



Carmage Walls
Commentary Prize

2018 Entry Form

Name of Author(s): Vince Wheeler
Author's Title (editor, columnist, etc.): Opinion page editor
Newspaper: The High Point Enterprise
Address: 213 Woodbine Street
City: High Point
State: NC
ZIP: 27260
Phone: 336-888-3517
Fax:
E-Mail: vwheeler@hpenews.com

Submitted by: Megan Ward
Title of Person Submitting: Editor
Phone Number: 336-888-3543
E-mail Address: mward@hpenews.com

What is the subject/title of the entry? Public Notices

Date(s) of publication? Oct. 4, 2017

Is your newspaper under 50,000 circulation or above 50,000 circulation? Under

Please give a brief explanation of issues discussed and the results achieved. (This space will expand as you type in your comments.) Local legislator sponsored legislation to allow removal of governmental public notices in Guilford County from local newspapers. We alerted the public to this abuse of power, which was based on conflicts between the legislator and local newspapers, one newspaper in particular.

Sen. Wade's abuse of power hits new low

State Sen. Trudy Wade's obsession with punishing newspapers in her home county of Guilford has descended to a new low with the latest demonstration of abuse of power by an elected representative.

During a special session today, Wade and the Republican dominated N.C. General Assembly are expected to consider a revamped, striped-down version of an earlier bill pushed by Wade and vetoed by Gov. Roy Cooper that would allow local governments in Guilford County to be exempted from state law requiring publication of public notices in local newspapers. If such a "local bill" applying only to Guilford County passes, it could not be vetoed by the governor.

Wade, a three-term Republican from Greensboro who also represents parts of High Point, has been trying for years to pass legislation that would allow local governments to fulfill public notification requirements by posting legal notices on their websites instead of publishing

in a local newspaper, which charges fees for that service. Fortunately, her efforts in past legislative sessions that would have applied statewide have failed.

In the spring of this year, Wade again was guiding legislation through the General Assembly in an attempt to punish newspapers. Her Senate Bill 343 would have created a pilot program in which Guilford and Forsyth counties and two others in the state would be exempt from the newspaper publication requirement.

Wade's bill stalled in committee. She then attached provisions for her idea to House Bill 205. That bill, which dealt with compensation for inmates in the state prison system, cleared the General Assembly and landed on Cooper's desk. The governor vetoed it, citing the provisions attacking local newspapers.

But Wade and other members of the Legislature who back her efforts are planning a new approach to passing this public notices pilot program for Guilford County, according to members of the General Assem-

bly. On Tuesday, Rep. Pricey Harrison, D-Guilford, told The High Point Enterprise that a notices bill applying only to Guilford County is expected to be considered during a special session today. Republican Rep. Chuck McGrady of Henderson County confirmed those plans to the The Asheville Citizen-Times.

This new attempt to attack newspapers in Guilford County, including The Enterprise, clearly shows Wade's disdain for her home county's newspapers, particularly The Greensboro News & Record. Wade was a Guilford County commissioner and Greensboro City Council member prior to her election to the state Senate.

On this page previously, we have discussed the public notices issue numerous times and defended the wisdom of requiring printing of public notices in newspapers instead of giving local governments the authority over dissemination of information such as zoning issues, road clo-

sures, annexations and financial matters.

Harrison told The Enterprise she fears other Democrats and Republicans opposed to the bill may not be able to defeat this measure in its new form designed to avoid going through the governor's office. It seems the only way now to defeat this new bill is for us, and for the public, to ask reasonable representatives here and across the state to say no to this spiteful attempt by one legislator to punish her home county newspapers and the people which they serve.

Here is contact information for area legislators:

N.C. SENATE

Sen. Gladys A. Robinson (D) (28th Senate District), 919-715-3042; Gladys.Robinson@ncleg.net

Sen. Jerry Tillman (R) (29th Senate District), 919-733-5870; Jerry.Tillman@ncleg.net

Sen. Phil Berger (R) (26th Senate District), 919-733-5708; Phil.Berger@ncleg.net

Sen. Trudy Wade (R) (27th Senate District), 919-733-5856; Trudy.Wade@ncleg.net

Sen. Cathy Dunn (R) (33rd Senate District), 919-733-5665;

Cathy.Dunn@ncleg.net

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES Guilford

Rep. John Faircloth (R) (61st District), 919-733-5877; John.Faircloth@ncleg.net

Rep. Cecil Brockman (D) (60th District), 919-733-5825; Cecil.Brockman@ncleg.net

Rep. Jon Hardister (R) (59th District), 919-733-5191; Jon.Hardister@ncleg.net

Rep. John Blust (R) (62nd District), 919-733-5781; John.Blust@ncleg.net

Rep. Mary "Pricey" Harrison (D) (57th District), 919-733-5771; pricey.Harrison@ncleg.net

Rep. Amos Quick III (D) (58th District), 919-733-5902; Amos.Quick@ncleg.net

Davidson

Rep. Larry Potts (R) (81st District), 919-715-0873; Larry.Potts@ncleg.net

Rep. Sam Watford (R) (80th District), 919 715-2526; Sam.Watford@ncleg.net

Randolph

Rep. Allen McNeil (R) (78th District), 919-715-4946; Allen.McNeill@ncleg.net

Rep. Pat Hurley (R) (70th District), 919-733-5865; Pat.Hurley@ncleg.net