

‘Iryna’s Law’ may spark return of death penalty in NC

North Carolina has not carried out an execution since 2006

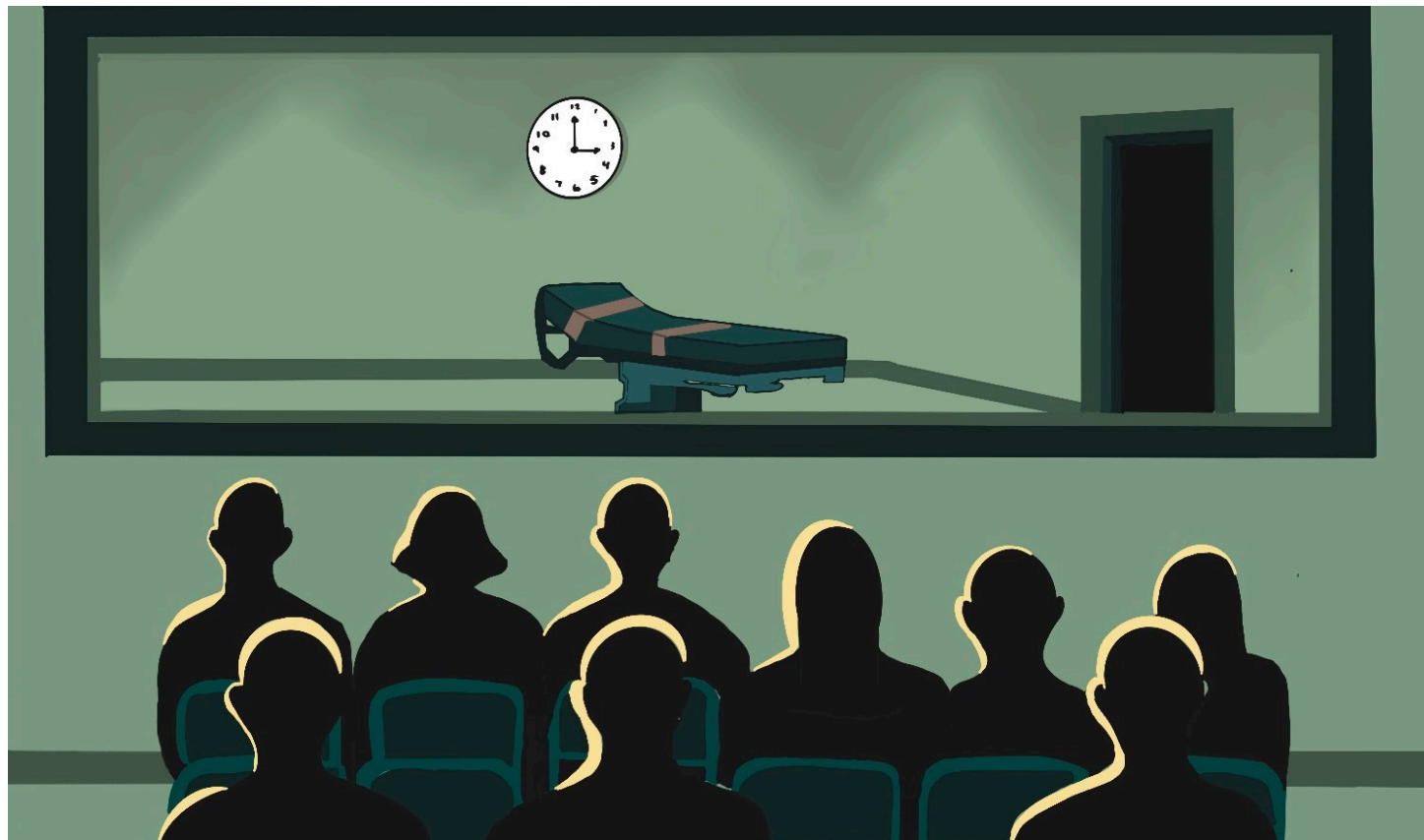
Miles Hayford
Elon News Network

After going almost two decades without carrying out executions, North Carolina is inching toward a return to the death penalty with the passage of HB 307, a new criminal justice law, in the North Carolina General Assembly.

“Iryna’s Law,” signed into law Oct. 3, eliminates cashless bail in some circumstances, establishes a new mental health evaluation protocol and restricts pretrial conditions for the release of violent offenders. But it also contains an amendment from Senate leader Phil Berger that would direct the state to find another form of execution if lethal injection — currently the state’s method of execution — is found to be unconstitutional or not available. The state would have to choose a method adopted by another state, such as the use of a firing squad.

Executions have been halted in North Carolina since 2006 over legal challenges to the use of lethal injections and issues of racial bias in death sentences, according to Matthew Robinson, a professor in the department of government and justice studies at Appalachian State University. Robinson said this amendment is a way for legislators to find alternative means to restart the death penalty.

“These are legislators who want to see executions resume in the state, and who are



DESIGN BY REAGAN SIZEMORE

taking some steps through the law to try to restart them,” Robinson said. “For example, replacing lethal injection with other means like firing squad or electrocution would mean that doctors wouldn’t have to participate in executions, so that eliminates that hold up.”

Robinson has decades of experience researching capital punishment and has provided the state legislature with multiple reports detailing research and data on the death penalty in order to help them make policy decisions over the past several years.

Robinson said the law impacts those currently on death row.

