

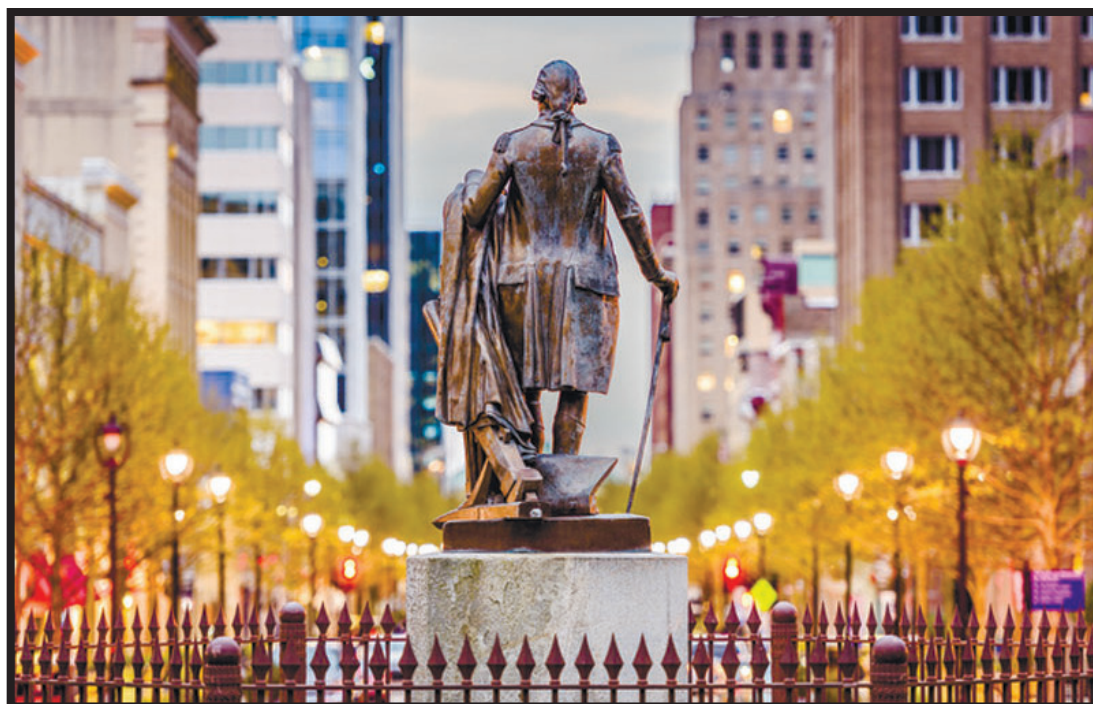


Amendment Mania Coming to North Carolina Ballot; Includes Voter ID

BY RAY NOTHSTINE

Voters in North Carolina will finally get the opportunity to decide if photo ID will be required at the polls. The proposed state constitutional amendment, along with five others, will be included on the November mid-term election ballots.

The right to hunt and fish was the first amendment to be approved by lawmakers for the November ballot. The other four are victim's rights (Marsy's Law), reforms to judicial vacancies, reforms to the State Board of Ethics and Elections Enforcement, and a 7 percent income tax cap. The amendments on the ballot will appear in the order they were approved by lawmakers, making the right to hunt and fish first,



while voter ID will appear last.

Commenting on the disappointment of the House moving the original income tax cap from 5.5 percent to 7 percent,

Civitas President Donald Bryson noted, "Once the voters see that the sky has not fallen like the progressive education establishment said it would, then perhaps we can revisit this issue again at a later date." In recent years, many North Carolinians paid a state income tax rate of over 8 percent when Mike Easley and Bev Perdue were in the governor's mansion. North Carolina failed to match Georgia's constitutional state income tax cap of 6 percent that was overwhelmingly approved by voters in

2014.

Civitas polling showed strong support for a voter ID (69 percent) and the tax cap amendment (66 percent), when it was polled at the 5.5 percent cap instead of the new 7 percent. The change in the percentage was altered late in the legislative approval process by the House in June, pushing the Senate to concede to the higher cap.

A constitutional guarantee for the right to hunt and fish polled strongly with 72 percent support from North Carolinians. Twenty-two states now have constitutional pro-

tections for the right to hunt and fish and it has never been voted down in any state when placed on a ballot. North Carolina and Florida are the only states in the Southeast without this protection enshrined in their state constitutions.

The amendment that reforms the State Board of Ethics and Elections Enforcement would give appointment power to the state legislature instead of the governor. The amendment concerning judicial vacancies implements a change to how judges are appointed if they resign, retire, or are forced out before their term expires. The amendment would shift some power away from the governor, towards a non-partisan commission, and ultimately state lawmakers. The commission would send a list of replacements to lawmakers, who would then narrow down the choice to two judicial candidates. The governor would then pick one replacement. The amendment does not make any changes to the judicial election process in North Carolina.

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FROM THE EDITOR

Amendment mania has arrived. Citizens across North Carolina will have a chance to vote on six constitutional amendments during November’s mid-term elections. Voter ID, capping the state income tax at 7 percent, and protecting the right to hunt and fish are all fairly self-explanatory. Some voters may need to dig a little deeper to make up their minds on the other three amendments.

Civitas has offered a lot of commentary on

the tax cap and how it can help allow citizens to keep more of their earnings, despite who holds power in Raleigh. It also can work to check state spending and help North Carolina continue down the path of saving and investing for legitimate future needs. One of the biggest problems we see in our nation today, particularly at the federal level, is we have governments and even unelected bureaucracies that have strayed too far from our founding

documents and principles. This has not only pushed our federal debt over \$21 trillion, but also created unsustainable government dependency amongst large segments of our population.

Some of the content for this issue covers voter ID and the tax cap, but there is of course tons more content and coverage of the amendments at our website. A new name for many of you is Leah Byers. She is working for Civitas as a budget and tax policy fel-

low. Byers has contributed an important piece on Gov. Roy Cooper’s admiration for tax increases over his long political career. There is a perception among some that Gov. Cooper is a middle of the road or moderate politician, particularly when it comes to economic policy. At the very least, I think Byers sheds more light on his goals for North Carolina with her comprehensive overview of his tax policy.

Civitas, of course spends a lot of time and resour-

es on polling for a number of reasons. It helps drive reform at the state level, and informs North Carolinians on what voters value. Adam Geller, founder and CEO of the polling firm, National Research Inc., offers guest commentary on insights and challenges in the world of political polling today.

