**Morning Press Clips: Thursday, May 26, 2016**

**TV COVERAGE**

[WNCT - 12:02pm - Loretta Lynch continues fight against HB2](http://mms.tveyes.com/PlaybackPortal.aspx?SavedEditID=2f35f564-d81e-47a9-8a94-f537d52e703a)

[WFMY - 12:04pm - NFL Commissioner doesn't agree with HB2](http://mms.tveyes.com/PlaybackPortal.aspx?SavedEditID=613a0b9a-1e84-419e-bc10-b5f2c41e2bda)

[WSOC - 12:25pm - Underage drinking task force](http://mms.tveyes.com/PlaybackPortal.aspx?SavedEditID=c9038e66-b8e6-436a-bd4e-685363ef6a4f)

[WRAL - 12:32pm - Coal Ash debate between legislators and Gov. McCrory](http://mms.tveyes.com/PlaybackPortal.aspx?SavedEditID=a64b33fd-b34b-4ef6-838f-5aafc8115096)

[WRAL - 4:15pm - Senate teacher pay proposal](http://mms.tveyes.com/PlaybackPortal.aspx?SavedEditID=1a109c25-9a85-431a-b8aa-de381e30afdb)

[WRAL - 4:30pm - Coal ash debate](http://mms.tveyes.com/PlaybackPortal.aspx?SavedEditID=0e8965fd-5fe6-4fcd-b829-a548f607b25f)

[News 14 - 4:09pm - Coal ash commission debate](http://mms.tveyes.com/PlaybackPortal.aspx?SavedEditID=101d66d8-8856-43a7-a342-0b660a30245e)

[News 14 - 5:07pm - Howard Clement passes away](http://mms.tveyes.com/PlaybackPortal.aspx?SavedEditID=e3ad4e10-b4bb-4315-ac63-ea49009dcf60)

[WCNC - 5:06pm - Richard Burr on HB2](http://mms.tveyes.com/PlaybackPortal.aspx?SavedEditID=51b2d646-a9f1-4018-ae8e-f7eb6816fecd)

[WGHP - 5:02pm - 11 states file lawsuit over transgender directive](http://mms.tveyes.com/PlaybackPortal.aspx?SavedEditID=d8bb9844-f936-419f-a18c-74afa6a2475d)

[WCTI - 5:07pm - Senate teacher pay proposal](http://mms.tveyes.com/PlaybackPortal.aspx?SavedEditID=7acfc3e6-51e2-409f-be63-dc70c9e49526)

[News 14 - 5:18pm - Click it or ticket](http://mms.tveyes.com/PlaybackPortal.aspx?SavedEditID=ecbc6e6e-40b1-43fe-845d-ce12981d4e28)

[WAVY - 5:32pm - Senate teacher pay proposal](http://mms.tveyes.com/PlaybackPortal.aspx?SavedEditID=a789c5c5-6694-4c52-85ae-7b1bcab57a3f)

[WLOS - 5:36pm - Senate teacher pay proposal](http://mms.tveyes.com/PlaybackPortal.aspx?SavedEditID=2dc5a6aa-07a0-42ee-a82b-e9db512507c1)

[WRAL - 5:44pm - Coal Ash oversight panel](http://mms.tveyes.com/PlaybackPortal.aspx?SavedEditID=42cc471a-e12a-4c4e-9756-de8376f1ca99)

[WNCT - 6:00pm - Legislators trying to legalize medical marijuana](http://mms.tveyes.com/PlaybackPortal.aspx?SavedEditID=7b635432-5faf-4bbb-a788-f9cd062ea192)

[WXII - 6:05pm - 11 states file lawsuit over transgender directive](http://mms.tveyes.com/PlaybackPortal.aspx?SavedEditID=80503f6b-9933-4325-9f48-13edd9295823)

[WNCT - 6:07pm - National Missing Children's day](http://mms.tveyes.com/PlaybackPortal.aspx?SavedEditID=fb413b13-ec4e-4f85-8b83-df9df835bc3d)

[WYFF - 6:10pm - PPP survey, most people think HB2 hurts state](http://mms.tveyes.com/PlaybackPortal.aspx?SavedEditID=e0fa99d2-1911-4697-bd2f-0968ee18d2b9)

[WBTV - 5:30pm - McCrory says he will veto coal ash panel bill](http://mms.tveyes.com/PlaybackPortal.aspx?SavedEditID=4a5af373-4ee6-418f-9a0d-6b2c16b71f3b)

[WGHP - 6:05pm - 11 states file lawsuit over transgender directive](http://mms.tveyes.com/PlaybackPortal.aspx?SavedEditID=c259f1f1-a357-4718-bf24-e3b978ff920f)

[WBTV - 6:13pm - Gov. McCrory's use of state plane](http://mms.tveyes.com/PlaybackPortal.aspx?SavedEditID=d2229bf7-0749-4794-9be9-0d0f05af09d1)

[WJZY - 6:18pm - 11 states file lawsuit over transgender directive](http://mms.tveyes.com/PlaybackPortal.aspx?SavedEditID=882392cf-fa52-45c1-b46e-cc7a7a05108c)

**ONLINE & PRINT COVERAGE**

*Misc.*

**Pisgah High students protest over 'bathroom bill,' bullying concerns**

BY REX HODGE

WLOS

<http://wlos.com/news/local/pisgah-high-students-protest-over-bathroom-bill-bullying-concerns>

**States Move Surprisingly Quickly in Suing Over Obama Transgender Policy**

by PETE WILLIAMS

NBC

<http://www.nbcnews.com/news/us-news/states-move-surprisingly-quickly-suing-over-obama-transgender-policy-n580506>

**Texas Leads 11 States in Lawsuit Against Federal Gov't Over Transgender Bathroom Directive**

By David Cawton

TWC News

<http://www.twcnews.com/tx/austin/politics/2016/05/25/texas-leads-11-states-in-lawsuit-against-federal-gov-t-over-transgender-bathroom-directive.html>

**'Secret' election on June 7 could tip scales of justice**

by Beth Velliquette

Daily Reflector

<http://www.reflector.com/News/2016/05/26/Secret-election-on-June-7-could-tip-scales-of-justice.html>

**LGBT ADVOCATES TAKE PERSONAL MESSAGES TO LAWMAKERS**

By Elaina Athans

WTVD

<http://abc11.com/politics/lgbt-advocates-take-personal-messages-to-lawmakers/1356033/>

**High-profile group wants to quell HB2 furor**

By Mark Binker and Adam Owens

WRAL

<http://www.wral.com/high-profile-group-wants-to-quell-hb2-furor/15728402/>

**Under Unwanted HB2 Spotlight, Some NC Businesses Promote Inclusivity**

By JORGE VALENCIA

WCQS

<http://wcqs.org/post/under-unwanted-hb2-spotlight-some-nc-businesses-promote-inclusivity#stream/0>

**Sen. Richard Burr: Legislature 'Botched' HB2**

By Jenna Barnes

TWC News

<http://www.twcnews.com/nc/charlotte/politics/2016/05/25/sen--richard-burr--legislature--botched--hb2.html>

**KKK HB2 RECRUITMENT FLIERS SPARK CONCERN IN ROXBORO**

By Tim Pulliam

WTVD

<http://abc11.com/politics/kkk-hb2-recruitment-fliers-spark-concern-in-roxboro/1356219/>

**High-profile group forming to search for HB2 fix**

McClatchy Regional News Service

<http://www.journalnow.com/news/state_region/high-profile-group-forming-to-search-for-hb-fix/article_9826a497-124f-5af5-a087-ee45e2ff53af.html>

**Tarte: HB2 raises questions of authority, privacy**

by Carrie C. Causey

The Herald Weekly

<http://www.huntersvilleherald.com/news/2016/5/26/15214/tarte-hb2-raises-questions-of-authority-privacy>

**Did losing PayPal over HB2 really cost Charlotte $285 million?**

BY STEVE HARRISON

Charlotte Observer

<http://www.charlotteobserver.com/news/politics-government/article79925922.html>

**Coal ash commission bill clears state House, McCrory threatens veto**

WECT

<http://www.wect.com/story/32066814/coal-ash-commission-bill-clears-state-house-mccrory-threatens-veto>

**SENATE GOP PROPOSES LARGER NC TEACHER PAY PLAN THAN HOUSE, MCCRORY**

By Heather Waliga

WTVD

<http://abc11.com/politics/senate-leaders-propose-major-boost-to-teacher-pay/1355334/>

**House votes to keep feds from withholding funds to NC over HB2**

BY GREG GORDON

McClatchy

<http://www.charlotteobserver.com/news/politics-government/article79960087.html>

**"My Right To Pee": Transgender woman takes selfie in woman's bathroom**

WJZY

<http://www.fox46charlotte.com/news/local-news/145122465-story>

**I-42, I-87 designated to run through Eastern North Carolina**

By Ken Watling

WNCT

<http://wnct.com/2016/05/25/i-42-i-87-designated-to-run-through-eastern-north-carolina/>

**Republicans offer options to revise HB2**

Wilson Times

[http://wilsontimes.com/stories/Republicans-offer-options-to-revise-HB2,67282](http://wilsontimes.com/stories/Republicans-offer-options-to-revise-HB2%2C67282)

**McCrory Threatens Veto After Coal Ash Bill Passes House**

By DAVID BORAKS

WFAE

<http://wfae.org/post/mccrory-threatens-veto-after-coal-ash-bill-passes-house>

**HOWARD CLEMENT, 1934-2016: Beloved Bull City civic, civil rights icon passes away**

by Colin Warren-Hicks

Herald Sun

<http://www.heraldsun.com/news/howard-clement---beloved-bull-city-civic-civil-rights/article_661c89d4-22a6-11e6-9c93-433be086548c.html>

**Coal ash bill reignites fight over commission, cleanup**

By Joe Killian

News & Record

<http://www.greensboro.com/news/local_news/coal-ash-bill-reignites-fight-over-commission-cleanup/article_7c34cea3-d417-5c53-b3fb-21b9f12ea67d.html>

**Coal ash commission, drinking water bill clears House**

AP

<http://www.wmbfnews.com/story/32065384/coal-ash-commission-drinking-water-bill-clears-house>

**Clean water solution could be on tap for families with contaminated wells**

By Brody O'Connell

WBTV

<http://www.wdam.com/story/32063734/clean-water-solution-could-be-on-tap-for-families-with-contaminated-wells>

**Cooper to tech entrepreneurs: Help fix state government**

BY BRYAN ANDERSON

N&O

<http://www.newsobserver.com/news/politics-government/politics-columns-blogs/under-the-dome/article79959342.html>

**Audit of NC's IT department shows gaps in protecting data**

by: Brittney Johnson

WSOC

<http://www.wsoctv.com/news/local/audit-of-ncs-it-department-shows-gaps-in-protecting-data/302712436>

**NCGOP launches veterans task force**

BY JIM MORRILL

Charlotte Observer

<http://www.charlotteobserver.com/news/politics-government/article79890157.html>

**Despite veto threat, House approves coal ash legislation**

By GARY D. ROBERTSON

Associated Press

<http://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2016/may/25/coal-ash-commission-drinking-water-bill-clears-hou/>

**NC coal ash bill on collision course with Gov. Pat McCrory**

BY CRAIG JARVIS

N&O

<http://www.newsobserver.com/news/politics-government/state-politics/article79925257.html>

**In Depth: Current Military Events in NC**

TWC News

<http://www.twcnews.com/nc/triangle-sandhills/salute-to-our-troops/2016/05/25/in-depth--current-military-events-in-nc.html>

**DOT pushes ahead with restructuring, staff reductions despite House objections**

By Mark Binker

WRAL

<http://www.wral.com/dot-pushes-ahead-with-restructuring-staff-reductions-despite-house-objections/15727589/>

**Future interstate highway names approved**

BY BRUCE SICELOFF

N&O
<http://www.newsobserver.com/news/traffic/road-worrier-blog/article79890487.html>

**Local restaurant owners say business has slowed since HB2**

BY FRANK KRACHER

WLOS

<http://wlos.com/news/local/local-restaurant-owners-say-hb2-is-bad-for-business>

**McCrory: Connect teachers to business**

BY BRYAN ANDERSON

N&O

<http://www.newsobserver.com/news/politics-government/state-politics/article79886342.html>

**NC House passes new coal ash cleanup bill**

By Jonathan Rodriguez

WNCN

<http://wncn.com/2016/05/25/nc-house-passes-new-coal-ash-cleanup-bill/>

**Legislators tweak special property tax districts to empower property owners**

BY COLIN CAMPBELL

N&O

<http://www.newsobserver.com/news/politics-government/politics-columns-blogs/under-the-dome/article79871137.html>

**School board to address HB2 issue at Thursday, May 26 meeting**

by Greg Childress

Herald Sun

<http://www.heraldsun.com/news/school-board-to-address-hb-issue-at-thursday-may-meeting/article_d59ce80c-22bb-11e6-a307-479bc9894db0.html>

**N.C. House revives coal ash oversight panel**

BY BRUCE HENDERSON

Charlotte Observer

<http://www.charlotteobserver.com/news/local/article79881057.html>

**Black NC faith leaders: 'We agree with God' on controversial HB2**

by Latisha Catchitoorian

Charlotte Post

<http://www.thecharlottepost.com/news/2016/05/25/local-state/black-nc-faith-leaders-we-agree-with-god-on-controversial-hb2/>

**Joe Walsh playing North Carolina, under protest**

BY DAVID MENCONI

N&O

<http://www.newsobserver.com/entertainment/music-news-reviews/on-the-beat-blog/article79856462.html>

**Coal ash commission, drinking water bill clears House**

AP

<http://www.wxii12.com/news/Coal-ash-commission-drinking-water-bill-clears-House/39724806>

**DuPont Forest may get money for improvements, workers**

by Mark Barrett

Citizen Times

<http://www.citizen-times.com/story/news/local/2016/05/25/dupont-forest-may-get-money-improvements-workers/84912494/>

**City Council still hoping to resolve impasse over HB2**

by Rad Berky

WCNC

<http://www.wcnc.com/news/politics/hb2/city-council-still-hoping-to-resolve-impasse-over-hb2/214954766>

**High-profile group forming to find a fix for HB2 impasse**

BY JIM MORRILL

Charlotte Observer

<http://www.charlotteobserver.com/news/politics-government/article79864802.html>

**State Lawmakers Consider New Coal Ash Panel Bill**

By Linnie Supall

TWC News

<http://www.twcnews.com/nc/triangle-sandhills/politics/2016/05/25/state-lawmakers-consider-new-coal-ash-panel-bill.html>

**Senate Republicans propose big teacher pay hike**

BY LYNN BONNER

N&O

<http://www.newsobserver.com/news/politics-government/article79852707.html>

**Records show McCrory's frequent use of state plane to fly home**

By Nick Ochsner

WBTV

<http://www.wbtv.com/story/32064688/records-show-mccrorys-frequent-use-of-state-plane-to-fly-home>

**BRAD PAISLEY WRITES PARODY SONG ABOUT HB2 ON 'JIMMY KIMMEL LIVE'**

WTVD

<http://abc11.com/entertainment/brad-paisley-writes-parody-song-about-nc-bathroom-bill/1355465/>

**Low tuition plan for UNC advances in legislative committees**

BY JANE STANCILL

N&O

<http://www.newsobserver.com/news/local/education/article79826322.html>

**A GOP Budget Bargaining Chip: Teacher Pay**

By JEFF TIBERII

WUNC

<http://wunc.org/post/gop-budget-bargaining-chip-teacher-pay#stream/0>

**Texas Suing Over Obama’s Transgender Directive**

AP

<http://dfw.cbslocal.com/2016/05/25/texas-suing-over-obamas-transgender-directive/>

**11 states sue US government over transgender bathroom policy**

By RNN Staff

<http://www.wbtv.com/story/32064042/11-states-sue-us-government-over-transgender-bathroom-policy>

**11 states file suit against Obama administration for bathroom policy**

BY TERESA WELSH

McClatchy

<http://www.newsobserver.com/latest-news/article79831807.html>

**11 STATES SUE OVER FEDERAL TRANSGENDER DIRECTIVE**

By PAUL J. WEBER

AP

<http://abc11.com/politics/11-states-sue-over-federal-transgender-directive/1355523/>

**Bill would cut tuition at five UNC schools, guarantee rates at other 11**

By Matthew Burns and Mark Binker

WRAL

<http://www.wral.com/bill-would-cut-tuition-at-five-unc-schools-guarantee-rates-at-other-11/15727579/>

**LGBT youth group in Rio Grande Valley to protest Abbott’s support of HB2**

Dallas Voice

<http://www.dallasvoice.com/lgbt-youth-group-rio-grande-valley-protest-abbotts-support-hb2-10220306.html>

**Singer Brad Paisley mocks HB2 on Jimmy Kimmel**

BY KATHERINE PERALTA

Charlotte Observer

<http://www.charlotteobserver.com/entertainment/article79828227.html>

**Conservative 'Southern Strategy' adapted to NC HB2 fight**

by Gary D. Robertson

The Associated Press

<http://www.thecharlottepost.com/news/2016/05/25/local-state/conservative-southern-strategy-adapted-to-nc-hb2-fight/>

**11 states sue US government over transgender bathroom policy**

Reuters

<http://www.aol.com/article/2016/05/25/11-states-sue-us-government-over-transgender-bathroom-policy/21383734/>

**Eleven states sue Obama administration over transgender bathroom directive**

By Emma Margolin

MSNBC

<http://www.msnbc.com/msnbc/texas-sue-obama-administration-over-transgender-bathroom-directive>

**LGBT Battle Underscores the Powerlessness of Being Governor in North Carolina**

BY ALAN GREENBLATT

Governing

<http://www.governing.com/topics/politics/gov-north-carolina-governor-mccrory.html?utm_term=LGBT+Battle+Underscores+the+Powerlessness+of+Being+Governor+in+North+Carolina&utm_campaign=LGBT+Battle+Underscores+the+Powerlessness+of+Being+Governor+in+North+Carolina&utm_content=email&utm_source=Act-On+Software&utm_medium=email>

**New plan could raise pay for North Carolina teachers**

BY BECCA MITCHELL

WTKR

<http://wtkr.com/2016/05/25/new-plan-could-raise-pay-for-north-carolina-teachers/>

**Transgender advocates again call for repeal of HB2**

By Emma Wright

WNCN

<http://wncn.com/2016/05/25/transgender-advocates-again-call-for-repeal-of-hb2/>

**GOP’s Burr has ‘issues’ with HB2, predicts law will change**

WNCN

<http://wncn.com/2016/05/25/richard-burr-has-issues-with-hb2-predicts-law-will-change/>

**HB2: Transgender student bathroom concerns at Pisgah High School**

By Rex Hodge

<http://wlos.com/news/local/impacts-of-north-carolinas-house-bill-2-felt-at-pisgah-high-school>

**Under Unwanted HB2 Spotlight, Some NC Businesses Promote Inclusivity**

By JORGE VALENCIA

WUNC

<http://wunc.org/post/under-unwanted-hb2-spotlight-some-nc-businesses-promote-inclusivity#stream/0>

**Advocates push for Medicaid expansion**

BY DAN BOYLAN

N&O

<http://www.newsobserver.com/news/politics-government/state-politics/article79781587.html>

**Driving change at NC DMV: Increased service and online renewals**

Bladen Journal

<http://bladenjournal.com/news/6063/driving-change-at-nc-dmv-increased-service-and-online-renewals>

**Senate GOP pitches teacher raise plan**

By Mark Binker

WRAL

<http://www.wral.com/senate-gop-pitches-teacher-raise-plan/15727231/>

**Five things to know from the NFL’s annual spring meeting in Charlotte**

BY JOSEPH PERSON

Charlotte Observer

<http://www.charlotteobserver.com/sports/nfl/carolina-panthers/article79770677.html>

**Brad Paisley wrote a song making fun of North Carolina’s transgender bathroom law**

By Team Fix

Washington Post

<https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/the-fix/wp/2016/05/25/brad-paisley-wrote-a-song-making-fun-of-north-carolinas-transgender-bathroom-law/>

**Senate GOP would pay teachers more than House, McCrory**

By GARY D. ROBERTSON

Associated Press

<http://www.wral.com/senate-gop-talks-teacher-pay-plan-above-house-mccrory/15727391/>

**NC Senate plan would raise average teacher pay to nearly $55K**

By WNCN Staff

<http://wncn.com/2016/05/25/nc-senate-leaders-to-unveil-teacher-pay-plan-today/>

**Teacher pay takes center stage at NC General Assembly**

By WNCN Staff

<http://wncn.com/2016/05/25/nc-senate-leaders-to-unveil-teacher-pay-plan-today/>

**More of Klumac to close for bridge replacement**

Salisbury Post

<http://www.salisburypost.com/2016/05/25/more-of-klumac-to-close-for-bridge-replacement/>

**Hornets: HB2-related cancellations at Time Warner Cable Arena are bad for business**

BY KATHERINE PERALTA

Charlotte Observer

<http://www.charlotteobserver.com/news/business/article79740797.html>

**Queens Bring RuPaul's Drag Race To Durham**

By LEONEDA INGE

WUNC

<http://wunc.org/post/queens-bring-rupauls-drag-race-durham#stream/0>

**BofA CEO Moynihan talks HB2, millennials, market share strategy in Raleigh**

by Lauren K. Ohnesorge

Triangle Business Journal

<http://www.bizjournals.com/triangle/news/2016/05/25/bofa-ceo-moynihan-talks-hb2-millennials-market.html>

**Sen. Richard Burr: HB2 ‘too expansive’**

BY JIM MORRILL

Charlotte Observer

<http://www.charlotteobserver.com/news/politics-government/article79751622.html>

*Opinion/Blogs*

**Bill Back-Tracking Duke Energy Coal Ash Cleanup is Moving Through the Legislature**

by Jane Porter

Indy Week

<http://www.indyweek.com/news/archives/2016/05/25/bill-back-tracking-duke-energy-coal-ash-cleanup-is-moving-through-the-legislature>

**Legislators Defy McCrory, DEQ Over Coal Ash Cleanup Plans**

By Catherine Clabby

North Carolina Health News

<http://www.northcarolinahealthnews.org/2016/05/25/legislators-defy-mccrory-deq-over-coal-ash-cleanup-plans/>

**Beware the Militant Queers**

Indy Week

<http://www.indyweek.com/indyweek/beware-the-militant-queers/Content?oid=5034754>

**Even Richard Burr is now openly criticizing HB2**

By Rob Schofield

Progressive Pulse

<http://pulse.ncpolicywatch.org/2016/05/25/even-richard-burr-is-now-openly-criticizing-hb2/>

**On HB2, warning signs abound, but state leaders just keep on driving**

By Allan Freyer

Jefferson Post

<http://jeffersonpost.com/opinion/3833/on-hb2-warning-signs-abound-but-state-leaders-just-keep-on-driving>

**Letter: In words of legislators, HB2 is common sense**

Citizen Times

<http://www.citizen-times.com/story/opinion/readers/2016/05/25/letter-words-legislators-hb-common-sense/84906398/>

**Guest columnist: Asheville’s independent restaurant owners speak out on HB2**

by Elizabeth Button

Citizen Times

<http://www.citizen-times.com/story/opinion/contributors/2016/05/25/guest-columnist-ashevilles-independent-restaurant-owners-speak-hb/84906462/>

**The Failed Scheme To Blame Charlotte’s LGBT Protections For HB2’s Consequences**

BY ZACK FORD

Think Progress

<http://thinkprogress.org/lgbt/2016/05/25/3781719/charlotte-chamber-hb2/>

**The HRC went too far with its ‘anti-LGBT bully’ label**

BY PETER ST. ONGE

Charlotte Observer

<http://www.charlotteobserver.com/opinion/opn-columns-blogs/peter-st-onge/article79795327.html>

**On HB2, our Attorney General seems more interested in making the law than enforcing it**

BY JAZZ SHAW

Hot Air

<http://hotair.com/archives/2016/05/25/on-hb2-our-attorney-general-seems-more-interested-in-making-the-law-than-enforcing-it/>

**Transgender North Carolinians, Family and Friends Speak Out in Charlotte to Repeal HB2**

By Ryan Wilson

HRC

<http://www.hrc.org/blog/transgender-north-carolinians-family-and-friends-speak-out-in-charlotte-to>

**Letter writer: HB2 affects employee rights and more**

Mountain Xpress

<https://mountainx.com/opinion/letter-writer-hb2-affects-employee-rights-and-more/>

**Mayor Roberts should be commended**

Charlotte Observer

<http://www.charlotteobserver.com/opinion/letters-to-the-editor/article79881817.html>

**The message HB2 sends to our kids**

BY SABINE SCHOENBACH

N&O

<http://www.newsobserver.com/opinion/op-ed/article79877072.html>

**At Lobby Day in Raleigh, Transgender North Carolinians Share Their Stories**

by Ryan Wilson

HRC

<http://www.hrc.org/blog/transgender-north-carolinians-family-and-friends-gather-for-day-of-advocacy>

**Promising signs on teacher pay at legislature**

BY ALAN E. GANT JR.

Charlotte Observer

<http://www.charlotteobserver.com/opinion/op-ed/article79877712.html>

**Saunders: Who gets to decide what’s a civil rights issue and what isn’t?**

BY BARRY SAUNDERS

N&O

<http://www.newsobserver.com/news/local/news-columns-blogs/barry-saunders/article79914732.html#storylink=cpy>

**N.C. leaders acting like outsiders they are**

News & Record

<http://www.greensboro.com/opinion/letters_to_editor/n-c-leaders-acting-like-outsiders-they-are/article_5033afec-6149-503b-a1f7-de65e5ca2e5e.html>

**Chris Heavener and Sam Ratto: Small businesses hurt by HB2**

N&O

<http://www.newsobserver.com/opinion/letters-to-the-editor/article79868877.html>

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**Pisgah High students protest over 'bathroom bill,' bullying concerns**

BY REX HODGE

WLOS

<http://wlos.com/news/local/pisgah-high-students-protest-over-bathroom-bill-bullying-concerns>

WLOS — CANTON, N.C. -- North Carolina's so-called "bathroom bill" is sparking heated reaction at a mountain high school.

Students at Pisgah High clashed Wednesday over the law which directs transgender people to use public bathrooms aligning with their birth certificate gender.

A Pisgah student used a bathroom opposite to their biological gender. School leaders said they agreed that student would use an individual bathroom. But the issue led to students on both sides of the issue to protest.

Many said a male student should not use a female bathroom.

"I don't have anything against gays, like, I just don't want, like, someone with different parts in the same bathroom, because you never know what could happen," Pisgah student April Pilcher said.

"People were saying it was bullying. But it really wasn't. All it was was we were just saying he shouldn't be in the same bathroom as us," says Mikayla Rogers.

School district leaders say students have a right to voice their opinions, but not disrupt instruction. They say they focus on safety for all, but say it's difficult when politics get involved.

"The problem that we're having now has been stirred up on social media. They've been stirring up individuals and groups who want to make it a political battle at a school," Haywood County Schools Associate Superintendent Bill Nolte said.

"In terms of students expressing their views, they can do that," he said. "But there's a difference between expressing views and intentionally causing a disruption."

Students who support the student at the center of the debate say the student gets bullied in the boys restroom and feels unwelcome at the school. They say they did not come to school Wednesday out of safety concerns.

**States Move Surprisingly Quickly in Suing Over Obama Transgender Policy**

by PETE WILLIAMS

NBC

<http://www.nbcnews.com/news/us-news/states-move-surprisingly-quickly-suing-over-obama-transgender-policy-n580506>

Less than two weeks after the Obama administration told the nation's public schools that they must honor the choices of transgender students, 11 states filed a lawsuit in federal court Wednesday to block the directive.

The ACLU labeled the lawsuit "a political stunt," and some legal experts said it was filed too soon, though they add the issue is soon to be properly heard before the courts.

Led by Texas, the states said the federal government is turning schools and workplaces "into laboratories for a massive social experiment" and "running roughshod over commonsense policies protecting children and basic privacy rights."

Eight of the other states on the lawsuit are led by Republican governors — Alabama, Arizona, Georgia, Maine, Oklahoma, Tennessee, Wisconsin, and Utah. The other two have Democratic governors — Louisiana and West Virginia.

They're asking a federal judge to invalidate a Department of Education notice to schools that they must honor a student's declared gender identity. And the states challenge a memo from the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission advising employers that denying employees access to a restroom corresponding to their gender identity amounts to illegal sex discrimination.

"Schools are facing the potential loss of school funding for simply following common-sense policies that protect their students," said Texas Attorney General Ken Paxton.

The lawsuit says that while civil rights laws governing schools and employers outlaw sex discrimination, the laws refer only "to one's biological sex, as male or female, and not the radical re-authoring of the term not being foisted upon Americans by the collective efforts" of the federal government.

But the ACLU's James Esseks called the lawsuit an attack on transgender people.

"The Supreme Court has made clear that one cannot sue an agency just because you disagree with the agency's guidance," he said. "If these attorneys general disagree with the agency's interpretation of what the federal ban on sex discrimination means, they can make that argument to the court when it arises in a real case."

PlayParents of transgender child weigh in on bathroom debate Facebook Twitter Google Plus Embed

 Parents of transgender child weigh in on bathroom debate 7:22

For now, Esseks added, "there have been no disruptions, increases in public safety incidents, or invasions of privacy related to protections for transgender people." And he said federal courts and agencies have long recognized that the ban on sex discrimination includes protections for transgender people.

Some legal experts agree that the states went to court too soon.

But they say there may soon come a time when the states have an example of a concrete action they have to take or a claim that they are in imminent danger of losing federal funds, which would constitute a proper lawsuit.

**Texas Leads 11 States in Lawsuit Against Federal Gov't Over Transgender Bathroom Directive**

By David Cawton

TWC News

<http://www.twcnews.com/tx/austin/politics/2016/05/25/texas-leads-11-states-in-lawsuit-against-federal-gov-t-over-transgender-bathroom-directive.html>

AUSTIN, Texas -- Texas is suing the federal government, again.

The state is leading an 11-state coalition that's suing the U.S. Department of Education and the Department of Justice regarding their directives on allowing transgender students to use the bathroom of their choice.

"It represents just the latest example of the current administration's attempt, to accomplish by executive fiat, what they couldn't accomplish democratically through congress," said Paxton at a news conference, Wednesday.

The 32-page lawsuit, filed Wednesday in a Wichita Falls-based U.S. District Court, includes 10 other states, and the Harrold ISD, which is near Wichita Falls.

The Harrold ISD Superintendent, David Thweatt told reporters his school district has about 100 students, none of whom are transgender to his knowledge.

His district adopted a policy Monday that only allows students to access bathrooms that correspond to the sex listed on their birth certificate -- the opposite of the federal guidelines.

"Washington's mandate doesn't fit our schools so we are suing to keep the federal government out of our children's locker rooms and restrooms," said Thweatt who was at Wednesday's press conference in Austin.

He said the federal guidelines put students in danger.

Claire Bow with the Transgender Education Network of Texas says that argument misses the point.

"We have been going to the appropriate restrooms for a very long time and it's never caused a problem," said Bow, an Austin Lawyer.

She explains that it's hard enough growing up transgender without dealing with discriminatory policies at school.

Bow says kids just want to be themselves, "Having something like this as a trans student, where you're just trying to figure yourself out, is devastating."

Here in Texas, Paxton is just the latest Republican to speak out on all inclusive bathrooms.

At a press conference on May 13, Lt. Gov. Dan Patrick told Time Warner Cable News that, "The President does not know the line he crossed this time," in regards to the federal guidelines.

Other leading Republicans, including Texas Gov. Greg Abbott and Sen. Ted Cruz praised the lawsuit.

**'Secret' election on June 7 could tip scales of justice**

by Beth Velliquette

Daily Reflector

<http://www.reflector.com/News/2016/05/26/Secret-election-on-June-7-could-tip-scales-of-justice.html>

WILLIAMSTON — A primary election called “one of the best kept secrets in North Carolina” on June 7 could tip the balance of the N.C. Supreme Court, and Republicans met near Williamston on Tuesday to urge their voters to spread the word about the importance of the primary.

The N.C. Republican Party held a judicial candidates forum at Deadwood Restaurant, southeast of Williamston, to introduce conservative judicial candidates to about 60 people who attended the dinner.

One of the candidates at the forum, Robert H. “Bob” Edmunds, is the incumbent and is running to keep his seat on the N.C. Supreme Court. He is running against Michael R. “Mike” Morgan, Daniel Robertson and Sabra Jean Faires.

Although the race is nonpartisan, Edmunds is considered the Republican candidate, and Morgan and Robertson are considered the Democratic candidates. Faires is considered an independent candidate.

“Nobody knows there is an election coming up in the next few weeks, and it is a critical election because my good friend Bob Edmunds is running for reelection,” said A.J. Daoud, former chairman of the N.C. GOP 6th Congressional District. Daoud served as master of ceremonies at the the dinner.

“The balance of the state supreme court hangs on the balance on the conservative side by one,” Daoud said.

During the primary, voters will be able to vote for one of the four candidates on the ballot, and the two candidates who receive the most votes will move on and run against each other in the November election.

That means two candidates will be eliminated, and if one of them is Edmunds, the balance of the N.C. Supreme Court could tip to the liberal side.

“Trust me, the election on June 7 is as important as the one in November,” said Garry Terry, chairman of the N.C. Republican Party 1st Congressional District. ”We’ve got to make sure we can hold the Supreme Court.”

Edmunds spoke to the crowd and said the primary is ”one of the best kept secrets in North Carolina.”

The ballot will not tell voters much except the names of the candidates since it is a nonpartisan ballot, so people should know something about the candidates before they go into the voting booth, Edmunds said.

“I need your vote,” he said.

Other judicial candidates at the dinner included Valerie Zachary, who was appointed to the N.C. Court of Appeals last July, and Hunter Murphy.

Zachary, an incumbent Republican running for the N.C. Court of Appeals, is running against Rickye McKoy-Mitchell, a district court judge in Mecklenburg County.

Zachary told the group that the N.C. Court of Appeals currently has nine Republicans and five Democrats, and one vacant seat up for grabs.

If the Republicans keep their seats and the vacant seat is filled by Republican candidate Hunter Murphy, that would give the Republicans a 10 to 5 majority on the Court of Appeals, Zachary said. That means the odds are good that for every three-judge panel that decides a case, two of the three will be Republicans, she said.

Murphy is running against John Arrowood, who served on the Court of Appeals from 2007 through 2008. They are running to fill the seat being vacated by Judge Martha Geer, who is returning to private practice.

Other candidates who appeared at the dinner included Powell Dew Jr., who is the 1st District candidate for U.S. Congress and Chuck Stuber, candidate for state auditor.

Another candidate, Buck Newton, is running for N.C. Attorney General against Democratic candidate Josh Stein. One of them will replace Attorney General Roy Cooper, who is running for governor.

Newton, a N.C. Senator for the 11th District, told the group that he was involved in writing the HB2 bill, saying it was the right thing to do.

Someone in the crowed yelled, ”Amen.”

Newton said that when he became a senator, he didn’t think they would be talking about where people go to the bathroom.

“I can’t believe we’re talking about it, but we are because Roy Cooper and the crazy left wing of Charlotte and around the country have decided to make North Carolina an example,” Newton said. ”That’s their goal. It hurt our state.”

The liberals have hurt the state for their own political ambitions, he said.

