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Haitian Immigrants Face Uncertainty After TPS Ruling

By Judaea Ingram
Special To The Carolinian

Fireworks burst across the sky last month as Americans celebrated Independence Day. For many, the crackling explosions meant joy, tradition, freedom. For a 31-year-old Haitian woman living in Florida, they sounded like something else entirely: the gunfire she spent years trying to survive.

Before she fled Haiti in 2021, falling asleep to gunshots was routine. Violence was the background noise of her life. Now, even the harmless pop of fireworks can send her spiraling into panic, pulling her back into memories she has tried desperately to outrun.

For a moment, she believed she had finally found safety.

That sense of security shattered when the Trump administration moved to end Temporary Protected Status (TPS) for Haiti, the program that allowed her to rebuild her life in the United States. Without it, she fears losing her job, her independence, and the fragile stability she has fought for.

The decision could affect hundreds of thousands of Haitians who rely on TPS protections. For her, it feels like being pushed toward a country she no longer recognizes. One where political chaos, gang rule, and daily violence make survival uncertain.

She was willing to share her story, but asked to remain anonymous for

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safety reasons. Created by Congress in 1990, TPS allows people from countries experiencing armed conflict, natural disasters or other extraordinary conditions to temporarily live and work in the United States. Haiti first received the designation following the devastating 2010 earthquake and remained eligible as the country continued facing political instability, natural disasters and escalating gang violence.

The administration has argued TPS was designed to be a temporary humanitarian program rather than a permanent immigration solution. Advocates, however, argue Haiti remains unsafe for many people to return because of ongoing violence and instability.

For the Florida resident, the decision represents more than a change in immigration policy.

"The question that I ask myself is, when am I finally going to be and feel safe?" she said.

Raised by a single mother in Port-au-Prince, Haiti's capital, she attended private school before continuing her education in college. Her mother dedicated her life to providing her with opportunities, and she eventually became a young entrepreneur with plans to build her future in Haiti.

Leaving her home country was never part of that plan.

But, as political instability worsened, she said her involvement



around political circles made her feel increasingly unsafe. She said she narrowly escaped being kidnapped, an experience that convinced her she could no longer remain in Haiti.

She does not discuss the details of the incident, but said the experience changed the way she viewed her future in Haiti. She no longer felt she could safely remain in the country.

She arrived in the United States in 2021 intending to apply for asylum. When Haiti received TPS protections, she instead applied for the temporary status. The process took months, leaving her unable to legally work while waiting for approval.

During that time, she relied completely on family members for support.

"If they don't cook, I wouldn't eat," she said, explaining that she depended on her aunt while waiting for authorization to work.

After receiving TPS and employment authorization, she began rebuilding her life. She found jobs, created friendships and discovered a community that welcomed her despite being thousands of miles away from home.

"I found a place in a new community that has welcomed me, regardless of my roots," she said.

But building that new life came with sacrifices.

She missed family funerals in Haiti. When her mother suffered four strokes, she could only help by paying medical expenses rather than sit-

ting beside her. One of her nephews no longer recognizes her because he was only a baby when she left.

Those were losses she accepted for the opportunity to live somewhere she believed she could be safe.

Now she fears losing that security.

Without TPS, she said she can no longer work and faces uncertainty about what comes next. She worries about losing her independence and becoming dependent on others again, as she was when she first arrived.

The uncertainty has also taken a toll on her mental health.

When news of the TPS decision spread, she said her first reaction was disbelief. As a woman of faith, she said she continues to believe there is a path forward, but the fear returned after seeing reactions online and hearing concerns from others.

"I don't want to be in those detention centers," she said. "When am I gonna finally be and feel safe?"

Returning to Haiti is not simply a matter of moving back to where she was born. She said the country she left no longer exists in the same way.

Since the assassination of President Jovenel Moïse in July 2021, Haiti has continued to face political instability. Powerful gangs have expanded control over parts of the country, forcing residents to flee their homes and making everyday activities increasingly dangerous.

Those dangers are not just stories

Why The Utilities Are So Vulnerable

THE CONVERSATION—Hackers tried to break into at least 30 municipal water systems in Minnesota on July 26-27, 2026. Since then, Michigan and five other states have reported similar cyberattacks.

The attackers did not try to infiltrate the computers that utility offices use. Instead, they tried to seize control of small computers in equipment like pumps and valves that deliver drinking water to millions of people.

The utilities countered the attacks by shutting down the control computers and sending personnel out into the field to operate equipment manually. Utility officials have said that water remained safe to drink.

Initial suspicion has fallen on hackers allegedly aligned with Iran, but the U.S. government has yet to attribute the attack to anyone.

How can someone from far away seize control of a water system and possibly shut off the flow or taint the water?

Controlling the water machinery

There are about 152,000 public drinking water systems in the United States, according to the federal government. A municipality gets its water from lakes, reservoirs, rivers or underground aquifers.

Pumps move water through pipes to a treatment plant that filters and



disinfects it. More pumps push the treated water into storage tanks, then through distribution pipes to homes and businesses. The entire system can span many square miles.

The hackers accessed small computers called programmable logic controllers at the water systems that operate all sorts of industrial equipment. The programmable logic controllers read sensors that measure conditions such as water pressure, water chemistry, tank levels and equipment status, and automatically operate pumps, valves and alarms. A household thermostat is a useful comparison: It reads the temperature and tells the heating or cooling

system what to do.

The programmable logic controllers also transmit operational data to a utility's central computer system. Workers use dashboards to monitor the information and send commands back to the controllers. The two-way communications can travel through wired networks, over radio or cellular links, or through internet connections.

Many utilities operate with small staffs, so remote connections allow an employee to monitor a distant pump or tank, receive an alarm after hours or let a vendor diagnose equipment without traveling to every site.

Controllers that use the internet may access it directly, or go through protective firewalls, secure gateways or virtual private networks. Direct access is more vulnerable because there are fewer defensive barriers. A hacker can find a controller by scanning the internet and finding its Internet Protocol, or IP, address, then try a weak or stolen password or exploit a known security flaw.

To reach a controller through a secure gateway or encrypted service, a hacker would have to steal remote-access credentials, or break into the gateway or private network, or get control of an operator's workstation. The hacker could then use that foothold to reach the controller.

Attempted access can also be part of an intruder's longer-term strategy to collect information, test defenses or establish entry for a later date.

How an attack works

Attacks on industrial control systems often follow a familiar sequence. Infiltration often begins with a quiet search for access. Attackers scan internet addresses for controllers, dashboards and outside companies that provide remote access services, looking for targets that are linked directly to the internet.

Next, the attacker looks for a

(See *UTILITIES*, P. 2)



AFTER NC LAWMAKERS PULL PLUG ON CIVIL LEGAL AID, NONPROFITS ARE LEFT SEARCHING FOR SOLUTIONS

NC NEWSLINE - As Democratic lawmakers rose to attack the recent state budget plan put forth by the Republican leadership of the North Carolina General Assembly, they repeatedly brought up a somewhat obscure legal acronym vital to legal aid across the state: IOLTA.

"We put more money into our indigent defense system, and that's great. It needs it. But it's come at the expense of IOLTA funding going to legal aid organizations providing important civil legal services to poor people," said Sen. Julie Mayfield, D-Buncombe, in a July 1 floor speech. "We're helping poor people over here, and we're hurting them over here."

The Interest on Lawyers' Trust Accounts program has for decades funded civil legal aid services across North Carolina until last year, when Republican lawmakers froze all IOLTA grants over concerns that the money was being used for political purposes.

After passage of the state budget, that freeze has become a complete elimination of future civil legal aid funding through IOLTA — an end to a grant program that legal aid nonprofits have relied on for more than 40 years.

"This is not the government's money"

The new budget makes North Carolina the only state in the country that offers neither state funding for legal aid in civil cases nor financial support from IOLTA.

The money that went toward IOLTA's grant program is generated as interest by pooled legal funds that attorneys are required to hold in trust. The funds, which are overseen by the North Carolina State Bar, are not taxpayer dollars nor are they revenue generated by the state government's operations.

"This is not public money. This is money that is generated by interest on individual clients' trust accounts," said Peter Gilbert, who serves as litigation director for the North Carolina Justice Center. "This is not the government's money, but they are asserting the right to control the board of it."

The Justice Center was among the largest recipients of IOLTA funding, receiving a \$1 million grant supporting a broad array of legal aid areas, including for housing, employment, public benefits, immigration, and consumer protections.

An April program audit by State Auditor Dave Boliek was unable to identify any instances of misused funds, finding that the program complied with all grant eligibility requirements. Despite this, he called for a massive program overhaul, condemning what he described as a lack of adequate oversight.

"As our audit shows, IOLTA grants are going to organizations with clearly partisan, political agendas," Boliek said in a statement following the audit report's release. "With IOLTA's revenues and grant payments surging, it's incumbent that the flow of dollars is met with additional scrutiny to ensure proper use."

Acting on these recommendations, the North Carolina General Assembly eliminated the civil legal aid grants disbursed by IOLTA, leaving in place only grants intended to improve legal administration.

LEGAL SERVICES CONTRACT EXPIRES, AND UNACCOMPANIED IMMIGRANT CHILDREN FACE DEPORTATION

WASHINGTON — More than 20,000 unaccompanied immigrant children Monday lost their legal representation because the Trump administration has not entered into a new agreement to take over their legal services after it let a longstanding contract with a nonprofit expire.

Without legal representation, fewer than 10% of immigrant children win the right to remain in the United States while their case goes through immigration court. Immigration attorneys and advocates worry the loss in legal aid will put children on a fast track to deportations.

"Right now we're all in the dark, and the secrecy is a big part of the problem," said Shaina Aber, the executive director of the Acacia Center for Justice, which previously held the contract that expired July 31.

The Department of Health and Human Services, which issues the contract, did not respond to several emails from States Newsroom asking which new organization will take over legal services in immigration courts for unaccompanied kids.

HHS has also not submitted any request for new contractors to provide legal services to unaccompanied minors, according to a States Newsroom review of the federal government's website for contractors.

Additionally, Scott Ehlers, the director of the Texas Indigent Defense Commission, an organization that the Trump administration was initially eyeing to take over legal services for unaccompanied minors, told States Newsroom it had not been awarded a contract from HHS and had not been contacted by the department regarding one.

Aber said that HHS has not informed Acacia who the new contractor will be, implemented a transition of children's cases to new attorneys, or paid the organization for completed legal work since December.

HHS has not reimbursed \$65 million to Acacia, which distributes the federal funding to roughly 100 organizations across the country who provide legal representation to unaccompanied children in immigration cases.

Trump Admin Halts Harriet Tubman \$20 Bill

By Jordan Meadows
Staff Writer

The Trump administration has halted plans to place abolitionist Harriet Tubman on the \$20 bill, ending a decade-long effort that began under President Barack Obama's administration and was revived under President Joe Biden.

Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent said last Monday that the department is "not at present" moving forward with the redesign, prompting criticism from Democratic lawmakers who argue the decision abandons years of bipartisan work to recognize one of the nation's most influential figures in the fight against slavery.

The proposed redesign would have replaced former President Andrew Jackson on the front of the \$20 bill with Tubman, who was born enslaved in Maryland in the early 1820s and later became one of the most famous conductors on the Underground Railroad, helping hundreds of enslaved people escape to freedom. Had the redesign been completed, Tubman would have become the first Black American featured on U.S. paper currency.

The effort to place Tubman on the \$20 bill began during the Obama administration in 2016, when then-Treasury Secretary Jacob Lew announced plans for a major redesign of U.S. currency. The announcement came as part of a broader effort to feature more women and civil rights figures on American money, with the Treasury initially aiming to unveil the new \$20 bill in 2020 to coincide with the 100th anniversary of the ratification of the 19th Amendment,



which granted women the right to vote.

However, the redesign stalled during President Donald Trump's first administration. Then-Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin announced in 2019 that the new \$20 bill would not be released until at least 2028, citing security concerns and the need for updated anti-counterfeiting technology. Trump himself criticized the move in 2016, calling the decision to replace Jackson "pure political correctness" and arguing that Tubman could instead be placed on another denomination, such as the \$2 bill, while Jackson remained on the \$20.

The Biden administration sought to revive the effort shortly after taking office. Despite renewed efforts, the redesign was expected to take years. Former Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen estimated that the new \$20 bill would likely not be ready until around 2030 because of the extensive design, testing, and security requirements involved in producing new currency.

Democratic senators are now urging the Trump administration to

restart the Tubman project.

Maryland Sen. Chris Van Hollen and New Hampshire Sen. Jeanne Shaheen recently led a group of Democratic senators in a letter to Bessent criticizing the Treasury Department's decision to abandon the redesign.

"We write to express our deep frustration that the Department of the Treasury is 'not at present' planning to move forward with the long-standing effort to place Harriet Tubman on the twenty-dollar bill," the senators wrote.

The senators also questioned why the administration had halted the Tubman redesign while pursuing other currency projects involving President Trump's likeness.

They pointed to plans for a commemorative \$1 coin featuring Trump and proposals backed by some Trump allies for a new \$250 bill celebrating the nation's 250th anniversary. The push to feature Trump on currency has raised questions because federal law generally prohibits living individuals from appearing on U.S. paper money. The administra-

tion has argued that a commemorative \$1 coin featuring Trump is allowed under a 2020 law signed during Trump's first term that permits the Treasury secretary to issue coins with designs commemorating the nation's semiquincentennial, or 250th anniversary. The Trump administration has also explored the possibility of creating a \$250 bill featuring the president's image.

Federal law currently prohibits living people from appearing on paper currency, but lawmakers allied with Trump have introduced legislation that would create an exception for the proposed commemorative bill. The Treasury Department has said it is conducting "appropriate planning and due diligence" regarding the proposal.

The administration has also moved toward including Trump's signature on money.

No new individual has appeared on U.S. paper currency since 1928, when the government began using the portraits currently seen on many bills. Supporters of the Tubman redesign argue that replacing Jackson would better reflect the nation's history, pointing to Tubman's role in ending slavery and advancing freedom. Critics of removing Jackson, including Trump during his first term, have argued that changing currency designs should not be driven by political considerations.

The dispute now places two competing visions of American symbolism against each other: one focused on expanding representation in national institutions, and another focused on elevating Trump's role in commemorating the country's founding anniversary.

Business & Finance

Auditor Continues Uncovering Financial Mismanagement

By Jordan Meadows

Staff Writer

North Carolina State Auditor Dave Boliek said his office uncovered a growing pattern of financial mismanagement across municipalities and public institutions statewide, with a series of audits revealing issues ranging from weak oversight to potential criminal activity.

Speaking during a July Council of State meeting, Boliek said his office has already been involved with “dozens of municipalities of varying sizes that are experiencing financial distress,” citing high-profile cases and emphasizing that similar concerns are emerging across the state.

One of the most detailed and closely watched investigations centers on the Town of Cary, where a sweeping investigative report released in mid-July found more than \$1 million in questionable and, in some cases, extravagant spending

tied to former Town Manager Sean Stegall. The report, which spans thousands of pages, examined procurement card use, council expenditures, and broader financial management practices after complaints of alleged misconduct.

Auditors reviewed tens of thousands of transactions and interviewed both current and former employees and elected officials. Boliek described the findings as “public dollars being thrown around carelessly while taxes are being raised only creates distrust in government,” and that it “brings a true accounting of where tax dollars go in Cary.”

The audit revealed that Cary issued 828 government purchasing cards—about 62% of its workforce—far exceeding the roughly 16% average among similarly sized municipalities like Charlotte and Raleigh.

Between January 2024 and December 2025 alone, those cards were used in more than 60,000

transactions totaling \$24.2 million. Auditors found that many purchases lacked proper documentation or a clear public purpose, with more than \$100,000 in transactions missing itemized receipts or any supporting records. Among the most scrutinized expenses were \$65,653 paid to a ghostwriter for a book about Stegall, \$86,000 for a video tied to a town retreat that included a staff dance performance, and an additional \$35,000 for a documentary about that same video. Other spending included a \$3,419 stay at a penthouse hotel, high-end meals, transportation costs, and even Ray-Ban sunglasses for council members. In one instance, \$37,301 in graduate tuition was paid on behalf of a councilmember before being reimbursed.

Boliek noted that some of the most expensive expenditures were approved at the staff level without council awareness.

“That \$86,000 was town staff ap-

proved, so the council wasn’t aware,” he said, adding, “We’ll let you draw your own conclusions about whether that’s a return on investment of taxpayer dollars.”

The fallout from the Cary audit has sparked debate about accountability, with town leaders largely attributing responsibility to Stegall, who resigned in late 2025 after nearly a decade in the role. A separate report commissioned by the town pointed to increased risk associated with long-tenured leadership and weaknesses in oversight systems.

The Cary Town Council is expected to continue addressing the issue in upcoming meetings, particularly one in late August.

In Rocky Mount, a 257-page performance audit revealed a dramatic 78% drop in the city’s cash and investment balances—from roughly \$100 million to \$21.8 million over two years—while spending increased sharply. Personnel costs rose 27%,

capital spending jumped 153%, and millions were spent on projects that either exceeded budgets or failed to materialize, including \$17.2 million for a proposed casino development.

Boliek said the report uncovered “red flag after red flag,” including poor hiring decisions and a lack of financial oversight that allowed problems to persist unchecked.

Other audits have identified serious issues across the state, including at North Carolina A&T State University, where more than \$700,000 in financial aid was improperly distributed to individuals connected to staff without clear criteria, prompting referrals to prosecutors and state investigators. In Forsyth County Schools, auditors found a \$46 million deficit along with “severe weaknesses” such as unrecorded expenditures and failures to reconcile accounts. And a statewide audit also found that the Department of Health and Human Services failed to properly track \$138.8 million in

federal awards to counties, raising concerns about accountability at the state level.

In Pilot Mountain, NC, Boliek said on-site investigative work contributed to the indictment of a former town manager, while in Zebulon, auditors identified significant internal control weaknesses. In the tiny town of Speed, NC, the auditor has even recommended potential dissolution due to fraud risks and a lack of financial management systems.

Boliek emphasized that his office is also expanding oversight efforts moving forward. Upcoming audits will examine the North Carolina Education Lottery, voter-approved general obligation bond spending over the past six years, and operations within the UNC system, including faculty workloads and vacancy management. He also noted that about five municipalities or entities are currently under active investigation for potential criminal activity.

Before Trump, Some States Had Already Ended Affirmative Action For Contractors

Ben Rosa

University of Michigan

President Donald Trump made headlines early in his second term when he ordered that affirmative action programs be dismantled. Less noticed was the fact that quite a few states had already eliminated such preferences for contractors, in some cases years ago.

This record can now provide some answers as to how businesses owned and operated by underrepresented groups actually fare after these measures take effect.

I’m an economist who has researched the consequences of state bans on affirmative action, and I found a mixed picture with some surprising conclusions. Notably, these measures did reduce the average head count among minority- and women-owned contractors. But in general, they didn’t push these companies to close shop.

This research is important not just because affirmative action is so politically sensitive. It matters because of the vast amount of money at stake: The U.S. spends about 10% of its gross domestic product on federal and state contractors, buying everything from pencils to new missile systems.

For decades, the government often sought to support businesses owned and operated by minorities and women through affirmative action at the federal and state levels.

But in more recent years, push-back against affirmative action and closely related diversity, equity and inclusion initiatives has prompted some states to eliminate such practices, including in contracting. Among the most recent cases was



Arian Simone, left, and Ayana Parsons of the foundation The Fearless Fund saw their grant program for Black women entrepreneurs affected after the Supreme Court ruled against affirmative action.

