

Panthers GM Dan Morgan seeks to 'challenge the roster' with draft class

THE VOICE OF THE BLACK COMMUNITY SINCE 1906

The Charlotte Post

WEEK OF APRIL 30, 2026

VOLUME 52 NUMBER 32

WWW.THECHARLOTTEPOST.COM

\$1.50



ADOBE STOCK

Pro-democracy groups plan to appeal a federal judge's ruling that allows North Carolina to restrict same-day voter registration through Senate Bill 747, which became law in 2023 when Republican lawmakers voted to override then-Gov. Roy Cooper's veto.

Plaintiffs appeal to overturn NC's voter suppression law

SB 747, OK'd by federal court, restricts some ballots of same-day registrations

Herbert L. White
herb.l.white@thecharlottepost.com

Three voting rights organizations plan to appeal a federal court decision upholding restrictions to same-day registration in North Carolina.

Plaintiffs Democracy North Carolina, North Carolina Black Alliance, and the League of Women Voters of North Carolina announced they will appeal the March affirmation of Senate Bill 747, which they contend suppresses younger voters by placing undue burdens on them and risks disqualifying their ballots based on administrative processes outside their control.

U.S. District Court Judge Thomas Schroeder found the law constitutional, stating SB 747 does not violate the First,

14th or 26th amendments to the federal constitution and that any burden on voters is minimal.

The plaintiffs counter that Schroeder didn't apply proper legal analysis to consider hurdles college-age students and first-time voters face, including limited student voter ID availability and reductions of early voting sites on college campuses.

"This ruling is a blow to North Carolina voters and a step backward for our democracy," Jennifer Rubin, president of the League of Women Voters of North Carolina said in March. "By upholding these restrictive changes to same day registration, this

decision will disenfranchise countless eligible voters through a flawed, discriminatory process."

SB 747, which became law in 2023 when the General Assembly's Republican supermajority overrode then-Gov. Roy Cooper's veto, requires county boards of election to verify voters' identification through a driver's license or Social Security number within two business days of registration. If the application meets qualification standards, the board mails a registration card to verify the address.

If the card is returned as undeliverable, a second will be mailed. If the confirmation is again returned – regardless of reason – the registration and ballot will be

Please see **VOTER** | 2A



Rubin



Majeed



Cunningham

2nd ousted lawmaker switches affiliation

Nasif Majeed joins Carla Cunningham as unaffiliated state reps

Herbert L. White
herb.l.white@thecharlottepost.com

State Rep. Nasif Majeed is the second lame duck Charlotte lawmaker to change party affiliation.

Majeed, who represents House District 99, today announced that he is now independent, a month after losing his re-election bid to Valeria Levy in the Democratic primary. Carla Cunningham, who lost her House seat to the Rev. Rodney Sadler in a primary election, last week moved to independent status.

"After deep reflection and conversations with constituents across District 99, I have made the decision to disaffiliate from the Democratic Party and serve as an Independent," Majeed said in a statement. "This decision is rooted in my responsibility to represent people – not party agendas – and to remain grounded in integrity, fairness, and truth."

Majeed, a four-term incumbent, lost to Levy with 27% of votes cast compared to her 67.5%. He and Cunningham drew the ire of Democratic activists and Gov. Josh Stein for their shared history of siding with Republican lawmakers on veto overrides where Democrats had a one-vote margin of breaking a GOP supermajority.

"During their years in public office Representatives Majeed and Cunningham have voted on bills according to their values and I expect they will continue to do so,"

Please see **MAJEED** | 2A

NC A&T audit reveals misuse of student aid

By Herbert L. White
herb.l.white@thecharlottepost.com

Criminal referrals have been issued after audits found improper use of student financial aid at North Carolina A&T State University.

School officials contacted the Office of the State Auditor after discovering irregularities in how \$5 million was directed to students without evidence of merit or need for financial assistance.

The agency confirmed the findings and alerted to the State Bureau of Investigation and outlines recommendations to improve how aid is approved.

