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North Carolinians politically split; abortion and Electoral College reinforce divide

BY RAY NOTHSTINE

A Civitas Poll released in March shows half of North Carolinians identify as pro-life and that there is mixed support for the Electoral College. Fifty percent of registered voters polled said they are pro-life, while 40 percent described themselves as pro-choice and 10 percent were undecided.

The issue of abortion is making more headlines of late as more conservative states are passing fetal heartbeat bills which could potentially prohibit abortions after six weeks. On the other side, some blue states, particularly in the Northeast, have expanded abortion rights up to the moment of birth. Much of the renewed controversy over abortion exploded after Virginia Gov. Ralph



Northam made these comments to a radio station in January:

“...If a mother is in labor, I can tell you exactly what would happen. The infant would be delivered. The infant would be kept comfortable. The infant would be resuscitated if that’s what the mother and

the family desired, and then a discussion would ensue between the physicians and the mother. So I think this was really blown out of proportion.”

Many accused Gov. Northam of supporting infanticide and President Donald Trump criticized him for supporting the extermination of babies during this year’s State of the Union Address. “We had the case of the governor of Virginia where he basically stated he would execute a baby after birth,” declared Trump.

According to the poll, half said they favor legislation prohibiting unborn chil-

dren from being aborted after 13 weeks’ gestation unless there is a medical emergency. Perhaps more notably, a third of North Carolinians that identified as pro-choice favored this measure.

While a small plurality of North Carolinians say they support a national popular vote alternative to elect the president, those polled overwhelmingly rejected SB 104 (55/29 – 15 percent undecided). That bill would bind North Carolina’s electors to the popular vote winner, known more popularly as the National Popular Vote Interstate Compact (NPVIC).

“It’s clear that there

is a widespread misunderstanding of what the Electoral College system is,” said Civitas President Donald Bryson. “The disconnect between a plurality of voters wanting a popularly elected president, but a majority of those same voters opposing implementing a national popular vote indicates that they changed their opinion with some explanation.”

The March poll showed potential problems for Sen. Thom Tillis (R-NC) if he decides to run for reelection for another U.S. Senate term. A strong primary challenger might make it difficult in his bid to secure the Republican Party nomination. Tillis’s favorability ratings are at negative 7 percent (26 favorable to 33 unfavorable). The other North Carolina politicians polled, which included State Treasurer Dale Folwell, Secretary of State Elaine Marshall, Lt. Gov. Dan Forest, Attorney General Josh Stein, and Gov. Roy Cooper all had higher favorable ratings than unfavorable.

President Trump had a job approval rating of 47

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FROM THE EDITOR

Recent headlines across the state regarding the shenanigans of GOP Chairman Robin Hayes and others remind us of the importance of strong principles and high character for leadership. At the Civitas Institute, we are dedicated to sound conservative policy decisions over partisan power or rancor. We want all North Carolinians to be afforded the best opportunity to flourish and have space from government regulations and mandates. Even through political strife and change the mes-

sage will always be principled and consistent for freedom.

The April issue continues to cover the detriment and budget strain that Medicaid expansion would have for North Carolina. Congressman Gary Palmer (R-AL) recently offered these comments for states buying into expansion:

When you expand Medicaid, the administrative costs and the cost of expansion will eventually swamp the state. It has other states. Illinois is about to go bankrupt. Plus,

it forces more people on the waiting list in the expansion state. Just in those states where Medicaid was expanded, 22,000 people have died on waiting lists.

The moral argument is profound and accurate. It's not moral or compassionate for taxpayers to foot the bill for what would be adding a vast majority of childless working age adults to the Medicaid rolls. Not only would there be permanent and lasting damage to our state budget but consigning more dependents to the broken

federal government that is \$22 trillion in debt is clearly problematic. States should be given flexibility and power to offer incentives and free market reforms to address the primary healthcare problem, which is one of cost.

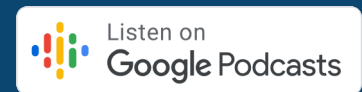
Speaking of a broken federal government, in this issue Brooke Medina offers up an essay titled "Congress: Where Constitutional Conservatism Goes to Die." It's a good read and she's critical of U.S. Sen. Thom Tillis's flip-flop on

President Donald Trump's National Emergency Declaration regarding our southern border.

Wherever you stand on the issue perhaps is ultimately unimportant, but she draws out some timeless reminders about principles over power for power's sake. It's our duty as citizens to hold our elected officials accountable and help create a culture that promotes principled leadership and virtue where public servants are willing to sacrifice for others and our Republic.

CIVIL TALK

BRINGING CLARITY TO NORTH CAROLINA POLITICS



CYAN MAGENTA YELLOW BLACK

Debunking those Medicaid expansion job claims

BY BRIAN BALFOUR

On the first day of the regular 2019 legislative session, Democrats introduced legislation to expand Medicaid in North Carolina. Among the justifications for expansion given at the press conference introducing the bill was that it would create more than 40,000 jobs.

This claim, however, doesn't stand up to scrutiny.

The figure comes from a 2014 report produced by George Washington University researchers. The report declared that North Carolina will miss out on 43,000 jobs over five years, along with \$21 billion in federal money, if it continues to refuse Medicaid expansion as prescribed in Obamacare.

The study's findings largely echo other reports, such as a January 2013 study produced by the North Carolina Institute of Medicine (NCIOM) which came to similar conclusions.

