

# TIMELINE: 9th Congressional District election investigation

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# CAROLINA JOURNAL

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## MULTIPLE CHOICES

*Nontraditional colleges and learning methods raise expectations for people willing to explore*



**KARI TRAVIS**  
ASSOCIATE EDITOR

Higher education is the object of aspiration and frustration. A lofty aim that, while promising opportunity, evokes feelings of anxiety from throngs

of students neither academically nor financially secure.

Commissions, boards, and committees spend hours deliberating on the subject. Politicos pontificate about gaps in student achievement. Newspapers and magazines publish story after story detailing the pitfalls of student loan debt.

Above the drone of negativity about traditional, brick-and-mortar universities and for-profit colleges,

a hum of optimism lingers. While many people may have lowered their opinions about traditional higher education, nontraditional colleges and learning methods are raising expectations for people willing to explore other options.

### Western Governors University

Outside the jurisdiction of the University of North

Carolina, and outside the reaches of the N.C. Community College System and the doors of North Carolina's Independent Colleges and Universities, is Western Governors University. WGU is a nationally acclaimed online school, holding promise for a new era in which students are more prone to breaking tradition than conforming to it.

One such student is Joe Evangelisto, who now works

as director of infrastructure at Durham's Metabolon Inc., a prestigious health technology company.

Raised near Washington, D.C., Evangelisto graduated high school without the opportunity to attend a traditional, four-year college. Instead, for eight hours each day he slung boxes in a warehouse. He then took a job as a secretary for a government defense contractor and, slowly, earned his way into a

computer job with the same company.

While learning about I.T. on the job, he got an associate degree through a community college in Virginia. But Evangelisto, a husband and father, wanted a management job, and he knew a two-year degree wasn't enough to satisfy an employer. He needed a four-year diploma.

In 2006, he started look-

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**Interview:**  
**LaTeesa Allen**

Innovative School District offers way to turn schools around

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# QUICK TAKES



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# Celebrating National School Choice Week

Photography by Lindsay Marchello



**SONG-AND-DANCE.** Students from Voyager Academy in Durham celebrate National School Choice Week with a song and dance performance at the Raleigh school choice rally.



**EAST VOYAGER ACADEMY.** Students from East Voyager Academy in Charlotte perform a traditional Chinese dance for attendees at the Raleigh school choice rally in celebration of National School Choice Week.



**CELEBRATING SCHOOL CHOICE.** Students from Gate City Charter Academy wait for their turn to perform at the Raleigh school choice rally in celebration of National School Choice Week.

## QUICK TAKES

### Cooper, ACP subcommittee chairs face off over interviewing state employees

**G**ov. Roy Cooper's administration has told legislative leaders investigating the Atlantic Coast Pipeline it won't allow private investigators hired by the General Assembly to interview state employees.

The investigators are former federal agents hired in December by a special ACP subcommittee to look into the ACP permit process and the creation of a \$57.8 million discretionary fund Cooper would control. The General Assembly created the subcommittee in September.

Subcommittee chairmen Sen. Harry Brown, R-Onslow, and Rep. Dean Arp, R-Union, responded to Cooper. They plan to proceed with interviews, which could lead to a showdown between the legislature and the governor regarding the General Assembly's oversight authority.

"Given your administration's repeated emphasis that nothing untoward transpired, we do not know why you would obstruct this investigation by forbidding state employees from speaking with the Subcommittee or its staff. The independent investigators will be in touch with prospective interviewees to schedule a conversation at a time and venue that is most con-



**PAGE 7: WHO IS KEN EUDY?**  
Governor's pipeline negotiator had ties to Duke Energy

of thousands of documents in response to public records requests on December 20, 2018."

"However, we have directed Cabinet level agencies to respectfully decline these outside investigators' requests for interviews. There are no protections for state employees from inappropriate questions and no rules preventing these private contractors from using underhanded or even illegal methods to interrogate," she said.

Don Carrington

venient for the interviewee," said Brown and Arp.

Letters from Cooper's Chief of Staff, Kristi Jones, and from Brown and Arp were published by WRAL. Jones' letter, dated Jan. 17, said the Department of Environmental Quality and Cooper's administration have been cooperative with the legislature and "produced tens

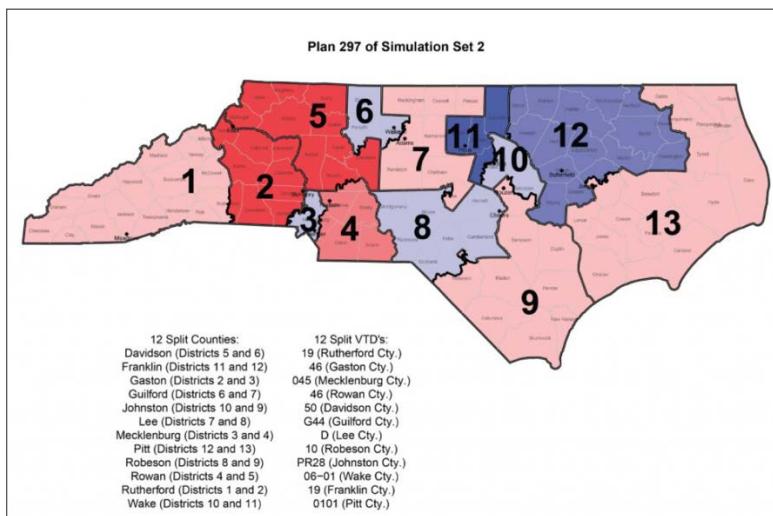
### U.S. Supreme Court agrees to hear N.C., Maryland gerrymandering cases

**THE U.S. SUPREME** Court finally may decide how much partisan advantage is too much when a political party draws congressional districts.

The justices have agreed to hear arguments in lawsuits involving the congressional maps in North Carolina and Maryland. Districts in both states had been declared unconstitutional by trial court panels in different federal judicial circuits. Oral arguments are scheduled March 26.

Courts in recent decades have regularly struck down districts drawn in a manner that denied equal protection to racial minorities. In contrast to those racial gerrymandering cases, the nation's highest court has reached no conclusion on partisan gerrymandering. While some justices have been willing to accept the notion that partisan gerrymandering could be unconstitutional, others have argued that courts have no business meddling in a political issue.

Former Justice Anthony Kennedy had acted as a swing vote. He agreed with the court's "liberal" bloc that partisan gerrymandering could



**The three-judge panel in charge of N.C.'s redistricting lawsuit suggested the state adopt this congressional district map drawn by Jowie Chen, a University of Michigan political science professor.**

be unconstitutional. But Kennedy never provided a deciding fifth vote for a judicial standard that would strike down an electoral map as overly partisan.

The N.C. and Maryland cases will

mark the first time the U.S. Supreme Court has addressed the partisan gerrymandering issue since Justice Brett Kavanaugh replaced Kennedy.

CJ Staff

### Scooter company raises prices, blames Raleigh City Council

**PEOPLE IN RALEIGH** who ride electric scooters will probably notice their trips costing more.

Bird, which operates many of the e-scooters dotting downtown, has added a \$2 transportation fee in response to recent City Council regulations.

Last year, the Raleigh City Council decided to implement an annual \$300 per e-scooter charge for any company that wants to operate e-scooters in the city. The money is supposed to go toward enforcing the city's rules on e-scooter use.

No other city has charged as much per e-scooter as has Raleigh. The average charge per e-scooter is between \$20 to \$30. Some cities charge as much as \$100 per e-scooter. Cities often also charge a company a permit fee to operate in the city.

The council also decided to limit the number of e-scooters permitted in the city to 1,500.



Each company is allowed to deploy up to 500 e-scooters. If the maximum number of e-scooters are deployed, the city could take in \$450,000.

The City Council requires that e-scooter companies have insurance, maintain staffed operations in the city, and provide monthly and annual reports on rate structures. E-scooters face limits on where they can park and at what time they can be deployed downtown.

Lindsay Marchello

### State justices affirm legislature's power to confirm governor's appointments



North Carolina Supreme Court justices, 2018

**T**he N.C. Supreme Court has closed one chapter in a two-year legal battle between Gov. Roy Cooper and the Republican-led General Assembly. The legislature prevailed.

In *Cooper v. Berger*, the justices ruled the state Senate does have the authority to confirm the governor's Cabinet appointments. The opinion, by Chief Justice Mark Martin, says the Senate's ability to reject an appointment doesn't violate separation of powers, since the governor chooses who will serve on the Cabinet, supervises those officers, and can remove them at will.

The justices affirmed a decision issued more than a year ago

by a unanimous three-judge Court of Appeals panel.

The General Assembly passed legislation in December 2016 requiring the governor to subject appointments for confirmation under "advise and consent" language in the N.C. Constitution. Soon after Cooper took office in early 2017, he filed a lawsuit challenging the law.

A three-judge trial-court panel in March 2017 sided with the General Assembly, saying confirmation doesn't violate separation of powers. The Court of Appeals agreed several months later, and the justices affirmed the opinion.

CJ Staff

## N.C. COURTS

# With Martin's departure, Cooper likely to move Supreme Court further left

BY KARI TRAVIS

**N**.C. Supreme Court Chief Justice Mark Martin will soon become the next dean of Regent University's law school in Virginia Beach, Virginia. Who might take his place is anyone's guess, though it's a safe bet that the court will continue to skew left.

The 55-year-old Martin, a public servant for 26 years, on Jan. 25 announced his resignation from the N.C. Supreme Court, effective Feb. 28. Martin has served on the court for 20 years. Gov. Pat McCrory appointed him chief justice in 2014.

Martin told Spectrum News' Tim Boyum in a Friday interview it's time for a career switch. Plain and simple.

"You reach a point in your career where, if you want to try a second career, you have to get started," Martin said. "You still have your health, and still have your energy and ability to really go out and give your very best. And, aside from judging, the thing that I've enjoyed more than anything else is working with law students and young people who want to join our profession as lawyers."

McCrory picked Martin in September 2014 to replace retiring Chief Justice Sarah Parker. Martin won a full eight-year term as chief justice in an election two months later. He had served as an associate justice on the Supreme Court since 1999.

Martin had been both the youngest justice in N.C. Supreme Court history and the youngest judge elected to the N.C. Court of Appeals. He served on that court from 1994 to 1999 after two years as a Superior Court judge in Pitt County. Martin had served as legal counsel to former Republican N.C. Gov. Jim Martin before taking the bench.

Earlier in January, Martin helped the N.C. Supreme Court celebrate its 200th anniversary. He invoked Alexander Hamilton's Federalist Papers essay No. 78, urging colleagues to set aside "preferences and opinions" in adhering to the rule of law.

"Each of us, as unique individuals, and thus as unique jurists, may not always administer the principles of Federalist 78 in the same exact way as other judges," Martin explained. "The key is that we each strive to do so — that we understand that the judicial office is not a political office. Courts are a



**N.C. SUPREME COURT CHIEF JUSTICE MARK MARTIN.** The 55-year-old Martin, a public servant for 26 years, on Jan. 26 announced his resignation from the N.C. Supreme Court, effective Feb. 25.

CJ PHOTO BY DON CARRINGTON

co-equal branch but with a different function than the legislative and executive branches."

Rich Leonard is dean of Campbell Law School in Raleigh. He's a former U.S. bankruptcy judge for the Eastern District of North Carolina and became dean at Campbell's Norman Adrian Wiggins School of Law in July 2013.

"Chief Justice Martin is a good friend for whom I have the utmost respect," Leonard says. "As someone who also left the bench for a deanship, I expect that he will find the skills he honed in that position will translate nicely and he will be remarkably successful."

Martin's exit punctuates an already significant political shift on the court. The seven-member body

has swung from conservative to liberal, flipping from a 4-3 Republican majority to a 4-3 Democratic majority after the election in November 2016.

In that race, Wake County Superior Court Judge Mike Morgan beat incumbent Associate Justice Bob Edmunds. Morgan got 54 percent of the vote to Edmunds' 46 percent. Many suggested Morgan's place on the ballot, which came before Edmunds, played heavily in the outcome.

Regardless, the transformation to the left continued in 2018, when Republican incumbent Associate Justice Barbara Jackson lost her seat to Democratic challenger Anita Earls.

Gov. Roy Cooper, who will appoint someone to fill Martin's seat, is about to push the scales to a 6-1

Democratic majority.

"Historically," says Leonard, "governors have looked to associate justices to fill the chief justice position when it has become vacant, and there is certainly ample talent on the court in those positions," he told *Carolina Journal*. "The caveat may be that many of the current associate justices have just run increasingly arduous campaigns and are secure in eight-year terms. Whoever becomes chief justice will have to run in 2020 to keep the position, which means starting to build a campaign right now for what will undoubtedly be an expensive and hotly contested race. We will just have to see who is interested."

Former Supreme Court Justice Bob Orr echoes Leonard, saying Cooper probably will choose someone already on the court as chief justice, then appoint someone from the N.C. Court of Appeals to fill the open associate justice's seat.

Senior Associate Justice Paul Newby is the only remaining Republican on the court. Newby would be a presumptive choice for chief justice under a Republican governor. In this case, if Cooper selects a chief justice from among

those already on the bench, he is more likely to choose Associate Justice Robin Hudson — the court's senior Democrat — to fill the slot, Orr said.

Hudson was elected to the Supreme Court in 2006 after five years as a judge on the Court of Appeals. She was re-elected in 2014. Her term expires in 2022.

While Hudson is a candidate for Cooper's appointment, there's no guarantee she would run for the position again when her term is over. Justices are required to retire from the Supreme Court at age 72. Hudson is 66.

Cooper will most likely select a chief justice who is willing to run for re-election, Orr said.

"There will be no shortage of patriots willing to volunteer," he said.

Merit, not politics, should be the deciding factor when it comes to filling the vacancy, Martin told Boyum.

"You should be selected based on legal and judicial ability, demeanor, and temperament. And that goes with being open-minded, to listening to both sides of the dispute before you come to a conclusion," he said.

There's another factor, Leonard says. The court, he says, must make a greater effort to progress and to adapt in today's technology-driven environment.

"I have always been heavily involved in court technology," Leonard says, "and it is painfully obvious that the North Carolina courts are woefully behind the federal and other state courts in this area. But we are at a pivot point, and I think the primary job of the next chief justice is to drive the North Carolina courts into the 21st century, whoever he or she is."

In 2015, Martin convened the N.C. Commission on the Administration of Law and Justice, a 65-member panel of attorneys, academics, and nonlawyers to address the state's handling of civil justice, criminal investigations, legal professionalism, technology, and public trust in the courts. As a result of that effort, the chief justice led a successful effort in 2017 to raise the age so that 16- and 17-year-old offenders would be treated as juveniles, not adults, for most nonviolent offenses.

*CJ Managing Editor John Trump provided additional reporting for this story.*

# UNC-CHAPEL HILL

## Silent Sam discussions further complicated by chancellor search

BY LINDSAY MARCHELLO

The UNC system is looking for someone to serve as interim chancellor for UNC-Chapel Hill after former Chancellor Carol Folt's sudden departure. But it's unclear who might want the job when it also means taking on Silent Sam.

When Folt announced her plan to step down at the end of the academic year, she decided also to take Silent Sam's pedestal down from McCorkle Place and place it in storage with the Confederate monument. The move upset the UNC Board of Governors and led to Folt's accelerated departure.

Folt was expected to leave Jan. 31. A temporary replacement was expected to be named by that date.

Dr. William Roper, interim president of the UNC System, told UNC BOG members at a meeting Jan. 25 that whoever becomes interim chancellor must also be familiar with the landscape of higher education.

"They must be ready to start on day one, and that means they cannot spend many months getting to know the lay of the land," Roper said.

The interim UNC system president said the national search for a permanent chancellor will probably start in the summer. Until then, an interim chancellor must lead the campus.

