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Overwhelming Majority Support School Choice in Civitas Poll

BY RAY NOTHSTINE



A Civitas Poll released on January 23 shows robust support for school choice across North Carolina. The poll, which surveyed 804 registered voters statewide, is a clear signal that all ages, races, and political parties are in support of expanding school choice programs in the state.

Seventy percent of respondents strongly agreed, and 22 percent somewhat agreed with the statement that "parents should have to ability to choose where their child attends school." Only 6 percent either disagreed somewhat or strongly in the poll.

Another question found that if money was no object, a plurality of those polled (45 percent) said they would pick a private school as the top educational choice for their child. Traditional public schools finished second with 28 percent, ahead of charter schools (13 percent) and home schools (9 percent). Simply put, if finances were not a limiting factor, a full 69 percent would choose education options outside of traditional public schools.

Support for charter schools and the Opportunity Scholarship program are even stronger among black residents than whites. The poll also showed strong support for school choice among Republicans, Democrats, and Independents.

The responses serve as a reminder that many state representatives and politicians are not meeting the policy demands of their constituents on this issue. Only 13 percent of respondents said lawmakers are "doing a good job of expanding educational opportunities for families."

"While the school choice movement has made progress, public policy does not reflect public sentiment," wrote Bob Luebke, director of policy at Civitas. At the same time, the poll results note that 79 percent of respondents said they are "much more likely to support" (42 percent) or "somewhat more likely to support" (37 percent) candidates that support school choice policies.

"This poll should give policymakers pause and concern the Department of Public Instruction," says Civitas President Donald Bryson. "Families are continuing to choose different avenues of education for their children, and this poll indicates only 28 percent would stay if resources were not a problem. Policymakers need to consider why families are in search of other options."

Bryson called for politicians across the state to take note, "particularly given recent election results in Florida and Georgia." There is strong evidence that school choice played a deciding factor in the governor and Senate races in

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FROM THE EDITOR

While our polling shows that school choice is widely popular in North Carolina, one has to wonder why so many state lawmakers do not reflect the views of their constituents? Undoubtedly, it highlights a significant failure of leadership by politicos, including our current governor, given a skyrocketing demand for options.

In his State of the Union address, President Donald Trump even said it was time to pass school choice legislation. Federalizing more legislation on education often proves to be problematic, but one wonders if we are getting closer to the dam finally breaking wide open on this critical issue?

Civitas remains committed to expanding school choice programs and we are currently working on additional projects in the state to raise awareness in the North Carolina General Assembly and with the public. That's a big reason why this issue offers a lot of commentary on school choice and highlights some of our work from January which included National School Choice Week.

Stopping Medicaid expansion remains one of our top priorities this year too. An aide to Gov. Roy Cooper recently told the media that the legislative session will end "when we get Medicaid expansion." I recently published a piece in the Raleigh News & Observer that tackled the consequences for expanding Medicaid for the federal and the North Carolina budget. That article is included in this issue and notes that states will have to pony up more and more of the cost sharing because of our unsustainable federal debt. That will be catastrophic for states who signed on and will soon crowd out other spending obligations like education and infrastructure. Simply put, it would mean higher taxes. Keep following Civitas for more proven and free-market oriented solutions to improve overall affordability and care.

We appreciate your support for Civitas as we continue to look out for and protect the taxpayers of this state. President Calvin Coolidge once said that it is the "men and women of this country who toil" that are the "ones who bear the cost of government." He noted that the more waste we add means "their life would be so much the more meager." It's a great lesson for our lawmakers to remember before all the bills come due.

Democrats File Medicaid Expansion Bill

BY BRIAN BALFOUR

At the end of January, House and Senate Democrats filed a bill to expand Medicaid in North Carolina as provided for in Obamacare. Gov. Roy Cooper, and many legislative Democrats have made this a top priority for 2019.

The bill would expand Medicaid coverage to working-age people earning up to 133 percent of the federal poverty level not currently eligible for Medicaid. The majority of those newly eligible would be able-bodied, childless males. There is no work requirement included in the bill.

The state share of the cost of expansion has been estimated to be upwards of $340 million, which would be paid for by a tax increase on hospitals. State owned, and/or operated hospitals would be exempt from the tax.

In a press conference discussing the bill, the issue of actual access to care for the newly eligible was once again ignored. Since 2003, North Carolina's Medicaid program has ballooned from about 1 million enrollees to about 2.1 million today. At the same time, the number of physicians accepting Medicaid patients plummeted by 28 percent. Expansion would stuff another 500,000 people into this already overcrowded program. Who will these patients see when they get sick? That question is never asked of expansion proponents.

Moreover, during the press conference the example of Ohio's Medicaid expansion was mentioned as a success story. Left out of the story, however, was the fact that actual expansion enrollment in Ohio exceeded initial projections by nearly 60 percent, while the cost explosion was so steep it caught the eye of a U.S. Senate panel investigation.

Another speaker noted how currently hospitals who treat uninsured patients pass those costs along to other patients, and that having more people covered by Medicaid would help remedy that. But wouldn't the new hospital tax likewise be passed along to other patients? Naturally that question wasn't asked.

Finally, it was emphasized that polling shows that Medicaid expansion is popular with North Carolinians. Sure, it is, until people actually learn more about it. When informed about expansion's actual cost and who would be covered, support for expansion dropped by half.



CYAN MAGENTA YELLOW BLACK

Growth of Heritage Leadership Academy Highlights Need for More School Choice

BY RAY NOTHSTINE



Heritage Leadership Academy has only been open for about 18 months but the school is already making a monumental impact in the lives of students. Heritage now has two campuses in the Triangle region. One located in Apex and one in Durham. The school is receiving attention for its differentiation in the education marketplace by educators and parents alike.

Perhaps nobody understands that there is a need for lots of options and choices in education than school founder Georgeanna Wiest. She is a mother of five and saw a need for something unique through the experience of her own family. While searching for options for her children nothing really was meeting that demand and she felt God calling her to start an entirely new kind of school.

