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**Frozen in amber**
TOPO and UNC-dependent Chapel Hill suffer after COVID locks town down.

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**Woke backlash**
The “woke” movement has gone too far, taking a hard left turn around the next corner.

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THE CAROLINA JOURNAL

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A CONTINUING ‘EMERGENCY’

**PAGE 6**
COVID aftermath, and a renewed appreciation for liberty

DONNA KING EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

This summer has been one of reflection and recovery after last year’s runaway train of crisis and pandemic panic. At Carolina Journal, we’ve been writing and debating the hard issues our nation and you have faced over the past 18 months. Whether your challenge has been a closed business, a closed school, closed minds in your community, we are starting to see a new sign of normal.

Over the past month, I’ve felt the momentum of those who see that liberty, equality, and capitalism, the foundational values of this nation, are at risk. They are fighting back. In this issue of CJ, we examine the fight and where it is taking us.

Among the real debates we’ve faced as a society is discrimination, whether it’s based on race, gender, heritage, or even vaccine status. This legislative session—a constitutional amendment is being considered that would make the Civil Rights Act of 1964 a permanent part of the N.C. Constitution. Senate Bill 729, The Public Non-discrimination Amendment, would ban the state or a state agency from discriminating against “or grant preferential treatment to any individual group on the basis of race, sex, color, ethnicity, or national origin in the operation of public employment, public education, or public contracting.”

I’ve repeatedly heard opponents of the measure try to redefine it as a “ban on affirmative action,” betting they can shift the public message on the bill to perceived racism, rather than the bill’s core purpose, ensuring equal access to opportunity. We see the same efforts in the addition of “equity” to the political playbook, rather than “equality.”

The idea goes that at any level would institutionalize or promote discrimination against anyone is so far removed from our values as a nation and current demands for reform that one must wonder about the real goals of opponents. Either you want equal access to the American dream and all that is required to achieve it, or you don’t.

The fight over Critical Race... continued PAGE 11

58% ENEMY OF THE PEOPLE

Percentage of U.S. voters that agree the corporate media have become “the enemy of the people.”

DONNA KING PUBLISHER

CORPORATE MEDIA

Enemies and anti-journalists provide opportunity for Carolina Journal

AMY O. COOKE PUBLISHER

BY CJ STAFF

Cases involving Barber, CON await Court of Appeals in-person hearings

Cases involving a high-profile political activist and a conservative state medical regulation await the N.C. Court of Appeals as it returns to regular in-person hearings in August.

The state’s second-highest court announced that it will resume its regular schedule of in-person oral arguments with the start of its fall session. Three-judge Court of Appeals panels will begin hearing cases again Aug. 10. Among the first cases on the docket is an appeal in a 2017 trespass case involving the Rev. William Barber. Former head of the state NAACP and current co-chair of the activist Poor People’s Campaign, Barber was arrested four years ago in connection with a protest at the state Legislative Building.

Judges reject guilty of second-degree trespass, but fines $200 and court costs. Barber continues to fight the conviction. Judges Chris Dillon, Lucy Imman, and Jeff Carpenter are scheduled to hear the case against Barber on Aug. 11.

Another case heading to the N.C. Court of Appeals that week will shine light again on the state’s controversial certificate-of-need law.

That law forces N.C. health care providers to get state government approval before expanding facilities or adding new services. It legislates on the issue in favor of a predominant role as reporters of facts and no political opinion. It’s not “fake news” to report the facts, as long as appropriate credit is given. The views of the editors of CJ or the staff and board do not necessarily reflect the views of the editors of CJ or the staff and board. All opinions expressed in bylined articles are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of the editors of CJ or the staff and board.

No word on the corporate media. No word on a monopoly on truth. … You are the part of the problem of the media. You come on CNN interview. Wolff scolded host Brian Stelter: “You’ve become one of the parts of the problem of the media. You come on here, and you have a monopoly on truth. … You are one of the reasons people can’t stand the media.”

This is the new real... continued PAGE 11

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**NOTEWORTHY**

**BUDGET**

**Senate Bill 105**
This is the piece of legislation most people are watching at this point in the session. The Senate has passed its version, which keeps state government spending growth under the rate of population and inflation increases, and now it is the House’s turn to present a two-year spending plan. The biggest question remaining is whether the governor will sign the budget the legislature sends him. Gov. Roy Cooper, a Democrat, has never signed a budget since being elected to his first term in 2016.

**DONOR PRIVACY**

**Senate Bill 636**
The General Assembly is considering a bill clarifying in state law that the personal information of nonprofits and charities must remain confidential. The Senate passed the bill earlier this summer, and the House is set to consider the bill. The measure comes up in the House just as the U.S. Supreme Court ruled in favor of donor privacy protections. S.B. 636 would codify into law what the Supreme Court has affirmed twice, that governments collecting and disclosing the personal information of nonprofit donors is an infringement on First Amendment rights.

**REGULATORY SANDBOX**

**House Bill 624/S.B. 470**
The bill would create a new regulatory structure for startups in the FinTech, banking, and insurance industries. The regulatory sandbox would allow startups to submit waiver requests for certain regulations that may hinder their business model. These startups would be relieved of some regulatory burden for two years, allowed to “play in the sandbox,” if you will, then work to make recommendations for updating laws.

**SAVE ACT**

**Senate Bill 249/H.B. 277**
This bill is stuck in the Senate Rules Committee after it was first introduced in 2019 and again this session. A recent stakeholder meeting could breathe new life into the SAVE Act. The bill would modernize nursing regulations and free North Carolina’s advanced-practice registered nurses from practicing under burdensome physician supervision. For years, North Carolina’s nurses have been fighting for full-practice authority, and the momentum is building.
COVID exposes certificate-of-need laws

Onerous laws keep people from getting care

BY ANDREW DUNN

As patients began to show up to emergency rooms with symptoms of a novel coronavirus last spring, hospital sounding an alarm. North Carolina doesn’t have enough beds.

Experts predicted a disastrous scenario. Models showed the potential for more than 250,000 COVID cases across the state by the end of May, even with lockdowns and social distancing; in fact, the number would be about 28,000 at that point.

The government swung into action, clearing out hospitals and suspending laws preventing hospitals from adding capacity.

On March 29, 2020, the N.C. Department of Health and Human Services asked all hospitals and surgery centers to stop performing elective procedures—a category that includes cancer screenings, organ transplants, and any other procedure that can be scheduled.

Nineteen days later, Gov. Roy Cooper signed an executive order suspending some of the state’s certificate-of-need laws so hospitals could add new beds as quickly as possible.

The dual actions put a harsh spotlight on North Carolina's certificate-of-need CON system, government control over how many hospital beds and medical equipment could be operated across the state.

To open a medical facility, add new beds, or buy new equipment, healthcare providers and physicians’ groups must get permission from a board appointed by the governor. The process takes months or even years, as well as thousands of dollars.

States with certificate-of-need laws have 30% fewer hospitals than states that do not. North Carolinians unnecessarily faced canceled cancer screenings, organ transplants, and other crucial procedures.

Jurisdictions with the most restrictive CON laws

<table>
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<tr>
<th>FIVE MOST RESTRICTIVE CON LAW STATES/JURISDICTIONS</th>
<th>OTHER STATES WITH CON LAWS</th>
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The General Assembly also plans to set aside more money as Medicaid expansion.

The managed care companies are responsible for cost overruns, but they also get to keep as profit amounts saved.

The idea is to help control costs to the state, which have risen rapidly in recent years. The General Assembly has worked to move toward the new system since passing a law requiring it in 2015. The transition has run into repeated delays since then, as the Cooper administration has fought its implementation despite widespread support among Republicans and Democrats. Cooper’s vetoes in 2019 cut off the money needed to finish the process, though a 2020 law ultimately restored the funding.