"Carolina needs a leader who has the gravitas to lead. We need an interim chancellor who will be able to chart the right course ahead and push back where needed," Roper said.

Roper said he anticipates the interim chancellor will have an ac-



**DETERMINING THE FATE OF SILENT SAM.** Onlookers view the base of "Silent Sam" Aug. 20, the day after protesters removed the Confederate monument from its post at UNC-Chapel Hill.

CI PHOTO BY DON CARRINGTON

tive role in determining the fate of Silent Sam. That will mean dealing with a faculty interested in having more of a voice regarding the disposition of the monument.

On Jan. 10, the UNC-Chapel Hill Faculty Council formally created a committee focused on the future of Silent Sam.

The faculty advisory committee will have up to 15 members, appointed by Faculty Council Chair Leslie Parise, after nominations are made. The committee aims to provide input to the university administration.

Whether it will actually have a say in deliberations over Silent Sam

is uncertain.

Protesters toppled the monument Aug. 19, and university administrators have struggled to determine the statue's fate.

Complicating things is a 2015 law protecting the movement of historic monuments without permission from the N.C. Historical Commission. The law requires that any monument removed from its location be returned to a place of similar prominence. If the monument wasn't originally at a museum, mausoleum, or cemetery, it can't be moved to any of those locations.

Parise told faculty council members at the meeting the ultimate

legal authority over Silent Sam lies with the General Assembly — not with the university, the UNC Board of Governors, or with the UNC-Chapel Hill Board of Trustees.

"They can fix this with a stroke of a pen," Parise said.

Neither the General Assembly nor the N.C. Historical Commission has taken responsibility for the statue. Instead, university officials are trying to find a solution for Silent Sam that works within the law.

The BOT in December approved a proposal from Folt to house Silent Sam in a \$5.3 million historical center to be built at Odum Village.

Few people were happy with the idea. Those who wanted the statue removed from campus criticized the idea of placing it back on campus in an expensive historical center.

Others argued Silent Sam's rightful place was back on his pedestal at McCorkle Place, and nothing short of his return there would do.

Some graduate students and teacher assistants threatened to withhold final grades if Silent Sam returned to campus. They could have held hostage some 2,000 grades if the university administration failed to meet protesters' demands.

The threats proved premature, as the Board of Governors rejected the BOT proposal during a Dec. 14 meeting. Instead, the BOG created a five-member task force to help the BOT in devising a new plan for Silent Sam by March 15.

UNC Board of Governors Chair Harry Smith said the task force would work with key stakeholders and constituents in coming up with a solution for the statue.

Parise told *Carolina Journal* that, as far as she knows, the council hasn't heard from the BOG Silent Sam task force.

The UNC-Chapel Hill Faculty Executive Committee passed a resolution Jan. 22 praising Folt for her time as chancellor.

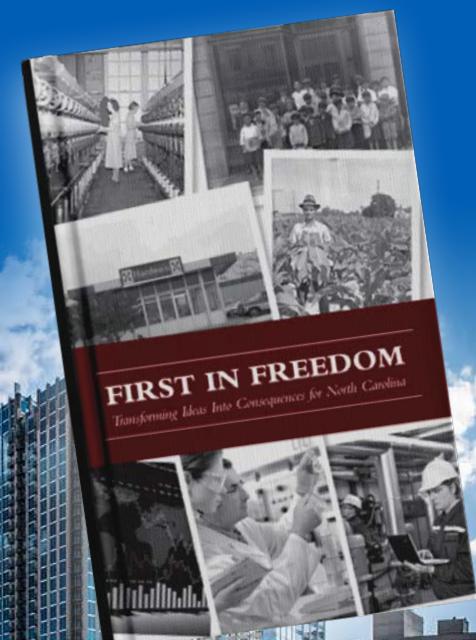
"Her visionary leadership — exemplified by an inspiring strategic plan; successful capital campaign; commitment to diversity, affordability and accessibility; and her final bold action to have the pedestal removed from McCorkle Place — will leave a lasting legacy on this campus," Parise said in a statement following Folt's departure.

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## HEALTH CARE

# Pfeiffer's new health sciences center could alleviate rural care shortage

DAN WAY

ALBEMARLE — North Carolina's rural residents historically suffer more from chronic diseases than their suburban and urban counterparts, largely because they lack access to medical care.

Pfeiffer University, a United Methodist-based institution with a social justice and servant leadership mission, thinks it has an antidote to whittle down health disparities and provider shortages in an eight-county region.

Pfeiffer took a bold plunge into the health care gap when it broke ground Jan. 17 for a \$16 million Center for Health Sciences here in the Stanly County seat of government, a short drive from its main campus in Misenheimer.

The building is expected to be completed by May 2020. When fully operational it will enroll 200 students annually seeking either a master of science in physician assistant studies degree or a doctorate of occupational therapy.

The city's economic development department estimates the center's 10-year economic impact will be more than \$136 million. New businesses, restaurants, and apartments are expected to spring up to accommodate the influx of students. It's precisely the sort of symbiotic relationship many experts say is necessary to combat the complex challenges of recruiting health care professionals to small towns.

Pfeiffer is well known for its nursing and health programs. President Colleen Keith said the PA program will offer concentrations in rural health primary care and mental health. Those services are in great demand in North Carolina's less-populated regions.

Overall demand for health care services is projected to grow by about 15 percent nationally between 2016 and 2030, a March 2018 report by the Association of American Medical Colleges concluded. Research by the Robert Graham Center for Policy Studies in Family Medicine and Primary Care found 34 percent of North Carolina's population is medically underserved, and the state needs to add 1,885 primary care physicians by 2030 just to maintain the status quo.

Physician assistants might be one way to fill the breach.

In 2016, there were an estimated 115,500 certified PAs nation-



**ALLEVIATING THE RURAL HEALTH CARE SHORTAGE.** Pfeiffer University President Colleen Keith speaks at the groundbreaking ceremony for the university's new Center for Medical Sciences Jan. 17 in Albemarle.

wide, according to the Association of American Medical Colleges. "The supply of PAs is projected to more than double by 2030 — reaching 242,000 if current growth patterns for the number of graduates continue," the AAMC report said.

The N.C. Academy of Physician Assistants says there are more than 5,700 PAs living and working in North Carolina.

A report by the Cecil G. Sheps Center for Health Services Research at UNC-Chapel Hill concluded between 1990 and 2013 the PA workforce increased 284 percent in North Carolina, compared to just a 42 percent cumulative growth rate for physicians during the same time period.

Campbell University, East Carolina University, Elon University, Gardner-Webb University, High Point University, Lenoir-Rhyne University, Methodist University, Wake Forest University, Wingate University, and UNC-Chapel Hill already offer PA degrees. Most have seats for 30 or more students. Duke University is tops with about 80 students per class.

**Thirty-four percent of North Carolina's population is medically underserved, and the state needs to add 1,885 primary care physicians by 2030 just to maintain the status quo.**

Brenda Diaz, director of Pfeiffer's PA program, said it's the last one N.C. regulators will approve. Full-time and adjunct faculty, staff, and guest lecturers will teach. Diaz said Pfeiffer will start with 24 students the first year, add 36 in the second cohort, and hit a full complement of 45 in the third year. The rest of the 200 students will be in the occupational therapy program.

Pfeiffer capped PA enrollment at the maximum level existing clinical sites can absorb for on-site training in the Central Park business development region. That comprises Anson, Davidson, Montgomery, Moore, Randolph, Richmond, Rowan, and Stanly counties, Diaz said.

Pfeiffer thinks the PA program will generate much-needed services for the region. The U.S. ratio for population to primary care physicians is 1,320:1, and the state's is 1,420:1. Only Moore County (960:1) has a better ratio among Central Park counties. The other seven far exceed the state ratio.

The Southern Association of Colleges and Schools' Commission on Colleges isn't expected to begin the center's accreditation process until next month, but student interest is bursting already. Diaz expects 1,000 applications from throughout the country for the first 24 seats, though most likely will come from the immediate eight-county region.

Emergency medical technicians, nurses, pharmacists, and

other nontraditional students have expressed strong interest in the program. Qualified Pfeiffer graduates and veterans are guaranteed an interview to give them a leg up on the admissions process.

Diaz, a physician assistant for 30 years, said Pfeiffer will do more than train PAs. The university will advocate for them by seeking to relax North Carolina's restrictive scope-of-practice laws. The laws limit the services a PA can provide, even though they're qualified for higher-level tasks. Critics say those antiquated laws block competition that could drive down medical costs and save government health programs billions of dollars.

"It's not about us," Diaz said. It's about patients who don't have local access to doctors, have to travel long distances to seek care, or can't afford it, leaving them with health conditions worse than statewide averages.

"Pfeiffer University will be a strong voice to work with the state and work at a national level as well" to strip away regulatory barriers, Diaz said. "That's one of my purposes. If I leave a legacy, this will be it."

Occupational therapy and PA are 27-month programs. Students will spend their first year in the new center, which will have a large multipurpose room to accommodate teaching or medical conferences. There will be classrooms, a lab that can hold 16 cadavers, six exam rooms, and six hospital rooms with simulated human patients. The second phase of training is field work in rural clinics and physician offices.

Keith said university officials hope they can achieve what many medical schools struggle with — keeping the vast majority of graduates from clustering in larger N.C. cities or leaving the state.

"Oftentimes, PA students will stay in the communities they did their work in," Keith said. That's why Pfeiffer will immerse its students in rural settings, and familiarize them with the cultures, customs, and people.

Partners are waiting, Keith said. Monarch has a brick-faced behavioral health center across the street from the Pfeiffer site. Monarch occupies the bottom floor of the historic Lillian Mills, recently restored with condominiums above. GHA Autism Supports is building a facility for developmentally disabled adults and adults with autism.

CI PHOTO BY DAN WAY

## POLITICS AND GOVERNMENT

# Who is Ken Eudy?

## Governor's pipeline negotiator had ties to Duke Energy

BY DON CARRINGTON

**K**en Eudy, Gov. Roy Cooper's policy adviser, was the governor's key negotiator with Duke Energy in developing a \$57.8 million discretionary Atlantic Coast Pipeline fund Duke and its utility partners would pay to Cooper.

Duke Energy also was a client of Capstrat, the marketing, advertising, lobbying and public relations firm Eudy co-founded in 1994. Documents released by Cooper's office show Eudy negotiated directly with Duke's chief lobbyist, Kathy Hawkins.

Ethics disclosure documents Eudy filed suggest he left Capstrat sometime before January 2017, when he joined the Cooper administration. But an annual report filed in April 2017 with the Secretary of State's office listed Eudy as one of Capstrat's four managers.

No one in the governor's office has explained to *Carolina Journal* whether Eudy was working with Capstrat after he started working for the governor. Neither Eudy nor Cooper Chief of Staff Kristi Jones responded to multiple requests to clear up the issue. *CJ* also hasn't been able to determine what services Capstrat was providing Duke in 2017.

A person who knowingly conceals information or files false information on his ethics disclosure form, called a Statement of Economic Interest, may be charged with a felony or misdemeanor.

Any relationship Eudy might have had with Duke Energy or Capstrat after he joined Cooper's administration should have posed ethical concerns for the governor. Records released by the governor's office in late December show Eudy intervened in negotiations with the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission over the pipeline. In one instance, he demanded a signed agreement between FERC and the Department of Natural and Cultural Resources be revoked temporarily because it was concluded without his final approval.

News articles and internet postings indicate Duke Energy has been a Capstrat client since at least 2013. *CJ* hasn't been able to determine when Eudy severed ties to Capstrat or its successor company Ketchum — a New York-based global public relations firm that bought Capstrat from Eudy in 2013. Eudy stayed on as presi-



**ADVISER TO THE GOVERNOR.** Ken Eudy had a lengthy career in journalism and politics before joining Cooper's administration.

KEN EUDY/TWITTER

dent of Capstrat until 2015, when he left that role and remained the firm's chairman.

Duke Energy spokeswoman Tammie McGee couldn't say if Duke remains a Capstrat or Ketchum client. "The last Capstrat invoice we processed for professional services for our Corporate Communications Department was on March 22, 2017, for services in February of 2017. I don't have insight into other groups in the company," McGee told *CJ*.

Cooper's office announced the \$57.8 million discretionary fund immediately after the state Department of Environmental Quality announced it approved a critical water-quality permit for the ACP. Both announcements were made Jan. 26, 2018. The memorandum of understanding between the governor's office and the four utilities building the pipeline — including Duke — said the money would be used to mitigate environmental impacts of the pipeline; for economic development projects in the affected

counties; and for renewable energy projects in the affected counties.

*CJ* was the first news organization to note the unusual arrangement. It was created outside normal legislative budgeting functions. Several legislators said Cooper violated the separation-of-powers doctrine in the state constitution, which says all state spending must be authorized by the General Assembly. In February, the legislature voted to redirect the ACP discretionary fund to the school systems in the eight counties crossed by the pipeline. To date, the state has received no money.

In December, a legislative committee hired a team of former federal agents to investigate the permit process and the creation of the \$57.8 million discretionary fund.

High-level state employees, including employees of the governor's office, must file Statements of Economic Interest with the State Ethics Commission. (In

December 2016, the General Assembly passed a law combining the Ethics Commission with the State Board of Elections, but after a successful legal challenge by the governor, the General Assembly passed a law in December returning those functions to separate boards effective Feb. 1.)

Eudy had a lengthy career in journalism and politics before joining Cooper's administration. After graduating from UNC-Chapel Hill in 1975 with a degree in journalism, Eudy worked as a television reporter and then for the *Charlotte Observer* as a political reporter. From 1987-89 he served as executive director of the N.C. Democratic Party. In 1994 he co-founded Capstrat. News articles state his clients included Duke Energy, Blue Cross, Lenovo, Quintiles, and UNC Health Care.

Eudy's 2017 SEI is dated Jan. 15, 2017. One section requires individual filers to report sources of income more than \$5,000 during the previous year. In that section, Eudy listed only his Capstrat salary. Another section requires a list of financial interests valued at \$10,000 or more in publicly or nonpublicly owned companies at the end of the previous year. As of Dec. 31, 2016, Eudy listed one company — Waste Zero. He did not list Capstrat LLC or Ketchum.

On April 12, 2017, Capstrat LLC filed a required annual report with the N.C. secretary of state. In the section labeled "company officials," the report listed Dale A. Adams, Kenneth L. Eudy, Jr., and Craig Gangi as managers and Deborah V. Reed as chief financial officer. Reed also certified and signed the report.

*CJ* was unable to discuss the annual report with Reed. She re-

cently retired from Capstrat and Ketchum. Reed left a voice message with a *CJ* reporter saying the report was filed by Debbie Brannan of Ketchum's holding company, DAS Global. Brannan hasn't responded to a request to discuss Eudy's tenure at Ketchum.

Along with negotiating the MOU for the \$57.8 million pipeline fund, Eudy was involved in other ACP issues. Some of these activities came to light in late December, when Cooper's office — responding to records requests from a number of media organizations — released 19,000 pages of documents related to the ACP.

WRAL News put the documents into a searchable database.

Before FERC would approve the ACP, the state of North Carolina had to devise a "Plan for the Unanticipated Discovery of Historic Properties or Human Remains During Construction in North Carolina." The task wound up with the N.C. Department of Natural and Cultural Resources, which prepared a plan and transmitted a copy to FERC Jan. 12, 2018.

Eudy — from the transcript of a February 2018 interview he gave to WRAL — tried to get back the signature page of the plan when he learned Natural and Cultural Resources had submitted the plan to FERC without his knowledge or consent.

Emails show how closely Eudy was involved in details of the ACP negotiations.

