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READ MORE: PAGE 2

THE

CAROLINA JOURNAL

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INSIDE: 2022 N.C. MIDTERM ELECTIONS

VOTER GUIDE

CONGRESSIONAL
RACES TO WATCH
Page 5

LATEST POLL
RESULTS
Voter Guide 7

OPINIONS AND
COMMENTARY
Page 7



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November elections are about more than control of Capitol Hill

DONNA KING
EDITOR -IN-CHIEF

NEXT MONTH North Carolina voters will head to the polls, and millions of North Carolinians will turn out to vote, but only a percentage of those will fill out their entire ballot.

In 2016, nearly a million people (780,212) who cast a presidential ballot did not vote in the North Carolina Supreme Court race. In that race, Justice Robert Edmunds was defeated by Mike Morgan on the high court, shifting the balance from 4-3 Republican to 4-3 Democrat. In the 2020 election, 133,303 people voted for president and did not vote for chief justice of the state Supreme Court. Republican Paul Newby defeated incumbent Cheri Beasley by just 401 votes.

Down the ballot, hundreds of thousands of North Carolina voters who made an effort to register, stand in line, and cast a ballot, left boxes blank in races ranging from the attorney general, to state Supreme Court, and superintendent of public instruction. The numbers drop off for local races, too.

The importance of “down-ballot” voting is not new this year. It has always been critical, and an opportunity to have your voice heard in the broadest possible sense.

Despite historic inflation and escalating federal spending, local government has the biggest impact on the individual through county commissioners, school boards, county sheriffs, and other officials.

This year every seat in the North Carolina General Assembly is on the ballot; 50 Senate seats and all 120 House seats. That means state taxes, spending, industry regulations, and education policy are all up to you — the N.C. voters.

Senate Republicans need two seats, and their House counterparts three, to secure a veto-proof majority. That would enable the legislature to override Gov. Roy Cooper’s veto stamp. So far, Cooper has vetoed more legislation than all governors in the history of North Carolina combined.

Two critical races for the state Supreme Court are also on the ballot. If Republicans flip just one of them, the highest court shifts back from left-leaning

to right-leaning. Democrats in those races have been dramatically out-raising Republicans for a seat on the bench. The high court is weighing cases on voter ID, the state’s congressional maps, and which branch of government controls state coffers, all critical to the state’s public policy path.

Control over local school boards across the state is up for grabs, too. While education is a state-level function, the legislature passes money and authority to the local school boards for day-to-day operations. When the state shut down schools during COVID, learning loss and remote classes drove parents to pay more attention to who was making the decisions for their children. Protests and heated school board meetings are now happening in areas where local education policy once flew under the public radar.

Opposition to Critical Race Theory, and demands that school boards be held more accountable to parents, have driven new candidates to run for office. Learn who they are.

School boards are an example of how local politics can start a national movement. In Loudoun County, Virginia, last year, parents pushed back on their board, sparking a change of leadership at the state level, and launching a national movement to empower parents in public schools.

All 100 North Carolina sheriff posts are also up for election this year. With rising crime rates and the challenge of law enforcement recruitment, few elected officials directly impact the individual more than the sheriff.

Because fewer people vote down ballot, each vote has more weight. In May’s Republican primary for House District 115, Pratik Bhakta won with just seven more votes than his opponent, Sherry Higgins.

Filling out your entire ballot matters.

Please plan ahead by finding your sample ballot at [www.ncsbe.gov/voting/sample-ballot](#) and familiarize yourself with the candidates down the ballot.

At [Carolinajournal.com](#) we have information on many of these elections and issues, but you can also contact your local party and visit the candidates’ websites for more information.

The early voting period for the 2022 general election begins Thursday, Oct. 20, and ends at 3 p.m. on Saturday, Nov. 5.



‘Save democracy! Kill free speech!’



Amy O. Cooke testifies before a congressional committee on "climate misinformation" claims.

AMY O. COOKE
PUBLISHER

George Orwell’s doublespeak is the dialect of the political left. The ease with which elected officials spew words that contradict our lived experiences is remarkable. President Biden celebrates the “Inflation Reduction Act” as inflation ravages American households. Vice President Kamala Harris says on national television that the Southern border is “secure” despite the very real humanitarian catastrophe of thousands of migrants flooding our border states every day.

I endured the doublespeak when I testified on Sept. 14 before the U.S. House Natural Resources Committee’s Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations. The hearing was titled “The Role of Public Relations Firms

in Preventing Action on Climate Change.” The same title was applied to a report the Democrat majority dropped a few hours prior. Both left little doubt about the Democrat majority’s bias.

A more appropriate hearing name would have been “Save Democracy. Kill Free Speech.” The majority serves as the committee’s own fact-checker to validate the majority’s bias. A simple business strategy such as “corporate image promotion” from a company the majority doesn’t like is considered “disinformation.” An industry defending itself from hostile activists is considered “delegitimizing the opposition.”

Much of the majority’s script focused on a failed 2018 ballot measure in Colorado, and the anti-oil and gas group Colorado Rising that pushed it. Proposition 112 attempted to severely cripple Col-

continued PAGE 11

2022 N.C. MIDTERM ELECTIONS

VOTER GUIDE

PAGE 7

This Issue

4 North Carolina redistricting cases attract national attention

5 Republicans hope ‘red wave’ extends to school board races

VG 8 CANDIDATE SURVEY: North Carolina Supreme Court Races

8 THE WOODSHED: Donald Trump’s New Hanover County visit

Uphill battle for GOP to gain supermajority in N.C. General Assembly

BY THERESA OPEKA

What are the chances of the GOP winning a supermajority in North Carolina's General Assembly in this November's general election? While the probability of that happening looked pretty good earlier in the year, many experts say the chances for that happening have now diminished.

"Compared to earlier in the year, polling doesn't look nearly as good for Republicans in 2022," said Jordan Roberts, director of government affairs for the John Locke Foundation. "However, I believe both chambers will have a Republican majority next year. I think there is still a slim chance Republicans get a supermajority, which would change the priorities for the caucuses for the biennium. Without a supermajority, I believe we will see more of the status quo of legislative stalemates on major issues in which the executive and the legislative branches disagree."

Republicans need 72 seats in the House and 30 in the Senate to secure a supermajority. To get this, the GOP needs a net pick-up of three seats in the House and two in the Senate.

"Since the legislative generic ballot has tightened, we had to change the 'districts to watch' to include some of these swing districts," said Jim Stirling, research fellow at the John Locke Foundation's Civitas Center for Public Integrity, referring to the Civitas Partisan Index. "House Republicans need to take 14 of the 19, while the Senate will require six out of nine Lean Dem/Toss-up seats. While a Senate supermajority is still possible, it will be a difficult uphill fight for Republicans to win one in the House."

A supermajority is crucial for Republicans because it means lawmakers could pass agenda items and ostensibly override the veto pen of Democratic Gov. Roy Cooper. Lawmakers and Cooper have been at a stalemate over various issues since 2019 due to the governor's veto.

With the economy worsening, inflation at a 40-year high, and rising interest rates, all occurring during a midterm year when Republicans do not inhabit the White House, history would suggest the GOP should have a strong showing. Andy Taylor, professor of political science at N.C. State University, breaks down why that



Republicans need 72 seats in the House and 30 in the Senate to secure a supermajority.

isn't the case this year.

"Inevitably, the presence of [Donald] Trump, national economic issues, the Dobbs decision, all of those issues are going to filter down into the state legislative races," Taylor said. "Democrats have done a pretty good job of trying to label Republicans as extreme on the [abortion] issue. I think Trump is casting a negative shadow on Republicans in this election. He continues to be a presence in discussions about politics."

Taylor said another metric could be used when considering legislative races.

"We have a U.S. Senate race, which is a really good way of understanding statewide sentiment this year," said Taylor. "And that's very close, effectively tied. I'm not sure how much of a tailwind the Republicans are now going to get from the general political environment, which should be a considerable one in a midterm year."

Inevitably, the presence of Trump, national economic issues, the Dobbs decision, all of those issues are going to filter down into the state legislative races.

- Professor Andy Taylor, N.C. State University

Taylor said a vast majority of districts in the House and Senate don't seem competitive at the general election level between the two parties, which will keep the focus on a few races, making the margin of error smaller.

However, the consensus among Taylor and other analysts is that Republicans will not lose control of the Senate or House, as Democrats would need a net gain of four in the Senate and 10 in the House to flip a chamber.

Regardless of what happens with the possibility of a supermajority, change is on the way for the General Assembly next year. There will be many new faces in the Legislative Building in Raleigh come January, with changes in redistricting, open seats, and people retiring or running for other offices.

Several seats have a chance to flip parties. In the Senate, those

include Senate District 4, with incumbent Sen. Toby Fitch, D-Wilson, facing former Sen. Eldon "Buck" Newton, R-Wilson. District 10, the seat currently held by Sen. Brent Jackson, R-Sampson, will feature Democrat Gettys Cohen Jr. and Republican Benton Sawrey. Jackson will run unopposed in District 9, the seat currently held by incumbent Sen. Michael Lee, R-New Hanover, who will run against Democrat newcomer Marcia Morgan in District 7. Incumbent Sen. Jim Perry, R-Lenoir, currently holds the District 7 seat and will run unopposed in District 2, which incumbent Sen. Norman Sanderson, R-Pamlico, now holds. Sanderson will run unopposed in District 1.

Sen. Bobby Hanig, R-Currituck, who resigned from the House in August to fill the District 1 seat of Sen. Bob Steinburg, R-Chowan, who retired in July, will be squaring off against Democrat Valerie Jordan in District 3. This comes after Hanig disputed that Jordan lived in the district. The Democrat-controlled N.C. State Board of Elections overruled the Currituck County elections board, which had determined Jordan most likely wasn't a resident in the district.

Another seat to watch is District 18, currently held by Democratic incumbent Sarah Crawford. A three-way race will include Democrat Mary Bode, Re-

publican E.C. Sykes, and Libertarian Ryan Brown. Crawford is running in N.C. House District 66 against Republican Ives Brizulea de Sholar, and Libertarian Micaio Penaflo.

In District 19, a seat currently held by incumbent Kirk deViere, D-Cumberland, Democrat Val Applewhite, who defeated deViere in the primary, will square off against Republican Wesley Meredith. He previously held the seat before deViere.

Another interesting race to follow is in District 11, where incumbent Lisa Barnes, R-Nash, will go against Democrat Mark Speed.

In the House, the race in District 2 features incumbent Rep. Larry Yarborough, R-Person, Democrat Ray Jeffers, and Libertarian Gavin Bell. In District 5, incumbent Rep. Howard Hunter III, D-Hertford, is facing Republican Bill Ward. Incumbent Rep. Brian Farkas, D-Pitt, will face off against newcomer Republican Timothy Reeder in District 9. In District 24, it's incumbent Rep. Linda Suggs, D-Wilson, versus Republican Ken Fontenot.

District 25 features incumbent Rep. James Gailliard, D-Nash, Republican Allen Chesser II, and Libertarian Nicholas Taylor. Incumbent Rep. Terrence Everitt, D-Wake, Republican Fred Von Cannon, and Libertarian Joseph Serio face off in District 35.

In District 47, a seat currently held by incumbent Rep. Charles Graham, D-Robeson, Democrat Charles Townsend will go against Republican Jarrod Lowery. Graham is set to run against David Rouzer, the Republican incumbent in North Carolina's 7th Congressional District.

In District 48, incumbent Rep. Garland Pierce, D-Scotland, matches up against Republican Melissa Swarbrick. Former Rep. Stephen Ross, a Republican, fights to get his seat back when he takes on Rep. Ricky Hurtado, D-Alamance, in District 63.

In District 104, it will be incumbent Rep. Brandon Lofton, D-Mecklenburg, versus Republican Don Pomeroy. In District 50, a seat held by Rep. Graig Meyer, D-Orange, Orange County Commissioner Renee Price, a Democrat, faces Republican Charles Lopez. Meyer is running in Senate District 23 against Republican Landon Woods.

The general election is Tuesday, Nov. 8.

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4 ELECTION 2022

N.C. redistricting attracts national attention

BY MITCH KOKAI

On its surface, the Moore v. Harper case at the U.S. Supreme Court deals only with N.C. politics. But observers across the country are watching the case's progress closely.

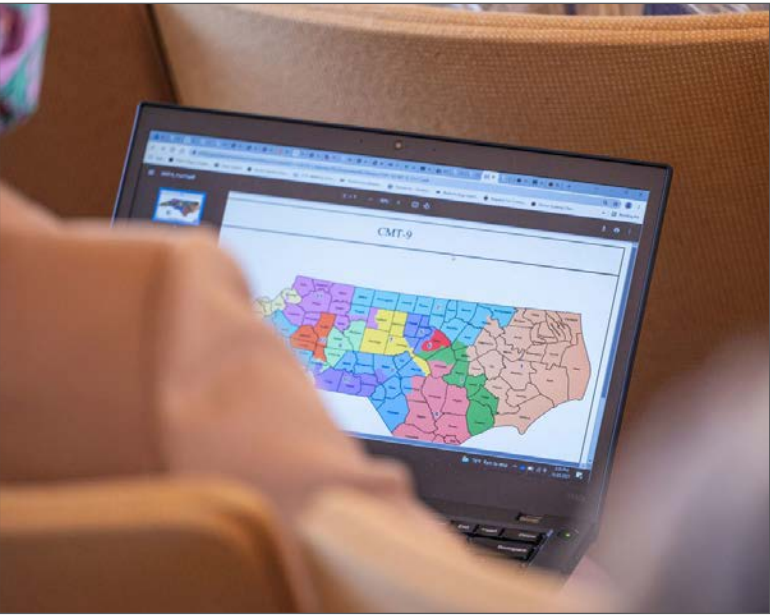
Left-of-center commentators are raising concerns about the case's link to something called the independent state legislature theory. They fear the ruling in Moore v. Harper could open the door to overturning future election results.

Moore v. Harper actually deals with a dispute over the role N.C. state courts can play in addressing congressional election maps drawn by the Republican-led General Assembly. Legislative leaders argue that the state's Supreme Court relied on vague language in the N.C. Constitution to toss out maps drawn by lawmakers. Lawmakers contend that this decision runs afoul of the U.S. Constitution's Elections Clause.

Attorneys general from 13 states are formally supporting North Carolina's U.S. Supreme Court arguments

The attorney generals from Alabama, Arizona, Arkansas, Kansas, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, Montana, Nebraska, Oklahoma, South Carolina, Texas, and Utah filed an amicus, or friend-of-the-court, brief on Sept. 6.

"Amici States have strong interests in the correct branch of their state governments carrying out redistricting," the brief opened. "Separation of powers is fundamental to the proper func-



Legislative leaders argue that the state's Supreme Court relied on vague language in the N.C. Constitution to toss out maps drawn by lawmakers.

tioning of state government because it ensures political accountability and also protects liberty. Conversely, the states have no interest in one branch of their governments usurping the proper function of another."

"The threats to state interests are clear in this case," the brief continued. "If state courts are allowed to override legislative decisions based on vague state constitutional provisions, then the delegation from the federal Elections Clause is transformed from its text and intent. This undermines the rule of law."

The 13 attorneys general put forward "one primary argument

— "that the text of the Elections Clause matters and that its enforcement by federal courts poses no threat to state sovereignty in our federal system."

"The Framers could have assigned the power over federal elections in the first instance to states, without specifying which entity of state government would have primary responsibility," the brief continued. "But recognizing that prescribing the times, places, and manner of federal elections is fundamentally a legislative role, the Framers specified that this delegated power would be exercised by 'the Legislature thereof.'"

"Text and the rule of law matter," the attorney generals argued. "This Court should clearly hold that none of the state constitutional provisions relied on by the Supreme Court of North Carolina empowers it to legislate the manner of congressional elections, and it should reverse the North Carolina Supreme Court's opinion imposing a court-drawn map in place of a legislatively-enacted one."

The state Supreme Court endorsed a trial court's decision in February to throw out the N.C. General Assembly's congressional election map for this year's election. State courts substituted their own map for the 2022 election cycle. Outside appointed "special masters" drew the map.

The N.C. Supreme Court justified its decision on the basis of several state constitutional provisions, including Article I, Section 10. It says "All elections shall be free."

State legislative leaders argue that the courts overstepped their authority in rejecting state lawmakers' work. They argue in Moore v. Harper that the Election Clause in Article I, Section 4, Clause 1 of the U.S. Constitution assigns decisions about the "times, places, and manner" of holding federal elections to state legislatures.

Legal observers, especially critics of N.C. lawmakers' case, have labeled the argument the independent state legislature doctrine.

The attorneys general's brief was one of 17 filed on a single day in Moore v. Harper. Fourteen briefs supported N.C. legislators. Twelve state legislators from Mis-

souri, Pennsylvania, South Carolina, and Texas backed their Tar Heel counterparts.

State legislative leaders also attracted friend-of-the-court support from the Lawyers Democracy Fund, Citizens United, Presidential Coalition, APA Watch, America First Legal Foundation, American Legislative Exchange Council, White House Watch, Honest Elections Project, Taxpayers for Honest Elections, National Republican Redistricting Trust, the Claremont Institute's Center for Constitutional Jurisprudence, America's Future Inc., Republican National Committee, NRCC, N.C. Republican Party, and Public Interest Legal Foundation.

Pennsylvania's Republican state senators and the group Restoring Integrity and Trust in Elections also filed friend-of-the-court briefs supporting N.C. lawmakers on Sept. 2.

