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Civitas continues to ask for accountability and transparency on reopen plans



BY RAY NOTHSTINE

While public health rightfully remains a high priority for citizens in our state, the Civitas Institute is continually working to remind lawmakers and the public alike that government does not have all the answers concerning the response to the coronavirus.

Unemployment claims in North Carolina surpassed 1 million on May 4 with nearly 850,000 being related to the economic catastrophe caused by the government's reaction to the pandemic. Getting more people back to work safely remains an essential goal in the push for more answers from the governor's office.

"In the wake of COVID-19, North Carolinians must have some assurances about the stability of the state government, the state's economy, and their jobs," said Civitas Institute President Donald Bryson. "The Civitas Institute has put together recommendations in critical policy areas to make sure that barriers to prosperity get out of the way so that people can get back to work while increasing governmental transparency to get us out of this economic crisis."

Transparency, already a significant concern, became an even bigger issue on May 6 after NC Treasurer Dale Folwell stated in a virtual townhall that all the information he receives from Gov. Roy Cooper about Covid-19 comes from watching his press conferences. Folwell, who was briefly hospitalized for Covid-19, called for more cooperation on the crisis among

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From the editor

Inside this issue is an article about the struggles of so many in the restaurant business in Calabash, North Carolina. There are all kinds of heartbreaking stories about the loss of livelihood due to government restrictions imposed on citizens because of the coronavirus outbreak.

Recently, I was drawn to a story in another state. A barber in Owosso, Michigan opened up his shop in violation of the governor's executive order. The barber was fined $1,000, but it appears law enforcement balked at an arrest. Perhaps they sensed it was too unpopular a move. He seems mild-mannered and his point was that there is nobody else supporting him and he needs to work to make ends meet. Also, he's taking extra safety precautions at work. The barber is quoted in a Washington Times article, referring to Gov. Gretchen Whitmer's order: "I don't need the governor to be my mother. … I can make these adult decisions myself."

Whether you agree with his actions or not, the line made me chuckle. Just from the picture of the barber, he is much older than Michigan's governor. At any rate, some are driving as far as three hours away because they are desperate for a haircut and a sense of normalcy.

We forget sometimes that a big part of living in a free society is entrusting citizens to make the right decisions for themselves and others. Sometimes people make good decisions and bad ones. Still, our actions should continually point us to one of the most important questions we can ask in a free society: What is our capacity for self-government? Back in the Victorian Age, Lord Acton, an English writer and politician was quoted as saying, "Liberty is not the power of doing what we like, but the right of being able to do what we ought."

All that to say, I hope that one of the great lessons that comes out of this crisis is that we all take more personal responsibility and look to the government less. Government can do a few things well, but it's never better or more equipped than the free people that make up that government. There will certainly be a lot of difficult times ahead for many given this economic slowdown, but there is very little that can't be done if we remember the timeless truths of freedom.



CYAN MAGENTA YELLOW BLACK

In North Carolina's seafood capital, every lost dinner hour brings sorrow, uncertainty

BY DALLAS WOODHOUSE

Just 30 minutes from the tourist mecca of Myrtle Beach, and touching the South Carolina state line, Calabash, N.C. does not have restaurants. It is restaurants. Calabash, incorporated in 1973, is a small fishing village with about a dozen restaurants, almost all seafood, with a year-round population of just under 2,000 residents.

It's both a town and a style of seafood. The town sits on the Calabash River, just a stone's throw away from the fresh catches of the Atlantic.

In the 1940s, Calabash was little more than a spot along the River where people lived off the water. Jimmy Durante, the national radio and television comedian and actor, came across the town. Soon after, he left a mystery at the end of every broadcast.

"Goodnight Mrs. Calabash, wherever you are," Durante said.

The sign-off became his signature, and the questions tantalized listeners for years. Was there really a Mrs. Calabash? If so, who was she? And was she, in fact, from Calabash?

Durante in fact came traveling through town and ate at The Original, the first Calabash seafood restaurant. He liked the food so much he asked for the owner, who turned out to be Lucy Coleman, and Durante told her, "I'm going to make you famous one day."