In 2017, Wiest decided to launch Heritage as a hybrid option for classroom instruction that partners with parents, splitting up the school week into classroom and "satellite" (at home) days. A flexible community and classroom structure was formed while keeping the piece for home learning and instruction. Two days a week are spent in the classroom for K-6 students and three days a week for seventh and eighth grade.

Wiest notes a lot of parents are looking for their children to be a part of a healthy community, where deep friendships develop and personal faith is given space to flourish. The emphasis on cultivating leadership skills is also a hallmark feature of Heritage's approach to educating students to thrive in the 21st century.

Another thing she notes is that "parents are just as important in the education journey as our teachers." She adds that "It has to be a healthy dynamic for the marriage in this school to work, and that's why it doesn't work for every family or parent."

Heritage is a University Model School, which focuses on college and career readiness and a vibrant Christian worldview and faith witness.

"Education is seen and often practiced as an informative experience," says Carl Chaney, head administrator at Heritage. "Educators often just dump a lot of information on to students. At Heritage, we are intentionally doing a lot of formative education which encompasses the whole person."

Chaney cited Heritage's mission statement found on the school's website and noted, "If we believe the Gospel to be true, that changes everything about your life. We are not removing students from culture but giving them the tools to defend what they believe."

A recent Civitas poll showed strong and broad support for school choice across all demographics. Wiest simply notes about school choice: "The more choices we give people the more ability we give them to choose what is best. So much is about providing another option for families." She says that the

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Growth of Heritage Leadership Academy Highlights Need for More School Choice

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Opportunity Scholarship program in North Carolina is instrumental in allowing for many of the children to attend Heritage.

Chaney, a former public-school teacher at Cary High School, who was recognized as their teacher of the year, noted that "there is a lot of teaching to the bottom for students in the public school system, and so with our program you can tailor more specific needs for your child." Chaney notes too that a public school might be a great fit for a child but having more options is crucial, particularly in a world where competition for jobs are now international not just national or statewide.

When asked about the one size fits all model that permeates so many public schools, Chaney says, "You have a lot of policy makers and experts who haven't spent any time in the classroom." Chaney concedes that Heritage may not be the best option for every child as well. "If you're looking for a pure classical education that is not us. We really want to help parents make that decision on what school is best for their child and be completely transparent with them."

Chaney notes classes are capped right around 12 students and he believes that is a decisive advantage for many students as opposed to teaching in a public school which often has as many as 33 students in a classroom. "The attention we can give is transformative for their lives."



Another differentiator Wiest likes to talk about is how the school's values transcends much of the educational complex worldview that has led to massive student debt and a considerable amount of occupational disappointment and angst.

"Success isn't necessarily where students go to college and your success isn't measured in material things and worldly status alone," she says. "Success is really the true joy of what they were created to do and be. I truly feel our school understands that." Wiest notes that there are families and students who are not Christian and they are welcomed within the Heritage community too. "We feel like we have so much to offer families from so many diverse perspectives. We want to be an example to the world."

Heritage is planning on starting classes for ninth graders in the next academic year. One of the obstacles for the growth of the school has been regulation, particularly on buildings.

"There are so many regulations on schools and buildings and the regulatory pieces make it extremely difficult to start or open schools," says Wiest. "We really want to go where the people want us and we can't because of some of these regulations. It's a challenge. But we are striving to overcome that every day and we would love more help from lawmakers."

Overwhelming Majority Support School Choice in Civitas Poll

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

Florida and the governor's race in Georgia. While GOP candidates narrowly won, they did so by winning stronger than usual support from black voters, particularly black women who did not want to lose access to school choice programs.

Support for the state's education Opportunity Scholarships hit a whopping 85 percent in the poll and Education Savings Account support was 79 percent. The poll was commissioned to be released for National School Choice Week, which was recognized during January 20-26. A national school choice poll released in January by American Federation for Children and Beck Research showed that school choice is even stronger in North Carolina than the rest of the nation. That poll showed that 67 percent of American voters across the country are in favor of school choice, up 4 percent from 2018.

"Despite relentless attacks from opponents of educational freedom throughout the past year, school choice support has grown over the past year," read a statement from John Schilling, president of the American Federation for Children. "It's time for policymakers to listen to these voters and pass legislation that gives more families the freedom to choose the best educational environment for their child."

To view the full results and crosstabs from the Civitas Poll, visit www.nccivitas.org.

CYAN MAGENTA YELLOW BLACK

Fact or Fiction: Segregation and Charter Schools

BY BOB LUEBKE

The war on charter schools continues. An opinion piece by Ferrell Guillory, Vice Chairman of EducationNC and a professor at UNC School of Media and Journalism, was recently published in a newspaper and the EDNC website because it parroted Gov. Roy Cooper's warning that allowing municipal charter schools "could lead to taxpayer-funded resegregation."

Critics have been trying to smear charter schools with allegations of segregation and racial isolation for decades. They point to disparities in the composition of charter schools and traditional public schools; cite statistics and studies and ask people to notice the changing populations around charter schools. Sadly, critics like these frequently use race to prop up and protect the education establishment's monopoly. Don't fall for their tactics.

Let's start with the facts. First, merely citing statistics and research studies does not prove causation. Guillory should remember that the results of some of the studies cited by charter school opponents are products of a deeply flawed methodology. In a number of cases, student populations of charter schools were compared to state averages rather than their surrounding local communities. The comparisons are apples-to-oranges. Faulty methodology leads to flawed conclusions.

Guillory acknowledges that schools reflect the divisions in society. Much as we hate to admit it, however, the public schools have helped to cement and perpetuate many of those divisions. Public schools are defined by attendance zones that largely mirror economic divisions and segregated housing patterns. These realities combined with their monopoly powers, have allowed many public schools to foster and perpetuate racial segregation. The history of segregation supports this. Remember Brown v. Board of Education and Swann vs. Charlotte Mecklenburg Board of Education? Often, you'll find, the school districts are the defendants and usually not on the side driving change.

It's irresponsible to say charter schools foster segregation and slow efforts to integrate students. Efforts to integrate schools stalled years ago because of white flight, endless court fights, the ridiculous busing policies that resulted in social unrest, and affirmative action plans. This happened years before charters came along.