Newton told those gathered that if they thought Cooper was bad, they should take a look at Stein, the Democratic candidate for attorney general.

“One of my good friends said, ’We’re going to have Eric Holder with a John Edwards accent if we let Josh Stein be elected as our attorney general,’” Newton said.

Daoud agreed and said Stein is raising millions of dollars for his campaign.

“Get your wallets out tonight and give these people money,” Daoud said. “Otherwise we’re going to lose these races.”

Stein also has served in the N.C. State Senate, representing District 16.

Entertainment at the dinner was provided by Donnie Weaver of Rocky Mount, who was the lead singer for the band, The O’Kaysions. He sang its hit single from 1968, ”I’m a Girl Watcher.”

In Pitt County, early voting for the June 7 primary begins today at Alice Keene Park at 4561 County Home Road from 9 a.m. to 6 p.m.

**LGBT ADVOCATES TAKE PERSONAL MESSAGES TO LAWMAKERS**

By Elaina Athans

WTVD

<http://abc11.com/politics/lgbt-advocates-take-personal-messages-to-lawmakers/1356033/>

RALEIGH (WTVD) -- Transgender woman Angela Bridgman arrived at the legislature Wednesday on a mission to get her message across to House Bill 2 supporters. She visited a number of lawmakers.

"I belong in this state, no matter what anybody says," she explained to Sen. Buck Newton's receptionist. "Nothing bad ever happened."

Wednesday was LGBT Advocacy Day at the General Assembly. Opponents of House Bill 2 took a personal approach bringing their stories straight to lawmakers.

"They don't understand the impact of what they do on real people," Bridgman said.

The mom of a transgender teen pleaded with lawmakers to repeal the law.

"I'm asking for all North Carolinians to be respected and protected," Jean Duwve said.

A Republican congressman is also blasting HB2. United States Sen. Richard Burr said he has "issues" with the legislation.

Burr told the Huffington Post, "the legislature botched what they were trying to do" and the bill "was far too expansive."

Democrats are surprised Burr is taking this position.

"I'm sure that the pressure is building on him as well," said Rep. Chris Sgro, who is also the Executive Director of Equality NC. "The economic harm has been so great, I'm sure in Washington -- with his role in the US Senate -- that's he's hearing from companies asking 'What the heck is your state doing?' "

ABC11 reached out to Burr's spokesperson, but his office has not responded.

HB2 was designed to block a Charlotte non-discrimination ordinance, part of which allowed transgender people to use bathrooms and locker rooms of the gender they identify with. The state law requires people to use the restroom according to their biological sex listed on their birth certificate in government buildings, schools, and universities. The law also excludes lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people from anti-discrimination protections and blocks municipalities from adopting their own anti-discrimination and living wage rules.

**High-profile group wants to quell HB2 furor**

By Mark Binker and Adam Owens

WRAL

<http://www.wral.com/high-profile-group-wants-to-quell-hb2-furor/15728402/>

RALEIGH, N.C. — A group of high-profile non-government leaders hope to spark a conversation and perhaps legislative changes to House Bill 2, which has roiled the state's political waters and spawned multiple lawsuits over the past two months.

The group would be led by former Lt. Gov. Dennis Wicker, a Democrat, and Raleigh businessman Art Pope, a prominent Republican donor who served as Gov. Pat McCrory's budget director. John Hood, a leader in North Carolina's conservative circles, is also helping to organize the effort, and former Republican Gov. Jim Martin has agreed to serve as one of several honorary chairmen.

"That is what I proposed. That we say we are going to lay down our weapons here for a while and give all of us a chance to talk together and try to learn a little something," Martin said.

Hood said the group hopes to tap around a dozen people from different walks of life, such as school leaders, businessmen and advocates on either side of the issue.

"North Carolina is a place of very opinionated people who disagree often, but this can show we're willing to talk about it," Hood said.

If successful, he said, the working group would forge at least some legal fixes that might tamp down opposition to the bill. On other topics related to House Bill 2, he said, they may have to settle for lowering the level of vitriol in the dialogue.

In an interview with WRAL News last week, Martin said that he hoped all sides could take a step back from the rhetoric surrounding the bill.

"That is what I propose, that we say we are going to lay down our weapons here for a while and give all of us a chance to talk together and try to learn a little something," Martin said.

Nationally, House Bill 2 is known as the "bathroom bill." It reversed a Charlotte nondiscrimination ordinance that would have required local businesses to allow transgender individuals to use the bathroom or locker room of their choosing. The state law now says businesses can set their own policies, but for publicly owned changing facilities and restrooms – whether in a public school, university, state facility or city-owned pool – people must use the locker room corresponding with the sex noted on their birth certificate.

"The Democratic majority on the City Council didn't give a hoot what the conservatives were concerned about. They were going to do what they were doing to do," Martin said.

However, the bill goes further. It establishes the first statewide nondiscrimination law but specifically excludes gay and transgender people from those protections and prohibits cities and counties from adding LGBT protections in many instances. It also ends wrongful termination lawsuits in state court, meaning that people suing employers for age, sex, race and other forms of discrimination must use the more costly and time-limited federal system.

"Here come a bunch of amendments to take away access to the courts, to do this, to do that, and it just became a debacle that has become very embarrassing and damaging to the state's economy," Martin said.

The bill has drawn national opprobrium, sparking concert cancelations, late-night talk show gibes, outrage from business leaders and lawsuits, including a U.S. Department of Justice discrimination suit against the state and the University of North Carolina system. The true economic costs are hard to pin down, but Martin said last week that the tit-for-tat between the state and City of Charlotte had cost North Carolin in reputation and commerce.

The Charlotte City Council and state lawmakers have been in something of a standoff, each apparently waiting for the other to take the first move. That first move almost came Monday night when the council talked about repealing its ordinance. It backed off that vote, and top lawmakers said this week that action by Charlotte would have to be a precursor to any major rewrite of the controversial parts of the state law.

"You can't really wait for an initial show of good faith," Hood said. "There needs to be some high-level discussion immediately."

Hood said the working group he is helping to assemble could potentially come up with some agreed-upon fixes that people on both sides of the issue could agree with. For the issues that can't be negotiated, he said, there could at least be conversation and a better understanding of both sides' points of view.

He said a locally negotiated solution was preferable to waiting for courts to settle the matter because litigation can take years of arguments and appeals before it is finally settled.

"I'm not sure we can wait," Hood said.

Although both sides may not agree on everything, Martin said it is important that people start talking to each other again.

"I have not heard a better solution for something to do right now, to put a stop to all the anguish we are going through," he said.

Read more at http://www.wral.com/high-profile-group-wants-to-quell-hb2-furor/15728402/#QtTFxPt3lkowT7C3.99

**Under Unwanted HB2 Spotlight, Some NC Businesses Promote Inclusivity**

By JORGE VALENCIA

WCQS

<http://wcqs.org/post/under-unwanted-hb2-spotlight-some-nc-businesses-promote-inclusivity#stream/0>

Listen Listening... Jorge Valencia reports on how some North Carolina businesses are seeking to disassociate their brands from House Bill 2.

It’s hard to imagine an industry in North Carolina that hasn’t somehow been affected by House Bill 2.  Restaurants say they’ve lost business. Hotels have seen conference organizers cancel conventions to protest the law. And start-ups say some investors are steering clear of North Carolina. But much of the work of dealing with the unwanted attention has been left to small businesses that don’t want to be associated with the law.

HB2 earned more than $31 million worth of media coverage, resulting in an estimated 38 billion views, according to Cision media metrics cited by Visit North Carolina.

The best-known part of HB2 restricts the bathrooms that transgender people can use. But the law also prohibits someone from suing in state court if they believe they were discriminated against and fired from their job. It also prevents cities from passing their own non-discrimination ordinances.

All of this has been a huge headache for North Carolina’s tourism industry. Marketers such as Carrboro-based New Media Campaigns, which helps companies craft their public identity, worried quickly after the law’s signing that it promoted an image of the state they didn’t want to be associated with.

The company’s designers created a website to collect tweets critical of the law from businesses across the state. They also made a logo, uploaded it to their website so anyone could use and printed out hundreds of stickers and distributed them to businesses. Initially, the designers drafted a version of the logo highlighting the slogan “Businesses Against HB2,” but quickly opted to create a design that emphasized a different message: “Everyone Is Welcome Here.”

“We wanted to put out more of a positive message,” said Clay Chassow, a co-founder of New Media Campaigns. “Also, we were hoping that HB2 wouldn't become this thing that everyone knows. So we thought, ‘Why lead with that?’"

New Media Campaigns, a marketing agency in Carrboro, made this logo and gave it away for free after the signing of HB2.

CREDIT NEW MEDIA CAMPAIGNS

But HB2 did become a brand of its own.

Chris Sacca, a famous venture capitalist, suggested he would no longer look for investment opportunities in North Carolina, and Steve Case, co-founder of AOL, canceled a visit. Startups across the state quickly responded with a petition to repeal the law.

Matt Williamson, president of the Durham software start-up Windsor Circle,  signed the petition. He said the negative attention associated with HB2 was quickly undoing years of promotion he and other local entrepreneurs worked on to make the Research Triangle attractive to people from different backgrounds, highly skilled workers and investors. But he said he has a bigger problem with a law he believes puts a class of people at a disadvantage, so perhaps the negative attention is necessary.

“If I've gotta lose a contract or if I've gotta not have Steve Case come to Durham, and people feel the pain of that, let's feel that pain," Williamson said.

The bad press is something that came up at a recent meeting of advertising professionals close to the capitol in Raleigh.

Vernessa Roberts, diversity chair of the Triangle Advertising Federation, helped organize a workshop about HB2, including discussions with lawmakers who support and oppose the law. The federation took no formal stance on the law, but Roberts said it’s clear the attention it has brought has marred the state’s reputation.

“And it's not an easy fix. There's not a way to spin your way out of it,” Roberts said. “There's not a way to kind of buy your way out of it."

Rep. Darren Jackson, a Democrat who represents Wake County, tried to do exactly that—by amending the state budget to repeal the law and set aside $2 million to market North Carolina as “Back Open For Business.” But House Speaker Tim Moore, a Republican from Cleveland County, blocked the move, saying it was out of order to include a policy change in the state budget.

**Sen. Richard Burr: Legislature 'Botched' HB2**

By Jenna Barnes

TWC News

<http://www.twcnews.com/nc/charlotte/politics/2016/05/25/sen--richard-burr--legislature--botched--hb2.html>

CHARLOTTE - U.S. Senator Richard Burr says HB2 goes too far.

He told the Huffington Post “the legislature botched what they were trying to do. It was far too expansive.”

These new comments are a shift from what Burr has previously said about the law.

"I continue to have businesses come in my office and talk about their desire to come to NC, to invest, to create jobs, and when they stop, then I'll question whether some policy or initiative we've done deters that,” he told Time Warner Cable News in April.

Burr’s challegenger, Democrat Deborah Ross, says he's changing his opinion because of the polls, which show a close race.

Political experts we spoke with say whatever the reason, Burr's statement was a smart move.

"He did it at the right time. I can't say he did it for political reasons,  but if I were his campaign consultant i would tell him, 'You need say something about HB2,’” said Dr. Susan Ross, a Davidson College political science professor.

In the article, Burr went on to say Charlotte and the General Assembly are both responsible, and they should work together to come up with a solution before a judge steps in.

**KKK HB2 RECRUITMENT FLIERS SPARK CONCERN IN ROXBORO**

By Tim Pulliam

WTVD

<http://abc11.com/politics/kkk-hb2-recruitment-fliers-spark-concern-in-roxboro/1356219/>

ROXBORO (WTVD) -- Rita Wilhelm found a membership application for the Loyal White Knights of the KKK in her front lawn Wednesday morning.

"It was laying in the yard -- rolled up like a scroll. I was just sad. It made me angry because I thought we had got past all this," Wilhelm said. "I walked all up and down my street and around the block picking them up.

Loyal White Knights supports House Bill 2 - also known as the Transgender Bathroom Bill.

HB2 was designed to block a Charlotte non-discrimination ordinance, part of which allowed transgender people to use bathrooms and locker rooms of the gender they identify with. The state law requires people to use the restroom according to their biological sex listed on their birth certificate in government buildings, schools, and universities.

The law also excludes lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people from anti-discrimination protections and blocks municipalities from adopting their own anti-discrimination and living wage rules.

Wilhelm said using HB2 as a KKK recruiting tool conjures up bad memories of racial tension and division. Memories she does not want passed to her grandson.

"He's 8 years old. He's biracial. I don't want him to have to grow up in a world with hate and violence and racism," Wilhelm said.

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 Tim Pulliam ‎@TimABC11

Just spoke to a #KKK member. The group is recruiting members who support #HB2. Don't miss my story at 6p #ABC11

3:49 PM - 25 May 2016

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Loyal White Knight members say the organization is based on Christian ideals.

The group said the LGBT rights, interracial relationships and immigration are against their beliefs. The local group formed three years ago and claims to have 50 members.

With this application, they hope to recruit more to keep House Bill 2 intact.

"People have nothing to be scared of," said Wayne Felker, great Titan of the Loyal White Knights in Roxboro. "We are doing the same thing the NAACP and Black Panthers and everybody else is doing. We're standing up for our race and we have that right."

Roxboro Mayor Mary Newell reacted to the fliers and application with this statement.

"The City of Roxboro will not tolerate any actions against citizens by groups who have a mission of racial, sexual, religious or any other kind of intimidation. While these types of groups have First Amendment protections for their recruitment or message, we stand by our city's mission to be a safe and fair place for all who choose to live here."

Roxboro Police Chief David Hess said this in a statement: "We have good people living in Roxboro and Person County who have the right to protection from fear and intimidation. We will protect that right and with the help of our good people and we will send a unified message that love is more powerful than hate."

He added that, "Investigators are working leads to determine who is spreading these deplorable messages of hate and intimidation."

The Roxboro Police are asking the public to provide information of those, who according to Chief Hess "hide under the veil of darkness."

Information leading to charges could receive a reward. Contact the Roxboro Police Department at 336 599 8345."

The KKK group said it is planning a rally in Roxboro in September.

**High-profile group forming to search for HB2 fix**

McClatchy Regional News Service

<http://www.journalnow.com/news/state_region/high-profile-group-forming-to-search-for-hb-fix/article_9826a497-124f-5af5-a087-ee45e2ff53af.html>

A former North Carolina governor and a former lieutenant governor are poised to lead a bipartisan search for a possible compromise on House Bill 2, the law that catapulted the state into a national debate over transgender rights.

The idea grew out of widespread discussions on how to break the impasse over the law, which according to one study has cost Mecklenburg County alone more than $285 million in lost economic activity.

 Click Here

The group would be led by Republican financier Art Pope, a former state budget director, and former Democratic Lt. Gov. Dennis Wicker. Former Republican Gov. Jim Martin would be the honorary chairman.

“My sense is that there’s a public appetite for people to get together and talk about it rather than people just yelling across the chasm at each other,” said John Hood, president of Pope’s family foundation.

Hood and Pope are organizing the working group. They say it grew out of discussions over how to find a way out of a situation that has resulted in economic losses, celebrity boycotts and dueling lawsuits between the state and the U.S. Justice Department.

The Raleigh Republicans are just two of the people who have been trying to find a solution to the impasse.

“Lots of different people had the same thought, which is some kind of de-escalation, followed by discussion,” Hood said. “There were different versions of what that de-escalation looked like.”

One version, which followed meetings with some Charlotte City Council members and legislative leaders, involved a council vote to rescind the February ordinance that prompted the law.

That ordinance extended anti-discrimination protections to people based on sexual orientation and gender identity. It gave transgender people the right to use the bathroom or locker room of their gender identity.

Republican lawmakers responded with HB2, which nullified the Charlotte ordinance and limited discrimination claims, among other measures.

This week, House Speaker Tim Moore told reporters the city had to rescind the ordinance before the legislature made any changes in the state law. “For any conversations to happen, Charlotte needs to take a look at what it did, and it needs to be the first to make any movement,” he said.

Pope said he was more confident of a compromise last week than he is now. He said the idea of a working group has “a lot of buy-in” from both sides.

Hood, former president of the conservative John Locke Foundation, said one reason is the need for trust. He alluded to comments by Julie Eiselt, a Democratic council member, who said the city needs more trust with Republican lawmakers before moving forward.

Hood said organizers are looking at a core group of 16 members representing local governments and people on various sides of the divide. The tentative name: the FAIR working group, for Facility Access Inclusion and Respect.

**Tarte: HB2 raises questions of authority, privacy**

by Carrie C. Causey

The Herald Weekly

<http://www.huntersvilleherald.com/news/2016/5/26/15214/tarte-hb2-raises-questions-of-authority-privacy>

CORNELIUS – The answer seemed obvious to several in attendance of a recent meeting held by the Lake Norman Chamber of Commerce when N.C Sen. Jeff Tarte asked for a solution that would please everyone about House Bill 2.

“Repeal it,” many called out.

But canceling the law that has brought into question who is legally allowed to use which bathroom, among other concerns, won’t be that easy and isn’t likely to happen, Tarte said, adding it will most likely have to go through the courts before it reaches a resolution.

Tarte and N.C. Sen. Joel Ford, who represents areas of Mecklenburg County such as Mountain Island and University City, were speakers during the chamber’s monthly Focus Friday, aimed at discussing topics, like HB2, affecting the area’s economic climate.

Ford was a stand-in for N.C. Rep. Tricia Cotham, who was held up at an N.C. House session and previously filed a bill to repeal House Bill 2, but he had a similar view on the matter.

“I don’t think there is a struggle to treat humans with respect,” Ford said. “We are all human beings, and we have to find a common ground and respect one another.”

In the wake of its passage earlier this year, HB2 has spawned various groups, from business owners to entertainers, to come out against the law and boycott the state, canceling shows as well as employment opportunities.

“House Bill 2 is bad for business and for tourism,” Ford said. “The NBA and other professional sports are not going to come to Charlotte, Mecklenburg County or our state.”

The U.S. Department of Justice has also noted the law is unconstitutional, leading to competing state and federal lawsuits in the matter. President Barack Obama has also issued notice to schools to provide transgender bathroom access.

The matter was initially brought forward by the Charlotte City Council as a way to allow those who identify as the opposite sex of what they were born to use the bathroom of their choosing. The state law was quickly approved to overrule the city ordinance prior to it taking effect and force people to go into bathrooms of the gender listed on their birth certificate, among other items.

Tarte said the law has brought multiple issues to the forefront – limiting certain local authorities and ensuring men stay out of woman’s bathrooms and locker rooms.

“LGBT (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender) is not the problem, it’s all about power and control,” Tarte said. He noted the Charlotte ordinance would have not been in accordance with indecent exposure and criminal trespassing laws, and the state needed to have a standard rule.

Ford disagreed.

“The best form of government is closest to the people,” he said.

He believes the rule should be turned over but acknowledged his own wife’s hesitation when the Charlotte ordinance came about regarding how their daughter could be affected.

“The fundamental part is grown men going into girls’ showers. I would unequivocally never support that,” Tarte said.

He also considers HB2 as enforcing a person’s right to privacy, which has been challenged by law critics who say it took away the privacy of people who are LGBT.

“Kids who are LGBT and transgender have been under the radar, but there is a percentage you are making a bigger target than they’ve ever been,” Arlene Berkman, founder of the Respect Ability Foundation, said, later adding the impacts could mean people not bringing in jobs, people choosing to move elsewhere and huge legal fees – a point Tarte doesn’t dispute.

John Akin, a self-proclaimed independent political affiliation, held up part of the North Carolina Constitution.

“Equal is equal,” he said, calling Tarte insensitive to transgenders and saying the assertion of men now going into girls’ bathrooms was ludicrous.

Tarte called the allegation offensive and said he has “unconditional love for them.” He added if anything, the new law has brought a better understanding of the transgender community.

**Did losing PayPal over HB2 really cost Charlotte $285 million?**

BY STEVE HARRISON

Charlotte Observer

<http://www.charlotteobserver.com/news/politics-government/article79925922.html>

PayPal’s decision to stop a planned Charlotte expansion because of House Bill 2 was an economic blow.

But did it really cost Mecklenburg County $285.5 million in economic activity, as the Charlotte Chamber said this week?

PayPal was planning to hire 400 new people for a global operations center, with an average wage of $51,000. That annual payroll would be $20.4 million. Including benefits could push that number higher, perhaps to $30 million.

So how did the chamber arrive at a “missed economic opportunity” estimate that’s nearly 10 times as large?

The chamber’s estimate was part of a larger report released by the city Tuesday on the impact of HB2. In addition to estimating the impact of PayPal, it showed visits by companies and inquiries are down since the law was passed, and also listed meetings and small conventions that have canceled.

The chamber has been urging Charlotte City Council to repeal its nondiscrimination ordinance to make it easier to reach a deal with the General Assembly.

Economic software used

The chamber said it used economic forecasting software called IMPLAN, which attempts to project the ripple effects of how money moves through the economy.

The idea is that when a business moves to a city, its employees spend their money on new cars, clothes and home furnishings. That money is then spent again by those businesses and their employees. And so on.

“The company itself has to make several purchases that first year – for example, office space, equipment, etc.,” said Chuck McShane, director of research for the Charlotte Chamber. “Relocating employees also have to make a lot of large purchases as well – mortgages, furniture, moving companies.”

McShane said IMPLAN is a “standard model for economic impact analysis used by several universities and federal agencies such as the USDA.”

But IMPLAN forecasts have also been ridiculed by economists, particularly when used to promote a specific project like a new sports stadium.

Economic impact analysis uses what’s known as a “multiplier” to determine how new money ripples through the economy.

In calculating the impact of the $800 billion stimulus program from 2009, the Obama administration used a multiplier of 1.6. Closer to home, the Charlotte Regional Visitors Authority has used multipliers of 1.5 or 2 to determine the economic impact of conventions or major sports events.

If the cost of PayPal’s wages and benefits are included, then a multiplier of nearly 10 would need to be used to reach $285 million.

“I do not know where they would find a multiplier of that level – especially on an ongoing basis,” said Craig Depken, a professor of economics at UNC Charlotte. “Perhaps for the first year if there were substantial construction outlays, etc.”

Another economist, Don Coffin of Indiana University Northwest, said a multiplier that brings a $20 million payroll to $285 million economic impact is “not plausible.”

Spin-off jobs included

In calculating economic impact, the chamber looked at more than PayPal’s 400 jobs.

It estimated those 400 jobs would have created 908 additional jobs in Mecklenburg County and 27 other new jobs elsewhere.

When those additional jobs are included, the multiplier needed to reach $285 million gets smaller.

But would a new job that pays $51,000 a year actually create two additional jobs?

In 2014, the total gross domestic product of the Charlotte metro area was $144 billion. There were about 940,000 full-time jobs in the metro area that year.

Each full-time job was worth $153,000 in economic activity.

McShane said new jobs produce more economic activity because there is more spending associated with starting or expanding a new business.

He compared the change in the region’s economy and jobs from 2010 to 2014, and found that each new job added was worth $273,000 in economic activity.

If that’s true for PayPal, the company’s 400 new jobs would generate $109.2 million in new economic activity.

That’s a lot of money – but far short of $285.5 million.

To reach $285.5 million, every PayPal job, as well as the other 908 jobs has to be included as well.

Steve Harrison: 704-358-5160, @Sharrison\_Obs

**Coal ash commission bill clears state House, McCrory threatens veto**

WECT

<http://www.wect.com/story/32066814/coal-ash-commission-bill-clears-state-house-mccrory-threatens-veto>

RALEIGH, NC (AP/WECT) -

An effort to revive a North Carolina commission to help oversee the cleanup of coal ash pits maintained by Duke Energy and ensure nearby residents get piped drinking water has cleared the state House.

The chamber voted Wednesday for Senate Bill 71, a measure to reconstitute the Coal Ash Management Commission. Gov. Pat McCrory shut down the original commission following a court ruling that found the legislature held too much control over a panel with executive branch duties. Lawmakers passed the bill on an 86-25 vote.

“Today I was proud to support a bipartisan bill that enhances measures that protect North Carolinians’ drinking water and puts in place a realistic path forward to remediate coal ash ponds across the state,” Rep. Moore said in an email statement. “Safeguarding the state’s water supply is one of the most important issues with which state government is charged and I am glad this reconstituted Coal Ash Commission will be in place to help oversee the remediation effort that will benefit all North Carolinians.”

McCrory told legislators he would veto the bill, calling it unnecessary. His lawyer said more litigation would occur if it became law. The Governor blasted the vote and lawmakers in a news release shortly after the House vote.

“It’s disappointing to see legislation of this magnitude drafted behind closed doors,” McCrory said in a statement included in the news release. “This bill is a blatant attempt to bypass state regulators and seek more favorable treatment from an unaccountable and unneeded bureaucracy that further delays the cleanup process.”

Rep. Chuck McGrady of Hendersonville said the commission provides a second level of regulation to decide how the pits should be cleaned up.

“I believe that this bill is about more than protecting public health, safety, and the welfare of North Carolina citizens,” McGrady said in a statement contained in the release sent by Speaker Moore’s office. “This bill is about protecting the institution that is the North Carolina House of Representatives and maintaining the separation of powers between our branches of government. On January 26, 2011, I swore an oath on the House floor that I would uphold the constitution of North Carolina.  Section 5 of Article III ascribes to the General Assembly the power to assign functions, powers, and duties to the executive branch.  Section 11 of Article III provides that all administration departments or agencies, and offices of the state shall be allocated by law.  Senate Bill 71 is about protecting this institution.”

The bill now moves on to the state Senate. To read the text of the bill click here: http://bit.ly/1saYM7A

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**SENATE GOP PROPOSES LARGER NC TEACHER PAY PLAN THAN HOUSE, MCCRORY**

By Heather Waliga

WTVD

<http://abc11.com/politics/senate-leaders-propose-major-boost-to-teacher-pay/1355334/>

RALEIGH (WTVD) -- North Carolina Senate Republicans are proposing a teacher pay plan that promises to exceed what Gov. Pat McCrory and House members are offering. Details on how the Senate would pay for the plan are unclear. They did not say if the proposal includes raises for other state employees.

Senate leader Phil Berger said Wednesday the chamber's budget adjustments unveiled next week will recommend salary increases that Berger said would raise the state average - including local supplements - above $51,000 for the next school year. Berger said the Senate would also push to get the average above $54,000 in the 2017-18 school year.

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 Heather Waliga ‎@WaligaABC11

Current NC teacher pay scale; Senate plan promises average $4,700 raise over next 2 years #abc11

3:24 PM - 25 May 2016

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"We think that this is something that's fully within the capacity of the state of North Carolina in terms of the budget availability, and we think it sets the right priorities," said Berger.

Berger said the economy and state government's fiscal picture are strong enough to pay for the two-year, $538 million plan without tax increases. He says the Senate budget proposal wouldn't exceed an overall spending limit agreed to with the House.

Under the plan, the average North Carolina teacher would receive a permanent $4,700 raise.

Beginning teachers would reach the top of the pay scale in 15 years, about half the amount of time than under the current system.

Senate leaders said the move would catapult North Carolina to 24th in the nation for teacher pay and number one in the Southeast.

Lawmakers offered few details on how they planned to pay for the raises.

"We've heard this before, particularly from the Senate, about raising us up to the national average, so we're very skeptical particularly during election years and we're still 41st in the country," said NCAE Vice President Mark Jewell.

Jewell said the short-term plan does not go far enough to keep teachers in the classroom.

Read the teacher pay proposal (must submit an email address)

Under the proposal, maximum salaries would be capped for North Carolina's most veteran teachers.

"They're not going to get a raise for the rest of their careers. Why would they stay in North Carolina?" Said Logan Smith, ProgressNC spokesperson.

The full Senate budget is expected to be released Tuesday.

The Associated Press contributed to this report.

**House votes to keep feds from withholding funds to NC over HB2**

BY GREG GORDON

McClatchy

<http://www.charlotteobserver.com/news/politics-government/article79960087.html>

WASHINGTON

The U.S. House of Representatives on Wednesday night approved an amendment to a spending bill that would seek to bar several federal departments from withholding funds from the state of North Carolina if it fails to abide by the Obama administration policy that transgender people be allowed access to bathrooms and locker rooms matching their gender identities.

Republican Rep. Robert Pittenger offered the amendment, which passed on a voice vote. Democrats requested a formal roll call vote, likely to be held later in the evening. In a brief speech on the House floor, he accused the administration of “bullying tactics.”

North Carolina’s legislature passed a law in March limiting transgender people to using the bathroom corresponding to their biological sex, a measure that preempted enforcement of an antidiscrimination ordinance adopted by Charlotte.

The Obama administration initially signaled it was considering withholding hundreds of millions of dollars if North Carolina failed to halt implementation of the law. But after the state and Justice Department filed dueling lawsuits over the issue, administration officials said no funds would be withheld until the courts had decided the matter.

But Pittenger , who faces a serious challenge in the June 7 primary election, contended that “the president just can’t be trusted.”

He pointed to comments in which he quoted President Barack Obama as stating he lacked the authority to unilaterally make any decision regarding immigration policy.

“Right after that, he declared amnesty,” through an executive order covering millions of undocumented immigrants, Pittenger said in a phone interview.

The measure that passed Wednesday night would prohibit use of money in the spending bill to revoke funding previously awarded to North Carolina via the Interior and Energy departments, the Nuclear Energy Commission and the U.S. Army Corp of Engineers.

Jamie Bowers, a spokesman for Pittenger, said he plans to introduce similar language “in future appropriations bills, including the one covering the Education Department.”

Gordon: 202-383-0005; @GregGordon2

**"My Right To Pee": Transgender woman takes selfie in woman's bathroom**

WJZY

<http://www.fox46charlotte.com/news/local-news/145122465-story>

CHARLOTTE, NC (WJZY) - A Charlotte transgender woman took to Facebook Wednesday and posted to Plaza Midwood's group page a bathroom selfie.

But this wasn't your average bathroom selfie. Janice Covington Allison took the picture in protest of North Carolina's House Bill 2.

Janice explained she was at the Charlotte City Council meeting Monday night and needed to use the bathroom in the building that Governor Pat McCrory said she could not use.

Under HB2, citizens must use the bathrooms and locker rooms that align with their biological sex.

So what did she do?

Janice said in her post, "I went into the Ladies room. Here is a picture of me violating the HB2 law exercising my right to pee, any questions."

Janice's post has more than 260 likes and 14 comments on Facebook.

**I-42, I-87 designated to run through Eastern North Carolina**

By Ken Watling

WNCT

<http://wnct.com/2016/05/25/i-42-i-87-designated-to-run-through-eastern-north-carolina/>

RALEIGH, N.C. (WNCT) –  North Carolina has received approval for the names of two new interstate route designations in the eastern part of the state, that’s according to a press release from Governor Pat McCrory’s office. The release states that the American Association of State and Transportation Officials approved I-42 for the U.S. 70 Corridor between I-40 and Morehead City, and I-87 for U.S. 64/17 between Raleigh and the Virginia state line.

“These connections are an integral part of my 25-Year Vision for North Carolina to improve the state’s infrastructure, expand economic opportunities and create jobs,” says Governor Pat McCrory. “They bring a much-needed interstate corridor to the Hampton Roads area, stronger connections between our important military bases, and enhance economic development through faster shipment of freight for our ports and Global TransPark.”

The N.C. Department of Transportation may now proceed with determining where “Future I-42” and “Future I-87” signs should be installed and pursue approval to install those signs from the Federal Highway Administration.

**Republicans offer options to revise HB2**

Wilson Times

[http://wilsontimes.com/stories/Republicans-offer-options-to-revise-HB2,67282](http://wilsontimes.com/stories/Republicans-offer-options-to-revise-HB2%2C67282)

Two leading state Republicans — one moderate and one conservative — have ideas for how to get North Carolina out of the bathroom and back into larger public policy issues without further tarnishing the state’s reputation.

On the conservative side is North Carolina businessman and philanthropist Art Pope. The one-time state budget director under Gov. Pat McCrory pours a lot of money into conservative causes and organizations, including some that have given a strong push to controversial House Bill 2.

Last week, though, during an interview on National Public Radio, he provided a voice of reason, according to the Fayetteville Observer.

“The LGBT community has legitimate issues,” Pope said. “Those who have concerns about the privacy in the bathroom of women and children or men have legitimate issues as well.”

So Pope suggested that all parties back away from their positions “and have a commission come up with a workable statute.”

Not bad.

The moderate is former Gov. Jim Martin, who has spoken out already on HB2, the so-called “bathroom law” that’s really about more and larger issues than simply who goes where.

Martin noted that while different sides of the issue are meeting, there has been little to no progress toward a solution so far. So he is proposing that the General Assembly: “Enact new legislation to (a) repeal the sections of HB2 pertaining to Charlotte’s ordinance, and (b) replace that with a simple directive reserving to the state exclusive authority and jurisdiction over laws and regulations governing access to multi-occupancy rest rooms, locker rooms, dressing rooms, showers and the like.

“Then, put an emphatic period right there. Include no further specification at this time as to who goes where … nothing would mention any class or category of people, and it would not be discriminatory against anyone. Let that issue settle back down. … Statewide policy regarding these kinds of sensitive issues would be right where it was a year ago ...”

If enacted, Martin’s plan would get us back to where we started before the brouhaha began, and allow for serious debate and input on a complex issue, which is what was needed from the outset.

That’s where Pope’s idea comes in.

We’re talking about a move toward common sense that might even jump-start a return to sanity in governance, where laws are created by studying a problem, advancing a solution, debating it publicly, compromising between opposing sides and then passing the best law possible.

Congress and the federal courts will have to deal with the recent mandates that came down from the Obama administration. As McCrory correctly said, that has become a nationwide issue.

Meanwhile, both Martin and McCrory have called on the legislature to return state court access to individuals claiming discriminatory business practices.

In order for Martin’s plan to work, there will need to be strong bipartisan support. Martin says he has been encouraged by the reception his idea has received from several members of both the House and Senate.

We hope our local legislators are listening with open minds. After all, since federal courts are likely to send the state back to the drawing boards on HB2 anyway, how about beating the feds to the punch and starting over again now?

The Times-News of Burlington

**McCrory Threatens Veto After Coal Ash Bill Passes House**

By DAVID BORAKS

WFAE

<http://wfae.org/post/mccrory-threatens-veto-after-coal-ash-bill-passes-house>

House lawmakers on Wednesday voted 86-25 to approve a bill that would change the rules for Duke Energy’s cleanups of coal ash across the state. It’s a controversial bill that has drawn the opposition of Gov. Pat McCrory and state regulators.

The statehouse debate comes just a week after state environmental regulators issued what they called "final" risk classifications for Duke Energy's coal ash sites. But the new legislation makes it clear that the question of how and when coal ash will be cleaned up may be as unsettled as ever. And that's despite a 2014 state law that set up a process and deadlines.

The governor and DEQ secretary Donald Van der Vaart sent letters to House and Senate leaders Tuesday opposing Senate Bill 71. They say it would weaken environmental protections and undermine DEQ efforts to carry out the law.

The bill proposes several major changes to the coal ash law:

It would put aside the DEQ's current risk ratings, instead giving Duke a year to devise new plans. The DEQ rankings had meant that Duke would be required to excavate ash from all its North Carolina plant sites and move it to new, lined landfills.

It also would reconstitute the Coal Ash Management Commission, which the law set up to oversee cleanups, and change the way members are appointed. McCrory shut down the commission in March after the state Supreme Court ruled it unconstitutional because it gave the legislature the majority of appointments.

