

Online POLL Should the effort to revitalize the Carolina Theater be revisited?
Visit www.mitchellnews.com to answer and our Facebook page to leave a response

OPINION

POLL RESULTS
What would you like to see more of in the News-Journal?
General news: 26% Opinion: 24% Features: 13%

NEWS-JOURNAL EDITORIAL

Gaining traction is crucial for online petitions

Online petitions are plentiful these days.

Some are political, and some aim to raise awareness and others have a more clearly defined purpose.

A local group called Save Our Hospital is circulating one now in hardcopy and online at change.org opposing the sale of the nonprofit Mis-

sion Health to for-profit Hospital Corporation of America.

If the petition garners the required 20,000 signatures, it will be sent to North Carolina Attorney General Josh Stein for review.

On the Change.org website, more than 1,000 petitions are started in the United States each day, according to the compa-

ny. Studies show lawmakers on all levels pay attention to petitions because they demonstrate “either existing organizational strength or the ability to organize,” Scott Payne, who worked as a legislative assistant in Congress, said in a New York Times article.

In the two weeks Save Our Hospital’s petition has been on change.org,

400 people have signed it.

The petition, and the Save Our Hospital Group, was created out of fear Blue Ridge Regional Hospital will be closed after the sale, and out of concern the endowment established by the transaction will not benefit Mitchell County. Both possible scenarios are causes for concern.

Another ad hoc group,

Sustaining Essential Access to Rural Healthcare, or SEARCH, disseminated an email stating its leadership does not support the petition.

Whether the petition gains any traction remains to be seen, but it does serve at least one purpose, and that is creating greater involvement by residents in decisions affecting our healthcare.

When it all comes crashing down

Our loyal readers may have noticed the past two editions of the News-Journal looked a bit different than usual. Fonts were changed, teasers were replaced with stories along with other small, yet noticeable differences.

Just as any other industry adapting with ever-evolving technology, we had some technical difficulties – my computer crashed the night before the June 20 edition was published.

Just before midnight Monday, June 18, the entire paper was lost when my computer crashed. With that crash went Relay for Life photos, Janie DeVos book-signing photos and every other single word of copy and picture set to be included in the June 20 paper. With 98 percent of the paper complete at the time of the crash, I was faced with building the entire edition from scratch for a second time.

Aside from losing everything, I also had no access to my email except for my phone and had to forward old emails to Cory Spiers’ email, then format the copy and quickly edit it again. It was a miracle a paper was published at all that week.

Then, all of a sudden, my computer booted up



Brandon ROBERTS

the following Wednesday morning and was working correctly. So, I settled in and started my usual process to get the June 27 paper ready.