The new policies went into effect in July. North Carolina joins more than 40 states that have already moved to the managed care system.

The Senate’s budget bill would set aside more than $200 million per year for the Medicaid transformation effort, as well as a half-billion to cover rising Medicaid costs.

“CON laws have always been a hindrance in natural disasters when facilities and services are needed quickly,” Dr. Jay Singleton, an eye surgeon in New Bern, told Carolina Journal. His ophthalmology center performs cataract surgeries and other eye disease treatments. Singleton has been stymied by certificate-of-need laws in the past.

During the pandemic, Singleton was able to reopen before many other facilities because he could keep tight control over how many people went into and out of his office. For a time, it was one patient in, one patient out—with 98% masks for all.

“Other independent surgery centers should have done the same—if any were allowed,” he said.

North Carolina continues to have one of the most restrictive CON laws in the country, and there is still no movement to change that despite the state’s experience with the coronavirus.

CON laws emerged in the 1970s, when the federal government required states to pass laws to control costs in Medicare and Medicaid. The efforts did not work, and Congress repealed the mandates in 1987.

Today, 12 states have fully repealed their programs. Thirty-eight states have some form of CON law on the books, and 26 of them suspended some or all CON laws during the pandemic.

In many states, these efforts were too late. New York, for example, had just a week to staff up hospitals before they approached full capacity.

Soon after North Carolina suspended its CON laws, hospital systems began planning to set up temporary hospitals to deal with expected COVID patients. Atrium Health and Novant Health were close to constructing temporary field hospitals in Charlotte. “There’s no way we could do that without waiving the CON laws,” Sen. Joyce Krawiec, R-Forsyth, told Carolina Journal in March 2020. “If we had a big outbreak and people needed hospitalization, this could be a real problem. This shows how onerous—and how dangerous—those CON laws could be.”

At the same time, the state continued with many of its restrictive CON laws.

Even with the CON law suspension, North Carolina continued to deny certificate applications. A proposed Atrium Health acute care hospital north of Charlotte was shot down in late March 2020. As COVID retreats, states will need to decide what to do with their CON programs. Medical experts in other states are already pushing for CON law repeal, citing the experience of the pandemic.

North Carolina holds off Medicaid expansion, but ‘transformation complete’

BY ANDREW DUNN

The General Assembly has successfully held off efforts to expand Medicaid in North Carolina for another year, but a years-long effort to improve the health care program finally went into effect this summer.

For years, expanding Medicaid has been one of the top priorities for Gov. Roy Cooper and his Democratic Party. The federal program extends health insurance to low-income people who are parents, disabled, or elderly. Under Medicaid expansion, virtually anyone making up to 138% of the federal poverty line could get free care for the 2021 long session, as he’s for the newly eligible being able-bodied parents, disabled, or elderly. Unemployment aid has been one of the top priorities.

The state’s budget bill does not include Medicaid expansion.

The Senate’s budget bill would set aside more than $200 million per year for the Medicaid transformation effort, as well as a half-billion to cover rising Medicaid costs.

“The law that’s good enough to be lifted during an emergency is probably a law that should be lifted permanently,” Dr. Marcello Hochman, president of the Charleston County Medical Society, said to WCSC News.
School choice scholarships help retired soldier’s autistic daughter to thrive

BY DAVID BASS

About North Carolina’s school-choice scholarships for students with special needs, retired soldier James Martin would have moved his family to another state. “It’s been priceless,” said Martin, a veteran of Operation Iraqi Freedom. “People ask me why we’re staying in Fayetteville, North Carolina. This is it.”

Mia was diagnosed with autism at age 3. Martin and his wife initially enrolled her in an early-intervention program in Cumberland County Public Schools. Mia attended a mainstreamed kindergarten class, but at the conclusion of her first year the school system decided a self-contained classroom would be a better fit.

In May, spent first through fourth grade at Childscape Elementary in Fayetteville. At first, she benefited from Applied Behavior Analysis services in the classroom, but the school system discontinued them after the first grade. That meant Mia ended up pulling 12-year-old children in her second-grade classroom with her behavioral tutoring.

“She would wake up at 5 a.m. to be on the bus by 6 a.m.,” Martin said. “I would pick her up from school at 1:15 p.m. to go to clinic for ABA services from 2 p.m. to 6 p.m. We’d get home around 6:30 p.m. We did this Monday through Friday for four years. She was frustrated, tired, sad, and I felt helpless to change the confines and conditions of her environment.

Even with a classroom of 16 students, Mia didn’t have a special-education teacher plus an assistant. Mia struggled to learn. At one point, the teacher put her in a seat in the far-left corner of the classroom – next to the bathrooms – because her behavior had become such a distraction.

“The greatest fear was that Mia would get lost in the system — that she would not get the services and support she desperately needed and would end up incarcerated or distraught as an adult because no one took the time to understand her limitations,” Martin said.

A NEW OPPORTUNITY

That all changed in 2020, when Mia was presented a new opportunity to thrive through a private-school education. Even as classrooms were shutting down across the state and students were experiencing unprecedented learning loss, the pandemic pro- 
vided the catalyst to put Mia on the pathway to a better life.

The lever of change came when Martin and his wife secured help through North Carolina’s Education Savings Account and the Children with Disabilities Grant Program. The combined funding through the two programs covers the tuition for Mia to attend New Leaf Academy, a specialized school that is a collaboration between First Impressions Academy — a private school — and New Leaf Therapeutic Services, an ABA clinic.

The classroom size matches six kids with autism and six ABA technicians and clinicians, with one special-education teacher. That’s a 2:6 teacher-to-student ratio.

Martin calls the school “a diamond in the rough right here in Fayetteville, North Carolina.” It’s an environment where Mia is thriving.

“Her maladaptive behaviors, aggression levels, and meltdowns have been reduced significantly, and the self-soothing and coping methods taught by the school clinic have helped tremendous- 
ly,” Martin said. “Her eye contact, verbal requests, and overall inter-
action with us and others have in-
creased dramatically.”

Even during the pandemic — when public schools were shuttering across the state even for students with special needs who desperately needed ongoing help — Mia’s education never slowed down.

“Our school wasn’t impacted by the lockdowns and restrictions. There was no virtual learning where my daughter would’ve been forced to sit still in front of a computer attempting to be educated for hours while enduring endless frustration and meltdowns,” Martin said.

MORE HELP FOR N.C. FAMILIES

If Republican lawmakers in the General Assembly are successful this year, more help could be on the way for students like Mia.

In April and May, the House and Senate passed their own versions of legislation that would combine the Children with Disabilities Grant Program and ESA into one program to ensure adequate funding and reduce wait lists.

The bills also would expand the Opportunity Scholarship Program, an income-based scholarship that helps working-class families pay for pri-
school tuition if they want to send their children to their locally zoned public school.

To Martin, continuing to make North Carolina a leader in school choice will pay dividends for de-
cades to come.

“If you get these kids the help they need right off the bat — while they’re young, while they’re learning, while they’re able to — they will grow and flourish. They will be brilliant and wonderful,” he said.

Lawmakers seek to expand K-12 school choice, remediate COVID-19 learning losses

BY DAVID BASS

Significant changes are in store for K-12 education across the state, arising from the 2021 session of the General Assembly.

Lawmakers are poised to pass major updates to North Carolina’s school choice laws, even as they work to remedy COVID-19 learning losses for traditional public school students and tussle over Critical Race Theory, whether to delay, or to do away with the state’s controversial new social studies standards, and whether to empower local districts to make the call on student mask policies.

The ideas are big. The pace is slow. The patience is thin. While Republican leaders should be commended for judiciousness and restraint, the General Assembly is six months into a long session with shockingly little to show for it.

