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BY NCCC STAFF

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Lawmakers Tackle Key Questions as Session Revs Up

BY NCCC STAFF

In the current session, the North Carolina General Assembly is tackling a range of issues that will impact the state this year — and in years to come.

Three key bills

The General Assembly will consider three bills of special concern to Civitas supporters this session.

- House Bill 3 – This bill would place on the ballot in fall 2018 an amendment to the state Constitution clarifying that the state's eminent domain powers could only be used for a "public use" and that "just compensation shall be paid" to the landowner, as determined by a jury. This would be an important step in protecting property rights and protecting against the state government's abuse of its eminent domain powers.

- House Bill 10 – Along the same lines as HB 3, this bill

would change the statutory law regarding the state's eminent domain powers, changing the current power from the ability to exercise eminent domain for "public use or benefit" to just "public use." That is an important distinction and would restrict the state's ability to improperly use its eminent domain powers.

- House Bill 7 – This bill would strengthen the state's Rainy Day Fund (savings reserve) by limiting the amount of the savings the legislature can spend in any given year (while allowing for exceptions if a two-thirds majority approves), specifying the uses of the funds, requiring 15 percent of each year's year-over-year increase in tax revenue be placed in the fund, and also requiring any savings from refinancing state debt to be placed into the fund. This is a fiscally prudent move to better prepare the state for the inevitable cyclical nature of

state revenue, so there will be no need to resort to "temporary taxes" or wild spending swings to cover for major revenue drop offs when recessions hit. (See page 4)

Bill would boost broadband

Republican legislative leaders have announced a bill aimed at bringing broadband Internet to 85 rural counties through public-private partnerships and grants.

The bill (HB 68) is called the BRIGHT Futures Act, which is an acronym for:

- Broadband-enabled services
- Retail online services
- Internet of things
- Gridpower
- Health Care
- Training and education

Lawmakers said the goal of the legislation is to spread high-speed broadband Internet access to the rest of the state to influence these "BRIGHT

Markets."

The bill also would direct the Rural Infrastructure Authority program within the Rural Economic Development Division to give grants for digital infrastructure, in addition to grants to construct water and wastewater facilities and other physical infrastructure needs.

However, Brian Balfour, executive vice president at the Civitas Institute, questioned the role of the government in expanding broadband to the four corners of the state.

"While the intent to provide broadband service to rural areas may be admirable, we don't believe it is the role of government to be involved in such a service," he said. "It is not up to the government to use taxpayer dollars to pay for people's Internet connections."

Rep. John Szoka (R-Cumberland)

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805 Spring Forest Rd Ste 100
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Vol. 9, No. 2



Beware of the Media's Subtle Slants on the News

BY JAMES TYNEN

People are waking up to the danger of fake news – phony stories hyped up by the media and politicians -- but we news consumers have to be alert to the subtler slanting of the news that happens every day.

And I mean every day. Just as an experiment, on the morning of Feb. 24 I looked over the News & Observer's website to see what I might find in terms of news that is distorted subtly – and therefore dangerously.

Full disclosure: I have been a foot soldier in the media war for decades, and I know all about how to play, or not play, a story. I will neither confirm nor deny that I have employed some of these tricks myself.

The non-news news story

Take an Associated Press story from a day earlier. Its lead –

Note how little substance or urgency this article has. It's about an announcement about a PR event that is scheduled to announce something an activist group hopes will happen in the future.

Will knowing this a day ahead of time matter to a typical reader? Of course not, it's just hype.

But the AP and N&O, just by creating this item, have made it seem important.

The real problem is that no one reads a newspaper with full attention. We glance over it. But that's exactly why it's so insidious: We readers don't have our guard up, and these factoids get into our minds without our even noticing.

Slanting the news with this non-news, continues right down to the final paragraph: "Previously, the NAACP held a 15-year economic boycott of South Carolina over the flying of the Confederate battle flag on Statehouse grounds. That boycott ended with the flag's

You have more important things to do than look the facts up, but Civitas generously lets me monkey around with this kind of thing, so I did.

The 15-year period cited saw South Carolina's real GDP rise from \$145 billion to \$179 billion, according to stastista.com. That doesn't sound terrible.

Moreover, the economy of a state is subject to a huge number of variables. South Carolina's economy is larger than those of Greece, or the Czech Republic, or New Zealand. It's impossible to say whether one tiny variable had any effect, and it's extremely unlikely it did. But just by the way it arranged the words, the N&O made it seem as if the boycott was a huge success.

The lonely quote

Then there's the single person who is taken, for no apparent reason, as a representative of some large story. That's behind the N&O story about a Triad area billboard reading: "Real men provide, Real women appreciate it."

Here's another trade secret: Any news story needs quotations. In a state of 10 million people, it's not too hard to find someone who will say something mildly interesting. The hidden implication, however, is that what the person says is correct.

The item says the billboard "has caught the eye — and the ire — of some who think it is a slam on gender equality."

Some? How many? Who are they? Are their thoughts representative?

The newspaper puts forward one person, "Winston-Salem business owner Molly Grace," to say: "It does not say anything that suggests that men and women are equal role players

in the home."

"It really marginalizes and hurts people," she added.

Are her views representative of many others? A majority? Of the thousands who drive past the billboard, how many agree, how many find it silly but unimportant, and how many don't care? Would she mind if this news item draws attention to her business? Hard to say.

The main trick here is that the N&O has found one person who has an opinion and is touting her views as important. Are they? The N&O doesn't know. But the reporter has stumbled across, out of the thousands who have glimpsed the billboard, one person who has some emotion over it, and that's enough for a story.

Unfortunately, most of us readers won't catch how little substance the story has.

Slanted headline

Of course, the quickest, easiest way to slant a story is to fiddle with the headline. The same N&O website had a Charles Krauthammer/Washington Post column headlined: "US foreign policy amid a 'Madman' President Trump."

The first thing a would-be journalist learns is that many readers read only the headline; those who read further usually have taken a crucial first impression from the headline.

The association of words is vital. Professional communicators all know this. That's why, for instance, a restaurant menu will tout the "delicious appetizers" and "luscious desserts." Your mind may recognize the adjectives, but your mouth will water anyway.

From the very beginning, this headline links "Madman"

and "Trump." And we typical newspaper readers are hardly conscious of it.

So is Krauthammer calling the president a madman? The opposite is true. He is no Trump fan, but he recognizes the power of the classic "good cop/bad cop" ploy.

The real point is that the flamboyant, unpredictable president has surrounded himself with experienced foreign policy experts. Krauthammer writes:

"This suggests that the peculiar and discordant makeup of the U.S. national security team – traditionalist lieutenants, disruptive boss – might reproduce the old Nixonian 'Madman Theory.' That's when adversaries tread carefully because they suspect the U.S. president of being unpredictable, occasionally reckless and potentially crazy dangerous. Henry Kissinger, with Nixon's collaboration, tried more than once to exploit this perception to pressure adversaries."

In other words, the column in fact suggests the president uses his public persona to create leverage for the diplomats and generals who implement the policies. He's not a madman, he's (duh!) a cagy dealmaker.

You don't have to buy that conclusion to see the point: The headline channels our perceptions of the actual column.

The examples above are almost subliminal in their impact, but that makes them all the more effective. Multiply these by all the media messages we are surrounded with all day, and you see the danger.

By all means, beware of fake news. But, just as important, beware of how the news is subtly shaped and twisted to mislead you. ■



the first and most important part of the story – reads: "The NAACP is announcing plans for an economic boycott of North Carolina to protest laws enacted by the state's conservative General Assembly, including one limiting LGBT protections."

removal in 2015."

This is a classic logical fallacy: just because two things happened at the same time doesn't mean that one caused the other. But of course we newspaper readers aren't focused on that, so this too may well slip right by us.

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NC Capitol Connection

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NC Capitol Connection is a publication of the Civitas Institute

The Civitas Institute is a 501(c)(3) non-profit dedicated to advancing conservative and free-market principles in the state of North Carolina.

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Muzzling Free Speech On College Campuses

BY MARK SHIVER

The following is a column by Mark Shiver, host of "What Matters in North Carolina."

Dr. Mike Adams knows firsthand what it feels like to be muzzled, or, more accurately, what it feels like for others to attempt to muzzle him. As a professor of criminology at the University of North Carolina at Wilmington, (UNC-W), Adams has been on both sides of the political spectrum.

As a guest on the "What Matters in North Carolina" podcast on February 14, Adams spoke of being an atheist and leftist professor at UNC-W for a number of years, then changing his views on both counts. Adams said, "Despite the asserted commitment to tolerance and diversity on our campuses, our universities are exactly the opposite. And they are very closed to conservative thought."

Controversy headed Adams' way, but he has turned that challenge into opportunities to write columns and give speeches on First Amendment issues. For example, Adams will kick off this year's ICON Lecture Series on March 7 with a speech entitled, "How U.S. Campuses Incubate and Enforce Cultural Marxism."

