

# Affordable healthcare is within reach in NC

## Your Turn

S. Mark McNeill, MD  
Guest columnist

Wouldn't you want to bring a \$4 billion investment into NC that could add 40,000 jobs to our economy in just five years? What if these funds also helped address the opioid crisis and lowered insurance premiums? You probably would.

NC House Bill (HB) 655 – NC Health Care for Working Families – can do just that right now by closing the coverage gap for employed but uninsured North Carolinians. This bill is a major step in the right direction to provide affordable healthcare and improve the wellness of our region. It is estimated to cover over 300,000 North Carolinians who currently do not qualify for Medicaid. The plan also focuses on preventative care and wellness. However, I am concerned that the work requirement creates unnecessary administrative barriers for struggling and vulnerable North Carolinians.

Closing NC's health insurance coverage gap through HB 655 would provide hundreds of thousands of our state's working poor access to life-saving healthcare. Thirty-seven states, red and blue, have closed the coverage gap by increasing access to Medicaid using federal funds. Closing the coverage gap has been key to Ohio's positive results in turning the tide on their opioid crisis. But the work requirement in the NC bill creates a layer of administrative red tape that has been

shown to be ineffective at boosting employment and a harmful barrier to accessing care, particularly to those with disabilities. It has also been deemed illegal when included in other similar laws in Kentucky and Arkansas.<sup>2</sup>

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# Is the art of the editorial



In 2000, the Citizen Times usually ran two editorials a day. Now there is one a week. GETTY IMAGES



## Bill McGoun

Columnist  
Asheville Citizen Times  
USA TODAY NETWORK

Is the institutional editorial dying? Maybe not, but it's feeling poorly.

When I retired from The Palm Beach Post in 1999, that paper ran at least two editorials a day. Today it runs two each week. When I started writing for the Citizen Times in 2000, there were usually two editorials a day. Now there is one a week.

The reason is obvious: Opinion staff have not been immune from the stark cutbacks all around as newspapers strive to survive in the Internet age. When I retired, The Post had six editorial writers in addition to the editorial page editor. Now it has one. The Citizen Times has gone from a staff of four to less than one; Opinions Editor Casey Blake also has other duties.

When I joined the National Conference of Editorial Writers in 1978, it had more than 600 members and cities vied to host its conventions. By the time NCEW's remnants were folded

**Some may not regret the loss of the editorial board. What business does an editorial board do if, when they ask for your opinion, what to think, they ask. And who needs the opinions available through media?**

from a wide range of views every week. That does not make the institutional opinion any less important.

Why? Because the institutional editorial is the considered opinion of a group of top editors who make their careers being informed about the issues. They do not take opinions lightly, as fodder for a transient debate. They look to the long run. And much of their work is in setting agendas.

Consider the recent Citizen Times editorial on the John B. Lewis Soccer Complex. We did not take a stand as to whether the flood-prone fields should be rebuilt after the most recent inundation. We merely said the question should be asked.

We have no qualms about endorsing a course of action in some cases, espe-

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ing care, particularly to those with disabilities.1 It has also been deemed illegal when included in other similar laws in Kentucky and Arkansas.2

As a family physician, all too often I care for patients who put off going to the doctor because they can't afford it, with catastrophic results ending up with emergency room visits, costly hospital stays, or even death. That is why I'm encouraged by a bill that will significantly close the coverage gap, reduce costs and save lives.

As President of the Western Carolina Medical Society Association (WCMS), I am optimistic about WNC's future. WCMS is advocating for affordable healthcare coverage for ALL residents of NC. The health of each individual is paramount to achieving a healthy population in NC. I applaud our state legislators for working hard on a bill that is a major step in the right direction in closing the coverage gap and improving the wellness of our region. We at the medical society want to continue to encourage efforts by our legislators in both parties to work together on solutions like HB 655, to close the coverage gap, preferably without unnecessary and harmful administrative barriers. By working together I know we can find a solution to the growing healthcare crisis of the uninsured. I urge them to do so.