But it's the seafood and the restaurants that serve the town that are celebrated. All across the southeast, dining establishments advertise "Calabash Style" seafood. Of course the people of Calabash insist that to be called Calabash seafood, seafood must be made in Calabash by putting fresh fish in evaporated milk, then in flour seasoned with salt and pepper, then in cornmeal, and then into a deep fryer for two minutes, and quickly shaken so no grease remains, and served hot to the table.



The entire community depends on feeding people. The Christmas shop sells to those waiting to be seated for dinner. The one mini-golf course is a family tradition, and the ice cream shops an after-dinner treat.

Now as vacation season begins, with no clarity when Calabash restaurants can welcome thousands of diners per night, each missed dinner shift brings heartache, sorrow and anxiety. Hundreds have been laid off. Locals have rallied around their restaurants, ordering take-out, but that is a drop in the bucket on what it takes to survive.

Donna Long manages the family-owned Captain Nance's Calabash Seafood Restaurant. She is also the mayor of Calabash.

"Before this happened, we had a staff of about 45 people. They have all gone on unemployment," declared Long. "We are doing takeout with just the family, as it is a family business, so we are down from 45 to 5."

The wait during the summer tourist season for

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A partisan lawsuit to gut absentee ballot protections

BY ANDY JACKSON

I have recently written on how coronavirus is being used as justification to both weaken voter protections against election fraud and to impose the judiciary into an area outside its proper purview.

Now, two groups with ties to the Democratic Party, the Right to Vote Foundation and the National Redistricting Foundation, have combined those two bad ideas into a single witch's brew with a lawsuit filed in Wake County Superior Court on May 4.

The National Redistricting Foundation, one of the groups pursuing the lawsuit, is affiliated with Eric Holder's National Democratic Redistricting Committee, a group seeking to bend voting laws to benefit Democrats. The other group, the Right to Vote Foundation, is a newly registered DC-based organization that has kept a low profile so far. Its director, JB Poersch, is also head of the Senate Majority Pac, a super PAC that bills itself as "Solely dedicated to building a Democratic majority in the U.S. Senate." The lineup of backers for this lawsuit exposes it for the naked partisan power grab that it is.

Trying to gut ballot protections by judicial fiat

The lawsuit is being led by Marc Elias, perhaps best known in North Carolina for representing Democrat Dan McCready in the State Board of Elections' (SBE) hearing following the 2018 9th Congressional District race. The board ultimately ordered a redo election due to alleged ballot harvesting by McCrae Dowless on behalf of Republican candidate Mark Harris. Elias had to go through some mental gymnastics to highlight evidence that Dowless harvested ballots while simultaneously ignoring evidence that others in Bladen County where doing the same thing to help Democrats.

We see a different kind of mental gymnastics in the complaint Elias and his colleagues filed recently against North Carolina. Early in the complaint, attorneys for the plaintiffs claim that the lawsuit is about the impact of the coronavirus on absentee-by-mail voting, stating on page 3 that current laws protecting the integrity of mail-in ballots "are at best unduly burdensome and pose significant risks to voters' health and safety,

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A partisan lawsuit to gut absentee ballot protections

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and, at worst, impossible to comply with during a global pandemic."

However, the changes they say they want the court to impose on North Carolina are not just for the potentially coronavirus-affected 2020 election, but permanent. Those changes include:

- Requiring the state to issue prepaid postage for ballot return envelopes
- Removing the witness requirement for absentee ballots
- Limiting signature-matching requirements
- Requiring the state to accept in-state mailed-in ballots until the day before the county board of elections canvas and to presume that a ballot was mailed by election day even if it shows up without a postmark nine days after the election

The prepaid postage requirement would not harm mail-in ballot integrity but is of limited use and SBE executive director Karen Brinson Bell estimates that it would cost $3.6 million at a time when the state is facing a revenue shortfall and increased expenses due to the coronavirus pandemic. The demand would inject the courts into appropriations, a power reserved to the legislature.

Reducing or ending the witness requirement would eliminate verification that the voter was actually the person who marked the ballot and that the change would also get rid of a crucial tool that provides evidence of absentee ballot fraud investigations.

So, this lawsuit is not about protecting voters from the coronavirus; it is about gutting protections for absentee voting.