Indiana, whose attorney general pronounced in July 2026 those preferences were unconstitutional.

I looked at the nine states that had banned affirmative action in contracting as of 2020 – covering 114,000 employers – and measured how affected companies adjusted their operations. One key finding is that they sharply reduced their workforce. Five years after a ban, these businesses had about 11% fewer workers than their counterparts who were not minority- or women-owned.

Black-owned businesses were the most affected, cutting their workforce by about 19%. For context, that number exceeds even the early COVID-19 layoffs. The largest minority- and women-owned businesses also had significant reductions, by roughly 13%.

These bans also dampened the formation of new businesses, reducing the annual average number of startups by 35 in states with bans. But there’s no evidence they put minority- and women-owned contractors out of business.

A regional breakdown shows that metropolitan counties saw the largest relative decrease in the size of affected businesses. And states with smaller minority populations saw less of an effect on company size. Altogether, these results suggest that these bans didn’t have uniform effects, even within states.

One conclusion may be less intuitive: These bans didn’t play a role in whether affected contractors went out of business. In fact, companies owned by minorities and women were less likely to go under after a

ban than other companies.

This result may seem puzzling at first. One would expect higher rates of exiting from the contracting business than before, especially since affected businesses also became smaller.

But I found statewide bans did lead to the equivalent of a roughly 9% drop in long-run productivity. Bans also equated to a 10% decline in the value of companies, regardless of whether they were sold off.

In short, although affected contractors were no more likely to close shop, banning affirmative action led them to downsize relative to companies that were not owned by minorities and women. And the drop in their employee head count corresponded to a decline in productivity, likely driven by reduced contracting opportunities.

These changes in states, and now at the federal level, make it all the more important to understand how banning affirmative action has impacted underrepresented businesses so policymakers know what to expect going forward.

Many questions still need to be answered. Although my study looked at how underrepresented contractors respond after these bans, researchers still don’t have good estimates of how many contract dollars these businesses lost, except in more isolated cases.

Furthermore, the changes at the federal level still need to be researched. While past legal cases have limited how practitioners have applied affirmative action, attempts to eliminate it at the federal level are very recent. Further research is needed to fully understand the scope of these changes.



Black Business Month Celebrates NC's Legacy Of Entrepreneurship

By Judaea Ingram

Special To The Carolinian

RALEIGH, N.C. — From neighborhood markets to award-winning restaurants, Black-owned businesses have long been a cornerstone of North Carolina’s economy and culture. As August marks Black Business Month, communities across the state are recognizing the entrepreneurs whose businesses continue to create jobs, preserve culture and invest in local neighborhoods.

Black Business Month, established in 2004 by historian John William Templeton and engineer Frederick E. Jordan Sr., highlights the contributions of Black entrepreneurs while encouraging consumers to support Black-owned businesses year-round. The annual observance also draws attention to the opportunities and challenges facing Black business owners as they continue to build wealth and strengthen local economies.

North Carolina has a rich history of Black entrepreneurship dating back to the late 19th and early 20th centuries, when thriving Black business districts emerged in cities such as Durham, Wilmington and Raleigh. Areas like Durham’s historic Hayti community became centers of Black-owned banks, insurance companies, restaurants and retail shops, demonstrating the resilience and innovation of Black entrepreneurs despite segregation and limited economic opportunities.

That entrepreneurial spirit continues today through businesses that have become staples in their communities.

In Raleigh, Black Friday Market has grown into more than a retail space. The marketplace serves as a hub where shoppers can discover products from Black-owned brands and small businesses while providing entrepreneurs with increased visibility and opportunities to connect with customers. By bringing dozens of vendors together under one roof, the market has become a destination that celebrates Black creativity, commerce and community.

In Durham, Saltbox Seafood Joint has earned national recognition for its fresh seafood and simple coastal menu inspired by North Carolina fishing traditions. Founded by chef Ricky Moore, the restaurant has become one of the state’s most celebrated dining destinations, earning accolades while showcasing the flavors and culture of the North Carolina coast.

Businesses like Black Friday Market and Saltbox Seafood Joint demonstrate the diversity of Black entrepreneurship across North Carolina. While one creates opportunities for emerging small business owners through retail and community partnerships, the other has transformed locally sourced seafood into an award-winning culinary experience recognized far beyond the Triangle.

Supporting Black-owned businesses extends beyond a single month. Every purchase helps create jobs, strengthen neighborhoods and circulate dollars within local communities. Many Black-owned businesses also give back through mentorship, charitable initiatives and partnerships with schools, churches and nonprofit organizations.

As consumers become increasingly intentional about where they spend their money, Black Business Month serves as a reminder of the lasting impact local businesses have on the communities they serve. From family-owned shops to nationally recognized restaurants, Black entrepreneurs continue to shape North Carolina’s economic landscape through innovation, resilience and service.

While August shines a spotlight on these achievements, business owners and advocates hope the recognition inspires residents to support Black-owned businesses throughout the year. For North Carolina, that means continuing a legacy of entrepreneurship that has strengthened communities for generations and ensuring the next generation of Black entrepreneurs has the opportunity to thrive.

Poll: Should Paper Checks Be Abolished?

THE CONVERSATION - Germany is getting rid of paper checks at the end of 2027. Australia is bidding them farewell by 2030. U.S. President Donald Trump followed up his order killing off the penny with an executive order stopping check writing by the federal government.

Should the U.S. follow these other countries and broadly eliminate the ability to write checks?

Years ago, experts predicted that checks would have disappeared by now. However, they are still around, and billions are written each year in the United States.

Why? The quick answer is that businesses love them. And plenty of Americans still use checks for good reasons. But there is more to the story.

I am a business school professor and one of the few academics who advocates for the use of cash. While I have long told everyone about the benefits of paper money, I didn’t give paper checks much thought or use them until my mother’s recent death. Then I found myself writing checks to the cemetery, funeral home, gravestone engraver and a



host of other places. Plus, I started getting refund checks back from her landlord and insurance companies.

These experiences made me look more deeply into this form of payment to understand what was happening.

Every three years the U.S. government runs the Federal Reserve Payments Study by asking banks and

credit unions for internal information. This survey tracks everything from how often credit cards are used to the number of checks written.

While check usage has sharply declined in the U.S., a significant number – about 9.2 billion in 2024 – are still written, the data shows. The face value of those checks is probably bigger than you’d expect: more

than US\$24 trillion, not adjusted for inflation. That is almost as large as U.S. gross domestic product of \$29 trillion that year.

Not everyone can imagine numbers in billions or trillions, so let’s put those figures in more manageable terms.

A little over 150 checks were written per person in 2000. By 2024, the average had plummeted to 27 checks – slightly more than two per month. However, over that time, the amounts typically scribbled or printed on the face of those checks rose.

In 2000, the typical check was worth less than \$1,000. By 2024, the average amount had more than doubled to \$2,600.

Trends elsewhere are similar. The Bank for International Settlements, which serves as a bank for central banks like the Federal Reserve, has tracked check usage in 25 countries since 2012. Its data shows that in only two other countries is payment by check still commonplace.

And in both of those countries, check usage has fallen more sharply than in the United States.

Navigating New Tech, Government Regs & Business Opportunities

By Mark Stowers

Mississippi Biz Journal

Not long ago, agricultural drones were little more than flying cameras.

Farmers flew them to inspect irrigation systems, scout for insect damage or survey fields after severe weather. The unmanned aircraft provided a bird’s-eye view that saved time, reduced labor and gave farmers information they couldn’t easily gather from their truck or tractor.

Today, those same drones are being asked to do more than observe. They’re applying herbicides and fungicides, spreading fertilizer, planting cover crops and creating new

business opportunities for custom applicators across Mississippi. While the technology is still in its early stages with plenty of problems to overcome, researchers at Mississippi State University believe agricultural drones are poised to become another essential tool in modern farming.

“We’ve moved from drones simply collecting information to drones actually doing work,” said Madison Dixon, Associate Director of the Mississippi State University (MSU) Agricultural Autonomy Institute (AAI). “That’s really where the industry is changing.”

Dixon has spent nearly a decade working with unmanned aircraft sys-



tems at Mississippi State. After joining the university in 2016, he spent seven years at the Raspet Flight Research Laboratory, where much of the research centered on defense and homeland security applications. When the Agricultural Autonomy Institute was established three years ago, his work shifted entirely to agriculture.

“The focus now is helping growers understand how this technology can be used safely, effectively and economically,” he said.

More than a flying camera

For many producers, drones still serve their original purpose as scouting tools. A drone equipped with

a live camera enables farmers to inspect hundreds of acres without setting foot in the field. It can identify irrigation problems, monitor crop development, document storm damage for insurance claims, and locate insect infestations before they become widespread.

“It’s still the simplest and most straightforward use for drones,” said Dixon.

The next step is collecting the data. Using specialized sensors, drones can build detailed field maps, measure elevation for land leveling projects and capture mul-

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TBJ Corridors of Opportunity: How Harnett And Lee Counties Are Navigating Tech, Trade

By Jheri Hardaway

Staff Writer

SANFORD, NC - Business leaders, elected officials, and regional developers gathered last Thursday for the Triangle Business Journal's "Corridors of Opportunity" panel, focusing on the rapid transformation taking place in the Greater Triangle's southern frontier: Lee and Harnett Counties.

Once defined primarily by manufacturing and agriculture, the region is rapidly transitioning into a high-tech and biomanufacturing hub. However, as escalating land prices and suburban spillover push south from Wake County, local leaders are wrestling with how to balance massive economic recruitment like data centers and life-science facilities with infrastructure capacity, workforce development, and farmland preservation.

Panelists included: Stephen Barrington, Economic Development Director for Harnett County, Harnett County Board of Commissioners Commissioner Barbara McKoy, Donnie Oldham President of Sanford Contractors, Jimmy Randolph CEO of Sanford Growth Alliance, and moderator Ben Tobin the Greater Triangle Reporter for Triangle Business Journal. A starting point of discussion centered on the rise of artificial intelligence and the massive data centers required to power it. Lee and Harnett counties have taken distinctly different policy paths to address data center proposals. While Lee County updated its Unified Development Ordinance (UDO) to establish clear development standards, Harnett County implemented a temporary one-year moratorium to assess long-term impacts on local utilities, noise, and zoning.

Addressing the county's deliberate pause, Harnett County Commissioner Barbara McKoy emphasized the importance of ensuring that new



industrial models align with community planning rather than rushing into quick approvals. "100% percent of the citizen who came before us said no, wait on data centers. We voted on a one-year moratorium; the citizens of Harnett County wanted to see the effects of data centers. That gives us the time to do the research and get the answers that the citizens need. We need jobs, but people need to think about the environment, their health, and all the things the data centers bring before we agree to say yes to a data center," noted Commissioner McKoy.

Jimmy Randolph, CEO of the Sanford Area Growth Alliance (SAGA), noted that while data centers are not a primary targeted sector for workforce creation due to lower job counts, their massive capital investment significantly broadens the local tax base. Randolph commended Lee County's joint planning commission for establishing proactive standards that protect residents while keeping the door open for critical digital infrastructure.

While Lee County continues to celebrate major biomanufacturing expansions and the pending arrival of large-scale retail assets, Harnett County is making targeted moves to position itself for high-wage industrial projects.

Harnett County Economic Development Director Steve Barrington detailed the county's strategy of

developing "market-ready" product along key transit corridors like Interstate 95 and Highway 87 to stay competitive on a national scale. "Building One, which is a 175,000-square-foot building, is being built. Walls are up, about a mile off I-95," said Steve Barrington. "That puts us in a different ballgame in terms of being able to compete with some of the larger projects that come through EDPNC or come directly," Barrington stressed that having shovel-ready land and speculative flex space is essential to sitting at the table for major corporate relocations. "Going after the big fish, if we can compete for the big fish with the product that we're working on... we have about another five projects coming behind in the earlier stages that will yield up to nearly 900 acres of market-ready product," Barrington added. "If we didn't have the product, we're not at the table. You're simply not going to compete for projects."

Barrington also noted that economic success isn't solely defined by thousands of assembly jobs, highlighting that higher-wage positions and a diversified commercial footprint are essential to supporting the tax base. Local business leaders on the panel provided a grounded look at the physical realities of rapid growth. Donnie Oldham, President of Sanford Contractors, spoke to the lingering challenges facing the construction sector, including rising equipment costs, supply chain lead times, and the squeeze on home

affordability. Despite cyclical downturns, Oldham highlighted regional wins, including significant retail momentum and strong public-private workforce partnerships like apprenticeship programs with Central Carolina Community College (CCCC) and local high schools.

Commissioner McKoy also spoke to the impact of collaboration with CCCC, including highlighting the new partnership to train the future workforce at the Harnett Advanced Technology Training Center in Dunn. Additionally, she highlighted the new Cape Fear Valley Hospital and the cancer center. As we look forward, we must also look back to understand how major business decisions have impacted the area. Commissioner McKoy provided an eye-opening perspective as she shared what happened with a major Harnett County employer, Erwin Mills: "Erwin was the denim capital of the world and the plant employed 2,000 employees with the highest wages in the area. When the plant closed, it shut down the community. The economy was hit hard when 2,000 people were put out of work, and that is when we saw a drift in our citizens leaving the county for jobs in surrounding counties. The jobs were not there in Harnett County. That's why I'm supportive of Steven Barrington and the mission he is on to bring jobs to Harnett County."

The panel concluded with questions from the audience on a plethora of topics, including the protection of agricultural heritage amid rapid development. In response, local leaders affirmed that land-use plans across both counties continue to incorporate rural preservation strategies to protect working farms, ensuring that the region's oldest industry remains viable alongside its newest.

This was an early but powerful morning packed with insight focused on the future of our economy. Great things are happening in rural North Carolina.

DRONES

Continued from page 3

tispectral imagery that reveals plant stress long before symptoms become visible to the naked eye. Those insights help producers make more informed decisions about irrigation, fertilizer and crop management. But the fastest-growing application—and the one generating the most excitement—is aerial spraying.

A new tool—not a replacement

For generations, aerial application has belonged to crop dusters and large ground sprayers.

"Drone technology isn't replacing those machines," said Dixon. "Instead, it is filling important gaps where traditional equipment widow struggles."

Today's largest agricultural drones can carry only a fraction of what a crop duster or self-propelled sprayer can transport.

"A conventional aircraft or ground rig may carry several hundred gallons of product," said Dixon. "Even the largest drones today carry only a couple dozen gallons."

Capacity remains a limitation, but precision is becoming a competitive advantage. Drones excel in small, irregularly shaped fields or areas surrounded by power lines, tree lines and other obstacles that make conventional spraying difficult. They also become invaluable when heavy rains leave fields too muddy for tractors.

"If your spray rig is sitting because the field is too wet, timing doesn't stop being important," said Dixon. "Having another tool available can make the difference between treating a crop on time or missing that window."

A business opportunity taking shape

The technology is also creating an entirely new segment of Mississippi's agricultural economy. Rather than growers purchasing drones themselves, Dixon says much of the early adoption is coming from startup companies specializing in drone application services.

"We're seeing a lot of custom applicator businesses built specifically around spray drones," he said.

Some farmers are investing in their own equipment, particularly larger operations that can justify the expense, but many are choosing to hire specialized operators much like they already hire aerial crop dusting services. Traditional aerial applicators have been slower to embrace drones.

"They're outstanding pilots, and many simply prefer flying the aircraft," said Dixon. "There's still a philosophical difference between traditional aerial application and drone operations."

Over time, he expects those two worlds to become increasingly connected rather than competitive.

A six-figure investment

Entering the drone application business requires more than purchasing an aircraft.

"A professional spray drone typically costs between \$30,000 and \$50,000, but that's only part of the investment," explained Dixon. "Operators also need multiple battery sets, charging equipment and a mobile support station capable of mixing chemicals, storing water and recharging batteries in the field. By the time you have a functional drone operation, you're looking at roughly a \$100,000 investment."

Larger operations running multiple drones can easily exceed \$250,000. While significant, Dixon notes those figures are modest compared with many other pieces of agricultural equipment.

"When you're talking about combines, planters or self-propelled sprayers, those costs fit within the range of what many producers already invest in machinery," he said.

Ultimately, the decision comes down to whether a grower expects enough work to justify the purchase—or whether hiring a custom drone operator makes better financial sense.



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Health & Wellness

Medicaid Work Rule Leaves Homeless People In The Cold

KFF — Tywon Pugh has seizures that make it hard to find and keep a job.

"They called me a 'liability to the job site,'" Pugh said, recalling the words of his manager when a seizure cost him his last job at a fast-food restaurant in this western Montana city.

When the 46-year-old lost work in the past, his wife of 10 years covered their rent and he tended to their home until he found another job. But his wife died last year. Soon after, Pugh became homeless. His problem with alcohol became worse, which made managing his seizures more difficult.

"When she died, my whole base was depleted," Pugh said.

Medicaid pays for the prescriptions that keep Pugh's seizures at bay. The government-subsidized health coverage would also pay for an addiction treatment program that Pugh says he has tried to get into, but he was told there's a waitlist.

Pugh's goal has been to get healthy enough to work again. But he's worried about being able to keep the Medicaid coverage he needs to get to that point.

Early embrace of new rules

In the spring, the federal government finalized regulations requiring millions of people who receive Medicaid benefits to prove they're working, volunteering, or going to school to keep their coverage. States have until January to begin those checks. Montana, Arkansas, and Nebraska have already started implementing them.

The Trump administration's federal work requirements exempt

certain groups of people: those with disabilities, those older than 64, pregnant people and Native Americans, among others. To receive an exemption, anyone without a clear-cut qualification — such as through their age or disability status — will have to prove they're too sick to work.

But the administration decided that being homeless isn't a medical condition and can't count as an automatic out from having to meet the new requirements. Many conservative policymakers support work requirements, and some states have attempted to implement such rules for years. At least four states — Montana, Arizona, Kentucky and Utah — previously proposed policies that included homelessness as an exemption.

But federal officials have said that's not allowed. In an email to KFF Health News, the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services declined to provide a comment on the record. But the agency confirmed that states must stick to the federal government's list of exemptions. Homelessness in the U.S. has increased by 27% from 2013 to 2025, according to data from the Department of Housing and Urban Development. Last year, about 746,000 people were homeless.

Many, like Pugh, qualified for Medicaid, though the number of enrollees who are homeless is difficult to measure. In 2023, 55% of patients who received medical or behavioral health services through one of the nation's roughly 300 Health Care for the Homeless programs were enrolled in Medicaid.



Jennifer Tolbert, deputy director of KFF's Program on Medicaid and the Uninsured, said the federal regulations are a lot stricter than many states had expected, even those on board with work requirements. (KFF is a health information nonprofit that includes KFF Health News.)

"It took everyone by surprise,"

Tolbert said.

Mehmet Oz, who leads CMS, touted the regulations as a "path to prosperity" during a press conference in June.

"We need to get people to try to work," Oz said. In June, 25 mostly Democratic-led states sued the Trump administration over the

regulations, arguing the medical frailty standard would be too hard for enrollees to meet — and for states to assess. The work requirements are projected to increase the number of uninsured people nationwide by more than 5 million by 2034, according to the Congressional Budget Office.

Most states will begin to implement the Medicaid work requirements in January 2027.

Montana plans to begin booting Medicaid enrollees from coverage in October 2026 if they can't prove they're in compliance with the work requirement.

"My Medicaid is still active, but when are they gonna cut that off from me?" Pugh said. "I can't get employed. How am I supposed to survive?"