Critics of N.C. legislative leaders have taken an active interest in the case as well. A group representing chief justices of state courts across the country has filed a brief supporting courts' authority to interpret state constitutions. A group of "New York voters" joined the debate to defend that state's efforts to outlaw partisan gerrymandering.

Other critics are expected to join the legal fray in the weeks ahead.

At press time, the U.S. Supreme Court had not scheduled oral arguments in Moore v. Harper. Those arguments are expected this year, with a decision likely near the end of the court's next term in June 2023.

Conservatives clash with elections board

BY DAVID LARSON

In recent months, the Democrat-controlled North Carolina State Board of Elections has been at odds with conservatives on a number of fronts, causing Republicans to accuse the board of partisanship.

Over the summer, the two Republican members of the board — Four Eggers and Tommy Tucker — voted to approve the N.C. Green Party's petition to be recognized and put candidates on the 2022 ballot. When the three Democrat board members voted not to approve the Greens' bid, ostensibly because of questions about the validity of some ballots, the board was opened up to media scrutiny and legal challenges.

Then, on Sept. 2, the NCSBE, again by a partisan 3-2 vote, overruled a decision by the Currituck County Board of Elections and declared Democratic state Senate candidate Valerie Jordan eligible to run. The local board had determined that she was ineligible because evidence showed that she lived in Raleigh and not at the address she listed within the Senate district. Jordan's Republican opponent, state Sen. Bobby Hanig, saw partisan bias in the decision to reverse.

"Once again, the Democratic majority on the board decided politics is more important than the rule of law," Hanig told CJ. "It was evident they made their decision before the hearing even began. And people wonder why they do not have faith in the election



Voter cast ballot.

process. It is because of shams just like this. This decision was all about partisanship. And Gov. Roy Cooper is to blame, since he told the press recently that 'nothing will come of this.' The citizens of District 3 and of North Carolina deserve better."

A week later, on Sept. 9, the Republican National Committee, N.C. GOP, and county Republicans filed a lawsuit against the NCSBE over whether they illegally moved the absentee-ballot deadline and limited partisan election observers.

"The NCSBE continues to undermine the democratic process with unlawful rulemaking and further restrict the rights of election observers, threatening the integrity of our elections," said RNC Chair Ronna McDaniel in a press release. "This lawsuit is the latest development in the RNC and NCGOP's ongoing fight to preserve transparency in North Carolina elections and stop unelected bureaucrats from rewriting the law in the Tar Heel State."

In comments to Carolina Journal, NCSBE public information

director Patrick Gannon pushed back on the claims in the lawsuit, saying, "We generally wouldn't want to comment on the pending lawsuit. However, I need to correct the misunderstanding that the board extended the absentee ballot deadline. The legislature did that by enacting G.S. 103-5. See Numbered Memo 2022-09, which explains why the law requires the receipt of absentee ballots on November 14, as November 11 is a state and federal holiday, when mail is not delivered. The same rule/deadline applied under a different administration in 2016."

Lastly, elections nonprofit Taxpayers for Honest Elections pushed the NCSBE to make voting more accessible to rural voters, after showing data that the further one is from a polling site the less likely they are to vote. The taxpayers group said this disadvantages certain rural groups and that if the NCSBE is going to focus on making voting accessible to all demographics, this should be taken into consideration.

TFHE chose Davidson, Duplin, Moore, Union, and Wayne as counties to focus on in a potential pilot program. They proposed that the NCSBE create an alternative plan for these counties that opened up more sites, after finding that 50,000 voters in these areas did not have accessible early-voting sites.

But after the Sept. 13 meeting, TFHE blasted the NCSBE, saying they "chose ideological beliefs over providing the citizens of our State reasonable access to voting sites"

by not considering their proposals despite evidence that rural voters did not have easy access to early voting sites.

"The Board has a statutory duty to determine whether county early voting plans 'disproportionately favor' a political party or candidate and whether those plans provide adequate coverage of the electorate," the TFHE press release said. "However, they chose to instead focus almost exclusively on whether or not counties should offer Sunday voting. Regardless of the day of the week, reasonable voter access to a polling location should have been the driving point of the discussion."

As the election season continues, there are worries that the perceived partisanship of the NCSBE will create distrust in results and in the board's neutrality. One effort to alleviate this was launched by the Carter Center, former President Jimmy Carter's foundation. The initiative is called the N.C. Trusted Elections Tour. It featured town halls in every U.S. congressional district in the state as well as online.

But while the tour was meant to have bipartisan appeal, there has been some skepticism of the balance. Its two organizers are former Charlotte Mayor Jennifer Roberts, a Democrat, and former Republican Supreme Court Justice Bob Orr. Orr's high-profile endorsements of Democrats in this election cycle and his role in redrawing the Republican legislature's election maps have called into question his ability to rebuild trust among conservative voters.

5 N.C. congressional races to watch

BY DAVID LARSON

North Carolina's congressional delegation in 2023 will be made up of 14 U.S. House members and two U.S. senators, but this year only five of these 16 seats appear to be in play. Depending on how the midterms shake out at a national level, these five races could make or break Republicans' chances of taking one or both houses of Congress.

Senate

The highest-profile race is undoubtedly that between Republican U.S. Rep. Ted Budd, R-13th District, and former N.C. Supreme Court Chief Justice Cheri Beasley, a Democrat. There has been big spending by both campaigns and independent expenditure groups on behalf of the two candidates.

If Budd wins, his seat will be one of about six — along with Wisconsin, Pennsylvania, Georgia, Arizona, and Nevada — that will decide the U.S. Senate majority. Republicans will need to win four of those six to get the 51 votes needed to avoid Vice President Kamala Harris' tie-breaking vote in favor of Democrats. Ohio and Florida are also possible pickups for Democrats.

At the moment, polling shows Budd with the edge going into the final month. FiveThirtyEight gives Budd a 62% chance of winning and calls the race a "lean R." RealClearPolitics gives Budd a 2-point advantage but calls the race a "toss-up."

But Beasley has seen some positive polling putting her within striking distance, and national Republicans are making a priority of



Ted Budd at a Save America in Wilmington, N.C.

keeping the seat in the Republican column. Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell, R-Kentucky, also spent at least \$7.2 million on television ads attacking Beasley in September, and former President Donald Trump chose to visit Wilmington for a rally on Sept. 23. A lot of the focus for the event was advocating for Budd in the Senate race.

House Races

The second most-watched congressional race this cycle is in North Carolina's 13th Congressional District between Democratic state Sen. Wiley Nickel and a political newcomer, Republican Bo Hines. After redistricting authority was taken over by state courts, special masters redrew the state's congressional districts more favorably for Democrats. Many observers see the 13th District as the state's only true swing district.

"The 13th District has a split personality, with conservative rural and exurb areas in Harnett, Johnston, and Wayne counties, and more progressive areas in Wake County," Andy Jackson, director of the John Locke Foundation's Civitas Center for Public Integrity, told Carolina Journal. "It is also a very competitive district, rated a D+1 in our analysis. That means both Democrat Wiley Nickel and Republican Bo Hines must walk a tightrope of trying to energize their base without alienating moderate voters."

Hines was also at the Trump rally in Wilmington in September, and the former president stumped for him during the primary as well. FiveThirtyEight's analysis considers Hines "slightly favored" in the race, with a 68% chance of winning. There have not been many polls of the race, but an RMG Re-

search poll from August put Hines 5 points ahead, and a Public Policy Polling survey called the race a dead heat.

In terms of messaging, Nickel has been focusing on the topic of abortion, painting Hines as extreme on the topic.

"Wiley's abortion message may help him boost turnout among progressives, especially in the Raleigh suburbs," Jackson said. "The economy is the issue most on voters' minds, however, and Wiley could find himself preaching to the choir on abortion while Hines picks up voters concerned about inflation and President Biden's economic policies."

The Civitas Center has also found that Hines benefited from more than \$1 million in independent expenditures over the summer, while Nickel only had \$11,000 spent in his favor.

There are three other U.S. House races that Republicans have their eyes on — NC-1 in the northeast corner of the state, NC-6 in the Triad, and NC-14 in the Charlotte area. All three favor Democrats to varying degrees. Although polling has tightened over the summer, according to Jackson, Republicans still have a chance to steal in these lean-Democrat districts if Republican turnout exceeds expectations.

NC-1 is an open seat, with longtime U.S. Democratic Rep. G.K. Butterfield retiring. Fighting to replace Butterfield are state Sen. Don Davis, D-Greene, and Republican Sandy Smith.

"In the 1st District, our research finds that the Democrat, Don Davis, has a baseline advantage of about 5%," Jackson said.

"However, the district is in a rural part of the state that is trending Republican. Republican Sandy Smith will benefit from Trump's endorsement [which she received at the Wilmington rally], meaning that the race has the potential to be very close."

NC-6 and NC-14 are more longshots for Republicans but are still within the realm of possibility in a red-wave year.

"The 14th and 6th congressional elections have a good amount in common on the surface," Jim Stirling, research fellow at the John Locke Foundation, told Carolina Journal. "Both are lean-Democratic seats, are made up of predominantly urban voters, and the Democratic members have a significant fundraising advantage over their Republican opponents. [Kathy] Manning being one of the wealthiest members of Congress and [Jeff] Jackson, having just dropped out from the high-profile U.S. Senate primary, should make this no surprise. These factors alone make it an uphill battle for Republicans to win these districts even with Republicans' advantage in this year's election."

Manning's opponent in NC-6 is Republican Christian Castelli, and Jackson's opponent in NC-14 is Republican Pat Harrigan. Both Castelli and Harrigan are businessmen and former members of the Army Special Forces. FiveThirtyEight rates NC-1 as a "likely D" and rates NC-6 and NC-14 each as a "solid D."

Republicans need 218 seats to win a majority in the U.S. House and are projected by nearly all political analysts to gain at least this many.

Republicans hope 'red wave' extends to school board races

BY DAVID BASS

Growing backlash against progressive policies implemented by school boards across the nation could manifest itself this year in North Carolina's school districts.

Conservative candidates in once thought reliably Democrat-friendly districts hope to make inroads during what could be a red wave election in the fall. The push is visible in counties like Wake, Orange, and Guilford. Here, a number of progressive candidates have chosen not to seek re-election, while conservative candidates are feeling wind in their electoral sails.

Meanwhile, candidates in more middle-of-the-road or conservative counties are mounting strong campaigns — in areas like New Hanover, Johnston, Craven, and Union counties.

Most school board elections are officially nonpartisan, but candidates and members still represent progressive, conservative, or moderate points of view. Pandemic-era policies — like forced mask-

ing and shuttered classrooms — have motivated a new batch of candidates to get involved. A rising tide of "woke" policies on race and gender issues have contributed to the motivation.

Political and education experts with the John Locke Foundation say that some school board races could follow statewide trends in voting, but they caution there are key differences in these local elections that could make a difference.

"School board elections, much like other races lower on the bottom of the ballot, tend to follow the trends of state-level generic ballots," said Jim Stirling, a research fellow at Locke. "While this can be seen in countywide elections that happen in November, many counties have different ways of implementing their races. For starters, some counties lack a primary, have a different election date, or have voters pick multiple candidates. This makes these trends slightly more inconsistent than something like our judicial elections."

Terry Stoops, director of the Center for Effective Education at

Locke, noted that the nonpartisan nature of most races — mixed with the high number of nonincumbents running — means that voters will have even less information heading to the ballot box.

"Because a number of incumbents declined to run for re-election, voters will select school board members from a slate of newcomers rather than choose from status-quo candidates and their opponents," said Stoops. "Simply put, it is often difficult to distinguish the reformers from the reactionaries."

"Endorsements from elected officials or prominent citizens may play an outsized role in school board elections this year," Stoops added. "Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis announced school board endorsements in key races, a move that was instrumental in securing victory for parental rights candidates in the Sunshine State."

In Orange County, progressive school board members Brenda Stephens and Hillary MacKenzie are not running for re-election. Conservatives are pushing hard to take those seats in the fall election. They are setting their hopes on three candidates: Bethni Lee, Penny Carter King, and Anne Purcell.

The Orange County school board has come under fire for its policy on students who wish to transition to a different gender — specifically excluding parental notice or involvement. "In some cases, transgender students may not want their parents to know about



The Orange County school board has come under fire for its policy on students who wish to transition to a different gender — specifically excluding parental notice or involvement.

their transgender status," the policy states. "These situations must be addressed on a case-by-case basis. The paramount consideration in such situations is the health and safety of the student."

The board also voted unanimously to keep controversial gender identity books in school libraries, such as "Gender Queer," "Lawn Boy," and "Out of Darkness."

In Wake County, five of the nine school board members are

not seeking re-election. Four seats will be on the ballot for four-year terms, with the remaining five seats up for two-year terms before switching over to full four-year terms after the 2024 election. Conservatives are pinning their hopes on candidates like Cheryl Caulfield, Wing Ng, Patrice Neal-on, Jacob Arthur, and Steve Bergstrom. Conservative candidates have been motivated to leap into the electoral fray by forced masking and curriculum concerns.

6 N.C. SUPREME COURT

Leandro decision could impact state budget, separation of powers

BY MITCH KOKAI

The fate of hundreds of millions of N.C. taxpayer dollars rests in the hands of state Supreme Court justices. They also will chart the future course for separation of powers within state government.

Both budgetary and constitutional issues are tied to the high court's forthcoming decision in the Leandro education funding lawsuit.

Leandro could tie up hundreds of millions of dollars — and eventually billions — from the state treasury. It also could influence future relations among state government's legislative, executive, and judicial branches.

At press time, the N.C. Supreme Court had not yet released its Leandro decision. A court order explained that justices would produce a ruling on a date of their choosing after Aug. 31 oral arguments.

The court will decide whether a trial judge can order the state to spend an additional \$785 million for education-related items. Justices also will decide whether the courts can bypass the General Assembly and order the money transferred out of the state's coffers.

Those are the key questions in the latest stage of Leandro, a case that dates back to 1994.

"Whether the judiciary can order the state to implement and fund money for a sweeping, eight-year, 146-item, comprehensive remedial plan ... that would remove



Melanie Dubis argues on behalf of plaintiffs in the Leandro school funding case on August 31.

decision making over education from the people and dictate education policy and spending for the state for a decade is yet another question," said attorney Matthew Tilley, representing Republican legislative leaders, early in the Aug. 31 hearing.

Lawmakers oppose both the court-ordered spending and the forced money transfer. They contend that the state Supreme Court cannot use one decades-old trial about public education in a single county, Hoke, to justify measures that would apply to every school system in the state.

Legislators also raise questions about a Leandro plan de-

veloped by state government's executive branch without legislative input. That multiyear plan has a price tag of at least \$5.6 billion, with the chance that the cost could rise substantially based on multiple mandated studies.

"The executive branch is going to be necessarily tempted to use admissions in a court case to get orders that would provide agencies things that they can't get in the legislative process," Tilley said. "It's a way to circumvent the process."

The state controller argues against the forced money transfer. It would place him in a "double bind," attorney Robert Hunt-

er argued. The controller would violate state law and violate his oath of office if he transfers money without authorization from the legislature. "We're all for the schoolchildren of North Carolina getting whatever money they're entitled to through an appropriation process."

Justice Sam "Jimmy" Ervin IV, one of four Supreme Court Democrats, asked Hunter about the implications of his argument.

"Your position then is limited to the notion that you essentially can tell the General Assembly ... to spend the money, but if they elect not to, there's nothing more that can be done?" Ervin asked.

"That's what I think you said in Cooper v. Berger," Hunter replied, citing Ervin's 6-1 decision in a 2020 case. At that time, Ervin confirmed that state government's legislative branch holds complete power over the state treasury.

Justice Robin Hudson, also a Democrat, pushed back on Hunter's argument. She cited language from an earlier 2004 state Supreme Court Leandro ruling.

"This court said when the state fails to live up to its constitutional duties, the court is empowered to order the deficiency remedied," Hudson said. "If the offending branch fails to do so or consistently shows an inability to do so, a court is empowered to provide relief by imposing a specific remedy and instructing the recalcitrant state actors to implement it."

Lawyers representing both state government's executive branch and the Leandro plain-

tiffs argued in favor of both the court-ordered spending and the forced money transfer.

N.C. Senior Deputy Attorney General Amar Majmudar pushed back against legislators' arguments that they alone control how money is spent. "To accept the truth of their claims would be to make broadly acceptable the idea that one branch of government can nullify the other two simply by controlling the money — that the branch with the purse has all the power."

Attorney Melanie Dubis reminded the court that she has represented Leandro plaintiffs for 27 years. She labeled the issue before the justices "very narrow." "When the state of North Carolina violates the fundamental, affirmative constitutional right to the privilege of education — for 20 years — can this court do anything about it?"

"This is a unique right — the right to the opportunity to a sound basic education," Dubis said. "As a co-equal branch of the state, the court has a duty to guard and maintain that right."

"The legislature is not above the law," Dubis added. "The legislature cannot carry out its constitutional duties in an unconstitutional way, which is what it has done for the last 20 years."

Democrats hold a 4-3 majority on the state's highest court. Two Supreme Court seats are up for election this year, both held by Democrats. A Republican victory in either election would shift partisan control back toward the GOP.

Court race could reshape the state for years

BY DONNA KING

With just weeks to go until the November midterm elections, both major political parties have their eyes on the N.C. Supreme Court, where control of the court is up for grabs. Two seats are on the ballot. If Republicans win even one, the balance of the court shifts from left-leaning to right-leaning.

