

**WRAL-FM, Raleigh, NC (101.5)**  
**QUARTERLY LISTING OF COMMUNITY CONCERNS/ISSUES**  
**AND PUBLIC AFFAIRS PROGRAMS**  
**1<sup>st</sup> Quarter 2021**

The following is a list of issues and concerns for First Quarter 2021 (January-March) and addressed in Public Affairs Programming, Public Service Announcements, and special programming on WRAL-FM.

- 1. CORONA VIRUS**
- 2. CRIMINAL JUSTICE REFORM**
- 3. ECONOMY**
- 4. EDUCATION/SCHOOL**
- 5. ENVIRONMENTAL CONCERNS/NATURAL DISASTERS**
- 6. HEALTHCARE/ HEALTHCARE REFORM**
- 7. HUMAN RIGHTS/EQUALITY**
- 8. MILITARY**
- 9. POLITICAL (JANUARY 6 INSURRECTION) /VOTING RIGHTS**
- 10. POVERTY/HOMELESSNESS**
- 11. PUBLIC HEALTH/MENTAL HEALTH**

## **PUBLIC AFFAIRS PROGRAMS**

### **PUBLIC AFFAIRS PROGRAMS**

January-March, WRAL-FM broadcast 13 hours of Public Affairs Programming on Sundays from 6-7 a.m.

**ON THE RECORD:** produced by WRAL-TV is a 30-minute local interview program with TV-5 news anchor, David Crabtree, discussing issues of concern in the Triangle and State, Sundays, 6-6:30 a.m.

**NEWS & VIEWS:** A 30-minute program, focusing on state policy issues that air Sundays, 6:30-a.m.

### **NEWS & VIEWS WITH ROB SCHOFIELD**

55 seconds Mon-Thurs, 6 p.m. Newscast and 2 minutes, Fri., 6 p.m. Newscast

**PUBLIC SERVICE ANNOUNCEMENTS** rotate throughout the broadcast day (Recorded PSAs are :15, :30, or :60 in length)

### **AMBER ALERTS**

The NC Amber Alert System is a statewide system for the rapid dissemination of information about abducted children. MIX 101.5 broadcasts Amber Alerts received from the NC Center for Missing Persons.

### **NC EDUCATION LOTTERY**

WRAL-FM airs one Problem Gambling PSA for every NC Lottery commercial scheduled on the station.

### **NEWSBREAKS, Mon-Fri**

60-Sec, 6 a.m., 6:30 a.m., 7 a.m., 7:30 a.m., 8 a.m. & 8:30 a.m.

60-Sec, 5 p.m.

### **NEWSCAST**

6-6:30 p.m. *Simulcast of WRAL-TV News*

## SPECIAL EVENTS

### **March 22: SHOW YOUR SHOT**

WRAL-FM launched the Show Your Shot campaign to promote COVID-19 vaccinations. This on-air and social media campaign invited listeners and local celebrities to share photos spotlighting their post-vaccination arms. Dr. Mandy Cohen, Secretary of the North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services, kicked off the campaign.

## **1<sup>st</sup> QUARTER ISSUES:**

*Issues are extrapolated from statements by local community leaders, including government, civic, church, and other organizations. Additionally, we monitor local news (TV, Radio & Newspaper, and well as Internet) for comments/opinions of community leaders, in the effort to ascertain and prioritize community concerns.*

### **CORONA VIRUS**

As COVID-19 cases spiked at the beginning of the year, the drive to vaccinate as many people as possible intensified. In March, it was announced that vaccines would be available to everyone ages 16 and over in April. Health officials worried about new variants that appear to be more easily transmissible. There is also a campaign to diminish public fear and skepticism towards vaccines.

### **CRIMINAL JUSTICE REFORM**

Last year, a report from Duke University found that life without parole sentences have been on the rise in North Carolina even as violent crime and death sentences have been trending downward. Attorney General Josh Stein, co-chairman of a state task force aiming to increase racial equity in the criminal justice system, announced initial findings and recommendations.

### **ECONOMY/ ECONOMIC SUPPORT**

The COVID 19 pandemic led to massive unemployment and a crash in tax revenues in 2020. North Carolina has performed much better than forecasted by economists. Federal relief spending and a recovering employment rate have boosted the NC economy. Unemployment in North Carolina in February 2020 was 3.6 percent, and unemployment peaked at 13.5 percent during the early months of the pandemic. The state's current unemployment rate is 6.1 percent. Some industries are surging, while others, most notably brick and mortar retail, may continue to struggle.

Due to the pandemic, charitable organizations are struggling to meet the needs of the public. More people are in need. These organizations depend on the media to relay their messages.

### **EDUCATION/SCHOOL**

How to reopen schools during the pandemic was an ongoing debate. Retaining and recruit high-quality teachers – especially teachers of color, addressing the social and emotional learning needs of our kids during the stressful times, and adequately funding our schools. A proposal to revise North Carolina's social studies standards to include the uglier side of American history led to intense division among some state board of education members and the public.

### **ENVIRONMENTAL CONCERNS/NATURAL DISASTERS**

Disposable masks, gloves and other types of personal protective equipment are safeguarding untold lives during the coronavirus pandemic. They're also creating a worldwide pollution problem. A new study published by Science in October 2020 found that the United States produced 92.6 billion pounds of plastic waste, more than any other country in the world.

A deadly winter storm amplified expert predictions about climate change: As climate change accelerates, deadly weather will be hitting the U.S. more often, and extreme weather events will put many electrical grids at risk of failure.

### **FAITH/RELIGION/COMMUNITY**

Today's society requires that religious services be available by digital means. The global pandemic made remote services more relevant as social distancing guidelines prevent churches from holding traditional services.

### **HEALTHCARE/ HEALTHCARE REFORM**

According to research from experts at Georgetown University, expanding Medicaid to cover more adults helps improve the health outcomes for their children. Yet, passing legislation continues to be problematic.

### **HUMAN RIGHTS/EQUALITY**

Last year, systemic racism was a point of emphasis in protests across the country, including several in the Raleigh-Durham area. Law enforcement continued to face scrutiny due to the high-profile cases of Breonna Taylor, George Floyd, Manuel Ellis, and other people of color who died by the hands of police officers.