*S. Mark McNeill, MD, is the President of the Western Carolina Medical Society Association. He lives in Asheville.*

## EDITORIAL BOARD



Dedicated to the upbuilding of Western North Carolina since 1870.

### Letters Policy

We invite Letters to the Editor of 200 words or less written by the submitter for the Citizen-Times. Please include your name, mailing address, daytime telephone number and email address.  
**Mail to:** Letters, Asheville Citizen-Times, P.O. Box 2090, Asheville, NC 28802-2090.

**E-mail:** letters@citizen-times.com

**For information:** Call Casey Blake at 828-232-5841 or email cblake@citizen-times.com.

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When I joined the National Conference of Editorial Writers in 1978, it had more than 600 members and cities vied to host its conventions. By the time NCEW's remnants were folded into the American Society of News Editors in 2017, it was down to 160 members and many if not most were, like me, retirees. The last few years, we struggled to find a convention site.

Some may not regret the loss of the institutional editorial. What business does an editorial board have telling people what to think, they ask. And who needs editorials with all the opinions available through media old and new?

To answer the second question first, expressions of individual opinion are no substitute for institutional opinion. The Citizen Times runs opinion pieces

group of top editors who make their careers being informed about the issues. They do not take opinions lightly, as fodder for a transient debate. They look to the long run. And much of their work is in setting agendas.

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We have no qualms about endorsing a course of action in some cases, especially in matters of discrimination against any group of real or perceived "others.. Misdeeds in such areas are wrong, whether committed to civilians or by police officers.

In many cases, however, editorials seek to highlight those areas the editorial board believes deserve public attention. We are not telling people what to think but rather suggesting what they should be thinking about.

A group of NCEW alums got together recently in Madison, Wisconsin, to reminiscence about the past and look with concern to the future. Some of them, such as columnist Froma Harrop, still

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### Money for nukes not needs?

Former Senator Richard Lugar's death signals another loss of one of the few remaining spokespersons, who has been signaling the peril to all from nuclear weapons. We are also at risk from nuclear power with its extravagance and eternal hazardous waste.

We in Buncombe County largely ignore the costs of our nuclear arsenal. Imagine how we in Buncombe County would benefit, if we could invest in our infrastructure, instead of shelling out forty million tax dollars annually for nuclear weapons. That money, our part of United State's more than 60 billion, could be used for real needs that don't involve destruction of the planet; e.g. nutrition for schoolchildren, healthcare disparities, income inequality, shortage of affordable housing, alleviating environmental health hazards and more.

As taxpayers and ratepayers, we also lose as we pay for commercial nuclear power plant construction, with ever upwardly spiraling costs, yet are never completed. Such has taken place in South Carolina and is taking place in Georgia.

Shouldn't our elected officials hear more from us?

*Lewis E. Patrie, Asheville*

### Where's the coverage?

Three new freshmen congressmen were sworn in a few months ago... However, there has been no news coverage of these Purple Heart Veterans.

The media would rather cover the "new breed of young women politicians." These 3 new congressmen, Jim Baird, Republican from Indiana, lost his left arm in Vietnam. Brian Mast, Republican from Florida, lost both legs in Afghanistan. Dan Crenshaw, Republican from Texas, lost his right eye in Afghanistan. All three of these men are Purple Heart recipients.

How often have you seen them on the evening news, compared to how often we've seen the two Muslim women and the Leftist from NY all blabbering vulgarities and spouting out anti-Israel/anti-American insults? Where is the appreciation for those who have given real service to our nation?! OH, WAIT . . . They're (gasp!) Republicans!!!

Don't you just love objective, bipartisan news coverage? Good luck finding any. Our society is being force-fed, anger, outrage, tragedy, and a steady diet of violence. Is it any wonder the country is reeling with fear and disillusionment? The media could be a force for positive change, but their owners choose to keep us fearful and divided. Lady Liberty weeps.

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