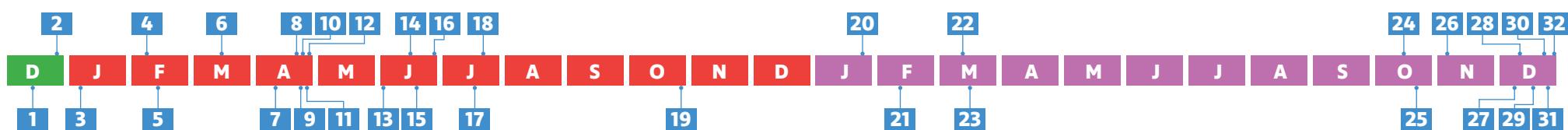
On Jan. 13, Charlotte's WBTV released investigative reports showing Eudy, legal counsel William McKinney, and Cooper discussed withholding approval of the MOU until Duke Energy reached an agreement with solar company executives on an interpretation of House Bill 589 — Competitive Energy Solutions for North Carolina.



**Any relationship Eudy might have had with either Duke Energy or Capstrat after he joined Cooper's administration should have posed ethical concerns for the governor.**

# TIMELINE

## Bipartisan Board of Elections and Ethics Enforcement



### 2016

- 1 **DEC. 16:** The General Assembly passes Senate Bill 4 to merge the state's ethics and elections boards into one bipartisan board. Half of the members would be appointed by the governor, while the other half would be appointed by the legislature. The law would require four Democrats and four Republicans to serve on the board.
- 2 **DEC. 29:** Gov.-elect Roy Cooper files a lawsuit challenging S.B. 4. Cooper's attorneys ask a Wake County Superior Court judge to block the law from taking effect.

### 2017

- 3 **JAN. 5:** The Wake County Superior Court grants a temporary injunction.
- 4 **FEB. 9:** The N.C. Court of Appeals removes the temporary injunction.
- 5 **FEB. 13:** The N.C. Supreme Court reinstates a temporary injunction of S.B. 4.
- 6 **MARCH 17:** The Wake County Superior Court strikes down S.B. 4 as unconstitutional.

- 7 **APRIL 11:** Senate Bill 68, which would merge the state's ethics and elections boards, passes. The merged board would have eight members with an equal number of Republicans and Democrats. The governor would be able to appoint all members.
- 8 **APRIL 21:** Cooper vetoes S.B. 68.
- 9 **APRIL 24:** The Senate overrides Cooper's veto in a 33-15 vote.
- 10 **APRIL 25:** The House overrides the governor's veto in a 75-44 vote.
- 11 **APRIL 26:** Cooper files suit in Wake County Superior Court, arguing S.B. 68 is unconstitutional.

- 12 **APRIL 28:** A three-judge panel approves Cooper's request for a temporary restraining order to block the new bipartisan election and ethics board.
- 13 **JUNE 1:** The three-judge panel rejects Cooper's new lawsuit against lawmakers. The judges rule they have no jurisdiction in the case.
- 14 **JUNE 15:** Cooper appeals the decision.

- 15 **JUNE 16:** The Court of Appeals issues an order refusing Cooper's requested stay.
- 16 **JUNE 30:** Cooper files a petition for discretionary review by the Supreme Court.
- 17 **JULY 19:** The N.C. Supreme Court grants Cooper's petition for discretionary review.
- 18 **JULY 21:** The Supreme Court orders the Bipartisan State Board of Elections and Ethics Enforcement to remain until a decision is reached about its legality. An order signed by Justice Michael Morgan explains the court will hear the case Aug. 28.
- 19 **OCT. 31:** Pursuant to an order from the Supreme Court, the Superior Court rules again that it doesn't have jurisdiction in Cooper's lawsuit against S.B. 68 but clarifies that if it did have jurisdiction then it would have ruled against Cooper.

### 2018

- 20 **JAN. 26:** The N.C. Supreme Court, in a 4-3 ruling, reverses the Superior Court's June 1 ruling. While the court

ruled the merger of the elections and ethics board was constitutional, the court said parts of the law relating to appointments to the board were unconstitutional.

- 21 **FEB. 13:** The General Assembly passes House Bill 90, which changes the elections board to comply with the court ruling. With H.B. 90, the board has nine members, four of whom are Democrats and the other four Republicans. The ninth member must be unaffiliated.
- 22 **MARCH 13:** Cooper files a complaint against H.B. 90, arguing that it's unconstitutional.
- 23 **MARCH 16:** H.B. 90 is entered into law without the governor's signature.
- 24 **OCT. 16:** The Wake County Superior Court rules the board unconstitutional.
- 25 **OCT. 22:** The Wake County Superior Court rules the board can stay in place until Dec. 3, so as not to disrupt the November election.
- 26 **NOV. 6:** Voters reject a proposed constitutional amendment designed to enshrine the merged bipartisan elections and

ethics board in the state constitution.

- 27 **DEC. 11:** Republican lawmakers introduce House Bill 1029 to return the Bipartisan Board of Elections and Ethics Enforcement to two separate boards.
- 28 **DEC. 12:** The House votes, 82-17, and the Senate, 34-3, to approve H.B. 1029 as a conference report.
- 29 **DEC. 21:** Cooper vetoes H.B. 1029 because it contains a provision that would make investigations of alleged campaign finance violations confidential.
- 30 **DEC. 26:** Veto override votes on the elections board bill were 68-40 in the House and 28-12 in the Senate.
- 31 **DEC. 28:** A three-judge panel dissolves the nine-member board. By law, the new board would not be established until Jan. 31. Cooper announces plans to establish an interim board.
- 32 **DEC. 30:** The N.C. Republican Party sends a letter to Cooper's office denouncing the interim board as unconstitutional and refuses to nominate members.



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## TIMELINE

## 9th Congressional District election investigation



## 2018

- 1 **NOV. 3:** Last day of early voting.
- 2 **NOV. 6:** Republican candidate Mark Harris declared the unofficial winner in the 9th Congressional District race against Democrat challenger Dan McCready and Libertarian Jeff Scott. Harris won by 905 votes.
- 3 **NOV. 27:** The Bipartisan State Board of Elections and Ethics Enforcement refuses to certify the election results of the 9th Congressional District in a unanimous vote. Democrat Joshua Malcolm, the state board vice chairman, raised the issue of absentee ballot irregularities in the district.
- 4 **NOV. 29:** Leslie McCrae Dowless is reported as being at the center of the investigation into absentee ballot irregularities. Dowless was paid by the Harris campaign as a contractor for the Red Dome Group, a consultant for the campaign.
- 5 **NOV. 30:** The NCSBE votes 7-2 to delay certifying the election results.
- 6 **NOV. 30:** Harris releases a statement saying the board should certify the results.
- 7 **DEC. 1:** NCSBE issues a sub-

poena for Harris' campaign to produce 140,000 documents relating to the inquiry. The Red Dome Group also is subpoenaed.

- 8 **DEC. 4:** NCSBE announces the disclosure of evidentiary materials related to its investigation of election fraud in the 9th Congressional District election.
- 9 **DEC. 6:** McCready withdraws his concession and voices concern about alleged election tampering.
- 10 **DEC. 7:** Republican senators hold a press conference calling on Gov. Roy Cooper to create a bipartisan task force to investigate the alleged election fraud in the 9th Congressional District.
- 11 **DEC. 7:** Harris, in a video posted to his Twitter account, says he and his campaign are cooperating with the investigation and that he was unaware of any wrongdoing.
- 12 **DEC. 11:** N.C. Republican Party Chairman Robin Hayes says in a news conference that the NCSBE must assume control over the Bladen County Board of Elections' operations if a new election is held.
- 13 **DEC. 11:** Republican lawmakers introduce House Bill 1029 to return the Biparti-

san Board of Elections and Ethics Enforcement to two boards. While the bill was in committee, a provision was removed that would have mandated a new primary if an investigation of alleged absentee ballot irregularities in the 9th Congressional District warranted a new general election.

- 14 **DEC. 12:** Republican lawmakers add back the provision to H.B. 1029 that would require a new primary if a new general election is scheduled. The House votes, 82-17, and the Senate, 34-3, to approve the bill.
- 15 **DEC. 21:** McCready's attorneys submit a list of 48 witnesses to the State Board of Elections.
- 16 **DEC. 21:** Cooper vetoes H.B. 1029 because it contains a provision that would make allegations of campaign finance violations confidential.
- 17 **DEC. 26:** Veto override votes succeed by a 68-40 margin in the House and 28-12 in the Senate.
- 18 **DEC. 31:** Outgoing U.S. Rep. Robert Pittenger, who lost the 2018 Republican primary to Harris, says he would not file for the seat again if a new election with a new filing period is ordered.

## 2019

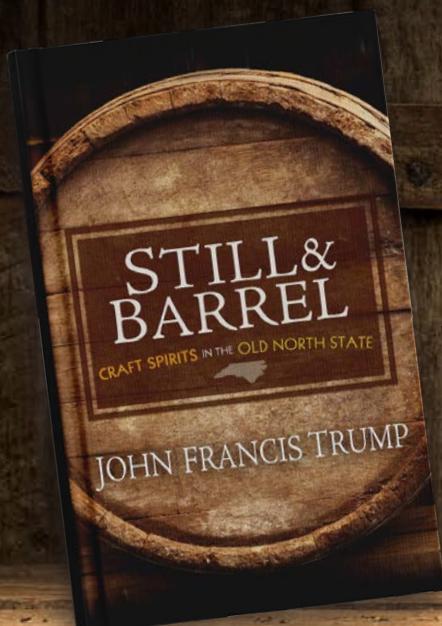
- 19 **JAN. 2:** NCSBE hearing planned for Jan. 11 is postponed because a three-judge panel dissolved the board. A new, five-member State Board of Elections won't be in place until Jan. 31.
- 20 **JAN. 2:** In a news release, Cooper says he won't appoint any members to an interim elections board because NCGOP Chairman Robin Hayes has refused to offer any nominees. GOP attorney John Lewis said Cooper's proposed interim board is unconstitutional.
- 21 **JAN. 3:** The 116th Congress convenes without seating Harris.
- 22 **JAN. 3:** Harris files a petition with Wake County Superior Court to order the executive director of the NCSBE to certify the 9th Congressional District results.
- 23 **JAN. 3:** WBTV reports frequent contact between former state elections board chairman Joshua Malcolm and former Bladen County elections board member Jens Lutz, both Democrats, around the Nov. 6 election. Lutz, who had business dealings with Dowless, resigned from the Bladen board in December.

- 24 **JAN. 5:** Chairwoman of the U.S. House Administration Committee, Rep. Marcia Fudge, D-Ohio, plans to launch an investigation of the 9th District race if the Superior Court certifies Harris.
- 25 **JAN. 7:** Sens. Harry Brown, R-Onslow, and Kathy Harrington, R-Gaston, call on Malcolm to answer questions about his communications with Lutz regarding the 2018 election.
- 26 **JAN. 14:** Lawyers for McCready ask the state court to reject Harris' motion to certify the election results.
- 27 **JAN. 14:** More than 700 documents relating to the investigation are disclosed.
- 28 **JAN. 15:** A state Republican Party news conference raises questions about links among Malcolm, Lutz, and McCready.
- 29 **JAN. 15:** Wake County Superior Court sets Jan. 22 for a hearing on Harris' motion to compel certification of the 9th District results.
- 30 **JAN. 22:** Wake County Superior Court Judge Paul Ridgeway rejects Harris' petition to force state elections staff to certify him the winner of the 9th U.S. Congressional District election.

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# HIGHER EDUCATION

## *N.C. Community College System gears up to help noncompleters 'Finish First'*

For some students, the North Carolina Community College System is an affordable path to getting a certificate, diploma, or degree. But the system's outdated records technology means many students drop out without realizing they have enough class credits for some type of academic credential.

Now, with the help of the Lumina Foundation and the John M. Belk Endowment, NCCCS is getting a technology makeover.

Finish First, a data tool invented by Wake Technical Community College's Kai Wang, senior dean of in-

novations, and Bryan Ryan, senior vice president of effectiveness innovations, uses analytics to help college advisers get a better picture of student progress and opportunities.

Often, students abandon classes at community colleges without realizing they've earned enough credits to qualify for some level of technical or academic credential, said NCCCS President Peter Hans. Each community college offers certificates, diplomas, and two-year degrees across a vast catalogue of curriculums. If NCCCS can measure a student's course records against every possi-

ble credential program, advisers can help individuals stay motivated to reach incremental, or "stackable," goals.

Finish First would do just that.

The software collects student information and finds leaks at every point of the pipeline. Ultimately, the program will identify first-time college students, students who are within striking distance of completion, and students who have already completed credentials but are unaware of their progress.

Finish First has been tested at a handful of community colleges, in-

cluding Wake Tech, and has yielded positive results, Hans said.

NCCCS received \$750,000 in grants from the Lumina Foundation and the Belk Endowment to implement the software across the 58-college system.

Students who attend community college are juggling jobs, kids, or other life challenges. By providing clear pathways and giving students a real sense of progress, community colleges can help noncompleters get back on track and across the finish line, Hans said.

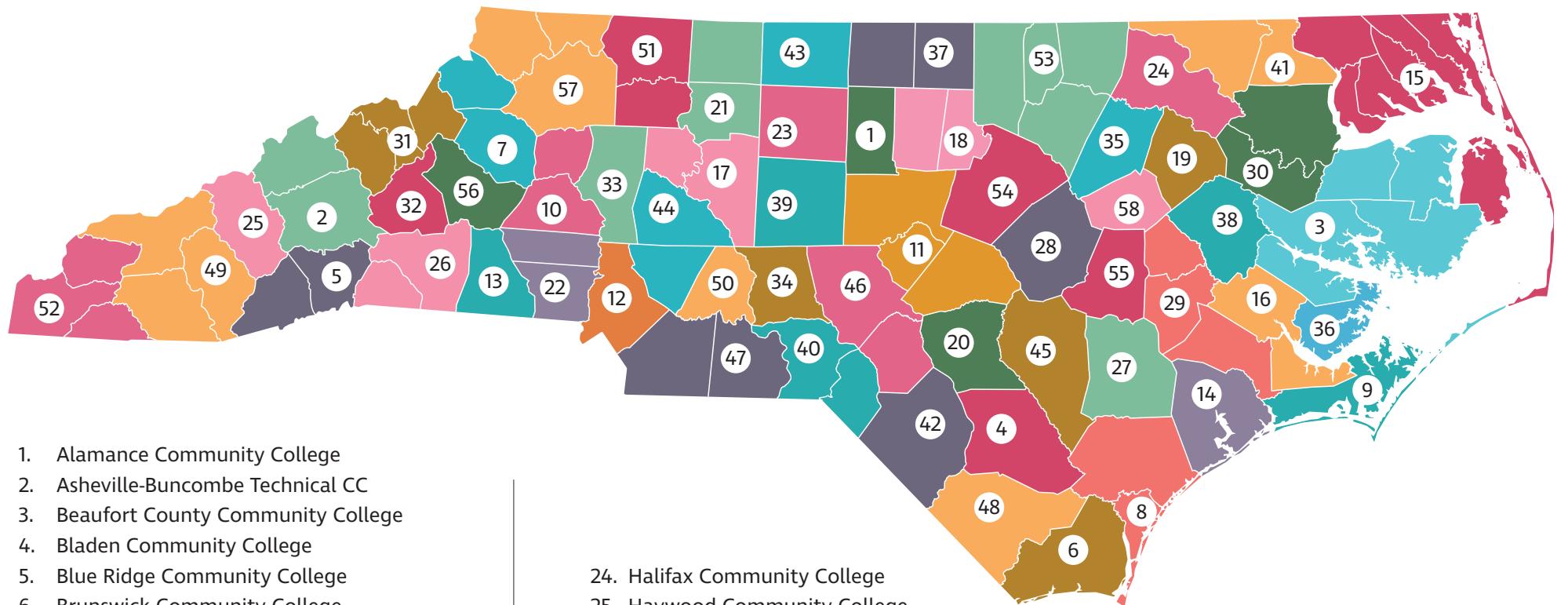
"We've done a tremendous dis-

service to tell everybody, 'This is what you have to do,' or, 'You failed,' because most people are probably going to fail. And then they get discouraged," Hans said.

