



A Conservative Agenda for 2018: Moving North Carolina Forward

BY RAY NOTHSTINE

North Carolina has made considerable progress over the last several years when it comes to tax relief and fiscal responsibility. Given the propensity for politicians to spend taxpayer dollars, however, it remains

improvements, there are other issue areas that warrant action. Compared to some conservative reform-minded states, North Carolina often lags behind in more comprehensive reform efforts.

While not an exhaustive list, below are some highlights of what Civitas would like to see lawmakers address in 2018.

Occupational licensing reform

There might be a few professions where an argument could be made for retaining occupational licensing requirements. But what about a fur trader, egg dealer, or locksmith? While special skills are certainly needed for many jobs, the market can quickly sort out lack of qualifications or competency without stifling entrepreneur-

ship. Training and competency is more important than licensing, where sometimes paying a hefty fee is all that is required. The major issue is that seeking a license can require a significant amount of time and money, preventing some from pursuing their chosen career path.

Conservative and free market think tanks have focused on barriers to employment for good reason. Like many states, North Carolina suffers from occupational licensing hazards that serve as a barrier to employment and can exacerbate income inequality and unemployment in the state. The Goldwater Institute in Arizona has wisely suggested states enact a “Right to Earn a Living Act,” which puts the onus on government to show how licensing protects the public health and the common good, thereby diminishing unnecessary barriers to employment.

There is virtually no reason to continue to retain occupational licensing for many professions and scrapping most of them will only improve the overall economic vitality in the state.

Keeping judicial elections in place

Civitas will continue to press the need for judicial elections so citizens are empowered to alleviate having their vote overturned by courts that are increasingly unrestrained by constitutional guidance. Not only are judicial elections valuable for limited government and accountability, so called “independent” or “merit” selection processes merely transfer decision making power from citizens to boards or committees that are often controlled by special interests and tainted by agendas.

Permitless or “constitutional” carry

While the clamoring for more gun restrictions is constant, many states have expanded the inherent right to arms by scrapping concealed carry permits. Over a dozen states have recently eliminated permit requirements. Missouri and West

Virginia overrode vetoes to enact permitless carry laws in states with a Democrat as governor (West Virginia’s governor later switched parties). While pushes for constitutional carry often invoke media hysteria, the crime in those states adopting permitless carry either decrease or remain unchanged after its passage. Unfortunately, legislators in North Carolina have done little to expand firearm rights in this direction, falling further behind more reform-minded states where conservatives hold power.

Concealed permit classes will still be available for citizens, which are certainly valuable and essential if one is a beginner with pistols or firearms. They are also important for reciprocity with other states, allowing somebody to bypass the federal background check at the time of purchase.

Eliminate the pistol purchase permit requirement

Pistol permits (obtained from the local sheriff) required to purchase a handgun is a relic of the Jim Crow segregationist past in the American South. Essentially, permits were enacted in many states to keep black citizens from protecting themselves. The fee, while a relatively reasonable \$5, is still a tax on an inherent right protected in the Bill of Rights. The federal government already provides background checks, and states that have done away with purchase permits seem to be having no additional problems.

Nixing the state film subsidies

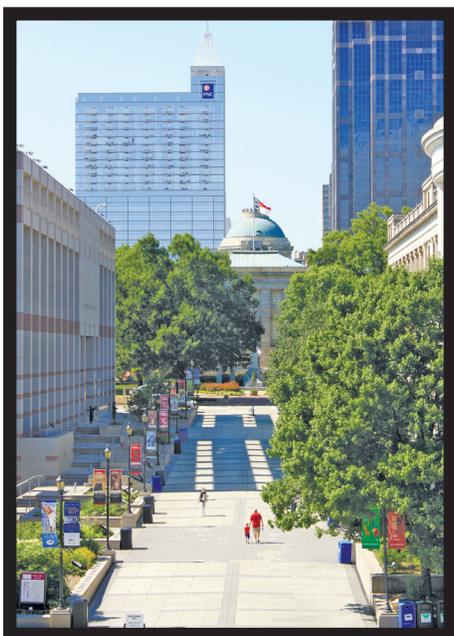
North Carolina allowed its generous film production tax credits to expire in 2014. Unfortunately, they replaced it with a direct grant program the following year. The program began at \$10 million its first year, and has rapidly grown

since. In 2017, \$34 million dollars in grants were doled out. This year the amount is projected to be \$31 million.

The best path forward is to end the handout and create parity for businesses across the board to operate in the state. Ten states have pared back the cronyism on film subsidies recently, and Michigan, Florida, and Alaska nixed them altogether. Even Louisiana, considered the poster child of film subsidies nationally, has significantly cut back on film subsidies.

Greater protection from eminent domain

North Carolina still lags behind many states when it comes to a constitutional protection from eminent domain abuse. This was highlighted more in the state media in late 2015 and 2016 with the potential condemnation of private land for CSX railroad expansion. After the 2005 Supreme Court case *Kelo vs. New London* (Connecticut) increased the possibility of transferring land from one private owner to another, many states have added greater protections for property owners. “Though citizens are safe from the government in their homes,” Supreme Court Justice Clarence Thomas rightly predicted in his ruling after the dissent, “the homes themselves are not.” While the occurrences of abuse might be rare, North Carolina needs to amend its constitution to prevent potential involuntary transfers of property from one private land owner to another. House Bill 3, which passed the House last year but is still waiting for the Senate to take it up, would do just that, by narrowing the scope of accepted eminent domain use from “public use or benefit” to just “public use.”



a challenge to build upon the state’s economic climate of low taxes and spending restraint. North Carolina too is coming off its number one ranking in the best state for business” by Forbes in 2017.

While the General Assembly should be lauded for these fiscal

FROM THE EDITOR

BY RAY NOTHSTINE

Even if I didn't fully understand it at the time, I believe that one of things that initially attracted me to conservatism is its commitment to understanding and championing fundamental truths. What I mean is that with great revolutions, most particularly the founding of our nation, embodied in them is a careful study and deliberation of the past to best make self-government possible.

Unfortunately, as the quest for modern liberalism claims itself to be so "forward thinking," it has forgotten or plowed over those fundamental principles that created and sustained freedom for the nation and North Carolinians.

Here at Civitas, even while we go through a leadership transition and some changes from time to time, we will always remain committed to the bedrock principles of freedom. Belief in self-government requires civic virtue and a responsibility from the citizenry. And ultimately, we are confident in the direction of

North Carolina with an empowered citizenry over central planners and other power seekers.

In this current issue, Brooke Medina has written an important piece on "The Many Victims of Abortion Expansion," where she successfully outlines how a large segment of the left wants to expand this policy of death. We need to always be reminded when discussing abortion that we are talking about the protection of a human person. We would do well to remember Thomas Jefferson's words: "The care of human life and happiness and not their destruction is the first and only legitimate object of good government." We will always believe that protecting the future citizens of this state is a worthwhile and essential endeavor.

From a policy level, Medicaid expansion has been one of the hottest topics for states across the country. Many states eagerly jumped at the opportunity to receive more 'free' federal dollars towards health

programs, including some controlled by Republicans. Former Republican presidential candidate and Ohio Governor John Kasich even commanded opponents of Medicaid expansion to read their bible more, where he equated government programs with Jesus' command to care for the poor. Brian Balfour has written a well-reasoned and researched two-part analysis of

and teacher pay. One of the big pushes on the political left and from many on the right too is the vast expansion of college enrollment. While education is obviously important, economic factors decreasingly equate college degrees with the skills necessary for many sectors of employment. The continued clarion call for sending every young person to college

There is a lot more content in the pages of this issue. In the future one of the things we want to incorporate into this publication is more feature stories from time to time and book reviews. The power of narrative or what Edmund Burke called "the moral imagination" is too often neglected within conservative publications. We want to tell the stories of entrepreneurship and freedom and those that are creating space from government control and intervention, allowing citizens to flourish.

We are excited about having this publication back for you, mostly because we want North Carolinians to be informed about the issues. You're support and feedback is critical to our success in helping to remove barriers to freedom so that all North Carolinians can enjoy a better life.

Happy New Year!

"We are confident in the direction of North Carolina with an empowered citizenry over central planners and other power seekers."

the dangers of expansion for North Carolina. You can find the full version online at www.nccivitas.org which is worth the read since that version includes conservative policy solutions for assisting those with inadequate or no insurance.

Bob Luebke contributes pieces on college readiness

inevitably will lead to more and more unprepared students. Not to mention the false pricing signal exacerbated by more and more federal money and loans. Luebke does an excellent job of navigating policy corrections while offering real solutions in the rapidly changing world of higher education.