See DEATH PENALTY | pg. 4

Republican National Committee backs Michael Whatley for Senate ahead of primary

Decision to endorse before contended primary raises ethical concerns, sets new precedent

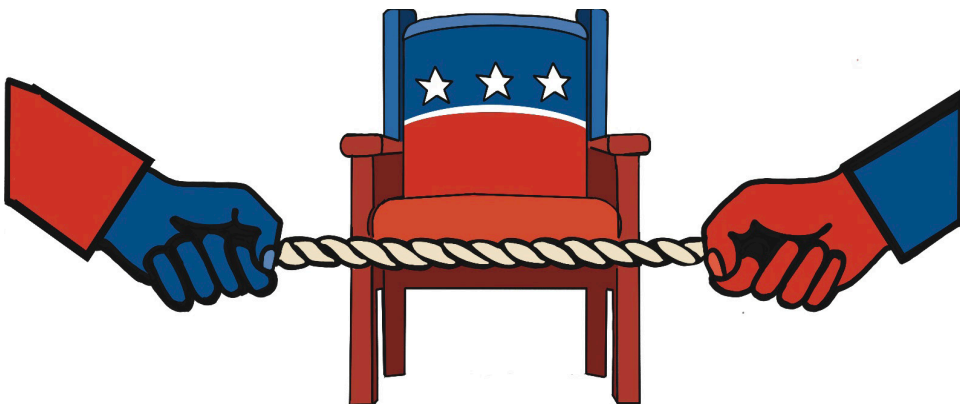
Kate Gray
Elon News Network

The Republican National Committee endorsed Michael Whatley as senator for North Carolina ahead of the midterm primary elections, sparking ethical concerns about early endorsements. The position opened in June, when current senator Thom Tillis announced he would not be running for reelection in the 2026 midterms, and Democrats now have the chance to flip the seat.

The RNC serves as the formal governing body and operational organization of the Republican Party. Their endorsement of Whatley is unusual because both the RNC and the GOP typically refrain from endorsing candidates until they have been confirmed as the party nominee or are running unopposed, according to Christopher Cooper, professor of political science at Western Carolina University. The Republican Party officially allows endorsements of non-incumbents before primaries only when all three members of a state’s RNC agree to the move, which did occur in this case.

When the RNC backed Whatley, businessman Andy Nilsson and former military lawyer Don Brown were still in the race. Nilsson later dropped out, and Brown openly criticized the RNC’s choice to endorse Whatley before the primary.

“The traditional way of thinking is the



DESIGN BY REAGAN SIZEMORE

party should stay out of primaries,” Cooper said. “It is the job of the party to facilitate the primary process, but not to favor one candidate over the other.”

The decision to endorse a candidate also drew backlash because Whatley was serving as chairman of the RNC when he announced his campaign for Senate.

“Certainly, people who have been head of the RNC and the DNC have run for office before, so that part is not that unusual,” Cooper said. “What’s interesting is, it isn’t like Whatley was the head of the RNC six years ago, this was, like, six days ago when they made the endorsement.”

For example, Cooper explained that former President H.W. Bush briefly served as RNC chairman between 1973 and 1974, but did not become president until 1989.

Whatley was selected by President Trump and officially appointed chairman in March 2024. He served as co-chair with Trump’s daughter-in-law, Lara Trump. The move was significant at the time because Trump was able to ensure all his picks for RNC leadership

were chosen, essentially linking the RNC with Trump’s presidential campaign.

Trump also played a major role in the RNC’s decision to endorse Whatley. Trump posted in support of Whatley on Truth Social on July 24, the same day Whatley announced his campaign.

“That is more normal, for President Trump to sort of askew norms and get in there early and endorse,” Cooper said. “In a world where Donald Trump is — not the literal head of the Republican Party, but certainly is the symbolic head — I have no doubt that Trump getting in early for Whatley played a role.”

North Carolina GOP Communications Director Matt Mercer also acknowledged the president’s influence in Whatley’s endorsement by the RNC.

“The decision to engage on their part was made when President Trump endorsed Mr. Whatley in the race,” Mercer said in an email statement to Elon News Network. “The NCGOP is neutral in primaries but will work with any candidate who wishes to engage

in joint fundraising to benefit the party’s General Election campaign activities.”

The 2026 Senate race in North Carolina is projected to set funding records, potentially becoming the first billion-dollar Senate race. Whatley’s campaign has largely been funded by small dollar donations to PACs such as the Whatley Victory Committee and Whatley for Senate, and recently received a \$4.5 million donation from the Susan B. Anthony Pro-Life America group.

Mercer also emphasized the GOP’s need for early action in this race because the seat could flip to a Democrat. Roy Cooper, who served as Governor of North Carolina from 2017 to 2025, is currently the only Democratic candidate for the Senate seat. Recent polls show Whatley trailing Roy, but by a small margin.

“Ensuring Republicans maintain this U.S. Senate seat is critical, especially going against Radical Roy Cooper and the out-of-state billionaire donors funding his campaign,” Mercer said in a statement.

In the first 24 hours of his campaign, Roy set a fundraising record by raising \$3.4 million. The majority of donations were collected directly from his campaign account, and 95% of donations totaled \$100 or less.

Going forward, Christopher said the RNC’s move to endorse a candidate before the primary election may set a new precedent for the role parties play in future elections.

“It’s very possible we’re going to see parties be more aggressive in choosing primary candidates, almost like they did before the party primary reforms of the early 1970s,” he said. “It’s almost the party re-exerting the muscle that it used to have.”