Of course, there has been progress. However, you can't sanitize the world into which most charter schools have parachuted. Our schools are segregated because our communities are segregated. Racial isolation in charter schools is a by-product of a larger community struggling with the same problems.



Charter schools developed in North Carolina and nationally as a lifeline for children who lacked access to good schools. Charter schools sprung up near troubled or failing public schools to serve struggling populations. Often these populations were and remain minority. It's one of the reasons why support for charters and school choice is so high among minorities. If segregation was an issue in charter schools, you'd expect minorities would be the first to be complaining about it. Yet, the complaints aren't there.

Guillory calls on state authorities to "appropriate the funds necessary to address the educational needs of poor and minority young people packed into schools that then become branded as low performing."

He makes his plea while at the same time casting dark clouds around the very programs that have helped thousands of children find their way out of packed and low-performing schools. Allegations of racial isolation ignore these truths. They also ignore the simple fact that some charters are designed to serve specific populations and as such may not mirror local or regional populations.

Such facts don't seem to bother the author. Guillory seems perfectly willing to sacrifice these opportunities and willing to keep students trapped in failing schools. The kind of schools that fail many students but that the educational establishment has somehow managed to hold blameless. In the Progressive hierarchy, social engineering trumps minority choice and student achievement.

Charter schools have emerged as one of the effective —albeit imperfect —alternatives to help honor the national promise of equality and liberty for all Americans.

Charter schools do not foster segregation or impede integration. To say so is misguided. Such claims rev up the Progressive and liberal bases of the educational establishment, but they also needlessly jeopardize the futures of those who have been the most disappointed by public schools. More reason why anyone concerned about providing our children with a quality education should continue to work to ensure that the truth be told.

CYAN MAGENTA YELLOW BLACK

Changes represent the difference in voter registration between December 15, 2018 and January 19, 2019										
County	Total Voters	Total Change	Democrats	Democrat Change	Republicans	Republican Change	Libertarians	Libertarian Change	Unaffiliated Voters	Unaffiliated Change
Totals	6,566,811	-567,477	2,461,036	-236,235	1,981,682	-143,961	35,867	-2,329	2,086,154	-185,190
Alamance	96,526	-7,574	35,608	-3,226	31,861	-1,869	510	-21	28,521	-2,459
Alexander	22,835	-1,804	5,474	-588	10,384	-600	81	-10	6,891	-608
Alleghany	6,842	-661	2,298	-295	2,519	-148	28	-6	1,996	-212
Anson	15,413	-2,068	10,120	-1,433	2,267	-273	24	-1	2,974	-361
Ashe	17,665	-1,695	4,683	-603	7,705	-565	71	1	5,202	-529
Avery	11,075	-1,108	1,310	-162	6,510	-581	46	-5	3,208	-360
Beaufort	31,354	-2,416	12,137	-1,145	10,441	-592	84	-4	8,683	-676
Bertie	12,464	-1,763	8,707	-1,346	1,357	-196	27	0	2,371	-222
Bladen	21,225	-2,123	11,177	-1,355	3,911	-247	39	-3	6,096	-518
Brunswick	97,860	-6,596	25,145	-2,516	37,511	-1,823	401	-13	34,783	-2,246
Buncombe	186,163	-13,724	71,490	-5,086	43,354	-3,206	1,398	-94	69,815	-5,349
Burke	52,051	-6,681	15,700	-2,286	19,199	-1,908	264	-18	16,872	-2,469
Cabarrus	129,383	-10,530	39,052	-3,586	46,891	-3,272	795	-48	42,594	-3,631
Caldwell	49,064	-6,201	11,670	-2,167	22,895	-2,155	335	-30	14,142	-1,853
Camden	7,269	-702	1,902	-288	2,373	-156	48	-3	2,945	-255
Carteret	49,524	-3,864	10,796	-1,140	21,618	-1,191	230	-30	16,877	-1,503
Caswell	14,292	-1,587	6,981	-883	3,129	-283	32	-4	4,147	-418
Catawba	96,708	-9,589	22,311	-3,073	42,180	-3,128	401	-24	31,802	-3,364
Chatham	51,185	-3,355	19,723	-1,388	12,494	-795	226	-16	18,718	-1,157
Cherokee	20,246	-3,234	4,358	-1,140	9,171	-1,019	119	-11	6,591	-1,065
Chowan	9,436	-984	4,282	-532	2,506	-193	24	0	2,622	-259
Clay	8,166	-566	1,632	-199	3,559	-131	47	-2	2,925	-234
Cleveland	60,119	-5,192	23,273	-2,274	20,174	-1,392	255	-13	16,404	-1,515
Columbus	33,606	-4,457	17,818	-2,816	6,912	-592	59	-4	8,811	-1,047
Craven	65,357	-5,402	21,225	-2,039	23,383	-1,483	373	-29	20,355	-1,854
Cumberland	196,619	-25,365	88,891	-11,081	45,061	-5,517	1,157	-111	61,455	-8,659
Currituck	18,567	-1,712	3,504	-457	7,128	-454	157	-12	7,771	-789
Dare	27,749	-2,793	7,894	-925	8,810	-691	208	-22	10,830	-1,155
Davidson	101,398	-8,249	23,243	-2,552	48,330	-2,913	437	-33	29,366	-2,753
Davie	28,096	-1,996	4,895	-513	14,476	-790	112	-4	8,607	-690
Duplin	27,846	-2,911	12,450	-1,534	7,717	-605	103	-17	7,565	-755
Durham	217,482	-15,766	119,104	-8,479	25,671	-2,421	1,088	-65	71,532	-4,806
Edgecombe	33,653	-4,903	23,258	-3,383	5,548	-770	84	-8	4,754	-742
Forsyth	244,236	-19,821	98,617	-8,733	71,665	-4,964	1,246	-91	72,632	-6,040
Franklin	41,247	-3,963	16,492	-1,781	12,696	-1,008	207	-17	11,840	-1,160
Gaston	132,172	-14,914	39,795	-5,455	51,091	-4,349	699	-69	40,554	-5,047
Gates	7,531	-1,303	3,833	-731	1,617	-226	28	0	2,052	-346
Graham	5,600	-837	1,565	-301	2,575	-274	25	-1	1,435	-261
Granville	36,061	-3,345	17,145	-1,640	8,915	-763	142	-13	9,852	-930
Greene	10,723	-885	5,952	-536	2,032	-130	19	-4	2,717	-215
Guilford	347,801	-30,842	155,932	-14,804	88,853	-6,749	1,813	-106	101,096	-9,204
Halifax	35,228	-3,943	22,864	-2,599	4,191	-535	89	-3	8,079	-806
Harnett	70,637	-6,716	24,162	-2,636	25,033	-1,863	486	-57	20,933	-2,163
Haywood	41,133	-4,196	14,704	-1,755	12,895	-1,090	247	-14	13,275	-1,338
Henderson	78,402	-8,120	16,374	-2,076	29,703	-2,558	442	-39	31,862	-3,450
Hertford	14,109	-1,549	10,174	-1,104	1,316	-190	33	-3	2,581	-252
Hoke	28,539	-4,824	13,412	-2,129	5,952	-1,011	186	-17	8,974	-1,669
Hyde	2,987	-442	1,657	-273	487	-57	12	0	831	-112

