

Big Brothers Big Sisters of America Announces National Partnership with Gillette to Engage More Men as Mentors

Big Brothers Big Sisters of America (BBBSA) and Gillette today announced a national partnership to bring more mentors into the lives of young men through the unifying power of sports.

The collaboration will mobilize local Big Brothers Big Sisters agencies and community partners to create a series of 10 welcoming flag football experiences across the country that connect prospective “Bigs” (mentors) with boys currently waiting to be matched with a mentor. Events will take place in Boston, MA; San Francisco, CA; Kansas City, MO; Dallas, TX; Tampa, FL; Cincinnati, OH; Detroit, MI; Seattle, WA; New Orleans, LA; and Phoenix, AZ.

Nationwide, there are tens of thousands of young people on Big Brothers Big Sisters’ waitlists, and the majority of them are boys.

Prospective “Bigs” at each flag football event will learn what it means to be a “Big for a Day” in their community, all while connecting with “Littles” on a topic critical to their success in adulthood, from personal care to conflict resolution, to

helping them realize their best and full potential.

“When caring adults show up, youth do better in school, they make better decisions, they gain confidence, and as a result, communities grow stronger,” said Artis Stevens, President & CEO, Big Brothers Big Sisters of America. “Together with Gillette, we’re creating intentional spaces where men can experience the joy of showing up and take the first step toward becoming a Big.”

Beyond game days, the partnership will create opportunities to amplify resources across the Big Brothers Big Sisters network to help agencies recruit more male mentors.

“At Gillette we have long believed in sport’s ability to bring people together,” said Pankaj Bhalla, Senior Vice President of North America Grooming at P&G. “Through our shared ambition with Big Brothers Big Sisters of America, we will enable thousands of meaningful connections for young men with potential mentors, all through something as simple as a game of flag football.”

For more information about how to become a mentor with Big Brothers Big Sisters, visit www.bbbs.org. About Big Brothers Big Sisters of America

Founded in 1904, Big Brothers Big Sisters of America is the largest and most experienced youth mentoring organization in the United States. The mission of Big Brothers

Big Sisters of America is to create and support one-to-one mentoring relationships that ignite the power and promise of youth. Big Brothers Big Sisters’ evidence-based approach is designed to create positive youth outcomes, including educational suc-

cess, avoidance of risky behaviors, higher aspirations, greater confidence, and improved relationships. Big Brothers Big Sisters serves more than 5,000 communities across all 50 states. For more information, visit: bbbs.org.



NC GETS \$4M FROM FEDS FOR WORKFORCE TRAINING AND TEMPORARY JOBS IN HELENE COUNTIES

North Carolina counties hit by Hurricane Helene last year will get \$4 million in new money from the federal government for temporary jobs and workforce training, Gov. Josh Stein announced Friday.

The grant funds, awarded by the U.S. Department of Labor, represent the rest of a \$10 million award designed to employ displaced workers to help recovery and humanitarian efforts. The grant also pays for local workforce development boards to train workers at community colleges and other locations.

“This federal grant will enable folks in western North Carolina who are out of work to get a job helping their neighbors and businesses recover and rebuild,” Stein said in a statement. “It is a win-win.”

More than 275 North Carolinians have participated in the program since it was created last year, according to the governor’s office. Workers may be eligible if they have been “temporarily or permanently laid off” as a result of Helene. The program supports wages up to 2,008 hours per worker with a minimum wage of \$15 per hour.

A division within the North Carolina Department of Commerce will administer the money, partnering with five workforce development boards that span the entire western region of the state.

RURAL NC LEGAL AID OFFICES CLOSE AFTER GENERAL ASSEMBLY FREEZES PUBLIC ASSISTANCE FUND OVER POLITICS

NC Newsline—For 40 years, the Interest on Lawyers’ Trust Accounts program has funded legal assistance for low-income North Carolinians. That money is now grinding to a halt over Republican accusations of bias toward progressive groups in the program’s grant awarding process.

The General Assembly voted in June to bar the awarding of new IOLTA grants from this July until June 2026, cutting off millions of dollars to groups like Legal Aid of North Carolina, who announced in October they are closing offices in Rocky Mount and Pembroke as a result.

In an Oct. 22 House Select Committee on Oversight and Reform hearing over IOLTA, committee chair Rep. Harry Warren (R-Rowan) said the program has violated its mandate by funding legal organizations aligned with progressive causes. The pause, he said, is to allow lawmakers to “investigate the group’s board and how they choose their grantees.”

“We’ve heard from a number of folks that IOLTA does good work, and we have seen evidence of that, but IOLTA has also gone somewhat rogue, awarding grants to leftist groups with leftist ideologies,” Warren said.

