



Early Voting Begins
February 12th

10 Tips for Early Primary Voters in North Carolina

In-person early voting for the 2026 primary election begins Thursday and ends at 3 p.m. February 28 in all 100 counties.

Statewide, 319 early voting sites will open for voters in the primary, when voters will select candidates to move on to the general election ballot in November.

Early voting is especially popular in N.C. general elections, but it is also used by many primary voters. In 2022, 59% of primary voters cast ballots on Election Day, 39% voted during the early voting period, and 2% voted by mail.

The following are 10 tips for voters as early voting begins:

Early voting locations. Eligible voters may cast a ballot at any early voting site in their county. For sites and hours in all 100 counties, use the Early Voting Sites Search tool. Also see Early Voting Sites for the March 3, 2026 Primary Election (PDF).

Sample ballots. Sample ballots for the primary are available through the Voter Search tool. The State Board does not provide detailed information about candidates, but some media outlets and advocacy groups do. Many candidates also have websites and social media accounts. Knowing your candidate choices in advance and being familiar with the ballot may help your voting experience go more quickly.

Primary ballot styles. In a partisan primary, voters affiliated with a political party may only vote their party's ballot and may not vote in another party's primary. For example, a registered Democrat may only vote in the Democratic Party primary. This remains true even if the party you are affiliated with does not have a primary. Unaffiliated voters may choose any one political party's ballot or a nonpartisan ballot, if available in their jurisdiction, in a primary election.

Same-day registration. Individuals who missed the regular voter registration deadline on February 6 may register and vote at the same time during the early voting period. Same-day registrants must attest to their eligibility and provide proof of where they live by showing a driver's license or other government document, paycheck, utility bill, or bank statement that has their current name and residence address on it. For more information, visit Register in Person During Early Voting.

Updating a registration. When you check in to vote at an early voting site, you may update your name or address within the same county, if necessary. You may not change your party affiliation at an early voting site during a primary election.

Bring your photo ID. Voters will be asked to show photo ID when they check in to vote. Most voters will show their driver's license, but many other forms of photo ID will be accepted. Voters who do not have photo ID can meet the photo ID requirement by either (1) filling out a form explaining why they are unable to show ID, or (2) showing their ID at the county board of elections office by 12 p.m. (noon) March 6. More information about the photo ID requirement is available at BringItNC.gov.

Free photo IDs. Any registered voter who needs a photo ID can get one for free from their county board of elections office during the early voting period, which ends on February 28. For details, go to Get a Free Voter Photo ID.

Voter assistance. Voters in need of assistance may bring an eligible person to help them enter and exit the polling place or to help them complete their ballot according to the voter's instructions. Election officials are also available to help voters. Curbside voting is also available for voters unable to enter the voting site. For more information, visit Curbside Voting.

No ballot photos. North Carolina law prohibits photographing or videotaping voted ballots. Voters may use electronic devices in the voting booth to access a slate card or candidate information, provided they don't use the devices to communicate with anyone or take photographs of their voted ballot.

Peace at the polls. The State Board asks that all voters respect the rights of others to participate in the election. Intimidating any voter is a crime. Voters who feel harassed or intimidated should notify an election official immediately.

For more information about early voting, please visit <https://www.ncsbe.gov/voting/vote-early-person>



STEVE RAO

WAKE COUNTY COMMISSIONER

steveraoforwake.com

RESULTS. ACTION. OPPORTUNITIES.

Steve Rao Is the Only Candidate of Color with 14 Years of Service as an Elected Official on the Morrisville Town Council

My campaign is about three things whose initial letters form my last name: Results. Action. Opportunities. I have built a reputation as a tireless advocate for innovation, equity, and progress in North Carolina. As a respected Council member in Morrisville and a long-time public servant, I bring years of experience, vision, and results-driven leadership to the table. Now, I am ready to take this commitment to our communities to the next level as your next Wake County Commissioner.

STEVE'S PRIORITIES FOR WAKE COUNTY

Standing Up To Donald Trump's Budget Cuts for Education, Medicaid & Transit

When our school budgets, Medicaid budgets and transit budgets are cut by Donald Trump and the Republican Congress, our families in Wake County get hurt. I'll fight for our working families.

Affordable Housing Solutions

We need leadership to bring people together to find real solutions to help our seniors, our low-income and working families and first-time homebuyers. It's about affordability and making sure our workforce can live and raise a family in Wake County.