Both COVID-19 and racial unrest in the country also highlighted the importance of understanding those with cognitive, mental, and social disorders. Are police equipped to recognize social and mental disorders?

## **MILITARY**

COVID-19 has had an impact on military recruiting, closing enlistment stations, and forcing thousands of recruiters to find potential soldiers online or even on their front steps. As enlistments slowed, worries grew that the armed services would have to rely more on current troops re-enlisting to meet total force requirements by the end of the fiscal year (September).

## **POLITICAL (JANUARY 6 INSURRECTION) /VOTING RIGHTS**

The November election season brought matters of voter suppression, voter access, and election tampering to the forefront well beyond the election. Following a violent insurrection at the US Capitol on January 6, political party allegiance became even more splintered as former president Donald Trump faced impeachment proceedings.

## **POVERTY/HOMELESSNESS**

Racial, healthcare, and income disparities existed before the onset of COVID-19. The lingering pandemic has only exacerbated these inequalities.

## **PUBLIC HEALTH/MENTAL HEALTH**

With restrictions easing and students of all ages returning to in-person learning for the first time in a year, mental health providers are noticing more people reaching out for help and support. Healthcare providers were worried about patients forgoing important health screenings due to COVID fears.

## 1<sup>ST</sup> QUARTER PROGRAMS:

### **CORONA VIRUS**

#### **NEWS & VIEWS 1/31**

##### **Guest: North Carolina Secretary of Health and Human Services Dr. Mandy Cohen**

State health officials have spent weeks urging North Carolinians to be prepared to take the COVID-19 vaccine. But with the Pfizer and Moderna vaccines in incredibly short supply nationwide, health officials are also urging patience. This week, Health and Human Services Secretary Dr. Mandy Cohen worked to explain the vaccine shift and provide greater certainty moving forward.

#### **News & Views 2/28**

**Guests: National and state leaders** about where things stand and what lies ahead in the COVID pandemic, as we mark 500,000 American lives lost. Health and Human Services Secretary Mandy Cohen marked the moment by addressing a legislative committee this week and focusing on the progress North Carolina has made in reducing the spread of the virus, and vaccinating thousands of our neighbors. Still, as teachers and essential workers queue-up for their turn to get vaccinated, Dr. Cohen said her team will be closely watching how new variants of the virus are spreading, and how that could impact children who are just now returning to the classroom. The variants and the ongoing shortage of vaccines are part of the reason that the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recently recommended Americans start double-masking to provide improved protection against exposure to the virus.

#### **ON THE RECORD 1/9**

**Legislative preview session:** Capitol Bureau Chief Laura Leslie sits down with state lawmakers and Statehouse Reporter Travis Fain to preview the session to discuss challenges the coronavirus pandemic has brought the state in addition to the usual business of the session.

#### **ON THE RECORD 1/28**

**The next phase of the COVID pandemic:** Guest speakers, including a one-on-one with Mandy Cohen, the Secretary of the North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services, explore what the next phase of the COVID-19 pandemic could look like in NC.

#### **ON THE RECORD 3/13**

**Overcoming vaccine reluctance:** Experts share the reasons people are hesitant to get a COVID-19 vaccine and strategies to overcome those concerns.

#### **NC POLICY WATCH COMMENTARIES : 1/5**

**Now is no time to ease up on public health and safety rules:** As we enter the new year, Americans are confronting a host of frightening new coronavirus numbers. With the global death toll soon to surpass two million – including more than 350,000 people here in the U.S. – some have even suggested that we should admit defeat and abandon our commitment to enforcing strong public health policies to limit the spread of the virus. This would be a huge mistake. Especially with the light at the end of the tunnel becoming visible thanks to the deployment of vaccines, now is, in fact, the time to redouble our efforts. Yes, the damage will be significant. The economy will struggle. Students will fall even further behind. Societal mental health will suffer. But all those options remain vastly superior to the alternative: millions of new, preventable deaths. Simply put: with the combination of strict public health rules and aggressive new federal relief programs we can sustain the American people through the dark months that lie ahead and emerge into the sunlight of an overarching societal recovery later this year. May our leaders have the courage to stay the course.

#### **NC POLICY WATCH COMMENTARIES : 1/7**

##### **Cooper right to call out the National Guard to aid in vaccine distribution**

The great shining light at the end of the dark pandemic tunnel in which the world finds itself right now is, of course, the widespread distribution of COVID-19 vaccines. Thanks to heroic work of scientists across the globe, we can now envision a dramatic easing of the coronavirus crisis later this year. Getting to that point, however, will be no easy feat as the process of distributing a vaccine that must be kept at freezing temperatures and then safely distributed to hundreds of millions of people presents enormous logistical challenges. The persistent lack of national leadership on the matter hasn't helped. Thankfully, some elected officials are taking aggressive action to remedy the situation. This week, for instance, North Carolina Gov. Roy

Cooper rightfully mobilized the National Guard to assist in the process of distributing available vaccines. Good for Cooper. The coronavirus pandemic continues to pose a dire threat to the safety, health, and wellbeing of millions of North Carolinians that's as serious as any natural disaster or terrorist act. If ever there was moment for an all-hands-on-deck response from government this is it. For NC Policy Watch, I'm Rob Schofield.

### **NC POLICY WATCH COMMENTARIES : 1/22**

#### **Senior living chain tries cynically to profit from COVID-19**

The COVID-19 pandemic has provoked a great deal of unseemly behavior, but a national senior living chain may have just taken the cake. Oregon-based Eclipse Senior Living manages facilities in 25 states and runs a dozen locations operating under the Elmcroft Senior Living brand in North Carolina. Recently, to recruit new residents at a time when many people are hesitant to enter congregate care (seven of the 12 locations in North Carolina are on the state's most recent list of COVID out breaks in congregate living settings), the company placed an online ad in which it told seniors they could gain priority for COVID vaccinations by moving to its facilities.

The ad read quote "By making the decision to become a part of our community now, you're also ensuring that you can receive the vaccine before millions of others." The company's come on is, in a word, revolting. COVID vaccines should be distributed pursuant to transparent public criteria and priorities – not the actions of companies that seek to imply they can help seniors jump the line. The company should pull the ad immediately.

