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THE GOOD, THE BAD, THE UGLY

Gov. Cooper's Budget Would Raise Spending 5.1%

BY BRIAN BALFOUR

Democratic Gov. Roy Cooper in early March released his first budget proposal, featuring a plan to expand Medicaid, aggressive pay raises for teachers, and tens of millions of dollars for corporate welfare, but no income or sales tax increases.

Cooper's spending proposal totals \$23.5 billion, marking a 5.1 percent increase over the current year's budget. The governor's budget was met with instant criticism from legislative leaders.

"The governor's proposal is a step backward from this successful approach that has led to a booming North Carolina economy and helped generate close to 500,000 new jobs," said Senate Leader Phil Berger.

The budget does, however, include some provisions that conservatives should like, along with proposals worthy of criticism and some items that should be dismissed immediately.

Following is a breakdown of the good, the bad and the ugly in Cooper's budget proposal:

The Good

- No new taxes. Cooper's plan includes no tax increases and, in fact, includes an increase in the child tax credit for FY 2018-2019 estimated to save families

proposal would set aside more than \$300 million into the state's Savings Reserve Fund, a fiscally prudent move to better prepare the state to weather the next economic recession (although

by roughly \$30 billion in unfunded liabilities for health coverage benefits for state retirees, any proactive measure to begin to rein in this growing obligation is wise.

The Bad

- The topline number: \$23.5 billion. This marks a 5.1 percent increase over the current year's budget, a hike of more than \$1.1 billion. For broader perspective, a spending plan of this size would be double the state budget of 20 years ago and would mark a 64 percent increase from 15 years ago. Recent budgets have seen annual increases in the 3 percent range.

- Corporate welfare. Tens of millions of taxpayer dollars are dedicated in Cooper's plan to be handed out to corporate cronies. Such programs include: \$30 million for the NC Ready program to subsidize "economic development" projects, \$20 million for the Manufacturing Site Infrastructure Development Fund, and an additional \$5 million to the Main Street Solutions program that gives

taxpayer dollars to government-approved "revitalization" projects. Such programs politicize our economy and empower politicians to pick winners and losers, rather than empowering consumers to determine which businesses succeed or fail.

- Breaks for Hollywood. Cooper's plan not only includes \$15 million of taxpayer dollars to go to Hollywood production corporations filming in NC this year, but would transition the grant program back into an even larger tax credit that would be estimated at \$40 million annually. This is just another kind of corporate welfare, except for giant Hollywood studios.

- "Free" community college. The NC GROW (Getting Ready for Opportunities in the Workforce) program would be created effective 2018, and would fully subsidize NC students graduating high school with a 2.0 grade point average or better who enter community college within 18 months of graduation. Students would also

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\$52.5 million.

(But beware: if Cooper's plan has no overt tax hikes, it does reach into citizens' pockets in other ways, as we'll discuss later.)

- Rainy Day Fund. The budget

I'd like to see a larger number set aside). Another \$100 million would be set aside into the Disaster Relief Fund.

- Funds for retiree health-care liabilities. With NC saddled

Tax Cut Plan Would Save Taxpayers \$1B

BY BRIAN BALFOUR

The leaders of the Senate Finance Committee have unveiled a tax cut plan projected to save taxpayers more than \$1 billion over the coming biennium. Following are the highlights from the plan.

Personal income tax changes

The plan would lower the rate from 5.499 percent to 5.35 percent, effective in 2018. Also, the plan would increase the standard deduction from \$17,500 to \$20,000 for married people filing jointly, and \$8,750 to \$10,000 for single filers.

Also planned is changing the existing child tax credit to a sliding scale that falls as income rises. For those with family income under \$40,000, the credit would rise to \$2,500 per child, and then it would drop by \$500 incrementally per every \$20,000 increase in income up to \$120,000 when it

would fall to zero. For those who itemize, the mortgage interest and property tax deductions are increased.

The benefits of these tax cuts include:

- These changes are estimated to save taxpayers nearly \$300 million in their first year and \$600 million the following year.

- According to a press release, the increase in the standard deduction will remove about 94,000 families from state income tax liability. Together with increasing child tax credits, families of four earning less than the federal poverty level of \$24,600 would be exempt from the NC state income tax.

- The removal of these additional families from the tax rolls, according to the release, would "move North Carolina closer to the goal of phasing out state income taxes."

Corporate tax cut

The corporate tax rate would fall from 3 percent to 2.75 percent in 2018, then to 2.5 percent in 2019. This is estimated to save those taxpayers nearly \$120 million over the next two years, funds they can instead use to create more jobs.

The franchise tax

Simplifying and reducing the franchise tax by creating a flat \$200 tax on the first \$1 million of a business' net worth would aid small businesses. This change is projected to save NC businesses nearly \$20 million a year once implemented.

Market-based sourcing

Moving to market-based sourcing would include a change in how service-based revenue is apportioned for tax purposes, so that taxation would be based on where the income-producing

activity is performed. This change is estimated to increase taxes on net for those affected by \$15 million over the coming biennium.

Almost all NC citizens would benefit

Sponsors of the legislation claim that 99 percent of NC taxpayers would pay less or no state income taxes under this plan, with the majority of benefits going to families earning less than \$50,000 per year.

Overall, the plan is projected to generate total tax savings of \$324 million in the 2017-18 fiscal year and \$710 million in FY 2018-19.

These changes will no doubt help to further improve North Carolina's business climate as well as to stimulate continued economic and job growth. One area of concern, however,

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Mike Adams: Crazy Campus Protests, Serious Goals

BY JAMES TYNEN

You may have seen some of the bizarre things happening at universities recently and thought these students and professors must be stupid, crazy or just ignorant of what freedom is all about.

But professor and writer Mike Adams

this week said the opposite is true: Campus radicals attacking free speech and traditional culture know exactly what they are doing and why they are doing it — to foment a Marxist revolution.

“What [campus radicals] are trying to do is radically transform the culture,” he said. “The mechanism of changing

What was most interesting to me was how he took us behind the curtain to show us the real motivations and goals of so many of the outlandish goings-on at colleges and universities. I suppose most of us read about campus radicals, and perhaps mutter about their protests and complaints, but then shrug our shoulders and go on about our business.

After all, their complaints seem so absurd and random. But it’s all part of a long-term, relentless strategy to weaken the culture, paving the way for a Marxist transformation of society, he said.

For, in addition to the economic Marxism we’re familiar with, there’s cultural Marxism, in which radicals seek

according to his needs.

But “who on earth would think that’s a good deal – ‘I want to be average?’” Adams said. “Marxism is for losers. I mean that literally: It benefits losers.”

So Marxism can’t be sold to people able to understand its goals. “You can’t possibly have radical transformation of the culture unless you interfere with the marketplace of ideas,” he said of leftists. “Their success in getting really bad ideas accepted on campuses has hinged on their ability to interfere with freedom of expression and to undermine the First Amendment.”

He recalled arriving on the campus of UNC Wilmington and finding that the student handbook included a speech

primed to take offense. Again, this may be absurd, but don’t be distracted: If leftists can get students to fear thinking and talking, they will lose their ability to resist leftist propaganda.

There has been some progress in cutting back speech codes on campus, he said, but the same strategy has continued with the assault on “microaggressions” – harmless comments or actions that the Left construes as racist. For that too is a prong of the attack on society, Adams said.

“White privilege” in cultural Marxism is the counterpart of capitalism in economic capitalism, radicals believe. “They need to overthrow capitalism in the economic level and ‘white privilege’ in the cultural level,” Adams said. And how is that done?

Creating More Losers

If communism is for losers, then it’s also essential for communists to create more losers. The vehicles for that kind of cultural change are mandatory student fees and campus centers for special groups, he said.

These centers and fee-funded projects aim to destroy students’ moral bearings, leaving them psychologically and spiritually weaker, thus in greater need of powerful government to help them.

Adams cited a “poetry” journal published under the aegis of a campus student center. It included a poem about Mother Teresa that can’t even be described in our newspaper. “It was worse than anything you’d find written on the walls of a bar on Franklin Street,” Adams said.

Or consider the “orgasm awareness day” sponsored by Western Carolina University or the “orgasm awareness week”

sponsored by UNC-Chapel Hill, he said.

“What is behind all of sexual politics ... is just of a larger scheme to transform the culture,” he said. “What they really want to do is to destroy marriage.”

That’s why young, impressionable people are targeted by the Left, he said. “It’s as if they’re being preyed upon by these cultural warriors.”

“They’re trying to sexualize our children, because what they’re really trying to do is take a look at sex and marriage and procreation and split them from one another,” he continued. “Because if you want to have a big government in a Marxist society, you have to have weak families.”

He did note that parents and lawmakers are beginning to understand these influences, and are fighting back successfully.

In an interview, Adams added that leftists may have gone too far for the comfort of their liberal allies, especially those whose secure, well-paid jobs depend on universities functioning smoothly.

“Hopefully the Left is realizing they are creating a monster that is out of control,” he said. “They better figure it out: This idea that emotions trump ideas is going to cause mass chaos on campuses.”

“There is actually a chance now that they’ll look at it now, and say, ‘Uh oh, we’re having rioting and safety issues, now we’ve got to go undo some of this mess.’”

Nevertheless, in his lecture Adams made one thing clear: Defeating cultural Marxism will require that we treat it very seriously indeed. ■



the culture revolves around free speech and that’s why this is a huge issue for us.”