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Civitas President Offers Farewell: 'Greater Things' Ahead

Ten years ago, I joined the Civitas Institute. In the spring of 2008 I was even more fortunate and got my dream job as head of Civitas! As I repeatedly tell people, this job has been one of the best I have had, and I have had some great ones, but like all good things it will come to an end. That end will be in the spring of 2018 when I will finish up 10 years as President and retire from Civitas. This job gave me the opportunity to extoll the conservative principles I believe in, serve my state and meet wonderful people from all over North Carolina.

I owe all the Board members who have served over the years my thanks for their service to Civitas and our state. I also appreciate the many generous donors who make all we do possible.

I want to recap some of the ways Civitas has helped make North Carolina a better place. High on any list is that North Carolina has led the nation in tax reform and economic growth over the last several years supported by Civitas research and

encouragement by showing how moving our state towards becoming a zero-income tax state would unleash economic activity and spur growth and jobs – and it has. In addition to tax reform:

- School Choice – Including the latest innovation Personal Education Savings Accounts

- o We are no longer debating whether we will have school choice but how much!

- o The human mind is our greatest natural resource for the future and every parent should have an educational choice that fits their child

- Election reform, advocacy and watchdog to make sure all elections are conducted fairly and the votes reflects the wishes of legal voters

- Civitas Transparency Projects including Vote Tracker and Voter Registration database

- First in the nation website Mappingtheleft.com documenting the size and funding of the

progressive movement in North Carolina

- Creation of alternative media streams online and in print including a statewide newspaper

- Creation of CivitasAction, a C-4, which has been extremely effective in its education efforts and in tracking how legislators are voting

- Always being an unapolo-

getic voice for conservative principles.

While I look forward to what the future holds for me, I do know I will miss all my fellow Civitas employees. It is a talented group of people who over the years have made me look very good. I will be excitedly watching them do even greater things in the future.

As I move on, I will remain

proud of all Civitas has accomplished and will accomplish.

Semper Fidelis,

Col. Francis X. De Luca
USMAR (Ret)



Civitas Board Names Donald Bryson New President

The Civitas Institute Board of Directors is pleased to announce the selection of Donald Bryson as President to succeed current President Francis X. De Luca. Prior to joining Civitas, Bryson served as the North Carolina State Director of Americans for Prosperity (AFP).

Bryson starts his role on January 16, 2018, and will assume full responsibility after a transition period with De Luca, who said, "Donald has a great combination of policy, grass-

roots, and leadership experience which will prove valuable as he leads Civitas into the future. I look forward to seeing all the great things Civitas will do under his leadership."

Bryson started with AFP in 2011 as a field coordinator, in charge of grassroots activities in the Raleigh-Durham area. In 2014 he was promoted to state director where he worked to expand AFP as the state's premiere grassroots organization and to promote a pro-growth

economic climate in North Carolina. Bryson led the AFP chapter during several successful campaigns to expand conserva-

"I look forward to seeing all the great things Civitas will do under his leadership."

tive policies in the state, including three major state income tax

cuts and the expansion of the Opportunity Scholarship program.

Before joining AFP, Bryson was communications and policy specialist with Parents for Educational Freedom in North Carolina.

Bryson said, "I am honored to have this opportunity to lead Civitas. Civitas fills a unique role in North Carolina's public policy sphere by bridging the gap between conservative grassroots issue education and public

policy analysis. I look forward to this next chapter in my life, and look to continue the past successes of Civitas."

Bryson's opinion-editorials on several policy issues have been in publications such as *The Wall Street Journal*, *National Review*, *Charlotte Observer*, and *Investor's Business Daily*.

Bryson lives in Wake County with his wife and two young daughters.

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The Many Victims of Abortion Expansion

BY BROOKE MEDINA

“Kristin had come to our center back in 2014 when she found out she was pregnant and chose to end the pregnancy with an abortion. She described how she was traumatized by the experience and that it was excruciating and devastating.

As she sits in the nurse’s room at Gateway sharing her experience from nearly 3 years ago, Kristin sobs and cries. ‘I still cannot get the sound of the suction out of my mind. I think about it all the time. It doesn’t go away.’”

– Wendy Bonano, Executive Director of Gateway, Raleigh-based pregnancy support center.

Under the guise of equity, empowerment, and women’s rights, several North Carolina legislators have sought to expand late-term abortions, with their latest attempt included in a bill entitled “The Whole Woman’s Health Act” (S.B. 588 and H.B. 563).

A number of state senators and representatives have made it clear that abortions past twenty weeks—the gestational age doctors can presently confirm babies feel pain—should be legal.

The most egregious aspect of S.B. 588, sponsored by Chaudhuri, Van Duyn, and Bryant and H.B. 563, sponsored by Fisher, Cunningham, Meyer, and B. Richardson, both presented this past April, was their lift on the twenty-week abortion ban, virtually eliminating all state abortion restrictions, including late-term D&E procedures.

If you’re unfamiliar with a D&E abortion, it involves dismembering the baby’s appendages and midsection and later crushing his or her skull while using a suction device to remove the brain.

The dismembered and crushed baby, referred to as “pregnancy tissue” in this Planned Parenthood description, is then put back together so the abortionist can ensure he or she completed a successful abortion.

Moral and Scientific Concerns

Life begins at conception. Not at implantation. Not when

the child feels wanted by his or her parents. And not when he or she has been deemed sentient. This is not just a moral truth (although it is that), it is a scientific fact based on basic empirical research.

There are two criteria that must be met in order for us to distinguish one cell type from another, helping us assess whether or not life has begun:

1. Difference in its molecular composition. In this case, the joining of a sperm and an egg (gametes) produces a new cell type – a zygote, or one-cell embryo. They are no longer a sperm and an egg. It is a new cell with a different molecular composition.

2. Difference in how it behaves. Within minutes of this fusion, the zygote will begin to block additional sperm from attaching to the cell surface, thus marking the zygote’s new pattern of behavior that did not exist when it was two distinct gametes.

Is this newly formed cell akin to a lung or liver cell, thereby rendering it unable to meet the qualifications of personhood all on its own? No. Once the gametes fused to become a zygote, it took on the unique role of organism, “acting in an interdependent and coordinated manner to ‘carry on the activities of life.’”

To deny that life begins at conception is to disregard the obvious realities evident in the physical world. The human organism that is formed within minutes of the sperm and egg fusing is a human being in its earliest stages. Most abortion advocates know this, so they typically choose to focus their attention on the tired argument, “My body, my choice” (ignoring the fact that there is a separate body—that of the child—that abortion affects).

At the most foundational level, if these pro-abortion legislators cannot recognize the right to life for one of society’s most vulnerable populations—the unborn—they have lost a substantial amount of moral authority by which to speak out on other issues involving human dignity. This is the reason pro-lifers question Planned Parenthood’s supposed concern

for poor and minority women.

The near constant denial of the unborn’s right to life by abortion proponents undermines the human dignity of those that are outside of the womb, too.

At its core, *abortion exemplifies the appalling belief that people are only worthy of dignity if they are wanted, healthy, or not a burden to others.*

For too long women finding themselves in unplanned pregnancies have had these truths withheld from them by those that would prefer they choose abortion in order to line their own wallets.

Legislators Should Enact Laws that Protect, not Destroy

For legislators to work against the fundamental truth that children—at every stage—are worthy of protection is antithetical to the purpose of statecraft, which is to institute policies that protect those within its borders and safeguard their inalienable rights, foremost among them the right to life.

Furthermore, to champion these policies as pro-woman is misguided. Legislation that is truly pro-woman will not be anti-child. This isn’t a zero-sum situation where women and children must vie one another for rights. To truly care about women is to care about their children and creating a false dichotomy wherein only the woman is the victor is poor policy making, at best, and reprehensible, at worst.

The legislators that pushed for expanded abortion policies in the Whole Woman’s Health Act are referred to as “pro-women’s health candidates” by Planned Parenthood Votes, but I find it difficult to see how advocating for sex-selective and pain-capable abortions is pro-woman.

Thankfully, given the current makeup of the General Assembly (with Republican veto proof majorities in both chambers), the bill’s chances for passage dwindled.

So, why are we addressing this now? Because when the winds of change blow and social conservatives find themselves in the minority, the likes of Planned Parenthood and North Carolina-based Lillian’s List intend to expand abortion to

the fullest extent. The North Carolina ACLU has made it clear that they “will continue to build support for the Whole Woman’s Health Act in the years to come.” This is a legitimate concern and we would be wise to treat it as such.