The differences between the states' and federal government's exemption lists don't end with people who are homeless. In Montana, lawmakers also planned to excuse people fleeing domestic violence and caregivers of hospitalized family members — two other groups left off the federal exemption list.

"These are simply parties that, due to a number of conditions, cannot

meet those requirements," Republican state Rep. Ed Buttrey said in 2019 when the Montana Legislature passed its first Medicaid work requirement bill. Buttrey did not comment for this article.

Federal officials have said many people who are homeless could fall under another exemption, such as being too sick to work. But, like many states, Montana's system to automatically conduct those checks through existing medical records isn't ready, though health department spokesperson Jon Ebelt said it should be in place by October. Anyone not automatically exempted by the state would have 30 days to prove their case.

A possible exemption for health

Pugh might qualify for a pass due to his seizures. But getting to doctor appointments the past year has been hard for him.

The anniversary of his wife's death just passed. Typically, Pugh has to find a new place to sleep outside each night. One night while camping, Pugh lost his wallet and important documents. And with the addiction treatment centers that accept

(See **MEDICAID WORK RULE**, P. 7)

Kratom And The Impacts



By Jheri Hardaway

Staff Writer

Sitting on display in local gas stations, smoke shops, and corner markets right next to energy drinks and candy bars, you'll find Kratom. National Institute on Drug Abuse has reported that people report using kratom to “alleviate pain, to address symptoms of mental health conditions like anxiety and depression, to help stop or reduce opioid or other substance use, and to manage withdrawal symptoms and cravings related to opioids and other drugs.”

Packaged as colorful gummies, energy shots, or herbal teas, it is aggressively marketed as an all-natural remedy for stress, pain, and fatigue. To the average consumer, it appears harmless, just another wellness supplement on a crowded shelf. Kratom is dangerous, an unregulated psychoactive substance derived from a Southeast Asian tree (*Mitragyna speciosa*), according to U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration. While proponents frame it as a gentle herbal aid, public health officials, medical toxicologists, and federal regulatory agencies warn that kratom acts on the body's opioid receptors, posing serious risks of addiction, organ toxicity, and severe physical harm.

One of the greatest misconceptions surrounding kratom is that because it comes from a plant, it is inherently safe. Kratom leaves contain active compounds, primarily mitragynine and 7-hydroxymitragynine (7-OH). In lower doses, these alkaloids produce a stimulant-like effect, increasing heart rate and alertness. At higher doses, however, they bind directly to the brain's opioid receptors. The result is a sedative effect that mimics classic opioids like morphine or prescription painkillers. Because it acts on these same pathways, long-term or heavy use of kratom can lead to physical dependence and addiction. Users who attempt to quit often suffer severe withdrawal symptoms, including intense anxiety, depression, and irritability, severe muscle aches and body tremors, insomnia, restlessness, and gastrointestinal distress.

A local family shared their experience, “Addiction doesn't just affect the person using the drug. It affects the entire family. Watching my 32-year-old son become addicted to kratom has been heartbreaking. It changed his personality, and his body became so dependent on it that he would shake and go through painful withdrawals if he didn't have it. What makes it even more concerning is how easy it is to buy. He can get it at vape shops and even convenience stores. Families like ours are left watching someone we love become trapped by a product that's marketed as if it's harmless.”

While marketed for general wellness, health records tell a much more dangerous story. Poison control centers across the United States regularly receive calls regarding kratom exposures. Clinical reports link the substance to a wide array of adverse physical and neurological events, including dangerously slow breathing, elevated heart rate (tachycardia), and erratic blood pressure. Neurological side effects like confusion, hallucinations, extreme agitation, and even grand mal seizures have been reported. Physicians have documented instances of acute liver injury and failure directly linked to kratom consumption, characterized by jaundice, elevated liver enzymes, and abdominal pain.

Adding to the inherent pharmacological risks is a total lack of regulatory oversight. The FDA has not approved kratom for any medical use or as a legitimate dietary supplement. Because kratom is largely manufactured outside standard regulatory safeguards, product purity varies wildly. Independent testing and federal surveillance of commercial kratom products have repeatedly revealed contamination, as some samples have tested positive for dangerous heavy metals, including lead and nickel, as well as bacterial pathogens like *Salmonella*. Some suppliers have been caught lacing products with synthetic compounds, prescription narcotics, or illegal drugs to artificially boost potency. There has also been deceptive labeling. Consumers rarely know how much active alkaloid they are ingesting per dose due to inconsistent or nonexistent third-party testing.

Several states and municipalities have stepped in to restrict or completely ban the sale of kratom and high-potency 7-OH products, inconsistent laws leave millions exposed to easily accessible harm. With kratom displayed alongside ordinary snacks and convenience items, consumers will remain susceptible to the dangerous illusion that “natural” means safe. Uncovering the truth about kratom requires clear, evidence-based education: it is a potent, addictive, and largely unregulated drug disguised as everyday wellness. Without stricter federal oversight and heightened public awareness, vulnerable individuals seeking relief will continue to fall prey to a chemical trap waiting at the corner store.

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Arts & Culture

A Legacy of Artistry: International Black Theatre Festival

By Jheri Hardaway

Staff Writer

Winston-Salem, NC - The landscape of American performing arts was forever changed when the “Marv-tastic” Larry Leon Hamlin founded the North Carolina Black Repertory Company (NC Black Rep). As the first professional Black theatre company in the state, NC Black Rep established a vital platform for creative expression and cultural preservation. Central to its mission is a steadfast commitment to exposing diverse audiences to the profound depth of Black theatre classics while simultaneously nurturing the development of groundbreaking new works.

Hamlin created a festival in 1989 in Winston-Salem, N.C., aimed at bringing together theater companies to learn from and support one another. Today, this legacy is most vibrantly realized through the company’s flagship outreach program, the International Black Theatre Festival (IBTF). Serving as the premier biennial gathering for the global theatre community, the IBTF continues to set the benchmark for sustaining and celebrating Black theatre excellence on an international scale. Playwright Baba David D. Wright held a reading of his play Sango, on Thursday evening. He shared, “I’ve been coming here since 1989. I’m always excited to be here. I have a play



read here every year if I don’t have a production up.

I’m a sound designer as well.” Wright, Brooklyn, NY-based, has been a Yoruba priest for 35 years. An artful and insightful man with roots in North Carolina, Wright lives for drama, “I was born in Brooklyn. In the People’s Republic of Brooklyn, the second largest Caribbean island in the world. And that’s why I write about people.” He shared details

about his play, “Sango is the orisha of Thunder Enlightenment, and justice.” The reading of Sango, was dark and winding, with pivotal lines like “let the one who opened this door close it” or even “he who asks the way does not lose his way.” Many memorable lines and moments made Sango a thoughtful and emotionally interactive reading.

NC Black Rep is dedicated to producing one world premiere play each



season, which assists in staying true to the company’s goal of discovering and nurturing the next generation of great African American writers. NC Black Rep’s Teen Theatre Ensemble (TTE) training program was created to provide professional theatre training for young emerging artists between the ages of 13 – 19 who are serious about developing their craft. The company’s Living Room Theatre reading series is free to the public and targets underserved members of the community who may not otherwise have access or the means to enjoy live theatre, and whose stories are often marginalized by society.

As we walked the vendors’ spaces

appearance on Friends. Wilson was excited to be a part of the festival and happy to speak with us, sharing, “I grew up in the theater, and there’s no greater training ground than being on that stage and live performance. Anything can go wrong, and it does. So this is not like television and film where you can have another take. But just to be here and to be supportive of us doing our thing, and to be acknowledged for the work that we do. So many times we’re overlooked, not given the accolades, and there are so many incredible talents here.”

We asked how often Wilson has attended the festival, “I think this is the sixth year that I’ve actually performed and been here.

But I also co-hosted, I think, in 2015. It’s really important. And I love bringing her, ‘cause she gets to see you all.” Dorien pointed to his beautiful wife, “We’ve been married for 40 years. We have a 40-year-old daughter.” Connecting with Dorien Wilson and other creators was a highlight of my first International Black Theatre Festival. See you all in two years!

CAM Raleigh Is Putting Its Building Up For Sale



WUNC - The Contemporary Art Museum of Raleigh is selling its building in downtown Raleigh.

Since 2011, the art museum has been housed at 409 W. Martin Street in the city’s Warehouse District. Prior to that, it had been located at Moore Square.

“The move is a deliberate step toward a more nimble, more sustainable contemporary arts institution, built around the creative energy of the city,” CAM Raleigh’s board said in a press release.

Commercial real estate company CBRE will list the property. It has a tax value of \$11 million, according to Wake County property records, broken down by a land value of \$9 million and building value of \$2 million. CBRE hasn’t set an asking price yet and will let the market dictate price, according to a CAM Raleigh spokeswoman.

The property is technically owned by 409 West Martin Landlord, LLC, a corporation owned and operated by The Contemporary Art Foundation specifically to hold the property. The property was purchased in 2010 for \$1.3 million.

The Contemporary Art Foundation operates CAM Raleigh as well as The Betty Eichenberger Adams Society (BAES), CAM’s women-only membership group with the mission to “generate, educate, and promote interest in contemporary art in Raleigh and beyond.”

In June 2025, the museum announced it was closing temporarily, citing financial struggles and increasing competition for grants and donations. Total revenues for the Contemporary Art Foundation dropped from nearly \$900,000 in 2018 to less than \$570,000 in 2025, according to tax filings.

“Selling our building isn’t a step back, it’s how we step forward,” Charman Driver, board chair of CAM Raleigh said in the press release. “It frees us to invest in artists, ideas, and experiences instead of a mortgage, and to design CAM’s next chapter with real freedom. That might mean a new kind of space, a smaller footprint, or a bold model that hasn’t been tried before.”

Hayti Heritage Center Announces 2026–27 Season:

“We Got a Seat With Your Name on It.”

DURHAM— Hayti Heritage Center, housed in the sanctuary of a former St. Joseph’s AME Church dating to 1891, today announced its 2026–27 season of performances, literary events, and free community gatherings under the theme “Planted in Legacy. Always in Bloom.” The season runs from August 2026 through May 2027 and reflects what curators describe as “cross-pollination”: the meeting of tradition and transformation, elders and newcomers, the deeply local and the nationally celebrated.

The season opens with the free, day-long Hayti Business Expo on Saturday, August 8, spotlighting more than 70 Black-owned businesses, and continues each Thursday in September with the outdoor Steps@Hayti dance parties. From there, programming moves indoors to the center’s landmark performance hall for a run of concerts, conversations, and premieres.

“This building was built to hold us. Hold us in joy, in revelry, in our questioning and in our grief. It is the living embodiment of the power of community. And so it remains. Our artistic expressions have always called our name and brought us together. And we aim to continue in that tradition this season,” said Monét Noelle Marshall, Interim Artistic Director of Hayti Heritage Center.

- 2026–27 Season Highlights
- Black Business Expo: August 8, 2026 | Free, full-day expo featuring more than 70 Black-owned businesses.
 - Steps@Hayti: Thursdays throughout September 2026 | Free outdoor dance parties.
 - Phonte Coleman: Speakerbox: September 18, 2026 | The Grammy-nominated Durham native and Little Brother member opens the Speakerbox, a new songs-and-stories series.
 - John Holiday: October 1, 2026 | One of today’s most acclaimed countertenors performs live.
 - YahZarah: October 10, 2026 | The five-octave vocalist returns to the city that first embraced her.
 - Amaryn Olmeda: November 6, 2026 | Teenage violinist with Carnegie Hall and Deutsche Grammophon credentials.
 - Eagle Aggie Gospel Classic: November 14, 2026 | NCCU vs. NC A&T meet in a gospel showcase.
 - The Sistering: Speakerbox: December 4, 2026 | Durham jazz vocalists Lenora Zenzalai Helm Hammonds, Lois Deloatch, Nnenna Freelon, and Kate McGarry share the songs they love and the stories behind them
 - Etienne Charles’ Creole Christmas: December 8, 2026 | A holiday concert rooted in Caribbean and Creole musical traditions.
 - Kwanzaa Celebration: December 26, 2026 | Free, full-day community celebration.
 - Gas Giants by Pierce Freelon: March 12–13, 2027 | A world-premiere show for young audiences blending imagination, biology, and science.
 - Our Ancestors Were Messy Live: March 26, 2027 | A DJ-driven, myth-busting look at North Carolina history.
 - Frankie Lee III: April 23–24, 2027 | World premiere of a Hayti-commissioned contemporary dance work rooted in the Triangle.
 - Golden Hour: Thursdays in May 2027 | A jazz-and-poetry series.
 - Cracked: Pleasure & Prose with Deesha Philyaw and Kennedy Ryan: May 19, 2027 | Two acclaimed Black women authors in conversation about desire, freedom, and the page.
- Season subscriptions, which grant access to every ticketed event for a single price, are on sale now, along with individual event tickets and a monthly sustainer program that helps fund the center’s free public programming, including the Expo, the outdoor dance parties, Kwanzaa, and youth masterclasses.

NASCAR Debuts First Delta Sigma Theta-Themed Show Car In Charlotte

CHARLOTTE, N.C. — Draped in Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc.’s signature crimson and cream colors, adorned with strands of pearls and the founding year “1913” across its doors, NASCAR’s first-ever Delta Sigma Theta-themed show car turned heads at the sorority’s 2026 South Atlantic Regional Conference in Charlotte.

The custom vehicle marked the first activation of its kind between NASCAR and a Divine Nine organization. Designed by Camilla Wilkins-Bowens, a NASCAR NEXT intern and Louisiana State University student who is also a member of Delta Sigma Theta, the show car celebrated the sorority’s rich history while introducing thousands of conference attendees to the world

of motorsports.

According to Watch The Yard, the initiative was made possible through the NASCAR NEXT Internship Program, which provides students with opportunities to work on high-profile projects and community engagement initiatives across the country. The debut also reflects NASCAR’s continued efforts to connect with new audiences through partnerships that extend beyond the racetrack while highlighting the contributions of emerging young professionals within the sport.

Throughout the conference, attendees gathered around the custom stock car, posed for photos and tested their driving skills on NASCAR racing simulators. The activa-

tion marked the first time NASCAR brought an interactive motorsports experience to a Divine Nine event, exposing thousands of Delta Sigma Theta members to the sport in a new way.

The vehicle itself paid tribute to the sorority’s history and traditions. Along with prominently featuring the founding year “1913,” the design incorporated pearl accents around the body of the car, the South Atlantic Regional Conference emblem on the rear quarter panel and the phrase, “Deltas REIGN in the Queen City,” across the rear deck in recognition of both the conference and its Charlotte host city.

Additional design elements honored the conference’s leadership,

with the names of Regional Director Dr. Demetria M. Lucas and Regional Representative Mission R. Mosley displayed on the side of the vehicle alongside the sorority’s Greek letters, ΔΣΘ. While customized to celebrate Delta Sigma Theta, the car retained the unmistakable look of a NASCAR stock car, complete with Goodyear racing tires, aerodynamic styling and a race-ready spoiler.

For Wilkins-Bowens, the project represented an opportunity to bridge two worlds. As both a NASCAR intern and a Delta Sigma Theta soror, she was uniquely positioned to create a design that honored the organization’s legacy while showcasing the possibilities available to students pursuing careers in motorsports.

Founded Jan. 13, 1913, on the campus of Howard University by 22 collegiate women, Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc. has grown into the largest sorority within the National Pan-Hellenic Council, commonly known as the Divine Nine. Today, the organization has more than 350,000 initiated members and more than 1,000 collegiate and alumnae chapters throughout the United States and internationally, with chapters spanning Canada, Japan, Germany, the Virgin Islands, Bermuda, the Bahamas, Jamaica, West Africa, Southern Africa, the United Arab Emirates and the Republic of Korea.

The Charlotte debut represented more than the unveiling of a custom race car. It highlighted the intersection of Black Greek excellence, student leadership and one of the nation’s most recognizable sports organizations. By placing a Delta Sigma Theta-themed show car at the center of one of the sorority’s largest regional gatherings, NASCAR celebrated the organization’s legacy while continuing its efforts to broaden the sport’s reach through meaningful community partnerships.



Kaepernick And Springsteen Receive New ACLU Award For Their Activism

WASHINGTON (AP) — Former NFL quarterback Colin Kaepernick received a new award from the American Civil Liberties Union recognizing contributions to American thought and culture.

Kaepernick and rock star Bruce Springsteen were honored Friday night with the ACLU Ralph Ellison Award for Defenders of Civil Rights and Civil Liberties in the Arts, Business, Science and Sports. The honor comes a decade after Kaepernick knelt during the national anthem in protest against police violence and racial inequality.

“We know our civil liberties are under attack, we know humanity is under attack, education is under attack. They are trying to encroach on our rights, encroach on our dignity, encroach on the future that we want to build together,” Kaepernick said in his acceptance speech. “When we look back at this moment, it will not be the speeches that change the direction of history. It’s going to be whether we decided: Are we going to build the schools or not? Are we go-



ing to defend the rights of others, or are we going to watch? Are we going to build community together, or are we going to stand in isolation?

“The consequences of these deci-

sions are going to be the reality that the future generations inherit.”

Kaepernick was joined in protest by teammate Eric Reid and others, but he also drew criticism from

politicians, team owners and other players. Kaepernick and Reid filed collusion grievances against the NFL in 2017, saying they were blacklisted. They reached a settlement in 2019.

“He demonstrated in real time the price America too often exacts from those who challenge racial injustice,” said Deborah Archer, the ACLU’s president. “His peaceful protest was met with extraordinary personal sacrifice. He lost the career he spent his life building. He became the target of criticism, hostility and relentless public attack, and yet he never retreated.”

Springsteen — who closed the event with a solo rendition of “Streets of Minneapolis” — and Kaepernick were honored as part of an awards ceremony hosted by actress Laverne Cox.

“It’s important for us to recognize all of the people who are contributing to the fight to protect civil rights and civil liberties,” Archer said. “Those folks — actors, athletes — these folks have all shown up in incredibly powerful ways.”

Community

Before The Civil Rights Movement There Was The Freedmen’s Convention

By Judaea Ingram
Special To The Carolinian

Months after the Civil War ended and slavery was abolished, newly freed Black North Carolinians faced a difficult question: What would freedom truly mean?

For more than 100 Black leaders who gathered in Raleigh in 1865, the answer was clear. Freedom had to include education, political representation, equal protection under the law and the ability to fully participate in society.

Their demands became part of one of the earliest organized efforts by Black North Carolinians to fight for their rights after emancipation: the Freedmen’s Convention of 1865.

Held in Raleigh during the early years of Reconstruction, the convention brought together formerly enslaved people and Black community leaders from across eastern North Carolina.

The gathering became a historic moment of political organizing, giving Black citizens an opportunity to advocate for themselves during a time when many lawmakers were attempting to determine the future of the state.

Although the 13th Amendment ended slavery in 1865, freedom did



not immediately bring equality.

Formerly enslaved people still faced discrimination, violence and legal restrictions designed to limit their opportunities. Many Black families were separated during slavery and worked to reunite loved ones. Others searched for education, employment and a pathway toward economic independence.

The Freedmen’s Convention allowed Black North Carolinians to address those challenges directly.

Delegates discussed issues in-

cluding voting rights, access to education, fair labor practices, citizenship and legal protections. Their goal was to ensure that emancipation became more than a symbolic change.

They wanted freedom recognized in everyday life.

The convention was led by Black leaders who understood that political participation would be essential to protecting the future of African Americans in North Carolina. Delegates argued that Black citizens

deserved the same rights and responsibilities as other residents of the state.