The races come down to two Democrats, established in the state's judiciary by a long family pedigree in Democrat politics, being challenged by younger conservatives who would be the first generation to hold N.C. elected office in their respective families.

Appeals Court Judge Lucy Inman is part of the controversial Daniels family, founders of the News and Observer. Her Republican opponent, Richard Dietz, also serves on the Court of Appeals. Dietz comes from what he describes as a poor "mountain family" of railroad and telephone workers.

Associate Justice Sam "Jimmy" Ervin IV is the third generation of Democrat men in his family to hold high office. He is defending his seat against Republican Trey Allen, a former U.S. Marine who is currently the general counsel at the state Administrative Office of the Courts.

In both races the Democrats are outlasting Republicans almost 5-to-1, based in part on money raised by national Democrats with an eye on abortion law in North Carolina.

However, partisan politics on the high court has come under

scrutiny, particularly as battles over the state's redistricting maps, voter ID, felon voting, and other partisan issues have made their way to the justices who, generally, have voted along partisan lines.

In a recent forum with all four candidates, held at the inaugural conference of the N.C. Chapter of the Federalist Society, the candidates all spoke about earning back public trust in the judiciary.

Inman said accusations that the court is legislating from the bench may simply be a matter of perspective, but she did criticize recent decisions by her Democrat colleagues.

"It's very troubling to me when we see the Supreme Court, especially in the year 2021, had so many cases of all matters that were not even political where you had a 4-3 decision," she said. "I think that a pattern of justices and judges voting together lockstep suggests that they are not acting as independently as they need to be."

Inman and Dietz are running for Seat 3 on the high court. Dietz told the gathering that the increasing partisan focus on the bench threatens the judiciary itself.

"I think our Supreme Court needs leaders who can reassure the public that the judicial branch and the courts are independent and that the courts are not involved in politics and that a judge's role is to defend our constitutional rights and to protect the rule of law, and to help people resolve their legal disputes fairly. ... I can be that leader."

In 2014, Inman was elected to an eight-year term on the N.C. Court of Appeals. Dietz was ap-



Candidates for North Carolina's two Supreme Court seats take part in a Federalist Society forum.

pointed to the Court of Appeals that same year by Republican Gov. Pat McCrory and was re-elected in 2016.

Inman is the daughter of author Lucy Daniels, granddaughter of former White House Press Secretary Jonathan Daniels, and great-granddaughter of Josephus Daniels, the founder of the News and Observer.

The elder Daniels was known for his role in the racist Wilmington Massacre of 1898. This is Inman's second run at the N.C. Supreme Court. She was defeated by Phil Berger Jr. in 2020 for an open seat, 51% to 49%, a margin of 71,517 votes.

In a September Civitas Poll from the John Locke Foundation, Dietz was running ahead of Inman, with 45% support over Inman's 41%, with 15% of respondents undecided.

Ervin and Allen are running for

Seat 5 on the state's highest court. In the forum, Ervin highlighted his family history, often referencing lessons from his grandfather, U.S. Sen. Sam J. Ervin Jr., and his father, U.S. 4th Circuit Court of Appeals Judge Sam J. Ervin III.

While Ervin is an incumbent, that still may mean an uphill battle as his party-line votes on redistricting maps and the voter ID constitutional amendment have landed him squarely in the middle of the debate over a partisan judiciary and may make him vulnerable to Allen.

"In analysis of voting patterns, you'll see that I do not hesitate to take any particular party's side in any particular case because I think that party is correct," Ervin told the group.

"That's what the law requires, and therefore I do it. I've done that even on what can be described as politically charged cases, on sev-

eral different occasions. Ultimately, the success of the court depends upon the perception of the fairness and impartiality of that court."

Allen is viewed as having the support of current Supreme Court Chief Justice Paul Newby, a Republican, having previously clerked for him. Allen also works for Newby in his role with the Administrative Office of the Courts. Allen's campaign website highlights his close relationship with Newby.

"One of our fundamental principles that our constitution lays out is the separation of powers. Why is that so vital? More than any other branch of government, the judiciary depends for its authority on the public trust. If we get to the point where a critical mass of the public no longer believes that our courts function as courts of law but instead function as political bodies, as super legislatures, we will lose our justice system."

In the latest Civitas Poll, Allen was ahead with 46% of respondents' support to Ervin's 39%. However, 15% of the respondents were still undecided.

Ervin is the only Supreme Court candidate to attend law school outside of the state, having received his J.D. from Harvard Law School. Allen and Inman earned their law degrees at UNC-Chapel Hill School of Law, while Dietz earned his at Wake Forest University School of Law.

With judicial races flying somewhat under the general public's radar, campaign spending becomes even more crucial, especially as national Democrats may be facing losses in Congress and state legislatures.

VOTER GUIDE

2022 N.C. MIDTERM ELECTIONS

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ELECTION DAY:
Nov. 8

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DEADLINE TO REGISTER:
Oct. 14

ABSENTEE DEADLINE:
Nov. 8

EARLY VOTING:
Oct. 20 - Nov. 5

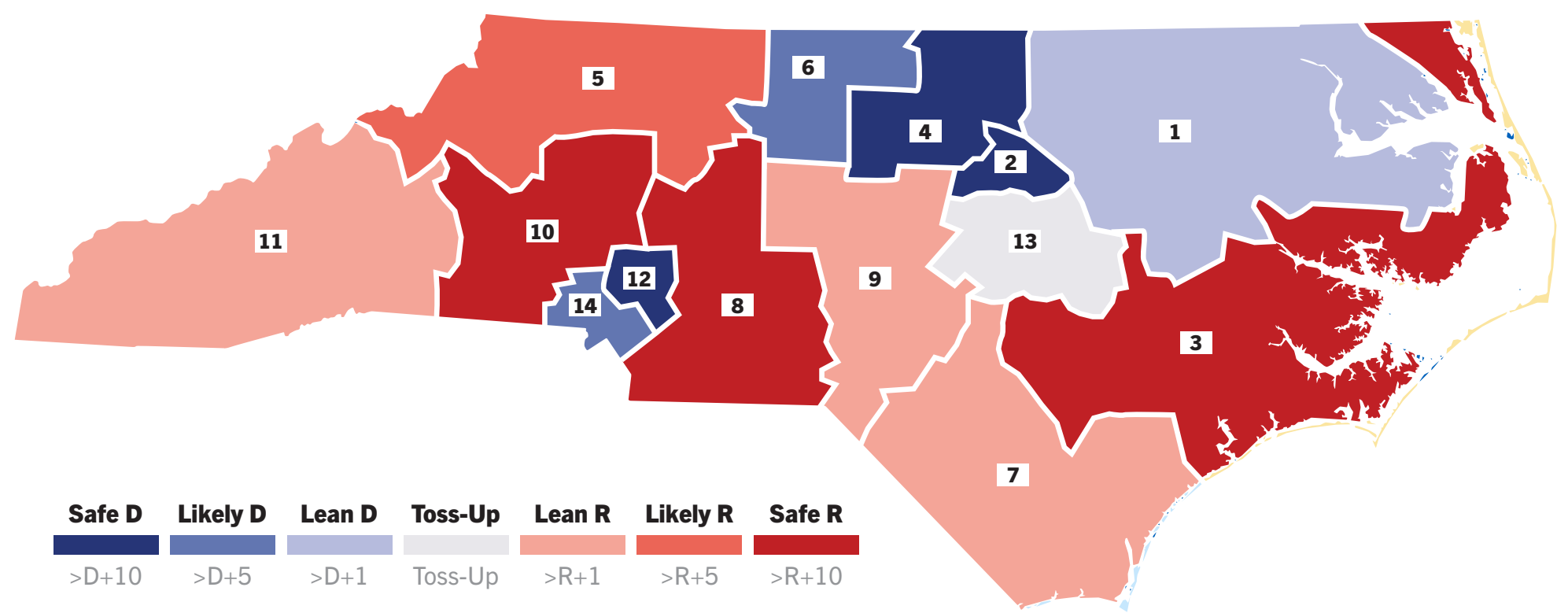


SURVEY OF CANDIDATES FOR ELECTED OFFICE

U.S. House of Representatives

DISTRICT 1	DISTRICT 2				
		What, if anything, needs to be done to shore up Social Security, Medicare, and other entitlement programs?	What steps, if any, should the federal government take to bring down gas prices?	What strategies should Congress employ to balance the federal budget?	
Don Davis DEMOCRAT	Deborah Ross DEMOCRAT	Intense study the problem, review options to maintain fiscal solvency of the programs.	Restore America's energy independence policies	Zero-based budgeting and legal restrictions on spending as a percentage of gross domestic product.	
No Response	No Response	How should the country move forward to improve energy policy?	What is the biggest foreign policy challenge facing the United States?	The last major federal tax legislation was passed in 2018. What, if any, major changes should be made to the federal tax code?	
		Energy policies were moving in the right direction prior to the Biden administration. Congress should re-enact policies that restore America's energy independence.	China and technology	Tax code needs to be simplified	
		What is your opinion of President Joe Biden's Executive Order on wind energy?	What, if any, involvement should the federal government have in private industry Diversity, Inclusion, and Equity policy?	What, if anything, should Congress do to ensure free and fair elections?	
Sandy Smith REPUBLICAN	Christine E. Villaverde REPUBLICAN	Unfavorable	Limited	Limited	
No Response	What should the priorities be for the 118th Congress?	To what degree should the federal government be involved in K-12 education?	Should there be more or fewer federal government tariffs in international trade? Why or why not?	How many justices should sit on the U.S. Supreme Court?	
	Restore American energy independence as a means to reduce energy prices, reign in spending as a means to reduce inflation, and investigate government abuses of power	Limited	This is a very tricky question because it's not as simple as yes or no. The problem is very nuanced, especially in countries, such as China, where they manipulate their financial system. Obviously, I support free trade and free markets, but I also understand there are nuanced policies that must be considered.	Nine	
		What steps, if any, should Congress take to combat inflation?	What should the U.S. policy toward China include?		
		As stated above, a reduction in spending will help fight inflation	We need to follow the Jef-		

Locke partisan leanings for North Carolina's congressional districts




DISTRICT 3



Barbara D. Gaskins

DEMOCRAT

No Response



Greg Murphy

REPUBLICAN

What should the priorities be for the 118th Congress?
Controlling Inflation, Cur-tailing the Crime Wave, Stop-ping the invasion at our South-ern Border including trying to halt the surge in drugs coming across our southern border.

What, if anything, needs to be done to shore up Social Security, Medicare, and other entitlement programs?
We must look at entitlement programs and make corrections that reflect the changes in life expectancy that have occurred since their inception in 1965

How should the country move forward to improve energy policy?
Reasonable evaluation of alter-native fuels but the reinstitu-tion of clean American fuel in-dependency.

What is your opinion of President Joe Biden's Executive Order on wind energy?
The exploration of reasonable alternative fuels must also in-vestigate the ramifications up-on the American people

To what degree should the federal government be involved in K-12 education?
They should not be involved in the education of children. This should be done on a local lev-el. If the government has a role, it should only be in provid-ing nourishment to those who need it

What steps, if any, should Congress take to combat inflation?
Stop the reckless spending and government giveaways.

What steps, if any, should the federal government take to bring down gas prices?
Restore American energy in-dependence by unleashing the power of clean American fos-sil fuels.

What is the biggest foreign policy challenge facing the United States?
The Biden administration's weak stance on the world stage most precisely evidenced by his betrayal of the American peo-ple in his politically timed de-parture from Afghanistan

What, if any, involvement should the federal government have in private industry Diversity, Inclusion, and Equity policy?
No involvement whatsoever

Should there be more or fewer federal government tariffs in international trade? Why or why not?

Appropriate tariffs help protect American trade

What should the U.S. policy toward China include?
A basic understanding that we are at war with China techno-logically, militarily and ideolog-ically

What strategies should Congress employ to balance the federal budget?
Cut unnecessary government spending. We do not have an income problem but a spending problem

The last major federal tax legislation was passed in 2018. What, if any, major changes should be made to the federal tax code?
minimal changes

What, if anything, should Congress do to ensure free and fair elections?
Codify national Voter ID, no ballot harvesting, minimize mail in balloting,

How many justices should sit on the U.S. Supreme Court?
Nine

DISTRICT 4



Valerie Foushee

DEMOCRAT

No Response



Courtney Geels

REPUBLICAN

What should the priorities be for the 118th Congress?
The top priority for the 118th Congress in its entirety should be the economy and balancing a budget.

What, if anything, needs to be done to shore up Social Security, Medicare, and other entitlement programs?
As noted in the top priori-ty, Congress has to make a bal-anced budget to ensure that promised expenditures (espe-cially for elderly) are able to be paid out in the long term. Spe-cifically, Medicare needs to be reformed to make sure the care the elderly is receiving is qual-ity.

How should the country move forward to improve energy policy?
To improve energy policy in our

country, we must be energy in-dependent. As a country, we need to prioritize being inde-pendent in the most good pos-sible for national security and emergency needs. If elected I would advocate for those ener-gy policies to include tax incen-tives for clean energy, re-using, and recycling.

What is your opinion of President Joe Biden's Executive Order on wind energy?
I am opposed to the excessive spending by the Biden admin-istration. The continued rise in inflation (with significant rise in the cost of goods and gas) caused by the excessive spend-ing by the federal government is harming the poor. I think clean energy practices, like wind, should be incentivized by the government to push the private sector to move in that direction.

To what degree should the federal government be involved in K-12 education?
The constitution never gave the role of managing education to the federal government. The federal government is now so involved financially with K-12 education that we are now dependent on many of the funds to supplement, and schools would be handicapped with-out it. My goal from the federal level will be to bring power fi-nancially to the People when it comes to education policy. It is great when the government can help with things like free school lunches for children in pover-ty. Unfortunately, those funds are now coming with strings at-tached, and the strings need to be taken away at a minimum. Education is best handled at the state level.

What steps, if any, should Congress take to combat inflation?
As noted in question 1, Con-gress needs to make and bal-

ance a budget. It is the job of Congress to manage taxpayers money well, and our country is in massive debt. The current Congress is continuing to spend without hesitancy, and it is driving inflation higher.

What steps, if any, should the federal government take to bring down gas prices?

We are currently importing oil from Russia and the middle east. We are spending money for transport, and we are risking more damage to the environment in the transportation process rather than opening a contained pipeline within our own country. I support moving toward green energy, but energy experts stand by the fact it must be done gradually. We are still dependent on oil and natural gas, and while that is the case, we must have that supply within our own country to lower costs. Right now, we have high demand and low supply. Basic economics will tell you if you increase supply, the price will go down.

What is the biggest foreign policy challenge facing the United States?

The concern for China attacking Taiwan (a major supplier in manufacturing) would cause major problems economically for America. We are also very dependent on China, especially with the majority of our pharmaceuticals being produced in China, that we cannot survive by cutting off supply to and from China. This dispute would be a major problem for America. We need Taiwan to be able to continue its independence.

What, if any, involvement should the federal government have in private industry Diversity, Inclusion, and Equity policy?

I believe the market will weed out bad business in all ways. Racist policies should never be tolerated, but the consumer will "cancel" these companies. I do not support government regulation. Regulation makes it more challenging for small businesses to thrive, and the expense regulation imposes on businesses drives up costs for the consumer.

Should there be more or fewer federal government tariffs in international trade? Why or why not?

The amount of tariffs on international trade depends on the budget that needs to be created by Congress. Congress needs to respect international relations, and it also needs to incentivize business to be handled within the US to avoid issues like we dealt with in COVID, where we were unable to obtain necessary supply from overseas. The amount of tariffs would depend on the fluid international relationships that we have as well as fighting inflation and making sure as a country we are bringing down the national debt.

What should the U.S. policy toward China include?

Politicians need to tread lightly on causing problems with China. We are too dependent in consumer product in China. A significant amount of pharmaceuticals come from China. Congress needs to incentivize businesses to manufacture in the U.S. For now, we need to maintain cordial relations with China. China has terrible human rights laws. With the pushes for freedom and rights in America, we need to slow the financial support America gives to the Chinese monopolies.

What strategies should Congress employ to balance the federal budget?

The strategy is to just make a budget. It is a simple plan. It will be challenging to settle on an agreed upon budget, but it is necessary to fight inflation.

The last major federal tax legislation was passed in 2018. What, if any, major changes should be made to the federal tax code?

The Biden Build Back Better/"Inflation Reduction" plan is to raise taxes across the board. This has already passed. Raising taxes harms every level of income economically. It slows the job market and decreases the GDP. Taxes need to be simplified and lowered. Statistically and historically tax cuts boost the economy.

What, if anything, should Congress do to ensure free and fair elections?

Election law regulation is given to the States. If elected, I will encourage transparency, but election law making should be left to the States. The Constitutional Republic is set up intentionally to give States the freedom to choose their representation nationally. We need keep that power in the States.

DISTRICT 5



Kyle Parrish
DEMOCRAT
No Response



Virginia Foxx
REPUBLICAN
No Response

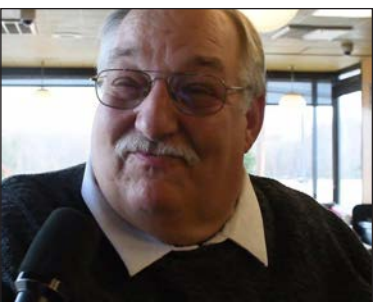
DISTRICT 6



Kathy Manning
DEMOCRAT
No Response



Christian Castelli
REPUBLICAN
No Response



Thomas Watercott
LIBERTARIAN

What should the priorities be for the 118th Congress?

