

# Chattanooga Times

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## EDITORIALS

### The District 3 riddle

Given the partisan bent of the 3rd Congressional District, the common assumption here is that the Republican party will again win the seat, as it has since Democratic Rep. Marilyn Lloyd stepped down at the end of her 10th term in 1994. Her departure ushered in Republican Zach Wamp's 16-year tenure, which he voluntarily ended two years ago in his campaign for governor. His voter base tells a distinctive tale.

Wamp won each of his eight terms with at least 64 percent of the district's vote, a margin that widened to more than two-thirds of the vote after the decennial redistricting that followed the 2000 census. The Republican/tea party wave in 2010 entrenched the aura of GOP dominance in most state and federal elections in Tennessee.

The decennial redistricting after the 2010 census substantially changed the shape of the 3rd District, however, and narrowed its partisan bias. The new line-up of counties appears to give independent voters potential swing vote leverage. But since it didn't affect Hamilton County, the main media center and still the district's most populous voter base, Republicans still confidently take the seat for granted.

So their focus in the 2012 elections is the internal challenge in the August GOP primary against one-term incumbent Chuck Fleischmann. He's widely painted by supporters of his chief GOP foes — Scottie Mayfield and Weston Wamp — as an unblinking and rather lightweight puppet for Speaker John Boehner's agenda in Washington. His voting record and stilted regurgitation of right-wing boilerplate blather largely substantiates that charge. Regrettably, his opponents are equally vague and superficial.

#### The Headrick-Taylor toss-up

With the limelight tracking the GOP contest and campaign money flow, little attention has been given here to the more substantive Democratic primary contest between Dr. Mary Headrick, a primary care physician, and Bill Taylor, an Ooltewah businessman and CPA who for more than 30 years held high positions in the health care industry in Nashville.

The irony of the lopsided focus is lamentable. Headrick and Taylor both stand head and shoulders above the GOP contenders in the range, quality and insight of their thinking on the issues that most affect the overwhelming majority of Tennessee voters and families: Health care, stagnant wages, tax inequity, declining public infrastructure, educational competitiveness for job growth, reasonable environmental rules, and support for Medicare and Social Security, the mainstay programs that more than 90 percent of Tennessee retirees and workers ultimately depend on.

Quality health care, they point out, is neither secure nor affordable for many, if not most, working Tennesseans, and it will become much less so if Republicans manage to dismantle the falsely maligned Affordable Care Act. Less than 55 percent of Tennessee employers now offer health insurance. And with or without employer help, the problems of insurance affordability, soaring deductibles,

premiums, skeletal coverage and medical bankruptcy keep rising. That creeping crisis will become disastrous unless the ACA rules take full effect in 2014.

Tax inequity, as well, remains a major issue at both the state and national levels, yet Washington's Republicans pledge to end the Bush tax cuts for middle class if Democrats refuse to extend the unfair Bush tax-cut windfall for multimillionaires and billionaires.

Dr. Headrick and Taylor adhere to similar fiscal goals. They want to help cut through congressional gridlock with a balanced policy for debt reduction — paring spending and cutting the gusher of corporate and high-end tax avoidance, along with threshold adjustments in entitlement spending.

Taylor focuses more on job creation, especially through infrastructure, research and development, high-tech manufacturing and educational linkages. His goal is to "bring people up the middle class, not down to the middle class." Headrick's focus tends more on Tennessee's high rates of poverty — rural and urban — and poor health, and the broad benefits of repairing the decline in social and educational infrastructure. Both cite abundant data that link improvement in educational attainment and improved health with better jobs and quality of life, and both would be notable advocates for such policies.

Headrick and Taylor are each easily superior to the Republican bench. Both are outstanding candidates: Voters can't go wrong in their choice in this primary election.

#### The Republican dilemma

Mayfield and his supporters tout his dairy business acumen and character as reason to abandon Fleischmann. But his public performance, lacking as it is, completely undermines that thesis. Mayfield initially admitted that he would have voted mostly like Fleischmann had. And since then, he has shunned public debates, failed to offer or explain his agenda and positions, and refused to come to this newspaper for interviews.

Given the campaign cash he has scooped off Lookout Mountain's GOP fortress, he apparently thinks he has Chattanooga wrapped up and doesn't need to say what his actual agenda would be in Congress.

He's wrong. If he's afraid of public debates and media interviews, his leadership, judgment, candor and stature for Congress remain untested, unproved and wholly unworthy of voters' trust.

Fleischmann's parroting of Republican caucus talking points could be delivered by a machine and it wouldn't make much difference: Authenticity and credibility escape him. He still fails to persuade us that his tenure in Congress will serve the core needs of Tennesseans, or trump the gridlock political agenda of Speaker Boehner.

Weston Wamp's easy delivery of his views outshines Fleischmann's skills, but it doesn't equate to solid views on essential policies to promote the health, well-being and economic competitiveness of District 3. Republicans' dilemma — whom to support — is understandable.



## COMMENTARY

### No retreat: We just got here

In the early days of American involvement in World War I, the Marine Brigade was rushed to blunt a German breakthrough near Belleau Wood. Paris was threatened as the French forces gave way. Moving forward, the U.S. Marines



Lt. Gen. John G. Castellaw

surged past the withdrawing French soldiers who called on the Devil Dogs to retreat with them. Undaunted, a Marine captain replied, "Retreat? Hell, we just got here!" signaling the beginning of a tenacious defense that stopped the Germans and saved Paris.

For years, the Marines and the rest of the military have defied naysayers and spearheaded innovation on many fronts — in aviation, communications, technology, transportation — and now, in alternative energy.

Yet some in Congress are now calling for retreat from one of the military's most promising alternative energy sources — biofuels.