Investing in our Public Schools & Classroom Teachers

As the son of Indian-American immigrants, I understand the value of education. My parents taught me that education is a step on the ladder of economic success. Investments in our public schools mean we are building a stronger Wake County.

Fixing Our Ailing EMS-Ambulance System

Our EMS-Ambulance service can't keep pace with our county's growth. There aren't enough staff and units to answer calls during peak hours.

Our current County Board has made investments and progress working on this issue, but we must do more. I will work with my colleagues to make sure we have first responders ready to answer your call for help.

BLACK LEADERSHIP ENDORSEMENTS:

Raleigh City Councilman
Mitch Silver

Raleigh Civic & Education Leader
Dudley Flood

Former Wake County Commissioner
Lindy Brown

State Representative
Abe Jones

Reverend
Paul Anderson

State Representative
Zack Hawkins

Former Raleigh City Councilman
Brad Thompson

Apex Town Councilman
Ed Gray

Fuquay-Varina Mayor
Bill Harris

Rolesville Town Commissioner
Dan Alston

Knightdale Town Councilman
Grady Bussey

Zebulon Mayor
Jessica Harrison

Zebulon Mayor Pro-Tem
Quentin Miles

Rolesville Town Commissioner
Lenwood Long

Former Rolesville Commissioner
Sheilah Sutton

North Carolina College Students Lose Court Battle To Open Early Voting Sites On Campus

U.S. District Judge William L. Osteen denied a motion for a preliminary injunction for North Carolina college students seeking to have polling sites available on their campuses when early in-person voting begins this week.

The state Board of Elections rejected early voting sites in January at on-campus locations at NC A&T State University, UNC-Greensboro, and Western Carolina University. College Democrats of North Carolina and students at the three campuses appealed, arguing that denying universities early voting sites was part of a targeted effort to limit young people's opportunities to vote.

The students argued in their suit that because many do not have transportation, it would be difficult to travel to the off-campus polling locations.

But Osteen wrote in a Sunday opinion that in the court's view, the solution being sought by the college students was "problematic" because it would depend on the actions of third parties beyond the court's control.

"Those universities are in-



dependent entities that are not party to this case and not subject to this court's equitable powers," reasoned Osteen.

Further, Osteen said that it was also "speculative" to suggest that granting the motion would result in the opening of on-campus early voting sites at the three campuses in just a matter of days.

"That the universities hosted early voting sites in prior elections, or that one of them indicated over a month ago that it could do so in this election, is one thing," Osteen continued in his 14-page ruling. "Whether they are able or willing to do so now, only days away from the start of the early voting period, is another."

The court further reasoned that it would risk causing voter confusion if it were to issue a preliminary injunction now, given that the locations and schedules for early voting were publicized in January.

While Osteen left open the door for a possible appeal, timing may be an issue. Early in-person voting begins on Thursday for the March 3 primary election.

Elect

Attorney Marcus W. Williams

For United States Senate

★ *46 years of the continuous practice of law in three states; Minnesota, Pennsylvania and North Carolina*

★ *Uncompromised Integrity*

★ *A lifelong Democrat*

Early Voting Begins

February 12

Election Day

March 3





A Diverse Career Serving NC

Dr. Lorenza Wilkins is an inclusive servant leader and inductee into the National Society of Leadership and Success, with a career dedicated to advocating for education, small businesses, and mental health.

His background includes multi-level experience in the private, public, and social sectors; he is currently serving as Chief Administrative Officer at the Inter-Faith Food Shuttle, formerly serving in human resources leadership roles and as an Executive Fellow at FUSE Corps, Executive Director at Rebound, Alternatives for Youth, Senior Director of Programs and Operations at Made in Durham, Program Manager at the Triangle Literacy Council, and Talent Advisor at CSX.

Dr. Wilkins has lived in Nash County for over 27 years, is a native of Lake Gaston, N.C., and enjoys spending time with his wife, four children, and family. His hobbies include volunteering, gardening, weight training, boating, fishing, and swimming.



ELECT LORENZA M. WILKINS
 NORTH CAROLINA HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
 DISTRICT 25

**Paid for by
 Committee to
 Elect Lorenza Wilkins**



ELECT LORENZA M. WILKINS
 NORTH CAROLINA HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
 DISTRICT 25



Logos of endorsing organizations: Carolina FORWARD, NC STATE AFL-CIO, work for DEMOCRACY, CLIMATE CABINET, WILEY NICKEL, ERA @ NC, ERA CERTIFIED, EMPAC SEANC, REPRODUCTIVE FREEDOM FOR ALL, NASW PACE, ENDORSED BY NORTH CAROLINA CHAPTER NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF SOCIAL WORKERS, EC EQUALITY NORTH CAROLINA ACTION FUND PAC, NCAE NORTH CAROLINA ASSOCIATION OF EDUCATORS.