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Voter ID: A Form of Suppression or Necessary Protection?

BY PATRICK O'HANNIGAN

Our prominent state newspapers are sounding alarms against Voter ID legislation and anyone trying to prevent voter fraud. In a June 7 editorial, editors at the Charlotte Observer described a proposed photo ID requirement for voters as “craven, political, misleading, and ineffective.” They also accused NC House Speaker Tim Moore of offering “the same lame justifications [for voter ID laws] that have been exposed as flimsy before.”

That four damning labels for one law were in play before “lame justifications” showed up suggests that someone checked a thesaurus before lobbing a draft essay into review. Every newsroom has a Sultan of

Synonym. He or she could have consulted with colleagues to call arguments for photo IDs “poor,” “misguided,” or “discredited.” Instead, editors dismissed the photo ID idea as “lame,” because that adjective signifies contempt. Anything “lame” does not deserve a place on the 2018 ballot.

Republicans usually endorse voter ID laws.

The study confirming that also found that Democrat support for Voter ID legislation depends less on principle than on political calculation, and so flickers like firefly light.

One major party fears voter fraud, and the other fears voter suppression. Observing this dynamic, an article in City Journal noted that among Democrats, “Voter suppression is said to occur at virtually every level of the political system, from the failure of some states to establish early voting to the makeup of the Electoral College.” This point of view stacks the deck against Voter ID laws because Democrats assume that voter fraud is nonexistent and voter suppression is self-evident. Thinking those things lifts



the burden of proof on both ends, and places it squarely on the shoulders of non-Democrats.

What you make of the fact that 70 percent of same-day registrants in New Hampshire used an out-of-state photo ID to vote in the presidential election of 2016 probably depends on your party affiliation, as does your reaction to an effort to make 16 the voting age in Michigan. When President Trump disbanded the Presidential Commission on Election Integrity (aka the “Voter Fraud Commission”), it wasn’t for lack of work, but because he’d decided that “endless legal battles” at taxpayer expense weren’t worth the cost of muscling in on the way states run elections within

their borders.

The Heritage Foundation tracks voter fraud cases state by state on its website. North Carolina entries there are slim but instructive. Local progressives point to an audit done by the State Board of Elections after the 2016 election, which found that there were only 508 ineligible votes cast out of a total of almost 4.8 million. Go back a bit further, and you might note a WTVD story that “more than 35,000 people may have double voted by casting ballots in North Carolina and another state” in 2012.

Newspapers that are leading the charge against photo ID challenge Republican lawmakers with Twitter-level arguments. In the edito-

rial mentioned above, they suggested that if Rep. John Sauls had any integrity, he would worry more about “Russian hacking” than about “someone showing up at the polls illegitimately.” That allusion to national controversy looks even more ham-fisted now that we know that Democrat consternation over Russian hacking is oh-so-carefully calibrated.

In response to the objection that people already show photo IDs even for trivial matters, the editors wrote that “voting, unlike driving or buying strong narcotic cough medicine, is a constitutional right,” whereas “the others are privileges.” They also went on to assert that “Americans should not

(Continued on page 9)

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The Left's War on Curiosity

BY BRIAN BALFOUR

- *People who feel threatened or angry when confronted with new or different opinions lack curiosity*
- *Being uncurious leads one to assign sinister motives to those who disagree*
- *Research, and recent events on college campuses, point to the Left as engaging more in motivated ignorance*

Last March, protestors at Middlebury College in Vermont sent professor Allison Stanger to the hospital with a neck injury. Stanger's crime? She had the nerve to ask the protestors to allow the conservative/libertarian author Charles Murray to speak, and then to engage in a debate after his speech.

According to news accounts, after about 20 minutes of protestors shouting down Murray's ability to speak, "Professor Stanger then took the microphone and asked the students, 'Can you just listen for one minute.' Many

in the audience replied, 'no.' She added that, 'I spent a lot of time preparing hard questions.' Finally, she conceded that, 'You're not going to let us speak.'"

Stanger is a liberal professor who chose to combat Murray's ideas with words, not violence or the heckler's veto. This was simply unacceptable to the protestors.

After moving to another location on campus, Stanger and Murray were confronted when attempting to leave following their discussion. What followed was minutes of

pushing and shoving, and "(w)hen Stanger tried to shield Murray, according to a Middlebury spokesman, a protester grabbed her hair and twisted her neck." Stanger ended up going to a hospital where she received a neck brace to treat her injuries.

The War on Curiosity

Why is the Left so afraid of an opposing opinion? How do they justify resorting to violence to shut down a dissenting voice rather than engaging in debate?

One such explanation is the war on curiosity.

This war is engaged by anyone without the faintest interest in learning about political philosophies, economic theories or moral principles that challenge their existing worldview.

Are you a soldier in the war on curiosity? Take this litmus test:

How do you react when presented with new information or a viewpoint that contradicts your beliefs?

If the revelation stimulates your intellect and makes you thankful for the chance to expand your knowledge and gain a better understanding of an opposing position, you have the gift of curiosity. You welcome the opportunity to challenge your beliefs with this new information, a process that may enable you to more strongly confirm the justness of your belief and sharpen your argument in favor of it. Or, if the new viewpoint is persuasive enough, you alter your belief, owing a debt of gratitude to the one who opened your eyes.

On the other hand, if you react with anger, anxiousness or a general feeling of being threatened, you are likely allowing your emotions to snuff out your intellectual curiosity.

"Motivated Ignorance"

Social psychologists, writing in a 2017 LA Times article, described such reactions as "motivated

ignorance." People engaging in motivated ignorance "neither know — nor want to know — what the opposition has to say."

Indeed, in one study cited by the authors, "people we surveyed said they anticipated getting angry if they were to listen to the other side, and suspected that it might damage their relationship with the person spouting off."

Those who are not curious close themselves off to other views. Over time, they can't figure out how any normal human being could possibly think differently than they do on political issues. Sinister motives, or stupidity, must be the only explanation. This is where the nastiness comes in. If one disagrees, surely they must be evil, dumb, racist or transphobic.

And because those who are not curious become convinced the other side is some sort of cartoonish villain, the uncurious feel compelled to not just ignore opposing viewpoints, but to silence them. Nobody should feel the indignity of being exposed to such "hate speech," they'll reason.