As the state legislature carries out inquiries over the political activities of grant recipients and probes the awarding process, tens of thousands of low-income North Carolinians stand to lose access to free legal services.

What is IOLTA?
In its first four decades of operation, IOLTA has been an obscure, noncontroversial program for funding legal aid to those without the means to afford representation, from assistance in the wake of hurricanes to helping remedy elder abuse and family violence.

The funds come from interest accrued on private trust accounts that lawyers are required to maintain in the course of their practice, often arising from real estate transactions and legal settlements among other sources. That interest is used for charitable purposes, issuing grants to programs that provide financial assistance for civil legal aid.

IOLTA executive director Mary Irvine told *NC Newsline* that until 1983, these trust accounts were all non-interest-bearing, until a voluntary IOLTA program overseen by the State Bar was approved by the North Carolina Supreme Court.

“If these funds are sitting in a trust account, it could be an interest-bearing account, and that interest could be directed to the public’s benefit by supporting activities that would improve the justice system and ensure that folks that didn’t have money to pay for an attorney would have that legal support,” Irvine said in an interview.

The program has awarded \$134 million in grants since its inception, more than 90% of which goes to organizations that provide legal assistance to low-income clients. About 7% goes to Administration of Justice grants, which aim to facilitate legal services around the state.

IOLTA has also played a key role in disaster relief in particular, delivering nearly \$1 million to support legal aid for residents impacted by Hurricane Helene in 2024 — helping them get justice in consumer fraud cases and navigate complex insurance claims.

ROLESVILLE’S AFFORDABLE HOUSING PLAN APPROVED

At its October 21, 2025, Board of Commissioners meeting, Commissioners unanimously approved the Town’s first Affordable Housing Plan. This is a major milestone in shaping a community where everyone can find a place to call home.

As our population grows and housing prices rise, this plan outlines a clear path to provide more diverse, attainable housing options while protecting the small-town charm that makes Rolesville special.

Why It Matters
Rolesville’s housing market has become less accessible for many, including first-time buyers and young families to seniors, and essential workers. The plan addresses these challenges with tools and strategies that ensure the Town remains livable for all.

Key Strategies in the Approved Plan:

- Zoning updates to allow for more housing types like duplexes, townhomes, and cottage courts
 - Public-private partnerships with groups like Habitat for Humanity
 - Use of Town-owned land to develop new affordable housing
 - Development incentives such as density bonuses or reduced fees for projects that include affordable units
 - Faster permitting for projects that support inclusive housing goals
 - Ongoing community engagement to align growth with resident values
- What’s Next?

Implementation of the plan will begin immediately, with roles for Town staff, community partners, and residents. The Town is committed to transparency and collaboration as we move forward

New Furniture Tariffs Ripple Through North Carolina’s High Point Market

HIGH POINT — Exploring showrooms and offerings at the High Point Market, I plopped down in a bean bag, amazed at how soft and luxurious it felt — a sharp contrast from the rocky ones of my elementary school days.

Fibre by Auskin describes itself as a global company, sourcing alpaca fur from South America and wool from Tibetan lamb. The company says it has purchasing, manufacturing, design and sales teams in Australia, China and New Zealand.

Like most wholesalers at the market, Fibre by Auskin is decidedly high-end. But even luxury goods like the bean bag are bearing the brunt of tariffs. Its manufacturer’s suggested retail price rose 37% this year, going from \$1,320 to \$1,814.

Other products by the same company saw even steeper markups — sales executive Erin Dowd said a pillow went from \$71 to \$101, a 42% increase.

The company faced a 25% tariff on all inbound goods from China in 2018. Tariffs increased by an additional 30% in 2025, resulting in a total of 55%.



“We managed to absorb as much of that as possible, but this year hit hard,” Dowd said. “I would say there’s not a day that goes by that somebody calls and they ask for a price and say, ‘Oh, that’s gone up.’”

Thousands of exhibitors gather in the Tar Heel State twice a year for the High Point Market, displaying the latest innovations in furniture, interior design and home furnishings. The showrooms welcome about 75,000 attendees representing more than 100

countries, according to the website.

Tariffs specifically aimed at the furniture sector were front of mind at this fall’s market, which took place from Oct. 25 to 29.

At the end of September, President Donald Trump announced “substantial” tariffs on imported furniture, a move he said would help manufacturers in North Carolina.

The U.S. began charging a 10% tariff on foreign softwood lumber and timber, and a 25% tariff on kitchen

cabinets, vanities and upholstered wooden furniture on Oct. 14, Trump announced in a Sept. 29 proclamation. The rates on cabinets will increase to 50% and upholstered furniture to 30% on Jan. 1.

“In order to make North Carolina, which has completely lost its furniture business to China, and other Countries, GREAT again, I will be imposing substantial Tariffs on any Country that does not make its furniture in the United States,” Trump wrote on Truth Social.

