

## North Carolina, Chatham support of guns disgraceful

by William Sommers

Once again our beloved State of North Carolina has fallen into the muddy grasp of the national gun lobby. It is hard to believe that our State Officials, especially those in charge of the venerable NC State Fairground, would have the hard heart to invite the Dixie Gun & Knife Show to produce their best guns for a two day shoot-along on January 19-20, posting a rather menacing sign on 15-501 as shown:

And this Gun & Knife Show to be scheduled only a few weeks after the parents and community of the Elementary School in Sandy Hook, Newton, Connecticut had in deep and uncontrollable sorrow buried 20 children and six adults killed by Adam Lanza's and his Bushmaster XM15-E2s. Yet our insensitive North Carolina officials thought it appropriate to host the "Show" right after the Sandy Hook disaster! Where did their values go? Where did sorrow and prayer go? Where did North Carolina go?

But the cursed events that pounced on the DIXIE show are now well known! Three visitors were injured based on the mishandling of a 12 gauge shotgun whose birdshot injured a sheriff's deputy, as well as a 54-year-old woman visitor. Another observer was treated for an injured right hand. Authorities were unsure whether it was legal to bring a loaded gun to the fair grounds? Is this some kind of a



Billboard on 15-501 advertising the show

horrible joke? These officials should contact Newton, Connecticut and find out what is official, what is real and what should be done?

But this is not all. During all these terrible actions, we are reminded that Chatham County has authorized a large Walmart commercial building at the Chatham County border with Orange County. The horror of our current upset over the killings and the uncontrolled diversion of "gun-lovers" has a devastating connection to the overall Walmart national and international operation.

Though we are all anticipating the remarkably-priced household items which Walmart has in abundance. Their employee satisfaction is not very high and their anti-feminine policy is not a model for commercial operation. But in addition – as we mourn the Sandy Hook deaths – and so many other similar instances, the worst part comes from the fact that we are frightened by the fact that Walmart, Inc. has a fearful record in the supply and sale of weapons and ammunition that have been at the root of many recent armed shoot-outs. In the Bowling, Arizona

shootings, for example, involving the death of six people, including a federal judge and a 9-year-old girl – and the wounding of Gabrielle Giffords, a member of the US Congress – the shooter bought his ammunition at a nearby Walmart store.

In fact, Americans annually purchase so many guns that more guns were purchased in the United States than there are active military members in the world's 14 largest armies, costing just short of \$11 billion dollars....and a good portion of these sales are related to Walmart's commercial operations.

While there are many possibilities in protecting ourselves from this growing menace, there is a local initiative that should not be ignored – namely – for the Chatham County officials – and citizens – to have Walmart promise not to sell ammunition or armed units in their newly built enterprise near the county line. This could easily be made a condition of their final approval.

But we need to be more and more watchful at all levels of government. If not, the blind OK given to gun sales by those who are part of our State government, the horror of the Newton disaster may, god help us, repeat itself. It should never happen again.

*William Sommers is a Chatham resident involved in a variety of civic and cultural groups.*

## Let's Bring Our War Dollars Home

by John Heuer

It was a powerful statement. On Jan. 15th, the Raleigh City Council passed a Resolution to Bring Our War Dollars Home and Move the Money to meet local community and human needs. The City Council called on Congress and the President to: "...bring our war dollars home, and use those and other savings in Pentagon spending to meet vital human needs, promote job creation, rebuild our infrastructure, aid municipal and state governments, and develop a new economy based upon renewable, sustainable energy."

Raleigh follows Durham, Burlington and dozens of cities across the US in sending a message to prioritize funding for human needs over wars. Congressional leaders who fund the wars must take note.

What is sometimes called "municipal foreign policy" is the practice of local communities and state governments taking on matters of national and global import through the passage of non-binding resolutions. Some people mock such resolutions as being a waste of time, since local officials have no direct budgetary or legal authority over the issue addressed.

In fact, taking positions on key national issues is a fundamental responsibility of local governments. Local resolutions serve a critical democratic function. Municipal, county and state elected officials have much closer relationships to the people than do Federal representatives—local officials are the most accessible. It is not surprising, then, that from the earliest days of the Republic, local governments have served as a key conduit for the people to express their views, and resolutions have been the mechanism of choice. Local government is the bridge between the people and their national government.

The National Priorities Project ([www.nationalpriorities.org](http://www.nationalpriorities.org)) provides cost data and trade-off scenarios to help communities understand some of the choices being made on their behalf. For example, citizens of Alamance County contributed \$218 million to the 2012 defense budget. For just a 10 percent reduction in Pentagon spending, Alamance could have provided 60 elementary school teachers; 400 Head Start slots for children; 1,100 households converted to all solar energy; 450 military

veterans receiving VA medical care; 580 people receiving low-income healthcare; 60 police or sheriff's officers; AND 560 students receiving Pell grants of \$5,550!!

In 2013, the tax payers of Orange County, NC will pay over \$11 million for the US nuclear weapons industry, while human services in Orange Co. are being slashed. Nuclear weapons constitute a relatively small portion of US war making and Pentagon spending, but our nukes represent a particularly egregious squandering of wealth and resources. After all, what could be more diabolical than to bankrupt our cities by maintaining weapons designed to incinerate other cities?