Using Shaming or Bullying to Silence

Violence is the most extreme and dangerous

(Continued on page 9)

CIVITAS POLL LUNCH

Topic: Unaffiliated Voters

August 23

**1707 Hillsborough St,
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11:45 a.m. - 1 p.m.

CYAN MAGENTA YELLOW BLACK

Recent Civitas Poll Offers Some Good News for Democrats

BY RAY NOTHSTINE

The below infographics are just a few of the highlights from the June Civitas Poll. The poll shows many voter priorities in North Carolina heading into the November mid-term elections.

Perhaps the biggest news is that Democrats, tied with Republicans last month, took a five point lead on the generic congressional ballot for North Carolina. The result is closely aligned with the Real Clear Politics average for mid-June, where Democrats held a 6.2 per-

cent national advantage in congressional races. Democrats are hoping that the unpopularity of President Donald Trump will help propel them to take control of Congress. They need a net gain of 24 seats to install Nancy Pelosi as House Speaker. Democrats held an advantage for state legislative races too, with an eight point advantage.

Thirty-two percent of North Carolinians considered some aspect of education or "supporting teachers" to be their top

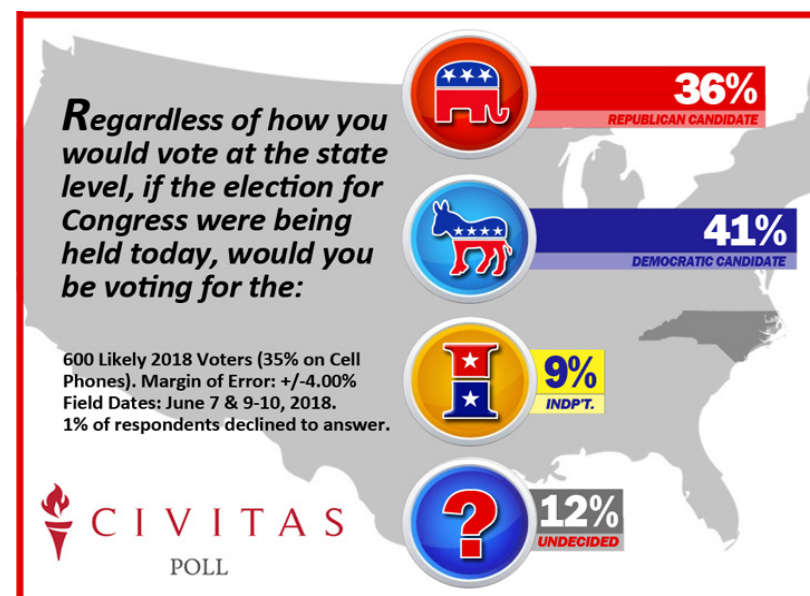
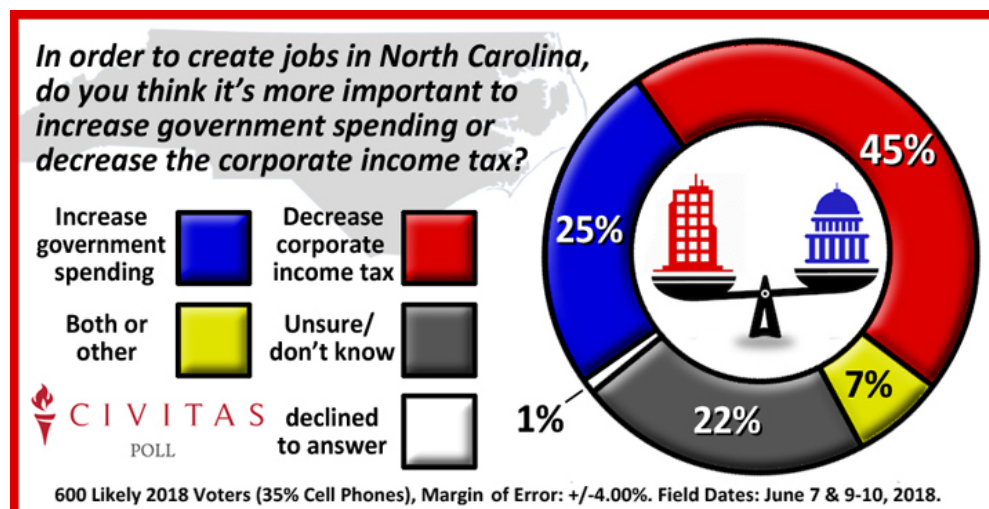
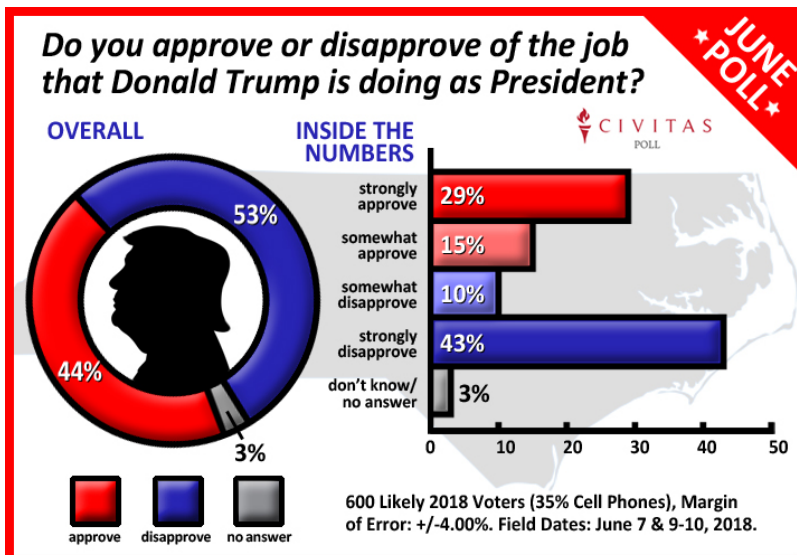
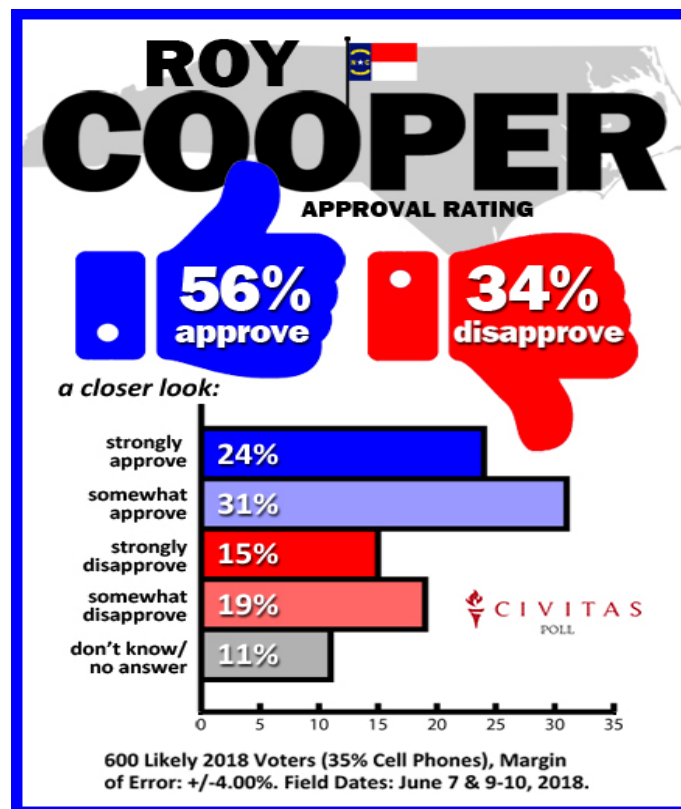
state priority. This is by far the highest response for the open ended answer about what is most important issue for voters in November. Obviously polling on education is a major reason why Gov. Roy Cooper will continue to blast away for more