The market comes at a point of high political tension, with the federal government shutdown approaching a full month and a contentious U.S. Senate race brewing in the Tar Heel State.

The North Carolina Democratic Party put out a press release on Monday saying “Whatley-backed” tariffs could raise furniture costs.

This refers to Michael Whatley, the former Republican National Committee chair who resigned from his position to launch a 2026 Senate bid against former Democratic Gov. Roy Cooper. Whatley has voiced support

(See **TARIFFS**, P. 2)

Trump Admin Must Restart SNAP Benefits By Wednesday, Judge Rules

WASHINGTON — A federal judge on Saturday issued a written order saying there is “no question” that U.S. Department of Agriculture contingency funds must be used to provide food assistance for 42 million Americans during the government shutdown.

Rhode Island U.S. District Court Chief Judge John J. McConnell Jr. had said during a Friday hearing he was granting a temporary restraining order sought by cities and nonprofit groups. McConnell ordered that the government distribute payments of Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, or SNAP, benefits.

Because Congress is locked in a stalemate over a stopgap spending

bill and did not appropriate money for the fiscal year that began Oct. 1, Trump administration officials had said the program could not provide SNAP benefits beyond Saturday.

In response to McConnell, President Donald Trump in a social media post later Friday said administration lawyers believed the funds could not legally be paid and that he needed clarification about how to distribute SNAP benefits.

“I do not want Americans to go hungry just because the Radical Democrats refuse to do the right thing and REOPEN THE GOVERNMENT,” Trump said. “If we are given the appropriate legal direction by the Court, it will BE MY HONOR

to provide the funding ...”

Government lawyers also filed a brief in the Rhode Island case asking McConnell to clarify how his order could legally be carried out, noting it was delivered orally and there was no written transcript.

In his Saturday order, McConnell, who was appointed by former President Barack Obama, quoted Trump and said, “So, here’s the ORDER and here’s the legal direction from the Court.”

In a footnote, the McConnell order also said: “The Court greatly appreciates the President’s quick and definitive response to this Court’s Order and his desire to provide the necessary SNAP funding.”



N.C. House Speaker Destin Hall (R-Caldwell) announced the formation of a bipartisan “House Select Committee to Investigate Alleged Misconduct and Other Matters Included in Charges Against Representative Cecil Brockman.”

A little over an hour later, House Democratic leader Robert Reives (D-Chatham) announced that Brockman had resigned. Reives lauded the move, which will help shore up Democratic defenses against a veto override in that chamber.

“The allegations against him are serious and made it impossible for

him to adequately represent his constituents,” Reives said in a news release.

It’s now up to the Guilford Co. Democratic Party to name a successor to the seat.

Hall said Friday that Brockman’s decision to resign “is the right thing to do for his constituents and for the North Carolina House of Representatives.”

“His departure spares the House from a difficult expulsion process and brings closure to this troubling chapter,” Hall posted on X.

Embattled North Carolina Rep. Cecil Brockman Resigns Under Pressure

Barely an hour after N.C. House leaders took steps toward expelling him from the legislature, Guilford County Rep. Cecil Brockman submitted notice of his resignation.

Brockman, 41, was arrested and charged October 8 with multiple felony sex offenses with a minor.

Calls for his resignation came quickly from his own Democratic party as well as Republicans. But Brockman, who was initially hospitalized and is now jailed on a \$1.05 million bond, has not publicly commented on the charges.

Late Friday afternoon, Republican

DeSean Jackson Gets The Better Of Michael Vick As Rookie HBCU Coaches, Former Eagles Meet In Philly

PHILADELPHIA (AP) — Michael Vick and DeSean Jackson shared an affectionate embrace at mid-field — Jackson pulled a hood over his mouth to hide his message to Vick — after a game at the same NFL stadium they called home for five years together as teammates with the Philadelphia Eagles.

The Pro Bowl players are now improbably linked as HBCU coaches, taking a career path that would have shocked both Vick and Jackson when they each shined in the NFL.

“I never thought I’d look across the field and watch him coach,” Vick said. “I know vice versa for him. It was just a really cool moment, a surreal moment. You just never know what life is going to put in front of you.”

Jackson got the better of Vick in their first meeting as historically Black college coaches thanks in large part to Amir Anderson’s blocked punt for a score that sent Delaware State to a 27-20 win over Norfolk State on Thursday night.

This was no ordinary regular-season win. Jackson had the game circled on his office schedule and the

Hornets carried him off the field on their shoulders as if they had just won a Super Bowl, an appreciation of the win and how — much like Vick — he’s raised the profile of HBCU programs.

“I’m just proud of, man, both of us,” Jackson said. “We’re in a position where we’re inspiring, changing young men’s lives at HBCUs. Man, it don’t get no better than that.”