"Marxism and radical thought on our college campuses only succeed because [campuses] are really ideological echo chambers," Adams said. As for campus leftists, he added, "It's not that they have good ideas, but they've set up a system on the campus where we don't have reasoned debate."

The rise of campus speech codes and notions such as triggers and micro-aggressions has resulted in an ever-shrinking area of what is acceptable free speech at colleges. Moreover, Adams said, it is no longer the administration or faculty forcing these attitudes onto students. "Students themselves are demanding restrictions on free speech. There is a culture of censorship that is beginning to spread among this generation."

Adams said this is now a form of weapon that can be used to indoctrinate students. He said, "They go into micro-aggression training, and they have college administrators who are teaching them new and novel ways of being offended, and language that wasn't even meant to be offensive. They realize that they can use this as a weapon with people. They get into an argument with someone and they don't have the intelligence to provide a rebuttal – well, what can they do? They can then whip up a charge against them in some sort of university proceeding for violating some sort of campus speech code."

Sound absurd? It's the reality of free speech on university campuses in 2017, and absolutely the reality on social media.

The rise of conservative success on one front – particularly in a state like North Carolina – along with the growing immorality that is rampant in much of leftist thought has brought campus radicals to a point in which their weapons of choice are hate and wild accusations, because they cannot defend their ideas reasonably.

Adams described this tactic as "teaching people how to be aggressive with others and actually shut them down when speech upsets them, instead of actually engaging the ideas on their own merit."

"Students are finding this empowering," Adams continued. "But what they don't realize is that we've got government agents who are determining what ideas are acceptable and what are not. And that actually is dangerous, sort of turning over their rights to government supervision. I just don't think that the students have thought about the long-term ramifications of what [they] are allowing to fester in their culture."

It often seems that the long view is not considered by leftists. They want to spend tax dollars aggressively without thought of the long-term negative impact on citizens. Leftist media use our Constitutional freedoms of speech and of the press to impale conservatives and advocate for liberalism, not thinking that the ultimate end of the liberal spectrum is communism, where there is no freedom of speech or of the press. ■

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Monthly Petition

Put a Cap on North Carolina's State Income Tax

The current North Carolina personal income tax rate is 5.49 percent, but the state Constitution allows it to go all the way up to 10 percent.

A proposed amendment to the state constitution would cap the income tax rate at 5.5 percent.

The current rate of 5.49 percent is more than adequate, as is shown by current estimates that this fiscal year revenue will finish \$550 million above original projections, even as the state has added to its Rainy Day Fund.

History shows that legislators are often tempted to raise income taxes to fund pet projects or giveaways to special-interest groups. Capping the income tax in the state constitution will slam the door on such efforts.

Finally, the latest Civitas poll has found that 68 percent of North Carolina voters polled support the proposed amendment. Taxpayers have been burned too often in the past by liberal tax-and-spend legislatures, and favor a safeguard against it happening again.

Yes, I support the idea of capping North Carolina's state income tax at 5.5 percent!

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Lawmakers Tackle Key Questions as NCGA Session Revs Up

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is the primary sponsor of the bill. He said the bill's "objective is to help people in rural and low-income areas connect to the economic development opportunities arising in the fastest-growing emerging markets of the 21st century." He went on to say that he and the bill's co-sponsors believe the best recipe for development in rural areas is to connect people to those BRIGHT Markets through high-speed Internet.

"With 3.3 million North Carolina residents living in rural areas, we have the second largest rural population in the United States; only Texas has a larger population of rural residents. Many of these people are not currently able to connect to the same quality digital infrastructure and gigabit Internet speeds now being introduced in areas like Charlotte or Raleigh."

Lt. Gov. Dan Forest said, "It's a great next step for the state of North Carolina and the people of North Carolina, and so many people have been working behind the scenes of this type of process of connecting the last mile for some time."

Cooling-off period for ex-legislators

Former members of the North Carolina General Assembly may have to wait longer to make the big bucks if a Charlotte lawmaker has his way.

Rep. Scott Stone (R-Mecklenburg) has filed a bill (HB 48) that would increase the time that a public servant would have to wait before registering as a

lobbyist in North Carolina. For some former lawmakers, this would mean six months longer before cashing in on a possibly lucrative business.

As a guest on the "What Matters in North Carolina" podcast Feb. 8th, Stone said, "The bill will require members of the General Assembly and other government officials to wait 12 months after leaving office before they can register as lobbyists. Currently in North Carolina it's only six months. It's called the 'cooling-off period,' and frankly that's on the low end of the scale for states."

Of the states that have cooling-off periods, which is the majority, "Most of them are much longer than North Carolina's is. Some of them are one year, some are even two years," he said.

Basically a legislator would have to resign his or her seat 12 months ahead of time before lobbying former colleagues. Will having to wait an extra six months before registering as a lobbyist really affect anything?

Former NC House Majority Leader Mike Hager said he does not think the extra time will matter one way or the other. Hager said, "Six months, 12 months, it's not really going to make a difference. What is important is the policy that a lobbyist is presenting. I know the guys I served with aren't going to just take what I say and run with it if it's bad policy. That's not the way they work, nor should they."

Hager did note that depending on the personal financial situation

of a public official, waiting an extra six months might be challenging as they wait to get their new businesses going. In some cases, that business can be potentially very lucrative.

Consider one example. The News & Observer recently reported that former Sen. Tom Apodaca registered with the NC secretary of state's office as a lobbyist, showing major clients such as Blue Cross Blue Shield of North Carolina, tobacco giant Altria, the North Carolina Beer & Wine Wholesalers Association, and IGT, the company that provides lottery equipment and technology for the N.C. Education Lottery. Apodaca, formerly chairman of the Senate Rules Committee, was considered one of the most powerful of all the state senators over the past six years.

Panel acts on class-size issue

The state House Education K-12 Committee in February unanimously approved a bill that would modify the current class-size requirements for K-3 classes – a measure some thought would be the source of friction at the legislature between Republicans and Democrats.

House Bill 13 increases the maximum amount of students allowed in a class by three students for kindergarten to third grade, raising the limits from 16 to 18 students to 19 to 21 students, depending on the grade.

Under current law approved as part of the 2016 budget adjustment, class sizes would be limited to 18 students in a kindergarten class, 16 in a first-grade class,

and 17 in second- and third-grade classes, beginning in the 2017-18 fiscal year.

The bill is meant to patch an issue in the budget that laid the class-size reduction on schools without increasing funding for increased teaching staff, which could have forced the reduction of other classes such as physical education and arts classes.

HB 13 would at least temporarily ease the requirements, but legislators have vowed to find a long-term solution. Perhaps for that reason, instead of being a contentious piece of legislation, the bill had the full support of the committee and many education advocacy groups.

Rep. Chuck McGrady (R-Henderson) is running the bill in the House, which was first brought up in special session last year. McGrady said the bill is an attempt to offer more flexibility to the school districts and that the legislature's ultimate focus is still on reducing class sizes for students, especially in the lower grades.

"I don't believe it's true, really factually accurate, to say that this will increase class sizes," McGrady said. "We are really more going back to what we have now. I think everybody, when we passed the budget, wants to move to smaller class sizes, especially in the lower grades."

Jennifer Hawthorne, with the Fiscal Research Division, said the bill takes the state "back to what the State Board of Education recommended and had been implementing for many, many years, which is three students

more than the allotment ratio for the average size and then three more for the maximum size."

Rep. Jimmy Dixon (R-Duplin) said the bill is a straightforward piece of legislation meant to fix an issue that arose after the budget was passed and should not be viewed as anything other than an attempt to help educators in the state.

"The explanation that we got right [on the bill] here would belie any political attempts from the news media or other people who have such an appetite for politicizing things like this to understand that what we're doing is a sincere attempt to reinstate historically what educators have been asking for, and that should belie any attempts to turn this issue into a political issue, but of course it won't. We will see [in news accounts] that 'we are increasing class sizes,'" Dixon said.

Rep. Cecil Brockman (D-Guilford) joined Dixon in support of the bill and working together outside of political differences in the interest of North Carolina educators and students.

"I hope as a Democrat we can leave politics out of everything we do in this committee. I support the bill, and I know NCAE (North Carolina Association of Educators) – I talked to NCAE this morning – supports the bill, the [State] Board of Education supports it," he said. "I know this is a fix for right now so I'm hoping we can have a conversation about what we can do long term to fix this." ■

Bipartisan Support for Savings Reserve Legislation

BY MARK SHIVER

A bill to bolster the state's financial reserves has found bipartisan support.

Flanked by Republicans and Democrats, Rep. Nelson Dollar (R-Wake) and Sen. Brent Jackson (R-Duplin) held a press conference Feb. 8 to highlight bills they are sponsoring to put more money into North Carolina's savings. House Bill 7 and Senate Bill 14 would require money to be set aside in each state budget for the savings reserve, commonly known as the "Rainy Day Fund."