education spending and teacher raises beyond the increases approved by the General Assembly. Second is "more affordable health care" within the state. Health care affordability was the number one response for 10 percent of those polled.

Eighty percent of North Carolinians agree with the spending increases for education and the increase in teacher pay implemented by the legislature, while in a separate question 72 percent believe more funding is needed for schools.

Fifty percent of responders across the state said they strongly supported the teacher walkout on April, while 12 percent said they somewhat supported the protests.

More North Carolinians think the state economy is getting better (36 percent) rather than getting worse (23 percent). Thirty-six percent of respondents said it is staying the same. The poll had a margin of error of 4 percent. The entire poll can be accessed on the Civitas website.



Changes represent the difference in voter registration between June 2, 2018 and July 7, 2018

County	Total Voters	Total Change	Democrats	Democrat Change	Republicans	Republican Change	Libertarians	Libertarian Change	Unaffiliated Voters	Unaffiliated Change
Totals	6,962,839	22,143	2,660,007	2,627	2,086,390	3,484	35,702	243	2,180,330	15,596
ALAMANCE	100,983	176	38,036	-58	33,068	27	494	-2	29,383	209
ALEXANDER	24,322	-3	6,168	2	10,768	-20	85	2	7,300	12
ALLEGHANY	7,431	4	2,634	-10	2,610	6	35	1	2,152	7
ANSON	17,350	9	11,626	-5	2,459	-7	19	0	3,233	10
ASHE	18,971	85	5,282	-17	8,096	42	71	-1	5,521	60
AVERY	11,809	63	1,403	7	6,952	38	48	0	3,406	18
BEAUFORT	33,152	62	13,209	-11	10,776	2	90	1	9,074	67
BERTIE	14,087	38	10,038	-3	1,541	0	25	1	2,483	40
BLADEN	22,906	2	12,581	-41	3,917	6	39	1	6,368	35
BRUNSWICK	100,616	1,104	27,327	181	37,656	419	370	1	35,260	501
BUNCOMBE	194,775	495	74,974	124	46,048	32	1,430	19	72,300	313
BURKE	58,105	51	18,175	-45	20,690	11	269	3	18,968	81
CABARRUS	135,790	388	41,384	65	49,348	76	776	3	44,275	242
CALDWELL	54,803	86	14,130	1	24,621	29	358	2	15,692	53
CAMDEN	7,845	33	2,222	-4	2,471	13	45	-2	3,107	26
CARTERET	52,340	52	11,973	-17	22,288	20	239	0	17,840	49
CASWELL	15,673	9	7,899	-6	3,299	4	35	1	4,439	9
CATAWBA	104,473	285	25,315	13	44,692	48	405	0	34,059	224
CHATHAM	52,886	144	20,754	16	12,905	11	234	0	18,990	114
CHEROKEE	23,205	45	5,603	-19	9,977	29	127	-2	7,497	37
CHOWAN	10,256	10	4,821	-22	2,644	16	22	1	2,769	15
CLAY	8,597	-38	1,866	-15	3,583	-12	45	1	3,102	-13
CLEVELAND	64,462	-5	25,858	-62	21,024	23	239	3	17,337	29
COLUMBUS	37,309	136	20,653	-45	7,174	35	58	0	9,422	145
CRAVEN	68,886	207	22,986	20	24,095	72	357	3	21,445	109
CUMBERLAND	215,865	1,375	98,250	295	49,390	159	1159	21	67,057	895
CURRITUCK	19,702	101	3,946	-18	7,282	64	157	3	8,316	52
DARE	29,744	121	8,747	-5	9,190	38	215	3	11,590	84
DAVIDSON	107,906	250	25,835	-14	50,471	12	445	1	31,153	250
DAVIE	29,713	31	5,438	-1	15,102	10	109	-3	9,064	25
DUPLIN	30,142	6	13,988	-17	8,116	6	123	-1	7,914	17
DURHAM	223,701	1,016	123,325	349	27,799	62	1,097	5	71,460	592
EDGECOMBE	38,298	124	26,713	13	6,219	7	82	-1	5,282	105
FORSYTH	257,579	1,452	104,883	438	75,853	179	1,251	8	75,573	813
FRANKLIN	43,954	81	18,068	-11	13,326	9	200	2	12,357	79
GASTON	143,595	353	44,649	45	54,444	94	698	5	43,802	208
GATES	8,665	29	4,578	3	1,764	2	29	0	2,294	24
GRAHAM	6,397	-4	1,894	-2	2,819	-3	26	0	1,658	1
GRANVILLE	38,320	-60	18,629	-26	9,361	-15	144	0	10,185	-19
GREENE	11,444	17	6,517	-6	2,094	9	21	0	2,810	13
GUILFORD	370,016	1,377	168,140	337	95,097	107	1,760	12	104,996	910
HALIFAX	38,558	226	25,277	14	4,609	-1	86	3	8,584	209
HARNETT	74,720	334	26,306	58	26,010	84	494	2	21,907	187
HAYWOOD	44,384	165	16,481	2	13,491	63	250	1	14,157	98
HENDERSON	84,401	236	17,962	21	31,678	44	435	0	34,318	168
HERTFORD	15,436	71	11,203	23	1,472	-3	36	0	2,725	51
HOKE	32,318	153	15,217	8	6,802	35	194	0	10,104	110
HYDE	3,420	-3	1,964	-9	531	0	12	-1	913	7