And it would put into law Duke's proposal to deliver a safe, permanent water supply to plant neighbors. Duke has been providing bottled water to about 400 households amid questions about the quality of their well water.  That could mean connecting homes to public water supplies. But it also says if that's too expensive, Duke could provide water filters.

DEQ said last week it wants lawmakers to revise the law to allow it to revisit coal ash site risk ratings in 18 months. That would give Duke time to repair existing coal ash ponds, and could let the utility keep ash where it is permanently.   But lawmakers have rejected that idea.

Frank Holleman of the Southern Environmental Law Center called the bill a "bailout" for Duke Energy. He criticized the speed with which the bill was introduced and debate, so soon after the DEQ's risk ratings came out.

"And now, just days later in a flurry, Duke has sent lobbyists down to the legislature to get the law changed. And lo and behold, the legislature of North Carolina is falling over itself to try to bail out Duke Energy."

Duke Energy says it supports the idea of reviving the Coal Ash Management Commission.

"It has a critical role in the process. That commission actually looks at the decisions or the recommendations made by the state regulator, and very importantly, that commission considers costs to customers," spokeswoman Paige Sheehan said Wednesday.

The utility also wants the DEQ to be able to revisit its risk ratings.

“Duke Energy is moving as quickly as it can to close these ash basins in a safe way for our customers and our communities - as quick as the process will allow,” Sheehan said. “What we support is clarity in the legislation that allows the state to update those rankings based on new information.”

The bill was approved Tuesday by the House Rules Committee and Wednesday morning by the House Appropriations Committee. It passed the House Wednesday afternoon and now goes to the Senate.

If the Senate passes it, Gov. McCrory has promised a veto. In a statement after the House vote Wednesday, McCrory called the bill irresponsible and unconstitutional.

**HOWARD CLEMENT, 1934-2016: Beloved Bull City civic, civil rights icon passes away**

by Colin Warren-Hicks

Herald Sun

<http://www.heraldsun.com/news/howard-clement---beloved-bull-city-civic-civil-rights/article_661c89d4-22a6-11e6-9c93-433be086548c.html>

DURHAM — Former City Councilman Howard Clement III, 82, passed away peacefully on Wednesday morning from complications of Parkinson Disease.

Mr. Clement served longer than anyone else -- 30 years -- on the Durham City Council, from 1983 to 2013.

During the civil rights era, Mr. Clement helped to integrate the Carolina Theatre, marched on Washington where he witnessed Martin Luther King Jr.’s “I Have a Dream” speech in 1963 and contributed to the formation of the Black Solidarity Committee for Community Improvement which pressured white-owned businesses to make changes recognizing civil rights changes, including integration.

Mr. Clement was a member of the NAACP, Habitat for Humanity, the American Red Cross, The Rotary Club of Durham, Alpha Phi Alpha fraternity, Alpha Tau Boule and spearheaded the creation of the Durham City Council’s Crime Cabinet.

He was born in Rowan County, North Carolina on March 12, 1934 and was a registered Republican much of his life, changing his party affiliation to Democrat late in his political career.

After graduating from Howard University School of Law, Clement moved to Durham to work at the N.C. Mutual Life Insurance Co. from which he retired in 1991.

“I was saddened to learn of the death of Howard Clement,” said Gov. Pat McCrory. “Howard made his mark as a civil rights leader, lawyer, business executive and as a public servant. His 30 years serving on Durham City Council was a record, and the city and the entire community were the beneficiaries of that dedication and service. Ann and I offer our prayers for the Clement family during this time of loss.”

"I will always remember Howard Clement for the great conviction he showed in his work on behalf of the community," U.S. Rep. G.K. Butterfield, D-N.C., said in an emailed statement Wednesday. "I extend my deepest sympathy to the Clement family during this difficult time. Durham is a better Mr. Clement is survived by his three daughters— Saundra, 52, Marcella, 46 and Irma 54 — from his first marriage to Dolores Clement who died on July 21, 2002 and three grandchildren. He is also survived by second wife Annie Clement. The couple wed in 2007.

“My husband was a wonderful, kind gentleman,” Annie Clement said. “My husband was very well known and very well respected. He loved Durham. He loved the progress of Durham.”

Former Durham Housing Authority executive director James Tabron said Mr. Clement was his best friend and remembered Mr. Clement fondly.

“For someone that was not a blood brother, he was about as close as one could be to me,” said Tabron who was spending time with the late Mr. Clement’s family on Wednesday.

Tabron met Mr. Clement in the early 1990s and described his friend as a thoughtful, cheerful man who, when sharing a point-of-view, never argued the case in a manner deliberately meant to hurt, disregard or insult a political or intellectual opponent or challenger.

“I never knew him to shout or not to maintain a level of poise, even if something may have touched him greatly. With him, there were no high highs or low lows,” Tabron said. “He presented himself so well, that he could get a point across in a way that was assertive and not harsh and he taught me.”

Former City Council member Tom Campbell said, “He was just a presence. When I was student at Duke in late 1960s, he was involved in protests. He’s been a public figure in Durham for 50 years.”

Campbell he will never forget Mr. Clement’s smile.

“He had a wonderful smile,” Campbell said. “Hard to predict. We wouldn’t always agree, but by the end of the conversation, he would have this big smile his face and there was nothing to do but smile back at him. One of his main strengths, he could disagree without being disagreeable. That is not always the vase with people in political life.”

State Sen. Floyd McKissick Jr., D-Durham, said, “One thing he would always say is that he didn’t want us to get caught up in the ‘paralysis of analysis.’ If somebody called up about a pothole or a stop light, he was always good with constituent services.”

N.C. Central University Coordinator of University Archives and Instructor of Public History Andre Vann said Mr. Clement was an intellectual who based decisions on extensive reasoning and for whom a legacy will be defined by acts such as “taking time out of his schedule to go down to Fayetteville Elementary” and read to kids.

Chuck Watts, now an attorney with the private practice Banks Law Firm, knew Clement for nearly his entire life.

Watts can recall when Clement moved to Durham into his childhood neighborhood near NCCU in southeast Durham — “I was a little boy,” he said — and eating lunch with Clement in the 1990s seated in the N.C. Mutual cafeteria.

“He never drove. If you served on a board with him, then chances were he would ask you to drive him to meetings. I was happy to do it and chat with him about matters of the day,” Watts said. “He was an extremely interesting guy. He grew into his stature. He was a black Republican when that was against the grain.”

Watts said Mr. Clement opposed alcohol at city functions but was “no teetotaler -- he had nice parties at his house,” he said.

Mayor Bill Bell recalled Wednesday that he went to Mr. Clement for advice before he began his political career. Both were Howard University graduates, and Mr. Clement was one of the first people Bell met when he moved to Durham.

Mr. Clement offered a piece of advice that Bell thinks back on and would often tease Mr. Clement about it.

Mr. Clement asked Bell, "Who knows Bill Bell."

Bell said in that moment he was a bit deflated.

"He was honest, I had been here no longer than four years and I was talking about running for the Board of County Commissioners, but we became friends."

"He was involved in the Black Power Movement back here in the '60s,” Bell said, “and I think that stood out because he was an executive at North Carolina Mutual Life Insurance Company, so doing those two roles were somewhat different," Bell said.

He also remembered Mr. Clement’s love for politics, the community and meetings.

"He didn't hesitate to tell you what he thought, how he thought," Bell said. "He was very, very open."

Bell said Mr. Clement's legacy would live on through his dedication to civil rights.

"He was around with the civil rights era and he transitioned into the era that we're into now," Bell said. "And he did it with ease."

Mayor Pro Tem Cora Cole-McFadden remembers Mr. Clement not only from her time on the City Council, but also while she worked with the city.

"I think that he was a strong City Council member, and a very compassionate City Council member," Cole-McFadden said.

She remembers Mr. Clement as a caring person and an advocate for the business community.

Cole-McFadden also recalled Mr. Clement's mentorship of young children — including reading to elementary school students.

Mr. Clement’s interests were multi-faceted, Tabron recalled.

“He was very much into sports, especially college basketball. When games were on that he was into, we knew conversations could be had but words should be at a minimum,” Tabron said.

Longtime Durham civil rights leader and former City Councilman Howard Clement died Wednesday. He was 82.

During the civil rights movement, Clement helped to integrate the Carolina Theatre, marched on Washington in 1963 witnessing Martin Luther King Jr.’s “I Have a Dream” speech, and contributed to the formation of the Black Solidarity Committee for Community Improvement which pressured white-owned businesses into civil rights reformations.

After graduating from the Howard University School of Law, Clement moved to Durham to work at N.C. Mutual Insurance.

Clements was a member of the NAACP, Habitat for Humanity, the American Red Cross and spearheaded the creation of the Durham City Council’s Crime Cabinet.

**Coal ash bill reignites fight over commission, cleanup**

By Joe Killian

News & Record

<http://www.greensboro.com/news/local_news/coal-ash-bill-reignites-fight-over-commission-cleanup/article_7c34cea3-d417-5c53-b3fb-21b9f12ea67d.html>

The N.C. House voted Wednesday to reconstitute the Coal Ash Management Commission, setting up another conflict with Gov. Pat McCrory who shut down the group earlier this year.

The vote comes after the House Rules Committee rewrote Senate Bill 71 on Tuesday, adding several provisions related to coal ash.

The bill, which passed the House 86-25, would do a number of things:

Reactivate the coal ash commission, which McCrory shuttered after a court battle with the legislature that resulted in a N.C. Supreme Court judgement that legislators had too much control over the appointed board.

Reopen the comment period over the risk posed by each coal-ash pond.

Establish new rules for the speed with which Duke Energy and the Department of Environmental Quality will provide a safe water supply to homes whose wells have been contaminated by coal ash.

McCrory has vowed to veto the bill, which he said tramples on his executive powers to manage environmental issues.

“This bill is a blatant attempt to bypass state regulators and seek more favorable treatment from an unaccountable and unneeded bureaucracy that further delays the cleanup process,” McCrory said in a statement Wednesday.

The original coal ash commission was established after a major pit spill in 2014, when tons of toxic ash — created by coal-fired power plants — flooded into the Dan River.

McCrory, a former Duke executive, faced criticism for his management of the cleanup effort. As the legislature tried to force Duke to clean up the unlined pits used to store the ash across the state, lawmakers created the commission to oversee the effort.

McCrory viewed that as an usurpation of his executive functions and went to court.

In the legal battle that followed, McCrory won a judgement that the legislature appointed too many members to the commission.

Under the bill passed Wednesday, the governor would appoint five of the seven members of the new coal ash commission and rules would prevent the board from taking action without the governor’s appointees.

Rep. Chuck McGrady (R-Henderson), the bill’s sponsor, said the governor would rather there be no coal ash commission so that he and the Department of Environmental Quality can unilaterally make decisions about cleanup.

“We made a decision as a body that it wasn’t going to just be one department and its head to make these decisions,” McGrady said during debate on the bill Wednesday.

Environmental groups reacted strongly to the bill, calling it an effort to slow down cleanup and disrupt the established timetable.

“This bill is the latest attempt by Raleigh politicians to bail out Duke Energy,” said Frank Holleman, a senior attorney at the Southern Environmental Law Center, in a statement.

The bill will now head back to the Senate on its way to the governor.

Contact Joe Killian at (336) 373-7023, and follow @JoekillianNR on Twitter.

**Coal ash commission, drinking water bill clears House**

AP

<http://www.wmbfnews.com/story/32065384/coal-ash-commission-drinking-water-bill-clears-house>

RALEIGH, N.C. (AP) - An effort to revive a North Carolina commission to help oversee the cleanup of coal ash pits maintained by Duke Energy and ensure nearby residents get piped drinking water has cleared the state House.

The chamber voted Wednesday for the measure to reconstitute the Coal Ash Management Commission. Gov. Pat McCrory shut down the original commission following a court ruling that found the legislature held too much control over a panel with executive branch duties.

McCrory told legislators he would veto the bill, calling it unnecessary. His lawyer said more litigation would occur if it became law.

Rep. Chuck McGrady of Hendersonville said the commission provides a second level of regulation to decide how the pits should be cleaned up. The bill passed 86-25 and now goes to the Senate.

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**Clean water solution could be on tap for families with contaminated wells**

By Brody O'Connell

WBTV

<http://www.wdam.com/story/32063734/clean-water-solution-could-be-on-tap-for-families-with-contaminated-wells>

BELMONT, NC (WBTV) -

State leaders are discussing a bill that could bring a long-term solution to hundreds of families that have contaminated well water.

DEQ says it is working with Duke Energy to find a permanent alternative water supply for the 240 households with water wells that have been affected by nearby coal ash ponds.

Those well owners received a notice from state health and environmental regulators in April 2015 warning them not to drink their water because it contained elevated levels of two potentially toxic elements. That order was reversed by state regulators a year later despite there being no change in the level of toxic elements present in the water.

Now, Senate Bill 71 may provide some relief.

“What this bill does is, it’s totally new, is provide municipal water, piped water, to a bunch of people that have that as their primary concern,” said Rep. Chuck McGrady.

Amy Brown, who lives in Belmont and has been living off of bottled water for more than a year, is cautiously optimistic.

“The goal has always been to have a permanent solution for safe water, so we are very pleased to know that this is something that they are discussing,” Brown said.

There is one thing about the Senate Bill 71 Brown is not happy with. The bill calls for an extended public comment period and review of proposed risk classifications for coal combustion residuals surface impoundments.

“I don’t feel that is needed. That is just more time, wasted time, you have already heard from us, you know how we feel,” Brown said. “It’s time for us to get back to a normal life. We need to not fear the water that is coming out of our faucet.”

Wednesday evening, McCrory issued a statement on the proposed bill and reiterated his intent to veto legislation that he  says "undermines environmental protections, bypasses the state’s ability to enforce the law, and is unconstitutional."

“It’s disappointing to see legislation of this magnitude drafted behind closed doors,” said Governor McCrory. “This bill is a blatant attempt to bypass state regulators and seek more favorable treatment from an unaccountable and unneeded bureaucracy that further delays the cleanup process.”

McCrory says Senate Bill 71 was written in secret and rushed to a vote by House lawmakers. He says the bill would

undermine the environmental protections contained in the state’s coal ash management law."

"After extensive scientific review and a robust public participation process, the state environmental department established classifications that protect public health and the environment by ensuring the safe cleanup and closure of every coal ash pond in North Carolina. In addition, any new landfills will be subject to an environmental justice review.

The department also recommended that the classifications be reevaluated provided that Duke Energy makes a permanent alternate water supply available to those at risk and completes required dam repairs. The schedule the department established would have required the work to be done in 18 months."

Duke Energy released the following statement about the proposed water lines:

"In regards to water extending water lines, we continue to see no indication that ash basins have influenced plant neighbors’ wells. However, we also realize even the extensive studies conducted by outside experts may not provide the level of assurance that some residents are looking for. We believe giving plant neighbors the assurance of long-term water quality gives them peace of mind and benefits North Carolina because we preserve the range of options to safely close ash basins."

Senate Bill 71 is being considered by an appropriations committee.

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**Cooper to tech entrepreneurs: Help fix state government**

BY BRYAN ANDERSON

N&O

<http://www.newsobserver.com/news/politics-government/politics-columns-blogs/under-the-dome/article79959342.html>

DURHAM

With some companies threatening to not do business in North Carolina because of House Bill 2, Attorney General Roy Cooper delivered a message to the tech industry Wednesday: become involved in state government.

“You need a state government that understands,” said Cooper, the Democratic candidate for governor. “You need to be involved in the process of policymaking and elections. It matters who you elect, and we’re seeing a lot of consequences right now.”

Cooper spoke during an event at American Underground sponsored by ExitEvent, an organization affiliated with television station WRAL that covers startup news, technology, business and entrepreneurship.

Among the concerns addressed to Cooper from business leaders were the need for skilled workers and the effects of HB2, which blocks local anti-discrimination protections for LGBT people and requires people in government facilities to use bathrooms matching their birth certificates.

“We need to make sure that we are not creating obstacles for ourselves,” Cooper said. “In the context of House Bill 2, we’ve got to repeal it … We need to make people understand that we are a welcoming state and that we don’t want this.”

Despite the negative impacts the law is having on business, Cooper said, the biggest concern CEOs voice to him is recruiting a strong talent pool.

Matthew Kane, CEO of Precision BioSciences, said his business competes with other biotech companies around the country to recruit a skilled workforce. He asked Cooper to explain what he would do to make North Carolina more attractive to potential employees.

Cooper said he would invest in public transit and public education and increase access to targeted loans for employers.

“We have to invest in our community colleges and our great universities, which I believe will be our economic engines,” Cooper said.

Cooper wants business innovators to offer solutions to problems within state government.

“People who are involved in entrepreneurship really need to get involved in the governmental process,” he said. “It may be distasteful. I’ve heard many people say ‘I’m not political, (so) I’m going to let that go.’ It matters to you and your business.”

Laura Baverman, editor of ExitEvent, said she is working with the campaigns of Republican Gov. Pat McCrory and Republican Sen. Richard Burr to coordinate talks similar to Cooper’s. Baverman said Deborah Ross, Burr’s Democratic challenger, has confirmed she will participate in a talk in early July.

Read more here: http://www.newsobserver.com/news/politics-government/politics-columns-blogs/under-the-dome/article79959342.html#storylink=cpy

**Audit of NC's IT department shows gaps in protecting data**

by: Brittney Johnson

WSOC

<http://www.wsoctv.com/news/local/audit-of-ncs-it-department-shows-gaps-in-protecting-data/302712436>

CHARLOTTE, N.C. —

Channel 9 obtained a state audit that found North Carolina's IT department would not be able to detect, prevent, or respond to a serious hacking attack.

With so much of your personal information on government computers it's a security problem that could have devastating consequences.

State auditors spent months examining the state's IT system.

It holds sensitive information including your health records and tax returns and auditors found the system is fractured.

In a video posted to the state auditor's website, state auditor Beth A. Wood said, "We found the state chief information officer’s office does not have a solid framework for managing its risk."

Among the problems the audit found the state spends $1.5 billion each year on IT needs but has not assessed if agencies have complied with IT security standards since 2004.

Wood said that means there is no reliable way to identify gaps in security before there is a problem.

Justin Briggs works in IT in Charlotte.

"It's very concerning due to the fact, I do work here live here, file my taxes here, that's all my personal information,” he said.

The auditor called it a critical issue for the state and country as large agencies work to protect sensitive data from hackers.

A breach at the South Carolina Department of Revenue exposed the Social Security numbers of more than 3 million residents in 2012.

The state's Chief Risk Officer told Eyewitness News her office was aware of the problems and already working to improve cybersecurity.

"It is my No. 1 priority and I will be focusing on ensuring that all that needs to be done is done to protect the citizens' data," said Maria Thompson, North Carolina's chief risk officer.

The state gave the Department of Information Technology two years to meet its recommendations. Thompson said they're working to consolidate IT systems across state agencies and have a strategic plan in place.

**NCGOP launches veterans task force**

BY JIM MORRILL

Charlotte Observer

<http://www.charlotteobserver.com/news/politics-government/article79890157.html>

North Carolina Republicans plan to launch a veterans task force Thursday, joining GOP organizations in other battleground states in a new effort to mobilize the veteran vote.

North Carolina was home to more than 775,000 veterans in 2014, according to one veterans group.

The GOP Vets Task Force will be headed by a handful of Republican legislators, including Rep. Craig Horn of Weddington.

Similar groups have launched in New Hampshire and other battleground states. The groups are designed to engage and mobilize veterans over defense and other issues.

“Gov. (Pat) McCrory has made it an absolute priority from day one to … show that North Carolina is a military-friendly state,” N.C. GOP Chairman Robin Hayes said. “This is now time for veterans to understand that they’re a high priority for us.

“This is another appropriate step, given the lack of attention coming out of Washington, that we send a very strong signal where vets are on our priority list. And they’re right at the top.”

Jim Morrill: 704-358-5059, @jimmorrill

**Despite veto threat, House approves coal ash legislation**

By GARY D. ROBERTSON

Associated Press

<http://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2016/may/25/coal-ash-commission-drinking-water-bill-clears-hou/>

RALEIGH, N.C. (AP) - Defying a veto threat from Gov. Pat McCrory, North Carolina House members on Wednesday approved a plan to revive a commission that would help oversee the cleanup of coal ash pits maintained by Duke Energy.

The chamber voted 86-25 for the measure to reconstitute the Coal Ash Management Commission. It now goes to the Senate, where leaders also are on board with the legislation, which also includes a directive designed to ensure some residents near the pits get piped drinking water.

McCrory shut down the original commission following a state Supreme Court ruling in January that found the legislature held too much control over a panel with executive branch duties. Under the original system, legislators appointed a majority of the commission members.

The seven-member reconstituted panel would have five members appointed by the governor, subject to General Assembly confirmation.

McCrory told legislators this week he would veto the bill, calling it unnecessary and saying it would interrupt recent efforts by the state Department of Environmental Quality to manage the cleanup of more than 30 pits linked to Duke Energy’s coal-fired power plants. In a House committee Tuesday, McCrory’s lawyer said there would be more litigation if it became law. The governor sued over the original commission in late 2014.

“This bill is a blatant attempt to bypass state regulators and seek more favorable treatment from an unaccountable and unneeded bureaucracy that further delays the cleanup process,” McCrory said Wednesday in a statement, repeating his plan to veto the bill.

Bill supporters say the measure is on solid ground legally. The margin of Wednesday’s House vote appears veto proof.

Rep. Chuck McGrady, R-Henderson, the bill’s manager, reminded colleagues that lawmakers in 2014 agreed it was best to create a commission that would make final determinations on the levels of risk most of the pits posted to the environment.

Regulators are supposed to decide whether coal ash should be excavated from or covered at their current sites. The Department of Environmental Quality issued risk classifications for the pits early this month.

“We made a decision as a body that this was not just going to be one department and its head that was going to reach this decision. We wanted two levels,” McGrady said.

The bill also would direct Duke Energy by late 2017 to work out how to help people living near the pits with questionable well water to locate a permanent drinking water supply, such as from a nearby public water system or filtration system. Citing legislative staff, McGrady said as many as 500 homes could be affected. The McCrory administration said it already had a plan to get water hookups to homeowners.

**NC coal ash bill on collision course with Gov. Pat McCrory**

BY CRAIG JARVIS

N&O

<http://www.newsobserver.com/news/politics-government/state-politics/article79925257.html>

RALEIGH

The state House on Wednesday overwhelmingly approved a plan to reconstitute the Coal Ash Management Commission, which the state Supreme Court ruled the legislature had unconstitutionally created a year and a half ago.

The 86-25 vote sends the bill to the Senate, where its sponsor, Rep. Chuck McGrady, a Republican from Hendersonville, says he is optimistic it also has enough votes to pass and override a veto.

The bill renews a wrestling match over who controls the multi-billion-dollar task of cleaning up coal ash in North Carolina: the governor or the General Assembly. After the Supreme Court agreed with Gov. Pat McCrory that the legislature had overstepped its authority in creating an executive branch commission, the governor disbanded it. McCrory and top officials in his administration worked to defeat the bill this week, saying the governor would veto it and sue again.

After Wednesday’s vote, McCrory issued a statement saying the bill had been rushed and written in secret. It was first made public Tuesday afternoon.

“It’s disappointing to see legislation of this magnitude drafted behind closed doors,” McCrory said. “This bill is a blatant attempt to bypass state regulators and seek more favorable treatment from an unaccountable and unneeded bureaucracy that further delays the cleanup process.”

The bill creates an unusual alignment of Republican and Democratic lawmakers, Duke Energy and the N.C. Chamber pitted against McCrory, whose response to coal ash cleanup has been criticized by some environmental groups because he worked for the utility for two decades. The state enacted the nation’s first coal ash regulatory law following the spill into the Dan River at Eden in 2014.

Now it is McCrory accusing legislators of going soft on Duke Energy. The legislation has also divided environmental groups over whether it is tough enough on cleaning up the coal ash ponds.

“You made the hard choice two years ago,” McGrady, a former environmental advocate himself, exhorted his colleagues on the House floor. “Don’t back away from that because some groups, my former colleagues, are pushing to dig them up.”

The legislation, a rewritten Senate Bill 71, attempts to address the issues in the Supreme Court’s ruling by giving the governor the majority of appointments to the commission. The governor, however, says the commission cannot be reconstituted at all.

The bill would also require Duke Energy to provide piped water, or filters where there is no public hookup, to neighboring well owners and includes provisions to promote the use of coal ash in concrete and other materials.

The House has written a backup plan into the bill: If the governor vetoes the bill and the General Assembly overrides it, and if it then goes to court and McCrory refuses to appoint any members, then the entire coal ash regulation scheme would transfer to the Environmental Management Commission. It is an independent body with the majority of appointments coming from the governor.

The legislation also reconstitutes the Mining Commission and the Oil and Gas Commission, which were also affected by the Supreme Court ruling. It leaves in place fracking rules the Oil and Gas Commission adopted. An environmental group has sued the Oil and Gas Commission challenging those rules; it isn’t clear how the bill affects that lawsuit.

The N.C. Chamber wrote a letter to legislators on Tuesday saying DEQ’s tentative recommendations to excavate all 33 ponds in the state would result in “irrational costs” and “send a chilling message to the regulated community.” The Chamber favors returning to the original coal ash commission to safeguard against “overreaching regulations.”

Duke Energy supports the bill because the original intent was to give the Coal Ash Management Commission the responsibility to make recommendations based on safety, environmental and cost factors, along with considering the impact on electricity rates.

The utility contends most of the ponds could be capped in place, which is estimated to cost about $4 billion. If the company is required to excavate all the sites on a faster schedule, that will significantly increase costs to customers without measurable environmental benefits, Duke Energy has said.

The state chapter of the Sierra Club said the clean water provision was a “step in the right direction,” while the League of Conservation Voters calls it a “sweetheart deal” for Duke Energy.

Craig Jarvis: 919-829-4576, @CraigJ\_NandO

**In Depth: Current Military Events in NC**

TWC News

<http://www.twcnews.com/nc/triangle-sandhills/salute-to-our-troops/2016/05/25/in-depth--current-military-events-in-nc.html>

RALEIGH, N.C.-- As we continue to recognize the men and women in the armed forces, we're honoring out state's military present by taking a look at significant current events within North Carolina's military community.  We go In Depth in this special Salute to Our Troops interview with retired Major General Cornell Wilson, the current Secretary of the North Caroline Department of Military and Veterans Affairs.

For the latest on resources and events for those in North Carolina's military community, visit the NC Military and Veteran's Affairs website.

**DOT pushes ahead with restructuring, staff reductions despite House objections**

By Mark Binker

WRAL

<http://www.wral.com/dot-pushes-ahead-with-restructuring-staff-reductions-despite-house-objections/15727589/>

RALEIGH, N.C. — The state Department of Transportation is pushing ahead with a plan that would reduce the number of state workers overseeing road building despite a state House budget provision ordering the agency to put any such plan on hold until early next year.

"We're not going to put up with it," said Rep. Gary Pendleton, R-Wake, who authored the House budget amendment.

Pendleton said he has called Transportation Secretary Nick Tennyson and spoken with Gov. Pat McCrory's office to express his displeasure.

Senior DOT officials outlined a proposed restructuring plan for lawmakers earlier this spring. In general, the department wants to move more positions out of the central office in Raleigh into regional divisions. Long term, the plan would also outsource much of the oversight work done in the central office. That plan roughly tracks with instructions in prior budgets to reduce staffing in the department.

While House lawmakers have said they want to put the brakes on the restructuring plan, senators have been much more keen on seeing the department make position cuts called for in prior year budgets.

"We're fine with the DOT's position of moving forward," Sen. Wesley Meredith, R-Cumberland, said Wednesday afternoon. "This is direction we've given them in past budgets."

An email sent to many DOT workers on Tuesday explained that the department was pushing ahead with its "Reorganization Through Reduction (RTR) Plan. For those of you who aren’t clear on what this is, it is the first step in the process for eliminating filled positions." Among the first positions to be eliminated would be "39 filled positions from the Materials and Tests Unit which includes the former Pavement Management Unit."

According to the email, the RTR would be, at least initially, voluntary and encouraged employees who wanted to partake to attend a May 31 meeting. This initial move would be part of a three-step restructuring plan.

Crystal Feldman, a spokeswoman for the department, responded to questions about the restructuring with a one-line email saying, "NCDOT is following the law by finding efficiencies to improve project delivery."

House lawmakers said they moved to put the restructuring on hold because they were unsure whether it would actually save any money.

"We need to see some financial proof that it makes financial sense," said Rep. John Torbett, R-Gaston, a chairman of the House Transportation Committee.

Asked about the DOT pushing forward with restructuring, Torbett said he wanted to know more.

Read more at <http://www.wral.com/dot-pushes-ahead-with-restructuring-staff-reductions-despite-house-objections/15727589/#TVXSTGF5zaJiGADy.99>

**Future interstate highway names approved**

BY BRUCE SICELOFF

N&O
<http://www.newsobserver.com/news/traffic/road-worrier-blog/article79890487.html>

RALEIGH

We don’t know when they’ll be built, but we know what we’ll call two new interstate highways planned in Eastern North Carolina.

The American Association of State and Highway Transportation Officials has ruled that I-42 will be the name used for a planned interstate upgrade of U.S. 70 from I-40 near the Wake-Johnston county line to Morehead City.

When U.S. 64 and U.S. 17 are elevated to interstate status from Raleigh through northeastern North Carolina to the Virginia line near Norfolk, it will be called I-87.

“These connections are an integral part of my 25-Year Vision for North Carolina to improve the state’s infrastructure, expand economic opportunities and create jobs,” Gov. Pat McCrory said in a news release. “They bring a much-needed interstate corridor to the Hampton Roads area, stronger connections between our important military bases, and enhance economic development through faster shipment of freight for our ports and Global TransPark.”

The state Department of Transportation plans to erect “Future I-42” and “Future I-87” signs.

Read more here: <http://www.newsobserver.com/news/traffic/road-worrier-blog/article79890487.html#storylink=cpy>

**Local restaurant owners say business has slowed since HB2**

BY FRANK KRACHER

WLOS

<http://wlos.com/news/local/local-restaurant-owners-say-hb2-is-bad-for-business>

WLOS — ASHEVILLE, N.C. -- Some local businesses are banding together to tell tourists a new state law has not changed what Asheville's all about.

The push targets House Bill 2, a controversial law that restaurant owners say is hurting them financially.

Organizer Elizabeth Button, owner and of Curate on Biltmore Avenue, reached out to other independent eateries and they're responding.

"It's kind of a no-brainer to oppose something that's actually causing damage to our local economy," Miki Loomis of Homegrown on Merrimon Avenue said.

Loomis' restaurant specializes in southern-style comfort food. She has local customers who are regulars and tourists who stop in. But ever since the passage of HB2, she and others have noticed something bad.

"We're seeing a tremendous amount of business slow down, our numbers under where they are last year," Loomis said. "In talking to other restaurant owners, their numbers are down as much as 30 percent, some even a little bit more."

Miki said there's something else that's not about the numbers. "As a lifelong North Carolina resident and a native of this area, it's painful and it's embarrassing."

"Actually had a customer tell me that he was glad he got this chance to come to Asheville because he probably [would] never return to North Carolina again," she added.

Dozens of independent restaurant owners have signed on to a guest commentary in Thursday's Citizen-Times. It'll be a letter promoting Asheville as a place that's always been inclusive and always will be.

Michael Reid, on a cross-country drive from Virginia, stopped in Asheville on Wednesday. Even back home, he's seen plenty of news coverage about the "bathroom bill' that made him think twice about visiting.

"Where do we take our vacation dollars, and uh, it's hard to think about coming to a place where not everyone feels welcome," he said.

But Michael said he's happy he stopped in at Homegrown, where the anti-HB2 message is clear.

"Long drive on the road, we had to hit the restroom, and there on the restroom door is 'Y'all,' and that says it all," he said. "It's a wonderful statement for restroom policy, everybody's welcome."

**McCrory: Connect teachers to business**

BY BRYAN ANDERSON

N&O

<http://www.newsobserver.com/news/politics-government/state-politics/article79886342.html>

DURHAM

Gov. Pat McCrory pushed for bridging gaps between the teaching community and the private sector Wednesday in remarks to a business group.

McCrory attended the annual meeting of the North Carolina Business Committee for Education (NCBCE). During a Q&A with Albert Eckel, vice-chairman of the NCBCE board, McCrory said the state should pay educators more and businesses should hire them while school is out.

“We need more university professors to frankly see the private sector environment because I think a lot of them have no idea where money comes from in the private sector,” McCrory said.

“I’ve made a challenge to the business community to hire teachers and professors during the offseason of teaching to help them understand the working environment in the private sector, and then they can bring that knowledge back to the classroom,” he told reporters after the event. “It’s a win-win both for teachers and in the private sector.”

McCrory wants to increase average teacher pay to $50,000 a year. North Carolina has been rising in rankings of states on teacher pay but remains near the bottom, with classroom teachers earning about $10,000 less than the national average, according to National Education Association statistics.

The Republican governor said there is backing in the legislature for raises. The question, he said, is “not just the amount of teacher pay increase but how to best distribute that money to teachers throughout North Carolina.”

McCrory wants to treat teachers differently based on factors that include responsibilities and demand for certain specialties.

“That means not all teachers are paid the same, and some in the teaching profession will say that’s not fair,” he said. “There’s just disagreement on how teacher pay should be distributed.”

McCrory proposes creating a promotion system for teachers so they can assume greater responsibility without having to take on administrative roles. He argued some teachers deserve a higher salary than principals.

“The only way a teacher could get promoted right now in North Carolina is basically become a principal or administrator,” McCrory said. “Some teachers might not want to do that and we might not want them to leave teaching because we need them more as a teacher.”

McCrory also said greater emphasis should be placed on math and science over other fields.

“I’ll do something controversial,” he said. “We have an overabundance of lawyers right now in not only North Carolina but the United States … Nothing against lawyers, but we have too many lawyers graduating right now. Any law firm will tell you that. So why are we graduating as many law students when the volume ... is not needed in the marketplace?”

Read more here: <http://www.newsobserver.com/news/politics-government/state-politics/article79886342.html#storylink=cpy>

**NC House passes new coal ash cleanup bill**

By Jonathan Rodriguez

WNCN

<http://wncn.com/2016/05/25/nc-house-passes-new-coal-ash-cleanup-bill/>

RALEIGH, N.C. (WNCN) – North Carolina House lawmakers approved a bill Wednesday that lays out who will oversee the cleanup of coal ash across the state.

The bill, Senate Bill 71, would create a new coal ash management commission.

The previous commission was disbanded after the Gov. Pat McCrory filed a lawsuit saying the General Assembly had too much control.

The governor would appoint majority of the members of the new commission.

That said, McCrory’s attorneys argued the commission undermines The North Carolina Department of Environmental Quality and said the governor will veto the bill.

If passed, The bill would also require Duke energy to provide an alternative water supply for people living near ash ponds.

But some environmental groups worry it could slow down clean up and prevent Duke from having to excavate all ponds.

The bill heads back to the senate for a final vote there.

Following the bill passing the House, McCrory issued a statement reiterating his intention to veto the legislation.

“It’s disappointing to see legislation of this magnitude drafted behind closed doors,” said McCrory. “This bill is a blatant attempt to bypass state regulators and seek more favorable treatment from an unaccountable and unneeded bureaucracy that further delays the cleanup process.”