### **NC POLICY WATCH COMMENTARIES : 2/3**

**For success with vaccine, North Carolinians must be demanding consumers and contributing citizens:** Last summer, the idea of a COVID-19 vaccine still seemed as if it might be years away. Today, however, just a few months later, nearly one in ten Americans has already received at least one vaccine shot. This is obviously terrific news, but as the widespread frustration that's accompanied the vaccine rollout in recent weeks makes clear, we still have lots of work to do. First, we must continue to improve our distribution plans – a task that's been made much harder by the Trump administration's late-term neglect and big Republican public health budget cuts. Second, we must dramatically ramp up vaccine production. Fortunately, there is reason for optimism on both counts given the Biden administration's strong, detailed, and ambitious plans and the rapid progress the Cooper administration has made here in North Carolina in learning from and correcting its initial errors. The bottom line: While times remain tough, vaccines offer real hope for overcoming the pandemic. If all North Carolinians act as both demanding consumers and informed and engaged citizens who are realistic and willing to sacrifice, that hope can become reality.

## **CRIMINAL JUSTICE REFORM**

### **NEWS & VIEWS 2/7**

#### **Guest: North Carolinians Against Gun Violence researcher Sara Smith**

Late last year, the advocacy group North Carolinians Against Gun Violence released a new and sobering, but vitally important report entitled "Safe North Carolina 2020," which documented and reiterated the widely acknowledged truth that firearm violence in North Carolina is a public health epidemic. The report documents this situation with a wellspring of data – on homicides, suicides, accidental shootings, mass shootings -- and breaks the numbers down in a host of instructive ways – including by race, age, and geography. Its central conclusion, however, is simple and straightforward and it goes like this: quote "Simply put, no other high-income country in the world allows its citizens to die by guns the way that we do in the United States." Sara Smith discusses the findings of her research and offers recommendations for state policymakers.

### **NEWS & VIEWS 2/14**

#### **Guest: Attorney Dawn Blagrove of Emancipate North Carolina**

One policy objective that's brought at least a measure of common ground to our politically divided state and nation in recent years is the acute need for criminal justice reform. After decades of incessant "get-tough-on-crime" policies that led to the discriminatory and unsustainable phenomenon that many refer to as "mass incarceration," progressives and conservatives alike are rethinking several basic premises of why and how we criminalize behavior and imprison people. Recently, we got a chance to talk with one of the leaders in our state in the fight for reforming our police, courts and jails, the executive director of the Durham-based nonprofit, Emancipate North Carolina, attorney Dawn Blagrove. While Blagrove agreed that there's cause for optimism on some fronts, she also expressed deep frustration that many critically important needs -- in particular, the current pandemic-driven public health crisis in our prisons and jails and the persistence of racially discriminatory practices by virtually all law enforcement departments remain largely unaddressed.

## NEWS & VIEWS 3/28

**Guests: Durham District Attorney Satana DeBerry and reform advocate Dawn Blagrove, Executive Dir. of Emancipate NC**

Earlier this month, at an online NC Policy Watch Crucial Conversation, we had the opportunity to interview two of North Carolina's leading experts on the subjects of race, mass incarceration and criminal justice reform. Satana DeBerry is the District Attorney of Durham County and one of a small, but growing group of visionary American prosecutors who are bringing a new approach to law enforcement and the pursuit of public safety. Attorney Dawn Blagrove is the executive director of Emancipate North Carolina, a nonprofit advocacy group that works with groups and individuals across the state to dismantle structural racism and mass incarceration. In this excerpt from our conversation, DeBerry and Blagrove shared some of their thoughts on race, the criminal justice system, as well as rethinking some of our basic ideas about public safety and dramatically improving our investments in the infrastructure of our communities.

### NC POLICY WATCH COMMENTARIES : 1/11

**COVID crisis in criminal justice system demands more attention:** The latest news story from NC Policy Watch Courts, Law and Democracy reporter Yanqi Xu highlights some troubling data about the impact the COVID-19 pandemic is having on North Carolina's criminal justice system. While the number of people incarcerated in county jails has dropped because of the pandemic, Xu reports, many incarcerated people are staying locked up longer than they ordinarily would simply because of delays in judicial proceedings or because they're too poor to make bail. In January of 2020, a person who had yet to go to trial stayed an average of less than a week in jail according to reports from 14 sample counties. That number, however, soared to over a month in July and still hovered at around three weeks at year's end.

And, of course, the longer people stay in jail, the more at risk they are of contracting COVID-19. We see this vividly in Mecklenburg County, where recent data show that 200 of 1,500 incarcerated individuals tested positive. The bottom line: People awaiting trial don't deserve a death sentence. State leaders should work to clear our jails of all nonviolent offenders immediately.

### NC POLICY WATCH COMMENTARIES : 2/9

**It's past time for NC prisons to end solitary confinement:** North Carolina has begun to make some encouraging headway in recent years in acknowledging the injustices and inequities that plague our criminal justice system – from discriminatory policing to the broken cash bail system to the failed war on drugs and the destructive mass incarceration it helped spawn. Here, however, is a subject that has yet to be addressed and still desperately needs it: solitary confinement in our state prisons. As attorney Luke Woollard of the group Disability Rights North Carolina explained in a powerful recent essay for NC Policy Watch, the reality of solitary confinement in our state (a system that effectively locks inmates in an empty closet for 22 to 24 hours per day) is shockingly cruel, dehumanizing, and counterproductive. What's more, it doesn't have to be this way. Other states are already moving to end this barbaric practice and recently, Gov. Cooper's Task Force for Racial Equity in Criminal Justice recommended abolition of solitary in several situations in which it's currently used. The Governor has the power to take this action and should do so right away.

## ECONOMY

### NEWS & VIEWS 2/21

**Guest: North Carolina's state budget director Charlie Perusse**

Eleven months ago as the COVID 19 pandemic was first causing a massive shutdown of the economy, an expected crash in tax revenues was leading forecasters to make some dire predictions for the budgets of North Carolina and other states. Since that time, happily, things have not gone as badly as had been feared. Thanks to federal relief spending and the fact that incomes of wealthy people and large corporations have actually risen significantly during the crisis, revenues have remained strong and North Carolina has actually banked close to \$5 billion in surplus funds. Earlier this week, we got a chance to learn more about this surplus and how it might best be spent to relieve suffering and address unmet needs with North Carolina's state budget director Charlie Perusse.

