NC Capitol Connection

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Next election to shape NC policy for years to come

BY RAY NOTHSTINE



The 2020 election will play a significant role for the future direction of North Carolina and the nation. The latest Civitas Polling shows a tight race for president in North Carolina and Gov. Roy Cooper holding on to his lead against potential Republican challengers.

While within the margin of error for most potential Democrat nominees, President Donald Trump is ahead of the field in the Tarheel State. Former Senator and Vice President Joe Biden was closest to Trump, trailing him by only one percent (45-44 percent) in North Carolina. Trump leads Bernie Sanders, 46 to 44 percent, Elizabeth Warren 46 to 43 percent, and Kamala Harris 47 to 41 percent.

"Across key demographics, President Trump has an advantage in party loyalty and the gender gap, given that men are more likely to vote for him than women are to vote against him," declared Civitas President Donald Bryson. "He also consistently leads among seniors, unaffiliated voters, and high propensity voters."

Trump's current favorability is a little bit higher in North Carolina than it is nationally, and by and large, the potential Democrat nominees are viewed more favorably nationally than in North Carolina.

Trump's reelection campaign team and Republican National Committee Chair Ronna McDaniel took the Civitas Poll as a sign of good news and shared the results on GOP social media platforms. Trump leads in North Carolina as opposed to other traditional swing states where in some polls he currently

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From the editor

It can be exhausting to follow the day to day minutiae of politics. I can't remember the last time I ventured up the courage or patience to wade into cable news. Overall, politicians and our dysfunctional political system, including those clamoring for more and more government, should remind us of the importance of empowering people over bureaucracy and centralized power.

What is encouraging is that while North Carolina and this nation have plenty of problems, it's not nearly as abysmal as things are often portrayed. Part of this reason is because you and I interact with responsible and trustworthy citizens every day. The type of people who are clearly capable of self-government. This is why Thomas Jefferson believed that there is still hope, even though leaders and institutions may fail, because the people are the ultimate guardians of liberty.

However, freedom is in no way guaranteed. The American Framers understood this and left us not only with the influence of our Bill of Rights and Constitution, but a tradition that is skeptical of concentrated power and tyranny. One of my favorite stories from history is when King George III asked his American painter Benjamin West what George Washington would do after winning independence from the Crown. West simply replied, "They say he will return to his farm." The King, having great power, knew there was something different about Washington. "If he does that," King George III remarked, "he will be the greatest man in the world."

Every issue we bring to you will always reflect the intention of giving more power to North Carolinians and less power to Washington and Raleigh. It should be of little doubt that those leaders and citizens who reflect the spirit of our revolution will reflect what is best about our nation and system of government.

One of the things this issue looks at is our recent polling and the upcoming election. Civitas will not only work diligently to keep you informed but to continually sound the alarm when there are abuses of power, no matter the political party or person in office. We appreciate your support and hope you can join us at the Conservative Leadership Conference in Raleigh in 2020, as well as our other events in the state.



CYAN MAGENTA YELLOW BLACK

Next election to shape NC policy for years to come

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

trails Democrat challengers.

Trump showed his prowess in North Carolina again this month by flexing his influence in the 9th Congressional district's special election. Trump helped Republican Dan Bishop overcome a deficit to Democrat challenger Dan McCready to secure a seat in Congress on September 10. A new election was ordered by the State Board of Elections in the district after ballot fraud and irregularities sowed doubts about the fairness of the results. Republican Mark Harris's victory over McCready by 900 votes was voided and he chose not to run for the seat again.

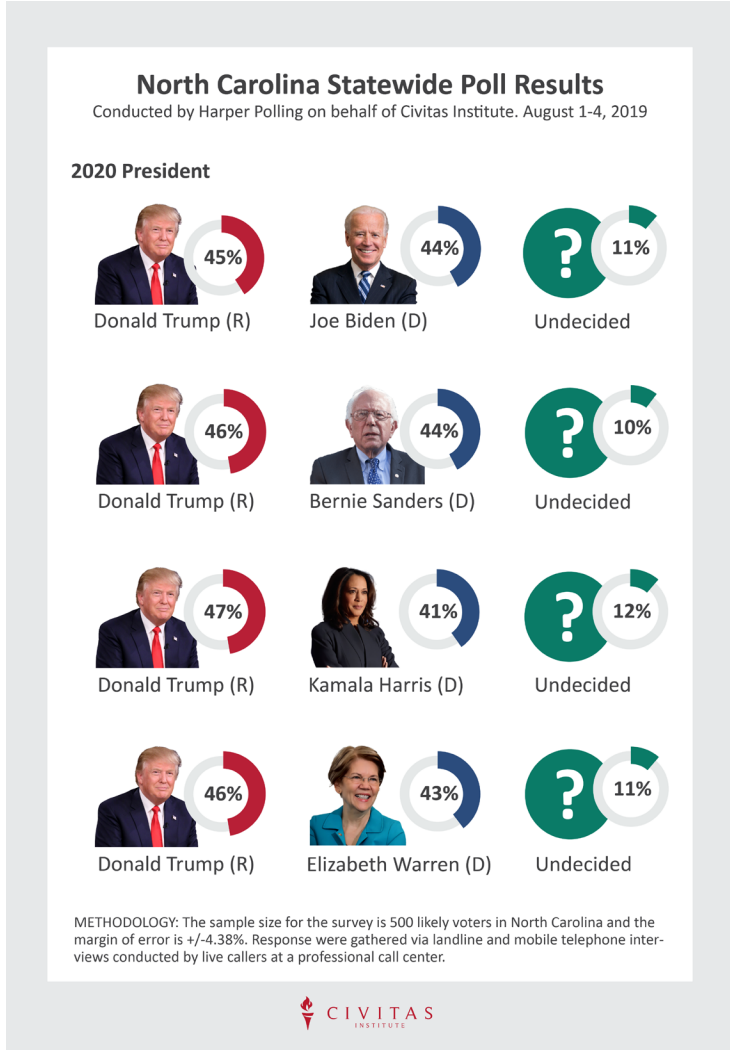
A large segment of the media swarmed to the district in hopes of showcasing a defeat of the president's preferred candidate and agenda. Politico called the special election "a testing ground for Trump's 2020 message and strategy." According to the popular political website, "Bishop has worked to nationalize the race, labeling McCready a 'socialist' and, more recently, pushing out immigration ads echoing Trump's rhetoric against Latino immigrants, including a spot in which he criticizes the Mecklenburg County Sheriff for not cooperating with federal immigration enforcement officials." Some experts and pundits predicted that the suburbs in and around Mecklenburg County would sink Bishop and be an ominous sign for Trump in 2020.

