

WRMR-FM, Wilmington, NC (98.7)
QUARTERLY LISTING OF COMMUNITY CONCERNS/ISSUES
AND PUBLIC AFFAIRS PROGRAMS
4TH QUARTER 2021

The following is a list of issues and concerns for 4TH Quarter 2021, and addresses in Public Affairs Programming, Public Service Announcements, Community Involvement and special programming on WRMR-FM.

1. COMMON CAUSE
2. DISCRIMINATION
3. EDUCATION
4. DEBT
5. LAW
6. TEACHER OF THE YEAR
7. INFRASTRUCTURE
8. STATE BUDGET
9. COVID 19
10. NCDHHS

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Date

PUBLIC AFFAIRS PROGRAMS

During October, November and December, WRMR-FM broadcast 13 hours of Public Affairs Programming on Sundays from 6:00AM-7:00AM.

NEWS & VIEWS WITH CHRIS FITZSIMON is a 30-minute program, focusing on state policy issues that air Sundays at 6:00AM.

CAROLINA NEWS MAKERS (30 Minutes) Each week Don Curtis interviews newsmakers from across the Tar Heel State on the issues of the day. From the local economy to crime to social programs to taxes and education... stories that effect our day-to-day lives are hot topics for Carolina News Makers.

2021 4th QUARTER ISSUES

1. COMMON CAUSE

North Carolina legislators held a dozen hearings in September to give the public at least some chance to have a say in the 2021 redistricting process

2. DISCRIMINATION

Five and a half years ago, the state of North Carolina attracted international derision and widespread boycotts when the General Assembly and then-Gov. Pat McCrory enacted HB 2- a law that purported to regulate the usage of public restrooms and prohibited local governments from passing human rights ordinances that bar discrimination against LGBTQ people.

3. EDUCATION

Earlier this year, Wake County Superior Court Judge David Lee gave his blessing to a plan developed by a national education research firm that charts a course for the state to follow in making this plan a reality and now the big question is will the General Assembly

4. DEBT

The Center for Responsible Lending on the state of the national student loan debt crisis and some relief that the Biden administration has been made available.

5. LAW

NC is likely to receive hundreds of millions of dollars because of the settlement of several of lawsuits from pharmaceutical companies.

6. TEACHER OF THE YEAR

Many critics have rightfully observed that it's a manufactured controversy designed by national political operatives looking to fan and capitalize on irrational white fears, but whatever its origins, there is clearly a debate underway right now across North Carolina and the nation over how our schools teach kids about race and American history.

7. INFRASTRUCTURE

While partisan gridlock is often the name of the game in Congress, we had a rare bit of bipartisanship and unity last week with the House's passage of a \$1.2 trillion infrastructure bill.

8. STATE BUDGET

After several years of gridlock and almost five months into the current fiscal year, North Carolina has a new state budget. Gov. Roy Cooper's decision to sign the latest proposal from Republican lawmakers – a bill in which, he said, “the good outweighs the bad” – removed the final roadblock.

9. COVID 19

The world has endured a long spate of very dark days over the last 20-plus months as the COVID-19 pandemic has raged across the planet, but the rapid – many would say miraculous – development of effective vaccines during the last year, has obviously made huge and positive difference and laid the groundwork for the return to a measure of normalcy.

10. NCDHHS

The NC Department of Health and Human Services will have an opening at the end of this year.

PROGRAMMING:

1. COMMON CAUSE

News and Views for October 04, 2021

Guest: Kathay Feng, the National Redistricting Director for Common Cause, David Wasserman, senior editor for the Cook Political Report, Prof. Michael Bitzer, a political scientist at Catawba College, and Harvard Law Professor Guy-Uriel Charles. North Carolina legislators held a dozen hearings in September to give the public at least some chance to have a say in the 2021 redistricting process. Unfortunately, since the hearings took place before any maps were released, speakers could only share very general comments about how they would like to see congressional and legislative districts drawn.

Last week, at the same time the public hearings were taking place, a group of national scholars, political scientists, journalists, and advocates gathered at Duke University for a redistricting conference hosted by the Polis Center for Politics at the Sanford School of Public Policy and the Duke Math Department. This week we hear from several of those experts about efforts to draw fair maps and curb gerrymandering.