Adams, a criminology professor at the University of North Carolina Wilmington, outlined the real basis for campus speech codes and other left-wing causes in his talk March 7 at the Icon Lecture Series in Chapel Hill.

to fundamentally transform society to undermine the family, religion, morality, and other forces that might stand in the way of radicalism.

Fighting Free Speech

First of all, he said, we have to understand the key Marxist axiom: From each according to his abilities, and to each

code that proclaimed people “had a right to be comfortable and unoffended”! That handbook, for instance, said students could be punished for “misdirected laughter,” if while laughing they happened to glance at someone nearby.

Almost anything might offend somebody somewhere – especially if he or she has been

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NC Capitol Connection

PUBLISHER

Francis X. De Luca
francis.deluca@nccivitas.org

MANAGING EDITOR

Jim Tynen
jim.tynen@nccivitas.org

GRAPHIC DESIGNER

Jona McDuffie

EDITORIAL & ADVERTISING

805 Spring Forest Rd Ste 100
Raleigh, NC 27609

phone: 919.834.2099

fax: 919.834.2350

NC Capitol Connection is a publication of the Civitas Institute

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

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NC Senate OKs Cap on State Income Tax

BY MATT CAULDER

The state Senate in mid-March approved a bill to put a constitutional amendment on the ballot next year to set a 5.5 percent limit on the state income tax rate.

The Senate voted 36-13 to approve Senate Bill 75, sending it to the House.

If the House approves, the proposal will go before the voters. (State constitutional amendments do not need the approval of the governor, just as amendments to the U.S. constitution do not need approval of the president.)

The one-page bill, in its current form, would simply ask voters in November 2018 if they wanted a constitutional amendment limiting the state income tax to a maximum of 5.5 percent. Currently the tax sits at 5.499 percent, meaning that under the existing constitutional limit it could be almost doubled.

The same proposal foundered last in the House, however. Critics charge that it would limit the state's options in the event of an emergency.

Advocates reply that the bill would merely let the voters decide on the proper cap on state income taxes.

"We're not limiting options," Sen. Andy Wells (R-Catawba) said. "We're not limiting choices. We're not setting a rate on an income tax cap. We're allowing the public to have a voice. Some members (of the General Assembly) are confident they will make the right choice. Some members are scared to death those voters will make the right choice."

Both sides made their points earlier in March in the Senate Finance Committee. Sen. Tommy Tucker (R-Union), who introduced the bill in the Senate, led off the committee discussion.

"This bill has been out there for some time. It basically is an act to amend the North Carolina Constitution to cap the personal income tax rate at 5.5 percent. It goes in the next election cycle before the people to vote for or against it," he said. "It gives them the opportunity to make that decision rather than us."

Sen. Joyce Waddell (D-Mecklenburg) questioned Tucker on the bill on whether this change would prevent lawmakers from increasing the income tax rate ever.

"We've visited this once before, and I still want to know about the income that comes into this state and SB75," she said. "Is there any way that Senate bill would amend the constitution to prevent future lawmakers from ever increasing the state income tax rate?"

"I think it would probably require a constitutional amendment to be able to raise that, but you have other opportunities to raise income in emergencies or recessions," Tucker said, citing the Rainy Day Fund and the ability to raise sales taxes. "It does not, as has been stated, hog-tie, hand-tie or handcuff any future legislature. They can always take other means to raise taxes in an emergency if they need to."

"If you have a shortfall, if you have a recession, if you have an emergency, you can always raise the sales tax a penny and you can get a billion dollars from that," Tucker added. "That income is immediate when it is coming in rather than waiting a year on personal income tax."

Sen. Floyd McKissick (D-Durham) made a statement against the bill during the committee meeting.

"I don't know what's going to happen in the future," he said. "I'm not a prognosticator, nor do I have a crystal ball, but I do know that if it is limited to 5.5 percent and if we went through something like we did back in 2009, then we could see our sales tax end up in double digits, really quickly, and these sales taxes are regressive. Low- and moderate-income people pay them disproportionately, whereas [with] a progressive income tax, high-income earners are going to be [paying] a higher percentage of their income."

Committee Chair Sen. Jerry Tillman (R-Moore) responded to McKissick saying the reason the state was in such poor position to handle the recession was due to the management of the state under Democratic leadership.

"Sen. McKissick, there were many reasons why you weren't able to weather that recession," he said. "You were broke when it started, you went year after year spending ... when you were having very unbalanced budgets, although they might have balanced on paper, they were structurally deficient. And to be broke and a recession hit you, you put on a billion sales tax that you all said was temporary, and we had to stop that and make it not temporary anymore." ■

Monthly Petition

Put a Cap on North Carolina's State Income Tax

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

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

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

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

Finally, the latest Civitas poll has found that 56 percent of North Carolina voters polled support the proposed amendment. Taxpayers have been burned too often in the past by liberal tax-and-spend legislatures, and favor a safeguard against it happening again.

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

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Cooper's Budget Would Boost Spending 5.1 Percent

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

be required to apply for financial aid first, and the state subsidy would pay for any costs not covered by the aid. Presumably, those students not receiving any financial aid would have their entire costs covered by

this program. Cooper's budget projects the cost of this program in its first year to be \$19 million and that it would be covered by state lottery revenue. (See a separate article on the education budget elsewhere in this edition.)

- Ferry funds. Roughly \$7 million in new funds are directed to improvements to the taxpayer-funded ferry system. This increased burden on taxpayers serves as another reminder that the ferry system should be privatized.

The Ugly

- Medicaid expansion. The governor's budget proposal includes a provision to expand Medicaid, with a projected state price tag of \$1.4 billion in the first year to add an estimated 624,000 people to the already overcrowded system. According to Cooper's budget document, "no existing general fund tax dollars" will be needed to pay for

the expansion. Instead, "provider contributions" would be sufficient to cover the expansion, according to the spending plan. Details of the "provider contributions" were absent from the budget document, but you can expect them to take the form of taxes hospitals will have to pay. Expanding this failed welfare program will undoubtedly cost more than expected and just make it harder for people to find a doctor who will treat them.

- Opportunity Scholarships capped. While providing funding to cover Opportunity Scholarships already awarded, Cooper's budget explicitly states it "anticipates no new scholarships." Meanwhile, the

waiting list of parents wanting their children to be able to get into the program will be denied under Cooper's plan.

- Museum, arts, and symphony money. The budget plan expands by millions funding for various museums, "grassroots arts" programs, and the NC Symphony (in addition to their annual appropriations). Museums and art programs are nice to have, but they should be financed by voluntary support, not taxpayer dollars.

As always, the governor's spending plan is just the opening gambit. The state Senate and House are now hashing out their own budget proposals. ■



Governor's Education Budget: By the Numbers

BY BOB LUEBKE

Gov. Roy Cooper submitted his recommended state budget for 2017-19 at the beginning of March. The \$23.5 billion budget represents his first opportunity to outline his priorities for education and other policy areas. Let's examine a few of the numbers Capitol watchers will be talking about.

5.1 percent: Gov. Cooper's recommended state budget includes a hefty spending increase of 5.1 percent over 2016-17. The budget includes \$1.3 billion in new spending, \$783 million of which is for education (i.e., K-12, community colleges and UNC System). It's been a long time since North Carolina has approved a budget that's increased spending by 5 percent or more from the previous year.

\$271 million: Cooper knows his base, and his first budget rewards many of his strongest supporters—educators. The governor's budget provides 5 percent raises for teachers in each of the next two years at an annual cost of \$271 million. Also included is a \$150 stipend for teachers to defray costs spent on classroom supplies. The salary increases may face a tough road. They come on top of three consecutive years of average teacher raises, which when combined total 13.8 percent.

6.5 percent: Cooper's budget also provides generous raises of 6.5 percent to principals and assistant principals, at a cost of \$20 million. The legislature currently has a joint committee studying the issue of principal and administrator pay. Cooper's proposal raises salaries but does nothing to resolve the many problems created by the salary schedule, the biggest of which is the failure to link pay to job performance. Good teaching

must be linked to financial incentives. Cooper's teacher salary plan fails to address those concerns. It amounts to nothing but throwing money—and a lot of it—at a big problem.

4,700: The governor's budget calls for an additional \$15 million to fund an ambitious increase of 4,700 slots for the NC Pre-K program, which aims to improve school readiness for 4-year-olds. While pre-K programs can have an immediate impact on some students, there are still concerns about long-term impacts. Cooper's plan represents a significant expansion of a program whose value remains uncertain.

\$10,000: The governor's budget calls for the creation of the NC Best and Brightest forgivable loan program. The program provides forgivable loans of up to \$10,000 per year for four years to students who agree to teach in the public schools and for three years to teachers who agree to teach in low-performing or low-wealth schools. I'm not entirely sold that there is a teacher shortage. Are there shortages of teachers? Yes, but I'm more apt to call it a maldistribution of teachers, not an overall shortage. The money might be better spent by targeting funding on areas with chronic shortages, such as math and science. Furthermore, how do we know that new teachers won't continue to teach in more attractive areas? There is nothing wrong with teachers living in nice areas. There is no reason, however, to increase the supply of teachers to do so. Plenty are already waiting to do so. This proposal is in effect the same as Teaching Fellows II. Is there any reason to expect the Forgivable Loan Program won't contain the same problems that led to the

justified demise of Teaching Fellows?