A step towards legalized ballot harvesting

In another lawsuit, filed in early March, Elias is attempting to force North Carolina to roll back absentee ballot protections put in place last year by the state legislature in response to ballot harvesting in the 2018 9th Congressional District race. That is the very race that resulted in the hearing at which Elias represented McCready. The bill, S683, which passed unanimously in the Senate and 111-1 in the House, generally bans anyone other than the voter or a near relative or guardian from submitting absentee ballot requests. Dowless turned in hundreds of absentee ballot requests as part of his alleged ballot harvesting operation.

> *"This lawsuit is not about protecting voters from the coronavirus; it is about gutting protections for absentee voting."*

But the mischief does not stop there.

The two lawsuits Elias is leading in North Carolina are also stepping stones to their ultimate prize in controlling elections: legalized ballot harvesting. That is not hyperbole on my part; the fourth item on the NC Democratic Party's coronavirus response wish list is to legalize "persons other than near relatives and legal guardians to assist voters with requesting, completing, and returning ballots."

Not to be outdone in chutzpah, Elias advocates for "community organizations" to be able to legally take possession of absentee ballots from voters, with doing in the 2018 9th Congressional District race. Elias even brags about a lawsuit he led against Arizona that struck down that state's ban on ballot harvesting (DNC v. Hobbs).

If Elias and his financial backers succeed in gutting North Carolina's absentee ballot protections, a lawsuit to legalize ballot harvesting here, like the one he led in Arizona, will not be far behind.

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Changes represent the difference in voter registration between April 4 and May 2, 2020										
County	Total Voters	Total Change	Democrats	Democrat Change	Republicans	Republican Change	Libertarians	Libertarian Change	Unaffiliated Voters	Unaffiliated Change
Totals	6,981,996	9,744	2,529,670	-135	2,089,213	3,624	39,778	29	2,323,335	6,226
Alamance	103,646	200	36,926	48	33,731	67	540	-1	32,449	86
Alexander	23,817	-3	5,185	-13	10,961	-8	91	1	7,580	17
Alleghany	7,202	10	2,166	-1	2,726	7	32	0	2,278	4
Anson	16,106	4	10,061	0	2,541	-1	28	0	3,476	5
Ashe	18,462	-48	4,530	-25	8,150	-13	76	0	5,706	-10
Avery	11,553	-17	1,344	-5	6,740	-8	53	0	3,416	-4
Beaufort	32,726	-24	11,848	-39	11,211	4	99	1	9,568	10
Bertie	12,883	0	8,632	-7	1,464	2	27	2	2,760	3
Bladen	22,118	12	10,804	-21	4,460	21	55	1	6,799	11
Brunswick	107,085	683	26,156	26	41,577	375	469	-4	38,883	286
Buncombe	195,581	-236	74,058	-95	44,524	-63	1,515	-1	75,484	-77
Burke	55,105	100	15,323	-14	20,700	78	287	0	18,795	36
Cabarrus	140,690	1,301	41,908	411	49,478	340	934	2	48,370	548
Caldwell	51,343	-139	11,335	-103	24,133	-40	349	-1	15,526	5
Camden	7,743	12	1,784	-2	2,631	6	55	-1	3,273	9
Carteret	52,356	-192	10,540	-96	23,104	-54	247	0	18,465	-42
Caswell	14,823	19	6,893	-5	3,484	19	39	0	4,407	5
Catawba	103,087	62	22,550	-33	44,432	41	458	4	35,647	50
Chatham	54,748	49	20,470	-12	13,237	39	263	-5	20,778	27
Cherokee	21,375	-5	4,248	0	9,991	-2	127	0	7,009	-3
Chowan	9,904	6	4,179	1	2,682	6	30	1	3,013	-2
Clay	8,627	-10	1,614	-3	3,846	-4	55	0	3,112	-3
Cleveland	63,579	128	22,876	-29	22,190	103	279	4	18,234	50
Columbus	35,193	150	16,913	-130	8,273	146	82	4	9,925	130
Craven	69,449	70	21,303	-15	24,979	2	408	2	22,759	81
Cumberland	211,499	381	92,772	117	48,236	111	1,317	1	69,174	152
Currituck	20,548	119	3,552	2	8,129	70	171	-2	8,696	49
Dare	28,344	210	7,574	15	9,325	106	188	3	11,257	86
Davidson	107,481	211	23,463	6	50,923	103	477	0	32,618	102
Davie	29,918	6	4,992	-11	15,358	7	136	3	9,432	7
Duplin	29,483	143	12,407	-3	8,393	80	101	0	8,582	66
Durham	229,963	2,693	125,125	1,182	25,838	112	1,133	7	77,867	1,392
Edgecombe	34,571	-137	23,117	-103	5,892	-12	80	4	5,482	-26
Forsyth	258,829	624	102,302	91	73,605	121	1,384	-14	81,538	426
Franklin	44,365	81	16,695	9	13,820	35	246	2	13,604	35
Gaston	141,440	200	41,097	2	54,552	100	833	5	44,958	93
Gates	7,942	52	3,835	5	1,776	21	29	0	2,302	26
Graham	5,800	-3	1,496	0	2,684	-2	26	0	1,594	-1
Granville	37,898	-18	17,270	-44	9,561	12	149	1	10,918	13
Greene	11,005	-8	5,612	-16	2,244	6	22	1	3,127	1
Guilford	366,697	847	161,155	133	90,803	134	2,048	1	112,691	579
Halifax	36,494	60	22,916	-7	4,581	25	95	-1	8,902	43
Harnett	76,310	171	24,676	1	27,193	91	538	0	23,903	79
Haywood	43,297	-63	14,399	-29	14,038	-20	275	-1	14,585	-13
Henderson	82,244	-147	16,957	-20	30,555	-64	483	-2	34,249	-61
Hertford	14,616	21	10,159	-12	1,435	13	33	1	2,989	19
Hoke	30,841	101	13,856	23	6,615	38	230	4	10,140	36
Hyde	3,071	15	1,552	4	537	4	16	0	966	7