States' rights, tax reform, fiscal responsibility, balanced budget amendment, regulatory reform, immigration reform, term limits for federal office

What, if anything, needs to be done to shore up Social Security, Medicare, and other entitlement programs?

Move social security to the general budget, end FICA and Medicare tax withholding, switch to the FairTax

How should the country move forward to improve energy policy?

Charge China, India, and other polluter nations a "carbon excuse tax" on goods imported from them.

What is your opinion of President Joe Biden's Executive Order on wind energy?

Naïve at best, not sustainable, and doesn't do anything other than virtue signal.

To what degree should the federal government be involved in K-12 education?

None whatsoever!

What steps, if any, should Congress take to combat inflation?

Stop spending/wasting money!

What steps, if any, should the federal government take to bring down gas prices?

Get a better energy policy! Open up exploration and access to oil reserves and stop importing from other countries.

What is the biggest foreign policy challenge facing the United States?

China, the rise and dominance of their empire monopolizing resources, and production is both a threat to national security and world peace.

What, if any, involvement should the federal government have in private industry Diversity, Inclusion, and Equity policy?

Unless there's a clear civil rights violation, the government should stay out of private business decisions.

Should there be more or fewer federal government tariffs in international trade? Why or why not?

We should have more targeted tariffs, like carbon excise tariffs on polluter nations.

What should the U.S. policy toward China include?

Carbon excise tax and embargo of products produced by slave labor.

What strategies should Congress employ to balance the federal budget?

Pass a balanced budget amendment, with budget caps linked to a percentage of GDP

The last major federal tax legislation was passed in 2018. What, if any, major changes should be made to the federal tax code?

Replace it with the FairTax, www.fartax.org

What, if anything, should Congress do to ensure free and fair elections?

Election integrity and voter access aren't mutually exclusive. You can have both. We shouldn't federalize elections, keep the federal government out of it.

How many justices should sit on the U.S. Supreme Court?

Nine has worked for some time now. Instead of changing the size, why not add mandatory retirement or term limits.

DISTRICT 7



Charles Graham
DEMOCRAT
No Response



David Rouzer
REPUBLICAN
No Response

DISTRICT 8



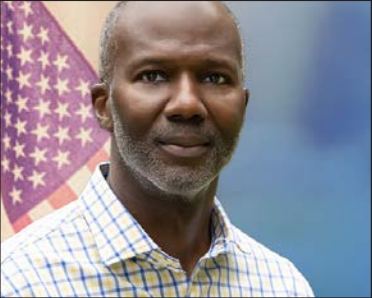
Scott Huffman
DEMOCRAT
No Response



Dan Bishop
REPUBLICAN
No Response

ABOUT THE SURVEY: Carolina Journal recently conducted a survey among candidates on the issues that matter to you. During this very busy campaign season, many candidates filled us in on where they stand. For more on the candidates and the issues facing North Carolina, visit carolinajournal.com

DISTRICT 9



Ben Clark
DEMOCRAT

What should the priorities be for the 118th Congress?

Protecting Social Security and Medicare from Republican attempts to eliminate cut the retirement benefits that folks have worked their whole lives for.

What, if anything, needs to be done to shore up Social Security, Medicare, and other entitlement programs?

Retirees have been paying into the tax system for 30 or 40 years. Now, it's time for billionaires and multimillionaires to pay their fair share to protect these critical programs for seniors.

How should the country move forward to improve energy policy?

We must reduce our reliance on foreign energy sources and expand our ability to leverage domestic sources of energy.

What is your opinion of President Biden's Executive Order on wind energy?

Democrats and Republicans in Congress work together to set the nation's energy policy by crafting thoughtful legislation and eliminating the need for executive orders.

To what degree should the federal government be involved in K-12 education?

Parents should determine K-12 policy in this country by electing school boards of their choice and being involved and engaged in their children's education in meaningful ways.

What steps, if any, should Congress take to combat inflation?

The Federal Reserve is the appropriate agency to combat inflation. Congress should not politicize the issue and "root" for the current administration to fail. We're one country and if President Biden fails, we all get hurt.

What steps, if any, should the federal government take to bring down gas prices?

Democrats in Congress attempted to pass anti-price gouging legislation but Republicans wouldn't support it. That would have helped a good deal.

What is the biggest foreign policy challenge facing the United States?

The advancement of anti-democratic movements across the world. I spent 20 years on active duty as an Air Force officer to protect our country from threats to democracy. I will do the same in Congress.

What, if any, involvement should the federal government have in private industry Diversity, Inclusion, and Equity policy?

The federal government should enforce the laws, including equal protection laws.

Should there be more or fewer federal government tariffs in international trade? Why or why not?

Federal tax policy should prioritize American workers and incentivize businesses to buy and build American so that American workers benefit.

What should the U.S. policy toward China include?

The US should be competitive with China. The CHIPS and Science Act that President Biden just passed was a great step in that direction.

What strategies should Congress employ to balance the federal budget?

I spent five terms in the NC Senate and every budget we passed was balanced. I look forward to taking my belief in balanced budgets to Congress where it's sorely needed.

The last major federal tax legislation was passed in 2018. What, if any, major changes should be made to the federal tax code?

Billionaires should pay their fair share. That would help a lot.

What, if anything, should Congress do to ensure free and fair elections?

Congress should pass legislation to ensure every eligible voter is allowed to vote and have their vote accurately counted.

How many justices should sit on the U.S. Supreme Court?

Nine justices who were appointed by Presidents who have the support of the majority of Americans as indicated by winning the popular vote.



Richard Hudson
REPUBLICAN

What should the priorities be for the 118th Congress?

Fighting inflation by cutting reckless spending, reducing gas

prices and restoring American energy independence, securing the border and fighting the fentanyl crisis, stopping crime and supporting law enforcement, increasing accessibility and affordability in health care, and defending our national security by properly funding the military and standing up to China. House Republicans have solutions to each of these issues and are ready to hit the ground running on day one.

What, if anything, needs to be done to shore up Social Security, Medicare, and other entitlement programs?

We must strengthen our economy by cutting reckless spending and refocusing workforce development tools to prepare and connect workers with jobs. We must also strengthen work requirements and oversight in entitlement programs to ensure they are serving those who rely on them and will endure for future generations.

How should the country move forward to improve energy policy?

America has an abundant energy supply. Harnessing this domestic energy is better for our environment than relying on any other nation, lowers costs, and creates jobs. Unfortunately, President Biden and Washington Democrats do not favor accessing this energy because of radical climate policies. I believe that instead of canceling pipelines and leases, we must unleash this domestic energy production and make America energy independent once again. We need an all-of-the-above American energy strategy that lowers costs, creates jobs, and reduces reliance on foreign nations to power our economy and lives. I've sponsored common sense legislation like the American Energy Independence from Russia Act to boost U.S. energy production and will continue to advocate for it in Congress.

What is your opinion of President Biden's Executive Order on wind energy?

I am always skeptical of any president using executive authority to do what Congress should be doing and believe President Biden went too far with his executive order. However, I support efforts to expand wind energy development as part of an all-of-the-above strategy. I believe North Carolina can and will be a leader in offshore wind energy generation capacity, research, and manufacturing. In April 2021, I sent a letter to the Bureau of Ocean Management urging them to advance lease sales of existing wind energy areas and identify new areas off the coast of North Carolina. This development can lead to investment and create jobs in our state, while helping our nation become energy independent once again.

To what degree should the federal government be involved in K-12 education?

As the son of a retired pub-

lic school teacher and dad of a first grader, I am committed to improving education for every student. I know that parents have rights when it comes to your child's education and decisions are best made when they are up to parents and teachers, not elites in Washington, D.C. The federal government should reduce its involvement in education and return power to local communities, educators, and parents.

What steps, if any, should Congress take to combat inflation?

First, Congress needs to cut wasteful government spending that's driving inflation. Spending boondoggles like the 'American Rescue Plan' and 'Inflation Reduction Act' have added trillions of dollars to our national debt and fueled this crisis. In addition to cutting spending, Congress must continue proven pro-growth tax policies that increase take-home pay, reduce your cost of living, and boost small businesses and innovation.

What steps, if any, should the federal government take to bring down gas prices?

Unleashing American energy production will bring down costs at the pump and reduce our nation's reliance on foreign countries.

What is the biggest foreign policy challenge facing the United States?

The Biden administration's botched withdrawal in Afghanistan led to the death of brave U.S. servicemembers, left American citizens, allies, and military equipment behind, and emboldened adversaries like Iran, Russia, and China. We must restore our nation's standing as a beacon for freedom around the world by supporting our troops and their families, standing by our allies like Israel, and standing up to those who wish to undermine the safety and security of America. Holding China accountable and protecting our supply chains from the Chinese Community Party are among our most important foreign policy challenges.

What, if any, involvement should the federal government have in private industry Diversity, Inclusion, and Equity policy?

The government should uphold that law that bans discrimination and violence of any kind but abandon attempts to force woke and radical ideology on private industry.

Should there be more or fewer federal government tariffs in international trade? Why or why not?

North Carolina has been hurt by unfair trade practices that decimated industries like textiles. We must do more to stand up to countries like China and push for fair trade. Tariffs can be a useful tool in forcing countries to come to the table. But

they can also be harmful to businesses and consumers. We must balance our approach to prioritize American consumers and businesses first instead of other countries.

What should the U.S. policy toward China include?

We must pass legislation I introduced to strengthen America's supply chains and boost domestic manufacturing for critical industries including health care to counter China. The recent legislation for semiconductors included massive giveaways to China, rather than protecting America's critical semiconductor industry. We must do whatever it takes to protect American jobs and interests above all others.

What strategies should Congress employ to balance the federal budget?

We should balance the federal budget within seven years, cut spending by \$16.6 trillion over 10 years, and reduce Americans' taxes by \$3.9 trillion, while increasing investments in our military by 5%. That's why I joined with other conservatives to introduce a budget proposal that will do just that.

The last major federal tax legislation was passed in 2018. What, if any, major changes should be made to the federal tax code?

Instead of hiring 87,000 IRS agents to go after hardworking Americans, we should be working to simplify the tax code and make it easier for families to file their taxes. I believe we should build on the success of the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act I voted for and President Trump signed into law. I also believe that any tax reform proposal should prioritize economic growth, raise wages, create jobs, and put more money in Americans' pockets. By creating an environment that encourages growth, we can stimulate the economy and provide a better future for all Americans.

What, if anything, should Congress do to ensure free and fair elections?

We can secure safe and fair elections by implementing voter ID, enforcing the law that requires states to keep accurate voter rolls, and improving observer access. We must also prevent non-citizens from participating in elections across the country.

How many justices should sit on the U.S. Supreme Court?

I have cosponsored a constitutional amendment to keep the number at nine justices and will continue to work to protect the integrity of the Supreme Court.

DISTRICT 10



Pam Genant
DEMOCRAT
No Response



Patrick McHenry
REPUBLICAN

What should the priorities be for the 118th Congress?

Reining in government spending, expanding American energy development, and oversight of the Biden administration. Congress also needs to address the lack of regulation in the digital assets sector. In doing so, we must balance the need for regulatory oversight without discouraging innovation or the adoption of these important technologies. Finally, we must find ways to help small businesses as they look to build and grow their companies. We can do this by strengthening our public markets, making it easier for entrepreneurs to access capital, and increasing opportunities for investors.

What, if anything, needs to be done to shore up Social Security, Medicare, and other entitlement programs?

Current projections have many entitlement programs, including Social Security and Medicare Part A, headed towards insolvency. The Social Security Old-Age & Survivors Insurance (OASI) Trust Fund will deplete its reserves by 2034, and the Medicare Hospital Insurance Trust Fund will be insolvent by 2028. Steps must be taken to ensure these programs remain solvent so that Americans receive the benefits that they have earned. Congress must modernize these programs, including allowing workers to have more control over their investments. For example, allowing younger workers to invest in safer market options can keep Social Security solvent for much longer than current projections. For Medicare, options could include allowing seniors to keep their private health plan without penalty if they choose and rewarding seniors who continue to work past age 65 by exempting them from the payroll tax. Any changes that are made must protect the seniors they were designed to help.

How should the country move forward to improve energy policy?

We must adopt an “all of the above” approach to ensure consumers have reliable energy without increasing prices. Building new nuclear reactors and permitting reform at the Nuclear Regulatory Commission will be key to powering a modern 21st century economy without increasing carbon emissions. We also must utilize our own natural resources. America has a plentiful supply of oil and natural gas, and our extraction process is cleaner than that of any other country in the world.

What is your opinion of President Biden’s Executive Order on wind energy?

President Biden’s executive order (EO) on wind energy was ultimately decided by Congress. President Biden’s EO sought to lift the 10-year moratorium imposed by President Trump. Given the probable legal challenges to Biden’s EO, Congress acted in The Inflation Reduction Act—which I opposed—to lift the moratorium on wind energy while keeping it in place for oil and gas development.

To what degree should the federal government be involved in K-12 education?

Federal investments in community college and vocational training programs are important to help enhance workers’ skills and training for new technologies and developing industries. This can help create a workforce that can attract businesses and jobs to western North Carolina. Tax incentives from the federal government can also give parents the opportunity to save for their children’s education as well as expand access to important educational resources and services. However, while federal investments can play a role, educational standards and schools should be controlled to the greatest degree possible at the local level. This allows the curriculum and experience to be tailored to the students’ needs in each locality. Parents know what is best for their child’s education and development. They should have a say in what their children are taught and mandates from the government at any level should not be a roadblock. Because of this, I am a strong supporter of charter schools and voucher programs that allow parents to have choice to decide the school that fits the needs of their child.

What steps, if any, should Congress take to combat inflation?

The main step Congress can take is to rein in our out-of-control spending. Congressional Democrats and the Biden administration have spent in excess of \$2 trillion on a completely partisan agenda that has fueled inflation to a 40-year high. It is clear Democrats have no real plan to get inflation under control. By pursuing ever more government spending, they are merely dumping fu-

el on the fire. Republicans have the right response to inflation: fiscal responsibility, budget enforcement, and sound money principles.

What steps, if any, should the federal government take to bring down gas prices?

Expanding domestic energy production through the issuance of new leases and permitting reform. These steps will help bring down energy costs and combat rising prices. This will also help to bring down inflation as the cost to move goods decreases.

What is the biggest foreign policy challenge facing the United States?

An increasingly aggressive China, especially towards Taiwan, and the increasingly likely possibility of a nuclear-armed Iran.

What, if any, involvement should the federal government have in private industry Diversity, Inclusion, and Equity policy?

The federal government should ensure that all Americans, regardless of race, gender, or other personal attributes, have an equal opportunity for full participation in our society and economy. At the Financial Services Committee, we have examined what challenges and successes American companies have faced in promoting diversity while also examining the challenges certain communities have faced in accessing financial services and products. However, America is not a monolith, and any efforts from the federal government should be tailored to best achieve real solutions, rather than simply accepting one-size-fits-all policies that do not work.

Should there be more or fewer federal government tariffs in international trade? Why or why not?

Tariffs can be an effective tool in redirecting supply chains, but they must be targeted in such a way that it does not hurt U.S. industries that need input materials which may not be made domestically.

What should the U.S. policy toward China include?

We should adjust, to the greatest extent possible, our supply chains away from China and towards our allies. We already have robust free trading agreements with our Western Hemisphere partners which can assist in reorienting away from China while benefitting industries and consumers here at home. We must also ensure our military continues to be the most advanced and well-trained force in the world and not allow the U.S. or our allies to be bullied by an ever more aggressive Chinese Communist Party.

What strategies should Congress employ to balance the federal budget?

Congress needs to cut spending to bring fiscal stability to

the federal budget. Congressional Democrats have spent more than \$2 trillion in the last two years on their partisan agenda. Raising taxes, especially during a recession, is not a realistic option. Congress must cut superfluous spending while ensuring we continue to meet our obligations to our constituents.

The last major federal tax legislation was passed in 2018. What, if any, major changes should be made to the federal tax code?

The Tax Cuts and Jobs Act (TCJA) provided much needed tax relief to Americans in every income bracket. We must not undo the successes of this legislation by raising taxes on millions of Americans during a recession, which is exactly what the Democrats’ Inflation Reduction Act will do. Additionally, we must have a sound plan to ensure the individual tax rate cuts that were included in the TCJA are extended prior to their currently scheduled expiration at the end of 2025.

What, if anything, should Congress do to ensure free and fair elections?

Congress’ role in supervising elections is limited by the Constitution. States are empowered to conduct elections as they see fit. That being said, many of the unilateral changes made to election procedures—like we saw here in North Carolina—during the 2020 pandemic resulted in Americans not trusting the results of the election. Congress must ensure, to the greatest extent allowed by the Constitution, that states conduct elections in an open and transparent manner. I have co-sponsored legislation that ensures non-citizens cannot vote and legislation that would examine the 2020 election and have Congress make recommendations to states about how to improve the security, integrity, and administration of federal elections.

How many justices should sit on the U.S. Supreme Court?

Nine

DISTRICT 11



Jasmine Beach-Ferrara
DEMOCRAT
No Response



Chuck Edwards
REPUBLICAN
No Response



David Adam Coatney
LIBERTARIAN
No Response

DISTRICT 12



Alma Adams
DEMOCRAT

What should the priorities be for the 118th Congress?