The job growth claims are based on the state's "drawing down" addi-

that the federal government pays providers for the services.

For instance, the NCIOM study assumes that more than 500,000 North Carolinians will not only enroll in Medicaid under expansion, but each would receive — on average — approximately \$4,300

enrolled as Medicaid providers dropped by more than 1,300.

Imagine adding since 2003 the equivalent of the entire combined population of Wake and Forsyth Counties to a group of people already fighting over a shrinking pool of doctors. Making matters worse,

ally seeing a physician. Coverage will not equal access.

If new enrollees in the already overcrowded Medicaid program have limited access to care, then a very limited number of services will be provided. With fewer services provided, fewer federal dollars are "drawn down" to Medicaid providers. The whole premise behind the study purporting to show job creation is flawed.

Moreover, the hospital tax being proposed to pay for expansion would force hospitals to either shift higher costs onto private insurance patients or cut costs — potentially decreasing jobs in the healthcare sector.

Finally, research shows that expansion actually has a significant negative impact on employment. A comprehensive study released in 2014 by the National Bureau of Economic Research, for instance, found that past Medicaid expansions to enroll able-bodied, childless adults reduced the likelihood of working by up to 10 percentage points.

Not only are the job creation claims unsupported, the more likely scenario of Medicaid expansion would be a net loss of tens of thousands of jobs, creating significant harm to our economy.

A version of this article originally appeared in the Wilson Times.

“North Carolina already suffers from a shortage of doctors, especially of those accepting Medicaid patients.”

tional federal funds due to Medicaid expansion. As the GWU report describes, “Since most of the cost of a Medicaid expansion would be borne by the federal government, expansion would result in billions of dollars in additional federal funding flowing into North Carolina. These funds will initially be paid to health care providers, such as hospitals, clinics or pharmacies, as health care payments for Medicaid services.”

The income received by health care providers is then spent on suppliers (such as medicine, medical supplies, etc.) and in communities on goods and services such as groceries, clothes and movies.

The fatal flaw in this methodology, however, is that in order to “draw down” federal Medicaid dollars, actual medical services need to be provided to Medicaid patients. It is only when doctors actually treat Medicaid patients

in medical services each year. As these services are rendered, the doctors and hospitals are paid by the federal Medicaid program, which injects the money into the state's economy and spurs the job creation, according to the report.

But here's where the jobs claims fall apart: North Carolina already suffers from a shortage of doctors, especially of those accepting Medicaid patients.

Medicaid rolls in North Carolina have ballooned from about 1 million in 2003 to roughly 2 million today. Adding another 500,000 would push the program over 2.5 million enrollees and mark more than a million-and-a-half new Medicaid enrollees in about 15 years.

All this would take place when the number of physicians accepting Medicaid patients is dwindling. According to state Medicaid Annual reports, from 2003 to 2016, the number of physicians

a 2012 article in Health Affairs found that one-fourth of North Carolina's physicians would not take any new Medicaid patients.

Indeed, a December 2014 report from the federal Department of Health and Human Services examined Medicaid enrollee access to medical providers. The report's findings confirm the concerns regarding lack of access for Medicaid patients. Half of the primary care and specialty providers contacted in the study could not even offer appointments to Medicaid enrollees.

In short, the supply of doctors is not large enough to meet the current Medicaid enrollee demand and expansion would only make this problem far worse.

Such extreme supply constraints tell us that if North Carolina were to expand Medicaid, the newly enrolled would have great difficulty actu-

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Congress: where constitutional conservatism goes to die

BY BROOKE MEDINA

“An open mind, in questions that are not ultimate, is useful. But an open mind about the ultimate foundations either of Theoretical or of Practical Reason is idiocy. If a man’s mind is open on these things, let his mouth at least be shut.” – C.S. Lewis, “The Abolition of Man.”

Throughout our lives we are given opportunities to prove the stuff we’re made of. To prove that we are not, in fact, “men without chests,” to borrow from C.S. Lewis’ analogy of a person that lacks an ability or willingness to grasp absolutes. Last month’s vote on a resolution to end President Donald Trump’s unconstitutional National Emergency declaration provided an opportunity for conservative senators to prove the stuff they were made of.

Unfortunately, the pull of political power has trumped the necessary – and increasingly uncommon – commitment to constitutional conservatism. President Trump’s decision to use the National Emergencies Act (1976) as the vehicle for building a wall on our southern border, thereby circumventing Congress’ ineptitude in handling immigration, is unconstitutional. This is not a denial that something must be done when it comes to border security.

For too long Congress has punted on this problem. But neither does the problem at the border negate Article I of the U.S. Constitution.

Up until the moment of last month’s vote, many thought Sen. Thom Tillis felt this way, too. Paying lip service to constitutional integrity, Tillis eloquently penned the following in a February 25th Washington Post op-ed:

“It is my responsibility to be a steward of the Article I branch, to preserve the separation of powers and to curb the kind of executive overreach that Congress has allowed to fester for the better part of the past century.”

It is clear that populism is taking its toll on Senators Tillis, Sasse (R-NE), and Cruz (R-TX). Populist sentiment has continued to grow in our nation, driving a wedge between right leaning Americans. It pits those that hold tightly to the belief that our republic

has an opportunity to impose their will on the minority. The Left has their own form of populism, too, but this article isn’t about them.

The fact that many Republican voters and politicians have sacrificed conservative principles on the altar of political expediency can be attributed, in part, to this growing populism that has paralyzed the will to safeguard the separation of powers.

