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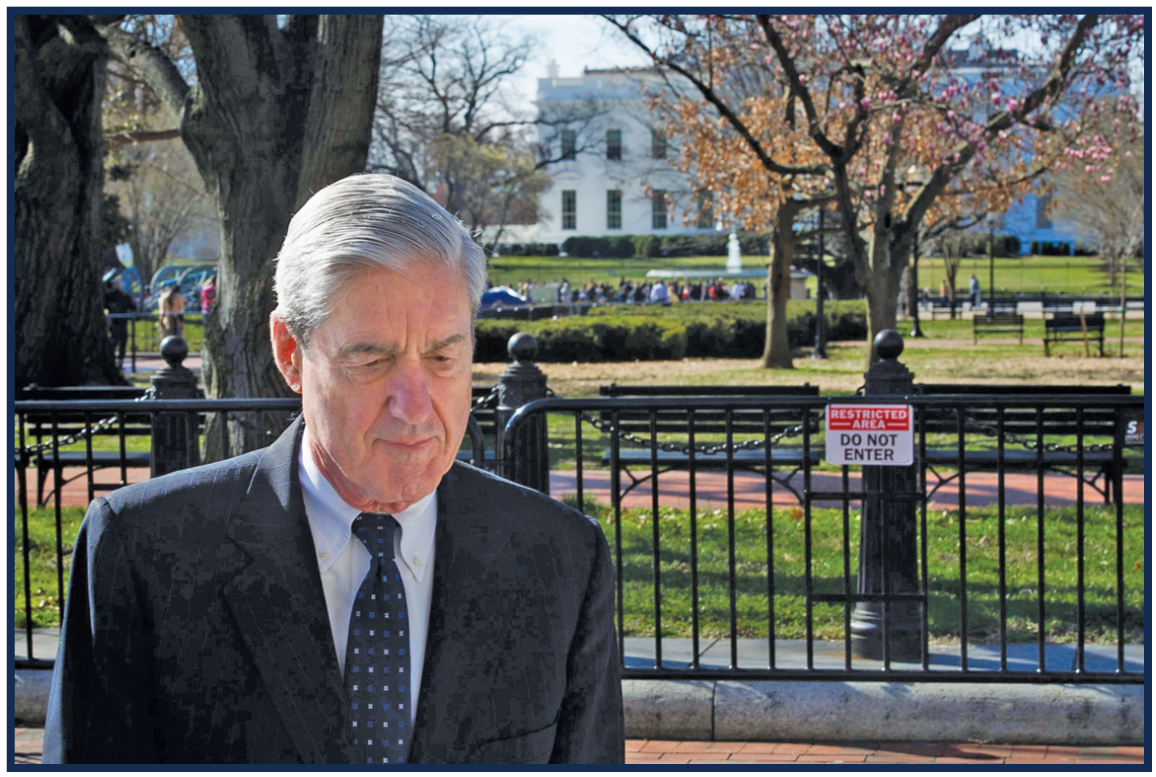
Electoral College gives North Carolina a commanding influence, p. 15

Latest Civitas polling shows uptick for NC Republicans; Mueller Report fatigue

BY RAY NOTHSTINE

Despite negative media bombardment over absentee voting irregularities in the 9th Congressional District and alleged corruption by the chairman of the state party, the North Carolina Republican party showed improvement from the previous month in Civitas polling. The party's favorability in the state was higher at 42 percent compared to Democrats who had a 39 percent favorable rating. For the first time in well over a year, Republicans held a lead in generic balloting for state legislature races. While within the poll's margin of error, Republicans had a two-point lead over Democrats (39-37 percent). Democrats and Republicans are tied in the generic ballot for congressional races, which was a three-point upward swing for the GOP since the March poll.

The poll clearly showed that the likely voters who were polled, for the most part, are tired of hearing about the alleged Russian collusion stories and the Robert Mueller investigation. Forty-seven percent said the media spent too much time on the story, while 19 percent said too little. One-fifth of likely voters responded that the media spent the right amount of time covering the topic. Half of respondents had a favorable view of the manner in which Mueller handled the investigation into President Donald Trump and his campaign. Only 22 percent disapproved. By 14 percent, North Carolinians believed Mueller did a better job handling the Russian collusion investigations than did current U.S. Attorney General William Barr's (36 percent supported it) handling of the outcome.



"It seems that Washington politics has jumped the shark, in the eyes of many North Carolinians," said Civitas President Donald Bryson. "While voters have opinions about the investigation, they're fatigued by hearing about it endlessly, without any end in sight or focus on public policy from the major parties."

North Carolinians also felt that the environment was less clean now than a decade ago. This despite dramatic improvements in air quality, particularly related to reductions in carbon monoxide and carbon dioxide in our air. Twenty-five percent of likely voters said they support the Green New Deal energy policy, while 36 percent said they opposed it. The currently proposed Green New Deal legislation would federally mandate that all energy be "renewable" and "clean" by 2030, potentially crippling the economy.

Trump showed slight improvement in the poll, while Gov. Roy Cooper, who remains popular, had a slight drop. Forty-seven percent approved of Trump's job as president and 56 percent of North Carolinians approved of Cooper. The full poll and crosstabs can be viewed at www.nccivitas.org.

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From the editor

Some of us from the Civitas Institute went to the NCAE rally in Raleigh on May 1. The rally is something we've written about continually, before and after the event. While no surprise, the gathering was a reminder that there is a substantial segment of the populace who truly believe government can solve almost any problem.

All of the clamoring was an angst for more government spending and programs, with no attention given to the citizenry that has to bear that cost. We haven't spent enough taxpayer dollars, or we haven't given enough power to the politicians who will excitedly hand over your money to a bureaucracy to manage, the protestors insisted.

This despite decades of evidence that shows centralized social engineering has had little to no impact on solving so many issues related to poverty, not to mention the trillions upon trillions of dollars spent at the federal and state levels.

And when it comes to education, despite the massive spending, why is there such fear to try something different? Of course, the answer is primarily about power and the politicians' desire to control a growing bureaucratic state.

Better ideas are needed.

I recently saw a headline that Pete Buttigieg, one of the Democrat presidential candidates, said events and buildings honoring Thomas Jefferson need to be renamed. Jefferson, the third president, and author of the Declaration of Independence, elevated liberty across the world, not just in America. Jefferson's writings were cherished by many of the men and women who languished in totalitarian gulags. People that yearned for the kind of freedom so often taken for granted in America. It should be a reminder of the dangers of the kind of progressivism that is so quick to dump our founding figures and principles to build their own society that is no longer beholden to Constitutional constraints.