The 118th Congress should focus on building on the work that the Democratic majorities and President Biden have facilitated so far. In Congress, I have focused my efforts on my ‘4 H’s’: Hunger, Housing, Higher Education, and Healthcare. To that point, priorities that I want to see advance include: i. Strengthening federal support for public housing and housing vouchers, including expanding and strengthening tax credits that help facilitate the construction and rehabilitation of affordable housing; ii. Reauthorizing the Higher Education Act and Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act, which should include doubling Pell Grant amounts, increasing support for Historically Black Colleges and Universities, Tribal Colleges and Uni-

versities, and Minority Serving Institutions, and iii.Reducing the cost of prescription drugs—including by instituting a \$35 monthly cap for insulin— and expanding our neighbors' access to healthcare by expanding Medicaid in the 12 states that have not yet done so; iv. Making sure no one goes hungry by expanding SNAP and ensuring that all students have access to healthy, nutritious meals at school. Additionally, Congress should take up the following priorities: i. Codifying a woman's right to choose and ensuring her access to contraception; ii. Codifying marriage equality; iii. Codifying an assault weapons ban, enhancing background checks, the George Floyd Justice in Policing Act, and confirming an ATF Director; iv. Codifying the John Lewis Voting Rights Act; v. Raising the minimum wage, and more.

What, if anything, needs to be done to shore up Social Security, Medicare, and other entitlement programs?

Social Security: Since its enactment, Social Security has formed a critical rock-bed of American society, ensuring that everyone has the ability to retire with dignity. As a proud cosponsor of the Social Security 2100 Act, I am committed to ensuring that Social Security is solvent for the generations to come. I believe we should do so by enacting across-the-board cost-of-living-adjustments, paid for by applying the federal payroll tax to those earning more than \$400,000 annually. I strongly believe that North Carolina should join 38 other states and expand Medicaid, ensuring that the those most in need in our communities can access the healthcare that they need to survive. I was proud to vote for the Inflation Reduction Act, which furthered federal support for the Affordable Care Act subsidies that make that expansion possible.

How should the country move forward to improve energy policy?

President Biden's plan in the Inflation Reduction Act was a great start towards reducing our greenhouse gas emissions and fulfilling our promise to future generations to leave this planet in a better state than my generation found it. That said, we have a long way to go, and I strongly believe that the federal government should continue to facilitate the transition to a zero-emission economy by supporting the burgeoning green economy in North Carolina— particularly through investments in solar and wind energy. However, we need to ensure that Black, brown, and native communities are placed at the forefront of an equitable transition — and I was proud to support the environmental justice provisions in the Inflation Reduction Act and look forward to their implementation.

What is your opinion of President Biden's Executive Order on wind energy?

Wind energy is a critical component of a green economy. I

strongly support the Biden Administration's goals of transitioning to a green economy and lifting the Trump Administration's moratorium on offshore wind development and will continue to support legislation to accelerate the transition away from fossil fuels and towards sustainable energy generation.

To what degree should the federal government be involved in K-12 education?

W.E.B. DuBois noted that, "Of all the civil rights for which the world has struggled and fought for 5,000 years, the right to learn is undoubtedly the most fundamental." I strongly believe in that fundamental truth. To that end, I have sponsored legislation to reimagine how the federal government supports K-12 education. My EDUCATORS Act, which I introduced with Senator Jack Reed of Rhode Island, would reshape the way in which the federal government provides support for teacher preparation. The recent shortages in North Carolina — and in the Charlotte-Mecklenburg School system — require the thoughtful support of the federal government to ensure a robust pipeline of qualified teachers to our schools.

What steps, if any, should Congress take to combat inflation?

The CHIPS and Science Act and Inflation Reduction Act were great steps towards bringing inflation under control: the former will help on-shore critical components necessary to manufacture electronics and cars — whose prices increases have contributed towards inflation — and the latter will help reduce the cost of home utility prices, which will save Americans hundreds annually.

What steps, if any, should the federal government take to bring down gas prices?

I was proud to support the Inflation Reduction Act, which will help transition the United States' economy to a non-fossil fuel based. That said, I strongly believe we need to enact legislation that will incentivize the production and sale of electric vehicles.

What is the biggest foreign policy challenge facing the United States?

In our country, politics has always stopped at the shore's edge. While we face the most arduous slate of foreign policy challenges in memory — China's geopolitical ambitions; Russia's attempts at resurgence; Iran's nuclear ambitions; and others — the greatest foreign policy challenge is the internal debate over Trumpian isolation versus the Democratic desire to support the liberal, democratic order that the United States has supported for the past three generations.

What, if any, involvement should the federal government have in private

industry Diversity, Inclusion, and Equity policy?

As the founder and Co-Chair of the Congressional Bipartisan HBCU Caucus, I am intimately familiar with efforts to diversify our workforce. My HBCU Partnership Challenge has brought dozens of Fortune 500 companies to the table to recruit from and engage with HBCUs for the purpose of diversifying our workforce. America is at its greatest when we engage our entire population— a decent respect towards our nation's fundamental goals require that we invest in and celebrate our talent of color, particularly our Black talent. I believe that the federal government should continue to ensure that our investments are working towards supporting Black and brown communities, so that Americans who look like me can have the same opportunities as those who don't.

Should there be more or fewer federal government tariffs in international trade? Why or why not?

Like so many North Carolinians, I remember the terrible effects of NAFTA on our state — I watched the decimation of our furniture industry and saw so many of my neighbors unemployed as a result of those laws. At the same time, I have watched home prices spike because of the Trump Administration's tariffs on Canadian lumber. Congress should carefully consider tariffs and only enact those that support American industries.

What should the U.S. policy toward China include?

While China has attempted to claim the mantel of one of the great powers of the world, it has done so at a cost— one that is too onerous to bear. The United States — as the greatest world power— should continue to ensure that our foreign policy is geared towards supporting democratic governments that not only support our way of life, but that value the contributions of ideologically and culturally diverse individuals. No country that denies that inherent worth of its diverse peoples can be truly great

What strategies should Congress employ to balance the federal budget?

As I have previously stated, I was proud to vote for the Inflation Reduction Act of 2022, which raised \$300 billion over 10 years to help reduce the deficit. That said, I strongly believe that those with the most among us should contribute their fair share— in the 118th Congress, I will continue to push for the wealthiest among us to pay their fair share.

The last major federal tax legislation was passed in 2018. What, if any, major changes should be made to the federal tax code?

As above, I strongly believe that the wealthiest among us need to pay their fair share. The Tax Cuts and Jobs Act of 2018 served to enrich those

with the most resources at the cost of those most in need. I was proud to vote for the common-sense provisions from the TCJA that were included in the Inflation Reduction Act — but we strongly need to ensure that the wealthiest individuals and corporations pay their fair share of taxes. It is unconscionable that working-class Americans should pay a higher percentage in taxes than millionaires who have figured out how to game the tax code.

What, if anything, should Congress do to ensure free and fair elections?

Former President Donald Trump has starkly reminded us that our republic is not just a form of government — it is a way of life that depends upon each generation to sustain it. As a Member of Congress who was present in the United States Capitol on January 6, 2021, I am acutely aware of the threat posed by those who would forsake our Constitution in favor of a despot. Congress should swiftly pass the Electoral Count Act and should do everything in its power to prevent those who would subvert our democracy from influencing our free and fair elections.

How many justices should sit on the U.S. Supreme Court?

The number of justices on the Supreme Court of the United States should match the number of circuit courts: 13 justices.



Tyler Lee
REPUBLICAN

What should the priorities be for the 118th Congress?

Reducing the rampant inflation our country is seeing.

How should the country move forward to improve energy policy?

We need a return to energy independence. Our dependence on foreign oil is a crippling factor causing the rampant inflation our country is seeing.

What is your opinion of President Biden's Executive Order on wind energy?

Joe Biden has yet to issue an executive order that I approve of.

To what degree should the federal government be involved in K-12 education?

None whatsoever.

What is the biggest foreign policy challenge facing the United States?

Theft of intellectual proper-

ty by bad actors in the Chinese region.

How many justices should sit on the U.S. Supreme Court?

Nine

DISTRICT 13



Wiley Nickel
DEMOCRAT

No Response



Bo Hines
REPUBLICAN

What should the priorities be for the 118th Congress?

We must roll back Joe Biden's disastrous economic policies that are hindering small businesses, increasing inflation, and growing the unaccountable federal bureaucracy. Additionally, we must ensure that parents maintain their rights and decision-making powers when it comes to how and what their children are taught in classrooms. Lastly, we must address our public safety concerns in this country. That begins with securing our border and ensuring that the men and women of law enforcement are properly resourced and trained in order to complete their sworn duty of protecting and serving our communities.

What, if anything, needs to be done to shore up Social Security, Medicare, and other entitlement programs?

We must seriously look at the privatization of these programs in order to ensure that they exist for future generations. The government has proven time and time again that they are not the best steward when it comes to the management of these programs.

How should the country move forward to improve energy policy?

We must unleash America's potential as an energy producer. We must not be reliant on other nations for energy. We must immediately reverse Joe Biden's energy policies in order to take control of our own energy future.

What is your opinion of President Biden's Executive Order on wind energy?

It is misguided and not properly thought out. The People's repre-

sentatives should be responsible for ensuring America is energy independent through the most effective and efficient means.

To what degree should the federal government be involved in K-12 education?

The Federal Government, under the Constitution, does not have a role when it comes to K-12 education. We must return education policy decisions to the most local level possible. After all, an unelected and unaccountable bureaucrat in Washington, D.C., is not in a position to dictate to parents what or how their children should be taught here in North Carolina.

What steps, if any, should Congress take to combat inflation?

We should reinstate the Trump-era tax cuts and immediately reduce wasteful spending.

What steps, if any, should the federal government take to

bring down gas prices? Unleash our own American energy potential and stop being reliant on foreign nations for energy production.

What is the biggest foreign policy challenge facing the United States?

The biggest foreign policy threat facing the United States of America is China and their investment in their desire to become unipolar power of the world. We must do all we can to protect American investments, property, intellectual property, and our own advancement from the ever-growing threat from the CCP.

What, if any, involvement should the federal government have in private industry Diversity, Inclusion, and Equity policy?

None. It is not the role of the federal government to participate in.

Should there be more or fewer federal government tariffs in international trade? Why or why not?

While I believe in an open, fair, and free market exchange, sometimes tariffs are necessary trade tools for national security purposes.

What should the U.S. policy toward China include?

We should ban Chinese nationals, the Chinese government, and Chinese businesses from owning land within our sovereign borders and holding them accountable when it comes to their relentless attempts to steal our intellectual property and trade secrets.

What strategies should Congress employ to balance the federal budget?

Reduce government spending and strip funding from bloated, wasteful, and unneeded government agencies.

What, if any, major changes should be made to the federal tax code?

We must reinstate the Trump-era tax cuts and we must ensure that we continue to cut taxes across the board in order to nurture a thriving economy. Americans deserve to hold on to their hard-earned dollars rather than the government ripping those dollars from their wallets.

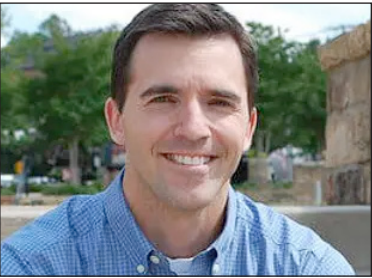
What, if anything, should Congress do to ensure free and fair elections?

We must implement a national Voter ID law. The next step would be to re-address the method and reasons why a mail-in ballot should ever be issued. Lastly, we must ban the practice of ballot harvesting.

How many justices should sit on the U.S. Supreme Court?

Nine.

DISTRICT 14



Jeff Jackson
DEMOCRAT
No Response



Pat Harrigan
REPUBLICAN
No Response

Political environment tightens headed into heat of election season

BY DAVID BASS,

The first poll since election season kicked into high gear following the Labor Day holiday shows a tightening field between Republicans and Democrats at the state and federal level in North Carolina. At the same time, the poll continues to show widespread concern among voters about the direction of the country and the economy, in addition to strong disapproval numbers for President Joe Biden.

The split between Democrats and Republicans on the generic legislative ballot narrowed compared to August, while the generic

ballot for congressional offices remained largely unchanged, according to a new Civitas poll of likely general election voters. The GOP maintained a 46.6% to 44.5% edge over Democrats on the generic legislative ballot, while edging out Democrats by a 47.5% to 44.2% on the generic congressional ballot.

The top race on this year's ballot — an open U.S. Senate seat being vacated by Republican Richard Burr — remains neck-in-neck. Democrat Cheri Beasley edged out Republican Ted Budd by a slim 44% to 43.7%, a statistical dead heat. 10.3% of the electorate remains undecided.

"To me, this race continues to be one of the highly competitive,

but perhaps second-tier national races — with Georgia, Arizona, New Mexico, and Pennsylvania — that people should be paying close attention to," said Dr. Michael Bitzer, professor of politics and history at Catawba College in Salisbury. "I think this is a race that feels like it will continue to be a 'margin of error' competitive race."

A Democrat hasn't won a Senate seat in North Carolina since Kay Hagan's victory in 2008. As of late September, the Cook Political Report ranked the contest as "lean Republican," while the New York Times' Five Thirty Eight blog forecast the race as the fourth most competitive in the country.

Two other consequential elec-

tions on the ballot are for seats on the N.C. Supreme Court that could tip the balance of power in Republican's favor. In those two races, Republicans are maintaining comfortable leads — Trey Allen with 46% support to Democrat incumbent Sam Ervin's 38.9%, and Richard Dietz's 44.5% to Democrat Lucy Inman's 40.5%. Those support levels have barely shifted since May.

Democrats hold a 4-3 majority on the state's highest court. If Republicans win both races, they would capture a 5-2 majority.

While Democrats have clawed back a measure of lost support since the spring, the Civitas poll also showed that North Carolinians

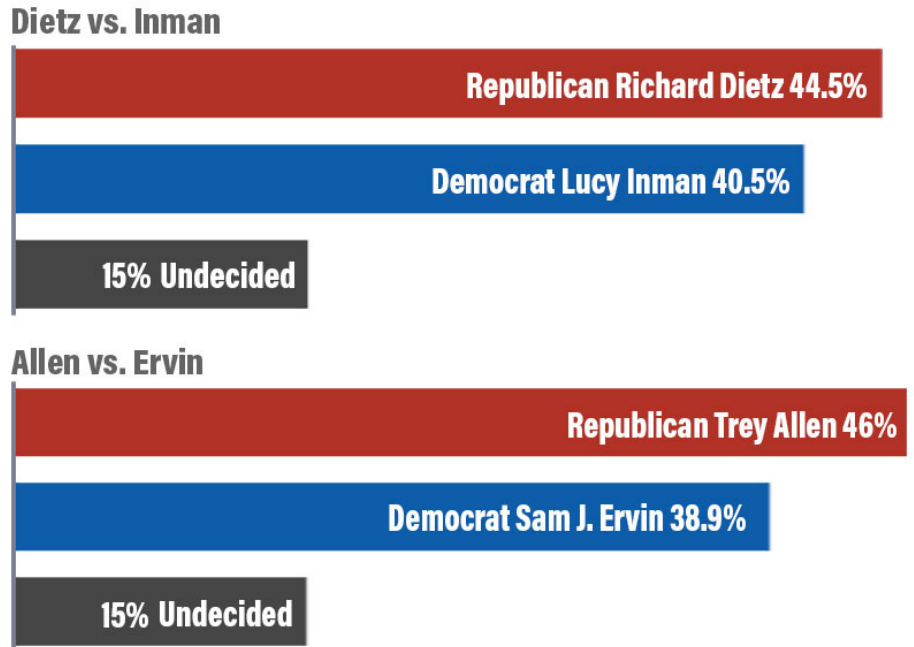
remain sour on the country's direction, the president's job performance, and an inflationary economy.

Biden's approval rating stands at 39.3% compared to 54.9% who disapprove. Fifty-six percent said they believe the U.S. will experience an economic recession during the next twelve months, while 52.9% said it was "difficult" to afford food, 56.5% to afford gas, and 48.5% to afford housing.

On election integrity issues, 66.7% said that voter fraud was either a "major" or "minor" problem, compared to 24.6% who said it wasn't a problem at all. Sixty-three percent favor voter ID with 25.7% against.