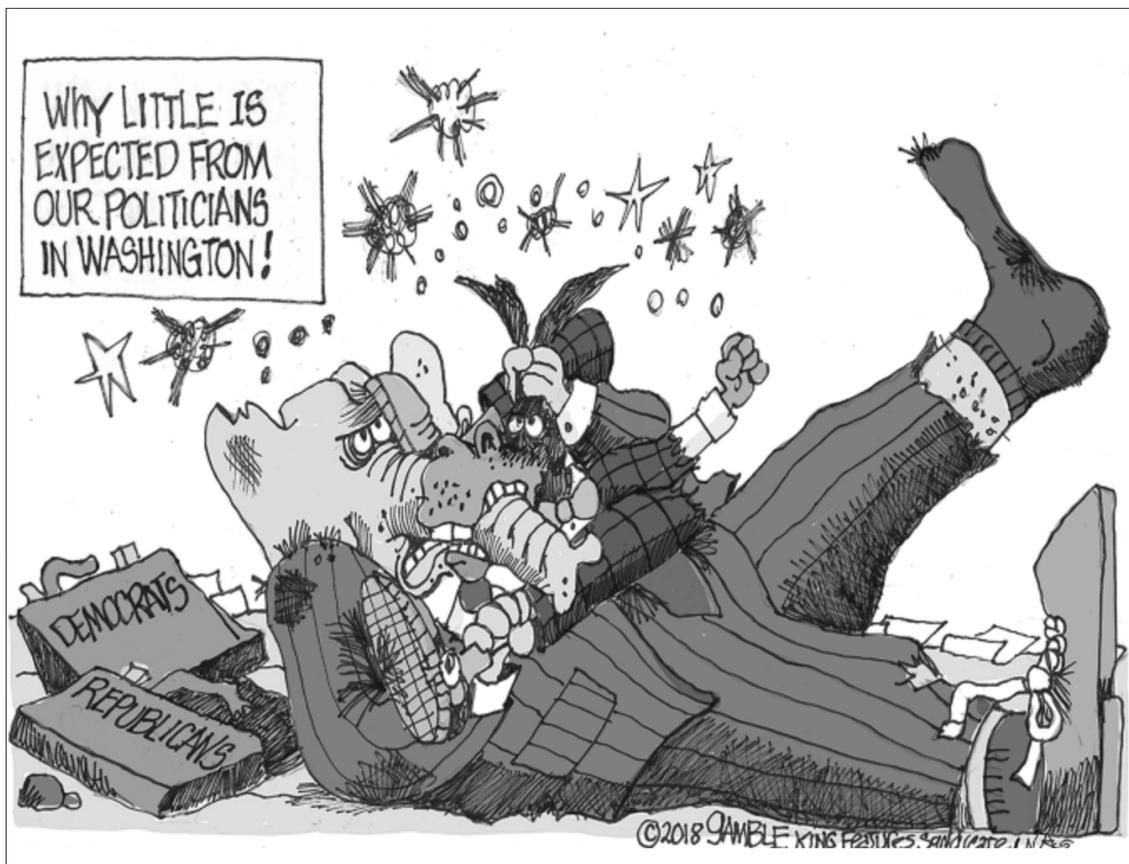
Then it happened the following Sunday again. Same thing.

I had luckily created a backup folder with copy and pictures, etc., but had to take Cory’s computer once again to put out the paper. I had no access to my passwords or the programs I use to send the paper to the press in Franklin electronically. The past two weeks have been a nightmare.

So, this week we are back on track, and everything is seemingly back to normal. (Fingers crossed.)

Thank you to everyone who mentioned the paper looked different the past two weeks and thank you as well to everyone who didn’t mention it.

Brandon Roberts is publisher and editor of the News-Journal. He can be reached by email at editor@mitchellnews.com or by calling 828-765-7169.



LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

People should let their voices be heard

A lot of our citizens have become complacent with what is being displayed by President Trump. Some don’t take the time to protest, and some are afraid to voice their opinions.

Many people have died in past revolutions and wars for us to have the right to protest what we deem as unacceptable and plain devilish. It would be wise to remind ourselves of what happened in Germany under Hitler when the citizens fell under the spell of a dictator.

Don’t let our democracy be ripped away from us by a President who seems to greatly admire Vladimir Putin, another dictator, who destroys people in his way and has nosed around in our elections with no admonishment from our President.

If we don’t stand up and become united in our efforts, we will fall, and it may be sooner than we think. Just watch what is going on now and don’t fall prey as people under Hitler did. Otherwise, every veteran death or injury will be in vain. Stand up. Don’t sit idly by and let America perish. The young people of our country depend on us.

Protest through letters to the editor, by marching, by talking to your representatives and don’t let up. America is our country, not Donald Trump’s. And please, don’t forget to vote.

Ann Beecham
Bakersville

Group circulating petition about Mission sale

There has been a lot of news recently about the pending sale of Asheville-based Mission Health to Tennessee-based Hospital Corporation of America.

The pros and cons of such a transaction are confusing. But one thing is clear: when a nonprofit entity, such as Mission, is sold to a for-profit corporation, such as HCA, the fair-market value of the nonprofit and the planned disbursement of the proceeds from the sale must be reviewed by the NC Attorney General to ensure

the communities initially funded and continually supported Mission and its smaller community hospitals are adequately compensated.