Dollar said at the press conference, "If you think about it, you always tell families that they need to save, and that savings should be a top priority in any budget. And we believe it's the same way with the state of North Carolina."

Jackson said, "One other thing that this does is it takes savings to a new level ... We've moved it up to the front instead of an afterthought."

He said this legislation will put North Carolina in the top five in the nation as far as having best practices when it comes to rainy day funds.

Dollar said he has spoken with Cooper's budget team and they are aware of the legislation. He also said he thinks the bill will pass and that Cooper will sign it into law.

House Minority Whip Rep. Bobbie Richardson (D-Franklin) was among those with Dollar and Jackson at the press conference. Afterward she said, "We know that we always need to save money. We know that in any given circumstance, regardless of how much you make or how little you make, you should always have a little nest egg."

Richardson said the recent natural disasters, Hurricane Matthew and the wildfires, helped convince her to support the bill and that it is good when there are bills that "we all can see

the good of and we can come together."

Rep. Jean Farmer-Butterfield (D-Pitt) was also at the press conference and said afterward, "If you notice in the past the General Assembly has always had reserve funds for disasters – rainy day funds. The amounts have fluctuated over the years so I think this is another way of enhancing that, because we know [a natural disaster is] going to come, it's just a matter of when it will come."

As a guest on the "What Matters in North Carolina" podcast on Feb. 9, Dollar further explained the proposed legislation. "We need the General Assembly to make savings a top priority to ensure that we will have funds available to us when we have a natural disaster or when we have a downturn in the economy and a recession," he said.

He pointed out that in the last 10 years we have had both:

natural disasters last year and the Great Recession in 2008.

The bill would require that 15 percent of the state's estimated growth in state tax revenues be transferred into the Savings Reserve Fund. It also sets requirements for money to be used from the fund, the amount that can be used, and procedures for exceeding that amount by required votes in the General Assembly.

Dollar added, "We want to set a great foundation for the future so that no matter who's running the General Assembly, the legislature in the decades to come, savings will be an institutional part of what's done. It will be in statute that it will be a normal part of the budgeting process as a high priority right off the top."

Gov. Roy Cooper is on the record as opposing strengthening the state's savings reserve. In an interview with the News & Observer published Sept.

6, then-candidate Cooper criticized the General Assembly for "building up the Rainy Day Fund in excess of what's necessary for the state. Instead of doing that," Cooper said, "we could invest in our people."

On Sept. 7, The Robesonian reported that Cooper criticized the current emphasis by legislators on rainy day reserves.

Just a month after his comments, however, Hurricane Matthew ravaged the eastern part of the state to the tune of over \$1.5 billion in flood damage. A few weeks later, wildfires spread over the western part of the state.

Even the typically ultra-liberal Budget and Tax Center has noted that a strong savings reserve is sound planning, writing, "The North Carolina Rainy Day Fund works to minimize the negative effect of economic downturns through responsible savings deposits during years of economic growth." ■

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Bill Would End Need for Concealed Carry Permit in NC

BY MATT CAULDER

A bill is being considered in the state House that would establish constitutional carry – the legal concealment of a handgun without a permit – in North Carolina.

The bill, HB 69, is sponsored by Rep. Larry Pittman (R-Cabarrus) and co-sponsored by Reps. Michael Speciale (R-Wake), Beverly Boswell (R-Beaufort), and Jay Adams (R-Catawba).

The bill would essentially maintain the existing law on concealed handgun permits but eliminate the need for the permit document. This change would remove a financial burden from those intending to conceal a firearm to protect themselves and would also help to combat the lack of uniformity on awarding permits from county to county, as sheriff's departments differ in how fast they process the paperwork and which get approved.

The only other substantive change to concealed carry law under the bill, besides removing

the need for the permit, is the change to allow those who are 18 or older to conceal a handgun. Under current law a resident of the state must be 21 to apply for a concealed handgun permit.

The proposed law would also

DUI conviction in the last three years or convictions on domestic abuse and felony charges.

Also, under the proposed law, anyone who is not legally allowed to own a firearm would not be legally allowed to conceal

North Carolina the 12th state to approve permitless concealed carry," Valone said. "It does not open up any new areas to concealed carry. It simply codifies the existing law as it is, but without a permit.

"Missouri just did it, and in all 11 of these states there has not been a problem. Every time there has been a change to concealed carry law the Left has predicted blood in the streets, and every time they have been wrong. The bill is deliberately limited in scope," he added.

And the bill is more limited than a similar bill filed last year by Pittman, HB 1148, which would have also added language to the state Constitution mirroring the Second Amendment's protection of gun rights.

Valone said the bill would not change anything in the state except removing the expensive burden of getting the permit, which includes an application fee, and also paying for the state-mandated training course.

He also said the proposed measure keep sheriffs who oppose concealed carry from delaying the granting of permits.

"As it sits right now, a lawful citizen has to spend hundreds of dollars and sit for months to get a permit because many sheriffs are holding up permits intentionally," he said.

As far as the bill's chances this session, Valone noted the current version is cleaner than the previous one. However, the main difference is that the governor's mansion is occupied by Democrat Roy Cooper.

What if the North Carolina Sheriffs' Association goes to Cooper to persuade him to veto the bill? If passed, it likely will cut down a source of revenue for the sheriffs and arguably remove one of their powers. Valone said the Republican-led legislature may be more likely to override a Democratic veto than a veto by a governor of its own party, as could have happened if Pat McCrory were still in office. ■



apply to nonresidents of the state as long as they are U.S. citizens.

Paul Valone, president of Grass Roots North Carolina, who has been pushing for constitutional carry for years, said the change will keep in place all of the disqualifying factors from the current law, such as having a

handgun. Carriers also still would be required to inform law enforcement officers that they were concealing and would not be able to carry that handgun anywhere that is currently not allowed.

"We're not breaking new ground here. This would make

Roy Cooper Shows His Hand, Plays the Race Card

BY SUSAN MYRICK

On Feb. 26, North Carolina finally discovered who won the November election for governor.

Oh, sure, on Nov. 8, voters cast their ballots. On Dec. 6, Gov. Pat McCrory conceded a tight race.

But all that time, a lot of people thought the new governor would be that folksy, ol' Roy Cooper they saw on the TV commercials. Only now, however, do we see the real Gov. Cooper: a radical progressive who detests anyone with qualms about allowing men into public bathrooms, locker rooms and showers used by women and girls.

Cooper, in his drive to eliminate gender designations on bathroom and shower room doors, wants Republican legislators to drop a provision in HB186, the proposed compromise to eliminate HB2.

But on Feb. 26 Cooper likened the compromise provision, which would allow for a vote by the people on local nondiscrimination ordinances, to allowing the old South to vote on the federal Civil Rights Act that ended the racist Jim Crow laws of the past century. In making this comparison, he equates voters in North Carolina today to the Democrat politicians of the Jim Crow era who wrote and enforced the racist law.

In saying this, Cooper is saying people who support HB2 are ignorant, violent racists. In other words, Cooper is really just like other radical progressives who detest anyone who opposes them.

This slur against the people of North Carolina also flies in the face of the historical facts. In North Carolina, it was the

politicians in power and the media of the day – the News & Observer – who implemented and enforced Jim Crow, not the people.

The News & Observer, in a 2005 editorial, acknowledged the paper's role in the White Supremacy Campaign and Wilmington race riots of 1898. Even so, the News & Observer can't help but point a finger at the people of North Carolina. "Many whites resented African-American advances, and the Democrat Party became their champion. Newspaper publishers – including Josephus Daniels, the founder and editor of The News & Observer – used their influence to stoke the racial animosity that catapulted Democrats in the 1898 elections.

"That animosity grew especially strong in Wilmington,

the state's largest city at the time, resulting that November in the torching of a black-owned newspaper and then violence that led to deaths and injuries of black residents. The following months saw the introduction of Jim Crow laws passed in Raleigh that weren't wiped away until the civil rights movement of the 1960s and '70s."

North Carolina Democrats benefited from the White Supremacy Campaign because North Carolina became a one-party state. Not until 2010 did Republicans have majorities in both chambers of the legislature, and only in 2012 did the people elect a Republican governor to go with a GOP-dominated General Assembly.

It appears that Cooper, a Democrat, believes that if given the chance, the people of North Carolina would vote to

protect women and children by voting against more ordinances like the one Charlotte passed that allowed – and in the end required -- men and women, boys and girls to use the same public restrooms.

Cooper, it would seem, wants to portray such a vote as abhorrent as racism by dragging in the Jim Crow label. Has Cooper given us all a glimpse of the cards in his hand and shown us that he will regularly be pulling out the race card and using it for political gain? North Carolinians are smart enough to know when a powerful person such as the state's governor is demeaning them without cause.