Orange County, like other communities across NC, has been devastated by declining revenues and state and federal budget cuts. We call for "Fair taxes and a budget for all" that will dramatically reprioritize our governments' policies toward spending and taxation. We call for an end to the war in Afghanistan, substantial reductions in military spending and increased taxation on wealthy individuals and corporations. A decade of wars in Iraq and Afghanistan have squandered vast amounts of blood and treasure (\$204 million just to Chapel Hill) while real security needs, housing, health care, education, jobs and renewable energy development have been relegated to the poor house.

The Orange County Peace Coalition is organizing a "Fair tax and budget for all" campaign to bring the war dollars home and institute fair tax policies that address the pressing needs in our communities.

When former Soviet Union Premier Mikhail Gorbachev attended the funeral of Ronald Reagan in 2004, he was asked about the common US narrative that Reagan won the Cold War by spending the Soviets into bankruptcy. Gorbachev scoffed at the claim. "We both lost the Cold War" Gorbachev responded, "By squandering tens of trillions of dollars on weapons that proved to be unnecessary. "Think of the good we could have done in this world with all those resources!"

Let's bring our troops and war dollars home; care for our returning soldiers and their families, and build healthy communities!

*John Heuer is director, NC Peace Action.*

## Fairness ca 2013

by Don Lein

Now that the new year and presidential term is beginning we are gaining an insight into 2013's definition of fairness. On the first day of the year, the President announced that under the new legislation "millionaires and billionaires" will finally "pay their fair share." Of course in this era of open government the U.S. Senate voted down by 14-10, along party lines, an amendment to list the corporations that receive tax perquisites on a government website. These included such worthies as NASCAR, StarKist, rum distillers, railroads, \$12 billion for the continuing quest for affordable, reliable wind energy, much of which will wind up in General Electric and Siemens coffers, cellulosic biofuels for another \$60 million and most egregious of all approximately a half a billion to Hollywood to assist in making films in "economically depressed areas", although most of the money will remain in Gucci Gulch. What is most astounding is that the president can keep a straight face when talking about this pork-laden bill. Surely there has to be an Oscar somewhere for this amazing performance.

However, some of Obama's greatest supporters did not wait until the new year and new taxes were enacted, before they sheltered their income to evade paying their "fair share", come 2013. When Google shifted 10 billion to a Bermuda shell company in December CEO Eric Schmidt defended the move by stating "It's called capitalism." The ultra-liberal Washington Post is paying its 2013 dividends in December so that shareholders, such as Warren Buffet, do not have to pay at 2013 tax rates. Mark Zuckerberg of Facebook told Obama at a Town hall meeting that he was "cool" with paying more taxes. Why then did Zuckerberg and other Facebook execs put their family shares in sheltered annuity trusts, rather than being "cool"? Not to be outdone co-founder Eduardo Saverin renounced his American citizenship thus evading approximately \$70 million in taxes.

Seeing how Obama's fairness is working on his favored people/companies, how is it helping the less advantaged – remember these are the ones that are to be the recipients of his redistribution largesse. Alas, a set of environmental policies that are built on sand, worthless computer models and deception, while begun as a movement to curtail serious environmental abuses, has devolved to a set of whiny organizations whose policies try to

control people's lives, assume a Luddite stance with respect to modern technology and result in increased poverty, disease and misery especially felt in third world nations. Higher gas mileage requirements has led to smaller less crash-proof cars which has led to more fatalities and injuries. Corn ethanol which was claimed to help the environment, in fact, increased corn costs from \$2.85 a bushel in 2005 to \$8.50 this year, which has had a serious detrimental effect on costs of food, which hit the poor the hardest. All of this was started by Sierra Club and other extreme groups, when they forecast the end of hydrocarbons, which has now proven fallacious. Empirical data has never been embraced by extremists of any ilk.

Nonetheless, technology is changing and challenging outdated "truths". As Bill Gates observed "one thing that is different today (in energy) is software, which changes the game." This is very true in California where opening up the Monterey shale field could have an economic impact of over a trillion dollars to the California economy. Will California embrace this opportunity for thousands of well-paying jobs, better schools and yes, even funding for those outrageous retirement benefits the government unions have wangled out of compliant politicians or will they listen to the Chicken Littles, Cassandras, and Luddites? Technology has opened the door for them. Will the government be fair to its citizens and give them an opportunity to prosper?

A new book, "Against Fairness" by Stephen Asma, an admitted left leaning thinker, has questioned the wisdom of pursuing a fairness described as universal egalitarianism, with its attendant redistributionist practices. If we love everyone universally, we cannot have favorites. However, what then happens to those virtues that arise from favoritism, such as loyalty, duty, compassion, etc. He favors tribes, nepotism, preferences and patronages, lest we wind up with "a whole population of detached, expedient eunuchs." He asks if you would turn in your father if he committed a crime. He also wonders at the impact of schools giving out first place medals to every child who enters a race, irrespective of where they finished. Compact little thought provoker and may give you some new insights on Fairness ca 2013.

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