Iredell	122,528	253	28,169	-14	50,919	154	634	3	42,806	110
Jackson	27,870	-127	9,436	-42	7,625	-42	193	-3	10,616	-40
Johnston	133,487	405	38,205	-60	51,173	188	852	6	43,257	271
Jones	7,156	14	3,101	-9	1,981	13	26	1	2,048	9
Lee	36,583	152	13,426	8	10,675	57	208	0	12,274	87
Lenoir	37,118	-37	18,419	-43	9,687	17	111	0	8,901	-11
Lincoln	58,179	77	12,143	-5	26,720	48	295	1	19,021	33
Macon	25,605	-36	5,847	-12	10,815	-14	147	0	8,796	-10
Madison	16,272	-39	5,824	-18	4,307	-11	113	0	6,028	-10
Martin	16,039	-42	8,873	-46	3,286	-1	36	-2	3,844	7
Mcdowell	27,892	-62	6,914	-21	11,266	-29	153	0	9,559	-12
Mecklenburg	751,648	533	324,055	5	164,552	77	5,077	-2	257,964	453
Mitchell	10,383	-23	1,046	-2	6,187	-15	34	0	3,116	-6
Montgomery	16,112	12	6,236	-13	5,318	25	74	0	4,484	0
Moore	69,565	48	15,857	0	28,598	30	435	-1	24,675	19
Nash	66,223	59	31,309	-38	18,867	39	234	1	15,813	57
New Hanover	169,062	56	51,028	-27	52,618	59	1,233	-4	64,183	28
Northampton	13,575	19	9,092	-10	1,405	5	26	0	3,052	24
Onslow	108,105	313	24,980	29	40,207	202	1087	-1	41,831	83
Orange	110,614	-467	51,605	-189	14,731	-68	646	-4	43,632	-206
Pamlico	9,219	-10	3,203	-13	3,337	6	44	0	2,635	-3
Pasquotank	27,357	-17	11,314	-34	6,341	25	168	2	9,534	-10
Pender	41,793	44	11,492	-12	16,145	30	274	0	13,882	26
Perquimans	8,947	82	3,165	-13	2,702	35	34	2	3,046	58
Person	26,142	79	10,983	-15	6,875	45	103	3	8,181	46
Pitt	120,738	-109	51,811	-70	30,886	5	730	0	37,311	-44
Polk	15,467	0	3,909	0	5,602	1	81	0	5,875	-1
Randolph	89,502	23	16,759	-35	45,913	22	505	1	26,325	35
Richmond	28,373	0	13,940	-25	6,190	16	86	1	8,157	8
Robeson	74,211	-87	43,178	-184	10,085	45	197	-6	20,751	58
Rockingham	58,647	9	19,886	-42	21,443	37	261	-2	17,057	16
Rowan	92,382	146	24,824	5	38,398	83	422	2	28,738	56
Rutherford	43,681	-1	12,260	-18	17,454	9	213	0	13,754	8
Sampson	36,176	-209	14,278	-152	13,776	-50	132	1	7,990	-8
Scotland	21,180	3	11,184	-15	3,706	14	66	-2	6,224	6
Stanly	41,218	-17	9,614	-52	18,880	16	151	1	12,573	18
Stokes	30,096	9	6,362	-59	15,190	42	153	0	8,391	26
Surry	44,603	156	11,385	-13	19,656	84	130	3	13,432	82
Swain	9,516	-14	3,382	-3	2,678	-8	39	0	3,417	-3
Transylvania	25,202	-50	6,170	-12	8,118	-18	119	0	10,795	-20
Tyrrell	2,230	-2	1,172	-1	363	0	9	0	686	-1
Union	159,311	155	38,621	-6	65,160	57	852	-1	54,678	105
Vance	28,567	-30	18,085	-49	4,315	24	73	-2	6,094	-3
Wake	758,434	800	277,682	165	184,087	115	5,346	4	291,319	516
Warren	13,043	17	8,547	-15	1,909	11	43	0	2,544	21
Washington	8,099	-20	5,175	-15	1,144	-5	19	0	1,761	0
Watauga	45,314	-107	11,974	-28	13,366	-20	480	2	19,494	-61
Wayne	72,874	33	29,393	-46	23,836	43	353	1	19,292	35
Wilkes	41,429	8	8,242	-24	21,873	40	142	0	11,172	-8
Wilson	55,384	61	27,508	-17	13,425	34	181	0	14,270	44
Yadkin	23,532	-3	3,508	-13	13,232	1	99	2	6,693	7
Yancey	13,456	-4	4,474	0	4,853	-3	51	0	4,078	-1