"Through our investigations, we at the State Auditor's Office seek to hold individuals accountable for misguided actions," State Auditor Dave Boliek said in a statement. "What's been uncovered at NC A&T represents gross misconduct. Given the findings of our investigation, we've made a criminal referral to the State Bureau of Investigation, and I have fully informed and updated the Guilford County District Attorney."

A&T auditors initially discovered the misuse of aid, and the OSA launched a review that found improper payouts through student fees charged for services such as dining, housing, and parking.

"N.C. A&T identified this problem through our own internal audit process, and I personally contacted State Auditor Boliek because full transparency demands nothing less," Chancellor James Martin II said. "I am grateful to Auditor Boliek and his team for the

Please see **A&T** | 2A



Boliek



Martin



ADOBE STOCK

Contract workers at Charlotte Douglas International Airport reported in a survey published April 24 they face chronic understaffing, high turnover and few job benefits.

Charlotte Douglas airport workers report low pay and staff shortages

By Herbert L. White
herb.l.white@thecharlottepost.com

Contract workers at Charlotte's airport face adversity that has the potential to jeopardize passengers, according to a report.

A survey conducted by Service Employees International Union of subcontractors at Charlotte Douglas International Airport deal with chronic understaffing, high turnover rates and unsafe equipment – long-

standing complaints among workers. The report, released on April 24, is based on responses of cabin cleaners and wheelchair assistance workers at American Airlines contractors ABM and Prospect Airport Services.

"We are understaffed because the pay is so low," said Charles McDowell-Medina, a wheelchair attendant who services American Airlines passengers. "Management asks us to

Please see **AIRPORT** | 2A

Report: Wells Fargo denied mortgages based on race

By Greg Childress
NC NEWSLINE

Mortgage lending patterns by banking giant Wells Fargo show "significant racial disparities" in Charlotte and across North Carolina, according to a new study by a national financial watchdog.

Americans for Financial Reform Education Fund released a report Wednesday showing that Wells Fargo denied Black, Latino and Asian mortgage applicants about twice as frequently as white applicants.

"It does raise significant questions about Wells Fargo's interest and willingness to serve the entirety of the community in North Carolina," Patrick Woodall, managing director of the nonprofit, non-partisan advocacy organization, told NC Newsline.

Between 2020 and 2024, the San Francisco-based bank, which has a regional hub in Charlotte with 27,000 employees, rejected 22.5% of Black applicants, 25.6% of Latino applicants and 20.3% of Asian ap-

Please see **REPORT** | 2A

STAY IN TOUCH

Snapchat: thecharpost
X: @thecharpost
Facebook: The Charlotte Post
Instagram: @thecharlottepost



#PaperThursday

INSIDE
Sports 5A
Life 1B
A&E 5B
Classified 4B

Digital edition:
www.thecharlottepostnewspaper.com

To subscribe: (704) 376-0496 or online
http://tcpc.com/Subscribe



Voter rights advocates appeal SB 747 ruling

Continued from page 1A

disqualified without notice or appeal. Plaintiffs contend the law will remove ballots cast via same-day registration, increase the likelihood of disqualification due to late mail delivery. As a result, SB 747 creates obstacles for young and older voters along with people of color and low-income voters who are more likely to depend on the U.S. Postal Service.

"This decades-long battle over college students' voting power is far from over," said Marcus Bass, executive director for the North Carolina



This decades-long battle over college students' voting power is far from over. [The] ruling deepens our resolve to ensure that the fundamental right to vote is not dissolved through legislative or judicial partisanship.



North Carolina Black Alliance executive director **MARCUS BASS**

Black Alliance. "[The] ruling deepens our resolve to ensure that the fundamental right to vote is not dissolved through legislative or judicial partisanship. The judge's decision to side with the hyper-partisan legislature was expected, which means we must work earlier and harder to ensure that no one is denied the right to vote because of a technicality in varying mail procedures on college campuses that may prevent a student from verifying their residence."



Bass

The law was among a series of Republican-sponsored legislation to limit or suppress voting among groups that tend to vote for Democrats. The plaintiffs insist that removing restrictions like SB 747, voter ID requirements and early voting site limits allows more people to cast ballots.