“ar number of proposed K-12 education measures could change the trajectory of the fast-approaching school year and thus should be addressed without further delay,” Stoops added.

The ideas are big. The pace is slow. The patience is thin. While Republican leaders should be commended for judiciousness and restraint, the General Assembly is six months into a long session with shockingly little to show for it.

By Terry Stoops, John Locke Foundation, and Education Savings Account

SCHOOL REOPENING, LEARNING LOSS, AND MASKS

In March, Democratic Gov. Roy Cooper and Republican law-
makers reached a deal on reopen- 
ing public schools for in-person instruction. The compromise plan returned most decision-making autonomy to local school boards.

A month later, lawmakers and Cooper found agreement on two bills designed to address pan-

demic-caused learning losses. The first, House Bill 82, required all public school districts to offer a minimum of six weeks of in-per-
school learning. The second, Senate Bill 387, made key updates to the 2013 “Read to Achieve” law put in place around ensuring students are reading proficiently by the third grade. The bill switches literacy instruction from a “look-and-say” method to a whole-word method.

More recently, another measure — Senate Bill 175, the “Free the Smiles Act” — has drawn more stark partisan divisions. The bill would allow public school districts, charter schools, and working-class families to set their own classroom mask policies, rather than allowing them to be set by state govern-

SB 173 passed the House in a continued PAGE 11
A continuing ‘emergency’
Lockdowns and suppressions: COVID-19 disrupts government, jobs, lives

BY JEFF MOORE

When the calendar flipped from 2020 to 2021, some breathed a sigh of relief. The advent of COVID-19 and the associated pandemic policies were a whirlwind of emergency measures that threw the state, nation, and world into disarray. What has transpired over the first half of this year could well be considered the aftermath.

In addition to the novel coronavirus, this includes fallout from myriad and unprecedented COVID policies. Whether it be businesses struggling to meet “re-opening” demand while competing for labor with increased unemployment benefits, parents fighting for their kids’ return to school, or the state legislature figuring out how to allocate revenue surpluses — which many people would have assumed to be deficits only one year ago — 2021 has largely been a reaction to the response.

2021 N.C. GENERAL ASSEMBLY

Usually, the “long session” of the General Assembly is dominated by the formation of a new biennial budget. This year, some of the most consequential legislative actions came before budget writers had even set their pens. Multiple massive federal rescue packages approved by Congress meant lawmakers’ first order of business involved allocating billions in federal funding. In early February, the legislature passed, and Gov. Roy Cooper signed, Senate Bill 36, a COVID relief bill allocating millions for schools, vaccine distribution, rental assistance, and expanded broadband services. It included $1.6 billion for K-12 schools, $95 million in federal funding for vaccine distribution, $39 million to expand rural broadband internet access, and $546 million for the Emergency Rental Assistance Program; plus an additional $155 million in rental assistance distributed to local governments.

While passing out federal dollars enjoyed unanimous support, other priority COVID aftermath legislation endured far more debate. Cooper “strongly urged” elementary schools to open for in-person instruction in early February, a welcome sign for parents and students alike dealing with remote learning struggles, but middle and high schools remained closed. The General Assembly passed Senate Bill 37, mandating in-person instruction options for all schools, but Cooper vetoed that bill. It wasn’t until the next month that the N.C. State Board of Education issued new guidance and subsequent negotiations yielded an agreement that led to the overwhelming majority of K-12 schools opening to students.

Yet the damage from months of remote-only instruction had already been done. Closing the COVID education gap began in earnest soon thereafter, as the legislature passed the Summer Learning Choice for N.C. Families Act on April 1, with the governor signing the bill into law just eight days later. The bill provided for a summer school program to offer core academic courses and enrichment instruction to tackle learning deficits accrued after months out of the classroom.

Beyond reopening schools was the question of the governor’s authority to make such sweeping actions in the first place. Throughout 2020, acrimony over emergency powers was palpable, and that tension extended in 2021. Eviction moratoriums, mask mandates, capacity restrictions, and business closures, all most exclusively, the most impactful COVID-19 emergency orders were decreed by Cooper unilaterally. Over the spring, the state House and Senate passed separate bills, the Emergency Powers Accountability Act and the Emergency Management Act Revisions Act, respectively, that shared a central aim. Both pieces of legislation pointed squarely at limiting in the governor’s open-ended and unilateral use of emergency authority through reforming the N.C. Emergency Management Act to require multiple layers of concurrence, from the Council of State to the state legislature itself.

Neither bill passed out of the General Assembly unscathed due to assured vetoes. But major elements of those reforms are now contained as policy items in the biennial budget under discussion. Other bills targeting the end of the extraordinary supplemental unemployment insurance benefits, an effort to spur higher workforce participation as economic demand grows, were passed, but ultimately vetoed. Still, not immune to public pressures, and faced with undeniable cases of COVID-19, Cooper reluctantly began to lift the most onerous of emergency orders.

INCREMNETAL REPRIEVE FROM EXECUTIVE ORDERS

During the first half of 2021, the executive orders that disrupted life so significantly over the prior year began slowly to peel away. But not right away. Cooper began the year by extending stay-at-home orders that set curfews for businesses, capacity restrictions, a moratorium on evictions, and statewide mask mandates.

It wasn’t until Feb. 24 that Cooper suspended the statewide curfew and began to ease business restrictions, albeit incrementally. A month later, as COVID-19 cases became scarcer, came more incremental easing of business restrictions. But another month later, on April 27, the need to maintain a mask mandate was finally lifted. These changes came because of pub-
lic sentiment turned decidedly to ward reopening and a desired return to normalcy.

Still, Cooper retained the remaining restrictions with the promise of lifting them only if the state hit vaccination targets by certain dates. It was an ultimatum he couldn't enforce, as consumer economic activity and public perception of the threat posed by COVID-19 began to diverge significantly from that implicated by the state of emergency.

On May 14, citing progress on vaccinations, Cooper signed Executive Order 215, officially lifting all capacity restrictions and social-distancing requirements for businesses and venues and suspending the statewide mask mandate, except for certain settings. It marked a return to normal, largely, as coronavirus numbers continued to dwindle. That also meant a turn to work search requirements for those receiving unemployment benefits. Cooper signed an order May 24 as job openings increased markedly and labor market woe became pronounced.

In the following weeks, most of the executive's attention then shifted to vaccination as a primary focus. With progress toward vaccination rates slowing as nearly half of all adults received their shots, Cooper signed an executive order to make it easier for businesses to run lottery to incentivize more to get shots.

Four $1 million prizes and four $125,000 scholarships for adults and kids, respectively, who got at least one dose of the vaccine, were offered via a random lottery funded by federal COVID money at the executive's disposal. While winners have been announced, but the incentive hasn't resulted in a renewed rush for vaccination. At time of publication, North Carolina is still short of Cooper's goal to have two-thirds of adults vaccinated, with an original target date of July 4.

North Carolinians' interest in bringing back summer was not slowing down, however. The previous month's large orders in effect cleared the runway, and the subsequent federal stimulus checks, savings, and pent-up demand provided the motive power to take off.

The term "Carolina Comeback" was actualized over late spring and early summer. The state last year was actualized over late spring and provided the motive power to take off. Savings, and pent-up demand previously cleared the runway, and the continuing pre-Memorial Day orders in effect not slowing down, however. The state hit new lows for year, around 50% of adults vaccinated, and unemployment rate at 4.6%, a level lower than "Grand Re-Opening" signs in towns across the state.