Elon releases annual security, fire safety report

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Bandleader for The Wailers spreads love, joy

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Men’s club rugby coach continues to support team

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THE PENDULUM

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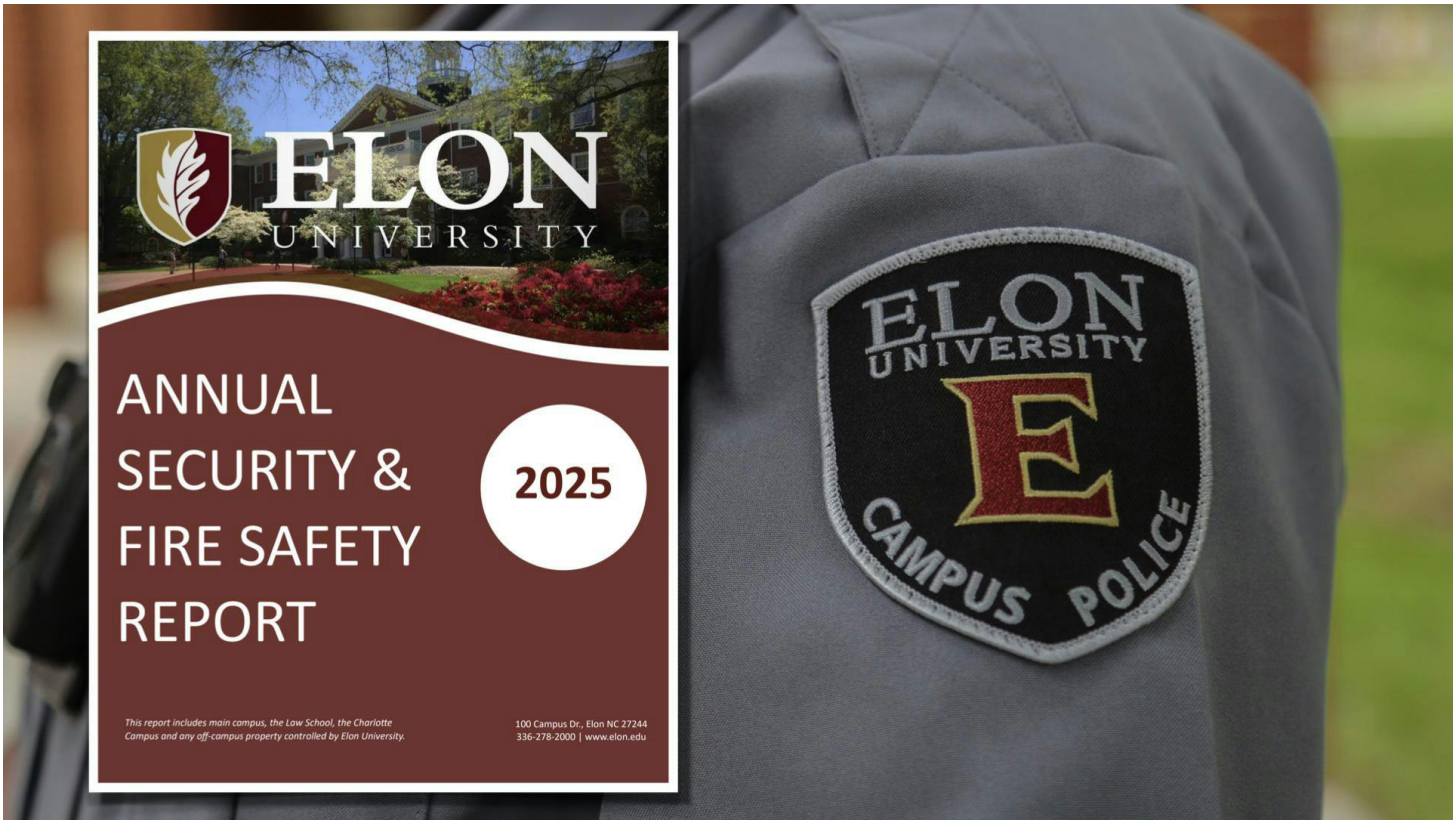
CORRECTIONS

A soccer photo on page 3 of the Oct. 1 edition of The Pendulum was credited incorrectly. Ethan Wu took the photo.

A photo of Landen Clark on page 8 of the Oct. 1 edition of The Pendulum was edited beyond acceptable practices as outlined in Elon News Network's Code of Ethics.

Elon News Network regrets these errors.

Annual Elon University security, fire safety report shows decrease in rape, drug violations



FIONA MCALLISTER | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Elon's annual security report released numbers for 2025.

Annual report shows a 93.3% decrease in cases of rape, 64.4% decrease in drug violations

Elon News Network

Elon University released its annual security and fire safety report in compliance with the Crime Awareness and Campus Security Act of 1990. This act requires that any institutions that participate in any student financial aid programs within Title IV of the Higher Education Act of 1965 must disclose campus crime statistics and security information.

The report, released on Sept. 24, includes crime that occurred on campus and within buildings owned by Elon, and includes data from 2022 to 2024.

According to the report, rape on campus dropped from 15 cases in 2023 to just one case in 2024. The report states that the university will continue to take steps in compliance with federal requirements, which are further defined in the Clery Act and Title IV, both put in place to document and prohibit sexual discrimination and misconduct on college campuses.

Chief of Campus Safety and Police Joseph LeMire said the department looks at data over a three year period before determining whether or not a drop or rise in certain crimes is a pattern or anomaly.

"Does it stay one in single digits, or does it go back up and then maybe you just had an anomaly of the stats?" LeMire Said. "So we say one year doesn't create a pattern, but two or three years you start to see, is it going in a particular direction?"

The University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill and North Carolina State University, Raleigh both followed similar patterns with reported cases of rape. UNC Chapel Hill reported 14 on-campus rape cases in 2024, a drop from the 17 cases in 2023. NCSU Raleigh reported four cases of rape in 2024, but noted that two of the cases were from previous years. In 2023, NCSU Raleigh reported 11 cases of rape.

