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**Dedicated to the Spirit and Service of God**

# The Carolinian

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## The Future Of Work For Black Americans

Mckinsey Global—There is a well-documented, persistent, and growing racial wealth gap between African American families and white families in the United States. Studies indicate the median white family in the United States holds more than ten times the wealth of the median African American family.

Apart from its obvious negative impact on African American individuals, families, and communities, the racial wealth gap constrains the entire US economy. In a previous report, we projected that closing the racial wealth gap could net the US economy between \$1.1 trillion and \$1.5 trillion by 2028.

Despite this, the racial wealth gap threatens to grow as norms, standards, and opportunities in the current US workplace change and exacerbate existing income disparities. One critical disrupter will be the adoption of automation and other digital technologies by companies worldwide. According to estimates from the McKinsey Global Institute, companies have already invested between \$20 billion and \$30 billion in artificial intelligence technologies and applications. End users, businesses, and economies are hoping to significantly increase their productivity and capacity for innovation through using such technologies.

As determined in our previous report on the racial wealth gap, African Americans start from a deprived position in the workforce, with an unemployment rate twice that of white workers, a pattern that persists even when controlling for education, duration of unemployment, and the cause of unemployment. Our prior research also shows that African Americans could experience the disruptive forces of automation from a distinctly disadvantaged position, partially because they are often over-represented in the "support roles" that are most likely to be affected by automation, such as truck drivers, food service workers, and office clerks.

This article builds on these findings using a new and proprietary data set compiled by MGI to construct a 2030 scenario that projects the impact of automation in the national workplace and specific US counties. We reviewed this demo-

graphic and employment data in 13 distinct community archetypes across the country to test our previous findings and discover if African Americans are overrepresented in both at-risk roles and within US regions that are more likely to see job declines because of automation.

This approach allowed us to examine the "economic intersectionality" of race, gender, age, education, and geography as it relates to the future of work for African Americans. Eco-

nomnic intersectionality can refer to the compounded effects of any combination of characteristics associated with economic disadvantage. In this article, we focus on differing levels of automation-based challenges for African American men and women of various ages and education levels in rural and urban America.

We project that African Americans in the 13 community archetypes we analyzed may have a higher rate of job displacement than workers in

other segments of the US population due to rising automation and gaining a smaller share of the net projected job growth between 2017 and 2030. By 2030, the employment outlook for African Americans—particularly men, younger workers (ages 18–35), and those without a college degree—may worsen dramatically. Additionally, we find that African Americans are geographically removed from future job growth centers and more likely to be concentrated in areas

of job decline. These trends, if not addressed, could have a significant negative effect on the income generation, wealth, and stability of African American families.

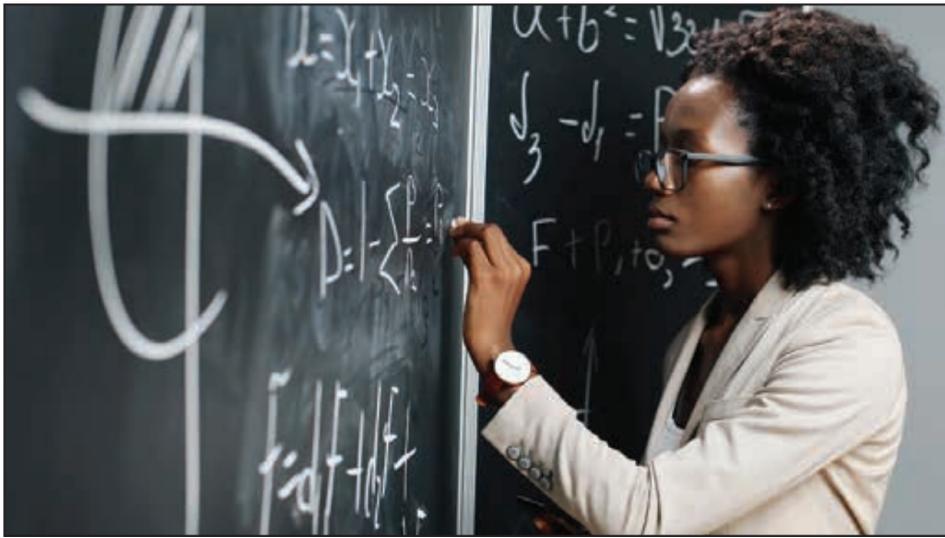
The challenges are daunting, but our research reveals opportunities for improvement within the African American workforce through strengthening local economies, shifting education profiles to align with growing sectors, engaging companies and public policy makers in

developing reskilling programs, and redirecting resources to ease the transition as automation changes the landscape for African American workers. In this article, we share our findings and note some potential interventions—some of which have already begun.

Understanding the 2030 risk for African Americans

Given that African American

(See **FUTURE OF WORK**, P. 2)



## 'Bias': How Google Tells You Just What You Want To Hear

BBC—Type in "Is Kamala Harris a good Democratic candidate", and Google paints a rosy picture. Search results are constantly changing, but last week, the first link was a Pew Research Center poll showing that "Harris energises Democrats". Next is an Associated Press article titled "Majority of Democrats think Kamala Harris would make a good president", and the following links were similar. But if you've been hearing negative things

about Harris, you might ask if she's a "bad" Democratic candidate instead. Fundamentally, that's an identical question, but Google's results are far more pessimistic.

"It's been easy to forget how bad Kamala Harris is," said an article from Reason Magazine in the top spot. Then the US News & World Report offered positive spin about how Harris isn't "the worst thing that could happen to America", but the

following results are all critical. A piece from Al Jazeera explained "Why I am not voting for Kamala Harris", followed by an endless Reddit thread on why she's no good.

You can see the same dichotomy with questions about Donald Trump, conspiracy theories, contentious political debates and even medical information. Some experts say Google is

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

## Benin Offers Citizenship To African Diaspora, With Help From Spike Lee

OUIDAH, Benin, Jan 14 (Reuters) - Isaline Atteley, a native of the Caribbean island of Martinique, had been living in Benin for nearly a year before she learned that her family's connection to the West African country went back much further.

Genealogical records confirmed her great-grandmother on her mother's side was born in what is now Benin and, at the height of transatlantic slavery, was trafficked across the Atlantic Ocean.

The discovery last year prompted Atteley, a 28-year-old content creator, to enrol in a new programme offering Beninese citizenship to people of African descent.

The "My Afro Origins" programme is an important piece of President Patrice Talon's plan to raise his country's profile, including among prospective tourists, by highlighting its prominent role in the transatlantic trafficking of enslaved people.

"For me, it's a source of pride. It feels like my journey has come full circle," Atteley told Reuters after her naturalisation ceremony. "I am proud and very happy to be able to represent my ancestors."

**PROJECTS HIGHLIGHT BENIN'S ROLE IN SLAVERY**

The first naturalisation ceremonies have coincided with the unveiling of projects intended to bring that history to life, including a new "Door of No Return" in Ouidah, a common departure point for transatlantic trafficking, and a replica of an 18th-century ship that transported enslaved people with sculptures inside

representing nearly 300 captives. Both are still under construction.

The government also plans to open this year a new International Museum of Memory and Slavery at the former residence of Francisco Felix de Souza, a prominent trafficker of enslaved people in the 18th and 19th centuries.

Talon, who survived a coup attempt last month and is expected to end his 10-year tenure after a presidential election in April, has recruited star power to publicise his vision. Filmmaker Spike Lee and his wife Tonya Lee Lewis were last year named ambassadors for the programme to the African-American community.

"Our brothers and sisters in Benin are telling us: come home, welcome us home, come back to the motherland. Come back (to) where your roots are," Lee told France 24 last year.

In July 2025 American R&B star Ciara became one of the first beneficiaries of Beninese citizenship. She performed last week at a concert in Ouidah as part of an annual festival devoted to voodoo, playing hits such as "Level Up" during a set that ran until 3 a.m.

Her husband, American football quarterback Russell Wilson, attended and said he was hoping to become a citizen himself "real soon".

**PUSH FOR 'RIGHT OF RETURN'**  
Around 50 people have received Beninese citizenship since the "My Afro Origins" programme launched last year, according to the Justice Min-



istry, which is sorting through thousands of applications and receives about 100 more each day.

To qualify, applicants need to be 18 years old and produce documents or a DNA test proving their ties to the continent, and they cannot be citizens of another African country, Foreign Minister Olushegun Adjadi Bakari told Reuters.

At the naturalisation ceremony on December 27 in Cotonou, Benin's biggest city and economic capital, Atteley and nine others received their citizenship certificates and posed for pictures next to the Beninese flag.

Benin's programme is similar to an initiative in Ghana that, since 2016, has granted citizenship to 684 members of the African diaspora, according to Kofi Okyere Darko, presidential adviser on diaspora affairs.

CARICOM, the regional bloc of the Caribbean, has endorsed a "right of

return" for descendants of enslaved people, as part of a reparations plan adopted in 2014.

Resettlement should be funded by "those states that are responsible for the forced movement and enslavement" of millions of people, CARICOM says, meaning European states and governments.

Though no significant progress has been made towards such a comprehensive effort, Benin's government hopes the programme can nevertheless strengthen ties between Africans and the diaspora while showcasing the country's history, said Bakari, the foreign minister.

"We believe that Africa cannot develop without a strong involvement of its diaspora," he said.

"What we are looking for is people who will definitely recognise themselves as African, having the proof that they are part of this continent."



### STATE ELECTIONS BOARD'S ACTIONS PROMPT DEBATE OVER ACCESS IN NC ELECTIONS

By Jordan Meadows

Staff Writer

A series of recent decisions by the North Carolina State Board of Elections is reshaping how and where voters across the state will cast their ballots in the upcoming primary.

Since December 2025, the state board has begun approving early voting plans from county boards after Republican lawmakers in the General Assembly shifted oversight of the elections board from the Democratic governor to the GOP-led State Auditor's Office. The change has coincided with a broader ideological shift: all 100 local election boards in North Carolina moved from Democratic majorities to Republican control.

As part of that process, nearly three dozen counties have moved to reduce early voting access by cutting polling sites, limiting hours, or eliminating Sunday voting altogether. Of those counties, at least 10 are located in newly redrawn congressional districts or have large Black populations. Advocacy groups argue the reductions threaten long-standing voting traditions such as "Souls to the Polls," a civil-rights-era initiative led by Black churches that mobilizes congregations to vote together on Sundays.

Marcus Bass, executive director of the North Carolina Black Alliance, said Sunday voting has provided both access and protection for decades. "The opportunity to go with your faith center, to go vote en masse, helps fight back against racist voter intimidation," Bass said. "It helps fight back against misinformation at the polls."

State Auditor Dave Boliek defended the changes, saying local boards considered multiple factors when drafting their plans, including projected turnout and cost. He said early voting is expensive and counties must balance access with financial realities.

"We're dealing with a primary, and elections are not cheap," Boliek said. "There are financial considerations on how many early voting sites you would need, depending on what you expect turnout to be."

Boliek said he remains confident the revised schedules will result in a successful election cycle, describing the goal as expanding access while maintaining election security.

The issue has been especially visible on college campuses. In January, the state board voted 3–2 to exclude early voting sites at four universities: North Carolina A&T State University, UNC Greensboro, Western Carolina University, and Elon University. At NC A&T, the largest historically Black college and university in the nation, students reacted to the decision, arguing that the loss of on-campus early voting places an unfair burden on students without cars or flexible schedules.

(See **STATE ELECTION**, P. 2)

### N.C. STATE BOARD OF ELECTIONS OVERRULES LOCAL BOARD IN CANDIDATE CHALLENGE

NC NEWSLINE – The North Carolina State Board of Elections voted 3-2 Tuesday to overrule the Wilson County Board of Elections in favor of a Republican candidate seeking to run for sheriff.

Bobby Knight, a senior deputy in the Nash County Sheriff's Office, maintained he has been a registered Republican since 2012. But in December, when he says he tried to update his address through the state Division of Motor Vehicles website, he claims he accidentally changed his party affiliation.

State law prohibits a person from filing as a candidate in a party primary unless that person has been affiliated with that party for at least 90 days.

Wilson County sheriff candidates Brandon Barbrey, a Democrat, and Kevin Raper, a Republican, each filed candidate challenges arguing that the change made Knight ineligible to run for the office as either a Democrat or Republican.

But Knight maintained he never really intended to run as a Democrat. He called the switch 'a technological mistake.' Knight said he changed his affiliation back to being Republican within a matter of hours of making the initial update in the online portal.

After a three-hour hearing, the Wilson Co. Board of Elections voted 4-1 in early January that Knight was not qualified to be a candidate in the race.

On Tuesday, Knight's attorney Rhyen Breen told the state board that procedural errors in that local hearing deserved another look, and that his client should not be disqualified in seeking elected office.

"Probably one of the more egregious violations is that during the deliberation, the panel allowed one of its own panel members to testify, and this is important because it didn't happen during the presentation," offered Breen.

State board member Jeff Carmon questioned how Knight could have got through the entire process of updating his address online while overlooking the guardrails put in place to make sure the information he was entering was correct.

"How are you getting over all of these safety steps to say it was a mistake?" asked Carmon.

"He very eloquently calls it a 'fat finger,'" said Breen in describing Knight's rush to get to work that day. "Essentially, what he did was just click through the remainder of the boxes as soon as possible until he got to the end."

(See **BOE OVERRULES CANDIDATE**, P. 7)

# Deadly Shooting In Minneapolis Could Lead To Shutdown

NC NEWSLINE – A partial federal government shutdown appeared Sunday to unexpectedly be on the horizon, after another fatal shooting by federal immigration agents in Minneapolis led key U.S. Senate Democrats to say they will oppose a spending package that includes immigration enforcement funds.

Senators have until a Friday deadline to clear a package of six House-passed funding measures, including the \$64.4 billion Homeland Security appropriations bill that includes funding for Immigration and Customs Enforcement and the U.S. Border Patrol.

Republicans hold a majority in the chamber but would need at least seven Democrats to join them in voting for the package in order to clear the chamber's 60-vote threshold to advance legislation.

The agreement had appeared to be on track for easy passage by the Senate by Friday, when a stopgap spending law expires.

But after Saturday's killing of 37-year-old Alex Jeffrey Pretti, the second by Homeland Security Department officers in Minneapolis this month, key moderate Democrats, appropriators and leaders said they would not support the package if it includes the Homeland Security legislation in its current form.

Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer also said his caucus would not provide the votes needed, citing the killings of Pretti and Renee Good in Minneapolis on Jan. 7, and called for the DHS bill to be split from the five spending bills with broad bipartisan support.

"Senate Democrats will not allow the current DHS funding bill to move forward," Schumer said in a Sunday statement. "The appalling murders of Renee Good and Alex Pretti on the streets of Minneapolis must lead Republicans to join Democrats in overhauling ICE and CBP to protect the public. People should be safe from abuse by their own government."

"Senate Republicans must work with Democrats to advance the other five funding bills while we work to



Official portrait in 2024 (as a registered nurse for the United States Department of Veterans Affairs)

rewrite the DHS bill," he added. "This is (the) best course of action, and the American people are on our side."

A complicating factor is the DHS bill also includes funding for the Federal Emergency Management Agency, even as a major winter storm swept through a large swath of the nation Saturday and Sunday, triggering disaster declarations in multiple states.

President Donald Trump and key administration officials committed to a robust media strategy over the weekend, defending the officers involved and smearing Pretti, despite contradictory evidence in available video.

Some elected Republicans backed the administration's account, but an unusual number of GOP members of Congress and at least one governor called for accountability.

Latest shooting a turning point

Five of the eight Democrats and independents who voted with Republicans to end a shutdown in November have said they will not support the package if it includes DHS funding.

## STATE ELECTION

Continued from page 1

An NC A&T student approached Guilford County elections board Democrat Carolyn Bunker in tears after the board's vote, explaining she felt responsible for driving classmates to off-campus polling locations while juggling school and work. Bunker said election boards should not place that kind of burden on voters. Student leaders at NC A&T have since launched "Protect Ours," an effort to organize transportation to the polls during early voting.

"This was no goof of the system or administrative error," Rouse said. "This is a modern-day poll tax on a student."

Similar debates unfolded in Western North Carolina, where the state board upheld Republican-backed plans in Jackson County to reduce early voting sites from six to four and eliminate a long-standing early voting location at Western Carolina University. State board chair Bill Thompson rejected claims that the change amounted to voter suppression, saying students could travel the short distance to off-campus sites.

Republican members have repeatedly cited historical turnout data to justify the decisions, arguing that campus sites were not used during midterm or municipal elections and that mail-in absentee voting and Election Day voting remain available options.

The changes come alongside heightened scrutiny of mail-in voting, with new rules tightening deadlines and administrative requirements. Voting advocates say the combined effect of fewer polling locations, reduced early voting days, and stricter absentee ballot procedures will fall hardest on older voters, students, rural residents, and communities of color.

Despite the setbacks, students and advocacy groups say they are preparing to adapt. At NC A&T, organizers are raising money for shuttle services and planning a march from campus to the Old County Courthouse during early voting. They also hope to coordinate with student leaders at other universities that have lost early voting sites.

Early voting starts February 12th in the North Carolina elections.

Maine independent Angus King, who caucuses with Democrats, said on CBS News' "Face the Nation" that he would vote against the package.

"I hate shutdowns," King said in a video interview on the Sunday morning show. "I'm one of the people that helped negotiate the solution to the end of the last shutdown, but I can't vote for a bill that includes ICE funding under these circumstances."

Nevada Democrat Catherine Cortez Masto, a former federal prosecutor, criticized Homeland Security Secretary Kristi Noem and called for blocking the funding package.

"The Trump administration and Kristi Noem are putting untrained, combative federal agents on the streets with no accountability," she said. "They are oppressing Americans and are at odds with local law enforcement. This is clearly not about keeping Americans safe, it's brutalizing U.S. citizens and law-abiding immigrants. I will not support the current Homeland Security funding bill."

Cortez Masto called for the DHS bill to be split off from the rest of the package.

"We have bipartisan agreement on 96% of the budget. We've already passed six funding bills," she said. "Let's pass the remaining five bipartisan bills and fund essential agencies while we continue to fight for a Department of Homeland Security that respects Americans' constitutional rights and preserves federal

law enforcement's essential role to keep us safe."

Fellow Nevada Democrat Jacky Rosen, who also voted to end the shutdown in November, said "enough is enough" and that she would oppose a funding package that did not "rein in ICE's out-of-control conduct."

"As a member of the U.S. Senate, I have the responsibility to hold the Trump Administration accountable when I see abuses of power — like we are seeing from ICE right now," she said. "That is why I'll be voting against any government funding package that contains the bill that funds this agency, until we have guardrails in place to curtail these abuses of power and ensure more accountability and transparency."

"My personal guiding principle has always been 'agree where you can and fight where you must,'" she added. "And I believe this is a time when we must fight back."

Virginia's Tim Kaine said in a Friday statement — before Pretti's killing — that he would oppose the package for several reasons, including as a check on ICE.

"We are not living in normal times," he said. "The President is acting chaotically and unlawfully and we shouldn't give his deranged decisions the imprimatur of congressional approval by passing this legislation without significant amendment."

Democratic Whip Dick Durbin of

Illinois also said after Pretti's killing early Saturday — the third shooting by immigration officers in Minneapolis in three weeks — that he would vote against the package. Durbin is a senior member of the Appropriations Committee.

DHS funding

The House last week passed the DHS funding bill, with seven Democrats voting to approve it, and a separate package of three other appropriations bills that passed with broad bipartisan support. House members passed two other funding bills the week before.

The fiscal 2026 Homeland Security spending bill cuts funding for Customs and Border Protection by \$1.3 billion, and maintains flat funding for ICE at \$10 billion.

The bill attempts to put guardrails around immigration enforcement by allocating \$20 million for body cameras for ICE and CBP officers.

But even if the funding bill doesn't pass or gets held up, the immigration enforcement agencies are still flush with cash after the One Big Beautiful Bill Act that Republicans passed last year allocated \$190 billion for DHS. ICE is slated to receive about \$75 billion over four years, or \$18.7 billion a year.

Path forward

Any Senate amendment to the House-passed package would require another House vote. The House is scheduled to be out this week and the chamber, narrowly controlled

by Republicans, may be unwilling to cooperate with Senate changes.

Senate Appropriations Chair Susan Collins, a Maine Republican up for reelection this year in one of the nation's most closely watched races, did not dismiss the possibility of changes in the spending bill package, telling The New York Times on Saturday she was "exploring all options" for passage.

The major winter storm also hit Washington, D.C., and could further complicate the Senate vote or potential House consideration. All flights into Ronald Reagan Washington National Airport were canceled Sunday as snow and sleet covered the region.

A handful of GOP officials, including Sens. Thom Tillis of North Carolina, Bill Cassidy of Louisiana and Lisa Murkowski of Alaska called for more scrutiny into Pretti's killing and ICE's conduct more generally.

"There must be a thorough and impartial investigation into yesterday's Minneapolis shooting, which is the basic standard that law enforcement and the American people expect following any officer-involved shooting," Tillis said on social media.

"For this specific incident, that requires cooperation and transparency between federal, state, and local law enforcement. Any administration official who rushes to judgment and tries to shut down an investigation before it begins are doing an incredible disservice to the nation and to President Trump's legacy."

# U.S. Army Western Hemisphere Command

By Jheri Hardaway

Staff Writer

Fayetteville, NC - As reported by CNN in December, the US Army officially stood up a new command on Friday to oversee the Army's activities in the Western Hemisphere in the latest signal of increasing focus on homeland defense. The new command, called Army Western Hemisphere Command, will combine US Army Forces Command, US Army North, and US Army South into one organization, based at Fort Bragg, North Carolina.

The combined organization will oversee Army operations like the southern border, disaster response, and Army mobilizations in support of federal law enforcement around the country. "The Army is transforming because our adversaries increasingly aim to exploit vulnerabilities in the homeland and throughout North, Central, and Southern America," Gen. Joseph Ryan, the commander of the new Western Hemisphere Command, said at a ceremony marking the activation of the command. "We have allowed this insidious activity to continue for too long, and we have not addressed it effectively."