Educational bureaucracy and the collapse of civics

BY RAY NOTHSTINE



In the wake of the 40th anniversary of the U.S. Department of Education earlier this month, civic illiteracy and even hostility to the principles that made America great continue to plague our nation.

For decades, Washington has continued to centralize more education authority and ramp up spending. Yet student achievement has essentially flatlined.

A recent Heritage Foundation report on the Department of Education (DoE) analyzed, among other things, discouraging results on National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) test scores. The report noted, "The tests have served as a steady reminder that no matter the increase in federal investment in K–12 schools or the size of the Cabinet-level agency, Washington has not improved student achievement over time."

Initiatives like No Child Left Behind, America Competes Act, Race to the Top, and Every Student Succeeds are just some of the ambitious DoE projects that show meager results — disproving the persistent theory that if government just marshals the right resources this time, success will follow.

Civic knowledge is not improving, either. Specific scores on civics assessed over two decades conducted by the federal government pronounce "no significant change." This despite multiple civic-minded federal initiatives meant to rally the nation, albeit with banal titles like "Civic Learning and Engagement in Democracy."

Billions of dollars have been appropriated to improve civics, yet a 2016 report titled "A Crisis in Civics Education" highlights an appalling lack of knowledge even for college graduates. At least we can take some comfort in the fact that only about 10 percent of the graduates surveyed think reality TV court figure Judge Judy serves on the U.S. Supreme Court.

Despite efforts to guide American principles through civic instruction, the rise of socialism is one of the most talked-about topics in American politics. It's an alarming trend that should prompt citizens to ask more questions about whether or not an increasingly top-down managed education system is helping to fuel the rise of socialism and centralized power.

Criticism of what is often called a "factory model of education" has only increased in the 21st century. It has led to a surge in homeschooling and school choice, while private school remains an appealing option for many families that can afford it.

Tim Hall, director of academics at the eight-campus Thales Academy in North Carolina, said a lack of character development and moral formation are related to socialism's appeal. That's a problem centralized bureaucracies aren't equipped to address in their pursuit of uniform standards and improved test scores. While giving credit to public schools for their vast monetary advantages, Hall expressed concern over the impact of "emotive reasoning" in many learning environments today.

