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Civitas launches new campaign to inform public on conservative policy



BY RAY NOTHSTINE

The Civitas Institute is launching a new voter education and policy initiative called "A Better Carolina." The campaign is aimed at reminding the public about the progress made over the last 10 years on conservative policy victories and where further improvements and reforms are needed.

Critical issues of the policy campaign will focus on education reform, strengthening election security, tax fairness, healthcare affordability, and protecting private property.

"North Carolina is stronger today than it was ten years ago, due to a decade of economic and policy success," said Civitas Institute President Donald Bryson. "With determination and a commitment to our values, we can become an even better Carolina this decade."

North Carolinians can go to www.ABetterCarolina.com to read more about the initiative as well as endorse a truly conservative agenda. Conservative reforms like tax cuts and controlling spending have resulted in the state surging up nationally in various freedom and economic rankings.

"There has been a widespread misinformation effort over the past several years to persuade North Carolinians that our state's taxes have increased, educational quality and choice has decreased, our healthcare system is inadequate, and our elections are rigged," added Bryson.

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From the editor

Despite a smattering of runoffs, most primaries are now complete in North Carolina. For conservatives, it's essential we don't put all of our energy and hope into politics. Unlike the statist, we realize that other areas of life are more important, particularly working to improve family and culture. However, this season does remind us that elections have consequences. Policies can dramatically shift with political change. It can easily transform public spending, our taxes rates, and even the educational opportunities for children. While government is equipped to do a few things, everything it does consumes the resources of the taxpayers.

Right now, one of the things Civitas is working hard at is getting voter ID implemented. This has been a decade long battle and it's long past time for the left-wing groups to stop playing games. Voters across North Carolina easily passed an amendment to add voter ID to the State Constitution. That must be honored. Thirty-five states already have some form of voter ID, including every Southern state. Andy Jackson, our elections policy analyst, offers an article updating readers on the latest.

Nationally, most people followed the Democrat primaries on Super Tuesday because of the contested race for the eventual presidential nominee. While I don't take much stock in exit polls, I did find a concerning theme emerge. According to NBC exit polls, 48 percent of North Carolina Democrats surveyed in that poll had a favorable view of socialism. Forty-two percent had an unfavorable view. In fact, every state that was highlighted in their exit polls all showed a favorable view of socialism by Democrat primary voters. Predictably, some states were higher, and a few were lower than North Carolina. While I know that primary voters in one political party are still a relatively small slice of the overall electorate, it's still discouraging. Despite problems, it's amazing that one can live in the richest country in the world and still have such a disconnect as to the reasons and causes of all that human flourishing. Of course, a primary cause of such flourishing is free markets, which would be destroyed by socialism.

It's a reminder we have a lot of work to do. The good news is North Carolina is showing the nation and the world what more freedom looks like. Civitas is committed to making sure we not only remain, but build upon being the model and measuring stick for freedom.

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CYAN MAGENTA YELLOW BLACK

Voter ID: A common sense solution to a real problem

BY ANDY JACKSON

Voter ID has been hotly debated and litigated in North Carolina over the past decade. Most recently, a NC appeals court overturned a district court ruling and issued an injunction blocking enforcement of the state's voter ID law.

So, why is voter ID so important?

Our election systems are vulnerable to fraud

Our first line of defense against all forms of election fraud are the voter registration lists kept in most states. The lists allow election workers to confirm that a person is eligible to vote in a precinct.

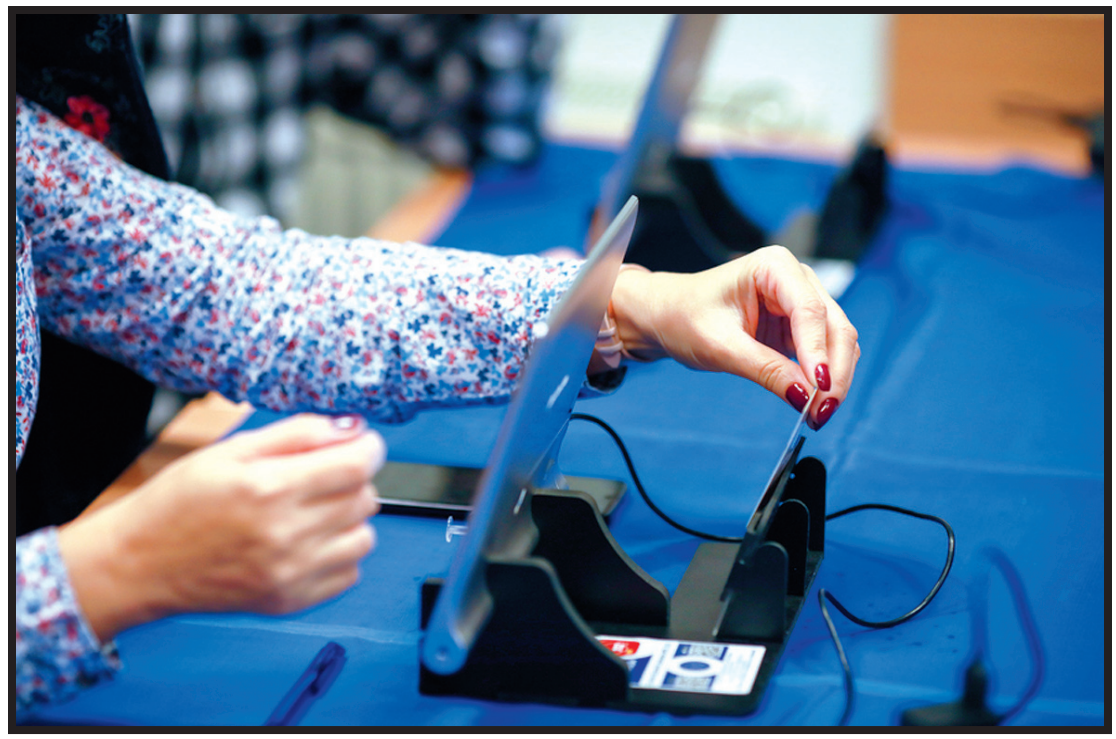
Unfortunately, many of the lists are poorly maintained. A Pew Center on the States study found an extensive problem with voter registration lists across the country:

"Approximately 24 million—one of every eight—voter registrations in the United States are no longer valid or are significantly inaccurate," claims the Pew Center. "More than 1.8 million deceased individuals are listed as voters. Approximately 2.75 million people have registrations in more than one state."

North Carolina is not immune to that vulnerability. An investigation by Judicial Watch found that two North Carolina counties (Guilford and Mecklenburg) have more voter registrations than voting-age citizens. That is an indication of registration lists bloated with ineligible registrations.

Vulnerabilities make voting fraud easy to commit and hard to detect

As observed in The American Economist, voting fraud is under-detected and under-prosecuted:



"Voter fraud is usually difficult to detect without costly monitoring and investigation costs, especially in light of mail-in votes and failure to require picture IDs. Clearly voter fraud is real and can effect (sic) …"

Many criminal acts are underreported. The nature of voting fraud makes it even less likely to get reported; if someone steals your car you can see that your car is missing and call the police, but who will know if your vote is being diluted by people voting illegally?

That concern is not just theoretical. A New York Department of Investigation report reveals just how easy it is to commit voting fraud:

DOI investigators posed as the 63 ineligible individuals still on the voter rolls [due to death, felony conviction, or having moved out of New York] and were permitted to obtain, mark, and submit ballots in the scanners or the lever booths in 61 instances (or approximately 97%). In five instances, DOI investigators in their twenties and thirties posed as individuals whose ages, as recorded in the registration books, ranged from 82 to 94, and despite the obvious disparity, the investigators were given ballots or access to lever booths without question by the BOE poll workers.

While two detectives were turned away at the polls, neither of their undercover attempts at voting fraud were reported to authorities, so neither would have shown up as evidence of such fraud.

Even when election officials report fraud, it is rarely investigated, much less prosecuted. Despite those obstacles, people are prosecuted every year for various forms of voting fraud.

Voter ID will improve the integrity of North Carolina elections

Voter ID is an additional layer of protection for the integrity of our election system that will help prevent voting fraud. Requiring voters to show IDs will deter voting fraud (an effect that will likely go undetected in research due to the problems of reporting voting fraud previous-

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New Study: Medicaid Expansion does not create jobs or boost hospital finances

BY BRIAN BALFOUR

A February study released by the Foundation for Government Accountability (FGA) lays waste to the claims by Medicaid expansion advocates that expansion would translate into an economic boon for state hospitals.

Key findings suggest that not only did the economic benefits predicted by advocates not materialize in expansion states, in some cases the very opposite occurred.

Specifically, the study found:

- Medicaid expansion did not strengthen the financial condition of struggling hospitals
- Expansion not only did not "create jobs," but non-expansion states added hospital jobs at a higher rate than expansion states
- The number of expansion enrollees coming from the ranks of the privately insured have exceeded expectations and put financial strain on hospitals

Medicaid expansion *not* a financial silver bullet for hospitals

For years, supporters have insisted that Medicaid expansion will boost the bottom line of struggling hospitals – especially rural hospitals. They cite figures showing that the majority of rural hospital closures over the last several years occurred in non-expansion states; a claim that proves to be mere correlation and not causation when examined more carefully.

Furthermore, FGA cited "an analysis of six full years of hospital financial data and more than 1,700 hospitals, comparing non-expansion states to expansion states," which concluded "expansion was found to be associated with 'higher Medicaid payment shortfalls,'" so much so that expansion's net financial impact on hospitals was "close to zero."

In short, any financial boost to hospitals from reducing uncompensated care by moving people from the uninsured to Medicaid was offset by patients moving from private insurance coverage to Medicaid and its significantly lower reimbursement rates.