The same unpredicted measures taken in Washington, D.C., that left consumers flush with cash, also added a supplemental to unemployment benefits that changed the calculus for the unemployed to accept a job offer. That means businesses hiring low-skill labor, hospitality workers, and seasonal jobs, had to compete with Uncle Sam. Those pressures aren't unique to smaller towns. Even businesses in relatively large labor markets have felt the effects of the aftermath.

"Labor, getting enough workers, has been our No. 1 struggle over the last six months," says Heath Stan ley, owner of Captain Stanley's Seafood Restaurant in Raleigh. After having to let workers go last spring and relegated to take-out orders only for months, the restaurant struggled to keep enough floor staff and kitchen staff to service a demand that has returned to pre-pandemic levels. And it's not the only ripple effect of 2020 they are feeling.

"Then comes food scarcity and rising costs of goods. Moving forward it will be rising wages," Stan ley adds.

The wave of COVID cash has met with the large ripples of supply disruption still reverberating throughout the economy. Everything from chicken to chicken wings has faced some level of supply crunch, and with it a spike in prices.

Mountaire Farms, one of the nation's largest chicken product producers, operates some of the largest poultry plants in the country right here in North Carolina. The community relations manager for the company's Silver City plant, Jarrod Lowery, says his company is doing all it can to keep up with demand, as rising product surplus challenges only months ago.

"We were deemed essential workers from the beginning, and we took precautions to make sure our workers were safe, but it's been full-speed ahead in 2021," Lowery said.

Last spring, Lowery helped organize community sales — refrigerated trucks full of 40-pound bags of chicken — to distribute surplus production direct to consumers, as disruptions in the supply chain stifled demand from large customers.

Then, he says, "It was like a switch flipping. One day we had too much chicken, too few buyers, and the next day it seemed like we couldn't get enough. We literally called a truck back that had been sent to distribute surplus, because it changed that fast."

In the meantime, Mountaire Farms has managed to grow from the sixth- to the fourth-largest producer of chicken in the country. The company harvests about 800,000 chickens each day. Lowery credits both strong consumer demand and the focus on keeping them safe and productive, for the growth. Still, Lowery worried for a time he would have to hatch chicks himself when labor got too tight.

"We treat our workers well," Lowery said. "They're making $19.40 an hour to start, and it was a struggle earlier this year for a lot of the industry to keep enough workers to meet demand. We were well-positioned, but there were times when we couldn't find enough workers who just didn't have the labor they needed to be the workers they had coming on a given day." Things are running apace now, but Lowery says challenges remain. Namely, exporting has become more difficult as world trade bottlenecks back but contain ers remain scarce. North Carolina doesn't exist in a vacuum, after all, and the policies of pandemic panic still reverberate on a global scale.

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The House passes a bill to delay the implementation of North Carolina's controversial new social studies standards for K-12 until the 2022-23 school year.

The House passes the "Free the Smiles" act to allow local school systems to set their own classroom mask policies, rather than allowing them to be set by state government. The Senate later votes not to accept the House's version of the bill, sending the measure to a conference committee.

The Senate passes a budget for the new biennium that would spend $10.4 billion in 2021-22 and $10.5 billion in 2022-23 on K-12 public education. The budget significantly expands and strengthens the state's three school choice programs.

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From 3.5% in January 2020, the unemployment rate in North Carolina topped out at 13.5% in April and May, according to federal statistics.
**Regulatory Reform**

**Lawmakers targeting governor’s powers**

**By John Trump**

The idea Gov. Roy Cooper is misusing his considerable power has, especially since the start of the pandemic, progressed from popular theory to incontrovertible fact. Cooper, a Democrat, issued his first executive order of the pandemic in March 2020, at the time implementing an interminable state of emergency, typically reserved for state’s that face a hurricane or severe winter weather.

That order, along with the General Assembly’s ability to cull Cooper’s considerable powers represent one aspect of myriad efforts to ease onerous regulations, which can hurt the way people do business and, ultimately, affect their livelihoods and freedom to ply their trades.

House Bill 624, for instance, establishes a “regulatory sandbox” like one created in Arizona in 2019 — waiving certain regulatory obstacles for a trial period for the onerous products and services. H.B. 624 mimics Senate Bill 470, which passed that chamber, 47-0, in June.

Each measure would create an innovation council to market the products and services that meet the requirements of this type, and enable businesses to test innovations in the private sector without the need for emergency management rules. It would then make them looser to continue indefinitely, unenforceable until it completes a review process, as written in law.

**COOPER’S POWERS**

Reining in unchecked powers, such as Cooper has displayed, is a key part of Senate Bill 165, the Senate’s budget bill. The bill places limitations on the power of a governor — now and in the future — to declare emergencies and allow them to continue interminably.

The move would require approval from the Senate of State, the other nine statewide elected executive branch officials. The council includes the lieutenant governor and attorney general. Republicans hold six of the nine seats, not including Cooper.

Executive orders from the governor have closed schools and shut down businesses. They have mandated masks and stopped public gatherings, even those involving family.

“Among the most important lessons of the pandemic is the need to ensure one person cannot exercise unilateral control over North Carolina’s 10.5 million people, along with thousands of businesses and schools,” a co-founder of Alexander Paul Institute of Hair Design in Greenville.

“Among the most important lessons of the pandemic is the need to ensure one person cannot exercise unilateral control over North Carolina’s 10.5 million people, along with thousands of businesses and schools,” said Paul Naoum, co-founder of Alexander Paul Institute of Hair Design.

“Governor Cooper’s unique interpretation of state Emergen- cy Management Act has given him too much unchecked power,” Kokai told CJ. “Adding time limits for his one-man rule makes perfect sense. It’s also a good idea to add input from other elected officials, whether it’s the other statewide elected officials on the Council of State or the lawmaking branch of state government. As an official governance entity, competency extends well beyond a year, the need for emergency management reforms grows stronger.”

**LIQUOR RULES**

The General Assembly this session has considered — and is continuing to consider — several bills that would open some of the barriers to liquor sales and alcohol regulation in the state. Some have progressed to the House or Senate floor, while others are mired in committee.

One measure, House Bill 693, passed the House on June 16 and was sent to the Senate. The move would allow alcohol to be sold and served on common carriers, such as charter buses. Another measure, House Bill 781, Bring Busi- ness Back to Downtown — cre- ating so-called social districts — passed the House in May but is stuck in the Senate. The move has generated much discussion, before moving to the House Rules Committee. House Bill 722, which would expand the size of growlers — essentially refillable containers for beer and cider, from two liters to four liters — passed the House. It was referred to the Senate’s Rules Committee.

House Bill 890 was, as intro- duced, an all-out regulatory reform, incorporating some mea- sures that have already cleared one chamber of the General Assembly. It would allow people to order online and pick products up from state liquor stores for delivery to their homes or for tours in N.C. distilleries, and allow managers to sell their products at festivals.

“Among the most important lessons of the pandemic is the need to ensure one person cannot exercise unilateral control over North Carolina’s 10.5 million people, along with thousands of businesses and schools.”
It’s around lunchtime on a Wednesday in mid-July, the bright remnants of the morning quickly morphing into the typical hot, humid Carolina afternoon. A dozen or so people—diners and drinkers—survey downtown Chapel Hill from atop a third-floor balcony at Top of the Hill Restaurant & Brewery.

“It’s a neighborhood landmark, since 1996,” one ideal place to watch the incessant flow of people and cars that greedily meet at Franklin and Columbia streets. The sense of vibrancy that personifies this town, which laid dormant the better part of a year, has returned. Because the University of North Carolina has, even though the academic calendars barely线 that, as in states like California and Michigan, it would ban government discrimination and affirm the Civil Rights Act’s foundation.

