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A counter-protester holds a sign outside of the Rally for Freedom at Centennial Park in Raleigh in September. The rally focused on issues such as vaccination mandates, masks on kids, businesses closing, and election fraud.

Culture Wars

Voters are paying attention like never before

BY JEFF MOORE

Over the course of the past two years, the ethos of the American electorate has changed markedly. After the historic whirlwinds of 2020 and into 2021, it's easy to identify any number of things as contributors to and/or evidence of that change — pandemic panic, racial tensions, lockdowns, mob events, masks, election suspicions, more mob events, Critical Race Theory, vaccine pressures, stifled speech, and so on.

While specific catalysts abound, the shift retains an intangible quality. A current between two poles, coursing between enlightened tradition and fundamental transformation — more felt than seen. While most voters may not have a good handle on what, exactly, a “culture war” is, the feeling we’re in one becomes more charged with every turn of the 24-hour news cycle.

It manifests in changed levels of engagement for voters in North Carolina, and around the nation. Whereas, before 2020, most people could still get by on a steady diet of apathy, controversial pandemic policies and aspersive social justice

campaigns leave little room on the sidelines. The political arena has expanded to include nearly everything at its center.

“What’s been different during the past couple of years is that many of the issues that have dominated politics have had much more direct impact on people’s lives,” says Mitch Kokai, senior political analyst for the John Locke Foundation. “Government mandates linked to COVID have shut down businesses, closed schools, limited people’s access to their churches and civic groups. Violent protests linked to George Floyd’s death and Black Lives Matter have raised concerns about safety and security. The fight over Critical Race Theory focuses intently on what kids are taught in school. Rising prices hit people in their wallets.”

Consider the novel ways many issues have become unavoidably political. Exactly which issue catalyzes a formerly apathetic voter’s political engagement depends on which culture war battle is waged closest to home. If a voter has school-aged children, for instance, should schools be open for in-person instruction or closed to help fight the pandemic? Should students be forced to wear masks? Should social justice theories be promoted in classrooms? How about gender identity surveys for your fifth-grader?

A High Point University poll in April showed a high level of engagement on

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Teachers union on decline as pandemic-weary parents clamor for more options

BY DAVID BASS

North Carolina’s self-described teachers union still has clout with many Democratic lawmakers in the legislature, but its influence — and popularity — with teachers and everyday North Carolinians appears to be waning. Over the past decade, the N.C. Association of Educators’ membership has dropped nearly 59%, and its revenue cut in half — from \$11 million to \$5.8 million. Among state affiliates of the National Education Association, only Montana and Nevada have had



Sign supporting teachers wishing to leave the NCAE.

larger declines in membership. Today, the NCAE represents just 18% of public school teachers in the state. Part of the reason is N.C. parents and teachers are increasingly look-

ing for alternatives to the NCAE and traditional public schools. During the pandemic, enrollment in public schools dropped by 5%, or around 70,000 students,

▼59%  
**NCAE MEMBERSHIP**  
Over the past decade, the N.C. Association of Educators’ membership has dropped nearly 59%, and its revenue cut in half — from \$11 million to \$5.8 million.

while the ranks of homeschoolers spiked by 20.6%, or around 30,000, students. Private school enrollment grew by 3,282, or

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Erosion of trust in our systems has created a culture war

**DONNA KING**  
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF



At Carolina Journal we have been covering N.C. news for more than 20 years. More than ever, we see the blurring lines between strategic messaging and healthy debate, individual freedom, and governmental mandates. When you dig into our work you will find compelling stories about real people fighting for their own rights, and yours, in what has become a culture war. Whether it is college students demanding a well-rounded education, parents fighting for au-



thority to make medical decisions for their own children, or a Fort Bragg soldier sacrificing for others in Afghanistan, American courage runs deep here in North Carolina, and it is needed right now. In this issue of Carolina Jour-

nal, we examine the culture wars being fought in classrooms, boardrooms, and battlefields. Imagine if someone told you in 2018 that Americans would soon be forced to vaccinate themselves or face losing their job, the right to be in public, or attend school. Imagine hearing that Americans, allies, service dogs, and billions in military hardware would be abandoned in Afghanistan in a chaotic retreat. Could you have anticipated that American parents would fear for their child’s future because schools closed for an entire year, or the U.S. Capitol would be rushed by voters enraged by the results of a presidential election? Just as it was during 9/11, this is a transformative time. Attitudes

are shifting, people are becoming more aware of public policy and international events. However, during 9/11 the events unfolded suddenly and there was a clear enemy and crime. This time, the lines are blurred, and people are taking sides, expanding the power of government at the expense of individual freedom. The gradual erosion of liberty is boiling us like lobsters. Now freedom truly is one generation away from extinction, and the battlefield is not just at the ballot box, it is in all three branches of government. On taxpayer-paid college campuses, students and staff are re-

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Exploring North Carolina led me to Venezuela and back

**AMY O. COOKE**  
PUBLISHER



**ONE THING** Roy Cooper’s absurd 20-month state of emergency has afforded me is the ability to explore this great state without much hassle. I know he didn’t mean to provide me that opportunity, but I seized it nonetheless. With gas stations and roadways open, I searched for North Carolina’s iconic photos — the Biltmore, the Pisgah Covered Bridge, the Diamond Lady — and lesser-known places like the Tartan Museum in Franklin. From Blowing Rock to Big Rock, from the Blue Ridge Parkway to the Outer Banks Scenic Byway, this state is beautiful. We must hold the record for most historical roadside markers of any



Jonathan Uzategui (center)

state in the Union. Ours even have their own Twitter profile: @NC\_Marketers. I highly recommend a follow. It’s North Carolina’s people that are its richest resource and the ties that bind our complex cultural tapestry. From native to newcomer and everyone in between, they recognize the pride of place that is unique to the Tar Heel State. I’ve written about it before. It’s an understated, understood feeling of “there’s no place else I’d rather be.” Occasionally on these pages, I’ll share the story of someone I met who

made an impact on me and is making an impact in his community. I’ll start with Jonathan Uzategui, a Venezuelan immigrant, small business owner, and authentic antidote to the insidious woke mentality that infects us today. Add one more thing to his resumé: Wilmington City Council candidate. His unbridled passion for being an American even made me question if I’m worthy, and I’m a homer. Uzategui’s experience reminds us why America really is that shining city on a hill — serving as a beacon of hope for freedom and opportunity seekers everywhere. I went looking for him following two meetings when people asked, “Have you met Jonathan Uzategui?” After asking them to spell it, I said “no.” I’d remember that name, I

thought to myself. (It’s pronounced Uz-got-key, or at least that’s pretty close, according to Jonathan.) I tracked him down at Churrasco, the restaurant he and his wife Hope recently opened. The menu is loaded with family recipes that they’ve personalized over the years. I caught up with Jonathan later at his other business — Brazilian Jiu Jitsu — where he was mopping floors and cleaning bathrooms. Uzategui escaped Hugo Chavez’s authoritarian regime two decades ago. He came here with nothing but a strong work ethic in search of opportunity. He taught himself English by watching daytime soap operas “General Hospital” and “All My Children.” He raised a family and start-

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Winning? Hardly

Biden lays blame for messy exits: Americans call for more transparency

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PUBLIC OPINION



Presidential approval ratings hit new low

Biden approval rating



■ Approve 43%  
■ Disapprove 53%  
■ Unsure 4%

Congress approval rating



■ Approve 27%  
■ Disapprove 69%  
■ Unsure 4%

Gallup poll taken Sept. 1-17, 2021 +/- 4% of 1,005 adults from all 50 states.

PHOTO ESSAY: Scenes from the Raleigh Children’s Business Fair



Sienna Forrester, 14, left, and sister Savanna Forrester, 13, and their business, Brown Sugar Sisters.



Cyrus Barbour, 13, displays at the Raleigh Children's Business Fair.



Anna Barbour, 13, displays her company's products.



Blake Ackiss, 11, answers a question at the Raleigh Children's Business Fair.

Youth biz fair sells hope for free markets

BY DALLAS WOODHOUSE

Despite efforts from the left to bring cradle-to-grave big government to America, dozens of talented entrepreneurs, ages 6 to 14, displayed their keen business sense as part of the annual Raleigh Children's Business Fair in early October.

This year's fair featured 40 youth vendors showcasing and selling original items in a market-style setting, presenting one-of-a-kind products, developed, created, and marketed by the young people. Some hot-selling items included gourmet foods, colorful hand-knitted scarfs, art, greeting cards, bath salts, beauty products, and comic books.

The fifth annual Raleigh Children's Business Fair, hosted by the John W. Pope Foundation, returned to Raleigh after a hiatus in 2020 because of the pandemic. The fair is part of a national program created by Acton Academy, with the goal of offering a safe and fun entrepreneurial experience. First held as a one-time event in Austin, Texas, the program grew, and today's fairs are held around the world and across North Carolina. This is the fifth fair hosted by the Pope Foundation.

Blake Ackiss, who is 11 and a fifth-grader at Combs Elementary, developed a successful business designing, making, and selling paracord bracelets.

Blake told Carolina Journal he's learning "salesmanship" and is making "good contacts" to help further grow the business he started with his brother. The two competed in a previous fair and have refined their products since.

They named their business Bash Brothers after former major leaguers Jose Canseco and Mark McGwire, both prolific power hitters.

Not only are the students competing for customer dollars; they're also competing for awards. Students are judged on customer service, originality, and potential for market success. Market success is judged on appearance, sales strategy, market knowledge, and scalability.

The Brown Sugar Sisters showcased popular apple and lavender bath salts and body scrubs, as well as coconut body butter. Sienna Forrester, 14, and her 13-year-old sister Savanna create the products from scratch.

Thirteen-year-old Cyrus Barbour and his 8-year-old sister Isis design Anime T-shirts. Customers could also pick up their novelty "slime" and silly string. Isis was quick to point out that she's learning "how to make money" and about what to do better next time.

The adoption of a rescue pet, a little dog named Josie, spurred 13-year-old Anna Barbour (no re-

CJ PHOTO BY DALLAS WOODHOUSE

CJ PHOTO BY DALLAS WOODHOUSE

CJ PHOTO BY DALLAS WOODHOUSE



## 4 AFGHANISTAN

## Winning? Hardly

*Biden lays blame for messy exits: Americans call for more transparency*

BY JOHN TRUMP

**W**e're winning in Afghanistan. That was the mantra, what they told us. Never entirely true.

Some of it, maybe. Many of us in the United States were admittedly oblivious to the realities that Taliban fighters still maintained strongholds in the mountains, that ferocious attacks on allied military bases and outposts continued.

Suicide bombings, car bombings.

Winning?

People in the country — the troops, advisers, contractors, and journalists — knew better. Almost 20 years ago, they knew better. They, too, knew better that, despite the White House platitudes, we didn't get everyone out.

They're still there, and America — as well as the rest of the world — knows it.

President Biden on Aug. 31 talked about getting more than 5,500 Americans and thousands of citizens, interpreters, and diplomats, as well as their families, out of Afghanistan.

"Now we believe that about 100 to 200 Americans remain in Afghanistan with some intention to leave," he said in a prepared speech. "Most of those who remain are dual citizens, long-time residents who had earlier decided to stay because of their family roots in Afghanistan."

People who have been there, in that rugged, brutal, and war-torn country, know better.

"The bottom line: 98% of Americans in Afghanistan who wanted to leave were able to leave," Biden said.

That's not quite accurate, say experts who lived and worked in Afghanistan, as well as one state lawmaker and a political science professor at N.C. State University. The lawmaker, Rep. John Szoka, R-Cumberland, went as far as telling Carolina Journal that Biden, if he had served in the military, should be court-martialed.

## JOHN SZOKA

**PAGE 7:** How did we get here, and what does it mean to be an American?

"It's poor leadership taken to a new low level," says Szoka, who served as a lieutenant colonel in the Army and whose legislative district includes Fort Bragg, home to the 82nd Airborne Division and 18th Airborne Corps. The massive post encompasses some 250 square miles and, at times, houses some 40,000 troops and their families.

Biden, despite a long pedigree of work in foreign relations — including serving as chair of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee and, of course, as vice president — seems detached from international affairs, says Andy Taylor, professor of political science at N.C. State University.

"This is someone who prided himself on his foreign policy expertise and skill," Taylor says of Biden.



President Joe Biden speaks from the Treaty Room in the White House on April 14, 2021, about the withdrawal of the remainder of U.S. troops from Afghanistan.

Biden, in his remarks after the exit, blamed Republican Presidents George W. Bush, who led the initial attacks on Afghanistan in 2001, and Donald Trump, who set the original withdrawal date.

He forgot to blame himself.

Yes, Bush and Trump made mistakes, as did Barack Obama.

Biden, a good argument would go, probably blundered most. Thousands of Americans, Afghans, and American supporters from myriad countries remain there.

Scared and bereft of necessities. Under the rule of a terrorist organization, its leaders high on America's list of enemies. Trapped, their voices silenced by political gamesmanship, which plays on.

Khalid Ramizy is a human rights activist with the Afghanistan Economic and Legal Studies Organization. Ramizy was part of an annual two-day youth conference in Kabul when the Taliban poured into his home city.

On Aug. 12, the first day of the meetings, security forces stopped and killed a terrorist who, apparently wearing a bomb, tried to enter the conference. Ramizy was

preparing to give a speech to a crowd of some 400 when he was told the Taliban may be entering the city and to please finish as soon as possible.

"Still, I don't know what I said on the stage," Ramizy told Tom Palmer, Atlas Network vice president, in a video interview.

Ramizy, speaking to Palmer from Albania, understood then that he must find a way to leave the country, as the Taliban had overrun Jalalabad. Kabul would probably be next, and then it would be over.

"It will be finished, it will be destroyed," he said in the video, called "Last Days in Kabul."

Ramizy closed his office, tried to save and secure what he could and burn or hide other documents. He erased his phone data clean.

"Now they are coming to Kabul, and they will take everything from us," he said. "Nothing was normal." He tried to withdraw money, but

banks closed amid the fear, the confusion.

"It was a really, really bad day."

For him, and for all Afghans who embrace freedom and liberty.

Ramizy struggles with English,

yet his words to Palmer were coated in emotion, the scars almost audible.

He changed his appearance. A beard, new clothes and hairstyle. To look like "them."

"Everything was totally changed."

He boarded a bus and managed to survive the Taliban checkpoints, all the while with friends "stuck in Kabul," captured, interrogated, tortured, though, Ramizy says, eventually freed.

"It would be more than 500 pages in a book." That's what it would take to tell his story, he told Palmer.

## TELL ME THE TRUTH

The truth about Afghanistan, and our role there, remains deeply dug in, behind the dark veil of a savage and relentless enemy. But that's been the case from the start.

Jeff Newton is an Emmy-winning military reporter, videographer, and storyteller. Newton covered the military and Fort Bragg for The Fayetteville Observer in the late 1990s and early 2000s. He covered the war in Bosnia and stories throughout the world. He shuttled between Iraq and Afghanistan, including, at one point, living in Afghanistan for 11 consecutive months, returning to the United States for maybe a couple of months each year. Newton managed reporting teams for "60 Minutes," the National Geographic channel, and VICE TV.

"I can't even count the number of embeds," Newton says.

He remembers 2004, when a homemade bomb destroyed his Humvee. The Taliban attacking his convoy in an ambush. Meet-

ings with the Taliban in Kabul, in moving vans. Missions with Navy Seals, with Special Forces soldiers, and with conventional troops. Embedded with the 101st and 82nd Airborne divisions, the 10th Mountain Division.

We're winning, they told us from Washington, D.C., in the early 2000s, some 20 years ago.

Not so much, Newton told CJ.

"They were telling everybody the Taliban was defeated, and I was out on embeds in the mountains, and they were not defeated at all," Newton says.