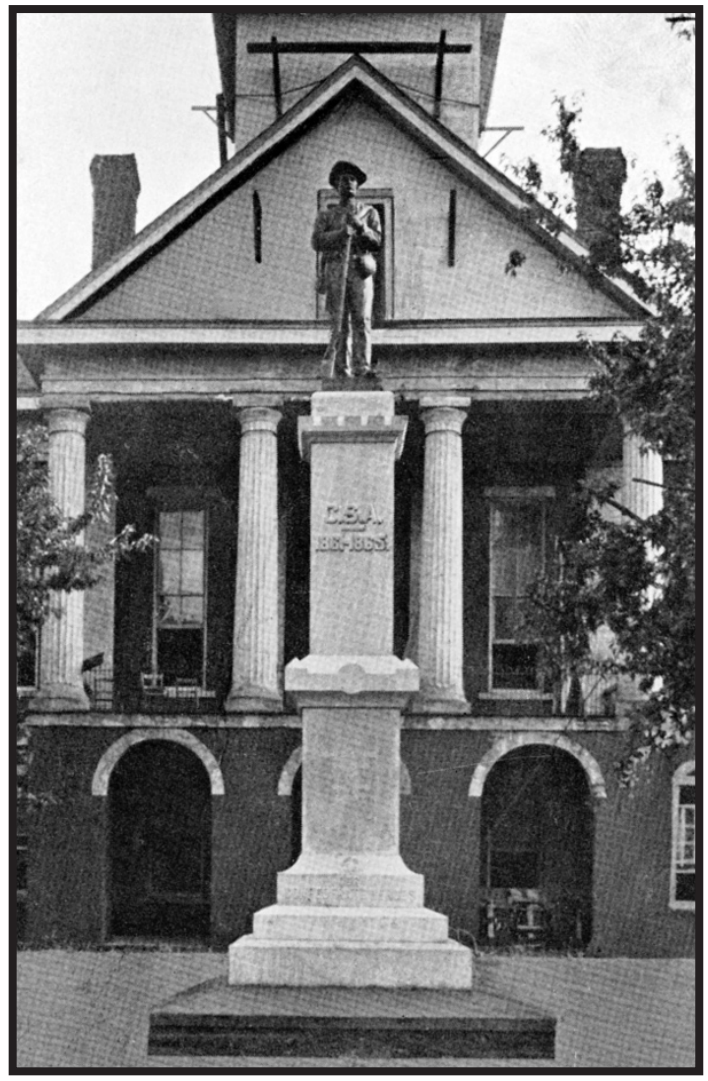
This edition covers issues like championing our Constitution – with a defense of the Electoral College to defending free markets, despite relentless attacks against a system that has lifted so many out of poverty while protecting private property. There are a lot of important issues facing our state and nation and we appreciate your support and attention in helping us to preserve and expand liberty. Future generations should know that all of us and organizations like the Civitas Institute didn't stand idly by against the onslaught to diminish life for the sake of false progress and utopian schemes.

Letter to the editor: preserve our monuments

Recently, certain people and groups have sought to remove the Pittsboro Confederate monument on the grounds that the display is "racist." They say that the memorial was erected during the Jim Crow era in order to intimidate African-Americans, but I disagree. You see, Confederate veterans and their fraternal organizations were very active between 1896 and 1939. This is the same time period in which most memorials were built. As the population of veterans dwindled, there was a drive to commemorate and preserve their stories so that future generations would not forget their struggle for independence. Thus, statues and plaques were placed at prominent locations throughout the South. Logically, they were often situated on government property where everybody could see them.

These memorials represent all Confederate soldiers from that conflict: black, white and Native American. Most of them were volunteers, many of them lost everything. There are people who will read this article who have already made up their minds; they will not be persuaded by my reasoning, and I will gain no ground with them. However, I know that there are many open-minded people of Chatham County who understand that history is complicated, truth is often obscured by politics, and that the history books are written by the victors. If you agree with me on this issue, write me a letter (I'd love to get in-touch) and tell the Chatham County commissioners.

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CYAN MAGENTA YELLOW BLACK

Red flags everywhere when it comes to Medicaid expansion

BY JIM ANTHONY AND DONALD BRYSON

In every state that has implemented Medicaid expansion, the costs have been substantially above projections. The expansion of Medicaid, a policy relic of Obamacare, has hit some states harder than others. California saw its expansion-related costs balloon to 278 percent above what their lawmakers projected. Even the more conservative-leaning Kentucky experienced sticker shock as they discovered their projection missed the mark by 95 percent.

There are other states, like Texas and Mississippi, that have held the line against this Leviathan of a program. Until very recently, expanding Medicaid wasn't even on the table in a state like North Carolina. However, 2018 saw a shift in the balance of power, with Republicans losing their veto-proof majorities. State Sen. Phil Berger, the top senator in the General Assembly, is right when he says Medicaid expansion is wrong for North Carolina — and his honesty should be applauded. Medicaid expansion puts resources for the truly needy at risk, threatens a state's budget, and disincentivizes work for able-bodied citizens.

Medicaid expansion takes a program designed to care for the elderly, disabled, low-income children, and pregnant women, among others, and opens it up to able-bodied adults in their prime working years. As a result, traditional Medicaid beneficiaries are forced to compete with able-bodied adults for limited services and providers like never before — and in reality, their new competition is a group like none other.

Medicaid expansion creates a new class of able-bodied adults dependent on welfare, the majority of whom are not working at all. Despite the myth that most Medicaid expansion enrollees are working hard, the truth is up to 70 percent of Medicaid expansion enrollees report absolutely no income. Instead of promoting work for able-bodied adults and preserving welfare resources for the truly needy, Medicaid expansion encourages this dependency and puts able-bodied adults at the front of the line for care.

The fact of the matter is, in our home state of North Carolina, able-bodied adults who would be eligible for Medicaid expansion already receive generous subsidies to purchase private insurance. The federal government fully pays for those subsidies, but if our state and others currently considering expanding Medicaid go forward with this budget sinking ship, they'll be forced to pay for a portion of enrollees' care instead. Where that money will come from and how much taxpayers will be forced to pay is still unknown. In states that have already expanded Medicaid, more than twice as many individuals enrolled than were projected, and the actual cost exceeded projections by a whopping 157 percent.

These massive overruns are now wreaking havoc on state budgets and many states are looking for solutions to walk back Medicaid expansion or tax their way out of the problem. In Ohio alone, nearly 280,000 more individuals enrolled in Medicaid expansion than were projected and cost overruns totaled $7.1 billion in just three and a half years. Proposals to deal with this budgetary crisis included



cutting payments to pediatric hospitals and limiting eligibility for pregnant women, the elderly, and the disabled — the very populations Medicaid was designed to help.

The experiences in other states should be massive red flags for states considering Medicaid expansion. The truth is Medicaid expansion is a budget buster that states can't afford without robbing resources from other priorities and the truly needy.

Medicaid expansion isn't "the right thing to do," as many have suggested. Discouraging work and creating government dependency, risking precious resources for the truly needy, and blowing state budgets — these are not American values. More policymakers across the nation need to re-read the facts and refocus their efforts to do the real right thing for their citizens by opposing (or repealing) Medicaid expansion.

This article was originally published in The Daily Caller.

Jim Anthony is president of Anthony Property Group, as well as a board member for the nonprofit Civitas Institute in Raleigh, North Carolina.

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No, students would not be covered under Medicaid expansion

BY LEAH BYERS

Leading up to their May 1 teacher strike, the North Carolina Association of Educators (NCAE) released their top five policy priorities. The third-ranked priority was the expansion of the state's Medicaid program. For the NCAE, expanding government welfare to working age able-bodied adults, most of whom have no dependent children, comes before nearly all other legitimate reforms needed in the state's public education system.

In an article before the announcement of the NCAE priorities, I pointed out that no children would become newly eligible for Medicaid under expansion.

Each proposed Medicaid expansion plan explicitly states it would expand Medicaid to adults ages 19 through 64 or 65. No K-12 aged student would be newly eligible for Medicaid under expansion.