“For all the Poor People”: Notes on Sarah E. Small & Her Run for the U.S. Congress in 1965

By David Cecelski

Independent Writer

Sarah E. Small of Williamston, N.C. was the first African American woman in North Carolina history to run for the U.S. Congress. When she ran for a seat in the U.S. House of Representatives in 1965, she may even have been the first African American woman to do so in American history.

Either way, Sarah Small was a groundbreaking historic figure: wise and seeing, deeply devout, and defiant of tyranny in all its shapes.

The centrality of her Christian faith and her defiance of worldly authority can be seen in a story that she told during an interview on Boston TV station WGBH in 1990.

In that interview, Small recalled a dinner at the White House during a civil rights summit in the 1960s. Unlike the other guests, she had not stood when Pres. Lyndon Johnson arrived late to the dinner.

“Everybody jumped up and I kept on eating,” Small remembered. “This minister said, ‘Stand up! That’s the president!’ I said, ‘I stand up for Jesus’—and I kept on eating...

“But that was just me, you know. I promised the Lord that I was not going to bow. I was not going to scratch when I didn’t itch. Or grin when I was not tickled. And I was not going to bow to any man.

“I was going to pray to God. Thank him for what He is to me. And just be Sarah. Plain old Sarah.”

A Militant Attachment... to the Jesus of the Gospels”

She may have been “plain old Sarah,” but she was also a woman of great depths.

After Small’s passing in 2001, at the age of 73, a Boston journalist named Christopher Lydon compared her liberation-oriented theology to that of Dietrich Bonhoeffer, the Lutheran pastor who defied his church to stand up to the Nazis and was hanged.

“She was a political radical with a militant attachment to the God of Genesis, Exodus, and the Psalms, and especially to

the Jesus of the Gospels,” he wrote of her in *The Boston Globe*.

At a forum at the John F. Kennedy Presidential Library and Museum in 1998, when she was 71 years old, Small made clear where she stood when it came to her faith and social injustice.

“I am a Christian,” she told the audience. “I believe the Earth is the Lord’s and the fullness thereof, the world and all of us therein. And no man got no business having dominion over another man. The Lord put this Earth here for [us all].”

Today I would like to invite you to spend a little time with Sarah Small— woman of faith, mother, civil rights leader, and a pathbreaking figure in North Carolina’s history.

Growing up in Williamston

She was born Sarah Everett in Williamston, N.C., a small farm town 100 miles east of Raleigh, in 1927. She grew up in the Jim Crow South during the Great Depression. Her early life was not easy.

Her father died when she was only 13 or 14 years old. After his passing, she dropped out of school to look after her ailing mother.

Times were hard, but she grew up in a close-knit family and with a tremendous faith. Her grandfather was a Baptist minister; he had founded the Mt. Shiloh Baptist Church in Williamston in 1874, less than a decade after the abolition of slavery.

His daughter, Sarah Small’s mother, had a faith no less strong.

Throughout Sarah Small’s early life, she breathed in the music of the African American church. She was a gifted pianist. She played by ear, and she could not remember a time in her childhood that she did not know how to play the piano.

Small often played at worship services and prayer meetings in the little country churches around Williamston. During the civil rights movement, she arranged “Freedom Songs” for rallies and, at least once or twice, “warmed up” audiences for the Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr.

She met her husband John Small while she lived in New York City for a short time in the late 1940s. He was originally from

Elizabeth City, 60 miles northeast of her home in Williamston. The couple soon moved back south and made Williamston their home.

Her brother, J. D. Everett, first drew her into the struggle for civil rights. The proprietor of a funeral parlor and an insurance business in Williamston, he was involved in the local NAACP chapter and was a strong advocate for African American voting rights.

After the Second World War, he had played an important role in organizing local voter registration drives in Williamston. His sister Sarah joined him in those efforts.

At the beginning of 1963, Sarah Small had five children and was devoting most of her time to her family and church. She had a reputation for being a mother not just to her own children, but to young people in need throughout her community.