One of the most important issues discussed was education.

After generations of being denied literacy under slavery, Black communities viewed education as a pathway toward independence and empowerment. Families, churches and community leaders worked to establish schools across the state, laying the groundwork for institutions and organizations that continue serving North Carolina communities today.

The convention also reflected a larger national movement during Reconstruction, when formerly enslaved people throughout the South organized to demand political and social equality.

However, the progress made during Reconstruction faced strong opposition.

As federal support for Reconstruction declined in the late 1870s, many of the rights Black Americans fought for were weakened through discriminatory laws, racial violence and voter suppression efforts.

Still, the legacy of the Freedmen’s Convention endured.

(See **FREEDMEN’S** P. 12)



National Night Out Brings The Community Together

FAYETTEVILLE, N.C. — Neighborhoods across Fayetteville came together Tuesday evening for National Night Out, an annual event designed to strengthen relationships between residents, law enforcement and other public safety agencies through community fellowship and engagement.

Across the city, neighborhoods hosted cookouts, games, music and family-friendly gatherings where residents had the opportunity to meet local police officers, firefighters and emergency personnel in a relaxed setting. Rather than interacting during emergencies, community members connected with first responders through conversations and activities aimed at building trust and strengthening neighborhood partnerships.

Fayetteville Police Chief Roberto Bryan Jr. said National Night Out is about bringing neighbors, community members, law enforcement and public safety personnel together in an informal environment where relationships can grow beyond emergency calls and crisis situations.

Observed annually on the first Tuesday in August, National Night Out began in 1984 through the National Association of Town Watch as a nationwide effort to promote crime prevention and community partnerships. Since then, the event has expanded to include millions of participants in thousands of communities across the country.

Throughout Fayetteville, families gathered for neighborhood celebrations featuring food, entertainment and activities for children and adults alike. Community members explored emergency vehicles, met first responders and learned more about the resources available through local public safety agencies.

Bryan emphasized that events like National Night Out provide an opportunity for residents and first responders to interact in a welcoming atmosphere, helping strengthen communication and encouraging collaboration throughout the year.

The annual event also reflects the principles of community policing, an approach that focuses on building relationships between officers and the communities they serve. By creating opportunities for meaningful conversations outside of emergencies, organizers hope residents become more familiar with local officers while encouraging neighborhoods to play an active role in crime prevention and public safety.

Beyond promoting safety, National Night Out encourages neighbors to connect with one another. Cookouts, music and family-friendly activities create opportunities for residents to build relationships that can strengthen neighborhoods long after the event concludes.

The evening served as a reminder that strong communities are built through partnership. While police officers and first responders play an important role in protecting the public, community engagement and neighbor-to-neighbor connections are equally important in creating safer neighborhoods.

State Employees’ Credit Union Awards \$233,000 to Help 466 Young Members Attend Summer Camp

RALEIGH, N.C. — Hundreds of North Carolina youth are spending part of their summer exploring new interests, building confidence, and creating lifelong memories with support from State Employees’ Credit Union (SECU).

This year, a record 466 young members received scholarships through SECU’s annual Summer Camp Awards program, helping them attend day and overnight camps. The scholarships total \$233,000 — the most in the program’s five-year history.

SECU’s Summer Camp Awards program gives FAT CAT® and Zard® youth members an opportunity to apply for a scholarship to help offset registration fees and other camp-related expenses. This year’s recipients include children and teens from 91 of North Carolina’s 100 counties, demonstrating the program’s statewide reach.

“Summer camp is an excellent opportunity for children and teens to try new things, step outside their comfort zones, and form lasting friendships,” said SECU President and CEO Leigh Brady. “The goal of SECU’s Summer Camp Awards program is to help ease the financial burden on families so more young members can experience everything summer camp has to offer. We are so pleased to continue our support for SECU families across the state through this beneficial program for a fifth consecutive year.”

To be eligible, young members with a FAT CAT or Zard youth account were invited to submit an essay or illustration describing their dream summer camp experience.

For Greenville’s Riley Hines, the dream was to experience a summer filled with fun and learning.

“I am truly grateful that Riley was able to apply herself to do something she loves with drawing,” said Brianna Hines, mother of Greenville-First Street Branch recipient Riley Hines. “But I also see it is something she is able to use to benefit herself by obtaining scholarships and encouraging her to continue to use her talents to build her future.”

Oliver Jernigan of Troy used his award to attend a wilderness adventure camp, where he explored the outdoors while learning camping and survival skills.

“For SECU to support me in this endeavor means a lot, as this was most definitely a dream trip,” Jernigan said. “Scouting has been a great adventure for me, and this was, without a doubt, a highlight in that adventure. Trips such as this one are what most people will never experience.”

Since launching the program in 2022, SECU has awarded more than \$741,000 to 1,483 young members, helping families reduce the financial barriers that can sometimes prevent children and teens from participating in enriching summer experiences.

The Summer Camp Awards program is one of many ways SECU supports its youngest members. Through its youth accounts, FAT CAT and Zard, SECU offers financial education resources and opportunities that encourage healthy financial habits from an early age. To learn more about SECU’s youth accounts and benefits, visit <https://www.ncsecu.org/accounts/kids-teens>.



By Jordan Meadows

Staff Writer

Mitch Prinstein, the John Van Seters Distinguished Professor of Psychology and Neuroscience and co-director of the Winston Center on Technology and Brain Development at UNC-Chapel Hill, told members of Gov. Josh Stein’s Advisory Council for Student Safety and Well-Being said on Monday morning that nearly half of North Carolina’s early high schoolers are experiencing digital stress severe enough to interfere with their sleep, exercise, homework, hygiene and family relationships.

Prinstein’s presentation covered adolescent social media use, the roll-out of the state’s new cell phone-free classroom law, and what he called an urgent and largely unstudied new front: children’s use of artificial intelligence chatbots.

“About 45% of the kids in early high school report that they’re experiencing so much digital stress it’s interfering with their daily rules and routines,” Prinstein said. “Their sleep, their exercise, their homework, their hygiene, looking at their parents in the eye across the dinner table — this is all impaired. The more digital stress they report, the more depression they’re reporting a year later.”

Prinstein said his lab has applied the same diagnostic criteria used to identify substance dependency, excessive and uncontrolled use, tolerance, withdrawal symptoms, and interference with daily life, to social media use, substituting the word “social media” for “alcohol” in the clinical standard. In his own research sample, 95% of respondents



reported excessive, uncontrolled use of social media, and about half reported at least one symptom of clinical dependency.

He said his team is now collecting comparable data on AI use and is already seeing adolescents report withdrawal symptoms when they try to stop.

Citing American Academy of Sleep Medicine guidance that adolescents need eight hours of sleep a night, Prinstein said fewer than half of the nation’s ninth graders and fewer than a quarter of 12th graders get the medically recommended amount — a shortfall he attributed largely to screens. Poor sleep, he said, is linked to obesity, risky behavior, lower grades, impulsivity, emotional outbursts and next-day driving accidents among teen drivers, and is associated with slower growth of white matter — the brain tissue that speeds

signal transmission and underlies more sophisticated adult-level thinking — during a critical stretch of adolescent brain development.

Prinstein also presented data from brain imaging of roughly 10,000 children scanned annually across 20 sites nationwide, part of a broader study he said showed more screen time correlated with a thinner cortex over time, particularly in regions tied to impulse control and susceptibility to addiction. Kids who used their phones heavily in sixth grade showed a blunted brain response to social feedback by the time they were older, he said, while kids who started using phones heavily later showed the opposite pattern: a spike in sensitivity in the brain’s reward circuitry.

“They’re building brains that are now hypersensitive to social cues,” he said.

Turning to phone use inside North Carolina classrooms, Prinstein cited a state-funded study — conducted with support from Jenny Corn at the North Carolina Collaboratory — that collected data from 22 schools across the state, more than 2,300 students and their teachers. Even with every school in the sample enforcing a no-phone policy, he said, students reported spending roughly 20 minutes of every classroom hour on their devices, a third of the school day, mostly on social media, entertainment and texting rather than schoolwork.

He said students are most likely to reach for a phone when bored or uncomfortable and try to resist while actively engaged, but slip once their attention drifts. Asked who they’re texting during class, students most often named their parents — a finding Prinstein said surprised him enough that he texted his own daughter about it before catching himself.

“We kind of forget that we have the skill of getting a text and then ignoring it until we’re out of our meeting,” he said. “But the kids don’t.”

The effects extend beyond the student holding the phone, Prinstein said. Research shows a student who spends class time on YouTube or TikTok scores lower on standardized tests such as the AP exam — and so does the student sitting near them, a phenomenon he called a secondhand screen effect. He said the same distraction shows up with school-issued laptops, which many students use for gaming and streaming rather than classwork, and that teachers report the enforcement burden contributes

(See **DIGIAL MEDIA**, P. 9)

Medicaid work rule — CONT. FROM PAGE 4

Medicaid patients overbooked, Pugh has had to rely on willpower to avoid drinking.

“I’m taking it one day at a time,” he said.

A little over two hours north, in Kalispell, Dustin Goss, a case manager at a homeless shelter called Samaritan House, said Pugh’s experience reflects why he’s worried that people who qualify for an exemption will get tangled in bureaucratic tape.

“You can’t really worry about getting paperwork done when you don’t know where you’re eating today,” Goss said.

Cassidy Kipp, who heads Samaritan House, said once people find shelter and start to stabilize, they typically find work. But even then,

meeting the new requirements can be challenging. Clients often start with temporary and informal jobs — such as cleaning out a storage unit — that don’t come with a pay stub, Kipp said.

Kaitlyn Bosshardt, a social worker at Partnership Health Center, a health clinic in Missoula, has seen more people priced out of longtime rentals as housing costs outpace people’s paychecks. Meanwhile, affordable housing and rental aid are limited.

Partnership Health is one of roughly 1,400 health centers nationwide that receive federal funding to serve patients based on what they can afford — meaning even those who lose Medicaid can receive care. But orga-

nizations representing health centers have said if too many patients lose the coverage, some clinics won’t be able to fill the financial hole.

The other problem is that these clinics generally don’t provide specialty care.

One day in June, as temperatures hovered around 90, Pugh visited Watershed Navigation Center, a refuge run by Partnership for people without steady housing to have a meal or see a doctor. His doctor, Atarah Sidey, told Pugh that the neurology clinic that managed his seizures had dismissed him from their care after he missed three appointments.

She referred Pugh to the other neurologist in town and talked about trying to find treatment for his ad-

diction.

“It’s just that if I don’t make the effort at changing, it ain’t gonna happen and I’m gonna end up found on the side of the road somewhere,” Pugh told Sidey.

“You got this, though, Tywon,” she responded as Pugh nodded his head. “You can do this.”

Pugh has connected with a social worker for help keeping his Medicaid. By late July, he was waiting for space to open at a Missoula addiction treatment center and waiting on responses from two job applications.

In the hard moments, Pugh imagines his wife telling him to stay calm, that things will get better.

“I just don’t wanna lose hope in the meantime,” he said.



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SERMON of the WEEK



TAKE IT TO THE KING...THEN STAY ON THE WALL!
NEHEMIAH 2:1-8; 6:1-4 NIV
By: Bishop-Elect William "Billy" Eli Ratcliff

Have you ever heard of a man who drank wine for a living? I'm not talking about a wino. I'm talking about a man whose job was to taste the king's wine before the king drank it. If there was poison in the cup, he drank it first. If someone wanted the king dead, he died first.

That man's name was Nehemiah. He wasn't just a cupbearer—he became a burden-bearer.

The Sermonic Text says, "...they were scheming to harm me." Nehemiah 6:3-4 reads: "So I sent messengers to them with this reply: 'I am carrying on a great project and cannot go down. Why should the work stop while I leave it and go down to you?' Four times they sent me the same message, and each time I gave them the same answer."

One leadership principle stands out:

Leadership begins when your burden becomes greater than your comfort.

Nehemiah loved his people more than the luxury of the palace because he had a heavenly assignment. When you truly do something for God, you'll help people, strengthen your community, and bless your city.

Nehemiah teaches us three lessons about leadership and resilience.

I. GREAT LEADERS TAKE THEIR BURDENS TO THE KING

When Nehemiah heard Jerusalem's walls were broken, he didn't complain or blame others. He fasted, prayed, and took his burden to King Artaxerxes.

The king listened and provided letters for safe passage, supplies, and

permission to rebuild.

We may never stand before King Artaxerxes, but every one of us can stand before the King of Kings.

When your family is hurting—take it to the King.

When your church faces challenges—take it to the King.

When your health fails—take it to the King.

When your dreams seem impossible—take them to the King.

Jesus said, "With God all things are possible."

II. GREAT LEADERS STAY ON THE WALL

Nehemiah traded comfort for calling. He went from the palace to the people, from privilege to purpose. Leadership isn't asking, "What can people do for me?" Leadership asks, "What can I do for others?"

Sanballat, his companions, and the false prophetess Noadiah tried to stop the rebuilding. They couldn't stop the work, so they tried to stop the worker.

Isn't that how the devil operates? If he can't destroy your calling, he'll try to distract you from it.

Again and again they urged Nehemiah to come down from the wall, but he answered:

"I am doing a great work, so that I cannot come down."

Don't come down to argue with every critic.

Don't come down to answer every rumor.

Don't come down to the level of jealous people.

Don't come down to foolishness.

The old folks used to say, "Never wrestle with a pig. You'll both get dirty, and the pig enjoys it!"

Stay on the wall. Stay faithful. Stay humble. Stay focused.

III. GREAT LEADERS OUTLAST THE NOISE

Nehemiah had resources, but he also had resistance. The difference was his resilience. He kept praying, planning, building, and believing.

In only fifty-two days the walls of Jerusalem were rebuilt because God's people worked together. Teamwork made the dream work!

Churches grow when people work together. Communities improve when neighbors work together. Families become stronger when everyone does their part.

I watched my father demonstrate that principle for fifty-five years. He didn't have a high school diploma or a college degree, but he had faith. He stayed on the wall through difficult

seasons, criticism, and challenges. Now it's my turn—and your turn.

Whatever God has called you to build, don't quit because opposition shows up. Opposition often means you're making progress.

Some of us don't need to rebuild Jerusalem—we need to rebuild ourselves. Rebuild your faith, your commitment, your integrity, your confidence, and above all, your relationship with God.

Don't let negative people poison your spirit. Stay on the wall. Don't let discouragement steal your vision. Stay on the wall. Don't let setbacks become stop signs. Stay on the wall.

And don't be like Humpty Dumpty, who sat on the wall, had a great fall, and all the king's horses and all the king's men couldn't put him back together again. But the King we serve comes Himself. He's the Potter, and we're the clay. He still puts broken lives back together. He still restores broken homes and rebuilds broken dreams.

So whatever burden you're carrying today, take it to the King. Whatever work God has assigned you to do, stay on the wall. The God who called you will strengthen you, and the God who started the work will finish it.

Tell somebody, "Stay on the wall!" Tell somebody else, "Take it to the King!" Then declare, "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me." "If God be for us, who can be against us?" "With God, nothing shall be impossible!"

When I started this sermon, I told you I wasn't talking about a wino, but let me close with one story.

There was a wino walking down a railroad track with a pint of wine in his coat pocket. He tripped, fell face down between the rails, saw something red running beneath his shirt, and prayed, "Lord...I hope it's blood!"

He was more concerned about the wine in the bottle than the blood in his body.

But since the Lord saved us, we don't have to hope it was the blood—we know it was the blood. One day, when we were lost, Jesus died on the cross.

His blood still saves, heals, and keeps. So, stay on the wall, because the King of Kings and Lord of Lords has everything under control.

Please visit www.youtube.com/@lincolnparkholinesschurch1913, we invite you to Like, Subscribe, and Share your comments. We would love to hear from you.

The Financial Dilemma That Wound Up Helping Churches

THE CONVERSATION - By many measures, Americans are growing less religious: Since 2007, for example, the percentage of people who pray daily has dropped, while the "unaffiliated" have grown to 29%. But those numbers can distract from just how much faith still matters in American public life – much more so than in Western Europe, despite its similar religious roots.

About two-thirds of Americans consider religion "somewhat" or "very" important, compared with 56% in Italy, 40% in Spain and 36% in Germany. While about two-thirds of American Christians pray every day, only 18% of European Christians do so.

Why such a stark divide? One reason, some scholars have argued, is the United States' tradition of separating church and state, also called "disestablishment." In other words, Americans' freedom of religion helped faith to thrive in ways that the state-sponsored churches did not.

As my research into the history of philanthropy shows, disestablishment was not just a cornerstone of American democracy. It was also an engine for the extraordinary growth of philanthropy, which played an important role in fueling American churches' growth and innovation.

Money from members

Prior to the American Revolution, most colonies sponsored particular churches and collected taxes to support them. New England governments tended to support Congregationalist churches, which grew out of Puritan traditions, while many Southern colonies supported the Church of England.

The First Amendment of the U.S. Constitution prohibits the government from establishing religion. The Supreme Court did not decide that that amendment applies to state governments until the 20th century. Within a few decades of independence, though, states' support for established churches had disappeared. The last to disestablish was Massachusetts, which ended support for Congregational churches in 1833.

After Christian churches were



stripped of state funding, churches had to find new revenue sources. Ministers' and teachers' salaries had to be paid, church buildings constructed and maintained, and colleges and other religious institutions supported. The funding for all that had to come from voluntary contributions from members – meaning that ministers were turned into fund-raisers, and believers into donors.

Donors weren't just giving money to be charitable. They were getting services and community in return, which helped keep them emotionally and socially invested – and helped religion thrive. Members essentially became stakeholders of their denominations. In the 21st century, those networks of donors and services have included everything from schools and radio stations to children's activities.

New generations

Religious colleges are a major example of this dynamic. On the eve of the Civil War, the country had 207 religious colleges, accounting for nearly 60% of all colleges and universities. Most had been founded after independence. Forty-nine were Presbyterian, 34 Methodist, 25 Baptist, 21 Congregational, 14 Catholic and 11 Episcopalian. The remaining 53 were founded by smaller religious groups, such as the Lutheran and Universalist churches.

Colleges took on a central role in many churches' religious life. They trained ministers and teachers for

the denominations that funded them.

Some American denominations built K-12 schools as well, which reached far more students than colleges could. The Presbyterian Church, for example, did not just build universities, such as Austin College in Texas and Lafayette College in Pennsylvania, but also established 59 academies in 20 states and numerous primary schools. These schools admitted and trained Presbyterians who, as adults, became the rank and file of their congregations – and, as alumni, donated to their alma maters.

Scholarship programs

Building and maintaining colleges is expensive.

And in the 19th century these American colleges could not necessarily rely on students paying the full cost of attendance: Many students were too poor to do so. In 1806, only six out of the 39 graduating students at Dartmouth College had paid their fees in full.

Lack of funding pushed many colleges into bankruptcy and closing. In fact, 68 of the 109 Presbyterian colleges established between 1794 and 1904 had shut down by 1940.

Colleges developed a new fundraising strategy: offering donors "scholarship certificates," which were essentially tuition waivers that could be used by family and friends. They came with price tags, from a few hundred to a few thousand dollars.

Practical Biblical Principles

GOD'S MAN UNDER PRES-SURE
READ: ACTS 6:7-15
By: John L. Caldwell, Pastor
New Jerusalem Baptist Cathedral

It is not often that a deacon steps into the lime lights of the scriptures. Neither is it often a man of Stephen's character comes across the scene. According to Luke's description Stephen was a man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit, as well as full of grace and power. Stephen was the real deal, so to speak. He didn't hang around the temple; he lived in a pressurized arena-the public's eye. And became a marked man by his enemies.