The report also showed a drop in drug law violations. In 2023, there were 73 reported drug violations, which has since dropped to 26 in 2024 — a nearly 64.4% decrease. The report states that "Elon University firmly believes that the misuse of alcohol and other drugs is detrimental to the entire university community."

According to the report, a violation of laws for drugs and liquor includes manufacturing, selling, transporting, or possessing drugs or intoxicating liquor; using a vehicle for illegal transportation of drugs or liquor; and other offenses.

Liquor law violations also decreased. In

2023 there were 293 reported liquor violations — dropping around 41.6% to 171 violations in 2024. However, liquor law arrests also increased from nine arrests to 12.

There were five reported cases of stalking, most recently compared to four cases in 2023. Cases of dating violence and fondling increased. In 2023 there were four reports of dating violence, but in 2024 the number increased by two — totaling six reports. In 2023 there were three reports of fondling, which doubled in 2024 to a total of six reports.

According to the safety report, the term "dating violence" means "violence committed by a person who is or has been in a social relationship of a romantic or intimate nature with the victim" and can also be considered based on the reporting party's statement.

UNC Chapel Hill saw a similar increase in fondling reports with two on-campus cases reported in 2023 and seven reported in 2024.

However, NCSU Raleigh did not see stalking, fondling or dating violence increase.

NCSU reported a decrease in stalking cases with 39 reported in 2023 and 35 reported in 2024. NCSU Raleigh reported a decrease in fondling cases from 11 cases in 2023 to two in 2024, one of which was a 2023 incident not reported until 2024. There were 11 cases of dating violence reported at NCSU Raleigh in 2023, which decreased to seven in the most recent 2024 report. UNC Chapel Hill did not add the most recent data about dating violence in its 2024 annual security and fire safety report.

LeMire said that the report only includes incidents that occur on Elon's campus. He said any crimes committed off-campus are not added into the report. However, he said he hopes online tools such as the Rave

Guardian app will encourage more people to feel comfortable coming to campus police.

"If there still aren't people reporting, we want to reach those people and let them know that you can report.

There are resources. There's things that can be done to help out," LeMire said.

There were no crimes reported at Elon University Law School in Greensboro or at Elon's Charlotte campus.

Fiona McAllister, Charlotte Pfabe and Nia Bedard contributed to the reporting of this story.

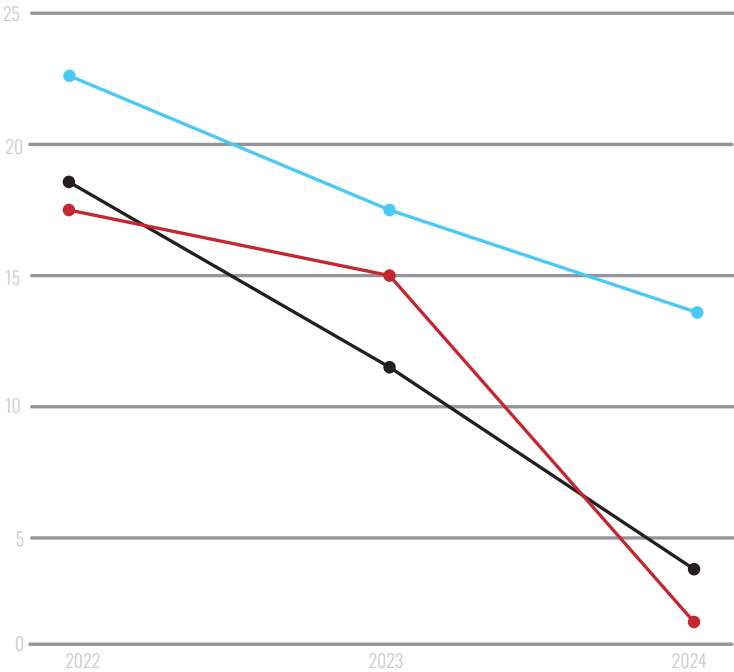
41.6%
Decrease in reported liquor law violations from 2023 to 2024.

64.4%
Decrease in reported drug violations from 2023 to 2024.

Reported Rape Cases from 2022 to 2025

Rape case reports at Elon University compared to University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and North Carolina State University, Raleigh.

■ ELON UNIVERSITY
■ UNC CHAPEL HILL
■ NCSU RALEIGH



Elon University has 7,289 students, UNC Chapel Hill has 32,438 students and NCSU Raleigh has 39,603 students. All data is according to each school's 2025 Annual Security and Fire Safety Reports.



VENUS SOTO CASTANEDA | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER
Drag queen Stormie Daie reads a children's book to families Oct. 4 during Alamance Pride at the Historic Depot in downtown Burlington. This year was Alamance Pride's 10th anniversary, and Daie's 10th year hosting. "It feels like those bulbs you plant in the winter or that plant that comes back every year," Daie said. "And every year it comes back bigger and more beautiful."



JESUS ROMERO | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER
Mid-Autumn Festival attendees try moon cakes from sophomore Emily Wright's table Oct. 2 at the Sacred Space in Numen Lumen Pavilion. The annual event was hosted by Elon's Chinese club.



VENUS SOTO CASTANEDA | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER
Wendel "Junior Jazz" Ferraro plays guitar during a concert for The Wailers on Oct. 3 at the Burlington Food Hall. The Wailers, the former band of reggae star Bob Marley, are now focused on spreading hope to younger generations. "We like to go into towns that people don't really go to, or you don't really hear reggae, because we want to spread the love everywhere," bandleader Aston Barrett Jr. told Elon News Network. Learn more about The Wailers on page 5.