She always made time for Biblical study. At prayer meetings, in small groups, and on her own, she strove to understand Scripture’s teachings and how they call us to live.

Even the Southern Christian Leadership Conference’s (SCLC’s) field organizer Golden Frinks, whom nobody ever called a saint, was in awe of her knowledge of the Scripture.

“She can recite every chapter in the Bible [and] tell you where Hagar was when [she] used the bathroom,” Frinks, in typically salty prose, told historian David Carter.

The Williamston Freedom Movement Historian Amanda H. Smith’s wonderful, award-winning book *The Williamston Freedom Movement: A North Carolina Town’s Struggle for Civil Rights, 1957-1970* is an essential work for understanding Sarah Small’s path toward her run for the U.S. Congress.

As described in Smith’s book, Small first grew into being a leader beyond her family and church during the civil rights struggle that came to be known as the Williamston Freedom Movement.

As chronicled in Smith’s book, black activists in Williamston reached out to the Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr. and requested

the support of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference in the spring of 1963.

King had been SCLC’s president since its founding in Atlanta, Georgia, in 1957.

King assigned SCLC field organizer Golden Frinks to go to Williamston and meet with black citizens. Soon after the first civil rights demonstrations began, Small was at their head.

“Through the movement she became brave”

A protest at the Watts Theater in June 1963 was the beginning of a long, hot summer of daily marches, sit-ins, pickets, and other non-violent protests aimed at ending racial injustice in Williamston.

Small and Frinks were widely seen as the Williamston Freedom Movement’s leaders. Frinks was fiery, brazen, inspirational, wily. He was already a veteran of several other local civil rights struggles in northeast North Carolina, including in Edenton, his hometown.

Small was visionary, courageous, uplifting, wise, and as protective of the Williamston Freedom Movement’s young activists as a mother bear with her cubs.

At a meeting at Green Memorial Church of Christ, those young activists chose her to be the president of a newly formed local chapter of the SCLC. As a woman president of an SCLC chapter, she was a rarity: in SCLC’s early days, male ministers usually made up its leadership at every level.

The interviews in *The Williamston Freedom Movement* demonstrate how Small shaped the civil rights protests in Williamston, but also provide hints as to how the protests shaped Small.

For instance, in one interview, Ida Small Speller, one of Sarah Small’s daughters, described an incident in which her mother stood up to Ku Klux Klan nightriders when they attempted to burn a cross in the family’s yard.

Instead of grabbing a shotgun and confronting the Klansmen (as many did) or turning off the house’s lights and hiding (as others did), Small stormed onto the front porch, turned all the house’s lights onto the Klansmen, and shamed them at the top of her voice until they retreated.

Ms. Speller made clear that her mother had not always been so fearless. She told Amanda Smith, “She was always skittish, but through the movement she became brave.”

“Mae, let’s hold hands and pray” Her Christian faith was at the core of her involvement in the African American freedom struggle. I do not think that I have ever seen or heard a story about Sarah Small that did not discuss her strong faith.

As historian David Carter put it, “She found artificial the distinction between civil rights and divine rights. Freedom was something God-given, not another commodity whose distribution only whites could control.”

In his NCHR article, Carter quotes a story that one of the older activists in Williamston, Mary Mobley, told him about the power of Small’s faith and how it inspired the people around her.

Late in the summer of 1963, Small and Mobley were leading a civil rights march of several hundred black citizens.

N. C. WOMAN TO SEEK CONGRESS SEAT

U. S. Court Rules Against City School Board

Motion for Approval 'Freedom Of Choice' Denied by Judge

The Carolina Times
THE TRUTH UNBRIDLED

VOLUME 42 — No. 45 DURHAM, N. C. — SATURDAY, DECEMBER 4, 1965 PRICE: 15c

NAACP Pushes Investigation Charlotte Homes Bombing

Wilkins Sends Telegram to Gov. Moore

MRS. COBB

Final Rites are

The Brief History of African Americans Running for Government: A Legacy of Courage & Persistence

The story of African Americans running for positions in government is one of extraordinary resilience, determination, and transformative impact. From the earliest days of Reconstruction to the modern political landscape, Black candidates have challenged barriers, rewritten political norms, and expanded American democracy. Their pursuit of elected office has not only shaped national policy but has also symbolized the ongoing struggle for representation, equity, and justice.