The FGA study noted "These findings are consistent with earlier studies by Moody's Investor Service, the firm that issues the credit ratings for hospitals nationwide."

Moody's "analysis of hospitals' own financial data found that there was 'no significant difference' in improved financial status in expansion states as compared to states that rejected Obamacare expansion."

The bottom line: Medicaid expansion failed to materially improve hospitals' financial condition.

This should be especially concerning to North Carolina Medicaid expansion advocates because the state's share of expansion costs will mostly be paid for by a tax on hospitals.

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CYAN MAGENTA YELLOW BLACK

A deeper look at the meaning of K-12 education with the Director of Academics of Thales Academy, Tim Hall

BY RAY NOTHSTINE

A formidable education story in North Carolina is that the Wake County Public School System is experiencing stagnant growth despite being one of the fastest-growing counties in the state.

A News & Observer article from 2018 noted that the county schools grew by just 42 students over the year. What gives? Being interested in some answers, I reached out to Tim Hall (PhD), director of academics of Thales Academy. Hall was willing to chat and offer some perspective on the strengths and weaknesses of public schools, while delving deeper into the purpose of education.

Thales Academy was founded in 2007 by CaptiveAire Founder and CEO Robert Luddy. The school offers a low-cost classical education setting and currently has eight campuses in North Carolina.

Hall sees a lot of kids that come to Thales from the public schools and praises their ability to adapt. "They are often very flexible and adaptable students because they are coming from fluid situations where they've been pushed to continually adjust."

Hall is quick to praise the resources of public schools given the number of tax dollars they are equipped with to help students. Extracurricular activities, student programming, and athletics are much more readily available and advanced in many public schools compared to private. "From an institutional standpoint they have the mechanisms to deliver resources unlike most private schools," says Hall.

"A lot of private schools can only dream of delivering those kinds of resources and they can struggle to offer quality curriculum and instruction." Hall says that public schools, in theory at least, should have a strong framework to deliver what they say they can.

"In terms of weaknesses, what I see in many of the K-5 students is there are gaps in reading and math," says Hall. When it comes to students in the 6-12 grade range, the collective deficiencies often change. "At this point, we see more gaps in critical thinking skills, and overall students in public schools rely on emotive reasoning," adds Hall. "That's not entirely the fault of public schools because emotive reasoning is such a large part of the culture now."



A good definition of emotive reasoning reflects the plain meaning of the term, where an individual uses their cognitive process, or how they feel, to decipher truth, instead of relying on logic or fact-based reasoning.

"We get a lot of families at Thales that are not comfortable with the contemporary progressive worldview." Hall stresses that when parents and families look into Thales, they appreciate that there is a traditional aspect that he refers to as "no-nonsense education." He adds, "There is an appreciation for a clean and orderly environment. Families are looking for something different and when they see it, they immediately recognize that."

One of the main purposes of talking with Hall was to get a sense of the meaning of education, something that is too often neglected today by bureaucracy or political fights over government spending.