It all started when the number of disciples were multiplying in Jerusalem. There rose a complaint against the Hebrews by the Hellenists in the community. The widows of the Hellenist were being neglected in the daily distribution. Luke wrote this account about AD 62, the final year of Paul's first imprisonment in Rome.

The twelve disciples (apostles) summoned a multitude of disciples and said, "It is not desirable that we should leave the word of God and serve tables. Therefore, brethren seek out from among you seven men of good reputation, full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business; but we will continually give ourselves to prayer and to the ministry of the word."

At this point in time the Word held sway over service in the church. God caused the Holy Spirit to focus upon spreading the word if the church were to grow. Is this true today?

And the saying pleased the whole multitude. And they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and the Holy Spirit, and Phillip, Prochorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas, and Nicolas. They set these men before the apostles; and when they had prayed, they laid hands on them.

Then the word of God spread, and the number of disciples multiplied greatly in Jerusalem. And a great many of the priest were obedient to the faith. Later on, some of the temple's priest eventually joined in with the Sadducees in persecuting the apostles with a focus on Stephen. There is no background information as to why Stephen broke out and became a powerful spiritual leader and teacher using the deacon position as a springboard to become a well-known teacher and apologist of the word.

Why is it when you walk with Christ the public will resent it... not support it. And when you react like Christ the pressure will increase... not decrease.

It appears that when Stephen, full of faith and power, started doing great wonders and signs among the people, then there arose a great dispute with Stephen from The Synagogue of the Freedmen- "outsiders" who came into Jerusalem to follow the good news of the gospel.

These outsiders were not able to resist the wisdom and the Spirit by which Stephen spoke. So, they secretly induced men to say, "We have heard him speak blasphemous words against Moses and God." They stirred up the people, the elders and the scribes and they came upon Stephen, seized him, and brought him to the council.

It appears that the only way the devil can put a stop to one's Christian work is to lie upon the child of God. It appears to work every time-lies, lies, lies. The temple officials in Jerusalem did the very same thing to Jesus earlier. The council obviously ignored the great wonders and signs Stephen had performed for the benefit of the community. They did the very same thing against Jesus Christ before they voted Him guilty of blaspheming Moses and God.

The council asked Stephen were these things true. Stephen then explained the entire story from the call of Abraham out of Mesopotamia to the ministry of Moses. And when he began to tell the people about Israel resisting the Holy Spirit referring to them as stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, and having killed the Son of God, they were cut to the heart and could not take it anymore.

Stephen being full of the Holy Spirit, gazed into heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God, and said, "Look! I see the heavens opened and the Son of man standing at the right-hand of God!"

Then the angry people cried out loudly, stopped their ears and ran at him with one accord; and they cast him out of the city and stoned him. And the witnesses laid down their clothes at the feet of a young man named Saul.

And they stoned Stephen as he was calling on God and saying, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit." Then he knelt down and cried out with a loud voice, "Lord do not charge them with this sin." And when he had said this, he fell asleep.

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Editorials

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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.

Before We Decide Shaw's Future, We Should Remember Its Past

By Kesha Monk

There are places that belong to a city. And then there are places that belong to a people. Shaw University has always belonged to more than Raleigh. Founded in 1865, just months after the Civil War ended, Shaw became the first historically Black college and university in the South. It educated ministers who would lead congregations, teachers who would shape generations, physicians who would care for Black communities, and civic leaders who believed education could change lives. Its campus witnessed history that cannot be recreated anywhere else. Leonard Medical School, established at Shaw in 1881, became the nation's first four-year medical school for African Americans. At a time when Black students were excluded from most medical schools, Leonard trained hundreds of physicians who carried healthcare into communities that desperately needed them.

Nearly eighty years later, another chapter in American history unfolded on the same campus.

In April 1960, student leaders from across the South gathered at Shaw University to organize what became the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee, better known as SNCC. Guided by the wisdom of Shaw alumna Ella Baker, those young people helped reshape the Civil Rights Movement through voter registration drives, Freedom Rides, and grassroots organizing that forever changed our nation.

History did not simply pass through Shaw University. History was made there. That is why conversations about Shaw should never begin and end with real estate.

Today, the university finds itself at the center of discussions about redevelopment, finances, and the future of its campus. Those are legitimate conversations. Every institution faces difficult decisions, and every generation is called upon to adapt to changing circumstances.

But progress and preservation have never been opposing ideas. Communities across this country have demonstrated that historic institutions can modernize while protecting the places that define them. New buildings can rise. Campuses can evolve. Economic development can occur. None of those goals require us to forget what came before.

The question facing Shaw is not whether the university should have a future. Of course it should.

The question is whether that future will be built with the openness and transparency worthy of an institution whose legacy belongs to so many people.

For more than a year, alumni and supporters have waited for a public-facing campus master plan that university leadership said would explain Shaw's long-term vision. That document has yet to be released publicly, even as significant announcements have been made about redevelopment and a proposed \$558 million capital campaign.

It is reasonable for alumni, donors, preservationists, students, and the broader community to ask how those pieces fit together. Asking those questions is not an act of disloyalty. It is an act of stewardship.

Every generation inherits something from those who came before. The generation that rebuilt Black education after emancipation handed us Shaw University. The generation that challenged segregation handed us the legacy of Ella Baker and SNCC. The generation that trained Black physicians handed us Leonard Medical School.

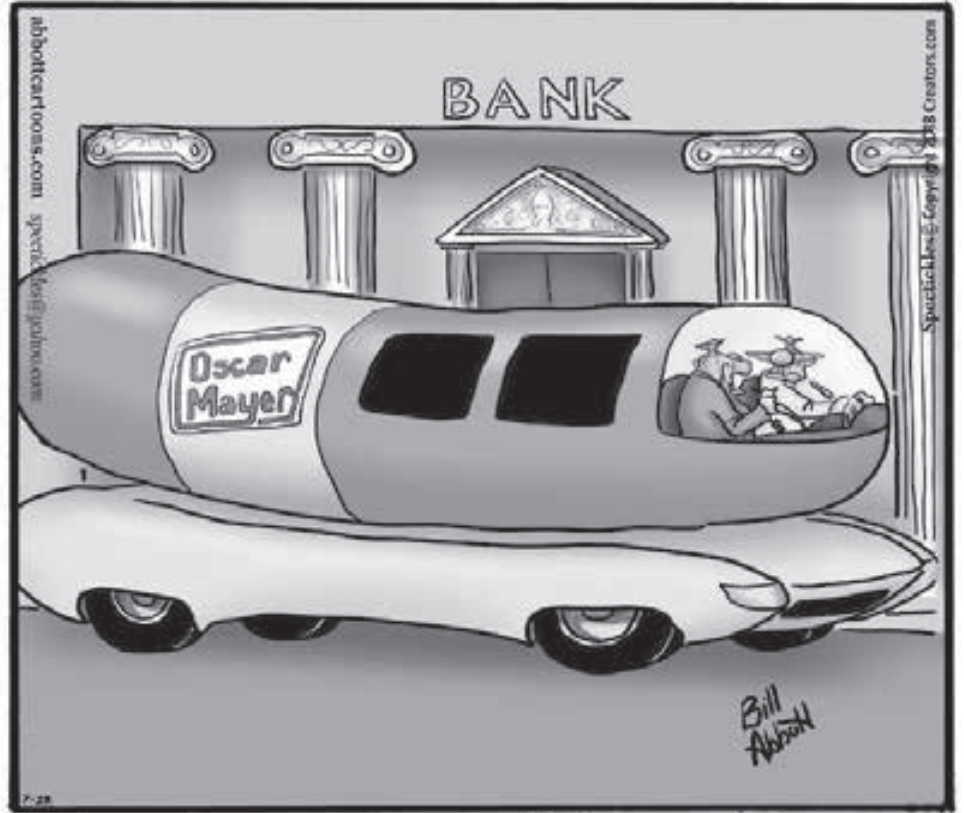
None of those gifts came easily. They were earned through sacrifice, vision, and an unwavering belief that education could change the trajectory of a people.

Now the responsibility belongs to us. Not simply to preserve buildings. Not simply to preserve land. But to preserve the trust that future generations place in those entrusted with Shaw's care.

One day, today's students will tell their children about Shaw University. The story they tell will depend on the decisions we make today.

History is watching. And so are the generations yet to come.

Kesha Monk is an award-winning voiceover artist and former national radio personality. A Shaw University alumna, she is a co-founder of the Save Our Shaw Coalition, an alumni-led initiative advocating for transparency, accountability, and the preservation of one of America's most historic HBCUs.



"When it comes to stealing a getaway car, let me go over again some of the things you really ought to avoid."



IS THE JUICE WORTH THE SQUEEZE

What on earth? Across North Carolina—from the foothills to the coast—you'll hear the same exhausted refrain: Can we get a break? Families across the state are being squeezed by an economic reality that feels increasingly unforgiving. Between the cost of gas and the cost of food, even longsteady households are struggling to keep their heads above water.

The most painful pressure point is the cost of food. North Carolinians have watched grocery bills rise month after month. A simple cart of basics—milk, eggs, chicken, produce—now costs noticeably more than it did just a few years ago. Food banks across the state report higher demand, not just from lowincome families but from working adults who never imagined they'd need assistance. Increased demand in a political environment of decreased funding creates a nightmare of unmet needs for too many people.

Housing is another crisis that hits especially hard here. North Carolina's population growth has outpaced housing supply, driving rents and home prices to levels that feel disconnected from local wages. In Wake County, Mecklenburg, Durham, and even smaller towns like Clayton and FuquayVarina, renters face steep increases with few alternatives. Homebuyers confront bidding wars, limited inventory, and mortgage rates that shut them out entirely. The dream of owning a home in North Carolina—a dream that once felt attainable—is slipping out of reach for many.

Utilities add another layer of strain. Duke Energy rate increases, rising water bills, and higher heating/cooling costs mean families are juggling which essential bill to pay first. And fuel—still a necessity in a state where many people commute long distances—remains volatile. Even small jumps at the pump ripple through household budgets, especially in rural counties where driving isn't optional.

I was talking to a young colleague who is my polar-opposite in every way except gender. I love talking with her because unlike many of her twenty-something contemporaries, she is open to the possibility that the world isn't the same for all of us. In an ongoing discussion about fraud, waste, and abuse of public funding we hit a dead-end on the question of whether the suffering of those dependent upon public assistant programs is justified in the campaign to root out corruption. As my boss says, "is the juice worth the squeeze?"

These pressures raise a critical question: Will economic frustration drive North Carolinians to the polls? Historically, economic pain has been one of the strongest motivators for turnout. When people feel squeezed, ignored, or destabilized, they look for change. They look for leaders who acknowledge their struggle rather than dismiss it with abstract statistics. Many North Carolinians aren't asking for miracles—they're asking for relief that feels real, immediate, and measurable.

So, what kind of relief are people seeking? The average North Carolinian wants policies that lower everyday costs: affordable groceries, stable rent, accessible childcare, predictable utility bills, and wages that keep pace with inflation. They want a break from the constant financial improvisation that defines modern life. They want breathing room.

Here's my question: What is the current majority party's plan for addressing rising poverty? Public reporting shows a mix of proposals—some focused on expanding tax credits for families, some on adjusting federal assistance programs, some on deregulation aimed at lowering costs, and others on workforce development. But the common critique is that these plans often feel too slow, too abstract, or too disconnected from the urgency people feel here in North Carolina.

North Carolinians don't want theoretical frameworks. They want action that meets the moment.

Going into the next election cycle, the economic pain we carry may be the most powerful force shaping turnout. When life becomes unaffordable, voting becomes unavoidable.



TUSKEGEE UNIVERSITY

Dr. Mark Brown, president of Tuskegee University, has started quite a stir across the news media and social media by instituting a dress code at the former Tuskegee Normal School, founded in the nineteenth century. Initially, it was reported that he was going to require male students to wear suits and female students to wear dresses or pantsuits to class. This is not his dress code. Instead, he is banning durags, bonnets, hair rollers, pajamas, and similar attire from classrooms and the cafeteria. I didn't see this stated, but I suspect he also would not want students wearing these items to social or athletic events.

Dr. Brown is a former general and has served as a CEO in the corporate environment, so I suspect he has an idea of what it means to "dress for success" and believes it is his job to help students learn and model what society often considers professional. After all, our armed services and corporate America typically require conformity in both dress and, at times, thought.

It would be interesting to hear what Booker T. Washington would say about this matter. He believed that the path to upward mobility for Black people was not simply through adopting the ideas of some of his contemporaries, who believed a liberal education was the best route to success in post-Fourteenth Amendment America. Instead, he founded Tuskegee with just \$2,000 and emphasized agriculture and the industrial trades because he believed business ownership and farming offered a practical path to economic independence. If one reads his biography, it becomes clear, at least to me, why he chose that direction.

Interestingly enough, the complexities of Washington's philosophy are often overlooked. On one hand, he publicly advocated that Black people accommodate themselves to segregation. On the other hand, he quietly gave financial support to court cases challenging segregation. I suggest reading the writings of W.E.B. Du Bois to better understand why he considered Booker T. Washington a traitor to his race. When Washington died at the age of fifty-nine, Tuskegee had one hundred well-equipped buildings, 1,500 students, 200 faculty members teaching thirty-eight trades and professions, and nearly a two-million-dollar endowment.

My father attended and graduated from Tuskegee, and as I review photographs of him during those four years, I see a young man who was very well dressed, but more in the style of what young men in his hometown of Washington, D.C., wore. In other words, the brother was sharp. I doubt that he carried a suit and tie to class every day, nor did he need one for many of the jobs he later held. My daddy became the athletic director at Voorhees College after serving in the military, and later worked for the United States Postal Service, where, of course, he wore a uniform, not a suit and tie.

Though I am not a proponent of durags, pajamas, bonnets, or cell phones turned on during class, I am also not a proponent of believing that putting a young man in a suit and tie or a young woman in her Sunday best somehow makes them better students. After all, what happens in a classroom typically takes place in the mind, not in the clothes.

Yes, I can agree that clothing can sometimes become a distraction. If a young woman's clothing is overly revealing, it may draw attention to her body in ways that distract others. I would want her to understand that showing parts of her body may attract attention, but is that the only attention she wants? At the same time, do students need to go everywhere in durags or wave caps?

Do young women need to wear bonnets or rollers to class while preparing their hair for activities later in the day? I would think not.

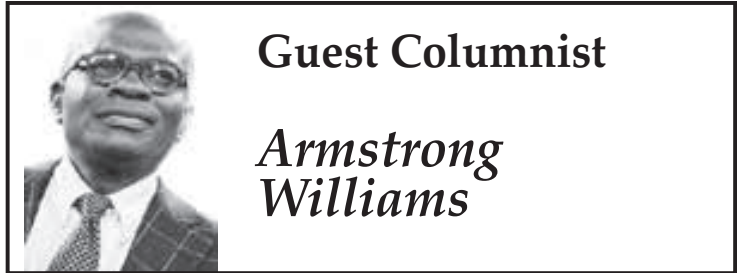
But after all, I have worn my hair naturally since 1968, so what do I know about today's hairstyles and what it takes to maintain them? The answer is simple. I know very little.

For that reason, I hope Dr. Brown and others give the students an opportunity to be heard, even while they are in positions to establish rules and expectations that students must follow. I cannot understand why students choose to wear pajamas to the cafeteria or to class. Yet I also remember that when I was in college, I could not understand why women were allowed to wear jeans or pants only on Saturdays. I was at the forefront of protesting what we believed was an unfair rule, and we won because we were armed with facts and intelligence.

I have heard from some of the students, and they say these rules are attempting to solve a problem they do not believe exists on their campus. I don't know.

I do know that, often, adults see conformity as a practical way to demonstrate strength and authority. I also know that, as a community descended from enslaved people, "going along to get along" has too often become another way of not taking a stand out of fear.

I pray that those who are leading our Historically Black Colleges and Universities, especially as more and more students are intentionally choosing to attend them, will not allow the political atmosphere in which we now live to convince us that we must imitate corporate America in order to succeed, and then teach that lesson to our young people.



EVERY NAME MATTERS

Since 2018, USAA's Poppy Wall of Honor has become one of the nation's most moving tributes to military sacrifice. Stretching more than 130 feet, the transparent wall is adorned with hundreds of thousands of handcrafted poppies, each representing an American servicemember who gave his or her life in defense of our nation since World War I. For countless visitors, it has become a place of quiet reflection amid the grandeur of our national monuments.

This summer, as America commemorates its 250th anniversary, USAA is presenting an even more extraordinary tribute.

From July 28 through Aug. 23, the National Military Monument will stand on the plaza before the Lincoln Memorial as a monumental digital installation unlike anything previously displayed on the National Mall. Towering digital screens will continuously display the names of more than 41 million Americans who have worn the uniform of the United States Armed Forces from the Civil War to the present day.

Standing before it, visitors will witness an endless procession of names. One after another, they remind us that history is measured not solely by battles won or wars remembered but by individual lives devoted to something greater than themselves.

Every name belonged to someone. A son or daughter. A husband or wife. A father or mother. A brother. A sister. A friend. A neighbor.

Someone who laughed with family, dreamed of the future, fell in love, wrote letters home, worried about parents growing older, and hoped to return safely. Some did. Many did not.

What makes this tribute especially powerful is that it reminds us that military service is not an abstract idea. It is deeply personal. Behind every name is a story interrupted by duty. Behind every uniform is a family that waited anxiously for a letter, a phone call or a knock at the front door they prayed would never come.

The monument's power lies not in dramatic speeches or elaborate symbolism but in its sheer scale. No visitor will ever read every name. That is precisely the point. The uninterrupted procession reveals, more powerfully than any statistic, the immense human cost of preserving liberty across generations.

Its historical reach is equally profound. Rather than focusing on a single conflict, the monument spans the breadth of American military history. It honors every generation that answered the nation's call, refusing to allow time to diminish either sacrifice or memory.

The soldier who fought at Gettysburg, the Marine who stormed Iwo Jima, the sailor lost at Pearl Harbor, the airman who flew over Europe, the infantryman in Korea, the young American in the jungles of Vietnam, the volunteer who served in Iraq and Afghanistan, and the servicemembers standing watch around the world today are all part of one continuous American story. Though separated by generations, they are united by the same oath to support and defend the Constitution of the United States.

DIGITAL MEDIA

Continued from page 7

to stress and attrition; a study his team conducted in Canada found teacher stress dropped and retention improved after a phone ban was imposed from the top down rather than left to individual teachers to police.

Citing a separate national study of more than 10,000 children across roughly 20 sites, Prinstein said children with the heaviest and increasing social media use scored lower on every measure tested, including impulsivity, reading, memory, processing speed, vocabulary and a composite measure of academic functioning.

Prinstein devoted a significant portion of his remarks to artificial intelligence, which he said is now the subject of three emerging strands of research: chatbots exacerbating existing mental health risks, chatbots fostering false intimacy and trust, and the displacement of human relationships and parental interaction. He referenced accounts of chatbots encouraging users toward self-harm and urging them to keep the conversations secret from their families, and cases of chatbots telling users their ideas were groundbreaking and that skepticism from others amounted to a conspiracy against them.

Citing a paper his team submitted for publication this past week, Prinstein said 65% of children in the North Carolina middle school sample reported interacting with chatbots regularly, and that his data show roughly one student per classroom describes an AI chatbot as their friend and prefers talking to it over talking to another person. He said the more adolescents use AI chatbots as companions, the more loneliness they report over the following six months. About 18% of students introduced to chatbots in school said they use them for things they wouldn't tell a teacher, he said.