IREDELL	119,495	491	30,205	51	49,326	109	572	4	39,385	324
JACKSON	28,403	34	10,155	-1	7,547	31	175	2	10,523	2
JOHNSTON	125,928	525	38,623	59	48,244	134	708	15	38,345	313
JONES	7,286	-15	3,531	-14	1,833	-1	22	1	1,900	-1
LEE	36,353	34	14,650	-13	10,326	7	170	-2	11,205	42
LENOIR	38,495	2	20,786	-41	9,553	15	115	1	8,040	26
LINCOLN	57,305	256	13,700	-9	25,158	97	259	3	18,188	165
MACON	25,889	88	6,490	-20	10,479	34	128	0	8,790	74
MADISON	16,951	22	6,530	-17	4,410	19	108	1	5,902	18
MARTIN	17,027	16	10,092	-5	3,300	8	36	2	3,598	10
MCDOWELL	29,377	65	8,295	-5	11,129	21	150	-1	9,803	50
MECKLENBURG	726,639	2,703	318,358	734	170,705	127	4,413	46	233,121	1,775
MITCHELL	11,034	9	1,145	-1	6,645	-3	28	0	3,216	13
MONTGOMERY	16,448	-1	7,083	-23	5,029	-11	58	1	4,275	31
MOORE	67,229	247	16,409	-1	27,275	72	343	3	23,199	171
NASH	66,326	85	33,144	-63	18,743	5	208	3	14,229	139
NEW HANOVER	168,865	775	52,919	180	53,137	96	1,183	8	61,615	487
NORTHAMPTON	14,581	-11	10,440	-46	1,437	3	24	3	2,678	28
ONSLow	106,985	608	27,578	57	38,709	162	936	15	39,759	375
ORANGE	113,342	118	52,421	36	16,362	-27	725	7	43,823	101
PAMLICO	9,712	29	3,809	6	3,160	14	39	1	2,704	8
PASQUOTANK	28,889	165	13,112	17	6,136	28	168	0	9,469	119
PENDER	41,039	189	12,565	5	15,421	66	238	1	12,811	113
PERQUIMANS	10,007	0	4,033	-7	2,708	1	32	0	3,233	6
PERSON	26,628	-21	11,966	-36	6,630	6	97	0	7,935	9
PITT	122,893	332	55,674	98	31,830	13	710	-2	34,665	216
POLK	15,969	12	4,364	-16	5,561	0	80	0	5,962	28
RANDOLPH	91,493	64	18,703	-19	45,875	12	479	-5	26,429	72
RICHMOND	30,334	5	16,467	-18	5,945	12	74	0	7,847	10
ROBESON	76,257	233	48,497	-138	9,454	-1	187	-2	18,117	373
ROCKINGHAM	59,944	56	22,408	-48	20,750	28	219	1	16,564	74
ROWAN	94,550	164	27,777	-45	38,270	25	391	3	28,110	179
RUTHERFORD	44,983	84	14,347	-20	16,933	48	217	0	13,484	54
SAMPSON	37,794	-108	16,197	-59	13,836	-27	108	0	7,653	-22
SCOTLAND	22,616	35	12,759	-36	3,729	7	49	-1	6,079	65
STANLY	41,535	60	10,997	-27	18,301	32	140	0	12,095	54
STOKES	31,065	40	7,641	-23	15,028	23	154	2	8,237	35
SURRY	45,723	28	13,509	-46	19,304	29	119	3	12,788	40
SWAIN	10,383	32	3,973	5	2,700	13	31	1	3,678	12
TRANSYLVANIA	25,751	46	6,675	-9	8,270	12	116	0	10,690	43
TYRRELL	2,420	2	1,377	-1	355	2	8	0	680	1
UNION	154,396	577	39,614	102	63,871	167	676	-1	50,228	305
VANCE	30,125	59	19,771	23	4,366	7	68	-1	5,918	29
WAKE	726,031	2,907	269,016	645	188,519	206	4,720	37	263,718	1,997
WARREN	13,525	17	9,239	-6	1,823	7	34	0	2,429	16
WASHINGTON	8,749	17	5,837	5	1,142	2	26	0	1,744	10
WATAUGA	45,670	-87	12,061	-57	14,019	-32	499	-3	19,088	4
WAYNE	74,759	136	32,190	-38	23,866	17	300	-1	18,402	157
WILKES	42,708	17	9,763	-19	21,994	6	138	0	10,812	30
WILSON	55,616	101	29,031	-1	13,454	-2	158	1	12,972	103
YADKIN	24,005	1	4,048	0	13,258	-13	78	0	6,621	14
YANCEY	14,002	11	5106	-14	4,913	-4	50	1	3,933	28

Gov. Cooper's History of Supporting Tax Hikes

BY LEAH BYERS

- *Governor Cooper's recent budget vetoes should come as no surprise given his history of tax increases, massive spending, and budget gimmicks.*
- *North Carolina has seen the consequences of liberal spending policies since taxpayers are left to foot the bill.*
- *North Carolina must adhere to fiscal responsibility, which involves difficult decisions and financial discipline.*

Gov. Roy Cooper has vetoed each of the two budgets passed during his time as governor. The Republican-controlled General Assembly overrode both vetoes. As an explanation for his veto decisions, Cooper said that the 2017 budget “comes up short” and the 2018 budget “doesn’t cut it.” Indeed, Cooper’s 2018 budget proposal would have spent a half-billion dollars more than the budget he vetoed.

It is easy for Cooper to call for more spending since he knows there is little chance he will ever be held accountable for the tax increases that would be needed to make his proposals viable. In fact, according to the non-partisan Fiscal Research Division of the General Assembly, Cooper’s 2018 budget proposal contained a \$469 million structural budget shortfall. This type of spending is irresponsible and unsustainable.