Duke Energy also issued a statement Wednesday.

The Utility said it supports SB71 as it “strengthens North Carolina’s Coal Ash Management Act by providing broad safeguards that protect people, pocketbooks and the environment, as legislators envisioned when they first passed the law.”

Duke Energy it will review amendments to the bill and monitor its status.

**Legislators tweak special property tax districts to empower property owners**

BY COLIN CAMPBELL

N&O

<http://www.newsobserver.com/news/politics-government/politics-columns-blogs/under-the-dome/article79871137.html>

A watered-down version of a once controversial change to special property tax districts is headed to Gov. Pat McCrory’s desk after a unanimous N.C. Senate vote Wednesday.

Last year, Republican Sen. Trudy Wade of Guilford County inserted a provision in the Senate budget that would allow residents of the tax districts – known as municipal service districts – to repeal a tax through a referendum vote. The service districts are typically used to add an additional property tax for downtown development, historic neighborhood preservation or beach maintenance.

The move prompted outcry from a number of cities. Raleigh, Durham, Chapel Hill and Smithfield are among the Triangle towns with a downtown municipal service district. The Downtown Raleigh Alliance, which is funded by a 7.9-cent property tax, worried the referendum process would mean business interests don’t get a voice in the group’s future.

The provision was removed from the final budget, and legislators decided instead to form a committee to study the issue. That group proposed the bill, sponsored by Wade, that cleared the House and Senate this month.

The bill adds transparency requirements that would allow the public to access information about contractors and subcontractors hired with revenue from the special tax. And it sets out processes for property owners to petition for a new municipal service district or to have their property exempted from a service district tax if they can prove they don’t need the services provided.

Wade noted Wednesday that the bill has support from the N.C. League of Municipalities, a group she’s often been at odds with. “I might frame this, it might be the first time and the last,” she said of the League’s endorsement.

Read more here: <http://www.newsobserver.com/news/politics-government/politics-columns-blogs/under-the-dome/article79871137.html#storylink=cpy>

**School board to address HB2 issue at Thursday, May 26 meeting**

by Greg Childress

Herald Sun

<http://www.heraldsun.com/news/school-board-to-address-hb-issue-at-thursday-may-meeting/article_d59ce80c-22bb-11e6-a307-479bc9894db0.html>

DURHAM -- The Durham school board will receive an update on House Bill 2 and review the district’s obligation to transgender students when it meets Thursday, May 26 for its regular monthly school board meeting.

HB2, as the controversial law is known, reversed a Charlotte ordinance that had extended to transgendered people the right to use the public restroom of the gender for which they identify.

The law also stripped workers in North Carolina of the right to sue in state court over any form of discrimination and bans local governments from setting their own minimum wage.

The school board has already adopted a resolution opposing the law, contending that it creates “serious legal risks for public schools because it conflicts with federal and state laws.”

The board’s agenda item comes attached with a “Dear Colleague” letter the U.S. Department of Justice released earlier this month spelling out public schools’ legal obligations to transgender students and an accompanying letter from the U.S. Department of Education that provides examples of “policies and emerging practices” for supporting transgender students.

The “Dear Colleague” letter explains, for example, that to comply with Title IX, which bars discrimination in education based on sex, public schools must treat a transgender student the same as it does other students of the same gender identity for which the transgender student identifies.

It also provides examples of how school can create a “safe and nondiscriminatory environment for all students, including transgender students.”

Schools are advised to instruct “staff and contractors” to use pronouns and names consistent with a transgender student’s gender identity.

And when there are sex-segregated restrooms, locker rooms, shower facilities, housing and athletic teams, transgender students must be allowed to “participate in such activities and access such facilities consistent with their gender identity.”

Currently, DPS works with families of transgender students to provide private facilities, such as staff bathrooms or single-occupancy bathrooms for transgender students to use.

State leaders opposed to HB2 had worried that North Carolina is at risking of losing public education dollars as a result of the Republican-led General Assembly’s passage of HB2.

But the Obama administration has said there is no immediate danger of the state losing funding for public education.

The Department of Justice has sued the state, asking the court to declare HB2 discriminatory under Title VII and Title IX of the Civil Rights Act.

Gov. Pat McCrory, the state Department of Public Safety, the University of North Carolina system and its board of governors are all named in the suit.

Meanwhile, McCrory has sued the Justice Department in in federal court, contending that federal authorities have made a radical interpretation of the Civil Rights Act by requiring the state to allow transgender people to use the restrooms of the gender for which they identify.

In other business, the school board is scheduled to discuss its proposal for a $110 million fall bond referendum that would include $51 million for a new Northern High School, $28 million for a new elementary school in southern Durham and $7.3 million for substantial improvements at Eno Valley Elementary School.

The $110 million is $20 million more than the $90 million recommended by county officials, but school officials contend it’s hardly enough to make a dent in the more than $450 million in capital needs listed in DPS’ Long Range Facilities Plan, which stretches out over 10 years.

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**N.C. House revives coal ash oversight panel**

BY BRUCE HENDERSON

Charlotte Observer

<http://www.charlotteobserver.com/news/local/article79881057.html>

N.C. House members, defying a promised threat by Gov. Pat McCrory, voted Wednesday to recreate a commission to oversee the state’s key decisions on coal ash disposal.

The bill, which now goes to the Senate, also requires Duke Energy to connect private wells that might be contaminated by ash to municipal water lines or filtration systems.

The bill gives Duke until October 2017 to file a binding agreement to supply alternate water to homes with contaminated wells and homes in the path of contaminated groundwater.

It also revives an oversight panel that McCrory disbanded after a state Supreme Court ruling on appointments to it. The House measure gives the governor five of the seven appointees to the commission and the legislature two.

McCrory, in a letter Tuesday to legislative leaders, said he would veto the “misguided and unnecessary” bill. McCrory said the measure is still unconstitutional and would undermine nearly two years of work to clean up Duke’s ash.

Duke said Tuesday night it supports the bill.

“We believe giving plant neighbors the assurance of long-term water quality gives them peace of mind and benefits North Carolina because we preserve the range of options to safely close ash basins,” the company said in a statement.

The oversight commission would review risk classifications by the Department of Environmental Quality, released last week, that will determine how and when 33 ash ponds will be closed.

DEQ decided Duke should excavate ash, the solution favored by environmental groups, from each pond. But it asked legislators for 18 months to further review and possibly change those decisions.

Under the bill passed by the House, the Coal Ash Management Commission would have 120 days after its members are appointed to review the risk classifications.

“Having the oversight that this bill contemplates is critical to us doing our job to protect the public health and the environment,” Rep. Pricey Harrison, a Greensboro Democrat, said during floor debate.

Environmental advocates said the measure helps Duke more than the public by making it possible that much of its ash could stay in place, the cheapest cleanup option for the company.

“This bill is the latest attempt by Raleigh politicians to bail out Duke Energy,” the Southern Environmental Law Center said Tuesday. “After heavy lobbying by Duke Energy, the Raleigh politicians want to re-open the process to try to find a way to let Duke Energy off the hook.”

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**Black NC faith leaders: 'We agree with God' on controversial HB2**

by Latisha Catchitoorian

Charlotte Post

<http://www.thecharlottepost.com/news/2016/05/25/local-state/black-nc-faith-leaders-we-agree-with-god-on-controversial-hb2/>

RALEIGH – Attorney General Loretta Lynch, with the support of President Obama, recently referred to transgender struggles as an issue of “civil rights.”

Faith leaders who stood in front of the Capitol building Tuesday called Lynch’s remarks “offensive.”

One of the provisions of North Carolina’s House Bill 2 prohibits transgender people from using the bathroom of the gender they identify with. The state has seen much opposition against the bill signed into law in March, but more than 50 faith leaders from across the state stood in solidarity in support of it.

“We’re here to debunk and dispel the many fallacious ideologies that people have attached to HB2, which is simply common sense legislation,” said John Amanchukwu, youth pastor at Upper Room Church of God in Christ in Raleigh. “Our president and our Attorney General Loretta Lynch have made some inflammatory comments and statements that are erroneous at best. A person’s ability to self-identify as something they are not has nothing to do with civil rights.”

“The language of ‘civil rights’ shouldn’t be hijacked to give privileges to the politically vocal while taking away freedoms from people disfavored by government,” said Bishop Patrick Wooden, senior pastor and bishop of Upper Room Church. “As you can see, I am African-American. I have been African-American since birth; God made me this way. For the attorney general to equate the legitimate struggle of the civil rights movement to the things that HB2 stands for is embarrassing and is wrong.”

Clarence Henderson, chairman of the Governor’s Commission on Civil Rights, participated in the Greensboro Woolworth sit-ins during the civil rights movement. He said transgender identity is a “feeling” and that to call it a “movement” offends him.

“I stand before you to tell you what civil rights is and what it isn’t. It certainly isn’t transgender (identification)… If you were born a man, that’s who you are. If you were born a female, that’s who you are. Tell me how you’re going to tell the families that came on those slave ships, in chains… tell their families (that it is comparable) to transgender (identity),” he said. “You tell me how many transgender people have been lynched.”

Only .3 percent of the American population identifies as transgender, though some experts estimate the number to be greater than reported. Pastor Kenneth Fontenot, senior pastor of Bethel Baptist Church in Wilson, said no law intended to protect a minority should be passed at the expense of the majority.

“The laws passed in the 1960s did not bless black people while they hurt white people,” he said.

Fontenot highlighted his point by pouring maple syrup on a stack of bread, saying that covering bread in syrup does not make it pancakes.

“It has become more and more challenging each day to witness our common sense liberties and freedoms being challenged and assaulted by an overreach of more and more government. I strongly believe that restrooms and showers separated by biological sex is common sense, not discrimination,” said Leon Threatt, senior pastor at Christian Faith Assembly in Charlotte.

Gabriel Rogers, senior pastor at Kingdom Christian Church in Charlotte, said that just like God loves everyone, so do the ministers, but if the government gives liberties to transgender people, it’s difficult to police the ill-willed with predatory intentions protected by the same law.

“What are we going to do with the trauma when our young girls and our young boys are exposed to (opposite sex) genitalia? What are we going to do when someone is confused about their own sexuality because they’ve been exposed to someone who was confused in and of themselves?” he said.

Jimmy Bention, pastor of Metrolina Christian Center Church of God in Christ in Monroe, was incredulous when he said society is “soft-shoeing” the issue because the conversation is about  “penises and vaginas.”

Added Wooden: “The African-American community is not monolithic. We’re not rogue pastors. We’re not ashamed to admit we agree with God.”

**Joe Walsh playing North Carolina, under protest**

BY DAVID MENCONI

N&O

<http://www.newsobserver.com/entertainment/music-news-reviews/on-the-beat-blog/article79856462.html>

Joe Walsh is the latest prominent musician to weigh in against North Carolina’s controversial House Bill 2.

The Eagles guitarist has two North Carolina dates scheduled this summer, including Aug. 9 at Raleigh’s Red Hat Amphitheater. In a statement on his website, Walsh announced his plans to play both shows with net profits earmarked for Equality NC and the ACLU. He also urged repeal of the law; the complete statement is below.

Walsh’s announcement follows similar moves by the Lumineers, scheduled for Sept. 15 at Cary’s Booth Amphitheatre; and Dave Matthews Band, playing Friday in Charlotte. Cyndi Lauper’s upcoming June 4 Raleigh show is also an anti-HB2 benefit.

Last week, both Maroon 5 and Itzhak Perlman canceled Raleigh shows to protest the law, joining a list that includes Bruce Springsteen, Pearl Jam, Ringo Starr, Demi Lovato, Ani DiFranco, Boston and Cirque du Soleil.

# # # #

Joe Walsh message to his fans about playing in North Carolina:

I have a few shows coming up in North Carolina: June 30th in Charlotte at the PNC Pavilion on my tour with Bad Company and August 9th in Raleigh at the Red Hat Amphitheater as part of my solo run. North Carolina has been in the news lately because of the new legislation passed (HB-2) that dictates which bathrooms transgender individuals are to use and overrules LGBT anti-discrimination measures passed by local governments in the state of North Carolina. It also deprives the rights of LGBT persons to fight back when their rights are denied in the workplace.

This legislation is deeply disconcerting and offensive to me and it hits close to home because, in addition to my diverse friends and peers from all walks of life, I have a gay stepson of whom I am very proud and that this legislation would directly affect. Because I am against discrimination of any kind, I encourage a full repeal of this law.

I believe that music is a language that connects people – without bias – and that my shows are a place where all are welcome and all can feel safe. This is why I have chosen to proceed with concert dates as planned in North Carolina and will be donating my net profits to Equality NC and the ACLU. Both of these organizations will be on site at my show passing out information and collecting donations. You can also find links to their pages on my website where you can get more information or make a donation. Please consider contributing to these organizations who are working to repeal HB-2 and join me in coming together to protect equal rights for everyone including our LGBT children today and for years to come.

With gratitude and love,

Joe Walsh

David Menconi: 919-829-4759, @NCDavidMenconi

Read more here: <http://www.newsobserver.com/entertainment/music-news-reviews/on-the-beat-blog/article79856462.html#storylink=cpy>

**Coal ash commission, drinking water bill clears House**

AP

<http://www.wxii12.com/news/Coal-ash-commission-drinking-water-bill-clears-House/39724806>

RALEIGH, N.C. —An effort to revive a North Carolina commission to help oversee the cleanup of coal ash pits maintained by Duke Energy and ensure nearby residents get piped drinking water has cleared the state House.

The chamber voted Wednesday for the measure to reconstitute the Coal Ash Management Commission. Gov. Pat McCrory shut down the original commission following a court ruling that found the legislature held too much control over a panel with executive branch duties.

McCrory told legislators he would veto the bill, calling it unnecessary. His lawyer said more litigation would occur if it became law.

Rep. Chuck McGrady of Hendersonville said the commission provides a second level of regulation to decide how the pits should be cleaned up. The bill passed 86-25 and now goes to the Senate.

**DuPont Forest may get money for improvements, workers**

by Mark Barrett

Citizen Times

<http://www.citizen-times.com/story/news/local/2016/05/25/dupont-forest-may-get-money-improvements-workers/84912494/>

CEDAR MOUNTAIN – Money included in the state House's budget bill would improve facilities and beef up staffing at DuPont State Recreational Forest if the Senate and Gov. Pat McCrory go along.

The House allocated $3 million for bathroom, utility and parking lot improvements in the park and nearly $630,000 to add nine workers to the 11 employees at the forest, which has seen exponential growth in visitation over the past decade.

The move could end or at least postpone discussion of the state charging a fee for park visitors.

Rep. Chuck McGrady, R-Henderson, pushed to have the money inserted in the bill that would provide funds to operate state government for the fiscal year beginning July 1.

The Senate version of the bill is expected to be debated in that chamber next week. Sen. Tom Apodaca, a Hendersonville Republican whose district includes the park, could not be reached for comment Wednesday.

The forest was established as a state facility in 1997 and now covers 10,400 acres on the Henderson-Transylvania county line between Hendersonville and Brevard. Its spectacular waterfalls, extensive trail network and use of the forest to shoot parts of movies "The Last of the Mohicans" and "The Hunger Games" contributed to an increase in visitation from 121,000 people in 2005 to 683,000 last year, according to state figures.

"Now that it's been found ... it's getting loved to death," McGrady said.

Bev Parlier, president of volunteer group Friends of DuPont State Forest, said the park is getting crowded in places and the need is clear for permanent restrooms at a popular parking lot on Staton Road often used by people visiting Hooker Falls and other large waterfalls, among other improvements.

There are portable toilets at the lot, but Parlier said they get so much use they are often "nasty" so visitors relieve themselves in the woods instead, leaving some places near trails nasty, too.

The friends group voted at its annual meeting in April to support a fee proposal being considered by the N.C. Forest Service, a unit of the state Department of Agriculture that manages the forest.

But Parlier said members "are very excited" about the prospect of a direct appropriation for park needs: "However DuPont gets money is good."

McGrady, who was involved in efforts to establish the forest before he became a legislator, said state parks generally do not charge admission fees and "whatever we do (for DuPont) probably needs to be consistent with what we do in parks."

"This is one of the highest visited state lands in the state," he said. "It is getting more visitation than many of the state parks, and it doesn't have many of the funding sources that many of the state parks have."

Brian Haines, a spokesman for the N.C. Forest Service, said state officials also see a need for restrooms at the Staton Road lot.

There has been discussion of paving the lot, and a park master plan also recommends providing trash cans and drinking water at trailheads. Decisions on what facilities should be added or improved won't be made until after legislators decide how much money to spend on the forest, Haines said.

Officials see a need for more workers because of the dramatic increase in visitors. Park employees "are outnumbered, and it's hard for them to keep up with all the folks on the forest," he said.

The $3 million for facilities in the House budget would be a one-time appropriation. Money for additional workers would be included in future budgets by default, barring legislative action to the contrary.

Because of the possibility of legislative action to appropriate the money for the forest, Haines said he does not expect any movement in the near future on charging forest visitors a fee.

"The fee discussion is not dead, but at the moment it's just sort of on hold," he said.

**City Council still hoping to resolve impasse over HB2**

by Rad Berky

WCNC

<http://www.wcnc.com/news/politics/hb2/city-council-still-hoping-to-resolve-impasse-over-hb2/214954766>

CHARLOTTE, N.C. -- Charlotte City Council members met for a budget session Wednesday where some had hoped there might be a vote that could end the impasse with the state over House Bill 2.

At Monday night's meeting, Kenny Smith made a motion calling for a vote Wednesday to repeal the city's original ordinance that broadened anti-discrimination measures for the LGBT community.

It was that ordinance that was later overturned when the General Assembly met and passed HB2 in one day two months ago.

However, at the Monday night meeting, the measure to vote Wednesday was voted down.

Council member LaWana Mayfield, who supported the city's ordinance, said she was still opposed to HB2 in any form.

"Five pages of legislation took away the ability for anyone to be protected," she said as she was walking into the meeting.

Tuesday, the Charlotte Chamber or Commerce sent a letter to legislative leaders asking them to allow Charlotte or any municipality to pass its own ordinances affording protections to the LGBT community.

Council member Gregg Phipps voted against the original Charlotte ordinance but said the Chamber's proposal could get things moving to resolve the impasse over HB2 that the Chamber estimates has cost Mecklenburg County more than $285 million.

Said Phipps, "It's a step. Whether it's incremental or not, it would move us beyond where we are now."

Council member Ed Driggs has been involved in conversations with legislative leaders over how to resolve the debate.

He worries now that time is running out before the end of the short session.

"So they will now need to think about what they can do in view of the fact that Charlotte is not able to accommodate the one request that they had," said Driggs.

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**High-profile group forming to find a fix for HB2 impasse**

BY JIM MORRILL

Charlotte Observer

<http://www.charlotteobserver.com/news/politics-government/article79864802.html>

A former North Carolina governor and a former lieutenant governor are poised to lead a bipartisan search for a possible compromise on House Bill 2, the law that catapulted the state into a national debate over transgender rights.

The idea grew out of widespread discussions on how to break the impasse over the law, which according to one study has cost Mecklenburg County alone more than $283 million in lost economic activity.

The group would be led by Republican financier Art Pope, a former state budget director, and former Democratic Lt. Gov. Dennis Wicker. Former Republican Gov. Jim Martin would be the honorary chair.

“My sense is that there’s a public appetite for people to get together and talk about it rather than people just yelling across the chasm at each other,” said John Hood, president of Pope’s family foundation.

Hood and Pope are organizing the working group. They say it grew out of discussions over how to find a way out of a situation that has resulted in economic losses, celebrity boycotts and dueling lawsuits between the state and the U.S. Justice Department.

The Raleigh Republicans are just two of the people who’ve been trying to find a solution to the impasse.

“Lots of different people had the same thought, which is some kind of de-escalation, followed by discussion,” Hood said. “There were different versions of what that de-escalation looked like.”

One version, which followed meetings with some Charlotte City Council members and legislative leaders, involved a council vote to rescind the February ordinance that prompted the law.

That ordinance extended anti-discrimination protections to people based on sexual orientation and gender identity. It gave transgender people the right to use the bathroom or locker room of their gender identity.

Republican lawmakers responded with HB2, which nullified the Charlotte ordinance and limited anti-discrimination claims.

This week, House Speaker Tim Moore told reporters the city had to rescind the ordinance before the legislature made any changes in the state law. “For any conversations to happen, Charlotte needs to take a look at what it did and it needs to be the first to make any movement,” he said.

Business leaders lobbied the city to make a concession. “We fear that if the City Council doesn’t take a first step, the crushing economic suffering … will continue for years,” Charlotte Chamber President Bob Morgan wrote in a column for the Observer.

But on Monday, the City Council voted 7-4 against rescinding the ordinance.

Pope said he was more confident of a compromise last week than he is now. He said the idea of a working group has “a lot of buy-in” from both sides.

Hood, former president of the conservative John Locke Foundation, said one reason is the need for trust. He alluded to comments by Julie Eiselt, a Democratic council member, who said the city needs more trust with Republican lawmakers before moving forward.

“The reasoning given in Charlotte … is ‘We don’t trust them,’ and what you hear from the legislature and to some extent the McCrory administration is, ‘We don’t trust them.’ So one reason to have a conversation … is to air out differences. Another reason is just to build trust.”

Hood said organizers are looking at a core group of 16 members representing local governments and people on various sides of the divide. The tentative name: the FAIR working group, for Facility Access Inclusion and Respect.

“The faster we get people talking the better,” he said.

JOE NEFF OF THE (RALEIGH) NEWS & OBSERVER CONTRIBUTED.

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**State Lawmakers Consider New Coal Ash Panel Bill**

By Linnie Supall

TWC News

<http://www.twcnews.com/nc/triangle-sandhills/politics/2016/05/25/state-lawmakers-consider-new-coal-ash-panel-bill.html>

RALEIGH -- A controversial bill is making its way through the State House about whether a coal ash management commission should be re-created.

Back in 2014, the previous commission created by state lawmakers was disbanded after Gov. Pat McCrory filed a lawsuit.

However, legislators now want to revive the commission and provide McCrory most of its appointments.

The bill would give Duke Energy until next summer to work out how to help people living near the pits with contaminated well water.

The McCrory administration says a new commission could come with more litigation and ultimately derail a plan to get permanent drinking water more quickly to some people living near the ponds.

“I don't believe it slows down the process at all.  It makes the process something people can have more confidence in because we're bringing more expertise to the table,” said Rep. Chuck McGrady.

“It's being promoted as if it's going to provide immediate relief when in fact under the provisions it may be up to a year before we get the process of actually delivering clean drinking water,” added Rep. Larry Hall.

The Department of Environmental Quality says it cannot support this proposal because it substantially weakens environmental protections contained in the current law.

The Governor’s staff also said if the bill reaches his desk he will veto it and once again sue state lawmakers.

**Senate Republicans propose big teacher pay hike**

BY LYNN BONNER

N&O

<http://www.newsobserver.com/news/politics-government/article79852707.html>

Senate Republicans on Wednesday proposed a steep increase in teacher pay that would bring the average teacher salary to about $54,000 a year in two years, but offered few details on how they would fund it.

Senate leader Phil Berger, an Eden Republican, said the proposal would add $538 million to base pay over the next two years and make North Carolina the regional leader in teacher pay. The announcement comes in advance of the presentation of the Senate’s complete proposed budget. Berger did not say how the chamber proposes to pay for the raises, other than that the money would come from recurring funds.

“If everything else remains stagnant, teachers will receive almost $200,000 in additional pay over the course of their career under this plan,” Berger said.

The increases are bigger than those Gov. Pat McCrory proposed and the state House passed last week. Berger said raises for other state employees would be disclosed in the full budget to be released next week.

Berger said teachers would reach the top of the pay scale after 15 years. No salary schedule was provided. Berger referred to a website run by the Senate Republican caucus’s political committee that requires users to enter their email addresses. That site did not include the traditional salary chart.

“Once you see the full budget, you’ll be able to see the details,” he said.

The early announcement of teacher raises is a repeat of the strategy Senate Republicans used in 2014, when they pushed for 11 percent increases.

Their complete budget proposal, revealed later, would have eliminated thousands of teacher-assistant jobs and cut thousands of people who were “medically needy” from Medicaid.

McCrory and House Republicans opposed that plan. The final budget that year spared teacher assistants and had a 7 percent average teacher raise, but some veteran teachers received increases of fraction of a percent, those at the top of the scale received one-time bonuses, and teachers lost their separate longevity paychecks.

Berger said Wednesday that the Senate proposal would not cut teacher assistant funding. “I don’t see any significant modifications as far as TAs,” he said.

Rodney Ellis, president of the N.C. Association of Educators, said Republicans are trying to “play catch up” in an election year.

“Clearly the devil is going to be in the details on this proposal, and we haven’t seen them,” he said in a statement.

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Read more here: <http://www.newsobserver.com/news/politics-government/article79852707.html#storylink=cpy>

**Records show McCrory's frequent use of state plane to fly home**

By Nick Ochsner

WBTV

<http://www.wbtv.com/story/32064688/records-show-mccrorys-frequent-use-of-state-plane-to-fly-home>

RALEIGH, NC (WBTV) -

Governor Pat McCrory’s frequent trips to Charlotte and the state’s Western Residence in Asheville has cost taxpayers nearly $60,000 in flight time on state airplanes.

McCrory makes no secret of the time he spends at his home in Charlotte and at the Western Residence.

A review of travel records obtained by On Your Side Investigates through a public records request shows the Governor frequently uses state airplanes to get out of town, even when it means making extra flights.

On Your Side Investigates reviewed the two years of flight records and flagged any flight that could have been avoided had McCrory stayed in Raleigh: flights with no passengers, flights that carried McCrory’s staff but not the Governor either coming to pick him up or going back to Raleigh after leaving him in Charlotte, or flights that included the Governor but that would have been unnecessary had he stayed in Raleigh.

Our review found 125 flights that fit the criteria: 48 flights with no passengers, 49 flights on which at least one member of the Governor’s staff was aboard without him and 28 flights that included McCrory.

Records show McCrory flies on one of two state airplanes owned by the North Carolina Department of Transportation. Typically, records show, McCrory flies on a King Air-200 twin-engine turbo prop airplane that costs $560 per hour to operate. Records show McCrory also uses the state-owned Cessna Citation II jet that costs $770 per hour to operate.

Invoices provided by the Governor’s Office shows the 125 avoidable flights flown by state-owned jets at McCrory’s request cost taxpayers $59,605 in just flight hours, not including additional fees associated with individual airports.

Flight manifests show McCrory took a total of 316 flights in 2013 and 2014.

Frequent weekend flights home, to the mountains

Flight manifests provided by the Governor’s Office show McCrory frequently has the plane make extra flights to or from Charlotte to pick him up and drop him off.

Records show that when the Governor comes to Charlotte, state planes typically fly in and out of Concord Regional Airport. McCrory then makes the roughly 30 minute drive from the airport to his home in central Charlotte by an SUV driven by a member of his security detail.

McCrory makes regular use of the state-owned Western Residence in Asheville, calendar and flight records show.

Often, McCrory’s flights to Charlotte coincide with a public appearance but come on a Thursday or Friday so he can spend the weekend at home.

One such trip came just months into McCrory’s term on February 28, 2013. Flight records show the plane flew McCrory, a member of his protective detail and three staffers to Asheville for “Western NC Public Appearances.”

The plane then flew back from Asheville to Raleigh with no passengers, the flight manifest shows.

McCrory then spent the weekend at the Western Residence and, later, at home in Charlotte before driving back to Raleigh on Monday, March 4.

Flight records show McCrory spent most weekends in July 2013 at home.

On Friday, July 12, 2013, McCrory started the day by flying from Raleigh to New Bern in eastern North Carolina for an event listed as a ‘Main Street Tour’ on his calendar. Flight records show McCrory then flew from New Bern to Charlotte, where he got off. The plane then flew back to Raleigh empty.

McCrory also had the state plane drop him off in Charlotte the next Friday, July 19, 2013. Flight records show the Governor flew from Raleigh to Boone for events and flew from Boone to Charlotte. After dropping McCrory off in Concord, the plane flew back to Raleigh with one staffer on board.

The following week, July 26, 2013, McCrory flew into the Concord airport and drove to a bill signing in Cornelius. The two remaining events following the bill signing are redacted on the calendar provided by McCrory’s office. A calendar entry for July 26 indicated McCrory ended the day in Charlotte. All calendar entries for the two days after that are redacted.

Daily commutes to/from Charlotte

Flight records provided by the Governor’s Office show McCrory also used state airplanes to commute to and from Charlotte daily.

One such period of daily back-and-forth came in early November 2013.

On November 7, 2013, McCrory flew from Raleigh to Asheville for Billy Graham’s 95th birthday party. Flight records show McCrory then flew from Asheville to Charlotte for the evening. The plane continued on to Raleigh without any passengers on board.

The next morning, November 8, 2013, the plane flew back to Charlotte empty, picked up McCrory and flew him to Raleigh for the funeral of longtime political consultant Jack Hawke. McCrory flew back to Charlotte that evening, with the state plane making another flight back to Raleigh with no passengers on board.

The state plane started the next morning, November 9, 2013, by flying back to Concord to pick McCrory up in Charlotte and flying to Fayetteville for a Veteran’s Day event. McCrory then flew back to Charlotte and the plan continued on to Raleigh.

McCrory’s calendar for Sunday, November 10, 2013 and that following Monday do not have any events and are not clear on when or how he returned to Raleigh.

Such use of the state airplane could be a violation of the travel policy outlined in the North Carolina Office of State Budget and Management’s budget manual, which outlines travel policies.

“An employee traveling on official state business is expected to exercise the same care in incurring expenses that a prudent person would exercise if traveling on personal business and expending personal funds,” the manual reads.  “Excess costs, circuitous routes, delays, or luxury accommodations and services unnecessary, unjustified, or for the convenience or personal preference of the employee in the performance of official state business are prohibited.”

Governors’ airplane use prompts calls for reform

Francis DeLuca, president of the conservative Civitas Institute, told On Your Side Investigates he is opposed to the state owning any passenger aircraft.

“North Carolina state government does not need an air force,” DeLuca said. “There’s only really three purposes we think the state should own aircraft for. One would be true law enforcement functions, two would be to fight fires in our state forests and the third would be maybe for transport – medical transport for our state hospitals.”

Instead, DeLuca said, he would rather see the Governor’s Office and other executive cabinet-level agencies given a budget each year to charter private aircraft as needed. Doing that, DeLuca said, would force departments to prioritize the use of private aircraft.

“When you have planes, you’re going to invite controversy over their use,” he said.

Past governors’ aircraft usage

McCrory is not the first North Carolina Governor to attract attention for his use of state aircraft.

In 2008, then-Governor Mike Easley, a Democrat, drew scrutiny for his use of the state helicopter and airplanes to fly back and forth from Raleigh to his home near the coast in Southport.

The details of Easley’s state aircraft use are outlined in a report from the conservative think tank John Locke Foundation.

Like McCrory, the Locke Foundation’s report found Easley often scheduled official events near his home or had the state’s aircraft make connecting stops to his home on his way to or from events.

A spokesman for the John Locke Foundation declined to make anyone available to comment on the McCrory’s use of state aircraft when reached for an interview.

By comparison, Easley’s successor, Democrat Governor Bev Purdue, rarely used state aircraft to trips that could have been avoided by staying in Raleigh.

A review of Purdue’s flight records for the first two years of her term - the same time period for which McCrory’s records were examined for this story - show she took a total of 210 flights on state aircraft. Of those flights, a total of 21 were found to have been avoidable during our review.

McCrory Responds

On Your Side Investigates first requested McCrory’s travel records in early January. They were provided in mid-May after multiple follow-up requests for the documents.

Within a week of receiving the records, we requested an on-camera interview with McCrory through the Governor’s press office.

Two emails sent a week before this story aired seeking an answer on whether McCrory would make himself available for an interview regarding his use of the state’s airplanes were ignored.

A phone call placed late Tuesday was returned by the Governor’s press secretary, Graham Wilson, the following day.  In a statement emailed Wednesday afternoon, hours before this story was set to air, defending McCrory’s use of state airplanes.

“The Governor is proud to visit his home and office in Charlotte. The current manner of using state aircraft is the most efficient and lowest cost option when it comes to expense and man-hours,” Wilson said. “Not only does it cost substantially more to keep the aircraft and crew at a specific location overnight, but it prevents that flight crew from being available to fly other missions for the rest of that duty day.”

A review of aircraft manifests provided by McCrory’s office shows an airplane used by McCrory was also used by staff from another agency six days in 2013 and 2014. Of those six days, only three of them saw state personnel use the state airplane for official business after the plane was used by McCrory.

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**BRAD PAISLEY WRITES PARODY SONG ABOUT HB2 ON 'JIMMY KIMMEL LIVE'**

WTVD

<http://abc11.com/entertainment/brad-paisley-writes-parody-song-about-nc-bathroom-bill/1355465/>

Country music star Brad Paisley appeared on "Jimmy Kimmel Live" on Tuesday night, and he had a message for North Carolina.

Paisley seemingly took a stand against House Bill 2 through a parody of Tammy Wynette's 1960s hit "Stand By Your Man." HB2, in part, requires transgender people to use the public bathroom that corresponds to the sex on their birth certificate.

Paisley rewrote the lyrics to feature some politically-charged bathroom humor. His message, whether done in ridicule or protest, is summed up in his closing lyrics: "Why is this such a big deal? Hike up your dress, and take a stand. And sit by your man."

Also on "Jimmy Kimmel Live," Jimmy shared his thoughts on "clever" bathroom signs and explains how he'll deal with them as Vice President.

**Low tuition plan for UNC advances in legislative committees**

BY JANE STANCILL

N&O

<http://www.newsobserver.com/news/local/education/article79826322.html>

RALEIGH

A bill that would dramatically lower tuition at five UNC campuses passed two legislative committees Wednesday, as proponents tried to calm concerns that the measure could harm historically black universities.

One controversial provision – the possible renaming of the schools – was removed from Senate Bill 873 before it passed education and appropriations committees.

It was clear from the debate that the bill has stoked fears among some supporters of the state’s publicly funded historically black universities. They suggest the changes could starve campuses financially, alter their makeup and diminish their traditions. Alumni showed up to speak to lawmakers Wednesday as the bill was heard in committee. The UNC system’s Faculty Assembly took a stand against the bill last week.

The legislation calls for fixed tuition for any UNC system student’s four years of enrollment and reduced fees at all UNC campuses.

But it also launches a radical experiment to establish tuition at $500 per semester for North Carolina residents at five schools – including the historically black Elizabeth City State, Fayetteville State and Winston-Salem State universities, the historically American Indian UNC Pembroke and Western Carolina University, which is majority white. Proponents of the legislation, which would begin in fall 2018, say it would boost enrollment at smaller campuses and provide a low-cost alternative to North Carolinians across the state.

The two other historically black state universities – N.C. A&T State University and N.C. Central – stand to gain a state-supported merit scholarship program to draw the state’s brightest students.

The bill’s sponsor, Republican Sen. Tom Apodaca of Hendersonville, called Wednesday a “historic day” as the legislation was first debated. He promised that the UNC system’s budget would increase by $70 million to cover the cost of the lost tuition revenue at the five campuses.

He said he hoped the budget pledge would correct misconceptions about the bill.

