

# OPINION



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## OUR VIEW

# A masquerade

A shallow anti-mask bill wafted briefly on currents of hot air in the General Assembly before predictably dropping like a rock for lack of logic and common sense.

Intended as a knee-jerk poke in the eye of campus protesters, the bill was heavy-handed, rushed, poorly thought-out and rife with unintended consequences.

HB 237 even has a transparently ideological name: “Unmasking Mobs and Criminals.”

Small wonder the House has had reservation after the Senate passed a version of the legislation that made no exceptions for people who wear masks as a medical precaution.

Some 700,000 North Carolinians are affected by immunocompromised medical conditions, state Sen. Sydney Batch noted ... including Batch herself, who has battled breast cancer.

“Some people say that we’re fear mongering,” Batch told ABC News.

“And what I would tell you is that for someone who’s been immunocompromised in the past and had to wear masks — and my children and my husband wear masks to protect me, you know — I’m not fear mongering. It’s a genuine concern, right? Somebody can actually die and get very ill if they are not able to protect themselves, if they’re immunocompromised, etc. This is actually a bipartisan concern that we’ve heard from all of our constituents, Republican and Democrat alike.” So, the House has said no to the bill, with some Republicans raising doubts as well.

Perhaps now lawmakers should do what they should have should have done from the start: seriously study the implications of the legislation and seek more public and expert feedback and input before bellyflopping again into an empty pool.

This should have been an easy, bipartisan lift for lawmakers if only they hadn’t gotten ahead of themselves, though it comes as no surprise. Wearing masks — or not — became politicized during the COVID-19 pandemic and it has remained so ever since.

Add the division that has come amid recent campus protests and it’s no wonder some lawmakers were in such a hurry.

In fairness, it is a stretch to believe that all those campus protesters wearing masks did so as a health precaution. At least some, if not many, of the protesters probably covered their faces to make it harder for them to be identified.

But any good this bill would have done, as it was written, didn’t outweigh its potential for unintended consequences.

“Politicizing what is fundamentally a health issue for a cheap shot at the Israel-Gaza debate is unconscionable,” Cameron Wolfe, an infectious disease specialist at Duke University, told NC Health News.

Added David Wohl, an infectious disease specialist at UNC Health, “This is really smacking of political point-making. People cover their faces for all kinds of reasons.”

Even a former U.S. surgeon general who served under Donald Trump saw glaring flaws in the bill.

“As a physician I am deeply concerned about North Carolina’s potential total ban on mask-wearing,” Jerome Adams posted. “It’s disturbing to think immunocompromised and cancer patients could be deemed criminals for following medical advice aimed at safeguarding their health.”

Lending grassroots voices to the blowback is a change.org petition begun by Greensboro resident Victoria Coble that had attracted more than 11,500 signatures as of Friday.

The bill does contain reasonable exemptions, among them masks worn for Halloween and theatrical productions. There originally had been exceptions in the bill for health or medical reasons as well, but they were stripped from the final version.

That leads us to where we are now.

To be clear, we’re still not sold on how compelling the need is for such a law in the first place.

But the voting public should demand a more serious process, devoid of political theater.

Otherwise, this is what you get.

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“We stand firmly with Winston-Salem and our region. We’ll demand accountability and vision from our leaders, and we’ll try to provide you, our readers, with the same. We’ll advocate, celebrate, commiserate, berate and sometimes aggravate. But we will never hesitate in voicing our opinion of what’s best for Northwest North Carolina.”

— The Journal Editorial Board

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## THE READERS' FORUM

### Heal, don't disdain him

In the coming days, a 17-year-old high school student who allegedly slapped a teacher will face being transferred from Juvenile Court to Adult Superior Court. The alleged offense was wrong, and the alleged offender should be held accountable. But the transfer of court settings changes the magnitude of how that accountability could be administered, from a healing, restorative approach to a harsh, punitive approach.

As a community, we need to address ways to prevent school misconduct from escalating to the courtroom. Supporting the school system’s efforts to implement restorative justice practices is a significant way that we can help address that need.

Restorative practices for school misconduct are less well-known, but gaining ground in school environments due to reduced recidivism rates. Offenders must understand the full extent of the harm caused and take responsibility for it. They are involved in facilitated dialogue with the victim, and sometimes with school staff or community members about addressing underlying causes.

Ways to repair the harm done are determined, and the relationship is restored. Opportunities to be reintegrated into the school community are done in positive ways.

With restorative practices, the focus is on inclusion rather than exclusion, healing and repair, rather than punishment and disdain. Both the offender and the victim have voices in the process.

We, as a community, can help prevent misconduct in the schools escalating to the courtroom, by advocating for the implementation of restorative practices in our schools.

Linda Winikoff  
Winston Salem

### The no-confidence vote

Your May 22 story on the “failure” of no-confidence resolution on Wake Forest University President Wenthe was one-sided and

failed to capture the nuances of what “failed” in that specially called faculty meeting on the preceding Monday. The no-confidence resolution “failed” solely on procedural grounds, namely, it failed to meet the two-thirds majority vote requirement for non-agenda items to be brought up for consideration at a faculty meeting, as required by the Undergraduate Faculty Constitution.

The no-confidence resolution was first introduced and accepted as a motion without having been either submitted as an agenda item or subject to the aforementioned two-thirds vote, at the very end of the scheduled regular faculty meeting held the week before, when many faculty members had already left the meeting.