If we’re honest, most of us can sympathize with the politically difficult situation Republicans like Tillis, Sasse, and Cruz found themselves in. As one pollster put it in an article in Politico: “Voting against the declaration poses a risk of being seen as not taking border security seriously.” This is potentially what Sen. Sasse, known for historically being an independent thinker committed to constitutional conservatism, had in mind when he voted against the



it our sympathy, but it shouldn’t garner our support. What good are principles and commitments to important ideals if we cast them aside when they are needed the most?

Essentially, what hills are worth dying on? Clearly, we have Sen. Tillis’ answer to this question. Re-election, probably justified in his mind by the belief that he can accomplish great things once he gets past 2020, was worth the buckling.

Soldiers that have gone to war can tell you that their deployment was filled

with one lone Iraqi girl today or living to fight another day, in the chance that he might be able to save two Iraqi girls tomorrow.

The question he must ask himself is, “What is my duty to my fellow man *right now*?” He can’t live in the theoretical world of “what if,” forever punting his decision to stand on principle to some mystical land of maybes. To do so would allow him to excuse every opportunity for courage as merely an unfortunate and untimely occasion that simply wasn’t expedient in light of what tomorrow might bring.

Likewise, our elected officials ought to function with one foot firmly planted in the rich soil of Article I and the other in the reality of their obligation to the American people.

Our character is revealed by what we do in times of testing, not in platitudes eloquently espoused in Washington Post op-eds.

“What good are principles and commitments to important ideals if we cast them aside when they are needed the most?”

lican form of government demands systems that dilute the impact of a fickle direct democracy and those that merely look to each new election as an

resolution. At the outset of his statement following last month’s vote, he said, “We have an obvious crisis at the border...”

This quandary can elicit

with choices, demanding they make quick, life and death judgment calls. For the infantryman on patrol, perhaps he was forced to choose between saving

Proposed free market healthcare reforms a step in the right direction

BY LEAH BYERS

In late March, state Senators Joyce Krawiec (R-Forsyth), Dan Bishop (R-Mecklenburg), and Ralph Hise (R-Mitchell) filed Senate Bill 361, the Health Care Expansion Act of 2019.

By focusing on free market, supply-side reforms, the bill reflects a positive shift in the conversation around healthcare policy for the state. Instead of asking how government can “help” by getting more involved, the state should look to reduce government interventions that strangle the healthcare market, driving up prices and restricting supply for all North Carolinians.

The bill also addresses a shortfall in Medicaid services for a truly needy population.

It is no secret that progressives are pushing for North Carolina to expand Medicaid this year. Proponents of expansion claim that providing government insurance to the uninsured will improve their access to care. This is an incorrect equation – coverage does not equal access to care.

Expanding Medicaid addresses the symptoms of government interference in health care with more government interference.

In a recent opinion editorial, John Locke Foundation Chair John Hood articulat-

ed the point well: “Shifting the cost from one pocket to another doesn’t make it go away. We need more innovation, more competition, and more information. Smart state policies

in their home or community. This helps individuals with disabilities to have more autonomy and independence. The program currently has a waiting list with an average wait time

patients.

Allow Interstate Reciprocity for Psychologists.

This section would add North Carolina to an existing interstate compact

Easing restrictions for these providers will also expand choices for North Carolinians with healthcare needs.

These are great steps that the legislature can take to help make affordable healthcare more accessible for all North Carolinians. But there is still more work to do.

Civitas has championed several access-expanding options, including the CON repeal and telemedicine expansion present in Senate Bill 361, as well as association health plans, which were passed by the Senate earlier this year. Other needed reforms include expanding scope of practice for certain healthcare professionals, loosening mandates and restrictions on health insurance options and removing burdensome insurance regulations from direct primary care physician-patient arrangements.

Through Senate Bill 361, as well as the association health plans, the North Carolina Senate has emerged as a leader in healthcare policy in the state. They have shown a willingness to embrace the capacity of the free market to increase quality and decrease prices. Hopefully, the House will soon follow their lead.



can help.”

Senate Bill 361 takes strides towards improving access to healthcare by accomplishing several objectives:

Increase innovation waiver slots.

The first part of the bill would expand funding and slots for the North Carolina Innovations Waiver. The waiver is part of the state’s current Medicaid program, providing funding for individuals with intellectual or developmental disabilities to receive care and support

of seven years, according to the bill sponsors.

Repeal the Certificate of Need law.

Certificates of Need (CON) are a government-issued permission slip required by the state for would-be healthcare providers to open their doors or provide certain services. The CON law limits supply and drives up prices; repealing it would encourage competition in the healthcare sector and expand our healthcare industry’s capacity to serve

granting licensing reciprocity to psychologists. Essentially, psychologists licensed by other states in the compact could practice in North Carolina without also getting a North Carolina license. This would apply to both telemedicine and temporary in-person practicing.

The bill also allows Licensed Marriage and Family Therapists to perform first level involuntary commitment evaluations and makes other minor regulatory changes.

