government. However, the Chamber is its own 501 (c) (6) organization which is an association of persons/members having a common business interest and its purpose is to promote this common business interest. The mission of our Chamber is to positively impact our community and members by facilitating tourism, economic, and cultural development. Our employees are not county employees. The only tax money we receive is a portion of the local hotel/motel tax which, by law, must be earmarked for tourism advertising and promotion. Therefore, we depend on our membership to support the business programs and services that we are able to provide. Signing up for membership does not mean paying money to the local government. It does mean that you are opening the door for a variety of business services not otherwise af-

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Wyatt and Gincy Cummings

My great, great, great Grandfather, Wyatt Cummings, fought in that awful War Between the States. At the time of the war he lived in North Alabama. He voted for Lincoln because he was opposed to the war. When Alabama succeeded from the Union most of the people in his community tried to sit out the war for three reasons. First, they didn't own slaves. Second, they were opposed to fighting against the country so many of their ancestors had helped create. Third, they didn't want to fight against their own brothers in the south. However, the Home Guard tried to force my ancestor and others to fight for the South. So, Wyatt and his brother Absolem, slipped through the lines to Savannah, Tennessee to sign up with the North and fought the remaining years of the war with the Second Tennessee Mounted Infantry a Federal Army.

There was nothing glamorous about this war. Many people died as a result of their wounds and it was close to one hundred years before the Tennessee Valley pulled out of the depression caused by the "War Between the States". Wyatt and his brother fought many battles in middle Tennessee, especially around the Duck River which is located around Winchester and Tullahoma. However, neither of the young men was wounded. Unlike Wyatt, Absolem never made it home from the war. He died not of a bullet, but, he died of dysentery.

After the war Wyatt came home first to a neighbor's house. At the time his wife, Gincy, didn't know whether he was alive or dead. Wyatt was afraid of sending letters home for fear of retribution from the Home Guard. Wyatt sent the neighbor's son to his home with a message. The boy went to the Cummings home and told Gincy, "There is a man down at our house that is offering you \$25 for your milk cow". He explained to Gincy that the man felt it was not proper for him to be in her home without her husband being present. Money was hard to come by during that period of time and \$25 was a lot of money. Since Gincy needed the money she went to the neighbor's house to dicker with the man about the price of the cow. Much to her surprise she found her husband whom she had not seen in 3 years.

We do not know what was said between Wyatt and his wife. But, the event must have been a joyful homecoming. Wyatt's son was only 1 1/2 years old when he left to fight in the war. Soon other siblings would come along. So, the family appeared to be happy and content. However, Wyatt was disturbed at what he found in Winston County upon his return. People were angry and wanted retribution for events that oc-

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Potato eyes are haunting

The home that I was raised in, from elementary school through high school years, was what was architecturally known as a "split level." It should have been called a "stair stepper." There were steps leading from the bedrooms to the main area - living room, dining room, and kitchen. Then steps leading to the family room level that also housed the garage and had doors leading out to the patio and backyard. Then there were steps leading to the basement.

Here's how we lived. The fourth bedroom had been converted into a playroom/study for my sister and me. We got up in the morning and went to the bathroom on that floor. That was the only floor that had the bathrooms in the main section of the house. You went down to the middle floor for breakfast. You went back up to change your clothes. You went down two floors to find your shoes you left under the coffee table the night before. Back up two floors to your room only to find out you need to go down three flights of steps because the clean blouses that Mom had so painstakingly ironed for our school uniforms were in the basement laundry room. Now you are back up three floors to finish changing.

You come down to get your coat and remember your homework in the study. You head back up one set of steps, get the homework and down two sets of steps to the garage. In the car you remember to tell Dad that you need lunch money. He tells you he didn't bring his wallet, so you get out of the car, run up two flights of steps to get his wallet and back down those same steps. I'm sure my parents never entertained going to "the gym" to get exercise.