"I fully believe everybody should have the opportunity to go to a university ... but that's not going to be the path for everybody. The more that we can collaborate between two-year and four-year institutions, the more this notion of 'stackable credentials' actually can lead people to earn a certificate in some field."

Kari Travis

### The North Carolina Community College System



1. Alamance Community College
2. Asheville-Buncombe Technical CC
3. Beaufort County Community College
4. Bladen Community College
5. Blue Ridge Community College
6. Brunswick Community College
7. Caldwell CC & Technical Institute
8. Cape Fear Community College
9. Carteret Community College
10. Catawba Valley Community College
11. Central Carolina Community College
12. Central Piedmont Community College
13. Cleveland Community College
14. Coastal Carolina Community College
15. College of The Albemarle
16. Craven Community College
17. Davidson County Community College
18. Durham Technical Community College
19. Edgecombe Community College
20. Fayetteville Technical Community College
21. Forsyth Technical Community College
22. Gaston College
23. Guilford Technical Community College

24. Halifax Community College
25. Haywood Community College
26. Isothermal Community College
27. James Sprunt Community College
28. Johnston Community College
29. Lenoir Community College
30. Martin Community College
31. Mayland Community College
32. McDowell Technical Community College
33. Mitchell Community College
34. Montgomery Community College
35. Nash Community College
36. Pamlico Community College
37. Piedmont Community College
38. Pitt Community College
39. Randolph Community College
40. Richmond Community College
41. Roanoke-Chowan Community College
42. Robeson Community College

43. Rockingham Community College
44. Rowan-Cabarrus Community College
45. Sampson Community College
46. Sandhills Community College
47. South Piedmont Community College
48. Southeastern Community College
49. Southwestern Community College
50. Stanly Community College
51. Surry Community College
52. Tri-County Community College
53. Vance-Granville Community College
54. Wake Technical Community College
55. Wayne Community College
56. Western Piedmont Community College
57. Wilkes Community College
58. Wilson Community College

# HIGHER EDUCATION

## CHOICES

continued from PAGE 1

ing for classes to fit his schedule.

"I had started and stopped several times with other universities that offered classes for adults," he said. "It was just problematic. I started doing more research on, 'What are my real options right now?'"

His options, it seemed, were schools like Strayer University and the University of Phoenix — for-profit, online schools that in recent years have attracted criticism for expensive programs and sketchy academics. Evangelisto didn't like the reviews, and he didn't want to feel like he was just buying his degree.

Then, as he surfed Google one day, he found Western Governors University.

### No adult left behind

As for-profit online colleges such as the University of Phoenix plummet in popularity, nonprofit universities are on the rise.

An April 2018 report from *Inside Higher Ed* cited "meteoric growth" for nonprofit, online schools and pointed to WGU, which, to date, has a national enrollment of 112,000 students. WGU is climbing as one of the biggest contenders in the online space.

The only other nonprofit to come close is Southern New Hampshire University, which has both a traditional campus and an online school. SNHU's online enrollment hit 93,000 last year. The two schools are eclipsing the University of Phoenix, which has dwindling enrollment, dropping below 100,000 students for the first time in 15 years, the report said.

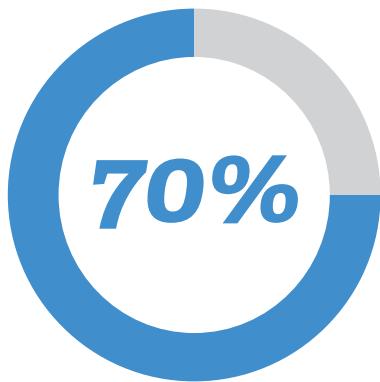
WGU is gaining traction in North Carolina, giving viable college options to hundreds of nontraditional students like Evangelisto. Founded in 1997 by 19 bipartisan U.S. governors, the school is headquartered in Salt Lake City. Since WGU's official opening in 1999, affiliates of WGU have formed in North Carolina, Arizona, Indiana, Missouri, Nevada, Ohio, Tennessee, Texas, and Washington.

Any student in any state can enroll in any WGU program, but state affiliates of the university give students a more involved experience — with the ability to interact locally with other students, mentors, and teachers.

WGU North Carolina was established in 2017 under the leadership of Chancellor Catherine Truitt, a former senior education adviser to former N.C. Gov. Pat McCrory. The state put up \$2 million in startup costs, and the Golden LEAF Foundation provided \$1 million in matching funds.

## 900,000

More than 900,000 North Carolinians between the ages of 25 and 64 have some college, but no degree.



Seventy percent of North Carolinians believe "having education beyond high school, including a college degree or professional certificate, is essential for getting a good job," according to a 2018 Gallup Poll.

## The My Future NC Commission

myFUTURE NC

What barriers stand in the way of North Carolina's future workforce?

That's one of several questions the My Future NC Commission will seek to answer in its official recommendation for "statewide educational attainment," to be unveiled in February.

Established in 2017, the commission is made up of business, education, nonprofit, political, and philanthropic leaders. The group spent months poring over everything from early childhood to postsecondary education, said Dale Jenkins, CEO of Medical Mutual Holdings. Jenkins co-chairs the commission alongside Bank of America COO Andrea Smith and N.C. Community College System President Peter Hans.

Hans took over the co-chair position from former University

of North Carolina President Margaret Spellings after she resigned.

Success in public education is siloed among traditional K-12 schools, community colleges, and the UNC system, Jenkins told *Carolina Journal*. Each system needs to find better ways of communicating and working with the others.

"What we've tried to do is say, 'OK, how do we better coordinate this education continuum in our state?'" he said.

There are lots of gaps.

Nontraditional adult students between the ages of 25 and 44 are in particular need of support, Jenkins said. Students have options beyond a traditional four-year college degree, and those options deserve more consideration.

"We're going to try to emphasize some of the technical programs that we looked at. How do

we fund community colleges? We don't think the funding mechanism is exactly right these days. There's more funding for traditional curriculums — such as history, and English, and math — as opposed to funding for trade school."

Since businesses are looking to schools for a well-trained workforce, it's up to those businesses to communicate their needs to educators, Jenkins said.

"You can go to the local community college, you can go to educators, and you can say, 'These are the skillsets that my business requires. What are you doing in the education world to help me address them?'"

Setting the commission's plan in motion will be the next challenge for 2019, Jenkins said.

"I think going forward the question is how do we take really solid ideas, and how do we take this attainment goal, and how do we execute it? I would always argue that ideas are worth a dollar. Execution is worth everything."



**EVANGELISTO.** Joe Evangelisto is Director of Infrastructure at Durham's Metablon Inc.



**TRUITT.** Catherine Truitt, Chancellor for Western Governor's University, a nationally acclaimed online school.

Today, the university is profitable — and fully funded by tuition receipts.

"We do not take any state or federal money," Truitt said.

The university offers undergraduate and master's degrees and has four schools — business, health and nursing, I.T., and education.

Evangelisto began his studies in 2008, before WGU expanded and when online learning was relatively unexplored territory. At first, the school sounded too good to be true.

"I reached out to WGU and said, 'What's the deal? How does this really work?'"

### Competency-based education

Letter grades don't matter at WGU.

Instead, the school uses "competency-based" education, a system that relies on industry standards over arbitrary or subjective classroom grades.

In other words, students prog-

ress based on whether they've mastered the material, not whether they've merely completed a semester's coursework.

WGU's competency-based programs give students the opportunity to show they've earned their degrees, Truitt told *Carolina Journal*.

"Employers complain all the time. ... People are not graduating with the skill sets that they need," Truitt said.

WGU learns what employers need and want, then prepares students accordingly. When stu-

dents take a test, their answers are weighed against answers provided by professionals in their field of study, Evangelisto said.

"If you're in accounting, [WGU teachers] will reach out to existing accountants who are considered experts, who have done the job a decade or more, and have them take the test," he said.

"The average rate of passing there is the pass rate for the course. You've shown you have as

continued PAGE 12

# HIGHER EDUCATION

continued from PAGE 11

much knowledge as someone who is actually in the field and doing the work.”

“Too many colleges add too much fluff,” he said. “They add stuff that doesn’t really matter today. They teach courses that don’t actually have an impact. Once you get a job, then you don’t know what you need to know because you’ve never done it.”

Student accountability is another part of WGU’s model, Truitt said. Each student is provided a mentor — someone who is a professional or expert in the career field of interest, with a master’s degree or higher credential. That mentor guides the student through every step of a degree program.

One such mentor is David Hicks, a former educator of 32 years. Hicks was ready to retire. When Truitt asked him to be a mentor, he was intrigued by the competency-based approach.

During his 13 years as a school principal, Hicks transitioned from a traditional public school to an alternative high school that served at-risk youth from troubled back-

grounds.

Under his leadership, the school successfully adopted a competency-based learning style, similar to WGU’s.

“We wanted to make the pacing right for what the student needed,” Hicks said. “If they were having trouble with one class, we needed to give them some extra time with that class.”

“On the other hand, if you’ve got a student who does very well in the class, why do you make them stay in the class for a whole semester, when they’ve got it done in just a few weeks? And that’s how WGU works.”

Today, Hicks mentors between 70 and 100 students in WGU’s school leadership master’s program.

“I call every student weekly,” he said. “We talk about where they’re



**There has to be more information given to students as they are applying to college. “What’s going to happen when I graduate? Where am I headed with my degree? Am I going to be able to get a job? What career am I going to have if I’m an English major?”**

- WGU-NC Chancellor Catherine Truitt

at, about what’s going on, about whether they’re behind or ahead, or if there’s any life issues that pop up, or might slow them down. We can kind of adjust for that. I’m a little bit of a mentor, and a tutor, and a life coach.”

Mentors are mandatory. They help students make on-time progress, Truitt said.

When WGU North Carolina opened, it enrolled 1,100 students. That number has since grown to nearly 3,000.

Truitt’s goal is to reach 11,000 by October 2022.

Low-cost tuition is another factor that makes the university an attractive option, Evangelisto said.

WGU charges an average of \$3,400 for a six-month term and allows students to take “all-you-can-

eat” credits, Truitt said.

A minimum of 12 credit hours is considered a full-time load. Students can take more if they want, all at no additional charge.

The model requires self-discipline and structure and is tailored for those who can maintain their own schedule and remain motivated, Evangelisto said.

“Early on I had to learn what worked best for me.”

Evangelisto got up at 6 a.m. each day and studied for two hours before work. He read, took tests, and wrote papers — pushing through the wee hours of the morning.

“That’s when I realized this is how I function. Today, that’s how I arrange my work. If I have to get things done, I schedule them before noon.”

Evangelisto finished his undergraduate degree and went on to complete his master’s — also through WGU.

## A solution by degrees

More than 900,000 North Carolinians ages 25 to 64 have some college, but no degree, according to a 2018 report from My Future NC.

About 1.3 million, or 24 per-

cent, have a high school or general education diploma. Five hundred fifty thousand residents, 10 percent, have an associate degree.

Sixty-seven percent of North Carolina jobs will require post-secondary education by 2020, the Georgetown University Center on Education and the Workforce predicts.

North Carolina must get to work educating noncompleters, Truitt said.

“In North Carolina we have a shortage of nurses, we have a shortage of teachers, and we have a shortage of IT professionals. That’s three of WGU’s four colleges,” she said.

Whether North Carolinians choose a traditional or nontraditional path, one thing is certain: They should be given the facts about the highs and the lows of education, Truitt said.

“There has to be more information given to students as they are applying to college. ‘What’s going to happen when I graduate? Where am I headed with my degree? Am I going to be able to get a job? What career am I going to have if I’m an English major?’

“There have to be alternatives.”

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# EDUCATION

## Wake County Public Schools enrollment misses the mark

BY LINDSAY MARCHELLO

Wake County Public Schools was anticipating enrolling 1,900 new students in the 2018-19 school year. Instead, the school district added just 42 students, the smallest single-year growth in the past 30 years.

The Wake County Board of Education met Jan. 8 to discuss what happened and what it means for the school district.

Wake County Superintendent Cathy Moore said it has reported slower growth over the

past three years, but planners expected birth rates and the number of school-age children to increase. That didn't happen.

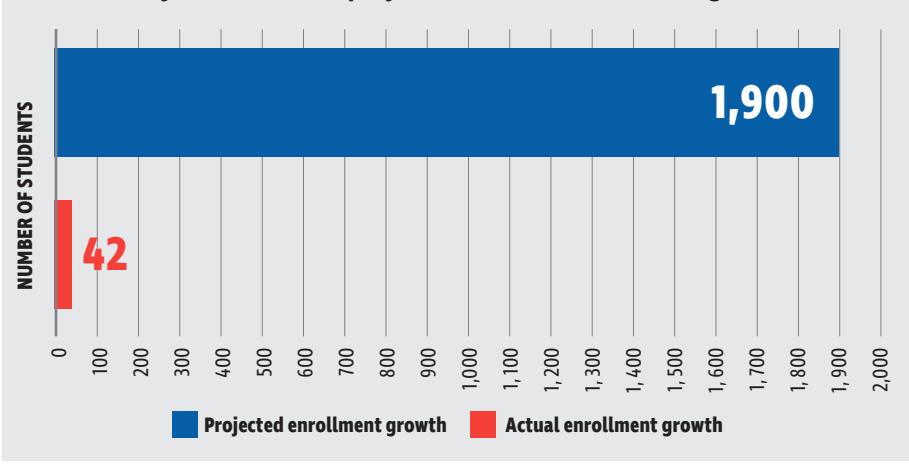
Birth rates in Wake County are slowing, not increasing, and the number of school-age children has also decreased. Adding to the mix is the growing availability of school-choice options, including charter schools, private schools, and homeschooling.

Charter school enrollment in Wake County increased from about 8,000 students in 2014-15 to more than 13,000 students in 2018-19. This isn't

unique to Wake County. Across the state, charter school enrollment is increasing. The story is similar with private schools and homeschooling. Both are growing, not only in Wake County, but all over North Carolina.

Wake County Public Schools still serves the majority of students in the county, with more than 160,000 students attending traditional public schools. New projections predict the school district will add 559 students for the 2019-20 school year. Enrollment may even shrink in 2025.

Wake County Public Schools projected vs. actual enrollment growth, 2018-19



## Carver Heights will become a restart school instead of transferring to the ISD

BY LINDSAY MARCHELLO

Instead of joining the Innovative School District, Carver Heights Elementary will become a restart school.

The move is part of an effort to turn around the school's chronic low performance.

On Jan. 10, the State Board of Education approved Wayne County Public Schools' application to make Carver Heights Elementary a restart school.

Originally, Carver Heights was slated to become the second school to join the ISD along-

side Robeson County's Southside Ashpole. Carver Heights has the opportunity to avoid that fate, thanks to a law passed by the General Assembly before the holidays.

Senate Bill 469, a technical corrections bill, featured a provision permitting Wayne County Public Schools to submit a restart school application for Carver Heights in lieu of handing the reins to the ISD. If Carver Heights fails to improve under the restart school model by the end of 2020-21, then it would transfer to the ISD.

## New national poll shows support for school choice is growing



GROWING SUPPORT. Students wearing commemorative scarves celebrate National School Choice Week.

MORE THAN two-thirds of likely voters back letting parents use tax dollars to send children to the public or private school which best fits their needs, a new poll shows.

