

Opinions

Everybody has one...

A sales tax extension is progress

I'm not sure who came up with the idea that an extension of our Education Special Purpose Sales Tax is a bad idea. The point is, there's a group out there fighting to make sure it fails.

There are conflicting opinions out there, and controversy is rampant when it comes to the vote on March 19th to renew the Education sales tax.

It's not a new tax. No, it's simply an extension of the tax that is already in place. It's still a 7 percent tax overall, including a penny for education. No increase will occur.

Straight Shooting

Charles Duncan



And one thing is for sure, if we don't extend the sales tax for education, we're going to pay for school improvements one way or another, sales tax or increased property taxes.

I prefer the former over the latter.

Bottom line, it is our responsibility as a community to pay for the education of our children. Our mothers and fathers before us did just that.

My mother was a teacher in a one-room classroom at the Coosa School here in Union County. She was a student in a one-room classroom prior to her days as an educator.

She taught many of the locals that are still here today.

My mother has been gone since June 1979, she died young, but, if she were here, she'd vote yes to extend this education sales tax. She believed in giving students the right tools for learning.

You see, my mother was dedicated to the fact that an educated mind is a useful mind. To teach is a personal passion, just the same as learning.

The only tools my mother had at her disposal was a chalkboard, a few well-worn textbooks and the knowledge she carried inside her being.

Folks, we're not overburdened with taxes at the moment. Union County Schools do more with less than any school system in the state.

We also can be fortunate that Gov. Nathan Deal isn't weighing whether to suspend our school board members like he is today, regarding the DeKalb County School Board.

No, we have a responsible school board, but, there are folks out there with nothing better to do than to strike a blow for their political party.

This isn't about politics, it's about doing the right thing and doing the smart thing. Consumption taxes are much easier to swallow than having to cough up chunks of property tax dollars.

You pay as you go, by the amount that you spend. In the end, it seems quite fair.

A Camel – Swallowing Society

Have you ever seen anyone choking on food lodged in their throat? It is frightening, scary and causes the worst kind of panic unless you know the Heimlich maneuver and are willing to become a rescuer. As I look at American society I see a nation in danger of choking to death on camels. In my humble opinion the words of Jesus are applicable to America in 2013, when He said, "Woe unto you, Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you pay tithes of mint and anise and cumin, and have omitted the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy and faith: these ought you to have done, and not to leave the other undone. Ye blind guides, which strain at a gnat and swallow a camel!" (Matthew 23:23-24).

It's On My Mind

Danny Parris



Personally, I believe that we have an over-abundance of "blind guides" in the religious world, political world, scientific world, sports world, economic world and in the entire scope of our society. It seems that we are straining out gnats through a cloth and at the same time gulping down camels. Our society is the picture of a people who have completely lost their sense of perspective.

We have leaders attempting to lead our world who are educated far beyond their intelligence. We have lost any sense of spiritual values. We are being deceived by so-called intellectuals and liberals who would have us believe that Christians and Bible students are a bunch of ignorant hate mongers who are causing all the problems in our modern world.

These perverted thinkers who condone bizarre behaviors, want to legalize life-destroying drugs, kill babies, promote sexual relationships between same sexes that destroy the family unit, scorn and mock any notion that God created all things are becoming celebrities in our day.

Society swoons over these folks as being modern rescuers.

Some day all of us will be judged by the God of this universe.

We need some prophetic rescuers like Isaiah and Jeremiah, who at least had the fortitude to stand up to the God-haters of their day and say: "Woe unto them that call evil good, and good evil, that put darkness for light, and light for darkness; that put bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter" (Isaiah 5:20)!

"The prophets prophesy falsely, and the priests bear rule by their means: and MY PEOPLE love to have it so: and what will you

See Parris, page 5A

Questions Feb. 27, 2013

Q. Who do I contact about receiving automatic weather information from the county (UC ALERTS)?

A. You can contact Amy Tatum at uc911admin@uniongov.com, or 706-439-6056. She will be happy to address any questions or concerns you might have.

Q. What is UC ALERTS?

A. It is an exceptional free information service for the public. The county pays a base fee for the service, but it allows an almost unlimited utilization of the service for many different purposes.

Q. What type of notification service is UC Alerts?

A. You commonly know this service regarding the receiving of weather warnings from the National Weather Service, but it is so much more. The system can send you an alert for many reasons by any of the three methods, which include an automated telephone call, cell phone text, or email.