A Little History

Abortion on demand became the rallying cry for many late 20th century feminists. The equal treatment of women that was championed by earlier feminists, such as Charlotte Lozier and Susan B. Anthony, was betrayed by pro-abortion feminists, determined to free themselves by what they felt were the intolerable confines of motherhood. In 1919 Margaret Sanger said, “Woman must have her freedom—the fundamental freedom of choosing whether or not she shall be a mother...”

A couple of decades later, women and men intent on removing the natural causal effect of sex, which is pregnancy, hitched themselves to the aptly named Sexual Revolution. What we now refer to as the Women’s Rights Movement is the fruit of these earlier ideas that children can (and should) be separate from the act of sex.

The legalization of abortion was a monumental victory for second wave feminists. It took two groups that had historically been viewed as the epitome of mutual affection—mothers and children—and inserted a wedge wherein the advancement of the female must be divorced from the care of the child.

Yet, as we learned in history class, revolutions always have victims and victors, and the Sexual Revolution was no exception. The victors were and are abortionists, “fetal tissue procurement specialists” employed by Planned Parenthood, sex traffickers, and child abusers.

The victims? Women that have been sold the lie that an unplanned pregnancy will ruin them, and the children who will never see the light of day.

It is important to note that abortion affects different populations within our country disproportionately. Particularly minorities and the poor.

According to the pro-abortion Guttmacher Institute, “Abortion has become increasingly con-

centrated among poor women, who accounted for 49 percent of patients in 2014” (emphasis mine).

The CDC found that minority women make up 62.5 percent of abortion clients in our state, despite only comprising approximately 38.2 percent of the population. Even on the national level the racial disparity in abortions is striking.

Note: Data retrieved from Guttmacher Institute’s May 2016 Report found here.

Why do we have this disparity? Even a non-cynical observer could conclude that the abortion industry markets its “services” to both poor and minority women.

Conclusion

North Carolina lawmakers should focus on policies that protect children, rather than crafting bills that make it easier to obtain late-term abortions.

The legislators that sponsored S.B. 588 and H.B. 563 need to know that the accolades and recognition they receive from Lillian’s List and Planned Parenthood will come at the expense of electoral support. For far too long politicians and special interest groups on the Left have misused women, and propped up the false narrative that in order for a woman to be successful she needs to have the option to abort her child.

On the other hand, the need for communities to help moms and dads that find themselves in unplanned pregnancies is of even more importance. There are many women that have experienced the same pain and heartache that Kristin did, and oftentimes this regret could have been prevented if caring support systems were in place.

What can we do to promote a culture of life wherein women and men feel more confident in their decision to bring a child into the world? Even if *Roe v. Wade*, *Planned Parenthood v. Casey*, or *Whole Woman’s Health v. Helldersstedt*, aren’t overturned in our lifetime, we can elevate the idea of family to its rightful place, thereby creating a society wherein women feel empowered and supported to keep their babies.

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The Many Victims of Abortion Expansion

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In a culture that champions abortion rights as liberating for women, pro-lifers are needed more than ever, to help women, like Kristin, who have been hurt by abortion. Thankfully there are those on the front lines, like Wendy Bonana of Gateway, doing precisely that.

Because of the care and compassion the employees at Gateway showed Kristin after

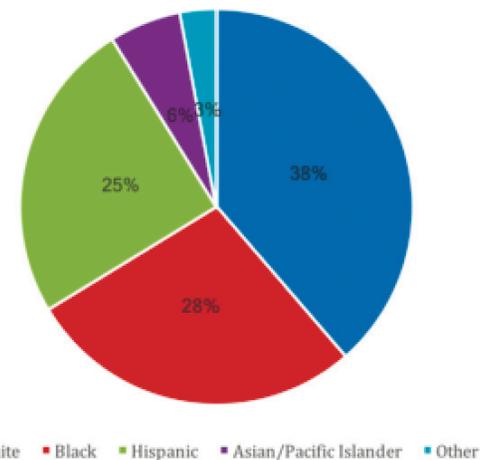
her abortion, she is now receiving help and support as she recovers from the pain of her past decision, while also preparing to carry her child to term that is due next year to term.

Imagine what would happen if we insisted that elected officials focus on ways to help women and children, rather than craft policies that hurt them.

Legislators and everyday

citizens have the responsibility to uphold the sanctity of life. Through our votes and civic action we have the ability—and responsibility—to make sure they do so. My hope and prayer is that North Carolina will be known as a state that elevates and lifts up women and children, setting an example for the rest of the nation to follow.

Proportion of U.S. Abortions, 2014
Source: Guttmacher Institute



Teacher Pay: What's Often Missing from the Discussion

BY BOB LUEBKE

- *Discussions over teacher pay often overlook an important factor*

- *Rising benefit costs have been crowding out funds for salary increases*

- *Total compensation has been rising faster than just salary figures*

The debate over teacher pay in North Carolina seems endless. It's important to realize that none of these discussions occur in a vacuum. Like all expenditures, the dollars available to pay teachers are dependent on such things as the state of the economy, the tax burden and other competing priorities for

funding. One of those priorities frequently left out of these discussions is the rising cost of employee benefits.

Employee benefits for North Carolina teachers include health insurance, retirement and social security. Table I shows changes in the rate or cost of employee benefits from 2010 -2017. As you can see, the percentage allotted for Social Security benefits remained unchanged (7.65 percent of an employee's salary) over that period. The cost of health insurance and retirement benefits however, both experienced significant increases. The cost the state paid for individual employee health insurance increased from

\$4,527 (2010) to \$5,754 (2017), an increase of 27 percent over seven years. However, the percentage charged for retirement benefits saw even larger increases, expanding from 8.75 percent in 2010 to 16.54 percent in 2017, an increase of 89 percent (All data from Highlights of the North Carolina Public School Budget for appropriate years and Statistical Profile Public Schools of North Carolina, financial tables.)

These changes translate into real numbers for employees. In 2010 the value of employee benefits totaled \$11,550. By 2017, the same total had surged to \$16,903, an increase of 46 percent. With an aver-

age teacher salary of \$45,970 and \$16,903 in benefits, total average compensation for North Carolina teachers is \$62,873. It is also important to note this total does not include local pay supplements (in 2017 average local supplement was \$4,200) or other forms of pay such as longevity pay, or mentor pay. If you only include the average local pay supplement, total average teacher compensation in 2017 totals more than \$67,000.

According to data from the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction, in 2010 North Carolina spent approximately \$2 billion on employee benefits. By 2017 that figure had increased to about \$2.8

billion. How did that change impact per student expenditures? In 2010, North Carolina spent \$1,467 on employee benefit per student. By 2017, the figure had increased to almost \$2,000 (\$1,970) per student. The percentage of all expenditures dedicated to employee benefits rose from 17.4 percent to 21.5 percent over the time period.

The rising cost of employee benefits is an important factor in determining how teachers are paid. We'd do well to do all we can to contain their costs and include employee benefits in future discussions on teacher pay.

Change in Cost of Employee Benefits for NC Teachers 2010-2017			
	2010	2017	Change
Ave. Teacher Salary	\$42,825	\$45,970	+ 7 percent
Employee Benefits			
Health Insurance	\$4,527	\$5,754	+27 percent
Retirement Benefits	8.75% ¹	16.54 %	+ 89 percent
Social Security	7.65% ²	7.65%	-
Dollar Value of Benefits	\$11,550	\$16,873	+ 46 percent
Total Compensation	\$54,375	\$62,843	16 percent

1. Employee pays 8.75 percent of total salary for retirement benefit.
2. Employee pays 7.65 of total salary for social security.

Medicaid Expansion: Cruel, Not Compassionate; Part 1

BY BRIAN BALFOUR

Coverage Does Not Equal Access to Care

The Left would lead you to believe that Medicaid expansion would provide low-income North Carolinians with top-notch medical care, create tens of thousands of jobs, and magically be paid for by “someone else.”

The reality is quite the opposite. Medicaid expansion would actually:

- Condemn low-income citizens to an already over-crowded system with little to no access to actual medical care
- Subject those enrolled who do access care to inferior quality and poorer health results
- Crowd out Medicaid resources for the needier in favor of childless, healthy adults
- Cost North Carolina thousands of jobs
- Come with a hefty price tag for North Carolina, and increase the national debt
- Trap more people in poverty
- Make healthcare more expensive for everybody

What the Left Wants

One of the long-held goals of the Left in North Carolina has been to expand Medicaid as provided for in Obamacare. Medicaid is a government program jointly funded by federal and state governments that pays for the medical bills of enrollees, which consist primarily of low-income households, pregnant women and people with disabilities.