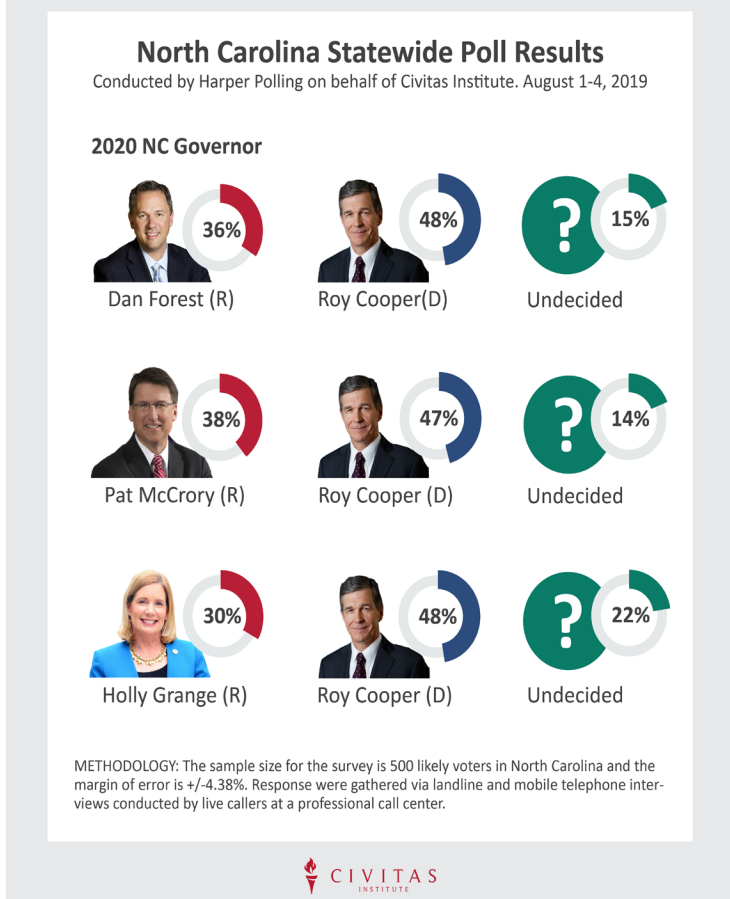
The Civitas Poll also surveyed three potential Republican opponents Cooper might face. Declared candidates Lt. Gov Dan Forest and state Rep. Holly Grange are behind Cooper in the survey. Cooper leads Forest by 12 percentage points with 15 percent undecided. Cooper leads Grange by 18 percent with 22 percent undecided. Former Republican governor Pat McCrory fared best against Cooper, trailing by 9 (47 to 38) percent with 14 percent undecided.

"Gov. Cooper has enjoyed positive favorability and job approval over the past few months, so these results are not a big surprise," said Bryson. "Expect these numbers to tighten as campaigning begins later this year in earnest. However, three key details to watch will be Cooper's strong leads among moderates, unaffiliated voters, and his slim lead in the Charlotte media market."

In 2016, Cooper won 10 percent of Trump voters statewide across North Carolina. Cooper benefited in part from some conservative and independent minded voters' feeling dissatisfaction with McCrory, who received less votes than Trump and Forest. On some issues, Cooper's campaign was able to successfully brand him as a moderate Democrat in a state that leans center right. Of course, it remains to be seen if Cooper's full embrace of more liberal policies will have any consequences at the ballot box in 2020.

Please check the Civitas website (nccivitas.org) for the full poll and for new and upcoming polls that can only be found at Civitas.





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On Medicaid, North Carolina should learn lessons from Louisiana – don't expand

BY DANIEL ERSPAMER and DONALD BRYSON

The ongoing impasse surrounding North Carolina's budget has at its root Medicaid expansion—Gov. Roy Cooper supports it, while legislators have voiced concerns. Based on Louisiana's experience during three years of Medicaid expansion, the General Assembly should maintain its skepticism.

If Medicaid expansion in North Carolina looks anything like expansion in Louisiana, residents can expect several consequences supporters won't advertise, like skyrocketing enrollment and costs. While Louisiana officials initially claimed that only 306,000 individuals would sign up for Medicaid expansion, the rolls soon swelled to over 505,000 — a 65 percent increase over the original projections. This enrollment explosion not only increased costs but caused severe problems for Louisianans on the pre-expansion Medicaid rolls in getting access to care.

As a result of this skyrocketing enrollment, a Louisiana Medicaid program originally estimated to cost $1.2-$1.4 billion annually, cost taxpayers over $3.1 billion in the last fiscal year. In this respect, Louisiana reflects a broader trend of higher-than-expected enrollment, and larger-than-expected costs, seen nationwide.

Enrollment swelled, and costs exploded, because of another unintended consequence of Medicaid expansion: People dropping their private health insurance to enroll in Medicaid. Public records requests of internal Louisiana Department of Health data show that thousands of people per month have moved from private coverage to the government rolls. Due to this shift, Louisiana taxpayers have spent hundreds of millions of dollars each year funding coverage for people who already had health insurance.