“The challenge in getting the proposals approved lies in that they are constitutional amendments. In both the Senate and House, the measure requires a three-fifths vote of the chamber’s entire membership to win approval. If approved by a 30-vote majority in the Senate and 72-vote majority in the House, the proposed constitutional amendments would go on voters’ ballots for the 2022 primary. That higher standard means Republicans will need some bipartisan support to place the measure on the ballot for voters.

The sense of vibrancy that personifies this town, which laid dormant the better part of a year, has returned. Because the University of North Carolina has, even though the academic calendars barely

“I’m actually pleasantly surprised,” he says. “I’m actually pleasantly surprised.”

“IT cap state spending at the level of the state constitution, that “the state shall not discriminate against, or grant preferential treatment to, any individual or group on the basis of race, sex, color, ethnicity, or national origin in the operation of public employment, public education, or public contracting.”

Critics call it a ban on affirmative action. Supporters say that, as in states like California and Michigan, it would ban government discrimination and affirm the Civil Rights Act’s foundation.

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Task force expert reviews first round of CRT submissions

BY JEFF MOORE

The popular race consciousness movement, defined by two white professors and presented as a curriculum in the classroom, focused specifically on white privilege and systemic racism that everyone, even the stu-
dents, is composed of educators and administrators, and university professors. The group opened a submission portal for concerned teachers, parents, and residents to report examples of possible indoctrination in violation of the Code of Ethics for North Carolina Edu-
cators.

One parent of a Wake County high school student described as-
signments from her child’s English teacher that focused specifically on white privilege and systemic rac-
ism. "I felt it totally inappro-
priate," said the parent. "I simply told her not to take part in that assign-
ment. I nor my child should [not be] exposed to this. It is not an appro-
priate concept for what my child may have to face."

That's one example, but the Wake County Public School Sys-
tem, the largest district in the state, has said it will not take any spe-
cific action for incorporating CRT at a professional development level. The Carolina Journal's Christopher Rufo reported on an "equity-themed" teachers' conference with sessions on "whiteness," and a "microaggressions" training. One training event focused on "challenging the dominant sen-
timent is that the lines have long been crossed.

Some parents say that the task force is one way to document these con-
scerns, but it is unclear how the task force will respond to these complaints that involve violations of the Code of Ethics for North Carolina Edu-
cators. The company contracts with other local governments and school dis-
tricts across the state, and be-
yond, for equity training events. The training process rests on the presupposition that "Racism is a fierce, ever-present, shaping force, one which has struc-
tured the thinking, behavior, and ac-
ctions of individuals, institutions, and institu-
tions since the beginning of human history."

Critics might say examples like those above do not include workshops on the structure of Critical Race Theory, but the parents who report their concerns on the portal seem unvarnished. When it comes to core edu-
cational values, the protests of social justice warriors, like the one in Wake County, are motivated by concerns that the lines have long been crossed.

Sharlene Joyner, the task force's co-chair, is one of the few parents and teachers who are publicly responding to the task force’s work. She said that the task force is one way to document these concerns, but it is unclear how the task force will respond to these complaints that involve violations of the Code of Ethics for North Carolina Edu-
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Corporated Media

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Theorized by anti-journalists. They don’t leave their bubble or report news. They act as information gatekeepers for the progressive left that now controls the executive and legislative branches of the federal government.

and control the flow of information.

So worried about President Trump’s potential re-election, the cabal interfered through questions and rules, sometimes after ballots dropped. That included interference in North Carolina led by former Hillary Clinton attorney Marc Elias. Ironically, in North Carolina, the one abusing excessive power is our Democratic Gov. Roy Cooper. Yet the anti-journalists never question his 16-month-long state of emergency and perpetual rule by executive fiat.

At Carolina Journal, we see the changing industry as an opportunity. We are a member of the N.C. Press Association, but the smaller N.C. Capitol Press Corps denies us entry. We don’t need their blessing to act as counterbalance. We publish

Education

continued from PAGE 5

largely party-line 66-44 vote June 23, possibly in a split committee between the two chambers as this issue of Carolina Journal headed to print.

DELAY IN SOCIAL STUDIES

Racial strife has reared its head in the spring of 2021, and in June, House lawmakers passed Senate Bill 654, which would delay implementation of North Carolina’s controversial new social studies standards for K-12 until the 2022-23 school year.

The social studies standards have drawn criticism from Republicans – Lt. Gov. Mark Robinson called them “politically charged” and “divisive” – for focusing too heavily on race, gender, and discrimination for U.S. history and civics instruction.

R.B. 654 also would avoid key COVID-19 learning loss adjustments, including distributing $1,000 grants to disadvantaged students in need of tutoring, instructional materials, or other services.

Additionally, the measure delays a scheduled reduction in the size of kindergarten classes for the fall in anticipation of an influx of new student enrollments after a year of remote learning. And the measure waives school performance reporting requirements for the 2020-21 school year because of COVID-19, and it prohibits the N.C. State Board of Education from using 2020-21 data to identify low-performing schools.

R.B. 654 passed the House, 74-34, but the Senate voted not to accept the House’s version of the bill. It is for House proponents to feature negotiations from the two chambers.

ANTI-CRT BILL, ACADEMIC TRANSPARENCY

In May, the House passed House Bill 324 by a vote of 66-48. That measure would prohibit the exclusive teaching of Critical Race Theory in public school classrooms.

While the bill does not identify CRT specifically, it would prohibit public schools from promoting the idea that one race or sex is inherently superior to another; an individual is racist, sexist, or oppressive based solely on their own race or sex – consciously or unconsciously; an individual should receive special treatment solely because of his or her race or sex; moral character is determined by race or sex; or based solely on race or sex, an individual bears responsibility for actions taken in the past by members of that race or sex.

H.B. 324 was referred to the Senate Education Committee on June 30 and hasn’t received a vote according to the news release.

We tell you: how critical race theory is being taught in some schools, some protests are violent; election integrity isn’t “Jim Crow 2.0” and Cooper is abusing his powers. Another bias is toward freedom and human flourishing, and whomever champions them, what you believe to be the truth is up to you.

The 15 judges of the Court of Appeals are looking forward to holding oral arguments in person in the fall,” said Chief Judge Dona Stroud in a news release. "And although we are pleased to welcome attorneys, parties to cases, and the public back to our Court, we will also continue to use some innovations adopted due to the pandemic to the extent those innovations improve public access to the Court and improve the Court’s operations."

Starting in April 2021, the Court of Appeals’ most recent arguments by Webex, according to the release. The court began hearing cases exclusively online in March with parties requesting in-person arguments, Temporary safety measures in place during spring in-person hearings expired as of June 15.

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Looking for a good book? We got you.

With summer winding down, sometimes we all need to check in—into a true story, a work of fantasy, or a new way of seeing history. Here are the vacation reads filling our beach bags.

**BOOKS**

**LATE SUMMER READING**

[Image 187x446 to 279x584] [Image 188x961 to 278x1101]

**MOUNTAIN FOLK**
John Hood
Defiance Press

**WHAT THEY SAY:** Goran is a rare fairy who can live without magical protection in the “Blitz,” but when he’s ordered to help the New World’s other fairy nations crush the American Revolution, Goran must choose between a solemn duty to his own people and a fierce loyalty to his human friends and the principles they hold dear.

**WHY WE LOVE IT:** It’s fantasy and fiction, yes, but it remains true to history. Fast-paced and thought-provoking, "Mountain Folk," at its core, is a book about freedom, liberty, principle, and loyalty—to oneself, one’s friends, and one’s country.

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[Image 504x446 to 597x584] [Image 504x962 to 596x1100]

**THE MANDIBLES**
Lionel Shriver
Harper Collins

**WHAT THEY SAY:** The Mandibles is a near-future novel that explores the aftershocks of an economically devastating U.S. sovereign debt default on four generations of a once-prosperous American family. In 2029, the United States is engaged in a bloodless world war that will wipe out the savings of millions of American families. Overnight, on the international currency exchange, the "almighty dollar" plummets in value, to be replaced by a new global currency, the "bancor."

