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FREE ~ GRATIS

April 2019

Confederate monument stands at a crossroads

by Randolph Voller

The historic Confederate Monument in downtown Pittsboro is under the microscope as communities across the South come to grips with

changing demography and shifting values in the twenty-first century.

Eternally facing North at the crossroads of the Jefferson Davis Highway (15-501) and US Business

64, the statue has survived the courthouse fire in 2010 and has remained an insulated presence in the heart of the Circle City since the original publisher of the *Chatham Record* and former state senator, Henry London, led the community effort with the Winnie Davis chapter of the U.D.C to erect the monument on August 23, 1907.

In fact, the Honorable Mr. London took to the editorial pages of his local organ on August 22, 1907 to explain the *raison d'être* of the bronze monument:

"The bronze figure, standing on this monument, will forever typify and call to mind the most magnificent soldiers who ever marched to battle in any age or country. In the ages to come that silent sentinel, standing with his empty musket at parade rest, will speak more eloquently than the glowing words of the impassioned orator, in perpetuating the memory of the heroism and self-sacrifices of the Confederate soldier. In a few more years the last of those whom he represents will like him, be at rest. Let posterity revere their memory so long as that bronze figure stands its silent watch!"

It has been well said that 'A people who forget their dead deserve themselves to be forgotten.' It is eminently right and proper, therefore, for the people of Chatham county thus to honor the memory of their Confederate heroes."

The intent of Mr. London may have been simply to honor the sacrifices of Confederate veterans; however, the physical location of the monument and what it may symbolize has been called into question.

Pittsboro resident Elizabeth



PHOTO BY GARY SIMPSON

MONUMENT CONTINUED, PAGE 7

4 face bribery charges; 3 GOP bigwigs, 2 from Chatham

by Randolph Voller

If "money is the mother's milk of politics" as opined nearly six decades ago by California Democratic Party boss, Jesse 'Big Daddy' Unruh, then Chatham County's Republican Party was in the land of milk and honey under the leadership of its former chairman, John V. Palermo, in 2018.

In April 2018, the local GOP received \$100,000 from mega donor Greg Lindberg, which allowed the local GOP to have more cash on hand at the end of the second quarter of 2018 (\$150,813.68) than the NC GOP's state senate committee had on hand (\$112,402.17) at the same time, according to reports filed with the State Board of Elections. That was unusual since the state committee's job was to elect fifty Republican state senators to its chamber in Raleigh.

The milk began to go bad last fall when Lindberg and his associates received subpoenas from the grand jury, a turn of events which led to a flurry of media coverage and the resignation of high-flying Chatham County GOP Chairman, John V. Palermo.

Unfortunately the milk officially curdled with the recent federal grand jury indictment of Palermo along with State GOP chairman and former U.S. Congressman Robin Hayes.

The indictment had Chatham County flavor; however, as Palermo and Hayes were joined in the indictment by the local party's two largest contributors, Greg E. Lindberg and John D. Gray.

The group was indicted on four counts by the United States District Court for the Western District of North Carolina Statesville Division. The indictment was filed in Charlotte on March 18th and focused on the group's efforts to influence State Republican Insurance Commissioner Mike Causey.

U.S. Attorney Andrew Murray said in a press release that the "alleged scheme" was uncovered thanks to Causey's "voluntary reporting." Previous reports indicated that Causey's "voluntary reporting" included wearing a wire for the government.

"Improper campaign contributions erode the public's trust in our political institutions," Murray said. "We will work with our law enforcement partners to investigate allegations of public corruption, safeguard the integrity of the democratic process, and prosecute those who compromise it."

The indictment of Lindberg, Gray, Palermo and Hayes alleges that they "devised a scheme to defraud and deprive the citizens of the honest services of the Commissioner, an elected state official, through bribery." That scheme involved holding multiple in-person meetings with Causey in multiple locations and other forms of communications "to discuss Lindberg's request for the personnel change in exchange

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IN DEPTH: AN ORIGINAL SERIES

Cannabis legalization in North Carolina, Part Two

by James A. Wood and Randolph Voller

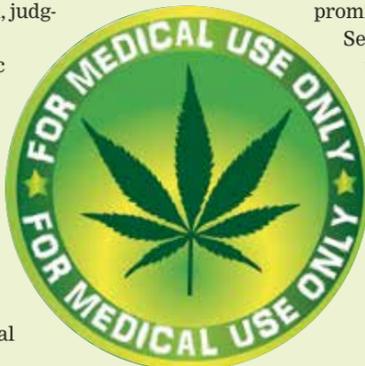
One sure sign that things are changing on the cannabis legalization front can be found in recent polling data for the United States and the state of North Carolina. Last year, for example, the annual surveys of U.S. public opinion conducted by Gallup and the Pew Research Center found that roughly two thirds (66% Gallup/62% Pew) of Americans support the legalization of cannabis generally. On the surface, it might seem odd that those polls did not make a distinction between medical and recreational use, until one remembers that 33 of the 50 states as well as the District of Columbia have already legalized medical marijuana. In other words, for the citizens of those states the only question left to answer is the question of recreational legalization, which, judging from the polls, has solid majority support.

Thanks to the work of the Elon University Poll, we have 2017 public opinion data for the state of North Carolina that does break down the question with regard to medical versus recreational legalization. According to the Elon poll, support for the legalization of medical marijuana was overwhelmingly favorable, with 80% of those polled saying they supported it. Recreational legalization, on the other hand, did not fare nearly as well, with only 45% favoring legalization and 51% opposing it. Millennials represented the largest block of support for recreational legalization in the poll, coming in at 65% in favor, while 51% of political Independents (Unaffiliated) also support it. Members of the so-called Silent Generation were, not surprisingly, the most strongly opposed to recreational

legalization, coming in at only 11% in favor and 84% opposed. Also not surprising was the fact that a solid majority of Republicans (65%) were opposed to recreational legalization. It must be noted, however, that 73% of Republicans supported cannabis legalization "for medical purposes only." That is a number that, in our estimation, bears watching, as it may create some space in the General Assembly for the relaxation of the GOP's rigid position on this issue.

Anecdotal evidence, too, indicates that public opinion on cannabis legalization in this state is shifting and that a political space may be opening to forge some kind of compromise on, at least, the legalization of medical marijuana. In its "Influencer Series" of public dialogues, for example, the *Raleigh News and Observer*, the *Durham Herald-Sun*, and the *Charlotte Observer* talked with several prominent figures in the worlds of government, business, and advocacy.

While the former governors were split on how best to move forward, the business community and some Republicans spoke in favor of different levels of legalization. Those who supported the outright legalization of recreational cannabis pointed to factors such as the increased tax revenue it would bring, the need to get control of the market for illegal drugs (of all sorts), and the spectacular failure and extremely high cost of the "prohibition" model of drug enforcement.



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