The 67 percent support level is 4 percentage points higher than a similar poll taken a year ago.

The National School Choice Poll of 1,200 likely 2020 voters, conducted by the Democratic polling firm Beck Research, was released last month by the nonprofit group American Federation for Children.

The poll has been conducted each of the past five years to coincide with National School Choice Week.

Backing for school choice has remained fairly consistent over the

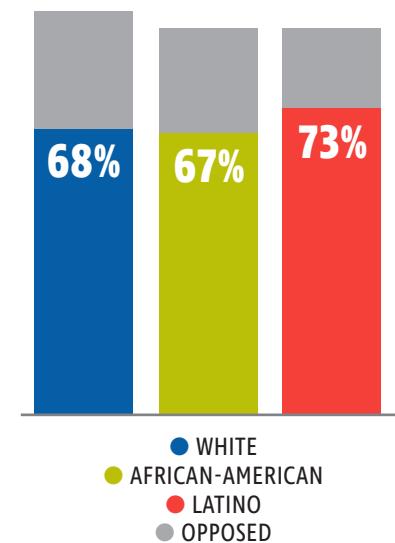
five-year period. The percentage favoring choice has ranged from 63 percent to 70 percent, while opposition has ranged between 24 percent and 33 percent.

School choice gets high marks across the board, with strong support from whites (68 percent for, 28 percent against); African-Americans (67-25); and Latinos (73-19).

A majority of Democrats, Republicans, and independents back choice as well, though with 56 percent favoring school choice and 36 percent opposing it, Democrats give choice the lowest levels of support.

Voters also say they want politicians who will extend school choice options.

Growing support for school choice across all demographics



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## COMMENTARY

# The unfinished business of school finance reform



**DR. TERRY STOOPS**  
VICE PRESIDENT FOR RESEARCH  
JOHN LOCKE FOUNDATION



A 2016 report published by the N.C. General Assembly's nonpartisan Program Evaluation Division detailed the distribution of state funds to public schools and concluded that the system's "features and controls are redundant, counterintuitive, lack rationale, and obscure transparency and accountability." They recommended either addressing the systemic defects identified in the report or initiating a complete overhaul of the system. Since the publication of the report, however, the way that the state delivers funding to public schools is mostly unchanged.

After lawmakers pass a budget that establishes public education funding levels for the following school year, the N.C. Department of Public Instruction distributes state dollars to school districts using a so-called resource allocation model. State funds are dispersed to districts using dozens of allotments or funding categories for components considered necessary

for the operation of public schools, such as textbooks and teachers. A series of formulas, published in a lengthy policy manual, determines the amount of money that each district receives for each allotment. If it sounds complicated, that is because it is.

School district officials may also transfer taxpayer funds between categories, so long as they comply with state regulations and statutes. One of the more surprising findings in the Program Evaluation Division report was that districts had conducted nearly 1,000 allotment transfers, moving over \$200 million across categories in 2015. Even funds set aside for our most vulnerable populations — low-income, at-risk, and limited-English-proficiency students — were

the subject of allotment transfers during that school year. While transfers are not inherently harmful, it makes it difficult to track the movement of state dollars at the district level. A provision in the 2017 state budget provided a short-term fix by requiring districts to publish allotment transfer data on their websites.

Another provision in the 2017 state budget created the Joint Legislative Task Force On Education Finance Reform. Lawmakers created the task force to receive input on North Carolina's school finance system from district, state, and national school finance experts. After seven meetings of the task force, the consensus was that the Program Evaluation Division report accurately described the

defects of North Carolina's obsolete school finance system.

Michael Griffith, school finance strategist at the Education Commission of the States, testified that North Carolina's funding system falls short of giving school districts the flexibility to meet the demands of nontraditional education programs. He pointed out that North Carolina's system was designed at a time when "almost all students attended brick and mortar schools." Today, students attend a variety of schools due to the increasing availability of charter schools, career and technical schools, dual enrollment opportunities, and alternative programs. North Carolina's current funding model is ill-suited for schools that increasingly move further away from traditional models of instruction.

Georgetown University professor and school finance expert Marguerite Roza explained that North Carolina's school funding system is the exception rather than the rule. In a presentation to the task force, Roza testified that most states now allocate dollars using a student-based model. She pointed out that the type of system used by North Carolina and a handful of other states may lead to the inequitable distribution of funds and limit the ability of districts to use state funds in innovative ways. Roza recommended that North

Carolina follow the lead of states like California and adopt a student-based formula that allocates a base funding level for each student with funding supplements based on students' grade-level, income, disability, and instructional needs.

Legislators convened the final meeting of the Joint Legislative Task Force On Education Finance Reform in April 2018, but despite counsel from these school finance experts, they failed to advance legislation that would make substantive changes to North Carolina's school funding model. It remains to be seen whether the Republican majority will choose to make school finance reform a centerpiece of its legislative agenda. Like every legislative session, the 2019 session will include fights about the amount of money we spend on public education. The added complication of fighting about the way that money is distributed may be a battle that they will choose to avoid.

I hope that lawmakers have the political will to address the issue during the 2019 session and begin the multiyear process of implementing a student-based funding model. This would be the crowning achievement for a legislative body that has done so much to focus our public schools on the unique needs of children, rather than the demands of the institutions designed to serve them.

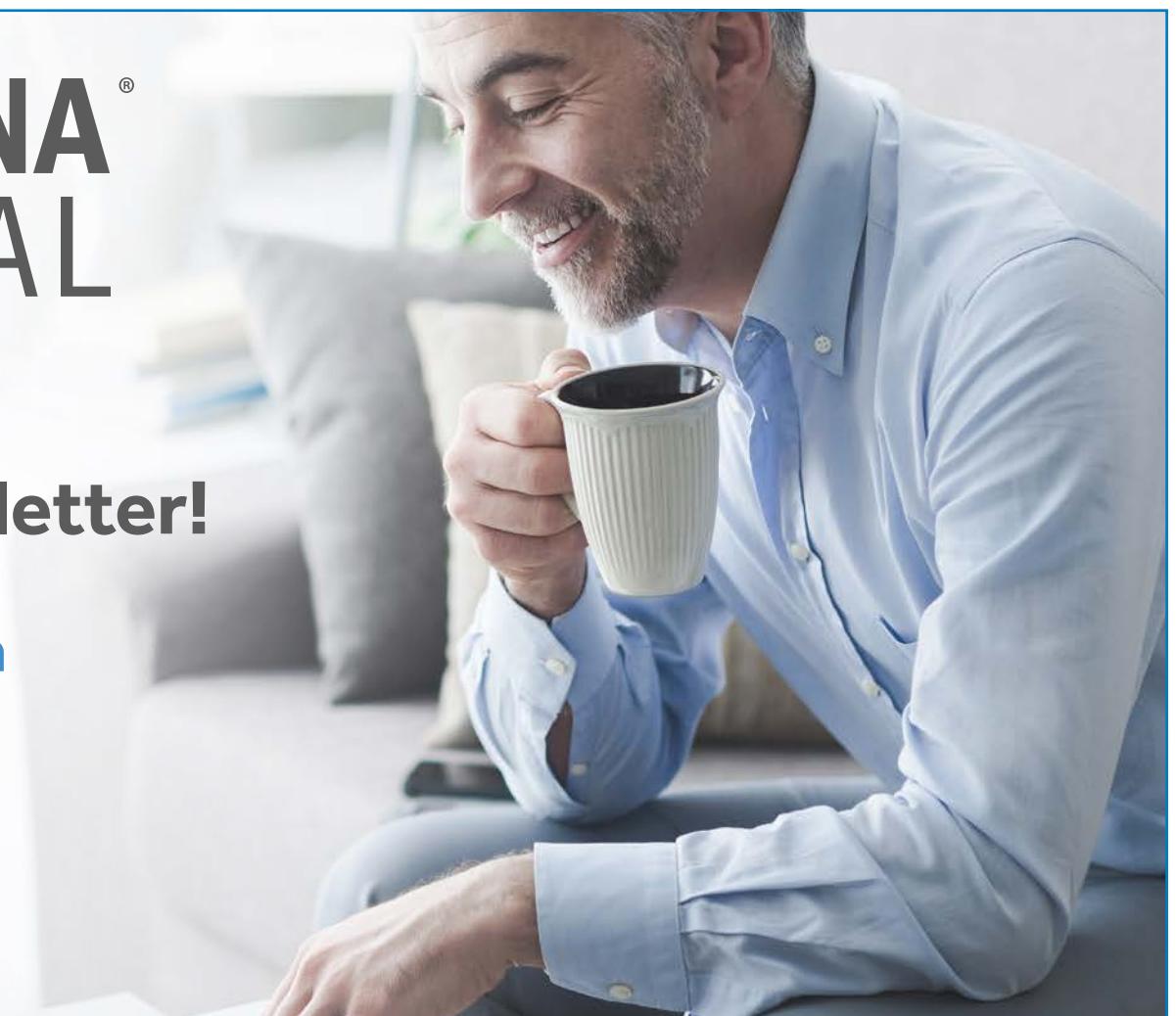


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## COMMENTARY

# Departing chief says rule of law requires setting aside preferences, opinions



**MITCH KOKAI**  
SENIOR POLITICAL ANALYST  
JOHN LOCKE FOUNDATION

After serving 20 years on the state's highest court — including almost five years in the top job in North Carolina's judicial system — Mark Martin is leaving. But the N.C. Supreme Court chief justice used one of his last public statements to remind colleagues about the importance of keeping politics off the bench.

"Alexander Hamilton posited that the judiciary is the least dangerous of the three branches of government," Martin said during a Jan. 7 celebration of the Supreme Court's 200th anniversary. He cited the famous American founder's words in the 78th Federalist Papers essay. "As such, he theorized that the general liberty of the people can never be endangered from that quarter."

But Hamilton, "like any good lawyer," added a caveat, "that the judiciary remain truly distinct from both the legislature and the executive," Martin added. "With this warning in mind, he went on to urge that the courts must declare the sense of the law, and if they should be disposed to exer-

cise will instead of judgment, the consequence would equally be the substitution of their pleasure to that of the legislative body."

In other words, judges should refrain from acting like legislators.

That doesn't mean judges always will reach the same conclusions. "Each of us, as unique individuals, and thus as unique jurists, may not always administer the principles of Federalist 78 in the same exact way as other judges," Martin explained. "The key is that we each strive to do so — that we understand that the judicial office is not a political office. Courts are a co-equal branch but with a different function than the legislative and executive branches."

"We understand that judges should defer to the other branches on issues of policy as long as constitutional standards are observed," Martin said. "By assuming a seat on this bench, we lay down our preferences and opinions in joint pursuit of upholding the rule of law."

"If judges do strive in good faith to observe the principles of Federalist 78, then the courts will in fact be the least dangerous branch," the chief justice added.

Martin aimed his words at a room full of federal and state judges, along with other lawyers and political leaders, including Democratic Gov. Roy Cooper and Republican Lt. Gov. Dan Forest, potential combatants in the 2020 race for the state Executive Mansion.



**If judges do strive in good faith to observe the principles of Federalist 78, then the courts will in fact be the least dangerous branch.**

- N.C. Supreme Court Chief Justice Mark Martin

But one suspects that the chief justice hoped colleagues sitting to his left and right would take special notice. Martin is leaving his job at the end of February as one of just two registered Republicans on the seven-member Supreme Court. The court's newest addition, Democrat Anita Earls, donned the black robe in January after decades of displaying her "preferences and opinions" as a lawyer pursuing causes for left-of-center advocacy groups like the Southern Coalition for Social Justice.

Democratic partisans have hoped and their Republican counterparts have feared that a more solid Democratic majority will lead to a substantial shift in Supreme Court rulings. They predict a shift toward the political left. That outcome is possible. It's not guaranteed.

With a 4-3 advantage during

the past two years, Democratic justices rarely displayed any evidence of a desire to secure partisan outcomes. Democrats and Republicans split along party lines in just three of 155 rulings handed down in 2017 and 2018. (In a fourth instance, the seven justices agreed on the result of a case while splitting along party lines on the legal reasoning.) Only one of those cases, the *Cooper v. Berger* ruling on a disputed reworking of the state elections board, involved a political dispute.

In other political cases, the court has acted in ways that worked to partisan Democrats' disadvantage. In March 2018, a unanimous one-sentence order signed by Democratic Justice Michael Morgan denied a request from Cooper. The Democratic governor wanted the high court to block the Republican-led General Assembly from merging state elections and ethics boards. The Supreme Court refused to go along. (A later trial-court order prompted state lawmakers to reverse the merger anyway.)

In September, the court rebuffed Cooper's attempt to block two proposed constitutional amendments from appearing on the fall election ballot. Without comment and with no sign of dissent, justices followed the standard appellate process. They ultimately endorsed the conclusions of a Superior Court panel.

In December, a unanimous court sided with Republican lawmakers

in their fight with Cooper over confirmation of the governor's Cabinet appointments. Martin wrote for the court — including all four Democrats — in reaffirming the GOP-led General Assembly's "general power to legislate, which it retains as an arm of the people."

No one can say with certainty how Earls will influence the court's direction. The same is true for Martin's replacement. Martin, for one, signaled during his Jan. 7 remarks that he hopes justices will continue to "lay down our preferences and opinions."

"It is often quoted that freedom is a fragile thing and is never more than one generation away from extinction," the chief justice said. "It is not ours by inheritance and must be fought for and defended constantly by each generation. Our freedoms as Americans are secured by the rule of law, by respect for our Constitution, and by each of us doing our part to promote and support the public good."

"The members of this court are the ultimate guardians of the rule of law in this state," Martin added. "It is the responsibility of the members of this court — both now and in the future — to heed Hamilton's charge, to decide each case as the law requires."

Follow that guidance, and avoid playing partisan political games, and the Supreme Court will give North Carolinians more reasons to celebrate its accomplishments in another 100 years.

NORTH CAROLINA

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## EDUCATION

# Looking at higher ed through rose-colored glasses



**SHANNON WATKINS**  
COLUMNIST

It can be tempting for college leaders to focus solely on data that support their policy initiatives—to the exclusion of other relevant information. Unfortunately, intentionally or not, former University of North Carolina System President Margaret Spellings seemed to have given in to this temptation.

At Spellings' last meeting of the UNC Board of Governors — her pending exit as system president only a month away — she triumphantly announced: “Nationally, we know there is skepticism of higher ed’s impact and benefits, but we’ve defied that trend in North Carolina.”

In her view, national polls that indicate a growing mistrust of higher education don’t apply to North Carolinians.

On the face of it, Spellings is right. A Gallup poll released in November by the MyFutureNC Commission, of which Spellings was a co-chair, clearly shows 65 percent of North Carolinians believe higher education improves their lives by helping them “get



ahead,” and 70 percent say it is “essential for getting a good job.” According to the poll, 94 percent of North Carolinians believe it’s important to receive a college degree or a professional certificate after high school.

While some might infer from these results that North Carolinians are more optimistic than the rest of the country, Spellings’ analysis ultimately falls short. Her claim doesn’t seem to take into account that people can recognize a college degree is important for economic (and personal) well-being while remaining unhappy with the direction higher education is taking.

Republican polling data illustrate this point. An overwhelming majority of Republicans in the United States are seriously concerned higher education has a

negative cultural and socio-political impact on the country.

For example, in a 2018 Pew Research Center national survey, 73 percent of Republicans said higher education is causing the country to “go in the wrong direction” (as did 61 percent of all Americans). And 75 percent of Republicans with that view said universities coddle students and that colleges are too concerned “about protecting students from views they might find offensive.”

Yet, according to a 2017 Pew report, the majority of Republicans also recognize higher education has economic advantages: “Last year, most Republicans said that colleges do well in preparing people for good jobs in today’s economy.”