“We have no desire to close any of our universities in our system,” Apodaca said. “We’re proud of the University of North Carolina system. I think it’s second to none in the United States, and our goal is to keep it that way. In order to do that, we’ve got to build all our institutions up to or as near capacity as we can possibly get them.”

Several lawmakers expressed worry that there is no guarantee the state would compensate for the lost tuition revenue in future years, because this General Assembly cannot bind a future legislature.

That fear was echoed by several speakers.

“We fully support an investment in our HBCUs, but we do want to make sure that commitment is something that can be sustained in the future,” said Abdul Rasheed, former chairman of the ECSU trustees. “We remain concerned about that.”

Archdale Republican Sen. Jerry Tillman said the best guarantee for continued funding is the bill itself, which is likely to be very popular with the people.

“The public is going to be very hard to convince that we ought to change this and weaken it and do away with it,” he said. “It’s the right direction for the families that are struggling to educate their kids, and it will keep them from graduating with a huge debt.”

Sen. Jane Smith, a Lumberton Democrat, suggested that the legislation provide incentive scholarships to students instead of cheap tuition. “We don’t want it to look like we’re getting a bargain basement diploma,” she said.

Apodaca responded that incentive scholarships were a good idea, but were unworkable because such awards could interfere with a student’s eligibility for government grants and loans.

Alyssa Canty, HBCU outreach coordinator for Common Cause, said students “now fear that their degrees will not be valuable when they graduate.”

Across the state, alumni have cautioned that a $500 per semester price tag could cheapen a degree. But Apodaca applies free market thinking to the issue. The five campuses have additional capacity, ranging from 5 percent to over 100 percent, so it makes sense to reduce price to increase demand.

“It’s a marketing ploy,” Apodaca said. “Let’s be very honest. This is to help get more students, high-quality students, into these universities so they can sustain themselves and do it on a geographical basis across the state of North Carolina.”

Even with $500-a-semester tuition, students would still have to pay fees and other costs such as room, board and books, which typically constitute about three-quarters of college costs in North Carolina.

Rising fees have caused problems at some campuses, Apodaca said, and inflate costs for students. But to make the bill more palatable to the universities, an amendment added Wednesday would reduce fees by 5 percent instead of the bill’s previously required 10 percent to 25 percent.

Some said the legislature should tread carefully before making such sweeping changes.

Sen. Paul Lowe Jr., a Winston-Salem Democrat, said he had been inundated with calls from supporters of Winston-Salem State who oppose the plan. He suggested a pilot program to try out the low tuition model – an idea that didn’t gain traction Wednesday.

“Right now I have a lot of apprehensions about this bill,” Lowe said. “It has a lot of moving parts that make me uneasy at this point.”

Others cheered the plan, saying it’s time for North Carolina to do more to make college affordable and keep talented students in the state. Sen. Tamara Barringer, a Wake County Republican, said her own son went to Arizona State University because of an attractive offer there.

“These colleges all over the country want our students,” she said.

Shanta Jackson, a Winston-Salem State alumna, said she views the legislation as a major threat to historically black universities. “Don’t have us coming back here begging for our very existence every two years,” she said, referring to the revenue loss.

“To me, all of this is a slap in the face,” Jackson said. “When someone wants to help you and you didn’t ask for help, be leery.”

Staff writer Colin Campbell contributed to this story.

Jane Stancill: 919-829-4559, @janestancill

Read more here: http://www.newsobserver.com/news/local/education/article79826322.html#storylink=cpy

**A GOP Budget Bargaining Chip: Teacher Pay**

By JEFF TIBERII

WUNC

<http://wunc.org/post/gop-budget-bargaining-chip-teacher-pay#stream/0>

A plan introduced Wednesday at the legislature by Senate Republicans would increase average annual teacher pay, and move North Carolina to the top of compensation in the southeast. The plan is significant in size, and represents a bargaining chip in the ongoing budget negotiations between the Senate and House.

During a news conference Senate Pro Tem Phil Berger touted the plan as a 20% increase in teacher pay, a bump of nearly $10,000 annually since the 2013-14 school year. Proposed raises for teachers were expected in this election year, however, the plan out of the Senate goes further than what the House and Governor McCrory had previously called for. One glaring omission as the plan was unveiled, was just how such raises would be paid for.

"The tax reform proposals that have been implemented have resulted in growth in state revenues. The money is there on a recurring basis and once you see the full budget you'll be able to see the details of that," Berger said.

The proposal adds more than half a billion dollars to base teacher pay. Although Berger didn't say where that $538 million would come from.

"It's hard to have a full understanding talking about it in bits and pieces, but I think once you see the full budget you will see how that fits together."

The full Senate budget proposal is due out next week. The House has already passed its version of the budget. Leaders from both chambers will then broker a budget deal during several weeks of negotiations in June.

Speaking at an education and business event in Durham an hour after Berger's announcement, Governor Pat McCrory said he hadn't seen the details, but he felt his office, the Senate, and the House were on the same page.

"There will be a teacher pay increase," said McCrory. "The question is how much, and the question is how will you distribute that teacher pay? Will it be across the board? Will it be based on performance? Will it be based upon market demand?"

Under Berger's proposal teachers would reach the top of the pay scale in 15 years, as opposed to the current standard of 33 years. This plan doesn't deal with merit pay, although Berger hinted more on that could be coming soon.

"This part is not merit based, but remember, we have talked about fixing and modifying the base pay structure so that we then have the capacity to do some merit based things. So I think you will see some of that when the budget comes out as well," Berger told reporters.

Today's pitch to grow teacher pay is seen as a bargaining chip as the House and Senate work to negotiate a state spending plan by the end of June.

**Texas Suing Over Obama’s Transgender Directive**

AP

<http://dfw.cbslocal.com/2016/05/25/texas-suing-over-obamas-transgender-directive/>

AUSTIN (AP) – The state of Texas is suing the Obama administrationover its directive to U.S. public schools to let transgender students use the bathrooms and locker rooms that match their gender identity, Gov. Greg Abbott said Wednesday.

The lawsuit appears to make Texas the first state to take the federal government to court over the directive handed down to schools earlier this month.

Texas and other conservative states have vowed defiance, calling the guidance a threat to safety while being accused of discrimination by supporters of transgender rights. Texas’ lieutenant governor has previously said the state is willing to forfeit $10 billion in federal education dollars rather than comply.

Abbott confirmed the lawsuit at a book signing hours before the state’s Republican attorney general was scheduled to formally announce the challenge at a Wednesday news conference.

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 Greg Abbott ✔ ‎@GregAbbott\_TX

Texas will sue to stop Obama's transgender directive to schools. Thanks @KenPaxtonTX #tcot #txlege #PJNET <http://news4sanantonio.com/news/local/texas-ag-expected-announce-legal-challenge-to-obamas-transgender-directive-to-schools?utm_source=twitterfeed&utm_medium=twitter> …

12:08 PM - 25 May 2016

Photo published for Texas AG expected announce legal challenge to Obama's transgender directive to schools

Texas AG expected announce legal challenge to Obama's transgender directive to schools

AUSTIN, Texas -- Texas Attorney General Ken Paxton has scheduled a news conference for Wednesday afternoon and is expected to announce a legal challenge to President Obama's directive to schools...

news4sanantonio.com

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“His lawsuit is challenging the way that the Obama administration is trampling the United States Constitution,” Abbott told reporters.

The directive from the U.S. Justice and Education Departments represents an escalation in the fast-moving dispute over what is becoming the civil rights issue of the day. The guidance was issued after the Justice Department and North Carolina sued each other overs a state law that requires transgender people to use the public bathroom that corresponds to the sex on their birth certificate. The law applies to schools and many other places.

Supporters say such measures are needed to protect women and children from sexual predators, while the Justice Department and others argue the threat is practically nonexistent and the law discriminatory

Texas was a likely candidate to rush to the courthouse first. Abbott sued the Obama administration more than two dozen times when he was attorney general, a pace that his successor, Republican Ken Paxton, has kept up since taking office last year.

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**11 states sue US government over transgender bathroom policy**

By RNN Staff

<http://www.wbtv.com/story/32064042/11-states-sue-us-government-over-transgender-bathroom-policy>

(RNN) - Eleven states filed a federal lawsuit against the Obama administration over the directive instructing schools to provide transgender students bathroom and locker room facilities that match their gender identity.

Additional Links

Governor: Texas suing over Obama's transgender directive

The states that filed the lawsuit in the U.S. District Court for the Northern District of Texas are Alabama, Arizona, Georgia, Louisiana, Maine, Oklahoma, Tennessee, Texas, Utah, West Virginia and Wisconsin.

Earlier in May, the Department of Justice and the Department of Education released a letter outlining the new policy to give schools guidance on the policy.

Immediately after the release of the letter, Texas Gov. Greg Abbott (R) said he would fight the policy, saying that President Barack Obama was trying to bully Texas schools.

According to The Washington Post, the lawsuit states the directive has no legal basis and could cause "seismic changes in the operations of the nation’s school districts."

The issue of gender identity and bathrooms gained national attention after the North Carolina legislature overturned a Charlotte city ordinance in March. North Carolina is not one of the 11 states suing the government.

North Carolina's House Bill 2 requires transgender people to use public bathrooms that match their birth certificates. The law also makes clear local measures can't expand anti-discrimination protections for sexual orientation or gender identity.

A ruling in April by a federal judge in Richmond, VA, threatened the part of HB2 that affected making transgender students in public schools and universities use bathrooms corresponding to their birth gender.

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**11 states file suit against Obama administration for bathroom policy**

BY TERESA WELSH

McClatchy

<http://www.newsobserver.com/latest-news/article79831807.html>

The controversy over bathrooms has deepened as 11 states filed a federal lawsuit against the Obama administration for mandating transgender students be allowed to use the bathroom of their choice.

The suit was filed in a Texas federal court by states who object to the federal government policy dictating which public school bathrooms students are allowed to use. The Obama administration has threatened to cut off federal funding to school districts that do not comply.

U.S. Attorney General Loretta Lynch discusses the government's HB2 lawsuit against NC during a visit to Fayetteville. Lynch was there to praise the city for its community policing initiatives. Robert Willett rwillett@newsobserver.com

Bathroom politics was hoisted to the national stage following dispute over a state law in North Carolina that mandated people to use the bathroom corresponding to the gender on their birth certificate. The federal government sued North Carolina, calling the law discriminatory, and the state filed a countersuit.

The lawsuit filed Wednesday said that the directive of the Obama administration, which was not an executive order, “has no basis in law.”

Read more here: <http://www.newsobserver.com/latest-news/article79831807.html#storylink=cpy>

**11 STATES SUE OVER FEDERAL TRANSGENDER DIRECTIVE**

By PAUL J. WEBER

AP

<http://abc11.com/politics/11-states-sue-over-federal-transgender-directive/1355523/>

WASHINGTON -- Texas and 10 other states are suing the Obama administration over its directive to U.S. public schools to let transgender students use the bathrooms and locker rooms that match their gender identity.

The lawsuit announced Wednesday includes Oklahoma, Alabama, Wisconsin, West Virginia, Tennessee, Maine, Arizona, Louisiana, Utah and Georgia. The challenge, which asks a judge to declare the directive unlawful, follows a federal directive to U.S. schools this month to let transgender students use the bathrooms and locker rooms that match their gender identity.

The Obama administration has "conspired to turn workplace and educational settings across the country into laboratories for a massive social experiment, flouting the democratic process, and running roughshod over commonsense policies protecting children and basic privacy rights," the lawsuit reads.

Some conservative states have vowed defiance, calling the guidance a threat to safety while being accused of discrimination by supporters of transgender rights. U.S. Attorney General Loretta Lynch has said "there is no room in our schools for discrimination."

Texas' lieutenant governor has previously said the state is willing to forfeit $10 billion in federal education dollars rather than comply.

Texas Gov. Greg Abbott confirmed the lawsuit at a book signing hours before the state's Republican attorney general was scheduled to formally announce the challenge at a Wednesday news conference.

"His lawsuit is challenging the way that the Obama administration is trampling the United States Constitution," Abbott told reporters.

The directive from the U.S. Justice and Education Departments represents an escalation in the fast-moving dispute over what is becoming the civil rights issue of the day. The guidance was issued after the Justice Department and North Carolina sued each other overs a state law that requires transgender people to use the public bathroom that corresponds to the sex on their birth certificate. The law applies to schools and many other places.

Supporters say such measures are needed to protect women and children from sexual predators, while the Justice Department and others argue the threat is practically nonexistent and the law discriminatory

Texas was a likely candidate to rush to the courthouse first. Abbott sued the Obama administration more than two dozen times when he was attorney general, a pace that his successor, Republican Ken Paxton, has kept up since taking office last year.

**Bill would cut tuition at five UNC schools, guarantee rates at other 11**

By Matthew Burns and Mark Binker

WRAL

<http://www.wral.com/bill-would-cut-tuition-at-five-unc-schools-guarantee-rates-at-other-11/15727579/>

RALEIGH, N.C. — A proposal heading to the Senate floor would set in-state tuition at five University of North Carolina campuses at $500 a semester for in-state students and would guarantee tuition for undergraduates at the other 11 UNC campuses wouldn't go up from the rate they pay as freshmen.

Sponsor Sen. Tom Apodaca, R-Henderson, deleted a controversial provision from Senate Bill 873 that suggested renaming campuses such as Fayetteville State University so they carry a UNC brand.

Apodaca said the tuition provisions are designed to make college more affordable to more North Carolina families.

The five schools where tuition would be capped at $500 per semester, starting in the 2018-19 school year, are Fayetteville State, UNC-Pembroke, Elizabeth City State University, Winston-Salem State University and Western Carolina University. Out-of-state students at those campuses would pay $2,500 a semester.

Several lawmakers noted that four of the five schools – all except Western Carolina – have long traditions of serving minority students and expressed concern that lower tuition would turn them into second-class universities.

"We don't want it to look like we're getting a bargain-basement diploma," said Sen. Jane Smith, D-Robeson, whose district includes UNC-Pembroke.

Apodaca, a Western Carolina alumnus, said the five schools were chosen to accommodate students from across the state and said the lower tuition is simply a "marketing tool" to encourage more students to apply to and enroll at the schools. Some of them, such as Elizabeth City State, have battled declining enrollments in recent years, he noted.

"What we're trying to do is boost up the enrollment at these institutions and get them as near capacity as we possibly can," he said. "We think the competition for the $500 tuition will increase the caliber of student and the numbers of students who want to attend those institutions."

Several alumni from the affected schools said there are other ways to help increase enrollment without cutting tuition, which they said would hurt the schools financially and stigmatize them as a lower-quality education.

"In two to three years, we'll be back here begging for our lives," said Shonta Jackson, a Winston-Salem State alumna. "You will be destroying a tradition."

UNC President Margaret Spellings met with Apodaca, Sen. Gladys Robinson, D-Guilford, Sen. Joel Ford, D-Mecklenburg, and the chancellors of the affected institutions on Wednesday afternoon. Spellings said the plan to reduce tuition rates poses "implementation challenges" but could be accomplished if lawmakers filled the hole left by the reduction with general taxpayer support.

"Their intention is not to cut funding," she said. "My hope is we can get to a place where we in the system can be enthusiastic supporters of this legislation."

Legislative leaders are committed to providing the UNC system with money to cover the lost tuition revenue, Apodaca said, estimating the changes in the bill would cost $61 million in the first year. The changes wouldn't affect room or meal costs at any of the schools.

Robinson, a former member of the UNC Board of Governors, said she welcomes changes that have already been made to the bill.

"This opportunity for the people impacted to speak to the bill is critical," Robinson said, adding that she believes that the effort to lower tuition at a handful of UNC system schools would move forward, even if it doesn't look like the current legislation.

"I don't know what it will end up looking like," she said.

Under the bill, tuition at the remaining 11 UNC campuses would be fixed, starting this fall, at the rate a student paid as an entering freshman or transfer student for either eight or 10 semesters, depending on the length of the undergraduate degree program.

Apodaca said that provision would help families plan for the cost of college.

"We're not guaranteeing the folks going to those 11 other institutions that their costs will go down. All we're going to guarantee them is that they'll know what their cost is going to be when they enter," he said.

Sen. Tamara Barringer, R-Wake, noted that one of her children now attends Arizona State University because it provided a better cost option than any school in North Carolina.

"Colleges all over the country want our students, and I see this as a way for us to keep ... all these students that (are) such an important part of the economy of North Carolina," Barringer said.

The bill also includes a provision for UNC schools to cut their student fees by 5 percent by the 2018-19 school year and another that would create a full-ride scholarship at North Carolina Central University and North Carolina A&T State University.

Read more at http://www.wral.com/bill-would-cut-tuition-at-five-unc-schools-guarantee-rates-at-other-11/15727579/#gP7s5PY4s5SeqYmG.99

**LGBT youth group in Rio Grande Valley to protest Abbott’s support of HB2**

Dallas Voice

<http://www.dallasvoice.com/lgbt-youth-group-rio-grande-valley-protest-abbotts-support-hb2-10220306.html>

Aquí Estamos, a youth-led LGBTQ organization in the Rio Grande Valley, will lead a protest against Texas Gov. Greg Abbott for supporting anti-LGBTQ legislation and spreading hateful rhetoric against the LGBTQ community. Texas Freedom Network, South Texans for Reproductive Justice, Curando RGV, Valley AIDS Council, PFLAG Harlingen, and Call To Action RGV will also demonstrate.

The community is disappointed with Abbott allying himself with North Carolina Gov. Pat McCrory and supporting North Carolina’s HB2 that targets transgender and gender-nonconforming individuals from using public facilities.

Sofia Peña, organizer for South Texans for Reproductive Justice, said, “South Texans for Reproductive Justice understands LGBT rights, immigrant rights and reproductive rights are all inherently closely linked but especially in the wake of harmful legislation around the nation. Texas Gov. Greg Abbott is notorious for undermining the rights of innocent, marginalized communities under the guise of protecting family values.”

Ruben Garza, leader of Texas Freedom Network in the Rio Grande Valley, added, “We will be protesting against Greg Abbott because he has continuously worked to restrict and undermine the rights and liberties of Texans. He has become a vocal opponent of legislation and ordinances that protect the rights and liberties of the LGBTQ community, and transgender people. Greg Abbott is a roadblock in the path to justice, liberty, and progress. Texas deserves better leadership, and he must go!

Protesters will gather in front of R Communications, where Abbott will be hosting an event. The protest will be followed by a short program to highlight LGBTQ lives lost because of the hate Greg Abbott is spreading.

The May 26 protest begins at 3 p.m. outside R Communications, 1201 N Jackson Road #900, McAllen.

**Singer Brad Paisley mocks HB2 on Jimmy Kimmel**

BY KATHERINE PERALTA

Charlotte Observer

<http://www.charlotteobserver.com/entertainment/article79828227.html>

Brad Paisley took on North Carolina’s House Bill 2 in an acoustic song on “Jimmy Kimmel Live” Tuesday night.

Appearing on the ABC late-night show with singer Demi Lovato, who canceled her North Carolina shows in opposition to HB2, Paisley sang about the controversial measure to the tune of Tammy Wynette’s “Stand by Your Man.”

“Sit by your man. We’re all just human beings,” the country artist sings. “He’s just a human peeing in the stall right next to you. Sit by your man. Why is this such a big deal? Hike up your dress and take a stand. Sit by your man.”

HB2, signed into law March 23, requires transgender people in government facilities to use the restroom that corresponds with the gender on their birth certificate. It also sets statewide categories of protected classes under nondiscrimination laws that exclude sexual orientation and gender identity.

Paisley’s no stranger to protest songs on late-night comedy shows. In 2013, for example, he sang about the BP oil spill on Jimmy Fallon’s show.

Paisley is scheduled to perform at the PNC Music Pavilion in Charlotte Sept. 17 and at the Coastal Credit Union Music Park in Raleigh the following night.

**Conservative 'Southern Strategy' adapted to NC HB2 fight**

by Gary D. Robertson

The Associated Press

<http://www.thecharlottepost.com/news/2016/05/25/local-state/conservative-southern-strategy-adapted-to-nc-hb2-fight/>

RALEIGH – After weeks of taking a beating from critics over North Carolina's law dictating which restrooms transgender people can use, Gov. Pat McCrory adopted a strategy long favored by Southern conservative governors: He went after the federal government.

The governor, trying to reshape the narrative as he fights for his political life, sued the Obama administration last week and accused officials of yet another overreach into state business. He said a court, not a federal agency, should dictate what the law known as House Bill 2 requires. The Justice Department sued him hours later over the law, with U.S. Attorney General Loretta Lynch casting the fight in stark civil rights terms.

"It's been successful in changing the discussion from one about the business community and its reactions to H.B. 2 to one that's more about the state's rights versus the federal government intervention," said David McLennan, a political science professor at Meredith College in Raleigh.

The fight, just months before McCrory faces a tough re-election battle, centers around a Justice Department directive that says not allowing transgender people to use facilities matching their gender identity broke the law and puts at least $1.4 billion in education funding at risk. It's not the first time McCrory has called out the federal government: He joined a lawsuit challenging Obama's executive action on immigration and his administration has fought regulation of small streams and power plant emissions. He also joined a brief last fall siding with a Virginia school district in its efforts to dictate school bathroom use on the basis of biological sex.

Hundreds of corporate executives, trade groups and other organizations have called for North Carolina to repeal the law. Some businesses have scaled back North Carolina investments or canceled projects, including PayPal, which stopped construction of a call center, costing the state 400 jobs. Entertainers from Bruce Springsteen to Pearl Jam canceled shows in protest of the law, which also limits local government anti-discrimination protections for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people.

Refusing to capitulate to the federal government is fraught with peril, especially when civil rights laws are involved. Previous Southern governors, particularly those in the 1950s who tried to defy federally-mandated school integration, are forever defined as roadblocks to racial equality.

Lynch hinted at that past in announcing the lawsuit, saying North Carolina's law created "state-sponsored discrimination."

"It was not so very long ago that states, including North Carolina had other signs above restrooms, water fountains and on public accommodations keeping people out based on a distinction without a difference," said Lynch, a North Carolina native.

McCrory disagrees that he's refusing to carry out established civil rights law and said the courts should be the arbiter. He said Congress also should consider stepping in and make clear what sex discrimination means in the Civil Rights Act.

"The Obama administration is bypassing Congress by attempting to rewrite the law and set basic restroom policies, locker room policies, and even shower policies for public and private employers across the country, not just North Carolina," McCrory told reporters at the Executive Mansion just after he sued the Justice Department.

With McCrory preparing for a re-election campaign against Democrat Roy Cooper, his lawsuit wins him support from conservative Republicans who support the law but may be thinking twice about voting this fall with Donald Trump likely at the top of the ballot. Protracted litigation also could quiet public debate until after November. The cacophony has defined McCrory the past two months, hindering him in talking about a recovering economy he's wanted to make the centerpiece of his campaign.

"His message was so muddled," said Mac McCorkle, a consultant for North Carolina's past two Democratic governors, Mike Easley and Beverly Perdue. "Now he's able to say, 'hey, I'm just fighting the good fight, the good conservative fight.'"

His focus upon federal overreach stabilizes him politically for now but is unlikely to undo all the damage, McCorkle said. McCrory's intervention in social issues also could risk him losing independent voters who helped elect him in 2012, when he was viewed as a moderate, pro-business Republican.

"He's in a tricky political situation running against the federal government," said Thomas Keck, a political science professor at Syracuse University, who studies politics and the courts and has written about LGBT rights. "When you're talking about public restrooms, that directly raises that historical analogy" to racial segregation, Keck added.

Cooper, the state attorney general, opposes the law and said McCrory poured more fuel on the fire with litigation. McCrory's "continued to make the situation worse every day," said Jared Leopold with the Democratic Governors Association.

Chris LaCivita, McCrory's chief campaign consultant, said the debate over transgender people and restrooms doesn't need the "over the top irresponsible rhetoric from someone in the position as the attorney general of the United States." He said

McCrory has been consistent in his defense of the law since signing it in March and in fighting federal government overreach. A Justice Department letter to McCrory demanding he stop enforcing the law opened the door for the governor to sue.

LaCivita said Lynch's legal challenge and the Obama administration directive to public schools nationwide to let transgender students use bathrooms and locker rooms that match their gender identity "reinforced and prove what the governor's been saying all along."

**11 states sue US government over transgender bathroom policy**

Reuters

<http://www.aol.com/article/2016/05/25/11-states-sue-us-government-over-transgender-bathroom-policy/21383734/>

May 25 (Reuters) - Eleven states filed a lawsuit on Wednesday challenging the Obama administration's guidance to U.S. public schools this month that transgender students must be allowed to use the bathroom of their choice.

The lawsuit, filed in federal court in Wichita Falls, Texas, accused the Obama administration of trying to turn workplaces and schools into "laboratories for a massive social experiment."

(Reporting by Joseph Ax)

**Eleven states sue Obama administration over transgender bathroom directive**

By Emma Margolin

MSNBC

<http://www.msnbc.com/msnbc/texas-sue-obama-administration-over-transgender-bathroom-directive>

Eleven states have sued the Obama administration over its sweeping directive requiring all public school districts to grant transgender students access to the bathrooms that correspond with their gender identities.

Texas Gov. Greg Abbott announced the lawsuit Wednesday on Twitter, offering the latest development in an escalating conflict over transgender rights between Republican-dominated states and an administration widely regarded as the most LGBT-friendly in history. In the past two years, the Obama administration has stipulated that it believes sex discrimination — as prohibited by Title VII of the 1964 Civil Rights Act and Title IX of the 1972 Education Amendments — covers discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity as well. That means that under federal law, LGBT people are protected from discrimination in employment and public education, as far as the Obama administration is concerned.

The complaint was filed in the United States District Court Northern District of Texas on behalf of what it refers to as “a diverse coalition of States, top State officials, and local school districts, spanning from the Gulf Coast to the Great Lakes, and from the Grand Canyon to the Grand Isle.” Along with the state of Texas, plaintiffs include Alabama, Wisconsin, West Virginia, Tennessee, Oklahoma, Louisiana, Utah, Georgia, Maine Gov. Paul LePage, the Arizona Department of Education, and two individual school districts in Arizona and Texas. All but two of the 11 states involved in the suit are run by Republican governors.

The plaintiffs, the suit states, “stand behind the singular principle that the solemn duty of the Federal Executive is to enforce the law of the land, and not rewrite it by administrative fiat.”

“Defendants have conspired to turn workplaces and educational settings across the country into laboratories for a massive social experiment, flouting the democratic process, and running roughshod over commonsense policies protecting children and basic privacy rights,” states the complaint. “Defendants’ rewriting of Title VII and Title IX is wholly incompatible with Congressional text. Absent action in Congress, the States, or local communities, Defendants cannot foist these radical changes on the nation.”

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Photo published for Texas AG expected announce legal challenge to Obama's transgender directive to schools

Texas AG expected announce legal challenge to Obama's transgender directive to schools

AUSTIN, Texas -- Texas Attorney General Ken Paxton has scheduled a news conference for Wednesday afternoon and is expected to announce a legal challenge to President Obama's directive to schools...

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Wednesday’s legal action comes amid an intensifying standoff between the federal government and a different Republican-controlled state, North Carolina, which passed a law in March banning transgender people from using public school and government building bathrooms that align with their gender identities. North Carolina and the Department of Justice sued each other earlier this month, with each taking an opposing position on whether the law violates existing federal statutes barring discrimination.

The Department of Education issued guidance in 2014 clarifying that Title IX of the 1972 Education Amendments, which prohibits sex discrimination in federally funded education programs and activities, also bars discrimination on the basis of gender identity. But the Obama administration went one step further two weeks ago when it directed every public school district in the country to allow transgender students to use the bathrooms matching their gender identities.

One federal appeals court — the 4th Circuit — has already sided with the Obama administration’s interpretation of Title IX. But in a press conference Wednesday afternoon, Texas Attorney General Ken Paxton, who was charged with securities fraud last month in federal court, said the Obama administration had once again overstepped its authority. (Since Obama took office in 2008, Texas has sued his administration approximately 40 times.)

“Make no mistake,” said Paxton. “This is no reinterpretation of terms. It’s an entire rewrite of law, and that is constitutionally the purview of the Congress, not the President of the United States.”

Later, in an interview on MSNBC’s “MTP Daily,” Paxton criticized nondiscrimination protections for transgender people more broadly, saying they open the door for predators to attack women and young girls in the bathroom. Eighteen states, plus the District of Columbia, as well as more than 200 cities already have such policies on the books. There has been no corresponding spike in bathroom-related assaults.

**LGBT Battle Underscores the Powerlessness of Being Governor in North Carolina**

BY ALAN GREENBLATT

Governing

<http://www.governing.com/topics/politics/gov-north-carolina-governor-mccrory.html?utm_term=LGBT+Battle+Underscores+the+Powerlessness+of+Being+Governor+in+North+Carolina&utm_campaign=LGBT+Battle+Underscores+the+Powerlessness+of+Being+Governor+in+North+Carolina&utm_content=email&utm_source=Act-On+Software&utm_medium=email>

Twenty-five years ago, Holly Springs was a little North Carolina country town, 15 miles from downtown Raleigh, but home to only about a thousand residents. As the capital city has grown, however, Holly Springs has grown with it. About 33,000 people live there now, in subdivisions with names like Arbor Creek and Trellis Pointe. Gov. Pat McCrory needs their votes to win re-election in November. Right now, those votes are at risk.

McCrory, a Republican who spent 14 years as mayor of Charlotte, appealed to suburban voters during his two previous gubernatorial campaigns as a pragmatic, pro-business moderate. That image has been shattered by his decision to sign and defend a law overturning a Charlotte ordinance offering anti-discrimination protections to gay and transgender individuals. The state law, known as House Bill 2, has drawn national attention and condemnation from corporate leaders, rock stars, sports leagues and media outlets. What might matter more in this political year is that it’s hurt McCrory’s chances in places like Holly Springs. The city was likely to go for McCrory prior to House Bill 2, says Mayor Dick Sears. Now, from what the mayor hears, the town is a tossup.

On a warm April afternoon, Peter Musser, a Holly Springs resident who works in IT for a chemical company, stopped at a snow cone stand to buy cherry-flavored treats for his daughters before dance class. He supported McCrory last time around, but won’t vote for him again, even though Musser can’t summon up the name of his Democratic opponent, state Attorney General Roy Cooper. He believes McCrory should have vetoed House Bill 2, which was rushed through the legislature during a single-day special session in March, and that the governor has failed to recognize the economic damage House Bill 2 has done to the state. “I like what he did in Charlotte,” Musser says. “He’s definitely been for business, but the response to the backlash has rubbed me the wrong way.”

McCrory can’t afford to lose too many voters like Musser. North Carolina is a purple state, neatly and contentiously divided between Democrats and Republicans. Even before the question of LGBT rights made North Carolina the current ground zero in the nation’s culture wars, the election for governor was likely to be one of the closest in the country, and almost certainly the most expensive. With a presidential contest expanding Democratic turnout, McCrory will have no easy ride. “Looking at demographic trends, a two- to three-point win in North Carolina is a solid win,” says Paul Shumaker, a Republican consultant in Raleigh.

That’s what makes Holly Springs and its neighbors a flashpoint. Losing a couple hundred thousand votes in such areas could cost McCrory the election. The total number of votes cast in rural Republican areas roughly matches those cast by Democrats in growing and increasingly liberal cities such as Asheville, Charlotte and Raleigh. It’s the suburbs that largely make the difference.

For years, North Carolina politicians joked that every time a McDonald’s popped up at an intersection, it meant a new subdivision full of Republicans had popped up nearby. But many suburban voters are wary of the stark conservative turn that North Carolina -- arguably the most progressive state in the South not that many years ago -- has taken under Republican leadership, as exemplified by House Bill 2. Such voters may not want their taxes to go up, but they want the amenities that government can provide, especially good schools. They aren’t Great Society liberals, but they might be described as quality-of-life liberals.

Holly Springs resident Joyce Wilford says she voted for McCrory last time, but now she’s troubled by his insufficient support for public education. “There are a lot of Republicans in Holly Springs,” says Ferrel Guillory, a longtime observer of state politics at the University of North Carolina. “If it’s turning against McCrory, he’s in trouble.”

House Bill 2 may not have doomed McCrory’s chances, but he’s trailed Cooper in recent polls and in fundraising. In some quarters, the law has made North Carolina a pariah state. Every week, the overall cost to the state economy in terms of canceled conventions, relocations and expansions seems to rise. Last month, the Justice Department filed suit, accusing North Carolina of unlawful discrimination and potentially putting billions in federal funds at risk. The complaints and the lost millions in potential investment have stepped all over McCrory’s message about the “Carolina Comeback” and the number of jobs created on his watch. Lately, the governor has been playing peekaboo with reporters, with his office giving as little as an hour’s notice prior to his public appearances. McCrory himself has been visibly frustrated about the packs of reporters who want to ask him about House Bill 2 and nothing else.

The new law will shore up McCrory’s support among ideological conservatives, who have sometimes been wary about him. It also will limit Cooper’s totals in some areas of traditional Democratic strength. In recent weeks, there have been far more people attending rallies at the Capitol in support of the anti-LGBT law than those protesting against it. “The press has given him a lot of undue bashing,” says Tom Lindley Jr., a real estate manager from Burlington who was part of a crowd of hundreds applauding the law at an April rally.

Glenda Ball supports the new law but notes that "it's as divisive an issue as any we've had in our state." (Alan Greenblatt)

Nevertheless, the issue has been such a thoroughgoing distraction for McCrory that many North Carolina Republicans talk about it in conspiratorial terms, suggesting that Cooper, his donors and gay rights groups put Charlotte up to passing its ordinance as a trap in order to have something to embarrass the governor with. “The Charlotte folks understood exactly what they were doing,” says GOP state Rep. Jimmy Dixon, wearing a button labeled “North Carolina values.” “It was a very narrow segment of the homosexual community that used sensationalism to affect the elections in November.”

For much of his long political career, the 59-year-old McCrory hasn’t been the master of his own fate. Although he was popular as mayor of Charlotte, McCrory didn’t really run the city -- it has a council-manager form of government. He maintained a moderate image that was based in part on his having to deal with Democratic majorities on the city council. McCrory was also a ready ally of banks and other big companies that fueled Charlotte’s growth spurt -- some of the same companies that are now dismayed about House Bill 2.

When McCrory lost his first campaign for governor in 2008, he blamed the voter outreach and turnout efforts of Barack Obama, who became the first Democratic presidential candidate to carry North Carolina since 1976. After that defeat, McCrory never stopped running, and he found success in 2012, when unpopular Democratic Gov. Bev Perdue decided not to run and Obama didn’t make a serious statewide effort.

By that time, Republicans had already taken over the state legislature, winning control of both chambers in 2010. They were able to override about a dozen Perdue vetoes. When he was House speaker, Republican Thom Tillis used to keep copies of the override votes under glass on his conference table, as trophies. “This legislature had a Republican majority before McCrory got here,” says Larry Hall, the state House Democratic leader. “In their minds, they created him.”

Maybe his fellow Republicans didn’t create McCrory, but they didn’t need his blessing to pursue their own agenda. They had a running start and they had the votes. While McCrory was winning election in 2012, legislative Republicans were making their majorities veto-proof in both the House and Senate. Over the past few years, the North Carolina General Assembly has pursued as conservative a course as any state legislative body in America. Name the issue -- welfare, education, tax cuts, abortion, environmental regulation, voting restrictions -- and North Carolina has taken a sharp turn to the right. Legislators have rarely stopped to wonder whether such bills would play well politically for the governor in a close election. Thanks to an aggressively partisan GOP redistricting plan -- now under court challenge -- nearly all of them represent reliably conservative districts and don’t face the pressures the governor faces.

