



**Your Turn**  
Steve Little  
Guest columnist

## Why small towns will win big with Mission deal

A front-page story in the Citizen-Times on Sunday, November 25, 2018 about some possible impact to the five local hospitals in the Mission Health system upon its sale to HCA did not include any comment from local government officials in Marion or McDowell County. One of these 5 local hospitals is located in Marion.

Both the McDowell County Board of Commissioners and the Marion City Council are on record fully supporting the proposed sale. This was not a blind or hasty decision by either group. It was based on many meetings and discussions with Mission officials since the sale was proposed. City of Marion and McDowell County officials met with the CEO of HCA in October. Our main questions were answered months ago, to our satisfaction.

Right now, we have ZERO protections that The McDowell Hospital in Marion won't be closed or its services reduced. However, if the sale goes through, we WILL get new protections ... some for 5 years, and some for 10 years ... that we don't have now and that we have never had before. The ex-

**Right now, we have ZERO protections that The McDowell Hospital in Marion won't be closed ... However, if the sale goes through, we WILL get new protections.**

act same situation applies to the hospitals in Spruce Pine (Mitchell County), Franklin (Macon County), Highlands (Macon County), and Brevard (Transylvania County). These new protections are explained in the proposed sales contract.

In addition to the millions of dollars that will be applied yearly to improve health care situation of all the counties in the Mission service area, the towns (Spruce Pine, Franklin, Highlands, Brevard and Marion) and the counties (Mitchell, Macon, Transylvania and McDowell) where these five smaller hospitals are located will begin to receive city and county taxes from HCA. The amount of the tax each town and county will receive depends on the current value of the local hospital buildings and equipment. It will be a NEW boost to our local governments, providing us with significant tax revenue we have never received in the past while the local hospital has been either locally-owned or Mission-owned.

Here's the bottom line of the proposed sale of the Mission Health system to HCA: Franklin, Highlands, Brevard, Spruce Pine and Marion will GAIN new protections we do not have now and have never had regarding the continued operation of our local hospitals. We will GAIN additional tax revenue we do not receive now and have never received.

As the Mayor of Marion, NC, I fully support the proposed sale of the Mission Health system to HCA. This will be extremely positive for Marion (and for Franklin, Highlands, Spruce Pine and Brevard) and for McDowell County (and for Mitchell, Macon and Transylvania Counties).

*Steve Little is the Mayor of Marion, NC.*

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### EDITORIAL

# Feds should get out of the CBD, hemp industry's way

Hemp farming is set to become a significant contributor to the Western North Carolina agricultural sector. One regulatory change at the federal level would help.

Buoyed by an especially profitable new use, the number of hemp farmers in the region has grown to nearly 50. "Last year, we only had five people planting hemp west of Charlotte," said Blake Butler, executive director of the North Carolina Industrial Hemp Association, which has more than 1,100 members.

The new high-profit use is production of cannabidiol or CBD, a compound extracted from the plant's flowers. CBD is said to treat ills from arthritic pain to anxiety, and products made from it range from tinctures to energy drinks.

Findings recently published in the Journal of the International Association for the Study of Pain indicate low doses of CBD provide relief from pain and anxiety.

"You can't walk 10 steps without tripping over a CBD latte or CBD ice cream at The Hop," said Brian Bullman, owner of the quickly growing Carolina Hemp Co. "Asheville will undoubtedly become Hemp City, USA."

Hemp growing has a long history around the world. "Hemp has been

used to make paper for thousands of years," says the Information Distillery website. "It makes a fine quality paper that is naturally acid free."

And that's just the start. "Hempseeds and hemp oil are highly nutritious and delicious. Hempseeds are an excellent source of protein, minerals, and dietary fiber," the website says. "Hemp can be used to make a variety of fabrics, similar to but more durable than cotton. Hemp is also excellent for making rugs and other textiles."

So why don't we hear more about the hemp industry? Why isn't it more popular? Because hemp is chemically related to marijuana and has become collateral damage in the war on drugs. It still is classified as a Schedule 1 narcotic, even though it contains little of THC, the psychoactive ingredient that gives marijuana its punch.

The recent boom is the product of a 2014 farm bill, which paved the way for states to mandate whether farmers could plant hemp as part of a Department of Agriculture-guided pilot program. North Carolina is one of 34 states participating.

"This is a resilient plant, very durable plant, and we're learning that it's doing well in our soil, which we didn't really learn until people started planting it," Butler said.

While the 2014 law removed one hurdle, it left another in place. Farmers now can grow hemp, but they cannot insure their crops due to the continuing classification of hemp as a narcotic. "We had one farmer who lost it all -- \$50,000, his entire crop," Butler said.