"This decision will have devastating consequences for our electoral system for decades to come," said Adrienne Spoto, counsel for voting rights at Southern Coalition for Social Justice, which represents the plaintiffs. "When young voters casting their first ballots see them rejected for technical snafus, it creates lasting barriers to participation and jeopardizes their lifelong civic engagement."

Report: Racial disparities exist in Wells Fargo mortgage approvals

Continued from page 1A

licants in North Carolina, compared with 10.3% of white applicants, according to the report.

The report calls on Wells Fargo to improve its performance in meeting mortgage needs in North Carolina, and to increase its outreach to Black, Latino and Asian applicants and communities. It also called on regulatory agencies to investigate Wells Fargo to ensure compliance with fair lending laws and asked local governments to revisit business relationships between their communities and the bank.

NC Newslines' calls and email to Wells Fargo were not returned.

Woodall said racial disparities in the bank's lending pattern persisted even when controlling for income.

"It is highly suggestive to me that their businesses really focus on upper-income white borrowers and neighborhoods," Woodall said "This can happen in a number of ways, but it's suggestive of greater outreach and greater effort in whiter parts of North Carolina."

Titled "Dreams Denied: Wells Fargo's Troubling Pattern of Racial Disparities in North Carolina," the report examined nearly 25,000 North Carolina mortgage applications and more than 16,000 mortgage loans at Wells Fargo between 2020 and 2024.

Here are more key takeaways from the study:

- Wells Fargo mortgage denial rates for Black and Latino applicants increased between 2020 and 2024. Wells Fargo's denial rates rose about a fifth for Black and Latino applicants over that period, rising from 21.2% to 25.6% for Black applicants and from 25.0% to 29.8% for Latino applicants. Over the same period, denial rates for White applicants increased by only about a tenth.

- Wells Fargo underrepresents Black and Latino applicants and borrowers in Charlotte: Black adults make up 22.9% of the population of the metropolitan area of Charlotte — North Carolina's biggest city — but they composed less than one-tenth of Wells Fargo's applicants and loan originations in the area (8.2% and 7.1%, respectively). Latino adults make up 11.0% of the Charlotte population but represented only 7.4% of Wells Fargo's applicants and 6.6% of its loan originations.

- Wells Fargo underrepresents communities of color: Wells Fargo took fewer applications and made fewer loans in census tracts where people of color made

up a majority of the population. People of color comprise the majority of the population in 27.3% of North Carolina census tracts, but Wells Fargo took only 15.4% of its mortgage applications and made only 14.3% of its loans in these areas.

Erica Taylor, co-executive director of Americans for Financial Reform Education Fund, said in a statement that the bank's pattern of under-serving people and communities of color and its high rejection rates of Black and Latino mortgage applicants is "especially troubling" in the wake of the Trump administration's effort to roll back civil rights and fair lending enforcement.

"And the bank's record of racial disparities in its home purchase lending not only undermines people's ability to build wealth and invest in their families' futures, but it also perpetuates the yawning racial wealth gap that is an injustice for these families and for all of us," Taylor added.

In North Carolina, the nation's fourth-largest bank saw a 70% decline in applications for conventional home purchase mortgages and mortgage loan originations from 2020 to 2024, the report said. And while some of the decline is tied to rising interest rates during that period, the report contends "multiple regulatory and enforcement" actions against the bank over racial lending patterns also contributed to the decline.

Bloomberg, for example, reported in 2022 that Wells Fargo rejected more than half of Black homeowners who sought to refinance their mortgages in 2020 during a period of historically low interest rates. Also in 2022, the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau ordered the bank to pay more than \$2 billion in redress to consumers and a \$1.7 billion civil penalty for legal violations across several of its largest product lines. The bank's illegal conduct led to billions of dollars in financial harm to its customers and, for thousands of customers, the loss of their vehicles and homes.

Americans for Financial Reform Education Fund partnered with North Carolina United Power for Action/NC Industrial Areas Foundation, Organized Power in Numbers and UNITE HERE North Carolina to produce the report.