"If you were at Bagram Air Base, or you're sitting in a press conference in the Pentagon, you could tell people the Taliban were largely defeated, that you are shifting to what they call PRCs [provincial reconstruction teams] ... and helping the Afghans rebuild their country. But if you were a person who's really spending time there, you knew the Taliban was reconstituting and getting stronger."

Military and political media spun reporters to places where people were, indeed, rebuilding. Trying to, anyway. Inoculating children and animals against disease. Passing out food, candy.

"But there was still a lot of fighting, and they weren't spending a lot of time working hard to get you out to those places to see that. That wasn't the message."

Newton on Sept. 11, 2002, was in a place called Khost, a large city in southeastern Afghanistan, with U.S. Special Forces soldiers and some Afghans, who were holding the base. Chapman Airfield years before was the site of a suicide bombing that killed seven CIA officers and contractors, as well as two other people at the base there. One of the worst days for Americans in Afghanistan.

The terrorist attack at Kabul airport that killed 13 American service members during the exit was the worst single-day loss for the Pentagon since 2011, when insurgents shot down a Chinook transport chopper on a nighttime mission in Wardak Province southwest of Kabul, Yahoo News reported.

Chapman at the time was a small airfield, with no perimeter security save for some earthen berms. It eventually became what Newton called "sort of a megabase," but during Newton's time there it housed about 200 people.

"I remember, they were doing interviews up at Bagram Air Base when I was at Chapman getting attacked by the Taliban," Newton told CJ.

Mostly feel-good-type stories, he says. Reflecting, remembering.

"They were telling people that they were largely routed, the Taliban, and I was in places where that just simply wasn't true."

Newton shot a video of the Taliban attacking Chapman. He sold it to CBS.

"That was a really hot video at the time because, with all the other stories, people were getting told

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An Apache attack helicopter provides security from above while supplies are dropped off for U.S. Soldiers at Bost Airfield, Afghanistan.

U.S. MARINE CORPS PHOTO BY SGT. JUSTIN T. UPDEGRAFF



Jeff Newton on battlefield circulation in 2003 in Tarin Kut, Afghanistan. Tarin Kut was a town of contention at the time and the Americans were holding into it along with their Afghan partners.

COURTESY JEFF NEWTON

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that everything was all hunky-dory.”

Not the case. Just as today. Just as Secretary of State Antony Blinken blamed Trump for the withdrawal debacle.

“It was a mess, and they’re basically trying to claim success,” said Newton, who is harshly critical of Biden, though, he says, Trump isn’t beyond reproach.

Trump negotiated with people such as Mullah Abdul Ghani Baradar, Newton says. Baradar escaped to Pakistan after the U.S. invasion. He’s now the country’s deputy prime minister.

“My biggest thing is that Trump negotiated with one of the main creators of the Taliban, who now is one of the de facto leaders, after being led out by the Pakistanis at the request of the Trump administration. That was a major, major problem.

“But Biden ... could have re-

set the clock. He could have reinforced with troops for a proper exit. He could have sent State Department people in to process thousands and thousands of visas since January when he got into office. We could have told them we’re going to need a couple more months and just dealt with it.

“Everybody says the Taliban would have started attacking Americans,” Newton told CJ. “Well, the Taliban was killing all the [Afghan] Army that was supposed to hold the country anyways. They never stopped doing that.”

Newton compares the botched exit to the moments before the Titanic sunk in the Atlantic. Upon seeing the iceberg, Newton’s scenario goes, the captain decides it’s time for him to take his leave. “Good luck,” he might have said, and “I hear the band is great.”

“Nobody spent any time saying, ‘Let’s secure these three air bases — Bagram, Kandahar, and Kabul. ... [L]et’s make sure the people we want to get out — or off the ship

— get off the ship before the captain does.

“Instead, the captain and all of his crew left early and then left the people on the ship to manage the exit themselves. They had to [add] 6,000 troops to the airport afterward, and they claimed what a great job that they did for it. They sent in a new captain and more people to finally try to get as many people off as they could and in the end claimed what a success it was.”

By the way, Newton said, the airfields at Kandahar and Bagram are relatively large, much more so than Kabul. The standoff area, too, is bigger.

“You don’t have people right on the gate, and you could secure the perimeter really well,” Newton said. “If the Taliban wanted to come, you can kind of hold them off with weapons or whatever you wanted to do, and you could get people inside that base, and they could have done visa processing in

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# Help!

## Aid, human rights groups work to free Afghans and others victimized by Biden’s blunders

BY JOHN TRUMP

Khalid Ramizy can’t sleep. How could he?

A human rights activist with the Afghanistan Economic and Legal Studies Organization, Ramizy stays awake asking about the conditions in Afghanistan, sending messages and offering ways to help. Offering hope.

Ramizy, who spoke with Tom Palmer, Atlas Network vice president, in a video interview, escaped from his home in Kabul to Albania. He spends his days and nights sending emails asking about sizes for shirts and shoes. He leads other grassroots groups dedicated to freedom and liberty, and he reads notes from people trapped in Afghanistan. He reads their messages. That’s when the tears come.

The legal studies group, its website says, works to promote the values of individual freedom and of the responsibility of civil society. For limited government and the rule of law. Free markets, free societies. Women’s rights, human rights.

Real Islam, he says.

“We’re fighting ... with our pens, our books, our ideas.”

Jeff Newton, an Emmy-winning reporter, videographer, and producer who’s covered multiple conflicts, including Afghanistan, tells the story of his Afghan translator, who declared asylum in the United States but fought for years for his case to be heard.

“We got him political asylum because the Taliban was leaving letters at his house, telling him they were going to come back, find him and kill him,” Newton told Carolina Journal. “And that was the basis by which we got him political asylum.”

Eventually, his five children and his wife joined him.

“He had all the documents, and he had proof. Imagine now, being somebody who can’t get a passport because the Taliban runs the passport office. Imagine somebody who can’t cross the border because the Taliban doesn’t want these people to get out. Imagine being somebody who no longer has access to money because all the sys-

tems and the banks are shut down.

“He is effectively having to face the prospect that he will never see his brothers again. He will never see his mother again, in her 50s or 60s now, who’s looking toward a long life by herself.”

Newton scoffs at the idea, perpetuated by the Biden administration, the United States successfully evacuated the country, getting people most vulnerable to the Taliban out.

“We took out about as many people [who attend] a University of Michigan football game on a Saturday afternoon. It was a colossal [screw-up].”

A new book, “Peril,” by Bob Woodward and Robert Costa, says Biden was blindly committed to ending the war in Afghanistan and overruled his advisers — and allied leaders — who pushed for a slower, more deliberate withdrawal.

Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin, writes the New York Post, citing the book, “proposed a ‘gated’ withdrawal in three or four stages during the negotiations to keep the pressure on. But Biden insisted that he wouldn’t allow ‘mission creep’ to extend the presence of U.S. troops in Afghanistan.”

Still, people such as Newton, Ramizy, and Palmer — through social networks, Afghan support groups, and the like — continue working to get people out, by negotiating with neighboring countries, building so-called “land bridges,” to places such as Uzbekistan and Pakistan.

“But it’s so messed up now,” Newton says. “They’ve now created a situation where people are going to have to country-hop for the next five to 10 years to eventually make it to the United States.”

Donor countries pledged during a United Nations appeal to open their purse strings to the tune of \$1.2 billion in humanitarian aid, The Associated Press reports. “But attempts by Western governments and international financial institutions to deprive the Taliban-controlled government of other funding sources until its intentions are clearer also has Afghanistan’s most vulnerable citizens hurting.”



Khalid Ramizy



6 AFGHANISTAN



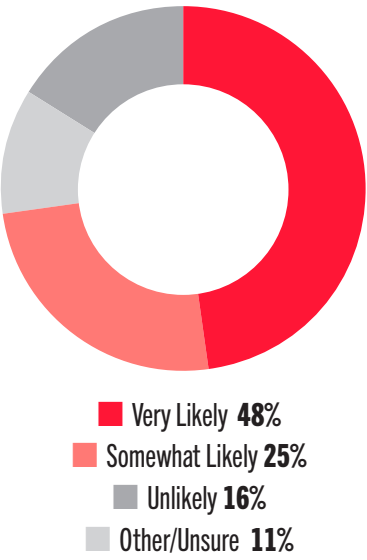
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the hangars there, for months.  
“That way, when everybody needs to go, they have their paper-work. If you treat the visa process like an ... emergency and not like a standard, ‘Oh, I-want-to-go-to-the-U.S.-on-vacation visa process, then you would have had more of a chance of getting those things done. Instead, people were trying to get marriage certificates together and passports together in a country where that stuff is not a quick process.”

KNOCK ON THE DOOR

Newton has many friends still in Afghanistan. Still needing to leave. Always fearing a knock on their door.  
“I’ve gotten people out over the past several years, but in this process, the mass evacuation, I had 17 people on a list, ... and none of them got out, despite being at the airport with electronic and national identity cards and all sorts of information that should have let them pass through the gate.”  
People with friends, family, and associates who have left Afghanistan. Safe now, maybe, but never to forget the threats, the inuendo, the naked fear.  
“We had reasonable excuses to get them out,” Newton said. “We filled out forms, all that stuff that we’re supposed to do for their brand-new program, and not a single call back from State. Nobody let anybody through the gate.”  
Say, for example, a group of people is living in a house, or a compound, Newton says. Maybe you, me, and 20 family members. In this scenario, he says, you and I have all the guns. The Taliban has surrounded our house, or the block, even. We, the ones with the guns, decide we can leave. So we do.  
“Don’t worry,” we might say. “We’ve got your back.”  
“What would you expect our people in the compound to do?” Newton asks.  
“They would not know how to get out, and we’d have to come back and get them. To me, one of the simplest philosophies is that you have to have an airport ready to evacuate a lot of people. You have to have a standoff area, especially when your enemy occupies the area right outside the gate. You need to be able to clear an area where they can’t easily mortar and

Is it likely that green card holders left behind in Afghanistan will be used as hostages by the Taliban?



Humiliated

A revelation by Secretary of State Antony Blinken that thousands of U.S. green card holders were left behind in Afghanistan has voters worried that these Americans will become Taliban hostages, and most agree it is a “national humiliation,” Rasmussen Reports says of its poll in late August.  
The national telephone and online survey, according to Rasmussen, finds 73% of likely U.S. voters believe it is likely that green card holders — permanent, legal U.S. residents — left behind in Afghanistan will be used as hostages by the Taliban, including 48% who say it’s very likely. Only 16% think it’s unlikely the Taliban will use Americans as hostages in Afghanistan. Another 11% are not sure.

rocket your base, because you’re bringing in flights.”  
Take back the streets? Impossible now, Newton says.  
“It’s like putting the toothpaste back in the tube. ... Once you lost a city, you were [screwed]. Once you lost the city, there was no way that that mission was going to look anything like what it should have looked like.  
“It would have looked exactly like it did in the end, but that’s [the Biden administration’s] fault, because they gave it up too early without planning a proper exit and ... people couldn’t freely move to the airport because the Taliban now had the city.  
“There are lots and lots of people. Everybody on my list is still in the city terrified right now ... of the knock that’s going to come on their door.”  
The Taliban, he says, may ask whether you worked for a U.S. media company, or if your brother did.  
“Oh, you were the mother of ... where is he?”

“We know that people are scared and terrified, and the Biden administration, I’m sorry — and I supported Joe Biden for this presidency — he has really [screwed] them.”

- Jeff Newton

“We know that those things are happening right now,” Newton says. “We know that people are scared and terrified, and the Biden administration, I’m sorry — and I supported Joe Biden for this presidency — he has really [screwed] them.”  
We were never winning in Afghanistan. Not really. Winners? That can be debated. Losers? How about everyone still there praying to be just about anywhere else?  
Yet we left them, Newton says. We dropped the tent at Bagram, packed up what we could, and broke camp. Guns, ammo, helicopters, planes. In the middle of the night, in total darkness. Just ... gone.  
“What do you think that’s going to do to your Afghan partners? If suddenly you start leaving in the middle of the night, months before you’re supposed to, and you want them to stand alone and fight when you take all their logistical training, their air support.”  
“I’ve spent so much time with



Firebase Wilderness, where American troops were trying to keep a road open so crews could pave it. A week after this photo was taken, the Americans were hit with an IED killing five U.S. troops.



Tired and spent, somewhere over Eastern Afghanistan in a U.S. Army Blackhawk, Jeff Newton returns to Kabul after a month in the field.

Afghan fighters, they’re not scared of anything,” Newton says.  
“They’ll fight to the death, but if they think the proper move for them is to switch sides or stand down because their partner is leaving, and that’s the best negotiating position they can be in, of course, they’re going to do that.  
“Their little towns are being surrounded by the Taliban, and they’ve got no air support anymore. They’ve got no partner standing with them. They’re all getting on planes to go home. Their only logical conclusion was to try to surrender.”  
Many, if not most, would have preferred not to surrender, he said. Not to quit, but rather to keep fighting.  
But Afghan military commanders cut their own deals, in whatever part of the vast country, Newton says. No one was left to help them.  
“They called it cowardly for not fighting for their own country. But they’re going to run out of ammo and weapons in these little towns, and suddenly have nobody to bring them in any more ammo, any food, nothing, while the Taliban waited for them and surrounded them and killed them off, one town after another.”  
Ramizy, the activist, says the Taliban destroyed the morale of the Afghan army, persuading people through fear and hyperbole. The Afghan leaders didn’t help, Ramizy said.

“They were only thinking about themselves.”  
Devoid of strategies, plans, or will.  
“They were not thinking about the people,” said Ramizy, who works incessantly to get people out, by road or any other conceivable means.  
“This is important to convey,” Newton says.  
“I don’t believe that we would have done any more by staying another 10 years. I wrote a piece for CBS Digital on the 10-year anniversary, which basically said, ‘Look ... it’s in worse shape now, at the 10-year anniversary, than it was when we first went in, and it’s not going to get any better.’  
“I’m not a believer that we need to stay another 20 years to fix the place. My problem was with the exit.”  
An exit he called, simply, “disgusting.”  
“You know, everybody says there was never going to be a clean exit. Well, there could have been a much cleaner exit. There’s nobody in their right mind who thinks that was a good exit, except for Biden. And that’s all political theater.”  
“There was no way you were going to fix Afghanistan,” Newton told CJ. “No way. We should have realized that five or 10 years in.  
“It’s going to be much worse now, and it will go back to civil war. It’s already started.”



# How did we get here:

## *What does it mean to be an American?*

BY JOHN TRUMP

John Szoka, an Army veteran, was thinking about 9/11. About the attacks and the aftermath.

The ghost-like figures, covered in ash, emerging from the destruction.

All looking much the same. Shocked, shaken, and scared. No tags or labels.

"You couldn't tell if someone was black, white, Hispanic, rich, poor. Everybody was the same. We were all Americans. We were all the same," said Szoka, a retired lieutenant colonel and N.C. House Republican who represents Cumberland County, which includes Fayetteville and Fort Bragg.

The American culture, particularly in recent years, is shifting and seemingly careening off path, speeding toward steep and dangerous cliffs.

Think back 20 years, Szoka says.

"We weren't hyphenated Americans. We weren't white. We weren't black. We weren't this, or we weren't that. The country pulled together. It was one of our finest hours."

Compare that with the divisive country of today. We fight each other over ideologies, values, and the ways in which we choose to live our lives. The predominant idea now is those who think or act differently are, without argument, just plain wrong.

Of course, college freshmen in 2021 weren't even born when the terrorists attacked the World Trade Center and the Pentagon. It's hard for them to understand the sentiment then, particularly in the polarized country of today.

"They don't really have any kind of understanding of the sentiment of the time," said Andy Taylor, political science professor at N.C. State University. "They didn't really even have that much of a sense of how unified the country was, for at least a short period of time. That makes it a harder sell. And the kinds of issues that we tend to be focused on these days, particularly with regards to the pandemic and other matters, are inward-looking."

