



THE DEBRIEF

THURSDAYS @ 7:30PM

CAROLINA JOURNAL'S WEEKLY RECAP OF MAJOR DEVELOPMENTS IN STATE POLITICS AND PUBLIC POLICY.

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THE CAROLINA JOURNAL

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IMAGE COURTESY OF DAVID COBB, OFFICE OF N.C. HOUSE RULES CHAIRMAN DESTIN HALL.

Attendees gather at the 2023 NCGOP convention in Greensboro, held June 8-11.

NCGOP convention draws big names and crowds

BY BRENEE GOFORTH AND ZACH ROUNCEVILLE

North Carolina Republicans gathered in Greensboro June 8-11 for the 2023 NCGOP Convention to elect a party chairman and to hear from frontrunners in the Republi-

can primary race for president in 2024. Current Chairman Michael Whatley was re-elected to lead the party in an election year when the state is expected to play a pivotal role in Republican efforts to take back the White House.

In a recent Civitas Poll of N.C. voters, former President Donald Trump led with 55% of Republican

primary voters, Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis polled in second place with 22% of the vote, and former Vice President Mike Pence polled at 8%.

Just more than 20% of respondents in the poll said they were undecided in the primary race.

DeSantis was the only candidate to outperform incumbent President

Joe Biden in an earlier Civitas survey.

The poll had DeSantis pulling ahead of Biden narrowly, with only a 0.7% lead.

Also in the poll, but not at the NCGOP Convention, former South Carolina Governor Nikki Haley polled at 5% among N.C. Republican primary voters and U.S. Sen.

Tim Scott, R-SC, polled at 1%.

Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis

First up, DeSantis spoke to party faithful with remarks that ran like a list of conservative accom-

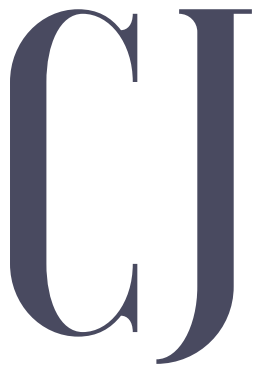
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Navigating the Legislative Building

DONNA KING
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF



The symmetry of the North Carolina legislative building seems calm on the outside, with the squared-off front and roof angles pitching perfectly against one another in four angular domes. The state seal in the entryway floor welcomes visitors and punctuates the massive red carpeted stairs just inside the brass doors. Once inside, though, the soaring entry and travertine-tiled hallways give way to four garden courtyards, each looking almost identical.

Newcomers wander a confusing maze of identical squares and halls, reaching the end only to realize they took the wrong one.

The building's simplicity is deceiving, and it can take years to navigate confidently. It's symbolic of the legislature itself.

The state Legislative Building turns 60 this year. Completed in 1963 on Jones Street, the "People's House" was designed by architect Edward Durrell Stone. While it has an unmistakable 1960s vibe, it still looks modern. Stone designed open mezzanines and courtyards for people to gather just outside the

elected members' offices. The only round area, the rotunda between the House and Senate chambers, is filled with natural light with space for quiet negotiations, quick chats, and sometimes loud protests.

This building has been a constant in my professional life, as it has for many other North Carolinians, and the relationships I've built there on both sides of the aisle have helped shape me.

As a 17-year-old page from Broughton High School, sponsored by Rep. Casper Holroyd of Wake County, I spent much of my time there delivering papers and coffee up and down the wrong hallways. I always looked for the big brass chamber doors to know where I was. In college, I worked as a reporter from the basement studio beside the cafeteria, cranking out short news stories for UNC-TV's "Stateline."

My late mother-in-law worked in the House Principal Clerk's office for years. As toddlers, my kids loved to visit her at work, their little shoes slapping those tile floors and eating homemade banana pudding in the cafeteria. The wonderful people working in that familiar haven of comfort food always acted as if they knew them, even

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Priceless: Why I'm renegotiating my calendar as CEO of Locke

AMY O. COOKE
PUBLISHER



Remember the old MasterCard commercials? Flight from Raleigh to Las Vegas: \$700

Tickets to Rod Stewart: \$300
An invitation to spend the weekend with my son and daughter-in-law: Priceless.

My son called a couple of months ago asking if my husband and I wanted to join him and his wife in Las Vegas to see Rod Stewart. We couldn't say yes fast enough. I didn't care what it cost.

My son and daughter-in-law live in Grand Junction, Colorado, near the Utah border. During the first two years of COVID, I could count on one hand the number of times I physically touched them. The same is true for my two beautiful daughters. Despite all the precautions, we all ended up getting COVID. Like when my kids were little, I nursed my

youngest daughter through it one Christmas.

Some people struggle through "long COVID," which the Centers for Disease Control describes as lingering symptoms that may include fatigue, cough, shortness of breath, depression, anxiety, vertigo, and more. It's real. My long COVID is different. It's the relentless heartache of physical separation from my family.

As a single working mom with sole custody of my children, I always negotiated my calendar first. When they were in school, it meant limited travel, being home for dinner, and leaving early to attend school activities or sporting events. If they were sick, I stayed home. I was there.

Remembering the good old pre-COVID days — December 2019 — when I accepted the offer to be the CEO of the John Locke Foundation, the world was a simpler place. The economy was booming, and COVID-19 hadn't entered our lexicon. Travel was

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Robinson top performer against Stein in new poll of NC governor's race

BY DAVID BASS

In a hypothetical match-up for governor in 2024, Lt. Gov. Mark Robinson is the only declared Republican candidate who leads Democrat Josh Stein, the current attorney general. Robinson would take 42% of the vote to Stein's 41%, according to a Civitas Poll released May 25. The difference is well within the poll's margin of error.

The other two Republican candidates who have declared for governor perform more poorly against Stein. State Treasurer Dale Folwell would lose 34% to 39%, while former congressman Mark Walker would secure 37% of the vote to Stein's 39%.

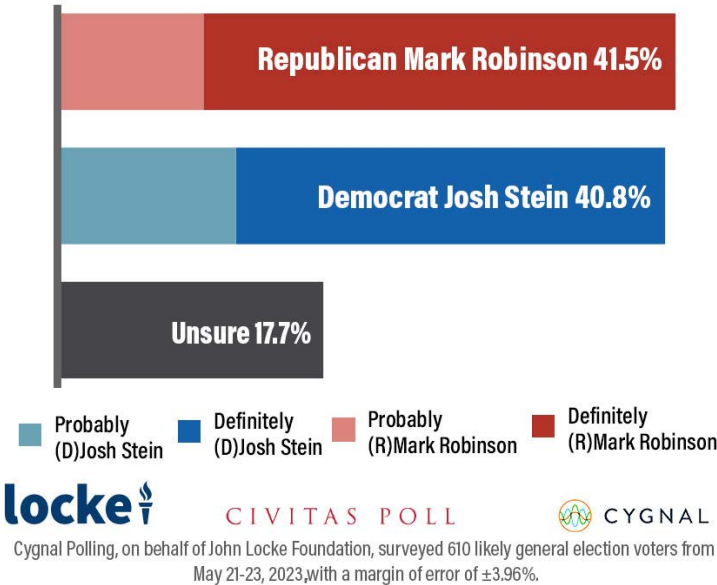
The poll did reveal that a noteworthy percentage of the likely 2024 electorate remains undecided about the candidates.

Robinson announced his bid for the GOP gubernatorial nomination April 22, while Folwell threw his hat into the ring a month earlier. Walker entered the primary May 20. On the Democrat side, Stein is the only declared candidate.

"The race for the governor's seat is a tight one so far," said John Locke Foundation President Don-

Robinson-Stein Ballot

If the 2024 general election for North Carolina's Governor was held today, and you had to choose based on the following options, who would you vote for?



ald Bryson. "But with so many undecided voters, there is definitely room for candidates to gain ground by making a compelling case to the people of North Carolina.

The calculus could also change if another Democrat throws their hat in the ring."

The Civitas Poll also revealed that pessimism surrounding the



The race for the governor's seat is a tight one so far. But with so many undecided voters, there is definitely room for candidates to gain ground by making a compelling case to the people of North Carolina. The calculus could also change if another Democrat throws their hat in the ring.

- John Locke Foundation President, Donald Bryson

track. That marks the highest level of dissatisfaction recorded in the Civitas Poll since President Biden took office.

Biden's approval rating reached a nadir of 32% — also the lowest point recorded by the Civitas Poll — with 57% disapproving. Gov. Roy Cooper remains in the green on his approval rating, with 44% approving, 38% disapproving, and 13% neither approving nor disapproving.

A national push on the part of Democrats to lambast Republicans for a new pro-life law that creates additional abortion restrictions doesn't appear to have translated to hurting the GOP on the generic ballot. In fact, the GOP has shored up its advantage. Forty-seven percent would choose a generic Republican in a race for the General Assembly, while 40% would pick a Democrat. In August, those numbers were tighter at 47% and 44%, respectively.

In a hypothetical generic congressional race, Republicans maintained a smaller lead, with 46% of voters favoring them and 42% favoring Democrats.

The poll was conducted May 21-23 and surveyed 610 likely general election voters.

Despite hype, electric car company VinFast hits rocky road

BY THERESA OPEKA

VinFast, a Vietnamese-based electric vehicle maker awarded an incentive package by North Carolina and Chatham County to build a \$4 billion EV production plant in Moncure, has not had a great track record, prompting worries about its viability and if the plant will be built at all.

VinFast's recall of all 999 VF8 2023 vehicles distributed in the United States, due to safety concerns, is the latest in a series of mishaps for the company founded in 2017. The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration issued the recall due to a malfunctioning head-unit display. A software error caused the display to go blank while driving, increasing the chances of a crash. The error was talked about in-depth in many critical reviews in the past month.

"In any other vehicle, this wouldn't be a big deal," according to jalopnik.com. "But in a VF8, as with most other EVs, the main display not only shows vital vehicle information, it's the only display in the whole vehicle." That includes the speedometer and warning lights.

This isn't the first recall for the VF8. According to InsideEvs.com, 2,781 VF8 SUVs sold in Vietnam



This image of a VinFast VF8 is from company promotional material.

were recalled over an issue with the front brakes. The article said that VinFast would also check for the issue in all vehicles being sent to the United States.

The NHTSA said the problem had been documented 18 times but estimated 1,263 VF8s were affected, with 999 potentially dealing with the issue, including 153 fleet vehicles and 111 in customer vehicles. VinFast has possession of the remaining vehicles.

The company is said to be fixing the issue with an over-the-air update to fix the glitch, free of charge, and was scheduled to notify owners through the mail starting May 29.

Reviews of the vehicle sparked words like "abysmal," "very, very bad," "yikes," "simply unacceptable," and "return to sender." The reviews came from sources like the highly respected MotorTrend, which said VinFast had the right

idea, but the VF8 is nowhere near ready for customer deliveries that are already taking place.

"Put the VF8 in reverse to back out of a spot, and the whole car shudders violently," said MotorTrend writer Scott Evans, describing other issues with the vehicle. "The parking brake doesn't release until you step on the accelerator, and once you do, there's no hold function, so you'd better keep Creep mode engaged so

it's always sending power to the motors. Disable Creep, and the car will roll away in gear. I nearly rolled backward into another car at an intersection like someone learning to drive stick."

Evans also said, while adaptive cruise control and lane-centering steering assist work well, there are no apparent safeguards, and can be activated on any road at any time.

Road & Track says, "Over a 90-minute drive, the 5,600-pound SUV never stopped bobbing, swaying, and bucking, producing near-constant head-tossing motions." The site's test driver "became car sick for the first time in years" riding in the passenger's seat.

In addition to the bad reviews, questions are being raised about the company having enough money to operate in the United States.

According to a December filing with the U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission, VinFast lost \$1.3 billion in 2021 and close to \$1.5 billion in the first three quarters of 2022.

The company recently announced that it would merge with special-purpose-acquisition company Black Spade Acquisition Company, allowing it to go public through a stock offering in the

Berger delivers 'scathing roast' of Cooper's emergency declaration

ALEX BALTZEGAR

Gov. Roy Cooper recently spoke about his emergency declaration over a school choice bill at an event hosted by the North Carolina Association of County Commissioners. Senate Leader Phil Berger, R-Rockingham, followed Cooper's speech by delivering what one person in attendance called "a scathing roast" of Cooper's comments.

After Cooper left the stage, Berger was introduced before delivering his remarks.

"I don't know if many of you are old enough to remember Paul Harvey. Paul Harvey had a show called 'The Rest of the Story.' So I'm here to give you ... the rest of the story," Berger said to applause.

"Over the next two years, the final budget will appropriate over \$23 billion for K-12 public schools," Berger said. "That is the most in state history."

Earlier in the week, Cooper said, "The Republican legislature is aiming to choke the life out of public education" during his state of emergency address.

Berger said the Senate's proposed budget raises starting teacher pay by more than 10%.

Additionally, Berger said the budget also brings average teacher pay to nearly \$60,000 a year, which is roughly on par with the average household income in North Carolina.

Cooper has been advocating against a bill to expand the Op-



Senate Leader Phil Berger delivers "The Rest of the Story" after Gov. Roy Cooper declared an education emergency.

portunity Scholarship Program to all North Carolina students, with more scholarship money for K-12 children with lower household incomes.

To describe the bill, Republican lawmakers have used the phrase "backpack funding," which means that the money follows the student rather than being funneled through government schools.

"We believe no one is in a better position than parents to decide what is right for their kids," Berger said.

Berger continued, taking a shot at Cooper's remarks.

"Education has been, and will continue to be, the largest part of our state budget, so anyone that tells you that education is being shortchanged, or that education is not getting dollars that are need-

ed, is not being straight with you," Berger said.

In his emergency declaration, Cooper said the legislature's budget "drops an atomic bomb on public education."

"Last week, the Senate passed its budget backed by Republicans and Democrats," Berger said. "The vote on the Senate version of the budget was 37 in favor, 12 opposed. Now, I've been in the leg-



It's a real stretch, in my opinion, to conclude that 37 elected state senators, representing approximately three-quarters of the people of North Carolina, would support a state budget that creates a State of Emergency in public education

- Senate Leader Phil Berger, R-Rockingham

islature for a while. That doesn't happen all the time."

Berger was referring to seven out of 20 Senate Democrats voting for the Senate's budget proposal, in addition to all Republicans.

"It's a real stretch, in my opinion, to conclude that 37 elected state senators, representing approximately three-quarters of the people of North Carolina, would support a state budget that creates a state of emergency in public education," Berger said, referring to Cooper.

The audience applauded. "Such hyperbole has no place in our public discourse," Berger said.

Medical marijuana on the move in NC House

ALEX BALTZEGAR

For the first time, a North Carolina House committee heard a bill, Senate Bill 3, to legalize marijuana use for certain medical reasons. The House Health Committee did not hold a vote on S.B. 3 but discussed the bill for about 30 minutes.

Earlier this year, the bill passed the Senate by a vote of 36 to 10.

Background

In the 2021-22 legislative session, the Senate passed a similar bill, but the legislation did not receive a committee hearing in the House, much less make it to the floor for a vote.

The bill is sponsored by the Senate's second-most powerful lawmaker, Sen. Bill Rabon, R-Brunswick. Rabon is the chairman of the Senate Rules Committee.