Kaiden Bennett threw a 24-yard TD pass to Tahmir Ellis for the Hornets and James Jones scored on a 76-yard run in the fourth quarter to seal the latest conference win for Jackson’s team.

Vick and Jackson were the signature attractions for each program headed into a rare nationally televised weeknight game for HBCU programs at an NFL stadium.

Both players keyed the Eagles’ run to the 2010 NFC East championship, where a banner is raised at the top of Lincoln Financial Field. Vick, the strong-armed, left-handed QB, and Jackson electrified the NFL that season when they connected on an 88-yard touchdown pass against Washington and a 91-yarder against



Dallas to help both players earn Pro Bowl nods.

“Man, just the energy when I walked on the field, smelling the grass, it just went through my veins,” Jackson said.

Jackson, who won a Super Bowl with the Rams and retired after the 2022 season, made the pitch to move the game from campus to Philadelphia. Former NFL stars Hugh Douglas, Marshawn Lynch and Cam Newton, and Eagles defensive

end Brandon Graham were at the Linc and thousands of fans — more than each program would average at a home game — waited out some early rain before Delaware State gave them a jolt.

Norfolk State led 6-3 — the good times started when Otto Kuhns hit JJ Evans for a dynamite 13-yard score — when it punted deep in its own territory. Anderson got a hand on the punt and scooped the ball in the end zone for a 10-6 lead that

Delaware State took into halftime.

Kuhns and Evans broke out that old Vick-to-Jackson dynamic on a 70-yard score that pulled the Spartans to 19-13 late in the fourth. Kuhns threw for 311 yards and three touchdowns, and Evans finished with five catches for 124 yards. DreSean Kendrick had nine catches for 112 yards.

“Having a chance to work with guys like JJ, guy like DreSean, guys in that locker room, being part of that HBCU culture is extremely cool,” Vick said. “I look forward to better days.”

Patrick Fisher-Butler kicked field goals of 30 and 26 yards for the Hornets (6-3, 2-0 Mid-Eastern Athletic Conference).

With emotions perhaps charged playing in front of a big crowd under the lights — thought the actual attendance total was far less than the announced 47,266 fans — the teams got into a scuffle at the end of the third and Delaware State offensive lineman Isaiah Cook was ejected for throwing a punch.

Jackson and Vick’s missions are clear — use their celebrity, their

connections, their football smarts to resuscitate two long-suffering programs in the HBCU community much in the way Deion Sanders did at Jackson State on his way to a Power Four program at Colorado.

The 45-year-old Vick, who starred in college at Virginia Tech and was a four-time Pro Bowler in 13 NFL seasons, is off to a rocky start in his rookie season.

Norfolk State, with an enrollment of about 5,100 students, is 1-8 and has lost seven straight games. Vick recently fired some assistant defensive coaches as he tries to revive a Spartans’ program that has made only one playoff appearance since moving to FCS in 1997.

Jackson has orchestrated a rapid turnaround at Delaware State, with an enrollment of about 6,500 students, that already included its first conference win since 2022. The Hornets beat rival North Carolina Central 35-26 last week for their first win in Durham since 1977.

“We had (eight) games before this, and every game, it was hard not to think about this game,” Jackson said.

‘We Will Delay, We Will Cancel’ Flights To Ensure Safety

By Nicholas Kerr
Yahoo News

Transportation Secretary Sean Duffy warned Sunday that flights across the country could be delayed or even canceled due to the ongoing

government shutdown as staffing shortages at air traffic control facilities spread nationwide.

Speaking with ABC News’ “This Week” co-anchor Martha Raddatz while a ground stop was in effect at Newark Liberty International Air-

port, Duffy said “We will delay, we will cancel, any kind of flight across the national airspace to make sure people are safe” amid the shortages.

“There is a level of risk that gets injected into the system when we have a controller that’s doing two jobs instead of one,” he added.

According to the Federal Aviation Administration, nearly 50% of all major air traffic control facilities face staffing shortages. Air traffic controllers are required to work without pay for the duration of the

shutdown.

“If the government doesn’t open in the next week or two, we’ll look back as these were the good days, not the bad days,” Duffy warned.

Asked by Raddatz if the Trump administration would consider using alternative funding mechanisms to keep air traffic controllers paid, Duffy confirmed that the administration was “pulling in whatever dollars we can.”

“But there’s real restrictions. When you don’t fund the govern-

ment,” Duffy said, “When you say there’s no dollars available, it becomes really challenging to find dollars to pay the different components of really critical workforces that keep our country moving forward.”

Duffy also defended President Donald Trump’s hardline approach to spending negotiations with Democrats despite telling NBC in a 2011 interview that it’s the president’s job to bring parties together and negotiate a settlement during a shutdown.