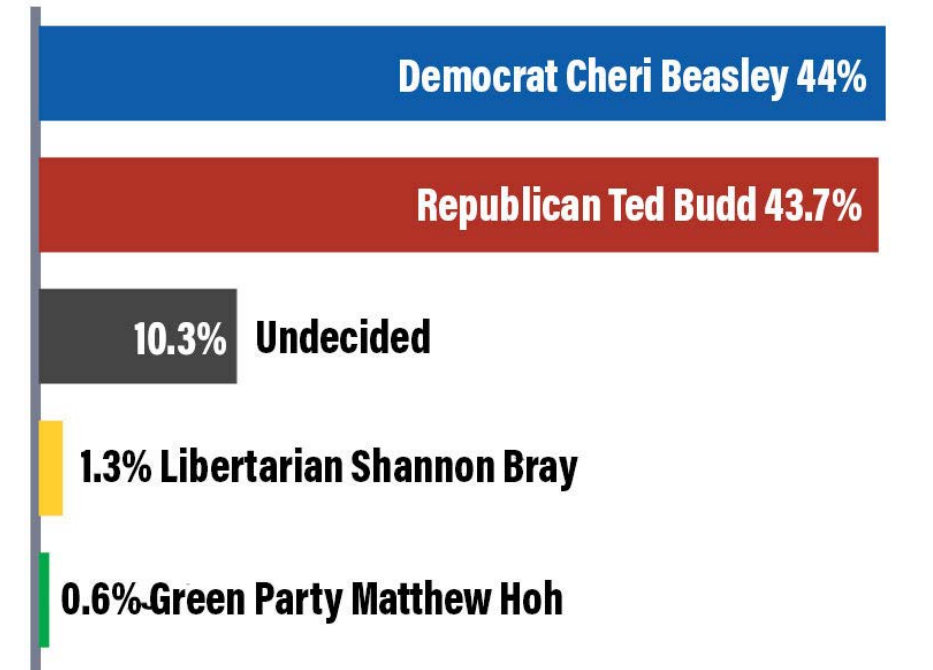
NC Supreme Court Ballot

If the general election for North Carolina Supreme Court was held today, and you had to make a choice between the following candidates, who would you vote for?



Senate Ballot

If the general election for U.S. Senate was held today, and you had to make a choice, who would you vote for?



SURVEY OF CANDIDATES FOR ELECTED OFFICE

N.C. Supreme Court

ASSOCIATE JUSTICE

SEAT 5



Trey Allen
REPUBLICAN



Sam Ervin, IV
DEMOCRAT

SEAT 3



Richard Dietz
REPUBLICAN



Lucy Inman
DEMOCRAT

Which current or former U.S. Supreme Court justice best exemplifies your judicial philosophy?

ALLEN: Justice Antonin Scalia. He always insisted that judges must follow the Constitution and laws as they are, not rewrite them to align with the judges’ personal beliefs. In other words, judges must faithfully apply the law to the facts, even when they don’t like the result.

ERVIN: My judicial philosophy is not based upon that of any current or former Justice of the United States Supreme Court. Instead, my judicial philosophy is pretty simple. Judicial officials are supposed to decide the cases that come before them based upon the law, the facts, and nothing else, while giving all litigants a fair hearing and treating everyone as equal under the law. I also believe that partisan politics has no place in deciding the cases that courts are called upon to consider and that judges should take each case that comes before them for resolution with the utmost seriousness given that their decisions have real impact on real people. I use this basic judicial philosophy in deciding each case that comes before me as an Associate Justice of the Supreme Court.

DIETZ: The core part of my judicial philosophy is an emphasis on doctrine and judicial restraint, which has been typified by many justices over the years, from Chief Justice John Marshall to Chief Justice William Rehnquist (and several current justices). Because judges can wield significant power in our society, they must commit to upholding the law and rejecting the temptation to decide cases on the basis of their policy preferences.

INMAN: My written opinions for the North Carolina Court of Appeals, which The Carolina Journal has occasionally reported on over the past eight years,

best reflect my judicial philosophy, which rests on fundamental principles including the doctrine of stare decisis, honesty, transparency, and the discipline of considering the facts of record and the applicable law as it is written. I apply the plain meaning of text, and when the meaning is unclear, I interpret it using established canons of construction. I strive to decide all cases independent of any outside influence, including my personal views, and reflect that independence by writing opinions that explain my analysis, so that readers can judge for themselves whether they think the decision is fair and impartial. It is impossible for me to identify which United States Supreme Court justice, past or present, best exemplifies my judicial philosophy.

Some judges believe in a “living Constitution.” Others support a concept called “originalism.” Please explain if you endorse either of those concepts. If not, how would you describe your approach to constitutional disputes?

ALLEN: I consider myself an originalist. When interpreting a provision of the Constitution, a judge should be guided by the text as understood at the time of ratification. Judges should follow the Constitution we have, not rewrite the Constitution to mean whatever they want it to mean.

ERVIN: Existing North Carolina law describes how constitutional provisions should be construed. If the language is clear and unambiguous, the provision should be interpreted as written. If that language is susceptible to more than one interpretation, then the judge should look at the way in which that provision has been construed in earlier cases, the context in which the provision appears, the way that other relevant constitutional provisions have been written, the historical context against which that provision was written, the purpose that the provision was intended to serve, and other relevant canons of construction. As a result of the fact that Associate Justices of the Supreme Court are bound by these interpretational principles, I employ them in determining what the constitution means.

DIETZ: In constitutional interpretation, I focus on the key idea that “We the People” ratified our fundamental rights, and the limits on government, and the role of judges is to enforce and protect what the people enshrined in the constitution. On the spectrum between originalism and living constitutionalism, this approach falls on the originalist side. When I explain my approach to constitutional theory, I often use the example of the U.S. Constitution’s age restriction for the President (35 years old). A judge today might believe that young people are healthier, better educated, and generally more mature than in the eighteenth century—essentially that “25 is the new 35.” But a living constitutionalist who in-



Candidates for Associate Justice of the North Carolina Supreme Court at a Federalist Society event in Raleigh.

terprets the U.S. Constitution to permit a 25-year-old to become President would do great harm to the concept of “We the People.” Our constitutional form of government anticipates that this sort of change would come from the people engaging in open discourse and debate, building consensus, and then amending the Constitution as the Framers envisioned.

INMAN: My approach to constitutional disputes is informed by United States Supreme Court decisions interpreting the federal constitution and North Carolina Supreme Court decisions interpreting the state constitution. No judge should employ his or her own individual philosophy as a substitute for the interpretive methods established by precedent unless it is distinguishable or has been overturned. If not bound by precedent, I endorse neither the “living Constitution” approach nor “originalism,” but see those as opposing doctrines on the spectrum of interpretative approaches. I always start with the text of the federal or state constitution. Beyond the text, I explore the context in which it was written. But I do not consider the meaning of constitutional text set in stone as of the date it was ratified. For example, although the second amendment of the United States Constitution begins with reference to “a well regulated Militia,” it has long been interpreted to guarantee people who are not members of a militia the right to bear arms. Similarly, although the North Carolina Constitution was amended in 1868 to recognize the right of all people to enjoy the fruits of their labor, and has been considered grounded in the history of an enslaved people obligated to work for the benefit of others but unable to benefit for themselves, the “fruits of their labor” clause has been applied more recently to prohibit government regulation of businesses. Conversely, judges who interpret ambiguous constitutional language only in the context of modern circumstances, with no consideration of its origin, miss the opportunity to consider the histori-

cal context and in doing so abandon the institutional principle that the law should develop incrementally, so that our jurisprudence remains stable, consistent, and predictable.

Do you believe that the role of party labels in judicial elections has improved North Carolina’s judicial system? Why or why not?

ALLEN: To the extent that judicial candidates who belong to a particular party are likely to share the same judicial philosophy, party labels can give voters useful information.

ERVIN: I strongly believe that the decision to make North Carolina judicial elections partisan again was an unfortunate one. Judicial officials are required to decide cases based upon the law, the facts, and nothing else while giving everyone a fair opportunity to be heard and treating everyone equally under the law. Although judges are not supposed to try to implement partisan or political agendas through their decisions, the use of partisan elections to select judges suggests to voters that is perfectly appropriate for judges to do exactly that and that voters should evaluate judicial candidates as if they were running for non-judicial office. As a result, I am convinced that our return to partisan judicial elections sends an erroneous signal to North Carolina voters about what courts actually do and is likely to result in declining public confidence in the judicial system.

DIETZ: I don’t think the party labels have any impact on the work judges do on the court. I strongly believe the public supports the idea of nonpartisan judges, but what that means is judges who don’t act like partisan politicians. I believe the key cause of the increasing politicization of the courts is candidates who seek to become judges because they are on a political mission. They’ve been fighting for political causes their whole careers and want to continue doing so as judges.

I’ve made the theme of my campaign “leadership, not politics.” I have no political mission. My only mission — from the moment I took the oath as a judge — is to defend our rights, protect the rule of law, and help people resolve their legal disputes fairly.

INMAN: Party labels in judicial elections have harmed North Carolina’s judicial system by giving political parties greater influence in the judicial branch and creating a barrier to judicial candidates who are not affiliated with any political party. Unaffiliated trial judges have been forced to choose a political party to run for re-election. Other trial judges and candidates have switched their party affiliation to match that of the majority of voters in their districts. Unlike non-partisan elections, which created an incentive for judges and judicial candidates to seek bipartisan support, party labels create expectations that judges will serve their political parties’ agendas and penalize judges who fail to tow the party line. Earlier this year, the chief judge of the North Carolina Court of Appeals was challenged in a primary election by a candidate endorsed by three of the chief judge’s colleagues on the Court of Appeals as well as a justice of the North Carolina Supreme Court who is not on the ballot, all members of the chief judge’s political party. News reports by the legal and business press indicated that the chief judge was accused of “poor leadership” because she had failed to ensure that a hiring decision at the Court of Appeals favored a member of her political party. The press also reported that the chief judge was publicly accused of betraying her political party by associating with judges of another political party. News reports like these, which to my knowledge have not been refuted, undermine public confidence in North Carolina’s judicial system. If citizens do not trust judges to make fair and impartial decisions independent of political parties, and so ignore the authority of the courts, our constitutional democracy is at risk of being replaced by lawlessness and raw political power.

OPINION



WIKIMEDIA COMMONS

Reflections on the free market from a Cold-War influenced Christian

RAY NOTHSTINE
OPINION EDITOR



One of the most vivid memories from my youth is watching the FB-111s, B-52s, and B-1 bombers take off and land. I'm sure I saw an SR-71 land once, but it was dark. My dad flew the KC-135 air refuelers, and I'd ride around with him in the Strategic Air Command (SAC) vans when permitted at Pease Air Force Base in New Hampshire. The smell of jet fuel is prolific. For many, I'm sure; it has the scent of freedom. Up close, the afterburner bursts of a B-1 are a jaw-clenching experience by itself.

My father often lived underground at the alert facility at different SAC bases. One time he got too close to the razor wire fence line while walking out to visit his family, and guards with M-16s surrounded him. Even though he had his flight suit on and just

came out of that very gate. A reminder you can't get too close to the razor wire fence. Nuclear weapons are stored there, ready to deploy at a moment's notice against what was then a possible massive retaliation against a Soviet strike. Mutually assured destruction was the popular terminology back then.

I saw a lot of bombers growing up. I saw military competitions and war game exercises. Vice President George H.W. Bush came to speak during the bomb competitions, and I remember being a little kid and wondering why his mom was with him. Barbara Bush, though attractive, had her famous white hair then too.

Growing up on military bases at home and abroad, all the weapons and aircraft pushed me to think deeply about human freedom. What was all the impressive armory of mass destruction defending? Even then, I knew about the Cold War. I couldn't avoid it being a military brat, and with the release of movies like "Rocky IV,"



Growing up on military bases at home and abroad, all the weapons and aircraft pushed me to think deeply about human freedom.

"Red Dawn," or "The Hunt for Red October."

Yet, I didn't pay much attention to the importance of free markets until graduate school when I was in seminary. I heard plenty of platitudes about assisting the poor, mainly through government spending and programs, always the echoing cry for more programs. Much of the Church, particularly mainline Protestantism, has an unhealthy attachment to the supposed virtues promised through big government spending.

Some professors and students in class understood markets as a tool of greedy corporations and entrepreneurs to inflict pain on the poor and middle class. Business is often viewed with skepticism, if not outright derision at times. The Good Samaritan increasingly morphed into a picture of the federal government.

Yet, it's the entrepreneurs and small businesses community that take risks, putting up their assets and security to bring new ideas and products to the marketplace. Entrepreneurs are job creation machines, but they also create content and implement visions people want and desire for their own lives. There is a servant nature to the work that is so often overlooked in a society that so often promotes individualism or, sadly, even narcissism. Entrepreneurs serve a need and purpose for their neighbors and for the common good. They often have an innate ability to see what's missing in daily life and then take the essential follow-through steps to

make something previously unfathomable a reality. Simply put, they must look beyond themselves to be successful. And whether they realize it or not, they reflect the image of God as co-creators by creating a better world that so often improves the lives of families and, yes, the "least of these" we are commanded to care for in the Gospel.

In fact, across the world, markets are the model for growth. The decline of poverty worldwide is because of free markets. No other plan of government action or political rhetoric even comes close to the results of the market economy.

Spontaneous order plays a significant role. It's impossible to thoroughly plan or navigate the manifestation of cooperating individuals coming together for mutually beneficial trade and transactions. This is a well-known phenomenon that is often diminished or ignored altogether by politicians or the many who continually

continued PAGE 11

8 THE WOODSHED

Trump's New Hanover visit highlights importance of coastal county

DALLAS WOODHOUSE
CONTRIBUTOR



Donald Trump's visit to New Hanover County, specifically the Wilmington International Airport, highlights the importance of the "Port City" and its home county, one of just two N.C. counties that embraced Trump in 2016 and rejected him in 2020.

New Hanover has become one of the most purple counties in North Carolina, and the largest one. Winning or losing New Hanover County can be crucial to success or failure statewide.

Trump could have presented a focused and moderate message in New Hanover, a county he won and then lost.

He should have stuck to a message that President Biden has destroyed the economy and that a vote for Republican Ted Budd for U.S. Senate is a vote to impose a restraining order on the Biden economic agenda of massive inflationary spending.

Instead, Trump's message included:

- That he won the 2020 presidential election and that it was stolen from him through voter fraud and other irregularities.
- Calling for ending early in-person voting everywhere, including North Carolina. Early in-person voting has grown in popularity with North Carolina Republicans.
- In fact, Republicans overperformed expectations in early in-person voting in 2016 and 2020, helping Trump win North Carolina.
- Railing against New York Attorney General Letitia James after James filed a civil lawsuit against him and his family business over allegations of fraud.
- Analyzing a recent New York Jets football game.

None of these topics is relevant to the 2022 U.S. Senate race between Budd and Democrat Cheri Beasley.

Will Trump's visit help or hurt Budd in New Hanover? It is a question that could determine the U.S. Senate race.

Wilmington is nicknamed North Carolina's "Port City" due to the critical Port of Wilmington. Wilmington has been a major player in the television and film industry for the last three decades.

From Stephen King's 1984 film "Firestarter" to "Dawson's Creek," "One Tree Hill," "White Men Can't Jump," "Nights in Rodanthe," and "Weekend at Bernie's," more than 350 feature films and television series have filmed in Wilmington, the largest production facility east of Hollywood.

After the Civil War, New Hanover County was Republican-leaning, voting for the Republican candidate in all but one presidential election from 1868 to 1896.

Politics in New Hanover changed dramatically with the



Donald Trump's visit to New Hanover County highlights the importance of the "Port City" and its home county.



New Hanover is one of just two N.C. counties that embraced Trump in 2016 and rejected him in 2020.

Wilmington insurrection of 1898, a riot carried out by white supremacists.

The coup was engineered by 2,000 of the state's white Southern Democrats, encouraged by the Raleigh News and Observer.

A mob of around 500 white Democrats overthrew the legitimately elected biracial government in Wilmington, destroyed the property of black citizens, and killed an estimated 60-300 people.

After the riots and the imposition of Jim Crow laws, New Hanover went Democrat for president from 1900 to 1968, with the exception of 1928, when Herbert Hoover carried New Hanover, primarily due to anti-Catholic sentiment against Democratic nominee Al Smith.

John Kennedy won New Hanover in 1960 by 14.84%, but Democrats started losing ground. New Hanover voted for Lyndon Johnson in 1964 by 1.8%, before flipping to Richard Nixon in 1968.

Between 1968 and 2016, only one Democrat, Georgia Gov. Jimmy Carter in 1976, would win the county until 2020, when it was

narrowly carried by Joe Biden.

Today, New Hanover is considered a bellwether swing county partly due to its high population of elderly and African American voters and a solid left-leaning college student population.

2020

In 2020, New Hanover County flipped Democratic after voting Republican in the previous five presidential elections. In total, 66,138 people in New Hanover voted for Biden, with 63,331 voting for Trump.

In New Hanover, 50.2% of the people voted Democrat in the 2020 presidential election, 48.0% voted for the Republican Party, and the remaining 1.8% voted for another candidate.

Not only was New Hanover one of two counties that flipped from red to blue from 2016 to 2020, but it is also one of two N.C. counties that was red in 2008, during Barack Obama's successful run in North Carolina, and blue in 2020.

In 2020, New Hanover split across several major races. Democrat U.S. Senate candidate Cal

Cunningham bested Republican incumbent Sen. Thom Tillis by 287 votes or 0.22%.

While Republican U.S. Rep. David Rouzer won New Hanover 51% to 48%, the county also voted for Democrat Gov. Roy Cooper, who won 53% of the vote against GOP nominee Dan Forest's 45%.

New Hanover narrowly selected Republican Mark Robinson for lieutenant governor by less than one point.

New Hanover also went GOP for agriculture and insurance commissioners, treasurer, and — by just 320 votes — superintendent of public instruction.

New Hanover also went with Democrats for attorney general, labor commissioner, secretary of state, and auditor.

Even more intriguing, New Hanover issued a split decision for the three state Supreme Court races in 2020. County voters selected two Democrats and one Republican.

According to the 2020 census, New Hanover's population was 225,702. New Hanover's population is dense, since it is the second-smallest county in land area

in the state.

With a 2020 population of 115,955, the county seat of Wilmington is the eighth most populous city in the state.

