

Saturday, December 13, 2008

Weekly wrap: Protest panned, safety slammed

Brief opinions about events of the past week:

Merit: For the State Board of Elections, which upheld the local elections board and dismissed a challenge of the November county commissioner election.

The protest, which had been filed by the Cumberland County Republican Party, claimed that thousands of improperly registered voters had cast ballots.

The county Republican chairman, Ralph Reagan, said nearly 5,000 voters had inaccurate registrations because they no longer lived at the address on record with the county. He had compared the addresses with Postal Service records.

The challenge raised a good question but was transparently political, since it only was filed for a race in which all the Republican candidates lost. The protest has delayed the swearing-in of three county commissioners. We hope Reagan and his allies drop the protest and take the matter up with the General Assembly, which could change the rules for registration and proof of address.

Demerit: For the N.C. Building Code Council, which is moving to weaken a safety rule even before it takes effect. The council, which establishes this state's building codes, wants to reverse a requirement that special circuit breakers be installed in new homes that could prevent electrical fires that are commonly caused by frayed wires.

The installation of the breakers would have added about \$100 to the price of a smaller home, and representatives of the building industry had protested. The council appears to be knuckling under to industry, instead of doing what it can to keep homeowners safe. Who, exactly, does the council serve?