“Should President Trump -- given

what he said [in 2011] -- should President Trump be meeting, would you like to see him hold another meeting?” Raddatz asked.

“Here’s the problem. Donald Trump has nothing to negotiate with. We passed a clean funding bill. Right? So what do you negotiate with when you -- again money in September, same as October. Democrats are trying to use this as leverage and again, trying to change legislation that they don’t like,” Duffy said.



shutdown,” McConnell said.

Two options in written order

Because the \$6 billion is not enough to cover the estimated \$9 billion cost of November benefits, government lawyers have said it would be difficult to determine reduced benefits, McConnell said.

He said USDA then should “within its discretion, find the additional funds necessary” to fund the full \$9 billion, suggesting use of \$23 billion in a fund for state child nutrition programs.

If the government chooses to make full SNAP payments for November, it must do so by the end of the day Monday, he said. If instead the government makes a partial payment of SNAP funds, then it must pay out all the \$6 billion in contingency funds by Wednesday, he said.

He asked the government to update him by noon Monday how it was complying with the order.

In a separate case, a federal judge in Boston also ruled Friday that the USDA plan to pause SNAP was illegal — but gave the Trump administration until Monday to respond to her finding before she decides on a motion to force the benefits be paid despite the ongoing government shutdown.

No matter what happens on Monday, experts and a key member of Congress have said that some SNAP recipients still may see delays in their benefits because changes in administration from the federal government to states to vendors take time. In states, SNAP benefits are loaded onto cards on varying dates, but the Saturday cutoff would have been effective for November benefits.

FDA Says Drugmakers Have Recalled A Blood Pressure Medicine Tainted With A Cancer-Causing Chemical

The U.S. Food and Drug Administration says drugmakers have recalled more than a half-million bottles of the blood pressure medication prazosin hydrochloride over concerns it may include a cancer-causing chemical.

New Jersey-based Teva Pharmaceuticals USA and drugs distributor Amerisource Health Services issued voluntary nationwide recalls earlier this month of more than 580,000 bottles of various strengths of prazosine capsules, according to the FDA.

Doctors prescribe prazosin, which relaxes blood vessels, to help lower blood pressure. It also is sometimes prescribed for nightmares and other sleep disturbances caused by post-traumatic stress disorder.

The FDA said in enforcement orders posted online that it has given the affected lots of the drug a Class II risk classification because some of the recalled medication may have nitrosamine impurities that are considered potentially cancer causing.

According to the FDA, N-nitrosamine impurities are a class of potentially cancer-causing chemicals that can form during manufacture or storage of a drug.



New Furniture Tariffs—CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

for Trump’s tariff strategy.

In the furniture industry, tariffs are also limiting options for designers relying on foreign goods and manufacturing.

Previously, producers at Union Home Furniture had a supply of backstock and could make pieces available for designers who wanted to experiment with new ideas. Now, the company has reduced its available stock and is sending products to fulfill orders as they come, according to Gauri Pal, a sales and operations manager.

“We’ve had to be conservative with production,” she said.

Meanwhile, domestic manufacturers say they’re faring better under the

tariffs.

Indiana-based Old Hickory Furniture produces rustic pieces that are featured in national parks. Its latest release, dubbed “The Lodge Collection,” features rugged wood detailing and gingham covers.

Beau Parsons, the company’s president, estimates 90% or more of Old Hickory Furniture’s raw materials come from sources within the U.S. The hickory comes from either Tennessee or Mississippi, so prices haven’t changed much there.

But furniture manufacturers have felt the impact of tariffs on plywood, he said.

“Plywood has been difficult, but

everything else, for the most part, has stayed pretty steady for us,” Parsons said. “Tariffs have been a great conversation starter for us, because we’re an American-made furniture company.”

It’s a similar case for Copeland Furniture, a family-owned business and the largest employer in Bradford, Vermont.

Most of the company’s raw materials are grown in the U.S., exclusively sourcing solid hardwoods that are grown and harvested in North America.

Copeland Furniture only imports some components of their products — for example, textiles, glass centers and

stone table tops.

With tariffs weighing more on brands relying heavily on imported goods, sales and marketing director Ben Copeland said he’s noticed more customers turning to Copeland Furniture.

“We’ve gotten some interest from retailers that might not have come to us five years ago,” he said. “Consumers are more likely to say, ‘What’s the country of origin of this product?’ and they assume that if the origin is something imported, they’re paying a penalty, a tax. If they’re buying something that’s American, they’re getting full value for the dollar.”

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DISCOVER NETWORK

Seeking Better Options For North Carolina Economic Development

In 2014, the North Carolina General Assembly commissioned a report that came to a stark conclusion: the state should discontinue the use of its economic distress tiers. The tiers fail to accurately capture economic distress, the report said. The system isn’t working for struggling communities.