### NC POLICY WATCH COMMENTARIES : 1/1

**Higher taxes on the very wealthy would benefit all North Carolinians :** North Carolina faces a raft of increasingly serious policy challenges these days – especially in funding core public services and structures like education. At such a moment, our state would do well to follow the path blazed by voters in Arizona recently when they passed that state's Proposition 208. Under the new law, wealthy individuals making more than \$250,000 and couples making more than \$500,00 will pay a 3.5% income tax surcharge. As a result, Arizona schools – which have long fallen short in providing a quality education for the

state's children -- will have the resources for instruction, student supports, teacher pay and professional development. In North Carolina, where our state continues to violate a constitutionally mandated court order to provide every child with access to a sound basic education, such a surcharge could raise hundreds of millions of dollars per year. Even better, 99% of the money would come from the richest 1%. The bottom line: Especially during a time in which incomes have shrunk or stayed flat for all but the wealthy, such a surcharge ought to be a no-brainer.

#### **NC POLICY WATCH COMMENTARIES : 1/4**

**A New Year's resolution for the legislative leaders:** As we head into what promises to be another extremely challenging year, all North Carolinians would do well to reflect on an important lesson that was brought home repeatedly during 2020 as we endured the devastation caused by the coronavirus pandemic. It has to do with the meaning of freedom and liberty. Simply put: Sometimes these ideals are about more than low taxes and small government. Yes, lower taxes are nice, but ultimately, they're not good for much when the basic public structures that knit together our society are so torn and threadbare as to be utterly ineffective. We've learned this lesson during the pandemic as we've watched the federal government fail repeatedly in basic functions like keeping us safe and the economy up and running. With robust and well-funded public systems and structures – schools, public health systems, transportation, healthcare, environmental protection, a functioning safety net – everyone has a real shot at enjoying the blessings of a free society. Without them, even the wealthy can find themselves prisoners in their own homes. Let's hope elected leaders take these truths to heart in 2021.

#### **NC POLICY WATCH COMMENTARIES : 1/19**

##### **General Assembly should use available funds to aid people and businesses in need**

What are state legislative leaders waiting for? As North Carolina slogs through what promise to be the darkest days of the COVID-19 pandemic, the state faces a dire economic and humanitarian crisis. All across our state, businesses are shuttered or hanging on by a thread while thousands upon thousands of families are grappling with unemployment and the threat of eviction, foreclosure, and hunger. Meanwhile, the General Assembly sits on a huge pile of cash. Thanks to the skyrocketing incomes of the wealthy and big corporations, state tax collections are actually up for the current fiscal year and as a result, the state has 4.4 billion dollars in available "unreserved funds." This needs to change right away. Lawmakers should quickly appropriate these funds to speed vaccinations, aid our schools and public health providers and support the core public structures and services that can ease immediate suffering and facilitate a much more robust and widely shared economic recovery when the pandemic eases later this year. As one economist wisely observed: to do anything else is tantamount to, quote: "throwing fuel on a raging dumpster fire."

#### **NC POLICY WATCH COMMENTARIES : 2/11**

##### **Eviction and utility shutoff moratoria shown to prevent COVID spread**

As the COVID-19 recession continues to wreak havoc with our economy, the case for a nationwide ban on evictions and utility shutoffs remains strong. When millions of people have been left jobless with no near-term prospect for returning to work, it's simply cruel for the world's wealthiest nation to allow them to be put out on the street. What's more, as a recent study conducted by researchers at Duke University shows, there's another practical reason to keep the moratoria in place: public health. According to the study, policies that help financially struggling Americans stay in their homes and keep access to water and electricity during the pandemic also help reduce the spread of the virus. Not surprisingly, when more people stay in their homes rather than being forced to double up with friends or relatives or turn to crowded shelters, social distancing is easier and the virus spreads less rapidly. The bottom line: Until the pandemic is brought under control and the economy rebounds, the federal government should bar evictions and shutoffs and allocate the funds to keep landlords and utility providers solvent.

## **EDUCATION/SCHOOL**

#### **NEWS & VIEWS 2/7**

##### **Guest: North Carolina Public School Forum Executive Director Mary Ann Wolf**

When it comes to meeting its constitutional obligation to provide every student with access to a sound basic education, North Carolina already faced a raft of daunting challenges prior to the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic -- challenges that the struggles of the past 11 months have only served to exacerbate. Fortunately, the state is home to a number of top-notch advocates who track these issues carefully and one of the best and most influential is the Public School Forum of North Carolina. Recently, the forum hosted a virtual version of its annual "Eggs and Issues Breakfast," at which it unveiled its list of the top education issues for 2021 and afterwards, we got a chance to have an extended conversation with the group's president and executive director, Mary Ann Wolf. Wolf shares some of her overarching assessments of the state of our

education system in 2021 and, in particular, how the COVID-19 pandemic has ratcheted up the challenge while laying bare a host of constitutional deficiencies that can no longer be swept under the rug.

#### **NEWS & VIEWS 2/21**

##### **Guest: Senator Jay Chaudhuri**

The debate over reopening public schools seems never to have really gone away over the last 11 months, but in recent days, some of the dividing lines have been brought into sharper relief as the General Assembly has pushed ahead aggressively with legislation to mandate that all schools reopen – even if they aren't in full compliance with CDC guidelines on containing the COVID-19 virus. Earlier this week we discussed this matter and a number of other current legislative issues with an elected leader who has been in the middle of the reopening debate – Wake County state Senator Jay Chaudhuri, who is himself a parent of school age children

#### **NEWS & VIEWS 3/21**

##### **Guest: State Rep. Zack Hawkins**

After more than four years in which they battled and sought to undermine Gov. Roy Cooper at every turn, North Carolina Republican legislative leaders did something very different recently: they actually sat down with the governor and worked out a compromise on reopening schools. Now the question is whether this agreement is just a one-time deal or the start of something new in state politics. Recently, we sat down with Durham County State Rep. Zach Hawkins to get his assessment of the situation – both with regard to the state of politics in Raleigh and our public education system. Hawkins also discussed an important bill he's sponsoring this year that could make life much easier for parents of children dealing with the effects of autism.