Army leadership said in May that it would merge the commands in a

letter to the force following a directive from Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth, who said the Army "must prioritize defending our homeland and deterring China." The new concept calls for "[t]argeted deployments to secure the border and defeat cartels, including, where necessary, the use of lethal force to replace the failed law enforcement-only strategy of the last several decades."

According to CNN, the US military became increasingly involved in the border mission earlier this year when the Trump administration surged more troops to the border and began establishing "national defense areas" where US forces could detain migrants. While the US military is prohibited legally from conducting law enforcement activities, the military zones are treated as extensions of US military bases, allowing service members to temporarily detain migrants before passing them off to local law enforcement. National Guard forces have also been mobilized at several locations to protect federal law enforcement and Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) personnel.

The consolidation will be a process; Col. Mike Burns, spokesperson for the new command, told reporters the headquarters at Fort Bragg is expected to be fully operational

by June 2026, after which US Army North and Army South will be officially shut down. "This reform modernizes the Army's command structure, reduces overhead, eliminates duplication, and puts more soldiers in operational formations where they can directly contribute to warfighting readiness," Burns said. "It's based on threat, strategy, and the need to treat the homeland as a priority theater."

Both Army North and Army South are currently headquartered at Joint Base San Antonio-Sam Houston, Texas. Most military and civilian personnel for the two commands will move to Fort Bragg over the next two years, Burns said, while some remain in the San Antonio area for specific assignments like that with Brooke Army Medical Center. There are concerns about capacity and infrastructure in Cumberland and surrounding counties.

U.S. Army Western Hemisphere Command was activated on December 5, 2025 and headquartered at Fort Bragg, N.C. U.S. Army Western Hemisphere Command is an operational warfighting theater command headquarters that is focused on homeland defense, defense support to civil authorities, and theater security cooperation across the Western Hemisphere. USAWHC Mission



Statement reads, "U.S. Army Western Hemisphere Command (US-AWHC) is the Theater Army for U.S. Northern Command and U.S. Southern Command. USAWHC enables defense of the homeland; conducts defense support of civil authorities, crisis response, and regional security cooperation; provides trained and ready land forces for global and regional employment; integrates Army capabilities into Joint and interagency operations; and ensures the ability of the Army to mobilize and employ reserve component forces to secure American interests and security in the Western Hemisphere."

# 'Bias': How Google — CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

just parroting your own beliefs right back to you. It may be worsening your own biases and deepening societal divides along the way.

"We're at the mercy of Google when it comes to what information we're able to find," says Varol Kayhan, an associate professor of information systems at the University of South Florida in the US.

The bias machine

"Google's whole mission is to give people the information that they want, but sometimes the information that people think they want isn't actually the most useful," says Sarah Pokorná (formerly known as Sarah Presch), digital marketing director at Dragon Metrics, a platform that helps companies tune their websites for better recognition from Google using methods known as "search engine

optimisation" or SEO.

It's a job that calls for meticulous combing through Google results, and a few years ago, Pokorná noticed a problem. "I started looking at how Google handles topics where there's heated debate," she says. "In a lot of cases, the results were shocking."

Some of the starkest examples looked at how Google treats certain health questions. Google often pulls information from the web and shows it at the top of results to provide a quick answer, which it calls a Featured Snippet. Pokorná searched for "link between coffee and hypertension". The Featured Snippet quoted an article from the Mayo Clinic, highlighting the words "Caffeine may cause a short, but dramatic increase in your blood pressure." But when she looked up "no link between cof-

fee and hypertension", the Featured Snippet cited a contradictory line from the very same Mayo Clinic article: "Caffeine doesn't have a long-term effect on blood pressure and is not linked with a higher risk of high blood pressure".

The same thing happened when Pokorná searched for "is ADHD caused by sugar" and "ADHD not caused by sugar". Google pulled up Featured Snippets that argue support both sides of the question, again taken from the same article. (In reality, there's little evidence that sugar affects ADHD symptoms, and it certainly doesn't cause the disorder.)

She encountered the same issue with political questions. Ask "is the British tax system fair", and Google cites a quote from Conservative MP Nigel Huddleston, arguing that in-

deed it is. Ask "is the British tax system unfair", and Google's Featured Snippet explains how UK taxes benefit the rich and promote inequality.

"What Google has done is they've pulled bits out of the text based on what people are searching for and fed them what they want to read," Pokorná says. "It's one big bias machine."

For its part, Google says it provides users unbiased results that simply match people with the kind of information they're looking for. "As a search engine, Google aims to surface high-quality results that are relevant to the query you entered," a Google spokesperson says. "We provide open access to a range of viewpoints from across the web, and we give people helpful tools to evaluate the information and sources they find."

# The Future Of Work — CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

workers face a significant amount of risk from the rise of automated technologies in the workplace—and in an effort to identify the most targeted and effective interventions—we analyzed a range of relevant factors including occupations that are most at risk from automation, job growth, and decline in various regions of the United States, and the disproportionate impacts of automation on African American subpopulations. Taken together, these factors reveal the macrolevel and local-level impact of job loss on African Americans.

Occupations

As shown in prior research, African Americans are overrepresented in occupations likely to be most affected by automation, and this remains accurate for our 2030 projection. In addition, African Americans are underrepresented in the occupational categories that are most resistant to automation-based displacement. African Americans are overrepresented in office support, food services, and production work industries. These industries are most vulnerable to a net loss in jobs. Whereas African Americans are underrepresented in professions such as education, health, business, and

legal, in which there could be a net gain in jobs.

Our research also shows that African Americans tend to hold occupations at the lower end of the pay scale. Only half of the top ten occupations that African Americans typically hold pay above the federal poverty guidelines for a family of four (\$25,750), and all ten of those occupations fall below the median salary for a US worker (\$52,000). Many of these occupations are among the top 15 occupations most at risk of automation-based displacement and are also projected to affect young African American workers without a college degree.

We measured job displacement as a percentage of jobs potentially lost due to automation by 2030 and found that because of their concentration in occupations at risk of automation, African Americans have one of the highest rates of potential job displacement when compared with other groups. While the Asian population has a displacement rate of 21.7 percent and the white population has a displacement rate of 22.4 percent, the African American population has a potential displacement rate of 23.1 percent, which is outpaced only

by the Hispanic/Latino population displacement rate of 25.5 percent. While these differences may seem minimal, they translate to a potential loss of approximately 132,000 African American jobs due to automation by 2030.

Our 2030 scenario also indicates that African Americans could capture a smaller share of new job growth in the economy compared with white and Asian populations based on the current job-growth outlook for these groups. There is also a possibility that higher-growth occupations that currently have a high representation of African Americans may become more attractive to workers of other races, further reducing the already small share of new jobs available to African Americans by 2030.

Community archetypes

Occupational distribution within the African American community and geographic concentration both affect the potential for job displacement or growth. Building on MGI's prior identification of 13 discrete community archetypes, we were able to analyze the employment prospects for African Americans in different areas of the United States in the pro-

jected wake of automation.

The largest amount of projected African American job disruption from automation could be in areas with the largest African American populations—particularly in megacities, such as the counties that include Chicago and Washington, DC, and in stable cities, such as the counties that include Detroit and Baltimore. However, these geographic archetypes also show the disconnect between areas where African Americans are currently concentrated and areas most likely to see job growth. African Americans are underrepresented in five out of the six projected fastest-growing geographical archetypes and are overrepresented in two of the six slower-growing archetypes, including the one archetype that has shown negative growth—distressed americana. Distressed americana showed negative net job growth from 2007 to 2017 and is projected to show negative job growth through 2030. African Americans in these distressed areas may disproportionately feel the negative effects of impending economic and technological changes, see fewer new opportunities, and face additional challenges in transitioning to the economy of the future.

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# Business & Finance

## Panel of NC Black Leaders Examine Economic and Voting Challenges

By Jordan Meadows

Staff Writer

A panel of political leaders, policy advocates, and organizers gathered last Thursday for a "Winning Margins" meeting to discuss the economic, political, and social pressures facing Black communities across North Carolina, with particular focus on employment, healthcare, and voting rights.

Moderated by Mike Ceraso of Winning Margins and attended by multiple reporters, the discussion featured Douglas Wilson, a Charlotte-based political consultant; John Verdejo, a Democratic National Committee member; former state Rep. Chaz Beasley, now a finance attorney; Marcus Bass, deputy director of the North Carolina Black Alliance; and Rep. Terry Brown, who represents House District 92 and serves as House Chief Minority Whip.

Much of the conversation centered on economic instability and its disproportionate impact on Black households. Panelists noted that Black unemployment is rising at a faster rate than unemployment overall, a trend compounded by stagnant wages and rising costs.

Brown said families are being squeezed on every side, from housing and utilities to groceries and healthcare, creating a cumulative strain that is difficult to escape.

"We have over 20,000 people waiting to get in-home healthcare," Brown said, pointing to a statewide shortage of healthcare workers driven by low wages. "It's not just housing costs, it's not just utility costs—it's all of it combined as an issue."

That pressure, panelists said, is falling heavily on millennials, many of whom are simultaneously raising children and caring for aging parents. Brown described this "sandwich generation" as facing not only financial challenges



but mounting mental health stress as costs rise across multiple areas of daily life.

Bass emphasized that these struggles are not new for rural North Carolina, particularly in communities that have lacked consistent investment. He noted that rural areas, including those in the newly gerrymandered Congressional District 3, have been dealing with intensified economic hardship since the COVID-19 pandemic.

According to Bass, the sense of frustration and pessimism that has grown in these communities could have political consequences: "Those who are feeling pessimistic will be taking that pessimism to the ballot box in November," Bass said.

The panel also spent significant time discussing the impact of state and national efforts to roll back DEI initiatives. Brown warned that legislation targeting DEI programs is designed to have a chilling effect on businesses and institutions, arguing that provisions allowing individuals to be sued personally for offering such programs will discourage participation altogether.

Verdejo focused on the consequences for higher education and workforce development, particularly within the University of North Carolina system. He said the dismantling of DEI programs has disrupted long-standing entry-level job pipelines that helped students transition from college into competitive careers.

"Since the ending of many of these DEI programs, many of the traditional entry-level job pipelines for many students in the UNC system have been lost," Verdejo said. He argued that states maintaining DEI initiatives are better positioned to attract and retain employers seeking a diverse and skilled workforce.

Beasley drew a distinction between the public and private sectors, noting that while public institutions have faced more direct pressure to eliminate DEI efforts, many private companies continue to see value in them. He said data shows private employers still want access to a broad and diverse pool of qualified candidates and are maintaining programs to meet that goal.

Wilson also pointed to the impact of

DEI rollbacks on rural education programs in counties like Moore County, saying Black farmers and rural residents are once again being pushed to the back of the line.

"Not to sound like President Obama. We're not just a black or white country—we're united," Wilson said. "When you start pushing down a marginalized group of people who have been historically marginalized, it adds to the economic and cultural strain we've had to experience."

As the panel turned toward voting rights and election access, Beasley framed the issue as a lived reality rather than a distant history. He noted that his grandmother was 20 years old before Black Americans gained the right to vote, underscoring how recent many of these struggles remain.

"This isn't some historical tale," Beasley said. "It's about how people feel in their own country, and if they feel comfortable coming to the polls."

Wilson echoed those concerns, warning that recent court decisions and potential Supreme Court actions could further weaken protections under the Voting Rights Act. He argued that the possible gutting of Section Five could accelerate Republican redistricting efforts and significantly affect Black and Latino voting power. Bass raised additional concerns about election administration and enforcement, alleging that actions during the Trump administration, including changes at the U.S. Postal Service, shortened mail-in ballot deadlines and reduced access to polling locations.

He said closures of Sunday voting, college polling sites, and voter registration locations disproportionately targeted older and younger voters in Black and other minority communities. Bass also criticized immigration enforcement practices, saying Black people have been disproportionately harassed by ICE officials.



### 8 TAX QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER AHEAD OF TAX SEASON

**Schwab** — It's never too early to prepare for tax season. Whether you're focused on lowering your income tax, planning charitable contributions, or simply want to avoid surprises, asking the right tax questions can help you make informed decisions.

Considering these questions now can also help ensure you're not missing out on potential tax benefits. With that in mind, here are some of the most important tax topics to review as you plan ahead.

1. What are my withholdings and estimated tax payments? Double-check your withholding and estimated tax payments to ensure you're not over or under withholding from your paycheck.

Some people might think withholding too much is a savvy move, as it should make for a bigger tax refund. However, over-withholding can actually cost you. Remember: The IRS doesn't pay interest on the funds you withhold, so if you've withheld too much or overpaid your quarterly estimated tax payments, you've effectively given up a potential opportunity to generate interest or returns.

Of course, withholding too little can lead to a large bill at tax time, as well as potential penalties and interest if the shortfall is too large—an unpleasant surprise if you haven't planned for it.

A better approach would be to withhold or prepay just enough to match your expected tax obligation. You can always adjust when you get a clearer picture of your likely annual income as the year progresses.

2. Have I maximized my retirement contributions? If you have the financial means, be sure to maximize your contributions to tax advantaged accounts and consider making your contributions sooner rather than later. Even though you have until year-end to make contributions to your 401(k) or Tax Day for your traditional or Roth IRA, making early contributions to your retirement accounts will give your money more time to benefit from potential long-term compound growth.

3. Am I eligible for any tax credits this year? Tax credits can directly reduce the amount of federal income tax you owe, making them especially valuable. Many taxpayers may qualify for credits such as the Child Tax Credit, the Earned Income Tax Credit, or education-related credits like the Lifetime Learning Credit. Reviewing your eligibility before you complete your tax forms can help ensure you're not leaving money on the table.

4. Do I need to take any Required Minimum Distributions (RMDs)? If you're age 73 or older and have to take RMDs from your retirement accounts, you must do so before the end of the year. Otherwise, you may have to pay a 25% penalty on the amount not distributed. That said, if you correct the issue by taking your full withdrawal, the IRS may lower the penalty to 10%.

If you turned 73 this year, you have until April 1 of next year to take your first RMD. However, if you wait until next year to start your RMDs, you'll have two distributions in the same year, which could make for a much bigger tax bill.

If you're charitably inclined and don't need the RMD for your living expenses, consider making a qualified charitable distribution (QCD) from your IRA directly to your favorite charity. You can use a QCD to donate up to \$108,000 for 2025 and it won't be included in your adjusted gross income (AGI).

5. What is the cost basis of my investments? If you're planning to sell any investments, know your cost basis before you do so. Managing your cost basis can help you save on taxes.

Your cost basis is essentially what you paid for an investment, including brokerage fees and any other trading costs. The size of any capital gain (or loss)—on which your tax obligation will be based—is the difference between the asset's cost basis and the sale price (i.e., what you sold it for minus what you paid). In a simple transaction, the cost basis should be easy to calculate.

However, if you buy the same investment over time—such as through a dividend-reinvestment plan—each block of shares purchased is likely to have a different cost basis and holding period. In these situations, you can pick which shares to sell, giving you the ability to sell the ones that will have the least tax impact.

Alternatively, you can go with the default method, which generally requires less effort on your part—but could cost you more in federal taxes. Unless you specify otherwise, Schwab uses the "first in, first out" (FIFO) cost basis method as the default method for determining which assets were sold.

Here is an example of how being selective with your cost basis can matter during tax season: Imagine you accumulated 1,000 ZYX shares at various prices over several years, and then sold 100 of them today, when prices are at an all-time high. With the FIFO method, you would be selling your oldest shares first. Assuming you bought the oldest shares at the lowest prices, the FIFO method would lead to the largest capital gains and therefore the biggest tax obligation.

6. Are my investments tax-efficient? Make sure your assets are located in the most tax-efficient investment accounts.

For example, a regular taxable account can be a good place to hold tax-efficient investments—such as stocks or funds that pay qualified dividends, municipal bonds (for those in higher tax brackets), and most index funds and ETFs—as these assets tend not to generate a lot of taxable income. (Before considering any fund, you should consult the fund's prospectus to understand its investment objectives, risks, charges, and expenses.) That said, timing matters. Holding such investments for over a year means any gains you make from selling will be taxed at the long-term capital gain rates, which are generally lower than the ordinary income tax rates.

Investments you plan to hold for short term (for a year or less) tend to work better in tax-advantaged accounts, such as a 401(k), IRA, or Roth IRA, since those gains are taxed at the higher ordinary income tax rates. Tax-advantaged accounts are also a good place for actively managed mutual funds that may generate significant short-term capital gains, and corporate bonds that pay interest income.

Assets that you expect will appreciate the most tend to make sense in Roth IRAs and Roth 401(k)s, as potential earnings in such accounts can accumulate tax-free, and qualified withdrawals are also tax-free once you reach age 59 1/2, so long as you made the first contribution to the account more than five years ago.

Of course, tax-efficient placement presumes you have different account types. If most or all of your portfolio is in tax-deferred accounts, you'll really only need to focus on your asset allocation strategy.

7. Have I maximized my charitable donations? Concentrating your donations within a single year can help you maximize your itemized deduction for that year. The next year, you can switch and take the standard deduction, which could increase your overall deductions for that two-year period, resulting in a large tax benefit.

In addition, if you're charitably inclined and planning on selling a significant amount of long-term appreciated stock, which will generate a large taxable gain, consider donating a portion of those assets directly to a charity, rather than selling them. Subject to certain income limitations, you could get a tax deduction for the full fair market value of the donated stock and you won't have to pay taxes on the gain for those shares.

Many charities are unable to accept gifts of appreciated assets—like stocks or mutual funds—but you can use a donor-advised fund, which is another great tax tool to facilitate the donation process. When you make an irrevocable donation to a donor-advised fund (DAF), you can potentially get the full deduction for the charitable gift that year, assuming you itemize your deductions and meet the income limitations. The DAF will then become the owner of those assets and you can recommend grants to eligible nonprofits over time.

8. Do I need professional help with tax preparation? Even with careful planning, tax law can be complex. If you're self-employed, run a small business, or have multiple income sources, doing your taxes may require more than standard tax software can provide. A qualified tax expert can help you simplify your filing, make tax preparation more efficient, and ensure you're taking advantage of all benefits.

The bottom line Answering these common tax questions can leave you better prepared for tax season and potentially a more manageable tax bill. By making tax planning a year-round exercise, you'll find it easier to check your progress, update your plan and, if necessary, take action long before the tax-filing deadline.

## State Treasurer Announces Early Availability Of Tax Documentation For 397,584 Retirees

By Jheri Hardaway

Staff Writer

Raleigh, NC - The North Carolina Retirement Systems (NCRS) has released 397,584 electronic 1099R and W2 tax documents for retirees and benefit recipients well ahead of the statutory Jan. 31 deadline. The early availability is due to enhanced efficiencies within the Retirement Systems Division, which enabled NCRS to load nearly 400,000 documents shortly after the holiday weekend.

"A top priority for our department is making things easier, safer and more efficient for our members. This early release of needed tax documents is just one example of how we are better serving North Carolinians," said Treasurer Brad Briner. "As we continue modernizing NCRS, enhancements to security, account access, and overall system perfor-



mance will further strengthen the administration of all programs."

Registered members can access their tax documents by logging into their secure ORBIT account at ORBIT.myNCRetirement.gov. Through Jan. 31, members can sign in using their existing username and password. Beginning Feb. 1, tax documents will be available through the new single sign-on system powered by ID.me.

NCRS, the ninth-largest public pension fund in the United States and recognized as one of the best-funded systems in the nation, provides retirement benefits and savings programs to more than 1 million North Carolinians. This includes teachers, state employees, local government workers, firefighters, police officers, and other public servants. The fund is currently valued at \$142 billion.

## OpenAI's Problems Are Bigger Than You Think

Yahoo!—OpenAI is currently facing significant challenges that contradict its high public valuation. While the company previously held a dominant market position with ChatGPT, recent data suggests a troubling shift in its position. Behind the closed doors of their San Francisco headquarters, the company is navigating a crisis marked by staggering financial losses, brain drain of top talent, and a product losing ground to Google.

Is OpenAI falling apart? George Noble, a seasoned market strategist with years of experience managing investment funds, recently shared his insights on OpenAI, suggesting that the company is facing significant challenges. "OpenAI is falling apart in real time," Noble shared in a post on X.

Noble points to an internal "Code Red" declaration made last December. This move came after OpenAI's CEO, Sam Altman, urged his teams to prioritize their efforts because they were losing ground to Google's Gemini 3.

Marc Benioff, the CEO of Salesforce, publicly abandoned ChatGPT in favor of Gemini after using the competitor's product for only two hours. This change by an enterprise leader suggests he may no longer have confidence in ChatGPT's capabilities. In fact, there's evidence to support his decision; the number of people using ChatGPT has decreased significantly in November, marking the second month in a row that its usage has gone down in 2025.

In comparison, Gemini jumped to 650 million monthly active users, suggesting that users are not loyal to the brand. They are simply looking



for the best tool, and right now, they are finding it elsewhere. "The company that was supposed to build AGI can't keep its chatbot competitive," Noble said.

But the most immediate threat is the cash burn. "OpenAI lost \$12 BILLION in a single quarter according to Microsoft's own fiscal disclosures", Noble added. This is an unprecedented loss for a company known for its rapid rise in popularity. Deutsche Bank analysts have crunched the numbers and estimate that OpenAI will experience a staggering cumulative negative cash flow totaling \$143 billion before it has any hope of turning a profit.

To put this into perspective, the company is reportedly spending \$15 million a day to maintain Sora, its video generation model. That is \$5 billion annually spent on a product that not only faces significant copyright challenges but also yields mini-

mal financial return on investment. Sora's lead engineer admitted that the economics are "currently completely unsustainable".

Noble says there is also a "big math problem" that investors are ignoring. He explains that creating new AI models is becoming increasingly difficult and costly. It now requires five times the energy and capital to make these models just two times better. The "low-hanging fruit" of easy upgrades is gone, he added. This became clear with the launch of GPT-5, which many users found disappointing. They noticed it performed worse on basic tasks, such as math and geography, compared to its predecessor, GPT-4. The negative reaction prompted the company to bring back GPT-4 within a day because people refused to use the new version. Updates that followed, like GPT-5.1 and 5.2, haven't resolved the concerns either. Users still describe

responses from these models as "too corporate," "safe," and "robotic."