The job of North Carolina governor comes with a big brick mansion, but not a lot of power. The state was the last to grant its governor veto power, back in the 1990s. McCrory has vetoed legislation only a handful of times, and they were all a waste of effort. “If he’d found five or six Republicans, we could have sustained his vetoes,” says Democrat Hall. “He couldn’t.”

McCrory was publicly opposed to Charlotte’s LGBT rights ordinance, but he didn’t ask the legislature to overturn it. Instead, for only the second time in the state’s history, the legislature called itself into special session. In order to win support among legislators for such a move, House Bill 2 took on other controversial provisions reducing local authority, including language blocking increases in the minimum wage. The governor wasn’t clued in about what the final bill would contain. It was introduced at 10 a.m. and passed the same day. McCrory had a month to review the bill, but he sent out a tweet that night announcing he had signed it.

Critics of this whole process like to point out that conservative Republican governors in several states have taken stands diametrically opposed to McCrory’s. Days after McCrory signed House Bill 2, Georgia’s Nathan Deal vetoed a religious freedom bill out of concern it could lead to discrimination against gay people. Earlier in the year, South Dakota’s Dennis Daugaard refused to sign one blocking transgender students from using bathrooms and other facilities. As the controversy grew in North Carolina, South Carolina Gov. Nikki Haley said a transgender bathroom bill was something her state didn’t need.

McCrory has made a few efforts to stake out a centrist position distinct from that of the legislature. In his budget proposal this year, he asked for a substantial increase in teacher pay. The legislature will give him something, but nothing like what McCrory has asked for. That’s true for a lot of the other requests in his budget. Legislators know they don’t need his support, either to pass legislation or to help with fundraising for their own campaigns. “It’s frustrating, because you hear ‘governor’ and you think of all these rights and privileges and you get here and that’s not how things are set up,” says Charles Jeter, the House GOP conference chair. “He has fought hard to defend his ideology, but that doesn’t mean he wins every time.”

McCrory has asked the legislature to revise House Bill 2, but beyond the barest of tweaks there’s little chance of that. “When the Republican leaders of the General Assembly force through horrible bills like House Bill 2 and frame the governor so he has to be their mouthpiece,” says Democratic state Rep. Graig Meyer, “there’s no way to see him other than as a puppet.”

“Puppet” is a pretty strong word, but not one that politicians on either side are shying away from in North Carolina this year. Some Republicans are already portraying Democratic nominee Cooper as a puppet who takes his marching orders from the far left. “If Roy Cooper would have run for governor 10 years ago, he would have been his own man, and not a puppet like he is now,” says Republican Jimmy Dixon. “Political expediency is his expertise and forte.”

Cooper, the attorney general, refused to defend House Bill 2 in court, saying it's bad for business. That stance may cost him votes in rural parts of the state. (AP)

The 58-year-old Cooper comes out of the same mold as recent Democratic governors Jim Hunt and Terry Sanford, and touts his support for business, job growth and education. Beyond that, he has not promoted much of a progressive agenda. Last fall, when McCrory joined with most of his fellow Republican governors in opposition to settlement of Syrian refugees in the United States, Cooper said he also favored a “pause” in the process. “It’s the kind of thing Southern Democrats have been doing for decades,” says Guillory, the UNC professor. “Find some ways to show you are a moderate.”

Given all that, the low-key Cooper might seem an unlikely champion of LGBT rights, but he’s gone all in on opposing House Bill 2. He refuses to defend the law from legal challenge, just as he had been one of the state attorneys general who refused to enforce bans on same-sex marriages when they were still in force. Republicans accuse him of placating the people who are giving him money and putting boots on the ground for his campaign. “A lot of what happened with House Bill 2 could have been avoided if the attorney general had enforced the laws that are on the books,” says House Speaker Tim Moore.

When Cooper talks about House Bill 2, he doesn’t emphasize equality or personal dignity. Instead, he talks up the idea that discrimination is hurting the economy. Cooper, who easily won each of his re-election campaigns as attorney general, still hopes for substantial support from his East Carolina base. Conservative Democrats still exist in the rural eastern counties, even if they have been voting Republican in the last several elections.

Some North Carolina Republicans think that Cooper has overplayed his hand on House Bill 2 and that a majority of voters are uncomfortable with the idea of biological males walking into a ladies’ bathroom. Transgender rights advocates reject this characterization, noting that it’s transgender people who tend to be at risk in public facilities. But polls show that a majority of North Carolinians believe people should go to the bathroom that conforms to their biological sex, rather than their gender identity. Republicans recall that voters in Democratic-dominated Houston, Texas, soundly rejected a broad anti-discrimination ordinance last fall after a campaign that turned largely on the question of bathroom use. “The bathroom issue plays well all over North Carolina,” says Jeter.

But Cooper knows that an increasing share of the Democratic vote is found along the Interstate 85 corridor that links Charlotte to Raleigh and the Research Triangle. Ten counties in North Carolina experienced double-digit population growth between 2010 and 2015, dominated by the major metropolitan regions, while 48 other counties lost population. The Democratic vote in North Carolina is both increasingly urban and increasingly liberal. Cooper is seeking to be the candidate of the emergent cities that feel themselves under attack by the leaders of their own state. He’s hoping not only to win, but to carry in at least a handful of additional Democratic legislators to sustain his vetoes and give him a fighting chance against the legislature. This is where suburban flight from the GOP could end up really hurting the party.

And this is why the Republican plan to motivate the conservative GOP with House Bill 2 could ultimately backfire. Voters such as Musser of Holly Springs understand that tolerance has become an economic asset. Urban liberals are all about getting rid of House Bill 2. Jillian Johnson, who was a social justice activist and part of the Occupy movement before getting elected to the Durham City Council last fall, concedes she wasn’t too fired up about supporting Cooper, having been put off by his stance on refugees. But she is all for him now and thinks her constituents will be too. “This bill will motivate a lot of people who weren’t excited,” Johnson says. “People are excited about getting McCrory out.”

There’s no question that the backlash against House Bill 2 has energized Democrats and put McCrory on the defensive. If the law continues to dominate political discussion into the fall, the governor is going to have a hard time, says Jeter, the House GOP conference chair. McCrory can win, in Jeter’s view, only if the conversation is focused on his economic record. The state’s economic output has grown by 13.4 percent on McCrory’s watch, which is the fastest in any state. “He has to educate voters on what North Carolina has done, and done well,” Jeter says.

But revising the law may be the last thing legislators want to do, given the Justice Department’s decision to sue. For McCrory, the political problem is that, on this issue as on so many others, there’s not much indication that the legislature is willing to give the governor the political support he may need to survive. “I don’t have the authority to change the law as governor of North Carolina,” McCrory said last month. That power, he said, rests with the legislature.

**New plan could raise pay for North Carolina teachers**

BY BECCA MITCHELL

WTKR

<http://wtkr.com/2016/05/25/new-plan-could-raise-pay-for-north-carolina-teachers/>

A new plan announced in the North Carolina Senate could raise the average pay for North Carolina teachers to nearly $55,000.

If the proposal becomes law, average teacher pay will be up almost $10,000 – more than 20 percent – since the 2013-14 school year.

“Just one month ago, Senate Republicans announced our support for Gov. McCrory’s goal to raise teacher pay to $50,000 on average – and we are proud this plan not only meets his goal, but exceeds it by almost $5,000,” said Senate Leader Phil Berger (R-Rockingham.) “Our efforts to raise average teacher pay by almost $10,000 – over 20 percent – since the 2013-14 school year will make North Carolina the Southeast’s leader in teacher pay and encourage the best and brightest teachers to make a long-term commitment to our students and our state.”

After the Senate passes its budget bill, members of the House, the Senate and the Governor’s Office will negotiate a final plan.

**Transgender advocates again call for repeal of HB2**

By Emma Wright

WNCN

<http://wncn.com/2016/05/25/transgender-advocates-again-call-for-repeal-of-hb2/>

RALEIGH, N.C. (WNCN) – Transgender advocates and allies met Wednesday to once again ask North Carolina lawmakers to repeal House Bill 2.

During a press conference at the North Carolina Museum of History, several people shared stories about their personal struggles of growing up and being transgender in North Carolina.

They say it’s frustrating the legislature has been in session for weeks but have not yet seriously discussed repealing the bill.

“To have them go into their short session and not address it is truly adding insult to injury, they still don’t perceive it as affecting anyone,” said Candis Cox of Equality NC.

Cox says she will continue to call on lawmakers to repealing HB 2 despite the lack of response from many.

**GOP’s Burr has ‘issues’ with HB2, predicts law will change**

WNCN

<http://wncn.com/2016/05/25/richard-burr-has-issues-with-hb2-predicts-law-will-change/>

WASHINGTON (WNCN) — Sen. Richard Burr said in an interview with the Huffington Post that North Carolina Republican lawmakers “botched what they were trying to do” in regards to House Bill 2.

In the interview, which occurred Tuesday, Burr told the Post he has “issues” with HB2 and said lawmakers need to make changes before a judge does it for them.

“The legislature botched what they were trying to do,” he said. “It was far too expansive.”

Burr said in the interview HB2 will change but it is now just a question of which branch of government will do it.

“It will be decided one of two ways: through the courts, where everybody’s chosen to place it now, or the General Assembly and the Charlotte City Council getting together and solving what was blundered on both sides,” Burr told the Huffington Post.

Burr is running for reelection against Deborah Ross in November’s election.

On May 9, U.S. Attorney General Loretta Lynch annouced the Justice Department will sue North Carolina over HB2.

The lawsuit says the law violates Title VII and Title IX of the Civil Rights Law by denying transgender people access to bathrooms consistent with their gender identity.

Lynch, who is from Durham, said HB2 “placed North Carolina in direct opposition to federal law.”

Also on May 9, Gov. Pat McCrory’s administration sued the federal government in a fight for a state law that requires transgender people to use the public restroom matching the sex on their birth certificate.

The lawsuit seeks to keep in place the law, which the U.S. Justice Department said last week violated the civil rights of transgender people against sex discrimination on the job and in education.

**HB2: Transgender student bathroom concerns at Pisgah High School**

By Rex Hodge

<http://wlos.com/news/local/impacts-of-north-carolinas-house-bill-2-felt-at-pisgah-high-school>

WLOS — HAYWOOD COUNTY, N.C.--North Carolina's controversial House Bill 2 impacted a mountain high school.

On Friday, Haywood County school leaders said students at Pisgah High School reported seeing a transgender student use a bathroom they believed did not match the student's birth certificate. That stands in contrast to the new law passed this spring, but also a law deemed by the Federal Government to violate civil rights.

While that legal battle continues, Haywood school leaders said they met the student and came up with a plan for the student to use individual bathrooms at the school.

"They worked together to get together a plan in place where that student could go to a restroom and feel safe," Associate Superintendent Bill Nolte said. "We've identified a number of restrooms for the student to use. They seem to be perfectly happy with that," he said.

Nolte says that plan is also for the safety and security of all other students.

"You lock it. One person is in there at a time. There's no chance for anyone else to be coming in or out," Nicole McCracken, a student at Haywood Community College, said.

"That would certainly be a better situation than letting someone of a particular gender go into...the bathroom of the opposite gender," Pastor Steve Frazier of Riverside Baptist Church in the Bethel community said.

The debate is the result of the bill passed this spring, directing transgender people to use public bathrooms aligning with the gender on their birth certificate. The Federal Government said the law violates civil rights and the Obama Administration sent a letter to public schools, directing them to allow transgender students to use bathrooms of their choice.

There's no enforcement behind that, but districts not complying could face a loss of federal funding. For Haywood County schools, that's $4 million a year.

"We don't want to lose funding from the state or the Federal Government. That's why we feel like it's not fair for them to put public schools in a situation of being a pawn that can be manipulated for political purposes," Nolte said.

Haywood School leaders will talk more about the issue over the summer break and have a training session with principals in August.

**Under Unwanted HB2 Spotlight, Some NC Businesses Promote Inclusivity**

By JORGE VALENCIA

WUNC

<http://wunc.org/post/under-unwanted-hb2-spotlight-some-nc-businesses-promote-inclusivity#stream/0>

It’s hard to imagine an industry in North Carolina that hasn’t somehow been affected by House Bill 2.  Restaurants say they’ve lost business. Hotels have seen conference organizers cancel conventions to protest the law. And start-ups say some investors are steering clear of North Carolina. But much of the work of dealing with the unwanted attention has been left to small businesses that don’t want to be associated with the law.

HB2 earned more than $31 million worth of media coverage, according to Cision media metrics cited by the Economic Development Partnership of North Carolina.

The best-known part of HB2 restricts the bathrooms that transgender people can use. But the law also prohibits someone from suing in state court if they believe they were discriminated against and fired from their job. It also prevents cities from passing their own non-discrimination ordinances.

All of this has been a huge headache for North Carolina’s tourism industry. Marketers such as Carrboro-based New Media Campaigns, which helps companies craft their public identity, worried quickly after the law’s signing that it promoted an image of the state they didn’t want to be associated with.

The company’s designers created a website to collect tweets critical of the law from businesses across the state. They also made a logo, uploaded it to their website so anyone could use and printed out hundreds of stickers and distributed them to businesses. Initially, the designers drafted a version of the logo highlighting the slogan “Businesses Against HB2,” but quickly opted to create a design that emphasized a different message: “Everyone Is Welcome Here.”

“We wanted to put out more of a positive message,” said Clay Chassow, a co-founder of New Media Campaigns. “Also, we were hoping that HB2 wouldn't become this thing that everyone knows. So we thought, ‘Why lead with that?’"

But HB2 did become a brand of its own.

Chris Sacca, a famous venture capitalist, suggested he would no longer look for investment opportunities in North Carolina, and Steve Case, co-founder of AOL, canceled a visit. Startups across the state quickly responded with a petition to repeal the law.

Matt Williamson, president of the Durham software start-up Windsor Circle,  signed the petition. He said the negative attention associated with HB2 was quickly undoing years of promotion he and other local entrepreneurs worked on to make the Research Triangle attractive to people from different backgrounds, highly skilled workers and investors. But he said he has a bigger problem with a law he believes puts a class of people at a disadvantage, so perhaps the negative attention is necessary.

“If I've gotta lose a contract or if I've gotta not have Steve Case come to Durham, and people feel the pain of that, let's feel that pain," Williamson said.

The bad press is something that came up at a recent meeting of advertising professionals close to the capitol in Raleigh.

Vernessa Roberts, diversity chair of the Triangle Advertising Federation, helped organize a workshop about HB2, including discussions with lawmakers who support and oppose the law. The federation took no formal stance on the law, but Roberts said it’s clear the attention it has brought has marred the state’s reputation.

“And it's not an easy fix. There's not a way to spin your way out of it,” Roberts said. “There's not a way to kind of buy your way out of it."

Rep. Darren Jackson, a Democrat who represents Wake County, tried to do exactly that—by amending the state budget to repeal the law and set aside $2 million to market North Carolina as “Back Open For Business.” But House Speaker Tim Moore, a Republican from Cleveland County, blocked the move, saying it was out of order to include a policy change in the state budget.

**Advocates push for Medicaid expansion**

BY DAN BOYLAN

N&O

<http://www.newsobserver.com/news/politics-government/state-politics/article79781587.html>

Roughly 8 percent of the 2.9 million Americans who exist in the “Medicaid gap” are in North Carolina, according to health advocates who planned to raise the issue at the General Assembly on Wednesday.

“It’s amazing,” said Ciara Zachary, Health Access Coalition policy analyst, who added that North Carolina ranks fourth in uninsured people after Texas, Florida and Georgia in a 2015 Kaiser Family Foundation analysis. The North Carolina Justice Center argues that closing the gap would provide health care coverage for 500,000 North Carolinians.

The issue stems from Congress passing the Affordable Care Act in 2010, which intended to expand Medicaid to millions of uninsured individuals. A subsequent U.S. Supreme Court ruling, however, allowed states to opt out, which North Carolina did.

On Wednesday, advocates, patients, health care providers and lawmakers, including Sen. Floyd McKissick, a Durham Democrat, planned to gather at the General Assembly and urge lawmakers to support legislation containing language addressing the gap, including Senate Bill 365 and House Bill 330.

Medicaid’s shadow falls across North Carolina politics, with opponents calling it a bureaucratic nightmare of mismanagement and waste. When announcing his budget in April, Gov. Pat McCrory said lower-than-anticipated Medicaid enrollment had improved the states fiscal outlook enough that additional funds were available to potentially cover pay raises and bonuses. Last year, one of the state’s most watched legislative battles involved shifting Medicaid from a fee-for-service model to a managed care system.

Earlier this year, a poll conducted by the liberal-leaning Public Policy Polling found a majority of Republican and unaffiliated voters supported providing health insurance to people caught in the gap. Commentators noted, however, that the poll’s accuracy was questionable because of its language. The poll asked respondents about “fixing the health insurance coverage gap” as opposed to “expanding Medicaid.”

Read more here: <http://www.newsobserver.com/news/politics-government/state-politics/article79781587.html#storylink=cpy>

**Driving change at NC DMV: Increased service and online renewals**

Bladen Journal

<http://bladenjournal.com/news/6063/driving-change-at-nc-dmv-increased-service-and-online-renewals>

ELIZABETHTOWN — On Monday, North Carolina DMV Commissioner Kelly Thomas hosted a tour of the DMV Customer Service Support Center in Bladen County. This facility serves as host to 140 service center agents that strive daily to deliver first class customer service over the phone and engage in customer outreach and information sharing.

NC DMV receives 3.3 million calls annually. More than two million of those calls are answered by an agent like the ones that work at the support center in Bladen County. The rest are addressed through the Integrated Voice Response system.

In addition to highlighting the customer service assets, Commissioner Thomas also showcased another tool in the state’s toolbox to improve customer service at the NC Division of Motor Vehicles.

Called NCDMV CAMS (Convenient Accessible Mobile Service), these new state-of-the-art mobile units allow North Carolina’s DMV to offer the first of its kind service in the nation. Replacing the aging, RV-style mobile units that are expensive to operate, and because of their age, difficult to keep in good repair, this new solution is cost-efficient and will give customers in all areas of the state better access to driver license services.

The CAMS will serve more than 36,000 customers at as many as 70 locations statewide. The old units only served 7,604 customers at 25 regular stops. This is an almost 475 percent increase in service to the citizens of North Carolina.

“As a member of the State Board of Transportation, nothing brings me more joy than when we can improve our operating efficiencies and better serve the State of North Carolina,” said Terry Hutchens, a member of the state’s Board of Transportation, Division 6. “And these mobile offices are only one chapter of a much larger success story at North Carolina’s DMV.”

Under Gov. McCrory’s “Driving Change” initiative, the DMV is providing drivers with more options and leveraging 21st century technology to better serve North Carolinians. Just last week, Gov. McCrory announced that the DMV’s online driver license renewal program had more than 355,000 North Carolina drivers renew their licenses online, resulting in customer time savings of 177,900 hours.

When Gov. McCrory took office, he promised to transform the culture of customer service across state government, particularly when it comes to getting a driver license.

“Whether through the mobile offices we demonstrated in Snow Hill, the success of the online renewal program, the acceptance of credit and debit card payments, or the introduction of extended and weekend hours, evidence abounds that this is a promise kept,” Hutchens said. “Gov. McCrory continues to drive change at the DMV and across state government, and our fellow citizens are benefitting from these improved services.”

**Senate GOP pitches teacher raise plan**

By Mark Binker

WRAL

<http://www.wral.com/senate-gop-pitches-teacher-raise-plan/15727231/>

RALEIGH, N.C. — Senate leaders say their budget includes a teacher pay plan that ensures educators hit the top of the state's salary scale in 15 years and raises average teacher salaries to more than $54,000 over two years.

"We think this is the right plan for teachers in North Carolina at this time," Senate President Pro Tem Phil Berger said.

Berger, R-Rockingham, did not say how his chamber would pay for the raises and did not provide a detailed salary schedule. However, he said that tax collections have been on the upswing in recent years and that a generally improving economy allowed the Senate to take up long-delayed priorities.

"We put forward where our priorities are," he said.

Along with plans from Gov. Pat McCrory and the state House, this is the third major teacher raise proposal put forward by state government this year, although all three work somewhat differently.

The Senate will roll out its entire budget next week, Berger said. When asked how the Senate budget would deal with pay raises for state employees or other areas of spending, he said he was "not prepared" to discuss those items.

Referring reporters to a website put together by the Senate Republicans' political operation, he pointed out that the raises would make North Carolina's teacher pay the highest in the Southeast and 24th in the country.

"This is on top of the teacher pay raises we passed in the 2014 and 2015 budgets," Berger said.

He said the Senate plan would move teachers to the top of the pay scale within 15 years rather than the current 25 years of service needed to max out.

Brenda Berg, president of BEST NC, a group of business leaders that have advocated for more education funding, said that faster rise to the top of the salary scale is key to stemming the tide of young teachers leaving the profession due to poor pay.

"We know they're leaving early in their career, and this is why they're leaving," Berg said.

She said it makes sense to raise salaries quickly over the first decade of a teacher's career.

"These 10 to 15 years are when you're making the most professional progress," Berg said.

Teacher pay has been a major political issues for years in North Carolina, with school systems and advocacy organizations alike saying that the state is losing teachers to other professions and other states.

State government provides a base salary for all teachers across the state. Most, but not all, county school systems also provide a supplement on top of that base pay. That means the actual salary a teacher is paid varies widely across the state. The average salary estimate in the Senate's pay plan includes those local supplements.

Rodney Ellis, president of the North Carolina Association of Educators, said that the "devil is going to be in the details" of any teacher pay proposal.

"NCAE has consistently beaten the drum that, for our students to be more successful, we must invest fully in our public schools by increasing the resources they have and by compensating educators as professionals," Ellis said in a statement. "Now, because it’s an election year, Senate leaders are trying to play catch-up from the destructive swath they created for our public schools. ... Last time there was a pay raise, they promised it would get us to 32nd in the country, and here we sit at 41st."

McCrory's proposed teacher pay plan would raise the average teacher's salary to $50,000. The House budget proposed slightly smaller raises in order to make sure there was enough money to give raises to other state employees, something McCrory's plan did not do.

After the Senate passes its budget bill, members of the House, the Senate and the Governor's Office will negotiate a final plan. If recent history is any guide, none of the teacher raise proposals floated early on the in the process will be precisely what passes into law this summer, although all three make raising teacher salary a priority.

Read more at http://www.wral.com/senate-gop-pitches-teacher-raise-plan/15727231/#T7MotlhLKP3e3Qby.99

**Five things to know from the NFL’s annual spring meeting in Charlotte**

BY JOSEPH PERSON

Charlotte Observer

<http://www.charlotteobserver.com/sports/nfl/carolina-panthers/article79770677.html>

NFL owners came to Charlotte on Tuesday for their annual spring meeting, voting on Super Bowl sites and approving a change to the league’s replay system.

Five takeaways:

If you build it, the NFL will come

In results that surprised no one, owners voted to play the 2019, 2020 and 2021 Super Bowls in Atlanta, Miami and Los Angeles, respectively.

Atlanta and L.A. are building stadiums at costs of more than $1 billion – estimates have the L.A. construction exceeding $2.6 billion as the world’s most expensive stadium. Miami owner Stephen Ross put up $500 million for renovations to the Dolphins’ stadium highlighted by a partial roof.

New Orleans and Tampa Bay, the other cities that were considered, have not started any major stadium projects recently.

Falcons owner Arthur Blank said rewarding owners who make big capital investments – and taxpayers who help fund the stadiums – is good business.

“The other owners, they realize to build a stadium today is a huge capital investment. The league does its part to support it. But it requires a great public-private partnership to do it,” Blank said.

“I think the message it also sends to communities that are considering other NFL stadiums, this is going to be important in terms of Super Bowls. A Super Bowl is – if not the biggest event – one of the biggest events in the world in terms of a sport opportunity. Probably that and the World Cup.”

Charlotte needs new stadium to be in Super Bowl mix

Or at a minimum, a stadium renovation that includes more than new escalators and suite improvements.

Asked about the possibility of Charlotte hosting the game in the future, commissioner Roger Goodell talked more generally, saying it takes a very large city with a lot of hotel rooms and airports than can handle 100,000 additional travelers the week of the game.

Charlotte is close to meeting the hotel rooms criteria, and Charlotte Douglas is the fifth-busiest airport in the U.S.

The weather in the Carolinas in early February is a little dicey. But with Minneapolis, Indianapolis and New York/New Jersey all getting Super Bowls, it’s clear a new (or vastly improved) stadium trumps all.

And while Goodell called Bank of America Stadium “a great stadium,” Charlotte’s not getting – or even bidding for – a Super Bowl any time soon.

Goodell takes a stand against HB2

It wasn’t as strong as the NBA threatening to pull the All-Star Game from Charlotte in 2017. But Goodell made his strongest public comments on House Bill 2, passed by the General Assembly in March that preempted the Charlotte ordinance expanding the city’s nondiscrimination policy to cover LGBT people.

Goodell stopped short of calling for North Carolina legislators to repeal the controversial bill, but said the league supports Charlotte leaders’ efforts at diversity.

Goodell was speaking at the close of Tuesday’s meeting, which the league kept at the Ballantyne Hotel in the midst of various economic boycotts throughout the state in response to HB2.

Goodell said he spoke with Charlotte Mayor Jennifer Roberts on Monday about the issue.

“We support those efforts. Anything that discriminates is something that we oppose, and we will continue to fight that,” Goodell said. “But we have a franchise here. The Carolina Panthers play here. They operate here. And we want to work with the community. We’re not going to threaten the community. We’re going to work with the community to make the effective changes that are necessary long-term.”

San Francisco 49ers CEO Jed York on Tuesday called for a repeal of HB2 and pledged $75,000 to further the work of the Equality NC, a LGBT rights advocacy group.

Slow roll (maybe) on the Raiders-to-Vegas talks

While Raiders owner Mark Davis continues to talk giddily about the prospects of relocating to Las Vegas, Goodell predictably took a more measured tone.

Goodell said the Vegas talks were “premature,” noting owners have yet to perform any market studies or see any stadium proposals. He also mentioned that league officials would have to consider Vegas “from a gambling standpoint” as well.

Meanwhile, Davis did little to quell the speculation.

“I’ve given my commitment to Las Vegas,” Davis told NFL Network. “And if they can come through with what they’re talked about doing, then we’ll go to Las Vegas.”

League OKs more oversight on replay reviews

Owners passed a measure to allow officials to consult with the league’s officiating department during replay reviews in certain administrative areas.

Goodell implemented the rule last year for the playoffs following a couple of high-profile mistakes involving game-clock management and penalty assessment in 2015. That change becomes permanent, but only in helping on-field officials with issues involving proper down, assessment of penalty yardage and clock management.

Owners considered two other rule proposals Tuesday, voting down a proposal by Washington that would have eliminated the first roster cutdown from 90 to 75 players during the preseason.

Owners tabled a measure to let coaches and players to look at video replays on tablets on the sideline. The league will allow the use of videos on the sideline during the exhibition season on a trial basis.

**Brad Paisley wrote a song making fun of North Carolina’s transgender bathroom law**

By Team Fix

Washington Post

<https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/the-fix/wp/2016/05/25/brad-paisley-wrote-a-song-making-fun-of-north-carolinas-transgender-bathroom-law/>

Brad Paisley has occasionally broken with the stereotype of your average country music star. L.A. Weekly even labeled him a "veiled liberal" a few years back.

Indeed, Paisley's politics can be hard to pin down, but Tuesday on "Jimmy Kimmel Live," he appeared to take a stand against -- or at least ridicule -- North Carolina's transgender bathroom law, which requires people to use the bathroom of the sex listed on their birth certificates.

Paisley basically re-wrote the lyrics to Tammy Wynette's 1960s classic "Stand by Your Man," featuring some bathroom humor and a message that can basically be summed up by his closing lyrics: "Why is this such a big deal? Hike up your dress, and take a stand. And sit by your man."

(As you might guess, the song below features some references to what happens in the bathroom.)

**Senate GOP would pay teachers more than House, McCrory**

By GARY D. ROBERTSON

Associated Press

<http://www.wral.com/senate-gop-talks-teacher-pay-plan-above-house-mccrory/15727391/>

RALEIGH, N.C. — North Carolina Senate Republicans on Wednesday previewed their plan to pay teachers more than what Gov. Pat McCrory and House members have offered, but didn't provide many details about how they would pay for it.

Senate leader Phil Berger said the chamber is committed to raising average teacher pay — including local supplements — by several thousand dollars to more than $54,200 by the 2017-18 school year. In a first step, the Senate's recommended budget adjustments, to be unveiled next week, would raise the state average to slightly more than $51,000 this fall, he said.

North Carolina is currently ranked 41st in the nation for teacher pay, with an estimated average salary for the current school year of $47,985, according to the National Education Association. The Senate plan, if implemented, would move North Carolina up to the middle among the states and District of Columbia, Berger said.

The effort "will make North Carolina the Southeast's leader in teacher pay and encourage the best and the brightest in the teaching profession to make a long-term commitment to our students and to our state," Berger, R-Rockingham, said at a Legislative Building news conference.

McCrory's budget proposes raising the state's share of teacher pay on average by 5 percent this fall, to slightly more than $50,000. The House budget, approved last week, would raise teacher salaries by 4.1 percent, not quite reaching a $50,000 average, although House Republicans said they would provide more raises next year. One-time bonuses also are included in proposals by McCrory and the House.

The two chambers ultimately will work out a final agreement for the coming year to present to McCrory.

Action on 2017-18 salaries wouldn't occur until the next session and the next two-year budget.

Berger said the Senate's entire plan would cost $538 million over two years and not require tax increases, relying instead on a stronger economy and healthy state revenues to pay for it. Pressed for what other spending changes, if any, would be needed to carry it out, he responded: "Once you see the full budget, you'll be able to see the details about it."

Paying for raises this year would appear trickier given that House and Senate leaders have agreed to spend no more than $22.2 billion in the new fiscal year starting July 1. Meanwhile, a Senate plan to increase standard income tax deductions, also expected in the budget bill, would reduce revenues by $145 million next fiscal year, compared to a reduction of $25 million in the House budget, which phases in the tax break.

Under the Senate's plan, for example, base pay for teachers with 10 years of experience would increase 6.3 percent to $42,500 this fall and to $45,000 the following year, according to a Senate Republican website referred to by Berger. The plan also envisions teachers reaching the current $50,000 maximum on the state-only teacher salary scale at 15 years of experience, compared to the current 25.

"The Senate's proposal for teachers to earn more money, faster will help recruit top talent to the profession, reduce turnover and dramatically increase career earnings," said Brenda Berg, who runs BEST NC, a business-oriented public education advocacy group.

The North Carolina Association of Educators, the state's largest teacher lobbying group and a critic of Republican legislators, was more suspicious about a plan lacking many details.

"Now, because it's an election year, Senate leaders are trying to play catch up from the destructive swath they created for our public schools," NCAE President Rodney Ellis said in a release.

Teachers have received raises two years in a row, including a significant 7 percent average increase for the 2014-15 school year. But the most experienced teachers did not get permanent raises this year.

Read more at http://www.wral.com/senate-gop-talks-teacher-pay-plan-above-house-mccrory/15727391/#5upKHGt71D0YlsZk.99

**NC Senate plan would raise average teacher pay to nearly $55K**

By WNCN Staff

<http://wncn.com/2016/05/25/nc-senate-leaders-to-unveil-teacher-pay-plan-today/>

RALEIGH, N.C. (WNCN) – How much North Carolina pays teachers takes center stage at the General Assembly Wednesday as the powerful leaders of the North Carolina Senate announced details for their teacher pay plan.

Phil Berger, the Senate president pro tempore, held the news conference with other Senate leaders.

The Senate plan would move average teacher pay to nearly $55,000 in the next two years. Berger said the plan would not require a tax increase. It also would not impact teacher assistants.

See the pay scale for North Carolina teachers

State leaders have been looking at how to raise pay for teachers, a political sensitive issue in a key election year. Republicans have pushed for teacher raises but Democrats have argued the plans don’t give teachers enough.

Pay has been a hot topic in the state in recent years, with education leaders saying the state has lagged behind in teacher pay and school administrators from other states swooping into North Carolina to raid teachers.

Starting pay for teachers has risen in recent years. Here’s the starting pay by academic year for recent years, according to the North Carolina Department of Instruction:

2015-16: $35,000

2014-15: $33,000

2013-14: $30,800

2012-13: $30,800

2011-12: $30,430

2010-11: $30,430

2009-10: $30,430

2008-09: $30,430

2007-08: $29,750

Teachers in many counties also get a supplement from the county.

Teacher advocates have pushed for higher salaries, saying educators got stuck with little or no raises during the Great Recession and salaries are now lagging.

Gov. Pat McCrory, in unveiling his budget proposal in April, called for teacher salaries to raise to above an average of $50,000 and give them bonuses that averaged 3.5 percent.

Under McCrory’s plan, all current teachers with up to 24 years of experience — or 84 percent of the workforce — would get permanent raises next school year from $500 to $5,000, according to McCrory’s plan. Teachers also would reach the top-scale salary of $50,000 sooner — in their 20th year, compared to 25 years today.

The North Carolina House budget would give teachers raises of an average of 4 percent.

**Teacher pay takes center stage at NC General Assembly**

By WNCN Staff

<http://wncn.com/2016/05/25/nc-senate-leaders-to-unveil-teacher-pay-plan-today/>

RALEIGH, N.C. (WNCN) – How much North Carolina pays teachers takes center stage at the General Assembly today as the powerful leaders of the North Carolina Senate announce details for their teacher pay plan at a 10:15 a.m. news conference.

Phil Berger, the Senate president pro tempore, will hold the news conference with other Senate leaders.

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The North Carolina House budget would give teachers raises of an average of 4 percent.

**More of Klumac to close for bridge replacement**

Salisbury Post

<http://www.salisburypost.com/2016/05/25/more-of-klumac-to-close-for-bridge-replacement/>

N.C. Department of Transportation contractors plan to begin replacing the bridge carrying Klumac Road over Town Creek between Jake Alexander Boulevard and Martin Luther King Boulevard next week, closing a portion of the roadway in Salisbury.

Work will begin at 9 a.m. on Tuesday, May 31. The new bridge should be open by October.

The existing 54-year-old bridge is structurally deficient and functionally obsolete. It is safe, but is in deteriorating condition and needed more constant repairs. It was also built to design standards no longer used, and it doesn’t meet the demands of the traffic using it.

Motorists will navigate around the work using a 1-mile detour on Jake Alexander Boulevard and Martin Luther King Boulevard.

NCDOT reminds motorists to watch signs for construction information, stay alert and obey the posted speed limit.

The Klumac Road Bridge project is part of the department’s overall bridge program to improve the condition of the state’s bridges. Governor McCrory improved bridge safety by increasing repair and replacement funding by 58 percent, totaling $242 million in 2016-2017.

For real-time travel information, visit the Traveler Services section of NCDOT.gov or follow NCDOT onTwitter.