This is the second compromise Republicans have offered to HB2, and once again, it appears Democrats have no intention to compromise at all. ■



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Law Might Have Unleashed Unintended Consequences

BY GREG PULSCHER

If you have ever uttered “there ought to be a law ...,” then seeing a dog on a driver’s lap may have been one of those times. I have no patience for people who think putting Rover in the driver’s seat is a good idea and expressed my opinion a time or two on the ridiculousness of such a risky practice. However, no matter how much of a good feeling one gets thinking about promoting a law, there is the far worse matter of unintended consequences.

Rep. Garland Pierce (D-Scotland) this session proposed a law to ban dogs/exotic animals on drivers’ laps. It drew a lot of attention, pro and con, he said, and he decided to withdraw the measure to study the issue of distracted driving further.

Rethinking the measure was a good idea, and the reason why is contained in one of his initial statements about the idea: “It protects the motorist. It protects the animal. It’s just common sense.”

He is not wrong about common sense, but that is also the reason there should not be a law on this or many other so-called common-sense laws.

There are other common-sense actions arguably dangerous for

driving, such as talking to a child in the back seat, eating a burger, changing the radio station or playlist on your phone, playing guitar, playing a tuba, reading George Orwell’s “1984” (I hear all the good Democrats are reading it lately), and the most risky

will be added to hundreds of other laws for the road. Many of these are rarely, if ever, enforced, such as laws against texting, talking on the phone, jaywalking, speeding, not wearing seatbelts, cracked windshields, broken tail lights, car seats, etc.

encounters, thus raising the likelihood of the tragic incidents we see on the news. Potentially, these feel-good laws are used as the initial reason to pull a driver over and then search for additional infractions, all of which puts people at risk.

2. Arguably excessive regulations cause people to lose awareness of their surroundings, leaving safety issues for government to decide instead of themselves.

3. The community slowly loses faith in the police, creating a perception that officers are here to penalize, not protect.

I must say I believe nearly all officers join the force to do the right thing: to protect and serve their communities.

But government officials desiring to create feel-good laws for our officers to enforce are doing them a disservice.

Actively finding ways to increase police encounters only raises the likelihood for claims of profiling and corruption. Also, a huge risk exists any time an officer pulls someone over. Using these types of laws to force our respected loved ones into danger over a dog or a cracked windshield is ridiculous.

If we respected the police, like most of us do, we should promote a force ready, willing, and able to protect and serve – not a group we demand do our common-sense work for us at their and their loved ones’ expense. ■



of all – driving while driving.

I bring these points up to show there “ought to be a law” for many things while driving, but at a certain point, what are we trying to do? Are we helping, or are we causing other problems and just making ourselves feel good?

At the end of the day, this law

We have a police system already burdened with society’s feel-good laws meant to protect us from ourselves. These oftentimes-unenforced laws lead to increased chances for police to selectively pick and choose, or profile, who they pull over. These types of laws, when they are enforced, increase the occurrence of police

The dog law is not really about the dog law. There are more serious potential unintended consequences:

1. Precious officer time is spent to monitor dog owners, cracked-windshield owners, parents, and teenagers, turning all into criminals at one point or another.

Cooper, Senate Battle over Cabinet Confirmations

BY NCCC STAFF

Gov. Roy Cooper and the state Senate have battled through the early stages of the session about whether the governor’s cabinet nominees must appear before the Senate for confirmation hearing.

On March 2, Cooper’s choice for secretary of military and veterans affairs, former state Rep. Larry Hall, attended such a hearing after a judge declined to stop the proceedings.

After an hour and a half of

the full Senate for a vote.

Even so, it was not clear that issue was entirely resolved. Other cabinet appointees had yet to appear, and the state’s highest court was scheduled to rule later in the month.

House Bill 17, passed late last year by the General Assembly, mandates that all of Cooper’s top agency heads be approved by the Senate.

The new law is based on state Constitution, Article III

of the confirmation process.

On Feb. 14, Superior Court judges Jesse Caldwell, Todd Burke and Jeff Foster ruled Cooper had not shown the block would cause “irreparable harm,” thus the confirmation process could move forward.

Republican legislative leaders maintain the state Constitution gives senators the power of “advice and consent” over Cabinet picks, much as the U.S. Senate confirms a president’s

extraordinary request to stop the people’s elected representatives from conducting a fair, open and transparent hearing process to determine whether his proposed Cabinet secretaries are qualified, without conflicts of interest, and willing to follow the law.”

The Cooper administration said the law hinders the governor from carrying out core executive duties. The Feb. 14 ruling meant Senate hearings could proceed.

However, HB 17 indicates the governor begins the process by first notifying the Senate of the nominees. Though Cooper has named eight picks and they are serving in those positions, his administration has asserted he has not yet formally submitted those names to the Senate. Some commentators have raised the possibility the governor could use this tactic to stall on the process until further court rulings are issued.

The state Supreme Court is scheduled to rule on the constitutionality of the law in March. And the new law itself says the governor has until May 15 to submit the names.

Hall’s nomination has been the focus of much of the controversy. He declined to appear for hearings on Feb. 20 and 23.

After the Feb. 20 hearing Sen. Wesley Meredith

(R-Cumberland), co-chair of the Senate Commerce and Insurance Committee, said: “As you all know, last week a three-judge panel denied Gov. Cooper’s request to continue blocking Senate confirmation of his cabinet secretaries, as provided for in the state constitution.”

“Yet, once again, his nominee is a no-show. We are very disappointed Gov. Cooper has ordered Secretary Larry Hall not to participate in this fair, open and transparent hearing process.”

Meredith noted that on January 13 Cooper announced Hall as his nominee, on January 16 Hall resigned from the state House, and the next day he attended a meeting of the Military Affairs Commission as the secretary.

“So it is hard to conceive how anyone could argue with a straight face that he is not yet nominated,” Meredith said.

“As we have said all along, the purpose of the confirmation hearings is to determine whether Gov. Cooper’s cabinet secretaries are capable, qualified, without conflicts of interest, and willing to follow the laws of our state and nation.” ■



mostly routine questioning, the Senate Commerce and Insurance Committee voted unanimously to confirm him. Hall had declined to appear at previous hearings.

Later that day, Hall’s nomination was approved by a second panel. As of press time, his nomination was headed to

sec. 5(8): “The governor shall nominate and by and with the advice and consent of a majority of the Senators appoint all officers whose appointments are not otherwise provided for.”

Upon becoming governor, Cooper challenged the law in court, and Superior Court judges issued a temporary block

Cabinet choices.

Senate Leader Phil Berger (R-Rockingham) and House Speaker Tim Moore (R-Cleveland) issued a joint statement about the Feb. 14 ruling that said: “It is incredibly encouraging that this court has shown judicial restraint and rejected Gov. Cooper’s

Latest Civitas Poll Highlights Voters' Post-Election Views

BY CIVITAS STAFF

The most recent Civitas Poll is the first to shed light on the opinions of North Carolina voters since the November election.

This poll surveyed 600 registered, likely voters (30 percent on cell phones) with a margin of error of +/- 4.00 percent. This survey was taken February 7-9.

Leaders and institutions

One of the questions we often ask is about whether North Carolinians have favorable or unfavorable views of people and institutions on the public scene.

With President Trump dominating headlines, it's interesting to note his support is evenly split in the Old North State. Asked if they had a favorable or unfavorable opinion of the president, 46 percent had a favorable opinion and 48 percent had an unfavorable opinion.

Asked the separate question of whether they approved of the job he was doing as president, opinion was evenly split, 46-46 percent for both.