A decade later, the system has only become more entrenched, influencing an unknown number of state programs, both economic and not.

North Carolina is the only state in the country with a three-tiered economic distress ranking — and certainly the only one where such ranking bears this amount of influence. Could there be a better way to distribute state funding and lift up the state’s most disadvantaged communities?

“There have been many attempts to tinker with the system,” N.C. Rural Center CEO Patrick Woodie told Carolina Public Press.

“It has remained basically intact, mainly because we haven’t found a viable alternative. There’s a lot of lawmakers that would like to see improvement, but can’t find a consensus or a path forward.”

In 2024, a bipartisan bill that would have directed the N.C. Collaboratory at UNC-Chapel Hill to study potential changes to the economic

distress tier system on behalf of the legislature did not become law.

This year, the N.C. Department of Commerce conducted listening sessions in cities across the state to hear residents’ concerns and ideas about the state’s economic development strategy.

The conclusions drawn from those conversations will help inform the Comprehensive Strategic Economic Development Plan for 2026 through 2030. Whether that plan will attempt to address the shortcomings of the tier system remains to be seen.

This is the third article in Trapped by Tiers, a three-part Carolina Public Press investigative series examining North Carolina’s economic

distress tiers, a system intended to promote economic mobility across the state. CPP analyzed state data and found that this system is ineffective, stagnant, and at times, counter-productive.

The first article examined the ways in which this system fails counties across the economic spectrum. The second focused on where North Carolina went wrong. This third and final installment explores ways to improve the system, as well as possible alternatives.

Speaking up about pockets of economic distress

Karen Howard of Chatham County has a plan.

As a commissioner, she has seen

how the county’s persistent Tier 3 status has left less fortunate parts of her county in the dust — towns like Siler City and Goldston. Because they are located in Chatham County, those communities do not get the special treatment that struggling communities in Tier 1 and 2 counties do. The situation in economically distressed communities within counties are concealed within an overall countywide picture of economic success.

“There needs to be more vision in the planning for how these tiers affect communities,” Howard said. “Not just counties, but communities. We could come up with workable solutions that allow for some nuance and for the possibility of a wealthy town very close to a poor town.”

Even in her frustration, Howard sees a path forward.

“Counties that have this challenge have the opportunity to form some sort of coalition,” she said.

“We need to work on the solution and present it to our legislators as a nonpartisan or bipartisan endeavor to address the very real challenge. Counties across the state span these deep pockets of wealth and then deep pockets of poverty. We could come up with and collaboratively design a workable solution that could be presented to the state.”

Business & Finance

BlackOut Report On The Cost Of Distorting, Erasing And Suppressing African American Progress Released

Black Press USA—Onyx Impact has released its eye-opening BlackOut Report which reveals that the efforts to derail Black progress are not merely historical footnotes but present-day threats. In just the past eight months, there have been 15,723 distinct impact points, each representing a direct attack on Black opportunities, lives, or histories.

Over this period, the report identifies 14,072 instances of distortion. On Make It Plain with Rev. Mark Thompson, Onyx Impact Executive

Director Esosa Osa said: “Distortion is by far the largest component of our database, with over 14,000 examples of swapping out evidence for ideology. This is fundamentally rewriting, grants, re-writing, all types of evidence distorting data sets. You are erasing that data, you’re hiding the proof of discrimination, you’re hiding the proof of inequality and, therefore, you’re preventing any type of remedy.”

The BlackOut Report highlights 1,362 examples of erasure during the

eight month period.

“When we talk about erasure, we’re talking about the erasure of Black heroes from government websites. We’re talking about the statues of Black history not just being removed, but being replaced by Confederacy statues [and] the banning of nearly 600 books by Black authors,” said Osa.

The BlackOut Report also exposes 289 efforts to suppress African American influence.

“Suppression is the active silenc-

ing of voices that could challenge the narrative. We’ve documented 63 government threats and investigations—strategies specifically designed to ensure institutions and individuals think twice before speaking up, effectively muting calls for accountability and justice,” Osa said.

“We are seeing \$3.4 billion, what ended up being \$3.4 billion at least in investment slashed to Black communities, right under this guise, this smoke screen, this Trojan horse of DEI,” Osa said.

The BlackOut Report also identifies cuts including:

- \$9.4M in sickle cell disease research
- \$68.5M for projects that prevent flooding in predominantly African American neighborhoods
- \$31M to address high asthma rates for African American children and reduce air pollution in African American communities
- 16 NIH grants totaling \$37M for research into disproportionate colon and prostate cancer in African

American men

- \$23.7M to fix unsafe drinking water and reduce childhood lead exposure in African American communities
- \$210M in grant funding to HBCUs, \$11M to Howard University, more than \$2.9M of funding for a center at Morehouse College focusing on improving the health of Black pregnant women, as was \$1.2M of funding to increase Black enrollment in the marine sciences at Hampton University

Obamacare Sticker Shock Is More Shocking In Some States Than Others

By Robert King

With open enrollment on most of the nation’s Affordable Care Act state marketplaces and the federal exchange starting Saturday, many consumers will suffer sticker shock.