Szoka attributes this attitude, at least in part, to the idea of giving trophies to all, regardless of the outcome. Young people rally around socialism, or even communism, at the same time lacking any sort of historical context or what those ideologies mean.

"How do we go from the nation rallying around the country to kids like this who are so misguided they don't even understand what America means?" Szoka asked. "They don't understand what it means to be an American, and this country really is the only country in the world where you can be, literally, president if you want."

"You can do whatever you want to do. You've got to work hard, and you're rewarded for that. I think some of that, and obviously I'm a Republican ... has been engendered by the Obama administration, and now double-downed in spades by the Biden administration, of giving things out for free. We're devaluing work and achievement."



A man props up an American flag at the north pool during ceremonies to commemorate the 20th anniversary of the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks at the National September 11 Memorial and Museum in New York.

AP PHOTO/JOHN MINCHILLO



Szoka: "We weren't hyphenated Americans. We weren't white. We weren't black. We weren't this, or we weren't that. The country pulled together. It was one of our finest hours."

COURTESY JOHN SZOKA

Win or lose. Period.

"If the enemy's standing on your throat, you lost. You don't get a participation trophy. You don't get anything," Szoka says. "So there's this weakening in the country, I think of what it truly means to be an American, and we need to get back to that ... just pull together as a country once again. How we're going to make that happen, I don't know."

Szoka also blames a general lack of leadership, accountability, and responsibility, in myriad spheres but particularly in government.

Make a decision and own it, sans excuses and blame. As it is in

the military. Afghanistan provides a glaring, if not horrific, example.

"All I've seen from the federal government, so far, from the people in power, is the complete lack of accountability and complete unwillingness to take on responsibility for any of the decisions they've made," Szoka said. "It's poor leadership taken to a new low level."

He points sharply at President Biden and his administration, which continues a mantra of blaming others yet excusing themselves.

For Biden and his people, the previous president is a popular target.

"Even if you're dealt a bad

hand, President Trump has been out of office since January. ... He's not the president anymore. When you're in charge, take responsibility for your actions. Be accountable for your decisions."

Many of Szoka's constituents are veterans or even current military members. Or just people who live in a community dominated by military culture. Some of the often-colorful conversations, Szoka said, make him want to cry.

Stories from hard-working people, of all ideologies and color. People at all levels of income, doing all kinds of jobs. Many of the conversations carry a strong undertone of complete disgust, of disillusion-

ment with Biden, who oversaw the mess of an exit from Afghanistan.

People who are "thoroughly and utterly disgusted."

"I haven't polled it," Szoka said, "but just based on who's calling me, it's pretty much that every group is entirely pissed off."

Then there are the wounded service members, those with injuries both visible and hidden from public view.

"Veterans are incredibly distressed," he said.

These aren't weak people. But they are people willing to give their lives for their country, and they most certainly expected something better than the debacle in Afghanistan. Their service should have value, meaning.

"What I tell folks is there's huge value in it, and don't ever doubt that for a minute," Szoka said.

The United States hasn't seen a major attack at home since 9/11, he said, and we've shown thousands of Afghans that there can be another way to live and to prosper.

The way Americans left Afghanistan, however, failed horribly in conveying that message.

"I was thinking," Szoka said, "that if President Biden had been a member of the military, he should be court-martialed for complete ineptness. That was my first thought."

American support for the war in Afghanistan has slowly yet steadily waned since our initial involvement some 20 years ago, and that goes across administrations, said Taylor.

Again, our exit will engrain an ugly exclamation point. Imposing a hard deadline was one problem.

"This is something that President Bush, actually, and to some extent President Obama, talked about in Iraq," Taylor said. "You don't want to give people an actual deadline, because then your enemy will be able to adjust strategy accordingly, and it puts you at a significant disadvantage."

To that extent, he said, Trump is as culpable as Biden.

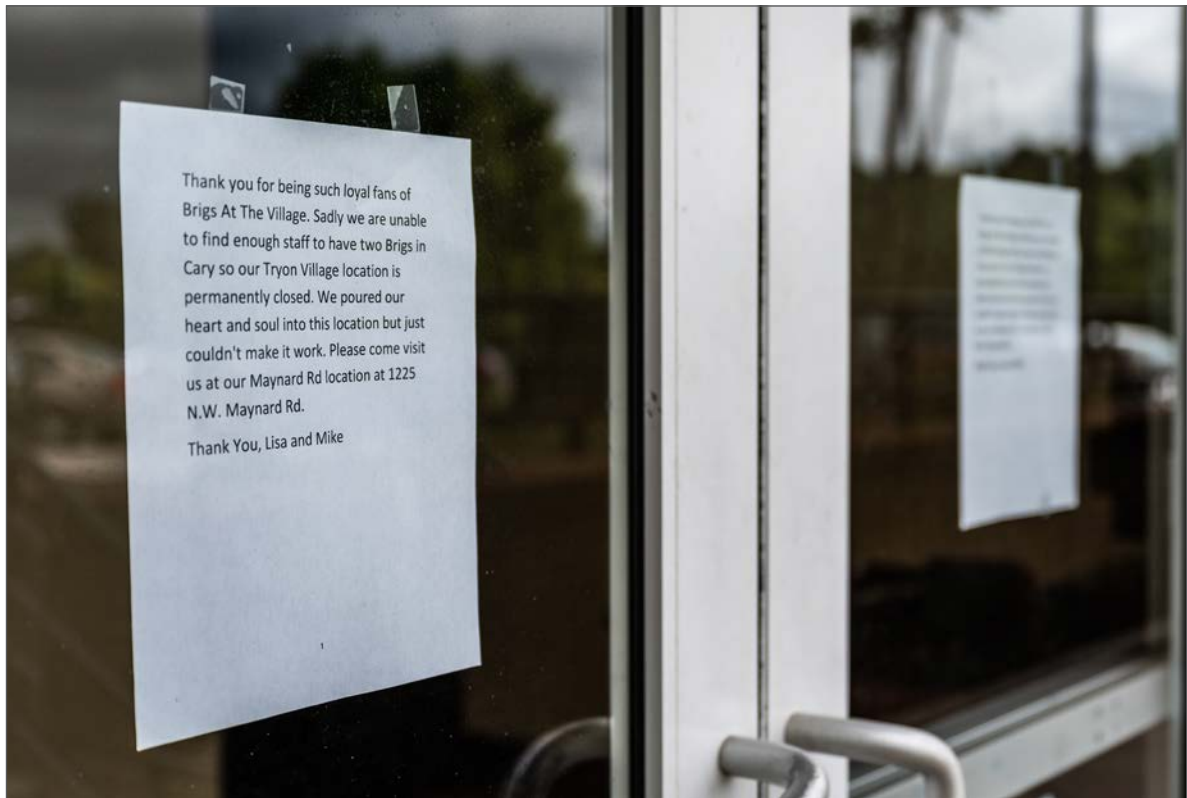
"He really started to push us with the withdrawal," Taylor said. "His administration negotiated with the Taliban, and the withdrawal was part of that. ... [But] it still had to be executed, and that clearly is where you can point the finger solely at the Biden administration. If they were kind of geared for this, there should have been some significant plan of how to get U.S. citizens, and those the U.S. wanted to get out, out of Afghanistan."

That would involve considering important factors, such as better predicting the capacity of Afghan forces to resist the Taliban's advances, or working harder to minimize the amount of equipment the United States — or, for that matter, Afghan forces — would leave for the Taliban.

Taylor says the past two presidents may be the least internationalist presidents the nation has elected since World War II.

Trump preached "America First." But Biden, as Taylor says, has an extensive foreign affairs pedigree, including chairman of





After operating for more than a decade, Brigs restaurant on Tryon Road in Cary closed in August due to staffing shortages.

# Help wanted

## Expanded unemployment benefits blamed for staffing shortages, business closures

BY DAVID BASS

The federal government's expanded \$300-a-week federal unemployment benefits expired Sept. 6, but their impact continues to be felt by businesses across North Carolina experiencing severe staffing shortages.

In some cases, the lack of avail-

able workers has meant businesses have closed for good. A well-loved breakfast and brunch restaurant in Cary is one of the casualties. After operating for over a decade, the Brigs location in the Tryon Village shopping center shuttered Aug. 18 due to staffing shortages the founder attributes to the expanded federal unemployment benefits.

"I don't know of a single business owner who doesn't blame [the federal unemployment benefits] for their staffing shortages," owner David Brigham told Carolina Journal.

Until early September, the unemployed could qualify for up to \$650 a week — or around \$16 an hour — in total when the federal benefits are combined with state

benefits.

### LABOR SHORTAGE

The closure of the Tryon Village Brigs isn't an isolated story. News reports across the state document the same pattern of severe labor shortages. The Durham-based staffing firm Hire Dynamics told the News & Observer in August it has seen turnover rates spike from 25% to 55% this year, even though its client firms are paying a minimum of \$15 to \$17 an hour.

"The jobs are out there. The trouble is getting people to go to work," said regional manager Leigh Whitehurst.

Larry Cerilli, co-owner of Snoopy's Hog Dogs in Raleigh, told WRAL-TV in May that his four restaurant locations were down by 60% of their employees. The lack of labor prompted the restaurant chain to close its dining rooms and offer takeout only.

In the Triad, the owner of Amoroso's Bakery closed his flagship location in High Point due to lack of staff. "We're not closing down because of lack of sales," owner Ralph Amoroso told WGHP-TV. "We're strictly closing down because we don't have the people to man it. That's unusual. It's really strange."

According to Brian Balfour, senior vice president of research at the John Locke Foundation, no one should be surprised that higher unemployment benefits lead fewer people to look for work.

"Government checks are competing with paychecks, and the government checks are at a big advantage because they don't require people to work," Balfour said. "It will be very interesting to see how quickly people who have been collecting unemployment attempt to return to the work force now that the federal subsidies have ended."

### BRIGS' CLOSURE

The Brigs chain of restaurants — with locations in Raleigh, Durham, Wake Forest, and Cary — was founded in October 1988 by Brigham and his wife Susan. The Tryon Village location of Brigs

once had 30 employees, but recently that number had dwindled to a dozen, Brigham said.

He said his chain of restaurants had a record-breaking May, June, July, and the first half of August in terms of sales, as pandemic-weary people flocked back to restaurants. But the staffing shortages made it impossible to operate.

"It got down to where we had two cooks and two prep cooks," Brigham said. "One of the owners was there on the weekends washing dishes because she didn't have enough staff. We had a line at the door and a 45-minute wait for a table, and she's in the back washing dishes."

The restaurants pay all employees a minimum of \$15 an hour, but even that wasn't enough to keep a full staff.

"If people would get off their butts and go to work, there would be no shortages," he said.

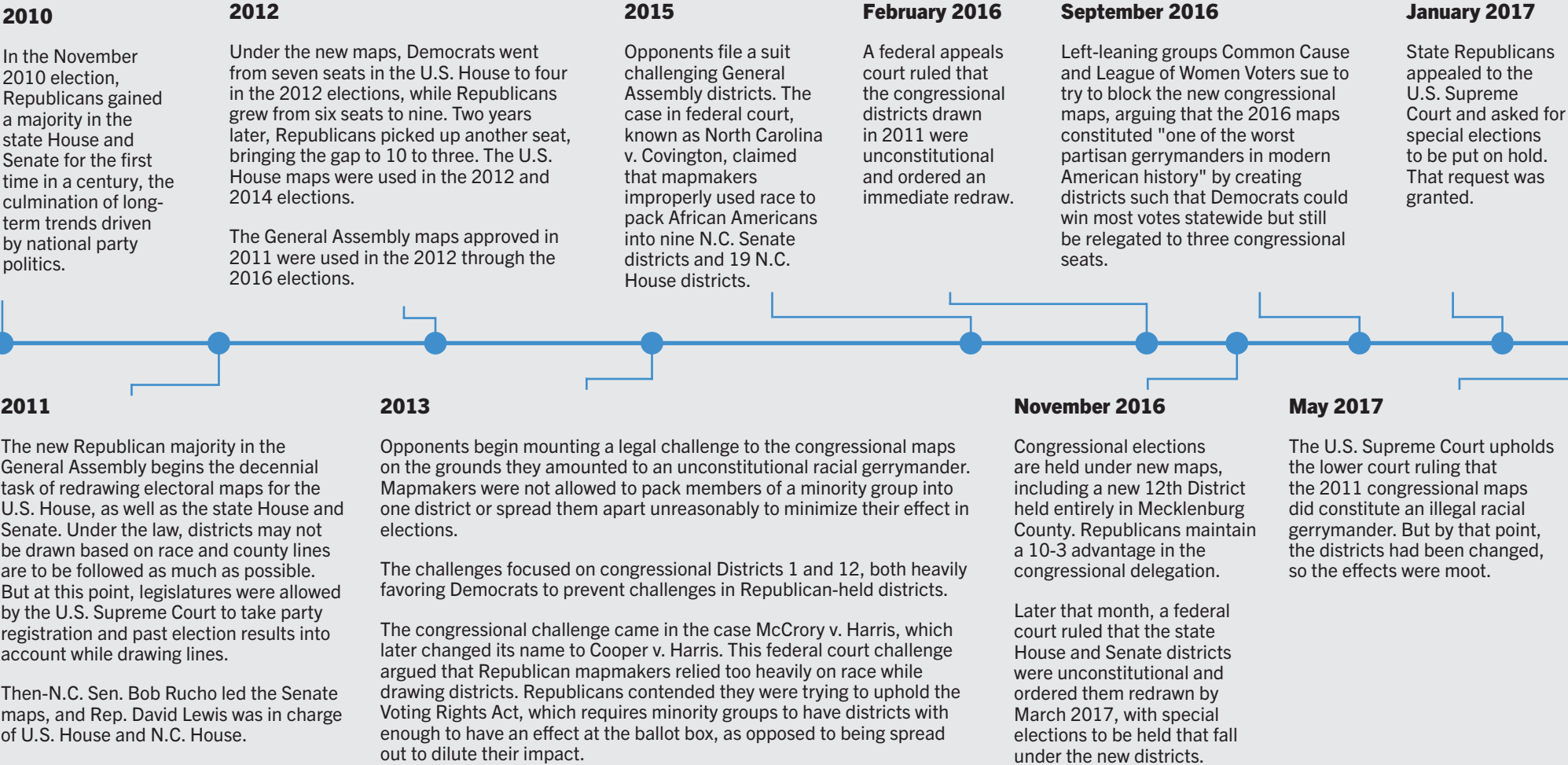
### LAWMAKERS' EFFORTS THWARTED

Over the summer, Republican leadership in the N.C. General Assembly passed Senate Bill 116, a measure that would have ended the state's participation in the expanded benefits earlier than the September deadline. The rationale: The extra benefits were hurting businesses and customers.

"You can leave this building and drive within a quarter mile, and you can find help-wanted signs everywhere," said House Speaker Tim Moore, R-Cleveland, in June. "Workers are needed. Right now, we have a system in place that is essentially incentivizing not working. That is not right. That is not good for people, that is not good for this state."

On July 2, Gov. Roy Cooper vetoed S.B. 116, arguing in his veto message, "Prematurely stopping these benefits hurts our state by sending back money that could be injected into our economy with people using it for things like food and rent."

North Carolina's unemployment rate has declined from a high of 13.5% in April and May 2020 to 4.4% in July 2021.





Questionable criteria on N.C. worker ranking beg a deeper dive

Study grabs media attention rating N.C. ‘worst for workers,’ but what is it measuring?