Changes represent the difference in voter registration between January 19 and February 23, 2019

County	Total Voters	Total Change	Democrats	Democrat Change	Republicans	Republican Change	Libertarians	Libertarian Change	Unaffiliated Voters	Unaffiliated Change
Totals	6,604,293	28,341	2,463,599	4,595	1,991,337	7,297	36,649	445	2,110,079	15,700
Alamance	97,090	336	35,617	28	32,013	79	515	4	28,912	220
Alexander	22,970	82	5,448	1	10,430	31	83	0	7,003	49
Alleghany	6,858	13	2,281	-6	2,529	8	29	1	2,018	10
Anson	15,508	72	10,120	6	2,300	22	26	2	3,035	44
Ashe	17,703	37	4,653	-16	7,729	18	72	2	5,244	33
Avery	10,995	-21	1,295	-4	6,450	-20	47	0	3,201	3
Beaufort	31,395	31	12,053	-50	10,479	29	89	3	8,765	50
Bertie	12,505	20	8,693	-7	1,367	7	26	-1	2,417	21
Bladen	21,230	121	11,085	11	3,944	40	41	2	6,158	68
Brunswick	98,870	753	25,158	98	37,935	296	416	8	35,336	347
Buncombe	186,937	528	71,530	78	43,443	103	1,421	10	70,408	319
Burke	52,392	118	15,651	-45	19,359	63	269	3	17,089	90
Cabarrus	130,308	556	39,233	107	47,103	105	832	21	43,070	313
Caldwell	49,395	228	11,678	27	23,038	98	342	8	14,310	93
Camden	7,310	21	1,894	-9	2,380	7	55	3	2,979	19
Carteret	49,747	110	10,780	-4	21,746	60	225	-2	16,990	55
Caswell	14,263	2	6,926	-12	3,146	19	33	1	4,154	-6
Catawba	97,395	418	22,342	54	42,394	139	413	7	32,222	212
Chatham	51,415	146	19,771	55	12,554	22	233	4	18,829	63
Cherokee	20,395	61	4,340	-3	9,258	33	124	3	6,663	27
Chowan	9,488	47	4,273	1	2,531	24	26	2	2,656	20
Clay	8,230	47	1,637	5	3,582	21	47	1	2,961	20
Cleveland	60,380	172	23,185	-47	20,342	91	267	6	16,569	119
Columbus	33,589	99	17,578	-38	7,004	69	62	0	8,936	66
Craven	66,090	532	21,250	39	23,680	208	375	5	20,764	280
Cumberland	199,324	2,341	89,598	629	45,511	385	1,197	38	62,935	1,273
Currituck	18,829	202	3,522	22	7,266	109	160	2	7,871	67
Dare	27,895	115	7,870	6	8,888	57	212	3	10,917	49
Davidson	101,948	369	23,203	12	48,527	138	432	-5	29,752	217
Davie	28,237	95	4,885	7	14,551	43	119	3	8,673	41
Duplin	27,912	73	12,387	-14	7,775	43	104	1	7,636	44
Durham	216,429	-129	118,451	-80	25,535	-12	1,089	-1	71,254	-41
Edgecombe	33,676	2	23,216	-26	5,561	13	82	-2	4,807	17
Forsyth	244,879	571	98,656	128	71,674	89	1,266	11	73,192	335
Franklin	41,605	183	16,485	-10	12,833	66	213	6	12,057	118
Gaston	132,922	496	39,866	81	51,347	169	729	17	40,934	223
Gates	7,591	56	3,836	4	1,637	17	28	0	2,088	34
Graham	5,627	27	1,538	-12	2,588	13	25	0	1,476	26
Granville	36,304	129	17,181	7	8,976	44	144	1	9,992	75
Greene	10,809	80	5,923	-13	2,074	33	20	1	2,789	59
Guilford	347,733	396	155,544	0	88,689	-25	1,853	16	101,509	391
Halifax	35,162	-99	22,741	-100	4,210	-8	85	-4	8,120	12
Harnett	71,168	302	24,203	43	25,172	85	506	9	21,258	163
Haywood	41,414	171	14,634	-20	13,068	105	259	0	13,438	84
Henderson	78,530	288	16,363	43	29,693	97	448	-2	31,997	147
Hertford	14,112	24	10,142	2	1,324	10	34	1	2,605	10
Hoke	28,852	139	13,476	30	6,037	42	196	4	9,125	63
Hyde	2,991	4	1,641	-6	490	1	14	2	846	7

