

# Opinions

## Everybody has one

### Don't take my vote away

It was born in Atlanta, and must be sent back to Atlanta with a resounding 'no' from voters.

The Transportation Special Purpose Local Option Sales Tax is flawed.

I have friends who support this measure. I can't and won't. I have my reasons.

First, it's an infringement on the voting rights of residents in small communities throughout the state.

If Hall and Forsyth counties pass this referendum in our region, we're stuck with it, no matter how many 'no' votes come out of the mountains.

It's designed so that counties with larger populations can pass it whether we (counties with less population) like it or not. It imposes a tax on food at a time when we can least afford it. It imposes an extra 1-cent tax on heating oil, electric bills, medical supplies and other necessities that families simply can't live without.

It penalizes poor families because they pay the same amount of tax on food and other necessities as folks with much more money to play with. It's a never-ending tax.

Proponents say it will only last 10 years. By design, that's true. However, this is something that the Georgia Department of Transportation is banking on from now until Kingdom Come.

Georgians should send the proposed T-SPLOST to a solid defeat for other reasons.

It benefits larger counties and I don't think the projects on the table in our communities will receive a dime until those larger counties are taken care of first.

It's a bad deal for the mountain counties - period.

Our state lawmakers need to roll up their collective sleeves and come up with a solution that doesn't impose on families at a time when they can least afford it.

Hitting wage earners, many who don't have jobs, with a sales tax that everybody pays is not a solution, rather, it's state lawmakers lending a slap in the face of the very people who send them to the State Capitol.

High praise goes to State Rep. Stephen Allison, (R, Blairsville) who had the foresight to vote against T-SPLOST in the State House.

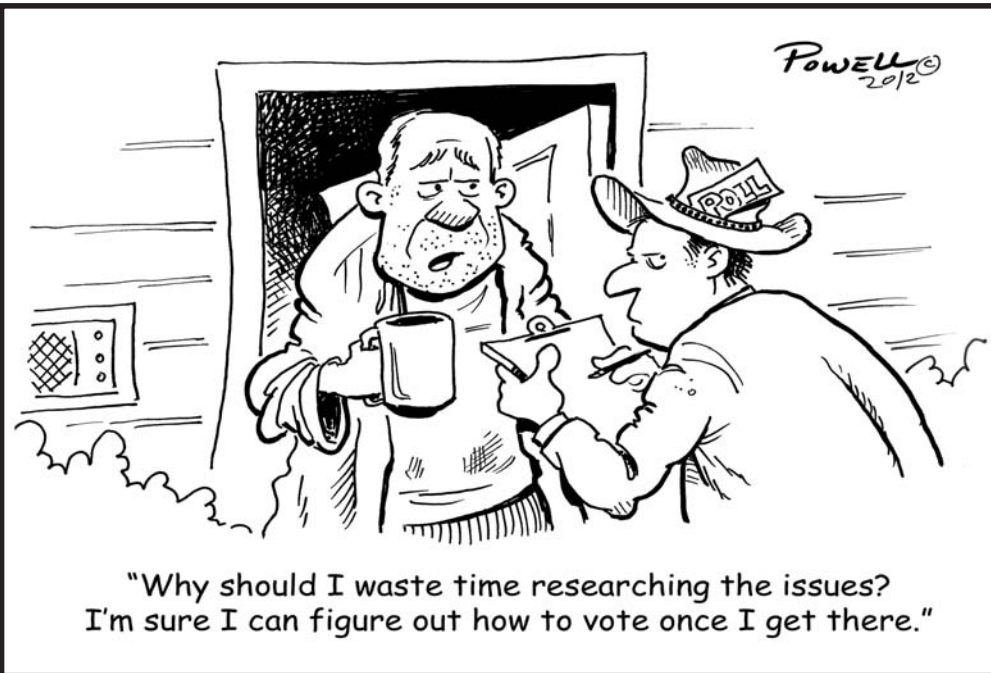
Bottom line, our economy has been in the ditch for several years now. How dare the Georgia General Assembly send a sales tax referendum to the voters asking for another penny.

All we hear at the State Capitol is how lawmakers are bound and determined to not raise taxes. Ladies and gentlemen, this is a tax increase.

I ask that you treat it as such at the polls. Send it back to Atlanta. It should have been a statewide vote to begin with or no vote at all.