BY DONNA KING

North Carolina’s economic health seems strong. Taxes are low, cost of living is reasonable, and a recent CNBC study gave the state a No. 2 ranking as “Best for Business” because of solid growth, quality work force, business friendliness, and technology. It’s all meant that more individual workers are making this home every year, with average full-time wages at \$54,000 a year in 2021. But a recent study from Ox-Fam, a Boston advocacy group that lobbies for government entitlement policies, rated N.C. dead last for workers.

Why the disparity? The two studies paint different pictures of our great state because they look at different data from a different point of view and a different agenda. Reading between the lines is required to be an

informed news consumer.

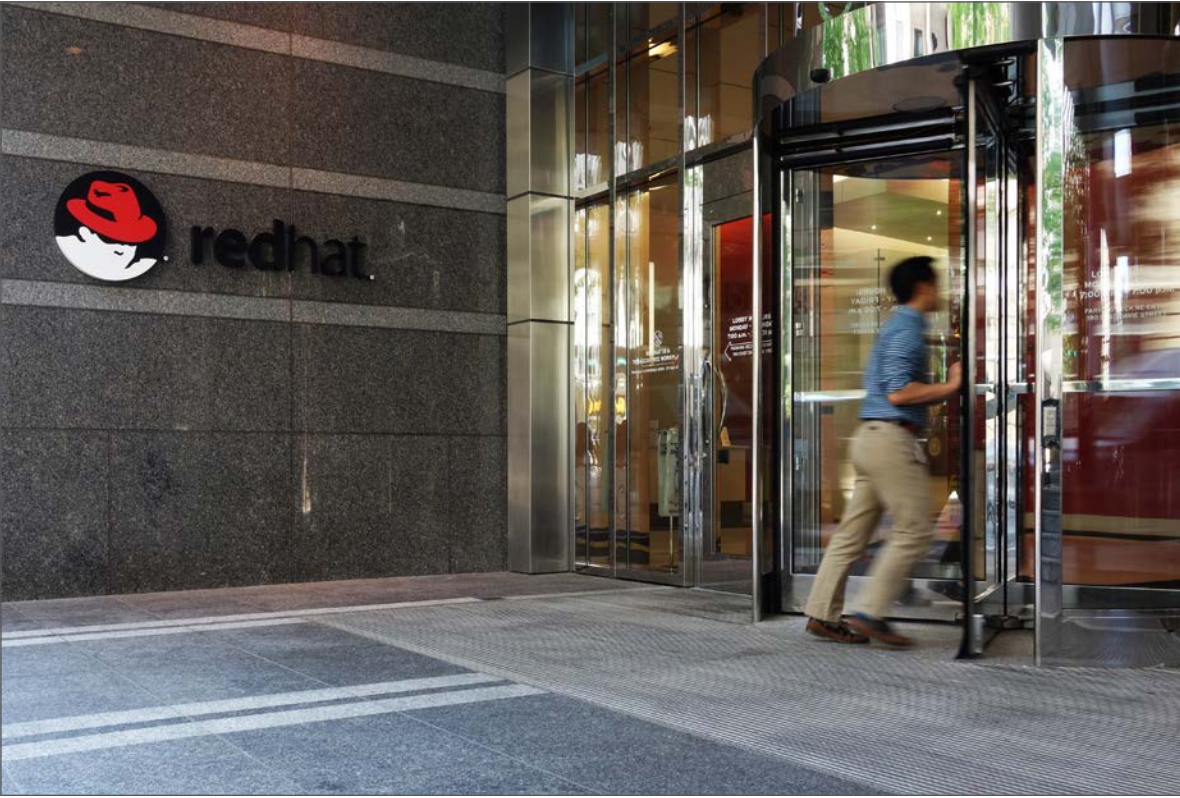
The OxFam study got more local media coverage by labeling N.C. as one of the “worst places to work” in the United States. Ox-Fam cites the reason as the lack of intervention policies by the state government, such as the fact that the N.C. minimum wage aligns with federal law, and its right-to-work status means it isn’t fertile for unionizing. The authors failed to calculate in the large number of people moving to North Carolina for work or the overall higher average wage. “This index is specifically just looking at state-level policies for workers,” said Kaitlyn Henderson, lead researcher for OxFam, in an interview with Carolina Journal. “We really wanted to celebrate those states that are seeking to support even the worker who earns the least amount of money.”

The OxFam study gave three criteria for judging a good environment for workers: the presence of a minimum wage law compared to the cost of living, power of labor unions and collective bargaining, and regulatory laws mandating some benefits, such as requiring that all businesses give sick and vacation days.

OxFam held up New York and California as among the best places for workers because they have \$15 and \$12 hourly minimum wages, respectively and their state policies encourage unions. However, the two are tied for second place for the highest unemployment rates in the country, and both have notorious-

“This is more of a left-wing progressive ideological wish list of interventionist policies rather than which states are actually creating jobs, creating opportunities, and creating income growth for workers.”

- Brian Balfour, John Locke Foundation



TOM SCHMUCKER

A worker enters Red Hat’s headquarters in Raleigh. CNBC recently gave the state a No. 2 ranking as ‘Best for Business.’ But OxFam rated N.C. last for workers. The OxFam study gave ratings based solely on minimum wage workers, which is only about 5% of North Carolina’s full-time workforce.

#2

BEST STATE FOR BUSINESS

CNBC study gave North Carolina a No. 2 ranking as “Best for Business” because of solid growth, quality work-force, business friendliness, and technology.

#52

BEST STATE TO WORK

OxFam, a Boston advocacy group that lobbies for government entitlement policies, rated N.C. dead last for workers.

Redistricting timeline

BY ANDREW DUNN

N.C. voters rarely voted in the same districts twice over the past half-decade, as legal challenges required the General Assembly to redraw state legislative and congressional districts numerous times. As the General Assembly prepares for redistricting after the 2020 census, here’s a look at the debacle that followed the last one.

January 2018

In early January, a federal court rules the 2016 congressional maps were an unconstitutional partisan gerrymander and ordered the maps to be redrawn immediately.

N.C. Republicans quickly filed an emergency appeal to the U.S. Supreme Court, asking them to decide the case and put the district redrawing on hold. It was granted Jan. 18.

A trial court rules that North Carolina should use the special master’s maps for 2018 for legislative districts.

August 2018

A U.S. District Court panel ruled the congressional lines were an unconstitutional partisan gerrymander. The court would later decide the 2018 elections could proceed using the current districts.

August 2021

The General Assembly adopts rules for the upcoming redistricting process. This includes not taking partisan, electoral, or racial data into account.

June 2017

The Supreme Court sided with the lower federal court in the state legislative district case, agreeing the districts were unconstitutional. The Supreme Court told the lower court to figure out if North Carolina should hold special elections in 2017.

August 2017

The General Assembly begins drawing new state legislative districts. These new 2017 maps are challenged as still not good enough, though only 12 districts were challenged, instead of 28.

October 2017

The federal appeals court appoints a “special master” to draw some legislative districts.

February 2018

The U.S. Supreme Court partially blocks the ruling on the General Assembly districts. The lines from the 2017 redraw are to be used in Wake and Mecklenburg counties, while the special master’s maps will be used for the other six counties changed.

June 2018

The U.S. Supreme Court rules this scenario is to be used in the 2018 elections for the General Assembly.

September 2019

Common Cause files a new lawsuit challenging the 2016 congressional maps, alleging they constitute an illegal partisan gerrymander. The courts block the use of these maps in the upcoming 2020 elections.

The courts declare the 2017 General Assembly districts an unconstitutional gerrymander. The General Assembly draws new state House and Senate districts for use in the 2020 elections.

November 2019

The General Assembly approves a new set of congressional districts, just a few weeks before candidate filing.

April 2021

The U.S. Census Bureau releases some results from the 2020 census. North Carolina officially gains a 14th congressional seat.

DISTRICTS DRAWN:

- 2011, 2017 (not used in an election), 2018, 2019 for General Assembly
- 2011, 2016, 2019 for congressional races



# Indoctrination and discrimination

N.C. parents say public schools are usurping their authority

BY DAVID BASS

Parents in North Carolina report feeling increasingly concerned about the public schools' efforts to usurp their parental authority on topics such as mask and COVID-19 vaccine mandates and the teaching of controversial race and gender theories.

The debate heated up over the summer as lawmakers in the General Assembly passed an anti-indoctrination bill — House Bill 324, Ensuring Dignity and Nondiscrimination in Schools — aimed at preventing teaching that one race or sex is inherently superior to another. That bill passed both chambers along party lines, but Gov. Roy Cooper vetoed it.

House lawmakers passed a bill meant to ensure that school districts — not state government — have sole discretion in setting mask mandates for classrooms. Meanwhile, parents have disrupted local school board meetings — in Buncombe County, for instance — over universal mask mandates.

Other parents are upset because schools are bypassing their authority on COVID-19 vaccines. In Guilford County, one mother reported that her 14-year-old son on the football team was given a shot without parental consent.

"As parents and guardians became more engaged in the education of their children during the pandemic, they discovered that their schools enforced arbitrary rules, maintained counterproductive practices, and delivered politicized instruction," said Terry Stoops, director of the Center for Effective Education at the John Locke Foundation.

"Rather than using parental objections as an opportunity to



A mother protests in Raleigh, North Carolina. Parents report feeling increasingly concerned about the public schools' efforts to usurp their authority regarding masks, vaccine mandates and controversial race theories.

reflect on the logic of existing arrangements, many school employees and school board members simply dismissed the legitimate concerns of families and bristled at anyone who dared to question their judgment."

## SOUNDING OFF ON CRT

Sue Gooze, who ran for the U.S. House in 2016 to represent the 4th Congressional District, says she has personal experience with indoctrination. She was born in communist China in the early 1970s and remembers being in school from 7 a.m. to 10 p.m., away from her family.

"I'm extra sensitive when someone wants to rewrite a curriculum to indoctrinate students," she said. "Critical Race Theory is a sneaky way to cave in American society, because it will create a division and take advantage of racial differences and stir up a fight. In order to defeat a nation, you have to divide it. A united nation is difficult to defeat. A united nation will generally agree in history-pride and heritage-pride. But the goal is to divide them and make them ashamed of their heritage."

Natalya Androsova, a Wake County resident who emigrated from Russia 22 years ago, experienced indoctrination firsthand. Her daughter is a sophomore in the public school system, but Androsova pulled her out in August and opened a homeschool academy. Critical Race Theory was one reason.

"I grew up in the Soviet Union, and I have experience firsthand in indoctrination in communist propaganda," Androsova told the Senate Education and Higher Education Committee in debate over the vetoed bill to ban indoctrination and discrimination in public schools. "It was everywhere, including in school curriculum, mostly language arts and social studies. Without noticing it, I be-

came a product of this propaganda, truly believing the Communist Party was only good. I believed my teachers because I loved them and I trusted them."



**Without noticing it, I became a product of this propaganda. ... I believed my teachers because I loved them and I trusted them. I see the same pattern here in our public schools.**

- Natalya Androsova, Wake County mom

mer public school elementary and middle school teacher.

Barnhart worries schools are bypassing parents' authority on

decisions ranging from masking to the length of quarantining after exposure to the virus. In the New Hanover County system, students must be out of school for 14 days if exposed to the virus without wearing a mask.

"That length of time outside of school used to be called truancy," Barnhart said. "Now it's just become standard protocol. The question is whether quarantining healthy kids outweighs the definite academic deficiencies when they're out of the classroom for weeks at a time."

She prefers those parents be notified of COVID-19 exposures and given the right to make the final call on quarantining.

"If schools realize that parents are not feeling heard and not have a voice, I know a lot of people who have pulled their kids from public school," Barnhart said. "If they don't start working through these problems, more and more public school funding will be lost as families look elsewhere."

## TASK FORCE REVEALS BIAS

Parental concerns have also been stoked by the results of Lt. Gov. Mark Robinson's task force, called Fairness and Accountability in the Classroom for Teachers and Students. The first F.A.C.T.S. report documented some 500 submissions from parents.

Most people who submitted their accounts asked not to be identified for fear of losing their jobs as teachers or counselors. Others, from parents or family members, expressed concern their children would be penalized for revealing teachers' actions.

One parent reported to the task force that both children's teachers were using biased instruction and commentary. "My child's freshman history class was told that if 'you were white and Christian, you should be ashamed,'" the parent reported. "My child's junior history class was told that, 'It is possible that some Republicans could be good people.'"

"This report should be required reading for anyone doubting the presence of Critical Race Theory and social justice claptrap in North Carolina public schools," said Stoops. "While the submissions are not indicative of the scope of the problem, it is undeniable there is a problem. I suspect that subsequent task force reports will add critical context to an issue of tremendous importance to families across the state."

## Teachers union on decline

continued from PAGE 1

a 3.3% increase, and charters saw a bump of 7.7%, or around 9,000 students.

"Over the last decade, North Carolina went from laggard to leader in parental choice," noted Terry Stoops, director of the Center for Effective Education at the John Locke Foundation. "Simply put, North Carolina is a better place because its citizens embrace

educational freedom."

Meanwhile, a statewide campaign launched by the John Locke Foundation — publisher of Carolina Journal — urges public school teachers to save \$500 in dues each year by leaving the NCAE.

The billboards are present in high-population areas of the state, including the two largest school districts of Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools and Wake County Public Schools.

The campaign includes a digital component at LeaveNCAE.com, in which teachers receive instructions on cutting ties with the NCAE.

"The John Locke Foundation embraces diversity of thought," said Locke President Donald Bryson in a statement. "We are pro-teacher. We believe educators

should have the freedom to affiliate as they see fit, and we believe the NCAE stopped representing the best interests of teachers and students long ago, in exchange for partisan gains."

For teachers who choose to leave the union, there's a new alternative in 2021: the Carolina Teachers Alliance.

"I've heard from so many teachers that the NCAE does not represent their values," said Amy Marshall, a former public school teacher who launched Carolina Teachers Alliance earlier this year as a lower-cost alternative that doesn't promote a progressive agenda.

Membership dues in the NCAE vary by school district and role but, for the 2021-22 school year, the organization was charging

\$586 a year for a full-time teacher in Wake County.

Professional membership in Carolina Teachers Alliance is about half as much at \$299.88 a year.

Marshall said membership in the Carolina Teachers Alliance has been steadily building since its official launch statewide in April.

In addition to differentiating itself from the NCAE on price, the organization also parts ways on major policy issues: It supports school choice while prioritizing public school improvement, supports law enforcement, and advocates keeping public schools open and accessible during the pandemic.

Jennifer Balgooyen is an example of a teacher who opted to join the Carolina Teachers Alliance

earlier this year because her values didn't match those of the NCAE.

"There is a very concerning trend for how the NCAE is politicizing medicine and public health, plus how they're bringing in a lot of topics that have no place in public schools," said Balgooyen, who has taught in Wake County public schools for 14 years.

Mark Crowe is another public school employee from Cumberland County who joined the Carolina Teachers Alliance because he was tired of the politics from the NCAE.

"It's more political than it is about the kids," Crowe said. "I think it's good when teachers can unite together, but some of the issues the NCAE has are so divisive, that's why they're losing membership."



Culture wars and COVID have voters paying attention like never before

continued from PAGE 1

the topic of public education, with 37% of North Carolinians indicating public education is headed in the wrong direction. Only 34% thought it was going the right way. The never-before-political are now moved to join protests of school board meetings.

The odd mixture of high engagement and low confidence can be seen in election polling, too. Even though nearly 90% of N.C. respondents told Cygnal polling in March they were “definitely voting” in the upcoming 2022 elections, fewer than half believe those elections will be “free and fair.” The suspicion comes on the heels of a 2020 election wrought with allegations of fraud and unfair rule changes, leaving 70% of Republicans to believe the election was not “free and fair” in the days after polls closed.

Yet before the 2020 elections were held — and contested, and the focus of the historic riot at the U.S. Capitol on Jan. 6, 2021 — it was young N.C. voters who had the most concern about election integrity. An October 2020 poll by Elon University found N.C. voters between 18 and 24 were about twice as likely as every other age group to express they are “not at all confident” the 2020 elections would be fair.

