

The News & Observer

MONDAY, MAY 14, 2012



75 CENTS ■ RALEIGH, N.C.

newsobserver.com

FINAL EDITION

» **This week**
See newsobserver.com for updates.
Follow us on Facebook at newsobserver.com and on Twitter @newsobserver.



2011 AP FILE PHOTO

President Barack Obama gives a commencement address at Miami Dade College in April 2011.

Obama speaks to grads at Barnard College

President Barack Obama will give the commencement address at Barnard College in New York on Monday. Students at Obama's alma mater, Columbia University – across the street from Barnard – were miffed by the president's choice. But analysts say speaking to the women's college might give Obama's re-election campaign a bigger boost.

Edwards trial continues as defense makes case

Defense lawyers in the criminal trial of former U.S. Sen. John Edwards will begin making their case Monday to a jury in a federal courtroom in Greensboro. It's not clear whether Edwards will testify about the money given by wealthy supporters to hide his pregnant mistress during his 2008 presidential campaign.

Serb military leader faces war crimes trial

The trial of Bosnian Serb military leader Gen. Ratko Mladic starts Wednesday at the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia in The Hague. He is accused of planning and carrying out the 1995 genocide of more than 8,000 Muslim men and boys in Srebrenica, Bosnia. Survivors of Bosnia's war have waited 17 years to see Mladic stand trial.

Feds want options for southern Wake loop route

State transportation officials and local leaders in Wake County are hustling to settle concerns of federal highway officials who have threatened to cut off funds this week for the next leg of the 540 Outer Loop toll road across southern Wake from Holly Springs to Garner. The feds want more study of an alternative to the state's favored route, which runs through sensitive wetlands.

Hot Ticket: Artspllosure

Artspllosure, the annual free art and music blowout, comes to downtown Raleigh this weekend with events on the Fayetteville Street City Plaza as well as Moore Square. Justin Robinson & the Mary Annettes, led by the former Carolina Chocolate Drops member, is the musical highlight. See artspllosure.org for details.

Legislators promise to take on divisive issues

EDUCATION, GAMBLING, FRACKING, VOTING ON THE AGENDA



2010 GETTY FILE PHOTO

A dealer works the blackjack table at the Seminole Casino in Coconut Creek, Fla. The Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians may be allowed to introduce Las Vegas-style card games in North Carolina.



MLADEN ANTONOV - GETTY

Workers change pipes at Consol Energy Horizontal Gas Drilling Rig exploring the Marcellus Shale outside Waynesburg, Pa. Three bills on fracking are likely to be introduced at this year's session.



JAIME GREEN - THE WICHITA EAGLE

Bob Orth prepares to scan a voter's identification this year in Kansas. North Carolina Gov. Bev Perdue vetoed a voter identification bill last year, but it's likely to come up again this session.

By LYNN BONNER, CRAIG JARVIS AND JOHN FRANK
lbonner@newsobserver.com
cjarvis@newsobserver.com
jfrank@newsobserver.com

RALEIGH The General Assembly gavel into session Wednesday with legislative leaders pledging to tackle big issues in a short time frame.

The so-called short session is designed to tweak the two-year state budget approved in 2011.

But the Republican lawmakers – starting just their second term at the helm of both the House and Senate – want to do much more.

On the table are a bevy of controversial issues ranging from drilling for natural gas through fracking to requiring voter identification at the polls.

At the same time, GOP leaders want to finish business by the end of June, much sooner than during recent even-year sessions.

Here's a look at major issues on the agenda:

State budget: The state has a \$19.9 billion budget for next year that legislators are returning to Raleigh to adjust. Gov. Bev Perdue has sent over a \$20.9 billion proposal with a sales tax increase, but the budget legislators approve probably won't look much like it. The state spends about half its money on education, from pre-kindergarten to state universities, so that will be the focus of some of the biggest fights.

Cherokee gambling compact: A new deal signed by the governor allows the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians to introduce Las Vegas-style card games with live dealers with millions in revenue going to the state to pay for schools. The deal, however, requires lawmakers to tweak a state law, and legislative leaders are expressing concern about the 30-year gambling compact. With an odd coalition of Republicans and Democrats aligned against gambling, it's also unclear whether there are enough votes to finalize the deal.