\$100,000: The governor's budget adds \$100,000 to the budget to provide charter school "oversight" for the State Board of Education and Charter School Advisory Board. This provision amounts to nothing less than a

Reserve, approximately half of the amount recommended in last year's budget bill. It also allows for no new scholarships. The budget language regarding Opportunity Scholarships is also interesting. It states it "will honor existing commitments to students with scholarships

and mandatory fees for high school graduates with a 2.0 or higher GPA at state community colleges. The scholarship is considered a "last dollar" scholarship in that it will meet financial need after state and federal financial aid has been determined. The budget



"shot across the bow" for school choice advocates. The Office of Charter Schools and Charter School Advisory Board already have oversight responsibilities in this area. The proposal promises another layer of bureaucracy and will only further expose the deep fissures that already exist between the public schools and charter schools in North Carolina.

\$49 million: The governor's budget proposes to repurpose nearly \$50 million in NC Education Lottery money to pay for classroom support staff, new textbooks and digital learning materials, and new programs. The changes continue a trend of lottery money being moved around and outside the classroom, its intended destination.

0: The governor's budget provides \$4.7 million to the Scholarship Granting Fund

already awarded for the 2017-18 academic year and to fund the remaining years of scholarships for those students. Anticipates no new scholarships." That says all you need to know: Cooper strongly opposes Opportunity Scholarships. Republican majorities in both houses of the General Assembly have supported Opportunity Scholarships and can be expected to continue to do so. How these differences get resolved will likely be one of the more interesting developments of the coming year.

Community colleges and higher ed

2.0 GPA: The governor's budget proposes NC Getting Ready for Opportunities in the Workplace (NC GROW) Scholarships. NC GROW is a new program that would cover the full costs of tuition

provides \$19 million, all from lottery receipts, to fund the program.

This program is problematic for two reasons. First, most "free college" tuition programs mistakenly assume cost to be the largest factor in college enrollment or completion. That's not the case with community college students. More often than not a change in life circumstances—such as a death in the family, an illness, or a job loss—impacts completion. Money may be helpful, but it probably will not directly impact the life-altering event. Second, if the state pays the "last dollar" after state and federal financial aid has been determined, why wouldn't this program be nothing more than a massive subsidy for middle- and high-income families who want to save money on their child's education? ■

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Some of the Least-Violent States Have Constitutional Carry

BY MATT CAULDER

In recent years, states across the nation have been moving toward more freedom for gun owners in the form of constitutional-carry legislation – allowing citizens to conceal their handguns without a permit.

The most recent state to join the ranks of those allowing constitutional carry is New Hampshire.

This brings the total to 13 states, with Alaska, Arizona, Arkansas, Idaho, Kansas, Mississippi, Missouri, Montana, Texas, Vermont, West Virginia, and Wyoming also having constitutional carry legislation.

In the past decade, 10 states have passed constitutional-carry legislation.

North Carolina could become the 14th state to approve constitutional carry if either of two similar bills now under consideration, House Bill 69 or House Bill 201, becomes law.

Whenever gun laws are seemingly relaxed, such as when “restaurant carry” was approved, the anti-gun crowd screams about the blood that will flow in the streets.

But if the recent expansion of gun rights in the state over the last few years is any indication, then those exclamations are more than a little exaggerated.

Passing constitutional carry here in North Carolina would be about as likely to turn our state into a warzone as it did

to Montana in 1991, Arizona in 2010, Kansas in 2015, and Idaho last year. None of them experienced a surge in violence.

In fact, three of the four states with the lowest levels of violent crime are constitutional carry states.

Vermont, which has never had concealed weapons permits, had the lowest violent crime rate in the nation in 2014: 99.3 people were the victims of a violent crime for every 100,000 people.

Among other constitutional carry states, Wyoming ranks third at 195.5 people per 100,000, and fourth is New Hampshire at 196.1 people per 100,000.

In the No. 2 position is Maine, and Virginia is fifth.

An honorable mention in the No. 7 slot goes to Idaho at 212.2 victims per 100,000.

This isn't definitive proof; there is one state in the bottom five (Alaska) that is a constitutional carry state.

Yet it is interesting that so many constitutional carry states are clustered together on the low end of the spectrum when it comes to violent crime.

Even states that just passed constitutional carry, such as New Hampshire, are likely fairly pro-gun to begin with and likely already have policies friendly toward concealed carry.

There likely are various connections between constitutional carry and a

tendency toward less crime. One could be that peaceful states, especially those where hunting and gun ownership have long been common, don't have the same anxieties about concealed weapons.

Passing constitutional carry legislation lowers the threshold for people to get into concealed carry, because getting a permit requires costly and time-consuming classes and application fees on top of the cost of the firearm, ammunition and holsters.

Thus a lower threshold means more people can practice concealed carry.

More law-abiding citizens carrying lawfully concealed handguns makes the populace

it, but without the need for the permit document.

This change would remove a financial burden from those intending to conceal a firearm to protect themselves and would also help to combat the lack of uniformity from county to county, as sheriff's departments differ in how fast they process permits and how many get approved.

The only substantive change to concealed carry law under the bill, besides removing the need for the permit, is the change to allow those who are 18 years old or older to conceal a handgun, whereas under current law a resident of the state must be 21 to apply for a concealed

constitutional carry in the last 10 years, it is clear the idea is catching on.

HB69 and HB201 mirror laws of other states that have more recently passed constitutional carry in that it takes the existing structure of the state's concealed carry law and applies much of it to concealed carry without a permit.

Some argue this is not true constitutional carry such as exists in the state of Vermont, which has never banned concealed carry, as other states have.

But after decades of regulation on concealed carry in North Carolina, it is a simple plan to take the existing framework for where you can carry a concealed handgun and who can obtain a permit and apply that to carrying without a permit.

You still would not be able to conceal a handgun at a protest, you couldn't conceal in a restaurant that serves alcohol, and property owners can still deny concealed carry in their establishments.

For these reasons, it's easy to predict that if one of the constitutional-carry bills passes, blood will not flow in the streets. In fact, the biggest change might be that, with more armed citizens on the streets, some potential criminals could decide to turn to honest work. ■



much less enticing prey for any criminals looking to do bad deeds — it's just a behavioral truth.

The current bills being considered by the General Assembly would essentially take the existing law on concealed handgun permits and maintain

handgun permit.

The proposed law would also apply to nonresidents of the state as long as they are U.S. citizens.

With more than 25 percent of the nation supporting constitutional carry, and with the 10 states opening up

Trickle-Down Hate: Cooper Aide Mirrors National Dems

BY MARK SHIVER

Ken Eudy is a senior advisor to Gov. Roy Cooper. By his own admission, he doesn't stand to honor our nation's military. While such an admission is highly offensive, particularly in North Carolina with its military-rich presence, it is actually a mirror reflecting the leadership of the national Democratic Party.

This became evident when President Trump addressed a joint session of Congress on Feb. 28, giving a speech intended to unify the nation and shed light on some of his policy priorities. During the speech, Trump took time to honor Navy SEAL Ryan Owens, who died in a raid in Yemen in January.

In his speech, Trump said, “I just spoke to Gen. Mattis, who reconfirmed that, and I quote, 'Ryan was a part of a highly successful raid that generated large amounts of vital intelligence that will lead to many more victories in the future against our enemies.'”

Trump recognized Owens' wife, Carryn, and paid tribute to his service to our country. There was initially bipartisan

applause at the tribute, but as the applause wore on it was obvious that many Democrats, particularly

been fired and has deleted his Twitter account.

What is amazing in all of this

Eudy said, “I do stand for the 'Star-Spangled Banner.' But I stay in my seat when thousands

honor the profession that will determine whether the United States remains free — schoolteachers.”

Perhaps Eudy might be hoping for a brand of teachers that will teach children of a different America, one that does not stand and respect those that serve and even die to protect our freedom.

Candidly, I have no idea why someone would not want to respect our military. As far as Eudy's attitude toward the armed forces, as they say here in North Carolina, “He comes by it honest.” Translation: He's just mirroring the Democrats on the national stage. ■



in leadership positions, were not standing.

Dan Grilo, who identified himself as a former volunteer for the Hillary Clinton campaign, took things a step lower and actually criticized Owens' widow on Twitter: “Sorry, Owens' wife, you're not helping yourself or your husband's memory by standing there clapping like an idiot. Trump just used you.”

Grilo has reportedly since

is the reaction from the Left. Michael Moore and Bill Maher, for example, said Trump was merely using Owens' widow as a prop. Such comments reveal an undercurrent of hatred. The America most Americans love is not the Left's America. They cannot be patriotic to an idea of America that they hate.

Meanwhile, here in the Tar Heel State, there are these words from Cooper's senior advisor.

of fans stand and cheer men and women in the armed services.”

Eudy also said, “I'm resolved that I won't stand until we also

Mark Shiver is host of the “What Matters in North Carolina” podcast at freedomactionnetwork.com.

Check out
freedomactionnetwork.com
for the "Free to Brew" and
"NC Gun Dad" shows.

NC Senate Tax Cut Plan Would Save Taxpayers \$1B

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

is how the plan strays from a main principle guiding recent tax reforms: broadening the tax base to help lower rates. By expanding the standard deduction and bringing more people off the tax rolls, yet failing to expand the sales tax base, the tax base will become narrower and thus rates will remain higher than they could otherwise be.

In other words, even if this

measure becomes law, the reform of North Carolina's tax laws will need to continue in future years.

House tax proposal

The House also announced its own tax plan this week in a bill, the Tax Reduction Act of 2017.

The House's plan would only raise the standard deduction for married, filing jointly, couples by

\$1,000 to \$18,500 and would add an additional \$500 for single filers bringing it to \$9,250.

The House plan is expected to save about \$500 million over the next two years, compared to the Senate's plan that is projected to save \$1 billion for personal and corporate taxpayers over a two-year period.