**WHY WE LOVE IT:** In the midst of the Tokyo Olympics, this compelling true story will touch your heart. It makes us ask, "Who is in my boat?" The alternating strength of character, built by adversity, led them to form a team for which each member played a critical role and could alternately lead and follow. Organizations and companies alike can learn how to get their teams pulling in the same direction.

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[Image 663x446 to 755x584] [Image 663x962 to 754x1100]

**THE LAST CASTLE**
Denise Kiernan Touchstone

**WHAT THEY SAY:** Orphaned at a young age, Edith Stuyvesant Dresser claimed lineage from one of New York's best-known families. She grew up in Newport and Paris, and her engagement and marriage to George Vanderbilt was one of the most watched events of Gilded Age Society. But none of this prepared her to be mistress of Biltmore House. The story of Biltmore spans World Wars, the Jazz Age, the Depression, and generations of the famous Vanderbilt family.

**WHY WE LOVE IT:** If you’re a sucker for history books set in North Carolina, this is a great one. It’s a true story of the Biltmore Estate and has it all—romance, fame, wealth, and tragedy.

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[Image 120x446 to 212x584] [Image 121x961 to 212x1101]

**1620: A CRITICAL RESPONSE TO THE 1619 PROJECT**
Peter Wood
Encounter Books

**WHAT THEY SAY:** Was America founded on the auction block in Jamestown in 1619 or aboard the Mayflower in 1620? The controversy erupts in August 2019, when the New York Times announced its 1619 Project. The Times set to transform history by asserting that all the laws, material gains, and cultural achievements of Americans are rooted in the exploitation of African Americans.

**WHY WE LOVE IT:** Peter Wood cuts through the rhetoric and gives a thoughtful analysis that will get your next dinner party, or classroom, talking.

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[Image 162x446 to 254x584] [Image 163x961 to 253x1101]

**THE WORLD REMADE: AMERICA IN WORLD WAR I**
G.J. Meyer
Random House

**WHAT THEY SAY:** This is an engrossing chronicle of America’s pivotal, still controversial intervention into World War I, encompassing the tumultuous politics and towering historical figures that defined the era and forged the future. When it declared war, the U.S. was the youngest of the major powers and militarily the weakest by far. On Nov. 11, 1918, when the fighting stopped, it was not only the richest country on earth, but also the mightiest.

**WHY WE LOVE IT:** If you are a military history buff, this one’s for you. It is a deep dive into the motives and role of the U.S. in World War I, but it also gives sharp insight on the architects of America’s development as a world power and perspective as our nation addresses future conflicts.

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[Image 180x446 to 272x584] [Image 181x961 to 271x1101]

**IN THE GARDEN OF BEASTS**
Erik Larson
Crown

**WHAT THEY SAY:** Set in Berlin in 1933-1934, this book tells the story of America’s first ambassador to Nazi Germany, William Dodd, and his daughter Martha, as they experience the rising terror of Hitler’s rule. As that first year unfolds, the Dodds experience days full of excitement, intrigue, romance—and ultimately horror, when a climactic spasm of violence and murder unmask Hitler’s true character and ruthless ambition.

**WHY WE LOVE IT:** It reads like fiction, but this true story about an American family is an amazingly close look at Hitler’s Germany and how the Nazi horrors were revealed.
Why we must relearn the separation-of-powers principle

RAY NOTHSTINE
OPINIONS EDITOR

THE AMERICAN founders were diligent students of history. The separation-of-powers concept is an essential framework of our Constitution designed to prevent the tyranny of centralized power. Unfortunately, a concept that is already floundering because of lack of civic instruction or knowledge of American history has been further weakened by the coronavirus pandemic. Many state governors, including here in North Carolina, doled out excessive emergency orders with little to no checks on their decrees.

Amazingly, a recent study by the Rand Corporation reveals that barely half of teachers and administrators feel it’s essential that students understand concepts like federalism, checks and balances, and separation of powers. It’s a stunning admission and explains a lot about our collective woes pertaining to civic knowledge and broader engagement in the public square.

The accumulation of all powers, legislative, executive, and judicial, in the same hands, whether of one, a few, or many, and whether hereditary, self-appointed, or elective, may justly be pronounced the very definition of tyranny,” wrote James Madison in the Federalist.

The brilliance of the Constitution isn’t just that the separation of powers includes separate branches at one level of government, but the framers designed our government in a way where power is shared at the federal, state, and local levels.

Our often-ignored 10th Amendment should be a good starting point as it directs us that, “The powers not delegated to the United States by the Constitution, nor prohibited by it to the States, are reserved to the States respectively, or to the people.”

If we are going to have a healthy political society, it requires a healthy, civic-minded culture. Otherwise, partisan bickering will only continue to spiral out of control given that most of the chips are put into one basket at the federal level. Here in North Carolina, one of the biggest problems is an activist judiciary interfering with the powers of the legislative branch. Understanding and teaching core concepts like separation of powers is vital to the health and state of our nation.

Without that understanding tyranny begins to take root and further erodes the fabric of the greatest experiment of self-government in the entire world.

Woke hubris will lead to backlash

JOHN TRUMP
MANAGING EDITOR

The predominant idea is those who think or act differently are in need of our edification, is annoy ing lecturing, apparently intended to have failed to figure this out, they soon will.

The condescension and pedantic lecturing, apparently intended for our edification, is annoying at the least and infuriating at the most.

The most obvious example is the “woke” movement — phenomenon, ideology, whatever it’s called — has gone too far, taking a hard left and then another sharp turn around and gone too far, taking a hard left and then another sharp turn around.

Eyebrows raised.

“I’m a lefty,” says Peggy Noonan, who wrote speeches for Ronald Reagan and writes a weekly piece for the Wall Street Journal. “You don’t mean?”

Noonan takes it from here. “The cultural provocations are currently at an all time high, in calling attention to Drums work, devoting an entire column to it. The points to Drums use of a magazine interview with Daniel Shor, who Drums calls “a data geek who identifies as socialist but is rigorously honest about what the numbers tell us.”

“Over the last four years,” Shor told New York in 2020, “white liberals have become a larger and larger share of the Democrat Party... And since white voters are sorting on ideology more than nonwhite voters, we’ve ended up in a situation where white liberals are more left-wing than black and Hispanic Democrats on pretty much every issue: taxes, health care, policing, and even on racial issues or divided over the question of racial resentment. So as white liberals increasingly define the party’s image and messaging, that’s going to turn off nonwhite conservative Democrats and push them against us.”

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“The point resonates loudly with conservatives and moderates in North Carolina. The concept of pushing Critical Race Theory in schools deeply divides not only the political parties but, as C.J.’s Ray Nothstine says, also those who want our true history preserved, by teaching “the core basic knowledge that reinforces America’s founding principles and documents.”

No matter how ugly or perverse, proponents of CRT and similar tenets, as well as those aspiring to be “woke,” would rather twist history in a shape that fits their beliefs, and then castigate those who step outside their convoluted boundaries.

Mainstream and left-leaning media are completely complicit, echoing common sense and the opportunity for reasonable discussion and debate.

They’re right. We’re wrong. We should apologize. Again and again.

The Democrats’ hold on Congress is tenuous at best, and Biden is probably a one-term president. Gov. Roy Cooper’s term is up.

The Democrats took a small lead and squandered it. The support they received in 2020 from moderates and disenfranchised Republicans led to toxic unconcern and insufferable hubris.

Noonan, as she often does, says it best, writing that “the left is overplaying its hand.”