"Sen. Rabon has been the driving force on the medical marijuana bill that passed the Senate last time and did not pass the House," said Senate Leader Phil Berger, R-Rockingham. "I think time will help, and we'll see whether or not this



Sens. Paul Low, D-Forsyth, and Bill Rabon, R-Brunswick, discuss Senate Bill 3 in committee.

session is the right time. I think it's the right thing for us to do. My thought is that the bill that passed the Senate last time was well-constructed and addressed a lot of the concerns that people have."

There were 10 Republicans who opposed S.B. 3 in the Senate. All Democrats supported the bill.

S.B. 3, dubbed "The Compassionate Care Act" by bill sponsors, has been a key negotiat-

ing tool for the House. Rabon has reportedly prevented many House bills from clearing his committee because the House refused to move S.B. 3.

With S.B. 3 receiving a hearing in the House, some House

priorities may advance from the Senate Rules Committee to the Senate floor in return.

House Health Committee debate

Rabon introduced the bill to the House Health Committee and answered questions from representatives. Rep. Larry Potts, R-Davidson, presided over the meeting.

"I think it's important for people to understand what this bill does and what it does not do," Rabon said. "It is not intended to change current civil or criminal laws governing the use of cannabis for non-medical purposes."

Rabon emphasized that the bill's intent is to keep medical marijuana highly regulated and focused on defined debilitating illnesses.

"The purpose of the bill is to allow tightly regulated use of medical cannabis only for those with debilitating illnesses," Rabon said. "Suppliers are banned from most forms of advertising, including advertising that might appeal to minors."

CI FILE PHOTO

NC legislature overrides Cooper's veto to pass new abortion restrictions

ALEX BALTZEGAR

Both chambers of the North Carolina state legislature voted to override Gov. Roy Cooper's veto of Senate Bill 20, "Care for Women, Children, and Families Act," which restricts elective abortions after 12 weeks of fetal development.

The vote was along party lines, with all Republicans in both chambers voting to override the veto while all Democrats voted to uphold Cooper's veto.

The House voted 72-48 and the Senate voted 30-20 to override Cooper's veto.

Legislators in both chambers often miss votes for various reasons, but no one was absent on the day of the override votes.

Senate Bill 20 changes

S.B. 20 makes the following changes to North Carolina's abortion laws:

- Limit elective abortions in the second and third trimesters
- Establish an exception for rape and incest through 20 weeks
- Establish an exception for fetal life-limiting anomalies through 24 weeks

The bill maintains an exception to save the life of the mother through the duration of her pregnancy.

Sens. Joyce Krawiec, R-Forsyth, Lisa Barnes, R-Nash, Amy Galey, R-Alamance, and Vickie Sawyer, R-Iredell, released the following statement on the override:

"This is a monumental moment for women, children, and families in North Carolina. Our bill puts to rest all of the noise and lies we've been hearing this past week, and brings to life a culture that cherishes motherhood and saves the lives of the unborn."

Democrat response

Following the final House vote, one Democratic state senator said North Carolina was entering the "Handmaid's Tale Era."

House Minority Leader Robert Reives, D-Chatham, said Republicans would not stop with 12-week restrictions.

"Tonight, North Carolina Republicans voted to strip women of the right to make decisions about their own bodies," Reives said. "Make no mistake: They will not stop here."

Many Democrats spent the previous two weeks arguing that S.B. 20, which restricts abortions after 12 weeks, was a total ban.

Cooper referred to the bill as a ban again after Republicans overrode his veto.

Although the vote was not bipartisan, House Speaker Tim Moore, R-Cleveland, said there was significant outreach to Democrats, and some even wanted to vote for the bill.

"We talked to a number of Democratic members, and at one point, we felt like we had a num-



Sens. Michael Lazzara, R-Onslow, and Vickie Sawyer, R-Iredell, help celebrate the veto override for Senate Bill 20.

ber of Democrats who were going to vote for this bill and even for an override," Moore said. "But they came back to me and said, 'Look, we're feeling overly pressured. We can't do it.' So I had hoped that it would be a bipartisan bill and wish it would have been, but I understand the pressure some of the members were under."

Galey said she emailed a key Democratic senator to ask if the Democrats wanted to discuss the legislation, but they declined.

"A middle ground"

In the House, several key swing Republicans received pressure from left-wing activists, Democrats, and the media to change their minds on S.B. 20. None did.

Rep. Tricia Cotham, R-Mecklenburg, a longtime Democrat who made headlines earlier this year when she announced she was switching parties, released a statement explaining her vote.

After saying she could not support a complete ban or "aborting a perfectly healthy child in the 40th week of pregnancy," Cotham said she feels that S.B. 20 is a middle-ground approach.

"I — like most North Carolinians — think abortion is a complicated issue without absolute answers," Cotham said. "After extensive review, I believe this bill strikes a reasonable balance on the abortion issue and represents a middle ground that anyone not holding one of the two extremist positions can support."



Senator Mary Wills Bode
@Bode4Senate

Today, I leave the #NCGA with fewer rights than I had when I got here today.

As we enter this Handmaid's Tale Era in North Carolina, remember: be a June, not a Serena.

And, of course—nolite te bastardes carborundorum.

#ncpol

8:58 PM · May 16, 2023 from Raleigh, NC · 3,141 Views

Strong majorities of North Carolinians don't want right-wing politicians in the exam room with women and their doctors, which is even more understandable today after several Republican lawmakers broke their promises to protect women's reproductive freedom.

For the last two weeks, Republican sponsors of this abortion ban have strenuously argued that it is much less restrictive than we warned, so we will now do everything in our power to make sure that's true.

North Carolinians now understand that Republicans are unified in their assault on women's reproductive freedom and we are energized to fight back on this and other critical issues facing our state. I will continue doing everything I can to protect abortion access in North Carolina because women's lives depend on it.



6 ON CAPITOL HILL

Bishop slams McCarthy and debt ceiling deal

BY THERESA OPEKA

Congressman Dan Bishop, R-NC8th District, was recently in the spotlight, not only for his opposition to the debt-ceiling agreement reached by Republican House Speaker Kevin McCarthy and President Joe Biden, but also for challenging McCarthy's capability in his position as speaker.

Bishop, a member of the U.S. House Freedom Caucus, said he had "zero confidence" in McCarthy, adding, "What basis is there for confidence?"

The debt-ceiling bill suspends the country's \$31.4 trillion debt limit through Jan. 1, 2025, taking it past the 2024 presidential election.

It rescinds about \$28 billion in unspent COVID relief funds.

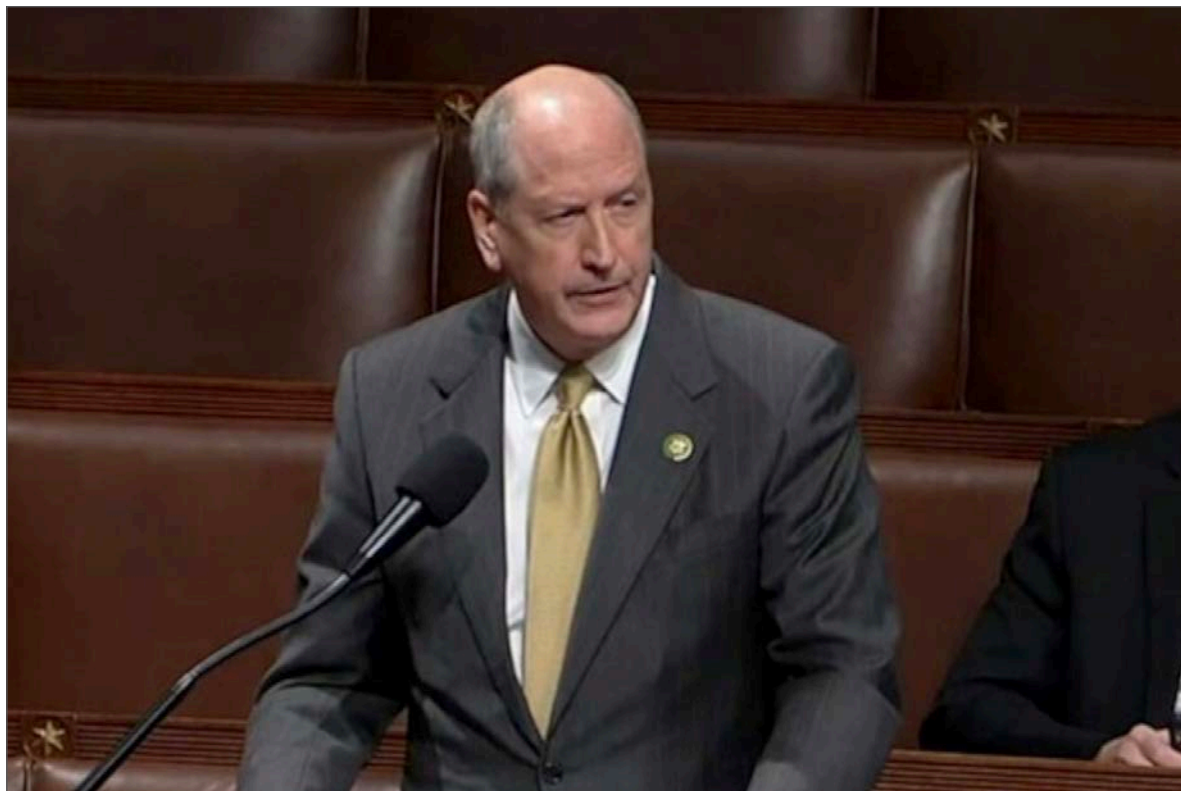
It eliminates \$1.4 billion in IRS funding and shifts about \$20 billion of the \$80 billion provided to the agency through the Inflation Reduction Act to nondefense funds.

After a more than three-year suspension, student loan payments would also resume after August.

Also, work requirements would not be added for those on Medicaid, but there are changes to the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program.

People currently eligible for SNAP do not have work requirements after age 50. The deal would raise the age to 54.

Work requirements would also



U.S. Rep. Dan Bishop, R-NC8th District, opposed the recent federal debt ceiling deal.

be eliminated for veterans and the homeless who receive SNAP benefits.

Bishop told Sean Hannity recently on his show that the Congressional Budget Office released information about the "so-called" work requirements that were added to food stamps and temporary assistance for needy families.

Bishop said the additional categories of exemptions added in the

bill's language will drive the cost up by \$2.1 billion.

"I was just in the conference earlier this evening, and Mr. McCarthy's negotiator talked about the provision on the IRS. It turns out to be \$1.4 billion, not \$1.9 [billion] as they claimed, but it doesn't do anything to stop them from hiring staff with the remaining \$78.6 billion — hiring new IRS agents this year," he said.

Bishop called it a "career-defining vote for every Republican." He said the bill is full of "cosmetic things and things that have been lied about, like IRS funding."

He also said removing it as an issue during the 2024 presidential election would cause an issue.

"How could you more successfully kneecap any Republican president than to take that issue out of his or her hands?" he told

reporters.

Bishop also talked about actions that would oust McCarthy from his position as speaker.

Bishop was the first House Republican to state that he was considering a "motion to vacate the chair," which would trigger a vote of no confidence that could oust McCarthy with a simple majority.

Bishop initially voted against McCarthy for speaker in January but eventually flipped his vote on the 12th ballot on Jan. 6.

Fellow Republican Rep. Patrick McHenry, a North Carolinian and McCarthy deputy who helped negotiate the deal, said the bill had "the biggest set of spending cuts and a substantial change from the spending of the last two years for this administration."

Rep. Deborah Ross, D-2nd District, also supported the bill but was not able to vote for it as she was recovering from COVID-19.

In the end, the bill passed the House with a 314-117 vote on May 31. It cleared the Senate with a 63-36 vote on June 1.

Sen. Thom Tillis, R-N.C., voted in favor, in addition to N.C. Democrat Reps. Alma Adams, Don Davis, Valerie Foushee, Jeff Jackson, Kathy Manning, and Wilely Nickel, along with Republican Reps. Chuck Edwards, Virginia Foxx, Richard Hudson, McHenry, Greg Murphy, and David Rouzer.

Bishop, along with Sen. Ted Budd, R-N.C., voted against the bill.

President Biden signed the bill into law on June 3.

SOURCE: HTTP://C-SPAN.ORG

THE CAROLINA JOURNAL ONLINE www.carolinajournal.com

VinFast's rocky road

continued from PAGE 3

United States.

The transaction is expected to be completed in the second half of 2023 and will value VinFast at approximately \$27 billion with an equity value of \$23 billion. After the transaction, existing shareholders of VinFast will hold approximately 99% of shares in the combined company.

Parent company Vingroup, Vietnam's biggest conglomerate, and founder Pham Nhat Vuong pledged the startup company \$2.5 billion in funding last month.

These issues raise concerns about the plant scheduled to be built at the Triangle Innovation Point in Moncure, slated to open in 2025.

To attract the newly formed company, the state and Chatham County committed to spending



Gov. Roy Cooper signs a deal on March 29, 2022, committing the state to millions in tax reimbursements for a VinFast electric vehicle manufacturing plant.

nearly \$1.2 billion in incentives over the next 32 years. Using the state's Transformative Job Development and Investment Grant

program, VinFast could get up to \$316.1 million in reimbursement from the state over three decades if the company meets hir-

ing goals.

The total state appropriation is estimated at \$766 million, with Chatham County giving VinFast

another \$400 million incentive package.

All of these and other issues have led to the question of whether or not the plant will even be built, which would be of small comfort to those losing their homes, businesses, and church to eminent domain in order to build new roads leading to the proposed plant.

About 27 homes, five businesses, and Merry Oaks Baptist Church will have to forfeit their land to make way for a new highway that economic developers say is needed for access in and out of the Moncure site.

The church has stood on the border between Moncure and New Hill, on the corner of Old U.S. 1 and New Elam Church Road, since 1888.

Reportedly, Phase 1 of the Vinfast project is estimated to relocate three businesses, 11 homes, and Merry Oaks Baptist Church; Phase 2 is estimated to impact an additional two businesses and 16 homes.

SOURCE: RESEARCH TRIANGLE REGIONAL PARTNERSHIP

Would the Council of State vote for Cooper's education 'state of emergency'?

BY THERESA OPEKA

In May, Democrat Gov. Roy Cooper issued what he called a “state of emergency” regarding K-12 public school education funding. But under new state law, a real “state of emergency” would require a vote from the North Carolina Council of State. So, how would they vote? Here is what they told us.

POLITICAL THEATER OR TRUE EMERGENCY?

First, in announcing his education “state of emergency,” Cooper clarified that he was not issuing an executive order — like with a hurricane or with the COVID-19 pandemic — but the action, he said, was “no less important.”

Cooper took aim at three proposals specifically — an expansion of the Opportunity Scholarship Program, income tax breaks, and what he termed “book banning” by Republicans.

The red banner proclaiming “public education in North Carolina is facing a state of emergency” still remains at the top of the governor.nc.gov website as of June 9, despite Republican criticism that it is more of a political stunt than a true emergency.

NEW STATE OF EMERGENCY LAW

If it were a true emergency, Council of State members would have to vote on the action taken by Cooper, or any other governor, under a new law that took effect on Jan. 1.

Any statewide emergency a governor declares will automatically expire in 30 days unless extended by a majority vote of COS. If a member fails to vote within 48 hours, that’s counted as a concurrence. After 60 days, the emergency will expire unless extended by an act of the General Assembly.