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CYAN MAGENTA YELLOW BLACK

Changes represent the difference in voter registration between February 1 and February 29, 2020										
County	Total Voters	Total Change	Democrats	Democrat Change	Republicans	Republican Change	Libertarians	Libertarian Change	Unaffiliated Voters	Unaffiliated Change
Totals	6,940,361	18,477	2,524,784	4,310	2,075,505	3,325	40,113	-132	2,299,959	10,974
Alamance	102,570	116	36,680	37	33,345	10	558	-2	31,987	71
Alexander	23,724	22	5,261	-40	10,872	34	90	1	7,501	27
Alleghany	7,157	49	2,192	-24	2,689	32	33	0	2,243	41
Anson	16,036	26	10,129	-10	2,475	15	29	0	3,403	21
Ashe	18,362	55	4,536	-46	8,081	54	76	-2	5,669	49
Avery	11,587	43	1,356	10	6,747	25	53	0	3,431	8
Beaufort	32,649	77	11,954	-30	11,117	50	102	3	9,476	54
Bertie	12,830	11	8,642	-26	1,449	19	27	1	2,712	17
Bladen	21,984	46	10,862	-102	4,374	69	51	0	6,697	79
Brunswick	105,982	185	26,048	17	40,992	113	469	2	38,473	53
Buncombe	195,983	590	74,127	438	44,653	-25	1,521	-12	75,682	189
Burke	54,640	64	15,438	-37	20,374	58	285	-5	18,543	48
Cabarrus	139,308	403	41,510	107	49,131	83	930	0	47,737	213
Caldwell	51,456	70	11,603	-8	24,075	51	363	-3	15,415	30
Camden	7,682	7	1,810	-20	2,585	10	60	0	3,227	17
Carteret	52,153	67	10,608	-73	22,980	73	243	-3	18,322	70
Caswell	14,729	18	6,896	-6	3,423	17	37	0	4,373	7
Catawba	102,386	107	22,654	-25	44,055	111	458	-1	35,219	22
Chatham	54,378	229	20,430	112	13,145	14	272	-4	20,531	107
Cherokee	21,447	35	4,268	-30	10,014	55	127	-1	7,038	11
Chowan	9,856	-39	4,177	-32	2,679	-11	32	1	2,968	3
Clay	8,659	22	1,619	-15	3,856	25	55	0	3,129	12
Cleveland	62,986	88	23,101	-106	21,685	146	282	-2	17,918	50
Columbus	35,096	-18	17,063	-173	8,139	82	78	4	9,816	69
Craven	69,033	-14	21,354	-70	24,779	22	410	-4	22,490	38
Cumberland	209,381	228	92,183	7	47,670	84	1,318	-4	68,210	141
Currituck	20,263	19	3,563	-27	7,979	22	175	-1	8,546	25
Dare	29,624	153	7,993	-2	9,567	73	224	0	11,840	82
Davidson	106,725	172	23,406	-27	50,515	114	481	-2	32,323	87
Davie	29,681	98	4,999	13	15,220	44	135	0	9,327	41
Duplin	29,246	221	12,438	-23	8,253	99	105	1	8,450	144
Durham	227,685	2,062	124,036	1,381	25,881	-68	1,137	-20	76,631	769
Edgecombe	34,666	167	23,243	24	5,893	84	78	-1	5,452	60
Forsyth	257,472	1,226	101,927	498	73,408	70	1,394	3	80,743	655
Franklin	43,964	96	16,657	-10	13,674	62	239	1	13,394	43
Gaston	140,188	44	41,080	-35	53,921	32	830	1	44,357	46
Gates	7,902	28	3,833	-7	1,758	22	30	0	2,281	13
Graham	5,805	38	1,498	-5	2,682	21	26	0	1,599	22
Granville	37,677	83	17,331	-18	9,431	47	153	-4	10,762	58
Greene	11,009	25	5,678	-35	2,213	26	21	0	3,097	34
Guilford	364,480	1,663	160,324	578	90,542	-83	2,051	7	111,563	1,161
Halifax	36,489	133	22,990	13	4,561	33	97	0	8,841	87
Harnett	75,452	175	24,633	-62	26,720	137	547	-11	23,552	111
Haywood	43,415	43	14,449	-61	14,068	66	277	0	14,621	38
Henderson	82,625	191	17,040	88	30,694	19	485	-5	34,406	89
Hertford	14,559	47	10,191	-15	1,406	14	33	0	2,929	48
Hoke	30,466	124	13,786	10	6,490	37	227	0	9,963	77
Hyde	3,048	-8	1,567	-21	530	1	16	0	935	12