Rep. John Szoka (R-Cumberland), who chairs the House Finance

Committee, is running the bill in the House.

"The House tax plan for 2017 continues the good work that has been done over the last few years," he said. "Because of responsible budgeting and spending, and job growth spurred by solid economic policies, North Carolina is projected to have a budget surplus of over a half billion dollars. The House's tax

plan incentivizes good paying manufacturing jobs and continues to lower personal income taxes, setting the stage for increased economic growth." As of press time, both chambers were still working on details of their budget proposals.

The Senate Finance Committee on March 29 passed Senate Bill 325, which incorporates the tax cut features. ■

Compromise Deal Sets Up Repeal of House Bill 2

BY MATT CAULDER

On March 29, the state House and Senate leadership and Gov. Roy Cooper announced a compromise deal to repeal House Bill 2.

On March 30, the General Assembly passed the bill: 32-16 in the Senate and 70-48 in the House.

The bill, HB 142, repealed HB2 and gave the General Assembly authority over regulating the use of "multiple occupancy restrooms, showers, or changing facilities." It would also put a nearly four-year moratorium on local governments enacting or amending ordinances regulating private employment

practices or regulating public accommodations.

Section three of the bill, which includes the moratorium, expires Dec. 1, 2020.

In a joint release, Senate President Pro Tempore Sen. Phil Berger (R-Rockingham) and House Speaker Rep. Tim Moore (R-Cleveland) said the deal protects privacy in bathrooms and shower facilities by leaving regulation of multi-occupancy facilities to the state and also returns to the status quo that existed prior to Charlotte passing its bathroom ordinance last year.

The four-year moratorium on local ordinances is meant

to give federal litigation on the issue time to play out.

"Compromise requires give and take from all sides, and we are pleased this proposal fully protects bathroom safety and privacy," Berger and Moore said.

Nine Democrats joined with 23 Republicans in support of the bill. With 48 senators voting on the bill, Republican leadership could not have passed the measure without some Democrat support.

None of the state leaders involved have had much to say about the measure, a stipulation of the deal with Cooper, according to Moore.

"I support the House Bill 2

repeal compromise that will be introduced tomorrow. It's not a perfect deal, but it repeals House Bill 2 and begins to repair our reputation," Cooper said in a written statement.

The deal immediately drew ire from two left-leaning non-profits active in the state, Equality NC and the Human Rights Campaign (HRC).

Chris Sgro, executive director of Equality NC, said, "This proposal is a train wreck that would double down on anti-LGBTQ discrimination. North Carolinians want a clean repeal of HB2, and we urge our allies not to sell us out. Those who stand for equality and with

LGBTQ people are standing strong against these antics. We've got less than 24 hours before the NCAA deadline. There is no time to waste – our leaders must fight for what's right, and that is full repeal."

On March 29, HRC President Chad Griffin said, "The rumored HB2 'deal' does nothing more than double-down on discrimination and would ensure North Carolina remains the worst state in the nation for LGBTQ people. The consequences of this hateful law will only continue without full repeal of HB2. Sellouts cave under pressure. Leaders fight for what's right." ■

Senate Bills Take Aim at Certificate of Need Laws

BY CIVITAS STAFF

Several state Senate bills have been filed to repeal or limit Certificate of Need (CON) laws in, opening up the medical field to more of a free-market approach, as opposed to state government allowing or prohibiting new and expanded medical services across the state.

Currently state law requires a certificate of need for many new medical providers to open up a hospital, for instance, or for existing providers to implement new or expanded services, such as adding additional radiology machines.

CON laws were implemented with the intention of keeping health care providers from overbuilding their facilities past the capacity need for their area and placing the cost of paying for the facility on their patients, but critics say that the laws provide a barrier of entry to new healthcare facilities, thus keeping competition low and prices high.

In recent years a push has arisen to remove CON laws in North Carolina as many states already have.

Sens. Ralph Hise (R-Madison) and Trudy Wade (R-Guilford) have filed a bill, Senate Bill 324, that would include a clean repeal of CON laws in the state.

The bill has been placed in the

Senate Rules Committee and is awaiting a referral.

Of the bill Hise said, "CON [law] is one more example of government overreach that may be well-intended, but in reality only serves to curb patient choices and drive up the already spiraling cost of health care. I'm pleased to join my Senate colleagues in working toward a solution that

office-based cataracts surgery from CON law, a bill from Sen. Harry Brown (R-Jones) that would exempt inpatient hospice facilities from CON law, and also a bill from Sen. Tommy Tucker (R-Union) that would also exempt certain ophthalmologists from CON law requirements.

A release from Senate Leader Sen. Phil Berger's

replacing their own equipment without approval from state regulators.

"The laws are among the most restrictive in the entire country, regulating dozens of services and procedures. And studies have pointed to CON restrictions leading in part to thousands fewer patient beds in the state, along with fewer MRI machines and CT scanners."

The problems

The problems with CON laws is that they can act as a significant barrier to companies trying to move into a new area, or for existing businesses to offer new services.

In effect, the CON process can be harnessed by established enterprises to keep competition down.

Nor do they even keep down costs, their avowed aim. The federal government implemented Certificate of Need nationwide in 1974, but abandoned the process in 1987 after concluding that the procedure had done little to nothing to control costs.

Independent studies have confirmed that CON laws don't lead to per capita decreases in overall health costs or spending on physician services.

For example, according to

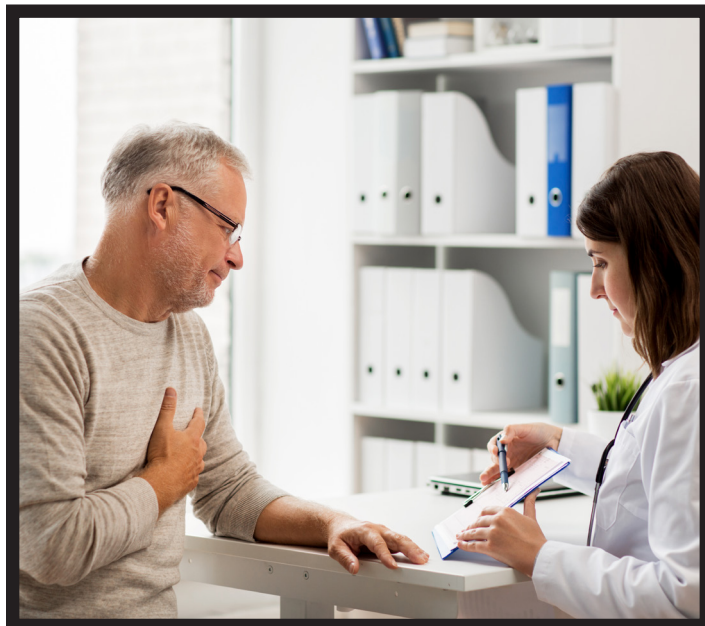
the Alabama Policy Institute, "Duke University professors Christopher Conover and Frank Sloan found that CON restrictions led to higher costs and higher profits for existing providers:

"While CON laws led to a small reduction in acute care spending, they also led to a reduction in hospital bed supply and 'higher costs per day and per admission, along with higher profits.' Overall, the study found no decrease in per capita health care spending that could be attributed to CON."

Moreover, though CON laws are touted as a way to keep health expenses down, the process actually costs health providers significant sums.

A hospital applying for authorization to use its own funds for hospital projects will, on average, pay a minimum of \$32,000 per CON application. Plus, of course, the application takes time and diverts management from a hospital's more important concerns.

All this ultimately deprives communities of expanded or new medical facilities and services. Like most examples of government planning, the CON process hurts the people it intends to help. ■



spurs more competition, lowers costs and puts patients first."

Other bills filed in regards to CON laws include a bill by Sens. Norman Sanderson (R-Carteret) and Louis Pate (R-Wayne) to exempt ophthalmologists performing

(R-Rockingham) office said, "Currently, North Carolina's CON laws discourage competition and drive up costs by forbidding health care providers from performing many medical services, building new facilities or even buying or

Civitas Poll Finds Support for Trump – Some Hidden

BY CIVITAS STAFF

The March Civitas Poll found that two months into his presidency, President Trump's numbers were improving in North Carolina. Among the key questions and responses:

Now I am going to read you a list of people and organizations active in politics or in the news. After I read each name, please tell me if you have a favorable or unfavorable opinion of that person or organization. ... Donald Trump.

Total Favorable: 49 percent
Total Unfavorable: 47 percent

Now, please tell me whether you approve or disapprove of the job that Donald Trump is doing as president?

Total Approve: 49 percent
Total Disapprove: 46 percent

Another question allowed people to give an opinion on the political scene without committing themselves to the president.

Do you believe the media have been fair in their coverage of President Trump?

Yes: 41 percent
No: 52 percent
Don't Know/ Unsure: 7 percent

Civitas Institute President Francis De Luca said, "Donald Trump has gained 4 points in terms of his favorability ratings since our poll in February. Not

only is this his highest level of favorability ever, but we cannot point to any single demographic as a reason for this increase, since he is up across the board. It would seem people are becoming more comfortable with Trump as president."

He continued, "While only 49 percent say they have a favorable view of Trump, 52 percent feel he is not being treated fairly by the media. Only 41 percent feel he has. We believe there is an undercurrent of support for President Trump reflected in this number that we might not see in the rest of the poll."

The poll also asked:

How much longer do you think it will take for the economy to improve and the current recession to end? If you think the recession has ended just say so. (If Necessary: "Would you say...")