#### **ON THE RECORD 2/14**

**Coronavirus in the classroom:** Listen as experts like Dr. Kanecia Zimmerman, the Associate Professor of Pediatrics at Duke, Amy Dragotta, Wake County Elementary Teacher, Eric Cunningham, Halifax County School Superintendent and Mary Anne Wolf, Executive Director Public School Forum discuss coronavirus in the classroom.

#### **ON THE RECORD 2/27**

**High school students return to the classroom:** Listen as local students from a variety of high schools discuss how COVID-19 has impacted their school years, and whether or not they are returning to in-class learning or staying remote -- and why.

#### **NC POLICY WATCH COMMENTARIES : 1/12**

##### **Jan. 12 – State Board of Ed should stick to plan for honest curriculum about “hard truths” of U.S. history**

The state Board of Education discussed ongoing efforts to update K-12 U.S. history curricula last week and, despite complaints from some on the political right, the work should continue.

At the heart of the discussion: how best to educate students about our nation's sordid history of racism, slavery, and white supremacy and expose them to the voices and viewpoints of Black and Brown people. Let's hope the board doesn't back down from aggressively pursuing these laudable objectives. As state board advisor and 2019 state Principal of the Year Matt Bristow-Smith observed – quote: “When it comes to facing the hard truths of our American narrative, what and how we teach history in our public schools matters, and it matters incredibly at this moment.” The goal, he noted is not to teach children to quote “believe one thing or the other or to feel a certain way or to engender a certain euphoric experience, but rather to think critically and arrive at their own conclusions thoughtfully about what they do, as well as what they do not believe” – unquote. The board should heed Bristow-Smith's sage advice.

#### **NC POLICY WATCH COMMENTARIES : 1/26**

**Widespread school reopening should remain on hold:** As America struggles to get through the darkest hours of the COVID-19 pandemic, a lot of frustrated groups and individuals continue to push for a rapid reopening of public schools to in-person instruction. Unfortunately, as veteran public education expert Kris Nordstrom explained recently in an insightful essay at [ncpolicywatch.com](http://ncpolicywatch.com), a growing body of evidence indicates that such a move could contribute significantly to further community spread of the virus. What's more, much of this evidence was compiled prior to the current grim situation and the emergence of new, more contagious COVID variants— and therefore probably *underestimates* the potential of schools to make things worse. Now add in the big limitations associated with in-person schooling during the pandemic (indeed, in many instances, it simply amounts to remote learning housed in a school building) and the case for plowing ahead grows even weaker. The bottom line: Waving a magic wand won't get teachers and kids back to school safely. For that, we need more vaccinations, investments in better protective equipment and facilities and the time to make them happen.

## **NC POLICY WATCH COMMENTARIES : 2/2**

**Time for an honest reckoning about “school choice”** : There’s case to be made that “school choice” – giving parents the chance to help select their children’s public school – can, in some circumstances, be a useful part of a healthy public education system. Unfortunately, there’s another important truth about school choice that’s too often swept under the rug – namely, its deep and undeniable historical connection to racism and school segregation. As contributor Zack Kaplan detailed recently in an essay at [ncpolicywatch.com](http://ncpolicywatch.com), school choice is a system that originated in efforts to maintain segregation and white supremacy. Indeed, the similarities between the infamous Pearsall Plan that white North Carolina politicians established in the 1950s in order to resist court ordered school integration, and the principles and techniques championed today by conservative “free market” groups in favor of school choice, are striking and disturbing. Happily, as Kaplan notes, it doesn’t have to be this way. With determined work, it’s possible to make school choice a tool for combating racism and segregation, rather than perpetuating it. But the process must start with a clear-eyed repudiation of its origins and the forces behind it.

## **ENVIRONMENTAL CONCERNS/NATURAL DISASTERS**

### **NEWS & VIEWS 1/31**

**Guest: North Carolina’s state climatologist Dr. Kathie Dello**

By any estimation, the news surrounding global climate change – what many scientists now characterize as the global climate emergency – continues to grow more dire. Recent reports indicate that we’re now witnessing a raft of deeply worrisome consequences – including a rapid decline in the polar icecaps, rising seas, and an increase in severe weather events. Of course, as much as we may be aware of this sobering news, it’s sometimes difficult to understand the connections between such a massive global problem and what we’re experiencing in our day-to-day lives – much less how we should respond and adapt. Thankfully, North Carolina maintains a state climate office to help us with these important tasks and recently we got a chance to have an extended conversation with the scientist who heads up that effort, our state climatologist, Dr. Kathie Dello. Dello joined us to discuss the urgent need for rapid societal action that will a) reduce carbon pollution in order to help slow the rise in global temperatures and, b) put all of us in a better position to avoid some of the worst impacts of the crisis – from increased flooding to dramatically warmer nighttime temperatures to enhanced stresses on agriculture.

### **NC POLICY WATCH COMMENTARIES : 1/27**

**Massive gasoline spill highlights need for stronger environmental protections, move to sustainable energy:** North Carolinians got yet another sobering reminder recently of the urgent need to expedite our transition from fossil fuels to sustainable energy sources.

As Lisa Sorg of NC Policy Watch reported, the latest impetus comes from the disclosure that a Colonial Pipeline Co. gasoline spill that took place last August in the Mecklenburg County town of Huntersville was much, much bigger than originally reported.

At the time, Colonial estimated that it had spilled 63,000 gallons of gasoline underground. Now comes word that the spill was almost twenty times larger than that: over 1.2 million gallons – the largest such inland spill in the U.S. this century.

Needless to say, the spill will have dreadful environmental impacts and Colonial has already started buying up homes in the area that have become uninhabitable.

The bottom line: From the disastrous impacts of climate change to the direct poisoning of our air, land and water, humans are reminded every day that we cannot go on indefinitely powering our economy with fossil fuels we dig or pump out of the ground. The Colonial Pipeline spill is but the latest compelling evidence.