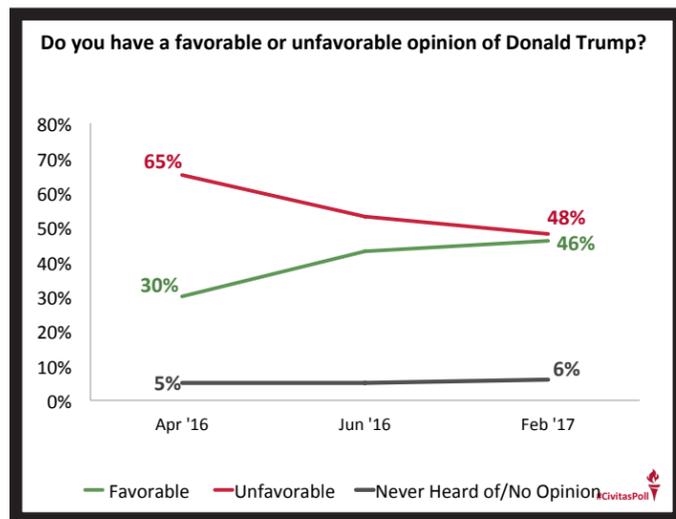
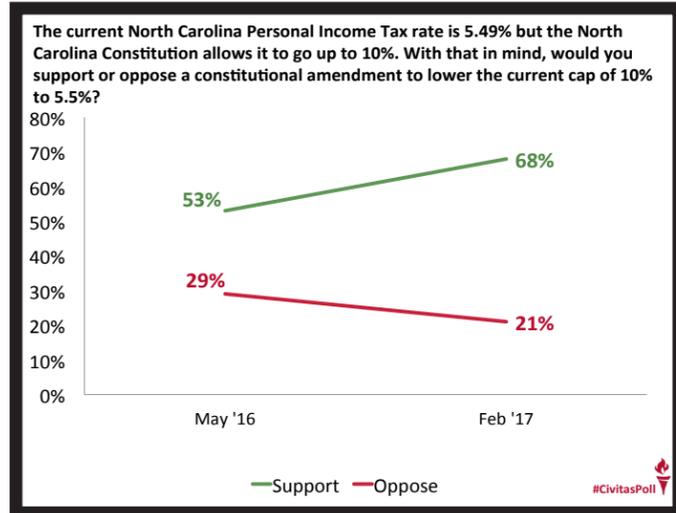
Meanwhile, Gov. Roy Cooper was enjoying the kind of honeymoon newly elected officials often receive in opinion polls. Fifty-one percent of voters said they had a favorable opinion of him, 31 percent had an unfavorable one, and 18 percent said they had no opinion or had never heard of him. His job approval rating was similar: 50 percent favorable and

26 percent unfavorable.

The news media had a 40/50 percent favorable/unfavorable rating; the North Carolina

Tax cap

The poll also found that 68 percent of North Carolina voters polled support an amendment to



legislature had a rating of 35 percent favorable/43 percent unfavorable, with 20 percent having no opinion – and 2 percent saying they had never heard of it.

the state constitution that would lower the current 10 percent personal income tax rate cap to 5.5 percent. Twenty-one percent opposed the cap and 11 percent didn't know or needed more information.

Election of judges

Civitas Polls usually show that, asked if they want to vote on an issue or for officials, people almost always want to vote. That's probably especially true this year, with judges and their rulings being in the news so often.

We asked if respondents would support or oppose a constitutional amendment to allow NC voters to vote on judges every two years instead of every eight years.

A strong majority, 62 percent, supported it, while only 24 percent opposed it, while 13 percent didn't know or wanted more information.

Support for health insurance programs

Our polling also allows us to drill down more deeply into public opinion. Our most recent poll took a look at how voters respond if faced with the bigger picture on health care issues.

We asked this question: "The Medicaid expansion authorized by Obamacare would cover mostly healthy adults with no children and would soon cost North Carolina taxpayers at least \$600 million a year to fund. In addition, past trends suggest that roughly 6 out of 10 new Medicaid enrollees would be people currently on private health insurance who would then switch to Medicaid. With that in mind, do you support or oppose North Carolina expanding Medicaid

as authorized by Obamacare?"

Given that background, 47 percent would oppose Medicaid expansion while 41 would support it, and 11 percent didn't know or needed more information.

We also asked this question about health insurance: "Currently all insurance in North Carolina must cover a minimum number of services mandated by law. North Carolina has one of the highest number of mandated coverages in the nation.

"Would you support or oppose legislation eliminating mandated coverages and instead allowing insurance companies to offer varying levels of coverage options from which customers can choose?"

Our poll showed 53 percent supported the elimination of mandated coverage, while 33 percent opposed it, and 14 percent didn't know or needed more information.

Travel ban

Our poll also asked about one of the most controversial topics of the day.

We asked: "Do you support or oppose President Trump's Executive Order which implemented a temporary travel ban on people from certain countries coming into the United States?"

Forty-eight percent supported it, 47 percent opposed it. ■

Bill Would Add Party Labels to Judicial Races in NC

BY SUSAN MYRICK

The North Carolina House of Representatives approved House Bill 100, "An Act to Restore Partisan Judicial Elections for North Carolina Superior and District Courts," on Feb. 22 by a vote of 65-51.

The Republican-led legislature has been restoring party labels to judicial races incrementally, just as the Democrats removed that key piece of information from ballots beginning in 1996. First, Superior Court judicial races were deemed "non-partisan;" then in 2001, District Court races; and finally in 2002 appellate court races.

Supporters of the legislation believe that party affiliation is a key piece of information that helps voters make informed decisions when voting for judges.

Rep. Justin Burr (R-Montgomery), a sponsor of the bill, said: "Providing party identification to inform voters of judges' viewpoints is the most practical approach to ensure citizens have an active voice in the selection of their

judiciary. Voters are competent and capable of making this choice and deserve all the information available to help them learn about candidates, identify them by their

The amendment passed easily, 104-12.

All but one Democrat, Rep. Mickey Michaux (Durham), voted for the amendment.



positions and cast their votes accordingly."

Rep. Pricey Harrison (D-Durham) offered an amendment to HB 100 that would make it easier for unaffiliated candidates to access the ballot in these judicial races.

Conversely, all but one Democrat, William Brisson (Bladen), voted against the final bill.

Six Republicans voted against the legislation: Brenden Jones (Columbus); Nelson Dollar (Wake); John Faircloth (Guilford); John Fraley (Iredell);

Chris Malone (Wake); Chuck McGrady (Buncombe).

Supporters of partisan judicial elections believe that removing the partisan labels from judicial

were cast in the North Carolina Supreme Court race.

In that election, Mike Morgan defeated Bob Edmunds, a sitting justice.

Though party labels weren't on ballots, Morgan is a Democrat, Edmunds a Republican.

The vote meant the state's highest court shifted from Republican to Democrat control.

This happened despite the GOP's dominance in most elections, including those for the U.S. Senate and House, the General Assembly, and county commissions.

Party affiliation is sometimes the only information available to voters in an election. In the end, removing party affiliation information from judicial candidates on North Carolina ballots only made it more difficult for people to find the information they believed important in choosing a candidate.

The bill moved on to the state Senate for consideration. ■

State's Jobless Rate Was 5.1% in December

BY SUSAN MYRICK

According to the state Department of Commerce's Labor & Economic Analysis Division, North Carolina's statewide unemployment rate was 5.1 percent in December, compared to 5.0 percent (revised rate) in November. Compared to December 2015, the rate was 0.5 of a percentage point lower.

Compared to November, the December unemployment rates (not seasonally adjusted) increased in 71 counties, decreased in nine counties and stayed the same in 20 counties. Compared to December 2015, rates decreased in 97 counties, increased and unchanged in two.

Forty-one counties had unemployment rates under 5 percent. Buncombe County had the lowest unemployment

rate at 3.7 percent, followed by Orange and Wake – both at 4 percent. Only two counties had unemployment rates over 10 percent. Hyde County had the highest rate at 11.6 percent. Tyrrell County was the next highest at 10.3 percent.

According to the Commerce Department, 11 of the state's metro areas saw unemployment rate increases and four were unchanged.