2. DISCRIMINATION

News and Views for 10-10-2021

Guest: Chairman of the Wake County Board of Commissioners Matt Calabria

Five and a half years ago, the state of North Carolina attracted international derision and widespread boycotts when the General Assembly and then-Gov. Pat McCrory enacted HB 2- a law that purported to regulate the usage of public restrooms and prohibited local governments from passing human rights ordinances that bar discrimination against LGBTQ people. Today, thank goodness, most of that now infamous law has been repealed and many local governments have moved to enact comprehensive anti-discrimination ordinances. The latest and one of the most important to move in this direction is the state's largest political subdivision, the capital county of Wake, which is

expected to formally approve an ordinance on October 18. Earlier this week we caught up with the chair of the Wake County Commissioners, Matt Calabria, to get an update on the new ordinance as well as Wake's efforts to tackle the COVID-19 pandemic and the affordable housing crisis that's vexing so many metro areas across the country.

3. EDUCATION

News and Views for October 16, 2021

Guests: Public education advocates Letha Muhammad and Sarah Montgomery of Every Child NC coalition.

When will North Carolina finally comply with the 24-year-old state Supreme Court ruling in the Leandro case which held that every child in the state has a constitutional right to receive a sound basic education?

Earlier this year, Wake County Superior Court Judge David Lee gave his blessing to a plan developed by a national education research firm that charts a course for the state to follow in making this plan a reality and now the big question is will the General Assembly – which has a multi-billion-dollar surplus at its disposal –appropriate the necessary funds to lift our schools?

Two advocates seeking to make that answer from the legislature an unequivocal “yes” are Letha Muhammad and Sarah Montgomery of the “Every Child NC” coalition and recently we caught up with them to learn more about Leandro mandate, its history and what they and other advocates are doing now to make it a reality.

In Part Two of our conversation, Montgomery explained how the judge now overseeing the case might well be forced to follow the precedent from other states and compel state lawmakers to appropriate the necessary funds, and Muhammad reminded us of why compliance is so long overdue and vitally important, and hopefully, just a first step toward guaranteeing all North Carolina children not just a sound basic education, but a truly world class education.

4. DEBT

News and Views for October 24, 2021

Guest: Consumer advocate Rochelle Sparko of the Center for Responsible Lending on the state of the national student loan debt crisis and some relief that the Biden administration has made available. Sparko discusses details of the debt relief, and what state policymakers could do to further help North Carolinians who are working to repay their student loans.

5. NC LAW

News & Views for October 31, 2021

Guest: North Carolina Attorney General Josh Stein
It's been well-documented in recent years that the national opioid crisis – a public health emergency that, in many places, has taken more lives than COVID-19 – did not happen by accident. To the contrary, it's now widely understood that many aspects of this tragic situation are directly attributable to the actions of big pharmaceutical companies who irresponsibly pushed these highly addictive (and highly profitable) substances on an unsuspecting public.
Thankfully, many of these companies and their owners are now being held responsible for their actions – at least to some degree – because of lawsuits brought by public officials and private citizens.
Recently, in fact, it was announced by North Carolina Attorney General Josh Stein that our state is likely to receive hundreds of millions of dollars because of a settlement of several of these lawsuits. And earlier this week, the Attorney General was kind enough to join me for an extended interview in which he laid out the details of the opioid settlement, as well as another settlement against a company that was pushing a dangerously addictive substance.

6. TEACHER OF THE YEAR

News and Views for November 3, 2021

Guest: Award-winning Nash- Rocky Mount middle school social studies teacher Rodney Pierce, N.C. Council for Social Studies Teacher of the Year

Many critics have rightfully observed that it's a manufactured controversy designed by national political operatives looking to fan and capitalize on irrational white fears, but whatever its origins, there is clearly a debate underway right now across North Carolina and the nation over how our schools teach kids about race and American history.

In the North Carolina General Assembly, Republican lawmakers have advanced legislation that seeks to micromanage the subject while, in some counties, local school boards have even gone so far as to enact rules that require teachers to inform their students that all people who contributed to American Society must be recognized as quote "reformists, innovators and heroes." Fortunately, most of our professional educators have been spared from such absurd and illogical directives and left mostly free to do what they're trained to do. One of those professionals is Rodney Pierce, an award-winning middle school social studies teacher in the Nash-Rocky Mount Public Schools and recently we sat down with Mr. Pierce, the N.C. Council for Social Studies Teacher of the year, also discusses teacher recruitment and retention and the impact of the unsettled Leandro school funding lawsuit.