Under 6 months: 2 percent
Between 6 months and a year: 13 percent
Between 1 and 2 years: 20 percent
Over 2 years: 25 percent
Recession has ended: 27 percent
Don't Know: 12 percent
Refused: 1 percent

"We have been asking this question since April of 2009, and this is the first time a plurality of respondents have said the recession is over," he said. "It is clear from all indications that people have an increasingly

optimistic economic outlook. Indeed, these results give even more weight to the notion of the 'Trump effect' on the economy."

This poll surveyed 600 registered, likely NC voters (30 percent on cell phones) with a margin of error of plus/minus 4.00 percent. This survey was taken March 18-19.

The poll also surveyed voters on other key issues.

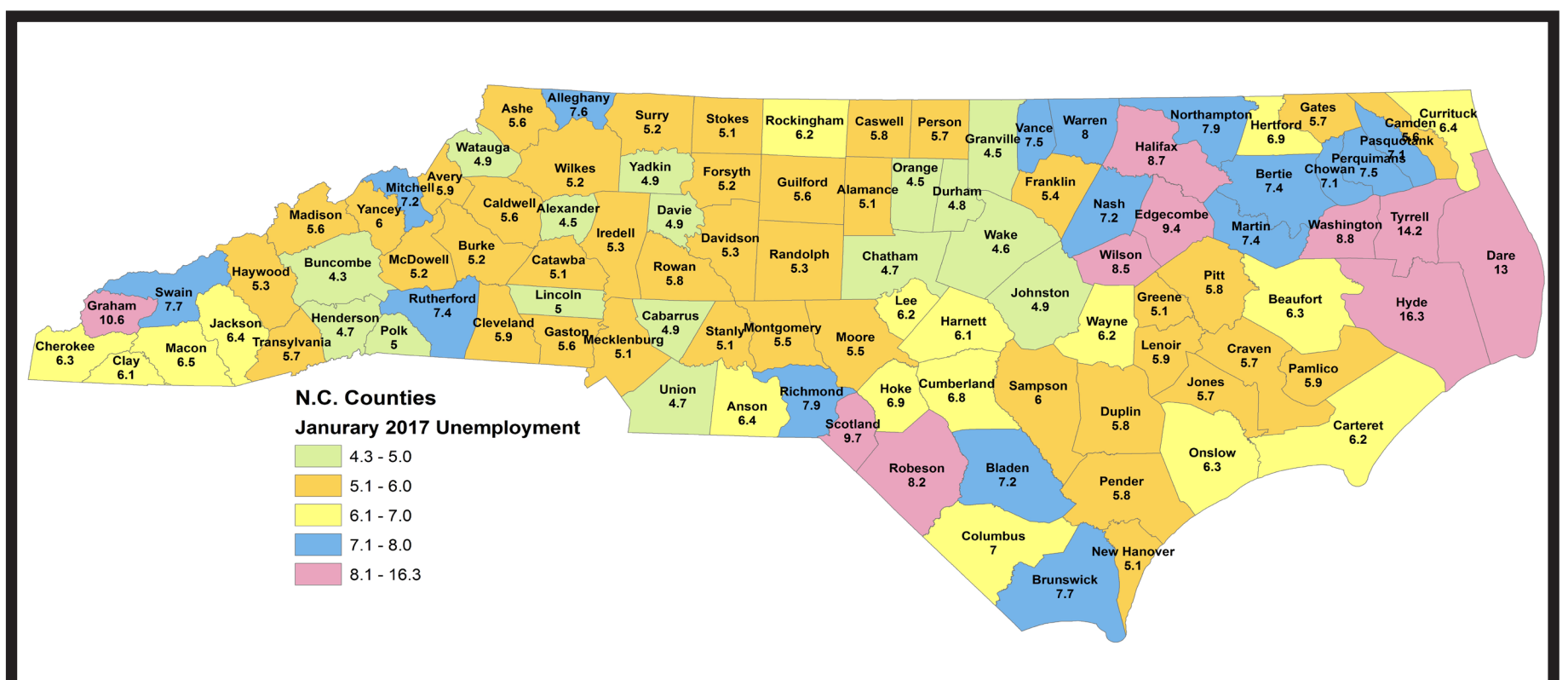
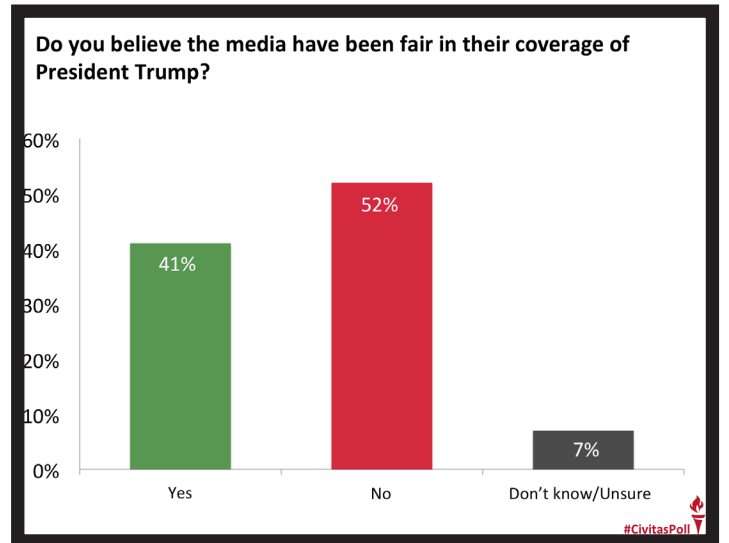
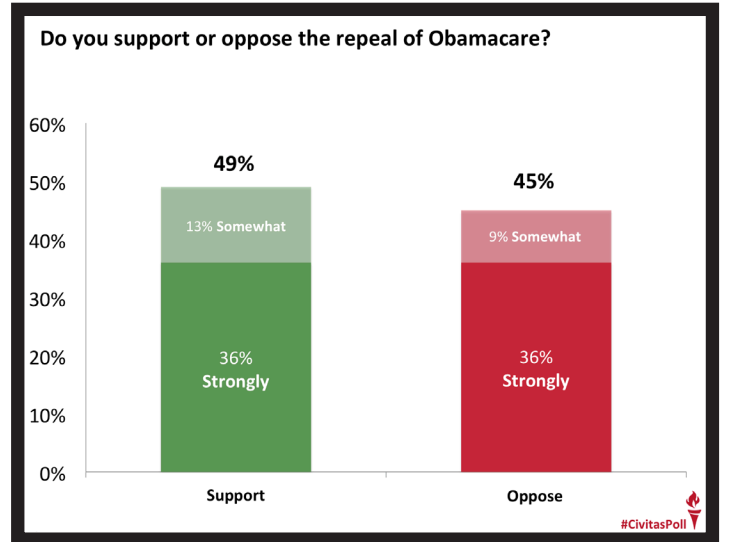
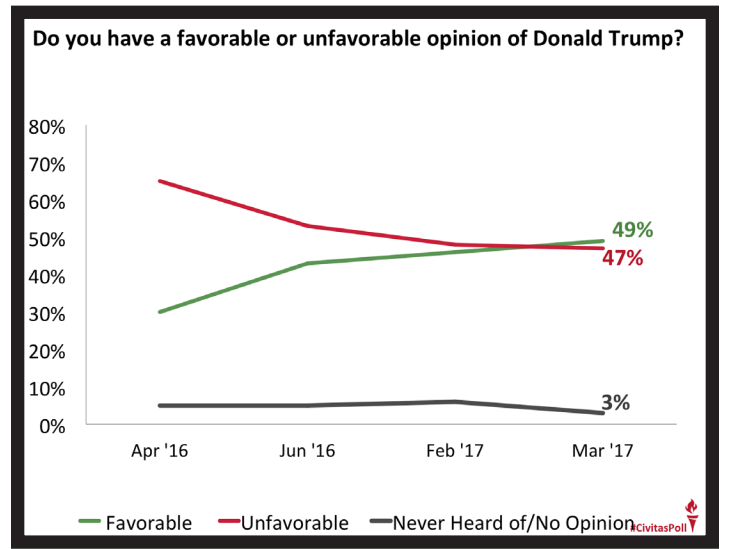
Do you support or oppose the repeal of Obamacare?

Total Support: 49 percent
Total Oppose: 45 percent

There is a proposal for an amendment to the North Carolina constitution that would prevent the legislature from increasing the income tax more than a half percent above the current rate. For example, currently the highest income tax rate in the state is 5.49 percent, so the Constitution would cap the rate to a maximum of 5.99 percent. If the rate were lowered to, say, 5 percent, then the new cap would become 5.5 percent. Would you support or oppose this amendment?

Total Support: 56 percent
Total Oppose: 29 percent

To see all the results of the March poll, go online to: tinyurl.com/March17Civitas



Unemployment Figures in NC

The above map shows the January not-seasonally adjusted unemployment rates for North Carolina counties. Statewide, the February, seasonally adjusted unemployment rate was 5.1 percent, falling 0.2 of a percentage point from January's revised rate. That rate decreased 0.1 of a percentage point from the same time last year. The number of people employed in North Carolina increased 16,648 during the month to 4,691,581.

Bill Seeks Crackdown on Sanctuary Cities in NC

BY NCCC STAFF

If legislators manage to add teeth to an existing law, passed last session, that requires local governments to cooperate with federal immigration authorities, North Carolina cities and universities may face financial penalties for flouting federal immigration laws.

If passed, the bill would add financial penalties to municipalities and counties that fail to cooperate with federal immigration authorities in the form of lost Powell Bill funding and revenue from certain state taxes.