Louisiana residents have also seen their hard-earned taxpayer dollars funding Medicaid coverage for ineligible individuals. An evaluation by Louisiana's legislative auditor led to the state finally removing more than 30,000 ineligible individuals from the Medicaid rolls — including 1,672 Medicaid recipients with six-figure incomes. With the Office of the State Auditor recently flagging problems in North Carolina's eligibility systems, residents in the Tar Heel State could likewise end up paying for "free" coverage for affluent and ineligible individuals.

One thing North Carolina won't see: Any supposed economic benefits from Medicaid expansion. While one study claims that expansion created 19,000 jobs in Louisiana, the facts suggest otherwise. Between June 2016 — the month before expansion took effect — and May 2019, the state has gained only 3,700 jobs. Louisiana's anemic job growth of less than 0.2 percent over nearly three years, coupled with a net reduction in the labor force of almost 63,000 during the same time, prove Medicaid expansion is anything but an economic boon.

Medicaid expansion also fails to help the most vulnerable in our society: The over 700,000 individuals with disabilities nationwide, including over 14,000 in North Carolina, still on waiting lists for Medicaid coverage of home-care needs. In Louisiana, more than 15,000 individuals with disabilities remain on state waiting lists — even as the state has expanded Medicaid coverage to the able-bodied. While ineligible adults with six-figure incomes have received Medicaid benefits in Louisiana, at least 5,534 individuals with disabilities have died while waiting to access care since expansion took effect.

Supporters claim that, because the federal government pays for the majority of Medicaid expansion funding, opponents should not turn down matching funds from Washington. But that "free" money ultimately either comes out of the pockets of residents in North Carolina, Louisiana, and the other 48 states or adds to the jaw-dropping $22 trillion of federal debt.

Even "free" things normally come with costs — and so too with Medicaid expansion. In Louisiana, expansion has driven people off private coverage, and encouraged fraud and abuse, even while failing to deliver jobs or help society's most vulnerable. For all these reasons and more, North Carolina should turn down Obamacare's expansion of Medicaid to the able-bodied.

Daniel Erspamer is CEO of the Pelican Institute, a nonpartisan think tank based in New Orleans.

Donald Bryson is president and CEO of the Civitas Institute.

This article originally appeared in the Greensboro News-Record.



CYAN MAGENTA YELLOW BLACK

Is Roy Cooper vulnerable on his gun control agenda?

BY RAY NOTHSTINE

North Carolina Gov. Roy Cooper, at least in the current political climate, is well positioned for reelection in 2020. However, a potential vulnerable policy area that is constantly overlooked by most is Cooper's leftward lurch on gun-control.

After mass shootings dominated recent headlines, Cooper has rapidly moved to the left, embracing positions more aligned with an increasingly liberal Democrat Party and activists. While Cooper once received "A" ratings and financial support from the NRA, he now embraces more and more stringent gun-control measures. And while he is often quick to position himself with national Democrats on most issues, a gun-control agenda can easily place him out of step with millions of North Carolinians, one of the most rural states in our nation.

Cooper's main proposal includes raising the age from 18 to 21 for the purchase of what some deem "assault rifles." This proposal raises concerns about not only the Second Amendment, but also the Equal Protection Clause under the 14th Amendment. Such a law could prevent many adults under 21 from purchasing certain hunting rifles, and of course, even block men and women who serve in the military from purchasing many types of firearms.

Cooper wants to expand the state Jim Crow era pistol permit process to include semi-automatic rifles, despite laws already requiring federal background checks on firearms. Of late, Cooper likes to admonish his opponents in the legislature for passing a law when there is already a similar law in existence. He has cited redundant or similar laws for his reasoning in vetoing bills to expand enforcement of illegal immigration and for the protection of babies who survive abortions. Yet, he conveniently ignores his own political advice on creating duplicate laws when it comes to firearms.

Cooper also supports broad "red flag laws," or "extreme risk protection orders," allowing firearms to be seized based on the recommendations from private citizens, potentially setting up scenarios where the right to due process under the U.S. Constitution is trampled. "Well, we call it gun-confiscation orders because it's largely confiscating firearms for people without due process," says Dudley Brown, president of the National Association for Gun Rights.



Finally, his support for firearm owners purchasing liability insurance is not only an odd requirement for a right enshrined in the Constitution, but places an undue burden on the poor.

Unfortunately for Second Amendment supporters, the General Assembly has done little to challenge Cooper on his gun control agenda, preferring to play defense instead of expanding an inherent right. By failing to scrap the pistol permit system or pass a constitutional carry bill, North Carolina has fallen behind many states when it comes to Second Amendment protections.

After the U.S. Constitution was ratified, Fisher Ames declared that "The rights of conscience, of bearing arms, of changing the government, are declared to be inherent in the people." The North Carolina state constitution affirms the basic tenets of the Bill of Rights and the Second Amendment, that gun ownership and the right to bear arms are essential components of self-government.

There are nearly 100 million firearm owners in America. The overwhelming majority practice their constitutional rights in a safe and lawful manner. Less than a fifth of gun crimes are committed by individuals in possession of a legal firearm. It makes little sense for politicians, including the governor, to say that since we can't control the lawbreakers, we will instead punish those that follow the law.

More importantly, the right to bear arms is an essential component of a free society and a continual reminder that the people are the masters and not merely the servants of government. This is a lesson that many politicians and some of the citizenry would do well to relearn.

This article orginally appeared in the Charlotte Observer.