The company is also bleeding talent, with CTO Mira Murati, Chief Research Officer Bob McGrew, Chief Scientist Ilya Sutskever, and President Greg Brockman all leaving. Half the AI safety team has also left, with some former executives mentioning issues of "psychological abuse" under the current leadership.

On top of the exodus, Elon Musk is suing for up to \$134 billion. A federal judge recently stated that there is substantial evidence suggesting that OpenAI's leaders failed to keep their promise to operate as a nonprofit company. If a jury finds against them in April, it could threaten the company's \$500 billion valuation, which holds the entire operation together.

Unless leadership can stop the cash bleed and resolve the legal issues, OpenAI risks becoming the most expensive failure in Silicon Valley history.

Why it matters Today's economy is highly vulnerable due to its reliance on OpenAI's technology. Over the last few years, countless industries, from customer service to software engineering, have built their workflows on top of ChatGPT's API. Many companies have replaced their workforce with AI agents, assuming the technology would be stable and permanent.

However, if OpenAI fails to sustain its operations or if its models continue to stagnate in quality, these businesses are left with broken infrastructure. It wouldn't just be a problem for OpenAI; it would create a ripple effect that disrupts businesses everywhere that have depended on this technology.

# Bermuda Goes All-In on Digital, Putting Entire Economy OnChain

Sandmark—Bermuda, the tiny North Atlantic territory that has been vying with other island jurisdictions for a piece of the digital assets industry, has raised the stakes to leapfrog traditional financial systems by piloting the world's first economy run on blockchain.

Supported by two of the biggest players in Web3 – number two stablecoin issuer Circle (USDC) and Coinbase, the largest US regulated crypto exchange – the Government of Bermuda's onchain plan will involve local banks, insurers, small and medium-sized businesses, consumers and support nationwide digital finance education and technical onboarding, according to a joint statement by the government and the two companies.

Lower costs  
"Bermuda has always believed that responsible innovation is best achieved through partnership between government, regulators, and industry," said Premier David Burt. "With the support of Circle and Coinbase, two of the world's most trusted digital finance companies,

we are accelerating our vision to enable digital finance at the national level. This initiative is about creating opportunity, lowering costs, and ensuring Bermudians benefit from the future of finance."

Burt has been an architect for digital assets development on the island, which passed the Digital Asset Business Act (2018), one of the world's first comprehensive regulatory frameworks for crypto and blockchain. Circle and Coinbase were licensed under that regime.

Raising stakes  
Bermuda's rivals include the Cayman Islands, British Virgin Islands and Malta, who will likely be close observers of the onchain blueprint.

Many Caribbean island jurisdictions experience costly onshore payment processing and local fiat banking fees in the traditional payment system. "The transition to an onchain economy is expected, over time, to deliver tangible benefits for residents and businesses. Benefits include lower transaction

costs and providing greater access to global finance through modern digital wallets, and infrastructure that keeps economic value circulating locally," according to the statement, which was issued during the World Economic Forum Annual Meeting in Davos.

USDC airdrop  
In the warm-up to the announcement, the three partners did an airdrop of USDC at the Bermuda Digital Finance Forum 2025, distributing 100 USDC to every attendee for use with newly onboarded local merchants.

That event led to more Bermudian businesses accepting digital payments and local financial institutions to expand their use of stablecoins and tokenized finance, the release said.

Burt has also personally been attending crypto events to bang the drum for Bermuda's potential as a regulated crypto hub, for example at Chainlink's flagship SmartCon New York event in November.

Piloting stablecoin payments  
Government agencies will begin

piloting stablecoin-based payments and financial institutions integrating tokenization tools. Residents of the island will also participate

in nationwide digital literacy programs.

While seen as a frontrunner on a compliant, institutional-focused

digital assets regulations, Bermuda has low crypto adoption, in common with other small island jurisdictions.



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# Health and Wellness

## These 3 Policy Moves May Change Health Care For Older People

KFF Health News— Month after month, Patricia Hunter and other members of the Nursing Home Reform Coalition logged onto video calls with congressional representatives, seeking support for a proposed federal rule setting minimum staff levels for nursing homes.

Finally, after decades of advocacy, the Biden administration in 2023 tackled the problem of perennial understaffing of long-term care facilities. Officials backed a Medicare regulation that would mandate at least 3.48 hours of care from nurses and aides per resident, per day, and would require a registered nurse on-site 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

The mandated hours were lower than supporters hoped for, said Hunter, who directs Washington state's long-term care ombudsman program. But "I'm a pragmatic person, so I thought, this is a good start," she said. "It would be helpful, for enforcement, to have a federal law."

In 2024, when the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services adopted the standards, advocates celebrated. But industry lawsuits soon blocked most of the rule, with two federal district courts finding that Medicare had exceeded its regulatory authority.

And after the 2024 elections, Hunter said, "I was concerned about the

changing of the guard." Her concerns proved well founded.

In July, as part of Republicans' One Big Beautiful Bill Act, Congress prohibited Medicare from implementing the staffing standards before 2034. Last month, CMS repealed the standards altogether. They never took effect.

"It was devastating," Hunter said.

As with environmental law and consumer protections, the Trump administration's enthusiasm for deregulation has undone long-sought rules to improve care for the aged. And it has introduced a Medicare experiment for prior authorizations, now getting underway in six states, that has alarmed advocates, congressional Democrats, and a good number of older Americans.

Taken together, the moves will affect many of the facilities and workers providing care and introduce complications in health coverage in several states.

On the nursing home front, "it's clear CMS has no interest in ensuring adequate staffing," said Sam Brooks, the director of public policy for the National Consumer Voice for Quality Long-Term Care.

"They're repealing a regulation that could have saved 13,000 lives a year," he added, citing an analysis by Uni-



versity of Pennsylvania researchers.

Industry groups argued that nursing homes, with high rates of staff turnover, were already struggling to fill vacancies.

The staffing mandate "was requiring nursing homes to hire an additional 100,000 caregivers that simply don't exist," said Holly Harmon, a senior vice president at the American Health Care Association.

The organization had brought one of the suits that largely vacated the rule. "Facilities would have been forced to limit admissions or downsize to comply with the requirements,

or close altogether," Harmon said.

For supporters, the action is now likely to shift to updating requirements in 35 states, along with the District of Columbia, that have already established some nursing home staff standards, and to developing them in those that haven't.

Rules for home help

A second rescinded regulation, this one more unexpected, brought about upheaval in July, when the Labor Department announced a return to a policy excluding home care workers from the federal Fair Labor Standards Act.

Some history: Dating back to the New Deal, the FLSA mandated that workers receive the federal minimum wage (currently \$7.25 an hour) and overtime pay. It exempted most "domestic service workers" until 1975, when a new Labor Department regulation included them — with the exception of home care workers.

"There was a misinterpretation of home care work as being casual, nonprofessional, non-skilled," the equivalent of teenage babysitting, said Kezia Scales, a vice president at PHI, a national research and advocacy organization. "Just someone popping into your mother's house now and then and keeping her company."

For almost 40 years, workers and their supporters lobbied to change the rule, seeing it as a contributor to the low wages and meager benefits of a swiftly growing workforce, one made up primarily of women and minority groups, with many immigrants.

In 2013, the Labor Department responded with a rule that brought home care workers under the labor act, entitled to minimum wage, time and a half for overtime work, and payment for travel time between clients.

After industry lawsuits failed to overturn it, "everything settled down," Scales said. "It was in place success-

fully for a decade."

Home care workers brought hundreds of compliance complaints annually. In 87 percent of them, the Labor Department found violations of the labor act, according to a 2020 Government Accountability Office report.

Since 2013, home care agencies have paid about \$158 million in back wages, PHI has calculated.

Then in July, the Labor Department abruptly announced that it would return to the 1975 regulations and stop enforcing the 2013 rule, which it said "had negative effects on the ground" and hindered consumer access to care.

The agencies employing most home care workers, primarily funded through Medicaid, would agree. "Many workers never got any benefit from this," said Damon Terzaghi, a vice president at the National Alliance for Care at Home.

"States made a lot of moves to essentially absolve themselves of any responsibility," he said. A 2020 federal report, for example, found that 16 states had capped Medicaid-covered home care hours at 40, thus averting overtime payment.

The alliance, which estimates that

(See **HEALTH CARE**, P. 7)

## The World Is In Water Bankruptcy, UN Report



The Conversation—The world is now using so much fresh water amid the consequences of climate change that it has entered an era of water bankruptcy, with many regions no longer able to bounce back from frequent water shortages.

About 4 billion people — nearly half the global population — live with severe water scarcity for at least one month a year, without access to sufficient water to meet all of their needs. Many more people are seeing the consequences of water deficit: dry reservoirs, sinking cities, crop failures, water rationing and more frequent wildfires and dust storms in drying regions.

Water bankruptcy signs are everywhere, from Tehran, where droughts and unsustainable water use have depleted reservoirs the Iranian capital relies on, adding fuel to political tensions, to the U.S., where water demand has outstripped the supply in the Colorado River, a crucial source of drinking water and irrigation for seven states.

Water bankruptcy is not just a metaphor for water deficit. It is a chronic condition that develops when a place uses more water than nature can reliably replace, and when the damage to the natural assets that store and filter that water, such as aquifers and wetlands, becomes hard to reverse.

A new study I led with the United Nations University Institute for Water, Environment and Health concludes that the world has now gone beyond temporary water crises. Many natural water systems are no longer able to return to their historical conditions. These systems are in a state of failure — water bankruptcy.

What water bankruptcy looks like in real life

In financial bankruptcy, the first warning signs often feel manageable: late payments, borrowed money and selling things you hoped to keep. Then the spiral tightens.

Water bankruptcy has similar stages.

At first, we pull a little more groundwater during dry years. We use bigger pumps and deeper wells. We transfer water from one basin to another. We drain wetlands and straighten rivers to make space for farms and cities.

Then the hidden costs show up. Lakes shrink year after year. Wells need to go deeper. Rivers that once flowed year-round turn seasonal. Salty water

(See **WATER BANKRUPTCY**, P. 12)

## ACA Navigators Try To Help Clients Find Insurance Despite Funding Cuts

NC Newsroom— Angela Baker-Hill knew she needed to sign up for health insurance again when lab results over the summer showed that her kidney disease had progressed slightly.

Baker-Hill had stopped carrying insurance as she battled with other rising costs, including housing, food and transportation. But with her kidney condition worsening and high blood pressure, Baker-Hill realized that having insurance would be cheaper than foregoing it.

"I can't afford to pay out of pocket," Baker-Hill said in an interview. "Last time I came (to the clinic), I didn't have insurance, even the doctor visit ... was like \$200 something."

With that in mind, Baker-Hill visited a southeast Raleigh healthcare clinic on a Saturday in early January seeking assistance to sign up for insurance through the Affordable Care Act's Marketplace. Baker-Hill, who works in housekeeping at a local senior facility, has had insurance through the marketplace before.

This year, though, there are a litany of changes to the coverage, including to Biden-era enhanced premium tax credits that brought the cost of health-care plans down for millions of enrollees. Navigators, who offer free assistance to help people traverse those changes, are facing challenges of their own amid significant federal funding cuts.

Donna Rasmussen, a certified navigator with the N.C. Navigator Consortium, met Baker-Hill inside an exam room. Rasmussen perched behind a small desk while Baker-Hill sat in a chair near wall-mounted exam equipment like a blood pressure cuff.

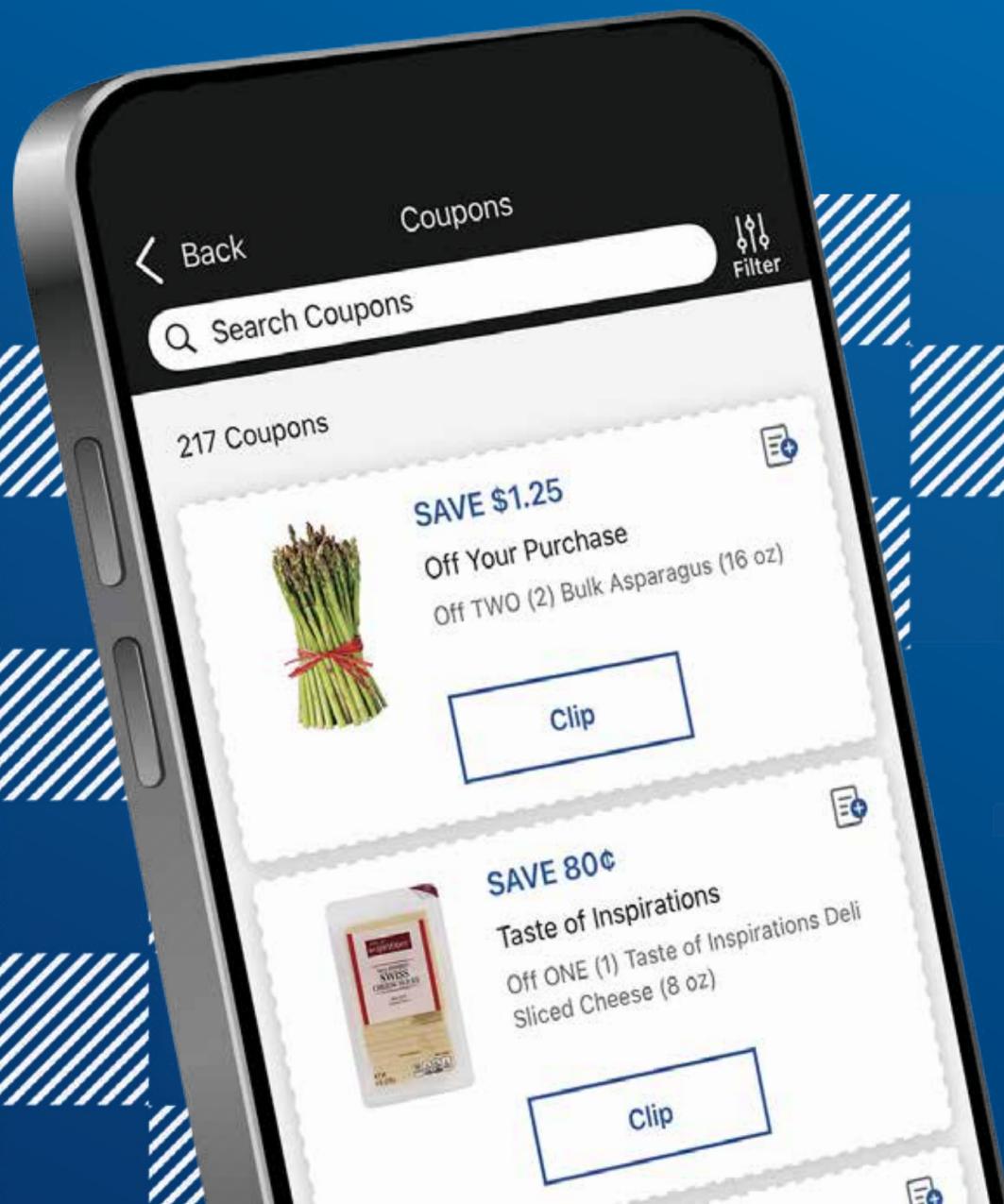
Navigators 'definitely felt a strain'

Rasmussen is one of 177 navigators working in North Carolina this year, down from 235 last year. That decline is almost entirely in paid, full-time navigators at the Navigator Consortium or its six partner agencies, a consequence of a 90% cut to federal funding for navigators the Trump Administration enacted in early 2025.

For North Carolina, that meant funding dropped from \$7.5 million to \$750,000. The Consortium was able to secure about \$2.4 million in philanthropic funding ahead of this year's open enrollment period, but navigators statewide have still needed to take on heavier workloads or shift how they operate.

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# Arts & Culture

## The City Of Philadelphia Sues Over Removal Of Slavery Exhibit Located At Independence Nat'l Historical Park



PHILADELPHIA (AP) — Outraged critics accused President Donald Trump of “whitewashing history” on Friday after the National Park Service removed an exhibit on slavery at Philadelphia’s Independence National Historical Park in response to his executive order “restoring truth and sanity to American history” at the nation’s museums, parks and landmarks.

Empty bolt holes and shadows are all that remains on the brick walls where explanatory panels were displayed at the President’s House Site, where George and Martha Washington lived with the people they owned as property when Philadelphia was the nation’s capital. One woman cried silently at their absence. Someone left a bouquet of flowers. A hand-lettered sign said “Slavery was real.”

Workers on Thursday removed the exhibit, which included biographi-

cal details about the nine people enslaved by the Washingtons at the presidential mansion. Just their names — Austin, Paris, Hercules, Christopher Sheels, Richmond, Giles, Oney Judge, Moll and Joe — remain engraved into a cement wall.

Karen Oliver, a retired Philadelphian who was visited the exhibit Friday, said she was “heartbroken” at the removal of references to slavery and a chance for visitors to learn from the nation’s history.

“You show all of it,” she said. “The good, the bad, and the ugly.”

Seeking to stop the display’s permanent removal, the city of Philadelphia on Thursday sued Interior Secretary Doug Burgum and acting National Park Service Director Jessica Bowron.

“Let me affirm, for the residents of the city of Philadelphia, that there is a cooperative agreement between the

city and the federal government that dates back to 2006,” Philadelphia Mayor Chelle Parker said during a press conference Friday. “That agreement requires parties to meet and confer if there are to be any changes made to an exhibit.”

Slavery is central to the site’s story, Philadelphia’s lawsuit argues: The people enslaved at the mansion included Oney Judge, who famously ran away and remained free despite Washington’s attempts to return her to bondage.

The panels came down because Trump’s order requires federal agencies to review interpretive materials to “ensure accuracy, honesty, and alignment with shared national values,” an Interior Department statement said. It called the city’s lawsuit frivolous, aimed at “demeaning our brave Founding Fathers who set the brilliant road map for the greatest

country in the world.”

The department did not answer questions about what will replace the exhibits that were removed.

Critics condemned the removals as confirmation the Trump administration seeks to erase unflattering aspects of American history.

“Their shameful desecration of this exhibit raises broader, disturbing questions about this administration’s continued abuse of power and commitment to whitewashing history,” said Rep. Dwight Evans, a Democrat whose district includes the city.

“America’s history, as painful as some chapters are, isn’t disparaged by telling the whole truth. Trying to whitewash American history, however, disparages who we are. This is yet another egregious example of revisionist history that will be reviled for generations,” said Philadelphia state Rep. Malcolm Kenyatta.

Taking pride in American independence shouldn’t mean hiding its mistakes, said Ed Stierli, a regional director for the National Parks Conservation Association. Historic sites should help Americans grapple with our difficult truths and historical contradictions, he said. Removing the exhibit insults the memory of the enslaved people who lived there, reverses years of collaborative work and “sets a dangerous precedent of prioritizing nostalgia over the truth,” Stierli said.

“It shows that the United States is still unwilling to reckon with the horrors of its past and would rather prefer to sanitize the history that it has and try to present a convenient lie,” said Timothy Welbeck, director of the Center for Anti-Racism at Temple University.

As the Trump administration prepares to celebrate the country’s 250th

anniversary, it has focused on a more positive telling of the American story and put pressure on federal institutions including the Smithsonian to tell a version of history less focused on race.

The executive order Trump signed last March accused the Biden administration of advancing a “corrosive ideology.”

“At Independence National Historical Park in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania — where our Nation declared that all men are created equal — the prior administration sponsored training by an organization that advocates dismantling ‘Western foundations’ and ‘interrogating institutional racism’ and pressured National Historical Park rangers that their racial identity should dictate how they convey history to visiting Americans because America is purportedly racist,” the order states.

## How HBCUs Create and Preserve Their Own History Through Amazing Artifacts

By Kaila Philo

Smithsonian Magazine

In February 1837, the African Institute was established in Cheyney, Pennsylvania, at the bequest of Quaker philanthropist Richard Humphreys. He had designated \$10,000, a tenth of his estate, “to instruct the descendants of the African race in school learning, in the various branches of the mechanic arts, trades and agriculture, in order to prepare and fit and qualify them to act as teachers.”

Today, the school is called Cheyney University, the first of what would later be known as historically Black colleges and universities, or HBCUs. According to the Smithsonian’s National Museum of African American History and Culture (NMAAHC), from the 1860s to 1900, more than 90 of these institutions were established—including Shaw University, the first to be founded after the Civil War. The Higher Education Act of 1965 noted that HBCUs “have contributed significantly to the effort to attain equal opportunity through postsecondary education for Black, low-income and educationally disadvantaged Americans.”

Now the museum is telling the stories of these schools with a new exhibition, “At the Vanguard: Making and Saving History at HBCUs,” which celebrates the many contributions of the institutions to American life. “At the Vanguard” features a collection of objects culled from the museum’s partnerships with five historically Black universities: Clark Atlanta, Florida A&M, Jackson State,

Texas Southern and Tuskegee.

Four bricks handmade by Tuskegee University students illustrate the very material that composed the campus. “Many of the buildings were created by students,” says Deborah Tulani Salahu-Din, a researcher in Black American literary history who helped curate the exhibition. “They took classes in brickmaking and then they made the bricks and used them in the construction of many of the buildings on campus.” Some students were even able to help build the school in lieu of paying tuition.

Other artifacts on view include an oil painting by American artist William H. Johnson, lent by the Clark Atlanta University Art Museum, and a mixed-media sculpture by contemporary Cameroonian artist Franck Kemkeng Noah, lent by the University Museum at Texas Southern.

“HBCUs played the role in providing platforms and showcasing works that would otherwise just go neglected,” Salahu-Din says.

“At the Vanguard” also features objects from famous figures in Black American history, such as George Washington Carver’s typewritten notes about peanut oil and a rare 1942 printing of *For My People* by poet Margaret Walker, from Tuskegee and Jackson State Universities, respectively.

Walker was an English scholar at Jackson State, where she founded the Institute for the Study of the History, Life and Culture of Black People

in 1968. She also organized a festival that brought Black women writers together from across the country to showcase their work and commune over the craft.