ETHAN WU | PHOTO EDITOR
Sophomore defender Megan Dwyer and junior midfielder Jenna Abousaab look to stop the University of North Carolina, Wilmington offense during the first half of the Elon vs. UNCW game Oct. 2 at Rudd Field. The game featured aggressive play and impressive goalkeeping on both sides and ended with the Phoenix tied 1-1. Elon head coach Neil Payne emphasized the importance of ball control as a primary strategy to neutralize Wilmington's aggressive defensive style. "It was important that we try to control the ball and try to take the physicality out of it," Payne said.



ETHAN WU | PHOTO EDITOR
Elon redshirt sophomore midfielder Dominik Renz and University of North Carolina, Greensboro sophomore Mohammed Sumaila attempt to head the ball simultaneously Sept. 30 during the second half of the Elon vs. UNCG game at Rudd Field. The Phoenix put up a gritty performance against UNCG — the No. 10 ranked team in the country — resulting in a 0-0 tie. Head coach Marc Reeves said he was pleased by Elon's ability to limit the amount of chances UNCG had at scoring. "They've got some really high level players, really good patterns of players, some really good movements and explosive technical guys and, you know, we gave them some shots, but we didn't give away a ton of chances," Reeves said.

Crime bill might allow executions to restart in NC

DEATH PENALTY | from cover

As of Oct. 7, North Carolina has 122 people on death row, and Robinson said execution dates could be set for any of them as a result of this new law.

“Iryna’s Law” is named for Iryna Zarutka, whose murder, which was caught on camera on a Charlotte light rail, sparked national attention and outrage. Robinson said the return of the death penalty was inevitable, but Zarutka’s death fast tracked the process.

“The more heinous, the more violent crimes occur, they tend to get a lot more media coverage, and more media coverage generates support among the public to do something to bring about effective change,” Robinson said. “Legislators in the state are using this as an opportunity to try to push through something they’ve wanted to get done for a long time.”

Zarutka’s death comes amid a series of high-profile murders that includes a mass shooting in Southport, North Carolina, where three people died. As a result of these murders and a recent increase in homicides, the Charlotte police union sent a letter to city leaders requesting federal assistance from the National Guard. However, violent crime was down 25% in the first half of this year before these killings, according to police mid-year crime statistics.

A history of executions

North Carolina has a long and turbulent history with the death penalty dating back to the early 1700s. Until the 1970s, North Carolina was one of most active states in executions, according to data compiled by the Death Penalty Information Center, a nonprofit organization that compiles data and analysis on capital punishment. The data consists of research done by the DPIC and data from the National Archive of Criminal Justice Data. From 1608 to 1972, North Carolina executed 784 people — a total that ranks fifth among all states. However, since 1976, North Carolina has only carried out 43 executions.

According to Seth Kotch, a historian on the death penalty at the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, the state’s decrease in executions and eventual complete suspension of them largely resulted from legal battles over racial bias. This racial bias included wrongful convictions and the exclusion of African Americans from capital cases’ juries.

“We know that it disproportionately fell on people who are uneducated. We know that if you had mental illness, you were more likely to be executed, and crucially, we know that if you had a white victim, you were more likely to be executed,” Kotch said. “Hence, all of the legal delays, lawsuits, and of course, tragically, the



ETHAN WU | PHOTO EDITOR

The Central Prison in Raleigh holds male death row offenders. It also holds the state’s execution chamber.

discoveries — often too late — of people who were executed, although they didn’t commit the crime that they were sentenced to death for.”

Robinson said there were also significant studies by scholars on the cost of the death penalty that turned public opinion against it. A 2009 study by Duke University economist Philip Cook found that North Carolina could save \$11 million annually if the death penalty had been abolished.

Kotch said Zarutka’s death is sparking a return to North Carolina’s past.

“We’ve seen a lot of newspaper, national media coverage about this tragedy in Charlotte that appears to have inspired a return to a kind of older, harsher and more brutal death penalty system,” Kotch said.

An uncertain future

“Iryna’s Law” sparked contention among state legislators as it was debated. The House voted 81-31 with 17 Democrats in support and the Senate vote saw no Democrats voting in favor of it. Democratic Rep. Pricey Harrison voted against the bill and denounced the amendment that would consider alternative methods during the

House’s session on Sept. 23.

“Electrocutions, they’re even more gruesome. We stopped that a long time ago because they were so gruesome. They literally cook the prisoner to death and sometimes they begin bleeding from their faces,” Harrison said. “You and I, and the rest of the state of North Carolina, having these people executed in our name, I don’t know if you want to go there. I’m going to be a no.”

Gov. Josh Stein signed the bill into law, but called the death penalty aspects of the law “barbaric” in a video announcing his decision to sign it.

“There will be no firing squads in North Carolina during my time as governor,” Stein said in the video published Oct. 3.

Robinson said that historically this has been a partisan issue where conservative Republicans favor the death penalty more than liberal Democrats.

Despite the potential for executions to restart under “Iryna’s Law,” Robinson said he still expects the death penalty to stay uncertain for now due to the legal holdups. He said he hopes it will be replaced by life without parole because the death penalty does not achieve its objectives of reducing

crime or bringing closure to victims.

“The cost associated with the death penalty clearly outweighs its modest benefits in terms of financial cost, in terms of racial bias, in terms of threats to the innocent,” Robinson said. “So my conclusion is that by any standard evaluation of policy, it’s a failed policy.”

Kotch said if the new law brings a return to the death penalty, people’s belief in capital punishment will be tested.

“We will have a really grim opportunity in the coming years to see if indeed we support the death penalty as much as we say we do, because there’s going to be a lot of killing,” Kotch said.

Kotch echoed Robinson’s statements, and said the death penalty is not a permanent solution.