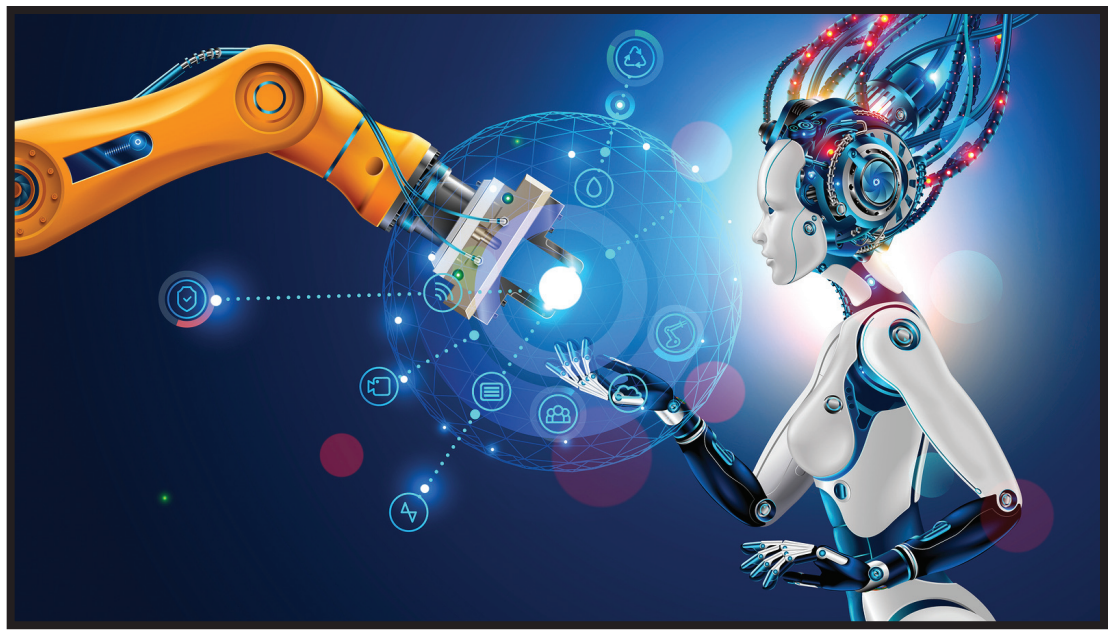
Iredell	113,322	-9,361	27,629	-2,904	47,556	-2,908	582	-39	37,520	-3,518
Jackson	26,838	-2,741	9,373	-967	7,227	-655	178	-11	10,050	-1,108
Johnston	121,742	-8,460	36,443	-2,964	47,208	-2,501	728	-36	37,318	-2,961
Jones	6,940	-404	3,259	-232	1,826	-53	21	-2	1,833	-116
Lee	34,213	-3,054	13,454	-1,304	9,895	-741	180	-8	10,677	-1,001
Lenoir	35,552	-3,314	18,802	-1,864	9,089	-700	102	-10	7,556	-740
Lincoln	54,021	-4,842	12,070	-1,671	24,535	-1,494	255	-7	17,147	-1,672
Macon	24,392	-2,125	5,925	-608	10,117	-670	129	-10	8,217	-838
Madison	15,848	-1,539	5,863	-682	4,199	-331	104	-6	5,676	-521
Martin	15,604	-1,541	9,025	-954	3,091	-264	39	-1	3,444	-322
Mcdowell	26,714	-3,049	7,127	-1,048	10,557	-794	140	-16	8,877	-1,191
Mecklenburg	699,970	-48,432	305,313	-21,372	160,446	-12,017	4,572	-138	229,409	-14,934
Mitchell	9,983	-1,172	1,031	-134	6,012	-669	28	0	2,911	-369
Montgomery	15,373	-1,470	6,424	-719	4,827	-364	65	1	4,054	-388
Moore	65,796	-3,207	15,565	-1,077	27,159	-905	356	-12	22,701	-1,214
Nash	63,351	-4,273	31,301	-2,074	17,943	-1,149	219	-7	13,876	-1,044
New Hanover	158,848	-15,446	49,030	-5,218	50,392	-3,925	1,108	-117	58,259	-6,192
Northampton	13,126	-1,568	9,223	-1,190	1,353	-144	23	-1	2,525	-233
Onslow	97,624	-13,073	23,973	-4,068	36,307	-3,817	916	-88	36,376	-5,107
Orange	105,215	-10,190	49,025	-4,419	14,618	-1,755	661	-74	40,873	-3,947
Pamlico	8,940	-860	3,356	-396	3,040	-212	41	-2	2,503	-250
Pasquotank	25,493	-4,028	11,204	-2,014	5,695	-660	147	-28	8,438	-1,326
Pender	38,772	-3,311	11,410	-1,241	14,886	-969	236	-18	12,227	-1,085
Perquimans	9,119	-1,084	3,485	-510	2,611	-202	33	-3	2,986	-369
Person	24,988	-2,097	10,998	-948	6,358	-468	93	-7	7,536	-674
Pitt	114,687	-10,701	51,368	-4,840	29,742	-2,457	668	-47	32,859	-3,364
Polk	14,899	-1,312	3,945	-433	5,320	-376	74	-12	5,548	-492
Randolph	85,184	-7,658	16,648	-2,006	43,736	-2,896	471	-28	24,304	-2,730
Richmond	27,139	-3,410	14,282	-1,964	5,573	-559	73	-5	7,203	-885
Robeson	69,745	-7,888	43,361	-5,267	8,830	-904	185	-17	17,351	-1,704
Rockingham	56,251	-4,653	20,106	-2,119	20,165	-1,133	232	-14	15,734	-1,387
Rowan	87,102	-9,309	24,295	-3,473	36,269	-2,708	378	-32	26,133	-3,100
Rutherford	41,656	-3,933	12,525	-1,546	16,256	-1,185	203	-21	12,655	-1,184
Sampson	34,510	-4,084	14,190	-2,055	13,069	-1,122	115	-6	7,128	-901
Scotland	20,244	-2,746	11,258	-1,531	3,370	-459	67	0	5,539	-761
Stanly	39,278	-2,786	9,869	-909	17,804	-890	136	-12	11,460	-975
Stokes	28,796	-2,651	6,608	-886	14,331	-974	150	-13	7,698	-777
Surry	42,399	-3,911	11,794	-1,535	18,446	-1,203	119	-6	12,033	-1,167
Swain	9,042	-1,438	3,386	-544	2,450	-302	38	-1	3,165	-592
Transylvania	24,444	-1,902	6,183	-559	7,960	-518	117	-10	10,182	-815
Tyrrell	2,190	-231	1,203	-156	334	-22	7	-1	646	-52
Union	146,876	-12,264	36,547	-3,830	61,060	-4,261	696	-59	48,532	-4,120
Vance	27,463	-2,907	18,022	-1,744	3,994	-436	60	-9	5,379	-719
Wake	708,218	-36,027	261,841	-13,631	180,568	-8,862	4,886	-206	260,683	-13,360
Warren	12,640	-995	8,576	-631	1,736	-130	35	-3	2,291	-231
Washington	8,030	-806	5,334	-537	1,044	-110	23	-4	1,629	-155
Watauga	43,227	-4,446	11,433	-1,133	13,131	-1,168	489	-60	18,161	-2,084
Wayne	69,458	-6,599	29,326	-2,933	22,577	-1,686	318	-13	17,213	-1,974
Wilkes	39,624	-3,584	8,563	-1,128	20,829	-1,432	131	-7	10,096	-1,019
Wilson	52,704	-4,211	27,137	-2,235	12,712	-953	172	-2	12,671	-1,021
Yadkin	22,491	-1,811	3,546	-449	12,700	-738	82	-1	6,157	-623
Yancey	13,086	-1,302	4,593	-540	4,663	-384	49	-6	3,777	-372