Cooper’s present-day budget approach is not surprising when you examine his record as a state legislator. Cooper served in the House from 1987 to 1990 and in the Senate from 1991 until being elected attorney general in 2000. During his 14-year legislative career, Cooper dis-

played a pattern of voting for tax increases and bills with budget gimmicks that created and sustained structural imbalances in the state’s budget. By looking back on that time, we can learn some valuable lessons about the consequences of that type of fiscal philosophy.

In his first term in the House, Cooper and fellow Democrats voted to increase the corporate income tax rate from 6 to 7 percent. Are we surprised Cooper’s 2018 budget proposed a halt on the scheduled corporate income tax decrease? Old habits die hard.

In his second term, Cooper and his like-minded colleagues passed a budget that implemented a “creative” method of balancing the budget: using transfers from special funds. In 1989, the General Assembly passed legislation to create the Highway Trust Fund. The fund was intended to earmark money for various highway and road construction projects across the state. A series of tax and fee increases were adopted to finance these projects, including raising the motor fuel tax by 5.25 cents per gallon and implementing a 3 percent “highway use fee” on car

title transfers.

The first two years after the fund’s creation, more than \$63 million was allocated from that special fund to pay for expenditures not related to transportation. Of that, more than \$53 million was used to finance pay increases for teachers and state employees. Cooper and his fellow legislators essentially implemented the fee and tax increases under pretenses, using them for expenditures outside of their stated purpose.

The 1991 session was Cooper’s first in the Senate, and the state was facing significant revenue shortfalls due to an economic recession. Instead of balancing the budget through cutting non-essential state spending, Cooper voted to raise taxes. The 1991 budget contained seven different tax increases, including:

- Increasing the sales tax from 3 to 4 percent.
- Increasing the corporate income tax from 7 to 7.75 percent.
- Creating a new personal income tax rate of 7.75 percent for income over \$100,000.
- Increasing some liquor surcharges and ABC permit fees.

- Increasing the cigarette tax from 2¢ per pack to 5¢ and levies a 2.0 percent of the wholesale price on other tobacco products.
- Raising insurance tax from 1.750 percent of gross premiums to 1.875 percent for 1991 and 1.900 percent beginning with 1992.
- Establishing a 6.5 percent charge against gross premiums tax liability (except HMOs and BCBS) for a special trust designed to eliminate general fund support for Department of Insurance and allow a 20 percent credit against premium tax for guaranty fund assessments.

The 1991 recession did not deter Democratic support for higher spending. If anything, it is clear that Cooper and other left-leaning legislators learned nothing from that economic hardship. When the recession passed, the tax increases implemented in 1991 created a \$1.2 billion revenue surplus by 1994. Instead of returning that money to taxpayers, the General Assembly increased spending by \$1 billion.

In the mid-1990s, the Republican-controlled

House led the campaign for a series of tax cuts, including increases to the personal income tax exemption and reducing the corporate income tax rate back to 6.9 percent. But an expanding economy meant that, despite tax rate decreases, Cooper and his fellow Senate Democrats never felt compelled to rein in their spending. They could agree to tax cuts – sometimes in the form of targeted corporate welfare, but technically decreasing tax obligations – because revenue was still coming in at a level that did not require them to curtail their spending habits.

The consequences of this lack of fiscal discipline became apparent when revenues began to decline in 1999 and 2000. By 1999, Cooper was the Senate majority leader, and Democrats had control of the Senate, House, and governorship. They lamented the budget shortfalls as a product of the prior tax cuts instead of considering that inflated government spending was a major factor. A series of natural disasters and lawsuit settlements owed by the state compounded the state’s financial problems.

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The Left's War on Curiosity

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tactic in the war on curiosity, but far from the only one.

Safe spaces offer protection for those who feel threatened by opposing viewpoints. There are campuses that offer mental health counseling to students who cannot bear “even the thought of an individual coming to campus” to express non-politically correct views. That the mere thought of someone with opposing views setting foot on your campus can threaten your mental health takes motivated ignorance to the nth degree.

Public shaming or bullying is another popular tactic. Anyone who disagrees with a Leftist is obviously a racist, or homophobe or a tool of the rich and therefore must be discredited through name-calling. Why bother with debate when mindlessly dismissing other viewpoints as “not worthy” of discus-

sion is so much easier, and empowering? After all, moral authority is valuable currency in the Left's desire to gain the top slot in our social hierarchy, and demonizing opponents has proven to be a more convenient route than an open debate of ideas.

Leftists Tend to be More Uncurious of Opposing Views

To be sure, the war on curiosity is being waged by people of all political stripes. However, Leftists seem to be outgunning their opponents when it comes to motivated ignorance. Indeed, social scientist Jonathan Haidt in his book “The Righteous Mind” reported on a study which found “clear and consistent” results that “(m)oderates and conservatives were most accurate in their predictions” when people of varying political bents were tested on how well they understood their ideological opposites.

In other words, Leftists don't understand their opponents' views as well as their opponents understand theirs.

When is the last time you heard of a Leftist speaker being shut down by violent protesters?

The Role of Confirmation Bias

Enabling this war is confirmation bias – the strong tendency in us to interpret all new information through the lens of our prior beliefs. Whatever your political philosophy is, you can easily immerse yourself into media outlets, social media and internet content that exclusively reaffirm your convictions. One can comfortably spend hours a day consum-



ing political information without once encountering a differing viewpoint.

Moreover, most Americans can go through thirteen years of public education, plus four or more years in university, and never be confronted with a viewpoint counter to the orthodox Leftist vision of government as benevolent dispenser of justice.

Lack of exposure to other viewpoints may help explain why so many Leftists can muster

no greater argument than “shut up, racist.”

The war on curiosity serves only to dumb down political debate. Non-Leftist viewpoints get silenced, while progressive arguments need never be thoroughly presented because intimidation and name-calling prove much easier and satisfyingly self-righteous. History proves such trends lead to ugly outcomes.

Voter ID: A Form of Suppression or Necessary Protection?

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 3

have to jump through artificial hoops to exercise their constitutional rights.”

It's as though they've never heard of the background checks and waiting periods by which North Carolina regulates the free exercise of the right to keep and bear arms. The hoops that we expect gun owners to jump through involve more than showing proof

of identity, yet editors who are silent about Second Amendment constraints want the rest of us to think that asking to see a photo ID is the same as collecting a poll tax or imposing a literacy test on prospective voters. Sheesh!