Prinstein criticized the design of commercial chatbots directly, objecting to their use of humanlike language such as claiming to feel emotions or to be "thinking" while a response loads.

"They're not people. They're computers. We should refer to them that way," he said, arguing that chatbots' tendency to affirm and flatter users rather than offer constructive feedback runs counter to how psychologists, teachers and healthy relationships are supposed to function.

"Sycophancy is not what we need for childhood," he said.

Prinstein urged the council to recommend that schools set academic deadlines no later than 9 p.m. rather than midnight, arguing that late homework deadlines keep students on devices later into the night regardless of whether they're doing schoolwork. He described bringing digital media literacy presentations to middle and high schools across the Triangle and elsewhere, including an exercise in which students look up the privacy policies of the apps they use and learn what data those apps collect and sell. He said students are often stunned to learn how much of their information — browsing history, payment methods, contacts — is being monetized. Prinstein said the American Psychological Association has published health advisories summarizing the research on social media and AI, and offered to share testimony his team has submitted to other states considering similar legislation.

The council, which Stein created by executive order last year to develop school safety and well-being policy, met at the Juvenile Justice Center in Raleigh.

Classifieds

DURHAM COUNTY

STATE OF NORTH CAROLINA
DURHAM COUNTY
NOTICE TO CREDITORS
The undersigned, having qualified as Executor of the Estate of JASON COLCHAMIRO-SMART, Deceased, late of Durham County, North Carolina, does hereby notify all persons, firms and corporations having claims against the estate to exhibit them to the undersigned at the offices of Munson Law Firm PLLC, P.O. Box 1811 Pittsboro, NC 27312, on or before the 6th day of November, 2026, or this notice will be pleaded in bar of their recovery. All persons indebted to the estate will please make immediate payment.

This 6th day of August, 2026.
JULIA VISGAUSS, EXECUTOR
ESTATE OF Jason Colchamiro-Smart
8/6, 8/13, 8/20, and 8/27/2026
STATE OF NORTH CAROLINA
DURHAM COUNTY
NOTICE TO CREDITORS
In the General Court of Justice, Superior Court Division Before the Clerk
File No.: 25E001308-310
Having qualified as ADMINISTRATOR of the Estate of ANA MARITZA MORALES CASTRO, deceased, late of Durham County, North Carolina, this is to notify all persons, firms and corporations having claims against said Estate to exhibit them to the undersigned on or before the 6th day of November, 2026, or this Notice will be pleaded in bar of their recovery. All persons indebted to said Estate will please make immediate payment to the undersigned.

This, the 6th day of August, 2026.
Hailey Isabella Morales Moreno
Administrator
3501 Sidneys Way
Durham, NC 27703
8/6, 8/13, 8/20, and 8/27/2026
STATE OF NORTH CAROLINA
DURHAM COUNTY
NOTICE TO CREDITORS
File No.: 26E000814-310
Having qualified as Executor of the Estate of PATTY JEAN NEAL, deceased, of 918 Ferncrest Drive, Durham County, Durham, NC 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 in care of the attorney for the estate on or before November 7, 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 6th day of August, 2026.
Theresa C. Neal
Executor of the Estate of Patty Jean Neal c/o Law Office of Jeffrey L. Austin, PLLC
500 Westover Dr. #32043
Sanford, NC 27330
FOR PUBLICATION: The Carolinian
8/6, 8/13, 8/20 and 8/27/2026
STATE OF NORTH CAROLINA
COUNTY OF DURHAM
IN THE GENERAL COURT OF JUSTICE
SUPERIOR COURT DIVISION BEFORE THE CLERK
ESTATE FILE: 26E000681-310
IN THE MATTER OF THE ESTATE OF: Wilmot H. Losee, Jr., DECEASED
NOTICE TO CREDITORS
Having qualified as Executor of the Estate of Wilmot H. Losee, Jr. (the "Estate"), of Durham County, North Carolina, the undersigned hereby notifies all persons, firms, and corporations having claims against the Estate of Wilmot H. Losee, Jr. to present them to the undersigned on or before the 9th day of November 2026, in care of the undersigned's attorney at the address stated below, or this Notice will be pleaded in bar of recovery. All persons, firms, and corporations indebted to the decedent, or the Estate shall please make immediate payment to the Estate of Wilmot H. Losee, Jr., care of the undersigned attorney at the address stated below.

This 6th day of August 2026.
Geoffrey A. Losee, Executor
Estate Wilmot H. Losee, Jr.
c/o Rountree Losee LLP
P. O. Box 1409
Wilmington, NC 28402-1409
Telephone: 910-763-3404
Facsimile: 910-763-0320
By: /s/ Michael A. Becker
8/6, 8/13, 8/20, and 8/27/2026
STATE OF NORTH CAROLINA
DURHAM COUNTY
NOTICE TO CREDITORS

ESTATE OF TOBY DUCHAN
FILE NO. 26E000883-310
ALL PERSONS, firms, and corporations having claims against Toby Duchan, deceased, of Durham County, N.C., are notified to exhibit the same to the undersigned on or before November 6, 2026, or this notice will be pleaded in bar of recovery. Debtors of the decedent are asked to make immediate payment. This the 6th of August, 2026. Joshua Greenstein, Executor of the Estate of Toby Duchan, c/o Amanda Honea, Attorney, 1255 Crescent Green, Suite 200, Cary, NC 27518.
8/6, 8/13, 8/20, and 8/27/2026
STATE OF NORTH CAROLINA
DURHAM COUNTY
NOTICE TO CREDITORS
The undersigned having qualified as Executor of the Estate of CLIFTON LENEAR DEARING, 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 9th day of November, 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 6th day of August, 2026.
Ronnie Lenear Dearing, Executor, Estate of Clifton Lenear Dearing, Deceased
Robert A. Idol, Esquire
IDOL LAW, PLLC
Attorney at Law
PO Box 51759
Durham, NC 27717
(919)401.5151
8/6, 8/13, 8/20, and 8/27/2026
STATE OF NORTH CAROLINA
DURHAM COUNTY
NOTICE TO CREDITORS
Having qualified as Executor of the Estate of GWENDOLYN JEAN JUSTICE PERRY, deceased, late of the County of Durham, North Carolina, this is to notify all persons, firms, and corporations having claims against the estate of said deceased to present them to the undersigned on or before October 30, 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.

William J. Hopkins, Executor of the Estate of Gwendolyn Jean Justice Perry
P.O Box 3814
Chester, Virginia 23831
7/30, 8/6, 8/13 and 8/20/2026
STATE OF NORTH CAROLINA
DURHAM COUNTY
NOTICE TO CREDITORS
In the General Court of Justice, Superior Court Division Before the Clerk
File No.: 26E000696-310
THE UNDERSIGNED, having qualified on the 9th day of June, 2026, as Executor of the Estate of CHARITY NAOMI JONES, Deceased, of Durham County, North Carolina, does hereby notify all persons, firms and corporations having claims against said Estate to exhibit them to the undersigned on or before the 30th day of October, 2026, or this Notice will be pleaded in bar of their recovery. All persons indebted to said Estate will please make immediate payment to the undersigned.

This, the 30th day of July, 2026.
Wilma Carolyn Jones, Executor
662 Wallace Fork Rd.
Roanoke Rapids, NC 27870
7/30, 8/6, 8/13, and 8/20/2026
STATE OF NORTH CAROLINA
DURHAM COUNTY
NOTICE TO CREDITORS
In the General Court of Justice, Superior Court Division Before the Clerk
File No.: 26E000898-310
THE UNDERSIGNED, having qualified on the 21st day of July, 2026, as ADMINISTRATOR CTA of the Estate of ELLEN WILKINS RAY, Deceased, of Durham County, North Carolina, does hereby notify all persons, firms and corporations having claims against said Estate to exhibit them to the undersigned on or before the 30th day of October, 2026, or this Notice will be pleaded in bar of their recovery. All persons indebted to said Estate will please make immediate payment to the undersigned.

This, the 30th day of July, 2026.
Chris Ray, Administrator of the Estate of Ellen W. Ray
1400 Hunters Ridge Road
Canton, NC 28716
7/30, 8/6, 8/13, and 8/20/2026
STATE OF NORTH CAROLINA
DURHAM COUNTY
NOTICE TO CREDITORS
All persons, firms and corporations having claims against

RONALD STEPHEN WATKINS, deceased, of Durham County, are hereby notified to exhibit them to the undersigned on or before the 28th day of October 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 30th day of July, 2026.
Tonya L. Minor Watkins
Administrator of the Estate of Ronald Stephen Watkins
c/o M. Bryan King
Haithcock, Barfield, Hulse & King, PLLC
Attorneys for Estate
Post Office Drawer 7
Goldsboro, NC 27533
(919) 735-6420
7/30, 8/6, 8/13, and 8/20/2026
STATE OF NORTH CAROLINA
DURHAM COUNTY
NOTICE TO CREDITORS
In the General Court of Justice, Superior Court Division Before the Clerk
File No.: 26E000801-310
THE UNDERSIGNED, having qualified on the 10th day of July, 2026, as EXECUTOR of the Estate of WINIFRED D. NORTON, Deceased, of Durham County, North Carolina, does hereby notify all persons, firms and corporations having claims against said Estate to exhibit them to the undersigned on or before the 30th day of October, 2026, or this Notice will be pleaded in bar of their recovery. All persons indebted to said Estate will please make immediate payment to the undersigned.

This, the 30th day of July, 2026.
Mitsi Utley Norton, Executor
3102 Carpenter Road
Durham, NC 27703
7/30, 8/6, 8/13, and 8/20/2026
STATE OF NORTH CAROLINA
DURHAM COUNTY
NOTICE TO CREDITORS
In the General Court of Justice, Superior Court Division Before the Clerk
File No.: 26E000099-310
THE UNDERSIGNED, having qualified on the 20th day of April, 2026, as ADMINISTRATOR of the Estate of DIANNE ELIZABETH TIMBLIN, Deceased, of Durham County, North Carolina, does hereby notify all persons, firms and corporations having claims against said Estate to exhibit them to the undersigned on or before the 30th day of October, 2026, or this Notice will be pleaded in bar of their recovery. All persons indebted to said Estate will please make immediate payment to the undersigned.

This, the 30th day of July, 2026.
James Graham Lewis, Administrator
4 Linkside Ct.
Durham, NC 27703
7/30, 8/6, 8/13, and 8/20/2026
STATE OF NORTH CAROLINA
DURHAM COUNTY
NOTICE TO CREDITORS
In the General Court of Justice, Superior Court Division Before the Clerk
File No.: 26E000885-310
THE UNDERSIGNED, having qualified on the 21st day of July, 2026, as EXECUTRIX of the Estate of FRANK DAVID ALMENDAREZ, Deceased, of Durham County, North Carolina, does hereby notify all persons, firms and corporations having claims against said Estate to exhibit them to the undersigned on or before the 30th day of October, 2026, or this Notice will be pleaded in bar of their recovery. All persons indebted to said Estate will please make immediate payment to the undersigned.

This, the 30th day of July, 2026.
Twila Slater, Executrix
c/o Richard F. Prentiss, Jr.
4 Consultant Pl.
Durham, NC 27707
7/30, 8/6, 8/13, and 8/20/2026
STATE OF NORTH CAROLINA
DURHAM COUNTY
NOTICE TO CREDITORS
In the General Court of Justice, Superior Court Division Before the Clerk
File No.: 26E000683-310
THE UNDERSIGNED, having qualified on the 13th day of April, 2026, as ADMINISTRATOR of the Estate of CHRISTY NICOLE REEVES, Deceased, of Durham County, North Carolina, does hereby notify all persons, firms and corporations having claims against said Estate to exhibit them to the undersigned on or before the 23rd day of October, 2026, or this Notice will be pleaded in bar of their recovery. All persons indebted to said Estate will please make immediate payment to the undersigned.

This, the 23rd day of July, 2026.
Pearl Bishop Reeves, Administrator

613 Holyle St.
Durham, NC 27703
7/23, 7/30, 8/6, and 8/13/2026
STATE OF NORTH CAROLINA
DURHAM COUNTY
NOTICE TO CREDITORS
In the General Court of Justice, Superior Court Division Before the Clerk
File No.: 26E000878-310
THE UNDERSIGNED, having qualified on the 16th day of July, 2026, as ADMINISTRATOR of the Estate of LUCY B. MCNEAL, Deceased, of Durham County, North Carolina, does hereby notify all persons, firms and corporations having claims against said Estate to exhibit them to the undersigned on or before the 23rd day of October, 2026, or this Notice will be pleaded in bar of their recovery. All persons indebted to said Estate will please make immediate payment to the undersigned.

This, the 23rd day of July, 2026.
Angela C. McNeal, Administrator
105 Kandlewood Drive
Durham, NC 27703
7/23, 7/30, 8/6, and 8/13/2026
STATE OF NORTH CAROLINA
DURHAM COUNTY
NOTICE TO CREDITORS
In the General Court of Justice, Superior Court Division Before the Clerk
File No.: 26E000876-310
THE UNDERSIGNED, having qualified on the 16th day of July, 2026, as EXECUTOR of the Estate of ALICE RUTH GARRETT, Deceased, of Durham County, North Carolina, does hereby notify all persons, firms and corporations having claims against said Estate to exhibit them to the undersigned on or before the 23rd day of October, 2026, or this Notice will be pleaded in bar of their recovery. All persons indebted to said Estate will please make immediate payment to the undersigned.

This, the 23rd day of July, 2026.
Dianne Ruth Garrett, Executor
3809 Ashley Cir.
Wilmington, NC 28403
7/23, 7/30, 8/6, and 8/13/2026
STATE OF NORTH CAROLINA
COUNTY OF DURHAM
NOTICE TO CREDITORS
THE UNDERSIGNED, having qualified on the 17th day of July, 2026, as Executor of the Estate of SUSAN BETH SPITZER, Deceased, of Durham County, North Carolina, does hereby notify all persons, firms and corporations having claims against said Estate to exhibit them to the undersigned on or before the 24th day of October 2026, or this Notice will be pleaded in bar of their recovery. All persons indebted to said Estate will please make immediate payment to the undersigned.

This, the 23rd day of July, 2026.
MADELINE SELTMAN, EXECUTOR
ESTATE OF SUSAN BETH SPITZER
c/o Jennifer Dalman, Attorney
Walker Lambe, PLLC
240 Leigh Farm Rd, Ste 100
Durham, North Carolina 27707
7/23, 7/30, 8/6, and 8/13/2026
STATE OF NORTH CAROLINA
DURHAM COUNTY
NOTICE TO CREDITORS
In the General Court of Justice, Superior Court Division Before the Clerk
File No.: 26E000859-310
THE UNDERSIGNED, having qualified on the 14th day of July, 2026, as Executor of the Estate of EDITH G. WRIGHT, Deceased, of Durham County, North Carolina, does hereby notify all persons, firms and corporations having claims against said Estate to exhibit them to the undersigned on or before the 23rd day of October, 2026, or this Notice will be pleaded in bar of their recovery. All persons indebted to said Estate will please make immediate payment to the undersigned.

This, the 23rd day of July, 2026.
Shirley Rhodes-Anderson, Executor
1 Christopher Court
Durham, NC 27704
7/23, 7/30, 8/6, and 8/13/2026
STATE OF NORTH CAROLINA
DURHAM COUNTY
NOTICE TO CREDITORS
In the General Court of Justice, Superior Court Division Before the Clerk
File No.: 26E000849-310
THE UNDERSIGNED, having qualified on the 13th day of July, 2026, as Executor of the Estate of MILO AGNES MCSHANE, Deceased, of Durham County, North Carolina, does hereby notify all persons, firms and corporations having claims against said Estate to exhibit them to the undersigned on or before the 23rd day of October, 2026, or this Notice will be pleaded in bar of their recovery. All persons indebted to said Estate will

please make immediate payment to the undersigned.

This, the 23rd day of July, 2026.
Brian M. McShane, Executor
1298 Lakeview Dr.
Rochester Hills, MI 48306
7/23, 7/30, 8/6, and 8/13/2026
STATE OF NORTH CAROLINA
DURHAM COUNTY
NOTICE TO CREDITORS
File No: 26E000478-310
Having qualified as Administrator of the Estate of LINDA KING WATKINS, deceased, of 111 Hidden Springs Drive, Durham, NC 27703, 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 on or before October 23, 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 23rd day of July, 2026.
Nicole Kubinsky, Administrator of the Linda King Watkins c/o N. Vail Gardner, Esq. Vail Gardner Law, PLLC
732 9th Street #621
Durham, NC 27705
7/23, 7/30, 8/6, and 8/13/2026
STATE OF NORTH CAROLINA
DURHAM COUNTY
NOTICE TO CREDITORS
File No: 26E000719-310
Having qualified as Administrator of the Estate of KENNETH ADAMS, deceased, of 280 South Mangum Street, Suite 130, Durham County, Durham, NC 27701, 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 on or before October 24, 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 23rd day of July, 2026.
Jeffrey L. Austin, Administrator of the Estate of Kenneth Adams c/o Law Office of Jeffrey L. Austin, PLLC
500 Westover Dr. #32043
Sanford, NC 27330
7/23, 7/30, 8/6, and 8/13/2026
STATE OF NORTH CAROLINA
DURHAM COUNTY
NOTICE TO CREDITORS
In the General Court of Justice, Superior Court Division Before the Clerk
File No.: 25E000357-310
THE UNDERSIGNED, having qualified on the 19th day of March, 2025, as Administrator of the Estate of MARIA TERESA TZOUMAS, Deceased, of Durham County, North Carolina, does hereby notify all persons, firms and corporations having claims against said Estate to exhibit them to the undersigned on or before the 23rd day of October, 2026, or this Notice will be pleaded in bar of their recovery. All persons indebted to said Estate will please make immediate payment to the undersigned.

This, the 23rd day of July, 2026.
Ignacio Tzoumas, Administrator
116 Millbrae Ln.
Chapel Hill, NC 27514
7/23, 7/30, 8/6, and 8/13/2026
STATE OF NORTH CAROLINA
DURHAM COUNTY
NOTICE TO CREDITORS
In the General Court of Justice, Superior Court Division Before the Clerk
File No.: 26E000813-310
THE UNDERSIGNED, having qualified on the 13th day of July, 2026, as Executor of the Estate of VIRGINIA BATTS CHORLEY, Deceased, of Durham County, North Carolina, does hereby notify all persons, firms and corporations having claims against said Estate to exhibit them to the undersigned on or before the 23rd day of October, 2026, or this Notice will be pleaded in bar of their recovery. All persons indebted to said Estate will please make immediate payment to the undersigned.

This, the 23rd day of July, 2026.
Kevin Scott Chorley, Executor
c/o Richard F. Prentiss, Jr.
4 Consultant Pl.
Durham, NC 27707
7/23, 7/30, 8/6, and 8/13/2026
STATE OF NORTH CAROLINA
DURHAM COUNTY
NOTICE TO CREDITORS
Having qualified as Executor for the Estate of the late CATHERINE M. REYNOLDS of Durham County, North Carolina, the undersigned does hereby notify all persons, firms and corporations having claims against the estate of said decedent to present them, in writing, to the undersigned at c/o Anne J. Randall, Kohut,

Adams & Randall, P.A., P.O. Box 269, Wilmington, North Carolina 28402, on or before the 16th day of October 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 settlement with the undersigned.