Two bills, introduced during the 2017 legislative sessions, HB 858 and SB 290 – both entitled *Medicaid Expansion/Healthcare Jobs Initiative*, constituted the latest effort to make those goals law.

The basic provisions of these bills include expanding the state’s Medicaid program to everyone under age 65 not currently eligible for Medicaid earning up to 133 percent of the federal poverty level. The bulk of the expense of expansion would be paid for by the federal government, with most of the state’s cost supposedly to be paid for by a hospital tax.

Fortunately, these bills never so much as saw the light of day in their respective legislative com-

mittees. But North Carolinians need to continue to recognize that the Left has not given up on this idea. Expanding Medicaid would have disastrous consequences for those it purports to help, and the state of overall healthcare in North Carolina.

Coverage Does Not Mean Access to Care

According to estimates provided in the legislation, Medicaid expansion would add another 630,000 people onto the already over-crowded program by 2019. The goal of expanding Medicaid to hundreds of thousands of North Carolina citizens is sold as a compassionate way to provide access to medical care for low-income families. The reality, however, is that new enrollees would find access to little more than overcrowded waiting rooms – at best.

“Who will these people see to get care? Medicaid enrollees already struggle to access care in a timely manner.”

Medicaid rolls in North Carolina have ballooned from about 1 million in 2003 to roughly 2.1 million today. Adding another 630,000 would push the program over 2.7 million enrollees and mark more than 1.7 million new Medicaid patients in just fifteen years.

All this would take place when the number of physicians accepting Medicaid patients is dwindling. According to state Medicaid Annual reports, from 2003 to 2016, the number of physicians enrolled as Medicaid providers plummeted by more than 10,000, from 36,869 to 26,404, a drop of 28 percent.

Imagine *adding* the equivalent of the entire population of Durham and Cumberland counties *combined* to a group of people already fighting over a shrinking pool of doctors. That’s what Medicaid expansion would do.

Making matters worse, a 2012 article in Health Affairs found that one-fourth of North Carolina’s physicians will not take new Medicaid patients.

In short, the dwindling supply of doctors is already struggling to meet the demand of the growing ranks of Medicaid enrollees. Expansion would only make things far worse.

The doctor shortage is especially acute in rural areas, where the concentration of Medicaid enrollees is even heavier, making for even lower doctor to population ratios.

This is not politics or ideology – this is simple math. Medicaid expansion in North Carolina would not provide access to medical care to the new enrollees, it would simply give them a Medicaid card with little to no hope of actually seeing a doctor when they are sick.

For example, a 2014 USA Today article looked at the impact in Reno from Nevada’s Medicaid expansion. Nevada was one of 26 states to expand

Medicaid in 2014, and the article notes that “many new enrollees have been frustrated by the lack of providers willing to see them,” and that “(p)hysicians and clinics that treat the poor say they’ve been overwhelmed by new patients.” As Chuck Duarte, the state’s former Medicaid chief and director of the region’s largest community health center, noted, “We are struggling to keep up with demand for care.”

Research also shows that Medicaid patients – especially children – have far longer wait times to see a doctor or specialist and are more likely to be turned away for treatment by physicians. Trouble finding a regular physician leads Medicaid patients to utilize the highly expensive emergency room for non-emergent care at a higher rate than the uninsured. As one Reno Medicaid enrollee noted in the USA Today article: “I love it on Medicaid because now I can go the emergency room when I need to and don’t have to worry about the bill.”

An Asheville Citizen-Times report reviewed the RAND Corporation study showing that emergency room visits are on the rise. The article continued: *It’s often hard for patients on Medicaid-managed care plans to get appointments with primary care providers, with median waits of two weeks, though more than a quarter waited a month or more, leaving them with few options besides the ER, according to the American College of Emergency Physicians. The group also pointed to the nationwide physician shortage.*

“America has severe primary care physician shortages, and many physicians will not accept Medicaid patients because Medicaid pays so inadequately,” said its president, Dr. Michael Gerardi. “Just because people have health insurance does not mean they have access to timely medical care.” (emphasis added)

If the radical Left gets its way and as many as 630,000 more people are stuffed onto North Carolina’s Medicaid rolls, a big question remains unanswered: Who will these people see to get care? Medicaid enrollees already struggle to access care in a timely manner. Imagine how much worse the problem will be when 630,000 more people are added to the program.

The bottom line is this: those advocating for Medicaid expansion want to condemn low-income people into an already overcrowded system that is simply incapable of providing adequate medical care. That’s not compassionate – that’s cruel.

Medicaid Provides Poor Health Results

A 2011 groundbreaking study in Oregon showed Medicaid enrollees don’t experience any better health outcomes than the uninsured, and often times experience even worse outcomes.

The study examined Medicaid expansion in Oregon, comparing outcomes for people who received coverage versus a control group that did not have health insurance. It found some limited benefits of Medicaid enrollment, like reduced rates of depression. But in terms of overall health outcomes, there

was no difference between the Medicaid group and the control group in terms of blood pressure, cholesterol, diabetes, or obesity – all indicators that should have improved over the span of the study.

If the goal of Medicaid is providing better health care to the poor, the evidence suggests it is failing miserably, and the failure comes with a huge price tag. *Expansion Would Crowd Out Care for the Most Vulnerable*

A 2012 study by the Urban Institute examined the demographic makeup of the uninsured that would be newly eligible for Medicaid under Obamacare’s expansion. Nationally, about 4 of every 5 newly eligible for Medicaid would be a working age adult with no dependent children. In North Carolina, that figure is more than 3 of every 4 newly eligible adults.

Furthermore, according to the Obama administration’s own Department of Justice, nearly 1 in 3 of those who become newly eligible for Obamacare’s Medicaid expansion would have had previous time served in prison or jail.

In other words, the majority of people who would be covered under Medicaid expansion in North Carolina would be healthy, childless adults of working age or ex-cons.

This new group is who would be competing for care – from an exceedingly short supply of doctors --- with the traditional Medicaid population of poor children, pregnant women and the disabled.

And because the federal government would pay for a higher percentage of the cost of the newly eligible under expansion compared to the traditional Medicaid population, states would favor directing resources to the newly eligible population over the most vulnerable populations.

Part 2 of this article will examine the rest of the negative consequences of Medicaid expansion.

A complete version of this article can be found online at www.nccivitas.org

Medicaid Expansion: Cruel, Not Compassionate; Part 2

BY BRIAN BALFOUR

Expansion Would Cost North Carolina Tens of Thousands of Jobs

Desperate because their past attempts to expand Medicaid have failed, liberal progressives a few years ago began advancing the “Medicaid expansion will create jobs” canard to try to broaden support for expansion of this costly entitlement.

Supporters were emboldened largely by two studies. One report, produced by George Washington University researchers, declared that North Carolina could create 43,000 jobs in five years under Medicaid expansion. That study was largely echoed by a 2013 study produced by the North Carolina Institute of Medicine (NCIOM) that came to similar conclusions.

Small problem: The assumptions built into the studies claiming Medicaid expansion would create jobs don’t square with reality. And in fact, credible research and logic show that expansion would cost North Carolina tens of thousands of jobs.

The job growth claims in the studies are based on the state’s “drawing down” additional federal funds due to Medicaid expansion. As the GWU report describes, “Since most of the cost of a Medicaid expansion would be borne by the federal government, expansion would result in billions of dollars in additional federal funding flowing into North Carolina. These funds will initially be paid to health care providers, such as hospitals, clinics or pharmacies, as health care payments for Medicaid services.”

This income received by health care providers is then spent on suppliers (such as medicine, medical supplies, etc.) and in their community on goods and services such as groceries, clothes and movies. The increased economic activity, according to the theory, would create more jobs.

We’ll leave aside for now the negative impacts from our already deeply indebted federal government having to borrow billions more to fund the Medicaid expansion.

The fatal flaw in these studies is the methodology. In order to “draw down” federal Medicaid dollars, actual medical services

need to be provided to Medicaid patients. It is only when doctors actually treat Medicaid patients that the federal government pays those providers for the services.

And this is where the methodology fails. There is simply no capacity for doctors and other providers to treat an additional 630,000 Medicaid patients. And if you think this massive shift of patients into the Medicaid program will attract more doctors to become Medicaid providers, think again. Across the state, there is a general doctor shortage, and thus doctors currently not seeing Medicaid patients are already at their limits and thus would not have the capacity to take on Medicaid patients.

Indeed, a 2011 survey by the Association of American Medical Colleges found that only 15 states have fewer primary care physicians per capita than North Carolina.