But the impact will not be felt evenly. It will depend on how heavily your premiums have been subsidized, the state you live in and your household income.

For example, some enrollees who live in New Jersey will see their out-of-pocket premiums rise more than 175 percent. In Colorado, it’s 101 percent. In Maryland, one of the states that is adding money to reduce the impact of the hikes, it’s 30 percent.

“It’s devastating. We’ve gotten to the point that real people are in the middle of this now,” said Jessica Altman, executive director of Covered California, the state’s Obamacare exchange.

The worst-case scenarios states have been warning Congress about for months are becoming closer to reality as lawmakers remain stalemated over an extension of enhanced ACA subsidies that Democrats enacted in 2021.

Democratic senators have made an extension a principle condition to vote to reopen the government and believe the big premium increases will strengthen their case. Republi-



can lawmakers seem unmoved from their position that Democrats must first agree to end the shutdown before the GOP will consider the future of the subsidies.

A new KFF analysis highlights the difference the enhanced subsidies make for consumers.

Residents of the 30 states that use the federally run HealthCare.gov will see an average 26 percent premium rise in 2026 for an average ACA plan, according to the analysis. Residents of the 20 states with their own exchanges will see an average 17 percent hike. These numbers include everyone on the exchanges.

However, that figure doesn’t re-

fleet what a person who gets a subsidy might pay.

“There is what the insurance company charges but since nine out of 10 [ACA customers] get a subsidy they don’t pay that,” Cynthia Cox, vice president and director of KFF’s ACA program, said in an interview. “They pay a certain amount of their income.”

Without the enhanced subsidies, ACA customers will pay a lot more out of pocket.

KFF estimates that customers on HealthCare.gov and in state-run exchanges will see their monthly out-of-pocket premium payments increase by 114 percent on average.

In some states that figure is higher.

CMS did not return a request for comment on the average premium increase for HealthCare.gov plans next year.

The premium differences are the result of how the federal ACA subsidies are structured, and how premiums grow and shrink based on state market dynamics and decisions.

There are two kinds of ACA subsidies. One kind was part of the Affordable Care Act first enacted in 2010. Layered on top are the enhanced subsidies created in the 2021 American Rescue Plan Act.

In that law, a Democratic Congress and then-President Joe Biden enhanced subsidies for everyone while lifting the income cap to qualify, 400 percent of the poverty level or \$128,600 for a family of four, to offer subsidies to families earning more.

Right now, nearly all people on the exchanges get some form of federal subsidy that lowers insurance costs. The subsidy amount is based on household income, with poorer households required to pay a smaller percentage of their income for premiums compared to higher-income customers.

But the loss of the enhanced subsidies means the percentage of household income an ACA customer is responsible for paying increases. It’s likely to hit both high- and low-income earners the hardest.

NC Tobacco Trust Fund Awards More Than \$6.4M To Support Agriculture

The North Carolina Tobacco Trust Fund Commission (NCTTFC) has awarded more than \$6.4 million in funding through 26 grants aimed at strengthening the state’s agricultural economy and supporting rural communities. The selected projects emphasize innovation, farmer education, infrastructure enhancement, and economic resilience in agriculture.

“North Carolina’s agricultural community continues to face mounting challenges, from unpredictable weather to rising operational costs,” said Bill Teague, Chairman of the

NCTTFC. “These grants represent an investment in resilience and innovation, supporting the people and projects that will lead agriculture forward in our state.”

The 2025 grant awards encompass a broad range of initiatives, such as enhancing agricultural education at middle and high schools, community colleges, and universities; supporting infrastructure improvements at farmers markets; upgrading loaner equipment at selected extension offices; and the implementation of additional projects aimed at promoting

the health and safety of farm families.

Additionally, the Commission has renewed its partnership with the AgVentures program. This initiative provides small cost-share grants directly to farmers in 46 North Carolina counties to improve farm viability and increase profitability. This and the Commission’s support of other farm organizations to ensure that farmers in all 100 counties have access to vital cost-share grant opportunities.

Established by the North Carolina

General Assembly in 2000, the N.C. Tobacco Trust Fund Commission was created to address the economic impact of the tobacco industry’s decline. Initially funded through the national Master Settlement Agreement with tobacco companies, the Commission now receives its funding through state appropriations. Since 2002, the NCTTFC has awarded more than 475 grants to public and nonprofit organizations aligned with its mission to strengthen the rural and tobacco-dependent economies in North Carolina.