Reconstruction: The First Wave of Black Political Leadership

In the aftermath of the Civil War, newly freed African Americans asserted their political voice for the first time. The Reconstruction era (1865–1877) marked an unprecedented moment when Black men, empowered by the 14th and 15th Amendments, began winning elections at local, state, and federal levels.

Between 1868 and 1876:

- Over 2,000 African American men held public office across the South.
- Hiram Revels of Mississippi became the first Black U.S. Senator in 1870.
- Joseph Rainey of South Carolina became the first Black member of the U.S. House of Representatives in 1870.

• State legislatures in states like South Carolina, Louisiana, and Mississippi included significant numbers of Black lawmakers. These leaders advocated for civil rights, public education, labor protections, and fair governance—policies that shaped the future of Southern politics.

However, the rise of Jim Crow laws, racial terror, and voter suppression violently dismantled Black political power. By the early 1900s, nearly all African American officeholders had been forced out.

The Early 20th Century: Persistence in the Face of Suppression

Despite massive disenfranchisement, African Americans continued pursuing local positions in northern and midwestern cities:

- Oscar De Priest of Chicago broke a major barrier in 1928, becoming the first African American elected to Congress in the 20th century.
- Black political clubs and civic organizations, especially in major cities like New York, Detroit, and Philadelphia, mobilized voters and supported Black candidates.

• Leaders such as Adam Clayton Powell Jr., elected to Congress in 1944, gained national notoriety for advancing civil rights and anti-discrimination laws. African American political lead-

ership during this period laid the groundwork for the civil rights breakthroughs that would follow.

The Civil Rights Movement: Reshaping the Political Landscape

The mid-20th century marked a turning point. The victories of the Civil Rights Movement—including the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965—broke down the legalized barriers preventing African Americans from voting and running for office.

As a result:

- Hundreds of Black candidates began winning elections in the South for the first time since Reconstruction.

• Shirley Chisholm made history in 1968 as the first Black woman elected to Congress, and in 1972 as the first African American woman to run for President.

• Black mayors emerged in major U.S. cities:

- Carl Stokes, Cleveland (1967)
- Richard Hatcher, Gary, Indiana (1967)
- Maynard Jackson, Atlanta (1973)
- Marion Barry, Washington, D.C. (1978)

These leaders transformed urban politics and expanded the role of African Americans in national policy.

The Late 20th Century: A New Era of Representation

By the 1980s and 1990s, African American political participation had grown dramatically. Notable breakthroughs included:

- Jesse Jackson's presidential campaigns in 1984 and 1988 galvanized millions, proving a diverse coalition could support a Black candidate nationally.

• Colin Powell was considered a viable presidential contender in the 1990s.

• The number of Black mayors, state legislators, and city council members continued to rise nationwide.

Black political organizations—from the Congressional Black Caucus to local advocacy groups—played major roles in advancing representation and political influence.

The 21st Century: Achievements, Milestones, and Expanding Power

The 21st century has seen unprecedented visibility and success for African American candidates.

Barack Obama

In 2008, Barack Obama shattered one of the greatest racial barriers in American history when he was elected the first African American President of the United States. His election—and reelection—marked a monumental shift in American politics.

Vice President Kamala Harris
In 2020, Kamala Harris became the first Black (and first South Asian) Vice President, reflecting the growing diversity in political leadership.

Surge in Congressional and State Offices

African American political representation continues expanding:

- A record number of Black members now serve in Congress.

• Black candidates have become governors (e.g., Wes Moore of Maryland, 2022).

• Cities large and small routinely elect Black mayors, county commissioners, and prosecutors.

Rise of Black Women in Politics

Black women have become the

fastest-growing demographic in political leadership:

- Stacey Abrams transformed voter mobilization in Georgia.

• Keisha Lance Bottoms, Karen Bass, Lori Lightfoot, and others have led major U.S. cities.

• Dozens of Black women now serve in state legislatures and Congress.

The Ongoing Challenges

Despite progress, African American candidates still face:

- Racially targeted voter suppression
 - Gerrymandering
 - Disparities in campaign fundraising
 - Media bias
 - Underrepresentation in statewide and federal offices
- Barriers remain, but the momentum toward equity continues to build.