That pendulum is now swinging hard to the right. The left can maybe slow that momentum, but only if they stop talking for a second and sit down to listen.

They’ll keep shouting, of course, until voters remove their podium.
Bootleggers, Baptists, and a zebra cobra

CONTRIBUTOR

MITCH KOKAI

ANY NEW N.C. election law will end up in court. It’s guaranteed. Partisans seeking even a marginal electoral gain from legal action will consider the effort worth the expense.

It’s fortunate for state legislative leaders, then, that the U.S. Supreme Court has set new limits on cases that can succeed in federal court. The court’s decision in an Arizona lawsuit shut the door on at least one charge for not reporting the zebra cobra’s removal. Alito wrote: “The charges are accurate, then a dangerous animal was handled inappropriately, and if it was provoked, it could have seriously harmed or killed someone.”

However, the second predictable outcome was the immediate reaction of politicians to create more laws to protect the vulnerable livestock and home. State Sen. Wiley Nickel, D-Wake, has announced that he will introduce legislation for a new state law to govern the handling of dangerous animals, specifically venomous snakes. As quoted by CBS 17 in Raleigh, “It’s clear enough, our laws do not go far enough. We need to have better protection in place for folks, and how we get there, we’re still trying to figure it out,” Nickel said.

In addition to concerns that new laws are currently not specific enough in details on what will be included in the legislation, which seems strange since Nickel has said he plans to file the legislation within two weeks. “Let’s pause for just a moment to recap the situation. A young man in Raleigh owned a venomous snake that somehow got loose. The snake was caught, and the boy has been charged with 40 counts under N.C. law. Now, a state legislator wants to create new laws in the spirit of protecting citizens—even though it appears that what happened was already illegal.”

Setting aside that no one disputes that a cobra is dangerous, this type of situation is how a nanny state is created. Politicians feel the need to show their useful- ness, be seen in the press, and generate goodwill with their constituents.

Therefore, they leap at the chance to “draft new legislation!” or “launch an investigation” or “call for hearings” on matters ranging from silly to serious. Elected officials are afflicted with the constant need to do something to justify their elected positions. Nickel told the liberal News & Observer, “We’ve got enough going on in the world right now where people shouldn’t have to worry about a neighbor with 70 dangerous venomous snakes living next to them.”

The third factor involves “disproportionate reaction of one group that can make a political reaction of another.” I am not trying to make light of the danger of an angry cobra. I am also not trying to make light of the danger of an angry cobra. I am writing this to prevent the overreactions that happen when people rush to create new laws when trying to correct something already illegal.

Before we rush to create new laws about something we don’t understand yet (and Nickel has admitted that he is new to this issue), maybe our elected officials should ask if we have too many laws already.

Asking that question would have prevented a lot of the unintended consequences in history.

Mitch Kokai is senior political analyst at the John Locke Foundation.

DOUBLE DESK

Supreme Court offers new protections for N.C. election reforms

MITCH KOKAI

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Mitch Kokai is senior political analyst at the John Locke Foundation.
Will higher inflation rates persist?

MICHAIL WALDEN
CONTRIBUTOR

When I joined the N.C. State University as a faculty member in the late 1970s, prices were rising at double-digit rates, and they continued at that pace for several years. It took a severe recession in the early 1980s to bring inflation under control.

The annual inflation rate has hovered near 2%. But there’s a worry that this happy situation could change. The current annualized inflation rate is above 5%, and some analysts think it may go higher. If inflation is trending higher, then the question is whether the situation we faced four decades ago will again be repeated.

Before giving answers, here’s some background on what inflation means, how it’s measured, and why we worry about it.

Inflation measures the rise in prices, and the inflation rate calculates that rise as a percent, usually over the course of a year. So, if the inflation rate is 5%, it means prices rose 5% over the last year.

Whatever the measured inflation rate, it does not mean all prices rose at that rate. The inflation rate is an average number. The federal government tracks thousands of individual prices and averages them to form the final inflation rate. However, all individual price changes aren’t counted equally in the average. They’re “weighted” by the importance of the product or service in the typical consumer’s budget.

The government reports two inflation rates, the “headline rate” and the “core rate.” The headline rate includes all consumer products and services, while the core rate excludes all except food and fuel products. Food and fuel products tend to have more volatile prices and wild swings in the inflation rate. Economists like to track the core rate to detect trends in inflation but contrary to what is sometimes asserted, the headline rate is the official inflation rate, not the core rate.

Most people worry about inflation, but here’s the summary. Inflation decreases the value of the dollar. An inflation rate of 5% over the last year means a dollar is worth only 95 cents in purchasing power today compared to its value a year ago. Higher income and investments increase at rates less than the inflation rate, so you’re moving backward in your current and future standards of living.

Let’s look at the debate over where inflation is headed. As usual, there are two camps. I’ll call them the “no worries” camp and the “worried” camp.

The “no worries” camp is based, like many things today, on the unusual events COVID created for the economy. The headline inflation rate dropped at an annual rate of 4% between February and May of 2020 when the pandemic was still spreading. In the comparable period in 2019 headline inflation rose 2.5%. The conclusion is inflation may take a near term jump to make up for the reduction in prices during early 2020, but the rise will be temporary.

The “worried” camp focuses on two concerns. One is the large amount of money being spent to get the economy back on track. The federal government will eventually have pumped $6 trillion into the economy fighting COVID and protecting household, businesses, and institutions. This is more than was lost in the economy due to the COVID shutdowns. Despite the recession of last year, consumers have money to spend and desires to spend it.

The second concern is the slow return of workers to jobs that may result in the amount of products and services available for consumers to buy will be less than the total number of workers want to buy when spending ramps up. Putting the two concerns together, we can set up a situation of too many dollars chasing too few goods and services, which is the classic definition of higher inflation.

It’s possible something affecting all of us, so keep your eyes open for news about it. The next six to nine months will tell us if faster inflation is temporary or if it’s imbedded in the economy for the longer run.

Michael Walden is a William Neal Reynolds Distinguished Professor Emeritus at N.C. State University.

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What to do when they’re wrong

JOHN HODD
CONTRIBUTOR

H ere are three true statements, as best I can determine: Americans of all backgrounds have experienced giant declines in poverty over the past two generations. Second, most diversity training is worse than a waste of time. Third, polls are skewed by people who are willing to kill their minorities across the board during traffic stops or arrests.

Surprised? I don’t blame you. These statements are difficult to square with establishment opinion. That doesn’t mean my statements false, however. It simply makes them inconvenient.

I’ll back up each statement in a moment. But to cut to the chase: What should you do when you’re convinced your political opponents are wrong? In my opinion, that is the key question we face in our present moment, not how best to address issues of mo- bility, equality, and justice.

Let’s begin with poverty. The standard measures are absurd. They treat all low-income households actually re- ceived to live on, such as refundable tax credits, nutrition assistance, and Medicaid. When correctly measured, poverty has fallen dra- matically — from 30% of Ameri- cans in 1960 to 13% in 1980, 6% are living below the poverty line. You’ll kill more minorities than you will kill during traffic stops or arrests.

Now let’s look at diversity training. After hundreds of stud- ied, it’s safe to say that most diversity training either produces no long-term benefits for the com- panies, universities, or other in- stitutions employing it, or activ- ily damages relationships among participating co-workers.

Finally, I’ll explain my point about fatal shootings by police of al- leds. On average, about a thou- sand Americans die every year at the hands of law enforcement. The majority of the deaths are not justifiable, of course, although we know from recent tragedies that some deaths are justifiable. Among those whose race or ethnicity is known, 51% of those killed by police in 2015 were white, while 27% were black and 19% Hispanic. Because blacks and Hispanic-

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BECKY GRAY
CONTRIBUTOR

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The General Assembly convened Jan 13 and has met for well over 100 days. Over 1,700 bills have been filed; bills on elec- tion reform, appropriating federal of- AC spending, modernization, medical marijuana, sports betting, constitutional amendment, mental health care advancements, regulatory re- forms, unemployment benefits, confirmations, and appointments — just to name a few.