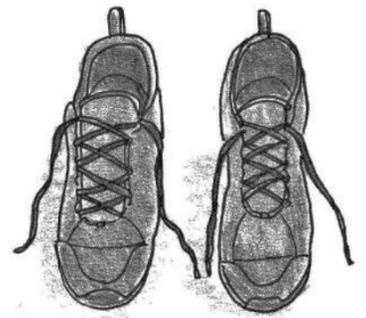
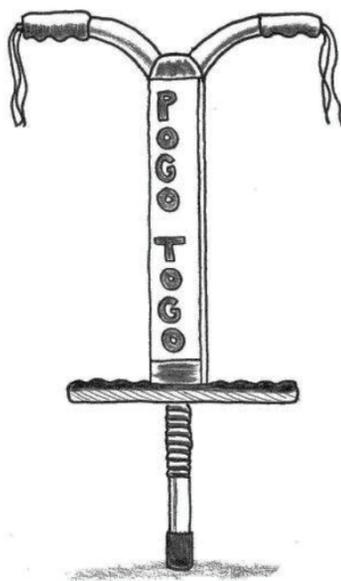
There's plenty of growth still to come in this hot market, said Bullman, who said Asheville is a market leader in hemp production and use. He mentioned the city's inventory of hemp biocomposite -- or "Hempcrete" -- homes, plus CBD dispensaries all over the city.

Carolina Hemp already has a Woodfin storefront at 406 Elk Park Dr. A new 1,400-square-foot West Asheville space will likely be open soon, selling CBD vape oils, flowers and food products. It will also be devoted to other hemp products and culture, with hemp fabric sold by the yard and tutorials on how to stretch and paint hemp canvas.

In what the company calls a "seed-to-sale synergy," Carolina Hemp's own CBD brand, Kingdom Harvest, brings together local farmers, botanical extractors and retailers.

This is good news, especially for farmers seeking a crop that can be grown profitably on small holdings. Now, if only the federal government will stop classifying hemp as a narcotic.

## SCOOTER ALTERNATIVES FOR DOWNTOWN



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## Where does your party fall on the compassion index?

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Joe Myers  
Guest columnist

How is it that in politics, and in the politics of life as well, that brother is separated from brother and friend from friend? From the outside it seems to be the substance of compassion. Where does compassion for others (perhaps we should say empathy) fit on your personal scale of values. No, better said, what is the measure of your action in the way of compassion? Where does it fit in what you do? Compassion emanates from and is driven by the heart. Does your soul live in your heart or your mind, in the land of intellect. Or, for the most physical of us, even in the gut?

What is the opposite of compassion? Dispassionate? Yes, but does the absence of compassion help us to understand? Indifference? Yes, we have seen that, but it seems too harsh and judgmental. Cold? Orderly? Love of order? Love of simplicity? Legal? Lawyerly? Preference for statutory law over equity law? Clarity? Clear direc-

tion? Rules? Religion over Spirituality? The Church over the Holy Spirit? What Paul said or what Jesus said? The Body of Christ over Christ? Evangelical over Charismatic? Evangelical over lukewarmness? Strength over softness? Power over togetherness? Certainty over mystical or magical or lack of certainty? Telling rather than discussing? Sermons rather than the free exchange of different ideas? Authority over messy vitality? Black and white over gray? Malum prohibitum over Malum in se. Uncaring? No, too strong? On a scale of 1 to 10, are you nearer 1 or 10? Based on what you do and how you spend your time, are you B or above?

When I work and support my family, why won't they work? Why should I spend my hard earned money to support people who don't want to work? Why should they get a free ride? As Henry Higgins said "why can't they be more like ME"! But what do we do for those who want to work but can't find work when unemployment is high? What about those who are born in poverty, who never have the love and support of two parents, who never get life's

"supplies", who go to inferior schools with inferior teachers, who never get the skills or the motivation to make it in our economy, who are virtually doomed to failure, who slide into the dark side with no one to pull them out, who at best are limited to a life of boring work at minimum wage? We could change that spiral of life, but the money goes to fight needless wars. Who are we? Where is "love thy neighbor" in all of this?

Democrats are closer to 10 on the compassion scale and Republicans are closer to 1. It is not that the latter are uncaring; it is simply that compassion for others is not a priority. For Democrats it is everything. Anyone who for whatever reason cannot take care of himself is the subject of compassion for Democrats. Republicans don't like people who cannot take care of themselves, they are like businesses which fail in the hard world of pure capitalism. Life is for winners, not losers. Perhaps "don't like "is too strong. Maybe "don't appreciate" or "don't respect" is closer. In any event they are a nuisance and a low priority for Republicans. Maybe it is as simple (ha) as right brain-left brain.

What is your favorite verse in the Bible? Mine is "whatever you do for the least of mine you do for me." Matthew 25:40. And yours?

*Joe Myers lives in Arden.*