A couple of bills have been filed during this session regarding the law on sanctuary cities, with one of those bills, SB145, Government Immigration Compliance, filed by Sen. Norman Sanderson (R-Pamlico).

On the March 3 “What Matters in North Carolina” podcast, Sanderson said last session’s HB 318 was a good start, but it does not include penalties for cities that violate federal laws on sanctuary cities.

Sanderson stressed, “Like

most citizens of this country, I have no problem with immigrants at all. But, I do want those immigrants to come here in some form of legal fashion. And I think that’s what most people want.”

Another point he acknowledged was the process for becoming a legal immigrant is so difficult that people find it easier to come here illegally.

Sanderson said, “Some cities are really challenging this ruling about sanctuary cities. They are in open discussions with people in their communities about setting themselves up as sanctuary cities. It’s just something that we do not want to happen in North Carolina, so we introduced this bill.”

Per a statement released by the office of Senate President Pro Tem Phil Berger (R-Rockingham), Sanderson’s bill requires the state attorney general to investigate complaints of a local government or law enforcement agency ignoring immigration law.

It also directs that all Powell funding for city streets as well

as revenue from beer and wine taxes, telecommunication taxes, sales taxes on video programming, taxes on piped natural gases, and scrap tire disposal taxes be allocated to

Another provision of Sanderson’s bill strengthens the E-verify system, adding harsher penalties for violations.

Sanderson said the bill passed last session also left open the

false impression the holder has legal status.

Rep. Harry Warren filed HB63, which would also punish local governments if they don’t comply with federal immigration law, or if they hold themselves out as sanctuary cities. It does not address universities or mention community IDs.

Scott Mooneyham, director of public affairs for the NC League of Municipalities, said of both bills, “We think it would be unprecedented to penalize cities or towns for issues that are not related to what they are being penalized for. Since the sanctuary cities bill was passed in 2015, we are not aware of any public allegation of cities or towns violating that law.”

As of press time, SB145 was before the the Senate Judiciary Committee. HB63 has been referred to the House Finance Committee. ■



local governments that comply with the law.

Under the proposed law, a city that holds itself out as a sanctuary city could jeopardize those and other funds.

Sanderson’s bill also impacts universities that do not comply with federal immigration laws by revoking certain appropriations if they are noncompliant .

use of some community identification cards as acceptable and that his bill would close those loopholes. These IDs are typically created by private organizations such as Greensboro’s Faith Action, which has issued thousands to illegal immigrants.

Berger’s statement also said these IDs can mislead law enforcement by conveying the

Gov. Roy Cooper Wanted to Keep North Carolina Voters in the Dark

BY SUSAN MYRICK

- Legislature’s override of HB100 means all judicial elections in NC will have party labels.

- Party labels provide important information for voters.

- Democrats voted for “nonpartisan” elections for their own partisan purposes.

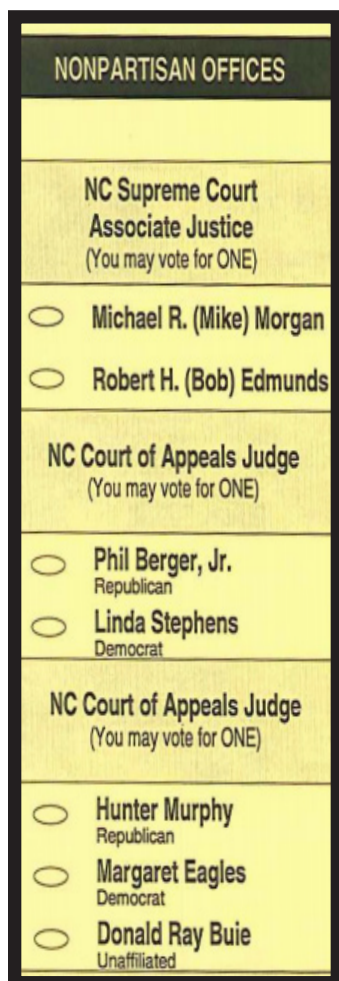
On March 23, the state Senate successfully voted to override Democratic Gov. Roy Cooper’s veto of House Bill 100. Since the state House voted in favor of the override the day before, the bill becomes law and all judicial races on North Carolina’s ballots will now include party labels.

House Bill 100, “An Act to Restore Partisan Judicial Elections for North Carolina Superior and District Courts,” will restore partisan elections for those Courts.

The Republican-led legislature has been restoring party labels to judicial races incrementally, just as the Democrats began systematically removing that key piece of information from ballots in 1996.

North Carolina’s new governor revealed his partisan stripes with this, his first veto. Cooper, by vetoing House Bill 100, signaled he wanted to continue to hide judicial candidates’ party affiliation from North Carolina voters, thus hiding a key piece of information voters could use to make their decision choosing the candidate.

His veto, at the very least, would have made it more difficult for voters to find the candidate’s political affiliation. Which leads us to the question: Why doesn’t Roy Cooper want you to have



key information to make an informed voting decision?

Far from a political novice, Roy Cooper knows that withholding the partisan affiliation of judicial candidates will not stop people from asking the question. Unfortunately, he also knows

that oftentimes, when a voter doesn’t have enough information about candidates, the voter doesn’t vote in that race.

Civitas has written on this issue many times and this 2008 Civitas article looked at the numerical impact the change in the law on partisan labels on judicial elections had in suppressing voters.

In 2000, with party labels on the ballot, the percentage of voters from the presidential race who dropped out before the state Supreme Court race was 2.8 percent. In 2004, after party labels were removed, the drop-off was 22.6 percent. Mission accomplished—votes suppressed.

The most recent example of judicial election drop-off in a high-profile “nonpartisan” judicial race came in the November General Election, where 4,769,640 total ballots were cast overall, but only 3,961,352 votes were cast in the North Carolina Supreme Court race. That’s an 808,288-vote difference in a race that decided which party held the majority on the highest court in the state.

In language the governor and the Left might better understand, they want to disenfranchise or suppress the vote of over 800,000 voters from voting in important elections.

In fact, the mainstream media often reported on the partisan ramifications of the so-called

nonpartisan 2016 state supreme court race. Gary Robertson of AP, in an article about the governor’s veto, wrote:

“Despite the officially nonpartisan nature of the Supreme Court at the time, the party registration of each justice is closely watched.”

The partisan nature of this race was well documented in the mainstream media before and after the election. Would Roy Cooper censor media reports of party affiliation in judicial races?

So, what is Cooper’s real reason for pushing “nonpartisan” judicial races?

More than likely the answer is highly partisan in nature. It is well-known that as a state senator in the 1990s Cooper was a leader in the effort to make the judicial elections nonpartisan.

As a state legislator in the 1980s and 1990s, Cooper watched Republicans consistently winning judicial races. Democrats, in power for 100 years at that time, recognized that voters of all political parties wanted to vote for judges who would uphold the principles of law and order, and voters were associating those principles with Republican judicial candidates. Democrats saw they needed to stem the tide.

Removing partisan labels from judicial races on North Carolina ballots did just that. In 1996 the first nonpartisan elections were established for Superior Court judges, followed

by District Court judges in 2001 and Court of Appeals judges in 2002.

So, what would have happened if you went looking for the candidate’s political party in the 2016 Supreme Court race between Mike Morgan and Bob Edmunds? Using the State Board of Elections voter search, you would have found ... 162 North Carolinians named “Michael Morgan,” two named Mike Morgan, and four named Robert Edmunds. That doesn’t help much, does it?

In defending his veto, the governor said: “North Carolina wants its judges to be fair and impartial, and partisan politics has no place on the judge’s bench. We need less politics in the courtroom, not more.”

The real shame, however, is that the governor of our state is playing politics with the voters. Cooper’s attempt to continue to hide relevant information from North Carolina’s voters when they are exercising their right as citizens of our state is beneath the Office of the Governor of North Carolina.

It’s a stretch to believe that if an informed voter wants to know the party affiliation of a Judge before voting, it would jeopardize the judge’s ability to be fair and impartial from the bench. ■

Voter Registration Trends Hold Steady After Election

BY SUSAN MYRICK

During the period between February 18 and March 25, North Carolina's voter rolls grew by 5,783 voters. Democrats saw a net loss of 1,691 voters; Republicans gained 1,327 voters, Libertarians picked up 227 voters and the unaffiliated ranks grew by 5,920 voters.

Democrats saw net losses in 77 counties, net gains in 21 counties and no change in two

counties. Republicans had net losses in 33 counties, net gains in 66 counties and one county's Republican voter registration remained unchanged. Unaffiliated numbers grew in 87 counties and fell in 13 counties.

The latest numbers confirm that the same voter registration trend North Carolina has experienced since January 2009 continues even after the 2016 presidential

election. Since January 2009, Democrats have experienced a net loss of 230,704 voters, Republicans a net gain of 41,111 voters, Libertarians a net gain of 28,087 voters and the unaffiliated ranks have gained a total of 611,916 voters.

The trend shows no sign of ending, in fact, it won't be long before unaffiliated voters outnumber Republicans in

North Carolina. On March 25, 2017 Democrats made up 39.2 percent (2,639,134) of voters, down from 44.8 percent in March 2009, Republicans made up 30.4 percent (2,046,260), down from 34.1 percent and unaffiliated voters are at 29.9 percent up from 21.1 percent (2,014,641) in March 2009.

You can watch voter registration change in your county and

statewide each week and see all these historical statistics and more by visiting Civitas' Carolina Transparency website. www.carolinatransparency.com/voterregistration. ■

See the chart on p.11 for details.