The House of Representatives recently voted to prohibit the Department of Defense from purchasing biofuels until they are cheaper than fossil fuels — even as the biofuels industry is pushing hard toward competitiveness against the highly subsidized oil and gas industry.

Unfortunately, the Senate Armed Services Committee followed suit in its markup of the 2013 National Defense Authorization Act. When the

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full Senate returns to work later this month, it is scheduled to consider the 2013 NDAA with its ban on biofuels for military operations.

This ban is just plain wrong. It should be defeated.

The military is pushing to adopt biofuels and other alternative energy sources not to save polar bears or trees, but to save lives and money, and to increase combat capability. Our dependence on a single source of energy means we have a single point of failure.

My good friend Gen. Jim Mattis used his normal blunt warrior talk to underline this vulnerability when he cried out to be "freed from the fuel tether" as he led the 1st Marine Division to Baghdad.

Today, our military is exposed to wide swings in petroleum costs and the potential for overseas sources of oil to be interrupted. Last year more than \$3 billion had to be pulled from other DOD accounts to pay for unexpected increases in petroleum prices due in part to fears of Iranian closure of the Straits of Hormuz. Developing a commercial-scale biofuel industry can help free us from that fossil fuel tether.

Already, the Air Force and Navy can run fighter jets and ships on "drop-in biofuels" that don't require engine modifications. These fuels are made from recycled oils and feedstocks grown by American farmers and processed in

American refineries. On the ground, the Army and the Marine Corps can use biofuels in current tactical vehicles.

Like other innovations that have their roots in the military, DOD's push into biofuels is spurring economic activity in the private sector. It's spawning a new breed of American entrepreneurs who are creating jobs, forming companies and moving our country forward. More established companies get the picture too: Recently FedEx CEO Fred Smith announced his company intends to use the same type of drop-in biofuels in his company's jets.

Here in Tennessee, we are poised to become a national leader in development of advanced biofuels. Among several efforts, Genera Energy has collaborated with DuPont, the University of Tennessee and farmers to develop biofuel from 7,000 acres of switch grass. The potential for regional energy solutions that will expand economic development, create more jobs and provide for energy needs is readily apparent.

We need Sens. Lamar Alexander and Bob Corker to push back on these shortsighted attempts to keep our military limited to a single source of energy. Continuing to develop the military's use of biofuels is about being combat effective and keeping America safe, prosperous and moving forward.

Lt. Gen. John G. Castellaw USMC (Retired) served for 36 years in the U.S. Marine Corps. Now residing on the family farm near Crockett Mills, Tenn., he is president of the Crockett Policy Institute and serves on the board of the American Security Project.

### Nepotism, Korean-style

What has been happening in North Korea recently is straight out of the "Hereditary Dictatorship for Dummies" handbook. Kim Jong-un, the pudgy young heir to the leadership of one of the world's last communist states, is removing powerful people who were loyal to his father and replacing them with men (it's always men) who owe their advancement only to him.

Vice Marshal Ri Yong-ho, the chief of the North Korean army, was not disloyal to the new boss. On the contrary, Ri's support was vital in ensuring a smooth transition after the death of Kim Jong-Il, and he gave it unstintingly. But in the end the vice marshal didn't owe everything to Kim Jong-un, so he had to go.

In his place, Kim Jong-un has promoted a man nobody had ever heard of before. His name is Hyon Yong-chol, but you don't have to remember it unless you really want to. The point is that Hyon will have annoyed a lot of other generals in the army because he has been promoted over their heads, and so he is absolutely dependent on the good will of the young master.

And just to be sure, Kim Jong-un had himself promoted to marshal, so now he outranks everybody else in the armed forces. At least he hasn't had all his brothers and half-brothers killed in order to rule out any challenges from within

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the family, like the Ottoman sultans used to do after they ascended the throne. So there is progress, you see.

Things are done very differently in South Korea. There the presidents are chosen by the free vote of all the people (or at least all the ones who bother to vote). But the candidate most likely to win the presidential elections this December is the daughter of the dictator who ruled the country with an iron hand for two decades, until he was assassinated in 1979.

There are, to be sure, some striking differences between Park Geun-hye, who will probably be South Korea's first female president, and the callow youth who is scrambling to put his stamp on the Democratic People's Republic of Korea up north.

Park has earned her candidacy by a lifetime of public service, including a decade at the head of Yeungnam University and 14 years in politics, during which she earned the nickname "Queen of Elections" for her skill in delivering the vote to her party even in the most adverse circumstances. At 60, she is more than twice Kim Jong-un's age, and she has seen and done a lot.

On the other hand, it is very unlikely that she would have had this stellar career if she had grown up as the daughter of an army sergeant on a suc-

cession of bleak army posts. Growing up in the presidential palace, and serving as South Korea's first lady for five years while still in her early 20s, after her mother was assassinated in 1974, was bound to produce a different outcome. It also helps with the name recognition that every politician needs.

Kim Jong-un is a completely closed book. Nobody beyond his own family has the slightest idea what he thinks and intends, and maybe even they don't. Maybe he doesn't even know himself yet. But unlike his father and grandfather, he has seen something of the world (he was educated partly in Switzerland), and it may have given him ideas.

The point is not that either of these people is necessarily a bad choice as president. It's that both countries (but especially the North) are fishing in a very shallow pool. There are probably thousands of people in each country who would make better leaders, but they lack the connections and they will never be considered for the job. In fact, the same thing is true everywhere.

Would Hillary Clinton be the U.S. secretary of state if her husband had not been the president? Would George W. Bush ever have been considered as a possible president if his dad had not been a moderately successful one? For that matter, would Aung San Suu Kyi ever have become the voice of Burmese democracy if her father had not been the (autocratic) hero of the independence movement?

Can anything be done about this? Probably not, but it is a pity.

Gwynne Dyer