Charles Duncan  
Straight Shooting



### Billboards & Bumper Stickers

We live in a very verbal society where everyone wants to make a statement. You drive down any street, country road, or a busy expressway and most of them are cluttered with billboards, marquees and posters that promote, proclaim, or protest some product, philosophy, or some political issue. If you are not financially able to purchase a billboard, or you do not have access to a marquee nor can you get someone to allow you to place a poster on his or her property to make your statement to the world, the next best avenue is to print your statement on a bumper sticker.

Observe the vehicles that are in front of you. Most of them have a bumper sticker or in some cases the whole rear end of the vehicle may be plastered with signs of all sorts, which can be very distracting and confusing.

While living in another city, quite frequently I would see a car that had two stickers on the rear bumper. The one on the far left of the bumper said, "Follow me to \_\_\_\_\_ Baptist Church." On the far right the sticker stated, "I had rather be at Six Flags." I was never sure about that message.

Now I must confess that for the most part I enjoy reading bumper stickers. I saw one the other day on a Cadillac, which stated, "If this car were a horse I would have to shoot it." The message conveyed was "that this car is not very dependable and causes me a lot of trouble." On a beat-up, dented, rusted and discolored car I saw this sticker, "Don't laugh, it's paid for," meaning no one can repossess this transportation. While another sticker on another car indicates the opposite: "I owe, I owe, so off to work I go." One of the religious bumper stickers states, "Honk, if you love Jesus." That's good, but I like the next one, which says, "Tithe, if you love Jesus. Anyone can honk." Most of the time I am amused and entertained by reading bumper stickers. But sometimes I am offended and embarrassed by the vulgarity and profanity displayed by owners of some vehicles. Yes, I understand and respect everyone's freedom.

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### A Fireworks Report

Another Independence Day celebration has come and gone, but not without lasting memories of one of the most magnificent fireworks displays in Union County history. As many of you know, the fireworks are made possible through generous contributions of time and treasure by a host of local residents and organizations, especially those who contributed to this year's fireworks raffle. This week, I want to give you a summary of the fireworks effort, a total financial amount raised and announce the winner of our \$1000 drawing.

The Chamber Board, staff, and volunteers began the fundraising effort in April of this year. Numerous hours were spent at community events encouraging donations for an entry into this year's \$1000 drawing. When Monday, July 2nd came, we still had not made our goal of \$4500. It became clear we needed to have one last push on the night of the fireworks event. I joined forces with other Chamber Board members, volunteers and President and pounded the pavement in support of the cause. The adventure for me was getting to meet many of the wonderful folks who live in this community. The end result was that this community believes in a tradition. A tradition built on "Community Values" that cause a community to care and be willing to support the effort for the greater good. Due to the generosity of those attending the event, over \$1,000 was collected on Wednesday night alone. When the dust settled, we had netted \$4,192.05 toward the expense of \$10,000 which was very close to this year's goal. Eventually or with some luck or possible improvement in the economy, we will get closer each year.

And the winner is...I am pleased to announce that David Dyer of Blairsville was the winner for the \$1,000 raffle drawing. For those who came and enjoyed 20 minutes of a fantastic fireworks show, I thank you. A community needs to stand together and work for a common good in great times and in economically slow times. The fireworks are another example of your Chamber and its supporters making a difference for this community.

I would like to express my appreciation to those who made a donation of \$10 toward the \$10,000 expense of the fireworks. Also, our thanks to the Union County Commissioner's Office, Union County Sheriff's Office, Union County Fire Department, Union County Recreation Department, Union General Hospital, Union County EMS and North Georgia Technical College who provided event support in the form of fire and public safety, traffic control, and parking. Additionally, we extend

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### Blackberries and Dancing

My grandmother, Delphia Adams, was a person that loved life. She loved to go play in the creek with us kids and she was an expert at fishing and making blackberry pie. One day while picking blackberries we asked her about her childhood memories.

She began by telling us about her father, Charlie Baker. Charlie was a farmer and logger. He loved hunting and he was in church every Sunday. Everyone in the little community loved Charlie and referred to him as "Dad." Dad Baker did have a stern side. He did not tolerate wild dancing. His kids loved him and feared him. When my grandmother was about 13 one of her cousins visited and showed her how to do the "Charleston." The Charleston was a wild dance that became popular during the depression.