BorgWarner Selects Henderson Co. For \$75M Industrial Ops Expansion

Governor Josh Stein announced BorgWarner Inc., a U.S.-based global mobility solutions company, is expected to create 193 jobs in Henderson County. The company says it will invest a minimum of \$74.9 million to build an advanced manufacturing facility for a new industrial product in Hendersonville. This investment further strengthens North Carolina’s automotive supply chain.

“I am pleased that BorgWarner will deepen its roots in western North Carolina,” said Governor Josh Stein. “This decision reaffirms our ranking as the best state to do business, highlights our thriving automotive industry, and invests in our manufacturing economy in

western North Carolina at a time when it’s sorely needed.”

Headquartered in Auburn Hills, Michigan, BorgWarner supplies leading technologies and systems solutions to every major automotive Original Equipment Manufacturer (OEM) in the world. For more than 130 years, BorgWarner has been a transformative global product leader bringing successful mobility innovation to market. The new 220,000-square-foot manufacturing site will be the company’s second North Carolina facility, adding to its portfolio of 84 manufacturing and technical center locations worldwide.

“BorgWarner is proud to continue to invest in the state of North Caro-

lina to bring an exciting new technology to market and provide jobs to local residents,” said Joseph F. Fadool, President and Chief Executive Officer, BorgWarner Inc. “We appreciate the grant and continued support from the state of North Carolina to expand our manufacturing footprint here in the United States.”


“BorgWarner could have chosen anywhere in the world for this new product line, but they chose to re-invest in North Carolina,” said N.C. Commerce Secretary Lee Lilley. “Western North Carolina is recovering stronger every day, and companies looking to grow want to do so in places like Henderson County, where there is access to a strong talent pool, a solid supply chain, and

an excellent quality of life.”

While wages vary by position, the annual average salary for the new positions is expected to be \$78,628. The average wage in Henderson County is \$51,565. These new jobs could create an annual payroll impact of more than \$15 million for the region.


BorgWarner’s expansion in North Carolina will be facilitated, in part, by a Job Development Investment Grant (JDIG) awarded to BorgWarner Industrial Solutions LLC; the grant was approved by the state’s Economic Investment Committee earlier today. Over the course of the 12-year term of this grant, the project is estimated to grow the state’s economy by \$583 million.

Classifieds




ADVERTISEMENT FOR BIDS

The North Carolina Department of Adult Correction has the following contract in Catawba County out for bid: C- 11787 Catawba CC Air Conditioning Information . The bid opening is scheduled for: Thursday, 11/20/2025 . To obtain the Notice to Bidders, any Pre-Bid Requirements, and any Addenda visit: North Carolina Department of Adult Correction · eVP



ADVERTISEMENT FOR BIDS

The North Carolina Department of Adult Correction has the following contract in Wayne County out for bid: C- C11831 Marion FA Replacement. The bid opening is scheduled for: Tuesday, 11/18/2025. To obtain the Notice to Bidders, any Pre-Bid Requirements, and any Addenda visit: <https://evp.nc.gov/solicitations/details/?id=26bdb56b-6ea8-f011-bbd3-001dd803d351>



ADVERTISEMENT FOR BIDS

The North Carolina Department of Adult Correction has the following contract in Lincoln County out for bid: C- C11750 Lincoln AC installation . The bid opening is scheduled for: Thursday, 11/20/2025 . To obtain the Notice to Bidders, any Pre-Bid Requirements, and any Addenda visit:<https://evp.nc.gov/solicitations/details/?id=e2381dfa-1b8f-f011-b4cc-001dd8062c20>

ADVERTISEMENT FOR MINORITY CONTRACTORS

Red Oak Road Water Project

TOWN OF NASHVILLE, NC

Hartsfield Contracting Company, LLC is seeking qualified Minority Subcontractors for an upcoming project. The project consists of the construction of 12" C-900 waterline and 14" HDPE directional boring, traffic control, paving, concrete and hauling. Interested Minority Contractors shall contact our office no later than November 18,2025 to be considered for the proposed project.

The information for Bidders, Form of Bids, Form of Contract, Plans, and Specifications may be exampled at the following:

Hartsfield Contracting Company, LLC 2507 Nash St. Wilson NC 27896

Email: judy@hartsfieldcontractingco.com

Hartsfield Contracting Company, LLC will break down elements of work into economically feasible units to facilitate minority participation.

Hartsfield Contracting Company, LLC will negotiate in good faith with interested minority businesses and will not consider anyone unqualified without sound reasons based on their capabilities.

Hartsfield Contracting Company, LLC will provide quick pay agreements and policies to enable minority contractors and suppliers to meet cash-flow demands.

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