A Legacy Still Unfolding

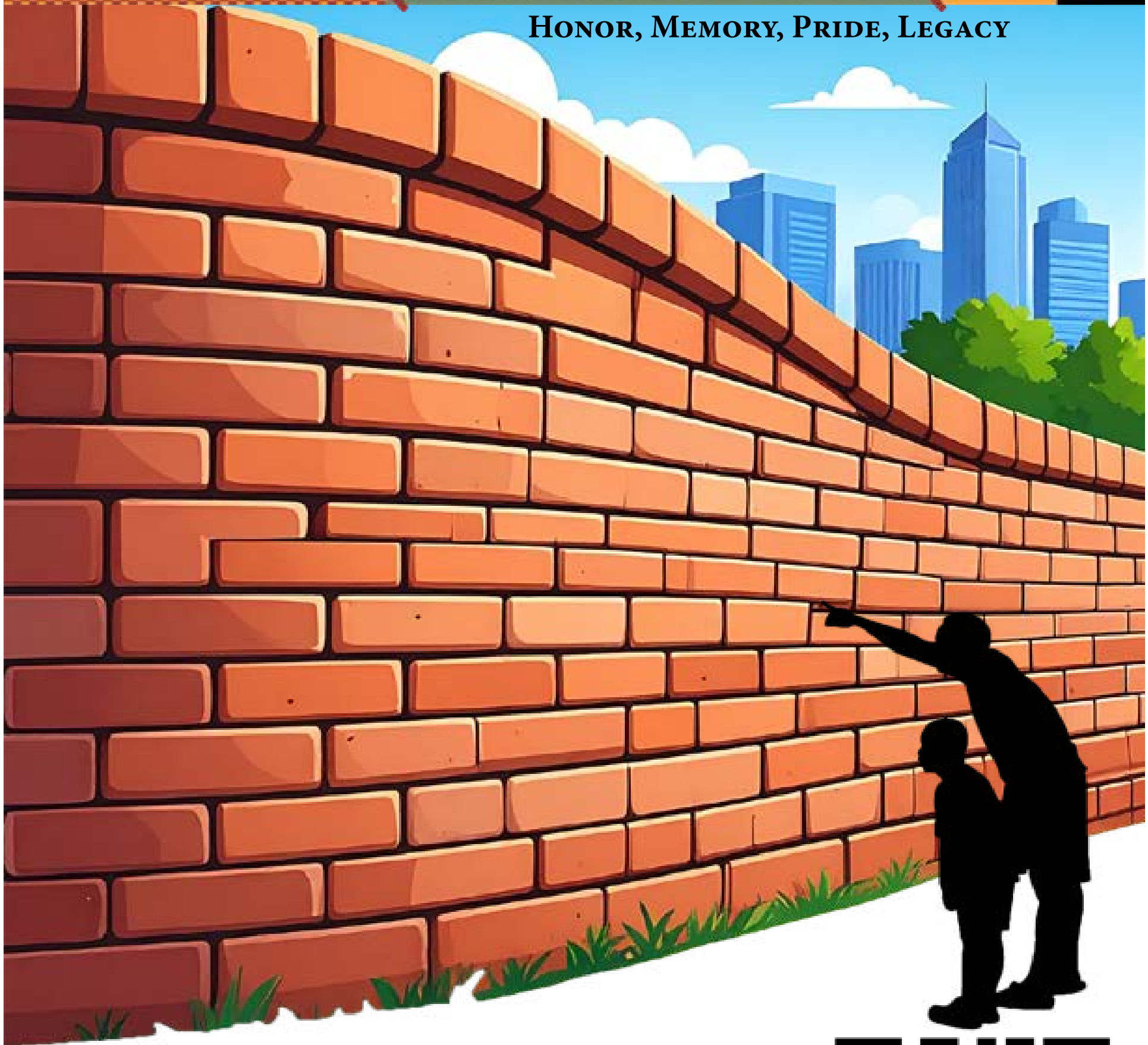
The history of African Americans running for positions in government is not simply a political journey—it is a testament to endurance, courage, and the unyielding pursuit of equality. From Reconstruction pioneers to modern trailblazers, Black candidates have reshaped American democracy and expanded what leadership can look like.

Their efforts have not only secured representation but have also inspired generations to participate, vote, advocate, and lead. As more African Americans run for office at every level, the nation continues to move closer to fulfilling its founding promise: a government truly of, by, and for the people.



The Carolinian

HONOR, MEMORY, PRIDE, LEGACY



THE CAROLINIAN LEGACY PROJECT

Whether honoring the accomplishments of a generation past, rooting a family name or celebrating a personal success, The Carolinian's Legacy Wall is how to say "I WAS HERE" on the landscape of Raleigh for generations to come.

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