In “collecting Black material culture and their own institutional histories,” NMAAHC African diaspora curator Joanne T. Hyppolite says, HBCUs have done “incredible work.” It’s “something they’ve been doing since the late 1800s, at a time when other museums and archives didn’t see the value of the content in that history and safeguarding it so that other people can use it in the future.”

Painter Hale Woodruff established the first permanent fine arts program at a Southern HBCU, at Clark Atlanta University, and in the 1940s, persuaded the school to create an annual juried art competition. Much like Walker, he used his position as HBCU faculty to prop up other Black creatives in an otherwise stifling political and social climate.

“HBCUs saw the value of Black cultural production and Black aesthetics in ways that other audiences probably didn’t understand,” Hyppolite says. “They encouraged students to look at their communities, their landscapes, their families, and paint from that, from what they know and what they saw. And in doing so, they created this incredible repository of Black life and Black history.”

And while popular understandings of historically Black colleges may conjure a familiar image—marching bands, majorettes and the Divine Nine sororities and fraternities—no two schools are exactly alike. Hyppolite makes a point of emphasizing their diversity: They’re big and small, based in the city and the country, and public and private.

After its time at NMAAHC, “At the Vanguard” will take a tour through the five schools that contributed to the collection. As a former HBCU faculty member, Jeanelle Hope, the museum’s curator of entrepreneurship and innovation, looks forward to giving the students an opportunity to engage with their schools’ histories on a deeper level.

In Hope’s experience, students don’t visit their campuses’ archives and art museums as much as they could. “And oftentimes, they aren’t aware of the rich history of their campuses,” she says.

From the inception of the first HBCU 189 years ago to now, the schools have been conductors and historians of Black life.

“HBCUs are part of the American narrative,” Salahu-Din says, “like Black people are part of American history and culture.”



## Grandmother Of Juneteenth Honored With Barbie Doll

FORT WORTH, Texas — Juneteenth icon Mrs. Opal Lee, of Fort Worth, also known as the “Grandmother of Juneteenth,” now has a Barbie doll.

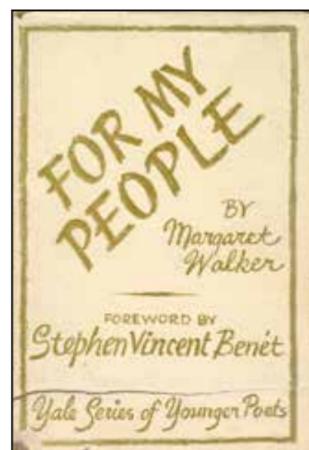
Lee’s doll was released as part of Mattel’s “Inspiring Women” series. She gained national acclaim after cementing June 19’s status as a national holiday in 2021 after years of advocacy, which included a 1,400-mile trek to Washington, D.C. The 99-year-old Fort Worth native has been awarded with the Presidential Medal of Freedom and was a Nobel Peace Prize nominee.

Lee holds an annual Walk For Freedom celebrating Juneteenth in Fort Worth, a 2.5-mile trek. Her granddaughter, Dione Sims, announced that in 2026, Lee plans to hold a march in Washington D.C., commemorating the 250-year anniversary of the founding of the United States.

Lee told ABC News in a statement that she hopes the release of her Barbie doll will inspire the next generation.

“It has been a joy to partner with Barbie on my Inspiring Women doll,” Lee said in a statement. “I hope my story encourages the next generation to never underestimate the power of one voice. As I often say, one person can start a change, and that can change the world.”

Lee’s Barbie doll features glasses, a blue Unity Unlimited Opal’s Walk for Freedom T-shirt, white pants and sneakers.



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# Community

## New Life Planned For The Mary Potter Academy Campus

By Jordan Meadows

Staff Writer

Mary Potter Academy, once a cornerstone of Black education and community life in Granville County, is entering a new chapter more than a century after it was founded.

The academy was established in 1889 by George Clayton Shaw, who served as principal until 1936. Shaw was born enslaved in Louisville in 1863 and raised by a mother who, despite limited opportunity, received what he later described as a “fairly good education” and passed on a deep belief in the power of learning. All six of her children became educators.

Shaw graduated from Lincoln University in Pennsylvania in 1886 and went on to study at Princeton Theological Seminary before completing his education at Auburn Theological Seminary in New York in 1890. While in New York, Shaw met Mary Potter, secretary to the Presbyterian Freedmen’s Board and a leading supporter of educational opportunities for formerly enslaved people.

With her backing, Shaw founded the first school for African Americans in Granville County, along with Tim-

othy Darling Presbyterian Church in Oxford in 1888. The school, initially called Timothy Darling in honor of Shaw’s teacher, was funded by the Board of Missions for Freedmen, the New York Synodical Society, and the Albany Presbytery before taking the name Mary Potter Academy in 1892. For decades, the academy operated as a private boarding school, educating generations of Black students from Oxford and beyond. By the 1950s, it transitioned into a public high school and continued in that role until 1969. Following the desegregation of Oxford schools in 1970, Mary Potter became an integrated middle school.

In a 1932 reflection, Shaw wrote proudly of the thousands of students who passed through the school, describing young people who arrived “crude” and left “refined, cultured, and polished,” prepared to serve their communities as they had been served. Roughly half of the school’s graduates were natives of Granville County, and many went on to become educators, professionals, and civic leaders. In recent years, local residents and alumni have worked to preserve that history by establishing the Mary Potter School Museum in Shaw’s former



residence.

Once one of the largest landowners in downtown Oxford, the academy’s campus has steadily diminished. By the early 21st century, only three buildings remained: Shaw’s residence, restored in 2004; a 9,600-square-foot Industrial Arts Building that has sat vacant since the 1990s; and a similarly scaled gymnasium. Both the industrial arts and gym buildings were originally constructed by students themselves.

Now, Durham-based Evoke Studio Architecture is leading a project to reimagine those structures as the Mary Potter Cultural Complex, a flexible, multi-use campus intended to serve today’s Oxford community while honoring the academy’s mission.

Under the proposal, the former Industrial Arts Building will become a two-story conference center with meeting rooms, gallery space, and offices, including space for start-ups. A new interior stair will connect previously disconnected levels and allow daylight to reach the partially submerged lower floor. The former gymnasium will be transformed into the Mary E. Shaw Cultural Center, capable of hosting large gatherings

and events beneath restored wood trusses.

Between the two buildings, an open-air pavilion will replace an aging wood structure that once housed the Oxford Farmers Market. The new steel-and-wood canopy will act as the campus hub, helping tie the site together and reinforcing its role as a gathering place. Across the complex, new canopies and additions will use a restrained palette of dark gray aluminum composite panels, wood insets, and glass, set deliberately against the original brick masonry.

During the Jim Crow and segregation eras, Mary Potter Academy functioned as the epicenter of Oxford’s Black community, bringing a strong Black middle class and serving as an incubator for leadership. Designers say the revitalized campus is intended to welcome multiple generations and races, creating space to gather, collaborate, and celebrate while keeping the academy’s memory alive.

The \$3.5 million project is being developed for the National Mary Potter Club, with Evoke Studio Architecture serving as design architect alongside engineers from MMSA and Dewberry.

## Durham Public Schools Investigating Suspended Administrator

NC NEWSLINE – Durham Public Schools is conducting an ongoing investigation into the actions of a school principal and two administrators indicted on felony obstruction of justice charges for their roles in a case involving a six-year-old autistic girl who was allegedly tied to a chair by a teaching assistant at an elementary school, Superintendent Anthony Lewis said Thursday.

Two of the three were also indicted for possible perjury in connection with the incident, which occurred at Eno Valley Elementary School in Nov. 2024.

Law enforcement officials believe the principal and administrators “obstructed the investigation and prosecution” by not responding to records requests in a complete and timely manner. School officials might have also broken the law requiring immediate reporting of suspected child abuse to authorities, law enforcement officials said in court documents.

“As a first step, we are investigating this matter thoroughly because when we’re talking about the safety, the well-being of our scholars, there’s only one path forward, and that is, we must act with urgency, and we must cooperate fully,” Lewis said. “If we fail to do that, we must indeed hold people accountable.” None of the three accused educators immediately responded to interview requests.



Durham Public Schools Board of Education chair Bettina Umstead and vice-chair Millicent Rogers called the allegations in the indictments “alarming” in a statement released late Thursday. “We are committed to understanding what occurred and holding individuals accountable where appropriate,” they said.

A grand jury found there is enough evidence to bring criminal charges against Eno Valley Elementary Principal Tounya Wright, Durham Public Schools senior executive director of employee relations Ayesha Hunter, and Tanya Giovanni, deputy superintendent of administration. All three have been suspended with

investigation, the district is taking steps to establish systems to standardize how it logs and stores legal documents, how it manages and creates investigative files and how it notifies its legal counsel of requests for records, Lewis said.

He also spoke about establishing “regular communications” with the Durham County District Attorney’s office to strengthen its partnership and relationship and to ensure the district is “fully cooperating with investigative efforts.” The district has a meeting scheduled with an assistant district attorney next week. Annual training around child abuse will be enhanced and a “little more robust” than in past years, Lewis said.

“This is beginning with immediate retraining for our principals and administrators,” Lewis said. “We’re also providing retraining to our exceptional children’s staff, administrators and others to reinforce expectations when it comes to physical contact and restraint.”

Durham Police named two former Eno Valley Elementary School teaching assistants in a December 2025 search warrant that allowed Durham Police to search the school district’s central office and digital records. Charges were filed against only one of them in connection with the alleged abuse of the six-year-old autistic girl, but those charges were dismissed by the Durham District

Attorney’s office in November. Meanwhile, Wright, the school principal, was indicted on three potential charges of felony obstruction of justice and one potential charge of perjury. Hunter potentially faces six charges of felony obstruction of justice and two charges of perjury.

Giovanni was indicted on five counts of felony obstruction of justice.

Court records show Giovanni had a court appearance Wednesday and bond was set at \$10,000. Hunter and Wright were arrested this week and court records show each posted bonds of \$5,000.



## THE GOLDEN YEARS

By Judykay Jefferson

As I write, I’m iced in. Iced, not snowed in. Our cul-de-sac street has been unused. It is skating-rink slick, and my car doors are iced shut. The temperature is above freezing, and the ice is slowly melting. This is going to be all about timing. Hopefully, I won’t get so distracted I miss the sweet spot where the ice has melted enough to open the car doors so I can dry the locks so when the temperature drops after sunset, there won’t be re-icing. That’s the plan. Keep a good thought.

I have noticed what feels like an increase in apocalyptic mentality as a response to the announcement of an impending weather event. I have lived in North Carolina thirteen years now and have seen much more intense winter weather happen. I remember living in North Raleigh in 2016 when the snow fell most of 24 hours. It was beautiful. I took pictures. It was also short-lived. Within 36 hours, the sun shone, melting and drying the streets and we all resumed our regular daily activities. The weather alerts were cautionary and, data-based. We prepared but didn’t panic. Not the case this time.

The tone of the weather alerts created more wide-spread panic than intentional awareness. Of course, with the omnipresence of social media’s opinion-based content, the race for audience prioritizes drama over fact. Even the weather has become click-bait. As Harris Teeter and Food Lion’s shelves emptied of water and toilet paper, the accumulation projections decreased, albeit that information was buried small and low on the weather app.

Having grown up in the Mid-West, snow was a given. Anytime from mid-October to mid-April, no one was alarmed when it snowed. I can’t tell you how many Easter Sundays little girls wore white patent leather shoes and straw hats, tipping carefully on icy sidewalks. I remember the May of my senior year of high school playing volleyball on the Senior Patio on a warm spring day. As the wind picked up, we felt the temperature drop and within minutes it began to snow. Game over. In fact, I remember attending the annual June book fair in downtown Chicago and having a similar experience in 1992. There was no panic. No survival purchasing. There was also no social media or cell phones warning us to shelter in place.

I don’t blame this entirely on overly dramatic weather reporting. In fact, I believe the panic is reflective of where we are as a nation. Fear and trauma have blanketed the “land of the free and home of the brave.” We question our national right to freedom and display decreasing bravery. We’re not in a good place. Funny thing is this type of thinking can go both ways. Many will look to root out the perceived enemy of America’s peace and tranquility. Others will eventually use this as a wake-up call to coalesce for justice for all. When it comes down to it, good weather, bad weather, we are in survival mode. This is the stuff that reveals who we are as people, citizens, God’s children. As the bible says in Matthew 5:45: “It rains on the just and the unjust.” In other words, we all in this together.

I love the stories about neighbors helping neighbors; people aiding strangers. Strangely, I may have seen more stories about people expressing concern about the well-being of animals; dogs chained outside; kittens separated from their mothers. Is the perception that these creatures are innocents whereas there are sufficient resources for people to take care of themselves? I love animals however I believe there are greater human needs than resources and that should be our priority.

As an older person without a lot of family nearby, I appreciate each and every text, phone call checking on my wellbeing. I am fortunate to have neighbors who care, family who remember I’m old and don’t need to be out and about. I too check on others because you never know who needs what unless you ask.

By the time you read this, it could be sunshine and 60 degrees. I am predicting, without any scientific evidence, an early Spring. I think there may be one more cold snap, then rain and warming temperatures. Whatever it is, err on the side of caution, think of others, live in the moment, and find peace in knowing we are not in charge.

## BOE Overrules —CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

“So, for the first time when he clicked it by mistake, fat finger, he meant to hit ‘Republican’ and he hit ‘Democrat,’” Carmon responded. “But then when it listed it all out for him to read and confirm? That’s not a fat finger. He either meant to do it, or are you saying he didn’t read it?”

“He didn’t read it,” said Knight’s attorney.

But attorney Andrew Simpson, representing Barbrey, said Knight knew what he was doing.

In its ruling disqualifying Knight, the Wilson Co. Board of Elections seemed to call the timing of the change into question.

According to the January 8 ruling, the evening before Knight changed his party affiliation, incumbent Wilson County Sheriff Calvin L. Woodard, a Democrat, sent an email to his staff informing them he would not be running for reelection.

The next morning, Knight logged onto the DMV website to purport-



edly update his address. At that time, Knight changed his party affiliation from Republican to Democrat.

A few hours later, after learning

from Barbrey that Barbrey would also be running for the office as a Democrat, Knight logged back onto the DMV website and changed his party affiliation back to Republican. Woodard has endorsed Barbrey to succeed him.

State board member Stacy “Four” Eggers IV said he viewed Knight’s change as an error that the candidate should be entitled to correct, just as any voter would be allowed to cure a mistake on the ballot.

Board member Bob Rucho agreed with Eggers that Knight should not be disqualified.

“What we’re going to be doing is preventing voters from having a chance to choose candidates of their own,” said Rucho. “And if I make an error, it’s always going to be on the side of giving the voter an opportunity to choose the people that they would like to pick.”

Siobhan O’Duffy Millen, one of two Democrats on the state board, urged her colleagues not to overrule the

local board of elections, which voted against Knight.

“We’re opening ourselves up in the future to a lot of shenanigans,” said Millen. “I think that’s just a Pandora’s box that we shouldn’t get into.”

Board chair Francis De Luca sided with his Republican colleagues in rejecting the Wilson County Board of Elections’ decision to disqualify Knight from this year’s election.

De Luca said the board will discuss in the future whether the DMV website was meant to be more than a vehicle registration portal.

“I don’t think it was meant to handle more than that, but it’s doing a lot more than that now,” De Luca said.

Knight praised the decision late Tuesday.

“Due process prevailed, and the decision now returns where it belongs ... the people of Wilson county will finally get to decide who they want to be Sheriff,” said Knight in a statement on social media.

## Health Care —CONTINUED FROM PAGE 5

the number of impacted agencies and businesses has declined by 30 percent since 2013, supported the rescission. Scales, who hopes for congressional action, called it “a shocking step backward.”

Where they concur is that the United States has never really committed to sufficiently funding long-term care at home. With the July legislation setting the stage for a \$914 billion cut to Medicaid over the coming decade, that seems unlikely to change anytime soon.

Medicare’s AI referee Beyond rolling back policies for care of the aged, the Trump administration has established a pilot program to introduce one to traditional Medicare: prior authorization, using artificial intelligence and machine learning technologies.

Touting it as a boon to taxpayers, Medicare calls it WISer — Wasteful

and Inappropriate Service Reduction.

Prior authorization, in which private insurers review proposed treatments before agreeing to pay for them, is widely used in Medicare Advantage plans despite its unpopularity with patients, doctors, and health care organizations. It has rarely been used in traditional Medicare.

This month, however, WISer debuts in six states (Arizona, New Jersey, Ohio, Oklahoma, Texas, Washington) in a six-year trial to determine whether review by tech companies can reduce costs and improve efficiency, while maintaining or improving quality of care.

Initially, WISer targets 17 items and services that CMS said “historically have had a higher risk of waste, fraud and abuse.” The list includes knee arthroscopy for arthritis, electrical nerve stimulation devices for several conditions, and treatment for

impotence.

The pilot program excludes emergency services and inpatient hospital care, or care where delay poses “a substantial risk.” Algorithmic denials will trigger review by “an appropriately licensed human clinician.” The tech companies get “a share of averted expenditures.”

“It injects some of the worst of Medicare Advantage into traditional Medicare,” said David Lipschutz, co-director of the Center for Medicare Advocacy. The six vendors that approve or reject treatments “have a financial stake in the outcomes,” he said, and therefore “an incentive to deny care.”

Moreover, the CMS Innovation Center overseeing the pilot could theoretically bypass Congress and expand prior authorization to include more medical services in more states.

**Ligon Renovation Community Engagement Meeting**  
**Monday, Feb. 9th 6:00 P.M. - 8:00 P.M.**  
**Ligon Magnet Middle School, 706 E Lenoir Street, Raleigh NC 27601**  
**During this event, district staff will provide an update on the current status of the Ligon Magnet Middle School renovation project and outline next steps for the revitalization of the school’s facilities. Following the presentation, there will be time for discussion to give families, staff, and community members an open opportunity to share feedback and ask questions.**

# Church

## Buddhist Monks On National Walk For Peace Receive Flowers

WUNC – Walking 3,200 miles throughout the South can wear you out.

On Thursday, the 19 monks doing so took a break for lunch before resuming their trek on U.S. Highway 64 toward downtown Pittsboro.

Onlookers parked their cars for miles along the highway, while Chatham County Sheriff's officers escorted the group.

Hundreds waited for hours in hopes of catching just a few minutes of the peaceful walk — some monks wore running shoes, others walked barefoot. They all wore saffron robes as they've received an overwhelming response across the Carolinas.

"It brings tears to your eyes," said Kristen Aldretti, who flew in from Colorado and rented a car to see the monks. "It's so moving to think about what they're doing and the symbolism and the selflessness, and it does give you hope."

The monks hail from Dhammace-tiya, a Vietnamese Buddhist organization in Fort Worth, Texas. Their walk began on Oct. 26 there, and they plan to reach Washington, D.C., before Valentine's Day.

The "Walk for Peace" amassed a viral social media following with each day of their journey, with

people following the group to get a glimpse of their universal message of peace, mindfulness, and compassion.

On Friday, the monks set out toward Apex where they stopped and participated in a ceremony with the town before heading east to Raleigh.

When the monks finally passed the anxious people on the side of the highway, the crowds were mostly silent.

People held out roses for them, many putting their hands together at their chest in prayer out of reverence and gratitude.

Some had tears running down their faces, and others knelt down before them.

Monks chant, bless an ailing woman

The monks silently smiled as they walked by, stopping briefly only to pass out a bracelet, or receive a flower.

Suddenly, the monks stopped at a woman standing with a sign. She knelt before them. Then, they began to chant for nearly a minute, as people stood by and watched in awe.

Lilly-Ann Wilson, who came from Washington, D.C. sobbed loudly next to them as they chanted.

The woman with the sign was recovering from a bone marrow



transplant and asked the monks for a blessing.

Wilson told WUNC that the woman with the sign was her sister, whom she had visited to be her bone marrow donor. Her sister sought a blessing from the monks in her fragile condition.

"I can't contain myself, I just can't," said Wilson, who sat in her car crying afterwards. "It's a beautiful moment. An absolutely beautiful

moment."

A moment "needed for the nation" For those of Asian descent who attended the walk, it was a different experience.

Chapel Hill resident Lin Oo migrated to North Carolina from Myanmar during the pandemic.

"We (are) people (who) love peace. Every people love peace," said Oo. "That's why they walk? We don't care, we don't know. But they walk



for peace. The world needs peace."

The monks' walk was important to him because Buddhist monks led a historic protest known as the "Saffron Revolution" in 2007 against the military government in Myanmar, facing severe repression.

But here in America, they can march freely, he said.

"Buddhism is not a religion, it's a way of life," said Jenny Flynn, who is Nepalese-American, a Buddhist,

and traveled from New Jersey. "The monks are living Buddhism. They are practicing simplicity and peace."

For Lynne Johnson, one of the many local residents who turned out, the monks' journey is a respite amid news of war and political division.

"I think it's what our nation needs," said Johnson. "I think it's the one thing right now that people can come together about. Everyone's so divided. We don't need to be."

## Obituaries

### FLORINE BADGER TROUBLEFIELD

Florine Badger Troublefield was born in Smithfield, NC to the late Cornelius Badger and Ida Jane Badger on Nov. 20, 1932. She departed her earthly life at her residence in Raleigh, NC on January 3, 2026. In addition to her parents, she was preceded in death by two sisters: Bertha and Mary and four brothers: Nathan, Leroy, Bud and Ervin.

She was educated in the Johnston Co. School System. She later received her certification in Nursing. "After being employed at other places where she used her nursing skills, she became a surgical nurse at Rex Hospital where she was employed for more than thirty years.

Florine accepted Christ at a young age and continued her spiritual journey at St. Amanda Missionary



Baptist Church, Mt. Peace Baptist Church, and Maple Temple United Church of Christ.

She was united in Holy Matrimony to the late Abraham Troublefield in 1950. To this union, they were blessed with four children. Florine took pride in being a good wife,

mother, and homemaker. In addition to caring for and raising her children, she loved shopping in thrift shops and going to food banks to get food and clothing to share with those in need. Some of her favorite things included dressing up with jewelry to match, going fishing, decorating with plants and flowers inside and outside of her home.