When students skew too far towards emotive reasoning, the consequences become stark. "Woke" college campuses filled with social justice warriors waxing over microaggressions and an unhealthy obsession with identity politics are the most prominent examples. But beyond that, the diminishment of critical thinking skills in education and thus the broader culture is inhibiting the ability to even reason economically or offer much nuance when it comes to public policy proposals. What someone feels, or what merely sounds good to them, is the superior and more moral argument.

Polling shows that it's not just the young: Democrats overall are more attracted to socialism in the Trump era. On Super Tuesday in March, NBC exit polling following the voting showed that a plurality or majority of Democrat primary voters in states where they conducted polling had a favorable view of socialism. A majority of Democrat primary voters had a favorable view in Texas and California, the two most populous states in the union.

Those kinds of responses would have been unthinkable in past America, particularly during the Cold War era. Even the oft-maligned labor unions by the political Right were once some of the fierc-

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Educational bureaucracy and the collapse of civics

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est denouncers of socialist states that wreaked havoc across the globe.

Reforms need to be made to public education. Teaching needs to better reflect the spirit of America's framers instead of being oriented towards more centralized mandates or politicized initiatives meant to tear down the American experiment.

Some states are trying to solve the civics crisis by passing laws requiring more credit requirements on the subject before high school graduation, but the damage is already immense.

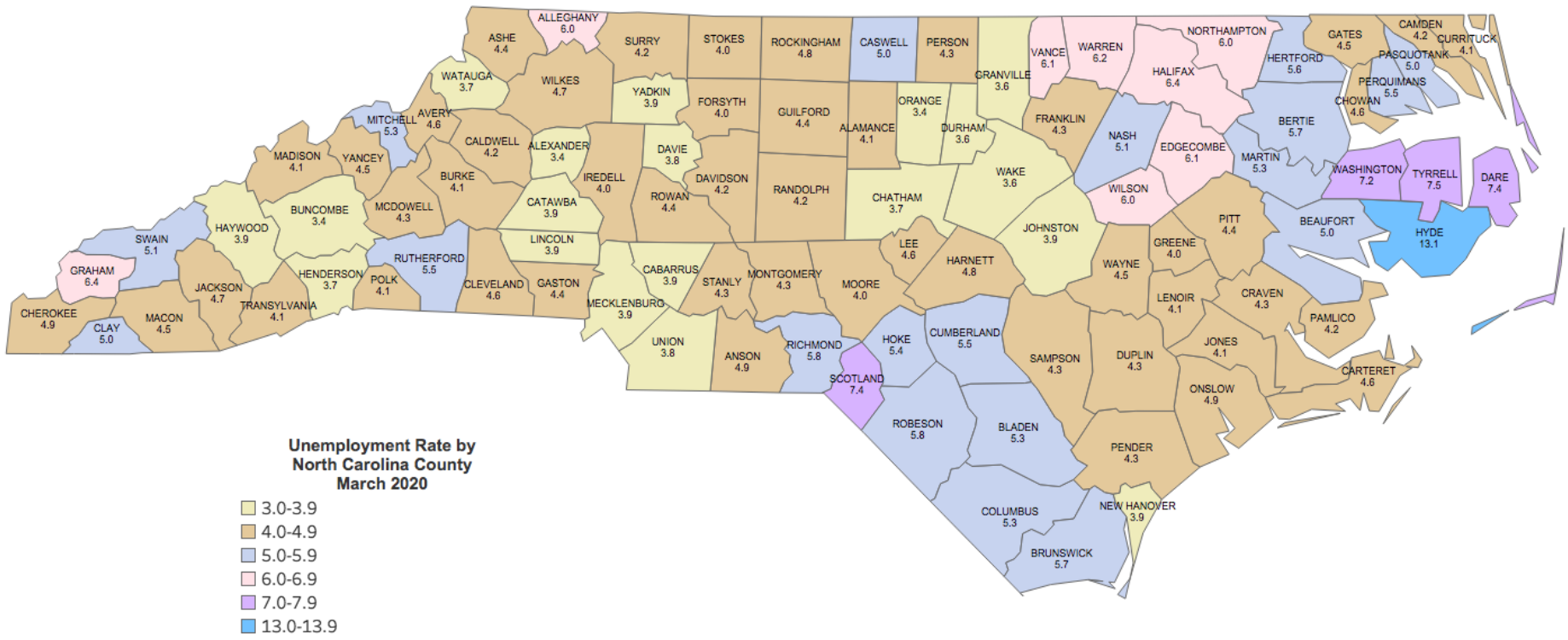
Ninety percent of immigrants pass the citizenship test, while only a third of native-born Americans can pass the exam. U.S. Sen. Ben Sasse (R-Neb.) sounded the alarm on the need for a cultural catechesis to restore and sustain our republic in a book titled "The Vanishing American Adult." "If the people who rule America in 20 to 30 years don't understand America, America will slip away," Sasse warns.