Young voters, forever the target for political campaigns hoping to turn youthful apathy into actionable enthusiasm, are indeed becoming more politically engaged. A national poll of America’s 18-to-29-year-olds conducted in April by the Institute of Politics at Harvard University’s Kennedy School shows they’re much more likely to be politically engaged than they were a decade ago.

That same poll found they are



Black Lives Matter protesters march in downtown Raleigh. Calls to defund the police and fundamentally transform America 'by any means necessary' are easily understood as battle cries in a culture war.

heavily invested in progressive policies and showed marked increases in support for government intervention in everything from health care to race relations and hiring practices.

Referencing those poll results, the Los Angeles Times noted that surging political engagement among young people is “a problem for Republicans.”

The most tangible manner in which this higher youth engagement manifested is perhaps most

noticeable in the demographic makeup of BLM/Antifa protests and riots throughout the summer of 2020. Calls to defund the police and fundamentally transform America “by any means necessary” are easily understood as battle cries in a culture war.

Inasmuch as the youth may be finding higher meaning through prescribed social justice policies, relatively older voters are reacting to the advancing front with a sense of foreboding. It wasn’t al-

ways the case. A few long years ago, many of these voters were most concerned with raising their kids, paying their bills, and putting food on the table, and not politics. That was before their business was closed, before their school-aged kids were caught in the middle of pandemic and ideological campaigns, and before supply chain disruptions and price swings made grocery shopping a gamble. Now they’re paying some attention.

A focus on the conflicts that have brought such attention could be found at the N.C. chapter of the Faith and Freedom Coalition’s Salt and Light Conference hosted late September in Mount Airy. It attracted members of the state legislature, candidates running in the 2022 U.S. Senate race, and some of the most engaged and active conservatives in North Carolina.

N.C. Senate leader Phil Berger, R-Rockingham, addressing the conference via video, spoke in plain terms about the high stakes in a world where apathy has become a luxury.

“There’s never been a more critical time in America than right now,” said Berger. “Our world is polarized, and it only continues to get more and more divided. Our values are attacked, day after day, our freedoms often becoming an afterthought.”

Most conference speakers trained their fire on the “plague” of Critical Race Theory and other “woke” ideologies, lamenting their propagation through public schools, and calling for resistance to such cultural changes through more energized political engagement.

As far as the intangible current, this crowd was electrified: Much like those crowds marching for social justice, those questioning election results, those protesting school mask mandates, those pleading for vaccine compliance, and those pining for the days when apathy was relatively easy.

“The good news is that American government depends on an engaged citizenry casting informed votes,” says Kokai. “The bad news is that higher engagement can be linked to increased turmoil and concern about the future. A lot of us might like to have a little more voter apathy if it meant that conditions could return to the ‘good ol’ days’ prior to 2020.”

Cancel culture at UNCW drives leadership out

BY DONNA KING

Describing a culture of silencing conservative voices at the University of North Carolina at Wilmington, one trustee was driven to quit recently with an openly critical post of Seahawk nation on Facebook. Former UNCW Board of Trustees member Woody White revealed what he sees as a troubling trend in treatment of conservative faculty and students.

“Like too many other American universities, it punishes conservative voices, by looking the other way, by perpetrating the double standard. By knowing that thousands of students engage in self-censorship, but doing nothing about it,” White wrote.

On Sept. 24, UNCW Chancellor Jose Sartarelli announced his retirement.

Those associated with the university have said that the resignation was already planned, but criticism of the university leadership has come in the wake of conservative professor Mike Adams’ suicide last year and later the online calls for violence against Republicans from a professor who was allowed to retain his position on the faculty.

People have started voting with their feet. It is time they also start voting with their wallets.

- former UNCW Board of Trustees member Woody White

MIKE ADAMS: 'LET MY PEOPLE GO.'

Adams, a sociology professor and vocal conservative, was forced to resign in 2020 after openly criticizing Gov. Roy Cooper for closing businesses and schools during the COVID-19 pandemic.

“This evening I ate pizza and drank beer with six guys at a six-seat tabletop. I almost felt like a free man who was not living in the slave state of North Carolina. Mas-



Former UNCW Board of Trustees member Woody White: 'Like too many other American universities, it punishes conservative voices, by looking the other way, by perpetrating the double standard. By knowing that thousands of students engage in self-censorship, but doing nothing about it.'

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Cancel culture at UNCW drives leadership out

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ams tweeted in May 2020. It certainly wasn't the first time Adams criticized the failings of elected officials, the university, or his liberal students and colleagues. Adams was an outspoken conservative Christian and a firebrand in academia, known for strong positions promoting the pro-life movement and calling Black Lives Matter protesters "thugs." He was vocally anti-lockdown, urging people to defy Cooper's orders. Over the years he also criticized the Women's Studies major, LGBTQ office activities on campus, and Muslim students, drawing heat from faculty and students who even created the "I Hate Mike Adams Day" petition, which Adams signed himself. When he was denied a promotion, Adams sued the school in 2014, saying UNCW was violating his First Amendment rights. He won a \$700,000 settlement from the university that included a promotion to full professor. However, following his tweet criticizing Cooper, Adams agreed

to retire early, but took his own life a week before his August 2020 retirement date.

DAN JOHNSON: 'BLOW UP REPUBLICANS'

Several weeks before Adams' suicide, UNCW associate professor Dan Johnson posted on his Facebook page, "Blow up Republicans." He posted his message on May 17, but it was reported by the news site Campus Reform and later taken down. Despite Johnson's call for violence against others, Sartarelli only censured him with a letter and allowed him to remain in his position on the faculty. Haylie Davis, a former student of Johnson's, told Campus Reform that she thought UNCW's handling of Johnson indicated a double standard. "Putting any personal political preference aside, I think this matter should be addressed and dealt in the same manner that it would be if the word 'Republican' was replaced with any other word. If the post stated 'Blow up women,' 'Blow up homosexuals,' 'Blow up Catholics,' etc.," Davis said. When Sartarelli decided to censure Johnson with a letter White did not call to fire Johnson, but did express his frustration in an email to the University's entire Board of Trustees. "The problem at UNCW, and at nearly every other university across the nation, is the double standard," White wrote. "Free speech is tolerated — even celebrated — when it condemns con-



UNC Wilmington professor Mike Adams won a free speech lawsuit settlement of \$700,000 that included a promotion to full professor. But following a tweet criticizing Gov. Roy Cooper, Adams agreed to retire early. He took his own life before his retirement date.

servative thought and speech. When it goes the other way, conservatives are shamed, canceled, and bullied. Just last year, our chancellor was censored by the faculty and student body for what he said at a town hall. And he did not suggest that anyone should be blown up." In December 2020 Sartarelli was himself censored by UNCW

faculty for what they described as "a lack of leadership on the matter of Diversity and Inclusion" and that he "initially refused to support a global social movement supporting the liberty and human rights of Black people." White, a Wilmington-area attorney and former New Hanover County commissioner and state senator, still had two years left

on his appointment as a UNCW trustee. Now, House Speaker Tim Moore will search for a new member after having appointed White twice. The UNC System Board of Governors will launch a nationwide search for a new chancellor. "Announcing now will give the UNCW Board of Trustees, President Hans, and the UNC System Board of Governors approximately nine months to conduct a national search for the next chancellor," according to a news release from the university. UNCW celebrates its 75th anniversary in fall 2022. White and Sartarelli have been instrumental in the school's growth, and both expressed a love for the school. Sartarelli led the school through a time of growth in donations, enrollment, and educational programs, earning national recognition. "The success that our students, faculty, staff, and alumni have achieved in recent years has been nothing short of outstanding," Sartarelli said in a statement from the school. "I am immensely proud to have served UNCW during such a pivotal time in history, and I want to thank the Seahawk community for making this great university so special." White said he is not throwing in the towel on the school just yet, but regrets the campus trend he's seen in recent years. "Despite his successes in enrollment growth and student housing, his neglect of the real issues that matter in the long run is Sartarelli's true legacy," he wrote.



John Szoka

Szoka

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the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. "It's the principal reason, I think, why Obama picked him to be his running mate in 2008, and it is interesting that he seems uninterested in international affairs and foreign policy and is go-

ing along with a project to withdraw the United States, particularly from the Middle East, and possibly from other parts of the world, and to have a very constrained, narrow view of what American interests are. "Both of them," Taylor said, "and Obama, to a large extent, talk about this pivot to Asia, and maybe we should concentrate on the Chinese. But that's, at most, a cold war. It's nowhere near a hot war, obviously. It's not even much of a cold war at the moment."

The two most recent presidents, Taylor said, left many with the sense they were largely unconcerned about what's going on in the world, and not too worried about America's role in it. As 9/11 wears off, Taylor said, understanding immediate threats to national security has proven more difficult. "This is not what American public policy, the American public, and it seems like American leaders, are particularly consumed with at the moment."

Still, America as a collection of individuals has often proven more adept at leading the conversation, at shifting a culture that skews American values, back on course. Szoka sees reason for hope. In young people he meets at the legislature and in the community. People, who, in his words, "get it." "It's not universal that we have to continue down this road, that mediocrity is rewarded, and that exceptionalism is not the standard."

GOT AN OPINION?

Carolina Journal is accepting letters to the editor and guest opinions (op-eds)\* on issues related to North Carolina. We cover the state from a limited-government and free-market perspective but will consider varying viewpoints, depending on relevance and quality. A good guideline for letters is 200-500 words and 550-800 words for op-eds. A letter to the editor is comment or disagreement with a published CJ piece; an op-ed is a guest opinion argument.

Please email any submissions to opinion editor Ray Nothstine | [rnothstine@lockehq.org](mailto:rnothstine@lockehq.org)

\*We retain the right to edit or to not publish any submitted letters or op-eds.

THE CAROLINA JOURNAL



THE CAROLINA JOURNAL

# OPINION



## Do limousine liberals control the Dem Party?

**RAY NOTHSTINE**  
OPINIONS EDITOR



Believe it or not, the “limousine liberal” tag was first used by a Democrat to describe a Republican in a New York City mayoral campaign during the late 1960s. Back then, the Democratic Party was still largely cemented as America’s working-class party. Today, it’s an entirely different story. Few policies highlight that more right now than those of the SALT reform proposal now before Congress. Yes, the constant barrage of virtual signaling by the left is the clearest signal of all, but those antics are far too numerous to address in a single column.

SALT simply means state and local tax deductions for federal income taxes. Republicans and Donald Trump capped the deductions at \$10,000 under their tax reform legislation in 2017.

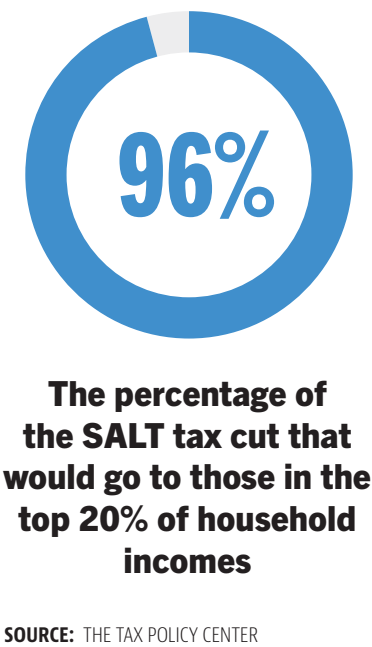
Simply put, the deductions were a way for the wealthy in high-tax states and localities to

dramatically lighten their federal tax burden. The places with the largest numbers of filers for the deduction are, predictably, states such as California, as well as the more liberal and affluent areas of the Northeast.

Despite Alexandria Ocasio Cortez’s “Tax the rich” dress she donned for the Met Gala in September, House Democrats are going to the mat for a tax reform plan that, according to the non-partisan Tax Policy Center, will be a boon for many of America’s highest earners. Contrary to TV appearances by the wealthy liberals demanding higher taxes, it turns out many aren’t so keen on the idea if it includes them.

The Tax Policy Center adds that 96% of the tax cut under SALT reform would go to those in the top 20% of household incomes. Predictably, Democrats have been calling it a middle-class tax cut in their news releases, yet it would benefit only about 3% of middle-class households.

It’s much easier to love one’s high tax haven if the taxes can be offset on the federal side. It’s a liberal dream: limitless virtue signaling about the need for high



taxes without bearing the total cost of those taxes.

Overall, Democrats in high-tax blue states are unwilling to consider spending restraint and

tax cuts that have proven so beneficial to states like North Carolina. Their answer to their own high tax climate is passing off the inconveniences to the feds. And then ask for a federal bailout when that gravy train is interrupted. Obviously, the real need is for a simpler and less burdensome federal tax code overall, but nobody’s holding their breath, given all the carveouts included in a tax code of more than 75,000 pages.

Still, an even bigger story is the transformation of the Democratic Party as an entity that protects the wealthy. Shifts and political realignment have unmoored the Democratic Party from its working-class roots. Former President Donald Trump capitalized on that fact better than any other politician in his 2016 presidential campaign. White working-class voters who wouldn’t support John McCain or Mitt Romney came out in droves for Trump, particularly in America’s Rust Belt.

Biden’s no-new-taxes pledge for those under a whopping \$400,000 household income signals the vast protection for wealthy Americans in regions

with a high cost of living, places where their party thrives today. Obama pledged a considerably lower cap of \$250,000 during his campaign. According to the left-leaning Institute for Taxation and Economic Policy, Biden’s capital gains tax reform plan, which aims to make the rich pay their fair share, impacts less than 1% of American taxpayers. That’s not a lot of revenue for a nation closing in on \$30 trillion in debt.

The Democratic Party is comfortable counting as its base the superwealthy, other countless left-wing special-interest “victim” constituencies, and perpetually aggrieved groups. In the 1990s, Blue Dog Democrats were still a massive force in Congress. Today, they are virtually nonexistent.

Of course, the two-party system and Republican missteps and mistakes make Democrats even more viable. Whether one calls them limousine liberals or champagne socialists, they are now the dominant force in Democrat politics. Since the policies no longer even pretend to match the rhetoric, don’t be surprised to see even more virtue signaling going forward.



It's not too late to roll back gov expansion

BECKI GRAY  
CONTRIBUTOR



It's been a difficult 19 months, with no real end in sight. At the stroke of the governor's pen in March 2020, businesses were ordered to shut down, schools were closed, and people were told to stay home. We were told short-term restrictions were necessary to "flatten the curve," followed by "once vaccines are available, everything will return to normal." Yet now the promises are "if everyone will mask up and get the jab, it will all be over." The truth is, even when it is over, things will never be the same.

People have come to mistrust government, question science, make moral judgments against anyone who disagrees, draw lines in the sand, and politicize every thought and intent. Uncertainty has bred contempt, fear, and intolerance.

An uncertain future includes what happens after the tsunami of federal money recedes and North Carolina is left with the obligations and growth of government dependency that will be left in its wake. They should have been spent for short-term needs associated with the pandemic like vaccinations, relief for businesses closed, and needs for online learning. Those one-time dollars should never have been used for ongoing, recurring expenses like increases in unemployment benefits, salary increases, or supplanting education spending.

Despite claims from the teacher union spinmeisters, post-pandemic learning loss is real. We've delayed testing and accountability as the pandemic lingers on, but the day of reckoning is here. Every delay is setting our students further back. Early testing is telling us kids have fallen behind. How will we restore the skills and, even more importantly, restore their confidence and love of learning? Avoiding the question, throwing blame around, or injecting distractions is adding additional harm. Somewhere right now in North Carolina a second-grader is falling further behind. Help him. Now.