Iredell	121,321	226	28,297	-147	50,240	139	642	-10	42,142	244
Jackson	27,902	459	9,424	124	7,638	84	196	-1	10,644	252
Johnston	131,988	277	37,995	-24	50,574	164	840	1	42,579	136
Jones	7,104	18	3,123	-12	1,939	19	24	0	2,018	11
Lee	36,275	59	13,441	-38	10,496	45	210	-1	12,128	53
Lenoir	37,032	-27	18,500	-74	9,637	8	112	1	8,783	38
Lincoln	57,699	105	12,189	-12	26,424	84	299	1	18,787	32
Macon	25,710	66	5,893	2	10,844	37	147	-3	8,826	30
Madison	16,332	21	5,847	6	4,330	6	113	0	6,042	9
Martin	16,005	15	8,929	-10	3,241	17	38	0	3,797	8
Mcdowell	28,048	85	6,964	-47	11,322	77	155	0	9,607	55
Mecklenburg	746,141	1,435	321,956	1,060	164,172	-551	5,070	-8	254,943	934
Mitchell	10,398	31	1,048	-6	6,192	22	34	-1	3,124	16
Montgomery	15,979	8	6,276	-32	5,200	39	72	0	4,431	1
Moore	69,129	169	15,897	-2	28,363	47	434	0	24,435	124
Nash	65,785	-46	31,499	-71	18,673	14	232	0	15,381	11
New Hanover	168,031	477	50,711	259	52,392	27	1,246	-10	63,682	201
Northampton	13,473	28	9,085	-55	1,387	-94	26	-1	2,975	178
Onslow	106,615	428	24,818	-24	39,532	193	1086	5	41,179	254
Orange	110,138	757	51,243	517	14,810	-45	671	-10	43,414	295
Pamlico	9,191	38	3,240	2	3,280	15	44	0	2,627	21
Pasquotank	27,175	149	11,320	3	6,230	53	168	2	9,457	91
Pender	41,383	117	11,458	6	15,972	71	273	-1	13,680	41
Perquimans	9,565	26	3,483	-22	2,794	27	40	0	3,248	21
Person	26,010	56	11,033	-22	6,789	34	105	1	8,083	43
Pitt	120,434	278	51,839	-34	30,745	22	744	-9	37,106	299
Polk	15,483	18	3,916	4	5,605	7	81	0	5,881	7
Randolph	88,974	122	16,847	-9	45,515	102	509	4	26,103	25
Richmond	28,299	98	14,064	-43	6,086	56	84	1	8,065	84
Robeson	73,956	687	43,272	24	9,937	171	204	-1	20,543	493
Rockingham	58,411	105	19,992	-49	21,222	57	262	1	16,935	96
Rowan	91,626	181	24,817	47	37,971	66	428	-6	28,410	74
Rutherford	43,594	86	12,284	-58	17,405	107	213	3	13,692	34
Sampson	36,202	82	14,397	-10	13,718	37	131	3	7,956	52
Scotland	21,116	129	11,212	15	3,665	20	69	1	6,170	93
Stanly	41,018	-5	9,715	-51	18,712	31	150	1	12,441	14
Stokes	29,926	88	6,454	-34	15,007	84	156	1	8,309	37
Surry	44,239	90	11,508	-50	19,374	100	131	3	13,226	37
Swain	9,525	52	3,384	5	2,681	21	39	0	3,421	26
Transylvania	25,316	5	6,197	5	8,154	-12	119	0	10,846	12
Tyrrell	2,222	2	1,170	-5	358	3	9	0	685	4
Union	157,978	-41	38,409	-1	64,694	-76	852	-6	54,023	42
Vance	28,464	2	18,134	-24	4,254	22	77	0	5,999	4
Wake	752,233	2,092	275,214	1,204	184,144	-287	5,477	-22	287,398	1,197
Warren	12,973	28	8,555	-6	1,890	15	41	1	2,487	18
Washington	8,111	-35	5,206	-28	1,137	4	21	0	1,747	-11
Watauga	45,533	43	11,969	78	13,425	-22	489	-4	19,650	-9
Wayne	72,490	-35	29,519	-68	23,544	38	354	-6	19,073	1
Wilkes	41,205	89	8,324	-42	21,646	83	146	1	11,089	47
Wilson	55,226	22	27,547	-21	13,337	17	182	0	14,160	26
Yadkin	23,402	30	3,523	-9	13,160	37	97	1	6,622	1
Yancey	13,481	0	4,484	-23	4,858	2	51	-2	4,088	23

Don't buy what the anti-capitalists are selling

BY DOUG MCCULLOUGH AND BROOKE MEDINA

"The [American] Dream is not dead, and we shouldn't let a populist scream convince us otherwise. Americans living today have every reason to be optimistic—and grateful."

– Michael Strain, American economist

Capitalism has become the preferred whipping boy of those calling for more government involvement in markets. The statists love to begrudge it and the wealthy wokes love to downplay it. Whether it's income inequality or the growing power of big tech, "late capitalism" is a term employed by those who would like to eliminate or greatly reduce private ownership and usher in an era of redistribution.



But is capitalism really in its final gasps? And if so, where are we headed?

The notion of late capitalism has been around since Karl Marx began his assault on free enterprise in the 19th century, although the term was officially coined by German economist Werner Sombart in his 1902 book "Der Moderne Kapitalismus." Marx believed that the proletariat would eventually revolt against the bourgeoisie due to the angst created by inequality and exploitation. For him, one of the most egregious injustices was wealth inequality. He believed private property was a major driver of inequality, effectively insulating the wealthy from giving workers their fair share.

Sound familiar? Sen. Bernie Sanders has an entire policy trove of bad ideas built on the premise that wealthy Americans have exploited workers by weaponizing their possessions (property) for their own malignant greed.

Those suggesting capitalism is in its final throes assume two things:

1. Economic inequality equals injustice
2. The existence of economic inequality means that capitalism must be replaced

A Tale of Two Inequalities

Unemployment in the United States is currently at the lowest level it has been since the 1960s. Not only is the economy creating more jobs, but wages are growing. And consider this from the American Enterprise Institute: "wages for the bottom third of workers have risen at a 4.1 percent annual pace over the past two years versus 3.3 percent for the middle third and 3.6 percent for those at the top."

Workers are in such demand, especially in industries like healthcare and education, that an increasing number of companies are offering incentive packages to defray the cost of moving to a new job. When we consider the income mobility of Americans, with 95 percent of those at the bottom 20 percent not being there in 15 years, it becomes clear that wealth is transient in a market economy, providing a pathway for many to pursue the American Dream.

It's important to note that regulatory and tax reform play a role in reducing wealth inequality. To be sure, nothing will create absolute wealth parity in a free market (nor should it), but the effects of deregulation and tax reform are instructive. Economist Michael Strain notes that from the start of the Great Recession until 2016, "inequality decreased by 7 percent" after accounting for taxes and transfers.

