

# Opinions

## The First Amendment

Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances.



**Bill McGoun**  
Contributing Editor  
Asheville Citizen Times  
USA TODAY NETWORK

## NC's western counties are real industry draw

A funny thing happened on the way to the collapse of manufacturing in North Carolina's three westernmost counties. It didn't happen for a number of reasons, not least of which was the efforts of the local community college.

Oh, there were some anxious moments in the opening years of the millennium, according to Paul Worley, director of economic and workforce development at Tri-County Community College. But then the community got together to see that departing industries were replaced by new ones.

Worley is an enthusiastic spokesman for the Tri-County service area – Cherokee, Clay and Graham counties. He rattles off the list of manufacturers that have moved into the region: TEAM Industries, Aegis Power Systems, Moog Components Group, Snap-On Tools, MGM Brakes, Core Scientific.

Moog employs about 375 people in Murphy producing “motion control and electronic components for industrial, commercial, medical, aerospace and defense applications.” TEAM employs about 165 in Andrews making technically difficult precision gears and components. MGM Brakes employs about 85 in Murphy.

How did this happen? Why are these counties drawing industry when so many rural counties are losing out? Worley cites foresight and a unified effort by both the public and private sectors. “It's because of our leadership,” he said.

The hurdles are high. The Tri-County area is arguable the most isolated in the state. Murphy, the seat of Cherokee County and the westernmost city in North Carolina, is more aligned to Chattanooga and Atlanta than to Asheville. Its service area includes counties in Georgia and Tennessee.

The nearest interstate highway is more than an hour away. There is no train service, though the tracks now owned by the Great Smoky Mountains Railroad remain in place and Worley hopes to see some usage restored.

The area does, however, have quite a bit of flat land – Worley describes it as a bowl – including a large tract between Andrews and Marble.

And, as Worley stresses, there are those leaders with foresight. Their efforts include seeing that business has the infrastructure it needs, including water and sewer service and high-speed internet. “We focused on putting in infrastructure and creating a workforce,” he said.

One good example of public-private partnership is the campus where Worley is based, the college's Center for Applied Technology in Marble. Its plain exterior, looking for all the world like a warehouse, gives little hint as to what is going on inside.

It's hard to overestimate the importance of community colleges in supporting a region's economy. To begin with, they provide a low-cost way for students to take their first two years' work toward a university degree. As Southwestern Community College of Sylva explains it on its website:

“Students at four-year public universities in North Carolina pay 2-6 times more in tuition and fees compared to students at Southwestern Community College.”

But, as they say on the TV infomercials, there's more. Community colleges provide the education needed to support a region's economy. They train the chefs of Asheville, the first responders of Franklin and the machinists of Murphy.

Industry is not the only employer in the far west. The Murphy Medical Center has become part of the Erlanger health-care system out of Tennessee, a move that should result in more services and more jobs. And then there is the casino opened by the Eastern Band of the Cherokee Indians on the four-lane just east of Murphy.

I had no problem parking near the entrance on the Thursday when I visited, and I can't help wondering if the Murphy facility is going to wind up mainly taking businesses from the Cherokee casino due to being nearer Atlanta. I hope I'm wrong.

However the gambling business fares, the far west is in good shape for attracting and keeping industry. And that is no gamble. It's a sure thing.

Bill McGoun is a contributing editor for the ACT Editorial Board. He lives in Bryson City.



## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### Dogwood board lacks diverse voices

We at Children First/ Communities In Schools believe that every child deserves to reach their full potential. Unfortunately, significant barriers to health persist for children of poverty living in Western NC and disproportionately affect children of color, such as higher infant mortality rates and higher rates of asthma. Socioeconomic conditions underlie many health inequalities and must be addressed if we want to see improvement in our population's health and a decrease in health inequities that adversely affect children and their families.

We applaud the Dogwood Health Trust's focus on social determinants of health in an effort to improve the overall health of the population of Western NC. However, any regional efforts to address health inequities must apply a lens of diversity and inclusion to be successful. We would like to add our organization's voice to those encouraging the Dogwood Health Trust to include in its leadership representatives who can speak to health inequities that break down along racial and gender lines. Who better to include than those with lived experience and dedication to addressing disparities and improving health outcomes for all?

Natasha Adwaters, Executive Director, CFCS

### Immigrants must enter legally

In response to the “Life, Liberty and Forgotten” letter this week, I respectfully see his point and America does welcome immigrants; however, we welcome immigrants who have in the past and in the future come to America through proper channels. Once it was through Ellis Island. Now it is through Customs and Border Protection sites.

There are pros and cons for the process immigrant's use; however, allowing immigrants to enter unchecked is detrimental to legal residents and those who choose to enter illegally (they can carry diseases, many are uneducated, there could be a criminal element, etc.). Taking care of those who enter with any one of the above can take a huge toll on the economics of any given region. Western North Carolina already has our fair share of economically deprived families who are living here legally and struggle daily with medical issues they can't afford to have attended, lack of medicine due to high costs, unhealthy diets due to high cost of groceries. Just look around, you will see this if you choose. To continue to burden our schools, our city/ county governments and medical facilities with these additional costs is unacceptable for most of us who believe in taking proper channels to America.

Because of the above whys and wherefores, all travelers entering the United States from all other countries need a passport upon arrival (regardless of their country of citizenship) and permanent residents and foreign nationals need a US Visa.

Connie Porter, Candler

### Trump's values shouldn't be ours

Donald Trump has brought an unprecedented pettiness and coarseness to the Oval Office. Yesterday I watched his news conference where the President of the United States publicly demeaned those Republican candidates who did not kiss his ring by asking for his support and then went on to lose their respective races. He called these people out by name.

What kind of person kicks someone when they are down? It's not the American way.

The President should be an example of American values, but I'm afraid he is making America an example of Trump values.

Dennis Wilson, Asheville

### Bipartisanship on climate change

With the elections finally behind us, it is time for Congress to start working in a bipartisan manner to address our county's many big issues. As shown in the latest report from the UN's Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, there is no bigger problem that can be addressed right now than climate change. If we don't start making a much stronger effort on this very soon, we are going to quickly reach a very dangerous tipping point for humans on earth. With a split Congress, it is going to take both parties working together to pass legislation and both sides are going to have to compromise. The best hope is to pass a fee on Carbon and then rebate the money collected equally to all citizens. This will dramatically reduce carbon emissions, while growing the economy and adding jobs. I urge Representatives Meadows and McHenry and Senators Tillis and Burr to work with the Democrats to push this legislation through Congress. It is needed now.

Dan Glidden, Asheville

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### 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.

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

**Casey Blake**  
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