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Changes represent the difference in voter registration between July 27 and August 31, 2019										
County	Total Voters	Total Change	Democrats	Democrat Change	Republicans	Republican Change	Libertarians	Libertarian Change	Unaffiliated Voters	Unaffiliated Change
Totals	6,717,157	35,329	2,480,080	6,351	2,018,984	8,220	38,258	436	2,176,128	20,006
Alamance	99,205	793	36,019	141	32,475	179	530	2	30,140	467
Alexander	23,247	51	5,391	-22	10,570	4	87	1	7,190	67
Alleghany	6,946	34	2,249	-3	2,589	12	30	0	2,077	25
Anson	15,646	22	10,083	-10	2,347	13	26	0	3,164	19
Ashe	17,896	62	4,607	2	7,822	39	73	1	5,389	19
Avery	11,221	40	1,320	-4	6,553	23	49	1	3,296	20
Beaufort	31,923	521	11,982	54	10,796	252	95	4	9,037	205
Bertie	12,597	29	8,666	-11	1,402	2	26	0	2,501	38
Bladen	21,471	-3	11,055	-10	4,074	2	46	2	6,290	2
Brunswick	102,027	930	25,578	119	39,290	424	437	0	36,683	381
Buncombe	190,113	769	72,219	182	43,907	86	1,498	6	72,304	476
Burke	53,253	265	15,583	-7	19,722	128	277	5	17,638	136
Cabarrus	133,281	874	40,012	201	47,635	184	872	6	44,666	472
Caldwell	50,102	221	11,631	1	23,367	105	351	3	14,715	109
Camden	7,391	-24	1,860	-23	2,442	6	56	-1	3,029	-6
Carteret	50,506	382	10,685	-7	22,119	170	225	2	17,467	215
Caswell	14,387	34	6,909	8	3,228	17	34	1	4,211	7
Catawba	99,303	510	22,473	58	42,914	145	442	6	33,432	298
Chatham	52,597	408	19,994	73	12,778	66	261	5	19,529	262
Cherokee	20,839	96	4,330	-1	9,555	54	127	1	6,814	41
Chowan	9,627	45	4,235	14	2,595	23	28	0	2,767	8
Clay	8,393	54	1,644	-2	3,667	40	52	2	3,024	14
Cleveland	61,255	341	23,165	22	20,765	139	275	2	17,025	176
Columbus	34,187	283	17,292	-26	7,504	146	71	2	9,310	161
Craven	66,983	1,136	21,253	146	23,986	380	389	17	21,320	583
Cumberland	202,463	453	90,373	93	46,112	115	1,254	8	64,599	227
Currituck	19,379	157	3,550	-9	7,528	81	168	2	8,117	80
Dare	28,476	93	7,895	-21	9,130	42	217	-1	11,222	72
Davidson	103,753	524	23,276	41	49,245	194	458	10	30,728	274
Davie	28,682	123	4,908	4	14,738	70	124	3	8,896	45
Duplin	28,299	144	12,393	22	7,932	54	103	-1	7,858	67
Durham	219,949	1,473	120,092	775	25,673	46	1,112	13	72,934	630
Edgecombe	33,779	73	23,054	-34	5,635	29	78	0	5,000	77
Forsyth	247,835	816	99,331	208	71,885	95	1,315	15	75,177	486
Franklin	42,313	166	16,468	5	13,071	50	228	9	12,516	100
Gaston	135,385	805	40,292	187	52,170	248	775	11	42,066	347
Gates	7,694	26	3,835	2	1,671	10	28	-1	2,157	14
Graham	5,678	12	1,510	-10	2,632	11	26	0	1,509	11
Granville	36,782	182	17,206	48	9,125	52	145	4	10,293	78
Greene	10,815	0	5,794	-13	2,105	3	19	0	2,893	10
Guilford	352,573	1,723	156,832	559	89,183	188	1,958	30	104,408	939
Halifax	35,486	109	22,750	22	4,316	36	85	-1	8,326	52
Harnett	72,950	607	24,437	92	25,706	196	533	12	22,228	299
Haywood	42,220	227	14,586	-10	13,447	93	268	7	13,894	136
Henderson	80,236	436	16,646	74	30,047	88	481	5	33,016	265
Hertford	14,192	18	10,118	-8	1,356	9	33	-1	2,677	18
Hoke	29,547	220	13,650	63	6,200	39	205	6	9,464	110
Hyde	3,005	-8	1,592	-16	514	7	15	0	884	1