I want to take exception to a faculty view quoted in your report that taking seriously the procedural and constitutional matters discussed in Monday’s meeting was merely a “blocking method,” obstructing the advancement of what some consider a just cause by those opposed to it. In fact, I believe the advocates for the no-confidence resolution have those colleagues who insisted on following an impeccable constitutional procedure to thank. What confidence would the all-important no-confidence resolution on the president inspire if it had been adopted in violation of the faculty’s own constitution, or worse, betrayed any hint that a majority was railroaded into voting for it? The Wake Forest faculty would only be a laughingstock, not to mention that the Board of Trustees would then have absolutely no reason to take the no-confidence resolution seriously.

Win-chiat Lee  
Winston-Salem

### Two flawed options

Does 2 Timothy 3:1-5 describe the current Republican frontrunner for president?

That scripture states: “But mark this: There will be terrible times in the last days. People will be lovers of themselves, lovers of

money, boastful, proud, abusive, ... ungrateful, unholily without love, unforgiving, slanderous, without self-control, brutal, not lovers of the good, treacherous, rash, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God — having a form of godliness but denying its power. Have nothing to do with them.”

The answer to my previous question seems to be: Yes, that scripture describes the Republican nominee for president. Therefore, if we follow the instruction of that scripture, we should have nothing to do with him, which suggests that we should not vote for him.

However, the Democratic frontrunner for president also has many faults, although most of his faults are different than those of the presumptive Republican nominee. In addition to increasing evidence that he is losing his ability to make timely and prudent presidential decisions, his support of abortion is contrary to biblical teaching regarding the sanctity of human life. And, his policies seem to promote socialism, rather than capitalism, which has historically been the basis for the prosperity of our nation.

So, like many millions of other voters in this country, I am left with a dilemma as to which, if either, of the two candidates that I don’t want to vote for, I should nevertheless vote for.

Harvey Armour  
Winston-Salem

### First, chill ...

I suspect Walmart loses a lot of money from petty thieves. To keep prices down they need some control. Maybe people should not be so quick to be offended, then get angry — and then do something incredibly stupid.

Just show the receipt, smile and say thanks for keeping my costs down. Don’t punch the employee doing his job. Write a letter to management if you must do something.

John Wolfe  
Winston-Salem

# Reconnecting Winston-Salem’s 24 ½ Street

I am standing with a group of UNC-SA students on the east side of 24½ Street, a few blocks north of downtown Winston-Salem, at a dead end overlooking University Parkway.

The construction of that roadway in the 1950s involved the demolition or relocation of scores of homes in the surrounding neighborhood, historic Boston (now commonly called Boston-Thurmond). Officials constructed University Parkway through the middle of the neighborhood, dividing 24½ Street (named before it was halved) into two and leaving dead ends on either side.

Above the buzzing cars that muffle our conversation, the students and I look across University Parkway toward the west side of 24½ Street to survey the work we have completed: Four era-appropriate homes, rebuilt where others

once stood along 24½ Street. Fruit trees, replanted between those homes. Period-specific lampposts, reinstalled next to those trees. A fresh stretch of asphalt, re-laid amidst all of this and hovering midair above University Parkway. We have resurrected — and then reconnected — 24½ Street.

This resurrected streetscape is not, however, a physical reality. Instead, we have produced a three-dimensional digital animation, overlaid it on the current physical environment, and made it visible through a smartphone to users standing nearby. We have reconnected 24½ Street, in other words, through location-based augmented reality (LBAR), the projection of digital content onto the physical world.

Why have we done this?

Like comparable mid-20th-century roadway projects across Winston-Salem and in cities far beyond, the construction of the Cherry-Marshall Expressway (later renamed University Parkway) created harmful changes and

prompt them to feel more deeply. Partnering with David West, resident and member of the Boston-Thurmond Community Engagement Roundtable, and urban planner Elise Barrella, we created a prototype LBAR experience to be viewed along 24½ Street. Barrella sees this street as emblematic of the disconnection the parkway caused. The prototype experience, which we are testing through the fall, will include narratives developed in collaboration with West and Barrella and informed by the work of Lisa Blee, Ivan Weiss, Cagney Gentry and Connor McNeely. 3D artist and UNC-SA alum Sarah Loveland led the construction of the 3D scene.

While the narratives in the LBAR experience focus principally on the past, the visualization can also spark imaginations about reparative reconnection along this corridor in the future. Indeed, the project aligns with increasing attention to the harms caused by midcentury roadway projects and possible avenues for

repair. The federal Reconnecting Communities and Neighborhoods Grant Program offers funding to transform highways that divide neighborhoods into streets that connect them. While the benefits of such initiatives are debated, they demonstrate concrete efforts toward reparative spatial and racial justice. LBAR visualizations can contribute to such initiatives by offering stakeholders the means to reconnect to a community’s past, further process what was lost, and imagine possible futures. Those modes of viewing have a particular significance in Boston-Thurmond today, as a new round of redevelopment is pursued just north of the neighborhood around Deacon Boulevard.

Andrew Britt is a historian at UNC-SA. The Spatial Justice Studio at the Center for Design Innovation, UNC-SA’s Office of Teaching and Learning, and the North Carolina Humanities, the state affiliate of the National Endowment for the Humanities, supported this project.

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