Iredell	114,187	455	27,706	51	47,798	94	597	7	38,049	303
Jackson	26,644	-18	9,260	-41	7,200	9	176	0	9,998	14
Johnston	123,090	655	36,619	66	47,711	265	743	10	37,959	306
Jones	6,952	16	3,246	-7	1,838	10	21	0	1,846	13
Lee	34,382	101	13,412	-9	9,975	47	180	-2	10,806	64
Lenoir	35,888	313	18,823	46	9,223	114	103	2	7,735	150
Lincoln	54,446	265	12,057	-11	24,749	143	261	1	17,360	130
Macon	24,536	102	5,905	-6	10,204	57	136	5	8,282	44
Madison	15,871	23	5,847	1	4,205	10	107	1	5,705	11
Martin	15,661	38	9,019	5	3,114	8	37	-2	3,486	26
Mcdowell	26,872	55	7,095	-31	10,659	35	145	3	8,957	46
Mecklenburg	707,662	5,984	308,021	2,070	160,997	690	4,681	55	233,680	3,141
Mitchell	10,020	20	1,029	1	6,028	4	28	0	2,934	15
Montgomery	15,414	68	6,382	-2	4,866	21	65	0	4,094	49
Moore	66,029	151	15,543	15	27,230	27	366	5	22,874	104
Nash	63,588	150	31,307	39	18,037	46	216	2	14,010	59
New Hanover	159,815	752	49,160	161	50,594	167	1,137	16	58,853	402
Northampton	13,142	38	9,203	10	1,367	11	24	0	2,545	16
Onslow	98,757	681	24,044	71	36,720	242	932	17	36,996	342
Orange	105,362	239	49,039	59	14,618	19	669	5	40,995	156
Pamlico	8,952	-1	3,317	-26	3,083	24	41	1	2,511	0
Pasquotank	25,709	190	11,209	19	5,770	59	149	3	8,570	107
Pender	39,007	146	11,371	-12	14,982	49	239	3	12,396	102
Perquimans	9,189	42	3,487	-3	2,631	14	33	0	3,033	30
Person	25,059	58	10,978	-9	6,394	35	92	-1	7,591	32
Pitt	115,352	566	51,435	118	29,885	135	691	17	33,271	285
Polk	14,939	45	3,928	-6	5,339	25	75	1	5,581	22
Randolph	85,582	281	16,621	16	43,912	125	484	8	24,536	130
Richmond	27,407	191	14,267	20	5,654	54	75	0	7,396	112
Robeson	70,126	400	43,266	49	8,971	75	186	0	17,677	273
Rockingham	56,478	138	20,055	-29	20,306	97	229	2	15,869	64
Rowan	87,557	281	24,345	41	36,447	129	383	0	26,349	109
Rutherford	41,823	139	12,499	0	16,324	64	205	2	12,776	72
Sampson	34,629	61	14,138	-16	13,148	42	119	1	7,215	33
Scotland	20,396	139	11,269	33	3,417	32	69	1	5,627	71
Stanly	39,480	75	9,835	-17	17,922	42	139	1	11,570	47
Stokes	28,961	95	6,595	-8	14,435	65	153	0	7,766	37
Surry	42,523	100	11,737	-5	18,528	45	121	1	12,129	59
Swain	9,095	35	3,380	4	2,488	17	39	1	3,185	13
Transylvania	24,412	39	6,126	-19	7,944	3	114	0	10,224	53
Tyrrell	2,201	10	1,199	-1	338	1	8	1	656	9
Union	149,412	2,071	36,941	333	61,926	745	739	22	49,759	968
Vance	27,493	40	17,973	-10	3,998	12	59	1	5,454	35
Wake	711,947	2,275	262,847	686	180,501	82	4,987	58	263,306	1,407
Warren	12,701	29	8,573	3	1,762	11	37	0	2,327	15
Washington	8,007	-14	5,310	-9	1,042	-1	21	-1	1,634	-3
Watauga	43,054	-12	11,335	-31	13,098	14	479	-8	18,128	13
Wayne	69,810	227	29,364	47	22,675	62	333	6	17,407	108
Wilkes	39,733	85	8,504	-32	20,888	52	135	0	10,200	64
Wilson	52,806	78	27,077	2	12,758	22	171	0	12,780	50
Yadkin	22,603	70	3,527	-9	12,771	38	88	3	6,208	35
Yancey	13,125	10	4,542	-24	4,705	23	49	3	3,824	8

Gov. Cooper's radical opposition to school choice

BY BOB LUEBKE

There has been a lot of discussion over the education proposals included in Gov. Roy Cooper's recommended 2019-2020 budget. One provision absent from most of those discussions is Cooper's decision to freeze, reduce and ultimately zero out the highly popular Opportunity Scholarship Program. The Opportunity Scholarship Program provides low- and middle-income students a voucher of up to \$4,200 to attend the private school of their choice. In 2017-18, North Carolina awarded 7,371 scholarships to needy students. This year, already 9,603 scholarships have been awarded. The increase speaks to the popularity of the program—and that the program is meeting a need.

Gov. Cooper says such programs lack accountability. Civitas vehemently disagrees and addressed some of those concerns in a longer article from March 2017 that can be found on our website titled "Cooper, Vouchers and the Veneer of Progressive Accountability." Last month, Parents for Educational Freedom North Carolina surveyed nearly 1,500 families about their experience with the Opportunity Scholarship Program. The results: 97 percent of families are happy with the child's

academic progress, 97 percent are satisfied or very satisfied with the program, and 99 percent say their child feels safe.

Gov. Cooper has spoken often about his commitment to education and ensuring all children have access to a good education. It appears however, that commitment only applies to certain students in the public schools. If you are in a public school that is challenged or is not a good fit, you're out of luck.

Civitas has continually chronicled the governor's opposition to school choice and we will continue to make sure the citizens of North Carolina are aware of his positions. That Cooper and his Progressive friends would rather zero out a program than see low-income children access a better education should be a wakeup call to all in our state.

How out of step are



Cooper's views on the Opportunity Scholarship Program? A January 2019 Civitas Poll found that 85 percent of North Carolinians support the program. That includes 93 percent of African Americans, 87 percent of Republicans, 85 percent of Democrats and 85 percent of unaffiliated voters.

School choice supporters might have reason to worry about Cooper's proposal. However, they should remember that earlier this year, Senator Terry VanDuyne (D-Buncombe), and many of her fellow Democratic Senators attempted to end the growth of the Opportunity Scholarship Program.

Senate Bill 5, Amendment 2, was a motion to end all funding increases for the program. The Amendment failed along mostly party lines, with Democrats Ben Clark (Cumberland) and Paul Lowe (Forsyth) joining Republicans to defeat the measure.