Iredell	117,211	930	28,010	118	48,781	330	633	13	39,724	463
Jackson	26,950	123	9,242	6	7,341	39	184	4	10,171	76
Johnston	126,539	949	37,112	123	48,771	265	781	15	39,794	538
Jones	6,946	-28	3,169	-18	1,859	-3	23	1	1,894	-8
Lee	35,166	242	13,422	9	10,171	52	198	4	11,363	177
Lenoir	36,081	-1	18,536	-24	9,333	-18	107	3	8,098	36
Lincoln	55,463	271	12,045	-1	25,240	122	274	1	17,875	145
Macon	24,942	94	5,895	-17	10,405	58	137	-2	8,488	52
Madison	16,010	41	5,808	-7	4,264	15	106	1	5,823	30
Martin	15,787	1	8,983	-38	3,160	3	38	0	3,601	36
Mcdowell	27,135	103	7,036	-2	10,800	53	149	3	9,134	48
Mecklenburg	718,812	2,441	311,750	886	161,643	-6	4,838	23	240,191	1,517
Mitchell	10,114	6	1,041	1	6,041	-5	27	-1	3,002	10
Montgomery	15,549	24	6,308	-9	4,962	25	67	0	4,200	6
Moore	67,319	347	15,687	59	27,694	126	397	5	23,511	152
Nash	64,383	247	31,372	23	18,290	57	228	0	14,463	165
New Hanover	162,761	585	49,548	59	51,262	75	1,188	13	60,668	429
Northampton	13,233	54	9,194	20	1,415	17	23	-2	2,597	19
Onslow	101,940	1,350	24,330	124	37,856	471	994	17	38,675	730
Orange	106,885	728	49,630	311	14,697	46	688	12	41,814	354
Pamlico	9,050	-10	3,278	-16	3,159	2	42	0	2,568	4
Pasquotank	26,203	491	11,240	70	5,939	151	154	6	8,855	260
Pender	39,706	159	11,312	-56	15,308	104	249	7	12,809	101
Perquimans	9,180	-14	3,454	-1	2,638	-7	34	0	3,047	-6
Person	25,367	96	10,969	14	6,532	39	99	2	7,761	43
Pitt	116,144	-89	51,283	-124	30,047	-28	711	-1	34,021	59
Polk	15,142	75	3,907	9	5,428	29	77	1	5,713	37
Randolph	86,655	290	16,644	4	44,363	112	502	5	25,099	161
Richmond	27,540	45	14,111	-31	5,749	27	82	0	7,577	49
Robeson	71,420	969	43,042	-5	9,234	70	187	1	18,918	897
Rockingham	57,153	211	20,004	8	20,622	83	242	1	16,259	116
Rowan	89,050	730	24,425	95	36,950	286	416	12	27,203	333
Rutherford	42,487	127	12,420	-34	16,713	91	207	2	13,127	67
Sampson	35,004	73	14,157	-1	13,293	26	118	0	7,424	48
Scotland	20,526	22	11,209	-8	3,487	14	66	0	5,746	15
Stanly	40,009	99	9,781	-32	18,191	46	143	2	11,871	82
Stokes	29,215	78	6,536	-16	14,574	47	160	5	7,930	42
Surry	43,197	182	11,667	-6	18,816	79	125	-1	12,577	110
Swain	9,223	40	3,378	6	2,552	26	39	-1	3,251	9
Transylvania	24,672	70	6,144	14	7,998	6	116	0	10,410	50
Tyrrell	2,222	-1	1,176	-8	357	5	9	1	679	0
Union	151,726	419	37,332	85	62,595	107	780	10	50,950	212
Vance	27,891	166	18,074	64	4,080	42	68	5	5,657	54
Wake	728,247	5,226	267,426	1,577	182,152	396	5,221	69	273,028	3,150
Warren	12,786	59	8,542	-1	1,794	20	38	0	2,409	40
Washington	8,039	23	5,261	-2	1,067	4	21	0	1,690	21
Watauga	43,513	352	11,373	104	13,153	46	476	0	18,494	199
Wayne	71,044	233	29,439	-3	23,058	93	352	-2	18,153	143
Wilkes	40,185	133	8,434	2	21,092	65	147	3	10,504	63
Wilson	53,343	199	27,061	38	12,907	66	169	0	13,175	94
Yadkin	22,866	83	3,528	13	12,880	33	92	0	6,354	35
Yancey	13,239	34	4,532	0	4,748	23	51	1	3,903	10

Indifference of election officials allows absentee ballot fraud to fester in North Carolina

BY ANDY JACKSON

Was the alleged absentee ballot fraud that derailed the 9th Congressional District race last year a unique case of political malfeasance? No, it is the inevitable consequence of indifference to election fraud that election officials have allowed it to fester.

The dominant narrative that came out of the State Board of Elections' hearing on absentee ballot fraud in the 9th Congressional District is that ballot harvesting (a form of absentee ballot fraud in which political operatives take possession of voters' absentee ballots) was committed by one person, McCrae Dowless, in service of one candidate, Republican Mark Harris.

That narrative has been pushed by Democrat Dan McCready throughout his now defunct campaign for the 9th Congressional District redo election because it allows Democrats to portray McCready as a victim.

However, absentee ballot fraud in the 9th Congressional District race was more extensive than McCready has portrayed. There is evidence that people paid by the Bladen County Improvement Association PAC (BCIA) with money provided by the North Carolina Democratic Party were also engaged in ballot harvesting.

Testimony during the State Board of Elections hearing on the 9th Congressional District and media reporting last fall revealed at least three cases in which people employed by the BCIA allegedly took illegal possession of voters' absentee ballots.

Those three alleged felonies are likely just the tip of the iceberg. An analysis by WRAL found that people paid by the BCIA had handled a similar number of ballots in Bladen and Robeson counties as those associated with McCrae Dowless.

People in Bladen County have been complaining about BCIA election activities since 2010, but prosecutors have done nothing, allowing the problems to fester.