In fact, children ages 6 through 18 currently qualify for full Medicaid up to 133 percent of the federal poverty level and for NC Health Choice (a Medicaid insurance product) up to 211 percent of the federal poverty level.

During the NCAE rally, protesters held signs reading "sick kids can't learn." Members of the state legislature also promoted similar messages. Expansion proponents continue to exploit children as political props in the ongoing debate.

Having been called out on their deception, Left-leaning groups scrambled to find justification for the policy in the days leading up to the rally. One policy paper by the North Carolina Justice Center cited a phenomenon known as the "welcome mat effect" – when those who were eligible before expansion sign up afterwards due to new awareness of their eligibility.

For students, this may happen when their parents become eligible for Medicaid under expansion. Unlike their children, some parents would become newly eligible under expansion in North Carolina. Medicaid currently covers the lowest-income parents, but not all the way up to 133 percent of the federal poverty line.

However, 78 percent of those that would be newly eligible for Medicaid under expansion would have no dependent children. And, at the end of the day, is it wise to further tie our state to a federal government that is $22 trillion in debt for the sake of a public information campaign to raise awareness of existing benefits for children?

As featured in a recent video from the Justice Center promoting Medicaid expansion, a protestor pointed out that, "every single child deserves access to the best healthcare…there's no reason in this beautiful state of ours that kids should be denied healthcare because of a legislature's vote."

The irony is that Medicaid expansion would threaten access to care for children who are currently enrolled in Medicaid by adding an estimated half a million new enrollees to an already overcrowded system.

So, it seems North Carolina's left-leaning cohort of organizations – including the Justice Center and the NCAE– have developed a new strategy to push their progressive policy agenda: if a policy can't be passed on its merits, find any way that it remotely connects to children. Then claim that anyone that opposes the policy is heartless.

Okay, this is not actually a "new" strategy for an ideology that uses emotion over sound logic at every turn. But it has rarely been more on display than in the advocacy for Medicaid expansion conveniently making its way onto the NCAE's latest policy priority list.

It is not compassionate to flood an already overcrowded system and limit access to care for current Medicaid recipients. It is arguably immoral to use children to advocate for a policy that would harm current children on Medicaid.



CYAN MAGENTA YELLOW BLACK

More can be done to stop absentee voter fraud

BY ANDY JACKSON



Would you trust someone who knocks on your door, asks for your ballot, and says that she will submit it for you? Would you trust an election system that allows illegal activity to take place largely unpunished?

The late-February N.C. State Board of Elections hearing on election fraud in the 9th Congressional District exposed deficiencies in our system of absentee voting. Those shortfalls leave North Carolinians vulnerable to exploitation by political hacks and destroy the public's belief in the integrity of our elections.

An Elon University Poll released on March 1 found that most North Carolinians, including 61 percent of Democrats, believe that election fraud is a major problem in our state. Perhaps more disturbing, only 18 percent of respondents said that they were "very confident" that future elections would be fair.

Our democratic system depends on the confidence people have that their collective voices will be heard by those in power. Widespread doubt about the integrity of our elections undermines that confidence.

The problem goes much further than Bladen and Robeson counties and requires more than a few tinkers to our voting system to fix. State Board of Elections officials have found examples of absentee ballot fraud in counties across the state. In perhaps the most extreme example, officials found that a 2010 sheriff's race in Yancey County involved absentee vote buying, including exchanging votes for drugs.

Now the General Assembly has an opportunity to make things right.

During a recent report to the General Assembly's House Committee on Elections and Ethics Law, soon to be former Board of Elections Executive Director Kim Strach proposed some much-needed reforms. However, Strach's recommendations do not do enough to protect voters from absentee ballot fraud. Current law makes it easy for political operatives to commit absentee ballot fraud and relatively difficult for officials to investigate and prosecute them. To correct those oversights in the law, there are additional reforms to North Carolina's absentee voting by mail system that should be implemented by the General Assembly.

First, limit who can submit absentee ballot requests. Require local boards of election to only accept absentee ballot requests from individual voters or their near relatives. McCrae Dowless, the man at the heart of the alleged absentee ballot fraud scheme in the 9th Congressional District, submitted 592 absentee ballot requests in Bladen County in the 2018 general election. These kinds of massive request submissions provide ballot harvesters with a large list of individuals whose ballots they can later collect.

Second, make absentee ballot requests private. The names and addresses of everyone who requests an absentee ballot is public information, providing ballot harvesters with additional lists of targets. Making that information private until the voter has submitted his or her ballot would help protect the integrity of those ballots.

Third, limit who can witness balloting. Ban individuals working for candidates, parties, or interest groups from witnessing ballots. Those who work for candidates or parties are working for the interests of candidates, not voters. People working as multipartisan teams, groups set up by local boards of election to assist voters, and those working for boards of elections would be exempt from this restriction.

Fourth, end "granny farming." Make it a felony for individuals working for candidates, parties, or interest groups to mark the absentee ballot of patients in hospitals, clinics, nursing homes or rest homes or to "assist" those patients in marking their ballots. Again, people working as multipartisan teams and those working for boards of elections would be exempt.

North Carolina voters deserve to know that their votes will not be negated by absentee ballot fraud. Common sense reforms like the ones listed here, will both protect voters from ballot fraud and restore citizens' confidence in the integrity of our elections.

This article was first published in The Robesonian.

