

## LEEburn REAPPOINTMENT IS A BIG DISAPPOINTMENT

So much for the New Georgia that Gov. Sonny Perdue promised us. Right now, New Georgia looks a lot like the old one. The governor has reappointed Don Leeburn, the controversial Columbus liquor dealer, to another seven-year term on the Board of Regents, proving that money talks as loudly to Republicans as it does to Democrats.

Leeburn is an equal-opportunity fat-cat contributor, as attested by the fact that he has been extremely generous to sitting governors. Democratic governor Zell Miller appointed and reappointed him to the powerful board that oversees Georgia's 34 universities and colleges. Now Republican Gov. Sonny Perdue has followed suit. Setting policy for institutions of higher education in Georgia isn't about what you know; it is about who you know.

The governor's PR flack, Heather Hendrick, defended the indefensible appointment. "Gov. Perdue makes these decisions based on an individual's job performance, his qualifications and his educational philosophy. Mr. Leeburn has done an excellent job on the Board of Regents and for the university system, for the state of Georgia." Horse patoot.

If Don Leeburn is doing such an excellent job, why, after 14 years on the Board of Regents, did he not know about the board's policy against using university trademarks on alcoholic beverages? If he did know, why then did he openly violate those rules by distributing a wine with the UGA Alumni Association logo through his company, Georgia Distributing? And why did it take the geniuses at the board six months to figure out that Leeburn was violating the rules?

As for Mr. Leeburn's "educational philosophy," could that have been honed through an up-close-and-personal relationship with a member of the University of Georgia staff? Leeburn lives openly with UGA gymnastics coach Susan Yoculan, despite the fact that he hasn't bothered to divorce his wife, Betsy, who still resides in Columbus. Details. Details. Maybe this doesn't bother the governor or the university administration, but it bothers the hell out of me. Doesn't anybody else think these two lovebirds aren't exactly the kind of people we want to hold up as role models to our young people? My momma would have called what Leeburn and Yoculan are doing "tacky." And my momma would have been correct.

Imagine the furor if a female member of the Board of Regents set up play-housekeeping with the UGA football coach or basketball coach while still married. There would be a roar of righteous indignation from Rabun Gap to Tybee Light. But because it is deep-pocketed Don Leeburn, you won't hear a peep out of the Board of Regents, the UGA administration or, evidently, the governor's office. See no evil. Hear no evil. Speak no evil.

Leeburn had six members of UGA's women's gymnastics team and Yoculan flown to New York on his private jet for a weekend of R&R, in clear violation of NCAA rules. His excuse? "There was a claim that it was a secondary violation of NCAA Rule 16.02.3. Has anyone ever read that rule?" I would hope a regent with 14 years experience would have, and if he hadn't, that he would have the common sense to check it out with the athletics department before firing up the jet. Even Sheila the Family Wonder Dog knows that athletic matters must first go through the office of UGA Athletics Director Damon Evans for approval, and Sheila's only awake four hours a day.

Leeburn blames the media for his high and not-so-admirable profile. After the Atlanta newspapers called on the governor not to reappoint him, Leeburn huffed, "It is a badge of honor that The Atlanta Journal-Constitution doesn't want me reappointed. I don't share its warped liberal agenda — and I make no apology for that." More horse patoot. This has nothing to do with warped liberal agendas. It has to do with a regent acting as if he is accountable to no one and being able to get away with it because he has lots of money. I don't share the Atlanta newspapers' liberal agenda either, but this time we happen to be on the same page. Don Leeburn should never have been reappointed to the Board of Regents.