7. INFRASTRUCTURE

News and Views for November 14TH, 2021

Guests: Congressman David Price, Congresswoman Deborah Ross, North Carolina Secretary of Transportation Eric Boyette and Wake Co. Commissioner Sig Hutchinson

While partisan gridlock is often the name of the game in Congress, we had a rare bit of bipartisanship and unity last week with the House's passage of a \$1.2 trillion infrastructure bill. Using Raleigh's Union Station as a backdrop, North Carolina leaders and elected officials gathered Monday to celebrate a win for the nation's crumbling roads and bridges, with a nod toward clean energy and public transit.

Congressman David Price – the dean of North Carolina's congressional delegation – said the bill was critical, because it reaches well beyond short-term solutions.

Congresswoman Deborah Ross called this a once-in-a-generation investment that is welcome news not only in the rural areas of our state, but the high-growth areas like the Triangle.

For decades, infrastructure in North Carolina has suffered from a systematic lack of investment. North Carolina Secretary of Transportation Eric Boyette said that will finally change because result of the new law.

8. STATE BUDGET

News and Views for November 21st, 2021

Guest: Rep. Ashton Wheeler Clemmons

After several years of gridlock and almost five months into the current fiscal year, North Carolina has a new state budget. Gov. Roy Cooper's decision to sign the latest proposal from Republican lawmakers – a bill in which, he said, "the good outweighs the bad" – removed the final roadblock.

Unfortunately, despite Cooper's tepid blessing and the fact that it does include some important and overdue items, the budget comes up short in several important areas.

Of course, for Democratic members of the legislature who were largely excluded from the budget writing process, this situation left them with some difficult choices to make and recently we sat down with one of those lawmakers, State Rep. Ashton Wheeler Clemmons of Guilford County.

9. COVID 19

News & Views for 11-29-2021

The world has endured a long spate of very dark days over the last 20-plus months as the COVID-19 pandemic has raged across the planet, but the rapid – many would say miraculous – development of effective vaccines during the last year, has obviously made huge and positive difference and laid the groundwork for the return to a measure of normalcy.

And while credit for this heartening progress is attributable to a host of talented and dedicated researchers working in an array of academic, government and corporate settings, one group that's made some real and important headway on this front in recent months is the team at The Duke Human Vaccine Institute.

In the coming days WRAL TV will debut a new and special program produced in collaboration with Duke that highlights the work of the Institute entitled "Our Best Shot." And recently, we got a chance to get a sneak preview from the program's producer, Clay Johnson.

10. NC DHHS

News and Views for December 1st, 2021

Guest: NC DHHS Sec. Dr. Mandy Cohen

Dr. Mandy Cohen, the leading voice of the state's COVID-19 response, will leave her post as Secretary of the NC Department of Health and Human Services at the end of this year. News of Cohen's departure was reported just hours before Tuesday's briefing with Gov. Roy Cooper and members of the Coronavirus Task Force. Dr. Cohen, who has two young daughters ages 7 and 9, has served as North Carolina's top health official since 2017.

"It has been the honor of a lifetime to serve this state at such an important moment in history," said Cohen. "I am so proud of what we have accomplished to improve the health and well-being of the state over the last five years. There is much work still to do, and I am so pleased the Governor selected Kody Kinsley to take the baton to run the next leg of this race."

Governor Roy Cooper praised Cohen's leadership and tireless work ethic in announcing her departure.

Cooper has named one of Cohen's top assistants, Kody Kinsley, to assume the role as secretary on January 1st. Kinsley is a Wilmington native who served in the U.S. Treasury Department under both Presidents Obama and Trump.

Additional Topics aired from News & Views

Guest: State Representative Graig Meyer

After years of gridlock, North Carolina finally has a new state budget. And while the new budget includes several things that were necessary to keep the state moving forward, including modest teacher and state employee raises and new funding to expand broadband and repair crumbling infrastructure, a lot of experts and advocates say it still comes up well short. One such individual is State Representative Graig Meyer of Orange and Caswell Counties and recently we caught up with Meyer to learn more about his concerns with the budget, as well as some of the other late-year legislation moving forward at the General Assembly, his reasons for seeking a seat in the state Senate in 2022, and the ongoing challenge to public health posed by misinformation about COVID-19 vaccines.