As reported in 2014 by WRAL, “A survey this year by The Physicians Foundation found that 81 percent of doctors describe themselves as either over-extended or at full capacity, and 44 percent said they planned to cut back on the number of patients they see, retire, work part-time or close their practice to new patients.”

Such extreme supply constraints tell us that if North Carolina were to expand Medicaid, the newly enrolled would have great difficulty actually seeing a doctor. Coverage will not equal access.

But that’s not all. Research, and common sense, tell us that expanding Medicaid will also reduce participation in the workforce, resulting in a net loss of jobs.

Studies by the National Bureau of Economic Research, the Congressional Budget Office, and university economists all find that expanding Medicaid eligibility discourages work and is associated with a decrease of jobs. Based partly on this research, the Foundation for Government Accountability estimates Medicaid expansion could cost North Carolina up to 94,000 jobs.

Academic research on states that have expanded Medicaid

finds Medicaid expansion causing decreases in employment as well.

Medicaid Expansion Would be Unaffordable

Funding for the newly eligible Medicaid enrollees under expansion would be provided 100 percent by the federal government in the first three years, and phased down to 90 percent thereafter.

According to language in SB 290 and HB 858, the price tag for North Carolina’s proposed Medicaid expansion would be steep.

By FY 2018-19, the federal share for expansion is projected to be \$3.5 billion per year, with the state portion amounting to \$341 million.

But if the recent past is any indicator, the actual costs will be far higher than that. As reported in 2015 at OhioWatchdog.org:

Expanding Medicaid to working-age Ohioans with no kids and no disabilities was supposed to cost \$2.56 billion in its first year and a half.

So much for that.

Kasich underestimated the cost of the first 18 months of his Obamacare expansion by roughly \$1.5 billion. Enrollment was almost 600,000 at the end of June, compared to Kasich’s projection of 366,000.

Ohio’s Obamacare expansion has cost far more than expected because enrollment and per-member costs have both rocketed past expectations.

Similarly, expansion enrollment exceeded projections by 322 percent in California, by 276 percent in New York, and by 134 percent in Kentucky.

The state portion of expansion, according to the proposed legislation, would mostly be paid for by a hospital tax – a cost most likely passed along to patients.

Furthermore, there is no guarantee the federal government will cover its end of the costs as promised. With the national debt and unfunded liabilities exceeding \$100 trillion, the wisdom of relying on federal funds is questionable. Indeed, any additional federal funds required to pay for North Carolina’s Medicaid expansion will necessarily add

to the national debt.

Add to that the uncertainty over federal funding for Medicaid in federal budget proposals, and the reliance on such substantial federal support for expansion is on shaky ground at best. Even a small drop in federal support could impose substantial additional financial pressure on the state budget.

Medicaid Expansion Would Strengthen the Poverty Trap

Like so many government welfare programs, Medicaid expansion would serve to steepen the “welfare cliff.” This is an effect whereby – on the margins – people face losing valuable government benefits if they choose work. Accepting work, or more hours, or even a promotion, would actually make them financially worse off.

The net impact is more people deciding not to work for fear of losing the benefits, causing higher unemployment. Moreover, some people may choose not to pursue higher paying jobs that they may otherwise be qualified for because the higher income would render them ineligible for government benefits that are more valuable than the pay raise.

Such perverse incentives serve to trap people in poverty. When confronted with a decision that makes them financially worse off, many rationally choose against work or a higher paying job. Unfortunately, the longer they remain unemployed or opt to forgo a higher paying job due to these short-term decisions, the more difficult their prospects are for future career advancement.

This vicious cycle ends up trapping many people in poverty.

Medicaid Expansion Would Drive Up Healthcare Costs

Supporters of Medicaid expansion have argued that expanding Medicaid coverage would help save money because the formerly uninsured would no longer go to the emergency room for non-emergency situations. But the Oregon study (first referenced in Part 1 of this article) concluded that Medicaid participants were actually more

likely than non-insured people to go to the emergency room. Over the course of the study, there was a 40 percent increase in visits to the emergency room, and a 25 to 35 percent increase in total spending on enrollees.

Moreover, a study published earlier this year in the *Annals of Emergency Medicine* journal concluded that emergency room “use per 1,000 population increased by 2.5 visits more in Medicaid expansion states than in nonexpansion states,” and that increases in such visits were largest for “states with the largest changes in Medicaid enrollment.”

Unfortunately, ER’s are not prepared for this new influx of Medicaid patients. A 2015 survey by the American College of Emergency Physicians found that “70% of member physicians believe their emergency department is not adequately prepared for potentially substantial increases in patient volume.”

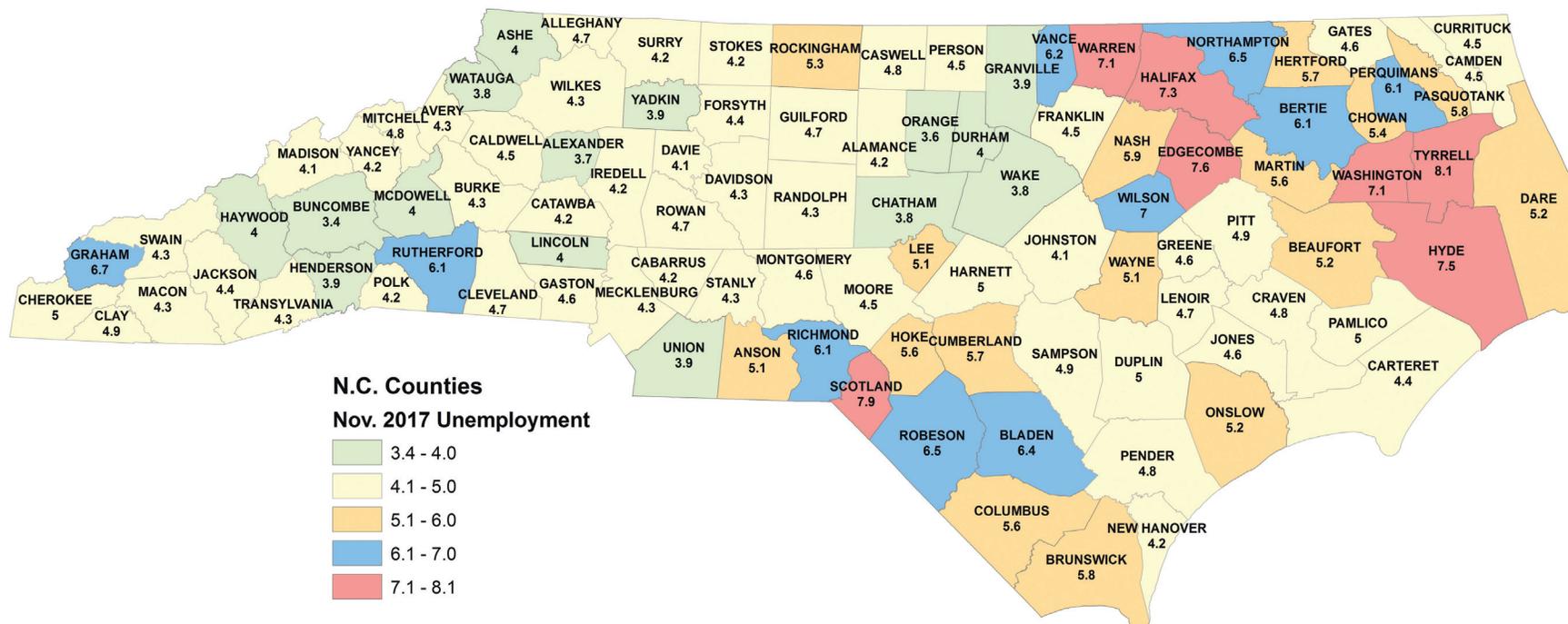
New Medicaid patients are more likely to go to the ER than even the uninsured. Because they can’t find a primary care physician that will see them, Medicaid enrollees have no other options to seek care. And because someone else is paying most of the bill, Medicaid enrollees are insulated from the ER’s high costs, unlike the uninsured. Greater use of the more expensive ER drives up overall healthcare costs.

Also, Medicaid underpays doctors. Providers have to increase their rates on privately insured patients to remain profitable. As private insurance plans become more expensive, more people become uninsured, driving more and more of them to Medicaid. The vicious cycle is self-perpetuating.

Medicaid expansion is untenable. It would produce negative effects on those it claims to help, drive up healthcare costs for all North Carolinians, and ultimately make healthcare more unaffordable.

A complete version of this article, which includes policy solutions, can be found online at www.nccivitas.org.