Among the metro areas, Rocky Mount had the highest rate (at 7.0 percent) and

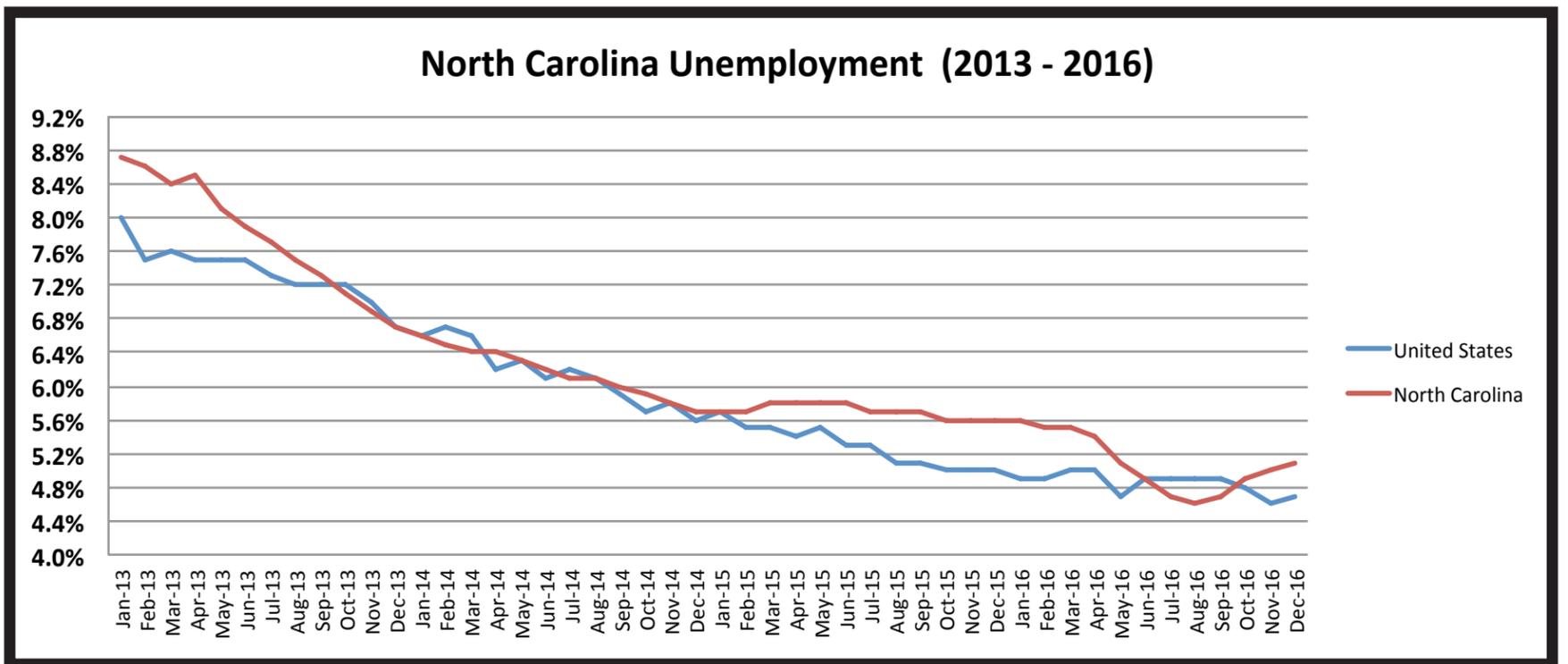
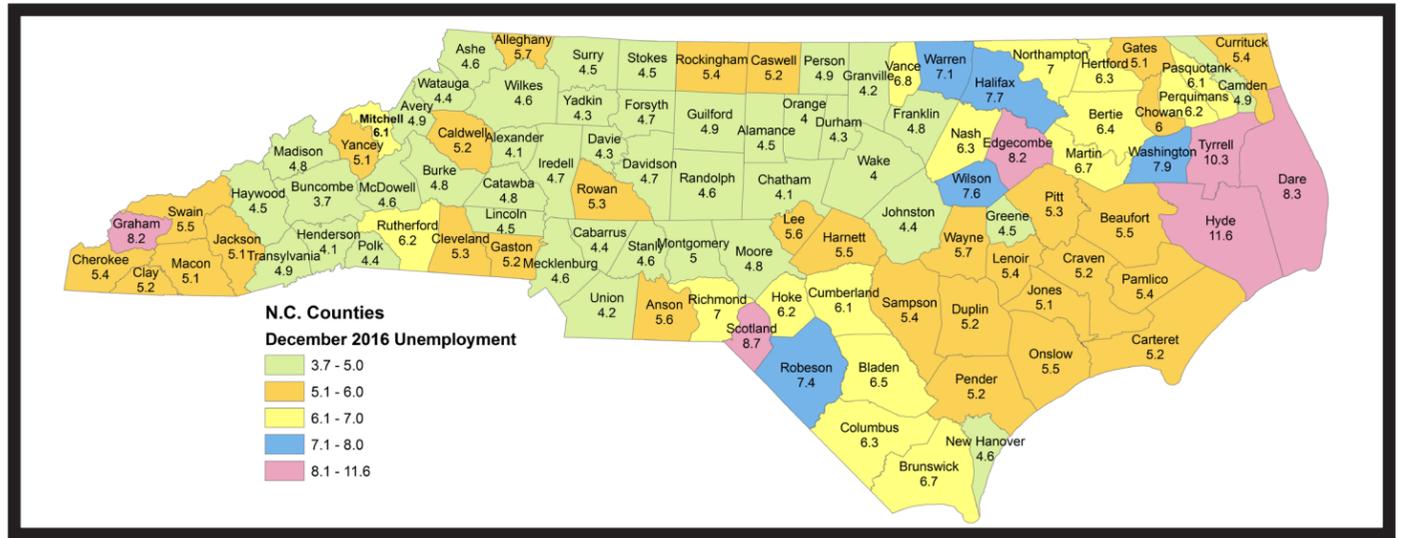
Asheville had the lowest rate (4.0 percent.)

Fourteen metro areas experienced rate decreases over the year and one remained unchanged.

Since December 2015, the number of workers employed

statewide increased 153,223, while those unemployed decreased 10,780.

The national unemployment rate at the end of December was 4.7 percent, according to the federal Bureau of Labor Statistics. ■



2008 - 2013 - 2016 N.C. Unemployment Rate Comparison

County	10-08	1-13	12-16	County	10-08	1-13	12-16	County	10-08	1-13	12-16	County	10-08	1-13	12-16
Alamance	7.1	10	4.5	Cumberland	6.8	11	6.1	Johnston	6.1	8.9	4.4	Randolph	6.7	11.1	4.6
Alexander	7.9	10.2	4.1	Currituck	3.6	10.5	5.4	Jones	6.8	10.7	5.1	Richmond	9.5	13.6	7
Alleghany	6.6	12.6	5.7	Dare	4.2	20.1	8.3	Lee	8.2	12.7	5.6	Robeson	8.1	13.9	7.4
Anson	9.5	12.8	5.6	Davidson	7.4	10.7	4.7	Lenoir	7.8	10.8	5.4	Rockingham	7.9	11.7	5.4
Ashe	6.3	13.8	4.6	Davie	6.9	9.3	4.3	Lincoln	7.2	10.8	4.5	Rowan	7.2	10.3	5.3
Avery	5.6	13.7	4.9	Duplin	5.9	10.6	5.2	Macon	5.3	13.3	5.1	Rutherford	8.7	14.7	6.2
Beaufort	7.3	11.8	5.5	Durham	5.4	7.9	4.3	Madison	5.7	10.1	4.8	Sampson	5.4	9	5.4
Bertie	7.5	13.5	6.4	Edgecombe	11.4	16.6	8.2	Martin	6.9	12	6.7	Scotland	11.7	17.8	8.7
Bladen	8.1	13.6	6.5	Forsyth	6.3	9.4	4.7	Mcdowell	8.1	11.9	4.6	Stanly	7	10.1	4.6
Brunswick	6.9	12.2	6.7	Franklin	6.7	9.6	4.8	Mecklenburg	6.6	9.7	4.6	Stokes	6.1	9	4.5
Buncombe	5.1	8.1	3.7	Gaston	7.7	11.1	5.2	Mitchell	7.7	15.5	6.1	Surry	8.3	11.1	4.5
Burke	8.6	11.6	4.8	Gates	5.2	8.3	5.1	Montgomery	8.3	11.1	5	Swain	5.5	19	5.5
Cabarrus	6.4	9.4	4.4	Graham	8.2	20.4	8.2	Moore	6.4	10.1	4.8	Transylvania	5	11.5	4.9
Caldwell	8.3	12	5.2	Granville	7	10.3	4.2	Nash	8.6	12.7	6.3	Tyrrell	6	13	10.3
Camden	5.4	9.4	4.9	Greene	7	9.8	4.5	New Hanover	5.4	10.4	4.6	Union	6	8.6	4.2
Carteret	5	10.6	5.2	Guilford	6.7	10.3	4.9	Northampton	7.7	12.1	7	Vance	9.8	13.8	6.8
Caswell	8.2	10.4	5.2	Halifax	9.7	14.7	7.7	Onslow	5.8	9.6	5.5	Wake	5	7.8	4
Catawba	7.9	11.6	4.8	Harnett	7.1	11.5	5.5	Orange	4.2	6.6	4	Warren	9.7	12.9	7.1
Chatham	5.5	7.5	4.1	Haywood	5.7	10.2	4.5	Pamlico	5.7	11.2	5.4	Washington	7.2	13.5	7.9
Cherokee	8.7	14.1	5.4	Henderson	5.1	7.9	4.1	Pasquotank	6.4	12.4	6.1	Watauga	4.1	9.5	4.4
Chowan	8.5	11.3	6	Hertford	6.6	11.5	6.3	Pender	6.4	11.5	5.2	Wayne	6.3	9.8	5.7
Clay	6	10.6	5.2	Hoke	6.3	9.7	6.2	Perquimans	6.7	11.1	6.2	Wilkes	8.2	11.7	4.6
Cleveland	8.5	11.3	5.3	Hyde	4.6	15.7	11.6	Person	7.3	11.1	4.9	Wilson	7.9	13	7.6
Columbus	8.1	13.8	6.3	Iredell	6.5	10.4	4.7	Pitt	7	9.9	5.3	Yadkin	6.1	10.1	4.3
Craven	6.2	10.8	5.2	Jackson	4.3	11.3	5.1	Polk	5	8.2	4.4	Yancey	7.2	13.8	5.1

State Continues to Update Voter Rolls

BY SUSAN MYRICK

North Carolina's counties continued with mandated list maintenance during the period between January 21 and February 18. In the four-week period, North Carolina voter rolls decreased by 9,561 voters. Democrats had a net loss of 7,247 voters and the Republicans saw a net loss of 2,748 voters. The Libertarian Party had a net gain of 83 voters while the unaffiliated ranks gained 351 voters.