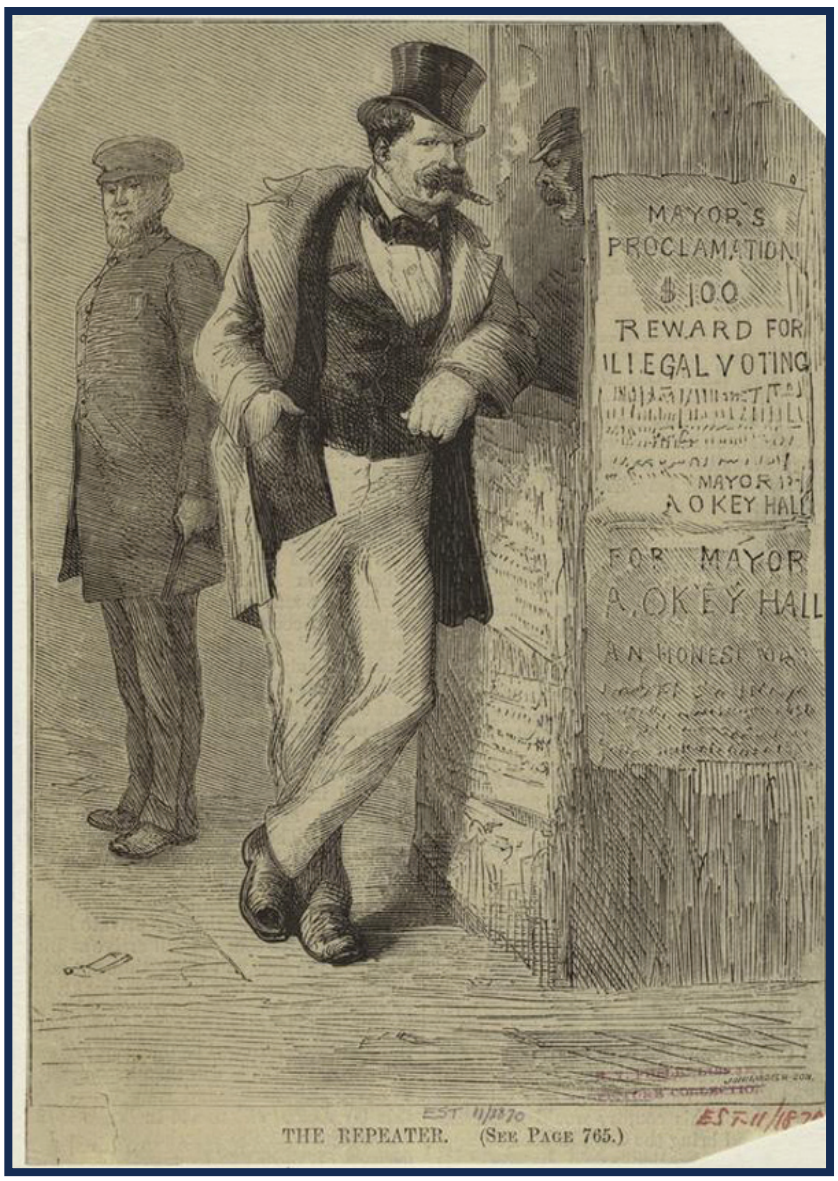
To end the scourge of absentee ballot fraud, officials must prosecute all incidents of ballot harvesting, not just those that are in the news. While Wake County District Attorney Lorrin Freeman has brought charges against Dowless and six associates for allegedly taking possession of absentee ballots, she has not brought any charges against people paid by the Bladen County Improvement Association who also allegedly took possession of absentee ballots. Such selective enforcement of the law against ballot harvesting continues the myth that such ballot fraud is rare and ensures that we will see more of it in the future.

While all eyes were on Bladen and Robeson counties after the 2018 election, ballot harvesting has been going on throughout North Carolina for years. Former Executive Director of the North Carolina State Board of Elections Gary Bartlett said he had referred "more than half a dozen" absentee ballot harvesting schemes to law enforcement officials from across the state, but they took no action. Prosecutors need to actively go after absentee ballot fraud complaints whenever and wherever they arise, not just when they become headlines.

The General Assembly must also act. Different versions of Senate Bill 683, which makes ballot harvesting more difficult, have passed both houses of the General Assembly by wide margins but the versions must be reconciled between chambers so it can be sent to Gov. Roy Cooper to sign. Members of the General Assembly must make sure that the versions of the bill are reconciled when they return to Raleigh.

Prosecutors must investigate and, when appropriate, prosecute all acts of ballot harvesting. If they do not, they are dooming North Carolinas to fall victim to it again and again.

This article originally appeared in The Laurinburg Exchange.



CYAN MAGENTA YELLOW BLACK

NC House overrides governor's budget veto; House Dems whereabout raise questions

BY LEAH BYERS



On September 11, the North Carolina House of Representatives overrode the governor's veto of House Bill 966, the state budget for the 2019-2021 biennium. The governor vetoed the budget less than 24 hours after receiving it, and the veto override vote has been on the House's daily calendar for over two months.

House Speaker Tim Moore (R-Cleveland) called for the vote, and the veto was overridden 55-9. If that number seems small to you, it's because it is – only 64 of the House's 120 members were present for the vote. Enough for a quorum. Speaker Moore seems to have strategically called the vote when most of the House Democrats were absent from the floor. Democrats allege that they were intentionally misled about the morning of September 11 being a "no-vote" session.

The Democrats response was swift. "Unhinged" is the word that comes to mind when listening to Rep. Deb Butler (D-Brunswick) and other House Democrats shouting over the vote. Butler and others can be heard screaming at the Speaker, speaking over him, the House clerk, and other members of the House who had been recognized under the rules of decorum.

"The Democrats response was swift. 'Unhinged' is the word that comes to mind when listening to Deb Butler and other House Democrats shouting over the vote."

The irony is that the hysteria among many members of the House Democratic caucus comes over a budget that is vastly similar to the budget the governor proposed, with only a few key differences.

This is also not the first time that a controversial vote has been taken strategically based on member presence in the chamber. Most famously was the 2005 vote in the Senate to approve the NC Education lottery. The Winston Salem Journal reported that two Republican lottery opponents were absent, one on his honeymoon and the other in the hospital. Democrats controlled the Senate at the time and took advantage of the situation, proving that both parties can and do use the procedural rules of their chambers to advance their legislative agenda.

As mentioned, House Democrats are alleging that the Republican leadership told them no votes would be held during the September 11 session. Republicans point to the audio from the September 10 session, where they announced moving an unrelated vote to Wednesday. Democrat leaders alleged in a press conference that GOP Rep. David Lewis (Harnett), the House Rules Chair, told them the September 11 morning session would have no votes. While the he said-she said continues, there is perhaps a more important question at hand: where were the House Democrats?

On a Wednesday – the middle of the legislative week – the members were almost certainly in town, especially if they were under the impression that the 1 p.m. session would be a voting session. Many of them may even have been on the legislative campus, given the on-going committee work.