Florine leaves to cherish her love and memory, her four daughters: Shirley Graves (Kenny), Riverdale, GA, Doris Utley, Raleigh, NC, Carolyn Bonner (Altoris), Wendell, NC, and Pamela Troublefield, Apex, NC; four siblings: Marvin Badger, Goldsboro, NC, Leon Badger, Garner, NC, Gloria Holden, Clayton, NC and Evelyn Triggs, Clayton, NC; six grandchildren, 12 great grandchildren, four great-great grandchildren, and a host of other dear friends and relatives too numerous to name.

## SERMON of the WEEK



### GOD'S MAJESTY Sermon by: Bishop-Elect William "Billy" Eli Ratliff

I'll never forget February 1996, when my wife and I were called to leave Raleigh to be with her dying grandmother, Mother Mary Steward. She was 99 years old and just one week away from turning 100. Wisely, her family had already celebrated her life with a large birthday party two weeks earlier at the Ramada Inn on Highway 55 in Apex. That day, she was her usual self—walking, talking, sitting, smiling, and enjoying the presence of generations of her children.

When we arrived at her home, she was resting quietly and peacefully. The doctors had told us there was nothing more they could do. Her heart was simply slowing down—beat by beat—and only God knew when that final beat would come.

Her oldest daughter asked if I would read Scripture and pray, and I accepted with honor. My wife, her mother, and her sisters joined hands as we prayed together. And I will never forget what happened next. When I opened my eyes, large, beautiful snowflakes—some as big as nickels and dimes—were gently falling all over her property. It was breathtaking. All day the sun had been shining. There was no forecast of snow—zero percent chance—, but heaven had its own plan.

Even more remarkable was the

Scripture I read. As Mother Mary's life was slipping away, her daughter handed me her Bible. I didn't search for a passage. I must admit, in that moment, I was hoping to read a comforting Psalm. But the Holy Spirit spoke clearly: "Just open the Bible and read where your finger lands." So, I opened her Bible and, without hesitation, my right index finger moved to the left side of the open pages and rested on Job 37:6. And in obedience, I read straight through verse 13. On that blessed day, I read from the KJV, but for more clarity, let's read from the GNT. And it reads on this wise:

6 He commands snow to fall on the earth, and sends torrents of drenching rain.  
7 He brings our work to a stop; he shows us what he can do.

8 The wild animals go to their dens.  
9 The storm winds come from the south, and the biting cold from the north.

10 The breath of God freezes the waters, and turns them to solid ice.

11 Lightning flashes from the clouds,  
12 as they move at God's will. They do all that God commands, everywhere throughout the world.

13 God sends rain to water the earth; he may send it to punish us, or to show us his favor.

Here, one of Job's friends, Elihu, proclaims the majesty of God. He declares that snow itself is produced by the command of God and stands as evidence of His wisdom and greatness. In Elihu's time, the scientific laws behind snow and storms were unknown, so what appeared before them was understood as the immediate work of God. And even now, modern science has not diminished that truth. In fact, every new discovery should move us from blind admiration to intelligent devotion, from wonder to praise.

We live in a world where scientists use radars, satellites, supercomput-

ers, and weather balloons to predict the forecast—and sometimes they are right, sometimes close, and sometimes wrong altogether. This past weekend in Raleigh, North Carolina, was a perfect example. And even now, they are offering their best educated guesses about what may come next. But one thing remains true: God is still in control.

Job 36:22-37:13 reminds us that Elihu describes God's power and majesty as revealed through storms, which He uses to accomplish whatever purpose He desires. And Job 37:13 teaches us that God's providence may come as correction, as love, or simply as care for His land. So let us agree on this: all weather is God's weather.

As one unknown author so beautifully said:

Sunshine is healthful;  
Wind is invigorating;  
Rain is refreshing;  
Snow benefits crops;  
Heat makes cold attractive;  
Cold makes heat appreciated;  
All weather is God's weather.  
So, thank God—for today.

One thing many church-folk across North Carolina can agree on this past weekend is that some of us experienced snow, sleet, freezing rain, rain, or a wintry mix. And if nothing else, that proves that by the works of God, we can sometimes all agree on something.

But more important than the weather, I pray that each of us can wholeheartedly say—or even sing:

Jesus, I'll never forget what You've done for me.

Jesus, I'll never forget how You set my soul free.

Jesus, I'll never forget how You brought me out.

No, no, no... I'll never forget.

Please visit [www.youtube.com/@lincolnparkholinesschurch1913](http://www.youtube.com/@lincolnparkholinesschurch1913) to watch this week's sermon on video. We invite you to Like, Subscribe, and Share your comments. We would love to hear from you.

## Practical Biblical Principles

### SOUL NOT FOR SALE Read: Matthew 16:24-28

How often have you pondered the thought about the integrity of other people and say, "Everybody have his/her price," meaning that a person's love, loyalty, and support can be bought. By thinking this way, one put the soul of a person on the same level of a house, land, horse, cow, car, and other items that may be bought or sold.

We are not shocked when we see a for sale sign on a house or car. However, we are dismayed when we perceive that someone has bought another person's love or support and such person is now under the influence or control of the purchaser. "There is nothing more debasing than the era of black slavery when there were for-sale signs and price tags hanging on the bodies of our black fore parents standing on an elevated platform waiting to be separated, priced and sold. Our nation has never recovered from such an ugly time period"— Rev. Gardner C. Taylor.

There is much historical evidence that many of the black prince and princesses, which were removed from the mother land of Africa, hung onto their integrity and pride when sold off as slaves. Otherwise, the number of black up-risings would not have been noted. This proves not even slavery could contract the sale of the soul. Today we all need to hear the Words of Jesus' teaching, for some of us are selling our souls too cheaply.

Has the devil bought you out with worldly promises and temptations?

When one is not found in regular worship service and have concluded you no longer need Jesus for any reason, then the chances are good the world or something stronger than you, will have bought you and you don't realize it. Your soul was put up for sale and somebody or something has bought it without you knowing it (Matthew 16:26).

I tell the story of a man who took notice of a well-dressed businessman was setting up tables in front of the local church, the football and basketball stadiums, the golf course, drinking holes, beaches, and casinos. On the table were very expensive-looking gifts, which were free for the picking, guaranteeing happiness, lots of fun, extra money, joy, and good feelings. When asked, what are the gifts on the table, the well-dressed man said, they are give-away gifts. There is no cost for you, and if you chose to participate in my business game, there is only one condition required. What is the condition asked the inquisitive man? Well, said the business man, if you choose that gift with the four carat diamond in it, all you have to do is remember where you got it from and keep coming back, and if you break the deal, real bad luck will come to you and yours. Then why are you set up for business in front of the church? Oh, replied the businessman, I'm not giving anything away at the church I'm selling them "discouragement." This is why they come to my other tables. The point to be made here is when we spend time away from Christ, we in a sense, are putting our souls up for sale. The problem here is who

and what will outbid our own selves and buy our souls against our will and drag us into the basement.

Charlemagne (Charles the Great-700 AD), first emperor of Rome and benevolent ruler of the Franks, and the whole of Europe for 46 years. He was the grandson of Charles Martel, who defeated the Muslims when they invaded Europe from Africa. When he died, this wise and honored king was not buried as if sleeping. He was buried seated on a king's throne dressed in stately robes with an open Bible on his knee, with one dead cold finger pointing to the words of Jesus. "For what is a man profited if he shall gain the whole world and lose his own soul?" (Matthew 16:26).

Every person is for sale. It is a matter of for what or how much. Are you sold out? The matter is not whether our souls are to be claimed or owned by somebody or something else. The question is rather by whom or what. Yes, our souls are for sale. What do you think your soul is worth? Do you measure your worth if you were to sell-out? Now that Christ has died to save our souls, what do you think you are worth? What is the price of a soul eternal? We are made in the image of God (Genesis 1:26). What price did God and His Son put on our souls? Jesus died for us because we are valuable to Him (John 3:16). God made no junk! If you must sell your soul to someone, "Sell out to Jesus!"

J. L. Caldwell, Pastor  
New Jerusalem Baptist Cathedral  
Durham, NC

Website: [www.mynjbc.org](http://www.mynjbc.org)  
Email: [njbc84@gmail.com](mailto:njbc84@gmail.com)





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# Editorials

## Editorial Policy

Unsigned editorials in this space are the opinion of the newspaper. All other opinion pieces, including those from regular columnists, are the opinion of the writers themselves. The Carolinian strives to provide provocative commentary that is likely to spur thoughtful debate, regardless of whether we agree with it.

### SAVE ACT: WILL 69 MILLION AMERICAN WOMEN LOSE THE RIGHT TO VOTE?

By Jheri Hardaway

Have you heard of the SAVE Act? The Safeguard American Voter Eligibility (SAVE) Act would require all American citizens registering to vote or updating their registration information to present documentary proof of citizenship in person. For the vast majority of Americans, this would be a passport or birth certificate. Government-issued driver's licenses, including REAL IDs, as well as military or tribal IDs do not satisfy the bill's requirements. The SAVE Act would require all Americans to prove their citizenship with documentation unavailable to millions and upend the way every American citizen registers to vote.

According to The Center for American Progress, an independent nonpartisan policy institute that is dedicated to improving the lives of all Americans through bold, progressive ideas, the legislation would invert the responsibility to verify a person's eligibility and citizenship status from election officials and the government onto every single American citizen, making citizens convince the government that they're eligible to exercise their right to vote. The SAVE Act would change the way all citizens register to vote upon enactment. It would upend online voter registration, make it impossible to mail in a registration application, and eliminate voter registration drives.

Approximately 146 million American citizens do not possess a valid passport. For context, 153 million Americans voted in the 2024 presidential general election. High rates of passport ownership are overwhelmingly concentrated in blue states, while low rates are concentrated in red states. In seven states, less than one-third of citizens have a valid passport: West Virginia, Mississippi, Alabama, Arkansas, Kentucky, Louisiana, and Oklahoma. Only in four states do more than two-thirds of citizens have a valid passport: New York, Massachusetts, California, and New Jersey.

The National Women's Law Center explains the issue, "Under the SAVE Act, anyone who has changed their name after birth will face increased barriers to voting. That's because this bill requires voters who don't have a passport to present a birth certificate that matches the name on their REAL ID or driver's license. This is particularly relevant for married women who legally change their last name after marriage, and trans people, who will often change their name during or after transitioning. That means if you're one of the approximately 69 million married women in the United States who decided to take your husband's last name, you may have a really hard time getting into the voting booth since the last name on your birth certificate is different than the REAL ID with your husband's last name. It's also extremely harmful for trans people to have to consider changing their I.D.s back to a name and gender they don't identify with just to exercise their right to vote."

As many as 69 million American women lack access to valid birth certificates. A large portion of female citizens ages 15 and older in each state whose names do not match their birth certificates due to a last name change or hyphenation upon marriage, the SAVE Act has the potential to permanently alter our voting pool, silencing the true will of the people.

### MUHAMMAD ALI RISKED EVERYTHING FOR HIS CONVICTIONS. HIS STAMP PROVES IT MATTERED.

By Bonnie Jean Feldkamp

Muhammad Ali was honored with his own forever stamp by the United States Postal Service on Jan. 15. "I should be a postage stamp," Ali famously once said, "because that's the only way I'll ever get licked."

I attended the launch celebration in Louisville where Bob Costas served as the master of ceremonies. As I listened to each speaker share memories of The Greatest, I could not help but think about how grounded Ali was in his convictions. His mindset feels so rare, but it also feels so right that he is revered now because of it.

I keep coming back to the part of Muhammad Ali's story when he refused to be drafted for the Vietnam War. Many sought draft deferments due to marital, parental or student status as well as for medical reasons, and Ali wasn't the only one who refused to serve due to religious and moral reasons. The term was "conscientious objector," which according to Amnesty International was defined as being "people who are eligible for conscription but refuse to perform military service for reasons of conscience or profound conviction."

Around 170,000 men received conscientious objector deferments during the Vietnam War, with 61,000 happening in 1971 following the Supreme Court decision that expanded the definition of what could be considered conscientious objection. By then, public support of the war had waned.

However, in 1967, the courts did not believe Ali was genuine in his objection. At his scheduled U.S. Armed Forces induction in Houston, they called his name three times, and three times Ali refused to step forward. He was warned of the consequences and given one more chance to comply. He did not.

Muhammad Ali knew from a very young age that he wanted to be a boxer. He worked tirelessly to make it a reality. He raced the school bus to school. He jumped rope between classes and after school, after his part-time job, he trained at the gym. He said, "Champions are made from something they have deep inside them — a desire, a dream, a vision."

At the top of his game, the then-undefeated world heavyweight boxing champion was convicted of draft evasion on April 28, 1967. He was stripped of his heavyweight title, suspended from boxing, sentenced to five years in prison and fined \$10,000.

"I ain't got no quarrel with those Vietcong," Ali said. He stayed out of jail on bond for the three years it took to fight the ruling in court and win. And though many think of him fondly today, at the time he was a hated man.

Not only did Muhammad Ali stand up for his convictions, but he did so with swagger. He was loud and proud. He rejected Christianity as the religion of his oppressor. He changed his name from Cassius Clay to Muhammad Ali, denouncing his birth name as a "slave name," for its ties to white ownership. He was a Black Muslim, which many felt had a militant connotation.

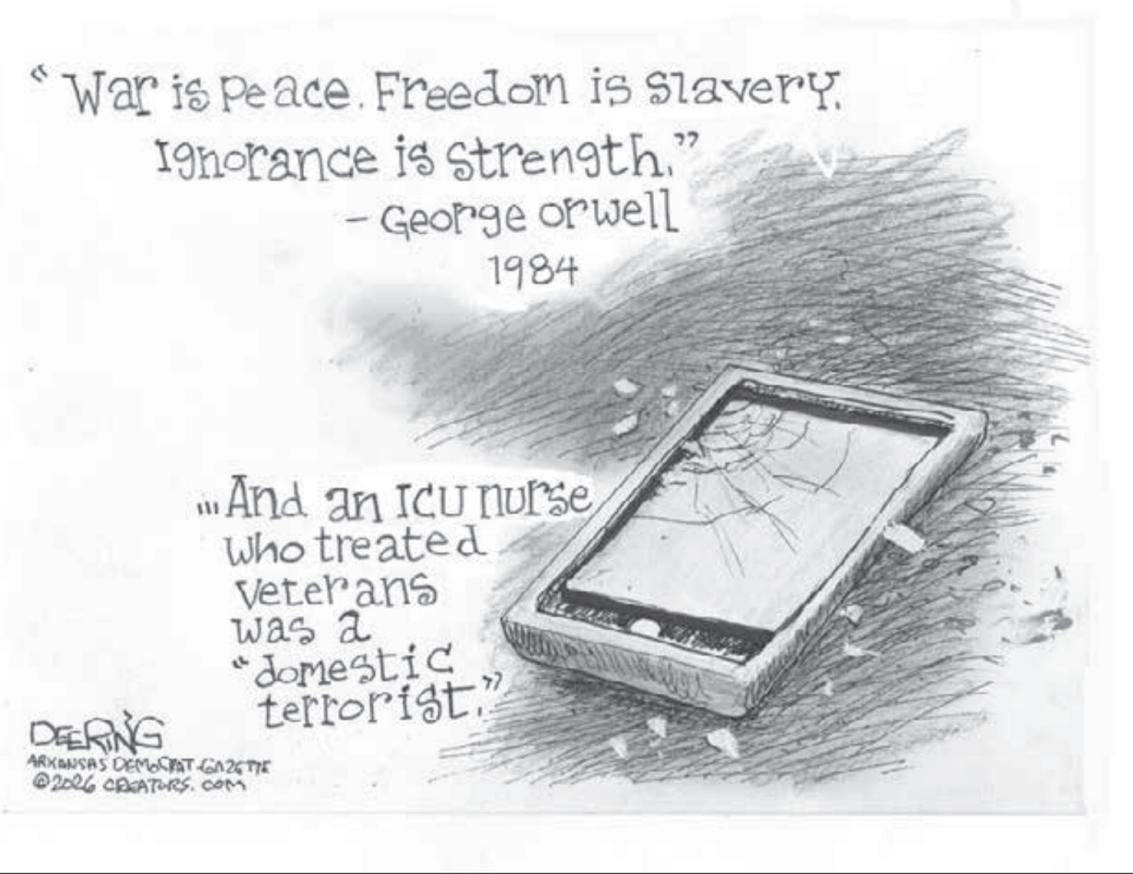
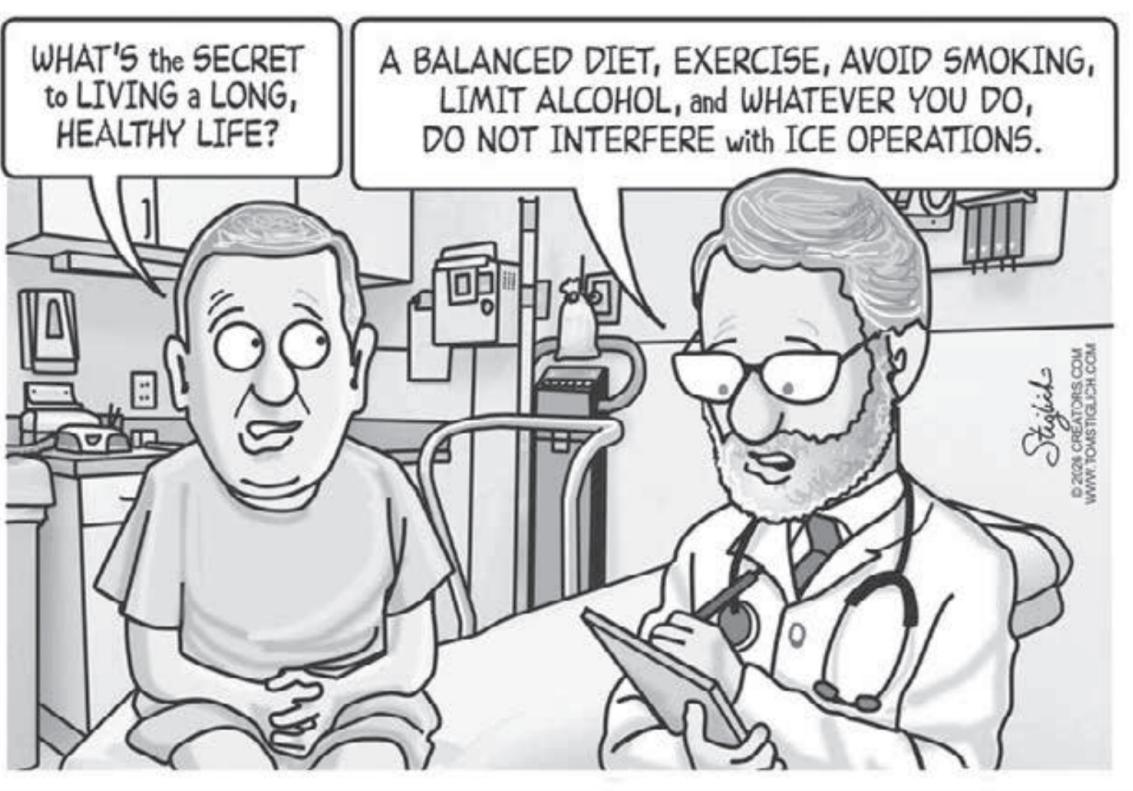
Muhammad Ali was radical. He was the "Louisville Lip," audacious enough to think himself worthy and consider himself "The Greatest." Meanwhile, America wanted nothing more than to remind Black people of their second-class status. Ali said: "I am America. I am the part you won't recognize. But get used to me. Black, confident, cocky; my name, not yours; my religion, not yours; my goals, my own; get used to me."

He took on the Vietnam War at a time when it still had public support. But while Ali was shunned from boxing and fighting in court, that tide began to turn. The 1968 Tet Offensive in particular exposed the futility of the Vietnam War. Over time, Muhammad Ali's stance was validated.

Now, Muhammad Ali's forever stamp and the stories of his humanitarian efforts make it hard to imagine him as a hated man. That's the lesson he offers us now. The unflinching truth-tellers are not always appreciated in their own time. We need the people with everything to lose who are willing to step into the light and resist.

Muhammad Ali sacrificed three years of prime fighting time in his life along with the millions of dollars he could have earned to stand up for what he believed in. It was a price he was willing to pay. He served his country in other ways for the rest of his life. It's why when he lit the torch at the 1996 Olympic Games, visibly shaking with Parkinson's, Bob Costas described a collective gasp in that Atlanta stadium — a gasp that gave way to thunderous applause. By then, most people understood that Muhammad Ali, in all of his audacity, stood on the right side of history.

The champ deserves his forever stamp. Every time I place one on an envelope, I'm going to remember his example of what it really means to be a champ. "You lose nothing when you fight for a cause," Ali said. "In my mind the losers are those who don't have a cause they care about."



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# Classifieds

## CHATHAM COUNTY

STATE OF NORTH CAROLINA  
CHATHAM COUNTY  
**NOTICE OF SERVICE OF PROCESS BY PUBLICATION**  
In the General Court of Justice  
District Court Division  
File No: 26CV00047-180  
To: EDGAR PERALES CASTRO, Defendant.  
Take notice that a pleading seeking relief against you has been filed. The nature of the relief being sought is for child custody. You are required to make defense to such pleading no later than March 3rd, 2026 said date being at least forty (40) days from the first publication of this Notice, and upon your failure to do so, the Plaintiff, LEVY MORALES RAMIREZ, will apply to the court located at 40 E Chatham St, Pittsboro, NC 27312 for the relief sought.

