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Larry Ford

LOCAL NEWS

Gaveling in Better Government

ASHEVILLE – Republican candidate Robert Pittenger visited Western North Carolina last week in his run for Lieutenant Governor. He carried with him a gavel, which symbolizes his campaign and what he says is a big problem in North Carolina government. In an exclusive Tribune interview, Pittenger discussed his reason for running, his stands on issues and his campaign strategy.

First, he explained the gavel. While serving in the NC Senate, Pittenger said, Republicans were often squelched by the Lieutenant Governor, who presides over the Senate, and that bills and amendments introduced by members of the minority party were routinely discarded.

He noted that his opponent, Senator Walter Dalton, was part of existing inner circle that limits Republican participation. As Chairman of the Senate Appropriations Committee, according to Pittenger, Dalton has overseen a budget that has increased over forty percent in his tenure. Pittenger noted that this year it will pass the fifty percent increase mark. He said that the budget had skyrocketed while services have suffered.

Specifically, he called the North Carolina drop-out rate unacceptable. His website says, "The liberal politicians in Raleigh... have neglected our roads and highways, and turned a blind eye to the fundamental failures of our children's schools." In his Tribune interview, he said, that the state continues to dip into the Highway Trust Fund while NC's roads and highways deteriorate.

Pittenger criticized the current system of highway funds disbursement, "The money should be divided by traffic count, not by politicians." He said that currently fifty percent of state highway funds were allocated by traffic count and fifty percent by politicians in a discretionary manner. He said, "The money should go to where the needs are. Eighty percent should be allocated by traffic count."

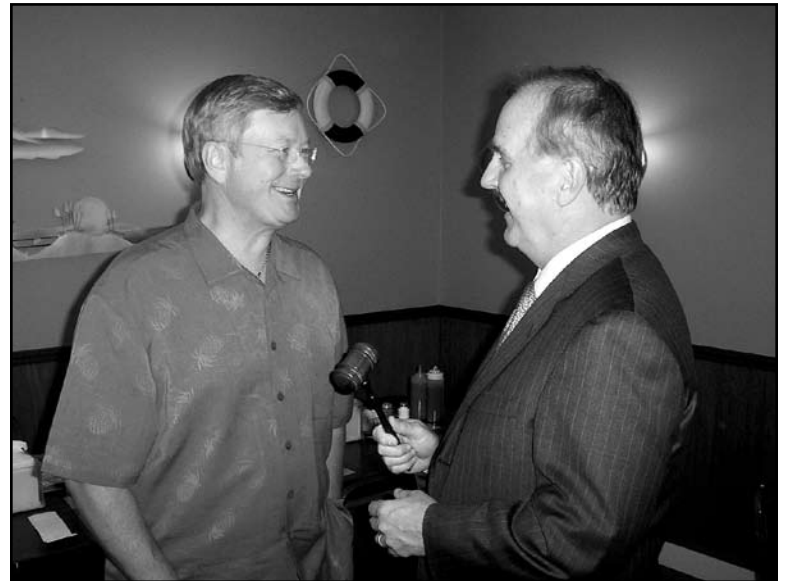
He criticized North Carolina's tax rate as "the highest in the Southeast" and noted that we

had lost 75,000 jobs to South Carolina and Virginia due to our tax rates. He also said that while North Carolina businesses pay high taxes, the state had given large corporations, such as Google and Dell, hundreds of millions of dollars in tax incentives. Pittenger favors "redirecting resources allocated for incentives to lower our individual and corporate tax rates. Small businesses generate an estimated 70% of new jobs and we must do everything we can to help them expand."

present valid passports from their country and valid documentation from the US government showing they are in the US legally in order to obtain a NC driver's license.

Another Pittenger bill would prohibit state economic incentives from going to companies that employ illegals and would require state agencies to verify legality of person requesting state assistance.

He co-sponsored bills to allow NC government agencies to assist the US government with



Robert Pittenger talks with former Sheriff George Erwin.
Photo by Larry Ford.

He also advocates a restructuring of state government to, "provide over \$2 billion in savings to lower our burdensome and excessive corporate and individual tax rates."

As a State Senator, Pittenger introduced the Taxpayers' Protection Act, which would limit growth of state government. He also introduced the Reduce Tax / Cut Government Spending bill, to cut corporate and personal income tax rates and reduce Medicaid fraud, and legislation to repeal the Estate and Gift Taxes.

Pittenger also told the Tribune that he had introduced several bills to combat illegal immigration, noting that studies showed a cost to North Carolina of 817 million dollars annually. One of his bills would require non-US citizens to

enforcement of immigration policies, a bill to eliminate income tax deductions for compensation paid to illegals and one which would require non-resident drivers with foreign driver's licenses to produce documentation of legal presence in the US.

Pittenger said that he planned several more trips to Western North Carolina in coming months. He said that it was unfortunate but true that modern statewide campaigns also required a great deal of media exposure and were very expensive.

He noted that most people probably did not realize that the Democrats had such a tight control over North Carolina's state government. He said that it was imperative that the message be presented to all North Carolinians.

When asked about his opponent's home base of Rutherford County, Pittenger said, "Look at his record. He has not represented the views of Western North Carolina but is part the current leadership. To make positive changes for our future, we must change the leadership in Raleigh. Only then can we arrive at new solutions and solve the problems facing our families and holding back our businesses."



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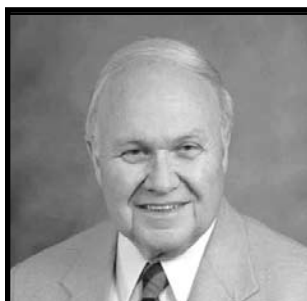
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Quote of the week:

"The world little dreams the things that are wrought by prayer."—Alfred, Lord Tennyson

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