CYAN MAGENTA YELLOW BLACK

Changes represent the difference in voter registration between March 30 and May 18, 2019										
County	Total Voters	Total Change	Democrats	Democrat Change	Republicans	Republican Change	Libertarians	Libertarian Change	Unaffiliated Voters	Unaffiliated Change
Totals	6,631,448	27,155	2,466,929	3,330	1,998,459	7,122	37,094	445	2,126,058	15,979
Alamance	97,543	453	35,651	34	32,129	116	519	4	29,210	298
Alexander	23,053	83	5,424	-24	10,493	63	83	0	7,046	43
Alleghany	6,879	21	2,272	-9	2,544	15	30	1	2,032	14
Anson	15,554	46	10,129	9	2,304	4	26	0	3,069	34
Ashe	17,742	39	4,633	-20	7,747	18	74	2	5,284	40
Avery	11,113	118	1,311	16	6,504	54	48	1	3,247	46
Beaufort	31,372	-23	12,022	-31	10,488	9	88	-1	8,765	0
Bertie	12,536	31	8,695	2	1,380	13	26	0	2,433	16
Bladen	21,334	104	11,089	4	3,998	54	42	1	6,203	45
Brunswick	99,710	840	25,276	118	38,282	347	421	5	35,703	367
Buncombe	188,011	1,074	71,745	215	43,637	194	1,451	30	71,028	620
Burke	52,603	211	15,634	-17	19,429	70	270	1	17,243	154
Cabarrus	131,135	827	39,453	220	47,247	144	843	11	43,516	446
Caldwell	49,625	230	11,670	-8	23,144	106	346	4	14,435	125
Camden	7,302	-8	1,889	-5	2,384	4	56	1	2,971	-8
Carteret	49,711	-36	10,737	-43	21,741	-5	228	3	16,999	9
Caswell	14,300	37	6,911	-15	3,172	26	33	0	4,180	26
Catawba	98,006	611	22,375	33	42,578	184	424	11	32,599	377
Chatham	51,635	220	19,806	35	12,580	26	238	5	18,979	150
Cherokee	20,496	101	4,333	-7	9,334	76	126	2	6,692	29
Chowan	9,456	-32	4,252	-21	2,524	-7	25	-1	2,653	-3
Clay	8,265	35	1,634	-3	3,602	20	50	3	2,975	14
Cleveland	60,564	184	23,174	-11	20,455	113	270	3	16,647	78
Columbus	33,793	204	17,411	-167	7,256	252	66	4	9,051	115
Craven	65,988	-102	21,196	-54	23,651	-29	374	-1	20,746	-18
Cumberland	199,502	178	89,608	10	45,533	22	1,211	14	63,057	122
Currituck	18,830	1	3,515	-7	7,266	0	160	0	7,879	8
Dare	28,113	218	7,902	32	8,965	77	213	1	11,023	106
Davidson	102,449	501	23,219	16	48,715	188	437	5	30,043	291
Davie	28,342	105	4,894	9	14,579	28	121	2	8,737	64
Duplin	28,013	101	12,381	-6	7,817	42	103	-1	7,701	65
Durham	217,031	602	118,666	215	25,567	32	1,092	3	71,592	338
Edgecombe	33,734	58	23,213	-3	5,586	25	79	-3	4,846	39
Forsyth	246,500	1,621	99,028	372	71,924	250	1,287	21	74,151	959
Franklin	41,807	202	16,450	-35	12,883	50	215	2	12,238	181
Gaston	133,527	605	39,940	74	51,587	240	745	16	41,200	266
Gates	7,627	36	3,844	8	1,643	6	29	1	2,109	21
Graham	5,646	19	1,532	-6	2,597	9	26	1	1,490	14
Granville	36,377	73	17,144	-37	8,990	14	143	-1	10,087	95
Greene	10,786	-23	5,890	-33	2,070	-4	19	-1	2,804	15
Guilford	348,775	1,042	155,724	180	88,774	85	1,893	40	102,220	711
Halifax	35,264	102	22,746	5	4,235	25	85	0	8,191	71
Harnett	71,715	547	24,287	84	25,337	165	507	1	21,555	297
Haywood	41,628	214	14,613	-21	13,169	101	259	0	13,565	127
Henderson	78,856	326	16,429	66	29,754	61	458	10	32,180	183
Hertford	14,121	9	10,128	-14	1,331	7	35	1	2,619	14
Hoke	29,116	264	13,549	73	6,103	66	200	4	9,245	120
Hyde	2,996	5	1,633	-8	496	6	14	0	853	7

Iredell	115,059	872	27,764	58	48,097	299	606	9	38,548	499
Jackson	26,751	107	9,258	-2	7,268	68	177	1	10,036	38
Johnston	124,055	965	36,722	103	48,057	346	750	7	38,461	502
Jones	6,918	-34	3,225	-21	1,827	-11	21	0	1,844	-2
Lee	34,528	146	13,417	5	10,003	28	186	6	10,912	106
Lenoir	35,818	-70	18,742	-81	9,218	-5	102	-1	7,753	18
Lincoln	54,710	264	12,071	14	24,861	112	265	4	17,493	133
Macon	24,682	146	5,907	2	10,274	70	138	2	8,351	69
Madison	15,902	31	5,827	-20	4,219	14	104	-3	5,744	39
Martin	15,695	34	9,014	-5	3,138	24	37	0	3,501	15
Mcdowell	26,921	49	7,073	-22	10,688	29	146	1	8,998	41
Mecklenburg	711,486	3,824	309,273	1,252	161,511	514	4,755	74	235,638	1,958
Mitchell	10,048	28	1,031	2	6,032	4	27	-1	2,957	23
Montgomery	15,456	42	6,374	-8	4,892	26	66	1	4,116	22
Moore	66,408	379	15,579	36	27,354	124	376	10	23,080	206
Nash	63,770	182	31,297	-10	18,137	100	218	2	14,099	89
New Hanover	160,897	1,082	49,331	171	50,886	292	1,159	22	59,444	591
Northampton	13,143	1	9,188	-15	1,368	1	24	0	2,560	15
Onslow	99,038	281	24,039	-5	36,827	107	939	7	37,164	168
Orange	105,745	383	49,193	154	14,652	34	673	4	41,185	190
Pamlico	8,948	-4	3,297	-20	3,098	15	41	0	2,512	1
Pasquotank	25,695	-14	11,185	-24	5,782	12	150	1	8,567	-3
Pender	39,232	225	11,381	10	15,080	98	240	1	12,509	113
Perquimans	9,183	-6	3,474	-13	2,632	1	32	-1	3,039	6
Person	25,148	89	10,978	0	6,436	42	93	1	7,636	45
Pitt	115,005	-347	51,261	-174	29,790	-95	689	-2	33,195	-76
Polk	14,987	48	3,915	-13	5,360	21	75	0	5,620	39
Randolph	85,878	296	16,623	2	44,067	155	490	6	24,665	129
Richmond	27,328	-79	14,207	-60	5,641	-13	76	1	7,389	-7
Robeson	70,034	-92	43,109	-157	9,010	39	182	-4	17,705	28
Rockingham	56,614	136	20,043	-12	20,411	105	229	0	15,910	41
Rowan	87,952	395	24,400	55	36,574	127	390	7	26,549	200
Rutherford	41,947	124	12,471	-28	16,403	79	205	0	12,849	73
Sampson	34,737	108	14,143	5	13,175	27	118	-1	7,293	78
Scotland	20,356	-40	11,228	-41	3,416	-1	66	-3	5,631	4
Stanly	39,707	227	9,823	-12	18,047	125	139	0	11,682	112
Stokes	29,033	72	6,585	-10	14,476	41	153	0	7,806	40
Surry	42,663	140	11,717	-20	18,606	78	121	0	12,210	81
Swain	9,134	39	3,384	4	2,503	15	39	0	3,205	20
Transylvania	24,443	31	6,128	2	7,953	9	113	-1	10,245	21
Tyrrell	2,194	-7	1,191	-8	340	2	8	0	655	-1
Union	149,492	80	36,921	-20	61,902	-24	742	3	49,878	119
Vance	27,611	118	17,994	21	4,001	3	60	1	5,546	92
Wake	716,005	4,058	263,936	1,089	180,983	482	5,053	66	265,702	2,396
Warren	12,716	15	8,563	-10	1,765	3	37	0	2,349	22
Washington	7,989	-18	5,289	-21	1,047	5	21	0	1,632	-2
Watauga	43,155	101	11,321	-14	13,114	16	479	0	18,227	99
Wayne	70,114	304	29,375	11	22,748	73	341	8	17,616	209
Wilkes	39,882	149	8,484	-20	20,963	75	144	9	10,284	84
Wilson	52,945	139	27,063	-14	12,795	37	174	3	12,885	105
Yadkin	22,676	73	3,525	-2	12,801	30	88	0	6,252	44
Yancey	13,134	9	4,533	-9	4,707	2	49	0	3,840	16

Housing for teachers; why it's a bad idea

BY BOB LUEBKE

While teachers were marching in Raleigh for higher pay and more staff, two bills were approved by the House and sent to the Senate designed to give teachers another benefit — affordable rental housing. House Bill 31 and HB 375 would provide teachers and other local government employees access to affordable housing in Bertie and Durham Counties.