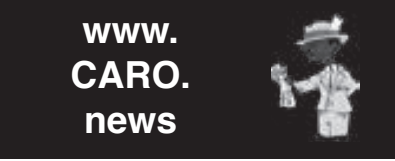
This the 16th day of July, 2026.
Elizabeth Christina Reynolds, Executor of the Estate of Catherine M. Reynolds
Anne J. Randall
Kohut, Adams & Randall, P.A.
513 Market Street
Wilmington, NC 28401
PO Box 269
Wilmington, NC 28402
7/16, 7/23, 7/30, and 8/6/2026
STATE OF NORTH CAROLINA
DURHAM COUNTY
NOTICE TO CREDITORS
In the General Court of Justice, Superior Court Division Before the Clerk
File No.: 26E000288-310
THE UNDERSIGNED, having qualified on the 11th day of March, 2026, as Administrator of the Estate of CAROLYN MCCOY, Deceased, of Durham County, North Carolina, does hereby notify all persons, firms and corporations having claims against said Estate to exhibit them to the undersigned on or before the 16th day of October, 2026, or this Notice will be pleaded in bar of their recovery. All persons indebted to said Estate will please make immediate payment to the undersigned.

This, the 16th day of July, 2026.
Ronald McCoy, Administrator
518 Cecil St.
Durham, NC 27707
7/16, 7/23, 7/30, and 8/6/2026
STATE OF NORTH CAROLINA
DURHAM COUNTY
NOTICE TO CREDITORS
In the General Court of Justice, Superior Court Division Before the Clerk
File No.: 26E000799-310
THE UNDERSIGNED, having qualified on the 2nd day of July, 2026, as Administrator of the Estate of WILMER L. JOHNSON, JR., Deceased, of Durham County, North Carolina, does hereby notify all persons, firms and corporations having claims against said Estate to exhibit them to the undersigned on or before the 16th day of October, 2026, or this Notice will be pleaded in bar of their recovery. All persons indebted to said Estate will please make immediate payment to the undersigned.

This, the 16th day of July, 2026.
Ni-Keya Sharee Wright
Administrator
1309 Shiley Dr.
Durham, NC 27704
7/16, 7/23, 7/30, and 8/6/2026
STATE OF NORTH CAROLINA
DURHAM COUNTY
NOTICE TO CREDITORS
ALL PERSONS, firms, and corporations having claims against JACQUELINE LEE CROSS, deceased, of Durham County, N.C., are notified to exhibit the same to the undersigned on or before October 16, 2026, or this notice will be pleaded in bar of recovery. Debtors of the decedent are asked to make immediate payment. This the 16th of July, 2026. Miosha Lavette Cross, Administrator of the Estate of Jacqueline Lee Cross, c/o Amanda Honea, Attorney, 1255 Crescent Green, Suite 200, Cary, NC 27518.
7/16, 7/23, 7/30, and 8/6/2026

EDGEcombe COUNTY

STATE OF NORTH CAROLINA
EDGEcombe COUNTY
NOTICE TO CREDITORS
RE: THE ESTATE OF DAPHNE BROWN – 23E000401-320
Having qualified as Administrator of the Estate of DAPHNE BROWN, deceased, Edgecombe 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 4th day of November, 2026, or this notice will be pleaded in bar of their recovery. This the 6th ay of August, 2026.
Alicia Dickens, Administrator
DSR Legal, PLLC
PO Box 51596
Durham, NC 27717
8/6, 8/13, 8/20, and 8/27/2026



MECKLENBURG COUNTY

STATE OF NORTH CAROLINA IN THE GENERAL COURT OF JUSTICE COUNTY OF Mecklenburg SUPERIOR COURT DIVISION FILE NO.: 26CV011824-590 Danielle Michelle Davis and Latonya Houston, Plaintiffs Vs. Ciani Adimu Vega, Defendant To: Ciani Adimu Vega, above named Defendant: Take notice that a pleading seeking relief against the Defendant Ciani Adimu Vega and naming you as a Defendant has been filed in the above entitled action. The nature of the relief being sought is as follows: Compensation in excess of \$25,000.00 for bodily injuries and property damage stemming from a motor vehicle accident that occurred on 12/10/2025.

You are required to make defense to such pleading not later than September 15, 2026, said date being 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 17th day of July, 2026. WILLIAM H. HARDING ATTORNEY FOR PLAINTIFF 9115 HARRIS CORNERS PKWY SUITE 220 CHARLOTTE, NC 28269 TELEPHONE: (704)509-3090 STATE BAR NO.: 40623 August 6, 2026, August 13, 2026, and August 20, 2026.

NASH COUNTY

STATE OF NORTH CAROLINA NASH COUNTY NOTICE OF SERVICE OF PROCESS BY PUBLICATION In The General Court Of Justice District Court Division File No. 26CV002374-630 EDITH ELIZABETH BULLOCK, Plaintiff, v. MICHAEL ANTHONY BULLOCK, Defendant. TO: MICHAEL ANTHONY BULLOCK

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 an Absolute Divorce. Plaintiff seeks a Judgment of Absolute Divorce based upon the parties having lived separate and apart for more than one year pursuant to N.C.G.S. § 50-6. Plaintiff also requests to resume the use of her maiden name, Bailey, and for such other and further relief as the Court deems just and proper.

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

This the 23rd day of July, 2026. Edith Bailey Bullock, Plaintiff 6572 Pine Street Bailey, NC 27807 7/23, 7/30, and 8/6/2026

ORANGE COUNTY

STATE OF NORTH CAROLINA ORANGE COUNTY NOTICE TO CREDITORS In the General Court of Justice, Superior Court Division Before the Clerk File No.: 25E000730-670 Having qualified as EXECUTOR of the Estate of BETTY COLEMAN WILLOUGHBY, deceased, late of Orange County, North Carolina, this is to notify all persons, firms and corporations having claims against said Estate to exhibit them to the undersigned on or before the 30th day of October, 2026, or this Notice will be pleaded in bar of their recovery. All persons indebted to said Estate will please make immediate payment to the undersigned.

This, the 30th day of July, 2026. Roger Dale Page, Executor 4313 Page Road Morrisville, NC 27560 7/30, 8/6, 8/13, and 8/20/2026 STATE OF NORTH CAROLINA ORANGE COUNTY NOTICE TO CREDITORS In the General Court of Justice, Superior Court Division Before the Clerk File No.: 26E000248-670 THE UNDERSIGNED, having qualified on the 2nd day of July, 2026, as Executor of the Estate of FRANCES HELMS LOWDER, Deceased, of Orange County, North Carolina, does hereby notify all persons, firms and corporations having claims against said Estate to exhibit them to the undersigned on or before the 16th day of October, 2026, or this Notice will be pleaded in bar of their recovery. All persons indebted to said Estate will

please make immediate payment to the undersigned. This, the 16th day of July, 2026. Lori L. Hoopes, Executor c/o Averett Family Law 101 Conner Drive, Suite 402 Chapel Hill, NC 27514 7/16, 7/23, 7/30, and 8/6/2026

WAKE COUNTY

STATE OF NORTH CAROLINA WAKE COUNTY NOTICE TO CREDITORS In the General Court of Justice, Superior Court Division Before the Clerk File No: 26E000939-910 Having qualified as ADMINISTRATOR CTA of the Estate of MARY ELIZA BOBBITT, deceased, late of Wake County, North Carolina, this is to notify all persons, firms and corporations having claims against said Estate to exhibit them to the undersigned on or before the 6th day of November, 2026, or this Notice will be pleaded in bar of their recovery. All persons indebted to said Estate will please make immediate payment to the undersigned.

This, the 6th day of August, 2026. Kayolyn Person, Administrator CTA 1313 Rhea Drive Garner, NC 27529 8/6, 8/13, 8/20, and 8/27/2026 STATE OF NORTH CAROLINA WAKE COUNTY

NOTICE TO CREDITORS In the General Court of Justice, Superior Court Division Before the Clerk File No: 26E001585-910 Having qualified as EXECUTOR of the Estate of MARY L. EVANS, deceased, late of Wake County, North Carolina, this is to notify all persons, firms and corporations having claims against said Estate to exhibit them to the undersigned on or before the 6th day of November, 2026, or this Notice will be pleaded in bar of their recovery. All persons indebted to said Estate will please make immediate payment to the undersigned. This, the 6th day of August, 2026. Veronica Evans-Johnson, Executor 9 Cynthia Court Durham, NC 27704 8/6, 8/13, 8/20, and 8/27/2026 STATE OF NORTH CAROLINA WAKE COUNTY

NOTICE TO CREDITORS In the General Court of Justice, Superior Court Division Before the Clerk File No: 26E002326-910 Having qualified as EXECUTOR of the Estate of ELIZABETH LEE IMBURG, deceased, late of Wake County, North Carolina, this is to notify all persons, firms and corporations having claims against said Estate to exhibit them to the undersigned on or before the 6th day of November, 2026, or this Notice will be pleaded in bar of their recovery. All persons indebted to said Estate will please make immediate payment to the undersigned.

This, the 6th day of August, 2026. Danny Robert Pugh c/o Ethan C. Timmins Patrick Law, PLLC 3805 University Drive, Suite A Durham, NC 27707 8/6, 8/13, 8/20, and 8/27/2026 STATE OF NORTH CAROLINA WAKE COUNTY NOTICE TO CREDITORS In the General Court of Justice, Superior Court Division Before the Clerk File No.: 26E002170-910 THE UNDERSIGNED, having qualified on the 15th day of July, 2026, as ADMINISTRATOR CTA of the Estate of ANNE GRAY FUTRELL, Deceased, of Wake County, North Carolina, does hereby notify all persons, firms and corporations having claims against said Estate to exhibit them to the undersigned on or before the 30th day of October, 2026, or this Notice will be pleaded in bar of their recovery. All persons indebted to said Estate will please make immediate payment to the undersigned.

This, the 30th day of July, 2026. Claude K. Futrell, II, Administrator CTA c/o Marion Law Office, PLLC 2741 University Drive Durham, NC 27707 7/30, 8/6, 8/13, and 8/20/2026 NOTICE OF SERVICE OF PROCESS BY PUBLICATION NORTH CAROLINA COUNTY OF WAKE In the General Court of Justice, District Court Division, File 26CV008358-910 [EQUITABLE DISTRIBUTION] JUDY OBANDO MORENO, Plaintiff v. JUAN VARGAS PEREZ, Defendant. TAKE NOTICE that a pleading seeking relief has been filed in the above-entitled action. The nature of the relief sought is Equitable Distribution and Post Separation Support. A hearing date of 9/11/26 has been scheduled. You are required to make defense with

the Wake County Clerk of Court no later than 00/00/26. Upon your failure to do so, Plaintiff will apply to the Court for the relief sought. This, the 30th day of July, 2026. Judy Moreno, PO Box 58058, Raleigh, NC 27658. 7/30, 8/6, and 8/13/2026 STATE OF NORTH CAROLINA WAKE COUNTY

NOTICE TO CREDITORS In the General Court of Justice, Superior Court Division Before the Clerk File No.: 26E000775-910 THE UNDERSIGNED, having qualified on the 11th day of June, 2026, as Administrator of the Estate of WILLIAM MICHAEL REESE, SR., Deceased, of Wake County, North Carolina, does hereby notify all persons, firms and corporations having claims against said Estate to exhibit them to the undersigned on or before the 23rd day of October, 2026, or this Notice will be pleaded in bar of their recovery. All persons indebted to said Estate will please make immediate payment to the undersigned.

This, the 23rd day of July, 2026. Deborah Williams-Reese, Administrator c/o Monks Law Firm, Steve Monks, attorney Monks Law Firm 6613 Speight Circle Raleigh, NC 27616 7/23, 7/30, 8/6, and 8/13/2026 STATE OF NORTH CAROLINA WAKE COUNTY

NOTICE TO CREDITORS Having qualified as Administrator of the Estate of MELVIN RESPERS 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 133 Kalmath Dr., Garner, NC 27529 on or before the 23rd day of October 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 is the 23rd. day of July 2026. Shondell Respers, Administrator 133 Kalmath Dr., Garner, NC 27529 File # 25E002777-910 7/23, 7/30, 8/6, and 8/13/2026 STATE OF NORTH CAROLINA WAKE COUNTY

NOTICE TO CREDITORS Having qualified as Personal Representative of the Estate of LINDA GAIL FISH, deceased, late of WAKE 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: 300 PINEHURST AVENUE, SOUTHERN PINES, NORTH CAROLINA 28387, on or before the 21st day of OCTOBER, 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 23rd day of July, 2026. STEPHANIE FISH JENKINS PERSONAL REPRESENTATIVE FOR THE ESTATE OF LINDA GAIL FISH JAMES H. JENKINS Thigpen and Jenkins, L.L.P. Attorney for Estate 300 Pinehurst Avenue Southern Pines, North Carolina 28387

PUBLICATION DATES: JULY 23, 30, AUGUST 6, & 13, 2026 NOTICE OF SERVICE OF PROCESS BY PUBLICATION SHE'DASIA DURHAM & CEDRIC WILLIAMS IN THE GENERAL COURT OF JUSTICE DISTRICT COURT DIVISION FILE NO: 26-JA-000029-060 STATE OF NORTH CAROLINA COUNTY OF BEAUFORT

IN RE: N.A.W., minor child. TO: SHE'DASIA DURHAM & CEDRIC WILLIAMS, mother and father of a African American Male child born on or about February 10, 2026, in Orange County, North Carolina.

TAKE NOTICE that a Juvenile Summons and Petition has been filed for the above-described juvenile, who is alleged to be neglected.

You must prepare and file with the Clerk of Superior Court of Beaufort County a written answer to the petition within 30 (THIRTY) days of the first date of publication of this summons, the 23rd day of July 2026. You must also serve a copy of the answer on the petitioner or its attorney.

The Beaufort County Department of Social Services has alleged that the above named juvenile is in need of protective services. The Court will conduct a hearing to determine whether the juvenile is in need of protective services. Notice of the date and time and location of the hearing will be mailed to you by the petitioner after you file an answer.

If you fail to file an answer, the relief sought will be granted. The petitioner will apply to the court for

the relief demanded in the petition. You have a right to be represented by counsel. If you want a lawyer and cannot afford one, the Court will appoint you one. Matthew W. Jackson Attorney for the Petitioner, Beaufort County DSS 632 West Fifth Street Washington, NC 27889

Dates of publication: 07-23-2026, 07-30-2026, & 08-06-2026 STATE OF NORTH CAROLINA IN THE GENERAL COURT OF JUSTICE DISTRICT COURT DIVISION COUNTY OF WAKE FILE NO. 26CV008674-910 LAURISSA S SOILS, Plaintiff, v. KENNETH D POINDEXTER, Defendant.

NOTICE OF SERVICE OF PROCESS BY PUBLICATION TO: KENNETH D POINDEXTER 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: Complaint for Child Custody regarding the minor child born to the parties.

You are required to make defense to such pleading not later than forty (40) days from the date of the first publication of this notice, which is scheduled for September 1, 2026, and upon your failure to do so, the party seeking service against you will apply to the court for the relief sought.

This the 23rd day of July, 2026. Laurissa Soils, Plaintiff Pro Se 919-771-6952 laurissa.soils@gmail.com 7/23, 7/30, and 8/6/2026 STATE OF NORTH CAROLINA WAKE COUNTY

NOTICE OF SERVICE OF PROCESS BY PUBLICATION In The General Court Of Justice District Court Division File No. 25CV030363-910 VONGRETCHEN POUGH, Plaintiff, v. TONY SAWANDEE POUGH, Defendant.

TO: TONY SAWANDEE POUGH 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 Child Custody and Visitation of the minor child, Touré Xavier Pough, born August 13, 2013.

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

This the 23rd day of July, 2026. Vongretchen Pough, Plaintiff 102 Futrell Way Smithfield, NC 27577 7/23, 7/30, and 8/6/2026 STATE OF NORTH CAROLINA WAKE COUNTY

NOTICE OF SERVICE OF PROCESS BY PUBLICATION In The General Court Of Justice District Court Division File No. 26CVD006916-910 JEANNE MUTESI, Plaintiff, v. SOLOMON MUGIRAKAMARO, Defendant.

TO: SOLOMON MUGIRAKAMARO 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 an Absolute Divorce. The Complaint also states that two minor children were born of the marriage: Ella Kaze Mugirakamaro, born March 15, 2010, and Eliana Mugirakamaro, born April 29, 2012.

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

This the 23rd day of July, 2026. Jeanne Mutesi, Plaintiff 1672 Singing Bird Trail Wake Forest, NC 27587 7/23, 7/30, and 8/6/2026 STATE OF NORTH CAROLINA WAKE COUNTY

NOTICE TO CREDITORS In the General Court of Justice, Superior Court Division Before the Clerk File No.: 26E001966-910

THE UNDERSIGNED, having qualified on the 30th day of June, 2026, as Executor of the Estate of GERALD HUBERT KNOTT, Deceased, of Wake County, North Carolina, does hereby notify all persons, firms and corporations having claims against said Estate to exhibit them to the undersigned on or before the 16th day of October, 2026, or this Notice will be pleaded in bar of their recovery. All persons indebted to said Estate will please make immediate payment to the undersigned.

This, the 16th day of July, 2026. George Andrew Knott, Executor 308 Ortega Rd. Raleigh, NC 27609 7/16, 7/23, 7/30, and 8/6/2026 STATE OF NORTH CAROLINA WAKE COUNTY

NOTICE TO CREDITORS In the General Court of Justice, Superior Court Division Before the Clerk File No.: 26E000271-910 THE UNDERSIGNED, having

qualified on the 23rd day of March, 2026, as Administrator of the Estate of LYNNETTE MOORE, Deceased, of Wake County, North Carolina, does hereby notify all persons, firms and corporations having claims against said Estate to exhibit them to the undersigned on or before the 16th day of October, 2026, or this Notice will be pleaded in bar of their recovery. All persons indebted to said Estate will please make immediate payment to the undersigned.

This, the 16th day of July, 2026. Shannon Whitney, Administrator 4902 Little Bud Lane Raleigh, NC 27610 7/16, 7/23, 7/30, and 8/6/2026 STATE OF NORTH CAROLINA WAKE COUNTY

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

Before the Clerk File No.: 25E003336-910 THE UNDERSIGNED, having qualified on the 11th day of May, 2026, as Administrator of the Estate of DONALD RAY HUGHES, Deceased, of Wake County, North Carolina, does hereby notify all persons, firms and corporations having claims against said Estate to exhibit them to the undersigned on or before the 16th day of October, 2026, or this Notice will be pleaded in bar of their recovery. All persons indebted to said Estate will please make immediate payment to the undersigned.

This, the 16th day of July, 2026. Destinee Angelica Hughes Administrator 12 Gardenia Drive Savannah, GA 31407 7/16, 7/23, 7/30, and 8/6/2026

Classifieds

MULTIPLE OPENINGS

ORIGIN HUBS INC has multiple openings for DEVOPS ENGINEER (Multiple Openings) w/ Masters Deg to Create user stories & track all the tasks rel to dev. Create & imp end-to end CI/CD Lifecycles. TS issues in various env (Dev/Test UAT/Production). Dsgn & dev enterprise cloud capabilities and sols. Wage: \$157248.00. SOFTWARE PROGRAMMER (Multiple Openings) w/ Bachelors Deg to Write clear, efficient, & reusable code as per the spec. Test, debug, ts, & deploy progr. Maint & upgrade existing soft prog. Inv in db dsgn & write SQL queries & stored proc. Wage: \$86570.00. For both positions: Tra & reloc may be req to var unant client locs t'out the US. To Apply: Mail resume to 2500 Gateway Centre Blvd, Suite# 100, Morrisville, NC – 27560 or email to talent@origin-hubs.com

HOME-ARP ALLOCATION PLAN SUBSTANTIAL AMENDMENT PUBLIC HEARING & PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD

The City of Raleigh Housing and Community Development Department will hold one Public Hearing and a thirty (30) day public comment period to gather input on a proposed Substantial Amendment to the City's HOME-ARP Allocation Plan.