Road, bridge, and other transportation improvement projects like this one are currently underway across the state as part of Governor McCrory’s 25-Year Transportation Vision to enhance travel safety and to better connect North Carolinians to jobs, education, healthcare and recreation opportunities.

- See more at: <http://www.salisburypost.com/2016/05/25/more-of-klumac-to-close-for-bridge-replacement/#sthash.Bn2ycJuH.dpuf>

**Hornets: HB2-related cancellations at Time Warner Cable Arena are bad for business**

BY KATHERINE PERALTA

Charlotte Observer

<http://www.charlotteobserver.com/news/business/article79740797.html>

Executives at Time Warner Cable Arena won’t give a dollar figure on the economic impact of shows that have canceled in opposition to North Carolina’s House Bill 2. But the president of the Hornets, Fred Whitfield, said this week the cancellations “have a direct impact on our ability to operate our business.”

Since the controversial bill was signed into law March 23, Cirque de Soleil, Nick Jonas/Demi Lovato and Maroon 5 all canceled their Charlotte shows in the Time Warner Cable Arena in opposition to the measure.

“As stewards of Time Warner Cable Arena, our goal is to bring a wide variety of world-class entertainment to our building, so we are clearly disappointed by these cancellations. However, we do understand and respect that the performers who come to our venue are entitled to their opinions and to make decisions based on their views,” Whitfield said.

“Unfortunately, show cancellations have a direct impact on our ability to operate our business and negatively affect the economies of the City of Charlotte and the State of North Carolina.”

Whitfield added that the team hopes all parties involved will be able to resolve the situation “as soon as possible.”

Elsewhere in the state, Bruce Springsteen, Pearl Jam, Ringo Starr and Boston have all also canceled shows because they oppose the measure. Others, like Mumford and Sons and Dave Matthews Band, have decided to keep their N.C. shows but donate ticket profits to nonprofit groups that support the LGBT community.

HB2, which overturned a Charlotte nondiscrimination ordinance, requires transgender people in government facilities to use the restroom that corresponds with the gender on their birth certificate. It also sets statewide categories of protected classes under nondiscrimination laws that exclude sexual orientation and gender identity.

**Queens Bring RuPaul's Drag Race To Durham**

By LEONEDA INGE

WUNC

<http://wunc.org/post/queens-bring-rupauls-drag-race-durham#stream/0>

Big name entertainers have canceled several North Carolina concerts and shows because of their opposition to House Bill 2.  But not RuPaul’s Drag Race, which performed Sunday in Durham.

Lots of fans for RuPaul’s Drag Race at DPAC came to see their favorite queen—men dressed as flamboyant women, for entertainment.

Listen Listening...0:40 Leoneda Inge reports on 'RuPaul's Drag Race' and HB2.

Alaska is one of the drag queens.  She said despite the controversy surrounding North Carolina's House Bill 2—which limits protections for the people in the LGBT community—the Drag Race decided to go on.

“I wouldn’t want to like not do a really big gay fabulous thing in a place where people are being discriminated against because they’re gay or trans or fabulous or whatever," Alaska said.

The statewide LGBT group Equality North Carolina took to the stage during the drag show, drumming up support for their petition drive to try and repeal HB2.

The group's Trevor Chandler said they are also glad RuPaul’s Drag Race was not canceled like other big shows including Pearl Jam, Ringo Star, Cirque du Soleil and most recently, violin virtuoso Itzhak Perlman.

“We really appreciate Bruce Springsteen making a stand and we also really appreciate our allies making sure the LGBT community in North Carolina are not alone and have people who are rooting for them," Chandler said.

One of the provisions in House Bill 2 prevents cities from enacting anti-discrimination protections for members of the LGBT community.

**BofA CEO Moynihan talks HB2, millennials, market share strategy in Raleigh**

by Lauren K. Ohnesorge

Triangle Business Journal

<http://www.bizjournals.com/triangle/news/2016/05/25/bofa-ceo-moynihan-talks-hb2-millennials-market.html>

In a small conference room with a glass wall overlooking Raleigh’s North Hills on Tuesday afternoon, Bank of America (NYSE: BAC) CEO Brian Moynihan was smiling.

Armed with a tie dotted with white butterflies and a Microsoft Band (“these things hold a lot of data,”) Moynihan was happy as his company was getting ready to officially unveil its newest digs in North Hills’ newest skyscraper via an executive open house.

In an exclusive interview prior to the seventh-floor party overlooking north Raleigh, he lets us in on his thoughts about the Triangle, millennials and the contentious House Bill 2.

On market share in the Triangle:

“This idea is, this is one of the markets that could be a growth market for the company,” he says. Market shares tend follow historic positions, he explains. If a large bank going back many years is acquired, its acquirer gets the allegiance. But he says the bank plans to evaluate its entire portfolio to get top market share positions in regions across the country. Already, it’s snagged the largest market share in the top 30 markets, he says. His job – and his team’s job – will be to look at what’s working in markets where BofA already gets top billing on those lists, and then see how to move the needle up in markets such as Raleigh. That could mean adding team members, particularly in relationship management.

BofA is the third largest bank in the Triangle, in terms of local deposits with about a 10.4 percent market share. Wells Fargo (NYSE: WFC) with 24.88 percent and and BB&T (NYSE: BBT) with 12 percent hold the top two spots.

On millennials:

Moynihan says that millennial needs, when it comes to technology in banking, really aren’t that different from those of the greater financial population.

“What people my age do with their device is the same thing the younger generation was doing 18, 24 months ago,” he says. Mobile banking isn’t just about attracting millennials. He says it’s about attracting all customers. To target millennials, BofA is educating them about money habits, both in-store and via the app. The app can answer questions such as “should I buy a car, or should I lease?” And it can help customers understand everything from checkbook balancing to retirement planning.

“We build a lot of capabilities around that,” he says. While BofA boasts 19.9 million mobile banking customers, 7 million people still come to branches each week, he says. And, while a lot of their transactions, from deposits to withdrawals, are happening on the smartphones and on ATMs, the branches aren’t going away, he says. Their functionality is different.

Branches are less about services and more about relationship management, he says.

On his biggest leadership strength:

“What you have to have as CEO is the ability to keep learning,” he says. “You have to have it. The minute you stop learning, your company is going to go sideways. … The curiosity, the learning, I hope I have it. I think I do.”

And that means learning from customers, employees, the media – “from everybody.”

“You figure out how to blend all that together,” he says.

On what keeps him awake at night:

“The macro risks,” he says. “Once you’ve positioned your company … what keeps you awake at night are the issues of economic disruption … cyberterrorism.”

BofA’s growth depends on economic activity, and when it’s disrupted, whether it’s by a political event or a recession, waves are felt at BofA.

In all, however, Moynihan says he sleeps very well. “We feel good about the U.S. economy.”

On HB2:

The bank has already published a statement opposing North Carolina's controversial new law.

“There’s nothing new to share,” he says. “Our position has been clear, that we stand for that it should be repealed."

When asked if he’d had any personal conversations with government officials to that effect, Moynihan reiterated that BofA wouldn’t be backing down from its stance against the measure.

**Sen. Richard Burr: HB2 ‘too expansive’**

BY JIM MORRILL

Charlotte Observer

<http://www.charlotteobserver.com/news/politics-government/article79751622.html>

WASHINGTON

Republican U.S. Sen. Richard Burr told The Huffington Post that North Carolina’s Republican lawmakers went too far when they passed House Bill 2, and need to rein it in before a judge does it for them.

“Yeah, I’ve got issues,” Burr said after The Huffington Post asked him if he had problems with the law known as HB2.

“The legislature botched what they were trying to do,” he said. “It was far too expansive.”

Burr’s remarks were his first publicly critical comments on the law that has resulted in economic losses, celebrity boycotts and dueling lawsuits with the federal government.

The law, signed in March, bars transgender people from using bathrooms in public facilities that match their gender identity, and it prevents municipalities from passing LGBT anti-discrimination ordinances. Cities like Charlotte and Raleigh had such ordinances in place before HB2. They are now invalid.

Earlier this month, Burr told the Observer that GOP lawmakers should take seriously a federal deadline to address the law or implicitly face a loss of federal money. “There’s over $1 billion in education dollars there, so I hope the General Assembly will strongly consider what their next step is to understand the financial implications,” Burr said at the time.

Burr has largely avoided talking about the controversial law. He has said he was out of the country when it passed and called it a state issue.

On Tuesday, he also predicted that the law will be changed, and it’s just a question of who does it.

“It will be decided one of two ways: through the courts, where everybody’s chosen to place it now, or the General Assembly and the Charlotte City Council getting together and solving what was blundered on both sides,” Burr told the Post.

The campaign of Democratic U.S. Senate candidate Deborah Ross said Burr’s decision to speak out on the bill came a day after a survey by Public Policy Polling showed only 35 percent of North Carolina voters back the bill, while 44 percent oppose it.

“Now that he thinks it’s hurting his re-election chances, he’s changing his tune,” Ross spokesman Cole Leiter said. “Burr’s Washington-style politics of self-interest haven’t worked for North Carolina, and it’s time for a change.”

Read more here: http://www.charlotteobserver.com/news/politics-government/article79751622.html#storylink=cpy

*Opinion/Blogs*

**Bill Back-Tracking Duke Energy Coal Ash Cleanup is Moving Through the Legislature**

by Jane Porter

Indy Week

<http://www.indyweek.com/news/archives/2016/05/25/bill-back-tracking-duke-energy-coal-ash-cleanup-is-moving-through-the-legislature>

Last week, after getting news it didn't like from North Carolina's Department of Environmental Quality about having to clean up its 33 coal ash ponds across the state, Duke Energy vowed to "clarify" the state's 2014 Coal Ash Management Law" within the next sixty days.

The energy giant is making good on that promise in the form of a bill that was modified to bail Duke Energy out of having to clean up its coal ash after the DEQ news broke. The bill passed the House Rules Committee on a voice vote late yesterday afternoon.

Among other provisions, the bill requires Duke Energy to connect households using well water that are situated around coal ash basins to piped or municipal water supplies. It also extends the public comment and review period of proposed risk classifications for coal ash pits and it reconstitutes the coal ash management commission that Governor McCrory dismantled after the N.C. Supreme Court ruled that state lawmakers overstepped their boundaries in creating such a commission.

Frank Holleman, senior attorney at the Southern Environmental Law Center which is representing twelve citizen groups in lawsuits against Duke Energy over fourteen leaking coal ash ponds in the state, had this to say about the bill:

“This bill is the latest attempt by Raleigh politicians to bail out Duke Energy. Citizens and communities across North Carolina followed the rules set out in the Coal Ash Management Act over a year and half ago. Under the existing law, after extensive public comments, DEQ was forced to conclude that Duke Energy must remove its coal ash from its dangerous and leaking pits across the state. Now, after heavy lobbying by Duke Energy, the Raleigh politicians want to re-open the process to try to find a way to let Duke Energy off the hook. The law, common sense, and common decency require Duke Energy to take responsibility for its irresponsible coal ash practices and move its coal ash to safe, dry lined storage as is happening in South Carolina today. In fact, up until they got a result they did not like, Duke Energy and the state’s politicians praised CAMA.

“Every community and every family living around one of Duke Energy’s leaking coal ash pits deserves a safe and reliable source of clean drinking water at Duke Energy’s expense. It is Duke Energy’s coal ash pollution that has contaminated or threatened the state’s drinking water supplies. Duke Energy owes it to these families to step up and provide them clean water for their homes. This bill makes that process overcomplicated and only sets out what Duke Energy this week has said it intends to do anyway.

“However, providing drinking water to nearby communities does not give Duke Energy amnesty for its illegal and dangerous coal ash pollution. Duke Energy is still polluting groundwater, drinking water supplies, rivers, and lakes. The very fact that Duke Energy must provide water lines underscores that Duke Energy’s coal ash practices have rendered the groundwater unreliable as a source of drinking water. Our clean water is not only a resource for current users, it is a resource for future generations that everyone—including Duke Energy—must protect for the future, not just the present day.

“As long as there are unlined coal ash pits in these communities, these families’ property values will suffer. If Duke Energy leaves its coal ash in unlined pits near these people’s homes, it will continue to hurt these families and drive down the value of one of their most important assets.

“This bill shows again that Duke Energy and politicians in North Carolina believe that Duke Energy does not have to comply with the law like everyone else in the state. Either Duke Energy breaks the law, the state government does not enforce the law against Duke Energy, or, when it’s inconvenient for Duke Energy to obey the law, the state’s politicians try to change it for Duke Energy’s benefit. Sooner or later, Duke Energy must obey the law and stop polluting North Carolina’s clean water with coal ash. And, sooner or later, North Carolina’s politicians have to put the public interest above Duke Energy’s special interest."

In a funny twist, the News and Observer reports that McCrory sent members of his legal counsel to the House Rules Committee meeting Tuesday to warn lawmakers not to re-assemble the coal ash commission.

Gov. Pat McCrory’s legal counsel and top environmental officials attended the unscheduled committee meeting held at the end of the day to stress that if the General Assembly passes the bill McCrory will veto it and sue lawmakers again. The counsel, Bob Stephens, had warned the legislature in 2014 that giving the General Assembly the majority of appointments to the commission was unconstitutional, but the bill was passed anyway.

“My message is, let’s don’t relive history here,” Stephens said. “We know what happened the first time. Let’s don’t do it again. Nobody wants that. The governor does not want that.”

The House Rules Committee approved the bill on a split voice vote. It goes to the House Appropriations Committee on Wednesday.

Under the bill, McCrory would appoint five positions on the commission and the legislature would appoint two, whereas before, the governor appointed three positions, and the House and Senate each appointed three positions.

McCrory still thinks the appointments structure is unconstitutional because they don't give him enough authority, though the commission was created in the first place as a safeguard against Duke Energy unduly influencing the governor, its former employee.

**Legislators Defy McCrory, DEQ Over Coal Ash Cleanup Plans**

By Catherine Clabby

North Carolina Health News

<http://www.northcarolinahealthnews.org/2016/05/25/legislators-defy-mccrory-deq-over-coal-ash-cleanup-plans/>

In a move supported by Duke Energy, Republican legislators on Tuesday took steps to decrease state environmental agency control over how the utility cleans up 100 million tons of coal ash stashed across this state.

And once again, providing new drinking-water sources to people living near the waste was front and center.

A bill emerging from the House Committee on Rules, Calendars and Operations late Tuesday would require Duke to submit plans for new water supplies for hundreds of people living near its coal ash by Aug. 1. Linking well users to municipal water systems would be preferred. But if a state infrastructure authority says the cost would be prohibitive at given locations, installing filtration systems will be allowed.

Submitted by Rep. Chuck McGrady (R-Hendersonville), the bill would also revive the state’s coal ash commission, first created in 2014 with passage of the Coal Ash Management Act but disbanded as the result of a lawsuit.

The commission, not environmental regulators, would rule just how aggressively Duke must clean up coal ash on 10 of 14 properties storing waste.

The utility supports McGrady’s bill, Duke spokesman Paige Sheehan said. The coal ash management commission was intended to provide oversight and make recommendations regarding a number of safety, environmental and cost factors in the closure of North Carolina’s ash basins, she said.

“The commission is the only entity charged under CAMA in considering the potential impact to electric rates in reviewing basin rankings and closure planning,” she said.

Out with the old

If approved, McGrady’s legislation could scuttle the state Department of Environmental Quality’s coal ash disposal rankings, released just last week. Based on current conditions and available data, DEQ concluded that all Duke coal ash stored in ponds and impoundments across the state poses potential health and environment risks and should be dug up.

DEQ also wanted legislative approval in 18 months to soften that requirement if Duke provided new drinking-water sources to neighbors and completed needed dam repairs on its properties.

Duke Energy opposed the latest DEQ risk assessment, saying it is convinced that it’s safe to cap but leave waste where it rests in impoundments at 10 locations. The Coal Ash Management Act required excavation at four other sites. In total, there are 32 coal ash dumps on 14 Duke Energy properties around the state; state law required excavation at four.

The original coal ash commission, intended by legislators to be the final state authority on Duke’s cleanup, was dismantled after Gov. Pat McCrory and two former governors successfully challenged its constitutionality. In the court case McCrory v Berger, the governors argued that legislative control of the panel usurped powers reserved for the state’s executive branch.

The bill introduced Tuesday would give McCrory the power to appoint five people to be confirmed by the legislature and allow legislators to appoint two.

McCrory’s appointees would have to bring expertise in waste management, medicine or public health, power-supply planning and engineering, costs associated with electricity generation and hydrology and geology.

One legislative appointee would be recommended by the House leader and be affiliated with a conservation organization. The other, recommended by the Senate leader, can simply be a citizen.

Nonetheless, McCrory’s general counsel, Bob Stevens, told legislators he believed that based on his reading of the court ruling in McCrory v Berger, the bill did not give the governor enough control.

He threatened a gubernatorial veto if the legislature passes the bill in its current form.

The bill would also reopen acceptance of public comments on coal ash cleanup requirements, a process the Department of Environmental Quality had already closed.

McGrady, a co-chairman of the state Environmental Review Commission, on Tuesday said it’s vital to have people independent of DEQ reviewing and assessing its plans for coal ash.

“We need a coal ash commission that has a separate set of expertise and hopefully more information. Maybe they’ll bless everything the department says, maybe it will not,” McGrady said.

‘Pinky swear’

DEQ Sec. Donald R. van der Vart slammed McGrady’s proposal for lacking firm deadlines by which Duke must provide neighbors with new, permanent water supplies. He also faulted the bill’s silence on needed repairs of dams that separate ash from waterways.

“Everybody believes that for those uncertain wells, this is a good solution. I’m here to say that part of the bill is quite right,” van der Vart said. But he quickly added that the timing of the fix is too open ended and doesn’t hold Duke accountable enough.

“All this is asking for is a kind of pinkie swear,” he said, adding that DEQ wants to be more certain that water supply lines get hooked up in a timely manner.

Rep. Larry Hall (D-Durham), the House minority leader, voiced a similar critique.

“The bill says you have to have a plan by August. It doesn’t say that you have to have water to people by then,” Hall said. “People can’t drink a plan, they need to drink clean water.”

McGrady stressed that he is willing to make changes to address concerns raised by DEQ and others.

New water lines

Duke Energy disclosed just last week that it is considering providing new sources of drinking water to people using wells and living near its coal ash waste, but did not reveal what it was considering at specific locations.

A draft study that the utility submitted May 17 to DEQ shows scenarios worked up for six locations where Duke now distributes the largest amounts of bottled water to those neighbors dependent on well water.

The preliminary study by Dewberry Engineers Inc., based in Virginia, proposes extending municipal water lines to neighbors near five sites, including the Allen Steam Station in Gaston County, Belews Creek in Stokes County, Buck Steam Station in Rowan County, Rogers Energy Complex (the former Cliffside Steam Station) in Cleveland County and Marshall Steam Station in Catawba County.

Due to a 14-mile distance between existing water lines and neighbors using well water near the Roxboro Power Station in Person County, the draft study recommends creating a community well system for those living nearby. Duke has not yet decided whether it would follow the Dewberry recommendations.

“We continue to see no indication that ash basins have influenced plant neighbors’ wells,” Sheehan said. “We believe giving plant neighbors the assurance of long-term water quality gives them peace of mind and benefits North Carolina because we preserve the range of options to safely close ash basins.”

Jim Behmer, director of Salisbury-Rowan Utilities, said his water system could accommodate adding the 95 properties Duke Energy has identified by its Buck Steam Station.

If Duke, on its own or with partners, extends water to reach people now dependent on well water, they would be receiving water that exceeds both state and federal safety standards, he said.

“We’re willing partners,” Behmer said.

Rose Hoban provided additional reporting.

**Beware the Militant Queers**

Indy Week

<http://www.indyweek.com/indyweek/beware-the-militant-queers/Content?oid=5034754>

We'll begin with this little gem from commenter David Parham about our HB 2 coverage: "Your overflowing disdain of things you either do not really understand, do not respect, or both comes across so loudly and one-sided that we readers have little choice but to take your views with a grain of salt, if not dismiss them altogether. Governor McCrory stands behind some genuine concerns of many reasonable, temperate, and loving people whose values are grounded in common sense and respect. I'd say that to an unfamiliar reader, and especially to one well-informed on the HB 2 issue, your overkill slant against those who are not brainwashed by militant views of the LGBT community comes across as a bit juvenile. I long for reason, hard to find these days in journalism. Would you agree?"

Not especially, no.

Moving on to last week's Soapboxer, which focused on new data about ever-rising income inequality. Cityfox writes: "I get why the greedy Art Pope types want the largest pieces of the economic pie. What I don't get are the poor and middle-class folks who vote Republican. Do they think Pat McCrory and his cabal give a fig about them? Their taxes are on the rise. The GOP has cut safety-net programs for all North Carolinians, including current and retired veterans. The NCGOP talks jobs and then blocks raises to minimum salaries. Is it the kabuki dance of social issues?"

Lynn Hayes adds, "I'm all for raising the minimum wage, but even $15 an hour will not bring back a strong middle class. The problem is the loss of quality jobs—factory jobs that paid well and provided good benefits. Somehow these must be replaced by other quality jobs that provide more opportunity and incentives for people to build careers and prosperity. There must be incentives for companies to keep factories and other businesses in the U.S., and this must be the priority. Focusing on minimum wage, I believe, obscures the bigger issue."

Referring to our story on the all-important-but-little-discussed N.C. Supreme Court election, commenter raleighispcool makes an important point about how change really happens: "Here's to hoping these young, motivated, 'high-information' Berners continue their political revolution by actually voting in these less-glamorous elections."

Finally, a correction: in last week's story "Out of Site," about the debate over where to locate homeless services in Carrboro, we reported that All Day Records co-owner Charlie Hearon received a flyer about moving the IFC's soup kitchen out of downtown. He did not receive the flyer but was only made aware of its existence, he says. The woman who was circulating the flyers did not tell him that IFC director Michael Reinke was involved in the effort.

Want to see your name in bold? Email us at backtalk@indyweek.com, comment on our Facebook page or INDYweek.com, or hit us up on Twitter: @indyweek.

**Even Richard Burr is now openly criticizing HB2**

By Rob Schofield

Progressive Pulse

<http://pulse.ncpolicywatch.org/2016/05/25/even-richard-burr-is-now-openly-criticizing-hb2/>

It would appear that recent poll numbers and the increasingly formidable challenge that he is facing from Democratic Party nominee Deborah Ross are forcing Senator Richard Burr to break with Gov. McCrory and state legislative leaders.

The Huffington Post reports that Burr was highly critical of HB2 in an interview yesterday:

Sen. Richard Burr (R-N.C.) said Tuesday that Republican lawmakers in his state went too far when they passed a sweeping anti-LGBT law this year, and said they need to rein it in before a judge does it for them.

“Yeah, I’ve got issues,” Burr told The Huffington Post when asked if he has problems with his state’s new law, also known as HB 2.

“The legislature botched what they were trying to do,” he said. “It was far too expansive….”

Burr has largely avoided talking about the law. He previously said he was out of the country when it passed; stated it’s up to the courts to decide if it’s valid; suggested it doesn’t actually discriminate; and declared it a state issue.

On Tuesday, though, he was clear that he wasn’t happy with it. He also predicted that the law is going to be changed one way or another, so the question now is which branch of government does it.

“It will be decided one of two ways: through the courts, where everybody’s chosen to place it now, or the General Assembly and the Charlotte City Council getting together and solving what was blundered on both sides,” Burr said.

Not surprisingly, Burr went on to make some other less insightful comments — blaming Charlotte officials and President Obama (naturally) for their roles in the controversy — but he also explained that he thought the Charlotte City Council made the right move in not repealing the non-discrimination ordinance that HB2 targeted this week:

“To repeal it before you know what the General Assembly is going to do would be a mistake,” he said, hopping into a Senate train car taking him away from reporters. “That’s why it’s got to be the General Assembly and the City of Charlotte getting together and coming up with an agreed-upon package.”

- See more at: <http://pulse.ncpolicywatch.org/2016/05/25/even-richard-burr-is-now-openly-criticizing-hb2/#sthash.xrbhV8Pf.dpuf>

**On HB2, warning signs abound, but state leaders just keep on driving**

By Allan Freyer

Jefferson Post

<http://jeffersonpost.com/opinion/3833/on-hb2-warning-signs-abound-but-state-leaders-just-keep-on-driving>

As the fallout from HB2 continues to pile up, one bad news story at a time, I am reminded of the time a friend of mine drove from Washington, DC to Birmingham, Alabama, unintentionally by way of Miami, Florida. (In case anyone is wondering, Miami is not exactly on a direct route, being about 10 hours further south than one needs to drive when traveling to west Alabama from points north and east). When I asked my friend why he took the scenic route (this was before the advent of GPS), he answered that he didn’t have a map, wasn’t quite sure where all the other exits went, and felt like he should just keep driving south, because he knew eventually he’d hit water.

Right about now, Governor McCrory is behaving a lot like my friend. When he signed HB2, he got on the freeway blithely unaware that he was going in the wrong direction. And after weeks of business backlash, falling tourism revenues, lost economic development projects, national and international scorn, and most recently, a federal lawsuit, he still can’t quite figure out how to get off.

Caught between a restive social conservative base, an openly dismissive legislature and a rapidly growing opposition, he just keeps driving, doubling down in support of a law that allows private businesses to deny service to gays and lesbians, tries to write transgender individuals out of existence by requiring them to use the bathroom of the biological sex on their birth certificate, and—perhaps mostly shockingly—eliminates 35-year-old state civil rights protections that prohibited employers from firing their workers because of their race, religion, or gender. Thanks to HB2, your boss can now fire you without fear of a state court lawsuit because you’re black. Or because you’re white. Or because you’re a woman. Or, yes, because you’re an evangelical Christian who supports HB2.

While HB2 certainly puts North Carolina on the wrong side of history, the Governor’s unwillingness to change course keeps the state going further and further in the wrong direction, as he passes one exit after another.

Have companies like PayPal, DeutscheBank, and Red Ventures canceled or reconsidered planned expansions due to HB2, costing thousands of jobs? Doesn’t matter, blame equality advocates for a “smear campaign” and keep driving.

Does HB2 give North Carolina the dubious distinction of joining Mississippi as the only state in the nation that doesn’t protect workers from workplace discrimination (and when we’re in the same category as Mississippi in the category of civil rights, this should be a clue that we’re headed in the wrong direction)? Doesn’t matter, keep driving.

Are the NCAA, the ACC, and the NBA thinking about pulling out of North Carolina because they can’t support the blatant discrimination enshrined in HB2? Doesn’t matter, pretend it’s not happening, keep driving.

Have more than 200 major multi-national corporations—many of them major contributors to the Governor’s campaign—publicly opposed HB2 because it’s bad for business? Doesn’t matter, threaten business lobbyists with legislative retribution, keep driving.

Are poll numbers for the Governor and key state lawmakers cratering? Doesn’t matter, the election is more than five months away, everyone will have forgotten about HB2 by then, just keep driving.

And most recently, does HB2 violate the Civil Rights Act, threatening the loss of $3 billion in federal funding for K-12 and higher education, job training, and other core state government programs? Doesn’t matter, sue the federal government for supposedly overreaching its authority, ignore the historical parallels of southern governors claiming the federal government can’t enforce civil rights laws and just keep driving.

Each one of these developments represented a real opportunity for the Governor and the General Assembly to get off the freeway, repeal HB2, and get the state moving back in the right direction.

Instead, unfortunately, they just kept driving. After all, eventually they’ll hit water.

And when it happens, the real question is whether North Carolina will drown before they will.

Allan Freyer is the Director of the Workers’ Rights project at the North Carolina Justice Center.

**Letter: In words of legislators, HB2 is common sense**

Citizen Times

<http://www.citizen-times.com/story/opinion/readers/2016/05/25/letter-words-legislators-hb-common-sense/84906398/>

The recent passage of HB2 has produced many comments. Unfortunately, many are in error.

Forget the economic threats, unfounded conclusions and opinions and the facts are really simple. Are we more concerned with the purpose of the bill (protection of our women and children) or other issues, real or imagined?

Forget political labels, economic issues and read the bill. There is no discrimination language or intent to be so.

Remember it started in Charlotte with an ordinance that made no sense but opened up a can of worms that was ridiculous.

In the words of our legislators, HB2 is common sense.

W.H. Elam, Otto

**Guest columnist: Asheville’s independent restaurant owners speak out on HB2**

by Elizabeth Button

Citizen Times

<http://www.citizen-times.com/story/opinion/contributors/2016/05/25/guest-columnist-ashevilles-independent-restaurant-owners-speak-hb/84906462/>

Restaurants are, first and foremost, in the hospitality business, and Asheville’s independent restaurants are very good at it. But you don’t have to take our word for it. Just look at the “listicles” in which Asheville’s food scene is mentioned: Travel & Leisure, Southern Living, AAA, USA Today, N.Y. Times, Traveler’s Choice, Wall Street Journal, Food and Wine, Bon Appetit. Providing outstanding service and memorable meals are points of pride.

So it is frustrating and disappointing when actions taken by elected officials interfere with the work we do and discriminate against our employees and our patrons. We are referring, of course, to House Bill 2, better known as HB2. Since its swift approval and signing by the governor, all in less than a day, Asheville’s independent restaurants have felt the impact.

At best, business is flat when we traditionally see increases. We are experiencing cancellations, all because of HB2. And yes, we are reporting all of this information to the Asheville Convention and Visitors Bureau so they can include it in the growing list of losses approaching $2 million, all because of HB2. To add insult to injury, our small businesses have the added expense of printing and installing new bathroom signs. For our diverse staff, HB2 is humiliating and degrading.

Our message to Gov. Pat McCrory and the North Carolina legislature is a simple one. If your goal was to hurt small businesses and diminish job growth in profound ways, congratulations. You succeeded.

Our message to the hundreds of thousands of people who enjoy coming to our energetic, adventurous, Bohemian city, our message is equally simple. Nothing has changed. Asheville is the same warm, safe, welcoming community it was before HB2. So come for a visit, sit a spell, relax and savor our award-winning food. Enjoy our attractions, stay in our hotels and explore our ancient mountains.

By definition, hospitality is the act of providing guests with a cordial reception. It’s what visitors have come to expect from Asheville’s restaurant community. And it’s what they will continue to experience. Because for us, hospitality is more than a word. It is an integral part of the way we live.

Elizabeth Liddell Button is owner and CEO, HeirloomHG.com.

HB2 Signature list, owners of independent restaurants; all members of Asheville Independent Restaurant Association:

April Moon and Belinda Raab – Sunny Point Cafe

Jacob & Alicia Sessoms – Table, The Imperial Life, Tod’s Tasties

Eric & Heidi Scheffer – Vinnie’s Neighborhood Italian

Kevin & Lucia Barnes – Ultimate Ice Cream

Rich & Lauren Cundiff – Rocky’s Hot Chicken Shack

Patrick O'Cain – Gan Shan Station

Traci Taylor - Fig

Jack Buan & Rosetta Star – Rosetta’s Kitchen

Michel Baudouin - Bouchon

Joe Scully – Corner Kitchen & Chestnut

Jael & Dan Rattigan – French Broad Chocolate Lounge

Liz Liddell Button, Katie Button, Felix Meana & Ted Button – Heirloom Hospitality Group, Curate & Nightbell

John Fleer – Rhubarb & The Rhu

Jeff & Ashley Miller – Luella’s Bar-B-Que

Molly & Meherwan Irani – Chai Pani Restaurant Group

Peter Slamp & Adam Bannasch – Zambra

Adam Bannasch & Kate Bannasch - Copper Crown

Lynn Foster – Buffalo Nickel

Anthony Cerrato – Strada Italiano

C. Allan Morse – Sante Wine Bar and Tap Room

Chris Cunningham, Sean Park, James Sutherland – Blue Dream Curry

Carole Bowers & Melissa Lausch – Carmel’s Restaurant & Bar & Burgerworx

Edward Hannibal & Natalie Byrnes – Glass Onion

William S. Dissen - The Market Place Restaurant

Charlie Hodge & Sunil Patel – Sovereign Remedies, Ole Shakey’s, Patchwork Urban Farms

Joshua Bailey – Bhramari Brewhouse

Billy Klingel – Oyster House Brewing Company

Miki Loomis – Homegrown & Saffron Fine Foods

Randy Talley & Roger Derrough – Green Sage Café

Vicki Schomer & Neeraj Kebede - Addissae Ethiopian Restaurant

Christine Lane – Marcos Pizzeria

Teri & Greg Siegel – Avenue M

Jay Weatherly & Kim Hunt – High Five Coffee

Carson Lucci - Over Easy Café

Karen Donatelli - Karen Donatelli Bakery and Cafe

Catherine Cambron & Anoop Krishnan – Mela Indian Restaurant

**The Failed Scheme To Blame Charlotte’s LGBT Protections For HB2’s Consequences**

BY ZACK FORD

Think Progress

<http://thinkprogress.org/lgbt/2016/05/25/3781719/charlotte-chamber-hb2/>

Since the backlash against North Carolina’s anti-trans law HB2 began, its proponents have tried to blame the city of Charlotte for passing LGBT nondiscrimination protections in the first place, forcing them to respond. This week, that “no, he started it” talking point bubbled over as the Charlotte Chamber of Commerce tried to pressure the city into rescinding its protections as part of some supposed compromise for repealing HB2. It didn’t work.

The blaming of Charlotte has been part of the HB2 story since before HB2 was even a glimmer in its drafters’ eye. When the city was considering the protections earlier this year, Gov. Pat McCrory (R) warned council members that passing an LGBT nondiscrimination ordinance would force the state legislature’s hand. It didn’t matter that 18 states and dozens of cities have the same protections; they weren’t going to be tolerated in North Carolina. And the state did respond — with HB2, which not only overrode Charlotte’s ordinance but included restrictions on transgender people that no state or city has ever passed.

Since then, when McCrory and others have been held to account for the economic backlash over HB2, they have tried to pass the blame to Charlotte. As McCrory said in a radio interview earlier this month, “The national media kind of thinks that North Carolina did this. No, Charlotte wanted to be the bathroom police with their own standards for private business.” In other words, Charlotte’s pro-LGBT ordinance is somehow to blame for all the pro-LGBT businesses, organizations, and entertainers boycotting North Carolina.

This past Sunday, Bob Morgan, president of the Charlotte Chamber, published an op-ed insisting that to find a compromise with state lawmakers to resolve the “crushing economic suffering,” Charlotte should act first as “an overture to begin rebuilding trust.” Though Morgan claimed the Chamber supported statewide LGBT protections, he argued that the only way to move state legislators toward such an outcome is for the city to cave first and repeal its unenforceable LGBT protections. “Inaction by city council followed by inaction at the Legislative Building will not lead to progress by anyone’s definition.”

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 Sharon Smith WBTV ✔ ‎@ssmithwbtv

Letter from @CLTChamberBob @cltchamber asking lawmakers to let cities pass their own #HB2 ordinances

2:40 PM - 24 May 2016

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LGBT groups were outraged. There was no guarantee that state legislators would fulfill their end of the informal compromise, nor was there any reason to believe that the action they took would be satisfactory. They would leave the bathroom restrictions for transgender people up to the courts to decide, and possibly only allow for sexual orientation protections if voters approved them.

A letter to the city council from Equality NC, the Human Rights Campaign, and the National Center for Transgender Equality read in part, “We urge you to stand firm, to not repeal Charlotte’s ordinance, and to resist putting what’s easy over what’s right. A deal that calls for a repeal of the ordinance would only tarnish the legacy of your city which you have worked so hard to strengthen.” Equality NC also launched a petition asking Charlotte to “stand strong against discrimination.”