## **HEALTHCARE/ HEALTHCARE REFORM**

### **NEWS & VIEWS 3/7**

**Guest: Georgetown University professor and national healthcare expert Adam Searing**

For years now, experts have demonstrated that expanding Medicaid under the Affordable Care Act to cover uninsured working people who are ineligible under current guidelines and who can’t qualify for a subsidy in the private market would save lives and money. Unfortunately, thus far, North Carolina remains one of the 12 holdout states that have continued to ignore this research. A new report, however, adds still another compelling argument for expansion – helping kids. According to research from experts at Georgetown University, expanding Medicaid to cover more adults helps improve the health outcomes for their children, and recently we talked with one of the experts behind the report, Professor Adam Searing.

## News & Views 3/21

### Guest: Charlotte Center for Legal Advocacy attorney Doug Sea

One of the many important policy changes that ended up getting put on hold in 2020 as a result of the pandemic was North Carolina's long-planned shift in how it delivers the Medicaid health insurance program. Under the shift – which is now finally underway – Medicaid is being changed from a “fee for service” model to a managed care system. This shift will have a profound impact on the nearly two million North Carolinians Medicaid covers and, to its credit, the state is taking action to inform and empower them by establishing an ombudsman program that will serve as a resource and assist in the transition. Recently, in an effort to learn more about the transition and the ombudsman program, we got a chance to chat with one of the state's most knowledgeable advocates when it comes to public safety net programs for people in need, veteran Charlotte Center for Legal Advocacy attorney, Doug Sea.

## NC POLICY WATCH COMMENTARIES : 2/16

### A Medicaid deal even NC Republicans shouldn't be able to refuse

At some point the federal government is going to make North Carolina Republicans an offer on Medicaid they simply can't refuse. And given the terms of the latest proposal contained in the new COVID relief bill in the U.S. House, it's hard to see how that moment hasn't finally arrived.

The new proposal would be incredibly beneficial to North Carolina by pumping 2.4 billion new dollars into the state over just two years if it expanded Medicaid under the Affordable Care Act. This windfall would be on top of the sizable net benefits the state would already realize under existing law if it expands coverage to a half-million uninsured citizens. The bottom line: The ongoing Republican refusal to follow the lead of dozens of other states is a massive and destructive policy error and, even more importantly, a true human tragedy that's directly led to the unnecessary deaths of thousands of North Carolinians. One prays that this new proposal will swiftly become law and finally, at long last, convince state Republican leaders to end their blockade of this essential human service.

## HUMAN RIGHTS/EQUALITY

## NC POLICY WATCH COMMENTARIES : 1/18

**A sober King Day reminds us of how far we still must travel:** Today is King Day – a day on which Americans celebrate the life of Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr., the achievements of the Civil Rights movement and the cause to building a truly just and equitable society. Unfortunately, this year's commemoration comes at a dark and troubling moment in our nation's history – especially as it relates to racial equity and justice. Just 12 days ago, a violent mob waving confederate flags and other symbols of white supremacy, and directly incited to action by President Trump, invaded the United States Capitol seeking to overturn the results of the 2020 presidential election. The horror of January 6 was only magnified by the kid glove treatment these armed and dangerous criminals were accorded by law enforcement officers – a reality that stood in stark contrast to the rubber bullets and tear gas to which protesters against racism and police brutality were regularly subjected last summer. The bottom line: Shocking and disturbing as this situation is, we cannot surrender to fear and hate. If ever there was a moment to rededicate ourselves to King's vision of peace and justice, this is it.

## NC POLICY WATCH COMMENTARIES : 2/5

### Good riddance to Confederate license plates

You'd have thought the message might have gotten through last year when even the state of Mississippi finally removed the Confederate symbol from its state flag, but apparently it took a little while longer for it to dawn on the Department of Motor Vehicles that it was past time to remove it from specialized North Carolina license plates. Maybe it was the way the Confederate flag ended up being the chosen emblem of so many white supremacists and insurrectionists who tried to overthrow a lawful presidential election with their deadly invasion of the U.S. Capitol last month, but whatever it was that motivated DMV to finally act, it's about time.

While some people of good will may intend otherwise, to millions of people the Confederate flag is a symbol of division and racism that's deeply hurtful and should not be on official license plates made and sold by our state government. And while no one believes that removing the flag will solve the problem of racism that still plagues our state, in this case, DMV clearly made the right – if long overdue – decision.

## News & Views 3/28

### Guest: Chavi Khanna Koneru of North Carolina Asian Americans Together

These are especially difficult times in the United States when it comes to matters of race and ethnicity. Thanks in part to

former President Trump's cynical tolerance and encouragement of white supremacists, race-based hate crimes have spiked in recent years. Attacks on Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders in particular – like the horrific murders in Atlanta last week – are up dramatically. Earlier this week, we got a chance to discuss this very troubling situation with the executive director of the group North Carolina Asian Americans Together, attorney Chavi Khanna Koneru. And as Koneru noted, this is a real and complex crisis that demands a determined response from elected leaders. Other issues discussed: new proposed hate crime legislation, education funding, and the need for better language translation services to help remove barriers to public services for Asian Americans.

#### **PSA RECORDED: T-Mobile Changemakers 1/1-3/31**

The T-Mobile Changemaker Challenge is looking for big ideas from visionary youth with an eye towards creating more connected, sustainable, and inclusive communities. Winning teams will win a trip to the Changemaker lab hosted at T-Mobile Seattle headquarters to receive mentorship seed funding. Up to 15000 dollars and other awesome prizes know a young innovator 13 to 18 years old, who's up to the challenge? Visit T-Mobile dot com slash changemaker to learn more entries must be submitted by April 8th, 2021. No purchase necessary. See contest website for full rules.

### **MILITARY**

#### **PSA RECORDED: Army National Guard - Ready 1/1-3/31**

The Army National Guard plays a vital role in your community. We're On the front lines supporting essential personnel, first responders, law enforcement, and medical professionals. Delivering food, supplies, and medicine. Keeping communities safe. Making a difference. During emergencies, we're always ready- Always there. Learn more about part time service by visiting national guard.com.