State Senate

New Hanover will once again see one of the most competitive state Senate elections in 2022. Republican incumbent Michael Lee handily won the New Hanover Senate seat in 2014 and 2016. Lee lost the race to former Wilmington Mayor Harper Peterson, a Democrat, by 231 votes in 2018. Lee reclaimed the seat in 2020 by 1,268 votes. New Hanover had the closest state Senate race in North Carolina in 2018 and 2020.

2008

In 2008, Republicans John McCain and Sarah Palin won New Hanover, 50% to 49%, but lost the state to Obama and Biden, 49.7% to 49.38%.

Yet Democrat state Sen. Kay Hagan crushed incumbent U.S. Sen. Elizabeth Dole, 53% to 43%, in a result that closely matched the statewide result.

2012

In 2012, New Hanover went with Mitt Romney and Paul Ryan for president, 51.5% to 47%.

2016 Pat McCrory New Hanover nightmare

If you want to see the importance of New Hanover, look to the political fortunes of former Charlotte mayor and Gov. Pat McCrory.

In 2008, McCrory lost the governor's election in New Hanover County, 49% to 46% in his first of three governor's races.

The New Hanover result once again closely followed the statewide race in Democrat Bev Perdue's lone successful run for governor.

Four years later, McCrory won New Hanover, 56% to 41%.

McCrory won the 2012 statewide race, 54% to 43%.

McCrory's 2012 winning margin was 15,475 votes in New Hanover.

Fast forward to 2016: McCrory lost New Hanover, 51% to 46%. Democrat Roy Cooper secured the coastal county with a margin of 4,865.

Remember, McCrory only lost the 2016 governor's race by 0.22% statewide, a margin of 10,227 votes.

At the same time, Trump won New Hanover in 2016 by 4,385 votes. Republican U.S. Sen. Richard Burr won by 7,159 votes.

McCrory's underperformance in New Hanover in 2016 compared to other successful GOP candidates in the county almost equaled his statewide shortfall.

While New Hanover County's 2022 U.S. Senate election results won't exactly match the statewide outcome, bet your bottom dollar it will come close.

If I were Ted Budd or Cheri Beasley, I would become a familiar face in New Hanover between now and election day.

Dallas Woodhouse is contributing political analyst for the John Locke Foundation.

A nation can't move forward without remembering its history

TROY KICKLER
CONTRIBUTOR



A PERSON losing his or her memory will soon start behaving uncharacteristically. They forget people's names. They struggle to remember directions regarding how to get home. They eventually may not be able to take care of themselves. In some ways, they will act like someone else.

I have a friend whose father had Alzheimer's disease. His father was a well-respected leader in his profession and a groundbreaking researcher. In time, he started, with more frequency, behaving like a child. The family understood the mental deterioration, yet it remained distressing to observe.

As people have memories, so, too, does a nation have a memory. When a nation starts losing its collective memory — forgets its history — it can suffer from cultural and national dementia. A country, as a people, will forget certain historical figures and the ideas influencing its founding and meaning. It can become something unrecognizable.

The study of history is indeed important. With a STEM emphasis in schools and elsewhere, many have relegated the discipline of history to the back burner. One can be up to date regarding the latest technology, yet be moronic when it pertains to civics and history. To what purpose will civically illiterate people use their technological expertise? Meanwhile, more than a few currently present a selective and weaponized history for present-day political purposes. More and more educators seem to be interested in creating political



History is recorded, remembered, and unremembered.

activists rather than cultivating more well-rounded students who learn from the past.

History can help us avoid future mistakes. History does not repeat itself exactly, but it does rhyme. If you are walking to your car, step in a pothole, and sprain your ankle, the incident will be memorable.

In the future, you will pay more attention to your pathway. If you forget about the pothole, you will probably turn your ankle again, or, even worse, break a bone.

So what is history? It is not mere memorization of facts. It is making something of those facts. History can help us better understand ourselves. As historian John Lukacs argued, it develops a "historical consciousness." It can form not only a personal and patriotic identity but also force us to consider others' experiences.

Lukacs further remarks, "History is the memory of Mankind." In some ways, history is the only thing we can know. Think about it. The present is only a splash between the past and the unknown

(yet potentially predictable) future.

History is recorded, remembered, and unremembered. Your personal history, for example, includes records, memories, and unremembered actions: You have legal documents, maybe a diary, and some personal correspondence. You remember certain past events, and others remember your actions.

You may not even remember or record specific episodes in your life's history. (Because you don't remember what you said or did 10



We can be almost certain of being wrong about the future, if we are wrong about the past.

- G.K. Chesterton

years ago does not mean it did not happen.)

As time goes on, personal and national history becomes larger. Memory becomes more and more important. Someone needs to document the past and then provide those memories to others.

Imagine if you forgot everything about your past. How would that change your current experiences if you forgot your name or your child's name or how to live from day to day? Now imagine a nation forgetting its past. Would the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution have any meaning to the collective memory? Would a nation be able to avoid committing previous mistakes? Would it start to act uncharacteristically?

As the prolific writer G.K. Chesterton penned, "We can be almost certain of being wrong about the future, if we are wrong about the past." Let's prevent national dementia. Let's avoid selectively weaponizing history. Let's work hard to preserve a comprehensive memory, a historical consciousness, that helps us better understand the past so that we may move forward.

Troy Kickler is a Senior Fellow at the John Locke Foundation

Should we worry about fewer youth working?

MICHAEL WALDEN
CONTRIBUTOR



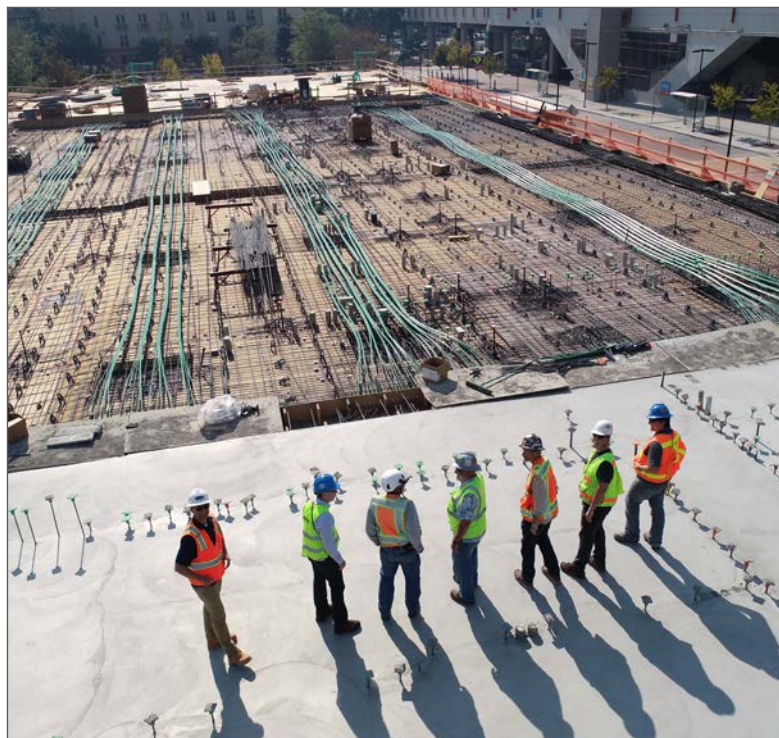
MY OFFICIAL entry into the paid work force was at age 16 when I took a job at a fast-food restaurant. I worked there a couple of months before finding a better-paying job at a furniture warehouse. I stayed there for six years, working half-time during my remaining high school years and four years as an undergraduate in college. In summers, I worked a full 40-hour week.

Looking back, I learned valuable lessons from my introduction to work, including taking orders, being punctual, cooperation, performing undesirable tasks — like cleaning garbage cans — and interacting with strangers.

Between 1950 and 1990, the percentage of youths aged 16 to 19 who were working or actively looking for work ranged — with a few exceptions — between 45% and 55%.

But in the 20 years from 1990 to 2010, the percentage of working 16-19-year-olds plunged, bottoming at close to 33%. Since then, there's been little change. Some experts think the 16-19-year-old work rate will drop closer to 25% by 2030.

What's happened, and is it good or bad news that young people



Fewer youths in their late teens and early 20s are receiving the experiences of, and lessons from, working for pay.

are working less?

One big factor behind the lower work participation of young people is the growth in the importance of education. As the economy has changed and moved away from human physical strength to human cognitive abilities, more young people have seen the need to graduate from high school and

then attend college. But to attain the high school grades to graduate and then be admitted to college, high schoolers may not want to take the time for a part-time job.

Indeed, the motivation to substitute study for work has extended into the summer. In 1980, only 5% of high school students aged 16-19 attended summer school.

Recent data show that 30% of 16-19-year-olds are now attending summer school. One economist found that the increase in summer school attendance accounted for almost all of the high schoolers' decline in summer work. Then, once in college, student loans can reduce the need for a job to pay tuition and living expenses.

Another factor is competition from other workers, particularly senior citizens and immigrants. The fastest growing demographic group in the country is individuals 65 and over. Some older individuals may decide to work just to keep busy, while others need employment to supplement their Social Security and other pension income.

Foreign immigration to the U.S. has surged in recent decades. For immigrants — especially males — with limited English-language skills, jobs in construction have become attractive. Immigrants now account for 25% of the construction work force.

In the summer, construction jobs offered major employment options for 16-19-year-old males. Now many of those jobs are taken by others who work full time year-round.

Interestingly, the decline in working youths has not been limited to our country. Countries with similar economies to the United States, especially in Europe, have seen downward trends in paid

work by young people. The reasons also appear to be the same: the increased focus on more education, and the employment alternatives provided by older individuals and immigrants.

Our country's declining birth rate will add another element to this story. The relative size of older teenagers (aged 16-19) will decrease, and in many states, the absolute number of 16-19-year-olds will also shrink.

This means there will be even fewer young individuals available for work, suggesting that firms will continue to turn to older workers, immigrant workers, and — increasingly — to technology and automation. We're already seeing more technology and automation used in sectors like hospitality and food service.

Yet this still leaves the second question: whether it's good or bad that fewer youths in their late teens and early 20s are receiving the experiences of, and lessons from, working for pay. My early jobs were valuable for me both then and later in life. But situations and individuals are different, and every decision involves benefits and costs. The best I can conclude is that parents and their children must jointly decide.

Michael Walden is a Reynolds Distinguished Professor Emeritus at North Carolina State University.

School closures were very bad policy

JOHN HOOD
CONTRIBUTOR



ROUGHLY EVERYONE in the United States — with the possible exception of teacher union leaders and their pet politicians — knew that learning losses from COVID-era school shutdowns were going to be big. But the latest results from the National Assessment of Educational Progress still retained their power to shock.

From 2020 to 2022, average scale scores for American 9-year-olds dropped by five points in reading and seven points in math. That's the largest decline in reading scores since 1990. It's the first-ever decline in math scores. As might be expected, learning losses were largest among students who were already low-performing and among disadvantaged students with less access to parental support and resources while trying to learn at home.

Here in North Carolina, 51% of our public school students scored at "grade-level proficiency" on state exams in 2022, up from a disastrous 45% in 2021 but still well below the 59% level of 2019.



Here in North Carolina, 51% of our public school students scored at "grade-level proficiency" on state exams in 2022.

Early in the pandemic, it became clear that COVID-19's risk profile was skewed by age and pre-existing conditions such as obesity. Young children faced (and still face) a tiny risk of serious illness.

Other countries started reopening schools in the summer of 2020, as did some states. North Carolina didn't. As some of us argued at the time, and as most in retrospect now concede, this was a very

From 2020 to 2022, average scale scores for American 9-year-olds dropped by five points in reading and seven points in math.

bad call. Defenders of Gov. Roy Cooper and his administration would hasten to point out that North Carolina has experienced a relatively low rate of COVID-19 deaths. Doesn't that prove that the state's approach to school reopening, and to pandemic restrictions more generally, was the right one?

Not so fast. While North Carolina's COVID mortality compares favorably to that of neighboring states, the story is more complicated than that. For one thing, because the risk of serious illness is so strongly related to demographics, simply eyeballing raw totals is unwise. You have to adjust the data.

The most recent age-adjusted death rates I've seen were produced in late August by the Bio-

informatics CRO, an international research team. Its figure for North Carolina is 295 per 100,000 residents, ranking the state 29th in the nation. That's clearly better than the age-adjusted death rates of Tennessee (403), Georgia (359), and South Carolina (356). But North Carolina's rate is actually a little higher than Florida's rate of 288 per 100,000.

Remember the furious criticism hurled at Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis for restricting his state's businesses too little and reopening his schools too early? As it turned out, the Sunshine State's risk-adjusted COVID deaths aren't much different from those of Illinois and Connecticut — and are significantly better than those of tightly controlled Pennsylvania and New Jersey.

We can't yet know for certain whether states that opened their schools early, such as Florida, experienced significantly less learning loss than North Carolina did. The NAEP reading and math trends I referenced earlier are not yet available at the state level, and it's best to use a common yardstick for such measurement.

But I'd say it's a reasonable guess. Lengthy school closures were, in fact, unreasonable.

Robinson's unique story guides his political life

RAY NOTHSTINE
OPINION EDITOR

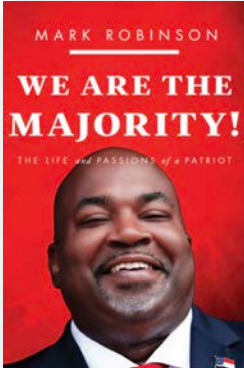


Lt. Gov. Mark Robinson's life is shaped by financial hardship, family life, trains, churches, the military, and even professional wrestling. In other words, Robinson is an ordinary guy. Many political autobiographies are trite or even dreadful, but "We are the Majority!" offers much more than platitudes. His book provides interesting stories of personal failure and the life of a poor young kid in Greensboro. He experienced domestic violence in his family and chaotic home life at times. Robinson even had a short stint in the foster care system.

After his father died, he credits his mom with helping the family become more stable. He started going to church and called his conversion a process. After his father died, his mother had to provide for the family, and his mom's hard work as a custodian at North Carolina A&T undoubtedly shaped his strong work ethic. Robinson understands the dignity of work and has held several different jobs, from working in the pizza industry to assembling furniture for different companies.

Of course, Robinson's own life experiences are a big part of his appeal. At this stage of his career, while certainly more outspoken than most, he still reflects the life of an ordinary citizen. It's one of the reasons he's a formidable option to be the next governor of North Carolina. People relate to Robinson and the highs and lows in the rhythms of life.

The fact that his home was foreclosed on or that there were times he couldn't pay utility bills adds to everyman man mystique. Robinson takes ownership of this aspect of his life. While he mentions the downsides of trade

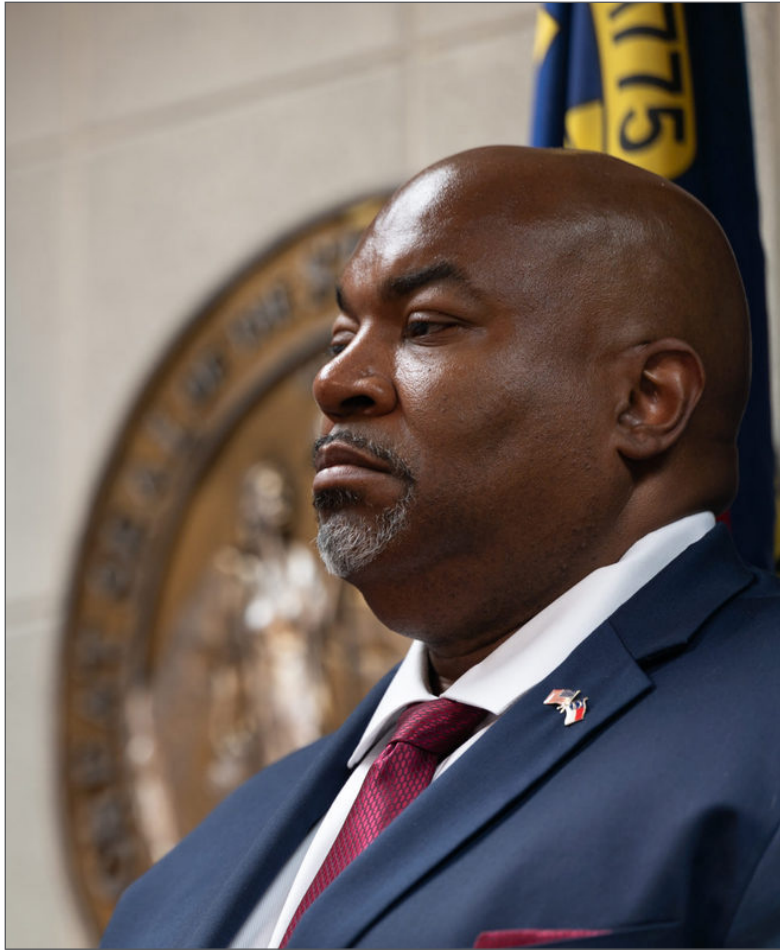


WE ARE THE MAJORITY: THE LIFE AND PASSIONS OF A PATRIOT
Mark Robinson

agreements like NAFTA, he admits he did not prioritize personal spending at that time. He made mistakes. The fact that he owns up to them and continually returns to God's grace and the importance of second chances is a recurring theme.

In fact, for me, Robinson is much more interesting when he is talking about his life and work experiences outside of the political arena.

