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NAUW Crowns "Little Miss Green & White" Queen

The Wadesboro Branch of the National Association of University Women recently crowned Amoriya Simon as queen of its 2026 Little Miss Green & White Scholarship Pageant during a celebration held May 2 at Morven Elementary School.

Ma'Kiyah Taylor, the 2025 queen, crowned her successor during the annual pageant, which promotes self-development, leadership and educational goal setting while helping raise scholarship funds for Anson County high school seniors.

Families, friends and community supporters filled the venue to cheer on the contestants as they showcased their confidence, talents and poise throughout the evening. Organizers said the event also helps participants build self-esteem and strengthen public speaking skills.

Contestants demonstrated a variety of talents, including singing, gymnastics and cheer performances. Escorts also participated in a fashion segment featuring favorite outfits. Before the crowning ceremony, contestants appeared on stage in elegant white gowns accompanied by escorts dressed in black pants, white shirts, green bow ties and green cummerbunds.

Amoriya Simon was escorted by A'yden Griffin and sponsored by Sarah Dean. Londyn Wall was named first runner-up and was escorted by Myles Gaddy and sponsored by Thomasina Montgomery. SaMiya Willoughby was named second runner-up and was escorted by Hakeem Willoughby Jr. and sponsored by Dr. Dionnya Pratt.

Malayah Little also participated in the pageant, with Brayden Little serving as her escort. All contestants and escorts received trophies, gift cards and gifts from their sponsors and the organization. Parents were also recognized as special guests during the event for their support and dedication.

Lorri Burns Bennett served as mistress of ceremonies, while Marlene Richardson and Ashley Cole led decorations with assistance from other NAUW members. The pageant committee included Patricia Bennett, Elizabeth Ashley Cole, Patricia McGregor-Deberry and Marlene Richardson.

As part of the pageant experience, contestants attended the organization's annual tea party on March 29 at the home of Frank and Marlene Richardson. During the event, contestants and NAUW members wore elegant dresses and hats, participated in bonding activities and learned tea etiquette, including how to properly enjoy tea, finger sandwiches and fruit.

Sarah Dean and Marlene Richardson led the etiquette lesson, while Patricia Bennett read "The Crown You Cannot See." Bennett also conducted an informational session for parents prior to the pageant to discuss expectations and responsibilities throughout the program.

Thomasina Montgomery, president of the Wadesboro Branch of NAUW, thanked parents, sponsors and supporters for helping make the pageant successful. "We could not have done it without everyone's participation," Montgomery said.

The National Association of University Women serves women, youth and disadvantaged communities through educational initiatives, advocacy and community partnerships.

Sarah Dean, Southeastern Section Director of the National Association of University Women, praised the organization's efforts in supporting local youth. "The members of the Wadesboro Branch of NAUW are to be commended for their excellence in promoting educational opportunities for the youth in Anson County," Dean said.

The Wadesboro Branch of NAUW said it remains committed to empowering young women and supporting educational opportunities through scholarships, leadership development and community service programs.

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You Decide: How Will You Vote on New Tax Proposals?

The North Carolina General Assembly has been busy debating some new ideas that we will be asked to vote on. Among them are two proposals involving taxes. One would add to the state constitution a limit on the state personal income tax rate. The rate would be capped at 3.5%. A second proposed constitutional amendment would place a limit on how much property taxes could rise after a property revaluation. If approved by voters, in both cases the new limits could not be changed by future legislatures. It would take approval of new constitutional amendments to remove the limitations.

The purpose of today's column is not to take a position on the two proposals, and certainly not to recommend how you should vote. Instead, in keeping with the "You Decide" tradition, I will strive to assemble information about both the pros and cons of the proposals and then let you draw your own conclusions.

The personal income tax in North Carolina is paid by households. It is distinct from the state corporate income tax paid by corporations. For much of the 20th century, the personal income tax rate inched up, meaning households paid more on each dollar they earned. But starting in the early 2000s, the General Assembly began to move in the opposite direction by gradually lowering rates. In 2026, the personal income tax rate is 3.99%, and the leadership in the General Assembly wants to continue lowering the rate. If passed, the proposed constitutional amendment would mandate that the rate could never go above 3.5%, but it could be lowered.

Supporters of the amendment have various reasons for backing it. Some want to limit how much money is collected by the personal income tax because they want to limit the size of the state government. Others want to shift tax collections away from the personal income tax to other forms of taxation, such as the corporate income tax and sales tax. They argue corporations have greater ability than households to pay taxes, and although the sales tax is paid by households, households have some degree of control over the amount because they control their spending. A third reason is based on an idea called "supply side economics." Supporters argue lower tax rates can motivate more people and businesses to migrate to North Carolina, and also to cause households to work more because they keep more of what they earn. Both impacts could limit the reduction in tax revenues that come with a lower tax rate, or even could cause tax revenues to increase.

Arguments against capping the tax rate revolve around flexibility and fairness in raising state public revenues. Some worry that during economic downturns a cap on the personal income tax rate could restrict the state from obtaining enough revenue to continue its funding needs, with one example being keeping public schools functioning. Also, if the cap causes a shift to more revenue from the sales tax, this action could put a greater burden on lower-income households buying necessities.

The move to use a constitutional amendment to limit property tax increases comes from an obvious issue. Property values in the state have been rising much faster than income - in some cases, twice as fast. This means potential large increases in property tax payments by owners, often much greater than how much their income has risen. Sometimes owners may be forced to sell their property because they can't afford higher tax payments.

Therefore, supporters use this situation as the reason for a constitutional amendment that would allow the General Assembly to set a limit on property tax increases. They also argue continued ownership of property, including homes, contributes to thriving neighborhoods.

Opponents have two concerns. First is the recognition that property taxes are a major source of public revenues for local governments, including counties and municipalities. A worry is that a limit might not allow for sufficient revenues to meet local needs, especially when localities are rapidly growing. For example, counties pay for many local employees and services. In particular, counties help fund public school construction and operation.

Opponents also point out that local governments can adjust property tax rates to make property tax increases more affordable. Also, with this adjustment being done at the local level, it can be fine-tuned to local situations, unlike what would happen with a constitutional amendment that applied the same restrictions to all localities.

In conclusion, North Carolinians will likely be faced with two important decisions about taxes this year. Hopefully, the information in this column will help you with this very big "you decide" situation.

Mike Walden is a William Neal Reynolds Distinguished Professor Emeritus at North Carolina State University.

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