“If this is indeed going to become a rising period for the death penalty, I expect that the next period would involve a fall. But unfortunately, that’s not a cure. That’s just sort of a response, and it doesn’t line us up for actual solutions to serious crimes,” Kotch said. “It lines us up for a more reactionary government and a government that is much too close to death for my taste.”

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The Wailers’ bandleader on mission to spread reggae

Reggae group performed in downtown Burlington

Charlotte Pfabe
Elon News Network

For Aston Barrett Jr., carrying on the legacy of The Wailers is more than just playing music. Barrett Jr. is the son of Aston “Family Man” Barrett, who played bass in The Wailers alongside Bob Marley. Now, Barrett Jr. is following in his late father’s footsteps, serving as bandleader and bass player for The Wailers. The Wailers performed in downtown Burlington at Burlington Food Hall on Oct. 3. Barrett Jr. sat down with Elon News Network to share how The Wailers continue to spread reggae around the world.

Below is an excerpt of Barrett Jr.’s interview. To watch the full interview, visit Elon News Network on YouTube. This interview was edited for clarity.

WATCH THE FULL EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW



When did you first have contact with The Wailers? What’s your first memory of the band?

I just remember growing up, the whole house, we had pictures of Bob that you’ve never seen before. We have the records, the plates, you know, and I’ve seen a lot of the original members used to come to the house.



VENUS SOTO CASTANEDA | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER
Aston Barrett Jr. plays bass Oct. 3 during a concert for The Wailers at the Burlington Food Hall.

And I grew up with the Marley family. Grew up with many top musicians over the years. So I just grew up seeing this, and I was just born into The Wailers family.

You were surrounded by music growing up your whole life. How was that? What instruments did you play? What did you learn?

Well, bass guitar, which is my real instrument, that’s the first instrument I played. I played the bass guitar on one string, and that’s what I learned. And then I moved to the other string. My father didn’t know that I wanted to play bass, but I didn’t know who my father was, really, until one day I was watching a video, and my mom is like, “Look, you see



VENUS SOTO CASTANEDA | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER
Wendel “Junior Jazz” Ferraro, left, and Aston Barrett Jr. play guitar and bass side-by-side Oct. 3.

your dad?” And I’m like, “That’s daddy?” And it’s like, “Yeah, I want to be like him.” So when he came home, my mom was like, “Give him one of your basses that you’re not using.” So he gave me a Steinberger from the 80s. I only had one string. And my dad said, “Learn on that, and when I come back from tour, I want to see what you learn.” I don’t think he took me serious, but I learned “Rastaman Vibration” and when he came back, I showed him and he’s like, “I have a present for you in the morning.” And in the morning was the bass with all four strings. And so that’s why I started out in the music.

You weren’t in the original group, but can you tell me about how you’re carrying that legacy forward and some of the pressures of that legacy? What does that mean to you?

Yes. It’s a lot of pressure in certain ways, and it’s also not in other ways, which is such a Libra thing to say. But basically it’s pressure in a way, where you know that you’re responsible for not just your family and not just the band members, but you’re responsible for the world. You’re one of the people that are here to keep balance, you know, so our music is here to keep balance in the world. When someone is angry, we’re here to make you better. You know, a few people came to us years ago,

when I was with my dad. A guy came like, “I was gonna commit suicide.” I’m like, “What?” He’s like, “You saved me.” Another lady said “You saved me.” A guy said he had brain cancer and he’s like, “I was listening to your dad’s baseline and the lyrics of Bob, and I told myself, I’m gonna live. I’m not gonna die.” And he’s still living now. He’s married, has his kid, living a great life. So it’s like, you hear all these stories, and they’re like, man. So that’s the part when you know the legacy is a lot to carry. But the part that is not hard, but I’m just grateful — I’m also a fan of my dad. So my dad taught me so many things. So now as a new generation, I’m going to do what I could do to keep the music working, and I still work with the Marley family as well. Because if you think about Wailers, you think about Bob Marley, think about the members. They never left. So you just feel good. So this is the part that is not hard, because I just knew what I wanted to do. And since I was in high school, middle school, high school, I told myself, “It’s manifestation.” I was like, “I’m going to tour with my dad, and I’m gonna run The Wailers with him.” I didn’t know why I was thinking that, but I knew that was what I was going to do, and that’s why, you know, when you’re young, in college and stuff, you can manifest what you really want. You just have to just say, “I’m going to do it, I don’t know how, but I’m going to do it,” and I am a manifestation of that.

Students celebrate cultural identity through on-campus clubs

BSU, LHU, APSA bring students together, highlight campus diversity

Gaby Maldonado
Elon News Network

From cultural celebrations to social advocacy, identity-based affinity groups shape student experiences at Elon University. These organizations provide students with spaces to connect over shared identities, experiences and interests while fostering inclusion and community across campus.

Groups such as the Black Student Union, Asian-Pacific Student Association and Latinx-Hispanic Union give students opportunities to celebrate their culture, raise awareness and participate in meaningful campus events.

Black Student Union

The Black Student Union is an organization dedicated to celebrating Black culture, supporting Black students and advocating for racial equity on campus. Through events including the “Art Around the World Fashion Show” and “Blackness in Bloom,” BSU provides spaces for connection, learning and cultural celebration. Sophomore and vice president of special events for BSU Damani Grayson said the organization provides a sense of belonging for many students at a predominantly white institution. “Especially at a PWI, it’s very important that Black students have somewhere to go because there are not many people that look like them,” Grayson said. “It’s really a home away from home.” Grayson said she values hearing from new members and using feedback to improve events. She said she enjoys being able to implement their ideas and be part of the difference. “Since joining the BSU, my favorite part

has definitely been talking to freshmen and getting their perspective, because I was a freshman a year ago in the same position and love hearing their feedback,” Grayson said. BSU has also collaborated with Elon’s National Pan-Hellenic Council on “Coolin’ on the Commons” and with the Center for Race, Ethnicity, and Diversity Education on “Town Hall” initiatives that bring students together for dialogue, unity and community engagement.