Public Hearing (pending City Council authorization):

September 1, 2026 - 7:00 PM

City of Raleigh Council Chambers, Raleigh Municipal Building 222 W. Hargett St, Raleigh, NC 27601

The City of Raleigh received \$5,256,688 in HOME Investment Partnerships American Rescue Plan (HOME-ARP) funds from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) to assist individuals or households who are homeless, at risk of homelessness, and other vulnerable populations. The proposed Substantial Amendment would reallocate \$3,636,688 from the acquisition and development of non-congregate shelter to Supportive Services. No change is made to the amount of funding allocated to the development of affordable rental housing. The draft Substantial Amendment is available on the City's website (Community Development Reports and Documents page) and at the Housing and Community Development Department, 421 Fayetteville Street, Suite 1200, for a 30-day review and comment period from August 4, 2026, through September 4, 2026.

To speak at the public hearing, please sign up by 3:00 PM on the Friday before the hearing. Visit the City of Raleigh Public Hearings web page for more information. You may also call the Clerk's office at 919-996-3040 to sign up.

Written comments may be submitted by email to housing@raleighnc.gov.

Accessibility and Language Services

Interpreter services (including American Sign Language) and accommodations for persons with disabilities or limited English proficiency are available at no cost with advance notice. Please allow at least five (5) business days for arrangements. Requests may be submitted via the City's Public Hearings web page or by contacting the City Clerk's Office.

For additional information, please email housing@raleighnc.gov or call 919-996-4330

ANNOUNCEMENT

ADVANCE COMMUNITY HEALTH BECOMES AMPLIFY HEALTH

RALEIGH, NC – Advance Community Health today announced its official rebrand as Amplify Health, marking a transformative milestone in the organization's 54-year history. The new name and brand identity reflect the organization's remarkable growth, expanded capabilities, and bold vision to amplify the health of individuals and communities across Wake and Franklin counties.

Founded in 1972 as Wake Health Services, the organization has evolved from a single health center on New Bern Avenue in Raleigh into one of the region's leading nonprofit healthcare organizations. Today, Amplify Health operates 14 locations and delivers comprehensive, integrated care through primary care, behavioral health, dental services, pharmacy, urgent care, OB/GYN, nutrition services, care management, and other specialty programs designed to improve health at every stage of life.

The rebrand comes at a defining moment for the organization. Over the past decade, Amplify Health has significantly expanded its geographic footprint, introduced new models of care, strengthened strategic partnerships, and pursued innovative business opportunities including acquisitions and Professional Services Agreements, to increase access to high-quality healthcare throughout the region.

As healthcare continues to evolve, so has the organization. Today's patients expect coordinated, technology-enabled, whole-person care that is accessible, convenient, and responsive to their changing needs. The transition to Amplify Health reflects an organization that has grown well beyond its original identity and is prepared to lead the next generation of community-focused healthcare.

Politics & Election News

An Urban League Report Says Trump Administration Is Harming Black Americans’ Chances At American Dream

WASHINGTON (AP) — The American Dream may not be dead for many Black Americans, but it is further away than at any point since the Civil Rights Movement, warns a report by the National Urban League. Released on Thursday, the annual “State of Black America” report grimly describes Black Americans’ economic and political prospects as having worsened due to policy changes from President Donald Trump’s administration, according to a copy obtained by The Associated Press.

The report contends that the challenges it highlights for Black communities are warning signs for the prosperity of all Americans. “It may be the focus is us, but the impact is not just us,” said Marc Morial, president and CEO of the National Urban League. “While they have targeted and focused on Black Americans, these attacks are going to impact broadly working Americans, poor Americans, aspirational middle-class Americans, and this is what this report points to.” Tracing the arc of American history, the Urban League describes Black Americans’ struggle for emancipation from slavery and equal economic and political rights as a gruesome but optimistic part of the American story. Now, the report says, the Trump administration is at odds with the goals and achievements of the Civil Rights Movement, citing the overhaul of the Justice Department’s



Civil Rights Division and the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, as well as the president’s focus on overhauling voting laws through the Safeguard American Voter Eligibility Act, as examples of rollbacks of long-sought civil rights policies. The report’s authors offer policy and strategy recommendations for civil rights groups aiming to combat the Trump administration. “The civil rights community must consolidate its legal resistance and turn courtroom wins into durable policy,” the report says. “The movement must build economic infrastructure that doesn’t depend on the goodwill of any one administration.” Reached for comment on Thurs-

day, White House spokesperson Allison Schuster said Trump was elected with a mandate to change the very policies that the Urban League contends are eroding real opportunity for Black Americans. “(Diversity, equity and inclusion) ran rampant during the Biden administration, and Americans ultimately paid the price for these destructive policies with a restricted labor pool, higher operational costs, and workforce inefficiencies,” Schuster said. “The Trump administration will always promote equal treatment under the law for every American.” Report contributors include a potential Democratic presidential contender

This year’s report includes contributions from members of Congress, and policy and legal experts, as well as some media personalities. U.S. Senators Angela Alsobrooks, Lisa Blunt Rochester and Raphael Warnock all contributed to the report, as well as Maryland Gov. Wes Moore and Baltimore Mayor Brandon Scott. Minneapolis Mayor Jacob Frey contributed a video message to the report. Moore, who is widely viewed as a potential 2028 presidential contender, submitted an essay focused on closing the racial wealth gap and Black Americans’ history of economic advancement in the face of adversity. “With wisdom and grit, my mom was able to lift me and my family to a higher rung on the economic ladder. But too often wisdom and grit aren’t enough,” Moore wrote. He later called closing the racial wealth gap “a matter of moral clarity” but cautioned that “government alone cannot close the racial wealth gap. It’s going to take all of us,” referencing the private sector and civil society. Report blasts ‘economic assault’ on Black Americans Whether corporate America and major nonprofits are still willing to participate is an open question. The report condemns the Trump administration’s efforts to roll back diversity initiatives and economic advancement projects in the private sector, and expresses frustration

with companies that cooperated with an “economic assault” on Americans, especially Black Americans. “This has been a campaign of coercion and oppression directed at these institutions who have been out here working hard to, if you will, change America,” Morial said. “The important thing about companies is that every company has not bent the knee. Some may have done some cosmetic changes. Some have been in full and complete retreat.” The DEI rollbacks are a jarring reversal for the Urban League, which held sway in the Biden White House on economic and social policies. The report lauds President Joe Biden’s administration for signing a sweeping COVID-19 stimulus package, as well as laws supporting minority small businesses and a bipartisan infrastructure bill. “Not every promise was kept, and the current administration is pushing to roll our wins back, but these wins serve as a blueprint for what is possible through sustained advocacy and a clear vision,” the authors write. The agenda, the Urban League

declares, was “the most consequential federal investments in Black America since the Great Society.” The organization and its civil rights allies now find themselves in a strikingly different political environment under the Trump administration. “Looking at our current political landscape, the calls for racial healing and righting of this nation’s wrongs in the aftermath of the murder of George Floyd feel like a fever dream,” the report reads. But the study also acknowledges that Black Americans have overcome more dire and discriminatory moments. Latest Black America report is the Urban League’s 50th edition The Urban League’s inaugural 1976 report on the state of Black America was described by the New York Times at the time as “a profoundly depressing document” that laid out the persistent disparities between the economic outlooks of Black and white Americans, a decade after the Civil Rights Movement’s crowning achievements were signed into law.

GOP Majority Legislature, State Board Drives Reforms

By Jordan Meadows

Staff Writer

Gov. Josh Stein chastised state Republicans at the state Democratic Party’s Unity Dinner in Raleigh on Saturday, escalating a months-long feud with GOP lawmakers and Republican State Auditor Dave Boliek over control of the state’s voting system. Gov. Stein argued a 2024 bill stripped the governor’s office of its authority to appoint state and county election board members and handed that power to the auditor’s office instead. He said Boliek and his former election liaison, Dallas Woodhouse, have used that authority to pressure local election officials into curbing Sunday voting hours and rejecting early voting plans that included certain college campuses. Stein has said that the new rules “invites the auditor and state board to sow mistrust in our elections.” Sweeping changes to how North Carolinians vote continue moving through the Republican-controlled General Assembly ahead of the November midterms. The state Senate passed two election bills along party lines late last month: House Bill 958, which cleared the chamber 28-13 with all Republicans in favor and all Democrats opposed, and House Bill 834, which passed 42-0. The two bills originated as a single sweeping elections package that passed the House in June before Senate Republicans split it in two. House Bill 958 would shorten early voting during primary, second primary and runoff elections from 17 days to 10, tighten rules aimed at preventing noncitizens from registering to vote, hand Boliek’s office new authority to audit county election systems, and require the state Division of Motor Vehicles to turn over voters’ full Social Security numbers to the State Board of Elections. House Bill 834 would extend the window voters have to fix problems with their ballots from three business days after an election to five, and would allow voters to continue using expired driver’s licenses as valid photo ID. Most provisions in both bills would not take effect until Jan. 1, 2027, meaning they would not apply to this November’s general election. House Bill 958 has since cleared the full General Assembly and now awaits action from Stein; a veto would require a three-fifths vote in both chambers to override. Democratic lawmakers have filed a competing package, House Bill 1246, that would ban the deployment of troops or other armed agents at polling places, increase criminal penalties for harassing voters or poll workers, protect early voting from further cuts, and bar election officials from refusing to certify results without evidence. The bill would also make clear that ballots cannot be thrown out after an election based on new interpretations of the rules — a direct response to the 2024 effort by Republican state Supreme Court candidate Jefferson Griffin to challenge more than 60,000 ballots after the fact, an effort a federal judge ultimately ruled unconstitutional. “Efforts to subvert vote counting and the recognition of election winners are, by definition, destructive to our system of democracy and the rule of law,” the bill states. “There can be no government ‘of, by and for the people’ if officials are dishonest about election results.” Democrats hold the minority in both chambers, and the bill is not expected to receive a vote.

The State Board of Elections has also been busy. At a meeting last month, the board’s Republican majority approved on a 3-2 vote the rule change lowering the threshold for county boards to reject a voter’s photo ID exemption request from a unanimous vote to a simple majority; the rule takes effect for the midterms and beyond pending approval from the state’s Rules Review Commission. At the same meeting, the board adopted amendments to three existing rules governing discretionary and mandatory recounts, along with a new set of rules dictating how county boards establish buffer zones, electioneering zones and curbside voting areas, and how officials maintain order at polling sites — including a provision letting site volunteers remove any voter, campaigner, candidate or protester they deem too disruptive, which several members of the public have argued comes uncomfortably close to infringing on First Amendment rights. Those recount and polling-place rules have also been sent to the Rules Review Commission, which is expected to take them up at its Aug. 27 meeting. Separately, the board voted along party lines to adopt six new rules governing absentee ballots, including a change that would require an unsealed inner ballot envelope to be treated as spoiled rather than resealed by election workers as before. The State Board of Elections is also taking public comment through Aug. 31 on proposed rules outlining reporting requirements for political party headquarters building funds, along with a proposed rule change on waivers of civil penalties for late campaign finance disclosure reports.

The NC Senate was scheduled to reconvene Wednesday morning.

FREEDMEN'S CONVENTION

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The gathering demonstrated that Black political engagement in North Carolina did not begin during the modern Civil Rights Movement. Decades before figures such as Martin Luther King Jr. and other civil rights leaders emerged, Black North Carolinians were already organizing, advocating and demanding change. The convention’s legacy can be seen throughout the state today in Black civic organizations, historically Black colleges and universities, community leadership and continued efforts to protect voting rights and equality. More than 160 years later, the Freedmen’s Convention remains a reminder that the pursuit of freedom has always required action. The men and women who gathered in Raleigh in 1865 were not simply witnesses to history, they were shaping it. And their voices continue to influence the ongoing story of Black North Carolina.

Moral Monday Leader, Some Activists Arrested In U.S. Senate Office Building

NC NEWSLINE - Bishop William Barber and a group of faith leaders were arrested in Washington, D.C., Monday following a demonstration inside the Hart Senate Office Building. Barber and the activists were attempting to meet with Senate Majority Leader John Thune, R-South Dakota, to voice their opposition to voter suppression and the SAVE America Act. Earlier in the day, Barber, president of Repairers of the Breach and founder of the Moral Monday movement, held a press conference at the steps of the U.S. Supreme Court to explain why faith leaders from across the nation are laser-focused on voting rights. With less than 100 days until the 2026 midterm elections, Barber said Christian, Jewish and Muslim faith leaders will use that time to mobilize 1,000 marches to the polls to encourage early voting and participation in the Nov. 3 elections. “We will cast a vision for a hundred days of mobilization,” Barber said. “In this moment, we do not need to have a march on Washington. We need a march in the states to change Washington.” Repairers of the Breach held a series of “public pulpit” events in the nation’s capital this summer, but Barber said faith leaders must now



return home to get occasional voters engaged in what is occurring in state legislatures. “The power is in the states. States can block your living wages. States can make [voter] suppression laws that we’ve already passed over 87 of them, particularly in southern states,” said Barber. NC Republicans look to add new restrictions Barber’s focus on the states comes just days after the North Carolina

Senate passed a controversial elections bill that will reduce early voting periods during primaries, primary runoffs and special elections from 17 days to 10 days. House Bill 958 will also require the state auditor to conduct post-election audits of county election systems. The number of audits to be conducted is at the sole discretion of the auditor. Democrats voiced concerns about another provision in H958 that would use federal databases and informa-

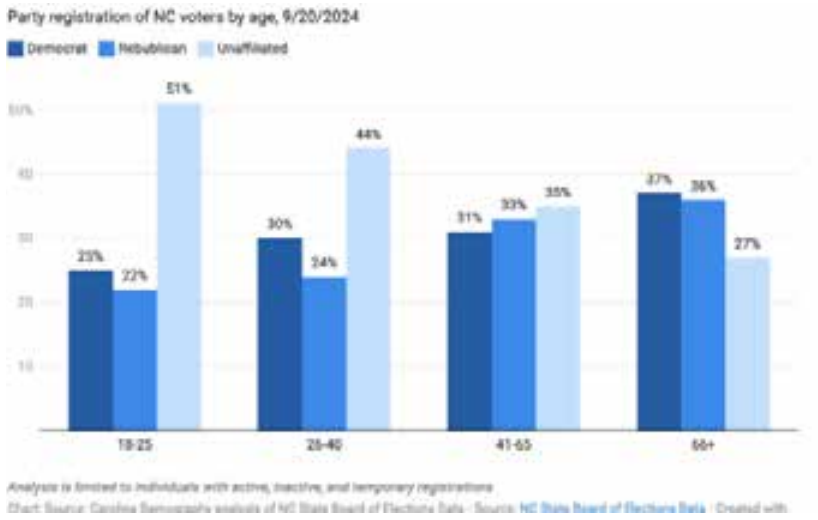
tion from other states to identify people who have died but remain on the voter rolls. Sen. Mujtaba Mohammed, D-Mecklenburg, argued last week that provision could lead to living voters being wrongfully removed, especially amid confusion over similar names. As the bill heads back to the state House on Tuesday, Republicans have argued that the legislation improves election administration and further enhances security. Gov. Josh Stein criticized the measure, saying the bill erodes trust by injecting more politics into the State Board of Elections. Awakening disengaged voters Repairers of the Breach and partner organizations are developing a plan to reach five million infrequent, low-wage voters and one million Black male voters through texting by their peers and knocking on doors in the coming weeks. “We’re here because the ballot is sacred,” Rev. Dr. Hanna R. Broome told reporters on Monday. With the U.S. spending an estimated \$1.5 billion per day on the war in Iran, Barber said even infrequent voters know that money could be addressing real issues “rather than being poured down a dark hole in the immoral and illegal war.”

The Unaffiliated Majority: North Carolina’s Independent Voters Rewrite The Playbook

By Jheri Hardaway

Staff Writer

For decades, North Carolina’s political story was written in shades of deep red and classic blue. A traditional battleground defined by the push and pull between registered Democrats and Republicans. Today, the state’s political map is being quietly reconfigured by a different group altogether: the unaffiliated voter. This voter is an unpredictable, often hard-to-read wild card. Representing nearly 40% of the state’s total electorate, unaffiliated voters have solidified their position as North Carolina’s largest voting bloc, outnumbering both registered Democrats and Republicans. New residents, upset youth, and disillusioned older voters fuel this movement. The Old North State has grown from a standard swing state into an uncontrollable loud wild card. Fast-growing exurbs around the Triangle (Wake, Johnston, and Harnett counties) and the Charlotte metro area (Cabarrus, Union, and Iredell) serve as the epicenter of independent voter growth. In these locations, college-educated professionals and young families are migrating in record numbers, bringing ticket-splitting tendencies that make traditional suburban strongholds increasingly fluid. According to the latest estimates from The University of North Carolina’s Carolina Demography, North Carolina has about 8 million citi-



zen-voting-age residents, and as of September 28th, 2024, 7.6 million registered voters. Partisan affiliation splits roughly between three groups: unaffiliated, Democrat, and Republican, with a slight lead for unaffiliated. The data reads: 2,886,573 or 38% were registered unaffiliated; 2,413,469 or 32% were registered Democrat; 2,285,377 or 30% were registered Republican; and 72,300 or 0.94% were registered to another party. Another impactful data point from Carolina Demography states that young voters are more likely to register as unaffiliated than any other age group: 51% of 18-25 year-olds are registered unaffiliated versus 44% of 26-40 year-olds, 35% of 41-65 year-olds, and 27% of voters 66 and older. As previously reported, there

are efforts being put forth to make candidates and citizens pick a side. Revisions to House Bill 958 would require any candidate running in a partisan primary to have been registered with that party for at least a year. An important note: each party’s state executive committee could grant exceptions. This is designed to block efforts like those of Educators on the Ballot and Kate Barr Can’t Win, registered Democrats or unaffiliated voters who switched their registration to Republican to compete in the recent Republican primary. While none came close to winning, the tactic has been circulated widely on social media. According to Carolina Demography, more than 55% of the state’s unaffiliated voters were born outside North Carolina. Relocating from

the Northeast, Midwest, and other Southern states, these new residents often leave their previous party affiliations at the state line, choosing to register as unaffiliated while they evaluate local political dynamics. Under North Carolina law, the state operates a semi-closed primary system. Registered Democrats and Republicans are locked into their respective party ballots. Unaffiliated voters, however, hold a unique privilege: at the polling place, they may request a Democratic, Republican, or nonpartisan primary ballot without altering their independent registration status. An interesting long-term thought: partisan mapmakers rely heavily on historical voter registration data and primary participation records to build “safe” partisan seats. Looks like the safety found in historic trends is treading water. This dynamic transforms independent voters into key players in primary contests, particularly in low-turnout election cycles. Associate Professor of Political Science at the University of North Carolina, Greensboro, David Holian confirmed the share of unaffiliated voters has been rising. They now make up the largest single group of registered voters in the state. Holian says that the growth in unaffiliated voting shows a pattern over the years. “It’s a sign of what we’ve increasingly been seeing in American politics, which is that it’s sort of this paradox where we have a really increasingly partisan and polarized political space.”