This, the 16th day of January 2026.  
Aneta Pavai  
Pavai Law Offices, PLLC  
Telephone: (919) 410-6690  
1/22, 1/29, and 2/5/2026

## CURRITUCK COUNTY

STATE OF NORTH CAROLINA  
CURRITUCK COUNTY  
**NOTICE TO CREDITORS**  
RE: THE ESTATE OF MARY JEAN SMITH – 25E000251-260  
Having qualified as Administrator of the Estate of MARY JEAN SMITH, deceased, Currituck County, North Carolina, the undersigned does hereby notify all persons, firms, and corporations having claims against the estate of said deceased to exhibit them to the undersigned on or before the 8th day of April, 2026, or this notice will be pleaded in bar of their recovery. This the 8th day of January, 2026.  
Charles Smith, Executor  
DSR Legal, PLLC  
PO Box 51596  
Durham, NC 27717  
1/8, 1/15, 1/22, and 1/29/2026

## DURHAM COUNTY

STATE OF NORTH CAROLINA  
DURHAM COUNTY  
**NOTICE TO CREDITORS**  
File Number 26E000089-310  
ALL PERSONS, firms and corporations having claims against LINDA ANN NEAL- NYANGENA A/K/A LINDA ANN NEAL, deceased, of Durham, Durham County, North Carolina, are notified to exhibit the same to the undersigned on or before April 30, 2026, or this notice will be pleaded in bar of recovery. Debtors of the Decedent are asked to make immediate payment. This 29th day of January, 2026. Carima Eticha Neal, Administrator, c/o Caroline B. Denning, Esq., Womble Bond Dickinson (US) LLP, 555 Fayetteville Street, Suite 1100, Raleigh, NC 27601.  
1/29, 2/5, 2/12, and 2/19/2026  
STATE OF NORTH CAROLINA  
DURHAM COUNTY  
**NOTICE TO CREDITORS**  
26E000062-310  
ALL PERSONS, firms and corporations having claims against LOTTIE MAE WALTON, of Durham County, N.C., are notified to exhibit the same to the undersigned on or before April 30, 2026, or this notice will be pleaded in bar of recovery. Debtors of the decedent are asked to make immediate payment. This the 29th day of January, 2026.  
Lisa Bullard  
1502 Pomona Drive  
Durham, NC 27707  
1/29, 2/5, 2/12, and 2/19/2026  
STATE OF NORTH CAROLINA  
DURHAM COUNTY  
**NOTICE TO CREDITORS**  
In the General Court of Justice,  
Superior Court Division  
Before the Clerk  
File Number 26E000063-310  
THE UNDERSIGNED, having qualified on the 14th day of January 2026, as EXECUTOR of the Estate of ROBERT BRADSHAW JONES, SR., late of Durham County, North Carolina, hereby wish to notify all persons having claims against the Estate of said deceased to exhibit them to the undersigned at the below listed address on or before the 30th day of April, 2026, or this notice will be pleaded in bar of their

recovery.

All persons indebted to the Estate will please make immediate payment to the undersigned at the below listed address.

This, the 29th day of January, 2026.

Nichole J. DeWeese, Executor  
212 Smith Dr.  
Durham, NC 27712

1/29, 2/5, 2/12, and 2/19/2026  
STATE OF NORTH CAROLINA  
DURHAM COUNTY

**NOTICE TO CREDITORS**  
In the General Court of Justice,  
Superior Court Division  
Before the Clerk

File Number 26E000044-310  
THE UNDERSIGNED, having qualified on the 14th day of January 2026, as ADMINISTRATOR of the Estate of PETER ALAN LODIEWICK, late of Durham County, North Carolina, hereby wish to notify all persons having claims against the Estate of said deceased to exhibit them to the undersigned at the below listed address on or before the 30th day of April, 2026, or this notice will be pleaded in bar of their recovery.

All persons indebted to the Estate will please make immediate payment to the undersigned at the below listed address.

This, the 29th day of January, 2026.

Victoria A. Lodewick, Administrator  
c/o Law Office of Anne Page Watson, 3400 Croasdaile Drive, Suite 205, Durham, NC 27705.

1/29, 2/5, 2/12, and 2/19/2026  
STATE OF NORTH CAROLINA  
DURHAM COUNTY

**NOTICE TO CREDITORS**  
In the General Court of Justice,  
Superior Court Division  
Before the Clerk

File Number 26E000024-310  
THE UNDERSIGNED, having qualified on the 6th day of January 2026, as EXECUTOR of the Estate of SHARON J. SABRAW, late of Durham County, North Carolina, hereby wish to notify all persons having claims against the Estate of said deceased to exhibit them to the undersigned at the below listed address on or before the 30th day of April, 2026, or this notice will be pleaded in bar of their recovery.

All persons indebted to the Estate will please make immediate payment to the undersigned at the below listed address.

This, the 29th day of January, 2026.

John Collier Sabraw II, Executor  
74 S. Shannon Ave.  
Athens, OH 45701

1/29, 2/5, 2/12, and 2/19/2026  
STATE OF NORTH CAROLINA  
DURHAM COUNTY

**NOTICE TO CREDITORS**  
In the General Court of Justice,  
Superior Court Division  
Before the Clerk

File Number 24E000218-310  
THE UNDERSIGNED, having qualified on the 9th day of August 2024, as ADMINISTRATOR of the Estate of CAROL JEAN MORRISON, late of Durham County, North Carolina, hereby wish to notify all persons having claims against the Estate of said deceased to exhibit them to the undersigned at the below listed address on or before the 30th day of April, 2026, or this notice will be pleaded in bar of their recovery.

All persons indebted to the Estate will please make immediate payment to the undersigned at the below listed address.

This, the 29th day of January, 2026.

Calvin Morrison, Administrator  
3820 Vesta Dr.  
Raleigh, NC 27603

1/29, 2/5, 2/12, and 2/19/2026  
STATE OF NORTH CAROLINA  
DURHAM COUNTY

**NOTICE TO CREDITORS**  
In the General Court of Justice,  
Superior Court Division  
Before the Clerk

File Number 25E001416-310  
THE UNDERSIGNED, having qualified on the 6th day of January 2026, as CO-EXECUTORS of the Estate of HELEN R. GAMBLE, late of Durham County, North Carolina, hereby wish to notify all persons having claims against the Estate of said deceased to exhibit them to the undersigned at the below listed address on or before the 30th day of April, 2026, or this notice will be pleaded in bar of their recovery.

All persons indebted to the Estate will please make immediate payment to the undersigned at the below listed address.

This, the 29th day of January, 2026.

Janie V. Harrell, Co-Executor  
1915 Southview Road  
Durham, NC 27703  
Frances R. Mizzell, Co-Executor  
2901 Blue Grass Lane  
Decatur, GA 30034

1/29, 2/5, 2/12, and 2/19/2026  
STATE OF NORTH CAROLINA  
DURHAM COUNTY

**NOTICE TO CREDITORS**  
File 25E001560-310

All persons, firms and corporations having claims against THOMAS THOMPSON WEAVER, deceased, of Durham County, NC, are notified to exhibit the same to the undersigned on or before April 23, 2026 or this notice will be pleaded in bar of recovery. Debtors of the decedent are asked to make immediate payment.

This the 22nd day of January, 2026.

JONI PIERCE, EXECUTOR, C/O BETH W BOWEN, BOWEN LAW FIRM PC 590 New Waverly Pl Ste 120 Cary, NC 27518

1/22, 1/29, 2/5, and 2/12/2026  
STATE OF NORTH CAROLINA  
DURHAM COUNTY

**NOTICE TO CREDITORS**  
In the General Court of Justice,  
Superior Court Division  
Before the Clerk

File Number 25E001585-310  
THE UNDERSIGNED, having qualified on the 30th day of December 2025, as EXECUTOR of the Estate of JOHN THOMAS GRAY, late of Durham County, North Carolina, hereby wish to notify all persons having claims against the Estate of said deceased to exhibit them to the undersigned at the below listed address on or before the 23rd day of April, 2026, or this notice will be pleaded in bar of their recovery.

All persons indebted to the Estate will please make immediate payment to the undersigned at the below listed address.

This, the 22nd day of January, 2026.

Faye Harris Gray, Executor  
4621 Holloman Road  
Durham, NC 27703

1/22, 1/29, 2/5, and 2/12/2026  
STATE OF NORTH CAROLINA  
DURHAM COUNTY

**NOTICE TO CREDITORS**  
In the General Court of Justice,  
Superior Court Division  
Before the Clerk

File Number 25E001375-310  
THE UNDERSIGNED, having qualified on the 29th day of October 2025, as EXECUTOR of the Estate of JAMES DAVID LORE, late of Durham County, North Carolina, hereby wish to notify all persons having claims against the Estate of said deceased to exhibit them to the undersigned at the below listed address on or before the 23rd day of April, 2026, or this notice will be pleaded in bar of their recovery.

All persons indebted to the Estate will please make immediate payment to the undersigned at the below listed address.

This, the 22nd day of January, 2026.

John C. Wainio, Executor  
109 Presque Isle Lane  
Chapel Hills, NC 27514

1/22, 1/29, 2/5, and 2/12/2026  
STATE OF NORTH CAROLINA  
DURHAM COUNTY

**NOTICE TO CREDITORS**  
In the General Court of Justice,  
Superior Court Division  
Before the Clerk

File Number 26E000052-310  
THE UNDERSIGNED, having qualified on the 13th day of January 2026, as EXECUTOR of the Estate of BARBARA A. REED, late of Durham County, North Carolina, hereby wish to notify all persons having claims against the Estate of said deceased to exhibit them to the undersigned at the below listed address on or before the 16th day of April, 2026, or this notice will be pleaded in bar of their recovery.

All persons indebted to the Estate will please make immediate payment to the undersigned at the below listed address.

This, the 15th day of January, 2026.

Elizabeth Gualtieri-Reed, Executor  
105 Hogan Glen Ct.  
Chapel Hill, NC 27516

1/15, 1/22, 1/29, and 2/5/2026  
STATE OF NORTH CAROLINA  
COUNTY OF DURHAM

**NOTICE OF SERVICE OF PROCESS BY PUBLICATION**  
In the General Court of Justice,  
Superior Court Division  
FILE NO.: 24SP001412-310

IN THE MATTER OF THE FORECLOSURE OF A DEED OF TRUST EXECUTED BY ANGELA RENEESIMPSON DATED JANUARY 13, 2004 AND RECORDED IN BOOK 4248 AT PAGE 641 IN THE DURHAM COUNTY PUBLIC REGISTRY, NORTH CAROLINA.

TO: Jennifer Simpson-Rogers  
3004 Ivey Wood Lane  
Apt. 219  
Durham, NC 27703; and  
Jamie Allen Bowen  
2001 Keotuk Court

Apex, NC 27523

Take notice that a pleading seeking relief against you has been filed in the above action. The nature of the relief being sought is as follows: Petitioner has filed a Petition to for Surplus Funds.

You are required to make defense to such pleading no later than the 24th day of February, 2026, which is 40 days from the first publication of this notice. Upon your failure to file a pleading by the above date, party seeking service against you will apply to the Court for the relief sought.

This the 15th day of January, 2026.

Thomas K. Reardon attorney for Robert E. Levin, Petitioner  
Haywood, Denny & Miller, L.L.P.  
P.O. Box 51429  
Durham, NC 27717

Telephone: 919-403-0000  
The Carolinian: 1/15, 1/22, 1/29, and 2/5/2026

STATE OF NORTH CAROLINA  
DURHAM COUNTY  
**NOTICE TO CREDITORS**  
FILE NO: 25E001317-310

In The General Court Of Justice  
Superior Court Division  
Before The Clerk

ESTATE OF AURIEL CIMONE LOWE  
ADMINSTRATORS NOTICE TO CREDITORS

THE UNDERSIGNED having qualified as Administrator of the Estate of AURIEL CIMONE LOWE, Deceased, in the Office of the Clerk of Superior Court of Durham County, does hereby notify all persons, firms and corporations having claims against the said Decedent to present the same to the undersigned on or before April 17, 2026, said date being at least three months from the date of the first publication or posting of this Notice as indicated below, or the same will be pleaded in bar of their recovery. All persons indebted to said Estate, please make immediate payment.

This Notice is given pursuant to the provisions of G.S. 28A-14-1.

This 15th day of January, 2026.  
Name and Address of Administrator  
Stephanie Thomas  
29237 Garnet Canyon Drive  
Santa Clarita, CA 91390  
Name and Address of Attorney:  
Steven Lundberg  
1155 Kildaire Farm Rd, Ste. 204  
Cary, NC 27511  
Date of Publication: January 15, 22, 29 and February 5, 2026  
STATE OF NORTH CAROLINA  
DURHAM COUNTY

**NOTICE TO CREDITORS**  
The undersigned, Carl A. Harris, having duly qualified as Executor of the Estate of ANNIE H. COOPER, deceased, late of Durham County, North Carolina, hereby notifies all persons, firms and corporations having claims against the Estate to present them to the undersigned in care of Ronald G. Coulter, Attorney for the Estate, 3400 Croasdaile Dr., Ste 205, Durham, NC 27705, on or before April 17, 2026 or it will be pleaded in bar of their recovery. All persons and legal entities indebted to the Estate will please make immediate payment. This the 15th day of January, 2026.

Carl A. Harris, Executor  
C/O Ronald G. Coulter, Attorney  
3400 Croasdaile Drive Ste 205  
Durham, NC 27705  
1-919-246-5775  
Publication Dates: 1/15, 1/22, 1/29, 2/5/2026.  
STATE OF NORTH CAROLINA  
COUNTY OF DURHAM  
**NOTICE TO CREDITORS**

The undersigned, having qualified as Executor of the Estate of CATHERINE C. ASCOTT AKA CATHERINE CHAVIOUS ASCOTT, Deceased, late of Durham County, North Carolina, does hereby notify all persons, firms, and corporations having claims against the estate to exhibit the same on or before 16th day or April, 2026, or this notice will be pleaded in bar of their recovery. Debtors of the decedent are asked to make immediate payment.

Dated January 15, 2026.  
Ashley Ascott Ahlers, Administrator  
c/o Attorney Heather Hazelwood  
PO Box 61182  
Durham NC 27715  
1/15, 1/22, 1/29, and 2/5/2026  
STATE OF NORTH CAROLINA  
COUNTY OF DURHAM  
**NOTICE TO CREDITORS**

All persons, firms and corporations having claims against KATHLEEN DIANE CALLAHAN, deceased, of Durham County, NC, are notified to exhibit the same to the undersigned on or before the 16th day of April 2026, or this notice will be pleaded in bar of recovery. Debtors of the decedent are asked to make immediate payment.

This the 15th day of January 2026.

Peggy K. Callahan, Limited Personal Representative  
c/o Trusts and Estates Law Group  
4141 Parklake Avenue, Suite 310  
Raleigh, NC 27612

1/15, 1/22, 1/29, and 2/5/2026  
STATE OF NORTH CAROLINA  
COUNTY OF DURHAM

**NOTICE TO CREDITORS**  
The undersigned having qualified as Limited Personal Representative of the Estate of JOHN PHILLIP BENNETT, Deceased, late of Durham County, North Carolina, this is to notify all persons, firms and corporations having claims against the Estate to Exhibit them to the undersigned at the office of IDOL LAW, PLLC, PO Box 51759, Durham, North Carolina 27717, on or before the 17th day of April, 2026, or this Notice will be in bar of their recovery.

All persons indebted to the Estate will please make immediate payment.  
This is the 15th day of January, 2026.  
Simone Bennett, Limited Personal Representative  
Estate of John Phillip Bennett, Deceased  
Robert A. Idol, Esquire  
IDOL LAW, PLLC  
Attorney at Law  
PO Box 51759  
Durham, NC 27717  
(919)401.5151  
1/15, 1/22, 1/29, and 2/5/2026  
STATE OF NORTH CAROLINA  
DURHAM COUNTY

**NOTICE TO CREDITORS**  
In the General Court of Justice,  
Superior Court Division  
Before the Clerk

File Number 25E001163-310  
THE UNDERSIGNED, having qualified on the 3rd day of September 2025, as EXECUTOR of the Estate of GEORGE WHITLEY BOLDEN, late of Durham County, North Carolina, hereby wish to notify all persons having claims against the Estate of said deceased to exhibit them to the undersigned at the below listed address on or before the 16th day of April, 2026, or this notice will be pleaded in bar of their recovery.

All persons indebted to the Estate will please make immediate payment to the undersigned at the below listed address.

This, the 15th day of January, 2026.

Lesley Ruth Bolden, Executor  
620 Wellingham Drive  
Durham, NC 27713

1/15, 1/22, 1/29, and 2/5/2026  
STATE OF NORTH CAROLINA  
DURHAM COUNTY

**NOTICE OF SERVICE OF PROCESS BY PUBLICATION**  
In the Superior Court  
File Number 25CV013616-310  
KATRINA BROWN, Plaintiff v. MELVIN SIMMS and wife LENA SIMMS, Defendants.

TO MELVIN SIMMS AND LENA SIMMS:  
Take notice that a pleading seeking relief against you has been filed in the above-entitled action. The nature of the relief being sought is as follows: To quiet title and for adverse possession of the property located at 1008 Lancaster Street, Durham, North Carolina, parcel identifier 100419.  
You are required to make defense to such pleading no later than forty (40) days after the date of the first publication of the notice of service of process. Upon your failure to do so, Plaintiff will apply to the court for the relief sought.

This the 15th of January, 2026.

Christopher M. Vann  
Vann Law Firm, P.A.  
9912 Monroe Road, Suite 201  
Matthews, NC 28105  
Telephone: (704) 845-6050  
Facsimile: (704) 845-1662  
E-mail: chris@vannlawfirm.com  
1/15, 1/22, 1/29, and 2/5/2026  
STATE OF NORTH CAROLINA  
DURHAM COUNTY

**NOTICE OF SERVICE OF PROCESS BY PUBLICATION**  
In the Superior Court  
File Number 25CV013616-310  
KATRINA BROWN, Plaintiff v. MELVIN SIMMS and wife LENA SIMMS, Defendants.

TO MELVIN SIMMS AND LENA SIMMS:  
Take notice that a pleading seeking relief against you has been filed in the above-entitled action. The nature of the relief being sought is as follows: To quiet title and for adverse possession of the property located at 1008 Lancaster Street, Durham, North Carolina, parcel identifier 100419.

You are required to make defense to such pleading no later than forty (40) days after the date of the first publication of the notice of service of process. Upon your failure to do so, Plaintiff will apply to the court for the relief sought.

This the 15th of January, 2026.

Christopher M. Vann  
Vann Law Firm, P.A.  
9912 Monroe Road, Suite 201  
Matthews, NC 28105  
Telephone: (704) 845-6050  
Facsimile: (704) 845-1662  
E-mail: chris@vannlawfirm.com  
1/15, 1/22, 1/29, and 2/5/2026  
STATE OF NORTH CAROLINA  
DURHAM COUNTY

**NOTICE OF SERVICE OF PROCESS BY PUBLICATION**  
In the General Court of Justice,  
District Court Division  
File No. 25CV010244-310  
[CHILD CUSTODY PROCEEDING]

Debra & Douglas Brinkley, Plaintiffs v. Unknown Father, Defendant.

To Unknown father of a male child born to Crystal Wheeler on May 10, 2021, in Durham, Durham County, North Carolina:

TAKE NOTICE that a pleading seeking relief against you have been filed in the above-entitled action. The nature of the relief being sought is as follows: that permanent sole legal custody of Hayden Salmon, born May 10, 2021 be granted to Debra & Douglas Brinkley.

You are required to make defense to such pleading no later than February 24, 2026, said date

being forty (40) days from the first publication of this notice, and upon your failure to do so the party seeking service against you will apply to the court for the relief sought.

This, the 15th day of January 2026

Kayla Chargois, JusticeMatters, Inc. Attorney for the Plaintiff  
P.O. Box 199

Durham, NC (919) 794-7511  
January 15th, 22nd, and 29th 2026

**NOTICE TO CREDITORS**  
25E001535-310

Having qualified as the Executor of the Estate of Allan K. Troxler, late of Durham County, North Carolina, the undersigned does hereby notify all persons, firms and corporations having claims against the estate of said decedent to exhibit them to the undersigned in care of the attorney for the estate, Colin K. Austin, Law Office of Colin K. Austin, PLLC, 128 W. Margaret Lane, Hillsborough, NC 27278, on or before the 9th day of April, 2026, or this notice will be pleaded in bar of their recovery. All persons, firms and corporations indebted to the said estate will please make immediate payment to the undersigned.

Kate T. Mitchell, Executor  
Attorney for the Estate:  
Colin K. Austin

Law Office of Colin K. Austin  
128 W. Margaret Lane  
Hillsborough, NC 27278

1/8, 1/15, 1/22, and 1/29/2026  
STATE OF NORTH CAROLINA  
DURHAM COUNTY

**NOTICE TO CREDITORS**  
Having qualified as Executor Administrator CTA of the Estate of ANN GAIL MURCHISON JOHNSTON, deceased, of 4408 Berini Drive, Durham, Durham County, North Carolina 27705, the undersigned does hereby notify all persons, firms, and corporations having claims against the estate of said decedent to exhibit them to the undersigned on or before 9th day of April, 2026, or this notice will be pleaded in bar of their recovery.

All persons, firms, and corporations indebted to the said estate will please make immediate payment to the undersigned.

This the 8th day of January 2026.  
Jeffrey L. Austin  
Executor Administrator CTA  
Law Office of Jeffrey L. Austin  
PLLC

500 Westover Dr. #32043  
Sanford, NC 27330

1/8, 1/15, 1/22, and 1/29/2026  
STATE OF NORTH CAROLINA  
DURHAM COUNTY

**NOTICE TO CREDITORS**  
In the General Court of Justice,  
Superior Court Division  
Before the Clerk

File Number 25E001454-310  
THE UNDERSIGNED, having qualified on the 15th day of December 2025, as ADMINISTRATOR of the Estate of JULIE ALLISON HARRISON, late of Durham County, North Carolina, hereby wish to notify all persons having claims against the Estate of said deceased to exhibit them to the undersigned at the below listed address on or before the 9th day of April, 2026, or this notice will be pleaded in bar of their recovery.

All persons indebted to the Estate will please make immediate payment to the undersigned at the below listed address.

This, the 8th day of January, 2026.