Asian Pacific Student Association

The Asian Pacific Student Association serves as a community for students of Asian and Pacific Islander heritage while welcoming others interested in learning about API cultures. Through events like the “Lunar New Year Celebration” and “Ramen Across Asia,”

APSA highlights Asian and Pacific Islander traditions in interactive and engaging ways. Junior and APSA president Cece Eborá said the group provides a space to celebrate heritage and learn from one another. “APSA is a safe space for all those identifying as Asian, Asian-American and Pacific-Islander,” Eborá said. “To me, APSA is an opportunity to learn more about Asia rather than just staying in my own little corner of Southeast Asia.” For Eborá, the relationships formed within the organization stand out. “The people make the experience. It has been such a privilege getting to know different people from all over the world,” Eborá said. “I’ve learned so much from their experiences, and many of them have inspired my own.” APSA has also partnered with K-DNS — a student K-pop performance group

— for “Tanghulu Making and Random Play Dance” and with RISE — an initiative within the Gender & LGBTQIA Center that highlights queer and trans people of color — for “Rainbow Boba.” These collaborations showcase creativity and encourage connections across student communities.

Latinx-Hispanic Union

The Latinx-Hispanic Union connects students with Latine and Hispanic backgrounds, while welcoming the broader campus community to engage with cultural traditions from Central and Latin America. The group organizes events such as “Churros and Chisme” and “Paletas en el Patio,” which create spaces for conversation and community. They not only celebrate traditions but also create a sense of pride and belonging for students. Sophomore and co-event coordinator of LHU Stephanie Diaz said the group helps students connect with their culture and with one another. “We try to build community and unity within all the Latinx/Hispanic people here on campus,” Diaz said. “For me specifically, this means being more in tune with my culture and who I am, and finding people I can relate to.” Diaz said planning events and seeing students enjoy them is a highlight of her involvement. “Being able to plan the events and then bring a smile to people’s faces... it’s very rewarding to see everyone come together and have fun,” Diaz said. LHU has also partnered with El Centro, a campus center that serves as an educational and cultural hub, encouraging community engagement. Together, they host “Noche Latina” and “Café con Leche,” events that showcase collaboration and invite the broader campus community to participate in Latine traditions.



KATRINA HOLTZ | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER
Sophomores Maurice Frazier and Kemari Logan pose together during the “Art Around the World Fashion Show,” a collaboration between the Black Student Union and Late Night Elon, on Sept. 12 in Alumni Gym.

SOUND CHECK

Town ordinances cause ambiguity among Elon musicians

Town of Elon seeks to change special event ordinances for clarity

Alex Nettles
Elon News Network

The ambiguity of special event permitting in Elon leaves a lot for speculation. Right now, the town's ordinance Article 3 leaves musicians and partygoers in uncertainty. It gets complicated.

You and your neighbor throw a party. Do you need a special event permit for it? Is it at that point considered a "block party?"

If you open the windows of your apartment and play an amplified guitar for a small group, is it then considered a "concert?"

If it is a concert, you must pay an assigned application fee, file 60 days in advance and have a police presence on the premises. The \$50 fine, possible civil action and police presence is enough to make anyone a little fretful about organizing on campus. Article 3 is now under review by the town council to improve clarity.

I can understand why, I work as a musician. As I first started looking into this, I carried some vague anger that I wanted to shed. Ordinances in small towns such as Elon change the language of school culture instantly. This rift feels simple when you first break it down.

Cycling batches of idealism are a constant in our town, like the train wailing down Lebanon Avenue. Every weekend during the academic year at Elon breaks with youthful noise. When we put all of our chips on youth, it can clash with enforcement.

The uncertainty of special event permitting creates an invisible fear in Elon's music scene. Before a gig, I'd struck my drums, the frontman had leaned towards my kit and muttered, "We shouldn't take any chances" with the noise.

Senior Doug Baker is a staple pianist in Elon's music scene. Baker said it's more convenient to enforce the ordinances upon bands. It's difficult for a small-town police force to regulate all of the speakers on a Saturday night. They already have enough on their hands.

"Anyone can go to Walmart and get a speaker. It's a lot harder to book and organize a band," Baker said. "It's a much easier

target. You can see a band playing while you drive."

One of Baker's gigs got shut down before he even played a note on St. Patrick's day. The police came and told party organizers that they could hold a party as long as the band didn't play and used speakers instead. Baker said he thinks that incident was an infringement of his First Amendment rights.

I was at that gig too. The organizers began absent-mindedly selecting a playlist from their phone. As soon as I began lugging my bass drum in defeat, "Last Night" by Morgan Wallen started playing.

From his dorm, Baker can hear parties going every weekend.

"From where I live, I can hear parties over there," Baker said. "I can hear many organizations having parties. So why not live music?"

Lucas McKeown '24 still remembers the Elon ordinances for musicians even as he works gigging in Nashville.

"They said it was dangerous to have a band play in your backyard," McKeown said. "It's also dangerous for students to go 5,000 miles outside of the country and study in Florence."

There have been 82 noise ordinance enforcements this year, according to Town of Elon data. The current ordinance laws have been in place since 2018.

Town Clerk Kathleen Patterson said the ordinance's intended goal was to keep every safe and public function running expectedly. I went into interviewing Patterson with the perspective of a musician, but left with an understanding of what her goals were. We talked over a plastic table in an empty town hall. There were no other places to sit down and talk.