One day Dad caught his daughters and their cousins doing this thing called the "Charleston." Delphia told him they were playing "ring around the roses." Luckily Dad didn't know a thing about dancing and so he believed her. Grandmaw told me she would have got a whipping if her father had known she was dancing that new dance called the "Charleston." I wanted to know why the dance was so bad so I asked her to show me how to do it. At 75 years of age Delphia Adams stood up and danced this dance called the Charleston. Oh, did I fail to mention that at 73 she went back to school and received her High School Diploma and enrolled in Northwest Alabama Community College as a student. She was never too old to learn and enjoy life. Neither are we.

So, let's talk about some educational programs we will begin having at the Farmers Market. The first program will be held next Tuesday, July 17. Retired Family and Consumer Sciences Extension Agent Allison McGraw will be speaking at the Farmers Market at a session called "Country Living." Allison will be discussing Food Preservation Techniques. Please come out and listen to Allison's discussions beginning at around 4:30 p.m. Other upcoming programs include "Heirloom Tomatoes," "Sport Fish Pond Management" and "Ornamental Fish Pond Management," "Native Plants,"

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### When I Learned To Can It

Growing up in Western NY, our family garden was located in hardiness Zone 5A. That's not the worst zone - Wisconsin, Minnesota and Alaska have it worse. But Lake Erie and the Snow Belt have a short period for vegetable gardens. Early plants - May 15th. Dad put most seed in the ground around the first of June. My birthday was the first week of August and I had a plethora of corn at my party every year.

By Sept. 1 we had the last pickings of everything including winter squash. So much for what they tell you the maturity date is on those seed packets. Cool, damp June weather and lots of good "pony poop" will bring a seedling out of the dirt faster than a rabbit pops out of its ferret invaded hole.

Late July through late August the family was busier than one armed paper hangers. After dinner every night, I'd ride my bike about a mile or so from home, where our garden was located on a lot Dad leased for a dollar a year from the Electric Company. I'm sure I remember being more industrious than I actually was. Truth be told, I could move my body on a bike and in the water, but was a sloth when it came to much other physical efforts, especially in the heat of summer.

Mom and Dad and Sis would pick and then load up the back of the station wagon. I'd try to race the car home before the sun set. Then we'd all get to unload. The kids headed for baths and bed and my folks would prepare the harvest. On weekends, we'd have canning parties. Family friends or my aunts and uncles would bring their kids and everyone would work and play. After everything was put up, my folks would serve a big dinner, usually an Italian feast, like Sauce Roberto, made from fresh tomatoes and sweet onion, or Sweet Italian sausage grilled with lots of peppers and onions, and a huge tossed salad, all from the garden.

In 1795 the French military offered a cash price of 12,000 francs for a new method to preserve food. A Parisian chef suggested canning and the process was first proven in 1806 in test with the French navy and the prize awarded in 1810.

Over two hundred years later, it hasn't gotten much more sophisticated. Sure, you have a choice between Ball and Kerr jars. There are fancy colored lids, and I have even found some Euro style shaped canning jars for my eggplant caponata, and hexagon shaped 4oz beauties for my berry cherry jam.

This Saturday, July 21, the Farmers Market will be celebrating "You can CAN IT Day." Ally McGraw, one of our County's

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# Letters

## To the Editor

### Support T-SPLOST

Dear Editor,

The citizens of Union County and our 13 county Georgia Mountains region will be asked to vote on the TSPLOST July 31. (Early voting has already begun.) Transportation Sales Tax is a complicated issue, but simple speaking, it is the difference between Georgia becoming a leader in the nation with our transportation network, or Georgia becoming one of the worst states in the nation. Currently, Georgia is tanked 49th in per capita spending for transportation. If that continues we will remain behind the rest of the nation and companies wanting to relocate to Atlanta or to Union County will have second thoughts.

No matter where a company locates in Georgia, it will have to deal with transferring goods and services through the Atlanta Airport, which for us means traveling through the Atlanta metro region with its constant traffic tie ups.

The reason we are running out of funds for transportation is that those funds are currently based on a gasoline tax that is one of the lowest in the nation and has not changed in over 30 years. With more fuel efficient automobiles being sold, the revenue is continuing to decrease and there is simply not enough money to maintain and build new transportation highways and bridges. If the legislators had passed Carlton Colwell's Gasoline Tax Bill, the state would not be in the shape it is today.

While highways are not sexy like local SPLOST projects (i.e. library, farmers market, etc.), keeping state highways and county roads safe is critical for our families and our economic development future. No one likes higher taxes, but if we must have them for maintaining and improving our highway system, sales tax is the fairest, as everyone contributes and many from outside our state who are passing

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### Bad Move

Dear Editor,

On June 26-27, the Union County government turned a perfectly good paved road, Crump Creek Road, into a gravel road. A county road crew spread tar and loose gravel on very large sections of the road, practically turning it into a gravel road. There was nothing wrong with the pavement. The results are a big waste of taxpayer money, and no matter how slow one drives on the road, chips in the vehicles paint are inevitable.