Charles Benjamin Harrison Jr.  
c/o Sonya Linton  
Magnolia Legal

3001 Academy Rd, Suite 120  
Durham, NC 27707

1/8, 1/15, 1/22, and 1/29/2026  
STATE OF NORTH CAROLINA  
DURHAM COUNTY

**NOTICE TO CREDITORS**  
In the General Court of Justice,  
Superior Court Division  
Before the Clerk

File Number 25E001566-310  
THE UNDERSIGNED, having qualified on the 31st day of December 2025, as EXECUTOR of the Estate of ELSIE OAKLEY STANFORD, late of Durham County, North Carolina, hereby wish to notify all persons having claims against the Estate of said deceased to exhibit them to the undersigned at the below listed address on or before the 9th day of April, 2026, or this notice will be pleaded in bar of their recovery.

All persons indebted to the Estate will please make immediate payment to the undersigned at the below listed address.

This, the 8th day of January, 2026.

Genise Morris Fowler, Executor  
c/o Anne Page Watson PLLC  
3400 Croasdaile Dr.  
Durham, NC 27705

1/8, 1/15, 1/22, and 1/29/2026

**DURHAM COUNTY**

STATE OF NORTH CAROLINA  
DURHAM COUNTY  
**NOTICE TO CREDITORS**  
In the General Court of Justice,  
Superior Court Division  
Before the Clerk  
File Number 24-E-338  
THE UNDERSIGNED, having qualified on the 8th day of March 2024, as ADMINISTRATOR of the Estate of CURTIS HOLLOWAY, late of Durham County, North Carolina, hereby wish to notify all persons having claims against the Estate of said deceased to exhibit them to the undersigned at the below listed address on or before the 9th day of April, 2026, or this notice will be pleaded in bar of their recovery.  
All persons indebted to the Estate will please make immediate payment to the undersigned at the below listed address.  
This, the 8th day of January, 2026.

Trena Jones, Administrator  
1406 Raspberry Run  
Graham, NC 27253  
1/8, 1/15, 1/22, and 1/29/2026  
STATE OF NORTH CAROLINA  
DURHAM COUNTY

**NOTICE TO CREDITORS**  
In the General Court of Justice,  
Superior Court Division  
Before the Clerk  
File Number 25E001492-310  
THE UNDERSIGNED, having qualified on the 24th day of December 2025, as CO-EXECUTORS of the Estate of AGNISH POOLE, late of Durham County, North Carolina, hereby wish to notify all persons having claims against the Estate of said deceased to exhibit them to the undersigned at the below listed address on or before the 9th day of April, 2026, or this notice will be pleaded in bar of their recovery.

All persons indebted to the Estate will please make immediate payment to the undersigned at the below listed address.  
This, the 8th day of January, 2026.

Gregory Todd R. Poole, Co-Executor  
12701 Cumberland Cove Drive  
Charlotte, NC 28273  
Roxie Jeneise P. Pagan, Co-Executor  
808 Bluestone Road  
Durham, NC 27713

1/8, 1/15, 1/22, and 1/29/2026  
STATE OF NORTH CAROLINA  
DURHAM COUNTY

**NOTICE TO CREDITORS**  
In the General Court of Justice,  
Superior Court Division  
Before the Clerk  
File Number 25E001249-310  
THE UNDERSIGNED, having qualified on the 30th day of December 2025, as ANCILLARY EXECUTOR of the Estate of LYDIA RUTH BLUNT A/K/A RUTH BLUNT, A/K/A LYDIA R. BLUNT, late of Kings County, NY, hereby wish to notify all persons having claims against the Estate of said deceased to exhibit them to the undersigned at the below listed address on or before the 9th day of April, 2026, or this notice will be pleaded in bar of their recovery.

All persons indebted to the Estate will please make immediate payment to the undersigned at the below listed address.  
This, the 8th day of January, 2026.

Marvin M. Reina, Ancillary Executor  
2445 Park Avenue Unit 18  
Bridgeport, CT 06604  
1/8, 1/15, 1/22, and 1/29/2026

**LENOIR COUNTY**

STATE OF NORTH CAROLINA  
LENOIR COUNTY  
**RE: THE ESTATE OF CHARLES COLE - 25E001580-530**  
Having qualified as Administrator of the Estate of CHARLES COLE, deceased, Lenoir County, North Carolina, the undersigned does hereby notify all persons, firms, and corporations having claims against the estate of said deceased to exhibit them to the undersigned on or before the day of 15th day of April, 2026, or this notice will be pleaded in bar of their recovery.  
This the 15th day of January, 2026.  
David Scott Russ, Administrator  
DSR Legal, PLLC  
PO Box 51596  
Durham, NC 27717  
1/15, 1/22, 1/29, and 2/5/2026

**HARNETT COUNTY**

STATE OF NORTH CAROLINA  
HARNETT COUNTY  
**NOTICE TO CREDITORS**  
In the General Court of Justice,  
Superior Court Division  
Before the Clerk

File Number 24E000392-420  
Having qualified as Executor of the Estate of IRWIN CLAUDE BENJAMIN, deceased, of 240 Rock Harbor Lane, Spring Lake, Harnett County, North Carolina, the undersigned does hereby notify all persons, firms and corporations having claims against the Estate of said Decedent to exhibit them to the undersigned at Steven Benjamin, c/o Susan Harman-Scott, Attorney at Law, PLLC, P. O. Box 1593, Nags Head, NC 27959, on or before the 8th day of April, 2026, or this notice will be pleaded in bar of their recovery. All persons, firms and corporations indebted to the said Estate will please make immediate payment to the undersigned.  
This the 8th day of January, 2026.  
Steven Benjamin  
c/o Susan Harman-Scott  
Attorney at Law, PLLC  
P. O. Box 1593  
Nags Head, NC 27959  
(252) 573-8248  
1/8, 1/15, 1/22, and 1/29/2026

**ORANGE COUNTY**

STATE OF NORTH CAROLINA  
ORANGE COUNTY  
**NOTICE TO CREDITORS**  
In the General Court of Justice,  
Superior Court Division  
Before the Clerk  
File Number 25E000780-670  
THE UNDERSIGNED, having qualified on the 5th day of January 2026, as EXECUTOR of the Estate of SANDRA SNEED JOSEPH, late of Orange County, North Carolina, hereby wish to notify all persons having claims against the Estate of said deceased to exhibit them to the undersigned at the below listed address on or before the 16th day of April, 2026, or this notice will be pleaded in bar of their recovery.

All persons indebted to the Estate will please make immediate payment to the undersigned at the below listed address.  
This, the 15th day of January, 2026.

Bruce Michael Joseph, Executor  
c/o Richard F. Prentiss, Jr.  
4 Consultant Pl.  
Durham, NC 27707  
1/15, 1/22, 1/29, and 2/5/2026

**WAKE COUNTY**

STATE OF NORTH CAROLINA  
COUNTY OF WAKE  
**NOTICE TO CREDITORS**  
In the General Court of Justice,  
Superior Court Division  
Before the Clerk  
File No: 25E002109-910  
Having qualified as Administrator of the Estate of MAY SADAK, deceased, late of Wake County, North Carolina, this is to notify all persons, firms, and corporations having claims against the Estate to present them to the undersigned, in writing, at the address shown below, on or before April 30, 2026, or this Notice will be pleaded in bar of their recovery.  
All persons indebted to the decedent or the Estate are requested to make immediate payment to the undersigned.  
This the 27 day of January, 2026.  
Fida Sadak Nehme, Administrator  
4020 Woodbine RD  
Raleigh, NC 27612  
1/29, 2/5, 2/12, and 2/19/2026  
STATE OF NORTH CAROLINA  
WAKE COUNTY

**NOTICE TO CREDITORS**  
In the General Court of Justice,  
Superior Court Division  
Before the Clerk  
File Number 25E004552-910  
THE UNDERSIGNED, having qualified on the 5th day of January 2026, as EXECUTOR of the Estate of JAMES LOVELACE BULLOCK, late of Wake County, North Carolina, hereby wish to notify all persons having claims against the Estate of said deceased to exhibit them to the undersigned at the below listed address on or before the 30th day of April, 2026, or this notice will be pleaded in bar of their recovery.

All persons indebted to the Estate will please make immediate payment to the undersigned at the below listed address.  
This, the 29th day of January, 2026.  
Bethel Clay Bullock, Executor  
2521 Sweetgum Drive  
Apex, NC 27539  
1/29, 2/5, 2/12, and 2/19/2026  
STATE OF NORTH CAROLINA  
WAKE COUNTY

**NOTICE OF SERVICE OF PROCESS BY PUBLICATION**  
In the General Court of Justice  
District Court Division  
File No: 25CV033894-910  
To: WILBER MACHADO, Defendant.

Take notice that a pleading seeking relief against you has been filed in the above-entitled action. The nature of the relief being sought is for child custody.

You are required to make defense to such pleading no later than March 3rd, 2026 said date being at least forty (40) days from the first publication of this Notice, and upon your failure to do so, the Plaintiff, ERIKA PINEDA, will apply to the court located at 300 S. Salisbury St., Raleigh, NC, 27601, for the relief sought.  
This, the 22nd day of January 2026.  
Erika Pineda, Plaintiff  
7803 S. Arizona Dr.  
Raleigh, NC 27616  
1/22, 1/29, and 2/5/2026  
STATE OF NORTH CAROLINA  
COUNTY OF WAKE

**NOTICE OF SERVICE OF PROCESS BY PUBLICATION**  
In The General Court Of Justice  
Superior Court Division  
File No. 25CV030600-910  
MARINE FEDERAL CREDIT UNION,  
Plaintiff, v.

JUSTIN SHARMA, Defendant.  
To: Justin Sharma  
Take notice that a pleading seeking relief against you has been filed in the above-entitled action.

The nature of the relief being sought is the collection of money owed, as more fully described in the Complaint filed in Wake County Superior Court, File Number 25CV030600-910.  
You are required to make a defense to such pleading no later than March 2, 2026, which is forty (40) days from the first date of publication reduces. Upon your failure to do so, the party seeking service against you will apply to the Court for the relief sought.  
This the 22nd day of January, 2026.

MEWBORN & DESELMS, ATTORNEYS AT LAW  
Brett J. DeSelms  
Michael Tuton  
Attorneys for Plaintiff  
829 Gum Branch Road, Suite C  
Jacksonville, NC 28540  
Telephone: (910) 455-9755  
Publication Dates: January 22, January 29, and February 5, 2026  
STATE OF NORTH CAROLINA  
WAKE COUNTY

**NOTICE TO CREDITORS**  
All persons, firms, and corporations having claims against the HILDA JANE HARPER, deceased, of Wake County, NC are notified to exhibit the same to the undersigned on or before April 20, 2026 or this notice will be pleaded in bar or recovery.  
Debtors of the decedent of the Estate are asked to make immediate payment. This the 20th

day of January, 2026.  
Gwendolyn Kathy Riggs, Executor  
Estate of Hilda Jane Harper  
5050 Pender Road  
Shallotte, NC 28470  
Jan 22, 29, Feb 5, & 12, 2026  
STATE OF NORTH CAROLINA  
COUNTY OF WAKE  
**NOTICE TO CREDITORS**  
ESTATE OF JAMES RANDOLPH FULLWOOD  
FILE NO 25E004348-910  
All persons, firms and corporations having claims against JAMES RANDOLPH FULLWOOD, deceased, of Wake County, NC, are notified to exhibit the same to the undersigned on or before April 16, 2026, or this notice will be pleaded in bar of recovery. Debtors of the decedent are asked to make immediate payment. This the 15th day of January, 2026. Ernest B. Fullwood, Jerelene Fullwood-Carver, and Lorenzo Keith, Co-Executors, c/o Blue LLP, 205 Fayetteville St, Suite 300, Raleigh, NC 27601. The Carolinian, 1/15, 1/22, 1/29, and 2/5/2026.  
STATE OF NORTH CAROLINA  
WAKE COUNTY  
**COMPLAINT TO ENFORCE POSSESSORY LIEN ON MOTOR VEHICLE**  
In The General Court Of Justice  
District Court Division  
Small Claims  
File No. W  
ANTHONY WILSON, Plaintiff VS. UNKNOWN VIN: 136177A181112, 1967 CHEVROLET, Defendant  
TO UNKNOWN OWNER: TAKE NOTICE the petitioner has filed with the clerk a petition in proper form indicating that the petitioner has a valid lien against a 1967 CHEVROLET, ID No. 136177A181112 and that the petitioner shall have the right to sell to the highest bidder the motor vehicle listed on February 11, 2026 at WCCH, 316 Fayetteville St., 3rd Floor, Raleigh, NC 27601, at 1:30 p.m. You are required to make a defense to such pleading before such date and time.  
This the 15th day of January, 2026.  
Anthony Wilson, Plaintiff  
13100 Callens Ln.  
Willow Spring, NC 27592  
1/15, 1/22, and 1/29/2026  
STATE OF NORTH CAROLINA  
WAKE COUNTY  
**NOTICE OF SERVICE OF PROCESS BY PUBLICATION**  
In the General Court of Justice  
District Court Division  
File No. 25CV000889-910  
To: JESSICA MADDEN,

Defendant.  
TAKE NOTICE that a pleading seeking relief against you has been filed in the above entitled action. The nature of the relief being sought is as follows: The Plaintiff has filed a COMPLAINT FOR JUDGMENT FOR ABSOLUTE DIVORCE. You are required to make defense to such pleading no later than February 19, 2026 said date being at least thirty (30) days from the first publication of this Notice, and upon your failure to do so, the Plaintiff, ERIN MADDEEN, will apply to the court located at 316 Fayetteville St., Raleigh NC 27601 for the relief sought.  
This, the 15th day of January, 2026.  
Erin Madden, Plaintiff  
933 Rand Street  
Smithfield, NC 27577  
1/15, 1/22, and 1/29/2026  
STATE OF NORTH CAROLINA  
WAKE COUNTY  
**NOTICE TO CREDITORS**  
In the General Court of Justice,  
Superior Court Division  
Before the Clerk  
File Number 25E002418-910  
THE UNDERSIGNED, having qualified on the 25th day of August 2025, as ADMINISTRATOR of the Estate of MARY ALICE POTEAT TRAPP, late of Wake County, North Carolina, hereby wish to notify all persons having claims against the Estate of said deceased to exhibit them to the undersigned at the below listed address on or before the 9th day of April, 2026, or this notice will be pleaded in bar of their recovery.

All persons indebted to the Estate will please make immediate payment to the undersigned at the below listed address.  
This, the 8th day of January, 2026.  
Cynthia Poteat Brandon  
Administrator  
12677 Talon Drive  
Zebulon, NC 27597  
1/8, 1/15, 1/22, and 1/29/2026  
STATE OF NORTH CAROLINA  
COUNTY OF WAKE  
**NOTICE TO CREDITORS**  
Having qualified as Executor of the Estate of Louis Randolph Barbee, deceased, this is to notify all persons, firms, and corporations having claims against the Estate of LOUIS RANDOLPH BARBEE to present them to the undersigned on or before the 9th day of April 2026, or this Notice will be pleaded in bar of their recovery. All persons, firms, and corporations indebted to said Estate, please make immediate payment.

STATE OF NORTH CAROLINA  
MECKLENBURG COUNTY  
**NOTICE TO CREDITORS**  
In the General Court of Justice,  
Superior Court Division  
Before the Clerk  
File Number 25E004303-590  
THE UNDERSIGNED, having qualified on the 13th day of January 2026, as ADMINISTRATOR of the Estate of BARBARA JONES HANKS, late of Mecklenburg County, North Carolina, hereby wish to notify all persons having claims against the Estate of said deceased to exhibit them to the undersigned at the below listed address on or before the 16th day of April, 2026, or this notice will be pleaded in bar of their recovery.  
All persons indebted to the Estate will please make immediate payment to the undersigned at the below listed address.  
This, the 15th day of January, 2026.  
Thomas Myers, Administrator  
30 North Gould Street, Suite R  
Sheridan, WY 82801  
1/15, 1/22, 1/29, and 2/5/2026

STATE OF NORTH CAROLINA  
MECKLENBURG COUNTY  
**NOTICE TO CREDITORS**  
In the General Court of Justice,  
Superior Court Division  
Before the Clerk  
File Number 25E002984-910  
1/8, 1/15, 1/22, and 1/29/2026

STATE OF NORTH CAROLINA  
MECKLENBURG COUNTY  
**NOTICE TO CREDITORS**  
In the General Court of Justice,  
Superior Court Division  
Before the Clerk  
File Number 25E001464-310  
Having qualified as Executor of the Estate of EDWARD LOWELL THOMAS, JR. aka EDWARD L. THOMAS, JR. deceased in Wake County, this is to notify all persons, firms and corporations having claims against said Estate to present them, duly verified, to the undersigned at 5108 Curriagan Court, Fuquay Varina, NC 27526 on or before the 8th day of April, 2026, or this notice will be pleaded in bar of their recovery. All persons indebted to said Estate will please make immediate settlement with the undersigned.  
This the 8th day of January, 2026.  
Donna R. Thomas, Executor  
5108 Curriagan Court,  
Fuquay Varina, NC 27526  
File # 25E002984-910  
1/8, 1/15, 1/22, and 1/29/2026

STATE OF NORTH CAROLINA  
MECKLENBURG COUNTY  
**NOTICE TO CREDITORS**  
In the General Court of Justice,  
Superior Court Division  
Before the Clerk  
File Number 25E000780-670  
THE UNDERSIGNED, having qualified on the 5th day of January 2026, as EXECUTOR of the Estate of SANDRA SNEED JOSEPH, late of Orange County, North Carolina, hereby wish to notify all persons having claims against the Estate of said deceased to exhibit them to the undersigned at the below listed address on or before the 16th day of April, 2026, or this notice will be pleaded in bar of their recovery.

All persons indebted to the Estate will please make immediate payment to the undersigned at the below listed address.  
This, the 15th day of January, 2026.

Bruce Michael Joseph, Executor  
c/o Richard F. Prentiss, Jr.  
4 Consultant Pl.  
Durham, NC 27707  
1/15, 1/22, 1/29, and 2/5/2026

STATE OF NORTH CAROLINA  
COUNTY OF WAKE  
**NOTICE TO CREDITORS**  
All persons, firms, and corporations having claims against the HILDA JANE HARPER, deceased, of Wake County, NC are notified to exhibit the same to the undersigned on or before April 20, 2026 or this notice will be pleaded in bar or recovery.  
Debtors of the decedent of the Estate are asked to make immediate payment. This the 20th

day of January, 2026.  
Gwendolyn Kathy Riggs, Executor  
Estate of Hilda Jane Harper  
5050 Pender Road  
Shallotte, NC 28470  
Jan 22, 29, Feb 5, & 12, 2026  
STATE OF NORTH CAROLINA  
COUNTY OF WAKE  
**NOTICE TO CREDITORS**  
ESTATE OF JAMES RANDOLPH FULLWOOD  
FILE NO 25E004348-910  
All persons, firms and corporations having claims against JAMES RANDOLPH FULLWOOD, deceased, of Wake County, NC, are notified to exhibit the same to the undersigned on or before April 16, 2026, or this notice will be pleaded in bar of recovery. Debtors of the decedent are asked to make immediate payment. This the 15th day of January, 2026. Ernest B. Fullwood, Jerelene Fullwood-Carver, and Lorenzo Keith, Co-Executors, c/o Blue LLP, 205 Fayetteville St, Suite 300, Raleigh, NC 27601. The Carolinian, 1/15, 1/22, 1/29, and 2/5/2026.  
STATE OF NORTH CAROLINA  
WAKE COUNTY  
**COMPLAINT TO ENFORCE POSSESSORY LIEN ON MOTOR VEHICLE**  
In The General Court Of Justice  
District Court Division  
Small Claims  
File No. W  
ANTHONY WILSON, Plaintiff VS. UNKNOWN VIN: 136177A181112, 1967 CHEVROLET, Defendant  
TO UNKNOWN OWNER: TAKE NOTICE the petitioner has filed with the clerk a petition in proper form indicating that the petitioner has a valid lien against a 1967 CHEVROLET, ID No. 136177A181112 and that the petitioner shall have the right to sell to the highest bidder the motor vehicle listed on February 11, 2026 at WCCH, 316 Fayetteville St., 3rd Floor, Raleigh, NC 27601, at 1:30 p.m. You are required to make a defense to such pleading before such date and time.  
This the 15th day of January, 2026.  
Anthony Wilson, Plaintiff  
13100 Callens Ln.  
Willow Spring, NC 27592  
1/15, 1/22, and 1/29/2026  
STATE OF NORTH CAROLINA  
WAKE COUNTY  
**NOTICE OF SERVICE OF PROCESS BY PUBLICATION**  
In the General Court of Justice  
District Court Division  
File No. 25CV000889-910  
To: JESSICA MADDEN,

STATE OF NORTH CAROLINA  
MECKLENBURG COUNTY  
**NOTICE TO CREDITORS**  
In the General Court of Justice,  
Superior Court Division  
Before the Clerk  
File Number 25E002418-910  
THE UNDERSIGNED, having qualified on the 25th day of August 2025, as ADMINISTRATOR of the Estate of MARY ALICE POTEAT TRAPP, late of Wake County, North Carolina, hereby wish to notify all persons having claims against the Estate of said deceased to exhibit them to the undersigned at the below listed address on or before the 9th day of April, 2026, or this notice will be pleaded in bar of their recovery.

All persons indebted to the Estate will please make immediate payment to the undersigned at the below listed address.  
This, the 8th day of January, 2026.  
Cynthia Poteat Brandon  
Administrator  
12677 Talon Drive  
Zebulon, NC 27597  
1/8, 1/15, 1/22, and 1/29/2026  
STATE OF NORTH CAROLINA  
COUNTY OF WAKE  
**NOTICE TO CREDITORS**  
Having qualified as Executor of the Estate of Louis Randolph Barbee, deceased, this is to notify all persons, firms, and corporations having claims against the Estate of LOUIS RANDOLPH BARBEE to present them to the undersigned on or before the 9th day of April 2026, or this Notice will be pleaded in bar of their recovery. All persons, firms, and corporations indebted to said Estate, please make immediate payment.