Clearly, despite higher education’s widely perceived negative

influence on the culture, large swaths of the country simultaneously believe it plays an important role in economic mobility. Similarly, North Carolinians, like other Americans, can believe a college degree is necessary for a successful career while also believing the university system is heading in the wrong direction. This belief suggests North Carolina’s polling data do not defy any national trends regarding the lack of confidence in higher education — the results are entirely consistent with those trends.

In his book *The Case Against Education*, economist Bryan Caplan argues that college can be lucrative for individuals without providing societal or collective benefits. Caplan doesn’t dispute the fact that college can “pay.”

But the crux of Caplan’s argument lies in the question of why college pays. Some argue it’s because college supplies people with important skills employers find attractive. This is known as the “human capital” theory. Others, like Caplan, are less optimistic and believe a great deal of the value of a diploma has less to do with learned skills and more to do with “signaling.”

Caplan explains the concept of signaling in an *Atlantic* article: “The labor market doesn’t pay you for the useless subjects you master; it pays you for the pre-existing traits you signal by mastering them.”

In other words, the value of having a college degree largely has nothing to do with what students learn while in college. Instead, it shows — or signals — desirable characteristics to employers such as intelligence, conscientiousness, and conformity.

According to Caplan, as the reception of a college degree becomes more commonplace, and the percentage of the total population with a degree increases, employers can more easily make holding a degree a qualification for a job. And since having a degree does signal employable characteristics, more employers will require an applicant to hold a degree.

In the end, policymakers must face the reality of credential inflation and look long and hard at how their current efforts to create a “college-going culture” may feed into that problem. It’s not enough to rely on glowing public opinion data to justify the aggressive expansion of higher education — especially when it might end up hurting the state’s most vulnerable residents.

North Carolina’s higher education leaders seem to be so set on confirming their policy goals that they are blinded from seeing the whole picture, or they willfully read more into the data than actually exists.

*Shannon Watkins is a policy associate at the James G. Martin Center for Academic Renewal.*

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# EDUCATION

## Why are teenage girls so sad?



**KRISTEN BLAIR**  
COLUMNIST

It's tough to be a teen girl today. Youth depression has risen significantly over the past decade, the uptick coming primarily from girls. The mother of a 17-year-old girl, I know pressures are high. Smartphones and social media fuel constant connection and comparison. Achievement expectations and perfectionism raise academic stakes, creating stress and burnout. Days are long; nights are short. Girls need lots of adult perspective, at home and school, to cope with it all.

First, the numbers: 41 percent of teen girls nationwide experience persistent feelings of sadness or hopelessness. That's nearly double the number of boys voicing similar symptoms, according to the Youth Risk Behavior Survey. Angst peaks during junior year, when 44 percent of girls are depressed. Many adults, then, know a girl who's sad and stays that way for weeks.



New data buttress worries about social media. A large-scale study from University College London, evaluating almost 11,000 14-year-olds in the U.K., found girls were "twice as likely to show signs of depressive symptoms linked to social media use compared to boys." Social media use was associated with a "stepwise increase" in depression. That's concerning, given girls' proclivities: 43 percent spent three or more hours daily on social media.

Perfectionism creates another pressure point. A recent study in *Psychological Bulletin*, comparing nearly 42,000 American, British, and Canadian college students to earlier generations, found greater perfectionism today. Socially prescribed perfectionism — striving for perfection to gain others' approval — increased most. Researchers cite cultural and economic change and competition, along with greater parental anxiety and control, as possible causes.

In top high schools, striving can reach toxic levels. Attending a high-achieving school, while conferring academic benefits, raises depression and perfectionism risks, according to Arizona State University psychologist Suniya Luthar's research. Kids internalize this exhausting ethos: "I can, therefore I must."

School counselor Nartarshia Sharpe sees myriad pressures for girls. The high school member services representative for the N.C. School Counselor Association, Sharpe says social media is "first and foremost" among girls' external pressures. "They feel a lot of times in their mind that they don't measure up."

Disconnecting daily for some period of time helps kids decompress. "I remind parents that, yes, it's important that your child feels a part of their peer group," Sharpe says, "but they also need to unplug when they come home. Everybody needs to unplug." Family connection builds kids up, enabling them to face the world again.

Since she began working in Wake County in the mid-1990s, Sharpe has observed growing perfectionism and a need for recognition. It isn't just student-driven.

"A lot of parents get caught up in it as well," she says. At the mall or grocery store, Sharpe hears "comparison conversations" between parents, discussing the number of AP classes kids are taking or colleges' expectations. "It's great if it's what that child truly wants to do," she says, "but I'm thinking, 'How is that child really feeling internally?'"

Sometimes therapeutic intervention is needed, of course. But parents can help kids reframe perfection pressures by sharing times they messed up or weren't prepared, Sharpe says: "Children don't think that adults fail." Learning they do shows kids they can recover from failure, too.

Girls are competitive about grades, scores, college acceptances, Sharpe affirms; rethinking comparison helps. She tells students, "You are your own competition. Do your best, and that's what matters the most." About admission to prestige colleges, Sharpe challenges prevailing all-or-nothing thinking. She says, "It doesn't matter where you start. It just matters where you finish."

Words to live by, at any age.

*Kristen Blair is a Chapel Hill-based education writer.*

## Public universities exploit eminent domain with little oversight



**CHRIS WEST**  
COLUMNIST

**COLLEGES TEND TO** expand beyond their original missions by hiring more administrators and creating new programs. But they can also expand physically by exercising power usually reserved for state and federal governments. When that happens, universities can abuse their power and undermine the public good.

For a prime example of this expansion, look at how public universities use eminent domain. Universities have used this power to build sports arenas and parking lots and evict students from university property that is then leased to private companies. Unless the public notices these abuses early, universities are rarely stopped.

Eminent domain is the government power of taking private property for public use, with compensation paid to the owner.



**Boise State University sought eminent domain powers in pursuit of a stadium.**

When used carefully, this taking can be justified and not spark public opposition. For example, it would be nearly impossible to build highways or hospitals in some urban areas without resorting to eminent domain.

Though eminent domain has a legitimate purpose and motive, its use can stoke public outrage and skepticism. Property grabs and unnecessary government projects are littered throughout history. In notable cases, such as *Kelo v. City of New London*, private property is obtained by the government through eminent domain — and then given to private interests.

The process for approving university use of eminent domain varies by state. Some states have independent review boards, whereas others only require approval from a university board of trustees or a few campus officials for eminent domain claims. Multiple calls by the Martin Center to university officials for clarity on eminent domain went unanswered. The process for how universities make an eminent domain claim isn't transparent, and even basic records and statistics on how colleges use eminent domain are nonexistent beyond scattered news reports.

This lack of data is discouraging

because some colleges have abused their eminent domain power:

- In Idaho, Boise State University wanted to build a baseball stadium on the parking lot of the local Biblical Studies Center and two apartment complexes — even though Boise State doesn't have a baseball team.
- Some eminent domain claims end up being costly and overly burdensome. The College of the Desert in southern California initially offered \$9.6 million for an outdated shopping mall before filing an eminent domain claim. But, after a months-long legal battle with the property owner, the school paid \$22 million for the property. This new total doesn't account for the cost of renovations or repairs.
- Community colleges, too, have used eminent domain. In 2017, Collin County, Texas, passed a \$600 million bond to upgrade its community college system. The Collin Community College system master plan includes building new campuses and several student centers. To build a

new campus in the city of Wylie, trustees voted to seize 9.9 acres after the property owner refused to sell.

Even when colleges succeed in taking land, doing so can harm the school's local reputation. If universities go too far, the public may turn to the legislature to constrain school ambition.

Upon examining university use of eminent domain and its results, it's clear this power should be reserved for the most extreme cases of need — or, better yet, never used. It harms university reputation, is easily abused by university officials, and is costly to taxpayers who foot the bill for unnecessary expansions.

The use of eminent domain by universities is a classic example of the "field of dreams" mentality, which is far too common among higher education administrators: "If you build it, they will come."

Unless state legislatures restrain this practice, colleges will continue to use government power while the public remains in the dark.

*Chris West is a policy fellow for the James G. Martin Center for Academic Renewal.*

# TAXATION

## Sin taxes, other selective taxes lead to poor public policy nationwide

### Q & A



**Todd Nesbit**  
Assistant Professor  
Ball State University

Many governments assess so-called “sin taxes” on items such as alcohol and tobacco. A recent book examines the unintended negative consequences of sin taxes and other selective taxes. Titled *For Your Own Good: Taxes, Paternalism, and Fiscal Discrimination in the Twenty-First Century*, its co-author is Todd Nesbit, assistant professor of economics at Ball State University. Nesbit discussed the book’s key findings during an interview with Mitch Kokai for Carolina Journal Radio.



*For Your Own Good: Taxes, Paternalism, and Fiscal Discrimination in the Twenty-First Century*

**MK:** Your book tackles this exact topic, sin taxes — what they do, why they’re in place, whether they represent good public policy. Tell us what the book is designed to do.

**TN:** [Co-editor] Adam Hoffer and I, we pulled together 25 academic scholars from around the nation, who all have a lot of experience working in the tax space. The book itself is geared toward really trying to explain, No. 1, why we end up seeing selective taxes as opposed to broader-based, more efficient, economically efficient taxes. And then secondly, really what are some of the secondary unintended consequences that result from these taxes? Then we, obviously, conclude with some general guidelines and some best practices for a lot of the states and local governments.

**MK:** You used the term “selective taxes,” not quite the term “sin taxes,” but sin taxes would be among these selective taxes?

**TN:** Yes, absolutely. So the most common selective tax would be, I think, most people would see it as a sin tax. But even cell phone and data charges or taxes would fall under that and haven’t quite made it to the sin tax level. But I think that in the future, you’ll probably see some arguments in that regard with specifically the data plans that are out there.

**MK:** In general, I get the sense that people who have studied these taxes and looked at them from the vantage point of good-versus-bad public policy say, “This is probably not the right way to go.”

**TN:** No. Selective taxes ultimately have led to really poor policy across the board. I have labeled it as “lazy public policy” in many respects. Broad-based taxes are certainly much more efficient. Selective taxes — they tend to disadvantage certain parties. A lot of the burden of these taxes certainly



**SELECTIVE TAXES:** Politicians generally see selective taxes as more politically advantageous. If there’s some need for raising revenue, they could fund it either through broad-based taxes or they could selectively tax some small segment of your constituents.

falls on the poor. And then they ultimately advantage some corporations or some companies compared to some others. And so there’s some cronyism involved in the application of these taxes.

Politicians generally see them as more politically advantageous, mainly because if there’s some need for raising revenue, whether it be due to an increase in expenditures or a decrease in intergovernmental grants from the federal level, there’s that revenue need. But they could fund it either through broad-based [taxes], that apply an increase in taxes on all their constituents, or you can selectively tax some small segment of your constituents. Only about 15 percent of the population now smokes. That’s an easy target at this point. And it can put a nice spin on it, that says, “Oh, well, we’re doing this to improve health, as well.”

**MK:** Some people are going to be listening to us, and they’re going to say, “Wait a minute. People who smoke: There’s no reason why we shouldn’t just put an extra tax on those cigarettes. Or people who drink alcohol. They’re choosing to do these things. They don’t have to do these things. Why not just put some extra taxation on that?” From the vantage point



**A lot of the burden of these taxes certainly falls on the poor. And then they ultimately advantage some corporations or some companies compared to some others. And so there’s some cronyism involved in the application of these taxes.**

**of someone looking at good tax policy, why is that not the right way to focus on this?**

**TN:** I think that typically when we’ve talked about sin taxes historically, it’s been more of correcting for actions that an individual or a group takes, that tend to have some side cost on to other people unaffiliated with that action itself. In the economics lingo, this would be an “externality problem.” And now we’re starting to see, with cigarettes, the argument used to be, “Oh, second-hand smoke,” so there was that external cost.

Now the focus has become on its internality. So [the] cost [to] myself that if I happen to smoke, well, I’m causing damage to myself, reducing my own health, and I’m just not aware enough of it or knowledgeable enough to actually take the correct action.

I think that there is potentially some good argument to say, “Hey, maybe we should try to help fellow citizens be more healthy.” But the bigger question is: Should we do that through a stick? Punishing them for this consumption? Or trying to ... lead their decision-making more with a carrot rather than that stick, and so try to have these educational campaigns, even have some type of program where we reward them for smoking cessation.

**MK:** You work at Ball State University in the Midwest. Why come down to North Carolina and participate ... in a presentation designed for North Carolinians? Is this a state that could definitely learn some lessons here?

**TN:** North Carolina is a really interesting case, I think. Mainly because if you look at a lot of the business climate indices that exist out there — the Tax Foundation just recently put out the “2019 State Business Tax

Climate Index.” North Carolina ranks No. 12. This is really quite good — the top roughly 20 percent of the nation. But that’s with the business climate. In our book, we have a paternalism index that’s state-based. North Carolina ranks 33rd. And so, certainly, there’s a lot of room for improvement.

In the use of taxes, selective taxes, the state doesn’t do too bad. They’re roughly No. 21, 22 in that index. So certainly [in] the better half of the group. But they really tend to struggle with bans, and so really that paternalist nature — trying to discourage certain actions and doing so through public policy.

And so a lot of individual freedoms are being really diminished mainly through some of these tax policies and bans. A ban is essentially ... you can interpret it as like an infinite selective tax. ...

**MK:** If people are interested in targeting these things, like alcohol consumption or cigarette use, what’s a good way to attack this policy-wise that doesn’t involve the selective taxation that you see as such a problem?

**TN:** Yeah. That’s a difficult one, certainly. ... We could try to rely on, as I think we used to some time ago, rely on a lot of nonprofits to pick up that role. However, if we want to do it through public policy, there’s certainly going to need to be some form of tax revenue to fund various programs. ... Based on some of our research that’s presented in the book, I think it’s more of, well, if we want to reduce cigarette smoking, tie or earmark the tax source that links directly with the need.

So if there’s more people smoking, there’s a greater need potentially then for smoking cessation programs. That needs more revenue. However, if we then tax cigarettes and earmark that directly for that expenditure, we see that more smoking leads to more revenue for cessation programs, and it’s responding directly to the need.

# EDUCATION

## Innovative School District offers way to turn schools around

### INTERVIEW



**LaTeesa Allen**  
Superintendent  
Innovative School District

The Innovative School District was created in 2016 to help turn chronically low-performing schools around. Under the ISD, schools are transferred to an outside entity, such as an education management organization, for five years to improve academic performance. So far, only Southside Ashpole, an elementary school in Robeson County, has been transferred to the ISD. When Carver Heights in Wayne County was selected as the second ISD school, many in the community opposed it. On Jan. 10, the State Board of Education approved Wayne County Public Schools' application to turn Carver Heights into a Restart School, which allowed the school to avoid transfer into the ISD.

Carolina Journal Associate Editor Lindsay Marchello sat down Jan. 16 with ISD Superintendent **LaTeesa Allen** to discuss what the ISD is and how it could help turn around low-performing schools.

**LM:** What is the core mission of the Innovative School District?

**LA:** Our primary focus has been improving student achievement, and we want to do that by creating those innovative conditions, and also by working with communities in partnership to make sure we focus on equity and opportunity for students. You will find that in our mission statement, because we really believe in sticking to our core values and ensuring that what we are doing, working collaboratively with communities and creating those innovative conditions, that student achievement is accelerated.