As the government's demands on business and

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CYAN MAGENTA YELLOW BLACK

Don't buy what the anti-capitalists are selling

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personal wealth are reduced, employers feel more comfortable investing in expansion, leading to more jobs that in turn create a demand for additional labor. This makes workers more attractive to prospective employers, bolstering job seekers with a competitive environment that enables them to be choosier employees.

Despite the free-market's ability to create a more level playing field, however, some types of inequality will continue to exist. Economist Thomas Sowell notes that there are many contributors to inequality, saying, "there was never a reason to expect equality. [There are so] many different complicating factors, cultures matter, demographics matter, regions matter."

For example, the average life expectancy of a man that lives in the mountains is a decade less than one that lives in the Virginia suburbs. Inequality is even evidenced in seemingly superficial matters, such as physical attractiveness, athletic aptitude, and musical ability. Not everyone can play like Patrick Mahomes or sing like Adele.

The Justice of Capitalism

There are few things more professionally distressing than seeing your hard work and earnest efforts thwarted by a system designed to quash competition. Unfortunately, this is the type of approach many protectionists on both the left and right take when it comes to economic policy. Through onerous regulation, occupational licensing restrictions, minimum wage laws, price controls, tariffs, and more, it can feel like the deck is stacked against you.

By contrast, free enterprise is liberating and creates opportunity. The spread of capitalism and the promotion of free markets has led to a substantial decline in extreme poverty. In the 1980s, approximately 40 percent of the world's population lived in extreme poverty. Today, that figure is 8.6 percent.

Even authoritarian regimes, like China, recognize the importance of limiting government intrusion in markets if they hope to be competitive in an increasingly globalized economy.

Capitalism has proven to be the best vehicle for economic justice for the marginalized and impoverished. Why would anyone want to deprive the poor of the mobility free enterprise affords?

Capitalism Today, Capitalism Tomorrow, Capitalism Forever?

If we look to public trust as an indication of capitalism's viability, look no further than business, which holds "a massive 54-point edge over government as an institution that is good at what it does," according to the Edelman Trust Barometer. It's also worth noting that US economic confidence is the highest it has been in nearly 20 years.

No, capitalism doesn't appear to be going anywhere anytime soon. Instead of statists thumbing their noses at capitalism–oftentimes suggesting governments intervene–they'd be wise to exhibit a little intellectual humility and take a lesson from the efficiency and dynamism of the private sector.

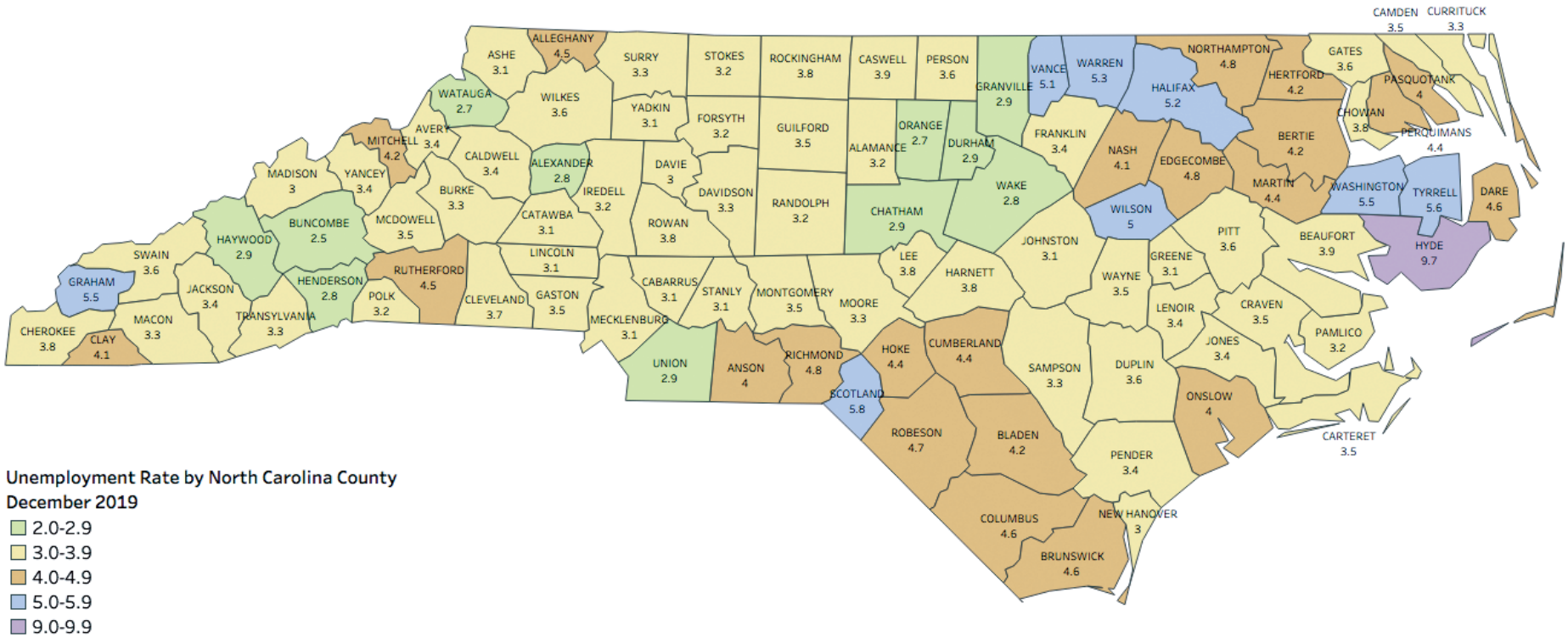
The data is indisputable. Capitalism has been the primary driver of economic flourishing and innovation for nearly three hundred years, catapulting individuals, societies, and nations into levels of prosperity that were previously unfathomable. Capitalism respects the agency of people and communities, recognizing that they should be able to freely associate and trade as they see fit. Free market capitalism honors the natural right to private property.