Q. Who determines when the emergency alerts go out or is it automatic?

A. All NOAA weather alerts are generated by the National Weather Service (NWS) Weather Forecast Office. Union County has no control at all of when the weather warnings are issued. We subscribe to only the "Warning" service, which is the absolute most severe of alerts. It involves Tornado Warnings, Severe Thunderstorm Warnings, Winter Storm Warnings, Flood Warnings and Flash Flood warnings. Our system does not send out any "watch notices" which are not as severe.

Q. Why did we get a weather alert at 3 am about bad weather and we didn't have any bad weather?

A. Forecasters at our local National Weather Service (NWS) Weather Forecast Office determined a severe weather event was occurring or about to occur. The information is input immediately into a computer and broadcast by National Weather Radio (NWR) transmitters to areas at risk. These alerts were then sent through Union Alert and out to the public. Again, Union County has no control of when these weather alerts are triggered. However, you can control the type of alert you receive, whether it is by telephone, text or email.

Q. What other choices of alerts besides weather, do I have?

A. We are currently working on other options but there are several others currently in use. The Recreation Department utilizes UC Alerts to notify parents regarding ball games, canceled games, practices, etc. The Ambulance service uses

Q & A from Union County Commissioner

Lamar Paris



Letters to the Editor ...

Due Diligence

Dear Editor,

While I have not made up my mind whether or not I will vote "yes" or "no" to the ESPLOST tax on March 19, I am concerned about several items with the vote, listed below. I know the Schools could use the money, but I have not been convinced there is a real need for the money at this time. Below are my concerns.

First, I fought vigorously against the 1-cent Transportation sales tax last year for several reasons. One of those reasons was the misinformation being put out about the percentage of a one-cent sales tax that out of county visitors spend in Union County. I stated numerous times in several different public forums that visitors only account for less than 10 percent of a sales tax collected in Union County. I backed up my argument with data from the report put out by the U.S. Travel Association Washington, D.C. in September 2011. There has been no major change in spending habits since 2010. A close study of the report will show less than 10 percent of visitors contribute to a 1-cent sales tax in Union County. The vast majority of sales taxes, 90 percent, are paid by local residents. The Travel Industry compiles and supplies this data for every State that requests it.

One School Board member has stated in a previous North Georgia News article that 30-40 percent of a sales tax comes from out of county visitors. The local GOP party has put an ad in the NGN using the same 30-40 percent. A letter to the Editor from Patrick Malone uses the same number, 30-40 percent. The report can be found at this internet website: <http://www.georgia.org/SiteCollectionDocuments>

See Sims, page 5A

Be There

Dear Editor,

School administrators, some school board members and members of the Citizens for Excellence in Education will be participating in an informational Town Hall meeting next Thursday February 28th at 6:30 p.m. in the Middle School Gym. They will be providing information on the renewal of the ESPLOST election scheduled for March 19th.

See Malone, page 5A

Freedom of Speech

Dear Editor,

When it comes to working to protect our Constitutional rights, there are those who choose to be patriots, and those who claim to be. Those who claim to be talk a good game, but their leanings are not in keeping with the true principals of patriotism. The patriot keeps abreast of what is going on, and when he sees lawmakers tampering with our Constitutional rights, he speaks out. On the other hand, while some of the false-patriots worship at the feet of the politician, others remain silent. When a