#### **PSA RECORDED: Army National Guard – Live Here 1/1-3/31**

My part-time service in the Army National Guard makes it possible for me to be more for the community I call home. I'm a better neighbor because my service has taught me how important it is to be a team player. My training helps me in my classes when I give attention to detail to the task at hand. My service also allows me to be there for my community in ways others can't. I help my hometown recover after nature strikes. My service in the Army National Guard allows me to keep my country and those I care about safe from threats. I also work with a network of professionals that help me succeed. The Army National Guard's education benefits make getting a higher education a reality. Being an Army National Guard soldier makes living and serving in my community more rewarding every day. Learn more about how you too can live and serve part time close to home by visiting national guard.com.

### **POLITICAL (JANUARY 6 INSURRECTION) /VOTING RIGHTS**

#### **NEWS & VIEWS 2/14**

**Guests:** Counter-terrorism expert David Schanzer of the Triangle Center on Terrorism and Homeland Security and Intelligence expert Sue Gordon of the Duke Sanford School of Public Policy. The U.S. Senate opened the impeachment trial of former President Donald Trump this week. And while many Republicans have signaled that they're unwilling to convict Trump for his role in the January 6th attack on the Capitol, experts at Duke University recently explained why Congress must do more to address homegrown terrorism to prevent these extremists from repeating the success that many of them believe they realized during the Jan. 6<sup>th</sup> insurrection. Gordon - the former deputy director of national intelligence – also proposes restricting the access that former President Trump has to sensitive information moving forward.

#### **News & Views 2/28**

##### **Guest: Catawba College political scientist Dr. Michael Bitzer**

It's only been a few weeks since the victors in the 2020 election took office, but action in the 2022 election is well underway. Here in North Carolina, candidates of both major parties are already lining up to compete for retiring U.S. Senator Richard Burr's seat – a contest that's sure to be impacted by Burr's vote to convict former President Donald Trump in his recent impeachment trial. Earlier this week we caught up with one of keenest observers of the North Carolina politics scene, Catawba College political science professor, Michael Bitzer. And, as Bitzer told us, while there are a lot of uncertainties in these tumultuous times, one thing that increasingly clear is that loyalists to Trump are now in complete control of the North Carolina Republican Party.

## **NEWS & VIEWS 3/7**

### **Guest: Democracy NC Executive Director Tomas Lopez**

One of the top duties for state lawmakers in the year after a national census is to redraw congressional and legislative districts to account for changes in population. This is almost always a fraught and contentious process and one that has been especially hard fought in North Carolina where maps drawn by Republican lawmakers in recent years have repeatedly been struck down as illegal gerrymanders. This year, a new wrinkle has been thrown into the process by the fact that census results won't be available until September. Recently, we got a chance to learn more about this development and to catch up on the other front burner issues from the world of voting and voting rights with one of our state's best-informed advocates, attorney Tomas Lopez of the group Democracy North Carolina.

## **NEWS & VIEWS 3/7**

### **Guest: Congresswoman Deborah Ross**

Freshman North Carolina Congresswoman Deborah Ross sure didn't pick a boring time to embark upon a career in our nation's capital. From the January 6 insurrection to the inauguration of a new president to the casting votes on an array of hugely important issues – all while somehow dealing with the challenges posed by the pandemic – Ross has experienced a whirlwind first two months in office.

Earlier this week, she was kind enough to take a few minutes from her busy schedule to update us on the pandemic relief legislation, and several other issues on which she's already spoken out – including the Equality Act and the long overdue need to add more judges to the federal courts.

## **NC POLICY WATCH COMMENTARIES : 1/5**

**Trump and his allies continue their assault on democracy with efforts to undermine election results:** Every time you think Donald Trump's outrageous actions in debasing the presidency and undermining the American government have hit rock bottom, the president pulls out a shovel and starts digging even deeper. The latest mind-bending scandal involves Trump's borderline criminal phone call to Georgia Secretary of State Brad Raffensberger this past weekend in which he pleaded with and threatened his fellow Republican to quote "find 11,780 votes" unquote that would give Trump a victory in the state's already certified November presidential contest. As in the past, Trump's actions are those of a Mafia crime boss, not the leader of the world's greatest nation. But, of course, Trump isn't the only politician shamefully attempting to overturn the election. Several lawmakers, including North Carolina's Richard Hudson, have said they will vote "no" tomorrow when Congress meets to certify the Electoral College results. The bottom line: None of these outrageous actions will succeed. Joe Biden will become the nation's 46<sup>th</sup> president two weeks from tomorrow, but until then, Trump and his cowardly allies appear bent on putting a torch to the fabric of our democracy.

For NC Policy Watch, I'm Rob Schofield.

## **NC POLICY WATCH COMMENTARIES : 2/4**

### **Feb. 4 – The first bill introduced in Washington this year should be a top priority**

Leaders in the U.S. House and Senate sent a strong message recently when they made an ambitious and important bill known as the "For the People Act" the first introduced in the new Congress. The legislation – known simply as HR 1 in the House and S1 in the Senate – seeks to rebuild the health of our political system that has been so regularly and systematically undermined with cynical voter suppression tactics, absurd conspiracy theories and, ultimately, the Jan. 6 insurrection.

Specifically, the bill would assist voters of all political stripes with provisions that:

- expand same-day voter registration to Election Day and make it a federal holiday,
- limit voter purges like those that removed over 570,000 North Carolinians from the rolls in 2019,
- provide for independent, nonpartisan redistricting commissions,
- limit big money in politics, and
- help the formerly incarcerated regain their voting rights.

The bottom line: Our democracy is stronger when more people vote, and big money and gerrymandering are kept in check. HR1 and S1 would move us in that direction.

## **POVERTY/HOMELESSNESS**

## **NEWS & VIEWS 2/21**

### **Guest: Dr. Peter Morris, Executive Director of Urban Ministries of Wake County**

One of the organizations that's truly on the frontlines in the ongoing battle against poverty in our community is Urban Ministries of Wake County. Now celebrating its 40<sup>th</sup> year of combating hunger, homelessness, and lack of access to health

care, Urban Ministries serves thousands of North Carolina's most vulnerable residents with an array of vital services that many can find in no other place. Not surprisingly, the challenges of performing this difficult work have only been enhanced during the pandemic, but as the organization's executive director, Dr. Peter Morris, told us earlier this month, COVID-19 has also brought out the best in a lot of Urban Ministries friends and supporters.