We hear much about how teachers are underpaid. What could be wrong with providing teachers and other government employees with affordable housing to help those who sacrifice a lot to educate our young people?

A lot.

Most often affordability programs develop as a tool to help attract and retain teachers. Is that the case here?

In 2017, median household income in Bertie and Durham Counties was $33,022 and $60,045, respectively. Median household income in North Carolina in 2017 was $50,343.

Is affordability an issue in these areas?

A quick trip to the web site rentdata.org provides some interesting information. According to the web site, fair market rent in Bertie Count for a one-bedroom and two-bedroom apartment is $595 and $683 respectively. Three-bedroom apartments in Bertie County rent for $856/month.

Can Bertie County teachers afford these rents? The lowest paid teachers earn a starting salary of $35,000. Bertie County was one of four counties in North Carolina that offer no teacher salary supplement. Hence, the monthly salary for a starting teacher in Bertie County is $35,000/12 months $2,916.67/month. If we adopt the principle that rent should not exceed 30 percent of gross take-home pay, a beginning teacher could spend up to $875 on an apartment. Under the current rates, Bertie County teachers should be able to afford, a one, two- or three-bedroom apartment.

What about Durham County?

As you might expect, Durham County has a higher cost of living than Bertie County. However, teacher pay is higher there. Like Bertie County, starting teachers in Durham earn a salary of $35,000. However, they also receive an average local salary supplement of $6,931. Hence starting salaries are $41,931. Applying the 30 percent figure for rent means teachers could spend up to $1,048/month on rent. According to Rentdata.org, the average monthly rent of a one-and two-bedroom apartment in Durham is $847 and $990 respectively.

Aside from failing to address the real issue of affordability, the legislation is problematic for other reasons. Data from Bertie County shows affordability is clearly not an issue. Bertie County's problem seems to be not affordability but getting people to move to the county. That's a different issue altogether. According to a 2016 U.S. Census estimate, between 2010 and 2016, the population in Bertie County declined 6.7 percent, falling from 21,282 (2010) to 19,854 (2016).

I'm not against helping teachers. However, is school-owned affordable housing for teachers and government employees really the best solution? Offering housing turns the school district into a landlord, a business in which they have no experience or expertise.

"A pay raise doesn't require construction."

Both bills (HB 31 and HB 375) offer teachers the opportunity to rent housing at below market rates. The bills also make available the opportunity to rent if individuals are members of the school district (HB 31) or if individuals are employed by county, state or local government (HB 375). This is a bad idea. As currently written there is no income threshold or eligibility requirement to ensure middle- and upper-income teachers or government employees can't access the program.

Teachers aren't the only professionals who have complaints about the cost of housing in many places. However, even if you think affordability is the main issue, wouldn't it be easier to just raise the pay of teachers most likely to qualify for the program? A pay raise doesn't require construction, hiring a property agent and daily upkeep and maintenance. Lastly and most importantly, this legislation is problematic because it really does little to redress the issue of why housing costs are so high in many parts of the country. High housing costs are usually the product of rent control, excessive regulation, overzealous zoning, regulations that make new construction more expensive and environmental laws which limit new development.

HB 31 and HB 375 do nothing to address any of these problems. Instead, the bills expand government yet again and then say only teachers and government employees are eligible for the benefits. Is that right?

Policymakers who want to help struggling teachers should resist the temptation to build special housing. Reasonable, less expensive solutions are available. Municipalities should ensure zoning and other regulations don't prevent the housing stock from expanding. There are examples of private companies successfully working together to help address the high cost of housing for teachers and other public employees, with little or no cost to taxpayers. Increasing teacher pay, providing a housing voucher or expanding eligibility for other existing housing programs are all preferable to building teacher housing.

Turning local governments into a landlord for teachers and government employees is an idea that deserves to be put to rest.

CYAN MAGENTA YELLOW BLACK

School choice opponents revert to their favorite weapons: twisting the facts and nonsense

BY BOB LUEBKE



Politicians opposed to the Opportunity Scholarship Program (OSP) have been fighting recent efforts to expand the program. The latest example is SB 609. Some of these arguments surfaced in the debate over SB 609 on the floor of the NC Senate on May 8.

Opponents say the program is underutilized due to lack of demand, and the money would be better used by redirecting the funds back to the public schools. Furthermore, expanding eligibility requirements would make the program – according to one senator – "one for relatively high-income families to send their kids to private schools." Therefore, all efforts to expand the program should be opposed.

It's difficult to call these statements anything other than pure nonsense. Let's analyze the claims.

Many trace the assertion about underutilized funds back to former representative Charlie Jeter, now a lobbyist for Charlotte Mecklenburg Public Schools, who claimed only $28 million of the $45 million allotted for OSP was utilized.

Those numbers are simply incorrect. If you do additional research, you'll find that in 2017-18 about $34.8 million was allotted for the OSP, with about $27.5 million of that spent on scholarships. Another $3 million was spent on program administration costs such as technology and administrative improvements by the North Carolina State Education Assistance Authority (NCSEAA), the state agency that administers the Opportunity Scholarship Program. That leaves $4.3 million in unspent funds.

Is the program underutilized? In 2018-19, over 500 kindergartners and first grade students applied and were declared eligible but were unable to receive the scholarship because OSP caps K-1 students at 40 percent of program enrollment. Five hundred scholarships would have reduced the unspent amount around another $2 million. According to NCSEAA, as of May 1, 2019, almost 10,000 families have applied for OSP, a significant increase over last year.

Lawmakers look at unspent funds and say demand for the program must be lacking. Waitlists are requested to indicate demand for a program. However, NCSEAA officials say that a waitlist is not an accurate measure of demand for OSP, since families are often unable or unwilling to separate siblings. If there is a possibility that siblings would be divided, parents will think twice about applying to the program. Removing this arbitrary cap would do much to increase demand and reflect the real demand.

Gov. Roy Cooper has challenged in the courts the provisions to forward fund OSP appropriations—and lost. Forward funding allows NCSEAA to award scholarships in spring for the fall, because the money is available and in hand, and administrators don't have to await annual budget actions by the legislature. Forward funding is a process that is not only used by OSP but by other large state agencies such as the UNC System, agencies that must administer programs involving thousands of applications and millions of dollars.

In his 2019-20 budget proposal, Cooper recommended freezing OSP enrollment and zeroing out forward funding for the program which is another way to essentially kill it. Cooper recommended the same in his first budget proposal.

Cooper defends his action by saying OSP lacks accountability and would be better spent by the public schools. Several bills have suggested redirecting this money back to the public schools where opponents of OSP say it is most needed.