The law was in response to how Cooper handled restrictions during the COVID-19 pandemic, which left North Carolina in a state of emergency for two and a half years. The law made changes to the Emergency Management Act as part of S.B. 105, otherwise



North Carolina Governor Roy Cooper takes the oath of office to be sworn in for his second term on Jan. 9, 2021. The ceremony had limited in-person attendance due to COVID-19.

known as the 2021 state budget, which Cooper signed into law in Nov. 2021, with the new law taking effect at the beginning of this year.

HOW WOULD THEY VOTE?

North Carolina’s Council of State is set up in the state Constitution as a body of 10 members elected statewide and, with the governor’s cabinet, make up North Carolina’s executive branch. So, would N.C. Council of State members vote for an education “state of emergency?” Reaction was mixed.

STEIN

“The Republican General Assembly is defunding public education,” said Attorney General Josh Stein, who is also a Democrat candidate for the 2024 governor’s race, in an emailed statement to Carolina Journal. “They are making it harder for our kids to compete. I applaud Governor Cooper for sounding the alarm because our children have a constitutional right to a sound, basic education.”

CAUSEY

Jason Tyson, communications director for Insurance Commissioner Mike Causey, told CJ in an emailed statement, “As to any official state of emergency declaration before the Council of State, Commissioner Causey would weigh all sides of the issue before making the decision to vote to declare or not declare an emergency.”

DOBSON

Secretary of Labor Josh Dobson told CJ in an emailed statement that as a product of public education, he believes we need to do as much as we can to strengthen public education and support teachers, but added he doesn’t anticipate it coming for a vote and would be hesitant to commit one way or another without more details.

He did, however, want to point out that not only are there challenges and vacancies in public education but also in state government.

“The N.C. Department of La-

bor is not immune from this crisis,” Dobson said. “In our compliance bureau, we are allotted 102 positions, and we have 24 vacancies. In our elevator bureau, we are allotted 39 positions and currently have 32 elevator inspectors to inspect over 25,000 elevators and escalators across our state.”

He said there is no substitute for money for teachers or state employees.

“So, while I won’t commit to a state of emergency, I will say that any focus should not only include public education (which I agree with) but all of North Carolina’s hard-working public servants,” Dobson added.

TROXLER

A spokesperson for Agriculture Commissioner Steve Troxler said in an emailed statement that he has no opinion to share at this time.

ROBINSON

Lt. Gov. Mark Robinson, who is a Republican candidate for the 2024 governor’s race, did have an

opinion. He called Cooper’s “state of emergency” “political theatre” and said he could have asked people to call their legislators through a press release or one of his fundraising emails.

“The fact of the matter is, the Governor is not looking out for North Carolina, he is looking for the next step in his political ladder,” Robinson said in an emailed statement to CJ. “If this ever came to a vote, I would unequivocally vote no. The real ‘State of Emergency’ is spending half of our state budget on education and our kids not being able to read at grade level. It is high time we address the real problems with education, and it is not Opportunity Scholarships.”

FOLWELL

State Treasurer Dale Folwell, also a Republican candidate for governor in 2024, said he generally supports legislation that pushes the power to the parent, as long as it is done in an “efficient, accountable, transparent, and auditable manner.”

“He’s following a pattern that I’ve been accustomed to over the last seven years, and that is when he wants to say or do something that he doesn’t think has the support of the majority of the Council of State, then he does it this way,” said Folwell in a phone interview with CJ.

“If he wants to say or do something where he thinks he may need some political cover, then he asked us for our vote,” he added. “To issue a ‘statement of emergency’ on something that is as important as public education is, without convening the Council of State and describing and making his case and having the courage to put that up for a vote, I think it’s sort of like a hug without a squeeze. It’s really nothing to it.”

Folwell said education isn’t one-size-fits-all for all children.

“You could actually have twins born within minutes of each other, who have two different types of educational needs,” he said.

Democrat Secretary of State Elaine Marshall, Democrat State Auditor Beth Wood, and Republican Superintendent of Public Instruction Catherine Truitt, did not respond to requests for comment before publication.




THE THURSDAYS @ 7:30PM

DEBRIEF

YouTube @CAROLINAJOURNALNC

CAROLINA JOURNAL'S WEEKLY RECAP OF MAJOR DEVELOPMENTS IN STATE POLITICS AND PUBLIC POLICY.



NC private religious schools feel threatened after Nashville shooting

BY DAVID BASS

In the wake of the shooting at a private religious school in Nashville, Tennessee, that left three children and three adults dead, some leaders of religious schools in North Carolina feel uneasy about the safety of their own schools.

Adding more pressure, anti-school choice forces continue to mount a social media campaign targeting specific private schools in the state and calling them out for their religious beliefs. Some private school leaders worry that such targeting could lead to violence.

"It's something we should be careful about in light of what happened in Nashville — that we are not targeting schools, whether they're Christian or not," said Dawn Baldwin Gibson, superintendent of Peletah Academic Center for Excellence, a private religious school in New Bern, in an interview with Carolina Journal. "We need to be mindful of that level of antagonizing that you clearly see."

Gibson said they have removed all signage from the front of the school for safety reasons. They have also fenced in the rear of the school, hired extra security, and had the local sheriff do a walk-through of the school to assess safety.

"The people targeting these schools need to understand that there may be consequences that none of us want to see and none of us want to pay," Gibson said.

Officials haven't released a specific motive for the Nashville shooting on March 27, but it's clear that the perpetrator, 28-year-old Audrey Hale, had a vendetta



Pastor Anthony Gibson of Peletah Academic Center for Excellence teaches a class.

PHOTO COURTESY OF PELETAH'S WEBSITE

against the school and the church associated with it.

Hale fired 152 rounds while on the school property before police shot and killed her.

There was evidence she had planned the shooting for months in advance. From her social media profiles, Hale seemed to identify as transgender in the months leading up to the attack.

The Covenant School is part of Covenant Presbyterian Church in the Nashville area. The church is part of the Presbyterian Church in America, a theologically conservative Presbyterian denomination. Meanwhile, in North Caro-

ANTI-SCHOOL-CHOICE TWEET



Justin Parmenter
@JustinParmenter

Freedom Christian in Fayetteville got >\$1.2 million for vouchers this year.

They only take students whose parents have a "vibrant relationship with Jesus Christ" and who demonstrate "a desire to learn."

This institution shouldn't get public dollars. #nced #ncga #ncpol

lina, anti-school choice activists have tweeted out names of private schools that have traditional Christian theology and religious beliefs on issues like human sexuality.

Anti-school choice forces have ramped up their rhetoric in recent months as the General Assembly is poised to pass a significant expansion of the Opportunity Schol-

arship Program. The scholarship program empowers families who wish to send their child to a private school to have the means to do so.

Gov. Roy Cooper, a Democrat, has made Opportunity Scholarships a target of his bully pulpit as well. Cooper recently declared a statewide emergency due to what he termed a lack of investment in K-12 public education. He accused Republicans of "handing out private school vouchers to millionaires."

Gibson and her husband, Pastor Anthony Gibson, created Peletah Academic Center for Excellence in 2017 after they worked on a racial reconciliation conference in New Bern. They determined that education was a big area for improvement. The private school is trauma-informed, Gibson said, and is one of the few private schools in the state certified by the Department of Public Instruction with an exceptional education program.

Gibson called the Opportunity Scholarship Program "a game changer" for families enrolled in the school.

"It's really been about leveling the playing field," she said.

Tuition at Peletah is \$6,300 a year for grades K-12. Under the proposed expansion of the Opportunity Scholarship Program, qualifying families would have 100% of that tuition covered.

That tuition rate is about half the amount the average public school spends per student. For fiscal year 2021-22, the average price tag for each public school student was \$12,345. That's up from \$10,753 the previous year.

NC Dept of Natural and Cultural Resources unveils 'Moonshine and Motorsports Trail'

BY ZACH ROUNCEVILLE

The North Carolina Department of Natural and Cultural Resources, in conjunction with other organizations dedicated to the state's rich history, recently unveiled the Moonshine and Motorsports Trail in order to highlight the history of bootlegging and stock car racing in the Tar Heel State.

Funding for the Moonshine and Motorsports Trail was allocated in the 2021 state budget and developed under DNCR.

An unveiling took place May 26 at the Museum of the Albemarle in Elizabeth City. In a post on the museum's Facebook page, the secretary of DNCR was on hand to provide remarks dedicating the trail.

"This trail will help preserve motorsports and distilling history and culture and enhance those industries' economic strength going forward," said DNCR Secretary Reid Wilson. "Without question, moonshine and motorsports are connected in North Carolina,



and this trail project aims to instill a sense of pride and ownership in this unique aspect of North Carolina culture."

According to the DNCR website, the trail designation is an important part in highlighting North Carolina's historical and contemporary relationship between distilling and motorsports.

"The Moonshine and Motorsports Trail highlights the state's unique history," the DNCR state-

ment said. "Distilling grew out of the state's rich agricultural and social history, and auto racing in North Carolina has grown from occasional competitions among speed-hungry moonshiners during the 1930s to a multibillion-dollar industry that attracts legions of devoted followers across the nation and world."

In an emailed statement to Carolina Journal, Museum of the Albemarle operations manager Barba-

ra Putnam outlined the unique history of moonshining in the eastern part of the state.

"Residents of the Albemarle Sound Region made illegal liquor long before the moonshining industry became popular in the Appalachian Mountains," Putnam said. "The desolate swampland in northeastern North Carolina was ideal for concealing stills. The numerous rivers emptying into the Albemarle Sound provided the fresh-

water needed to manufacture the moonshine as well as an easy way to transport the finished product to the state's small ports in boats."

East Lake township in Dare County also played a role in moonshine shipping and production.

"The rivers harbored remote, inaccessible areas; places only known by the locals where a bootlegger could disappear with a shipment," Putnam told Carolina Journal.

"Although most still sites in nearby counties could be reached easily by automobile and then on foot, East Lake on the Dare County mainland was accessible only by boat. By 1923, it was apparent that East Lake shipped large quantities of quality moonshine to Norfolk, Baltimore, and other northern cities. A great volume of moonshine was produced in the swamps of Dare County and adjacent counties."

In an interview with CJ, Putnam credited the trail for bring-

Follow the Money: Planned Parenthood PAC spent \$10 million in NC's last 4 state-level elections

BY CJ STAFF

Gov. Roy Cooper's fundraising campaign started within minutes of the legislature overriding his veto of a new law placing restrictions on abortions after the first trimester.

Shortly after the House voted to override his veto of Senate Bill 20, the Care for Women, Children, and Families Act, in a 72-48 party-line vote, Cooper sent this to supporters:

...North Carolinians understand fully that Republicans are unified in their attacks against women's freedom. And they are counting on you to give up. We can't afford to do that. We will stay and fight.

Im relying on grassroots supporters like you to make it possible. Im personally asking you to contribute whatever you can to help us build out our teams to help Democrats win in North Carolina. Click here to donate.

I'm always in this fight. -RC

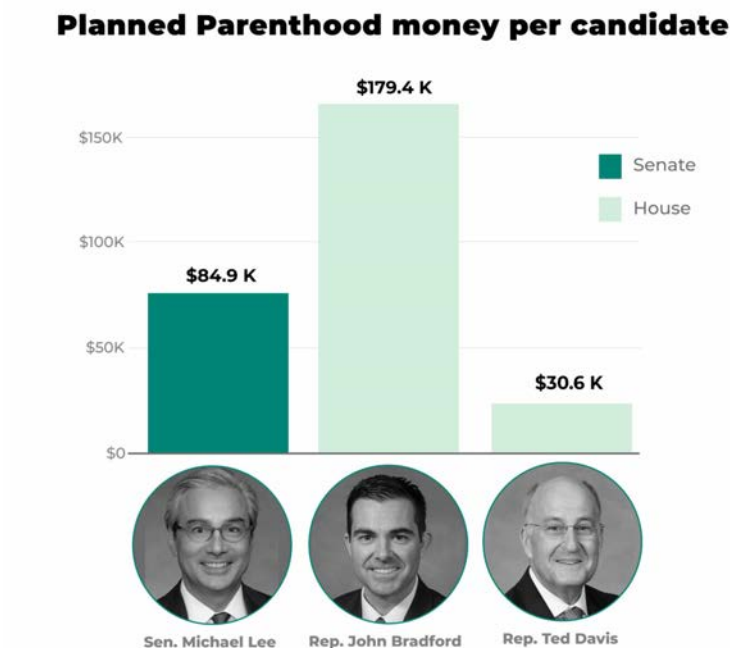
Cooper also tried to drum up grassroots opposition to the bill in four key Republican districts. However, the lawmakers representing the districts say Cooper did not reach out to them to discuss the bill.

"I have not heard from the governor directly," said Rep. John Bradford, R-Mecklenburg, one of the members targeted in the tour.

"In fact, I am serving my fourth term in the legislature, and he wouldn't know me if he bumped into me," Bradford added.

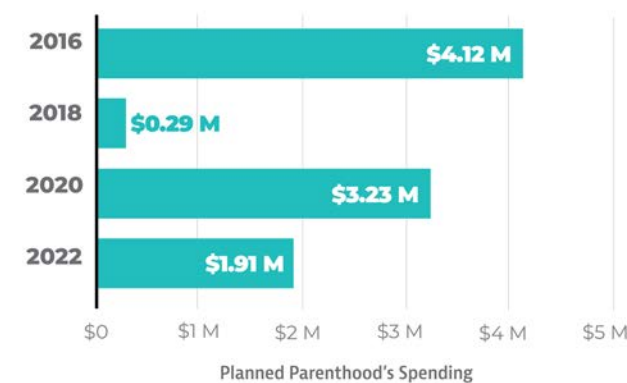
The stakes are high on this issue, particularly for N.C. Democrats. Planned Parenthood of North Carolina is a major donor, spending nearly \$10 million since 2016 on its legislative and executive-branch campaigns.

For comparison, the National Rifle Association Victory PAC



SOURCE: NCSBE

Planned Parenthood spends millions in NC
Ahead of the SB20 veto override vote, stakes are high for Democrats and a party mega donor



SOURCE: NCSBE



Democrat Cheri Beasley shows support for Planned Parenthood during a protest.

spent less than one-tenth of that in independent expenditures in North Carolina since 2016, with \$162,510 spent in 2016, \$277,381 in 2020, and \$31,942 in 2022.

Cooper has pulled out the political stops in the days since

May 4. Ahead of vetoing the bill, Cooper traveled to swing Republican districts to pressure lawmakers through their constituents, but did not attempt to meet with the lawmakers directly.



Gov. Roy Cooper drums up grassroots opposition to Senate Bill 20.

Follow the Money

The Planned Parenthood PAC announced in October 2022 that it was pouring \$5 million into North Carolina's mid-term elections as part of a nationwide \$50 million campaign, but that level of spending started long before the U.S. Supreme Court's Dobbs decision last summer, which overturned the Roe v. Wade decision that said abortion access was protected in the U.S. Constitution.

"Planned Parenthood has been a major force in North Carolina's elections, particularly in presidential years," said Jim Stirling, research fellow at the John Locke Foundation. "While their state board reports indicate they have spent \$10 million since 2016, this is likely only a portion of what they have spent."

The PPNC Pac has been a "max-out donor" to Cooper and Democrat Attorney General Josh Stein, giving \$5,400 each year from 2016 through 2022 in direct donations to each candidate. But independent expenditures reveal the real numbers.