Education: A battle over education policy is shaping up with Perdue proposing to increase the total education budget by \$785 million using mostly new tax revenue. SEE **LEGISLATURE**, PAGE 9A

» **Online**
Find more political news at nando.com/politics.

20-foot berry deserves respect

COMMENTARY
Josh Shaffer

ELLERBE With wooden beams, Sheetrock and foam, Lee Berry built the world's largest strawberry – a 20-foot monument to his homemade ice cream business, a red and yellow beacon so garish and eye-catching that the beach traffic couldn't help but stop for a lick.

Then state government shut him down, taking his land by eminent domain, writing him a check for his life's work – evicting his 16,000-pound, fruit-shaped building for the sake of a new bypass.

So this is the story of a berry farmer named Berry and how he persisted, jabbing a finger in the eye of The Man.

He hoisted his strawberry on the back of a flatbed and hauled it one mile north, taking up both lanes of U.S. 220 along the way. He plunked it down on a new patch of land and started back churning out triple-scoop waffle cones.

Then he sued the state, seeking \$1 million in lost business and giant-strawberry-moving expenses.

"I had 1,000 feet of road frontage," said Berry, 41, who has three children. "They condemned me. I didn't want to leave the old strawberry down the road and build a new strawberry. My customers would be like ... what?"

This drama takes place in Richmond County, about 90 miles southwest of Raleigh, not far from the famed Rockingham Speedway and the South Carolina border.

Stop into the Food King on Main Street, show anybody there a picture of Berry's strawberry and they'll point down the road to the right. It's pretty much Ellerbe's landmark.

He built his spotted octagon in SEE **SHAFFER**, PAGE 8A



JOSH SHAFFER – jshaffer@newsobserver.com

Lee Berry was forced to move his ice cream and produce business when a bypass was built.

Job outlook improves for 2012 college grads

More opportunities exist for this class than any since recession

By SCOTT MAYEROWITZ
Associated Press

NEW YORK The class of 2012 is leaving college with something that many graduates since the start of the recent recession have lacked: jobs.

To the relief of graduating seniors – and their anxious parents – the outlook is brighter than it has been in four years. Campus job fairs were packed this spring and more com-

panies are hiring. Students aren't just finding good opportunities, some are weighing multiple offers.

In some ways, members of the class of 2012 got lucky. They arrived on campus in September 2008, the same month that Wall Street investment bank Lehman Brothers collapsed, touching off a financial crisis that exacerbated the recession.

On campus, they were largely insulated from the collapsing U.S. economy. While older brothers and sisters graduated into a dismal job market, they took shelter in chemistry, philosophy and literature classes.

They used their college years to prepare for the brutal realities of the job market that would await them. They began networking for jobs much earlier, as freshmen in some cases. They pursued summer internships not simply as resume boosters, but as gateways to permanent jobs. And they developed more realistic expectations about landing a job in the ideal place and at the ideal salary.

On campuses across the country, spirits are more upbeat this spring, and the employment outlook is especially promising, according to interviews with three dozen seniors and career center directors.

"It's just been such a dramatic change from what we saw in 2008," says Mercy Eyadiel, who oversees career development at Wake Forest University in Winston-Salem. Back then, openings disappeared overnight and companies were calling recent graduates to rescind offers.

Wake Forest senior Lesley Gustafson started her job search during her freshman year.

She met with a career counselor to discuss her goals. Gustafson picked a double-major – computer science and political science – that made her more marketable. And she found in-

SEE **JOBS**, PAGE 9A

» **Today's weather**



76° / 63°
80% chance precip.

Detailed forecast on 8B

» **Index**
Television3D

Lotteries.....2A Horoscopes .5D Puzzles.....5D
Obituaries6B Comics.....4D Editorials11A

A B
Vol. 2012, No. 135



Do you want a career that matters?

MEREDITH
COLLEGE
MASTER of ARTS in
TEACHING

Meredith's coeducational **Master of Arts in Teaching** program will prepare you to succeed as a teacher.
Learn more today at www.meredith.edu/graduate/mat