The amendment was offered, despite the fact that polling shows that 67 percent of North Carolinians believe the General Assembly should do more to expand choice in our state; only 7 percent believe the legislature should stop expanding choice.

Cooper's opposition to school choice is deep. He included a similar pro-

vision to eliminate the Opportunity Scholarship Program in his first budget. Cooper also went to court to challenge the forward funding provisions added to the Opportunity Scholarship Program; a fight he ultimately lost. The governor is already on record saying he thinks charter schools promote segregation.

Gov. Cooper's proposal to end the Opportunity Scholarship Program signals the breadth of those intentions. It's a position that is clearly out of step with the majority of North Carolinians. And people need to know about it.

Supporters use children as political pawns in fight for Medicaid expansion

BY LEAH BYERS

Gov. Roy Cooper's bi-annual State of the State address outlines his vision for North Carolina over the next two years. Unsurprisingly, expanding the state's Medicaid program was a top priority for Cooper.

While discussing expansion, Cooper highlighted Boone pediatrician Dr. Gregory Adams. This seemed to be an emotional appeal to persuade North Carolinians that children will benefit from Medicaid expansion. The governor's press release gives this blurb about Adams:

"Dr. Adams, a pediatrician practicing in Watauga County, has been in practice for more than 35 years. Dr. Adams is concerned about patients with chronic conditions being able to get the health care they need and believes our state should expand Medicaid."

The wording in the biographic blurb is very carefully chosen. Notice that the statement says that Adams is "concerned about patients," but it does not specify whether it is his own patients that he is worried about.

That's because low-

income children are already covered under the state's current Medicaid program.

There is no direct benefit to children for expanding Medicaid. But unless someone was very familiar with current Medicaid eligibility rules, he or she would probably not catch Cooper's subtle deception. And the governor is not the only one using this dirty trick.

Last month, the president of the North Carolina Pediatric Society wrote an opinion piece for the Raleigh News & Observer on her support for expansion. The piece was titled "Why close the gap? Kids' health depends on it."

This title is disingenuous and misleading. The article describes how children are better off if their parents and caregivers are in good health. But that argument ignores two significant facts. The first is that, like low-income children, many low-income parents are already covered under the state's current Medicaid program. Low-income pregnant women are also covered under the current Medicaid program.

Of individuals eligible to

be covered under Medicaid expansion, 78 percent are working-age, able-bodied, childless adults.

The article says that Medicaid expansion would help "future parents" remain in better health. But it does not mention that Medicaid coverage for family planning health services is already available for non-pregnant adults of child-bearing age with an income of up to 195 percent of the federal poverty line.

The second fact conveniently ignored in the article is that Medicaid coverage is not equivalent to better health outcomes. A groundbreaking study in Oregon in 2011 found no positive health improvements between new Medicaid enrollees and the uninsured, with the exception of slightly better mental health outcomes.

One reason for the disconnect between Medicaid coverage and health could be the issue of access. A



limited number of doctors in the state accept Medicaid patients at all, and even fewer accept new Medicaid patients. It is likely that current Medicaid recipients already have a harder time finding a doctor than someone with private insurance. Expansion will increase Medicaid enrollment by 30 percent in one year and that will only perpetuate the problem of access, for both the expansion population and current Medicaid enrollees.

The irony? Expansion could worsen the strain on access and actually harm the health of low-income

children, parents, pregnant women, and "future parents" that currently receive Medicaid if they have a harder time finding a doctor.

Medicaid expansion proponents know that low-income children and their parents garner public sympathy that they need to push their initiative to victory. Cooper and other expansion proponents are using children as political pawns to advance their big-government agenda – and they are not letting the facts get in their way.

North Carolinians politically split: abortion and Electoral College reinforce divide