According to reports from the N.C. State Board of Elections, PPNC spent \$4,118,944.70 in the 2016 elections, the majority of which was to oppose Republicans Dan Forest and Pat McCrory, support Cooper and Stein, and influence state legislative elections.

In the 2018 midterms, the organization spent less, at \$292,314.65. In 2020, Planned Parenthood reports spending \$3,227,573.74.

Details are not complete in their 2022 spending, but including their fourth-quarter report, Planned Parenthood spent \$1,907,552.23.

Independent expenditures range from printing for door tags, television or digital ads, time spent by staff for candidates, and hiring professional canvassers to knock on neighborhood front doors for or against certain candidates.

Planned Parenthood N.C. spent \$1.5 million in the last month leading up to the 2020 election, focused in part on opposing six state House Republicans: Reps. Erin Pare, R-Wake; Kristin Baker, R-Cabarrus; Stephen Ross, R-Alamance; John Bradford, R-Mecklenburg; John Szoka, R-Cumberland; and former Republican lawmaker Perin Jones, who was defeated by Democrat Brian Farkas.

Bradford was targeted again recently by Democrats. He is one of four Republicans whom Cooper spent time and effort to pressure over 10 days to uphold his abortion veto.

Cooper visited Bradford's district and met with constituents about S.B. 20. Cooper also visited districts for former Democrat-turned-Republican state Rep. Tricia Cotham, R-Mecklenburg; Sen. Mike Lee, R-New Hanover; and Sen. Ted Davis, R-New Hanover.

PPNC has spent nearly \$85,000 since 2016 to defeat Lee, \$76,000 of which was spent just in 2022.

More than \$30,000 of PPNC money went to defeat Davis. However, Bradford has had the most money put against him by PPNC, at \$180,000 since 2016.

S.B. 20 takes effect in July. Since the override, Cooper and legislative democrats have focused their messaging on abortion access.

Cooper visited with President Joe Biden in May, who is expected to make abortion access a primary issue of his re-election campaign.

"I told [Biden] we're going to win North Carolina," Cooper said in an interview with CNN.

"The fact that President Trump is now claiming credit for all the laws that have passed in every state because of his U.S. Supreme Court that he appointed, that's going to make a real difference in November."

"It's going to help us elect a Democratic governor, and I think it's going to help us break the supermajority in the legislature," Cooper added.

CJ FILE PHOTO



CJ FILE PHOTO

10 NCGOP

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plishments for his home state.

Among other things, DeSantis reminded the audience that as governor he signed measures that prohibited the purchase of Florida land by China, banned ESG investing, and banned sanctuary cities.

He pointed out that under his tenure the state also passed a heartbeat bill, voter ID, constitutional carry, and \$2.7 billion in tax relief.

DeSantis told delegates that his proudest achievement was “drawing a very clear line in the sand” that “the purpose of our schools is to educate kids, not to indoctrinate kids.”

He referred to efforts to remove Critical Race Theory from K-12 education, remove pornographic books from school libraries, and enact universal school choice.

“Leadership is about doing what’s right when you have intense opposition,” he said. “Leadership is about delivering results to the people that you represent.”

Former Vice President Mike Pence

The following afternoon, Pence spoke at the “First in Freedom” luncheon. Pence’s speech was much more narrow — focusing on family, patriotism, and faith.

Pence spent a noticeable share of his speech on the recent Trump indictments. Pence told the crowd, “It’s important in America to remember that you are innocent until proven guilty.”

He also urged the audience to pray for the former president and his family, then made a promise that, if elected president, he would “uphold the rule of law, clear house at the top levels of the Department of Justice, and restore the confidence of the American people in equal treatment under the law.”

He rejected Trump’s call for Pence to “return” electoral votes back to the states following the 2020 election.

Pence said Trump presented him with the option to choose “between him and the Constitution.”

The former vice president stated he “chose the Constitution and always will.”

He continued, “Anyone who puts themselves before the Constitution should not be president of the United States.”

Pence’s speech repeatedly came back around to national security.

The former vice president criticized the withdrawal from Afghanistan under the Biden administration and said that America must continue to support the Ukrainians in their fight against the Russian invasion.

It contained significantly fewer references to the southern border than DeSantis’ remarks.

Former President Donald Trump

Trump headlined the Grand Old Party Dinner.

Speaking to a capacity crowd, the former president discussed a wide array of topics and pushed back against those he believes hate the United States and want to destroy it.

“For seven years we’ve been engaged in an epic struggle to rescue our country from the sinister forces who actually hate it and want to destroy it,” said Trump.

“These forces are much stron-



Convention goes mingle and visit booths at Koury Convention Center.

IMAGE COURTESY OF DAVID COBB, OFFICE OF N.C. HOUSE RULES CHAIRMAN DESTIN HALL.



Former Vice President Pence with N.C. House speaker Tim Moore.



Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis, a top GOP presidential contender, mingles with the crowd.

IMAGES COURTESY OF DAVID COBB, OFFICE OF N.C. HOUSE RULES CHAIRMAN DESTIN HALL.



Former President Donald Trump addresses those attending.

SOURCE: RNC TWITTER



N.C. Speaker Tim Moore makes a point during his speech.

IMAGE COURTESY OF DAVID COBB, OFFICE OF N.C. HOUSE RULES CHAIRMAN DESTIN HALL.



Vendors sell merchandise to convention-goers at booths.

IMAGE COURTESY OF DAVID COBB, OFFICE OF N.C. HOUSE RULES CHAIRMAN DESTIN HALL.

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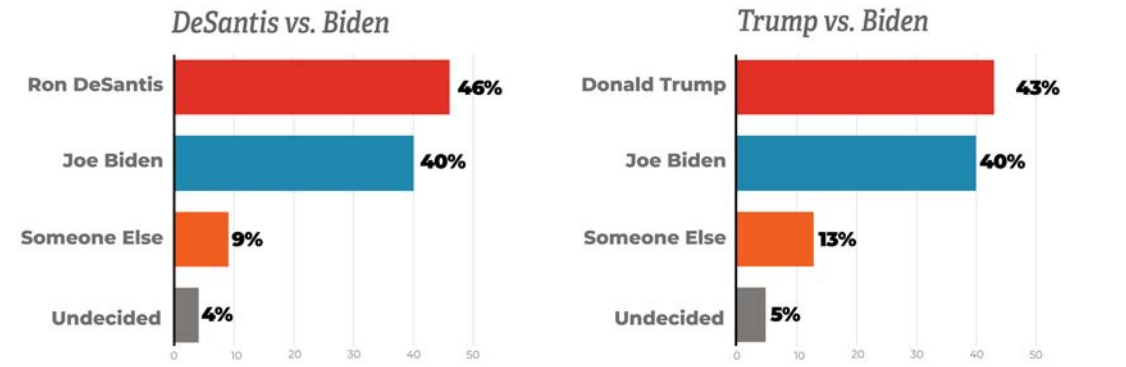
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ger than China, Russia, North Korea, and Iran all put together. If we have the right leader, all of those countries are absolutely no threat. Together we stand up to the globalists; we stand up to the Marxists; we stand up to the RINOs [Republicans in name only]; we stand up to the communists and the environmental extremists; we stand up to the open-borders fanatics, the radical left democrats and their lawless partisan prose-

cutors, and the fake news media.” During the speech, Trump promoted the accomplishments of his former administration and put forth an ambitious domestic and foreign-policy agenda in the event he wins the Republican nomination and ultimately the presidency in 2024. The agenda centers on ending the war in Ukraine, improving care for U.S. military veterans, brokering fair trade deals, redeveloping major U.S. cities, gaining independence from China, making

the U.S. the No. 1 manufacturing superpower in the world, and taking a hard line stance against illegal immigration with a focus on deportations. Trump did not shy away from attacking the record of President Biden. “For three years, Joe Biden and his corrupt allies in Washington have waged economic warfare on the hardworking citizens of our country,” said Trump. North Carolina’s Republican primary election is scheduled for Super Tuesday, March 5, 2024.

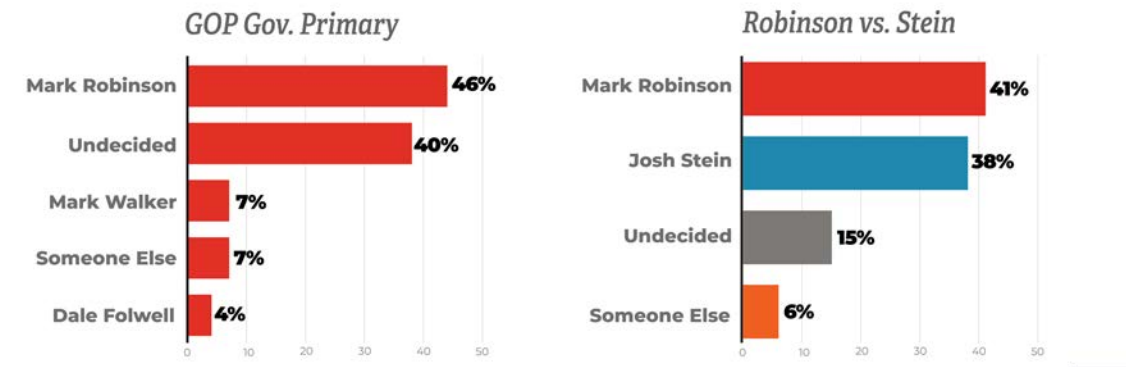
In North Carolina, DeSantis has a stronger position than Trump. DeSantis leads 46%-40%, while Trump leads 43%-40%



POLL METHODOLOGY: OPINION DIAGNOSTICS CONDUCTED A POLL OF LIKELY GENERAL ELECTION VOTERS WITH A SUBSAMPLE OF LIKELY REPUBLICAN PRESIDENTIAL PREFERENCE PRIMARY VOTERS IN NORTH CAROLINA. THE SURVEY WAS FIELDIED ON JUNE 5-7, 2023. THE SAMPLE SIZE OF THE POLL WAS N=902 LIKELY GENERAL ELECTION VOTERS AND THE SUBSAMPLE WAS N=408 LIKELY REPUBLICAN PRIMARY VOTERS. THE MARGIN OF ERROR FOR THE GENERAL ELECTION POLL IS 3.3% AND THE MARGIN OF ERROR FOR THE PRIMARY ELECTION SUBSAMPLE IS 4.8%.



Mark Robinson leads Josh Stein 41%-38% with 21% undecided or supporting an alternative candidate, indicating North Carolina is likely to have its third consecutive tightly contested gubernatorial general election.



POLL METHODOLOGY: OPINION DIAGNOSTICS CONDUCTED A POLL OF LIKELY GENERAL ELECTION VOTERS WITH A SUBSAMPLE OF LIKELY REPUBLICAN PRESIDENTIAL PREFERENCE PRIMARY VOTERS IN NORTH CAROLINA. THE SURVEY WAS FIELDIED ON JUNE 5-7, 2023. THE SAMPLE SIZE OF THE POLL WAS N=902 LIKELY GENERAL ELECTION VOTERS AND THE SUBSAMPLE WAS N=408 LIKELY REPUBLICAN PRIMARY VOTERS. THE MARGIN OF ERROR FOR THE GENERAL ELECTION POLL IS 3.3% AND THE MARGIN OF ERROR FOR THE PRIMARY ELECTION SUBSAMPLE IS 4.8%.



Former Congressman Mark Walker, who is running for the N.C. governor is pictured.

IMAGE COURTESY OF DAVID COBB, OFFICE OF N.C. HOUSE RULES CHAIRMAN DESTIN HALL.



State House Rep. Tricia Cotham, who recently switched from Democrat to Republican, addresses the crowd.

IMAGE COURTESY OF DAVID COBB, OFFICE OF N.C. HOUSE RULES CHAIRMAN DESTIN HALL.



NCGOP Chairman Michael Whatley was re-elected at the convention.

IMAGE COURTESY OF DAVID COBB, OFFICE OF N.C. HOUSE RULES CHAIRMAN DESTIN HALL.



Another view of Rep. Tricia Cotham addressing the crowd.

IMAGE COURTESY OF DAVID COBB, OFFICE OF N.C. HOUSE RULES CHAIRMAN DESTIN HALL.

Compelled speech would be banned on NC college campuses in House bill

BY KEVIN GARCIA-GALINDO

The Prohibit Compelled Speech/Higher Ed Act, House Bill 607, continues to sit in the Senate Rules Committee, after passing the House in early May. It seeks to extend and codify protections from compelled speech for students and college applicants in North Carolina.

More specifically, this bill would prevent colleges and universities from using diversity, equity, and inclusion questions in their job and student applications.

H.B. 607 prohibits students, faculty, or administrators from being forced to take “particular views on matters of contemporary political debate or social action contained on applications or qualifications for admission or employment or included as criteria for analysis of an employee’s career progress.”

In addition to banning certain questions for admissions, the bill would ban discriminatory hiring and promotion practices based on ideological beliefs.

All of this follows a flurry of similar legislation attempting to ensure that institutions of higher education and workplaces do not pressure students or employees to adopt certain beliefs to keep their position.



N.C. State University is one of the campuses covered in House Bill 607.

Earlier this year, the University of North Carolina System Board of Governors unanimously approved a similar ban on compelled political speech protecting current and prospective employees. The bill specifically targeted schools that were forcing employees or applicants to accept political viewpoints as conditions of employment.

This ban however only applied to schools within the UNC system. H.B. 607, on the other hand, would extend over all 58 community colleges located in North Car-

olina.

A related bill currently in the General Assembly is Senate Bill 364, which adopts very similar language to the UNC System ban but instead applies to state nonexempt employees to protect them from being required to “endorse or opine” any belief as a condition of employment.

“When institutions in the hiring and firing process, for example, delve into the applicant’s beliefs on politically contentious issues, they are treading on thin ice,” Joe Cohn, legislative and policy di-

rector for the Foundation for Individual Rights and Expression, told Carolina Journal in a phone interview. “There are many instances across the country that demonstrate that those questions are used to filter out dissent.”

N.C. entrance application

In February, North Carolina State University stopped requiring applicants to answer an essay question affirming the DEI agenda that the university promotes. According to Rep. Steve Tyson, R-Craven, the N.C. State case motivated him to sponsor H.B. 607.

“Almost 10 years ago, this wouldn’t have been necessary, but I do feel like in today’s climate socially, among particularly the universities,” decisions like the one from the UNC Board of governors “ought to be applied to the state government as well,” Tyson told Carolina Journal.

FIRE states that faculty hiring criteria using “vague or ideologically motivated DEI statement policies can too easily function as litmus tests for adherence to prevailing ideological views on DEI, penalize faculty for holding dissenting opinions on matters of public concern, and ‘cast a pall of orthodoxy’ over the campus.”

Like N.C. State, many universities across the country have rescinded their DEI questions, including the University of Illinois, University of Washington, Texas Tech, Ohio State, and the University of Tennessee.

Petitioning for exemption

However, a process to petition for an exemption to the rule is built into the UNC Board of Governors’ policy. School administrators could bypass the ban on compelled speech for certain lessons by getting approval from the university president and holding discussion in an open session with the Committee on University Governance, attended by the chancellor, provost, and trustees chair. Doing so would be necessary to meet “the educational, research, or public service mission” of the school. H.B. 607 adopts these same guidelines.