Progressive fondness for treating reason like an accessory rather than something integral to argu-

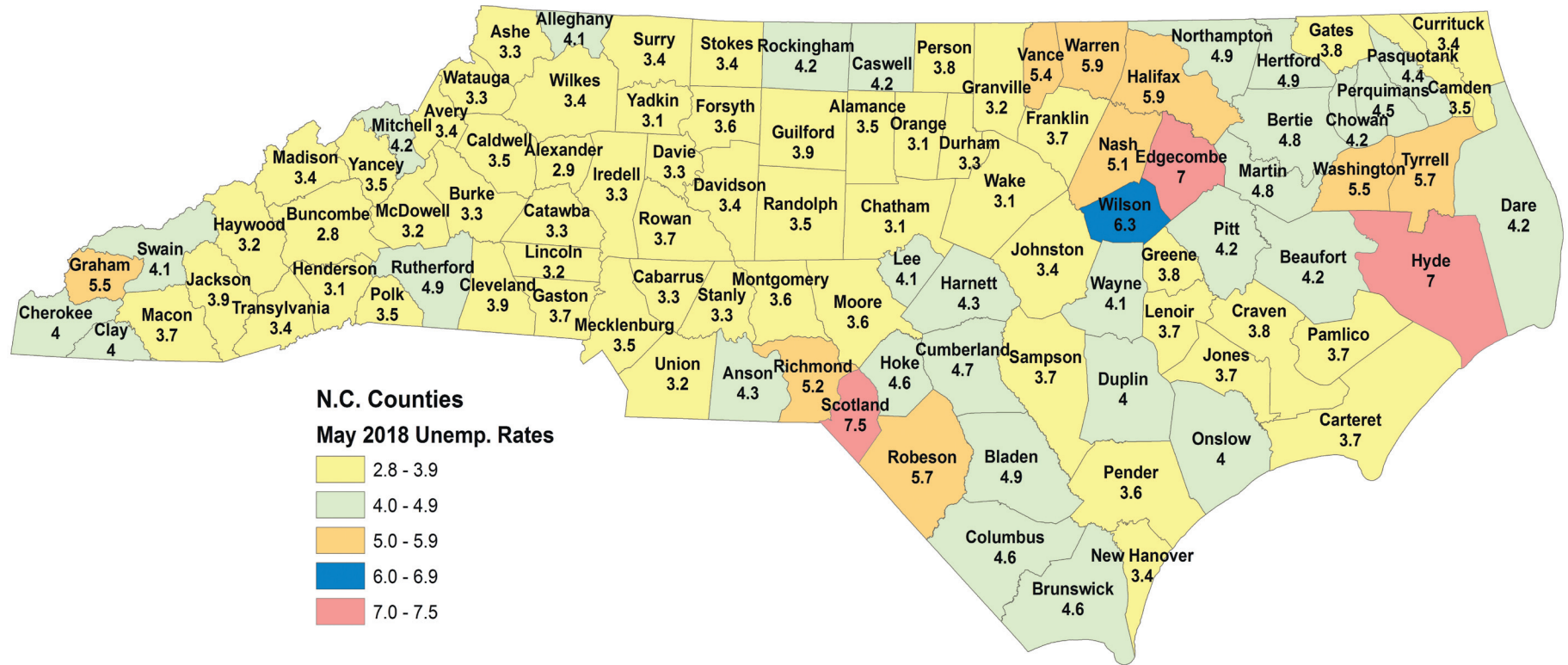
ment makes it a prop, like Tiny Tim's crutch in “A Christmas Carol.” This habit also makes Observer editorials fun for those of us who can't pick up a shovel without remembering folk wisdom about the pony that might be under a pile of manure.

Happily, the screed against voter identification made good on that

promise. Voters should be especially wary of the proposed amendment to the state constitution requiring a photo ID to vote editors said, “because they would be asked to approve it before they know any details of how photo ID would work. Would student IDs count? Would utility bills?”

You must be a special kind of editor to get your picture on a utility bill.

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The above map shows the May 2018, (not seasonally adjusted) unemployment rates for North Carolina counties. (data from N.C. Department of Commerce) The May statewide unemployment rate was 3.7 percent, which was the same percentage as April. Unemployment decreased in 60 counties, increased in eight, and remained unchanged in 32. The state’s May 2018 (not seasonally adjusted) unemployment rate decreased in all 100 counties compared to last year.

Scotland County reported the highest unemployment rate at 7.5 percent, while Buncombe County had the lowest at 2.8 percent. Asheville at 2.8 percent has the lowest unemployment rate among metro areas, while Rocky Mount had the highest at 5.8 percent. Seven of the state’s metro areas decreased, seven remain unchanged, and one increased.

Gov. Cooper’s History of Supporting Tax Hikes

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Despite the tight financial situation, Cooper and company continued to increase spending in the 1999 and 2000 budget bills for the pet projects of then-Governor Jim Hunt, including yearly increases in Smart Start funding and teacher and state employee pay increases. Cooper’s unwillingness to deal with budget problems was revealed in

2000 when he supported a General Assembly plan to delay payments for teacher salaries to the next fiscal year. This accounting gimmick allowed the budget to appear balanced on paper when it, in fact, contained a funding gap.

The budget crisis created by reckless spending and structural imbalances reached a breaking point in 2001 when the state faced

an \$820 million budget shortfall. Cooper, however, had just been elected state attorney general and did not have to face the reckoning that resulted from the irresponsible budget practices that characterized much of his time in the legislature.

When you review Cooper’s legislative record, it is no surprise that, as governor, he has advocated

for big government spending. Higher spending levels are appealing to Cooper’s Democratic and left-leaning base. But, there are two sides of the ledger. State spending has to be financed, and it is essential to remember that taxpayers are footing the bill.

Luckily for North Carolina, policymakers that share Cooper’s liberal fiscal philosophy no longer

control the state’s purse strings. As Cooper has demonstrated with his budget vetoes, his approach to budgeting has not changed much in the past 30 years. The governor continues to support unsustainable levels of government spending, and North Carolina should be careful not to follow his lead.

Polling in the Trump Era: A Primer

BY ADAM GELLER

In the autumn of 2016, the talking heads on cable news and the Sunday talk shows were laughing at the Trump for President campaign. Why, they wondered, was he spending so much time in Michigan and Wisconsin, states that he would surely lose? After all, it had been decades since those states went Republican in a presidential election. It was, they opined, a fool's errand to court those states.