Ideologues on the left will continue to loathe Robinson. To them, he's a homophobic bigot who should not only be disqualified from political office but probably from public life altogether. Furthermore, they see him as a hypocrite on social issues since he aborted a child and is now an outspoken critic of abortion. While Christians are much more forgiving of Robinson's sins, it's odd that he mentions the abortion early in his book with a few lines and never goes back to it. It's likely an obvious correction after the manuscript was finished, and an old Facebook post of his revealed that this tragedy occurred when he was unmarried and living with



Lt. Gov. Mark Robinson is known nationally as a superb speech maker and communicator.

the woman that is now his wife. Robinson is known nationally as a superb speech maker and communicator. He talks about the time he entered a speech competition at school and wowed teachers and audiences without any preparation. Later, he offers this prescient line: "If you can't communicate with the dumbest person in the room, you are not the smartest person in the room."

Watching wrestling helped to develop a worldview about life and politics. After all, "wrestling was a morality play, and the good

guys won in the end," he says. Robinson uses the past tense because he laments that even professional wrestling, like much of our world today, no longer has firm commitments to "right" and "wrong" in society.

Not surprisingly, Robinson remains outspoken in his book. He even calls Martin Luther King, Jr. a communist at one point. Almost off-handedly. While King certainly worked with communists or communist sympathizers at times in the Civil Rights Movement, there is little to no

evidence he was committed to Marxist Leninism or the Communist Party. King was under surveillance by the FBI for some of his connections to communist-leaning friends, eventually highlighting many of King's moral failings that emerged publicly after his assassination.

Robinson is outspoken on many controversial issues, which is one of the reasons the left will do everything within its power to keep him from higher office or become the next governor of North Carolina. One can easily see corporations threatening to pull out of the state to slow any momentum for his campaign because of his past statements about human sexuality and family dynamics. Much of the media will attempt to derail his potential quest for the office. Of course, it's already happening anytime he is deemed to say something controversial in today's more secular society. There are parts of the book that need to be cleaned up grammatically. Robinson repeats himself unnecessarily at times, too.

Still, much of Robinson's appeal stems from his authenticity. For a lot of people, he says it like it is when he opens his mouth. Robinson rightly understands that many forces in the world are more important than politics — including God and family. He's not merely driven by ideology or a desire to win. He's driven by his sense of right and wrong in life. He's passionate about abortion, not merely because of his own experience, but he believes — correctly I might add, that abortion diminishes human life for all and promotes "degenerate, horrible behavior."

The title of the book is "We are the Majority!" It's a theme Robinson comes back to again and again. And it looks like we'll get the chance to see if he's right in 2024.

Surge in violence demands attention

JOHN HOOD
CONTRIBUTOR



While North Carolina continues to outperform the rest of the country on a range of economic and social indicators, its leaders can't afford to overlook a flashing red light on the state's dashboard: violent crime.

According to the latest FBI data, our urban areas continue to experience rising crime rates. Comparing the first quarter of 2022 to the first quarter of 2021, violent crime was up 23% in Raleigh, 22% in Greensboro and Fayetteville, 7% in Durham and Wilmington, and 6% in Winston-Salem. Charlotte's 2% increase looks comparatively tame, but it came after a bigger jump the previous year.

More generally, North Carolina's rate of violent crime was significantly below the national average from 2009 to 2018. It shot up dramatically in 2019 to 379 reported crimes per 100,000 residents, close to the na-

tional average of 381, and then again in 2020 to 419, blowing past the national average of 399.

What should we do about this?

Let's start with two reality checks. First, the problem is multifaceted and not easily jammed into a partisan political frame. The surge appears to be confined to violent crimes, for example, and more specifically to homicides and aggravated assaults.

When it comes to property crimes — burglary, larceny, motor-vehicle theft, etc. — North Carolina's rate went down in 2020, not up. Indeed, our property-crime rate has been declining fairly steadily since the early 1990s. It's down 35% in the past decade alone.

Did the tumultuous events of 2020 contribute to the surge in violence? That's certainly plausible. The raucous protests we saw in the aftermath of George Floyd's death may have been well-intentioned, but they created incentives for law enforcement to pull back from neighborhoods where a disproportionate share of violence occurs.

My second reality check is about



guns. Most violent crimes are also gun crimes, yes, but the weapon of choice is almost always a handgun. Whatever you think of banning "assault weapons," its effect on violent

crime would be negligible.

As for banning or radically restricting the ownership of handguns, I'd view the constitutional and political barriers as insurmountable

even if I favored such a policy, which I don't.

More practical solutions exist. Even when it comes to guns, most North Carolinians would likely favor stronger measures to keep guns out of the hands of minors and the mentally ill, to crack down on "straw purchases" and other illegal trafficking, and to toughen penalties for those who use guns to commit crimes.

Speaking of behavioral health, I believe there is broad support for spending more tax dollars on community-based treatment for mental illness and drug addiction. N.C. communities can also employ such bread-and-butter solutions as installing more streetlights, installing gates in alleyways, and restoring vacant lots to productive use or at least "greening them over" with grass, trees, and gardens.

We were never going to "defund the police." As Manhattan Institute analyst Charles Fain Lehman put it, policing remains "the heart of American crime control" because of its "proven efficacy." Still, there are other tools in our toolbox. Let's use them.

Free Market Reflections...

continued from PAGE 7

clamor for more centralized state power.

It's really my prior experience working at the Acton Institute and studying the works of former AEI scholar Michael Novak (1933-2017) that fully opened my eyes to the morality of markets. Many Christians go through periods of deep turmoil in how they view market capitalism. This can be true for some that study and focus on a liberal arts degree.

Novak made markets much more palpable for many because he rooted the defense and vision for the free economy firmly in the Judeo-Christian vision. Much credit should be given to Novak's work in helping to increase positive views of the market in the Church and the entire life of Christianity. Where would believers and even many economists be without Novak now? It's a fair question.

Notably, Novak's words are

just as prescient now as ever. "The market raises up many who under other regimes were last, and tumbles many in earlier regimes that were first," wrote Novak in "The Spirit of Democratic Capitalism." The line is a reminder that markets not only cause a leveling effect in society but often foster rapid advancement of traditional underclasses or those pressed down upon by the boot of tyranny. Unlike the command economy, a truly free market deprives evil individuals of ultimate power, which they seek to dispense against their victims in an arbitrary and unfair fashion.

Most importantly, Novak's work is a powerful reminder of the importance of moral restoration, not just in the economic sphere but the whole of life and culture. "Liberty itself requires unprecedented virtues, rarely seen in simpler and more simply led societies," wrote Michael Novak. "In self-government, citizens are sovereigns, and must learn to exercise the virtues of sovereigns." Novak continually reminds us that the people who participate and benefit from the free economy must be rooted in the richness of love for the other and, yes, ancient truths. Furthermore, the free

market elevates the destiny of the human person because it elevates human creativity.

In my own life, markets undeniably impact my life for good. Through investing, robust property rights, my own hard work, and the help of my parents, I was able to graduate from university and then graduate school with no debt. An interest in investing and thrift allowed me to pursue work not only for economic and material benefit alone but to pursue a passion for studying freedom and truth, fully incorporating that into a professional vocation and a passion for writing.

Markets through scientific innovation eventually helped to vastly improve my health through drug therapy. Pharmaceutical companies often receive negative flak or derisive rhetorical arrows from politicians, but investment in drug research transformed my health and, in turn, my life for the better. Healing comes in various forms, and markets are proving to be an invaluable tool for many who suffer from chronic illnesses and other physical limitations.

I bought a home in 2015 and my wife is expecting a third son in October. Markets offer an opportunity to plan and rectify the

past. My gratitude for the market is robust. Markets have literally transformed my life and billions around the world. The free market continually rewards human production and hard work. The ability to create and the force that emanates from all that intellectual dynamism is a reminder that wealth is not just made through the land, physical property, or the material world. Wealth is human capital and potential, too. Wealth is not a fixed pie, as the statist so often proclaims.

Humans are created with a purpose, and markets empower us to flourish and find our destiny in life. Command economies and socialism continually restrict freedom. It places unnecessary limits on what humans can accomplish for themselves and others. That kind of thinking creeps into our politics when leaders talk about scarcity instead of abundance, leading the populace to fight over the table scraps offered up by the government or a dictatorial strongman.

At the end of the Cold War, many assumed the planned economy was destined for a permanent retreat, and freedom in all avenues of life was destined to descend. Yet, markets or even an en-

tire republic untethered to truth and virtue faces threats that are not merely external. When qualities like civic virtue diminish, it impacts not just markets but the whole trajectory of ordered liberty.

Free markets are worth defending not only because they pull millions out of poverty and make lives easier, but because they uplift human nature and call forth previously untapped spiritual energy and creativity. Additionally, utilitarian arguments for market-capitalism are only a minor benefit to the whole when they are properly viewed and oriented within a moral framework.

When I recall all the jets and weapons on alert to defend this nation and the free way of life, it's a much richer understanding now than I had then. Freedom is primarily a spiritual benefit, and free people's creativity is unmatched worldwide. Markets play a vital role in that truth. We are a nation that stormed beaches, liberated continents, and freed those enslaved under communism. The market economy constantly affirms the way of life we defend, and freedom is not only worth practicing, but something we should all continually celebrate.

Orwell's doublespeak...

continued from PAGE 2

orado's economically vital oil and gas industry with a 2,500-foot well setback. My issue committee Spirit of Colorado ran a highly effective multimedia campaign against it.

The subcommittee's outrage centered on oil and gas companies. Facing unrelenting and untruthful attacks, those companies had the audacity to hire professional public relations firms to advance positive messaging about the benefits of energy development in Colorado.

Three witnesses, including Prop 112 spokesperson Anne Lee Foster, fed the majority narrative. They howled about being out-

spent, which they were. But they implied that it was unfair. I can't help but think this is the everyone-gets-a-participation-award effect. If you've been in politics long enough, you know the agony of defeat even when you've spent big and the thrill of victory when you've been dramatically outspent. That's the world of campaigns.

I accepted an invitation from the GOP minority to be the party's lone witness for three reasons. First, I welcome any opportunity to be the champion of free speech, no matter how hostile the audience.

Second, it provided a national platform to promote the John Locke Foundation's work on energy policy (in written testimony), specifically our Energy Crossroads report and its impact on House Bill 951, North Carolina Energy Solutions.

Third, my issue committee Spirit of Colorado ran a highly effective multimedia campaign

against Prop 112. I even hired a professional public relations firm, Novitas Communications, that masterfully helped us craft award-winning messages for the Spirit of Colorado TV, radio, print, and digital campaign.

As voters do, they enjoyed the

final say. We won with 55% agreeing with our position. Industry didn't defeat Ms. Foster's message. Voters did. Prop 112 opponents did our jobs better than Ms. Foster and her group. For our hard work, the Democrat majority on the Natural Resources Committee plans to regulate speech because it's too dangerous for voters to have open access to it.

The hearing was two hours of Orwellian doublespeak. Facts are disinformation. Problems ignored. Solutions discouraged. The predetermined outcome is that the majority must police speech in the energy policy space. If they don't do it directly, they'll have their social media and tech henchmen do it for them.

In the real world, gas prices are still far too high. Biden begs OPEC to increase production. The Economist calls the looming energy crisis across the Atlantic, "Europe's winter of discontent." And in California, home state of Sub-

committee Chair Katherine Porter, ratepayers suffer some of the highest electric rates for the most unreliable power.

As we stare down the barrel of a global energy crisis, this committee wants an information blackout. Not all information. Just information from the fossil fuel industry that it doesn't like. I doubt they'll feel the same way about majority control of speech if the GOP retakes the House following the midterm elections.

The current majority has forgotten these few words members swear to uphold: Congress shall make no law ... abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the government for a redress of grievances.

This is Congress in 2022. In plain language, it is one of the biggest threats to the First Amendment and our constitutional republic.

Mark Robinson, Ted Budd headline 5th annual Salt & Light Conference



The North Carolina Faith and Freedom Coalition was created in order to engage and educate people of faith in the political process.

BY ZACH ROUNCEVILLE

Themes on the importance of faith in the public square and optimism about the future in the face of adversity highlighted the N.C. Faith and Freedom Coalition's 5th annual Salt & Light conference, held at Freedom House Church in Charlotte on Sept. 23 and 24.

N.C. Lt. Gov. Mark Robinson; current and former members of Congress, including Ted Budd, Richard Hudson, Lauren Boebert, and Trey Gowdy; journalist James O'Keefe; and pro-life Catholic priest Frank Pavone were among the many public figures and faith leaders featured at the two-day policy conference.

The North Carolina Faith and Freedom Coalition is led by executive director Jason Williams. Williams started the organization with the help of the National Faith and Freedom Coalition and its chairman, Ralph Reed, in order to engage and educate people of faith in the political process. Williams told Carolina Journal that the event was a success and that he was grateful to Freedom House Church for hosting the conference.

"It was great to hear from a diverse group of speakers that included faith leaders, elected officials, and other conservative influencers from across the nation," Williams said. "Regardless of how much the left tries to intimidate believers, we don't compartmentalize our faith or check our values at the door when it comes to our engagement in the political arena. Pro-faith, pro-family, and pro-freedom policies are good for our nation."

"Our goal of the conference is

to educate, equip, and encourage attendees to stand up and become part of the cultural conversation and follow the biblical mandate of being salt and light," Williams continued. "We've gotten feedback from attendees that describe the conference as a political camp meeting. There are those who talk about being encouraged spiritually and challenged to be involved. We hope to carry that enthusiasm into the election on Nov. 8."

Speaking to a capacity crowd, current congressman and U.S. Senate candidate Ted Budd discussed his background and faith story about trusting Jesus Christ as his Lord and Savior, which he described as the most important factor in his life. Budd also referenced a mission trip to the Soviet Union while an undergraduate at Appalachian State in August 1991 in order to contrast the experience with the freedoms provided in the United States. Budd said he learned a valuable lesson about the United States while on the trip.

"It taught me something profound about this country here," Budd said. "The Soviet Union built walls to keep its people trapped inside, while in America, last year we let over 850,000 to a million legal people into this country," he said, emphasizing the word "legal." "Our country is blessed by God, and we embody the ideals of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. And we are endowed by our creator with equal rights that no man or government can take away."

Bremerton, Washington, High School football coach Joe Kennedy also spoke at the conference on his faith journey and the events surrounding his removal as head coach of the Bremerton

Speaking to a capacity crowd, current congressman and U.S. Senate candidate Ted Budd discussed his background and faith story about trusting Jesus Christ as his Lord and Savior, which he described as the most important factor in his life.

High football team for praying on the field after games. Upon being fired, the First Liberty Institute filed a lawsuit against the school district on Kennedy's behalf, arguing that his firing violated the Constitution. The case eventually made its way to the U.S. Supreme Court, where a 6-3 majority ruled that the coach's prayers were a form of private speech, protected by the First Amendment.

According to the court's decision, the free-exercise and free-speech clauses of the First Amendment protect an individual engaging in a personal religious observance from government reprisal. The Constitution neither mandates nor permits the government to suppress such religious expression. Kennedy told CJ at the conference that he was grateful for the opportunity to speak.

"The Faith and Freedom coalition promotes everything I stand for, so they've been behind me 100%," Kennedy said. "I had the opportunity to come here

and thank everybody who's been in this fight with us. This is my chance to be able to step in, look them in the eyes, and say thank you, and that God heard our prayers and that they've been answered."

Kennedy was also grateful for the support of the First Liberty Institute. "The Constitution doesn't always mean what we think it means, and there's a lot of ignorance out there. I was ignorant to what it meant and how the whole system works, but because of the First Liberty institute, I received a crash course on not just the Constitution, but how the law and courts work. You get to see how an average American would absolutely get crushed if it weren't for organizations out there backing us up and looking out for us."

Educational freedom and school choice were also topics of discussion. CJ spoke with Corey DeAngelis, executive director of the Educational Freedom Institute and senior fellow at the American Federation for Children, about the conference and his efforts in promoting school choice and educational freedom across the country.

"The event was put on really well, and the crowd was super-energized, which gives me optimism about promoting school choice in North Carolina," DeAngelis said. "The fact that I was invited to speak also gives me optimism about the importance of advancing school choice in North Carolina. The state already has the Opportunity Scholarship Program, but it's about time every single state goes all in on educational freedom. And what that means is allowing all families to take their children's state funded education dollars to the education provider

of their choosing, whether that's a public school, private school, charter school, or homeschool option."

Many local political officials were also present at the conference. N.C. House Rep. David Willis, R-Union, spoke to CJ and praised the N.C. Faith and Freedom Coalition for its efforts.

"The N.C. Faith and Freedom coalition does such a great job bringing folks together from across the state on a number of different issues, and it's important to highlight the value and the need for our churches and for our fellow believers to get involved and to come out and vote," Willis said. "They do such a good job of helping everybody understand the issues we are facing every election cycle, and we are appreciative of them and their work."

CJ also talked with N.C. Republican Party Chairman Michael Whatley, who expressed his admiration for the Faith and Freedom Coalition.

"I'm very excited to work with the Faith and Freedom Coalition," Whatley said. "These guys have been such great partners. All the work that Ralph [Reed] and Jason [Williams] have done to make sure that we have evangelicals participating is extremely important. I believe so strongly that we've got to have more men and women of faith involved in the public square and involved in politics. The Republican Party needs to be the party of faith, and we need to be a place where God can use the party as an instrument to be able to further his designs. When we are looking at building a winning political coalition that will win campaigns, evangelicals are absolutely an essential part of it."

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