Tyson said that college applicant questions should focus on grades and accomplishments rather than DEI.

“[The] UNC system gets over \$4 billion, and the community colleges get over 1.5 billion this year,” he said. “So they need to do the job to educate young people and not try to scope their ideology.”

Legislature overrides veto

continued from PAGE 5

Cotham also said that she had “insisted that any abortion legislation include meaningful support and protections to mothers and children to give them the best chance at a good life.”

Lt. Gov. Mark Robinson, a Republican running for governor, said he was glad to see Re-

publicans “stand strong and override the governor’s veto.”

Robinson also credited Republicans with creating “a culture of life in North Carolina.”

Former Congressman Mark Walker, who also has entered the Republican primary for governor, was among the pro-life advocates who attended the Senate’s override vote.

“It was never a question in my mind that we would have the votes to override the veto,” Moore said.

Following both override votes, S.B. 20 was enrolled to become law.

Moonshine and Motorsports

continued from PAGE 5

ing an awareness to the history of moonshine and auto racing in the state.

“I think it is a unique history,” she said. “Most people associate the moonshine industry with the mountains in North Carolina, but there are also places in eastern North Carolina like the Dismal Swamp and East Lake. When

most people envision moonshiners, they envision the mountains of North Carolina, so I think the importance of this is about bringing an awareness that auto car racing started from people who were making moonshine and were trying to get away from law enforcement. It eventually turned into a million-dollar recreational activity sponsored by high-dollar corporations, and is an interesting piece of the history of North Carolina.”

Awareness was also brought to the trail designation on May 27 during the Xfinity Series Alcoso 300 race held in Charlotte, where JD Motorsports driver Brennan

Poole’s No. 6 Chevrolet car featured a branding logo for the trail.

There are eight designations to be unveiled this year as part of the “Year of the Trail” theme created by the DNCR.

The sites include the NASCAR Hall of Fame and Museum in Charlotte, the North Wilkesboro Speedway, the Charlotte Motor Speedway, the North Carolina Museum of History in Raleigh, Stone Mountain State Park in Alleghany and Wilkes counties, the Occaneechee Speedway near Hillsborough, the Rockingham Speedway, and the Museum of the Albemarle in Elizabeth City.

Medical marijuana

continued from PAGE 4

Rabon also addressed concerns about the ability of law enforcement to determine whether someone is legally using marijuana as prescribed by a doctor.

“We have accepted significant input from law enforcement on the bill,” Rabon said. “Law enforcement will have access to numerous records and databases necessary to verify that patients are eligible and in compliance with the provisions of the bill. Production facilities and cannabis centers are also subject to random searches and inspections by law enforcement and DHHS.”

Rep. Tim Reeder, R-Pitt, shared some concerns with Rabon about several of the 15 illnesses designated as debilitat-

ing. Reeder said that HIV/AIDS and several other diseases mentioned are not usually “debilitating” if properly treated and asked Rabon if he would be open to amending the bill. Rep. Reece Pyrtle, R-Rockingham, shared similar concerns.

Rabon said he is open to amendments but implied that PTSD was an important condition to keep in the bill because more veterans have supported the bill with personal testimony than any other group.

“We have lost more veterans to suicide than we’ve lost in the last two wars we’ve fought,” said Rep. Allen Chesser, R-Nash, who also said he supports the bill.

Rep. Donny Lambeth, R-Forsyth, said he was not convinced it was a good idea to legalize medical marijuana until he took a trip with about 15 other lawmakers to Mississippi and toured their highly regulated production facilities.

Lambeth’s experience reduced his concerns about medical marijuana legalization being a gate-

way to legalizing recreational marijuana.

Toward the end of the committee meeting, Rabon shared his personal experience with medical marijuana.

He credited medical marijuana with helping him remain alive today, saying it saved his life while he underwent cancer treatment, which included chemotherapy.

Rabon said he did not pay for medical marijuana, but someone supplied him with it by mail on a routine basis, right when he needed it each time.

Senate Bill 3 provisions

S.B. 3 identifies debilitating medical conditions such as cancer, epilepsy, HIV/AIDS, ALS, Crohn’s disease, sickle cell anemia, Parkinson’s disease, PTSD, multiple sclerosis, cachexia, and terminal illness as ones that would qualify for the use of cannabis.

S.B. 3 requires doctors to complete a 10-hour continuing

medical education course, conduct risk screenings, educate patients, and provide follow-up care before issuing written certifications for medical cannabis use.

Doctors must have a bona fide physician-patient relationship before issuing a written certification for cannabis use.

Doctors are also prohibited from advertising their ability to issue prescriptions.

S.B. 3 requires the Department of Health and Human Services to issue registry identification cards to individuals with debilitating medical conditions who are at least 21 years old and have been designated as caregivers. The bill also requires cardholders to carry their identification cards and disclose them to law enforcement when approached.

The bill also requires DHHS to create a confidential electronic database containing information about qualified patients, designated caregivers, and physicians and to monitor the database for unusual patterns.

Additionally, S.B. 3 establishes the Medical Cannabis Production Commission, which has the power to approve applications for medical cannabis supplier licenses, and the authority to suspend or revoke licenses. The commission can issue up to 10 supplier licenses, each of which can operate no more than four medical cannabis centers. Each supplier must pay a monthly fee of 10% of their gross revenue derived from cannabis sales to DHHS.

For registry identification cardholders, smoking and vaping cannabis is prohibited in public places, any place of employment, in a vehicle, in or within 1,000 feet of a church, childcare facility, or school. However, the fine for violating this will not be more than \$25.

S.B. 3 was the first bill filed in the North Carolina Senate, indicating its high priority level for Rabon.

The bill will move to the House Finance Committee if it receives a favorable vote from the House Health Committee.

OPINION



Grand Theft Auto NC: Lawlessness and 'TikTok challenge' lead to boom in car theft

DAVID LARSON
OPINION EDITOR



RECENTLY I STARTED hearing more and more reports of people's cars being stolen in North Carolina. My curiosity was further piqued as two fellow John Locke Foundation employees had their vehicles stolen just in the last month.

It turns out there is much more than anecdotal evidence suggesting a surge in car thefts in 2023 compared to 2022.

A February article on the WTVD website quoted a woman in northwest Raleigh saying "it's disturbing" how many cars are getting stolen in her neighborhood. In the first few weeks of 2023, 43 cars had been stolen in her police district, compared with 12 at the same point the year before.

When asked for an explanation for the spike, Raleigh police indicated to the television station that "people are becoming a victim of car theft because some drivers are leaving cars running and unattended."

In Charlotte, they're see-



I Stole a Kia With a TikTok Hack

Watch

A TikTok video shows people how to steal Kias and Hyundais using USBs, driving a trend in car theft.

ing much the same. The Charlotte-Mecklenburg Police Department says car theft is the top contributor to rising crime in

North Carolina's largest city, rising 99% in the first quarter of 2023. In 2022, there were 738 auto thefts after the first quar-

ter of the year, and in the first quarter of 2023, there have been 1,468.

As in Raleigh, Charlotte po-

lice pointed, not to rising lawlessness among the population, but to external factors — in this case, a challenge on the social media platform TikTok that encouraged people to steal cars, specifically Kias and Hyundais.

There has also been a rise in brazen heists at car dealerships across the state. Over \$1 million worth of vehicles were taken just between Feb. 19 and March 13 in four well-planned heists targeting dealerships in Lexington, Charlotte, Cornelius, and Hickory.

As the state's top cop, how has Attorney General Josh Stein addressed this rise in car theft across the state and in our major cities?

Going through his public statements, I could only find one press release so far in 2023 on the rise in auto theft. And that press release specifically scapegoats Kia and Hyundai for not having enough anti-theft protections in their new vehicles, specifically an immobilizer that most cars now have.

NC should lead the nation in ag innovation



DONALD BRYSON
JOHN LOCKE FOUNDATION

ON MAY 19, the North Carolina Department of Agriculture announced that the economic impact of North Carolina's agriculture sector had topped \$100 billion for the first time. That is a fantastic accomplishment, and everyone involved in the extended supply chain of our state's agribusinesses should be proud.

While North Carolina has a burgeoning agriculture sector, and with its continued growth in the industry, it is wise for state lawmakers to consider creating an agriculture regulatory sandbox. The sandbox concept has been proven in other industries and has demonstrated the value of reducing regulatory burdens for innovative businesses. It is high time for agriculture to benefit from the same type of regulatory relief.

First, what is a regulatory sandbox? A regulatory sandbox is a program set up by regulators that allows innovative startups and businesses to test their products, services, or business models in the real market with limited regulations and requirements. This "sandbox" enables entrepreneurs to experiment and innovate without fearing heavy regulatory penalties or restrictions.

Regulatory sandboxes also provide a safe environment for businesses to test new products or services with a limited number of customers while the regulators monitor and evaluate the results. The purpose of the sandbox is to support innovation and promote competition while managing the potential risks associated with new, untested products or services. Several states have created regulatory sandboxes in the past three years, includ-



IMAGE FROM N.C. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE AND CONSUMER SERVICES

ing North Carolina, whose sandbox is specific to financial and insurance products. Utah lawmakers created the country's first all-inclusive regulatory sandbox in March 2021.

The agriculture industry is ripe for innovation. Advances in technology and business models can create exciting opportunities, from precision agriculture and vertical farming to data analytics and blockchain technology. Innovation in agriculture often needs to overcome unnecessary regulatory hurdles that can stifle growth and progress. A regulatory sandbox would provide a controlled space where businesses can experiment and innovate without the threat of onerous regulations. It also allows regulators to learn about these innovations' benefits and potential drawbacks before enacting rules that might hinder progress.

North Carolina is well-positioned to lead the nation in cre-

ating an agriculture regulatory sandbox. The sandbox concept differs from one in which taxpayers are asked to subsidize industry. Instead, it's a concept in which state regulators step back, allowing entrepreneurship to thrive and fuel human flourishing. Entrepreneurs don't need public dollars; they need a chance.

Benefits of an N.C. agricultural sandbox

Agriculture in North Carolina has been at the forefront of technological innovation in agriculture for years. By creating a regulatory sandbox, the state would attract businesses and entrepreneurs from around the country seeking a regulatory environment fostering innovation. This entrepreneurial environment would create jobs, stimulate economic growth, and posi-

tion North Carolina as a leader in agricultural innovation.

The potential benefits of an agriculture regulatory sandbox are vast. For example, precision agriculture could optimize crop yields and reduce waste. At the same time, vertical farming could make it possible to grow crops in urban areas where agriculture is typically not possible. New business models could enable more efficient distribution and marketing of agricultural products, benefiting farmers and consumers alike. These innovations can potentially revolutionize agriculture, but well-meaning, cumbersome regulations often need to be revised to progress.

The Old North State could witness various innovative technologies and solutions in the agricultural sector if it adopts an agriculture regulatory sandbox. For instance, Croptracker has identified 10 emerging inno-

vations in agriculture technology, such as bee vectoring, blockchain technology, and drones. The state could allow the testing of these technologies and assess their impact on crop yields, profitability, and land conservation. North Carolina could foster the development of these and other emerging innovations, transforming its agricultural sector into a more efficient, profitable, and sustainable industry.

State lawmakers could consider their own Financial and Insurance Regulatory Sandbox for a framework. But an example with a longer lifespan would be from the first regulatory sandbox, the United Kingdom's Financial Conduct Authority Sandbox, established in 2016. There, many businesses have benefited from the regulatory relief provided by the sandbox, and the program has successfully guided the creation of new regulations. An agriculture regulatory sandbox in North Carolina could succeed similarly, ensuring the state remains a leader in agricultural innovation.

North Carolina has a rich agricultural heritage and a promising future in the industry. Lawmakers can help ignite growth and innovation by creating an agriculture regulatory sandbox. The sandbox would provide a controlled environment where businesses can innovate freely and without the threat of burdensome regulations while regulators can learn about the implications of these new technologies. By creating an agriculture regulatory sandbox, North Carolina can position itself as a leader in agricultural innovation and set an example for other states nationwide.

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

Adding fruits to our constitutional diet



MITCH KOKAI
CONTRIBUTOR

School kids are supposed to learn about our rights to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. But few of them hear much about another right spelled out in the N.C. Constitution.

It's North Carolinians' right to "the enjoyment of the fruits of their own labor." It sits between "liberty" and "the pursuit of happiness" in the first article of the state Declaration of Rights.

Though most of us spend little time thinking about the "fruits of your own labor" clause, it's attracting attention these days at the state's highest court. A renewed focus on this little-known right could mean good news for the future of economic liberty in the Tar Heel State.

State Supreme Court Justice Phil Berger Jr. focused on the "fruits" clause during a May 10 presentation in Cary. "It is unique and represents a foundational principle for the protection of property rights here in North

Carolina," Berger told the Bastiat Society.

"You could easily gloss over this phrase and think, 'Well, my goodness. They took this right from the Declaration of Independence,'" Berger said. "But in North Carolina, the people have enshrined in their constitution a seemingly innocuous clause that packs quite a bit of punch."

"The 'fruits of your own labor' clause is not a relic of the old days, but rather it's a strong safeguard that's available to North Carolinians which serves to protect property interests and economic liberty," Berger added.

Berger labels the clause an "actionable" provision. Plaintiffs can use it as the basis for civil lawsuits. It "has been and will continue to be a valuable tool that offers robust protections for your rights here in this state."

North Carolina wrote the "fruits" clause into the post-Civil War state constitution of 1868. But the idea stretches back to biblical times, Berger said. King Solomon's writing in the Book of Ecclesiastes could be considered a source for the right, as could the words of Aristotle, economist

Adam Smith, American founders James Madison and Thomas Jefferson, and philosophers John Locke and Frederic Bastiat.

"In essence, both Locke and Bastiat conveyed that individuals have the right to create and own property that results from their labor or production," Berger said. "These rights, and protection of those rights by government, is essential to individual liberty and prosperity."

Berger cites N.C. court cases as early as 1835 — three decades before the "fruits" clause — that point toward protection of economic rights.

Legal arguments based on the "fruits" clause have cropped up from time to time over the 150 years since North Carolina officially recognized the constitutional protection.

Berger referenced the "fruits" clause in two recent dissents. In August 2021, Berger and Republican colleagues broke from Democratic justices in a tax dispute between Mecklenburg County and the Harris Teeter grocery store chain. Berger referenced the clause while suggesting that the county's tax valuation scheme

appeared to conflict with basic constitutional rights.

One year later, Berger cited the "fruits" clause in a legal battle over Harnett County's water and sewer capacity fees. His dissent cited the clause as a potential safeguard for developers challenging the county's assessments.

Both dissents involved cases decided when Democrats held a 4-3 majority on the N.C. Supreme Court. Thanks to last year's elections, Berger and fellow Republicans now outnumber Democrats, 5-2.

One of the court's newcomers, Justice Richard Dietz, has offered his own public support for the "fruits" clause.

Writing in Carolina Journal in February 2021, Dietz explained how the clause "was aimed at preventing established businesses from using political influence to keep out new competition in the marketplace."

Dietz pointed to "hard cases and faint-hearted judges" that had diminished the impact of North Carolina's unique economic liberty protections, including the "fruits" clause.

"It's not too late to save our state's unique free enterprise protections from a future as meaningless surplusage," Dietz warned readers. "But the clock is ticking."