The learning loss will undoubtedly impact future workers and their potential employers. Will



The good things we learned during the pandemic: Expand school choice options, be fiscally responsible, plan well for future emergencies, and develop access to health care. Shouldn't we have been washing our hands all along?

they have the skills to perform the jobs next year, in five years or 15 years? Will businesses get the talent to get what they need to invest in North Carolina's economy? Who will do the work? Have government subsidies replaced salaries and meaningful work? We see the impact daily of a post-pandemic employment crisis. When employers can't find people willing to work, they can't stay in business long, the economy slows, and everyone suffers. The longer government softens the blow, the harder recovery is. We need less government here, not more.

More than \$80 billion in federal COVID-related money has come to North Carolina over the last year and a half. All the "free" contract tracing, vaccines, paycheck protections, aid to businesses, direct payments to individuals, and educational assistance aren't free. As long as government con-

tinues to prop up workers and employers, companies will struggle to rebound. Extended inflated unemployment benefits discourage returning to work. Rental assistance has left many landlords without rent and with damaged property while also driving up housing costs. For some, affordable housing means the government pays for housing; for others, it means less regulation, more timely permitting processes, and loosening zoning regulations. Again, less government is the answer.

But with all bad news, a little good news follows. There are post-pandemic silver linings.

When schools shut down, all families became homeschool families. Parents saw firsthand what was being taught in the classroom via Zoom, how a cookie-cutter approach to education is designed to be mediocre, and said no, thanks. Homeschooling numbers are mul-

tiplying, applications to charter schools have increased, there's more interest in private school vouchers, and an educational savings account may be the answer to learning loss. Parents are storming school board meetings, rejecting the teacher union antics and demanding accountability.

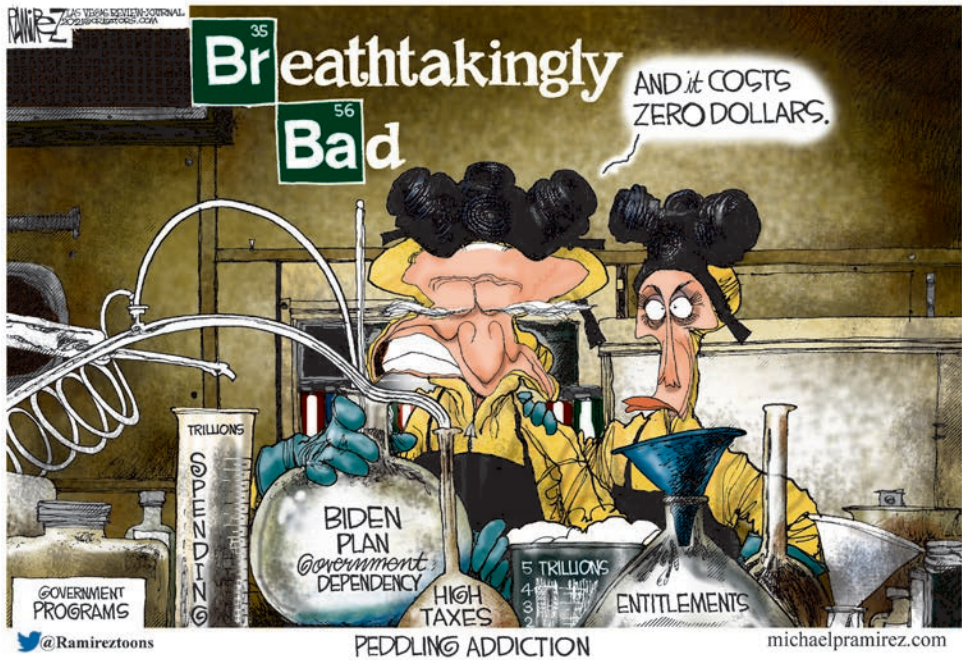
They're taking control of their kids' education, and there's no turning them back.

Health care during the pandemic has raised questions that now demand answers. When does freedom trump public health when it comes to wearing masks or taking the vaccine? Can you be pro-vaccine and anti-mandate? (Spoiler - I am.) Why doesn't natural immunity count?

Concerns over access to quality health care at reasonable costs have only been exacerbated. Removing barriers, whether removing certificate-of-need restrictions

or allowing more health care providers to practice to the full extent of their training or providing more reasonable oversight requirements for advanced-practice registered nurses or extending telemedicine, are all excellent ideas whose time has come.

There were precedents put in place at the onset of an emergency that we would not have gone along with if we'd known the costs at the time. But it's not too late to roll back the expansion of government we've seen over the last 19 months and remove the restrictions, mandates, and subsidies. It's also an opportunity to expand the good things we learned during the pandemic: expand school choice options, be fiscally responsible, plan well for future emergencies, and develop access to health care. There are a lot of lessons to be learned. Shouldn't we have been washing our hands all along?





# Food access should be a PRIME concern for Congress

**DONALD BRYSON**  
CONTRIBUTOR

In a speech at Bradley University in September 1956, President Dwight Eisenhower told the crowd, “You know, farming looks mighty easy when your plow is a pencil and you’re a thousand miles from the cornfield.”

Even though it was said 65 years ago, that statement rings strangely true for North Carolina’s agricultural community, which is heavily regulated. Farmers face red tape and regulators at every turn, while consumers find grocery stores with meat and dairy shortages during the era of COVID-19. Even in 2021, consumers are seeing a 12% yearly increase in beef prices.

Agriculture is North Carolina’s largest industry, yet it is never at the forefront of our minds regarding public policy. This strange situation was the impetus behind a recently published John Locke Foundation study, “Freedom To Farm: The Impacts of Agriculture Regulation On Production and Processing In The South.”

This report, by Montana State University’s Dr. Vincent Smith, examines the structure and differences in seven Southern states and the federal regulations that govern farms with dairy and cattle herds. It also describes and assesses regulations impacting dairy processing facilities and slaughter facilities that process livestock into beef products. Of the seven states, five are coastal states — Florida, Georgia, North Carolina, South Carolina, and Virginia, and the other two are the adjacent “landlocked” states of Kentucky and Tennessee.



Consumers are seeing a 12% yearly increase in beef prices as farmers face mounting red tape and regulations.

Unsurprisingly, the report found that farmers in these states, especially small farms, were likely to be concerned about federal and state regulations restricting their access to local markets. And so begins a tale that is all too familiar across several sectors of the economy — the heavy hand of federal regulation on state governments.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture Food Safety Inspection Service is the federal agency

responsible for inspections of meat-processing facilities. While states can technically set their own standards for meat inspection, any farm or facility that wants interstate sales must meet USDA standards. States are required to have standards “at least as effective” as the USDA for intrastate sales. Thus, the USDA dominates the market on meat processing.

How do we move past a regulatory framework that prevents

farmers from getting meat and dairy to market while consumers have faced months of shortages?

In 2017, then-Congressman Thomas Massie, R-Kentucky, introduced the Processing Revival and Intrastate Meat Exemption, or PRIME, Act. Currently, custom-exempt meat processors are exempt from state and federal inspection regulations to process meat for personal consumption. If a farmer owns the facility, then the farmer can process

and consume a cow or hog without the USDA or state regulators interfering. But the PRIME Act would have expanded the capacity of these facilities. According to the Carolina Farm Stewardship, the PRIME Act would have allowed “states to then pass their legislation that could open up custom-exempt facilities for commercial slaughter and/or processing.” North Carolina currently has 18 custom-exempt facilities. Under the PRIME Act, these facilities would be able to process slaughtered livestock, and farmers would sell the meat within North Carolina. Thus, consumers would have broader access to products they have seen shortages of in the past 18 months.

Unfortunately, the 117th Congress of the United States is not interested in the real-world problems of its citizens. Instead, the Pelosi-Schumer led Congress is focused on a pseudo-infrastructure bill that would explode federal spending, which is already astronomical. Instead of helping Americans get back to work, Congress is considering extending enhanced unemployment benefits into 2022.

There was a time when both political major political parties were concerned with governing the country. Unfortunately, today’s politicians are concerned with buying votes through handouts and staging political theater. However, a simple policy change, like the PRIME Act, would help people put some food on the table, and everyone should be able to agree to that.

*Donald Bryson is president and chief strategy officer at the John Locke Foundation.*

# What made today’s North Carolina economy?

**MICHAEL WALDEN**  
CONTRIBUTOR

**NORTH CAROLINA** has a long and dynamic economic history. When I arrived in the state in the 1970s, the “big three” industries of tobacco, textiles, and furniture dominated the economy, accounting for almost one-quarter of all economic production.

Today, the big three account for less than 10% of the state’s aggregate economic production. In place of the big three are the new “big five” sectors of technology, pharmaceuticals, banking, food processing, and vehicle parts.

The shift from the big three to the big five occurred in the span of less than half a century, which in historical time is the blink of an eye. How did it happen? There were five key causes: globalization, the rise of higher education, national banking, the transformation of agriculture, and the movement of new companies and people to North Carolina.

Since the end of World War II, the world has been moving toward free and open trade between countries. But two trade agreements in the 1990s and 2000s, the North American Free Trade Agreement and the World Trade Organization, really put a capstone on globalization. The result was economic production gravitated to lo-

**For North Carolina, globalization meant large parts of the state’s manufacturing base in textiles, apparel, and furniture departed to foreign countries.**

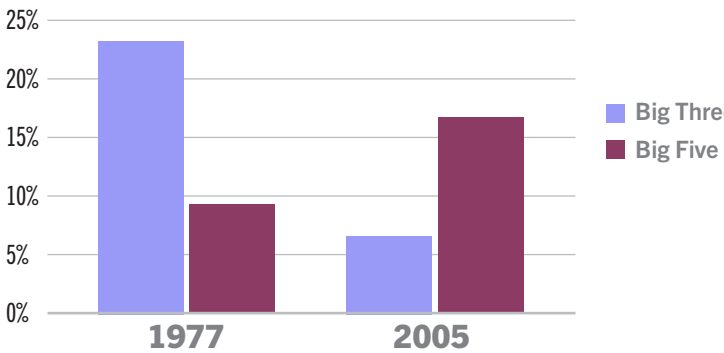
cations with the lowest costs.

For North Carolina, globalization meant large parts of the state’s manufacturing base in textiles, apparel, and furniture departed to foreign countries. However, one upside was growth in the state’s vehicle parts industry supplying auto assembly factories operating in South Carolina.

As the economy shifted in the late 20th century from relying on “brawn power” to using “brain power,” higher education expanded everywhere. North Carolina had already developed a robust public university system to complement its high-profile private universities and colleges. Hence, the state was ready to expand its college training. One factor helping the state was the high level of state support for higher education, thereby allowing North Carolina to be among the states with the lowest public university tuitions and fees.

## “Big Three” and “Big Five” industries' share of North Carolina Gross State Product over time

The “Big Three” industries of tobacco, textiles, and furniture compared with the “Big Five” industries of technology, pharmaceuticals, finance, vehicle parts, and food processing.



SOURCE: AUTHOR'S RESEARCH

As early as the 1950s, farsighted state leaders in North Carolina recognized economic change was on the way. Efforts were made to attract new companies in technology and pharmaceuticals, the most prominent being developing Research Triangle Park, the first of its kind in the country. North Carolina combined this effort with growing numbers of college graduates, a relatively low cost of living, attractive natural amenities, and a sunny climate to grow these sectors just when traditional manufacturing was waning.

In the 20th century, most states restricted banks to one lo-

cation. Both North Carolina and South Carolina were exceptions, allowing banks to have branches across their states. Hence, when nationwide banking was approved by Congress in the 1990s, banks in the Carolinas had the experience to expand rapidly. The result was Charlotte — on the border of the two states — became the second-largest financial center in the country.

As tobacco’s importance in North Carolina declined, farmers looked for substitutes. One alternative was meat — specifically hogs — which led to rapid expansion in the state’s food processing

sector. In fact, North Carolina has the largest meat processing plant in the world.

Last, as the nation became more economically and culturally linked in the late 20th and early 21st centuries, the relocation of both businesses and households increased. North Carolina has consistently been on the positive side of these relocations, with many more companies and people moving to the state than moving out. These movers have come from the two ends of the age spectrum — retirees enjoying their golden years and young people beginning their careers.

These five forces have remade North Carolina — economically, socially, and culturally — within the span of five decades. This demonstrates the lesson that change can occur rapidly. Some futurists believe the pandemic has put us at the beginning of another set of forces creating widespread change in the upcoming decades. Are they correct? What kind of changes will occur?

Fifty years from now, will we be looking back at another transformation of the North Carolina economy?

*Michael Walden is a William Neal Reynolds Distinguished Professor Emeritus at North Carolina State University. He is an author, public speaker, and economic consultant.*



# In defense of private Christian schools

**BRUCE RILEY ASHFORD**  
CONTRIBUTOR

Every year, private schools across the nation commence for graduation ceremonies. Yet, if many of today’s progressive educators are to be believed, the ceremony they participate in ought to be abolished or sent underground. They wish for public schools to be the primary — and in some activists’ view, exclusive — vehicle for educating our youth. Indeed, whenever the idea of vouchers for private schools comes up, progressives stridently insist that private education harms our society rather than helping it.

Now, the American people are not, generally speaking, given to talking back to educators. We have been taught better. These educators have great gobs of education, and thus we are expected to cherish their ideas. Still, some undisciplined folks like us are inclined to tell activists to go take a ride on the Staten Island Ferry. We simply don’t agree that private education — especially private Christian education — is a net negative for American society. In fact, we believe that private schools make profoundly good contributions to our society.

Why do activists say such poorly reasoned and uncharitable things about the men and women who send their children to private schools? They are social engineers who wish to fashion society and culture in their mold. They wish



CLIP PHOTO BY MAYA REAGAN

to build a new social order, shorn of the Western tradition and its Judeo-Christian ethical trappings.

Indeed, there is not enough room for both this New Social Order and the strong forms of religion that many private schools endorse. The desire for a new order is philosophically tied to a belief that religion yields no reliable knowledge and that the state alone is our savior and the dispenser of everything good. In defense of private education, and describing this progressive desire for an educational revolution, William F. Buckley Jr. once wrote: “It clearly won’t do, then [in the eyes of progressive detractors], to foster within some schools a respect for an absolute, intractable, unbribable God, a divine Intelligence who is utterly unconcerned with other people’s versions of truth and humorous-ly inattentive to majority opinion. It won’t do to tolerate a competitor for the allegiance of man. The State prefers a secure monopoly for itself. It is intolerably divisive to have God and the State scrapping for disciples.”

For proponents of a public school monopoly, the state is the unchallengeable and irreproachable steward of every human being. Public schools alone, as the argument goes, are capable of producing students who will be exemplars of our New Social Order.

How do they try to convince us to demote or eradicate religion? They teach us that religion is an unserious source of knowledge and a poor guide for the emotions. They try to prove that religion is better taught in public — rather than private — schools but then only in a relativistic man-

ner and with a social scientific approach. In other words, they wish to unite “church and state,” with the state at the helm. This is how the New Social Order lurches along.

But there remains a challenger to this new progressive order. An unyielding Trojan horse that threatens America’s march toward a new secular progressive: the private school. Private schools are still largely independent of government funding. Many of them unify their curriculum around belief in a transcendent God. So long as these schools survive, the secular progressive project in social engineering is threatened.

Progressives want to abolish the challenger — private schools — and authorize the state to monopolize education. They demand that our nation use public money to support public but not private institutions. And they use legislation, judicial activism, and social media flash mobbing to frame religious institutions as discriminatory.

In response to the secular progressive agenda, we as citizens must support private schools in any way we can. We must encourage legislators to reform the law so that “vouchers” are available by which citizens can draw upon tax dollars to send their children to private schools.

Tax vouchers would ensure that sufficient competition among private and public schools persists, that all boats will rise with the tide. Further, vouchers signal that our nation is genuinely a plural society in which diverse fami-

lies and communities can choose from reasonably priced educational institutions. Finally, vouchers empower financially disadvantaged families to send their children to whichever school they deem best.