A County by County Look at Unemployment



The above map shows the November 2017, not-seasonally adjusted, unemployment rates for North Carolina counties. (data from N.C. Department of Commerce)

According to the North Carolina Department of Commerce, the November “not seasonally adjusted” statewide unemployment rate was 4.5 percent.

There were fifteen counties with rates at or below 4 percent and another 52 counties with rates at or below 5 percent unemployment. When compared to the same month in 2016, unemployment rates decreased

in 99 counties and remained unchanged in one. All 15 metro areas experienced rate decreases over the year.

Over the last decade, the unemployment rate peaked at a high of 11.3 percent in March of

2008 during the financial crisis. Over 500,000 North Carolinians were out of work at that time. In October of last year it was reported the economy in N.C. added almost 92,000 jobs over 12 months.



TEARING DOWN THE BARRIERS TO FREEDOM: CLC 2018 APRIL 13, 2018

Thirty years ago, Ronald Reagan made the powerful call: “Mr. Gorbachev, tear down this wall”. He was calling for an end to the barriers that kept citizens trapped in communist tyranny. And it worked. Soon the Berlin wall fell and the world rejoiced. Today, the barriers we fight are ones envisioned by the Left and erected by government that squelch innovation, limit opportunity, and prevent true flourishing. The mission of the Civitas Institute is to Fight to eliminate barriers to freedom so North Carolinians can live a better life. We believe North Carolina can and should lead the nation to a future of unfettered opportunity without political favoritism. The 2018 CLC will identify the biggest obstacles to freedom for North Carolinians and equip attendees with the knowledge and training to do their part to eliminate them.

College Readiness: The Rhetoric and the Reality

BY ROBERT LUEBKE

Every public school student will graduate ready for post-secondary education and work, prepared to be a globally engaged and productive citizen.

Those lofty words are from the vision statement of the State Board of Education of North Carolina. With the adoption of Common Core State Standards in 2010, college and career readiness became the stated outcome of our public schools.

According to the Department of Public Instruction, in 2015, 82 percent of North Carolina high school graduates intended to enroll in a public or private four-year college or two-year community college.

Education officials trumpet that North Carolina's four-year high school graduation rate is at an all-time high; 86.5 percent.

If we seek to enroll more graduates into college, high school graduates need to be ready for college. Are they?

In 2016-17 the percentage of 11th grade students in North Carolina taking the ACT test — an exam that gauges college readiness — who met ACT benchmarks in all subject areas

was 30.8 percent. The concerns aren't limited to high school. The percentage of K-12 students who met or exceeded college or career ready proficiency standards on all EOG/EOC subjects was less than half of all students (49.2 percent).

Today children receive non-stop messages about the benefits of higher education. Couple that with pressure from Washington and Raleigh to not only increase the number of high school graduates and get students into colleges, but to also increase the number of minority and disadvantaged students and you have significant forces working to open college doors. It's a mix where strange things begin to happen.

North Carolina's rising graduation rate was supposed to be good news. Until you realize it has been aided by an online credit recovery program that allows students to retake parts of classes for credit that students failed to gain credit for the first time. In 2015-16, over 18,600 students enrolled in credit-recovery programs and 64 percent of students passed. The unusually high numbers

of students gaining diplomas through the program has raised questions and recently caught the attention of the State Board of Education.

In North Carolina, students are considered career and college ready when they have the knowledge and academic preparation needed to enroll and succeed, without the need for remediation in college-bearing courses like English language arts and mathematics. The percentage of students taking remediation classes in many states ranges from the mid-thirties to mid-forties. Not in North Carolina.

In recent years, the percentage

“Parents and taxpayers should expect high school graduates to have the skills necessary to enter either higher education or the work force.”

of North Carolina high school students enrolling in English or math remediation classes has been declining. In 2013, 63 percent of recent high school graduates who enrolled in North Carolina community colleges took one or more developmen-

tal courses in reading or math. Four years later, Terry Stoops, Director of Research at the John Locke Foundation reported that approximately 25 percent of freshman students were enrolled in remediation classes.

But further reflection reveals that policy changes — not improved preparedness — have reduced the size of the remediation applicant pool.

For instance, if a student takes four years of math, has a GPA of 2.6 or better and graduated in the previous five years, they are not required to take the placement test. This significantly narrows the pool for potential

remediation.

In the last several years, North Carolina has awarded performance grades to all public schools. Schools are awarded individual grades A, B, C, D and F. While we can argue about how the grades are calculat-

ed, few parents know that the grades are based not on a traditional seven or ten-point grading scale, but on a 15-point scale. The new scale makes it easier to get higher grades and lowers the floor for failing from a score of 69 to 39 and below.

Performance grading was supposed to revert to a 10-point scale a few years back but lawmakers have delayed the transition.

These factors may help to explain the myth of college readiness. None of this is easy to fix.

Parents and taxpayers should expect high school graduates to have the skills necessary to enter either higher education or the work force. That we find more students unfit for higher education points to a system where the rush to expand access has damaged educational quality and had the opposite effect. The gap between the rhetoric and reality of college readiness is a problem we have tried hard to ignore. It shouts for our attention.

This article originally appeared as an op-ed in the Fayetteville Observer on Sunday, December 3, 2017.

Voter Registration Trends

During the period between July 2017 and January 6, 2018, North Carolina's voter rolls grew by 75,162 voters. Democrats saw a net increase of 7,789 voters; Republicans gained 11,587 voters, Libertarians picked up 1,417 voters and the unaffiliated ranks grew by 54,369 voters.

Since July 2017, Democrats experienced net losses in 70 counties and net gains in 30 counties; Republicans had net losses in 14 counties and net gains in 86 counties. In the same time period, unaffiliated voter registration grew in 99 counties and fell in only one county. Tyrrell County saw a net loss of one unaffiliated voter.

According to the State Board of Elections voter statistics on

September 9, 2017, unaffiliated voter registration exceeded the number of Republicans for the first time. In September, unaffiliated voters outnumbered Republicans by 55 voters, today the gap has grown to nearly 28,000 more voters in the unaffiliated ranks compared to Republicans.

The voter registration trend that began in January 2009 shows no sign of stopping. Since January 2009, Democrats have experienced a net loss of 221,921 voters, Republicans a net gain of 60,358 voters and the unaffiliated ranks have gained a total of 690,711 voters.

On January 6, 2018 Democrats made up 38.7 percent (2,647,917) of North Carolina

voters, down from 45.7 percent in January 2009, Republicans made up 30.2 percent (2,065,507), down from 31.9 percent and unaffiliated voters are at 30.6 percent up from 22.3 percent (2,093,436) in January 2009.

You can watch voter registration change in your county and statewide each week and see all the historical statistics and more by visiting Civitas' Carolina Transparency website. www.carolinatransparency.com/voterregistration