Now Dietz, Berger, and their colleagues can determine how the "fruits" clause will impact today's ongoing legal disputes.

"If you have a right that's enshrined in the constitution, then how does a statute interact with that? Where is the friction?" Berger asked on May 10. "What level of scrutiny should the violation of a constitutional right be afforded?"

"Is it a secret weapon? I would say no. Is it something that could be explored more, whether it's by literature, scholarship, or litigation? Absolutely," he said.

It's clear at least some N.C. Supreme Court justices are willing to take another bite at cases dealing with a little-known constitutional provision. Those cases could bear fruit that nourishes defenders of economic freedom.

Mitch Kokai is senior political analyst for the John Locke Foundation.

Carolina voters dislike big government

JOHN HOOD
CONTRIBUTOR



NORTH CAROLINA Democrats are frustrated. It's not hard to see why. Since 2008, when Barack Obama narrowly won the state and Kay Hagan beat Elizabeth Dole by a more comfortable margin, Democrats have fought hard but lost every subsequent presidential and Senate race in the Tar Heel State. In 2010, Republicans won their first majorities in both houses of the General Assembly since the 19th century. Ever since, Democrats have organized, raised money, and recruited candidates. They've screamed and hollered. They've litigated. Yet legislative control remains out of their reach. Even in 2022, running in districts redrawn by Democratic court order, they lost ground in both chambers. Democrats have also enjoyed some victories, mind you — for governor, attorney general, Supreme Court, and key offices in urban counties. They've hardly been shut out of power in North Carolina. But under our state constitution, the legislature is the most important branch of government. And after a fleeting Demo-



Gov. Roy Cooper unveils proposed 2022-23 state budget adjustments.

cratic interlude, the state's highest court is now solidly Republican again, blocking what had been an ongoing progressive effort to convert the judiciary into a policy-making body. For complex social phenomena such as election results, there is no single explanation. Democrats and Republicans have competed vigorously in North Carolina for more than half a century. Partisan affiliations, political networks, regional patterns, and mobilizing issues have changed over time. Here's something that hasn't changed much since I began cov-

ering state politics in the 1980s, however: Democratic candidates tend to fare better when defined as nonideological centrists. They tend to lose when defined as big-government progressives, either by themselves or by their Republican opponents. Most North Carolinians aren't keen on increasing the size, scope, and cost of government. The most recent evidence comes from the John Locke Foundation's latest Civitas Poll. It included two questions that Gallup has been asking its samples for decades. Here's the first one: "Some people think the government is

trying to do too many things that should be left to individuals and businesses. Others think the government should do more to solve our country's problems. Which comes closer to your own view?" In Locke's sample of likely voters, 61% of respondents said the government was trying to do too many things, while 27% said it should do more. The rest were unsure. Here's the second question: "Some people think the government should promote traditional values in our society, and others think the government should not promote any particular set of values. Which is closer to your view?" Opinions here were more mixed, with 38% picking the first answer and 48% picking the second. Cross-tabulating the two questions produces the following five groups of North Carolina voters. Traditionalists say government is doing too many things and that when it acts it should promote traditional values. They made up 30% of the sample. Their polar opposites, Progressives, favor more government and oppose the promotion of traditional values. They were 16% of the sample. Libertarians (25%) dislike activist government and its promotion of traditional values. Populists (6%) like both. The remaining voters,

whom I'll label Centrists for want of a better term, declared themselves unsure about one or both questions. While most Traditionalists reliably vote Republican and nearly all Progressives vote Democratic, the other groups exhibit a mixture of partisan preferences. On the government activism question, most Republicans were against it, most Democrats were for it, and unaffiliated voters tended to agree with Republicans. Regarding government promotion of traditional values, 63% of Republicans said yes while 62% of Democrats and 54% of independents said no. These are general predispositions, of course. Candidates, campaigns, and context matter a great deal. And all human beings can exhibit cognitive dissonance — saying yes to a long list of proposed government actions, for example, while continuing to believe government as a whole is too intrusive. Still, as long as Democrats run as big-government candidates, or can be easily defined as such by their opponents, they'll be running uphill. *John Hood is a John Locke Foundation board member. His latest books, "Mountain Folk" and "Forest Folk," combine epic fantasy with early American history.*

The sinister eco-propaganda of 'How to Blow Up a Pipeline'

GRANT LEFELAR
INTERN



EARLIER THIS SPRING, arthouse theaters across America screened a strikingly titled independent feature: "How to Blow Up a Pipeline." Despite its name, the film is not a documentary-style instruction manual showing viewers how to complete what the title suggests à la "The Anarchist Cookbook." Instead, "Pipeline" is a narrative feature following the exploits of a ragtag group of naive, wannabe revolutionaries as they attempt to, obviously, blow up an oil pipeline. Immediately after the movie's release, mainstream outlets lauded the film and its message. UK's The Independent reviewer Clarisse Loughrey said the film "speaks to a generation's anger." The Guardian's Wendy Ide stated that "it's hard to think of another film as emphatically, passionately and furiously of the moment as this one." This is not the first time Hollywood has sympathetically explored the lighthearted topic of eco-terrorism. Kelly Reichardt's similarly themed 2013 thriller "Night Moves" follows another group of aspiring bomb makers, this time trying to blow up a dam. Master filmmaker Paul Schrader took a crack at the issue in his 2017 drama "First Reformed," starring Ethan Hawke.



Image from promotional material of 'How to Blow Up a Pipeline.'

Both films received near universal acclaim. However, "How to Build a Pipeline" differentiates itself from other environmentalist films in its source material. While an original story, "Pipeline" takes its ideological basis and title from a 2021 manifesto written

by neo-Marxist professor Andreas Malm, who advocates for civilians to "damage and destroy new CO2-emitting devices," all in an effort to reverse climate change. It does not take a second glance to realize the nuttiness of Malm's statement. If Malm wants to destroy CO2 devices, does that mean he wants to carpet-bomb every SUV dealership? How about cows? Does their release of ungodly amounts of methane make them legitimate targets for incendiary devices? Concerningly, to some North Carolinians, Malm's ideas hold some weight. Less than a week after the movie's theatrical release, students in Chapel Hill staged a walk-out in support of Jamie Marsicano, a UNC Law student charged with domestic terrorism after participating in an organized attack on an Atlanta police training center construction site. Some of those who took part in the attack did so over the construction site's clearing of forest to make way for the facility. Other forms of infrastructure have also come under attack. In December, unknown persons attacked two Duke Energy-owned substations in Moore County, leaving the surrounding areas without electricity for days. Currently, there have been no arrests and no concrete motives established. "Pipeline" is another example of the slow mainstreaming of political violence in everyday life,

something Malm advocates in his writings. "Pipeline" director Daniel Goldhaber spoke on how Malm's book inspired the film's content at the Toronto International Film Festival last fall. "I think it's really important that we make movies and tell stories that challenge what we should do about [climate change]. ... That is an urgent conversation to have," said Goldhaber. Despite Goldhaber's claim that he only wants to start a "conversation" on environmentalist tactics, "Pipeline" appears to be a full-fledged endorsement of Malm's advocacy for violence, intended to convince the audience to take similar actions, or at least view those who do as admirable heroes. Distributed by Neon — the indie film label behind the American releases of previous hits "I, Tonya" and "Parasite" — "How to Blow Up a Pipeline" treats environmental concerns as justification for abhorrent political behavior. Set primarily in West Texas, "Pipeline" tells the tale of a diverse group of eight activists working to destroy an oil pipeline by way of explosive devices. To what ends? Just as Malm explains in his writings, group member Shawn (Marcus Scribner) states the purpose of the bombing is to "make oil economically unviable in the marketplace." **continued PAGE 18**

How we can limit partisan gerrymandering in 2023

ANDY JACKSON
CONTRIBUTOR

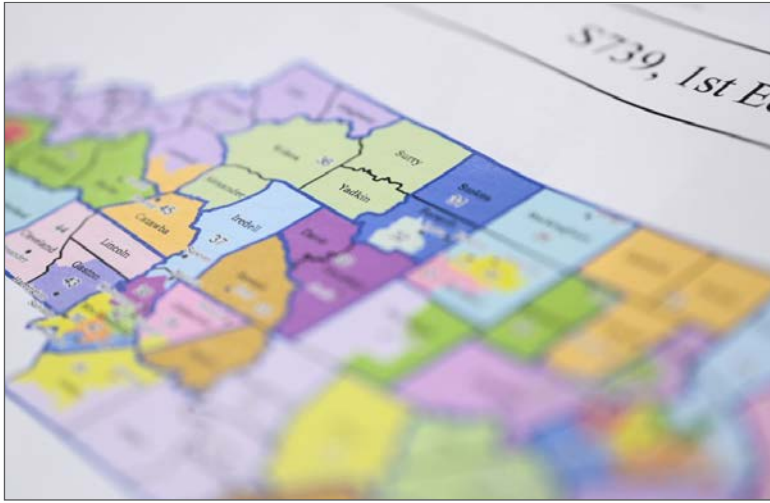


The North Carolina Supreme Court ruled on April 28 that partisan gerrymandering claims were “nonjusticiable, political questions” and ordered the General Assembly to redraw the state’s House, Senate, and congressional maps. The legislature will take up that task later this year.

With the threat of a (successful) political gerrymandering lawsuit largely behind them, how should legislators draw those districts? The short answer is that they should use the same criteria they used when they last drew districts but apply them more strictly.

Those standards include requirements the North Carolina Constitution imposes for state legislative districts: making districts roughly equal in population, requiring that they be contiguous, and minimizing dividing counties.

Other standards legislators used in 2021 that they should use again this year include splitting as few precincts as possible, keeping municipalities within the same district, and keeping districts compact. They should also prohibit using partisan or ra-



This map illustrates the N.C. Senate proposal of new state Senate districts as the N.C. General Assembly members debated the proposed redistricting maps on Nov. 2, 2021.

cial data again when drawing districts.

Legislators should go further by more strictly applying those standards than they did in 2021 and adopting numerical limits when possible. My colleague Jim Stirling and I provide some of those numeric targets in our research report, “Limiting Gerrymandering in North Carolina.” We considered congressional and North Carolina Senate maps in the report. (Legislators can set similar standards for the state House map.)

For example, the General Assembly should divide counties

no more than 13 times and split no more than 13 precincts when drawing the state’s 14 congressional districts. They should seek to keep municipalities whole within congressional districts, although the geography of our cities can make that difficult. For larger cities, they should strive to keep all the “core precincts” (which we define as precincts wholly contained within city limits) within the same congressional district. We considered North Carolina’s 10 largest cities when looking for core precinct splits.

Legislators did not meet those standards in 2021; they divid-

ed counties 14 times and split 24 precincts.

The court-appointed special masters who drew a new congressional map in 2022 fared no better. Their map had fewer county splits (13) and split fewer precincts (again, 13) than did the General Assembly’s. However, they did a worse job of keeping municipalities whole, dividing more municipalities (50) than did the General Assembly (42). Looking at the 10 largest cities, the special masters split the core precincts of five cities while the General Assembly split two.

Similarly, the North Carolina Senate map passed by the General Assembly in 2021 had 19 precinct splits spread across the state, even though only splitting as few as three precincts (all in Wake County) is necessary. They made the minimum possible number of county splits (15) because adherence to that limit is required under the 2002 Stephenson v. Bartlett ruling.

Putting the standards to the test

If both the General Assembly and the court-appointed special masters failed to adhere to strict redistricting standards, perhaps it’s impossible to meet those standards. To test if map-drawing under these restrictions is possible, we recruited 15 students from

North Carolina State University. We gave them two hours of training on redistricting and how to use a redistricting computer program. We then gave them five hours to draw a congressional map and another five to draw a state Senate map. (We did not cover the state House.)

The students showed that adhering to strict redistricting standards is not easy but can be done. They produced four congressional maps and eight state Senate maps that complied with strict standards. We believe that with a little more time, all the students could have created compliant maps.

All but one of the student-produced maps fell within the normal range of expected election results established by Jowei Chen and Daniel Magleby’s expert testimony in the Harper v. Hall I (2021) redistricting lawsuit. See the report for details.

Legislators should adopt stricter redistricting standards and stick with them when redrawing state legislative and congressional maps later this year.

Our research found that they can successfully do so, making districts more representative of their communities and limiting the impact of partisan gerrymandering.

Andy Jackson is Director of the Civitas Center for Public Integrity at the John Locke Foundation.

NCInnovation would be just more crony capitalism

BRIAN BALFOUR
CONTRIBUTOR



A PROVISION included in the Senate budget proposal would direct \$1.4 billion in taxpayer funds to a project to subsidize select private businesses.

NCInnovation is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization dedicated to increasing the amount of university research being commercialized by North Carolina companies. According to their research, North Carolina ranks 20th in the country in terms of such innovation, a ranking they believe is too low.

Every perceived problem, however, does not require a government solution, in this case forcing taxpayers to fund investments in companies chosen by political appointees.

The Senate budget would set aside \$1.4 billion in taxpayer funds to be handed over to NCInnovation. The funds, in no small part, would be used to invest in — or provide grants to — North Carolina businesses taking newly innovated products developed from university-based research to market.

Stripping away the lofty language about innovation and cooperation with university-based research and development, this project is crony capitalism, plain and simple. It would involve an organization of political appointees using taxpayer dollars to pick winners and losers in the marketplace.

Such a move would represent



This CJ file photo shows lab research. NCInnovation will seek to market research done in UNC System schools.

a further intrusion of government into our economy and go against free-market principles. Business investments should be voluntary choices of market participants who willingly risk their own capital. It should be these willing investors who determine which innovations are brought to market, and how much each receives in investment, not politicians or taxpayer-funded committees.

According to the Senate budget bill’s language, NCInnovation’s 13-member board would include eight political appointees. They would be chosen by the House and Senate leadership. The remaining board members would be appointed according to the organization’s bylaws. They are supposed to have experience in areas such as research and development, entrepreneurship, and product commercialization.

Curiously, no state employees are allowed on the board, meaning no representatives from the UNC System, an integral piece of NCInnovation’s mission, will be allowed on the board.

Despite any good intentions, political appointees sitting on a treasure chest of more than \$1 billion in taxpayer dollars will invite a lot of attention and have a tendency to lead to cronyism in which those with the best lobbyists and political connections receive funding. This creates a great recipe for corruption and favoritism.

Locke President Donald Bryson has highlighted concerns with the governance of NCInnovation as provided for in the Senate budget. They include board composition (with eight appointments and none for the executive branch, the legislature would wield a concentration of power

over the group) and transparency (NCInnovation would be exempt from open-meetings and public-records laws).

But that’s not all

Beyond the government intervention and governance concerns surrounding NCInnovation, there exist still more troubling aspects.

First, NCInnovation is organized as a nonprofit but will use taxpayer dollars to acquire equity in private companies. Such a move would certainly blur the lines between nonprofit and for-profit organizations.

Second, part of the plan for NCInnovation is for the organization to use the returns from its investments to fund its continued operations, in order to avoid any further taxpayer appropriations. However, most startup businesses fail. What happens if the organization suffers losses on its investments? Would taxpayers be forced to bail them out?

We should be reminded that Gov. Roy Cooper’s administration, along with Chatham County government, thought it a great idea to commit more than a billion taxpayer dollars over 32 years to VinFast, a startup Vietnamese electric vehicle manufacturer.