Originally, the City Council had planned to discuss the “economic impact of HB2” at its meeting Monday night, which seemed to suggest willingness to consider such a compromise. Mere hours before the meeting, that item was removed from the agenda, indicating that no action would be taken on the ordinance.

At the end of the meeting, the topic came up nevertheless. Republican councilmembers Kenny Smith and Ed Driggs argued that something should be done to “stop the bleeding” of the HB2 boycotts. Other councilmembers countered that HB2 already preempts the city from enforcing its protections, and that it’s HB2 that is hurting the state, not Charlotte’s ordinance. “I don’t know why Charlotte has to do anything,” Councilmember Al Austin (D) said. The motion to consider repeal failed 7-4.

On Tuesday, the Chamber responded by making public the letter it had sent to state lawmakers asking them to adjust HB2 to allow cities like Charlotte to “bolster their nondiscrimination laws” in “limited circumstances.” The letter did not call for the repeal of HB2, but merely “reforms” that would be catalyzed by Charlotte acting first. At a press conference, Chamber Chair Ned Curran explained that the Chamber was hoping to act as a “shuttle diplomat” between the city and the state legislature, suggesting that there was “an impasse between these two bodies.”

Curran said that that the Chamber was “disappointed” in the city council for not taking “some action that would be a signal to the legislature that they are trying to work together with that body. It certainly make efforts such as this hard, but we don’t think it makes them impossible.”

In fact, he kept piling on the blame. When asked if both sides had indicated a willingness to compromise, Curran admitted, “The first group to publicly be asked to demonstrate a willingness to do that was the city council, so it makes it harder that that group chose not to take some formal action in that regard.”

Curran opposed the idea that the Chamber must be subjected to some sort of “litmus test” of supporting the full repeal of HB2, arguing that it would prevent them from having any seat at the table to move state lawmakers to modify it. “Those that are calling for a litmus test are failing to get any traction.”

During the conference, Morgan also boasted that the Chamber has “a formal partnership with the Charlotte LGBT Chamber of Commerce,” but that soon might not be the case. The LGBT Chamber responded Tuesday that it not only opposes the Chamber’s “recent efforts to push for a compromise,” but that it is “reviewing next steps with affiliation.” The statement went on to say, “The LGBT Chamber notes that its mission, core values and best practices do not align with the current positions held by the Charlotte Chamber.”

For all of this sturm und drang, the only apparent outcome is that the Charlotte Chamber of Commerce has alienated itself from the LGBT community and possibly also the businesses it was trying to impress with this stunt. If the Chamber does not support full repeal of HB2, then that tacitly means it supports some aspect of it.

Moreover, if they were truly asking for the city council to compromise on behalf of state lawmakers, it’s further evidence that those lawmakers are trying to avoid taking any responsibility whatsoever for HB2. It seems they won’t be stopping the bleeding anytime soon.

**The HRC went too far with its ‘anti-LGBT bully’ label**

BY PETER ST. ONGE

Charlotte Observer

<http://www.charlotteobserver.com/opinion/opn-columns-blogs/peter-st-onge/article79795327.html>

In the days before Monday’s Charlotte City Council meeting, the Charlotte Chamber urged council members to pursue a compromise with state lawmakers over HB2. That nudging included an op-ed in the Observer calling for the council to symbolically rescind the city’s anti-discrimination ordinance that HB2 had rendered null and void.

In those same days before Monday’s meeting, the Human Rights Campaign and other LGBT advocates told council members not to make a deal – and definitely not one that involved pulling back even symbolically from its ordinance.

Both organizations, the Chamber and HRC, were doing what they were supposed to do. The Chamber was advocating for businesses threatened by HB2. HRC was protecting an LGBT community that’s now more vulnerable to discrimination.

All of which happens every day with public officials and private groups. It’s called lobbying.

On Monday, HRC called it something else. A spokesman, following up on a tweet, said the Chamber was an “anti-LGBT bully.”

That’s a word – bully – that we hear a lot lately, including in this HB2 debate. You’ve heard it, too: City Council members bullied Charlotte businesses with its ordinance. State lawmakers bullied cities with HB2. The Obama position is bullying everyone on gender identity in bathrooms.

It’s a pretty powerful label, even when it’s used passive-aggressively. It resonates, especially with parents, thanks to the attentiveness these days on bullying at school or online. Add “anti-LGBT” to it, and you’ve doubled up with an even more potent “B” – bigot.

In the Chamber’s case, that’s also not true. In his Observer op-ed, Chamber President Bob Morgan emphasized in the opening paragraph that “the only acceptable outcome are policies at the city and state level that prohibit discrimination against all people.” A compromise, he said, was the best way to get there.

The HRC disagreed. So, by the way, did we. The particular deal the state was offering wasn’t a good one for Charlotte.

As it turns out, the HRC’s tactic worked. Instead of arguing for compromise, the Chamber howled Monday at being called an anti-LGBT bully. On Tuesday, it urged the state to let cities protect whomever they wanted from discrimination. Meanwhile, at least a couple council members who considered an HB2 compromise instead fell into place. The vote over repealing the ordinance was canceled.

So there’s a temptation to argue that the greater good was done here. And let’s be clear: We’re glad HRC has taken up the cause against HB2. The organization is very adept at defending LGBT rights, because it’s very adept at the hand-to-hand combat that comes with public debates. Look no further than the bruises left on Pat McCrory over HB2.

But this week, the organization went too far. It was an unnecessary attack, and it diminished the very real bullying that people endure, including individuals HRC wants to protect.

It also left a bad taste, even for some of us who want HB2 gone. The Chamber was tagged with a label that doesn’t wash away easily, and we’re disappointed that the mayor and most council members sat meekly by while someone did damage to an important organization in their city.

You could almost call it the B-word. As for the council and mayor, we’ll settle for a C: Cowardly.

pstonge@charlotteobserver.com; @saintorange

**On HB2, our Attorney General seems more interested in making the law than enforcing it**

BY JAZZ SHAW

Hot Air

<http://hotair.com/archives/2016/05/25/on-hb2-our-attorney-general-seems-more-interested-in-making-the-law-than-enforcing-it/>

Was there some change in the definition of the role of the Department of Justice which I missed recently? The last time I checked, that agency was part of the executive branch and was entirely separate from the nation’s legislative activities except in terms of enforcement. If that’s still the case, somebody might want to mention it to our Attorney General at the next staff meeting. She showed up in North Carolina this week, ostensibly for the purpose of checking in on police protocols (perfectly reasonable) but decided to wax poetic on the state’s lawmakers. (Fox 8)

U.S. Attorney General Loretta Lynch was in Fayetteville Tuesday to discuss community policing, but, during a media press conference, she also reiterated her opposition to House Bill Two.

“North Carolina decided to pass a law that sanctioned discrimination,” she said.

While some say that the federal government’s involvement in HB2 is an overreach, Lynch said she felt it was the U.S. Department of Justice’s duty to step in.

There’s something quite inappropriate going on here and it’s not the first time this problem has cropped up. The various states pass laws all of the time. On rare occasions they will run afoul of federal law in a supremacy dispute or overstep the boundaries of the constitution. When that happens, challenges are filed and the matter is decided in the judicial branch. Even when it comes to federal law, bills are passed by Congress and the only person in the executive branch who has anything to say about it is the President who either signs or vetoes them.

Loretta Lynch is the nation’s top cop. She’s supposed to be in charge of enforcing the laws and that, in theory, applies to laws that she may not personally agree with. (Her boss, President Obama, falls victim to the same shortcoming at times, particularly when it comes to immigration law, but he’s at least tangentially involved in the process.) The Attorney General has nothing to say about the quality or merits of the laws which are on the books. As long as they remain the law of the land she is tasked with ensuring they are upheld. Period. Full stop.

But she didn’t stop there. When the question arose, she decided to jump into yet another area of government overreach.

When asked when or if the federal government might consider cutting any federal funding to North Carolina, Lynch said as the lawsuit progresses, the DOJ will consider all options..

The DOJ will “consider all options” in terms of state funding? Since when does the Department of Justice have anything whatsoever to do with the allocation of public funds to the states? The police around the nation are supposed to lend an ear to the Attorney General in terms of law enforcement issues. It’s completely inappropriate for her to be poisoning the well with these types of biased dog whistles. Methinks it’s time for the House majority to call some more hearings and have a chat with Ms. Lynch over her proper role in the federal government.

**Transgender North Carolinians, Family and Friends Speak Out in Charlotte to Repeal HB2**

By Ryan Wilson

HRC

<http://www.hrc.org/blog/transgender-north-carolinians-family-and-friends-speak-out-in-charlotte-to>

On Monday, TurnOUT! North Carolina (NC) hosted a timely press conference in Charlotte featuring the voices and perspectives of Transgender North Carolinians, their family members and friends to speak out against the discriminatory HB2. This press conference was part of a continuing the effort to feature unique stories and diverse experiences facing LGBT people in the Tar Heel State.

The speakers collectively called on Charlotte leaders to stand firm against pressure to repeal the city’s non-discrimination ordinance and urged leaders in Raleigh to fully repeal HB2.

Connie Norris, a native Charlottean and a mother of a transgender child, spoke about the impact HB2 has had on her family.

“The message our child hears from my husband and myself is one of unconditional love and acceptance: ‘You’re beautiful. You’re special. You’re amazing—just the way you are,’” she said. “This message of support is one that is echoed by our community: our family and friends, our neighbors, local businesses we frequent, churches, and especially our school.”

While she was thrilled when the Charlotte City Council passed the LGBT protections earlier this year, ensuring that all three of her children would be treated equally, she was shocked and disgusted after the North Carolina legislature passed HB2 in a special session in March.

“It makes North Carolina look like something we are not: close-minded, bigoted and backwards,” she said. “It is shameful what this bill does to the rights of the LGBTQ community. This bill is hurting my city…it is hurting our businesses, our tourism revenue, our economy. It is hurting people that have hurt enough already. And it hurts MY family.”

Also speaking was Elder Mykal Shannon, a transgender man and member of Rebirth Cathedral of Praise church in Charlotte.

“Hate Bill 2 is telling me that I don’t matter, my progress to live my life authentically is devalued and not only that…what personal progress I have made to live my life in the pursuit of happiness is now, null and void,” he said. “HB2 says we must go backwards and for an already marginalized community, this message is one we cannot afford to hear.”

Later that day, the Charlotte City Council stood strong as Republican lawmakers in Raleigh continue to redirect blame for their disastrous HB2 mess.

These stories, plus those from other speakers, including Andraya Williams, Rev. Dawn Flynn with, New Life Metropolitan Community Church and Erica Lachowitz, were a strong chorus for repeal of HB2 coming from Charlotteans.

This is why TurnOUT! NC, which is a coalition of HRC, Equality North Carolina, the ACLU and the Campaign for Southern Equality, is working to mobilize the voices of transgender North Carolinians, their family and friends, to speak out for the full repeal of HB2. TurnOUT! NC has field organizers based in Asheville, Charlotte and the Triangle area. Additionally, HRC staff is on the ground working with coalition partners across the Tar Heel State. There are daily opportunities to volunteer with weekly phone banks and weekend canvassing opportunities.

If you live in North Carolina and want to join the efforts to repeal HB2, RSVP for upcoming phonebanks and volunteer opportunities. For more information about our work in North Carolina, contact HRC Associate Regional Field Director Ryan Rowe at Ryan.rowe@hrc.org.

**Letter writer: HB2 affects employee rights and more**

Mountain Xpress

<https://mountainx.com/opinion/letter-writer-hb2-affects-employee-rights-and-more/>

The focus on discrimination against LGB and, notably, trans persons in the wake of the passage of North Carolina HB2 (the Public Facilities Privacy and Security Act) may be to miss the portions of the bill that affect a greater segment of the people of North Carolina. People who support HB2 solely on the basis of their belief that LGBT people should have no equal protection under the law might want to take a look at HB2 again (or for the first time, as many are informed of legislation solely by the media and hearsay).

HB2 restricts local governments from initiating their own living-wage ordinances except as applies to city or county employees. So if the city of Asheville or Buncombe County wants to ensure for the well-being of the greater working force (grocery clerks, construction flag persons, delivery drivers, janitors, etc.) by raising the minimum wage to $15 per hour, they are now prohibited from doing so by this legislation. Also, the city or county may not refuse to contract with a company that discriminates against or underpays its own employees.

Do you want your local government to enact or maintain ordinances that establish family-leave policies, protections for children, standards for health insurance, or policies that place limits on how long an employer can make you work without a break? Well, HB2 robs your local representatives of the option to create such protections.

Now get this: If your employer fires you because of your race, religion, national origin or sex, under this legislation, you no longer have any remedy to sue an employer through appealing to North Carolina state courts. You must now sue your employer in federal court, and you have much less time to file a complaint (180 days) than you used to have when suing an employer in a state court.

Less time to sue, more costs for filing lawsuits and a much lower cap on damages. Read this, Christian people, this includes you! If an owner of a downtown Asheville clothing shop hires you, but then finds out you are a fundamentalist Christian, while the owner is a pagan (or atheist, Muslim, Buddhist, humanist, liberal Christian, etc.) who takes umbrage with your views, they can fire you, and your only recourse will be to take out a federal lawsuit and pray. This legislation negatively impacts the well-being of all North Carolinians.

I encourage everyone to read the actual legislation, expand the debate, and if you are against this legislation or just want to become more informed, then access portals such as the North Carolina Justice Center website ([www.ncjustice.org](http://www.ncjustice.org)) and NC Policy Watch ([www.ncpolicywatch.com](http://www.ncpolicywatch.com)).

— Dan Waterman

Asheville

**Mayor Roberts should be commended**

Charlotte Observer

<http://www.charlotteobserver.com/opinion/letters-to-the-editor/article79881817.html>

I admire that mayor hasn’t backed down

In response to “Time for mayor to back down on HB2” (May 25 Forum):

Forum writer James Todd has it all wrong in criticizing Mayor Jennifer Roberts.

What she is actually doing is showing her resolve in the quest to make Charlotte a world-class city.

She is smart, brave, and should be commended. She is also following federal anti-discrimination laws.

These are the same laws Gov. Pat McCrory and his cronies are breaking. That’s why the DOJ is on North Carolina’s back.

It’s the Republicans in Raleigh who are costing the taxpayers and businesses money with their witch-hunt HB2.

BOB RAHILLY, CONCORD

Referendum on HB2 might surprise media

I was taken aback when the Observer’s editorial page content made national news.

Hard to believe that supposedly well-educated people would publish such a ridiculous editorial regarding HB2.

This will continue to surface for a long time, and it appears the media disregard public opinion.

I would like to see a referendum take place. It would probably surprise many in the media.

ROLAND THOMAS, PINEVILLE

I want my rights protected also

It seems the only people who have rights being violated are those in the LGBT community.

The news reports on the economic hurt this issue has caused, but gives little to no attention to the distress caused to families who don’t feel comfortable with the direction this policy is going.

The married – male and female – family has just as much right to protect its privacy and safety.

I am getting very sick and tired of all this reverse discrimination erupting in our nation.

DON WHICHARD, CHARLOTTE

Gergen issued a needed wake-up call

In response to “How to get North Carolina back on track” (May 25 Editorial):

David Gergen’s call for political and social moderation amidst the wave of calls to militancy and extremism is much needed.

I’m a transplanted Californian who was enthusiastic 20 years ago about the prospect of life in the “New South.”

North Carolina has such an admirable legacy of progressive thinking and leadership – Terry Sanford, Erskine Bowles, Hugh McColl, etc.

We need to be reminded occasionally about the leaders and their policies that have created so much of the shared prosperity and pride in our state.

Thanks to the Observer and Mr. Gergen for this wake-up call.

ROGER COATES, CHARLOTTE

Obama erred in lifting arms embargo

In response to “Obama banishing Vietnam War vestige by lifting arms embargo” (May 23):

Our president visits Hanoi and agrees to let Vietnam buy weapons if its leaders will be nicer to its citizens!

Hanoi is the location of the Hanoi Hilton, where our prisoners were held for years, tortured and beaten on a regular basis.

Mr. President, communist dictators do not treat protesters well or anyone who disagrees with the way they run their government.

Can’t you find a better way to be presidential?

RICHARD LYNCH, CHARLOTTE

Turned off by GOP; it’ll impact my vote

The Republican Party, its candidates and elected officials continue to provide embarrassing headlines read around the world.

As a registered independent, I have never voted a straight-party ticket. That will probably change in November.

BILL HALL, RUTHERFORDTON

Don’t throw rocks, cast ballots instead

In response to “Anti-Trump protests turn violent outside New Mexico rally” (May 25):

I wonder how many votes go to Donald Trump for each rock thrown in Albuquerque?

How about using those hands in the voting booth in November instead.

PAUL SALATA, CHARLOTTE

Patients, not doctors, to blame on opioids

In response to “Drug database can save lives in 60 seconds. Why don’t more doctors use it?” (May 21):

Ever since the ’60s, liberals have been out to destroy all moral authority figures, with doctors being their latest target.

The slant of your opioid addiction story is just another example of how the so-called “patient rights” movement is in reality an all-out assault on physicians in which they are always wrong and the patient is always right, no matter if the patient is a drug addict.

Forget personal accountability. The doctor is to blame.

NAN BAUROTH, CHARLOTTE

**The message HB2 sends to our kids**

BY SABINE SCHOENBACH

N&O

<http://www.newsobserver.com/opinion/op-ed/article79877072.html>

When I told my 11-year old daughter about House Bill 2, she said, “That doesn’t make any sense.” She was thinking about people in her life – friends of hers and friends of ours who are transgender or have gender expressions that don’t fit neatly into a box – who are being told by North Carolina legislators that either they don’t exist or they are not worth protecting.

A lot has been written about HB2. I am grateful for all of the outrage and that my children hear the chorus of those calling for equality.

But I’ve also been listening to children’s reactions to the bill. And some of these are breaking my heart. A child recently asked my friend, her mom: “If those lawmakers had a child who turned out to be transgender, would they love that child less?”

Kids in this state are hearing lawmakers digging in, fighting passionately to “protect our children” (great!) – from an imaginary danger (what?!). I’m not the first to point out that there have been zero cases of “sexual predators” as a result of the ordinances passed in 18 states and over 200 cities – similar to the one Charlotte passed – allowing individuals to choose the bathroom corresponding to their gender identity.

Instead of using their platforms and power to address the very real dangers of underfunded public schools, gun violence, environmental hazards, job losses, income inequality and lack of access to health care, our lawmakers are showing our kids that they are willing to fight for discrimination, even if it doesn’t make any sense.

This isn’t the first time a Southern state has justified blatant discrimination by invoking the protection of women and children. And once again, it’s clear that in the eyes of lawmakers, only some women and children are worthy of protection. I worry our children are hearing loud and clear the message that the privacy and safety of LGBTQ North Carolinians, including children, are not worth protecting.

If we are actually going to talk about danger in bathrooms, we should address the fact that bathrooms often are dangerous places for transgender and gender nonconforming people. So far, bathroom police are only Facebook memes, but bullies will use this policy to justify their bad behavior to adults – and to children – who don’t fit neatly into gender norms. Even worse, these bullies may get so riled up by having the law on their side that they hurt someone. Nationwide, 1 in 4 trans people reports having been physically assaulted at least once because of anti-trans bias. And the risk is even greater for transgender individuals of color.

INSTEAD OF USING THEIR PLATFORMS AND POWER TO ADDRESS THE VERY REAL DANGERS OF UNDERFUNDED PUBLIC SCHOOLS, GUN VIOLENCE, ENVIRONMENTAL HAZARDS, JOB LOSSES, INCOME INEQUALITY AND LACK OF ACCESS TO HEALTH CARE, OUR LAWMAKERS ARE SHOWING OUR KIDS THAT THEY ARE WILLING TO FIGHT FOR DISCRIMINATION, EVEN IF IT DOESN’T MAKE ANY SENSE

The children who really need more protection are LGBTQ children. The reports on bullying and harassment of LGBTQ kids (or those who are perceived to be) are already overwhelming. These children – our state’s children – are four times more likely to attempt suicide. Trans youth, in particular, report even higher rates of suicidal thoughts – between 38 and 65 percent have thought about suicide. Policies like HB2 clearly exacerbate this crisis. A national suicide hotline dedicated to the well-being of transgender people reported that crisis calls have doubled since the passage of the bill.

Our children are watching. They will learn, if they haven’t already, that it’s dangerous to be nonconforming. Maybe that it is dangerous to be yourself.

Pro-HB2 parents say they want to protect their children. I get it. I want to protect my children, too. But not from imaginary dangers. That’s not “common sense.” Let’s protect all of our children from the actual dangers that public policies can address. Let’s protect our children from environmental hazards, gun violence and underfunded schools. Let’s make sure all parents can afford to put food on the table when they work full-time, can rely on a safety net when they get laid off and can access health care when they get sick. And let’s protect our state’s children from the very real dangers of discrimination and the hateful, limiting messages about who they can be and who they can love in order to be accepted and honored and safe.

Our children need brave role models who live honestly and wholeheartedly, not more adults acting like bullies out of fear.

Sabine Schoenbach of Durham is a mother of two and a North Carolina MomsRising steering team member.

Read more here: <http://www.newsobserver.com/opinion/op-ed/article79877072.html#storylink=cpy>

**At Lobby Day in Raleigh, Transgender North Carolinians Share Their Stories**

by Ryan Wilson

HRC

<http://www.hrc.org/blog/transgender-north-carolinians-family-and-friends-gather-for-day-of-advocacy>

Close to 40 North Carolina residents came together in Raleigh today for a special Day of Advocacy hosted by TurnOUT! North Carolina (NC), PFLAG and the National Center for Transgender Equality (NCTE).  The lobby day was specifically focused on Transgender North Carolinians, their family and friends telling the stories to members of the North Carolina General Assembly.  With a special focus on how the discriminatory House Bill 2 has negatively impacted transgender adults and students, and those that support them, today’s lobby day and press conference had one simple demand for legislators, Repeal HB2.

The day began with a welcome from Equality NC’s Executive Director and North Carolina Representative Chris Sgro and a brief training from Asa King, Southern Regional Staff Attorney for the Transgender Law Center on how to effectively tell personal stories about how HB2 is impacting transgender North Carolinians from across the state. Equality NC’s Director of Advocacy Crystal Richardson, facilitated a Q&A discussion with Rep. Duane Hall who shared thoughts on an effective lobby visit.

Some of the attendees gathered briefly for a press conference before heading out for their lobby visits. Jeanne Duwve talked about the challenges and joys as a mother of a transgender child, followed by her son Luke Duwve speaking about his experience as a transgender high school student in NC schools. Transgender advocate Candis Cox, and Tavi Hancock, co-founder of QORDS, shared their perspective about the pain and challenges that HB2 is causing,

Attendees then broke into small groups and made visits to the offices of key legislators -- some of whom voted for HB2 and who need to realize the impact of their vote. Other groups stopped by offices of legislators who voted against HB2 to thank them for standing-up for fairness and equality for all North Carolinians.

When the North Carolina legislature hastily passed HB2 during a one-day special session, many legislators did not take the opportunity to hear from their constituents. Particularly absent was the opportunity for legislators to meet with and hear from transgender North Carolinians, their family and friends, so today TurnOUT! NC made sure that members of the North Carolina General Assembly heard those transgender voices loud and clear, urging a full repeal of HB2.

TurnOUT! NC is the joint project of the Human Rights Campaign, Equality NC, Campaign for Southern Equality and the ACLU of North Carolina, with a goal of mobilizing thousands of North Carolinians to speak out for the full repeal of HB2. TurnOUT! NC has field organizers based in Asheville, Charlotte and the Triangle area. Additionally, HRC staff is on the ground working with coalition partners across the Tar Heel State. There are daily opportunities to volunteer with weekly phonebanks and weekend canvassing opportunities.

If you live in North Carolina and want to join the efforts to repeal HB2, RSVP for upcoming phonebanks and volunteer opportunities. For more information about our work in North Carolina, contact HRC Associate Regional Field Director Ryan Rowe at Ryan.rowe@hrc.org.

**Promising signs on teacher pay at legislature**

BY ALAN E. GANT JR.

Charlotte Observer

<http://www.charlotteobserver.com/opinion/op-ed/article79877712.html>

Education transformation in North Carolina depends on our ability to attract and retain the best and brightest teachers and school leaders. That’s why we commend our elected leadership for their bold commitments to raise teacher pay.

The National Education Association reports that North Carolina has raised teacher salaries faster than any other state over the last two years. More importantly, legislative leadership has made it a top priority to significantly boost not just starting pay, but pay for all early career teachers.

Business leaders know that talent is the key to the success of any organization. That’s why we must continue investing in a teacher pay plan that enables every teacher to earn more earlier in their career and compensates experienced teachers who expand their career into classroom leadership and/or hard-to-staff schools and subjects.

BEST NC members believe North Carolina can have the best education system in the nation. We start by looking at the reality of today’s teaching profession.

The truth is that schools are competing with other professions to retain new, talented teachers. Even though starting teacher pay was raised significantly over the past two years, teachers quickly fall behind their college graduate peers with the slow progression of our pay schedule. That is one big reason turnover is so high among younger teachers in North Carolina.

The other hard reality is that we don’t compensate teachers as we do other highly skilled professions. In most other professions, earnings potential keeps up with early career growth and includes additional opportunities for specialized skills or achievement. Currently, North Carolina teachers can’t reach top earnings until they are nearly 50 years old. No other high-skilled profession follows such a slow curve.

To be clear – teaching is a highly skilled profession, requiring teachers to make complex, real-time decisions to ensure students are engaged and learning. Plus, the demands of the economy require teachers to meet higher expectations and provide personalized learning for all students. We must ensure that our classroom teachers have the respect and compensation commensurate with this demanding job.

Giving higher raises to early-career teachers will help recruit top talent to the profession, reduce turnover, and enable them to earn more, faster. We can continue building on these gains by compensating experienced teachers for taking on leadership roles, teaching in hard-to-fill subject areas or taking positions in hard-to-staff schools.

We commend both the governor and House leadership for prioritizing pay increases for teachers and principals in their budget proposals. The Senate pay plan that was previewed Wednesday appears to build on those proposals, offering a multi-year commitment to a visionary plan for paying teachers commensurate with the importance and skill of their profession.

Read more here: http://www.charlotteobserver.com/opinion/op-ed/article79877712.html#storylink=cpy

**Saunders: Who gets to decide what’s a civil rights issue and what isn’t?**

BY BARRY SAUNDERS

N&O

<http://www.newsobserver.com/news/local/news-columns-blogs/barry-saunders/article79914732.html#storylink=cpy>

Really, reverends, this is the hill on which y’all want to plant your flag, the one that makes you descend your pulpits?

Tell the truth: When you saw that a large group of pastors, mainly African-American pastors, was gathering at the State Capitol on Tuesday and HB2 was the topic, didn’t you think they were gathering to express solidarity with their transgendered brethren and sisteren, members of the beleaguered minority who just want to stand, sit or primp in the bathroom of their choice?

Having themselves been members of a once-despised minority whose bathroom privileges were severely circumscribed, if not denied, by law because of their race, you had to figure these black pastors would thunder righteously against the same thing being done to another group.

You’d figure wrong. On many of the issues facing the black community, sad to say, the church has been darned near mute. On an issue such as this, though, one that will minimally – if at all – disrupt anyone’s life, they come out in full-throated opposition.

Halleluyer?

As a child in the South, I knew the humiliation that comes from being denied access to a restroom – any restroom – while you’re out shopping with your mother or at the movies, the agony of trying to divert your mind until you get home, regardless of how far from home you might be.

It didn’t always work, and at times I still seethe. Some of those preening pastors, with their pocket squares perfectly placed in luxurious suit coats, looked as old as I, so they are acquainted with those indignities, too.

Clarence Henderson, who was among the college students at N.C. A&T State University in Greensboro who were jeered and sneered at and abused in 1960 when they sought to desegregate a Woolworth’s lunch counter – to, in other words, enjoy the civil right to eat wherever they wanted to – wrote last week objecting to the transgender fight for potty parity being called a civil rights issue.

CLARENCE HENDERSON HAS UNDERGONE A TRANSFORMATION SINCE HE WAS ON THE FRONT LINES OF THE CIVIL RIGHTS MOVEMENT. THAT’S NOT UNUSUAL, SINCE MOST OF US BECOME MORE CONSERVATIVE IN THOUGHT THE OLDER WE GET.

Henderson, who wasn’t one of the original Greensboro Four but who still gets mad props for participating in the sit-in on the second day, wrote in an opinion piece in The Charlotte Observer that he is aghast that “civil rights” is being co-opted to describe the effort to allow transgenders to use the bathroom they want to use. Also in the piece, Henderson accused Attorney General Loretta Lynch and the Obama Administration of trying to “pimp civil rights” to help Hillary Clinton.

Say what?

Henderson has undergone a transformation since he was on the front lines of the Civil Rights Movement. That’s not unusual, since most of us become more conservative in thought the older we get. I knew I was slipping into darkness the first time I thought, while watching “Soul Train,” “How did her mama let her out of the house wearing that dress?”

That’s why young people who claim to be conservatives scare the heck out of me. What do they transform into if, as knee babies, they are already to the right of Rick Santorum?

Henderson, of High Point, makes speeches across the nation. He is beloved by the Tea Party for what he calls his embrace of smaller government and his disdain for President Obama. Dude does realize, doesn’t he, that he’s aligning himself with the spiritual descendants of the people who punched, shoved, spat upon and poured bowls-ful of sugar onto the students who were demanding their rights, right?

Some of my best blacks are Republicans, and we need a presence in both major parties – but only if both parties want us. What the heck is up with these blacks who participated in iconic struggles by fiercely fighting the status quo becoming, in their dotage or sooner, reactionary Republicans?

▪ James Meredith, whose effort to enroll in the University of Mississippi in 1963 sparked riots by people who didn’t want him there and whose efforts to register blacks to vote got him shot down like a rabid dog, ran for office as a Republican and joined the staff of noted civil rights warrior Jesse Helms as a domestic adviser.

▪ Eldridge Cleaver, the late minister of information for the Black Panthers, became a supporter of Ronald Reagan – yes, the same Ronald Reagan who as governor warned in 1968, after Cleaver got a job teaching at UC-Berkeley, “If Eldridge Cleaver is allowed to teach our children, they may come home one night and slit our throats.”

And now Henderson.

When I spoke with him Wednesday, he said there was no one incident that turned him into a Republican. “When I started to read American history, did a comparative analysis, I saw in times past what the Republican Party had done in reference to black people as a race. I began to understand they had done a lot of things that were good for us as a race to be processed into the American system. I saw the Democratic Party as more of an enabler as far as entitlements were concerned. That handicaps people. I certainly am” in favor of smaller government.

When I asked where would the Tea Party come down in relation to a group of black college students protesting in front of a diner trying to get a hamburger, he said, “I don’t know. That’s a hypothetical. I can tell you this. The Tea Party has done a lot of things to call attention to where America is versus where it was in times past.”

I CAN TELL YOU THIS. THE TEA PARTY HAS DONE A LOT OF THINGS TO CALL ATTENTION TO WHERE AMERICA IS VERSUS WHERE IT WAS IN TIMES PAST.

Clarence Henderson, who participated in 1960 efforts to desegregate a Woolworth’s lunch counter in Greensboro

And that’s good?

“Yes, it is,” he said with no hesitation. Henderson confirmed that he gets a lot of strange looks when people familiar with his past learn that he’s now a conservative Republican. “But I got a lot of strange looks when I was sitting at that lunch counter also.”

He added, “I don’t think Obama has done a good job, because he had a lot of opportunities to unify the races and I haven’t seen him do anything in regards to that. As far as the economy, the government has gotten bigger.”

As far as what many consider Obama’s biggest accomplishment – the Affordable Care Act – Henderson said, “Nowhere in the Constitution is health care listed as a right. It’s a service, not a right.”

Oy.

In the often-hilarious movie “I’m Gonna Git You, Sucka,” the hero asks Kalinga, former leader of a 1960s militant group called “Brothers United Against the Man,” what happened to his revolutionary army.

“They got government jobs,” he lamented. “You know that government office building on 21st street? We went down to take it over, but they were hiring that day. The brothers walked in with guns, and came out with jobs.”

I’m guessing that’s what happened to some of these former world-changers – they went to raise hell but stayed to do well. The modern day version of that is – to paraphrase H.L. Mencken – nobody ever went broke criticizing President Obama.

Whether one sees the trans community’s struggle as a civil rights issue or not, the real question is how does it harm or detract from what we went through to have it classified as such? Is there a “civil rights” stipend we’re supposed to be receiving and that we’d have to share with another group if transgendered people are classified as one?

If so, somebody’s been cashing my check.

Barry Saunders: 919-836-2811, bsaunders@newsobserver.com, @BarrySaunders9

**N.C. leaders acting like outsiders they are**

News & Record

<http://www.greensboro.com/opinion/letters_to_editor/n-c-leaders-acting-like-outsiders-they-are/article_5033afec-6149-503b-a1f7-de65e5ca2e5e.html>

Listening to our state’s leaders comment on the HB 2 controversy made me question their love for North Carolina.

Then I discovered that Gov. McCrory was born in Ohio and N.C. Senate leader Phil Berger is from New Rochelle, N.Y. Bob Rucho, the N.C. Senate redistricting committee chairman, is from Worcester, Mass., and U.S. Sen. Thom Tillis was born in Jacksonville, Fla., and moved more than 20 times before settling in our state. These so-called leaders were not cut from the same cloth as William Aycock or former Gov. Terry Sanford.

These two had love for all of our state. Our present leaders have only represented select causes. Tillis once said restaurants shouldn’t be required to make restaurant workers wash their hands after using the restroom. Rucho says Justice Roberts and President Obama have done more damage to our country than the Nazis, Soviets and terrorists combined. We deserve something more. Our latest controversy has cast our state in a very negative light.

We must attract employers, not scare them away.

Gregory R. Tatum

Gibsonville

**Chris Heavener and Sam Ratto: Small businesses hurt by HB2**

N&O

<http://www.newsobserver.com/opinion/letters-to-the-editor/article79868877.html>

The May 18 Focus article “How much has HB2 cost North Carolina?” highlighted the state Commerce Department’s discussions about the business impact of House Bill 2, the state’s new anti-LGBT law.

As small-business owners, we can confirm these concerns were spot on. The law is already having a negative effect on our state’s economy, and we’re worried about how it will affect small businesses.

For small businesses, profit is a primary concern, and we can’t turn a profit without loyal customers and talented employees. Unfortunately, HB2 is threatening to drive away consumers and workers from our state.

For instance, PayPal canceled an expansion in North Carolina that would have created 400 jobs in response to the law; similarly, major entertainers like Bruce Springsteen have canceled events here.

Small-business owners understand these consequences. Small Business Majority’s polling found 67 percent of North Carolina entrepreneurs believe there should be a state law prohibiting employment discrimination against gay and transgender people.

HB2 is hurting our entrepreneurs, and it’s important for us to let lawmakers know how we feel.

CHRIS HEAVENER AND SAM RATTO

OWNERS, VIDERI CHOCOLATE FACTORY

RALEIGH

Read more here: http://www.newsobserver.com/opinion/letters-to-the-editor/article79868877.html#storylink=cpy

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