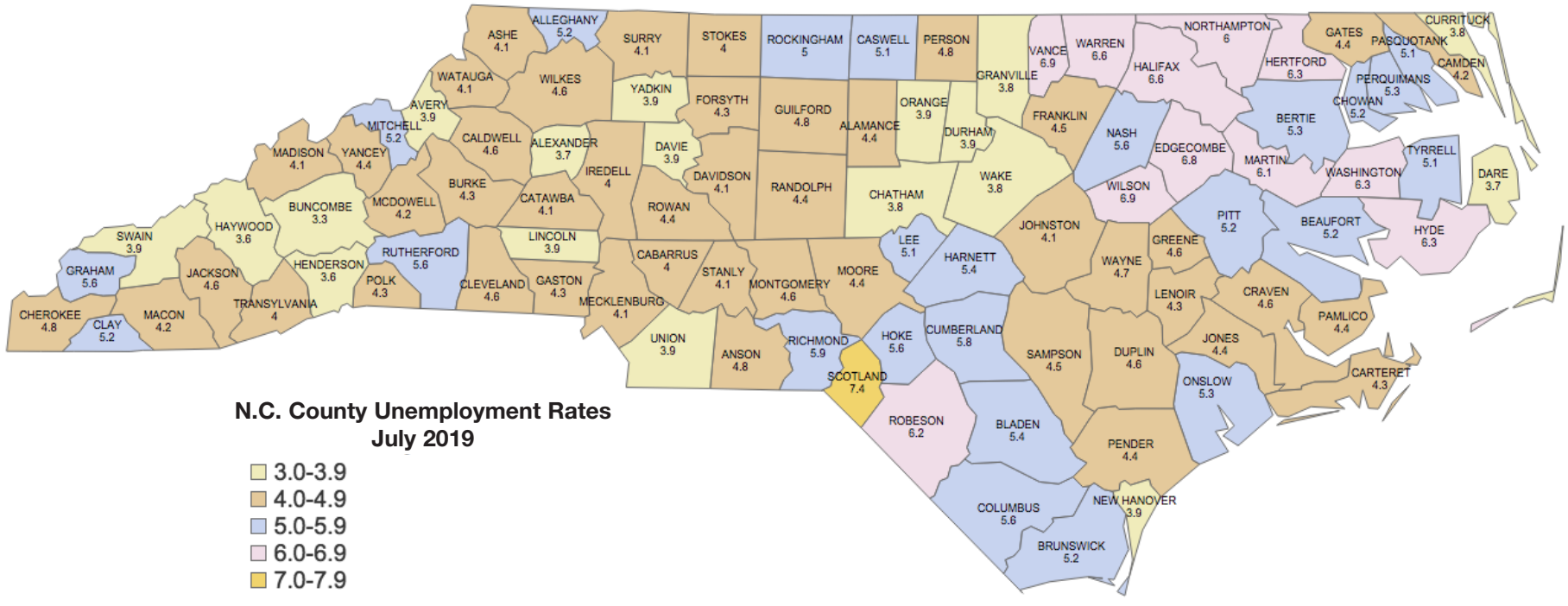
Namely, both chambers of the legislature are working on redrawing the state legislative maps in compliance with a state court order. Under that order, the court directed that the new maps must be drawn in public view. Even the computer screens of the map drawers must be available for public observance.

Interestingly, Rep. Butler makes a rather incriminating statement during her tantrum. While railing on the Speaker for calling the vote, she says, "We're downstairs right now trying to redraw partisan-heavy maps."

Since both the House and Senate redistricting meeting are occurring on the top floors of the Legislative Office Building, and Rep. Butler's statement was made on the House floor in the main Legislative Building, this raises the question: were the House Democrats violating the court order and drawing their secret maps while the session was going on?

During this morning's session, the House also overrode the governor's veto of House Bill 55, a bill that provided funding for the state's ongoing transformation of the Medicaid program from a fee-for-service model to a managed care model.

Both bills will now go to the Senate for an override vote. Although previously speculated that the Senate may have the votes on the budget veto override, the Senate Democrats may now be hesitant to go against their House colleagues and the governor after the contentious House override.



The above map shows the July 2019, (not seasonally adjusted) unemployment rates for all 100 North Carolina counties (data from N.C. Department of Commerce). The July statewide unemployment rate was 4.4 percent. The national unemployment rate in July was 3.7 percent.

The unemployment rate increased in five counties for July from the previous month, decreased in 70, and remained unchanged in 25. Twelve of the 15 metro areas experienced rate decreases while three remain unchanged.

Scotland County had the highest unemployment rate at 7.4 percent, while Buncombe County had the lowest at 3.3 percent.

Among the metro areas, Rocky Mount at 6.0 percent had the highest unemployment rate and Asheville had the lowest rate at 3.5 percent. When compared to the same month last year, not seasonally adjusted unemployment rates increased in 96 counties, decreased in two, and remained unchanged in two. Fourteen metro areas experienced rate increases over the year and one decreased.

Cooper, who claims to be against corporate tax breaks, continues to dole out corporate tax breaks

BY BRIAN BALFOUR

More than two months after Gov. Roy Cooper vetoed the legislatively approved state budget proposal, he continues to hypocritically hand out targeted tax cuts and subsidies to favored corporations.

At the time of his budget veto, Cooper said: "This is a bad budget with the wrong priorities. We should be investing in public schools, teacher pay and health care instead of more tax breaks for corporations."

His words indicate that he is against tax breaks for corporations. His actions, of course, tell a different story.

At the end of July, Civitas President Donald Bryson pointed out how Cooper's office was handing out targeted corporate tax breaks at a pace of $1.2 million per day.

Cooper has continued to be quite busy with the corporate tax breaks he pretends to be opposed to.

In late August and early September, his office has announced:

- $200k for a clothing manufacturer in McDowell Co.
- $1.2 million for a car buying and selling e-commerce company in Cabarrus Co.
- $5 million for an online insurance platform in Durham Co.
- $760k to a transportation service company in Nash Co.
- $200k to a manufacturer in Richmond Co.
- $940k for a manufacturer in Halifax Co.

If Cooper brags about the job growth created by these tax breaks, he recognizes that tax cuts incentivize investment and job creation.

So why does he claim to be so hostile against "tax breaks for corporations"?