Already, VinFast is showing signs of financial distress, and its latest car model is getting universally slammed in reviews, including “very, very bad,” “yikes,” and “return to sender.” Indeed, VinFast announced recently that it will be recalling its entire first

batch of 999 vehicles it shipped to the United States last year due to safety issues.

There is a clause included in the Senate budget bill that allows the General Assembly to repeal NCInnovation’s charter or outright dissolve the organization. So if the group begins losing money, it could be dissolved. But when have you ever known a government program to be dissolved because of poor outcomes? If anything, they get rewarded with more money to try to “fix” them. In reality, politicians of any party will be loath to get rid of a massive endowment that enables their political appointees to direct taxpayer dollars to hand-picked companies.

Third, JPMorgan Chase Chair and CEO Jamie Dimon voicing his support of NCInnovation should raise a red flag. According to the Senate budget bill language, NCInnovation will hire “an independent investment manager to handle activities related to managing State funds.” It’s easy to speculate that the leading contender to manage the \$1.4 billion endowment may well be JPMorgan Chase.

Recall this is the same JPMorgan Chase that received a \$25 billion government bailout in 2008.

North Carolina taxpayers should not be forced into becoming investors in businesses selected by politicians or their appointees.

Brian Balfour is Senior Vice President of Research for the John Locke Foundation.

Lawmakers should move constitutional amendments forward

JORDAN ROBERTS
CONTRIBUTOR



In Federalist 49, James Madison wrote, "The people are the only legitimate fountain of power, and it is from them that the constitutional charter, under which the several branches of government hold their power, is derived."

This still holds today and applies equally to the U.S. Constitution and to state constitutions like North Carolina's.

One of the key ways to bind the constitution to the people is by allowing them to amend their governing document.

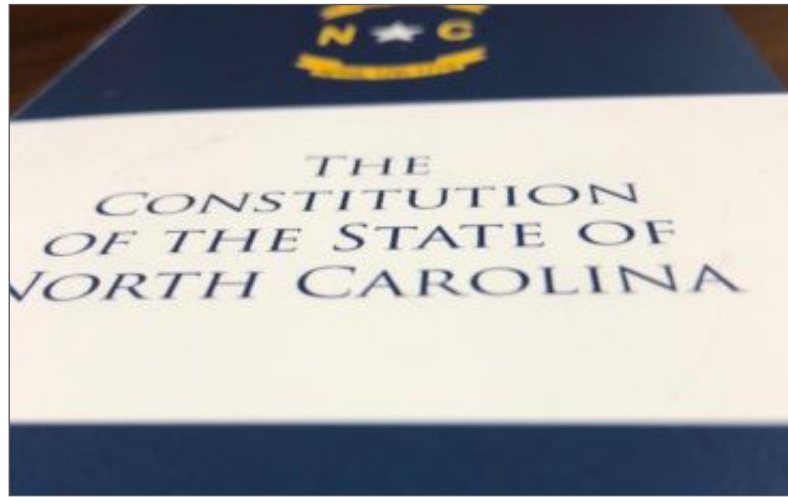
The process is, by design, difficult to do. In each biennium in North Carolina, lawmakers elected by the people propose constitutional amendments to be voted on in a future election.

Several key constitutional amendments were proposed by lawmakers in the current long session and should be put to a vote by the people.

How does the process work in North Carolina?

Unlike some states where citizens can petition for constitutional changes, only the legislature can propose constitutional amendments.

The legislature will propose language that can be voted on during an upcoming election, either on the primary or general



CI FILE PHOTO

election ballot.

Before the language can be placed on the ballot, it must pass by a three-fifths margin in each chamber.

This means it would need to be supported by 72 members in the House and 30 in the Senate.

Then 50% of the voters would need to approve the changes for the language to be added to the constitution.

Allowing voters to make their voices heard on proposals to amend the constitution is a hallmark of our democratic republic.

When casting votes on a proposed constitutional amendment, lawmakers are essentially voting to give the option to the voters rather than voting on the proposal themselves.

Some significant constitutional amendments have passed in recent years.

In 2018 North Carolina voters

considered six amendments.

Of those that passed, voters approved provisions to require showing an ID to vote in the state, a limit on the state income tax, an expansion of victims' rights, and a right to fish and hunt.

In total, voters have amended our state's current constitution 42 times since it was ratified in 1971.

Now, this year, there are several proposals that should be placed on the ballot in the future:

Right to work

North Carolina has enjoyed its status as a right-to-work state for over 75 years.

But as we've seen in states like Michigan, if opponents of right to work take control, they

would likely repeal the law. Lawmakers should give the voters the option of enshrining this in the constitution.

TABOR

For the last decade, state lawmakers have kept the growth of government in line with population growth and inflation, which has resulted in prudent budgeting and economic growth.

Voters should be able to make this the state's policy in perpetuity

Repeal of the literacy test

This nonfunctional provision in our state constitution is an unfortunate reminder of our racist past.

Although the Voting Rights Act of 1965 outlawed literacy tests as a condition to vote, lawmakers should allow voters to remove this archaic provision from our guiding document.

Citizens-only voting

To prevent future governments from allowing noncitizens to vote in North Carolina elections, lawmakers should ask the voters to clear up ambiguities in the suffrage section of the constitution.

This constitutional amendment would make it clear that

one must be a citizen to vote in North Carolina.

Eminent domain

After the tragic Kelo v. New London decision, which opened the door to more eminent domain abuse nationwide, the U.S. Supreme Court left the door open to states to further restrict government takings for economic development.

North Carolina has no such protections currently, and we have seen some recent abuses that make it even more imperative that voters get a chance to enshrine this protection in the constitution.

Constitutional amendments are not subject to the crossover deadline or a gubernatorial veto.

There is still time this session for lawmakers to vote on these proposals and give the decision to the people to vote on these crucial issues that need to be decided in our founding documents.

Our representative republic primarily works by electing representatives to meet and decide on policy matters.

However, the other way the people can be directly involved in policy is through constitutional amendments.

Lawmakers should give the people a chance to vote on these popular provisions and provide them with the opportunity to add them to our state's founding document.

GOT AN OPINION?

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

Please email any submissions to opinion editor
David Larson | dlarson@carolinajournal.org

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



Political and racial gerrymander myths

PAUL STAM
CONTRIBUTOR



In these political times, the last rationalization of liberals tired of losing is the cry that everything they don't like legislatively is because of the "gerrymander." On NBC, CNN and MSNBC in May 2023, Gov. Roy Cooper said: "Technologically, diabolical gerrymandering. Some of the worst in the country." He didn't like limitations on abortion or expansions of school choice, and this seemed to explain his inability to stop it.

As David Larson pointed out in his essay "Super-technologically-diabolical Gerrymandering" (Carolina Journal, May 19), there was no political gerrymander that formed the 2023-24 session of the General Assembly.

There may have been one Republican political gerrymander in the past (2017-18), and there may be more in the future.

But the current legislature is the result of a Democrat political gerrymander in 2022 of the state Senate and congressional delegation.

The House map was passed almost unanimously, hardly evidence of any kind of political gerrymander.

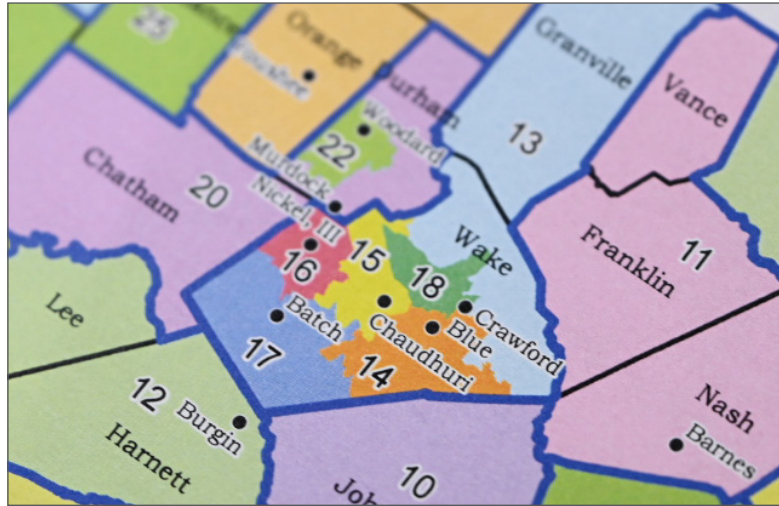
The congressional map was drawn by special masters chosen by the Democrat state Supreme Court. They were ordered to use political criteria to create a Democrat result.

What about racist gerrymandering?

When they're not blaming the nonexistent political gerrymander, the other cry is a "racist gerrymander." Let's look at that more carefully.

In the 2010 general elections, House Republicans picked up 16 seats using a 2004 Democrat-crafted political gerrymander to make a (68-52) majority (one independent joined Republicans). The GOP picked up 11 seats in the state Senate for a supermajority, (31-19).

After the census of 2010, the General Assembly had the legal duty to redistrict the entire state, applying federally required population criteria and the state constitution's "whole county" provision.



This map illustrates the N.C. Senate proposal of Wake County state Senate districts as the N.C. General Assembly debated the proposed redistricting maps on November 2, 2021.

The assembly proceeded to do so, but there was a complication. Federal law required, under the Voting Rights Act, that "racial gerrymandering" must be done to create minority-majority districts where possible.

The U.S. Justice Department, run by Attorney General Eric Holder, appointed by President Barack Obama, approved the maps. They were also approved by the state Supreme Court twice and by federal courts.

In 2014 African American Democrats made big gains, but it did not help Democrats as a whole. Republicans gained even more seats and obtained supermajorities in the House (77-43) and expanded them in the Senate (34-16).

The U.S. Supreme Court changed its mind (Alabama Legislative Black Caucus v. Alabama, 2014) and decided that what it required in 2011 was hereafter prohibited as an illegal racial gerrymander. The maps would have to be redrawn.

The 2011 North Carolina maps were attacked again under this new U.S. Supreme Court doctrine. The maps were redrawn for the 2016 election.

But the narrative had been set by the then-legal maps drawn in 2011. Republican legislators must have had race in their hearts (retroactively) instead of complying with the Voting Rights Act and U.S. Supreme Court decisions. They must be bad people. They were guilty of not reading the future minds of Supreme Court justices.

On July 29, 2016, the McCrory case decision came down from

the 4th Circuit just in time for the general election. It claimed that the voter ID bill (passed in 2013) had been crafted "with almost surgical precision" to disadvantage black voters. The Appeals Court disregarded the evidence from the only election where voter ID had been used in 2016. The trial judge heard dozens and dozens of witnesses and found that not a single African American voter who tried to vote was prevented from doing so.

On July 30, 2016, I read in the New York Times of the "scurrilous attempt by North Carolina Republicans to suppress the rising power of black voters." It made me feel bad. Maybe I had missed something in the 25,000 pages of exhibits or in the 479 pages of the trial judge's analysis of the evidence. But I had not yet read the McCrory 4th Circuit decision.

After reading the decision, I was perplexed, amused, and angry. I was perplexed because the Appeals Court decision ignored Supreme Court precedents, amused because the "evidence" marshaled by the 4th Circuit was in turns ludicrous or logically fallacious. I was angry because the overwhelming will of the people had been thwarted under the guise of combating racism.

What was the proof that the 4th Circuit found of legislative racism? Not much. The opinion makes clear that:

"our conclusion does not mean, and we do not suggest, that any member of the General Assembly harbored racial hatred or animosity toward any minority group."

Without any evidence that any of the 170 members of the General Assembly — Republican or Democrat; black, white or Indian; men or women — were intending to discriminate against African American voters, the 4th Circuit pinned on the collective body an intent which there was no evidence that any member harbored.

Then the court marshaled another argument. At one of the public hearings Don Yelton, a GOP precinct chair, delivered a baldly racist statement. The court even cited his call-in to "The Daily Show"!!

"The statements do not prove that any member of the General Assembly acted with discriminatory intent," the decision stated. "But the sheer outrageousness of these public statements by a party leader does provide some evidence of the racial and partisan political environment in which the General Assembly enacted the law."

With over 150 statements made at the public hearings, that was the best evidence the 4th Circuit could find. The statement by a party leader does not mean that any member of the assembly paid any attention to it. Members often pride themselves on how little attention they pay to their party. Guilt by association is McCarthyism at its worst.

In this case the "party leader" was a precinct chair. One vote is usually sufficient to elect yourself as precinct chair. This particular "party leader" was known to be constantly at odds with actual party leaders.

The next scrap of evidence was "the smoking gun." The sponsors of the bill requested racially disaggregated data of various election methods. This request was made pre-Shelby (2013), when the U.S. Supreme Court declared unconstitutional certain provisions of the Civil Rights Act that required pre-clearance to changes in election law. It would have been legislative malpractice for the sponsors of the bill to have not requested this data prior to Shelby. The District Court carefully explained this in its 479-page opinion. The Court of Appeals ignored this obvious fact.

The next bit of "evidence" of discriminatory intent was the passage of the bill right after Shelby. The House bill was filed and considered months prior to Shelby. Although they spoke against it, Democratic leaders in the House complemented the

chair of the Election Law Committee, former Republican House Rules chair Rep. David Lewis, for a thorough and proper process. After Shelby, the Senate Rules chair announced there would be an "omnibus bill." The 4th Circuit apparently thought the word "omnibus" had the same meaning as "ominous" and that it suddenly sprang out of the sea foam of the Aegean, like Aphrodite. But that is not what happened. The legislation which the Senate added to the House bill had been filed in the Senate for months.

The 4th Circuit, engaging in the logical fallacy identified by Aristotle 2500 years ago — post hoc ergo propter hoc — decided that the bill was passed because of the unprecedented gains of African Americans in electing Democrats in 2012 and that suddenly this bill became law in 2013 when Shelby gave the green light.

But nothing of the sort happened. There were unprecedented gains of African Americans in the elections to the state House and Senate. But that did not help Democrats. In 2014 Democrats had their worst election outcome in 144 years, losing to super majorities in the House (74 to 46) and Senate (34 to 16), as well as the governorship, and with Republicans retaining a majority on the Supreme Court.

Neither did these reforms come because of Shelby. Voter ID came out of the 2000 Bush/Gore razor-thin election in Florida, followed by the Jimmy Carter/James Baker report in 2005. That report recommended photo voter ID. Republicans filed multiple voter ID bills: House Bill 10 in 2003, H.B. 794 in 2005, H.B. 285 in 2007, and H.B. 430 in 2009.

To say that photo voter ID came because of Shelby is ludicrous. In 2010 House and Senate Republicans, then in the minority, made, as part of their 10-point campaign platform, photo voter ID as one of the laws they would pass within the first 100 days if they were given a majority. In 2011, H.B. 351, "Restore Confidence in Government," was passed by the House and Senate and vetoed by Democrat Gov. Bev Perdue. Photo voter ID in 2013 was passed then because there was finally a governor (McCrory) who would sign it.

Paul Stam is a John Locke Foundation board member. He is an attorney and former state legislator.

Eco-propaganda

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The filmmakers attempt to justify the group's actions by providing some of the supposed protagonists with sympathetic sob story backgrounds: the mother of group leader Xochitl, portrayed by co-screenwriter Ariela Barer, died in a global warming heat wave; Theo (Sasha Lane) caught leukemia after growing up by a nearby oil refinery; and Dwayne's (Jake Weary) Texas property was taken via eminent

domain for the sake of pipeline construction.