Patterson said the town rarely denies permits, using them to take liability off people throwing events.

"It could be a special event if the number of attendees creates a problem with access to sidewalks, or the streets," Patterson said.

Patterson said these laws were created to ensure that emergency vehicles could reach everyone and improve safety, not to target musicians. She said Elon looks to model another ordinance on other college towns to ensure that the law is as clear as possible. Raleigh's ordinance is a good model, Patterson said. It uses a structured tier system for event levels as opposed to one permit for every event.

"The goal is to make sure the ordinance is clear on what the ramifications are," Patterson said.

Every comment from musicians and students showed youth and some unfamiliarity with town politics. But in a way, it was refreshing to see the urgency of expression. The town is working on a clearer plan for its permits. Another constant of Elon — other than the parties — is the cycle from youth to maturity. It is true for students and with time, it will be true for ordinances.

DESIGN BY SARAH T. MOORE

Men’s club rugby coach reflects on longtime position

Elon alum continues more than 2 decades of team involvement

Benjamin Berfield
Elon News Network

Ryan Bays has coached club rugby at Elon since 2003. While all teams are expected to have a coach, Bays’ position is unique compared to other club sports, which are coached by students serving as club presidents. Bays said the rugby program has meant a lot to him and he wants to give back to it as much as possible.

“I have a lot of pride in the program,” Bays said. “I felt like I got a lot out of it when I was here. Being able to anchor a university club is a big deal.”

After graduating from Elon University in 2000, Ryan Bays spent his time both playing and coaching rugby. He competed for a local men’s club rugby team in Greensboro, and when he wasn’t doing that, he was helping out men’s club rugby at Elon.

“

I WANT THEM TO BE ABLE TO SAY THE TEAM WAS SUCCESSFUL BECAUSE OF WHAT WE PUT TOGETHER.

RYAN BAYS
MEN’S CLUB RUGBY COACH

But Bays said that over time, the amount of responsibility was beginning to conflict with family time. Citing a busy schedule and a desire to spend more time with family, Bays decided to stick with coaching over playing.

“I was away from Monday through Thursday and I would get home at 9 p.m.,” Bays said. “My wife was like, ‘you can either coach or play. You can’t do both anymore.’ The coaching seemed like a better fit on the longevity side.”

Bays said that, like all club sports at Elon, rugby does have student executives. However, he gives plenty of advice on what’s best for the team, from how practices should be run to recruiting new players.

Bays found rugby as an alternative in his sophomore year after quitting football. Bays said he views rugby as an easy sport to play. He noted that it’s a very social sport where anyone can be accepted. All anybody needs to play are shorts, cleats and a jersey.

“One of the beauties of rugby is that socially, and also as a competitive sport, you can play it after you graduate from high school or college,” Bays said. “If you have the desire to play, you can find a spot.”

Bays admitted that he doesn’t expect anyone in the club to compete for the national rugby team once they graduate from Elon. However, he believes he’s doing a good coaching job if he can get at least something out of his players. Much of Bays’ approach revolves around incorporating team building skills with his players.

He knows that on a large team, there’s going to be scenarios where not everyone is on the same page. Yet Bays said that’s expected among college students who are still developing skills to use in the future. He believes it’s his job to teach these skills so that the players will become better at working together.

“When you have 30 guys that are on a team,



BENJAMIN BERFIELD | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER
Elon men’s club rugby coach Ryan Bays takes the team through drills during a practice Oct. 6. Bays has coached the team since 2003.

nobody’s ever going to agree on everything,” Bays said. “My goal as a coach is to make them better in those things, because a lot of them may not have a lot of leadership skills.”

Bays acknowledged that there might be some mistakes made from his players along the way. However, he prefers they commit some of these errors now rather than in an actual job.

“They got to make mistakes someplace,” Bays said. “It’s better to do it here, now, with somebody that’s helping them out with it, than trying at your next job.”

In Bays’ years coaching the rugby team, one of the things he enjoys most is the connections established throughout his tenure. He said he knows almost everyone who has ever come from the program since it began in 1995. Bays said it means a lot for him to see players who

he coached spend time with one another.

“I just love the brotherhood and seeing guys taking in what they did on the team,” Bays said. “I feel the most joy from people I’ve impacted at Elon because they had a lot of time with me and felt like they took something away from it.”

Even though Bays counts on the students to take ownership of the program, he said he is always there for guidance. He described everyone’s contributions to the club as meaningful for not only the program’s success, but their lives after Elon.

“I want them to be able to say the team was successful because of what we put together,” Bays said. “I’m here to facilitate it, but outside of it is where I feel like that’s the bigger thing. That’s the stuff that they’re going to take into their profession.”

Upcoming Phoenix home games

VOLLEYBALL SCHAR CENTER

	NORTHEASTERN 10/11 7 p.m.		NORTHEASTERN 10/12 3 p.m.
	NORTH CAROLINA A&T 10/24 3 p.m.		NORTH CAROLINA A&T 10/25 6 p.m.
	UNCW 11/8 7 p.m.		UNCW 11/9 3 p.m.

MEN’S SOCCER RUDD FIELD

	UNCW 10/11 7:30 p.m.		WILLIAM & MARY 11/1 7 p.m.
WOMEN’S SOCCER RUDD FIELD			
	DREXEL 10/16 7 p.m.		TOWSON 10/19 1 p.m.
	COLLEGE OF CHARLESTON 10/26 1 p.m.		

FOOTBALL RHODES STADIUM

	VILLANOVA 10/11 2 p.m.
	RHODE ISLAND 11/8 2 p.m.
	NORTH CAROLINA A&T 11/22 2 p.m.



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