As this review process nears, NC Attorney General Joshua Stein has publicly asked for comments and concerns from residents of affected communities. Since our very own Blue Ridge Regional Hospital is part of this planned sale, that means us.

Over the past few months a loosely affiliated group of concerned citizens from Mitchell and Yancey counties, dubbed “Save Our Hospital” has been meeting and following the development of Mission’s planned sale. We’ve been thinking about how to give our community a voice to let Stein know we are here and we care about the outcome of this sale.

Who will oversee the proceeds from the sale, and how it will affect our community health care? Our solution: a petition.

There are several ways to access and sign the petition.

Go to your local library and find the box labeled “To Be Sold.” There you will find copies of the petition. Just sign, and place it inside the box.

Go to www.change.org/p/joshua-stein-save-our-hospital and sign an online version. At change.org you will also have the option to write a note to our Attorney General.

You can also find a link to the petition on Facebook at @saveblueridgehospital. There you will also find recent news articles about the sale of Mission.

And, there’s the good, old-fashioned way to participate, by signing a hand-delivered petition when you see one of our volunteers holding them in various public places over the coming weeks.

Let your voice be heard.

Susan E. Spruill
Spruce Pine

HB 662 too little, too late

I am glad to see that Rep. Josh Dobson has begun to see there is a medical insurance crisis denying citizens of NC health insurance.

HB 662 he is touting as a “common-sense solution” is very late in

coming and does not fix the problem. Rep. Dobson had an opportunity to stand up for the people, and he failed, that is he failed to show up and vote against SB-4 that prohibited Medicaid Expansion in North Carolina. Along with failing to expand Medicaid, we must deal with Mr. Dobson’s legislature’s 10-consecutive years of declining state investments in the NC Medicaid system.

HB 662 requires a premium of 2 percent of the participant’s household income, which is a challenge to those in this income range. The bill states: “Failure of a program participant to make a premium contribution within 60 days of its due date shall result in the termination.”

Termination of coverage would never happen under Medicaid expansion and puts more stress on those with the greatest need.

To qualify there are mandatory employment requirements: “To increase employment and community engagement, Carolina Cares program participants must be employed or engaged in activities to promote employment.” What does Rep. Dobson think these individuals do all day?

Both Medicaid expansion and HB 662 would depend on federal and state funds, but HB 662 adds the burden of participant contributions: “If the combination of funding sources identified in this section is not sufficient to initially fund or to provide a sustainable funding source to cover all costs of the Carolina Cares program, then the program shall not be implemented.” That caveat doesn’t make me very confident about the security of this program.

This program will require additional state personnel to manage and oversee the program. It requires those most in need pay premiums while living in poverty. Coverage can be canceled for non-payment, and the program can be canceled if the state does not provide adequate funding. I would hope we could do more for those in need in our community.

Howard Larsen
Spruce Pine

LETTERS POLICY

The Mitchell News-Journal welcomes letters to the editor about issues of local importance. Deadline to submit a letter for publication in the coming week’s edition is 5 p.m. Friday. All writers are expected to abide by the following policy:

- Letters must be exclusive to the News-Journal;
- Letters must include the writer’s full name, street address and daytime telephone number for verification. The writer’s name and city of residence will be published;
- Letters must be original – no photocopies;
- Letters should be 500 words or fewer;
- We do not publish poems, excerpts from other publications, lengthy submissions of scripture or letters signed by groups or multiple individuals;
- Letters endorsing or criticizing a business will not be published;
- We reserve the right to edit letters for brevity, style and libel. Publication of any letter is at the sole discretion of the News-Journal.

MITCHELL NEWS-JOURNAL

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Our Mission

The Mitchell News-Journal is published with pride for the people of Mitchell and adjoining counties by Community Newspapers Inc., Athens, Georgia.

We believe strong newspapers build strong communities – “Newspapers get things done!” Our primary goal is to publish distinguished and profitable community-oriented newspapers.

This mission will be accomplished through the teamwork of professionals dedicated to truth, integrity, loyalty, quality and hard work.

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