In response, the group travels to a deserted Texan landscape to blow up a recently built oil pipeline.

Throughout the film, the group justifies its violent actions to the audience. In one scene, the group converses in a dilapidated living room, bizarrely comparing themselves to Boston Tea Party participants and naming themselves "patriots." Michael (Forrest Goodluck) embraces the "terrorist" moniker, stating, "If the American Empire calls us 'terrorists,' then we're doing something right."

Despite having no formal training, Michael proceeds to irresponsibly create a homemade

incendiary device, risking his life in the process. When asked if the bomb will blow up in their faces, Michael simply responds, "I don't care."

The movie's gravest sin is reserved not for the group's violence against infrastructure, but against the personal property of everyday people.

In the opening scene, Xochitl slashes the tires of a random SUV parked on the street. Xochitl justifies her action in a flier placed on the vandalized SUV's windshield, stating, "If the law will not punish you, then we will."

Furthermore, group member Logan (Lukas Gage) states "revolution has collateral damage" in response to a question of wheth-

er normal citizens would be economically hurt from the fallout of the pipeline's destruction.

Furthermore, those standing in the way of the pipeline's destruction, be it mainstream environmental activists or pipeline workers, are vilified by the film. In one scene, Xochitl complains to a small group of fossil fuel divestment activists that their efforts will do nothing to save humanity from extinction.

Similarly, Michael chastises his mother (Irene Bedard) for her nonviolent environmental activism, calling her a "coward."

Toward the film's climax, oil-company employees who confront the group are portrayed as cartoonish gun-toting rednecks. As a group member flees the

scene, one of the workers opens fire with a handgun.

"Pipeline" further alludes to the strategy of violence being used in the future. In a mid-credits scene, another group of terrorists plants a bomb on a random yacht, pasting the same flier on a post as the one left by Xochitl in the film's opening.

Viewers are left with the conclusion that the filmmaker would not be disappointed if the violent actions seen in the film were replicated in the real world, attacking those who commit the unforgivable crime of owning devices that run on fossil fuels.

If you believe in the merits of nonviolent advocacy and democracy, which I believe you do, let's all hope that is not the case.

Grand Theft Auto NC

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He also mentions the Steal-a-Kia/Hyundai TikTok challenge as contributing, saying, “The rise in thefts has also been connected to a viral TikTok challenge that shows people how to use a USB cable to start Kias and Hyundais without a key.”

Recently in Cary, which isn’t a city known for crime, four hotels were also hit by thieves. While the bad actors didn’t steal the cars themselves, dozens of cars had their windows smashed and items stolen from inside. Cary police said if people really have to go to an event or a hotel, they should put all items out of site and park in a well-lit area near a building.

Who’s really to blame?

Rather than blame TikTok, Korean car companies, or people who leave their car running in the winter or with valuables visible,

Attorney General Josh Stein Urges Kia and Hyundai to Act Swiftly to Protect Vehicle Owners and Public Safety

“Kia and Hyundai should have included anti-theft devices on their cars. Because of that omission, car owners are suffering. Kia and Hyundai need to act now to address the hardships they are causing their customers and the rise in crime they are contributing to.”

Attorney General Josh Stein

Attorney General Josh Stein addresses the rise of car theft across the state and in our major cities.

why not blame those choosing to break into cars?

It’s always wise to lock your home and put a security system in place, but there are many neighborhoods safe enough for people to leave their doors unlocked and know they can trust their neighbors to both not steal from them and to keep an eye out. If homes in one of these safe neighborhoods suddenly started being burglarized, it wouldn’t make sense to blame the homeowners or homebuilders for not having enough se-

curity in place.

In my neighborhood, many people leave their cars running in the winter as they get ready. Somehow, even though I have every opportunity to, I have managed to restrain myself from stealing any of them.

The question is: Why are so many young people so easily influenced by nonsense on TikTok or other social media platforms to such a degree that they would steal cars, and risk years behind bars, to complete a “challenge”?

CMPD News @CMPD

The largest contributor to the increase in overall crime incidents are car thefts (up 99%). The spike is linked to the Kia/Hyundai Challenge, social media TikTok trend that started around the summer of 2022.



10:51 AM · Apr 20, 2023 · 1,025 Views

The Charlotte-Mecklenburg Police Department says car theft is the top contributor to rising crime in North Carolina’s largest city.

It seems like a sort of “gamification” of life as they spend more and more of their time online, whether it’s playing video games, browsing social media, or being otherwise involved in virtual worlds. When that virtual gamified world blends with the real world, there apparently can be crazy consequences. Other thefts, like the dealership heists, are likely just organized crime.

Whatever else explains the rise in car theft — whether social media, poor security, or organized crime — the underlying culprit is lawlessness. And that can’t be fixed by scolding car companies or writing press releases, as it’s a deeper symptom of the general social decay that’s also leading to spiking homicide rates, drug overdose deaths, mental health diagnoses, and homelessness.

THE CAROLINA JOURNAL

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Navigating the Legislative Building

continued from PAGE 2

if they didn’t, and rang up their meals with a smile and a “dis-

count.”

Years later, when I returned to work for Majority Leader Edgar Starnes of Caldwell County, it all flooded back to me. The smells, the food, the kindness — and the universal desire, regardless of party, to make North Carolina the best possible home for everyone.

North Carolina’s seal hangs at the front of each chamber and reads *Esse Quam Videri*,

the state motto, “To Be Rather than to Seem.” It’s from Greek philosopher Marcus Tullius Cicero’s essay, “De Amicitia,” explaining how to be a good friend. Among the points he makes is that true friendship is between people of good moral character and that friendship makes one a better person. He writes that real friendship requires trust, wisdom, and basic goodness.

Like that 60-year-old build-

ing, the relationships and the ideology built at the N.C. General Assembly stand the test of time. While politics will always be a part of the culture, I have found over the years that all who serve within those walls want to build a better state. They want all children to thrive, business owners and their employees to grow, and the state to stand as a beacon of liberty and prosperity.

Cicero’s essay on friendship

explains the dynamic well. He says that real friendships are built by appreciating people not for what they can give us but because we find a kindred soul in them. Differences in policy often split members. Finding some common ground, a kindred soul, and using that friendship to build a prosperous and free future for our state will be their legacy and that of the Legislative Building.

Priceless...

continued from PAGE 2

easy and relatively affordable.

The plan was straightforward. I’d move to North Carolina in January 2020. My husband would join me after he retired from the Colorado legislature in May 2022. Our kids and other family members would visit, and we’d also be back in Colorado. We’d see each other often.

Eight weeks after I arrived in North Carolina, the world shut down. Everything changed. Two weeks turned into two years. Travel restrictions, vaccine mandates, and work schedules challenged the 1,600-mile cross-country trek. We talked on the phone, Facetimed, and texted often, but we usually spent birthdays, anniversaries, and many holidays apart. Virtual relationships can’t replace physical proximity. I’ve always worked, but we’ve never been so physically separated.

I threw myself into my Locke family. Together, we dove head-first into our response to government shutdowns. We navigated protests, violence, vaccine mandates, political toxicity, labor shortages, and economic instability.

Amid the madness and after several evenings enjoying adult beverages around a fire pit

(where all good ideas are initiated), Donald Bryson, then president of the Civitas Institute, and I incubated a plan to capitalize on our organizational strengths and merge capacities.

In January 2021, we went from two separate think tanks to the battle tank known as Locke with the sole purpose of being the most influential driving force in public policy in North Carolina. Cost savings were reinvested in capacity expansion in government affairs, communications, research, development, and grassroots.

We reworked Carolina Journal structurally and aesthetically. We hired new talent, expanded our reach, increased our influence, and racked up policy wins for North Carolinians. Our network peers took notice and recognized our work with a national award. Quite simply, we are the best.

My father taught me not to define wealth and success professionally. As kids, my siblings and I rolled our eyes whenever he said, “I’m the wealthiest man in the world. I have seven wonderful children and a beautiful wife. What more could anyone want?” When I finally had my own family, I understood what he meant.

No matter what our plans are, God has his own. My husband John did retire, but he can’t leave Colorado for extended periods. My mother-in-law’s dementia has forced her into assisted living. Based on my experience with

my parents, it doesn’t get better. It just ends. He’s needed in Colorado.

Over the last year, my kids have asked me to be more present. Despite DNA and role modeling that makes us fiercely independent, we get strength from our family unit.

In this spirit, I announce, once again, that I’m negotiating my calendar. I will retire from being the CEO of the John Locke Foundation on June 30. It’s been the professional honor of a lifetime to lead this great organization. Only my family could take me away.

Memo to parents of young children: “The Song for a Fifth Child” comes true. They grow up, move out of your house, and become fascinating people with their own lives. When they ask you to be present in their lives, do it.

As for me, I’ll continue to be



No matter what our plans are, God has his own.

the organization’s biggest champion, just from a slightly different vantage point. I’ll be doing some contract work with Locke on particular projects and working with development, which allows me the flexibility to split my time between Colorado and North Carolina. Anyone who has heard me fawn over my little house on Core Sound in Carteret County knows I can’t give it up entirely. Also, I’ll be reunited with my first policy love – energy – this time on a national level.

More importantly, I’m going to treasure every moment with my family. Time is priceless. Once spent, we can’t get it back. Since I will have the luxury of remote work, I plan trips to see my adult children. John and I will spend time with my mother-in-law while she still remembers us.

I want to thank all of you who have made my time in North Carolina so meaningful. You welcomed me into your hearts and homes. You and your families embraced me when I couldn’t hug my own.

I cannot begin to convey my gratitude for your support and encouragement. North Carolina is a special place. But you already know that.

SONG FOR A FIFTH CHILD

By Ruth Hulburt Hamilton

**Mother, oh mother, come shake out your cloth!
Empty the dustpan, poison the moth,
Hang out the washing and butter the bread,
Sew on a button and make up a bed.
Where is the mother whose house is so shocking?
She’s up in the nursery, blissfully rocking!**

**Oh, I’ve grown as shiftless as Little Boy Blue
(Lullaby, rockaby, lullaby, loo).
Dishes are waiting and bills are past due
(Pat-a-cake, darling, and peek, peekaboo).
The shopping’s not done and there’s nothing for stew
And out in the yard there’s a hullabaloo
But I’m playing Kanga and this is my Roo.
Look! Aren’t her eyes the most wonderful hue?
(Lullaby, rockaby, lullaby loo.)**

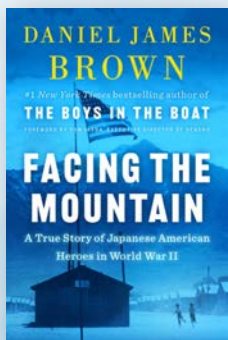
**Oh, cleaning and scrubbing will wait till tomorrow,
But children grow up, as I’ve learned to my sorrow.
So quiet down, cobwebs. Dust, go to sleep.
I’m rocking my baby. Babies don’t keep.**

20 SUMMER READING

BEACH READS: CJ SUMMER EDITION

Looking for a good book? We got you.

With summer under way, sometimes we all need to check into a true story, a work of fantasy, of dystopian fiction, or a new way of seeing history. Here are the vacation reads filling our beach bags.



FACING THE MOUNTAIN: A TRUE STORY OF JAPANESE AMERICAN HEROES IN WORLD WAR II
Daniel James Brown

AMY O. COOKE
JOHN LOCKE FOUNDATION CEO
CAROLINA JOURNAL PUBLISHER

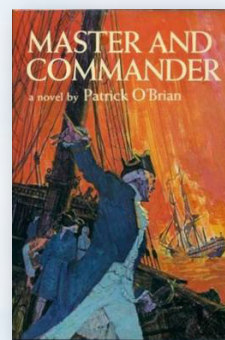
For the energy-policy curious, aka geeks:

Shorting the Grid by Meredith Angwin, about the fragility of the electric grid

Fun beach reads:

Remarkably Bright Creatures by Shelby Van Pelt

Happy Go Lucky by David Sedaris



MASTER AND COMMANDER
Patrick O'Brian

JON SANDERS
DIRECTOR OF CENTER FOR FOOD, POWER, AND LIFE
JOHN LOCKE FOUNDATION

I would recommend escaping to the high seas of Patrick O'Brian's Aubrey/Maturin novels, beginning with **Master and Commander**.

I would urge readers to consult the local used bookstores. They are magical places packed with gems awaiting your discovery, and their treasures cannot be digitally erased by virtual censors of the present day but bear the patina and crinkles of proof.



LORD OF THE FLIES
Daniel James Brown

KELLY MANN
DIRECTOR OF EXTERNAL RELATIONS
JOHN LOCKE FOUNDATION

J.K. Rowling is most known for writing the Harry Potter series, but what is less known is her pseudonym, Robert Galbraith. The Cormoran Strike crime series is published under the pseudonym.

I also highly recommend **Lord of the Flies**. I try to read a classic every month that I didn't read in high school and college, and this is my most recent.

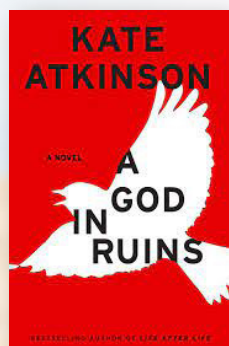


THE LAST CASTLE
Denise Kiernan

CARRIE LEGGINS
DIRECTOR OF OPERATIONS
JOHN LOCKE FOUNDATION

The Last Castle: The Epic Story of Love, Loss, and American Royalty in the Nation's Largest Home by Denise Kiernan is a deep dive into the Biltmore house and the history surrounding it.

Wrong Place Wrong Time by Gillian McAllister is a true "beach read," and I crushed it in two days.



A GOD IN RUINS
Kate Atkinson

JON GUZE
SENIOR LEGAL STUDIES FELLOW
JOHN LOCKE FOUNDATION

I enjoyed **A God in Ruins**, by Kate Atkinson. It's set in England before and during WWII, and it's one of the best war novels I've ever read.

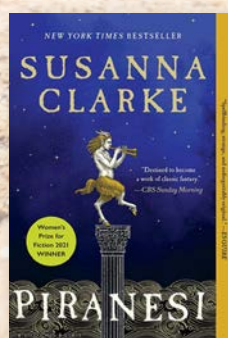


A TIME TO BUILD,
Yuval Levin

ANDRE BELIVEAU
VISITING FELLOW
JOHN LOCKE FOUNDATION

The Right: The Hundred-Year War for American Conservatism, by Matthew Continetti (Basic Books, 2022. Paperback, 2023)

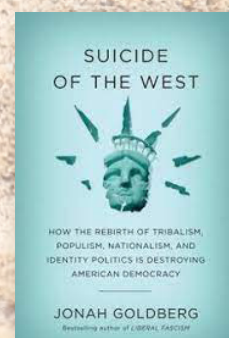
A Time to Build, by Yuval Levin (Basic Books, 2020)



PIRANESI
Susanna Clarke

BROOKE MEDINA
VICE PRESIDENT OF COMMUNICATIONS
JOHN LOCKE FOUNDATION

I also suggest **How To Be A Conservative** by Roger Scruton (2014).



SUICIDE OF THE WEST
Jonah Goldberg

JORDAN ROBERTS
DIRECTOR OF GOVERNMENT AFFAIRS
JOHN LOCKE FOUNDATION

Suicide of the West – Jonah Goldberg.