Guest: Lindsay Wagner, NC Public School Forum

As we heard during our earlier segment with State Rep. Graig Meyer, North Carolina's new state budget takes several necessary steps to keep K through 12 schools functioning, but in many respects, it comes up well short. A new report from the Public-School Forum of North Carolina serves to emphasize this point – particularly the yawning gaps between what the budget actually does and the actions a state court judge recently ordered lawmakers to take in the longstanding Leandro school funding case.

Earlier this week, we sat down with the Forum's Director of Communications, Lindsay Wagner, to learn more about these gaps and how researchers say our schools will continue to lag for years to come unless there's a change of course.

Guest: NC Policy Watch investigative reporter Joe Killian on the controversy surrounding Lt. Gov. Mark Robinson and the ongoing political efforts of the Christian right in anticipation of the 2022 elections.

Guest: And in a very special interview, we chat with author, scholar, and former U.S. Navy Commander Theodore Johnson

about his new book, "When the Stars Begin to Fall: Overcoming Racism and Renewing the Promise of America."

Guest: Bob Phillips, Executive director of Common Cause North Carolina

A decade ago, before they came to power, Republican politicians in North Carolina like then-Senate Minority Leader Phil Berger, along with conservative "think tanks" like the John Locke Foundation, happily partnered with good government groups like Common Cause to champion the enactment of nonpartisan redistricting that would be overseen by an independent commission.

Today, sadly, that talk is a distant memory and, as North Carolinians have born painful witness in recent days, redistricting in our state remains a corrupt and opaque process in which politicians draw gerrymandered maps behind closed doors that are rigged to elect large GOP majorities. Fortunately, despite this maddening trend, civil rights and good government groups are still waging a spirited battle for fair maps and have, once again, asked the courts to step in. And recently we got a chance to sit down with one of the leaders of that effort, Common Cause North Carolina executive director, Bob Phillips.

Guest: Meredith College political science Professor David McLennan
As is the case in most of the rest of the country, North Carolina women have made a great deal of headway in recent decades in winning elective office and filling other positions of leadership in government.

Unfortunately, as a team led by Meredith College political science Professor David McLennan documents in a new report entitled "The Status of Women in North Carolina Politics," there's still a long way to go – especially in the more rural and conservative sections of the state.

This week, we caught up with McLennan to review some of the report's key findings and as he told me, there are some things we can and should do to make relative gender equality a widespread and lasting component of our politics.

Guest: Senator Wiley Nickel

Over the last few decades, state and federal courts have repeatedly told North Carolina lawmakers that they must mend their ways and stop drawing gerrymandered electoral maps that disadvantage people of color and rig elections to guarantee victories for member of certain political parties.

Unfortunately, the message doesn't seem to have gotten through. Indeed, the latest maps crafted and approved by Republican majorities at the General Assembly are some of the most gerrymandered we've ever seen. Recently, to get a handle on this situation and how it came to pass, as well some of the other top policy debates on the front burner in the waning days of the 2021 legislative session, we got a chance to talk with a lawmaker who's been in the middle of these debates – Wake County state Senator Wiley Nickel.

Guest: North Carolina Justice Center's Education & Law Project Attorney Matt Ellinwood

Well, it's about time. That's the reaction a lot of North Carolinians have had to a recent order from a Superior Court judge in the 25-year-old Leandro lawsuit, directing state legislators to fund an initial \$1.75 billion installment toward bringing the state's broken public school system into compliance with the state constitution. Of course, as we discussed in our previous interview with Rep. Ashton Wheeler Clemmons, Republican legislative leaders have thus far refused to comply with the order – a step that's putting the state on course for a constitutional showdown between the legislative and judicial branches.

Recently, to get a better understanding of the judge's order, what it would do, and why it was so necessary, I talked to an advocate who's spent much of his career closely monitoring the case, the director of the North Carolina Justice Center's Education & Law Project, attorney Matt Ellinwood.