**LM:** What do those innovative conditions look like? How do they work in practice?

**LA:** When you talk about innovation, it's very difficult to describe it and put it into a box because innovation is not in a box, and so what some of that looks like depends on the community that we go into. Some of that innovation is that we have flexibilities legislatively. What that means is that there can be flexibility in the school schedule, in hiring teachers, and things of that nature. We are also able to hire a school leader. We can adopt different calendars, meaning that students can have more days or they can have extended days. If you look at our school in Robeson County, we have extended days there. We work in partnership collaboratively with different organizations in that particular community. The innovation is really about what's best for kids. What can we do to create those conditions in that particular school and in that particular community to ensure that students are getting what they need? Innovation means you are going to do something different. There is going to be change, and that change is enacted, and ultimately the results are that student achievement improves.

**LM:** When Southside Ashpole was selected as the first ISD school, there was some pushback from the community and confusion over what it



meant to be a part of the ISD. That eventually blew over, but when Carver Heights was selected there appeared to be significantly greater pushback from the community, who viewed it as a takeover. How do you address those concerns?

**LA:** Well ... with Carver Heights we didn't get to the point with the process that we did with Southside Ashpole. Initially with Southside Ashpole, there was some trepidation. It was some of the same concerns that we were there for a takeover. What's going to happen with our school? What does the ISD mean? What happens with our students? What happens to the parents? What happens to anything that we already have in place? You have to engage and have those authentic conversations. Once Southside Ashpole and that community realized what we were there for, after the vote had taken place ... a lot of the working together took place after the school had been transferred. There were community meetings, and after that there was collaboration and a task force that worked together with community leaders. Advocates for the school were involved with that. Elected officials were involved. The school board was involved. So that was a process. Once everyone came to the table and saw that we are all in this for the same reason. ... That reason is what's best for the kids, how to accelerate student achievement. That's when the turn happened. We didn't get to that point with Carver

Heights. We did have some great conversations. I won't say that it was all pushback. What you may have seen on the surface was pushback, and of course we expect that going in because this is something new. This is something different. I think just, as you and I would say, if something new comes to us we do have questions. We didn't see that so much as a negative. We saw it as the community wanted to engage with us to learn what is the Innovative School District and what does this mean for our community.

**LM:** Some people have called the ISD a takeover. Is it a takeover?

**LA:** The ISD is not a takeover. The ISD is a partnership. We know how important the local community is, and so when we approach a community and start having those discussions, it's all about collaborating with the local school district, with communities, with businesses that could really impact the school, and collaborating with parents. It is a partnership. It's not about taking over. The Innovative School District is part of the N.C. Department of Public Instruction, and so we are not an outside entity. It is the 116th school district, and the school remains a public school. The ownership remains a part of the community.

**LM:** With Southside Ashpole, I understand there were major staffing changes and only a handful of the original teachers were there after the transfer to the ISD. Can you talk about that?

**LA:** There were staffing changes. What we want to make sure, what I think is very critical, anytime you're looking at school transformations or school turnarounds, you do have to evaluate what is currently existing in the school. You need to look at what changes need to take place. Every teacher there had an opportunity to interview for their position there. There was a qualified interview team that interviewed the teachers. It is also important to note that there were teacher vacancies at Southside Ashpole. There were substitutes in the classrooms. Of the teachers that we interviewed, some elected not to stay and some wanted to transfer to another school in the district, and they have that option. We want to make sure that every teacher at every school wants to be there.

**LM:** What would improvements look like in an ISD school?

**LA:** We are looking at some of the same outcomes that we look at when we are evaluating schools. One thing that is very important in school turnaround is that there is a culture change. There has to be a shift. You have to be able to walk into a school and know that you're in a school where students feel safe and where you know education is taking place and students are learning. That's what you would feel if you walked into Southside Ashpole. That's one of the improvements that we initially look at. Then we start looking at teachers and making sure that they are receiving the training that they need. Professional development is very important for students. Have we equipped our teachers with what they need to have the greatest impact on our students? You will see at Southside Ashpole they have two weeks of additional professional development for training for teachers. You want to make sure that the practices that are being used in the classroom are what are going to get the best results for students in the classroom. Then we look at our students. We take an assessment. When you look

at school improvement, you have to be a data-driven school. What does the data say currently? What do we need to focus on? It is critical we look at reading and math to make sure that both scores are where they need to be. Many of our students are two, sometimes three, years behind. You have to see where each student is. We want to meet every student where they are and take them where they need to be.

**LM:** With the transfer of Southside Ashpole to the ISD and everything that happened with Carver Heights — its selection and subsequent acceptance as a Restart School — have there been lessons learned that will inform the process going forward?

**LA:** What we have said from the beginning is that we do understand that the timeline that we have to make the selection is very short. We have heard that from schools and districts. It is something that we have stated that we would like to see maybe some adjustments in legislation. They [lawmakers] came out with a technical corrections bill that was most recently voted on that looked at the timeline. We applaud legislation for looking at the timeline. We would like to build upon that so that we have the best timeline to move forward with our selection process.

**LM:** What do you want people to know about the ISD? What's the most important thing for people to know about the program?

**LA:** What's most important is that our focus is on students. Any time we take our eyes off of the students, then we are going in the wrong direction. Our focus is that every student who is in a low-performing school across North Carolina does have an opportunity, has not only equal but equitable opportunities. We want to make sure that our students have access to the best possible quality education that propels them to greatness. They deserve it, and we have to give it to them.

## COMMENTARY

## EDITORIAL

*Smaller school districts are coming, eventually*

The average public school district in the United States enrolls about 3,700 students, according to a recent *Governing* magazine analysis. In North Carolina, the average school district enrolls more than 12,500 students. Only six other states in the nation exceed North Carolina in this regard (including Hawaii, where all 187,000 students are in a single district).

Although N.C. politicians and activists normally exhibit great interest in state education comparisons, most either ignore the fact that we stick out like a sore thumb on school governance or attempt, rather awkwardly, to label it virtue rather than an oddity.

For example, when it comes to the gargantuan districts in Wake (enrolling 159,000 students this school year) and Mecklenburg (146,000), increasing numbers of parents — many residing in suburban communities or hailing from other states where multiple districts per county are the norm — seem skeptical that county-wide school governance serves the interests of their children and neighborhoods.

Some are explicitly demanding the creation of smaller, more manageable districts. Others aren't waiting for policymakers to catch

up with their preferences, opting instead for chartered public schools (each of which has its own governance board) or private alternatives if they can swing them.

In the face of these developments, the education establishment offers two defenses: cost and race. Countywide school districts reduce the cost per student for delivering education, the argument goes, while combating re-segregation. Neither argument can withstand close scrutiny, which is why the powers-that-be keep trying to change the subject as quickly as they can.

This strategy isn't going to work in the long run. It would be wiser to prepare for a future in which N.C. public schools are organized differently, with multiple districts coexisting in at least a dozen or so of our counties. We believe this future is inevitable.

The efficiency argument for big districts just doesn't comport with available evidence. While consolidating sparsely populated rural districts into larger entities probably did exploit economies of scale to reduce operating cost per pupil, there is very little evidence of such benefits when school districts run into the tens of thousands of students.

Moreover, even if construction costs and other expenses are lower at large enrollment scales, the purpose of public schools is to educate students, not merely to house them.

While the empirical literature is mixed on the subject of optimal district size, there is a compelling body of evidence suggesting that competition is good for school quality — that the more options families have within a given geographic area, the better those options tend to be.

Debates about competition in education tend to focus on alternatives to public schools. But in this case, we're talking about having multiple school districts within a metropolitan area rather than just one. One recent study found that, everything else being equal, pupils score lower in states that restrict the number of districts, an effect that "makes school districts less efficient."

As for race, browbeating recent arrivals from high-scoring states such as Massachusetts (averaging 3,300 students per district) and New Jersey (2,300) for not understanding the need to combat educational disparities by race and income isn't going to cut it. Disadvantaged students in those states perform very highly by na-

tional standards, thank you very much. And even among Southern states, North Carolina's districts are significantly larger than those in Virginia (9,700), Georgia (9,400), South Carolina (8,800), and Tennessee (7,400).

Here's a fundamental reality progressives have yet to accept: Regardless of how big the district may be, the days of busing large numbers of kids around according to race- or income-based school assignments are over. Most par-

ents, of all backgrounds, do not support it.

A more constructive approach would be to get ahead of the trend. Subdivide the largest districts thoughtfully, minimizing any disparities, while ensuring that state and local funding formulas send more money to districts with higher rates of poverty or special needs.

Most of all, be patient. Prudence is both praiseworthy and rare.



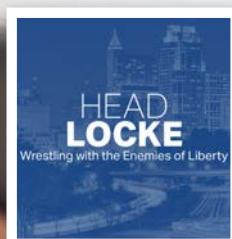
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## COMMENTARY BY JOHN HOOD

### Democratic governors get failing grades

**W**ant yet one more signal American politics has changed markedly in the past decade? Look no further than the annual report card issued by the Cato Institute to grade the fiscal performance of governors.

Even just 10 years ago, there were quite a few Democratic officeholders whose views on fiscal policy were moderate-to-conservative. Their budgets were constructed to prioritize education and other core programs without committing to reckless spending growth. Some Democratic governors proposed tax cuts to enhance their state's economic competitiveness while giving residents more freedom to decide for themselves what to do with their money.

Employing revenue and expenditure variables, Cato analyst Chris Edwards assigned letter grades to each governor. Of the 17 who received A's or B's in 2008, six were Democrats: governors Joe Manchin of West Virginia, Ted Strickland of Ohio, Bill Richardson of New Mexico, Brad Henry of Oklahoma, John Baldacci of Maine, and Phil Bredesen of Tennessee.

In the 2018 report card, the 16 governors earning above-average grades were all Republicans, including five with A's: Susana Martinez of New Mexico, Henry McMaster of South Carolina, Doug Burgum of North Dakota, Paul LePage of Maine, and Greg Abbott of Texas. Only one Democrat, Steve Bullock of Montana, managed even a C.

Our own Roy Cooper was one of the six Democrats and two Republicans who received failing grades in 2018. His big-spending budget proposal last year counted heavily against him.

Quite apart from whether you agree with the fiscal policy preferences the Cato Institute and I share, think for a moment about what these two snapshots in time reveal about the increasing polarization of politics.

Although political parties can disappoint their hardest-core supporters by going too slowly or straying from their ideological moorings on occasion, it's essential to recognize the Democratic Party is much more consistently liberal than it used to be, while the Republican Party is much more consistently conservative.

These terms mean different things to different people. The term "liberal" has become an umbrella term that de-

see HOOD PAGE 24

## Democrats may help GOP in 2020

**T**he promise of "Medicare for All" polls well. But if Democrats endorse the concept in large numbers, and make it or some similar proposal a centerpiece of the party's brand going into the 2020 election cycle, Republicans will be among the prime beneficiaries.

How can a popular idea be politically damaging? Because it's only popular in the abstract. A 2017 survey by the Kaiser Family Foundation, for example, found 54 percent of Americans favored a single-payer plan for financing health care. The phrase "Medicare for All" polled even higher, at 62 percent.

Once voters heard some of the details, support dropped. When told that a single-payer plan would dislodge the role that employers play in sponsoring health plans, 17 percent of respondents switched sides, raising opposition to 60 percent. When told a single-payer plan would require higher taxes, 23 percent switched sides, raising the opposition to 66 percent.

North Carolina politicians who favor Medicaid expansion face a similar challenge when it comes to interpreting public opinion. If a survey question presents Medicaid as a cost-free



way to extend services to the poor, you may get a favorable response.

That will change when voters learn that 1) we aren't talking about poor children and their parents, who are already covered, but childless adults; 2) many advocates either refuse to require these childless adults to work for Medicaid benefits, or plan to subvert any work requirements that may be included in expansion; 3) emergency-room usage is likely to go up, not down, as Medicaid

expands; and 4) North Carolinians will end up paying higher state taxes or receiving fewer educational services in the long run, as the extravagant promise of near-complete federal funding of Medicaid expansion gives way to fiscal reality.

Progressive Democrats reject several of these premises. They argue, for instance, a Medicare-for-All plan can be financed merely by taxing the super-rich, so average folks won't get taxed more. Their math is faulty and their assumptions dubious.

Consider the recent proposal to slap a 70 percent federal tax rate on income in excess of \$10 million. The Tax Foundation estimates such a marginal tax rate would raise about \$300 billion over 10 years under the most favorable of assumptions. That would fall far, far short of paying for some sweeping new health program.

In 2016, Donald Trump won the presidency despite the fact that he was deemed unqualified, unprincipled, and untrustworthy by a solid majority of Americans. Why? Because he was running against Hillary Clinton, about whom a similar share of voters had the same unflattering view. Both candidates lost support from voters who previously voted the other way. Trump's losses were disproportionately in places where he was going to lose (California) or win (Texas) anyway. But Clinton's losses were disproportionately in Midwestern battlegrounds.

In the 2020 cycle, Trump and the GOP again face strong headwinds. But elections are comparisons, not plebiscites. If the Democratic Party makes a sharp left turn, it will lose winnable races. Republicans will gladly pocket those victories.

### EMINENT DOMAIN REFORM

## Land grabs don't enhance growth

**OVER THE PAST** eight years, conservative lawmakers have done much to constrain the excesses, expenses, and abuses of governmental power in North Carolina. They have cut taxes, controlled spending, slashed regulations, and increased the cost-effectiveness of services by introducing more choice and competition.

But in the midst of many accomplishments are some missed opportunities, including a failure to reform eminent domain, the power governments enjoy to condemn and purchase private property for public use.

In the aftermath of the 2005 decision in *Kelo v. City of New London*, in which the Supreme Court declared it consistent with the property-rights protections of the U.S. Constitution to permit eminent-domain abuses, most states decided to limit or block their governments from condemning land merely to con-

vey it from one private owner to another, as New London had done with Susette Kelo's "little pink house."

Advocates of the practice argue that if a prospective private owner — a real-estate developer, let's say, or a manufacturer — promises a "higher-value" use that will generate higher property taxes per acre, governments should be able to employ eminent domain to convey the land to the new owner. The general public will benefit from the transaction, they argue, and thus condemnation is a permissible tool to make it happen.

Most Americans disagree, and for good reason. The Fifth Amendment states that "private property" shall not "be taken for public use without just compensation." The plain meaning of "public use" is, well, a use by the public — the placement of a courthouse or street, for example. The public-use

concept has also traditionally been applied to "common carriers," as well, to private firms that operate infrastructure such as railroads, pipelines, and power lines.

While such public uses of acquired property offer the promise of benefiting the general public, lots of purely private uses generate public benefits, too. Public use is a subset of public benefit, not a synonym for it. It is, and was intended to be, a restrictive concept. The federal judiciary has decided in its infinite folly to refine the terms broadly, removing the restrictions.

To say the federal government won't stop states and localities from abusing the property rights of their citizens is not to preclude other remedies. Some states have enacted statutes to constrain the use of eminent domain. Others have amended their constitutions.

Special-interest lobbies say our state's economic competitiveness would suffer if localities and the state were forbidden from using, or at least threatening to use, eminent domain to assemble land parcels for business recruitment or urban redevelopment. Otherwise, they say, lone holdouts who refuse reasonable offers will slow or kill economic development projects with significant public benefits.

This claim is empirically testable, since some states acted more quickly than others to reform eminent domain after *Kelo*. In a recent study for *Economic Development Quarterly*, Washburn University economist Paul Byrne found that limiting the use of eminent domain produced "no adverse effects in terms of state employment and gross state product."

It's time to reform eminent domain.

# COMMENTARY

## How can we address our transportation issues?



**MICHAEL WALDEN**  
COLUMNIST

**M**y wife retired a dozen years ago after working more than three decades as an elementary school teacher. Her daily routine now includes a trip to the nearest wellness facility for exercise as well as conversation — hopefully not at the same time. One thing she chronically complains about is the increased traffic in Raleigh compared to her working days. She says Raleigh has too many people and too few roads.