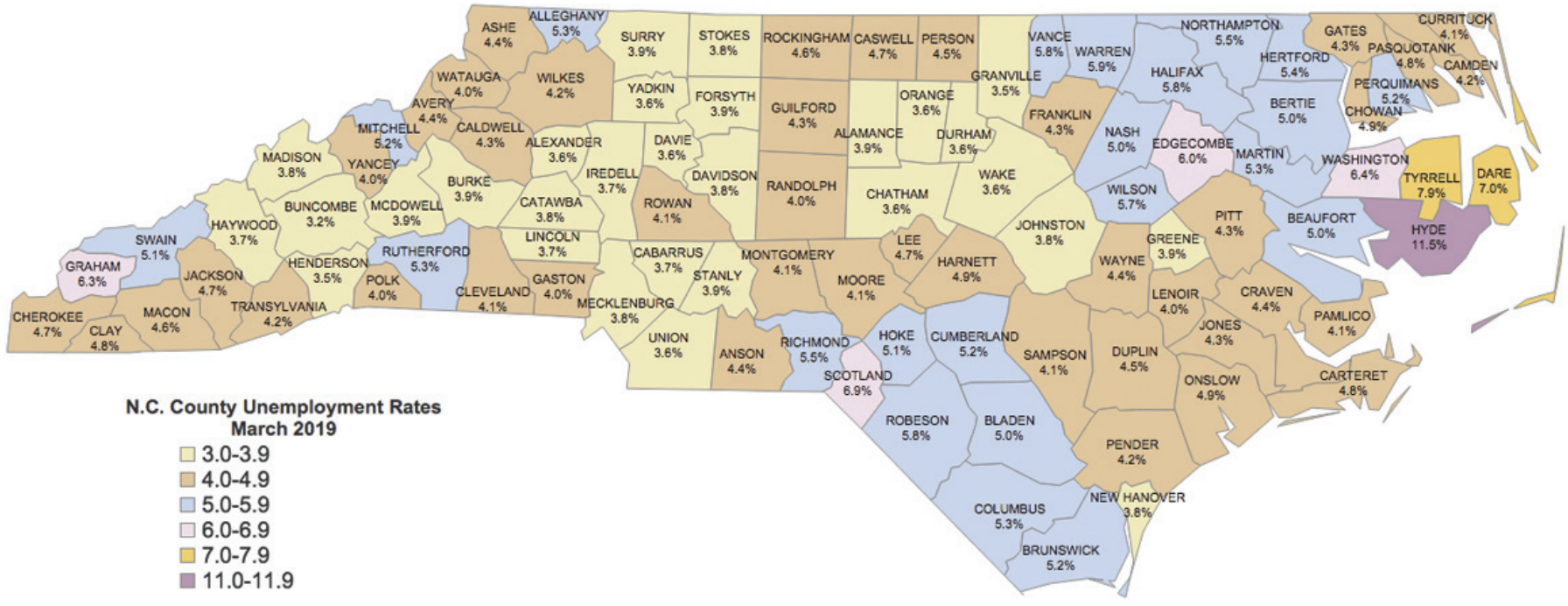
Contrary to the assertions of many, ending forward funding would not aid the public schools. Students from the OSP program would show up in the public schools and schools would have to find space and resources to educate them. To date, Cooper has suggested he would not provide any additional funding for the public schools to handle the influx of students.

Currently it costs the state about $6,154 to educate a public-school student. The cost of an average OSP scholarship for one year is about $3,911. The state is saving over $2,243 per student.

The fact is, if more students are enrolled in the public schools, taxpayers will pay more, but because there will be more students, less money will be available on a per student basis.

Lastly, during the debate on the Senate floor to expand OSP eligibility to a family of four earning about $71,000. Sen Marcus (D-Mecklenburg) said:

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The above map shows the March 2019, (not seasonally adjusted) unemployment rates for all 100 North Carolina counties. (data from N.C. Department of Commerce) The March statewide unemployment rate was 4.1 percent. March shows a slight drop from February 2019 unemployment, which was 4.2 percent. However, in comparison to November 2018, the statewide unemployment rate was 3.5 percent. December was 3.8 percent.

Thriteen metro areas experienced rate decreases over the previous month and two remain unchanged. Rocky Mount had the highest at 5.3 percent and Asheville the lowest at 3.3 percent.

Hyde County had the highest unemployment rate at 11.5 percent, while Buncombe County had the lowest at 3.2 percent. Hyde County was 12.5 percent the previous month and Buncome County remained unchanged from February.

When compared to the same month last year, not seasonally adjusted unemployment rates increased in 61 counties, decreased in 26, and remained unchanged in 13.

School choice opponents revert to their favorite weapons: twisting the facts and nonsense

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"This is no longer going to be a program that was as originally designed. Instead it's going to be one for relatively high-income families to send their kids to private schools even if they can and probably are now affording private school from their own funds."

A family of four with an income of $71,000 is "high income"? I think you'd find a lot of families who would disagree with that designation. I would like to remind Sen. Marcus of NaShonda Cooke. Last year she appeared on the cover of Time Magazine in an article on struggling teachers. Cooke, a teacher in Durham is quoted in the story:

I have 20 years of experience, but I can't afford to fix my car, see a doctor for headaches or save for my child's future. I'm a teacher in America.

Cooke worked two teaching jobs for 10.5 months for a combined salary of $69,165. Is Sen. Marcus saying Cooke – and all other educators who earn the same – are "high income"?

Marcus implies that $71,000 somehow fails the acceptable threshold test for OSP recipients, but it's not a living wage for teachers. The distinction lacks justification.

Opportunity Scholarships offer 9,600 students throughout North Carolina the chance to access educational opportunities that best fit their needs. A recent survey of parents with children in the OSP program found 97 percent of parents were satisfied or very satisfied with the program and 97 percent of parents said they were happy with their child's academic progress.

Does OSP take money from the public schools? No. OSP is funded separately and administered through UNC — not the Department of Public Instruction. OSP funds have no connection to the public schools.

As OSP grows, it provides more children the opportunity to receive a quality education. A recent poll showed the popularity of the Opportunity Scholarship Program. It's clear the public supports these opportunities. And children and parents want these opportunities.

It should anger us no end that some lawmakers are working to limit and take away these options.

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North Carolina Association of Educators Rally

Raleigh, NC









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Taxpayer-funded campaigns are the wrong solution to big money in politics

BY BRIAN BALFOUR

The recent fraud and bribery case of wealthy political donor Greg Lindberg has shone another spotlight on the inevitable result of concentrated political power. The scandal has also emboldened left-wing progressives to agitate for the resurrection of a dead and buried system of forcing taxpayers to finance political campaigns.

In a recent editorial, the News and Observer wrote that "Another improvement (to campaign finance laws) would be to restore and expand public financing for elections." Likewise, the leftists at NC Policy Watch insisted that "the real fix in this matter involves a return to voter-owned elections."

Beginning in 2007, candidates in North Carolina Council of State and appellate court races were eligible to use taxpayer funds to finance their campaigns. Labeled by advocates as "publicly financed campaigns" and "voter-owned elections," this system asked that interested candidates meet a certain threshold of small donations to show "public support." Once that threshold was met, candidates could access taxpayer dollars to finance their campaign.

The system was thankfully eliminated in 2013 by the new Republican majority who opposed the measure.

Taxpayer-funded political campaigns are objectionable for several reasons. First and foremost, as Thomas Jefferson declared, "To compel a man to furnish funds for the propagation of ideas he disbelieves and abhors is sinful and tyrannical." This should be transparently obvious to anyone with a shred of respect for the rights of conscience and individual freedom.

Forcing taxpayers to finance political campaigns means that they are required to fund the spread of ideas with which they may disagree. This is compelled speech and has no place in decent society.

Moreover, the claim that taxpayer-funded campaigns will eliminate the influence of big money and special interests in politics is hopelessly naïve. Indeed, under this system, special interests may exert even greater influence over candidates.