Bill Hopes to Stem Overdose Epidemic in the State

BY MARK SHIVER

Four people a day die from overdoses related to opioid pain medications and heroin. This is a sad, startling statistic here in North Carolina: sad because it is so unfortunate and startling because many think the deaths can be prevented.

On the March 3 "What Matters in North Carolina" podcast, Rep. Greg Murphy (R-Pitt) shared that statistic, along with the astonishing fact that 29 people died of overdoses last month in Craven County.

These stark realities point to an epidemic in the state that Murphy, who is the only physician in the state House of Representatives, is determined to stop.

Murphy said North Carolina has four of the top 15 cities in the United States most affected by opioid abuse, with Wilmington being the top in the state. He also said, "It's gotten to the point where enough is enough. We have to confront this."

To that end, he has filed HB 243, the Strengthen Opioid Misuse Prevention (STOP) Act. The bill addresses prescription amounts for opioid pain medication that will be allowed if the bill passes, as well as required use of the NC Controlled Substance Recording System.

Many folks start out taking pain medicines such as Percocet or OxyContin, and then when they can't get them anymore they may

find it cheaper to get heroin and/or fentanyl. Murphy said the drug potencies of fentanyl and heroin are much different, causing people to risk overdose because they don't understand the dosages of the various drugs.

The idea behind Murphy's bill is to stem the risk of addiction by limiting the amount of opioid medication a patient can be

and a post-surgery patient could get the drugs up to seven days.

Also proposed in Murphy's bill is required use of the NC Controlled Substance Recording System. Murphy said, "Any time that I write [a prescription for] a narcotic or any controlled substance, it goes into a database. The problem is a lot of physicians don't have the time, don't have

The bill will make it a requirement that every time a scheduled drug is prescribed the provider must query the system.

A pharmacist who agreed to provide information confidentially for this story said doctors' offices often say they are too busy to run a check on a patient after a pharmacy notices multiple prescriptions for opioid medications

pain medications.

Veterinarians are also included in the list of providers who will need to check the database. Murphy said there are cases of people receiving prescriptions for pain medication for a pet or a farm animal after a surgery and that medication has ended up on the street.

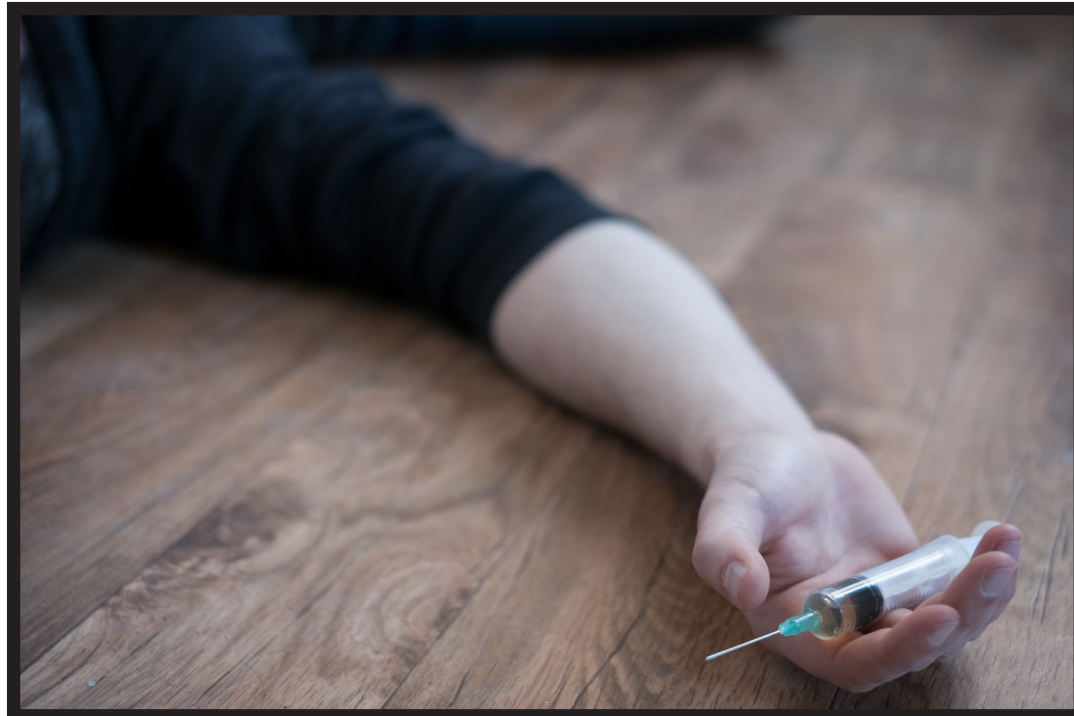
He said, "While it's a little bit of a reach for veterinarians, we're still throwing out a big net."

The bill appropriates \$20 million to help with community treatment and recovery services for those already dealing with addiction.

The House Health Committee reviewed the bill on March 8 in a "discussion-only" format. NC Attorney General Josh Stein addressed the committee, reporting that in the last five years in North Carolina there has been an 880 percent increase in deaths from heroin and fentanyl.

Stein said, "Our state can and must address this crisis, and the STOP Act is an important first step." He urged the committee to pass the bill.

Murphy concluded that education at the community level is the most effective way to combat the epidemic of opioid abuse. ■



prescribed initially. (Murphy stressed that in no way is his bill aimed at those with chronic or long-term pain.)

Under the bill, a patient prescribed opioids due to an injury could receive up to five days of the medication initially,

the knowledge, or have not signed up to query that database to say: 'Is this person someone that's doctor shopping, or is this the fourth prescription they've gotten for this disorder from different doctors, etc.?' which I've found out is the case sometimes."

from different doctors.

The bill also will require pharmacists to use the system when filling prescriptions. Murphy said this requirement is different from what is currently required at the federal level, which already has many regulations of controlled