Increased travel time and traffic congestion are common gripes today for those living in North Carolina's large metropolitan areas. Yet this doesn't mean rural residents are satisfied with their roads. Often, they too want more and better-maintained roads just as their city cousins. But the rural requests are for a different reason. They want more roads to bring more people and businesses to their communities.

These two concerns about our transportation system, as well as others, were discussed at a recent state transportation summit. The purpose of the conference was to assess both today's and tomorrow's transportation issues



**Over the sweep of history, a strong link can be seen between advancements in transportation and improvements in the economy.**

in North Carolina and to consider plans for addressing them.

I was honored to participate in the meeting and make a presentation. Here I'll give you a summary of what I said.

Although we might not think about it, transportation is key to two goals our society has: individual freedom and economic development. Transportation gives each of us freedom to consider more locational options for living, working, and enjoying ourselves. For example, in the early 20th century most people — including my grandparents — had to live very close to where they worked, because the range of horse travel and then early autos was very limited.

Over the sweep of history, a strong link can be seen between advancements in transportation and improvements in the economy. Faster, more reliable, versatile, and less expensive (per mile traveled) methods of moving both

people and products are keys to an expanding economy and higher standard of living. Better transportation creates more opportunities for businesses to sell and for people to work.

While transportation is important to every person and place in North Carolina, the key issues are not the same. In the big urban areas, the top concerns are congestion, high land costs for new road projects, and the roles of mass transit as well as new transit modes like rides-on-demand and bikes and scooters.

In the suburbs and small towns economically linked to nearby big urban centers, the greatest need is fast transit links from homes to jobs in the cities. These suburb-to-city commuters can easily spend two to three hours each working day in travel — first to work in the morning and then to home at night.

Then there are the scores of rural counties in our state that are trying to remake their economies. Many of these have actually lost population in recent years and have prospects of continuing to lose residents in the decades ahead. For these localities, improved transportation is considered a lifeline to a better economic future.

An easy conclusion is that we need more transportation investment in almost all of our counties. But some futurists think the kinds of transportation we desire now

will not be the kinds of transportation we'll actually need in the future.

Consider these potential game-changing technologies affecting transportation: autonomous vehicles, expanded ride-sharing, virtualization, drone delivery, remote service (such as medical care) delivery, and universal low-cost, high-speed internet. Some futurists think these technologies could reduce vehicle ownership, reduce commuting, increase remote working, improve the availability of services in rural counties, and reverse the trend toward urbanization in the state.

Even if these technologies

develop, they are likely years — if not decades — away. In the meantime, the issues I outlined above for the various parts of our state — congestion, connection, and economic development — will remain the key issues in transportation.

The longer-run look of transportation is less certain. This future depends on how fast the game-changing technologies evolve and how our living, working, and commuting patterns will consequently transform.

*Michael Walden is a Reynolds Distinguished Professor at N.C. State University.*



## Words matter, and each carries in its meaning a unique gravity — real and perceived



**JOHN TRUMP**  
MANAGING EDITOR

**THROUGHOUT MY** career in journalism, I've tried to make it a point to learn something from each of my editors, even those I often questioned or even disliked.

One such editor, who falls into that latter category, sometimes made points that were both salient and eloquent.

Words matter, he once said.

Each and every word has its own meaning, though to many the synonymic difference is imperceptible.

Words matter, in meanings specific to situations and to ideas.

A Sunday sermon at my church in Cary reminded me of that

editor's teachings, that words can be as easily divisive as they can harmonious. Today's political environment offers daily examples, though, again, the outcome typically leans toward the latter.

In the similar vein, a Facebook friend last week posted a question: "For 2019, what's your ONE word?"

A simple question? Yes. Simple answers? Not so much.

Because each word carries in its meaning a unique gravity, real and perceived.

The year will bring more threats — of lawsuits and retaliation. More political hand-wringing and more ideological spats.

More needless insult and rebuke.

Much of this can't be avoided.

But words matter. They always will. Common, elementary words could mean so much if thoughtfully considered and used as a moral guide.

I've looked at that Facebook thread and chosen a few I think are pertinent, especially in a politically tumultuous 2019.

No one expounded on their words in the thread, but I wanted to.

I've tweaked the narrative with my own words, too, which I think better encompass our polar and tribal political environment.

**Brave:** The word, to me, at first conjures images of war and of personal strength while facing

sadness and tragedy. "Courage" may be more apt. To remain courageous in all things we do, regardless of our fears and anxieties. To hold fast to ideals and conviction, staying true to our beliefs while thoughtfully and respectfully considering the beliefs and ideas of others. That brings me to the next word.

**Respect:** Political disagreement and passionate discourse are essential to the health of our republic, but personal insult, spite, and blatant vindictiveness should have no place in that arena. Logic, sound judgment, and persuasive arguments grounded in fact, research, and experience should prevail, as opposed to pettiness, meanness, unsubstantiated claims, and unwarranted attacks.

**Curiosity:** This word plays off the first two. Much of today's political polarization and reluctance to consider alternate ideas is based on a general lack of curios-

ity, a reticence by some to explore disparate ideas and to become more aware, not only of personal convictions, but also of the views and opinions of others.

**Truthfulness:** No explanation needed.

**Kindness:** This word, which dovetails with "respect," was my contribution to the group. One can espouse beliefs while still being cordial and civil. Life, for all of us, isn't easy.

Each day each of us faces a personal struggle. Some of us are grieving, others are anxious — about jobs, finances, children, and on and on. We know something about the lives of our family, friends, colleagues, and neighbors. But not a lot. About strangers, we know nothing.

It's all a simplistic exercise, but it could be a start. In a dangerous world, a world of political antipathy and power mongering, we should choose any path that at least tries to end in civility.



## COMMENTARY

## Republican Party should explore policies that bring people to the polls



**ANDY TAYLOR**  
COLUMNIST

North Carolina now has its second voter identification law. A federal court voided the first because it would not consider forms of ID disproportionately used by minorities, such as cards or documents given to government employees, students, and people on public assistance. In this past November's referendum, the state's residents approved a voter ID amendment to the N.C. Constitution. The General Assembly then swiftly passed into law, overriding a gubernatorial veto, a bill permitting many more forms of identification than the original. Another successful legal challenge is unlikely, since the Supreme Court has upheld the constitutionality of near-identical statutes in other states.

North Carolinians have been debating the legitimacy of voter identification for many years. A central feature has been a dispute over the prevalence of election fraud enabled by the lack of an ID requirement. Opponents, generally on the left of the political spec-



FILE PHOTO

trum, say incidents of illegal voting by people claiming to be others are exceedingly rare. Supporters point to contradictory data and worry such fraud violates the rights of those who vote legitimately.

Regardless of the extent of voter impersonation, the events of the past couple of months suggest conservatives who wish to maintain the integrity of American elections are looking in the wrong place. We shouldn't be so worried about who turns up at the polls, but who doesn't yet still casts a vote. "Ballot harvesting," where individuals drop off a large number of others' postal absentee votes, is in vogue.

It's a worrying trend.

California made ballot harvesting legal in time for the 2018 elections. The postal-vote-only states of Colorado, Oregon, and Washington also permit the practice, but the Golden State has in-person

voting, as well. Still, the Democrats who monopolize the state's politics quickly saw its utility, passing the California Voter's Choice Act and liberalizing absentee procedures greatly in 2016. Outgoing Republican House Speaker Paul Ryan of Wisconsin noticed the results of ballot harvesting in the weeks following last year's election. Republicans appeared to be holding on to seven closely contested California congressional seats based upon in-person and early voting tallies. Those leads melted away as dropped-off absentee ballots were counted, and all of the GOP candidates ultimately lost, some by astonishing margins given the figures initially reported on election day.

Democrats are not the only ones who have benefited from this dubious procedure. Last November, at least one political operative may

have illegally harvested ballots of voters in Bladen County. There's evidence that an operative unduly influenced or tampered with and then delivered the absentee votes of many residents for Republican Mark Harris, who currently leads Democrat Dan McCready in the 9th Congressional District contest by less than half a percentage point. Some voters the operative approached were reportedly high on drugs. Others handed over signed but blank ballots for which they were paid. An operative worked for a company that the Harris campaign gave over \$400,000.

These incidents suggest manipulation of absentee voting is a threat graver than voter impersonation. The 9th District aside, ballot harvesting is something Democrats can do and have done "better." Labor unions in the public and service sectors and advocacy groups like the Center for Popular Democracy and their state partners have grass-roots operations that facilitate access to voters who don't want to go to the polls or are willing to have others deliver ballots for them. Such citizens, often the elderly, ethnic or racial minorities, and low-income, are the types of voters Democrats have accused Republicans of wanting to disenfranchise with voter ID laws. Their frequent ambivalence about politics and residence in many

insular communities with cultures of political corruption make them especially vulnerable to ballot harvesters. We saw in the past how they were exploited by Acorn, the discredited and defunct organization CPD has risen to replace.

The Democrats own an infrastructure capable of registering voters, canvassing them on their doorsteps, and driving them to the polls. It facilitates direct contact with subjects, communication that, unlike texts, emails, and social media activity, doesn't leave a lasting record to assist investigators. The GOP has spent decades beefing up its voter database, but it uses the information to inform strategies executed using tools such as robocalls, direct mail, and media advertising. The object is to get registered voters to the polls under their own steam.

Except in less-affluent rural areas where they can hire shady mercenaries like Dowless, Republicans will always be disadvantaged where ballot harvesting is permitted. In its efforts to protect the integrity of elections, the party should be exploring policies that make people come to the polls to vote, not give them the third degree upon their arrival.

*Andy Taylor is a professor of political science at the School of International and Public Affairs at N.C. State University.*

## Are we willing to accept cost of expanding Medicaid?



**BECKI GRAY**  
SENIOR VICE PRESIDENT  
JOHN LOCKE FOUNDATION

**THE GOVERNOR'S** behind it, and state Department of Health and Human Services Secretary Mandy Cohen is for it. Some freshmen legislators have made it a priority, some leaders in the N.C. House think it's a good idea, and 32 states have implemented a version of it.

But does Medicaid expansion take us in the wrong direction?

We begin the 2019 legislative session with winds of transformational reforms at our backs. They've given us surplus revenue, more transparency, more opportunities, and a stronger economy. Do we really want more government control over health care?

Medicaid is federal- and state-run health coverage designed for vulnerable and high-risk, low-income, aging and disabled adults,

pregnant women, and children. Twenty percent of North Carolinians are covered under Medicaid. State taxpayers foot about a third of the total costs of \$3.6 billion. Medicaid makes up 16 percent and is the fastest-growing part of the General Fund budget. A provision in Obamacare authorized states to expand Medicaid coverage to low-income, able-bodied, childless adults with incomes of \$16,753, or a family of four with \$34,638. Thirty-two states have expanded Medicaid. North Carolina isn't among them.

The federal government has promised to pay 90 percent of the costs for Medicaid expansion through 2020. But that doesn't apply to administrative costs, and future funding isn't guaranteed. The federal government is already \$22 trillion in debt. In states that expanded Medicaid, the number of enrollees has been larger than anticipated, and costs have been higher. Lower reimbursement rates have meant fewer doctors willing to take on Medicaid patients, limiting access and compromising outcomes for those who have received care through Medicaid.

The General Assembly's nonpartisan fiscal research staff estimates initial Medicaid expansion will cost about \$300 million.

As a federal entitlement program, Medicaid obligations are paid first; before the first teacher or police officer. As those obligations increase, Medicaid costs will crowd out other General Fund obligations.

The state's Medicaid program has undergone significant reforms since 2011, cleaning up waste, making management changes that provide better budget predictability, and changing the model from fee for service to managed care. Before 2013, Medicaid cost overruns totaled almost \$2 billion.

The General Assembly reformed and restructured the program in 2013, which allowed a stable and predictable budget. From 2014 through 2018, \$436 million was set aside in reserve. This freed funds for other parts of state government, such as five consecutive pay increases for teachers. The hope is a newly implemented managed care model will provide better care with better outcomes for patients and lower costs for taxpayers. Money for implementation to the managed

care model will be taken from the reserve accounts. Costs and results won't be known for years.

It has taken six years to bring meaningful reforms. Lawmakers shouldn't be anxious to turn it over to the folks who created so many of the problems. Despite significant improvements, Medicaid remains vulnerable, but many state lawmakers and Cooper are advocating adding 500,000 new people to the rolls. Eighty-two percent of those in the proposed expansion population are able-bodied, working-age, childless adults — a far cry from the vulnerable high-risk population for which Medicaid was designed.

The better solution for those in the "insurance gap" would be a job in which they could receive health insurance through their employer or individually through an insurance market that offered a variety of policies at affordable costs that best met individual needs. North Carolina would be better to spend that \$300 million — likely more — estimated for Medicaid expansion on work-force training programs, apprenticeships, and expanding skill development opportunities. Lawmakers would be wise to

reform the insurance market to encourage competition and allow individuals to choose options that best meet their needs, rather than an insurance exchange ACA regulations offer.

A lot of people have made a lot of money under the current system. Pharmaceutical and insurance companies, hospital conglomerates, and others will have to make concessions, but the future of care rests in decisions made in 2019.

We are at a crossroads. The current health care system is unsustainable. Costs continue to escalate, access continues to be limited, and outcomes are deteriorating. It appears we have two choices: more government control or more patient- and market-driven solutions. Medicaid expansion sets us on the path to more government control. First, it's 500,000 more on the rolls. Next, it will be a statewide universal health care system for all, as was proposed in 2017 and carried a cost estimate of \$101 billion — in the first year alone. If we choose to go that way, we need to be prepared to accept — and pay for — the health care government is willing to give us.

# POLLS

## Survey of public opinion on school choice

### Hood

continued from PAGE 21



How much do you agree or disagree with the following statement: Parents should have the ability to choose where their child attends school:

- STRONGLY AGREE - 70%
- SOMEWHAT AGREE - 22%
- SOMEWHAT DISAGREE - 4%
- STRONGLY DISAGREE - 2%
- UNSURE - 1%



In your opinion, who's best suited to decide where a child should attend school?

- PARENTS OR LEGAL GUARDIANS - 88%
- LOCAL SCHOOL BOARD - 5%
- STATE GOVERNMENT - 2%
- FEDERAL GOVERNMENT - 1%
- UNSURE - 4%



Which of the following statements best reflects your views on how well the legislature is meeting the needs of families for educational options?

- STATE LAWMAKERS DOING A GOOD JOB OF EXPANDING EDUCATIONAL OPTIONS - 13%
- STATE LAWMAKERS NEED TO DO MORE TO EXPAND EDUCATIONAL OPTIONS - 67%
- STATE LAWMAKERS SHOULD STOP EXPANDING EDUCATIONAL OPTIONS - 7%
- UNSURE - 13%

scribes an alliance of progressives (left on economics and social policy) and communitarians (left on economics but not on social policy), while the term “conservative,” in its modern context, describes an alliance of traditionalists (right on economics and social policy) and libertarians (who often dissent on the latter).

Something like the same coalitions were evident in 2008. But the partisan umbrellas were open a bit wider, capturing a more diverse assortment. On the Democratic side, Joe Manchin is now a U.S. senator, and Phil Bredesen tried to become one in 2018. But few up-and-coming Democrats are following in their footsteps.

The events of the past two years have presented Republicans with big political challenges. But to the extent Democrats cede both right and center to Republicans when it comes to economics — in Washington and in state capitals — they are making a long-term bet that the public wants vastly more government and vastly more taxes to pay for it. Seems risky.

The Civitas Institute school choice poll surveyed 804 registered voters between Jan. 15 and Jan. 18. The margin of error is plus or minus 3.4 percent. Some results may not add up to 100 percent due to rounding.



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