But, even beyond these principles and big ideas, the practical matter is that so long as humans value prosperity, opportunity and innovation, capitalism won't fade away. Free enterprise offers technological innovation that make products smarter, lighter, cheaper, and use less material.

Capitalism creates, socialism destroys.

Moving from free market capitalism toward a command economy is neither moral nor responsible. So long as free people choose action over apathy and liberty over serfdom, capitalism will continue to offer individuals the opportunity to pursue the American Dream.

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The above map shows the December, 2019 (not seasonally adjusted) unemployment rates for all 100 North Carolina counties (data from N.C. Department of Commerce). The December statewide unemployment rate was 3.3 percent. When compared to the same month last year, not seasonally adjusted unemployment rates decreased in 95 counties, increased in three, and remained unchanged in two. The North Carolina numbers are slightly lower than the December 2019 national unemployment rate of 3.5 percent.

Hyde County had the highest unemployment rate at 9.7 percent, while Buncombe County had the lowest at 2.5 percent. Ten of the state's metro areas experienced rate decreases, one increased, and four remained unchanged. Among the metro areas, Fayetteville had the highest rate at 4.4 percent and Asheville had the lowest rate at 2.7 percent.

The number of workers employed statewide (not seasonally adjusted) decreased in December by 27,197 to 4,909,376, while those unemployed decreased by 4,392 to 169,153. Since December 2018, the number of workers employed statewide increased 128,272, while those unemployed decreased 16,003.

Civitas launches new campaign to inform public on conservative policy

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"The truth is that North Carolina is flourishing and freer than ever. Civitas is proud of the progress North Carolina has made and is optimistic about the future, believing even better days are ahead of us."

Part of the goal of the campaign is to reinforce to voters that state policy often has a much bigger impact on North Carolinians than compared to what is happening at the national level or in presidential campaigns.

Some of the more specific policy goals will focus on ending the corporate income tax to stop crony-minded tax-incentive packages that allow state government to pick winners and losers in the economy. Gov. Roy Cooper has made decrying corporate tax cuts while doling out targeted tax incentives a big part of his political agenda.

On healthcare, repealing the certificate of need regulations is an essential issue for lowering cost and improving access to care. Civitas opposes Medicaid expansion to protect the state's most vulnerable populations and supports increasing scope of practice legislation to expand access to the healthcare needs of the state's rural population.

On education, Civitas supports broadening school choice and ending the teacher salary schedule so quality teachers are paid more. North Carolina needs to implement voter ID as voters overwhelmingly approved that change to the constitution in 2018. On property rights, it's long past time for the state to pass a constitutional amendment that prohibits seizing any private property for private use.

For a more comprehensive list of Civitas proposals visit www.ABetterCarolina.com.

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New Study: Medicaid Expansion does not create jobs or boost hospital finances

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Medicaid expansion did *not* create jobs

In contrast to one of the loudest claims made by Medicaid advocates, that expansion will create thousands of jobs, FGA also found "nearly 40 percent of Obamacare expansion states lost hospital jobs in the first year of the program."

For instance, Arkansas hospitals lost 732 jobs in the first year of their expansion. In Iowa, hospitals shed more than 1,000 jobs after one year of expansion, and "researchers at the University of Louisville found that Kentucky actually lost more than 1,200 health care and related jobs in the first year of expansion," FGA reported.

The FGA study showed that "In total, 11 states and the District of Columbia lost hospital jobs in their first year of Obamacare expansion—including later expanding states Louisiana and Michigan."

Indeed, the study also found "hospital job growth has actually been more rapid in states that rejected this failed welfare expansion."

Their research discovered "Over a period of nearly five years, non-expansion states enjoyed annual hospital job growth of 1.55 percent on average, compared to just 1.36 percent for Obamacare expansion states."