#### **NC POLICY WATCH COMMENTARIES : 1/29**

**New administration must target poverty and inequality in first 100 days:** The list of crises to address and messes to clean up for the new Biden-Harris administration is alarmingly long, but here's one topic that simply has to be a top immediate priority: attacking poverty and inequality. Our country has long had a huge and growing problem in this realm, of course, but the COVID-19 pandemic has made things dramatically worse. While tens of millions of Americans are struggling to find enough food to eat, the wealth and income of the top one percent – especially a handful of super rich billionaires – is skyrocketing. This situation simply can't continue. As Rev. Dr. William Barber of the Poor People's Campaign put it recently: "If America does not address what's happening with visionary social and economic policy, the health and well-being of the nation is at stake." And while President Biden and Vice President Harris clearly grasp the situation and the need to rebuild the middle class, they can't do what's necessary without help from Congress. All North Carolinians should demand that Senators Burr and Tillis and members of our U.S. House delegation aid this vital cause.

For NC Policy Watch, I'm Rob Schofield.

#### **NC POLICY WATCH COMMENTARIES : 2/12**

**The case for a \$15 minimum wage gets another boost:** Yet another high-powered report is boosting President Joe Biden's effort to raise the federal minimum wage to \$15 per hour by 2025. Researchers at the nonpartisan Congressional Budget Office found that such a hike would reduce poverty and increase pay for millions of low-income workers. The report found that 900,000 people would be lifted directly out of poverty, 17 million would experience a wage increase and that reliance on federal social programs like food assistance would fall. Among the people who would benefit the most: workers and their families in North Carolina, where the minimum wage remains mired at \$7.25 even as dozens of states and cities across the country have already raised the wage to much higher levels. None of this is to say that a hike to \$15 per hour wouldn't have costs. The report predicts some job losses around the margins and a slight increase in demands for unemployment insurance, but overall, the benefits to working people and their self-esteem – not to mention their families and their communities – would be immense. Congress should enact the hike right away.

#### **PSA RECORDED: North Carolina Community Action Fund – Big Pop-up 1/1-1/26**

Everybody needs help sometimes, especially during unprecedented times such as these. If COVID has you struggling to provide basic household goods for your family, drop by PNC Arena for the big pop up on January 26 from 10:00 a.m. to 2 p.m. - Simply drive up, pop your trunk and volunteers with the North Carolina Community Action Association will supply you with a care package, including household items, food, and other things you can use to help see you through these tough times. Details at NCCAM Dot Net.

#### **PUBLIC HEALTH/MENTAL HEALTH**

##### **News & Views 2/28**

##### **Guest: NC Child's executive director Michelle Hughes**

The COVID-19 pandemic has obviously taken a large toll on the health and well-being of millions of North Carolinians, but as a new report released by the children's advocacy group NC Child makes clear, kids in our state were already struggling beforehand. Indeed, the group's new 2021 child health report card gives the state an "F" in several categories, including mental health, substance abuse, and housing & economic security. Fortunately, as the group's executive director Michelle Hughes told us earlier this week, the solutions to these problems aren't rocket science and are mostly a function of state elected leaders mustering the will to support proven public programs and services.

AMBER ALERT

2/15/21

Savanah Grace Childress

	<u>DATE</u>	<u>TIME</u>	<u>JOCK INITIALS</u>
1.	2/15/21		EAS
2.	2/15/21	10:40 PM	DM
3.	2/15/21	11:39 PM	DM
4.	2/16/21	12:36 AM	DM
5.	2/16/21	1:38 AM	DM
6.	2/16/21	2:41 AM	DM
7.	2/16/21	3:37 AM	DM
8.	2/16/21	4:35 AM	DM
9.	2/16/21	6:33 AM	KBS
10.	2/16/21	7:34 AM	KBS
11.	2/16/21	8:33 AM	KBS
12.	2/16/21	10:51 AM	DR
13.	2/16/21	11:37 AM	DR
14.	2/16/21	12:53 PM	DR
15.	2/16/21	2:46 PM	DR
16.	2/16/21	3:40 PM	JK
17.	2/16/21	5:41 PM	JK
18.	2/16/21	6:54 PM	JK
19.	2/16/21	7:40 PM	DM
20.	2/16/21	8:39 PM	DM
21.	2/16/21	9:42 PM	DM
22.	2/16/21	10:39 PM	DM
23.	2/16/21	11:41 PM	DM
24.	2/17/21	12:39 AM	JK
25.	2/17/21	1:32 AM	JK
26.	2/17/21	2:38 AM	JK
27.	2/17/21	3:38 AM	JK
28.	2/17/21	4:39 AM	JK
29.	2/17/21	6:36 AM	KBS
30.	2/17/21	8:02 AM	KBS
31.	2/17/21	8:48 AM	KBS
32.	2/17/21	9:17 AM	KBS
33.	2/17/21	10:53 AM	DR
34.	2/17/21	11:42 AM	DR

AMBER ALERT

2/24/21

Aubrey Leann McFarland

	<u>DATE</u>	<u>TIME</u>	<u>JOCK INITIALS</u>
1.	2/24/21	2:01 PM	EAS
2.	2/24/21	2:40 PM	DM
3.	2/24/21	3:10 PM	JK
4.	2/24/21	3:39 PM	JK
5.	2/24/21	4:55 PM	JK
6.	2/24/21	5:19 PM	JK

The Brunswick County Sheriff's Office has issued an Amber Alert for **Aubrey Leanne McFarland**. **Aubrey** is a 4-year-old Bi-racial female, approximately 3 feet tall, weighing 42 pounds. She has brown hair and brown eyes and was last seen wearing a purple Shirt, black leggings, black sip up boots and a pink fleece jacket.

Aubrey is believed to be with **Elijah Muhammad McFarland**. **Elijah** is a 37 year old Black, male, 5 feet 8 inches tall, weighing 161 pounds. He has black hair and brown eyes and was last seen wearing a Black shirt, black pants and black shoes.

Subjects were traveling in a Burgundy 2008 Chrysler PT Cruiser with North Carolina license plate TCY-9075.

If you have any information about this abduction, please call 911.