Civitas uses the voter registration data from a report provided by the State Board of Elections to update our voter registration database found on www.carolinatransparency.com/voterregistration. The database is user-friendly and allows users to observe changes in voter registration each week.

The accompanying chart on page 11 was derived from the database found on the www.carolinatransparency.com website.

On February 18, 2017, there were 6,726,484 voters registered in North Carolina. There were 2,640,825 (39.3 percent) registered Democrats, 2,044,933 (30.4 percent) registered Republicans and 2,008,721 (29.9 percent) registered unaffiliated voters. The remainder, Libertarians, make up less than 0.5 percent of the voter rolls with 32,005 voters.

Four years ago Democrats made

up 43.2 percent of the voters in North Carolina, dropping 4 percent in four years. Republicans dropped just about 0.5 percent in the same four years: They made up 30.9 percent in November 2012. It's the unaffiliated ranks that expanded since November 2012, when they made up only 25.7 percent of North Carolina voters. At this time unaffiliated voters outnumber Democrats and Republicans in eight counties

and outnumber one of the major parties in 60 other counties.

We're likely to see the number of voters on North Carolina voter rolls decline even more in the coming days because state law NCGS 163-82.14(a)(2) requires county boards of elections to complete their list maintenance mailing program by April 15 of every odd-numbered year. ■

'A Day Without Immigrants' Protest Calls for Cooper Support

BY MATT CAULDER

On Feb. 16, opponents of President Trump's stance on illegal immigration took to the streets, leaving jobs and businesses closed for "A Day Without Immigrants" to supposedly show the effect that illegal immigrants have in America each day.

But a leader of a group that calls for the enforcement of immigration law said the protest was misleading, and every nation has the power to limit immigration.

Here in North Carolina, dozens of businesses statewide closed either because they were standing in solidarity with the immigrant community, or because of threats from protest supporters to pull their money from the businesses, an organizer of the protest said on Thursday.

For example, Compare Foods, a small chain of grocery stores, planned on keeping its seven locations closed in the state on Thursday.

One rally in Moore Square in Raleigh drew a few hundred people Thursday morning. David Salazar with Si A Las Licencias NC, an organization that advocates for driver's licenses for illegal immigrants in the state, said that the goal of the rally and the walkout was to show politicians the effect that illegal immigrants have in the state each day.

"[We want to] let politicians

know, and especially Donald Trump know, that our economy counts in this country and especially this state," Salazar said. "The undocumented pay \$266 million a year in taxes here to the state on North Carolina.

"So today by doing this, one day without immigrants, the state of North Carolina will not receive almost three-quarters of

a million dollars in taxes – plus all the places that are shut down, all that taxes the state will not receive today.

"Our economy counts," he continued. "We are building anything that is being built here in Raleigh, Greensboro, Charlotte. You go out there and look at it, it is nothing but immigrants, and especially Latino immigrants. So we are buildings, we do make America great."

Salazar's figure on how much tax illegal immigrants pay in the

state was found in a Washington Post story from 2015. Salazar said that one of the main reasons for the protest was against President Donald Trump's rhetoric against illegal immigration, but much of the talk yesterday focused on Gov. Roy Cooper's lack of public support for the illegal immigrant community.

"We expect Gov. Cooper's

a pathway for illegal immigrants to work in America legally.

"The way to fix this is for Trump to stop attacking us. And if these people want to get some kind of work permit – a lot of us are not interested in citizenship, some are – but the people here want to just work correctly and have a driver's license," he said. "That's the other thing that we want to

right off the bat they are being dishonest. If they break our laws, then they are illegal. They are saying nobody is illegal, so the laws don't matter."

Woodard said that each country has the power to control its own borders and handle immigration as it sees fit to.

"Every country has a right to control its borders – even Mexico has said that," he said. "The United Nations has said that every nation has the power to control their borders."

Woodard said that illegal immigrants are being dishonest when they try to equate themselves to legal immigrants who went through the proper system to get to America.

"Coming across our border, committing identity theft and taking a job that belongs to someone else is not someone that we should look up to," he said. "There are over 7.1 billion people on the face of the earth and only 4 percent of the people in the world live in America, so, yeah, not everyone can live here."

"It's always going to be hard to get in because 96 percent of the people in the world don't live here. We're already bringing in more people than we can find jobs for, we are already bringing in more people than anyone else in the world, but we can't take everyone." ■