See Honea, page 5A

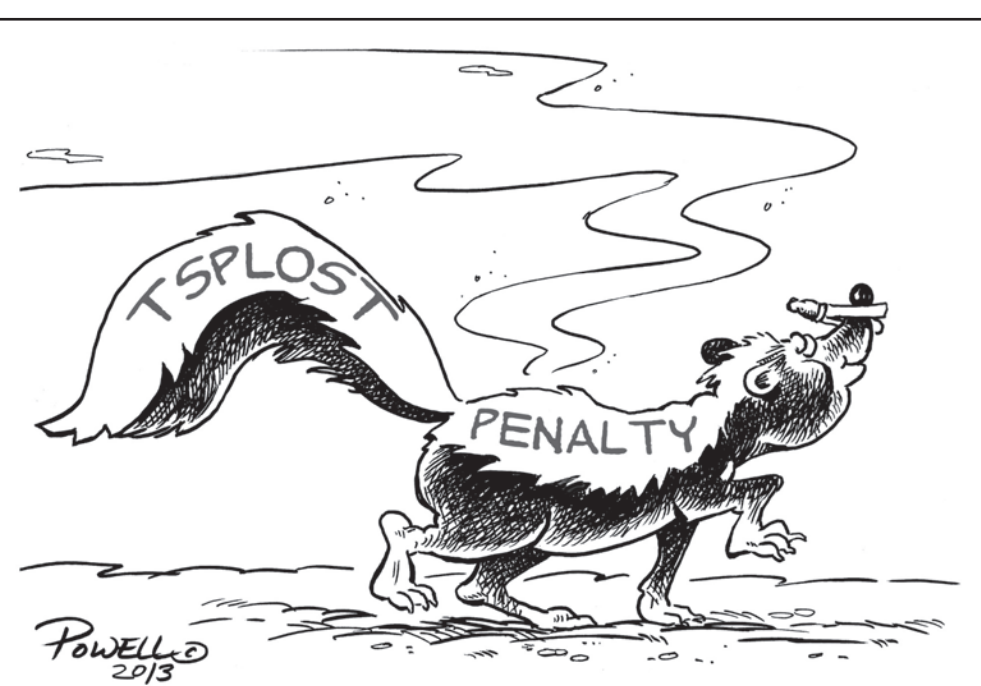
WWJD

Dear Editor:

On July 1, 2011, a 16 year old Morganton driver was involved in a fatal vehicle accident that resulted in the death of a 6 year old girl and left her younger brother a quadriplegic. A nightmare for all concerned. Besides the vehicular homicide charge against the driver, he was also charged with driving under the influence of inhalants.

One needed only to read the Fannin County letters to the editor to note that the "community" sentiment was solidly against the

See Ramsey, page 5A



Potential Monopoly

Dear Editor,

Here is a letter that I've sent to State Rep. Stephen Allison and State Sen. Steve Gooch regarding House Bill 282 and the DSL service provided to local citizens by Windstream. I'd appreciate your considering this for publication, as this issue impacts locals' monthly expenses, as well as opening a window on the quality of legislation that from time to time is introduced by our good folks under the Gold Dome. HB 282, in effect, guarantees Windstream and other rural DSL providers a monopoly on DSL services in a region, provided they offer service at a minimum connection speed of 1.5MB. As I'm sure you understand, that speed is hardly faster than dial-up, and is about 1/10th the speed available when modern technologies are employed. Windstream owns equipment that provides "up to 24MB" speeds as stated by their own representatives; they simply have not chosen to invest in the equipment to provide said speeds to us rural bumpkins. And if that is not bad enough, Windstream is in violation of contract with who knows how many customers who are paying monthly for 3MB DSL connections, and receiving less than 1MB when the connections work at all. If your publisher is interested in "investigative journalism" on a story that directly impacts your readership, here it is.

Roger Beal
Blairsville, GA

(Begin text of letter to Mr. Gooch):
21 February 2013
Dear Mr. Gooch,
I'm copying you on a message sent to Representative Stephen Allison about pending House legislation. I realize this is occurring in the other chamber, but as one representing the citizenry of north Georgia, you need to be aware of this particu-

See Beal, page 5A

No Rush

Dear Editor,

I am so glad folks are talking about the cringe-worthy "Blue Ridge Welcomes Rush Limbaugh" billboards. That statement is pretty arrogant and misleading (congruent with Rush's persona) and a frightening message to send out to tourists.

Considering his ever-dwindling audience is rural, male and over 65, that is not a very inclusive audience and hardly representative of our community. Yes, our population is rural and conservative but not mean-spirited. I cannot imagine many folks here would choose a man with admitted drug addiction and multi-marriages as a spokesperson for our local values. We ARE better than that.

That billboard perpetuates a myth that those of us living in the mountains are uneducated, unwelcoming to outsiders and resistant to change. Instead we are a welcoming, diverse community that upholds family values and helps out our fellow neighbors.

So let Rush espouse his hateful message as he wishes, but do not speak for me or my friends when you say "Blue Ridge Welcomes Rush" - because we don't.

Please contact 95.1 and tell them" Take down the Billboards" and also note who their sponsors are (<http://wjulradio.com/index.html>).

Pam Sullivan

Miss Floss

Miss Floss was an elderly lady known by my grandfather when he was a boy. Miss Floss could be cantankerous and stubborn; however, she had a heart of gold. But, the one thing she was known for was being bossy.

Miss Floss was Papa's Sunday School Teacher for 10 years. After each Sunday School lesson Papa said she would bark out orders to her class in an effort to get the front of the small church house organized and ready for preaching. Her bossy behavior was accepted by the young people. But, the men of the church took offense when she started on them and so they began poking fun at her by calling her Bossy Flossie.

One particular Sunday Papa told me that Floss showed herself at church. "She took a fit" Papa said. It seems that Floss was overwhelmed by the spirit and began to buck dance and she lay back on the floor of the church. Somehow she rolled over on her belly while her legs were kicking and her arms were waving. All of this activity caused her dress to roll up over her head and there for all to see across her rear end were the words, "Martha's Finest Self-Rising". The word flour was missing. Apparently, Miss Floss had made her underwear from a Martha White Flour sack.