The United States is in sore need of courageous leaders in this movement against the forces that would subvert classical and religious education. If we hold that our current social order, built largely on a Judeo-Christian world-view, is worth preserving and refining, rather than burning it to the ground, then a classical education taught from within a Christian world-view is exactly the thing our young people need. They will be better educated and better equipped morally to be the citizens our nation needs, rather than become the rabid revolutionaries seeking to destabilize every corner of our society.

It’s not so hard to understand why the left’s hard-core education bureaucracy is so opposed to private education. It is a serious threat to the progressive hegemony that has served them — if not students — so well.

Good-thinking Americans on the left and right should reject the narrative that private schools perpetuate inequality and religious bigotry, and support elected officials who seek reform and wish to shake up these aspects of our nation’s educational ecosystem.

*Bruce Riley Ashford is senior fellow at the Kirby Laing Centre and author of “Letters to an American Christian.”*

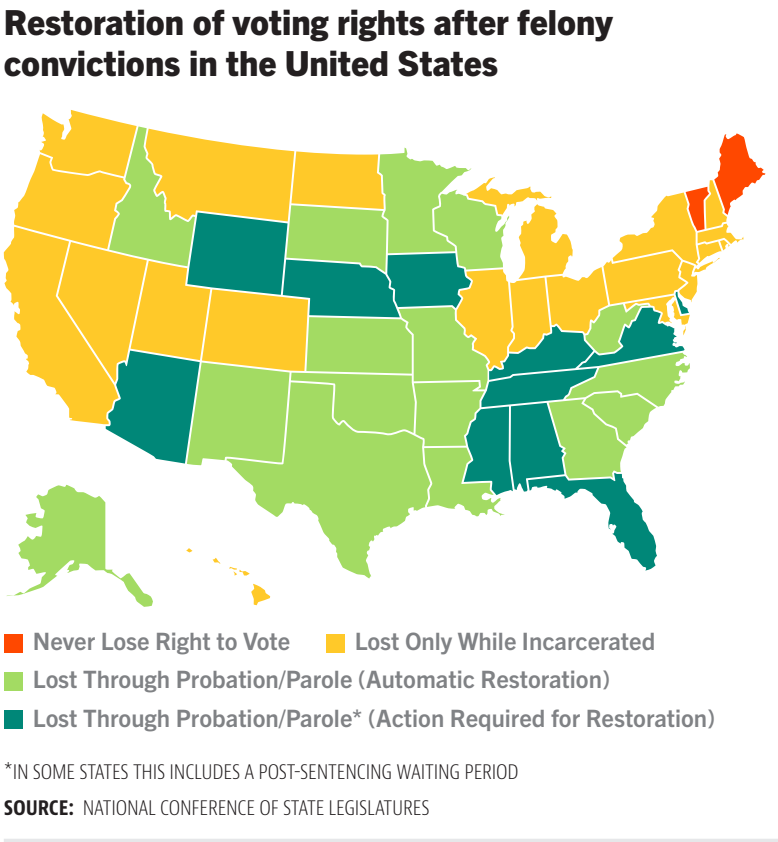
# Preventing felon vote is not unconstitutional

**ANDY TAYLOR**  
CONTRIBUTOR

RECENTLY, A THREE-member panel of state trial judges ruled North Carolina must allow felons serving sentences but on probation, parole, or post-release supervision to register to vote. According to media reports, the decision constituted the largest expansion of “voting rights” in the state since Congress passed the national Voting Rights Act in 1965. In the case *Community Success Initiative v. Moore*, the plaintiffs and their allies characterized it as a stunning reversal to the erosion of democracy initiated by Republicans since the party took control of the General Assembly following the 2010 elections.

The ruling might constitute some kind of justice. It might be good public policy. But preventing these citizens from voting is not unconstitutional. In the 1974 case of *Richardson v. Ramirez*, the U.S. Supreme Court argued Section 2 of the 14th Amendment provided for the denial of voting rights to criminals. Article VI, Section 2 of the N.C. Constitution explicitly bars felons from the vote.

Dissecting the plaintiffs’ winning case more fully reveals the faulty reasoning. Their argument hinged on two claims. First, the law permitting disenfranchise-



ment was inherently racist because the original provision governing felons’ voting rights was written into the state constitution in 1875, at the advent of Jim Crow. But the N.C. Constitution written in 1971 permits felons to vote if and when their “rights to citizenship” have been “restored.” In 1973 the General Assembly passed a law automatically restor-

ing voting rights for felons at the point they have been pardoned or “unconditionally discharged” from their sentence. Together, both supplant the 1875 provision, making it irrelevant.

Republican defendants believed the 1973 law could not be racist because three black representatives voted for it. But the key point is that the law the Gener-

al Assembly worked hard to pass in 1973 was demonstrably “to the left” of the status quo under the 1971 Constitution. If racism drove its decision-making, the legislature would surely have left rights unrestored.

The state would have enjoyed plenty of company. Even today, according to the National Conference of State Legislatures, 11 states do not automatically restore citizenship rights at the completion of the sentence for all crimes, including several outside the South like Delaware, Iowa, Nebraska, and Wyoming. Deep-blue California, Connecticut, and New York did not restore voting rights to parolees until 2020 and 2021.

The second claim focuses on effects rather than motive. A disproportionate number of N.C. residents on probation, parole, or post-release supervision are African-American. Figures generated by experts estimate the figure at 42%, approximately 20 percentage points higher than blacks’ share of the state’s general population.

Restoration of rights to the North Carolinians on probation, parole, or post-release supervision would increase the proportion of the eligible voting population that is black.

However, although authoritative data do not exist, surely the 1973 legislation automatically restoring voting rights to those who had unconditionally completed

their sentences raised the black proportion of all voters by a much larger amount than requested by the plaintiffs in *CSI*. According to the Sentencing Project, at 2.4%, the proportion of North Carolina’s 2020 black population prohibited from voting was smaller than that in California, Minnesota, Washington, and Wisconsin. It was considerably smaller than the rest of the South.

The 1973 legislation, therefore, allayed nearly all of the plaintiffs’ concerns about the disproportionate disenfranchisement of African Americans because of the state’s policy regarding felons. And, if the plaintiffs were genuinely concerned about the underrepresentation of blacks in the voting population, they would have requested the restoration of voting rights to the currently incarcerated.

According to the Prison Policy Initiative, about 37,000 African Americans are now locked up in North Carolina — that is 55% of the state’s residents in prison or jail. Of the 55,000 people the court ruling hopes to enfranchise, 23,000 are black.

Since then, the state Appeals Court has stayed the order. However, the state Supreme Court may repeat the trial court’s overreach as the case makes its way through the legal system.

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



# We came together 20 years ago. Look at us now.

JOHN TRUMP  
MANAGING EDITOR



**W**e've lost what we were. As individuals, as a country, as Americans. Our inherent liberties and freedoms are now cast aside by governments at all levels, seemingly by whim or will.

Trying to explain American culture throughout our complicated history has amounted to impossible conversations, typically devolving into rhetoric and hyperbole. But that used to be routine, expected, and even welcome. Or so it seemed.

Think about us 20 years ago. We still argued and debated, yet, at least for a short while, civility prevailed. We came together as a nation, toward goals of destroying the enemy and of becoming whole.

Look at us now. Back then — immediately after 9/11 — national conversations came with the purpose of uniting us. Now, those conversations increasingly pull us apart. A delicate threat fraying with every tug, as Peggy Noonan so brilliantly put it for the Wall Street Journal.

A deterioration, says Noonan, a Pulitzer-winning journalist who wrote speeches for President Reagan.

"We feel disturbance at this because we don't know if we can get our way back," writes Noonan. "The losing of the thread feels bigger than ideology, bigger certainly than parties. It feels like some more fundamental confusion, an inability to play the role of who we are, and to be comfortable in who we are."



A man raises a flag at a prayer service after the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center.

Because of our disastrous exit from Afghanistan. Because we're bitterly divided over race and gender. This we complicate by overcompensating, in turn widening the divide. The thread laid bare.

Fabric ripping and tearing, until tangled shreds are all that remain.

"The country we are experiencing now is one of people in different groups ganging up on each other," Noonan writes. "Twenty years in our history is treated as all sin, sin, sin. We're like mad monks flagellating ourselves. We are go-

ing through a nonstop condemnation of our past and our people and their limits and ignorance. It isn't healthy. Reflection and honest questioning are, but not this."

Certainly not this. Caring little about our seeping borders or alienating allies. Neglecting friends and leaving thousands of others trapped facing incomprehensible dangers, facing death. But, led by a stumbling president, we are largely indifferent. We fight over vaccines and masks, topics that should never advance beyond matters of in-

dividual choice and the freedom to decide what's best for ourselves and our families.

The media spreads fear and bows to government edict, no matter how nonsensical or overbearing. Without question or complaint, going so far as castigating those who rebel against unconstitutional orders as foolish or ignorant. Taking government at its word, however dubious, and damn the repercussions. Rather than admit the country has moved on from COVID, the media and the left pile onto the dissenters as

though someone fumbled in the end zone.

We have, indeed, moved on, except for the "health experts" and government at all levels, a leftist sentiment driving painfully deep into our cities, towns, and boroughs. No matter the building stench of socialism, the wrong-headed ideas of shutdowns and handouts, the agonizing deaths of businesses because they're bereft of workers and can't navigate the moving labyrinths.

We shout but don't talk. Exchange messages but don't meet.

It's a rise of incompetent leaders, taken, as state Rep. John Szoka told me, to a depressing nadir. Fit to neither lead nor govern, politicians, like the president, eschewing accountability and responsibility.

A weakening in our values, of what it means to be an American, said Szoka, a Cumberland County Republican and Army veteran. Work and achievement are devalued in favor of participation trophies. Hard lessons go by the wayside.

"How do we go from the nation rallying around the country to kids like this who are so misguided they don't even understand what America means?" Szoka asked.

To return to a state of even imperfect unity. To stop if only for a minute, a short respite by the side of the road, as we did some 20 years ago.

"We weren't white. We weren't black. We weren't this, or we weren't that," said Szoka. "The country pulled together. It was one of our finest hours."

The day the towers fell. We didn't see the enemy, but we knew it wasn't us.

# Leandro judge courts a constitutional crisis

DR. TERRY STOOPS  
CONTRIBUTOR



**RECENT DEVELOPMENTS** in North Carolina's long-running school funding case validate Rush Limbaugh's observation that "Liberals attempt through judicial activism what they cannot win at the ballot box." A North Carolina judge would rather risk a constitutional crisis between the judicial and legislative branches than respect the constitutional authority of the General Assembly to direct state tax dollars.

Plaintiffs and defendants in the Leandro v. State of North Carolina case appeared before Superior Court Judge David Lee in early September to urge the court to compel the Republican-led General Assembly to fund the first two years of an eight-year, multibillion-dollar plan. Lawmakers were not consulted at any stage of the plan's development or asked to participate in deliberations about it. In fact, the General Assembly is not a named party in the Leandro case and has had only tangential involvement in the lawsuit since its birth in 1994.

While Judge Lee previously urged cooperation between the Leandro parties and the General Assembly, he recently declared that he is ready to give up on lawmak-



Rush Limbaugh: "Liberals attempt through judicial activism what they cannot win at the ballot box."

ers. He established an October 18 deadline for lawmakers to comply with every word of the comprehensive remedial plan developed by California-based consultant WestEd or face unspecified consequences.

The current showdown between Judge Lee and the General Assembly is the product of supervisory and procedural changes. For years, Superior Court Judge Howard Manning oversaw compliance with Leandro decisions issued by the N.C. Supreme Court. Manning dismissed the plaintiffs'

frequent complaints about inadequate resources, and he mostly respected the separation of powers between the judicial and legislative branches.

Manning retired from the bench in 2015, and former state Supreme Court Chief Justice Mark Martin appointed Lee, another retiree, to replace Manning. Lee is a registered Democrat from Union County and has brought an activist judicial philosophy to his oversight of the litigation.

The second change was a 2017 agreement between the plaintiffs



**Much to the dismay of many progressives, judges have no authority to direct state tax dollars. The power of the purse has been reserved to the General Assembly.**

and defendants to allow an independent consultant to advise Lee on how to proceed. Two years later, WestEd delivered a shoddy report titled "Sound Basic Education for All: An Action Plan for North Carolina." The unpredictable economic consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic forced Lee to delay action in the 18 months that followed. In June 2021, the state's strong economic recovery and an avalanche of federal coronavirus aid convinced Lee that it was time to act.

Much to the dismay of many progressives, judges have no authority to direct state tax dollars. The power of the purse has been reserved to the elected members of the General Assembly since the ratification of the first state constitution in 1776.

It is no exaggeration to say that our republican system of government has survived for over two

centuries because we do not empower judges to write budgets or dictate policy. We wisely agree to elect representatives every two years to shoulder that responsibility as a deliberative body. The blatant attempt to undermine these enduring political arrangements is not just scandalous. It is seditious.

A confederation of far-left advocacy groups and Democratic politicians applauded Lee's posturing. It is no secret that they champion using Leandro to compel their political opponents in the legislature to increase public school expenditures outside of the conventional deliberative budget-making processes.

To their credit, the Republican leadership of the N.C. General Assembly is standing firm to defend its constitutionally defined authority as the sole branch of government with the power to determine how state taxpayer dollars are spent.

North Carolina's K-12 social studies standards require that all public school students learn about the separation of powers in grades three, four, five, seven, and eight, as well as two years during high school.

I am pleased that schoolchildren will graduate with both an understanding and appreciation of the separation of powers. Shockingly, adults in the Leandro case do not appear to possess either.



# Mayberry fans seek solid ground

JOHN HOOD  
CONTRIBUTOR



Before “The Andy Griffith Show,” before nearby Pilot Mountain became the nucleus of a popular state park, Mount Airy had the Rock.

Granite, to be precise. Mount Airy is home to the largest open-face granite quarry in the world. Stretching over 60 acres on the surface and thousands of feet below is a mass of stone so pure and desirable that it can be found in such varied sites as the World War II Memorial in Washington, the gold depository at Fort Knox, and the Wright Brothers National Memorial.

Mining began here in 1889. But Mount Airy was already a thriving town — and had even achieved some notoriety as the home of the original Siamese Twins, Chang and Eng Bunker.

Its broader fame began in 1960 when local boy Andy Griffith, already a star of stage and screen, launched his eponymous sitcom on CBS.

Mount Airy is a real place. Mayberry is fictional. But to its fans, Mayberry is a real place, too — not a physical location but a moral one. A place where mistakes earn people second chances, not everlasting scorn. A place where parents teach their children the virtues of honesty, re-



Mount Airy is a real place. Mayberry is fictional. But to its fans, Mayberry is a real place, too — not a physical location but a moral one. People long for Mayberry because of the timeless and universal truths found there.

sponsibility, and compassion — and sometimes get schooled in those same virtues by those same children.

Desperate to find such a place, if even just for a weekend,

fans visit Mount Airy in droves. The Granite City proved supple enough to welcome them. You can get into a vintage squad car at Wally’s Filling Station and be carried to Floyd’s Barber Shop for a

trim, Barney’s Cafe for a smile, and the Snappy Lunch for its famous pork-chop sandwich.

I was in Mount Airy recently for the Mayberry Days festival. My new Revolutionary War-

themed novel “Mountain Folk” is partly set on Pilot Mountain, so it was a natural for me to do a downtown book signing. But that was just an excuse. My wife and I wanted a weekend getaway. We got that, and much more, thanks to Ted Koppel.

No, the famous newsman wasn’t in Mount Airy when we were there. But he’d come a short time before, producing a segment that aired on “CBS Sunday Morning.”