Another solution for the crisis in civics and education is a desperate need for more educational options. Recapturing a richer meaning for the purpose of education is critical, and it would better reflect the diversity of thought and beliefs across America. For many families, education is a personal and moral endeavor, instead of a one-size-fits-all top-down system embodied so well by the Department of Education.

As the conservative philosopher Russell Kirk noted so well: "True education is meant to develop the individual human being, the person, rather than serve the state." If we don't reorient education to higher things, we are left with a much lower common denominator everywhere. That leads to a drearier vision of the world and one in which a materialist vision like socialism inevitably thrives.

This article was originally published in The American Spectator.





The above map shows the March 2020, (not seasonally adjusted) unemployment rates for all 100 North Carolina counties (data from N.C. Department of Commerce). The March statewide unemployment rate was 4.4 percent. However, since March 15 there have been 1,085,276 unemployment claims in North Carolina. On May 7 there were over 16,000 claims filed in one day. Over 900,000 claims are related to the government shutdown over the coronavirus. One out of every five North Carolinians in the labor force are at least temporarily out of work.

Lockhart Taylor, the head of the state's unemployment agency, recently noted that North Carolina had 100,000 claims a month during the height of the Great Recession. He added that the state now has ten times that much in under two months. In a May 8 press conference, Gov. Roy Cooper said that more than 460,000 North Carolinians are now receiving benefits.

Getting back to the state reported numbers for March, North Carolina's 2020 unemployment rate increased 0.3 of a percentage point from a year ago. The number of people employed decreased 180,275 over the month to 4,751,781 and decreased 100,381 over the year. The number of people unemployed increased 35,020 over the month to 217,626 and increased 12,282 over the year.

Civitas continues to ask for accountability and transparency on reopen plans

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the elected representatives that make up the NC Council of State. Lt. Gov. Dan Forest made similar complaints about the governor's lack of cooperation in a May interview with the Daily Signal. In a May 1 interview with Civitas, NC Congressman Dan Bishop also expressed frustration that he could not receive information related to data and the timeline for reopening from Gov. Cooper's office.

Civitas remains diligent across all platforms to prevent professional politicians and activists who desire to harness the crisis to grow government and curtail freedoms.

One example of this has been the work of Elections Policy Analyst Andy Jackson. He continues to raise awareness about the power grabs meant to undermine the security and fairness of elections in North Carolina.

"We support the state providing matching funds so that the State Board of Elections (SBE) can get federal grant money to offset the likely increased expenses related to running an election under the threat of the coronavirus," declares Jackson. "However, we are also watching to make sure the SBE executive director does not abuse her powers under the coronavirus emergency declaration to illegally alter early voting hours in a way that creates unequal opportunities to vote. We are also working to prevent progressive groups from using the coronavirus as an excuse to force North Carolina down a path towards legalized ballot harvesting."

Civitas continues to fight against aggressive judicial activism by the left and for the implementation of Voter ID, a state constitutional amendment that was easily passed by North Carolina's voters in 2018.

Among all our projects, Civitas is amplifying the voice of business leaders and citizens in need of work who have pushed for safe a reopening beyond the more stringent and economic-crippling directives mandated by Gov. Roy Cooper.

CYAN MAGENTA YELLOW BLACK

In North Carolina's seafood capital, every lost dinner hour brings sorrow, uncertainty

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any one of the seafood restaurants can run an hour or two. Year after year, families taking their beach vacation return to their favorite restaurants. It's what built this town. It's how this town survives.

"We have families that've been coming to a restaurant for 40 years, and now it's the next generation, and you get to know their families because they come every summer and you get connected to them," says Long.

And pressure is building on Calabash because of the actions of its southern neighbors. South Carolina restaurants with outdoor seating are now open. North Carolina restaurants like the ones in Calabash appear to be weeks away from being able to do anything but takeout.