10 NC Capitol Connection, February, 2018

Changes represent the difference in voter registration between July 8, 2017 to January 6, 2018										
County	Total Voters	Total Change	Democrats	Democrat Change	Republicans	Republican Change	Libertarians	Libertarian Change	Unaffiliated Voters	Unaffiliated Change
State Total	6,841,256	75,162	2,647,917	7,789	2,065,507	11,587	34,396	1,417	2,093,436	54,369
ALAMANCE	99,258	985	37,993	74	32,642	169	480	27	28,143	715
ALEXANDER	24,078	58	6,182	-67	10,692	39	77	5	7,127	81
ALLEGHANY	7,330	-16	2,668	-31	2,550	-5	36	-1	2,076	21
ANSON	17,204	27	11,621	-73	2,448	17	23	3	3,112	80
ASHE	18,742	135	5,380	-35	7,986	55	68	1	5,308	114
AVERY	11,569	9	1,401	-1	6,811	-14	48	1	3,309	23
BEAUFORT	32,717	115	13,239	-95	10,641	27	98	-2	8,739	185
BERTIE	13,913	-47	9,995	-71	1,538	4	24	4	2,356	16
BLADEN	22,598	-8	13,041	-198	3,545	65	39	0	5,973	125
BRUNSWICK	97,361	2,460	26,813	374	36,455	873	358	11	33,735	1,202
BUNCOMBE	191,476	2,257	74,432	303	45,848	24	1,348	81	69,848	1,849
BURKE	57,544	294	18,350	-115	20,511	108	257	7	18,426	294
CABARRUS	132,850	2,049	40,956	442	48,729	220	736	37	42,429	1,350
CALDWELL	54,323	301	14,219	-13	24,460	25	351	10	15,293	279
CAMDEN	7,624	97	2,361	-21	2,379	52	44	0	2,840	66
CARTERET	51,636	466	12,118	-89	21,940	232	244	8	17,334	315
CASWELL	15,408	43	7,894	-43	3,644	-12	35	2	3,835	96
CATAWBA	102,605	773	25,937	-71	44,049	85	412	10	32,207	749
CHATHAM	51,609	759	20,452	127	13,111	147	227	14	17,819	471
CHEROKEE	22,876	325	5,902	-41	9,738	190	128	8	7,108	168
CHOWAN	10,147	3	4,867	-47	2,596	4	24	1	2,660	45
CLAY	8,472	134	1,968	-23	3,503	82	40	0	2,961	75
CLEVELAND	64,070	695	26,161	-10	20,806	197	230	11	16,873	497
COLUMBUS	36,679	14	20,943	-230	6,951	73	56	2	8,729	169
CRAVEN	67,512	833	23,019	-44	23,663	288	343	15	20,487	574
CUMBERLAND	211,371	2,522	97,417	471	48,666	347	1098	77	64,190	1,627
CURRITUCK	19,003	365	3,972	-14	6,955	189	146	4	7,930	186
DARE	29,070	352	8,757	-25	8,972	156	204	5	11,137	216
DAVIDSON	106,017	770	26,803	-158	49,581	229	445	14	29,188	685
DAVIE	29,163	216	5,430	-8	14,904	38	107	9	8,722	177
DUPLIN	29,871	230	14,015	-22	8,196	62	118	14	7,542	176
DURHAM	219,369	1,449	121,624	299	27,979	-141	1,067	37	68,699	1,254
EDGECOMBE	38,066	4	26,792	-152	6,183	-14	78	1	5,013	169
FORSYTH	253,203	1,528	103,838	62	75,653	-179	1,219	30	72,493	1,615
FRANKLIN	43,181	370	18,053	-72	13,153	121	187	4	11,788	317
GASTON	141,214	1,623	44,369	149	53,852	378	667	34	42,326	1,062
GATES	8,505	76	4,577	-11	1,748	31	26	3	2,154	53
GRAHAM	6,309	35	1,907	-16	2,784	24	20	0	1,598	27
GRANVILLE	38,208	308	18,685	-70	9,406	124	143	6	9,974	248
GREENE	11,341	79	6,537	-18	2,073	21	22	0	2,709	76
GUILFORD	364,691	3,917	166,969	1,173	94,663	-93	1,720	46	101,339	2,791
HALIFAX	37,956	218	25,215	-15	4,661	59	82	-1	7,998	175
HARNETT	73,197	1,029	26,255	17	25,534	309	498	18	20,910	685
HAYWOOD	43,632	353	16,553	-72	13,207	122	235	26	13,637	277
HENDERSON	82,796	907	18,039	131	31,309	102	430	22	33,018	652
HERTFORD	15,239	123	11,137	18	1,475	31	35	0	2,592	74
HOKE	31,608	390	15,059	39	6,706	102	188	2	9,655	247
HYDE	3,389	-15	1,978	-31	531	4	11	0	869	12
IREDELL	116,777	1,569	29,910	45	48,541	428	547	29	37,779	1,067
JACKSON	27,882	257	10,095	-7	7,404	70	165	7	10,218	187
JOHNSTON	122,412	2,318	38,154	540	47,083	649	667	43	36,508	1,086
JONES	7,197	-9	3,538	-46	1,806	11	22	2	1,831	24
LEE	35,828	269	14,691	-48	10,200	28	161	4	10,776	285
LENOIR	38,298	-63	20,891	-147	9,467	-48	108	2	7,832	130
LINCOLN	56,002	738	13,976	-1	24,520	272	242	15	17,264	452
MACON	25,405	372	6,522	-26	10,305	166	123	12	8,455	220
MADISON	16,693	103	6,536	-44	4,352	22	98	4	5,707	121
MARTIN	16,829	-23	10,083	-104	3,346	32	39	0	3,361	49
MCDOWELL	28,950	183	8,364	-63	10,960	85	147	9	9,479	152
MECKLENBURG	711,428	12,801	312,909	4,038	170,059	718	4,224	196	224,236	7,849
MITCHELL	10,932	-67	1,133	-2	6,626	-83	30	0	3,143	18
MONTGOMERY	16,214	-7	7,104	-113	4,950	26	55	4	4,105	76
MOORE	66,028	579	16,422	-75	26,933	142	332	0	22,341	512
NASH	65,612	52	33,075	-189	18,612	-42	194	8	13,731	275
NEW HANOVER	165,480	2,292	52,249	230	52,650	332	1,141	32	59,440	1,698
NORTHAMPTON	14,426	24	10,421	-45	1,450	21	20	2	2,535	46
ONSLow	103,747	1,966	27,410	110	37,692	669	870	55	37,775	1,132
ORANGE	112,404	1,300	52,113	450	16,580	-12	717	30	42,994	832
PAMLICO	9,546	42	3,814	-44	3,077	31	36	2	2,619	53
PASQUOTANK	28,201	400	13,088	47	6,025	129	163	7	8,925	217
PENDER	39,965	419	12,665	-22	14,977	137	227	-2	12,096	306
PERQUIMANS	9,949	124	4,081	20	2,666	32	31	0	3,171	72
PERSON	26,474	41	12,042	-54	6,605	8	99	1	7,728	86
PITT	121,173	2,231	55,399	229	31,745	769	701	45	33,328	1,188
POLK	15,738	152	4,386	-18	5,510	44	78	5	5,764	121
RANDOLPH	90,406	667	18,823	-96	45,518	204	409	9	25,656	550
RICHMOND	30,039	136	16,603	-99	5,801	80	72	3	7,563	152
ROBESON	74,257	758	48,552	78	9,856	211	194	2	15,655	467
ROCKINGHAM	59,485	255	22,769	-155	20,555	65	209	9	15,952	336
ROWAN	93,584	724	27,810	46	37,989	39	373	15	27,412	624
RUTHERFORD	44,194	335	14,828	-161	16,476	212	209	13	12,681	271
SAMPSON	37,863	196	16,402	-50	13,863	57	104	-1	7,494	190
SCOTLAND	22,346	138	12,783	-44	3,710	49	47	5	5,806	128
STANLY	40,860	268	11,196	-66	17,984	128	136	7	11,544	199
STOKES	30,825	45	7,735	-111	14,913	14	150	-1	8,027	143
SURRY	45,177	186	13,854	-168	19,002	60	114	2	12,207	292
SWAIN	10,179	90	3,950	-12	2,613	34	32	-1	3,584	69
TRANSYLVANIA	25,231	200	6,683	-48	8,168	29	121	6	10,259	213
TYRRELL	2,409	-22	1,394	-18	351	-3	8	0	656	-1
UNION	150,710	2,198	39,105	291	62,791	422	653	26	48,161	1,459
VANCE	29,742	138	19,672	10	4,376	28	67	1	5,627	99
WAKE	711,353	8,738	265,254	1,993	187,732	26	4,533	154	253,834	6,565
WARREN	13,418	5	9,253	-75	1,793	53	32	0	2,340	27
WASHINGTON	8,688	90	5,846	26	1,129	12	27	2	1,686	50
WATAUGA	45,531	1,469	12,157	340	13,985	203	503	32	18,886	894
WAYNE	74,039	408	32,189	-11	23,708	38	291	-1	17,851	382
WILKES	42,552	85	9,888	-109	21,919	23	134	4	10,611	167
WILSON	55,058	208	28,983	-80	13,635	-4	152	7	12,288	285
YADKIN	23,816	75	4,080	-25	13,188	-13	72	4	6,476	109
YANCEY	13,904	99	5,144	-5	4,884	17	45	2	3,831	85

Testing Our Endurance

BY REBECCA FAGGE

- *Testing is expected as part of education.*

- *Important questions remain unanswered concerning testing in NC public schools.*

- *NC policymakers need to re-evaluate the frequency, quantity and appropriateness of current testing.*

You don't have to be an educator to know it is reasonable to periodically test student knowledge. There are, however, three major criticisms with current testing in North Carolina public schools: we test too much, it's too time consuming and it's too much of a gamble.

Too Many Tests?

Testing begins in the early grades. Kindergarten teachers must observe and record the developmental progress of students in several areas such as emotional literacy, pencil grip, and manipulation. Also, in the first month of each school year all K-3 students must be assessed in phonics/reading skills. These assessments, called benchmarks, are administered individually. If a child can't demonstrate a level of proficiency, that student must automatically be reassessed every few weeks. The judgement of proficiency isn't made by the teacher, but is made by the timed program that is pre-loaded on a digital device. Another required benchmark occurs in January and a final one in May, along with all the periodic reassessments in between. In Grade 3, students are mandated to participate in the benchmarks, as well as a variety of other reading assessments.