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Changes represent the difference in voter registration between February 18, 2017 and March 25, 2017										
County	Total Voters	Total Change	Democrats	Democrat Change	Republicans	Republican Change	Libertarians	Libertarian Change	Unaffiliated Voters	Unaffiliated Change
STATE TOTAL	6,732,267	5,783	2,639,134	-1,691	2,046,260	1,327	32,232	227	2,014,641	5,920
ALAMANCE	97,847	63	37,916	-40	32,399	9	436	5	27,096	89
ALEXANDER	23,989	37	6,306	-9	10,638	15	71	0	6,974	31
ALLEGHANY	7,344	-8	2,726	-13	2,543	1	36	1	2,039	3
ANSON	17,147	22	11,713	-6	2,422	-1	21	1	2,991	28
ASHE	18,548	22	5,448	-3	7,883	11	65	1	5,152	13
AVERY	11,512	-18	1,393	-1	6,812	-14	46	-1	3,261	-2
BEAUFORT	32,581	13	13,402	-24	10,620	11	96	-2	8,463	28
BERTIE	14,008	2	10,119	-8	1,537	8	20	0	2,332	2
BLADEN	22,552	-42	13,271	-55	3,442	6	33	0	5,806	7
BRUNSWICK	93,552	158	26,229	-30	35,074	90	336	0	31,913	98
BUNCOMBE	188,287	234	74,047	98	45,710	17	1,235	-3	67,295	122
BURKE	57,117	51	18,571	-29	20,342	19	253	3	17,951	58
CABARRUS	129,742	353	40,279	86	48,357	35	678	5	40,428	227
CALDWELL	53,956	86	14,323	1	24,430	26	343	-1	14,860	60
CAMDEN	7,455	12	2,391	-2	2,287	7	43	0	2,734	7
CARTERET	50,985	-9	12,251	-47	21,590	17	230	2	16,914	19
CASWELL	15,369	-24	7,961	-33	3,649	4	32	0	3,727	5
CATAWBA	101,425	-94	26,042	-100	43,916	-40	389	2	31,078	44
CHATHAM	50,448	-79	20,254	-62	12,875	-19	206	0	17,113	2
CHEROKEE	22,438	64	5,954	-14	9,510	33	108	1	6,866	44
CHOWAN	10,160	40	4,952	5	2,594	12	22	0	2,592	23
CLAY	8,434	-94	2,022	-51	3,447	-27	37	0	2,928	-16
CLEVELAND	63,100	-10	26,186	-67	20,497	26	214	3	16,203	28
COLUMBUS	36,568	-24	21,261	-66	6,802	22	56	1	8,449	19
CRAVEN	66,186	178	23,086	-5	23,226	58	319	1	19,555	124
CUMBERLAND	208,017	66	97,005	-66	48,144	-22	987	2	61,881	152
CURRITUCK	18,420	102	3,957	6	6,668	57	141	4	7,654	35
DARE	28,499	96	8,803	-6	8,707	47	192	0	10,797	55
DAVIDSON	104,863	72	27,046	-32	49,257	-17	426	2	28,134	119
DAVIE	28,814	34	5,445	-3	14,833	14	95	1	8,441	22
DUPLIN	29,548	18	14,060	-17	8,110	29	101	2	7,277	4
DURHAM	217,662	-1,091	121,520	-693	28,140	-155	1,023	0	66,979	-243
EDGECOMBE	38,082	-136	27,034	-129	6,203	-10	72	2	4,773	1
FORSYTH	250,170	1,621	103,551	439	75,664	368	1,151	20	69,804	794
FRANKLIN	42,695	13	18,132	-38	13,006	17	183	-3	11,374	37
GASTON	139,044	170	44,283	-30	53,344	31	617	6	40,800	163
GATES	8,351	-21	4,582	-19	1,684	0	23	0	2,062	-2
GRAHAM	6,254	6	1,923	-5	2,758	-1	17	0	1,556	12
GRANVILLE	37,865	111	18,842	19	9,245	14	141	1	9,637	77
GREENE	11,219	-6	6,559	-20	2,041	-2	23	0	2,596	16
GUILFORD	359,197	502	165,475	128	94,688	-1	1,638	15	97,396	360
HALIFAX	37,575	-41	25,187	-55	4,551	-15	83	2	7,754	27
HARNETT	71,586	228	26,223	0	25,014	46	467	7	19,882	175
HAYWOOD	43,002	111	16,652	-13	13,006	45	208	5	13,136	74
HENDERSON	81,264	-95	17,847	-60	31,078	-60	403	6	31,936	19
HERTFORD	15,116	-39	11,145	-46	1,437	-4	37	0	2,497	11
HOKE	30,983	-96	14,995	-58	6,534	-20	184	-3	9,270	-15
HYDE	3,404	-5	2,016	-2	525	-2	10	0	853	-1
IREDELL	114,424	230	29,844	8	47,894	89	504	6	36,182	127
JACKSON	27,555	22	10,112	-2	7,315	8	157	1	9,971	15
JOHNSTON	119,415	333	37,656	39	46,181	131	611	5	34,967	158
JONES	7,218	-8	3,620	-10	1,786	3	20	0	1,792	-1
LEE	35,407	60	14,787	-25	10,160	7	149	0	10,311	78
LENOIR	38,378	12	21,105	-18	9,518	14	103	2	7,652	14
LINCOLN	54,839	146	13,979	-8	24,037	61	221	0	16,602	93
MACON	24,800	-39	6,558	-29	10,015	-17	108	5	8,119	2
MADISON	16,540	19	6,597	-4	4,310	-12	92	1	5,541	34
MARTIN	16,883	0	10,254	-3	3,300	4	40	0	3,289	-1
MCDOWELL	28,668	33	8,457	-2	10,843	12	129	8	9,239	15
MECKLENBURG	693,810	282	307,498	-160	168,896	-65	3,923	21	213,493	486
MITCHELL	10,988	-1	1,124	-6	6,709	-1	29	0	3,126	6
MONTGOMERY	16,135	19	7,226	-3	4,882	18	50	0	3,977	4
MOORE	65,039	41	16,503	-20	26,653	-13	324	3	21,559	71
NASH	65,489	-75	33,362	-79	18,658	-12	181	-1	13,288	17
NEW HANOVER	162,013	-409	51,916	-183	52,061	-199	1,088	14	56,948	-41
NORTHAMPTON	14,359	-13	10,464	-18	1,417	7	17	0	2,461	-2
ONSLOW	100,408	471	27,360	52	36,436	153	774	12	35,838	254
ORANGE	110,659	-53	51,558	-41	16,552	-21	686	2	41,863	7
PAMLICO	9,506	-17	3,880	-12	3,034	-7	35	0	2,557	2
PASQUOTANK	27,631	108	13,040	16	5,850	32	150	1	8,591	59
PENDER	39,270	141	12,693	20	14,729	61	225	2	11,623	58
PERQUIMANS	9,780	-8	4,068	-13	2,616	3	28	-3	3,068	5
PERSON	26,414	-32	12,142	-45	6,572	-1	95	1	7,605	13
PITT	118,592	86	55,195	17	30,900	24	656	1	31,841	44
POLK	15,514	-26	4,397	-14	5,450	-13	71	-1	5,596	2
RANDOLPH	89,378	129	18,967	-19	45,154	82	389	0	24,868	66
RICHMOND	29,779	62	16,731	-2	5,671	23	66	1	7,311	40
ROBESON	73,315	136	48,593	37	9,554	25	181	2	14,987	72
ROCKINGHAM	59,157	19	23,017	-35	20,446	28	199	0	15,495	26
ROWAN	92,623	43	27,793	-17	37,931	38	341	5	26,558	17
RUTHERFORD	43,755	23	15,082	-26	16,201	33	194	1	12,278	15
SAMPSON	37,565	10	16,500	-18	13,745	5	100	2	7,220	21
SCOTLAND	22,153	32	12,831	9	3,634	11	43	0	5,645	12
STANLY	40,428	51	11,317	-9	17,775	28	124	3	11,212	29
STOKES	30,787	27	7,906	-4	14,914	10	149	0	7,818	21
SURRY	44,931	76	14,106	-8	18,907	23	115	0	11,803	61
SWAIN	10,004	-17	3,957	-13	2,533	-2	32	-1	3,482	-1
TRANSYLVANIA	24,817	24	6,696	-2	8,083	-3	115	0	9,923	29
TYRRELL	2,429	8	1,420	-4	346	4	7	0	656	8
UNION	147,441	171	38,636	42	62,104	23	616	4	46,085	102
VANCE	29,572	-10	19,691	-27	4,337	2	66	0	5,478	15
WAKE	698,026	910	262,442	145	187,181	4	4,307	39	244,096	722
WARREN	13,402	-1	9,353	0	1,717	-9	32	0	2,300	8
WASHINGTON	8,609	-23	5,850	-16	1,102	-3	25	1	1,632	-5
WATAUGA	44,016	-73	11,851	-37	13,749	-16	465	0	17,951	-20
WAYNE	73,481	119	32,229	28	23,661	40	277	1	17,314	50
WILKES	42,305	62	10,006	1	21,844	4	124	0	10,331	57
WILSON	54,765	58	29,114	8	13,614	1	143	1	11,894	48
YADKIN	23,671	58	4,113	9	13,200	13	69	0	6,289	36
YANCEY	13,744	14	5,153	-15	4,844	12	40	0	3,707	17

Scandal

Why IS NC Helping One Group Defy the Law? NCAE Won't Reveal Membership Numbers

BY BOB LUEBKE

Why should North Carolina continue to provide free administrative services to a private organization when that organization refuses to release membership information to prove it's in compliance with state law? That's the question a lot of people are wondering these days.

The North Carolina Association of Educators (NCAE), the largest teachers union in North Carolina, refused – on two occasions – to provide membership information to the Office of the State Auditor to certify that the organization has 40,000 members and thus is in compliance with state law to receive dues checkoff benefits.

According to a February 2017 report from the State Auditor's

fall under the authority of the State Auditor. However, NCAE reported a total membership count of approximately 70,000 on their web site as of December 4, 2016. We were not able to confirm the membership count.”

What is interesting is that it appears a good number of people know that NCAE is not in compliance with membership requirements.

Mike Antonucci, a long-time tracker of all things regarding teacher unions, reported numbers that didn't meet the threshold and expressed dismay that North Carolina has not acted.

Antonucci reported on his web site, Education Intelligence Agency, that NCAE membership “lost more than 38 percent of

one of the National Education Association's “five financially shakiest” unions.

NCAE is the National Education Association State Affiliate in North Carolina. To look at the numbers from another angle, in 2015 NCAE membership declined 9.6 percent and total membership is only half of what it was in 2010.

In addition, in 2015, NCAE ran a deficit of \$690,000. So how did all this happen? Fresh from gaining majorities in both houses of the General Assembly, in 2011 Republican legislators were looking to rein in an organization that had worked very hard to defeat many Republicans.

Legislation was passed that

Lawmakers made a small change to dues checkoff legislation: requiring the Office of the State Auditor to certify that the NCAE membership was at least 40,000 and that the majority of those must be public school teachers.

The bill was approved.

Unfortunately, the threshold language was added in the same paragraph that mentions a threshold for state employees of 2,000. The change generated legal confusion.

Hoping to bring clarity, the Office of State Controller determined the appropriate threshold was 2,000. Of course, you have to wonder how it was determined and how such a directive can be consistent with state law.

That said, the fact remains North Carolina continues to provide administrative services for an organization that fails to comply with state law.

Of course, there is another question underneath the legal issue: Why does North Carolina provide free administrative services to private organizations?

Doing so only provides real subsidies and savings to certain organizations at the expense of all taxpayers. It puts state government in the position of playing favorites.

The actions clearly constitute an illegal benefit to an organization whose mission is to advocate for the interests of educators and staff – and not the interests of students or the people of North Carolina.

This must stop. North Carolina needs to stop collecting dues for NCAE. The organization is taking advantage of the government's helping hand but refuses to comply with the law.

The way to correct this problem is to enact new legislation that gets state government out of the business of withholding dues checkoff privileges for private organizations altogether.

Dues checkoffs lack a justification for state involvement, while they are a great way for the government to play favorites by doing a favor to certain groups. Those are two good reasons for the legislature to address the problem once and for all. ■



Office, the state continues to provide payroll deduction services for approximately 7,300 NCAE members, as well for approximately 40,000 members of other employee associations.

The auditor's report states that “NCAE refused to furnish the information.

“We do not have the authority to compel NCAE to turn over this information because as a private entity, NCAE does not

its membership over the last 13 years. The losses push NCAE membership under the threshold for payroll deduction for dues, but the state of North Carolina appears unable to enforce the law.”

According to documents on the site, NCAE 2016 membership in North Carolina was estimated at 39,948, down 3,727 from the previous year. Antonucci also listed North Carolina as

prohibited the state from collecting dues from NCAE members.

NCAE immediately brought a legal challenge and won an injunction against implementing the prohibition on the grounds that since the legislation only singled out NCAE, it amounted to viewpoint discrimination. The injunction remains in place to this day.

Fast forward to 2014.

Scandal is a regular column in *Civitas Capitol Connection* that will explore public corruption in NC Government.

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