For example, certain organizations, such as unions, could simply mine their membership rolls for the numerous small donations required to qualify their chosen candidate for the taxpayer-provided campaign funds.

As a result, a limited amount of special interest money could leverage hundreds of thousands of taxpayer dollars toward their chosen candidate's campaign.

In the end, the candidate is still beholden to the special interest group, and the special interests now have more dollars freed up to funnel to 527 groups or other PACs to advocate for their chosen candidate.

The outcome is that despite claims to the contrary by advocates of taxpayer-funded elections, even more money is entered into the campaign process, special interest influence is magnified, and taxpayers lose more of their liberty.

Furthermore, taxpayer-funded campaigns don't address the actual root of the problem of money in politics. Wealthy donors and special interests influencing politicians are merely a symptom of a government reaching far beyond its proper parameters. It is basic ignorance to think that a bit of tinkering with campaign finance laws will eliminate a practice as old as government itself: shady dealings between those who wield great power and those who seek to profit from it.

Where massive political power centers exist, such as in Raleigh, there will be no shortage of those wishing to gain access to that power. Campaign finance laws can serve to discourage certain practices, but when there is so much to be gained from accessing power, black markets in campaign funding and political influence peddling will emerge and simply divert big money into increasingly darker corners.

If one is truly concerned about reducing big money in politics, the only meaningful solution is to significantly reduce the size and scope of government itself. With less power to access, there will be less demand for seeking to access that power.

Finally, taxpayer-funded campaigns are very unpopular. A 2013 Civitas statewide opinion poll asked respondents, "Do you support or oppose a program that uses state taxpayer dollars to help pay for the political campaigns of judicial, Council of State, and other statewide candidates?"

An overwhelming 70 percent of respondents said they opposed the measure, while only 21 percent expressed support.

If anything, the Lindberg scandal underscores the excessive nature of political power concentrated in Raleigh. The decisions of a few in the ruling class can make or break the fortunes and well-being of entire industries and millions of people. Politicians already control far too much of our tax dollars and infringe on way too many of our freedoms.

The proposed 'solution' to big money and special interest influence in politics presented by today's progressives is unironically to hand over yet more control of our tax dollars and give up more of our liberty to the political class.

To truly rid the influence of big money in politics we must strike at the actual root of the problem: big government.

"An overwhelming 70 percent of respondents said they opposed the measure, while only 21 percent expressed support."

CYAN MAGENTA YELLOW BLACK

5 ways to address millennial pessimism about capitalism

BY DOUG MCCULLOUGH AND BROOKE MEDINA

Polls suggesting that millennials have a favorable view of socialism are well publicized. Less known are polls showing that 90 percent of millennials have a positive view of entrepreneurship, and 58 percent of millennial respondents believe they are more entrepreneurial than previous generations. So far, though, millennials have not been as entrepreneurial in practice as prior generations. But there is hope that this could change given their views on entrepreneurship and the currently robust economy.

Capitalism is facing high-profile criticism and challenges from politicians. But capitalism doesn't need to be saved. Rather, we need to teach this generation the skills to prosper in a free enterprise system.

How Do We Respond to Millennial Pessimism?

It's important to understand the economic challenges that millennials face. But we do them a disservice when we let them dwell in their pessimism. If we care about their long-term success, the most useful thing we can do is help them develop a resilient entrepreneurial mindset.

We often hear the message that a skills-based economy requires continual learning. Because millennials have faced arrested development, one of the best places for them to begin their continuing education is by learning the basic skills of free enterprise such as resilience, pragmatic optimism, emotional intelligence, and the flexibility needed to adjust to market changes.

It is not enough to counter bad policy on policy grounds alone. To sustain capitalism, we must equip young people with the tools needed to improve their well-being in a way that government policy will never be able to.



1. Define Terms

Millennials' skepticism of capitalism and their subsequent embrace of socialism stems, in part, from a misunderstanding of terms. Harvard economics professor Edward Glaeser writes "The unhappiness that many millennials have with the status quo [of our economic system] reflects an economy that has too often protected insiders at outsiders' expense." They have conflated cronyism between government and business with capitalism, cementing their distaste for what they believe to be free markets.

Those of us who understand capitalism and socialism recognize the faultiness of this thinking. If we hope to see millennials turn a corner, we must educate them on how a healthy capitalist system functions and how they can personally flourish in it.

2. Acknowledge Hardships

It's clear that millennials' economic adversities are real. According to Ben Steverman, writing in Bloomberg, the combination of stagnant wages and the student loan quagmire significantly contributed to this generation's delayed prosperity. As a result, millennials are not saving enough for their retirement. In addition, young adults will shoulder the burden of mounting federal debt and have reason to fear that Social Security may not be fully funded when it's their time to retire. These economic woes have led to pervasive pessimism, as reflected in Rep. Ocasio-Cortez's recent lamentation that her generation has never known prosperity as adults.

In the face of economic challenges, millennials have fallen behind other generations in certain adulthood milestones, including buying homes, marriage, and childrearing. Although this data paints a discouraging picture, comparing quality of life from one generation to another can be difficult.

3. Make the Case for Optimism

Prosperity is more than just salaries or gross domestic product. Contrasted with previous generations, millennials live in an enviable period. With smartphones, smart homes, on-demand music, video streaming, ever-present information from Alexa and Siri, and the consumer cornucopia that is Amazon Prime, the number of ways one can entertain themselves and connect with the world around them is unprecedented.

After experiencing the Great Recession, the weakest recovery in modern history, and growing income disparities, the economic outlook for millennials may finally be improving as productivity and wages increase and unemploy-

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5 ways to address millennial pessimism about capitalism

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ment falls. Millennials are now the largest contingent in the labor force and arguably the most powerful consumer demographic.

On top of these conveniences of the digital age and sharing economy, the economic growth of the past two years has millennials feeling more optimistic financially. This newfound optimism has led to several encouraging behaviors, such as a significant uptick in marriage rates and an increase in home purchases. Millennials are now responsible for 42 percent of new mortgages, outpacing both baby boomers and Gen X.

Millennials are still writing the book on their generation. Each young person will have to choose whether to give in to pessimism or act with the confidence that their own decisions matter. Individuals on the short end of income inequality can improve their financial prospects by their own efforts more than any politician or policy ever could.

4. Help them Reimagine the American Dream

For decades, the American Dream has been defined by a definition of prosperity that couldn't account for the technological advances ushered in by the Digital Revolution.

By reimagining the American Dream in a rapidly changing economy and labor market, we can guide millennials away from futile comparisons of the 20th-century version of success and into an understanding of prosperity that matches our highly mobile, innovative world. A 2019 American Enterprise Institute report found that Americans may no longer be defining the American Dream entirely in purely material terms. Instead, as if to echo the Declaration of Independence, Americans seem to be defining the American dream as the "*pursuit* of happiness."

According to the report,

Americans of all demographic groups believe being free to live your life and having a rewarding family life are more essential to the American dream than owning a home, becoming wealthy, or even having a better life than their parents.

The pursuit of happiness and prosperity is inherently active, willful, and hopeful. A conviction that one's actions and decisions matter liberates us from the fatalist belief that forces beyond our control shape our lives.

5. Become a Mentor

Those of us who believe that free enterprise leads to prosperity should educate millennials and Gen Z about how to be capitalists. Merely cheerleading capitalism when we see aggregate GDP growth will neither persuade millennials nor teach them how to take control of their own lives.