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

percent, while 49 percent statewide disapproved. The poll was commissioned

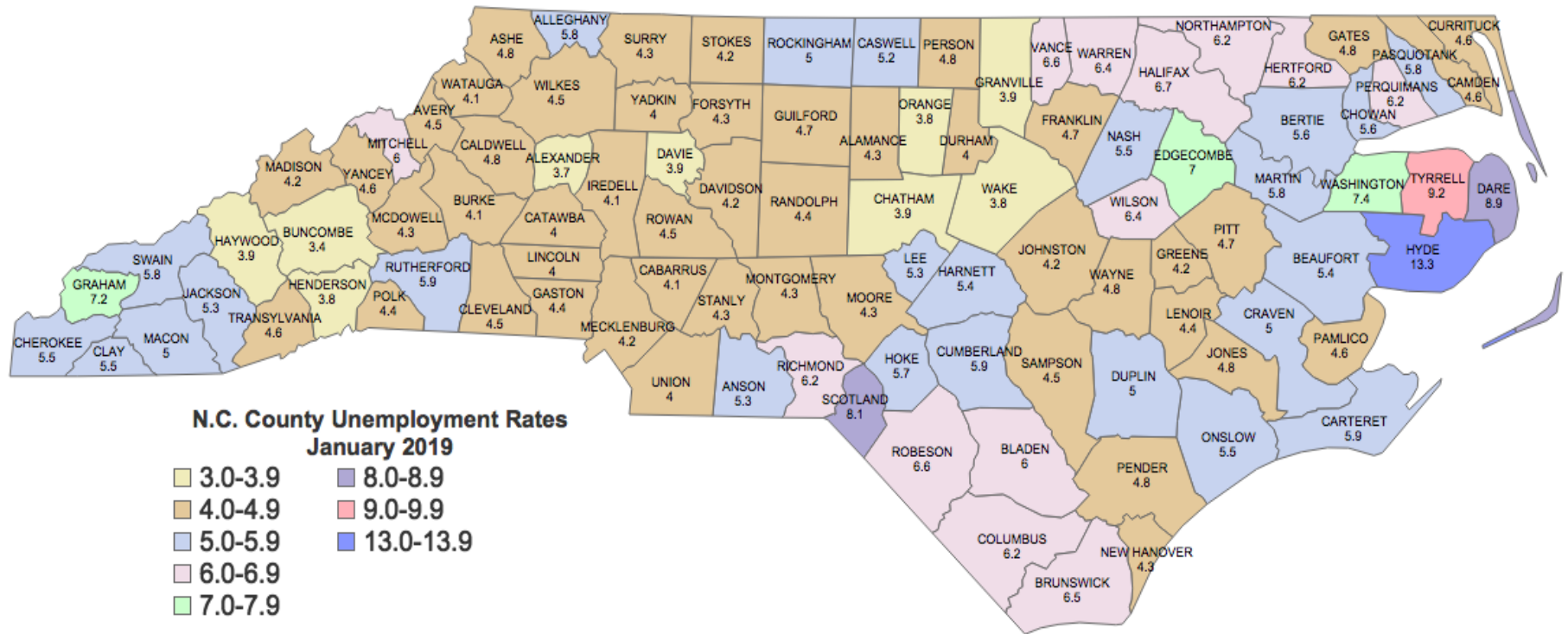
before the president was essentially cleared by special counsel Robert Mueller

during an investigation to see if there was any campaign collusion between

Trump and Russia.

You can find the entire poll and crosstabs at

NCCivitas.org.



The above map shows the January 2019, (not seasonally adjusted) unemployment rates for all 100 North Carolina counties. (data from N.C. Department of Commerce) The January statewide unemployment rate was 4.5 percent and increased in all 100 counties. In comparison to a few months earlier in November, the statewide unemployment rate was 3.5 percent. December was 3.8 percent.

Hyde County had the highest unemployment rate at 13.3 percent, while Buncombe County had the lowest at 3.4 percent.

All 15 of the state's metro areas experienced rate increases. Rocky Mount had the highest at 6 percent and Asheville the lowest at 3.6 percent.

When compared to the same month last year, not seasonally adjusted unemployment rates decreased in 67 counties, increased in 17, and remained unchanged in 16. Nine metro areas experienced rate decreases over the year, one increased, and five remained unchanged.

Balancing voters' convenience with children's safety

BY ANDY JACKSON

With growing concerns about school safety, should schools be forced to open their doors to hundreds of unchecked adults?

Under current North Carolina law, election officials can compel local schools to open their buildings to be polling places regardless of security concerns that school officials may have. In addition, the increased traffic on voting days can make gaining access to schools more difficult for students and increases the danger of traffic accidents involving children. While some

school systems respond to those concerns by making elections days teacher work days, that is not practical for all school systems, increasing risks to students.

However, schools are the most convenient location for polling places in many precincts. Research by the Raleigh News & Observer found that roughly 20 percent of the polling places used in last November's election were in public schools. A ban on using schools as polling places would likely be highly disruptive as local boards of

election scramble to find new accessible locations where citizens can vote.

A proposal currently in the Elections and Ethics Law committee of the NC General Assembly is an attempt to thread the needle between those concerns. House Bill 24, sponsored by Reps. Donny Lambeth (R – Forsythe) and Lee Zachary (R – Forsyth, Yadkin) would not prohibit schools from being used as polling places, but would give local school boards the option to refuse to open some school buildings for that purpose. Perhaps more

importantly, it gives school boards the power to establish safety protocols for children that election officials must follow:

If the local board of education consents to the request, the local board of education shall develop a safety plan that the local board of elections shall follow to ensure the security of students at the school while the building is being used as a voting place.

I doubt that many schools would be put off limits as polling places if this proposal is enacted. As elected officials, most

school board members are aware of the convenience often associated with using schools as polling places and would likely only ban their use when there is a strong safety or operational concern. In addition, some of them may also be aware of research showing that voting in schools increases the likelihood that voters will support school bonds.

House Bill 24 is a moderate solution that addresses real concerns about student safety while still allowing schools to be used as polling places.

Could marriage help millennials escape poverty?

BY BROOKE MEDINA

Ask adults over 55 what comes to mind when they think of millennials and many of them will roll their eyes and swiftly say, “entitled.”

While I’ll be the first to admit that millennials like myself have our shortcomings, the reality is that one of our greatest challenges’ stems from a breakdown in society’s oldest institution: the family.

Compared to boomers in 1980, the Census Bureau reports that millennials have fallen behind in two key areas: they’re less likely to be married and more likely to live in poverty.

While I bristle at the notion that my generation is obliged to do things the same as other generations solely because, “that’s how things have always been done,” it’s undeniable that many millennials are reaping the economic and quality of life consequences of their life choices.

Take unwed parenthood, for example. A recent study found that only 40 percent of millennials had married before having children, compared to 67 percent of boomers. Regardless of race, seven out of 10 millennials who grew up in low-income homes are able to move up to the middle class or higher by waiting until marriage to

have children.