Starting in third grade, and continuing through middle school, students spend two or three days testing at the end of each quarter. Early in the last quarter of the year most teachers begin to feel the pressure to practice material the way it will be presented on the year-end tests. Teaching to the test is not a new theme, but the negative consequences of poor test results (as calculated by a private company using statistical data) looms larger each year for individual students, teachers in general, and now for schools and administrators. High school teachers also feel the pressure to push students to perform well on end-of-course and advanced placement tests.

The general public may not be aware, but teachers and schools receive scores based partially on the results of student testing. Some eventually hope to pay teachers and administrators based on these scores, even though the calculation is difficult to understand. While teachers understand the push for performance pay, I can tell you that most educators find that particular compensation plan distasteful, since such scores usually derive from many variables that can't be controlled solely by the teachers in the classroom.

Tests Can Drain Teachers' Time

One year I tracked every minute that I spent assessing and re-assessing the phonics and reading skills of my first graders. By the end of that school year I had spent the equivalent of one entire quarter of my daily allotted time for reading instruction on these mandated assessments. One-fourth of my time to teach reading skills was spent collecting data that often frustrated me and my young students. Teachers are told that these assessments are to help them understand their students' progress and then make subsequent planning decisions, but most teachers learn very little and then must spend time to devise more meaningful ways to truly monitor student progress. Again, this is just the testing I had to do for reading; math testing in the early grades also required periodic assessments to be recorded on confusing paperwork, most of which was shredded at the end of each year.

Classroom teachers are required to collect so much useless data that they have come to resent rather than respect it. As one teacher asked, "Do we really need up to 7-8 reading passages and 52 math word problems four or more times per year to learn more about a child's performance and growth?"

Over-Testing Can Harm Students' Enthusiasm for Learning

Although most teachers attempt to shield their students from the stress of testing, smart kids have caught on to its importance and weight. I have heard students comment, "I'm not good in reading 'cause I'm only in yellow." "I like school, but we take a lot of tests." "What

I've learned in 13 years is how to take tests."

I wonder if we can cite enough student comments to balance these. We should hear, "I love learning!" "My teachers make school interesting." "I feel prepared for college or a job." Do NC schools maintain the enthusiasm for learning seen in most kindergarten students? I don't think so, and neither do many parents.

Common Core, Federal Dollars Still Have Outsized Influence

Years of Common Core's influence produced curriculum goals and subsequent test questions which were often developmentally inappropriate. Currently NC says that we are not teaching or testing under Common Core standards, but even the newest NC K-12 English/Language Arts standards, which will go into use at the beginning of the 2018-19 school year, are written in a similarly vague form.

For example, kindergarten students will be taught to "explore nuances in word meanings." Even seasoned teachers are confused by tricky wording and left wondering how deeply to teach a standard. Teachers spend time at mandated meetings trying to decide exactly what to teach and then spend time practicing how the test will

ask for the information. Add that to the time taking the periodic tests that ask for the information in a vague way and you have wasted lots of time.

One might ask, "Why do schools do so much testing?" More often than not it's usually to comply with conditions of a federal grant or regulation. About 11 percent of all funding in North Carolina public schools comes from the federal government. Yet the federal government imprint on testing and education policy is much bigger than its imprint on funding.

Focus More on Teaching, Not Tests

This is the essential question for all educators, policymakers, and families. If NC was serious about effectively educating its students, decisions would be made to pull back from this testing focus. We would take the time to analyze both our goals and our resources and we would begin a move back to common sense education by concentrating on developing a superior teaching force, concentrating on the factors that boost student achievement and working to expand educational opportunities for all students.

We could track student progress using scores from NAEP (National Assessment of Educational Progress) or by using yearly standardized tests

such as ITBS (Iowa Test of Basic Skills). Teachers could still administer reasonable quizzes and tests as needed to guide their planning. Most importantly, it would give our schools the time and freedom to actually teach necessary subjects without being micromanaged from Washington, D.C.

For most of us, regular quizzes, chapter tests, and even the dreaded pop quizzes were a regular part of our education. We also took some form of yearly standardized testing and some of us took the PSAT/SAT. The stain of Common Core is still visible in NC in the overly-controlled and highly confusing questions asked on tests in both reading passages and math word problems. All this collection of data and scores from K-12 students has not led to greater proficiency for most students. What it has contributed to is more frustration for students and teachers, less time to spend teaching the subject matter in a deep and meaningful way, and an increased number of families frustrated with the testing obsession found in North Carolina's public schools.

Rebecca Fagge is a Civitas contributor and a former teacher with the Winston-Salem Forsyth County Public Schools.



Cooper's Leandro Commission: Look at Who's Missing

BY TYLER BONIN

- *In spite of near countless educational committees in existence, Gov. Cooper has created another new commission tasked with developing recommendations for Leandro compliance*

- *Missing from the commission is a voice representing school choice*

- *Blocking choice from the discussion appears highly political, and leaves out a vital and popular movement*

In 1994, the Leandro family joined school districts and other families from five low-income counties in North Carolina (Vance, Cumberland, Robeson, Halifax, and Hoke) to file suit against the state. Specifically, the plaintiffs argued that even with higher than average tax rates, these counties received lower than average tax revenues, thus putting their schools at a disadvantage compared to wealthier school districts.

In order to address this disparity, the plaintiffs suggested that the state needed to balance funding across school districts. The court ruled that while school districts do not have a constitutional right to equal funding, North Carolina children have a state constitutional right to the “opportunity to receive a sound, basic education” — a right the court deemed to be the state’s obligation to uphold.

The Leandro case, however, has never left court. Continuous hearings are held so that the

court may review state efforts to comply with the ruling. Recently, Governor Roy Cooper assembled the Governor’s Commission on Access to Sound, Basic Education, comprised of individuals working within education, government, non-profits, and the private sector. The intent of the commission, created by executive order, is to advise the independent education consultancy selected by the court to provide recommendations on how best to comply with the Leandro ruling. Once the recommendations are made, the court may direct action from the state.

In outlining his reasoning for adding a commission to the myriad other state education committees already in existence, Cooper noted, “What gives this commission extra authority, is that there is litigation going on in the courts... And all the attorneys in this litigation over whether the state is complying with Leandro have agreed that this commission and consultants can help us find a way forward.”

Cooper’s commission, unsurprisingly, is missing a school choice representative. The fact that a school choice representative does not have a seat at this table is short-sighted and implicitly demonstrates the commission’s partisan agenda.

If the Leandro commission truly wants to discuss the ways

in which North Carolina students from traditionally underserved communities may best secure a “sound basic education,” then school choice must be part of the dialogue. The rise of charter schools and voucher programs across the U.S.—and their increasing popularity among families—is linked to their ability to provide an excellent education for disadvantaged students whom have been subjected to failing school districts for years.

One such example is Eva Moskowitz’s Success Academy Charter Schools in Harlem, a New York City neighborhood that has been plagued with high unemployment and poverty rates, and perpetually failing public schools. Moskowitz’s charter school network in Harlem now outperforms 89 percent of New York City schools on math. This is just one example of the progress that school choice has made among the country’s most disadvantaged students.

In North Carolina, there has been an increasing desire among parents to “vote with their feet.” Specifically, the Opportunity Scholarship Program, North Carolina’s private school voucher plan for low-income families, has seen record numbers of applications from parents across the state. Parents are taking action to secure a better educa-



tional outcome for their children, by removing them from the very situations cited in the Leandro case.

In spite of the growing demand for school choice, Cooper appointed Duke professor Helen Ladd—an outspoken critic of charter schools and voucher programs—to the commission’s education researcher position. It is clear that Cooper intends to exclude discussion of programs and schools popular among North Carolina families; programs and schools which show promise for allowing low-income families access to the education that is the right fit for their child.

It’s no secret that Cooper is an opponent of school choice; having a school choice representative on his commission could have at least given the impression that its intent is to have a

bona fide discussion on ways to improve outcomes for disadvantaged students. But by rigging a highly partisan commission to “inform” an educational consultant on the best way to achieve a sound basic education (while ignoring the popularity of school choice programs among North Carolina families), Cooper is attempting to not only embrace the status quo, but is also seeking to expand his power into an area constitutionally reserved for the General Assembly and the State Board of Education.

It appears then that any recommendations surfacing from this commission will most likely serve to expand the very educational bureaucracy that is harming North Carolina schools.

Tyler Bonin is a contributor to the Civitas Institute.

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