Out of all the bills filed, the one that matters most is the overall budget. As of mid-August, after hundreds of budget hearings and appropriations bills have been filed; bills on education, health care, and elections. There will be special sessions spread across specific districts. There will be last-minute insertions.

Expect a budget to pass the General Assembly with bipartisan support and not on the governor’s desk by Labor Day. Gov. Roy Cooper has vetoed every budget that has been passed by the legislature, or if it’s last year’s. Schools will continue to open, but that’s not the same as saying police officers are more likely to shoot them than they are to be shot. Blacks and Hispanics are more likely to be stopped, questioned, or arrested. When Har- vard economist Roland Fryer ran the numbers on fatal incidents, he found “no racial differences in eith- er the raw data or when con- trolled for risk factors.”

Knowing what I think I know about poverty, diversity training, and police shootings, then, should I feel empowered to tant, rid- icule, or savage those with con- trary views? No. For one thing, these statements are factual but not the whole truth. Why are police shootings more frequent or more deadly, for example? Both differences in crime rates and racial profiling are likely at play.

Moreover, these state- ments are true as best I can de- termine. If I ever hope to per- suade others I am right, I must ac- cept the possibility that someone will persuade me I’m wrong. It’s a reality to which I’ll commit myself worth traveling in a free, open, and civil society.

John Hood is president of the John William Pope Foundation.

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The next battle: revisions to North Carolina science and health standards

Dr. Terry Stoops

In July, the N.C. State Board of Education approved the remaining supplementary material of the revised social studies standards approved earlier this year. This year’s revision, by the General Assembly, state education officials will begin assisting educators responsible for implementing the new social studies standards during the coming school year. The presumptive implementation of the new standards does not mean debate over the quality and content of social studies education in North Carolina is over. Republican lawmakers’ laudable effort to address the teaching of Critical Race Theory in public schools signals the start of a sustained effort to monitor and strengthen the teaching of history, economics, and civics through legislative action. Moreover, consultant parents continue to demand that school boards use their statutory authority to prohibit classroom instruction and professional development informed by Critical Race Theory. “The time has come to education policy, there is no rest for the weary.” The Fourth Court of the June State Board of Education meeting, members approved a request to begin revisions of K-12 science and healthful living standards. State education officials established a tight timeline for the review and implementation of new standards in these subjects. Over the next nine months, state Department of Public Instruction staff will publish drafts of the revised standards and gather input from educators and the public. They anticipate state board approval in the spring or summer of 2022 and the initial installation launched in the fall of this year. Traditionally, science instruction in elementary and secondary schools focused on teaching children about practical applications of the scientific method and the essential concepts used in the physical and life sciences. But even science is not immune to the influences of Critical Race Theory. For example, Lt. Gov. Mark Robinson’s Fairness and Accountability in the Classroom for Teachers and Students Task Force received a complaint from a parent concerned about a “how whiteness is a problem in science’ assignment in a high school chemistry class. As they contemplate revised science standards, members of the State Board of Education may decide if woken assignments will become the exception or the rule. Debates over the social studies and science standards may pale in comparison to those related to new healthful living standards. The authors of the revised standards will be tasked to create a framework for discussing some of the most contentious issues in contemporary public discourse: sex and gender. How will standards writers require teachers to depict the concept of biological sex? It has become commonplace to substitute the term “assigned sex” to accommodate individuals who do not physically or emotionally identify with their biological sex. Reorienting the standards to focus on assigned sex would necessitate LGBTQ-inclusive education with lessons on gender identity, gender expression, transgenderism, and gender nonconformity. New Jersey, Colorado, Oregon, Illinois, Nevada, and California have passed laws related to LGBTQ-inclusive instruction in public schools. For example, the California state legislature approved The California Healthy Youth Act in 2016. That legislation requires that teachers “affirmatively recognize that people have different sexual orientations and, when discussing or producing examples of relationships and couples, use language that is protective of same-sex relationships.” The legislation also requires educators to discuss “gender, gender expression, gender identity, and explore the harm of negative gender stereotypes.” California parents may request that their child not participate in state-approved sex education and HIV prevention education. Despite corporate opt-out provisions will not be enough to satisfy parents who object to LGBTQ-inclusive instruction in the first place. Alternatively, the LGBTQ agenda translates into healthful living standards that, they believe, fail to describe the nuances of sex and gender. If standards writers cannot craft standards that satisfactorily address the concerns of both groups, then North Carolinians may witness larger tears in the state’s social, political, and cultural fabric.

Ray Nothstine

Despite corporate media and many politicians clamoring for more gun control measures, an inherent right continues to expand in much of the nation today. The Fourth Circuit Court of Appeals made Second Amendment history by expanding the right of those under 21 to purchase handguns. While the ruling doesn’t take immediate effect, and the Supreme Court may ultimately decide the issue, the federal court has jurisdiction over North Carolina, Virginia, South Carolina, Maryland, and West Virginia. In 1969 a federal law restricted licensed handgun sales to anybody under 21. “When it comes to an inherent right enshrined in the U.S. Constitution, the court refused to ‘re legislate gun rights’ under the Second Amendment or 18- to 20-year-olds to a second-class status.” Further good news is that since the 2006 Heller decision, many courts have shifted their rulings toward deeper respect of the plain meaning of the text in the Bill of Rights. The phrase ‘the people’ meant the same thing in the Second Amendment as it did in the First, Fourth, Ninth, and Tenth amendments — that is, each and every free person,” declares Stephen Halbrook, a senior fellow at the Independent Institute. State legislatures have been even more aggressive in extending the right to bear arms. Twenty-one states now have constitutional carry, and Tennessee, Iowa, Montana, Texas, and Utah have all passed permitless carry laws in 2021. Louisiana may be next it can secure the necessary votes to override Gov. Jon Bell Edwards’ recent veto. Even three New England states have constitutional carry. Why does North Carolina continue to lag on gun rights? Guns & Ammo magazine no longer ranks North Carolina in the top half of states, ranking 25th nationally. Not all the blame falls on Gov. Roy Cooper, given that Republicans in the state legislature could not pass constitutional carry before his tenure, even with a Republican governor and supermajority control of the legislature. Furthermore, Republicans have been unable to repeal the Jim Crow pistol permit process, an early 20th-century law passed in North Carolina to curtail black citizens exercising a right to bear arms. No other state in the South east still has this law, given its racist past. Also, firearm purchases from licensed dealers already require federal background checks. New residents to North Carolina that are impacted by gun laws are frequently shocked that North Carolina still has such a draconian firearms measure. Republicans in the General Assembly are running out of excuses. They have done excellent work on issues like the budget and taxes but have failed on some of the most basic functions of government — protecting and securing the rights of citizens. Seeing other states surpass North Carolina so quickly on securing a right inherent in the Constitution should be troubling for citizens. In The Federalist, James Madison notes that America is unique in Europe because the citizenry rule the government, and unlike Europe, the people are trusted with the executive. In his 1833 commentary on the U.S. Constitution, former Supreme Court Justice Joseph Stu- rdy called the right to bear arms one of the “pulpitum liberties of the republic.” Sturdy further explains its purpose is a moral check against government, a right that potentially allows for the “people to resist and triumph over them.” The Second Amendment strikes at the heart of our capacity to self-govern. Gun rights are not protected by the government, it inevitably dilutes the moral authority of the state. The issue remains a great reminder for legislators to align themselves with first principles over politics.