The only reason I can figure that the county administration did this was to show the people living along the road that their county government is "helping" them. Not only did they not help the residents along the road, they hurt everyone in the county by unnecessarily wasting taxpayer money. This is merely an election year shenanigan that will backfire at the polls.

Richard E. Smith

### We need real change

Dear Editor,

A recent letter here stated that the problem with Republicans is that they watch too much of Fox News.

Perhaps the same can be said of too many Democrats watching MSNBC. Instead of making such petty arguments, time would be better spent on real issues worthy of consideration.

A fact that is real which was not mentioned by the writer or on the main stream media is important.

All of the 17 states that voted in Republican Governors in the 2010 election have enjoyed a decrease in their unemployment rate. Without these decreases the national rate would be much higher.

This is the kind of leadership that is lacking in our current administration. We should all be wanting real change in the next Presidential election or we may be without hope.

Gary Davis

### Constitution vs. Treaty USA vs. U.N.

Dear Editor,

There are some citizens who believe that treaties supersede the U.S. Constitution, and there are those who consider this a nugatory statement. Count the Founding Fathers, and me, in the latter camp, along with Curtis W. Caine who successfully argues the case that a treaty cannot supersede the Constitution. Thomas Jefferson was clear on this point: "If the treaty power is unlimited, then we don't have a Constitution." Alexander Hamilton agreed: "a treaty cannot be made which alters the Constitution of the country or which infringes any express exceptions to the power of the Constitution of the United States." But as we know, regardless of the intent of the Founding Fathers, these days all three branches of the

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### Socialism and School Taxes

Dear Editor,

There is a lot of concerned talk about the country's slide into socialism but nary a peep from the local Republican Party about the redistribution of our school taxes to other Georgia counties. The North Georgia News ran an article several weeks ago saying that \$5.19 million of our county school tax money is being sent to Atlanta to be redistributed to "poorer" counties. And this comes at a time our school board has to cut essential services.

It makes me wonder whether Stephen Allison or Steve Gooch have been introducing bills to eliminate this redistribution of wealth. Where are the Tea Party voices screaming to stop this state-level socialism? The school board would not have needed to cut essential services if that \$5.19 million taxed from the

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### TSPLOST (part 2)

**Q. I heard that the new TSPLOST sales tax will be a new permanent sales tax. Is this true?**

A. No. This sales tax will sunset in ten years and the only way it can be continued is for it to first be approved by a majority of the 13 counties in our region. Second, it must be voted on and approved again by the Georgia Legislature and third, it must be voted on again by you, the voters, all before it can be renewed. This was to make it very clear to voters that if TSPLOST is not a very successful program, it would never have a chance of being renewed.

**Q. How is this TSPLOST tax being voted on, state wide or county wide?**

A. Neither. It is being voted on by region. The state is divided into 12 regions. Ours is called the Georgia Mountains Region and contains 13 counties including Hall and Forsyth, over to Hart and up to Rabun Co and across to Union County.

**Q. Do you think it is fair that we are voting by region instead of state wide?**

A. I prefer that we had voted state wide, but I think the Governor and Legislature wanted to give all parts of the state their own say in what projects would be on the list and therefore voted on region wide. The purpose of this transportation sales tax is to promote region wide projects and not projects that just help one county. In other words, most of the projects chosen by the county commissioners and mayors of our region, in cooperation with GDOT, are for the purpose of expanding regional transportation.

**Q. Does the regional approach give Hall County and Forsyth Counties the advantage in directing the vote since about half of the votes in our region come from those two counties?**

A. If some person or group controlled the decision making of those two counties it might be an issue, but just like our county, they are made up of lots of independent minded voters who will choose to support or not to support TSPLOST based on whether they feel it helps them or their region or not. As to the fact that they control half of the votes, I do not see that as a real problem any different than what smaller counties always deal with in statewide or national elections. If it had been strictly a state wide vote, then the Atlanta metro area controls over half of the state population and votes anyway, so I really do not see any difference. Any time you are from a smaller populated area, you are naturally going to control fewer of the votes.

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Lamar Paris  
Q & A



Joe Garner  
BUCC



JoAnne Leone  
Farmers Market Moment

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