It was, alas, largely a hit piece. Looking more discombobulated than discerning, Koppel sought to depict Andy Griffith fans as bigoted fools wallowing in nostalgia about a racially segregated past.

He reacted with mock dismay at the idea that a couple from Ohio would let their son watch the show for hours at a time. “Aren’t you afraid,” he asked disdainfully, that “you’re going to turn his little brain to mush?”

The folks I talked to in Mount Airy were enraged by his hit piece. Few television shows on the air half a century ago were racially integrated.

Why did CBS choose this much-beloved program, and the proud community that celebrates it, as battlefields in a culture war?

People long for Mayberry because of the timeless and universal truths found there. Like folks have done for more than a century, they come to Mount Airy looking for solid rock.

# What’s more democratic than an election?

JOHN HOOD  
CONTRIBUTOR



**DO THE ENDS** justify the means? Not when it comes to the operation of government. Constitutional republics, in particular, are based on precisely the opposite formulation: The means justify the ends.

Whatever our personal interest in a given governmental outcome may be, citizens of a republic are required to accept unwelcome ends as long as the means by which they were achieved are proper. The other side may win a legislative argument. The other party may win an election.

In recent years, Democrats have complained loudly that Republicans have breached the social contract regarding means and ends.

Although I am politically conservative, I have agreed with some of those Democratic complaints, regarding such matters as legislative encroachment on executive power and the irresponsible rhetoric that preceded January 6.

My hate mail switches from Republican to Democratic, however, when I point out that political history extends far past 2010. That many of the same Democrats who criticize Republican gerrymandering, for example, were once enthusiastic practitioners of Democratic gerrymandering, including Gov. Roy Cooper.

Of course, two wrongs don’t

**I never thought to argue that the state budgets [gerrymanderers] enacted, the laws they passed, or the constitutional amendments they placed on the ballot were illegal acts of an illegal legislature.**

make a right. “He started it!” is no more an excuse for political heavy-handedness than it is an excuse for one of your children to attack the other in the backseat while you’re trying to drive.

At the moment, it happens to be the Democrats throwing the punches, regarding two amendments North Carolinians added to their state constitution in 2018. One requires that a voter show a photo ID before casting a ballot. The other sets North Carolina’s maximum tax rate on personal income at 7%.

Both were popular ballot measures, gaining 55% and 57% of the vote, respectively, in the 2018 election. But progressives dislike them. So they filed a lawsuit claiming that the referenda were illegally held because the legislature that placed the measures on the ballot was illegally constituted by gerrymandered districts.

I’ve advocated redistricting reform for decades. For most of that time, the gerrymanderers were



Democrats filed a lawsuit claiming that the voter ID referendum was illegally held because the legislature that placed the measures on the ballot was illegally constituted by gerrymandered districts.

Democrats. I never thought to argue that the state budgets they enacted, the laws they passed, or the constitutional amendments they placed on the ballot were illegal acts of an illegal legislature.

That’s because the argument is ridiculous and dangerous, especially when applied to constitutional amendments. What more democratic process is there than allowing voters to decide an issue by referendum?

It gets still worse. Now that the matter is before the N.C. Supreme

Court, the plaintiffs are attempting to force two Republican members from the case.

They argue that Justice Phil Berger Jr. can’t participate because his father is president pro tem of the Senate, and that Justice Tamara Barringer can’t participate because she served in the Senate when the amendments were submitted to voters in 2018.

Berger and Barringer were themselves elected by voters in 2020 to preside over constitutional questions on the court. Are

Democratic activists, cheered on by Democratic leaders, truly willing to undermine popular sovereignty in this way? Yes, it seems. Can they not foresee how Republicans will respond?

“He started it” is no way to end it.

*John Hood is a John Locke Foundation board member and author of the novel “Mountain Folk,” a historical fantasy set during the American Revolution (MountainFolkBook.com).*



# Thales College at forefront of higher ed innovation

GRATTAN BROWN  
CONTRIBUTOR



At the start of students' college careers, there are both good and bad unknowns. The good unknowns are the people they will meet and the courses on subjects they have heard about but never studied.

The bad unknowns include how much their books will cost and how difficult it will be to pay tuition, room, and board.

How their school's curriculum works should not be one of those unknowns.

However, first-year students sometimes arrive on campus and discover that their courses and schedules are not what they wanted. The student who wants to solve the problem by changing courses faces the question: What courses?

Ask that question, and you enter the maze that is an undergraduate curriculum today. It takes serious thought to get through it, and by the time you are done, you will have spent hours figuring out which courses to take and which to avoid.

Here's how the system works and how Thales College, a new college in Raleigh, makes it work better for students.

When a student arrives on a typical campus, they must plan to complete the college's or university's core curriculum or general education requirements. In most U.S. institutions today, these curricula come in the form of survey courses that lack depth and elective courses that lack coherence.

If a college uses general education requirements, students will find a few broad divisions, such as humanities, sciences, and social sciences — and will need to pick a few courses from each division. Students have, for example, over 300 course options to choose from in Williams College's nine-course general education requirement.

This system looks good to many people because it offers quite



Democrats filed a lawsuit claiming that the Voter ID referendum was illegally held because the legislature that placed the measures of the ballot was illegally constituted by gerrymandered districts.

literally a unique basic education, made up of whatever courses the student chooses. At graduation, each student's set of general education courses differs from everyone else's.

However, even though students have maximum freedom to choose subjects to study, something is lost in this approach. There is no set of texts and ideas that everyone has studied and can discuss.

There is no presentation of foundational ideas as they developed through ancient, medieval, and modern periods. There is no help in discerning how these ideas could add up to a vision of life and how to live it.

A core curriculum solves some of these problems. Students have fewer choices about which core courses they take, but they walk away familiar with texts and ideas that they can discuss, debate, and advocate for the rest of their lives.



**When we designed the liberal arts curriculum for Thales College, we did not ask what should go in the core and what should go in the major. We simply asked what would make a good liberal arts education to prepare students for life and work.**

But there are problems even with undergraduate core curricula. They stop at the freshman and sophomore levels. In reality, students need to continue thinking deeply about humanity and society as their intellectual abilities

mature and as they enter into the freedom and responsibilities of adulthood.

Thales College's integrated liberal arts curriculum fills these gaps in students' intellectual development.

When we designed the liberal arts curriculum for Thales College, we did not ask what should go in the core and what should go in the major. We simply asked what would make a good liberal arts education to prepare students for life and work.

You could think of Thales College's liberal arts curriculum as a house with a foundation, walls, and a roof. In the first three terms, our students improve their intellectual skills in math, writing, logic, and their humanistic understanding by studying basic concepts in philosophy, economics, and great literature.

They also strengthen their self-understanding through hu-

manities-based career discernment and mentoring.

In terms four through six, the "walls," students bring their more developed intellectual skills and humanistic understanding to the study of ethics, economics, and science and to the interpretation of masters of ancient and medieval thought. During the final two terms, they orient their undergraduate learning toward living and performing well in today's society by exploring masters of Renaissance and modern thought, studying political philosophy, culture, leadership, and American history, and honing public speaking and debate skills.

An organized liberal arts curriculum also provides a better structure for professional studies. Take Thales College's Entrepreneurial Business major as an example. In the first three terms, the Liberal Arts curriculum improves students' skills in language, math, and logic and helps students relate humanistic learning to career discernment. While valuable on their own, these skills help students acquire accounting and finance skills, in addition to humanistic learning, which is essential to an entrepreneurial mindset and business management philosophy.

In the final two terms, students apply math and humanistic learning to data analytics, finance, product design, marketing, contract law, and ethics. They also continue business law and ethics and undertake an entrepreneurial ventures course that brings together liberal arts and business learning.

Arranging the curriculum is far better than prescribing a core curriculum or general education requirements and having the students choose the courses and the order in which to take them.

An organized curriculum with no electives looks restrictive, but at Thales College it offers the more important freedom to think deeply in an organized way about foundational ideas regarding humanity and society and how they relate to professional work and leadership.

## Exploring North Carolina

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ed businesses. He's had hard times and happy times. Now, he's enjoying success that comes from hard work.

Uzcategui is fearless and unapologetic in his praise for his adopted country and state. "I want Americans to love this country as much as I do."

He's also an unabashed free-market conservative small businessman. He declares, "If you can't make it here without playing the victim card, it may be on you."

A look of concern crosses his face when he brings up his fear that the Venezuelan "ideological revolution" he escaped is creeping into this place he loves. He sees it in local schools, government, and businesses.

He warns in Venezuela "there's free health care but no medicine. There's free education but no

learning. Don't think it can't happen here. Venezuelans thought it couldn't happen there, either."

Already busy with two businesses and a family, Uzcategui is now a candidate for Wilmington City Council. He's taking his freedom message everywhere and anywhere, especially Wilmington's immigrant communities.

He reminds them that they came to America and North Carolina for a reason — opportunity. He cautions that some want to use them to advance their own political power and turn North Carolina into a place that more closely resembles the country they fled. "Don't let them take your opportunity," he urges.

At a time when so many of us are sick of being beaten up by the woke mob and desperate for leadership unafraid to challenge them, Wilmington has one. He's a Venezuelan immigrant named Jonathan Uzcategui.

(For the record, I think most people also are ignoring Roy Cooper's state of emergency. I saw and met a lot more people on North Carolina's highways and byways this summer versus last.)

## Erosion of trust creating a culture war

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quired to take Critical Race Theory-based training while students who speak out against biased lectures are ridiculed by teachers. Parents fight for the right to make private medical decisions for their own children in an environment free of politics and government pressure. In Afghanistan, Americans were horrified to witness a chaotic and deadly evacuation.

But here is the thing: People see what is happening. Kindergartners are required to wear masks in classrooms, while thousands of cheering people pack football stadiums. Celebrities are shoulder to shoulder at awards shows amid claims that vaccines are not as protective, and Gov. Roy Cooper mandates vaccines for state workers. Vice President Kamala Harris,



who once said she would not take a vaccine developed under leadership of the last administration, is now advocating vaccine mandates.

The overreach and mixed messaging of government during COVID has eroded public trust in our institutions, cost lives, and made liberty fighters out of once disengaged people.

Capitalizing on these trends, left-leaning media outlets and corporations are turning hard left and trying to drag culture with them. Now, 20% of youth believe so-

cialism is worth trying. It is considered acceptable among some teachers to tell kids that their value and potential is tied directly to their race and gender.

All of this is motivating a growing base of people for whom common sense, rather than fear, prevails. They may never march with a sign or run for office — but they are watching, learning, and fighting for change in their corner of the state. At Carolina Journal, we are committed to bringing you their stories.



# Fight over removing Supreme Court justices in voter ID case captures national headlines

DALLAS WOODHOUSE  
CONTRIBUTOR

A new N.C. Supreme Court order confirms justices are considering whether to remove two colleagues from hearing a high-profile case involving voter ID.

It's a dangerous move that could upend 200 years of case law and prior precedents and destroy the court for years to come. The story, first reported by carolinajournal.com, has made national headlines after catching the eye of the Wall Street Journal and Forbes, who called it an "unprecedented" effort to provide Democrats with "political cover."

The order issued Sept. 28 asks for briefs answering eight multi-part questions from lawyers on both sides of the case, NAACP v. Moore. The questions are designed to address whether and how the court could remove justices from a case when those justices choose not to recuse themselves, and what role the N.C. Judicial Standards Commission would play if that happens.

The justices' questions come after lawyers for the NAACP filed a motion July 23 to have Republican Justices Tamara Barringer and Phil Berger Jr. removed from NAACP v. Moore. The questions indicate that the targeted justices are fighting efforts to remove them.

If the four justices move forward to remove Barringer and Berger, two duly elected Supreme Court justices, it would nullify N.C. voters' decision to amend the constitution in 2018, and the votes to seat those two justices in the first place.



N.C. Supreme Court justices, left to right, Associate Justice Samuel Ervin IV, Associate Justice Robin Hudson, Associate Justice Phil Berger Jr., Associate Justice Tamara Barringer, Associate Justice Michael Morgan, Associate Justice Anita Earls, and Chief Justice Paul Newby

Without the Republican justices, a temporary 4-1 Democrat majority could erase two constitutional amendments voters approved in 2018; one would require voter ID and the other would lower the state's income tax cap. Both passed overwhelmingly with more than 2 million votes each.

Democrats Anita Earls, Robin Hudson, and Mike Morgan could remove the GOP justices while potentially allowing Associate Justice Sam "Jimmy" Ervin IV to vote against the move. Ervin is the one Democrat currently on the court who will face re-election in 2022. Hudson's seat is also on the ballot, but she is expected to retire

at the end of her current term.

The NAACP argues the Republican justices have a conflict of interest because Berger is the son of state Senate Leader Phil Berger and Barringer was a lawmaker during the time these constitutional amendments passed the legislature by a three-fifths majority.

In response to the NAACP request, lawyers working for legislative defendants in the case filed a motion opposing the forced removal of Barringer and Berger, pointing out that if the NAACP's objection was really over a conflict of interest, why was there no effort to remove Earls, who was

once the attorney for the plaintiffs — the NAACP?

"Plaintiff's decision not to seek recusal of another justice with actual involvement in this case only undermines its position and calls into question Plaintiff's real goal in bringing this Motion, which is that a vote of five justices might be better for it than all seven," the motion read.

Attorneys representing the legislature and those representing the NAACP have 30 days to answer the questions set out in the new Supreme Court order.

This is an important issue in the politics of this matter. Democrats already hold a majority

Plaintiff's real goal in bringing this Motion is that a vote of five justices might be better for it than all seven.

- motion filed by lawyers for legislative defendants

on the Supreme Court. As legally suspect as it is, the Democrats could just vote now to nullify the amendments without the forced removals on a 4-3 vote. But nullifying millions of votes to amend the state constitution to require voter ID and to lower the maximum income tax rate would be political suicide for Ervin. Keeping Barringer and Berger from ever being able to vote on their own removal or the case itself would mean Ervin would never have to vote on the wrong side politically.

This is why judges often make poor political candidates and horrific political strategists. The idea that court Democrats could kick out two duly elected GOP justices, nullify two popular constitutional amendments, and protect Ervin from the political blowback is a complete farce and is unhinged from reality.

*The Woodshed, by investigative political analyst Dallas Woodhouse, is a unique blend of news and opinion based on his expertise and years of experience in North Carolina's political trenches. For more follow him on Twitter at @DallasWoodhouse*

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## Children's Business Fair

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lation) to create Watercolors for Wags.

"This is my business, and I am selling watercolors," she said. "I have bookmarks for a dollar, greeting cards for \$2, quote cards for \$3. All the profits go to Saving Grace Animals for Adoption. You can place personalized orders, and we will ship them to you."

Anna told CJ that starting her business helped her to understand perseverance. "It is hard sometimes, and so you have to keep going, even though it's hard."

Sixth-grader Molly Wilkins and her fourth-grade sister Zoey are talented young artists who created Pour Girl designs. They hand paint canvases, design earrings, and decorate vases.

"I am learning how to interact with people without being a little

pushy," said Molly.

"I think they are doing a great job," says proud mom Grace. "I think they are learning responsibility. I think they are taking ownership for something as they are creating."

The Pope Foundation makes grants to improve the well-being of North Carolinians by advancing the ideas of limited government, individual freedom, personal responsibility, and strong communities. The foundation's grants are focused on public policy, education, the arts, and human services. The foundation is a supporter of the John Locke Foundation, the parent company of Carolina Journal.

The children's business fair is one of many charitable endeavors the foundation supports to foster free-market economics under the foundation's belief that "under the rule of law, a free-market economy is the best conduit to bring the greatest prosperity to the most significant number of people. A free and prosperous nation cannot function without individual responsibility and initiative."



The Children's Business Fair in Raleigh is one of many charitable endeavors from the Pope Foundation, which promotes free markets and the entrepreneurial spirit.