South Carolina restaurants with the support of their governor are aiming to fully open indoor seating with safety precautions by mid-May.

The people of Calabash know, as much as their dedicated and loyal customers love their food, vacation dining is an experience, and Calabash takeout can't compete with hundreds of seated dining experiences in Myrtle Beach.

Rep. Frank Iler (R-Shallotte) is gravely worried about the slow pace of re-opening North Carolina's economy in Calabash and other tourism dependent communities in Brunswick County that he represents.

"This is our whole economy, restaurants and tourism. I have told the governor's people if this gets into June and we are still closed down, it will kill us."

Iler estimates with the legislature setting the opening of public schools a week sooner and the uncertainly of when restaurants and other tourist related services can open, half the tourist rental season may already be lost, a crushing blow to small business along the coast.

"Every week you lose is 10 percent of your revenue, and I think there was an overreaction in many ways," said Iler.

On Monday, May 4, just minutes after attending a coronavirus relief package bill signing ceremony with Gov. Roy Cooper, Republican House Speaker Tim Moore expressed frustration about the slow pace of North Carolina's reopening. "It is clear we're in decline now and we desperately need more business and more commerce," said Moore in an interview with Newsmax.

He also voiced concern about the restaurant industry, noting that "it is difficult to see improvement" given the minimum number of openings that have taken place so far.

Rep. Iler also complained that restaurants not only don't know when they can open, but under what rules they'll have to abide by when they can.

That is a major challenge faced by Oyster Rock, a contemporary seafood venue in a setting that is a perfect blend of low-country upscale and Carolina casual, on the Calabash waterfront. South Florida native Patrick Legendre is the General Manager.

"It has been difficult, this is the time of the year when we are skyrocketing, it has been quite a blow, financially as well as mentally."

"I would love for them to come out right now and say you can have 50 percent of your capacity, all tables have to be six feet apart, you can't have parties larger than four at a time," says Legendre. "Give us the guidelines now so we can have our plan, so when you say today is the day, we can get our reservations, open the doors and be gone."

While North Carolina restaurants wait for rules to be mandated from Gov. Cooper, South Carolina went a different route. Gov. Henry McMaster accepted the recommendations of the South Carolina Restaurant and Lodging Association and the dining industry. There is more there in the free market to self-regulate the safety protocols and follow reduced capacity guidelines. Civitas has advocated such an approach.

Meanwhile, in Calabash as each dinner hour comes and goes, empty chairs and empty tables sit, and a town waits and wonders.



How might coronavirus impact enrollments?

BY BOB LUEBKE

Coronavirus has put the brakes on a once booming state and national economy. Today, one in five American workers are currently out of a job and many are asking: when will we return to normal?

With many parents of out a job, some families face the prospect that things might not return to normal. Families might have to move or might no longer be able to afford private school tuition. Moreover, a decline in enrollment or private support might force the closure of some private schools. Recessions are always hard on private schools, which frequently see drops in enrollment during hard economic times.

How might public schools be impacted by student migration and coronavirus? That's the question Edchoice asked in a recent report in April. The analysis estimated the state and local costs of migrations of 10 and 30 percent of private school students to the public schools. Analyses were run for all 50 states.

So how would such scenarios impact North Carolina? According to the report, the estimated cost of 10 percent of private school students (approximately 10,900 students) transferring to public schools to be almost $64 million dollars. If you include local costs as well, the bill jumps to $90.6 million.

The cost associated with a 30 percent migration is even more eye-popping; a state tab of almost $192 million, and total costs (state and local) of just over $272 million.

Of course, no one knows how many students will transfer. However, when they do there will be costs and schools should try to make that transition for students as smooth as possible.

North Carolina private schools educate almost 110,000. It's true 9,600 students — or about 9 percent of private school students — receive almost $38 million in tuition awards from the Opportunity Scholarship Program. However, the other 91 percent of private school students and their families have to figure out how to pay tuition since the schools they attend receive little if any direct aid from the state. Private schools perform a public service. These schools develop our children academically, morally and socially and provide important educational alternatives for families. North Carolina needs healthy private schools. Lawmakers would do well to remember this and the many contributions these schools make to our communities when they consider how to assist schools impacted by coronavirus.



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