When they laughed at the Trump campaign, they were laughing at me. I was one of the pollsters for the Trump for President campaign, and those states, among others, were my responsibility. And I was fairly confident that the numbers in those states were much closer than most people believed.

In order to explain why I was confident in these numbers, let me start at the beginning: the state of North Carolina, and the monthly public Civitas Institute polling that my firm has been conducting since 2011.

In early 2016, before I was brought on to the Trump campaign, we occasionally tested the head to head horse race tests for the upcoming presidential election. The goal was to publicly report which way North Carolina voters were leaning in the campaign.

While conducting and analyzing these surveys, I stumbled upon a voter subgroup that exists in large numbers but is significantly under-reported in



other public polls: the hidden Trump supporter.

The hidden Trump supporters are favorable toward the President, but they don't publicly state this. They have their reasons: they don't want to be called racist or deplorable. They don't want to be attacked verbally or physically. They don't want the confrontation. So they remain hidden.

In order to find them, pollsters need to ask new questions, beyond the job approval or head to head question. Among the questions we now ask regularly:

- Do you know of anyone who likes what President Trump is doing, but refuses to say so publicly.
- Do you agree with the following statement: "I may not approve of the job that President

Trump is doing, but I do like some of the actions he is taking."

The responses to those questions can be analyzed and cross-tabulated with other responses in order to provide a true measure of Trump support.

That is merely one example of how polling needs to evolve and adjust to a changing landscape. There is certainly great value in asking "standard" questions using identical language to track the ways in which opinion evolves over time. But there is just as much value in being creative and always trying to build a better mousetrap.

We take the same approach in the monthly polls we conduct for the Civitas Institute. Instead of merely asking North Carolina voters whether or not they support a particu-

lar issue, we dig in to the issue, present competing arguments for and against a policy, and understand how people process the dialogue.

Of course, there are lots of reasons why poll results differ. We would always recommend reading the fine print about how, when and where the poll was conducted, as well as by whom.

Some key items to keep in mind:

- What is the sample size and margin of error?
 - Who commissioned the survey?
 - Are full results available?
 - Is the pollster transparent about their methodology?
 - What was the mode? If telephones, were cell phones used?
- And now, the part where

I make an appeal to you (no, it doesn't affect your wallet, I promise). Participation in polls – response rates, in our parlance – is way down. The next time someone asks you to participate in an opinion survey, I would ask you to consider participating.

Think about it. Someone values your opinion enough to want to pick your brain and ask your opinion about elected officials and policies. The common refrain that "they don't care what we think" actually isn't true. Businesses and politician do care what you think. Let them know. Hey, at the very least, it's a good opportunity to give them a piece of your mind!

Adam Geller is the founder and CEO of the polling firm, National Research Inc.

Why the Lower Tax Amendment is Good for North Carolina

BY RAY NOTHSTINE

In a recent Civitas poll, 66 percent of North Carolinians support a constitutional amendment to cap the state income tax rate at 5.5 percent, compared to only 13 percent who oppose it. Unfortunately, that number was altered to 7 percent after some lawmakers in the House got a case of cold feet. In the end, they couldn't muster up the political

courage to at least match Georgia's cap at 6 percent. Still, 7 percent is better than the current 10 percent cap and voters will now have the opportunity to affirm that on the November ballot.

As the poll indicates, citizens rightly value protecting their property and earnings from

government overreach too. Many of our newer residents to North Carolina have themselves fled high tax regions. Lowering the cap helps to protect residents from future spend-thrift politicians.

In the recent past, many North Carolinians had a state income tax rate of over 8 percent when Mike Easley and Bev Perdue were in the governor's mansion. Gov. Roy Cooper continually signals that North Carolina is not spending enough tax dol-

lars and submitted a budget \$500 million more than the GOP controlled General Assembly.

The state individual income tax rate will dip to 5.25 percent in 2019. The amendment's most positive aspect is helping to secure lower tax rates going forward. After all, one of the main reasons constitutional government

and "make work" projects. At the end, "Fast Eddie," just one of Edwards' many nicknames, spent a lot of time in federal prison.

While many prefer to regale in the illegal shenanigans of Edwards, legal plunder of the state financially crippled Louisiana. "Spending on state construction projects had become so profligate by

for some time now, individuals and families fleeing high tax states where spending is out of control because of a lack of discipline by state legislatures and no political courage to tackle issues like bloated pensions. California's top marginal income tax rate is 13.3 percent, highest in the nation. Now migration patterns are reversing from

a state income tax. States with bloated expenditures and debt are not only losing businesses, but shedding many of their most productive citizens.

Taxpayers should continually ask "what is the purpose of government?" One of the reasons we have a national debt in excess of \$21 trillion is we no longer understand that question on the federal level.

We've moved too far away from our foundational document or roadmap, the U.S. Constitution.

North Carolina has worked hard in recent years to be a model of fiscal conservative policy, this amendment signals businesses and residents

that those policies are less likely to change.

It's a great idea to reinforce lower taxes in our state constitution and to remind people that government can – and should – only do so much. While 7 percent was not the ideal number, it's a step forward instead of a step back. By limiting taxes we place limits on government, powerfully reminding our representatives in North Carolina that their sphere is limited and our power over them is not.



is implemented is to prevent runaway power and protect personal property from plunder.

When it comes to chicanery and corruption in state government, one of the most enthralling books is "The Last Hayride" by John Maginnis. It largely profiles the antics of former Louisiana Governor Edwin Edwards. But it's a powerful moral tale and reminder too about the importance of limiting state power and its never-ending appetite for more and more revenue

the fourth and final term of Gov. Edwin Edwards during the early 1990s that the state was spending 15 percent of its general fund revenue on debt," reads a 2017 article in The Advocate, Louisiana's largest newspaper.

An April Wall Street Journal op-ed by economists Stephen Moore and Art Laffer predicted that 800,000 will flee New York and California over the next three years because of high taxes. Of course, this has been occurring

just a couple of generations ago when many fled the Dust Bowl for opportunities in California.

States that have their fiscal house in order are reaping the benefits, all the more if a state can virtually guarantee lower taxes. Texas continually made national headlines recently, especially under former Gov. Rick Perry, for aggressively recruiting businesses and their workers to leave California for low tax Texas. The "Lone Star State" does not have