Are you ready for the future of work?

BY DOUG MCCULLOUGH AND BROOKE MEDINA

Ignore the robots and politicians, your future depends on you

The world is changing at dizzying speed. Blockchain, artificial intelligence, machine learning, the internet-of-things and 3D Printing are disrupting the economy and the labor market. The changes are so epic that some say we are living in the Fourth Industrial Revolution.



It has been estimated that 73 million existing jobs will be eliminated by the year 2030 due to automation. At the same time, we are witnessing a worldwide rise of populists who offer reassuring words and economic nostalgia. It is easy for a person to feel at the mercy of external forces, as if they are being tossed around like a rowboat in a tempest. So, how can a person ensure they thrive amidst the technological disruptions and political uncertainty? The key is resilience.

Personal resilience is a mixture of skills and traits including perspective, optimism, continual learning, and self-reliance.

To avoid seasickness on a rough ocean, sailors are told to look at the horizon. That perspective allows the sailor to steady himself by seeing past the immediate troubles. To cope with so much change, it is important to understand that change is nothing new.

Since WWII, the US has increased its manufacturing output with fewer workers thanks to automation. A famous Ball State study estimates that 88 percent of manufacturing job losses have been lost to automation (rather than global competition). Despite the decline of manufacturing jobs, productivity has grown, and millions of new jobs have been created.

A proper perspective doesn't discount the turmoil around us. Rather, it steadies us by enabling us to see other signs of stability and human progress. We have to guard against the steady stream of negativity in the media and social media if we are to maintain perspective.

While the rate of change feels unprecedented, many believe that automation and artificial intelligence will result in more, not fewer, jobs. As futurist entrepreneur Raya Bidshahri wrote: "while emerging technologies will destroy many jobs, they will also create many new ones."

We tend to share Bidshahri's belief that automation will create more and better jobs in the long term. But even so, none of us knows the exact shape this new economy will take. As a result, many of us will likely encounter anxiety and painful disruptions. To counter the angst, each of needs a dose of optimism.

Optimism is not blindly hoping for something good to happen. Rather, it is a conscious decision to approach life with intentions of making the most out of the opportunities. We may not be able to control what those opportunities look like, but we can control how we respond to them.

Resilience involves adapting to new realities. We are living in a knowledge-based economy. It's not enough to get a college degree and assume your education is complete. Instead, adapting requires continual learning.

Continual learning involves updating our existing technical skills, developing new skills (such as coding), or improving soft skills (such as emotional intelligence). Ongoing learning, fueled by curiosity, also enables us to improve our "user experience" in the workplace. Finding ways to make work less tedious and more enjoyable can give us renewed energy in our career.

Perhaps it's no coincidence that as technological innovation has disrupted the labor market, people have turned to politicians for solace. Candidate Trump capitalized on the frustrations of rust belt workers who felt neglected in the modern economy.

Since the 2016 election, pundits and policy experts have offered competing visions for helping workers. Those policy proposals have ranged from public financial support in the form of universal basic income, to subsidizing wages in hopes of incentivizing people back to work, or the laissez faire approach of growing the economy to create more jobs and ultimately better wages.

Regardless of whether you fear the robot apocalypse or what you believe the government's proper role is in providing a safety net, each one of us is responsible for our own well-being. Even if you are a progressive that believes in a robust welfare state, your personal well-being and prosperity will ultimately depend on your own attitudes, decisions, and actions.

