

## Forest sheds light on legislation

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### Body

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Oct. 22--Friends, supporters and Burke County Republican Party members joined several local and state elected officials at the Morganton Community House on Friday evening to celebrate the legacy of former President Ronald Reagan.

This year's Reagan Dinner also allowed keynote speaker Lieutenant Governor Dan Forest to contest some of the misconceptions about major North Carolina legislation that have been circulating through the media.

"I want y'all to know what is really happening in Raleigh," Forest said. "Not just what they say in the headlines."

The Lt. Governor described Reagan as one of his two heroes, claiming that the former President helped establish the legacy of the Republican Party.

"Ronald Reagan didn't back down from a good fight. He always stood for the idea of America, and he knew that freedom... isn't free. Some people have never seen freedom, touched it or heard of it," said Forest.

"He was willing to fight that battle... because he knew that freedom was never more than one generation away from extinction. He knew that every generation has to fight and pass it on to the next, and we are the next generation."

Forest was joined by Congressman Mark Meadows, who represents North Carolina's 11th district (which includes Burke County).

"I ask myself, 'Where are the Ronald Reagans today? Will America see another Ronald Reagan?'" said Forest. "But I see glimpses of Reagan in elected officials like Congressman Meadows... Meadows is the smartest man in Washington today."

Forest spoke of the recent turmoil regarding the debt ceiling in Washington, referring to the government shutdown as "bad math." He explained to dinner guests that China recently downgraded America's credit rating, saying that "America believes that it's OK to continue to max out your credit card."

Concerned with the way that tax dollars are being spent in Washington, Forest asserted that all revenue in America supports entitlement programs.

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"Every tax dollar we bring in goes to pay for Social Security, Medicare, Medicaid and prescription drug benefits. Every dollar," said Forest. "So every other dollar, everything we do with infrastructure, everything we do with education, everything we do with our military... every other dollar is borrowed. Paying off our debt, it's all borrowed."

Forest did not deny the severity of the country's financial state. While he agreed that defaulting on our debt as a nation would be catastrophic, he insisted that the only way to avoid default is to stop spending so much.

"How come we're not hearing stories like, 'Why don't we cut back? Why don't we do a little bit less? Why don't we squeeze things down a little bit like we have to do at home?'" Forest said. "But what's the most catastrophic thing we can do at home? Go get another credit card. China knows it, but we don't know it."

Forest addressed the untruths regarding the state legislature's refusal to expand Medicaid that recently have been publicized.

"We had to say no to the state health care exchange because we know that our state can't afford that. We had to say no to Medicaid expansion," said Forest. "The Affordable Care Act... isn't that funny? There's nothing affordable about it."

The Lt. Governor spoke on the influence that Obamacare has had on North Carolinians since its inception, noting that it will continue to present challenges to hardworking citizens.

"We're getting calls every day and hearing from people on Facebook and Twitter, 'my premiums just doubled,' 'my premiums just tripled.' If you're already paying \$10,000 for health insurance premiums and it doubles to \$20,000, that's unsustainable," Forest said. "I don't know many American families that can handle that. Every aspect of Obamacare is going to be a train wreck for America."

Forest explained the voter laws that he claims "are going to make great strides to making our elections more fair and transparent" and the federal government's intention to sue the state of North Carolina over this legislation.

"When you sign up for Obamacare, the first thing you have to do is verify your identity," said Forest. "The federal government suing us for passing voter ID legislation is the same federal government that has to verify your identity for health care. How hypocritical is that?"

After expressing his discontent for the lawsuit, Forest described how taxpayers in North Carolina will have to pay for the federal government's lawsuit.

"We are going to be paying the federal government to sue us. We are also going to be paying our Attorney General to represent us in the suit and paying a third party law firm to make sure he's doing his job," said Forest. "We're going to be paying three times for the federal government to sue us over a law that's already been accepted in other states around the country. These are the kind of shameful activities that are going on in government right now, and we really need to make sure we are standing up."

Sitting on the State Board of Education, Forest is also personally invested in the issues that schools and teachers are facing in North Carolina. To contest accusations that Republicans have been harming teachers by slashing the budget, he explained that the state needs to reevaluate the way it funds education.

"The other side is saying that we made draconian cuts to education... the truth is that we spent \$360 million more on education in this budget than has ever been spent in the history of North Carolina. That's not a cut," said Forest. "There have been more students added to the system and the per-pupil expenditures in some places have decreased, yes. But we're also in the middle of a recession ... and have a billion and a half dollars of Medicaid we're trying to take care of through the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS)."

Among other things, Forest has goals for North Carolina to have the highest paid teachers in the country, to connect all schools in the state digitally by broadband and to provide devices that will help students compete in a global economy.

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"I think we should turn the funding model upside down in N.C. I think we should fund the classrooms first, fund the teachers first and then fund the bureaucracy in Raleigh last," Forest said. "When we do these things, we will have transformation. ... When we get the burden of mandates off the backs of these teachers ... we will have innovation in education."

According to Forest, his concerns on each of these issues are rooted the federal government consuming responsibilities that he insists should be left to the states.

"Taking over health care, taking over education, taking over other aspects of our country that our founding fathers did not think was a good idea. Everything that wasn't written into our federal government was given to the states to do," said Forest. "So this federal government power grab, there's a lot of this happening. We have to continue to fight to be vigilant about this."

Forest also explained that state legislation efforts are working to require abortion clinics to "live up to the same standards that ambulatory care and surgical facilities live up to in other parts of the state." The same efforts are working to require a doctor to be present during the performance of abortion procedures as to make abortion based on sex selection illegal.

"We are not for abortion by any means. But it's still the law of the land, and until it's overturned we're trying to protect women," Forest said. "These (decisions) are standing up for our culture and standing up for what is right ... standing up for what God believes is right and true in America. So that's good legislation."

The Lt. Governor also explained the state's aggressive tax reform package and the influence it will continue to have on North Carolinians.

"We lowered your personal income tax, lowered your corporate income tax and eliminated the death tax. The government thought it deserves what you've worked for your entire life more than your family does and wanted to take it from you after you die," said Forest. "But not anymore in North Carolina. It really is a good, solid tax reform package, and it will continue to get better over time."

Forest thanked guests for supporting the state legislature and closed his message by calling on Burke Republicans to continue supporting the party and its efforts.

"If you're not satisfied with where America is or where North Carolina is right now, dig a little deeper, give a little bit more of your time and sacrifice just a little bit more," Forest said. "Because I can guarantee that these folks who represent you are going to do that for you."

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