The shortest set of steps led to the basement. Just three little steps and you entered another world. Ours was a partially finished basement. No, you aren't visualizing this

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Letters To the Editor

Thriftness

Dear Editor:

How many times have we all heard advertisements from businesses which will "save you money because we cut out the 'middle man'?"

Why not apply that same principle to the Union County schools?

What if the position of Superintendent were eliminated and the money that is spent on his salary, his travel expenses, his memberships in "professional organizations," were returned to the school board to...say...hire one, two -- three -- more teachers?

Why don't the Union County school principals create and submit their individual budgets directly to the school board? They know what they need. Why do they need a "middle man" between themselves and the school board?

If it's about creating "policy," isn't that what the school board is for?

Why pay a superintendent a handsome six-figure-plus salary (plus "benefits") when he has no day-to-day contact with students? The farther from the students an administrator is elevated, the more he's paid.

To me, that's convoluted logic -- if any reasonable person would call paying a person who doesn't teach five times (or more) what a classroom teacher is paid, "logic."

If the finances are so critical -- and they are -- why not hire more teachers and a part-time business manager and use the money that has traditionally gone to the superintendent to pay them?

It might be time to change "tradition." "Cutting out the middle man" is thrifty.

"Cutting out the middle man" is wise.

"Cutting out the middle man" is sensitive to the people who pay the bills. You know, the taxpayers of Union County.

George Mitchell

Thank you Sheriff Stephens

Dear Editor,

I want to take this opportunity to thank former Sheriff Scott Stephens for his service to Union County.

I appreciate his dedication and untiring efforts to keep the county safe and to lessen the amount of drugs available to our citizens, esp. our young folks.

His 12 years in the Sheriff's office were well served, as he oversaw many changes and upgrades to the department. While I would have liked to have seen him continue in office, this was not to be.

I also want to congratulate Sheriff Mack Mason, on his election. I wish him the best as he works to Protect and Serve this county and its citizens.

Nelson H. Thomas

Making Things Happen For Rural America

The RC&D Council is constantly planning new projects that will fulfill their mission which is to "Assist local people in planning and carrying out activities that conserve natural resources, support economic development, enhance the environment, and improve the standard of living for all citizens" in the 13-county area of Northeast Georgia that it serves.

When we checked our Bucket List, the next "Need to do" was "Disaster Preparedness" workshops. Our plans are to present one of these workshops in each of our 13 counties during 2013. The recent hurricane, Sandy, that roared through the northeast and the tornadoes that strike all over the south this time of the year can happen in your community and will change lives and communities forever. These workshops will have local Emergency Management officials explaining the emergency plans and procedures that are in place in each of the counties as well as state and federal resources that are available to handle citizens needs before, during, and after disasters.

These public servants will provide useful information that can help you prepare for those emergencies or disasters that may one day be in your neighborhood. When disasters strike they devastate lives, homes, businesses, and entire communities, and the time to decide what to do, who to call, and where to go for life safety is not when the water is rising up to the porch or when a tornado is roaring across the ridge; it's before the emergency threatens you and your family's lives, when you have plenty of time to think and make the plans to lessen the risks of the emergency.

We think that disasters only happen to someone else, somewhere else, but one day someone else might be you and somewhere else might be your community. These workshops will provide valuable information that can help lessen confusion and panic later.

The workshops will also provide information to help citizens make it through other types of tough times that can threaten a family's livelihood.

The schedule for these workshops will be posted as they are developed on the RC&D website listed below.

The Chest/Chatt RC&D also offers help to citizens by directing them to information sources concerning local, state, and federal programs, services, and agencies where information is available for the public.

In the weeks to come, I plan to highlight some of the projects that the Chestatee/Chattahoochee RC&D has successfully completed in each of the 13 counties that it serves in Northeast Georgia. There are many projects that citizens enjoy the benefits of every day that are there because of the Chest/Chatt RC&D Council.

Frank Riley is Executive Director of the Chestatee/Chattahoochee RC&D Council.

Executive Director of RC&D



Frank Riley

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