The fact is that Cooper isn't against tax breaks for corporations, he's only against across-the-board tax cuts for all businesses. Cooper instead prefers the crony system in which he can select favored corporations to grant tax breaks to so that he can issue press releases and attend ribbon-cutting ceremonies.

Cooper is placing his personal PR gains and cronyism above good economic policy that would benefit more struggling North Carolinians.

CYAN MAGENTA YELLOW BLACK

It's time to empower military families with education freedom

BY BROOKE MEDINA

The military life is often marked by periods of uncertainty, so it's no surprise that seven out of 10 current school parents in the military community support school choice policies like Education Savings Accounts (ESAs), vouchers, and charter schools.

Like most moms, my kids keep my life filled to the margins, from sports practices to birthday parties. Our days are like a record on repeat: feed the kids, carpool the kids, homework the kids, crash into bed, repeat.

But my husband's decision to join the Army over 20 years ago meant our family life would include many moves, deployments, and a bit of uncertainty. When he enlisted, our entire family became members of the extended military community. This guaranteed that, in some ways, our lives marched to the beat of a different drum and our cadence looked quite different than the average family. Because of this unique--and often stressful--environment in which military children grow up and are educated, Congress must empower our service members and their children with real education freedom.



A recent survey of military families by EdChoice, a research organization devoted to expanding education freedom, found that, "Active-duty military households overwhelmingly support choice-driven education policies and programs." These types of choices lend to a level of autonomous decision-making that is often lacking in other aspects of the military lifestyle.

All parents want to ensure their child is able to receive the best education possible. This is no different for military families. To help military families meet this need, while simultaneously bolstering retention efforts, Sens. Ben Sasse (R-Neb.), Tom Cotton (R-Ark.), and Tim Scott (R-S.C.) recently introduced the Education Savings Account for Military Families Act of 2019. This bill, and a companion bill in the House from Rep. Jim Banks (R-Ind.), would allow military families to exercise autonomy over their child's education. In practice, this means that regardless of where a family is stationed, even if it's in an area with underperforming schools, they will be given a measure of decision-making power to a degree previously unavailable. The parent can use the ESA for private school tuition, enrollment in an online school, curriculum for homeschooling, and a number of other learning options.

Like many service members and their families, we have wrestled with how to ensure our children receive a great education while living such a transient life. Because the typical military child moves three times more than their civilian peers, a number of parents place significant weight on stressors like frequent moves and deployments when deciding whether or not to reenlist. Add the stress that comes with education decisions, including school safety, peer acceptance, curricula, and accommodations of special needs, and the weight feels even more burdensome.

And as the needs of our military have changed, recruiting and retention incentives have had to adapt. The GI Bill continues to be a huge draw for those interested in pursuing higher education. But what of the 4 out of 10 active-duty service members that have children, particularly the 55 percent of parents that have school-age children?

Recently Lindsey Burke, one of the EdChoice study authors, noted that, "half of all military families live in states with no school choice options whatsoever." Many of my friends and I have had to navigate the bureaucracy of local school districts or onerous homeschooling mandates in our efforts to help our children receive the education they deserve. It can be a tedious and drawn-out process that only adds to the challenges that come with big moves.

With each new move, these parents are asking questions like, "Will this new state's academic requirements mean that my child needs to be placed in remedial classes?" "Will the teachers understand the challenges faced by kids like mine?" And, "Is this an environment in which I feel my child will be safe?" Because more than half of service members with children have considered leaving the military this past year, it would be wise to look for ways to empower them to stay in service, while at the same time minimizing this stressor.

Service members often have very little say over where they'll be stationed; their children have even less of a voice in such a significant life event. By giving military children and their parents education options, like the Education Savings Account for Military Families Act of 2019, we're affirming our belief that educational freedom is a value that those who fight for our freedom should be allowed to exercise.

The article originally appeared in The Hill.

NC public schools get two check-ups

BY BOB LUEBKE



The release of two reports in September provide some helpful insight into an often-asked question: how are North Carolina public schools performing?

The Department of Public Instruction released the 2018-19 School Performance Grades, or as they are more commonly known, the school report cards. Schools grades are a combination of proficiency (80 percent) and growth (20 percent) scores.

Over a third (37 percent) of all public schools received an A or B grade, 41 percent of schools received a C grade. In addition, over 1 in 5 schools (21.7 percent), received a D or F grade and were classified as "low-performing," an increase of eight schools over the previous year.

Test results reveal almost three quarters (73.3 percent) of North Carolina public schools met or exceeded their growth goals. Regarding proficiency, 45 percent of students in grades 3 - 8 statewide scored at least a 4 or 5 in reading, a standard for college and career readiness. When the scoring threshold is expanded to 3 (Grade level proficient), the percentage increases to 57.2 percent.

Math test changes limit legitimate comparisons to previous years, there is still much to digest. Many schools saw a rise in science scores and that's good. Still, the lack of improvement in reading scores and the persistence of a chronic achievement gap is more than concerning.

Graduation rates were also included in the NC DPI report. North Carolina reported a 4-year graduation rate of 86.5 percent. While graduation rates have improved significantly over the past dozen years, improvement has flattened out in more recent years. In 2011-12, North Carolina's 4-year graduation rate was 85.6 percent. Also this month, Education Week released a ranking of state school systems. States were ranked according to three factors 1) chance for success, 2) achievement and 3) school finance; scores were combined into a final grade. The U.S. received a grade of C (75.6 percent). North Carolina received a grade of 72 which equated to a C – letter grade. When compared to border states, North Carolina is in the middle, trailing Virginia (80.3 percent) and Georgia (73.5 percent) but ahead of both Tennessee (71.1 percent) and South Carolina (70.2 percent).

The results from both reviews are disappointing. Even more disappointing is the fact that neither report seemed to generate much of a ripple in the news cycle.

Is accountability really accountability if few people care or are even educated about the results?

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