Thriving in the digital economy may come down to either controlling the robots (coding, repair or operation), or being more human than robots through emotional intelligence, customer care, and personalized service. Regardless of the path you choose, it will be up to each of us to navigate through all the changes. Building the traits and skills of resilience will better equip you for that journey.

Doug McCullough is a director at Lone Star Policy Institute in Dallas, TX. Brooke Medina is communications director at Civitas Institute in Raleigh, NC.

CYAN MAGENTA YELLOW BLACK

How Public Schools Fit into School Choice

BY LEAH BYERS

- *Traditional public schools educate around 80 percent of K-12 students in North Carolina.*
- *Expanding choice incentivizes traditional public schools to be more in touch with parent and student needs.*
- *In order to adapt to those needs, traditional public schools should have more financial and administrative autonomy.*

January 20 – 26 was National School Choice Week and many ardent supporters of school choice took advantage of the opportunity to shine a light on the benefits of a thriving education marketplace.

At Civitas, we addressed some frequently asked questions about school choice and pointed out that there is still work that can be done at the state level to better meet parental demand. The Civitas School Choice Poll found that North Carolinians support the concept of school choice, support the specific choice programs that operate in North Carolina, and want more educational options.

Much of our writing and research from January centered on private, public charter, and homeschools. In North Carolina, about one in five students attends an alternative to traditional public schools.

But what about traditional public schools, and the 80 percent of North Carolina students that they are responsible for educating?

School choice advocates are often accused of wanting to prop up non-traditional schools, and the minority of students that they represent, at the expense of the majority of students that remain in traditional public schools. This accusation could not be further from the truth.

As the name implies, schools of choice are just that – a choice. The "default" option for most students is to attend their neighborhood public school. And for many students, the public schools serve them well. Without schools of choice, traditional public schools have a monopoly on the education marketplace.

There are two major reasons why a monopoly is harmful to all North Carolina students. First, although students within an area have no choices under that model, families do have a choice about which neighborhood in which to live. As we know, the reality is that only some families have the full array of choice in where to live. Other families cannot afford to live in certain neighborhoods. Houses located in high-quality school districts are likely to be more expensive, meaning that low-income families get priced out. This perpetuates a cycle where lower-income families may struggle to find a school to match their academic and social needs.

Second, a traditional public-school monopoly can harm students because it creates a disconnect between the school and the needs of students and parents. When there is no competition, quality is certain to suffer. This can manifest in several ways, including lack of desired curriculum, mismatch of values, administrative bloat, or even lower academic quality.

In North Carolina, academic performance of traditional public schools has been mostly stagnant for years, despite changes in funding levels over time. For example, state NAEP scores have remained essentially the same for the past 15 years. Opponents of school choice claim that traditional public schools are underfunded. When adjusted for inflation, public schools have 3 percent less funding in 2017 than they did in 2007. Despite fluctuations in funding during that period, results did not increase or decrease significantly. What critics fail to note is that money is not the answer to the state's educational challenges. And despite steady funding increases for traditional public schools in recent years, school choice options continue to gain popularity.

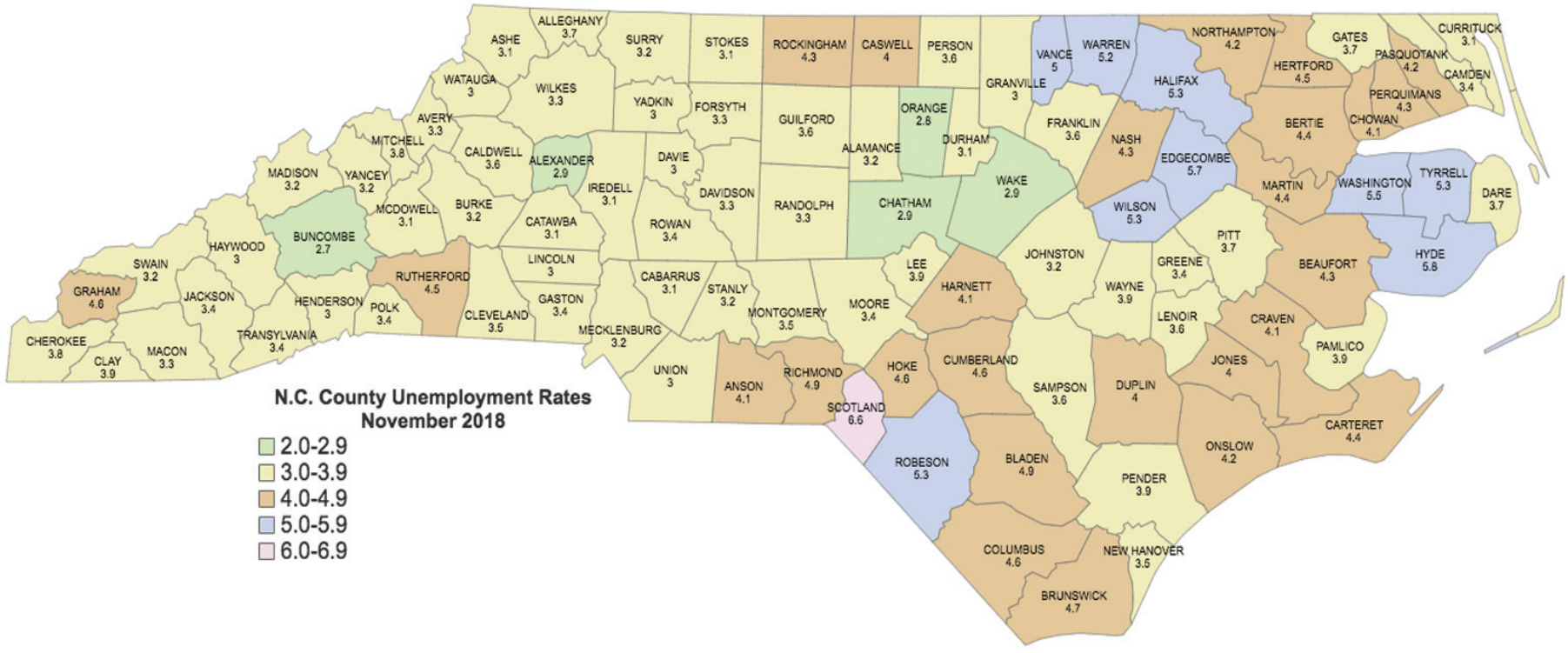


If money alone isn't the answer for improving the state's traditional public schools, what can we do to support them in educating 80 percent of students?