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Changes represent the difference in voter registration between January 21, 2017 and February 18, 2017										
County	Total Voters	Total Change	Democrats	Democrat Change	Republicans	Republican Change	Libertarians	Libertarian Change	Unaffiliated Voters	Unaffiliated Change
STATE TOTAL	6,726,484	-9,561	2,640,825	-7,247	2,044,933	-2,748	32,005	83	2,008,721	351
ALAMANCE	97,784	-99	37,956	-92	32,390	-45	431	1	27,007	37
ALEXANDER	23,952	-38	6,315	-30	10,623	-4	71	1	6,943	-5
ALLEGHANY	7,352	3	2,739	-12	2,542	4	35	0	2,036	11
ANSON	17,125	15	11,719	-7	2,423	12	20	0	2,963	10
ASHE	18,526	-14	5,451	-19	7,872	-8	64	0	5,139	13
AVERY	11,530	5	1,394	-1	6,826	2	47	0	3,263	4
BEAUFORT	32,568	50	13,426	-12	10,609	23	98	1	8,435	38
BERTIE	14,006	-32	10,127	-37	1,529	2	20	0	2,330	3
BLADEN	22,594	-80	13,326	-66	3,436	-9	33	0	5,799	-5
BRUNSWICK	93,394	-11	26,259	-13	34,984	-12	336	0	31,815	14
BUNCOMBE	188,053	-205	73,949	-158	45,693	-88	1,238	13	67,173	28
BURKE	57,066	12	18,600	-35	20,323	9	250	-2	17,893	40
CABARRUS	129,389	-178	40,193	-49	48,322	-110	673	2	40,201	-21
CALDWELL	53,870	-87	14,322	-61	24,404	-34	344	0	14,800	8
CAMDEN	7,443	1	2,393	0	2,280	0	43	1	2,727	0
CARTERET	50,994	-10	12,298	-18	21,573	-19	228	0	16,895	27
CASWELL	15,393	-75	7,994	-51	3,645	-11	32	1	3,722	-14
CATAWBA	101,519	-194	26,142	-121	43,956	-77	387	1	31,034	3
CHATHAM	50,527	-124	20,316	-83	12,894	-43	206	-3	17,111	5
CHEROKEE	22,374	51	5,968	-12	9,477	37	107	0	6,822	26
CHOWAN	10,120	-13	4,947	-11	2,582	1	22	0	2,569	-3
CLAY	8,528	-196	2,073	-47	3,474	-81	37	0	2,944	-68
CLEVELAND	63,110	-136	26,253	-100	20,471	-16	211	-2	16,175	-18
COLUMBUS	36,592	30	21,327	-15	6,780	12	55	1	8,430	32
CRAVEN	66,008	-42	23,091	-47	23,168	-2	318	-2	19,431	9
CUMBERLAND	207,951	45	97,071	-68	48,166	-12	985	10	61,729	115
CURRITUCK	18,318	72	3,951	1	6,611	31	137	4	7,619	36
DARE	28,403	-101	8,809	-40	8,660	-25	192	-2	10,742	-34
DAVIDSON	104,791	4	27,078	-48	49,274	21	424	4	28,015	27
DAVIE	28,780	-55	5,448	-20	14,819	-46	94	0	8,419	11
DUPLIN	29,530	13	14,077	10	8,081	1	99	8	7,273	-6
DURHAM	218,753	-1,911	122,213	-1,205	28,295	-215	1,023	-18	67,222	-473
EDGECOMBE	38,218	-94	27,163	-133	6,213	23	70	2	4,772	14
FORSYTH	248,549	-736	103,112	-315	75,296	-290	1,131	6	69,010	-137
FRANKLIN	42,682	-71	18,170	-67	12,989	-4	186	-1	11,337	1
GASTON	138,874	46	44,313	-92	53,313	-17	611	4	40,637	151
GATES	8,372	23	4,601	-5	1,684	17	23	0	2,064	11
GRAHAM	6,248	-8	1,928	-11	2,759	-2	17	0	1,544	5
GRANVILLE	37,754	-190	18,823	-129	9,231	-43	140	1	9,560	-19
GREENE	11,225	-11	6,579	-21	2,043	4	23	-1	2,580	7
GUILFORD	358,695	-2,260	165,347	-1,204	94,689	-410	1,623	-10	97,036	-636
HALIFAX	37,616	-80	25,242	-66	4,566	-10	81	0	7,727	-4
HARNETT	71,358	15	26,223	-82	24,968	27	460	3	19,707	67
HAYWOOD	42,891	-34	16,665	-72	12,961	27	203	0	13,062	11
HENDERSON	81,359	102	17,907	6	31,138	24	397	3	31,917	69
HERTFORD	15,155	-11	11,191	-27	1,441	2	37	-1	2,486	15
HOKE	31,079	-37	15,053	-31	6,554	-7	187	3	9,285	-2
HYDE	3,409	-18	2,018	-19	527	-4	10	0	854	5
IREDELL	114,194	-80	29,836	-90	47,805	-32	498	-6	36,055	48
JACKSON	27,533	-105	10,114	-51	7,307	-39	156	-1	9,956	-14
JOHNSTON	119,082	-53	37,617	-45	46,050	-56	606	1	34,809	47
JONES	7,226	-8	3,630	-11	1,783	-4	20	0	1,793	7
LEE	35,347	29	14,812	-41	10,153	-6	149	3	10,233	73
LENOIR	38,366	-157	21,123	-128	9,504	-19	101	0	7,638	-10
LINCOLN	54,693	89	13,987	-10	23,976	45	221	-2	16,509	56
MACON	24,839	-87	6,587	-56	10,032	-31	103	0	8,117	0
MADISON	16,521	-2	6,601	-8	4,322	8	91	-2	5,507	0
MARTIN	16,883	-11	10,257	-14	3,296	4	40	1	3,290	-2
MCDOWELL	28,635	12	8,459	-22	10,831	16	121	0	9,224	18
MECKLENBURG	693,528	-354	307,658	-134	168,961	-431	3,902	23	213,007	188
MITCHELL	10,989	-19	1,130	3	6,710	-15	29	-1	3,120	-6
MONTGOMERY	16,116	-49	7,229	-36	4,864	-12	50	0	3,973	-1
MOORE	64,998	-165	16,523	-62	26,666	-81	321	-1	21,488	-21
NASH	65,564	-88	33,441	-57	18,670	-42	182	1	13,271	10
NEW HANOVER	162,422	306	52,099	1	52,260	105	1,074	-3	56,989	203
NORTHAMPTON	14,372	-27	10,482	-28	1,410	1	17	1	2,463	-1
ONSLow	99,937	154	27,308	-17	36,283	54	762	7	35,584	110
ORANGE	110,712	-639	51,599	-298	16,573	-104	684	-1	41,856	-236
PAMLICO	9,523	5	3,892	-9	3,041	13	35	1	2,555	0
PASQUOTANK	27,523	-30	13,024	-36	5,818	-12	149	0	8,532	18
PENDER	39,129	-110	12,673	-59	14,668	-44	223	-3	11,565	-4
PERQUIMANS	9,788	-4	4,081	-13	2,613	7	31	-1	3,063	3
PERSON	26,446	-41	12,187	-36	6,573	-5	94	-1	7,592	1
PITT	118,506	-154	55,178	-97	30,876	-45	655	3	31,797	-15
POLK	15,540	-6	4,411	-7	5,463	-6	72	1	5,594	6
RANDOLPH	89,249	-515	18,986	-162	45,072	-258	389	3	24,802	-98
RICHMOND	29,717	-47	16,733	-73	5,648	4	65	0	7,271	22
ROBESON	73,179	-106	48,556	-161	9,529	10	179	1	14,915	44
ROCKINGHAM	59,138	-67	23,052	-59	20,418	-19	199	4	15,469	7
ROWAN	92,580	36	27,810	-64	37,893	7	336	11	26,541	82
RUTHERFORD	43,732	-3	15,108	-43	16,168	7	193	2	12,263	31
SAMPSON	37,555	-39	16,518	-37	13,740	0	98	1	7,199	-3
SCOTLAND	22,121	-40	12,822	-29	3,623	-10	43	0	5,633	-1
STANLY	40,377	1	11,326	-30	17,747	3	121	1	11,183	27
STOKES	30,760	41	7,910	-24	14,904	24	149	0	7,797	41
SURRY	44,855	-63	14,114	-43	18,884	-16	115	1	11,742	-5
SWAIN	10,021	-135	3,970	-54	2,535	-37	33	0	3,483	-44
TRANSYLVANIA	24,793	-37	6,698	-24	8,086	-10	115	-2	9,894	-1
TYRRELL	2,421	-13	1,424	-8	342	-1	7	0	648	-4
UNION	147,270	-37	38,594	-25	62,081	-37	612	-4	45,983	29
VANCE	29,582	-19	19,718	-32	4,335	-13	66	0	5,463	26
WAKE	697,116	102	262,297	-9	187,177	-150	4,268	13	243,374	248
WARREN	13,403	-30	9,353	-22	1,726	-8	32	1	2,292	-1
WASHINGTON	8,632	-29	5,866	-30	1,105	-4	24	0	1,637	5
WATAUGA	44,089	-135	11,888	-44	13,765	-41	465	-2	17,971	-48
WAYNE	73,362	-50	32,201	-57	23,621	-33	276	5	17,264	35
WILKES	42,243	-44	10,005	-36	21,840	-42	124	0	10,274	34
WILSON	54,707	-30	29,106	-33	13,613	-9	142	2	11,846	10
YADKIN	23,613	19	4,104	-12	13,187	6	69	0	6,253	25
YANCEY	13,730	-63	5,168	-40	4,832	-25	40	-2	3,690	4

Scandal

Hartsell Case Raises Issue of Monitoring and Enforcement of Law Changed in 2006

BY BOB LUEBKE

Jim Black, Stephen LaRoque, Thomas Wright – If you're from North Carolina, you know what those three individuals have in common: they are all former state legislators who were convicted of various crimes and sent to prison. Unfortunately, you can now prepare to add the name of a fourth legislator to that list: Fletcher Hartsell.

In mid-February, according to the terms of a plea agreement, Hartsell, a former Republican state senator from Cabarrus County, pled guilty to federal charges that he used more than \$200,000 in campaign funds

“Transparency, honesty and integrity on the part of elected officials allow citizens to make informed decisions about their campaign contributions and at the ballot box. This case should serve as a reminder that those occupying positions of public trust will be held accountable under the same criminal laws as their constituents.”

According to court documents detailing the terms of the plea agreement, Hartsell pled guilty to filing a 2010 tax return that failed to include nearly \$84,000 in income and included almost \$19,000 in false deductions.

legislative work was mostly focused in the areas of the judiciary and tax writing. His reputation for reaching across the aisle won him friends and respect.

A 2013 investigation by the State Board of Elections (SBE) formed the basis of the federal case against Hartsell. SBE investigators said Hartsell used campaign funds to pay for personal services such as haircuts, personal vacations and parties. Hartsell claimed the expenses were related to his campaign or running his office.

In 2006, a new state law limited the use of campaign funds to expenses tied to running for or holding office. Prior to 2006, candidates and office holders could use campaign funds as they wished. As might be expected, many candidates took advantage of the provision and purchased such extravagances as cars, trips and laptops.

Kim Westbrook Strach, now executive director of SBE but then deputy director of campaign finance at SBE, is quoted in one news account as saying the day before the new law took effect prohibiting candidates from using campaign money on personal expenses, Hartsell

had more reported campaign expenditures than any other candidate.

After completing its own investigation, SBE turned over its report to the Wake County district attorney. Last June, a Wake County grand jury indicted Hartsell on three felony counts

That raises the question: Can you expect a law with no monitoring to really serve as a deterrent? If not, enforcement can be bolstered with stiffer reporting and monitoring requirements.

The other option is to change the campaign finance law to

“That raises the question: Can you expect a law with no monitoring to really serve as a deterrent?”

to pay for personal items and services for himself and others over the course of eight years.

Hartsell now faces up to 20 years in prison and fines up to \$250,000.

In a prepared statement for news media, acting US attorney for the Middle District of North Carolina Sandra Hairston said:

The third count alleged Hartsell committed mail fraud by soliciting campaign contributions via mail but then using the funds for other purposes.

Hartsell, also a lawyer, had been elected to the Senate in 1991. He had served 13 consecutive terms, until he decided not to seek re-election last fall. His



of falsifying campaign reports

Wake County District Attorney Lorrin Freeman said a state case against Hartsell is still pending.

So where does all this leave us?

It's interesting that the SBE reports form the backbone of the investigation. It's also interesting to note that many of the reports used are five to ten years old. Such realities suggest a weak enforcement mechanism and close to no monitoring.

what it was prior to 2006. If the law isn't going to be monitored, why is this a bad option?

If voters give money and they don't like what their candidates spend their money on, they can let their views be known to the candidate and at the ballot box. It's not a perfect system, but it might just be better than what we have today. ■

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