This story was handed down through 4 generations in my family. The story became intertwined in the actions of my family. For example, when I was a young boy Papa had an old Ayrshire milk cow. This old cow was the boss and she let the other cows on the farm know it. She was always the first to feed and the other cows would not attempt to eat the feed until old "Floss" was finished. Nobody in the family remembers who the person was that gave the old cow the name of Floss. But, we all agreed the cow reminded us of Papa's old Sunday School Teacher.

In 1963 Papa bought an old Farmall tractor. He used that old red tractor until the late 1960's when he purchased a blue Ford tractor. I learned to plow using that old tractor and it was the first tractor my sons ever rode. It was dependable, even in cold weather. Just like Miss Floss was there for Sunday School the old Ford tractor was always ready to work. Is it any wonder then that the tractor picked up the name, "Miss Floss".

About 15 years ago Papa called me with some news. The first words from his mouth were "I baptized Miss Floss yesterday". Papa had taken the old tractor down by the lake to clear out some brush. He set the parking brake and got off the tractor to close a gate he had driven through. Somehow the brake loosened and papa watched helplessly as the old tractor rolled into and disappeared under the waters of Bear Creek Lake. I actually shed a tear for a tractor that day.

A couple of things you should know about are a Corn Production meeting on March 4th and time to begin making Farm RSVPS for the Farm-

Around The Farm

Mickey Cummings



See Cummings, page 5A

See Paris, page 5A

Chamber of Commerce in Action

At our recent Annual Membership Meeting, I had the fortunate opportunity to share with our attendees several of the Blairsville-Union County Chamber of Commerce's top 2012 accomplishments and upcoming 2013 initiatives. Because I think they are worthy of celebration throughout the community, I want to share them briefly with you this week.

Top 2012 Chamber Accomplishments

Union County Community Center - In our beautiful new home, we served over 14,000 visitors and callers, had almost 116,000 website visitors, and worked on behalf of our 548 Chamber Members.

Hotel/Motel Tax - The Chamber's Tourism Committee successfully worked with local County government to make critical updates to and across the board compliance with the local Hotel/Motel Tax Ordinance.

Communications - The Chamber delivered more than 100 email communications to the inboxes of almost 2000 people with articles, discounts, events, and tips to grow your business. Additionally we regularly appear in the North Georgia News and other local and regional media outlets.

Business & Community Development Programs - Leadership Union 2012 graduated a total of 13 participants, many of whom have already been selected to serve on various community Boards of Directors. We co-hosted an Entrepreneur Resource Rally for over 100 guests. We began our monthly Business Roundtables, held a Nonprofit Board Training Session, successfully hosted three

See Williams, page 5A

The Sicilian Feast

Last week I spoke about the March feast days of both St. Patrick and St. Joseph, which are just two days apart from one another. Sicilians honor St. Joseph, in particular, because he is the father of the holy family, and family is the core of the Sicilian heritage. "LaFamiglia." You've heard that word before. Mario Puzo used it a good deal in his fiction.

The St. Joseph's Day Feast is a gastronomical cavalcade of pure delight, especially if you like sardines and sweets. Odd combination, isn't it? Let's start with the Pasta Con Sarde, also known as St. Joseph's Pasta. The sauce is made with tomatoes, fennel, raisons, sardines and pine nuts. It is ladled over thick tubular pasta, and then covered, not with grated cheese like most tomato based pasta dishes, but with bread crumbs that have been toasted crisp in olive oil and sugar.

The recipe is ancient and legend has it that it was invented during a siege. The army cook only had pasta and not very fresh sardines on hand. He added some wild fennel tops from the field, which were aromatic and tasty enough to cover the tang of the "old" sardines. He added pine nuts because they were thought to have antibodies that helped fight food poisoning. For most of you, the thought of this dish has done nothing to stimulate your appetite. For those of us who have been blessed with the opportunity to indulge in this delicacy, we drool in anticipation of the next opportunity to devour it again.

The pasta dish, and every other course of the St. Joseph's feast, is served with St. Joseph's bread. This bread is a beautiful baked specimen, as it is twisted like a rope and brushed with egg and topped with sesame seeds before baking. It gets a shiny, golden, crispy crust, alluding to something scrumptious under that crust. And one won't ever be disappointed. The secret ingredient that sets the flavor apart from other breads is the anise seed, which is

Farmers Market Moment

JoAnne Leone



See Leone, page 5A