Competition into the education marketplace helps traditional public schools by creating incentives for school leaders to be more in touch with the wishes of parents. In competing for parents, local boards of education or principals will have to be more innovative. This is not to say that the individuals in those positions don't currently consider parental impact. But the popularity of school choice in the state shows that there is room for traditional public schools to be more responsive to the populations they serve.

The latest Civitas School Choice Poll found

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The above map shows the November 2018, (not seasonally adjusted) unemployment rates for all 100 North Carolina counties. (data from N.C. Department of Commerce) The November statewide unemployment rate was 3.5 percent. The October statewide unemployment was 3.4 percent. Unemployment rates increased in 56 of North Carolina's counties in November, decreased in 14, and remained unchanged in 30.

Scotland County reported the highest unemployment rate at 6.6 percent, while Buncombe County had the lowest at 2.7 percent. Five of the state's metro areas saw increases from last month, three decreased, and seven remain unchanged. Asheville had the lowest at 2.8 percent and Rocky Mount the highest with 4.8 percent.

When compared to the same month last year, not seasonally adjusted unemployment rates decreased in 99 counties and remained unchanged in one.

How Public Schools Fit into School Choice

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 9

that only 35 percent of traditional public-school parents would choose to educate their child in a traditional public school, if resources were not a problem. The fact is, some parents feel trapped in their current school due to lack of resources. This demonstrates what we have long known: school choice has always been available for those who can afford it, while those who cannot are trapped.

The third of surveyed parents that would remain in traditional public schools regardless of resources are satisfied with the results. But the other 65 percent of parents could teach us a lot about the areas in which our schools could improve, if we have the time and capacity to listen.

A key way that state lawmakers can help traditional public schools better meet parental needs? Increasing flexibility at the local and school levels. This means less burdensome testing regulations and more local autonomy on issues like class size, calendar setting, and teacher and staff compensation. In order to be competitive, traditional public schools need to be able to adapt to meet parental demand and student needs. Part of the pushback from traditional public schools against expanding school choice is that schools feel they lack the ability to compete successfully. This is a valid point and should be an easy fix – give traditional public schools flexibility, as well.

In a true education marketplace, traditional public schools are a perfectly fine choice for parents to make. But it is paternalistic to insist that families should only have one option for their child's education unless they can afford otherwise. Quality under a monopoly is almost certain to be sub-par.

Free-market conservatives often take issue with some of the specifics of the present structure of the system, but not with government-funded schools themselves. For educational choice, an "all of the above" philosophy is the one that best facilitates the benefits of an open market system. Under that model, all parents – regardless of income – can choose the best educational options for their child and help to ensure that all schools are working to serve the needs of students.

CYAN MAGENTA YELLOW BLACK

Your Grandchildren and Great Grandchildren are Paying for Medicaid Expansion

BY RAY NOTHSTINE

At a presidential campaign stop in Indiana in 1968, Robert Kennedy was asked by a medical student who was going to pay for his healthcare proposal for poor people? Kennedy famously responded, "you will." His answer is often seen as a courageous and brutally honest event in American liberalism.

However, when compared to today's federal spending binge, quips like that don't tell the whole story.

A huge portion of today's entitlement expansion is not being paid by current taxpayers but future generations through federal deficits and our unsustainable $22 trillion national debt.

Entitlement spending such as Social Security, Medicaid, and Medicare already devours 70 percent of our $4.4 trillion federal budget after unemployment insurance and Obamacare is added to the mix. So called mandatory entitlement spending costs are skyrocketing and the U.S. finds itself again nearing $1 trillion annual budget deficits. Interest on the national debt alone will soon surpass defense spending.

Here in North Carolina, Gov. Roy Cooper and other politicians desperately want to further tie North Carolina to a debt-saddled federal government through Obamacare's Medicaid expansion.



Part of the argument put forward by many lawmakers across the country, Republicans and Democrats alike, is the belief that if their state doesn't rush to get the "free money" it will go elsewhere.

As healthcare policy experts like Katherine Restrepo point out: "According to the Congressional Research Service (CRS), when Congress drafted Obamacare, a pot of money was not allocated for Medicaid expansion. Rather, the reality is that an influx of federal funding would merely be adding to the federal deficit — taxing future generations and their children."

Gov. Cooper likes to say North Carolinians are "already paying for it" when it comes to Medicaid expansion for other states through federal taxes. He's right in a way, given that future North Carolinians, many not even born yet, are shouldering that burden. Yet, the Congressional Budget Office (CBO) has repeatedly pointed out that states that reject expansion are reducing federal spending.

The appeal for Medicaid expansion is that the federal government picks up nearly the entire tab until 2020 and then states have to kick in 10 percent. But even the Republican champion of Medicaid expansion, former Ohio Gov. John Kasich, admits this 90 percent deal will change. In a 2017 op-ed in the New York Times Kasich noted, "And states cannot expect the federal government to continue paying 90 percent of Medicaid expansion costs given our nation's historic debt; they must accept a gradual return to traditional cost-sharing levels." And what are those traditional cost-sharing levels for states? According to the left-leaning Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, that traditional cost-sharing averages out to around 40 percent, not 10 percent, painting a bleak future as state budgets become entirely swallowed up by Medicaid. Costs are already exploding as the price tag of expansion in Virginia will overrun estimates by $85 million in the biennium budget. Overall for Virginia, Medicaid costs unexpectedly soared by $462.5 million overall.

The rush to make states and a large portion of their citizenry even more dependent on a financially fledgling federal government is clearly unsustainable, but also immoral, particularly because major entitlement reform is the only path towards fiscal sanity for this nation.