Medicaid expansion drew many of its enrollees from the ranks of the privately insured, causing economic distress on hospitals

Medicaid expansion advocates continue to claim that expansion will boost the finances of hospitals because it will shift significant numbers of patients from being uninsured to being covered by Medicaid. This would lessen the amount of uncompensated care provided by hospitals, providing much needed financial relief, the story goes.

But what if that financial relief is offset by a shift in patients moving from private insurance to Medicaid?

Because Medicaid reimburses hospitals at only about 63 percent of the rate private insurers do, this shift would represent a significant blow to the bottom line of hospitals. In fact, Medicaid reimbursements have been found to be below hospitals' cost of care.

A December 2019 FGA report found that "if the remaining non-expansion states expand Obamacare, they could drive more than two million additional Americans out of private insurance plans and into Medicaid."

Indeed, states that have already expanded Medicaid are experiencing major influxes of previously privately insured patients enrolling in the government program.

For example, in Montana, 72 percent of those enrolled in Obamacare exchange coverage who also met Medicaid expansion income requirements dropped their private exchange coverage. It's easy to conclude most shifted to Medicaid. Similarly, Louisiana saw an 80 percent drop in exchange coverage for that income group. Thousands more on other private insurance also shifted onto Medicaid.

As a result, Montana's Medicaid enrollment surged by double initial projections, and Louisiana's grew by 50 percent more than expected.

The FGA report further noted that in Colorado, "hospitals' operating losses for treating Medicaid patients have tripled since expanding Obamacare, growing to nearly $1 billion by 2017." This increase has more than offset the reduction in charity care.

The Obamacare law includes a mandate that "individuals who become eligible for Medicaid expansion will automatically lose access to federal premium subsidies," according to FGA.

This requirement essentially forces low-income people off of the private insurance coverage they obtained through the exchange and onto Medicaid. The result of this shift is significant financial losses for hospitals.

Conclusion

If something sounds too good to be true, it probably is. Such is the case with Medicaid expansion. Advocates claim it will save lives, save hospitals and create jobs – all with no downside or trade-offs.

Sober analysis, however, shows this not to be the case. Medicaid coverage does not equal access to care. The promised jobs not only didn't materialize, but non-expansion states actually created more hospital jobs than expansion states. And research shows that expansion failed to boost the bottom line of hospitals, and in many states harmed them.

Rather than continue to lobby for greater government control over the healthcare industry, we should instead focus on undoing the government restrictions that drive up prices and restrict competition.

Voter ID: A common sense solution to a real problem

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ly noted). Voter ID does so without being discriminatory. Despite the claims of progressive activists, research has found that voter ID does not suppress turnout.

That protection makes sense to citizens. A comfortable majority of North Carolina voters approved voter ID in a 2018 referendum. Once voter ID makes it through the courts, North Carolina will join thirty-five other states that have some form of voter ID in their laws (including every state in the South).

Many North Carolinians see election-related fraud as a major problem. Instituting voter ID will not only help protect the integrity of our elections, it will also be a clear signal to North Carolina citizens that the state is serious about keeping our elections clean. That is why recent polling shows that a majority of North Carolinians continue to support it.

While voter ID will not prevent all forms of election fraud, it is a common-sense solution that will improve the integrity of North Carolina's elections.

A deeper look at the meaning of K-12 education

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"The crux of the issue should be: what really is the goal of the education?" says Hall. "That is the critical question parents need to ask and be conscious of when thinking about education and searching for the right learning environment." Hall says many parents he talks with, at the very least, get a sense that something is not right with the status quo in many public-school settings.

"One of the things different about Thales is our use of direct instruction, which public schools don't use." notes Hall. "Instead, they put everybody in the same classroom and teach towards the middle – which hurts the students in the lower and higher ends in that classroom. Some students are continually left behind." Hall adds that many of those students that are left behind are even more apt to fall into the trap of emotional reasoning.

Hall emphasizes the classical education approach used at Thales and its benefits not just for the student but for society and civic education as a whole. He readily admits that Thales teaches American exceptionalism. "We are all inheritors of the Western tradition," says Hall. "Everything we are is rooted in the Western tradition, and if you don't understand who you are—you're legacy so to speak—you can't understand yourself." Lacking that instruction sets students on a path of devaluing or rejecting greater truths.

"Really, the purpose of a classical education is focused on the human formation," he adds. "The goal is to be the best human being you can be in relation to yourself and your community around you."

Hall emphasizes too that when the student is morally formed, it directly translates into being a better well-rounded citizen. "We are teaching a student self-mastery for self-giving. When students self-give, they support their community and support themselves – that's an essential aspect of self-actualization." Hall says the rise of young people's interest in socialism is a direct symptom of the lack of teaching character development.

Hall says this contrasts with public schools that are often more focused on educational and vocational outcomes. "What college can you get into? That's a primary focus and a barometer of success," he says. "At Thales, we are looking at the long game —we don't judge ourselves solely by college admittance, but how well students flourish in life individually and as part of a community."



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