Schools are failing to teach the skills and traits necessary for enterprise and entrepreneurship. The media is more interested in clickbait about the latest scandals than devoting pages or pixels to improving quality of life through economic literacy and skill development. So, economic mentorship should become the new activism.

You don't need an MBA or PhD in economics to be an economic mentor. And you don't have to be in a formal mentorship program or startup accelerator. Don't wait for anyone's permission. Look for "teaching moments" to explain the basics of how the market works. Most importantly, preach agency. Spread the message that personal choices and effort affect us more profoundly than any policy or governmental program.

Ultimately, if we want to be free, we don't need to go on an apology tour for capitalism. Instead, we need to teach the next generation that entrepreneurship, agency, and optimism are not only possible but necessary for their economic freedom. We may not change millennials' perception of capitalism overnight. But as they discover that their choices matter and that making wise economic decisions produces good results, we might end up winning the war on free enterprise and save capitalism for the next generation.

This article first appeared in Foundation for Economic Education (FEE).



CYAN MAGENTA YELLOW BLACK

Electoral College gives North Carolina a commanding influence

BY RAY NOTHSTINE

Like many political issues today, North Carolinians have divided opinions about the way we elect our presidents. A Civitas poll released in March revealed that 47 percent of those polled statewide believe a popular vote model is the best outcome to determine the winner, while 43 percent favor the Electoral College.

Perhaps more notable, a substantial majority of North Carolinians (55-29 percent) polled rejected SB 104 when explained to them. That bill would bind North Carolina's electors to the popular vote winner, known more popularly as the National Popular Vote Interstate Compact (NPVIC). The polling suggests that voters may be more apt to support the Electoral College when offered more information, proving their instincts about the superiority of our current system are correct.

The Electoral College model, enshrined by our Founding Fathers, is advantageous to North Carolina for a number of reasons. One of the main benefits is that North Carolina is now a perennial swing state. While Democratic presidential candidates have only won the state once since 1980 — Barack Obama in 2008 — many of those races remained competitive, particularly in years where the election was close. Presidential candidates pay special attention to North Carolina because its electoral votes are up for grabs. The Civitas poll notes too that voters seem to be aware of this benefit for North Carolina.

Compared to most every state, North Carolina is relatively rural. Only Texas has more rural residents, and proportionally North Carolina has a larger rural population. This matters in terms of switching to a popular vote because candidates for president would spend the bulwark of their time campaigning in major media markets and primarily focusing only on urban residents and their preferred issues. The top media markets in North Carolina do not even rank in the upper 20 nationally, with Charlotte at 23, and Raleigh (Fayetteville) at 25.

At the Constitutional Convention in 1787, a direct popular vote election was the least popular consideration and was immediately scrapped. After all, our nation is a republic and not a pure democracy. Initially, delegates seemed to be settling on the idea of the U.S. House of Representatives selecting our president, given they were considered to be most in tune with the electorate. But smaller states realized this would put them at a disadvantage and a compromise was reached to have states vote as a single bloc through their electors.

In the modern era of presidential elections, North Carolina has never gone with the loser when the winner secured a victory in the Electoral College but lost the popular vote. Since 1892, there have only been two occurrences when the winner of the popular vote for president lost the Electoral College: 2000 and 2016.



With all the current talk of ditching the Electoral College, expanding voting rights to minors, and even non-citizens, the next election may be shaping up as a referendum on Constitutional government as we know it in America. Ultimately, the Electoral College empowers states over the federal government, and is an important part of our system of checks and balances in a Republic. The Electoral College is "the basic institution that has given structure to American politics," declared the late Daniel Patrick Moynihan, a former Democratic Senator from New York.

A popular vote winner-take-all election would only cater to urban interests and pull candidates further and further to the left. Centrist and conservative states like North Carolina would quickly be left behind to the whims of the largest media markets and packed urban enclaves. Worst of all, a president could easily be elected with 30 percent of the popular vote in a crowded field, further alienating more and more Americans.

Our state and nation need to do a better job of teaching these truths in schools and reminding the citizenry, while the American Founders were not perfect, they left us a model intent on empowering states' rights and preserving liberty. North Carolina should be leading the charge in the expansion of those ideals, not looking for ways to dismantle the Republic that has lasted for over 230 years.

This article first appeared in the Fayetteville Observer.

What makes a stay-at-home mom turn into a political activist?

BY CHRIST WEST

In this case, the water bill.

In 2017, Angela Humphries' attention turned from her bills to the bill her local government was running up. Humphries received a notice that her family's utility bill was going to double, due to a series of tax increases and fees imposed by the city of Raleigh to cover increased spending. She decided that this increase was the one that went too far.

Unsure of what to do, she began with a Google search, "how to contact your representative," then flocked to her state representative's office but found no allies there. Rather than giving up, she began reaching out to others and at a local meeting, she vocally opposed the fee and tax hike. Her concerns fell on deaf ears.

Her quest for representation then turned to social media, where she began to air her grievances in various local groups. In order to educate herself on local issues, she subscribed to numerous news sources and she began attending events hosted by local nonprofit groups, like the Civitas Institute. As the NCAE teacher walkout was announced, like any good mother, her concerns quickly shifted to her children.

With the help of a few friends she made in her quest to lower her water bill, she organized a group of school choice advocates to organize outside this year's NCAE walk-out to combat what Humphries described as "strictly political rhetoric that has found its way into the classroom."



For the "Opt-Out Day" organizer and new political advocate, these protests didn't end on May 2 when classrooms were once again full of sunburnt teachers. "Opt-Out Day" was her call for teachers to leave the NCAE and its partisan fueled agenda.

Humphries was contacted by Forest Moriarty, who founded a group in Arizona that combats the National Association of Educators' yearly protest. He wants his group, Purple for Parents, to become a nationally recognized, household name. Moriarty's expansion is beginning right here in North Carolina with a stay-at-home mom and new education activist.

The North Carolina chapter officially launched their social media push on Facebook to gain followers. The group's message to the NCAE is clear: parents like Humphries are frustrated with the annual march filled with political antics. Gaining over 400 members to a closed Facebook group in just a few weeks, the group seems to be gaining traction.

According to Humphries, who is leading the North Carolina chapter, "This is exactly what the state needs to give parents the courage to speak up and fight back against a system that has been holding them hostage and swipes their opinions to the side."

Concerned about the political nature of the NCAE Walk Out Day, she added, "Red 4 Ed and various affiliates' main concerns are to help elect Democrats and impose NEA ideas on public school systems."

Though she now runs an education advocacy group, she never lost sight of the goal: Lower the water bill. Just this week, Humphries led a group to speak at the N.C. General Assembly over proposed Wake County property tax hikes. Humphries and her friends, and other concerned citizens volunteering their time to speak up, gained the attention of news media, and were interviewed by WRAL and other local news sites.

Politics can be complicated and seem overwhelming for many. We often imagine politics as men with law degrees, dressed in suits debating complicated policy positions, citing bill numbers like a complicated game of political backgammon. It makes having an impact seem impossible.

Humphries proves that this doesn't have to be the case. Real policy changes result from everyday citizens. They get tired of the water bill going up and decide to visit their representative, then make a few phone calls, and take a stand.

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