While we have a healthcare problem in North Carolina the state should continue to explore managed care and other alternative reforms before jumping on the Medicaid expansion train that is clearly helping to send our nation and many states towards financial ruin. We all share in a moral obligation to help care for the neediest citizens, but in reality, expansion weakens our ability to do so.

Given that North Carolinians and potentially a handful of other states are about to debate signing up for the expansion of Medicaid again, there needs to be some pause and clarity over federal spending. Overall, federal lawmakers have failed miserably to even slow the spending binge.

Continuing to kick the can down the road, mortgaging the future of children and the unborn who have no say in the process is no solution. Given the continued rush towards reckless spending, it's becoming evident that the onus is now on states like North Carolina and the citizenry to try to sound the alarm on all of this insanity.

This article was previously published in the News and Observer.

576,534 Voters! Gone! The Great North Carolina Voter Purge of 2019

BY ANDY JACKSON

- *576,534 voter registrations were purged from North Carolina voter rolls.*
- *North Carolina's biennial cleaning of voter rolls is mandated by federal law.*

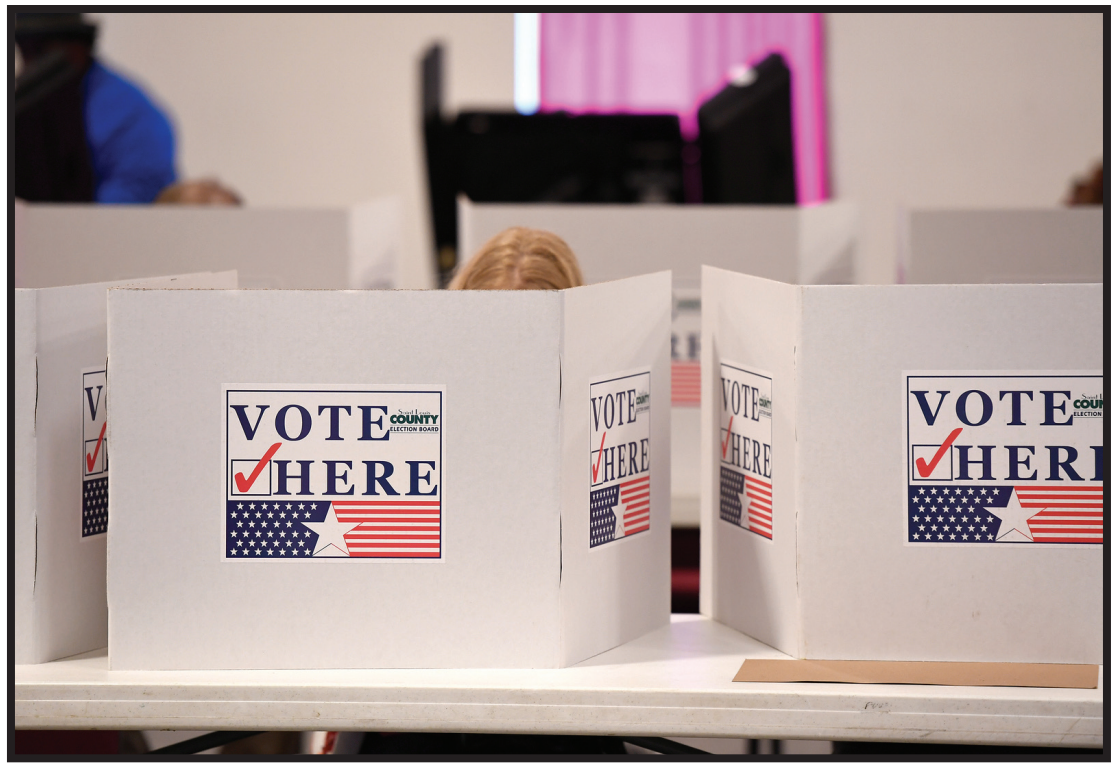
If you happen to casually check out the recent voter registration changes at Civitas' Carolina Elections web page (www.carolinaelections.com), you will see an eye-popping number; the number of people registered to vote in North Carolina dropped by 576,534, from 7,137,713 on December 29 to 6,561,179 on January 5 (the State Board of Elections updates it voter registration data on Saturdays).

Voter registrations become outdated for several reasons, including voters dying or moving. Cleaning the voter rolls is a normal activity for local election boards and is mandated by the Help America Vote Act (2002).

According to the North Carolina State Board of Elections, there are several steps that must happen before a voter registration is purged:

Voter registration records are not "purged" simply due to non-voting. Voters are removed from the voter rolls due to a biennial list maintenance process that is mandated by federal and state law. If a county board of elections has not had any contact with a voter for a period of two federal election cycles, then the voter will be sent a forwardable address confirmation mailing. The voter will be required to return the confirmation mailing within 30 days of the mailing. If the confirmation mailing is not returned by the voter within that time, or the mailing is returned by the postal system as undeliverable, then the voter's record will be marked inactive in the voter registration database. Inactive voters are still registered voters. If an inactive voter presents to vote, the person will be asked to update his or her address with the board of elections. In the event that an inactive voter remains in this status for another two federal election cycles (meaning the county board still has no contact with the voter), then the voter will be removed as a voter in the county.

So, a voter must fail to vote in two federal election cycles (a federal election cycle includes all elections and primaries in a two-year period) and fail to return an address confirmation card before being put on the inactive list. The inactive voter must then fail to vote in an additional two federal election cycles before his or her name is removed from the voter rolls. That means those who were recently removed from voter rolls have not voted since 2010.



What makes the most recent purge seem so dramatic is that it was almost all done in one week during the Christmas holidays, a time when there would be few new people registering to vote. Every county except Yancy saw a decrease in registration numbers from December 29 to January 5. Previous purges took place over several weeks. As with prior purges, it will take some time for voter registration to reach its pre-purge level; the number of registered voters in the state did not fully recover from the early 2017 voter roll purges until late June of 2018.

Despite the occasional screaming heads about purges, such maintenance to voter rolls affects almost no actual voters and a portion of those purged are likely people who were caught up in voter registration drives but who never actually bother to vote.

The voter registration changes site mentioned in the first paragraph goes back to January of 2008 and is a great way to explore how voter registration in North Carolina has shifted over the past decade.

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