My first job was at a non-profit in a city known for its middle class, military-connected population. The economy was largely fueled by the demand created by young soldiers and middle-class families. The side of town that our organization served, however, was economically depressed and largely devoid of steady employment and strong families. In place of full-service grocery stores and playgrounds stood the looming Department of Social Services, abandoned buildings, and corner stores where the cost of groceries was much higher.

It was at this non-profit that I had a front row seat to the indignity of poverty. One by one, day in and day out, my colleagues and I would work through the long list of visitors – many of them single mothers – that had come to receive “emergency assistance.” This misnomer was likely not lost on our visitors, most of whom were regulars, as their reason for being there wasn’t so much an emergency as it was a daily reality. Eventually I recognized that although we were helping meet the immediate needs of these individuals, we were failing at the long-term goal of empowering men and



women to move beyond government programs and into the freedom and pride that come from a steady job with which they can take care of their families.

Although marriage is by no means a guaranteed way out of poverty, the data tells a compelling story. In my home state of North Carolina, children are five times more likely to live in poverty if there is no father in the home. A 2018 study found that drug-related deaths were “significantly higher in counties with greater economic and family distress.” The study’s authors defined family distress as “divorce/separation and single parent families.”

Unfortunately, many government welfare poli-

cies don’t acknowledge the powerful connection between marriage and economic well-being. As a result, policies that refuse to place work requirements on able-bodied adults remove the healthy pressure of finding employment. This serves to disincentivize those already trapped in poverty from reaching historically celebrated adult milestones, such as marriage and full-time work.

But is government’s mismanagement of welfare policies the only problem, or for that matter, the biggest problem? Have we, as a society, especially those of us who believe in limited government, embraced our responsibility to promote strong marriages and

families?

Do we believe in the value of matrimony? Or are we inclined to think of it primarily as a bourgeoisie virtue? If we want to stand shoulder to shoulder with the one in five millennials battling poverty, then encouraging healthy marriage, should be one of our clarion calls. Promoting a vibrant family life is much harder than hurtling contempt at those “entitled millennials.” If we’re tired of seeing this promising generation flounder, then perhaps they’re at least entitled to being shown a better way forward.

This article was originally published at Intellectual Takeout.

Is the NCAE trying to divide North Carolina with their socialist symbols?

BY RAY NOTHSTINE

The North Carolina Association of Educators (NCAE) is hard at work promoting their teacher walkout for May Day. The May 1 (May Day) date, often referred to as “Workers’ Day,” is linked to socialist and communist movements to organize labor against management. There is nothing inherently wrong with workers advocating for better treatment and better pay, but the May 1 teacher proposed walkout is extremely problematic for a host of reasons. Depending on the number of districts choosing to close that day, hundreds of thousands of students will miss school.

Below is a statement from Mark Johnson, North Carolina’s superintendent of public instruction:

We support teachers and are championing the changes our education system needs, but I cannot support protests that force schools to close.

The protest organizers should choose a non-school day. The legislature will be in session in Raleigh for at least another three months, a time period that spans dozens of days students are not scheduled to be in school, including spring break and summer break.

Protesting is a right that can be just as effective during non-school hours. Closing schools affects not only students’ learning and

nutrition, but also parents, other school employees, and other teachers.

We have more work to do, but we listen to educators’ concerns and have been responding with efforts to raise teacher pay, provide state funding for school construction needs, reduce high-stakes testing, improve school safety efforts, and more.

On top of that, the closing of school should be a last resort. Schools should be closed when it’s in the best interest and safety of the students. Political agitation led by a group seeking to divide the state politically is a terrible reason to shut down schools. I can’t imagine the vast majority of principals and superintendents are in favor of this walkout, given that they are accountable to more than merely pleasing some of the politically motivated staff.

The NCAE itself is known for embracing Marxist symbolism too, as North Carolina radio host Chad Adams pointed out on Twitter at the end of March:

“It’s one thing for folks to THINK you’re a communist organization when you adopt a communist symbol to represent your group. Bad choice of the week @ncae for choosing Soviet Era CCCP logo as theirs!”

The symbol they chose to represent them was a raised fist similar to the ones provided by Soviet and Marxist revolutionaries.

If you want to be socialist or engage in activism sympathetic to Marxism, that’s your right as an American, but don’t do it on taxpayer time and don’t punish students and children for those antics.

Most importantly, North

Carolina is a right to work state and is not known for its labor agitation and agenda. People here are not used to groups coming in and pitting workers against management, or in this case the taxpayers. If it feels out of place for a reason, it’s because this kind of symbolism is out of place in our state.

Teacher pay is an important issue and you can read some of Bob Luebke’s recent commentary on that topic at our website. According to the John Locke Foundation pay for teachers in the state now ranks 2nd in the Southeast and 20th nationally after the cost of living is factored into the equation. Brooke Medina and I talk about teacher pay frequently on the Civitalk podcast as well. We love and admire teachers not only because like most, we have educators in our family, but we

cherish learning and are always seeking to expand our knowledge base.

At any rate, I think Mark Johnson has struck the right tone with his response to the May walkout. Protests are a right but, in this case, should only come after the interests of students and taxpayers.

It’s political suicide to take on “teachers,” just about everybody knows it’s counterproductive too, but one shouldn’t be afraid to call out the NCAE for this kind of perpetual political agitation that seeks to divide us and ends up harming students. Not to mention the severe inconvenience to working parents, many of whom make less than teachers and are already struggling to scrape by to support their family.