STATE OF NORTH CAROLINA  
MECKLENBURG COUNTY  
**NOTICE TO CREDITORS**  
In the General Court of Justice,  
Superior Court Division  
Before the Clerk  
File Number 25E004303-590  
THE UNDERSIGNED, having qualified on the 13th day of January 2026, as ADMINISTRATOR of the Estate of BARBARA JONES HANKS, late of Mecklenburg County, North Carolina, hereby wish to notify all persons having claims against the Estate of said deceased to exhibit them to the undersigned at the below listed address on or before the 16th day of April, 2026, or this notice will be pleaded in bar of their recovery.  
All persons indebted to the Estate will please make immediate payment to the undersigned at the below listed address.  
This, the 15th day of January, 2026.  
Thomas Myers, Administrator  
30 North Gould Street, Suite R  
Sheridan, WY 82801  
1/15, 1/22, 1/29, and 2/5/2026

STATE OF NORTH CAROLINA  
COUNTY OF WAKE  
**NOTICE TO CREDITORS**  
All persons, firms, and corporations having claims against the HILDA JANE HARPER, deceased, of Wake County, NC are notified to exhibit the same to the undersigned on or before April 20, 2026 or this notice will be pleaded in bar or recovery.  
Debtors of the decedent of the Estate are asked to make immediate payment. This the 20th

day of January, 2026.  
Gwendolyn Kathy Riggs, Executor  
Estate of Hilda Jane Harper  
5050 Pender Road  
Shallotte, NC 28470  
Jan 22, 29, Feb 5, & 12, 2026  
STATE OF NORTH CAROLINA  
COUNTY OF WAKE  
**NOTICE TO CREDITORS**  
ESTATE OF JAMES RANDOLPH FULLWOOD  
FILE NO 25E004348-910  
All persons, firms and corporations having claims against JAMES RANDOLPH FULLWOOD, deceased, of Wake County, NC, are notified to exhibit the same to the undersigned on or before April 16, 2026, or this notice will be pleaded in bar of recovery. Debtors of the decedent are asked to make immediate payment. This the 15th day of January, 2026. Ernest B. Fullwood, Jerelene Fullwood-Carver, and Lorenzo Keith, Co-Executors, c/o Blue LLP, 205 Fayetteville St, Suite 300, Raleigh, NC 27601. The Carolinian, 1/15, 1/22, 1/29, and 2/5/2026.  
STATE OF NORTH CAROLINA  
WAKE COUNTY  
**COMPLAINT TO ENFORCE POSSESSORY LIEN ON MOTOR VEHICLE**  
In The General Court Of Justice  
District Court Division  
Small Claims  
File No. W  
ANTHONY WILSON, Plaintiff VS. UNKNOWN VIN: 136177A181112, 1967 CHEVROLET, Defendant  
TO UNKNOWN OWNER: TAKE NOTICE the petitioner has filed with the clerk a petition in proper form indicating that the petitioner has a valid lien against a 1967 CHEVROLET, ID No. 136177A181112 and that the petitioner shall have the right to sell to the highest bidder the motor vehicle listed on February 11, 2026 at WCCH, 316 Fayetteville St., 3rd Floor, Raleigh, NC 27601, at 1:30 p.m. You are required to make a defense to such pleading before such date and time.  
This the 15th day of January, 2026.  
Anthony Wilson, Plaintiff  
13100 Callens Ln.  
Willow Spring, NC 27592  
1/15, 1/22, and 1/29/2026  
STATE OF NORTH CAROLINA  
WAKE COUNTY  
**NOTICE OF SERVICE OF PROCESS BY PUBLICATION**  
In the General Court of Justice  
District Court Division  
File No. 25CV000889-910  
To: JESSICA MADDEN,

**Classifieds**

**SEEKING NETWORK ENGINEER**  
ENGINEERING-A10 Networks, Inc. in Cary, NC seeks Network Engineer: Troubleshoot customer reported network issues via phone and/or e-mail. Part-time telecommuting allowed. \$84,500/yr. - \$94,500/yr. Email res (must reference Job Code #43970) to recruiting@a10networks.com.

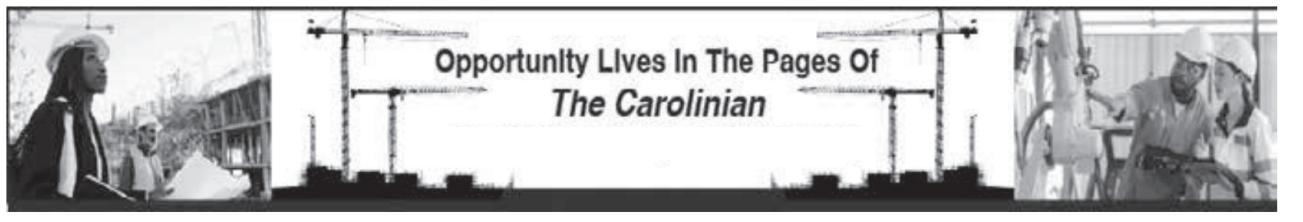
**Submit your bid, job and recruitment advertising to ads@caro.news**

**ADVERTISMENT FOR BIDS**  
The North Carolina Department of Adult Correction has the following contract in McDowell County out for bid: C- C11831 Marion FA Replacement . The bid opening is scheduled for: Tuesday, 02/17/2026 . To obtain the Notice to Bidders, any Pre-Bid Requirements, and any Addenda visit: <https://evp.nc.gov/solicitations/details/?id=067ff40d-8ded-f011-8407-001dd80a67c90>

**ADVERTISMENT FOR BIDS**  
The North Carolina Department of Adult Correction has the following contract in Wake County out for bid: C- 11838 Central Prison Steam Leak Repairs . The bid opening is scheduled for: Tuesday, 02/24/2026 . To obtain the Notice to Bidders, any Pre-Bid Requirements, and any Addenda visit: <https://evp.nc.gov/solicitations/details/?id=674d8d1f-ebf2-f011-8406-001dd8003962>

**PUBLIC NOTICES REQUEST FOR BID**  
**REHAB OF 1801-1807 SUMMERDALE DRIVE**  
The City of Raleigh will accept sealed, written bids for the rehabilitation of the property located at 1801-1807 Summerdale Drive, Raleigh, NC 27604 until February 27, 2026 at 1:00 p.m. (EST). Bids can be submitted at the City of Raleigh's Housing and Community Development Department at 421 Fayetteville St, Suite 1200, Raleigh, NC 27601 at which time and place bids will be publicly opened and read aloud for the construction of the Rehab of 1801-1807 Summerdale Drive project.  
A mandatory on-site pre-bid meeting will be held on February 3, 2026 at 11:00 a.m. (EST) at 1801-1807 Summerdale Drive, Raleigh, NC 27604. Information is also posted on the North Carolina Electronic Vendor Portal (eVP): <https://www.evp.nc.gov>. The City reserves the right to reject all bids.

**PUBLIC NOTICES REQUEST FOR BID**  
**DEMOLITION OF 5507-5511 HILLSBOROUGH STREET**  
The City of Raleigh will accept sealed, written bids for the rehabilitation of the property located at 5507-5511 Hillsborough Street, Raleigh, NC 27606 until February 27, 2026, at 2:00 p.m. (EST). Bids can be submitted at the City of Raleigh's Housing and Community Development Department at 421 Fayetteville St, Suite 1200, Raleigh, NC 27601 at which time and place bids will be publicly opened and read aloud for the construction of the Demolition of 5507-5511 Hillsborough Street project.  
A mandatory on-site pre-bid meeting will be held on February 3, 2026, at 2:00 p.m. (EST) at 5507-5511 Hillsborough Street, Raleigh, NC 27606. Information is also posted on the North Carolina Electronic Vendor Portal (eVP): <https://www.evp.nc.gov>. The City reserves the right to reject all bids.



# Sports

## 'Emotional' Coco Gauff Smashes Racket In Frustration

MELBOURNE, Australia (AP) — Coco Gauff smashed her racket into the concrete floor once for every time she dropped serve, and another one for good measure, after her Australian Open quarterfinal loss to Elina Svitolina on Tuesday.

The third-seeded Gauff, a two-time major winner, struggled with her serve and recorded five double-faults in the first set, when she was broken four times.

There were two more service breaks in the second set and, once the match was over — in 59 minutes — Gauff stayed composed as she left the center court and tried to find



somewhere quiet to vent her frustrations.

Turns out, there's pretty much no place in Rod Laver Arena except for the locker rooms that is beyond the scope of the cameras. So, the seven times she pounded her racket into a concrete ramp were far from a private moment following her 6-1, 6-2 defeat.

"Certain moments — the same thing happened to Aryna (Sabalenka) after I played her in the final of the U.S. Open — I feel like they don't need to broadcast," Gauff said in her post-match news conference. "I tried to go somewhere where I thought

there wasn't a camera because I don't necessarily like breaking rackets.

"I broke one racket (at the) French Open, I think, and I said I would never do it again on court because I don't feel like that's a good representation. So, yeah, maybe some conversations can be had."

Gauff hit just three clean winners across 15 games, made 26 unforced errors and won 2 of 11 points on her second serve. She got 74% of her first serves into play, but only won 41% of those points.

It was an usually bad day for a

player who made her Grand Slam debut at 15 and won her first major, the 2023 U.S. Open, at 19. She's still only 21.

Gauff said she felt it was better to shatter a racket than to take out any frustrations on her support team. "They're good people. They don't deserve that, and I know I'm emotional," Gauff said. "So, yeah, I just took the minute to go and do that."

"I don't think it's a bad thing. Like I said, I don't try to do it on court in front of kids and things like that, but I do know I need to let out that emotion."

## NFL World In Disbelief Over Bill Belichick Hall of Fame Snub On First-Ballot HOF

ESPN—Bill Belichick, the eight-time Super Bowl-winning coach, is not a first-ballot Hall of Famer.

In voting earlier this month, Belichick fell short of the 40 out of 50 votes needed for induction to the Pro Football Hall of Fame during his first year of eligibility, four sources with firsthand knowledge of the outcome told ESPN. Belichick received a call from a Hall representative Friday afternoon with the news that he won't be inducted in Canton, Ohio, this summer.

Several sources who spoke with the coach over the weekend described Belichick as "puzzled" and "disappointed" by his inability to secure support from at least 80% of Hall committee members.

"Six Super Bowls isn't enough?" Belichick asked an associate, referring to the championships he won as head coach of the New England Patriots. He won two more as defensive coordinator of the New York Giants.



To another associate, he said, "What does a guy have to do?"

Another source familiar with Belichick's thinking said, "Politics kept him out. He doesn't believe this is a reflection on his accomplishments."

Belichick declined comment to ESPN.

"The Pro Football Hall of Fame does not comment on the voting of

the Selection Committee and awaits the unveiling of the Class of 2026 at 'NFL Honors' on Feb. 5 in San Francisco," a spokesperson for the Hall said in a statement.

With an NFL coaching record of 333-178, including playoffs -- career victories second only to Don Shula's 347 -- Belichick was considered by most fans and Hall voters to be a first-ballot lock.

The Hall's voting committee is composed mostly of veteran NFL reporters but also includes football figures such as former general manager Bill Polian and former coach Tony Dungy, both of whom are Hall of Famers.

This year, Belichick was a finalist with Robert Kraft, the Patriots owner and Belichick's co-architect of an NFL dynasty in New England. It marked the first time that Kraft, 84, was a Hall finalist after 14 years of campaigning on his behalf by his team's longtime PR man and other supporters. Kraft and Belichick have become bitter antagonists since parting ways in January 2024.

It's unknown whether Kraft, or any other finalist, received the necessary votes for induction.

On Jan. 13, voters met from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. to discuss and debate the qualifications of this year's finalists, which also included three senior

## Ag Grow Culture

### Farmers Owe A Lot More For Health Ins.

KFF Health News— Last year was a tough one for farmers. Amid falling prices for commodity crops such as corn and soybeans, rising input costs for supplies like fertilizer and seeds, as well as the Trump tariffs and the dismantling of USAID, many farms weren't profitable last year.

And now, the enhanced Affordable Care Act subsidies that many Americans, including farmers, relied on to purchase health insurance are gone, having expired at the end of December.

James Davis, 55, who grows cotton, soybeans, and corn in northern Louisiana, said he didn't know how he and his wife would afford coverage. Their share of their insurance premium quadrupled for 2026, jumping to about \$2,700 a month.

"You can't afford it," Davis said. "Bottom line. There's nothing to discuss. You can't afford it without the subsidies."

More than a quarter of the agricultural workforce purchases health insurance through the individual marketplace, according to an analysis from KFF, a health information nonprofit that includes KFF Health News.

That 27 percent rate is much higher than the overall population's — only 6 percent of U.S. adults have non-group coverage.

Farmers are used to facing challenges such as unpredictable weather and fluctuating commodity prices. But the loss of the enhanced subsidies, coupled with challenging economic conditions, will make coverage unaffordable for many.

Without major intervention from Washington, farmers say they'll have to choose between being uninsured or leaving the farm work behind for a job that offers health insurance.

A gamble for farmers

Farming is dangerous work. Agricultural workers spend much of their time outside and exposed to the elements. Many of their duties can lead to injury or illness. They drive and operate heavy machinery, work with toxic chemicals, and handle large animals.

The rate of work-related deaths for farmers is seven times the national average.

The financial toll of non-fatal farm injuries is also significant. A study from the University of Nebraska Medical Center found that the average cost of a farming injury was \$10,878 in medical care and \$4,735 in lost work.

It's essential that farmers can purchase comprehensive insurance, said Florence Becot, a rural sociologist and associate professor of agricultural health and safety at Pennsylvania State University, where she studies the social and economic needs of farm households.

In a 2022 study, Becot found that more than 20 percent of U.S. farm households had medical debt exceeding \$1,000 and that more than half



were not confident they could cover the costs of a major illness or injury.

"That shows you the level of vulnerability and concerns that farmers are facing," she said.

Mental health is also a concern. Farmers are roughly twice as likely to die by suicide compared with the general population. Mental health hotlines that serve rural communities have seen an uptick in calls.

These concerns around farmers' increased emotional distress, coupled with a rise in bankruptcies, conjures memories of the farm crisis of the 1980s, said Michael Klein, a vice president at the industry group USA Rice. During that decade, there was a raft of foreclosures, and hundreds of farmers took their own lives.

"We're really afraid of what's going to happen," Klein said.

Farmers can be reluctant to acknowledge that they rely on government-subsidized insurance, said Meghan Palmer, 43, who runs a dairy farm in northeastern Iowa with her husband, John, 45.

"We're not handout-takers," Palmer said.

More than 40 percent of dairy farmers lack health insurance — one of the highest rates among all agricultural sectors.

But going uninsured is not an option for the Palmers.

During their first year of marriage, the couple recalled, they were uninsured and had to pay out-of-pocket for two unexpected health crises: Palmer had an appendectomy, and her husband needed stitches after getting kicked in the face by one of his cows.

"It was stupid of us," Palmer said of the decision to forgo coverage.

But this year, the combined out-of-pocket monthly cost of their plans is increasing by more than 90 percent, to \$368.18. Their total 2026 deductible is \$7,200.

Palmer is a registered nurse who picks up shifts on an as-needed basis, allowing her the flexibility to prioritize her work on the farm. She's now searching for a job with health benefits. But she worries a job that doesn't allow her to keep up with the farm work will create a greater burden for

her husband.

"John is working exhausted most of the time," she said. "That's when mistakes get made and you end up in the ER."

Political consequences

Even after the enhanced subsidies expired at the end of 2025, the Palmers estimate their income will still be low enough that they'll qualify for some tax credits to purchase coverage.

However, under the GOP's One Big Beautiful Bill Act, repayment limits are being eliminated, so if the Palmers have a surprisingly profitable 2026, they'll be forced to pay some, or even all, of that subsidy back at tax time.

A farmer's income can vary drastically year to year, Becot said, partly because commodity prices can fluctuate rapidly.

Some farmers might deliberately choose to not expand their businesses, because too much profit might mean they lose access to health care subsidies.

Farmers who are insured through Medicaid have similar concerns, Becot said. But prioritizing health care affordability by suppressing operational growth can have long-term consequences for a farm's success.

Palmer, in Iowa, and Davis, in Louisiana, are both upset that lawmakers aren't more sensitive to the economic demands of farming and how those have coincided with rising health costs.

President Donald Trump recently pledged \$12 billion in one-time bridge payments to row crop farmers, but that's not going to stop health care costs from ballooning.

Republicans are aware that health care affordability is a problem and have put forth proposals, said Donna Hoffman, a political scientist at the University of Northern Iowa. But most don't support extending the enhanced ACA subsidies, because they don't see them as a good solution to the problem of rising health care costs.

### WATER BANKRUPTCY

Continued from page 5

creeps into aquifers near the coast. The ground itself starts to sink.

That last one, subsidence, often surprises people. But it's a signature of water bankruptcy. When groundwater is overpumped, the underground structure, which holds water almost like a sponge, can collapse. In Mexico City, land is sinking by about 10 inches (25 centimeters) per year. Once the pores become compacted, they can't simply be refilled.

The Global Water Bankruptcy report, published on Jan. 20, 2026, documents how widespread this is becoming. Groundwater extraction has contributed to significant land subsidence over more than 2.3 million square miles (6 million square kilometers), including urban areas where close to 2 billion people live. Jakarta, Bangkok and Ho Chi Minh City are among the well-known examples in Asia.

Agriculture is the world's biggest water user, responsible for about 70% of the global freshwater withdrawals. When a region goes water bankrupt, farming becomes more difficult and more expensive. Farmers lose jobs, tensions rise and national security can be threatened.

About 3 billion people and more than half of global food production are concentrated in areas where water storage is already declining or unstable. More than 650,000 square miles (1.7 million square kilometers) of irrigated cropland are under high or very high water stress. That threatens the stability of food supplies around the world.

Droughts are also increasing in duration, frequency and intensity as global temperatures rise. Over 1.8 billion people — nearly 1 in 4 humans — dealt with drought conditions at various times from 2022 to 2023.

These numbers translate into real problems: higher food prices, hydroelectricity shortages, health risks, unemployment, migration pressures, unrest and conflicts.

## Classifieds

### D/M/WBE

#### SUBCONTRACTORS/SUPPLIERS WANTED

T. A. Loving Company (NC General Contractor License No. 325) is seeking certified DBE, MBE, and WBE subcontractors and suppliers for the 16-Inch Aerial Crossing Repair at Methodist University project for the Fayetteville Public Works Commission which bids on February 10, 2026, at 2:00 PM. Plans and specifications for this project are available at the following locations: T. A. Loving Company; 400 Patetown Road; Goldsboro, NC 27530 \* Fayetteville PWC Procurement website \* Fayetteville State University Construction Resource Office website \* ConstructConnect website (formerly iSqFt) \* NC Institute of Minority Economic Development (NCIMED) website.

Potential subcontracting opportunities include but are not limited to surveying, clearing and grubbing, erosion control, seeding, landscaping, bypass pumping, dewatering, and concrete forms. Please contact Jeff Price (jprice@taloving.com) if you are interested in submitting a proposal on any portion(s) of this project. Contact via phone 919-734-8400; fax: 919-736-2148; or email. All quotations will be accepted up to the closing time of the bid date. T. A. Loving Company is an Equal Opportunity/Affirmative Action Employer.

Please advise if assistance is needed with obtaining necessary equipment, supplies, materials, or insurance/bonding to satisfy the work requirements. We are willing to accept quotations for all or partial quantities and items of work. We can offer 2-party check payments and quick payment agreements, but the agreements need to be negotiated prior to the bid date.

### ADVERTISEMENT FOR BIDS

Town of Bailey  
P.O. Box 40  
Bailey, NC 27807

Separate sealed BIDS for the construction of 2024 Water System Improvements, DWI Project Number: VUR-W-ARP-0001 Contract No. 11 - Water Distribution Im12rovements Contract No. 12 - Well Im12rovements Contract No. 13 - Sanitary Sewer Improvements will be received by the ENGINEER at Bailey Town Hall, 6217 Main Street, Bailey, NC 27807 until 2:00 PM, February 24, 2026, and then at said office publicly opened and read aloud.

The CONTRACT DOCUMENTS may be examined at the following locations:

Bailey Town Hall, 6217 Main Street, Bailey, NC 27807  
McDavid Associates, Inc., 3714 North Main Street, Farmville, NC 27828-049  
Dodge Data and Analytics, 2860 South State Highway 161, Suite 160, #501, Grand Prairie, TX 750527361 (View online at [www.construction.com](http://www.construction.com))  
ConstructConnect, Attn: DPC, 30 Technology Parkway South, Suite 100, Norcross, GA 30092 (View online at [www.constructconnect.com](http://www.constructconnect.com))  
Construction Journal, 400 SW 7th Street, Stuart, FL 34994 (View online at [www.ConstructionJournal.com](http://www.ConstructionJournal.com))  
Builders & Contractors Exchange, Inc., 1118 Azalea Garden Road, Norfolk, VA 235025612 (View online at [www.bceva.com](http://www.bceva.com))

Copies of the CONTRACT DOCUMENTS may be obtained at the office of McDavid Associates, Inc. located at 3714 North Main Street, Farmville, NC 27828 upon a non-refundable payment of \$1 | 1.00 for each set.

The OWNER reserves the right to reject any and all BIDS. BIDDER shall be properly licensed under Chapter 87, General Statutes of North Carolina.

Small, minority, women's, and disadvantaged businesses and labor surplus area firms are encouraged to submit BIDS.

This PROJECT is subject to the good faith efforts and goals for participation by minority businesses required by G.S. 143-128.2. The OWNER has adopted a verifiable ten percent (10%) goal for participation by minority businesses in the total value of the WORK.

BIDDERS shall, within the time frames specified in the BID documents, submit all required affidavits and documentation demonstrating that the BIDDER made the required good faith effort in compliance with G.S. 143-128.2. Failure to file all required affidavits and documentation within the required time frames is grounds for rejection of the BID.

Prospective BIDDERS who have been found guilty of discrimination within the last two (2) years are debarred from bidding.

A pre-Bid conference will be held at 10:00 AM on February 12, 2026 in Bailey Town Hall, 6217 Main Street, Bailey, NC 27807. Prospective BIDDERS are encouraged to attend this pre-bid conference as part of their good faith efforts.

Januarv 22, 2026  
Owen H. Strickland, II  
Mayor

Town of Bailey