"Housing is not a privilege for some — it's a basic need. When race decides who gets access, it goes against our deepest moral beliefs," said Bishop Herbert Reynolds Davis, chairman of the Board of Directors of NC United Power for Action.

Majeed switches party affiliation

Continued from page 1A

House Democratic leader Robert Reives (D-Chatham) said in a statement. "I value their friendship and look forward to continuing to serve with them."

Majeed and Cunningham both will leave office in December when their terms end.

Majeed contends his decision on going independent was based on concerns about political intolerance that doesn't align with transparency. He

didn't call anyone by name but noted in his statement that campaign strategies and tactics observed in recent election cycles pushed him to change affiliation.

"Our community deserves leadership that is honest, accountable, and respectful of the democratic process," Majeed said. "I have witnessed and experienced actions within the political landscape that I believe could be perceived as misleading or inconsistent with the spirit of fair elections. I cannot, in good conscience, remain aligned where those concerns are not adequately

addressed."

While Majeed reveal which group of lawmakers he'll caucus with, he pledged to collaborate with colleagues regardless of affiliation to benefit his constituents.

"My focus remains unchanged — delivering results for working families, supporting economic opportunity, addressing public safety, and expanding access to affordable housing," he said. "As an Independent, I am free to evaluate each issue on its merits and advocate without constraint."



Reives

Airport workers report low pay, high turnover rates

Continued from page 1A

push two passengers at the same time just to keep up. "I do my best because I don't want people to get left behind and miss their flights, but that's not safe for us or the people we're helping. Passengers deserve better."

American Airlines didn't respond to The Post's request for a response to the survey.

The report found substandard wages, unsafe work conditions, and high turnover contract workers at Charlotte Douglas, the sixth-busiest airport in the world. Among the results:

- 53% have worked at the airport for less than a year
- 67% say they are pressured to work too quickly due to staffing gaps
- 71% of respondents report coming to work sick due to lack of paid time off
- 74% struggle to afford necessities
- 80% of cabin cleaners say there isn't enough staff to clean planes as trained
- 88% of wheelchair agents report faulty or unsafe equipment
- 19% sleep in temporary situations including cars or hotels

Cabin cleaners reported being rushed to service multiple planes in short periods of time, while wheelchair attendants describe unsafe practices like pushing multiple passengers at a time to keep up with demand.

"I can't afford to get an apartment right now, so I sometimes stay in hotels," said Dajhaun Perry, a cabin cleaner who services American Airlines planes. "That costs \$400 to \$500 a week. When I can't afford that, I have no choice but to sleep in my

car. I struggle to pay my phone bill, car note, and have to cut back on groceries sometimes."

The average wage of Charlotte Douglas' contract workers is \$14.71 an hour — far short of the \$24.19 needed to meet basic living expenses in Charlotte, according to Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

Contract workers handle essential airport functions like clean aircraft, help passengers with disabilities and children get to and off planes, handle baggage, and make safety checks. Labor advocates say low wages and poor working conditions lead to turnover that makes retention difficult and threatens airport operations.

Charlotte Douglas is a major economic engine, yet workers say American isn't providing benefits. The Dallas, Texas-based airline controls nearly 90% of all Charlotte air travel and reported \$54.2 billion in revenue in 2024.

Contract workers are lobbying city leaders to incorporate improved wages and benefits in negotiations with American on a lease extension at Charlotte Douglas, which expires on June 30. City Council members Dimple Ajmera and J.D. Mazuera Arias joined airport workers for the report's release.

"The time is now for the city to negotiate a lease that raises standards for workers, protects passengers, and keeps the airport's economic benefits in Charlotte," said Niecy Brown, district director of SEIU Workers United North Carolina. "We cannot let American Airlines continue to profit while workers and the community fall behind."

A&T audit reveals inappropriate awards of student financial aid

Continued from page 1A

thoroughness and professionalism of their review. Our students deserve to know that every dollar they pay is managed with integrity, and the corrective actions we have taken reflect that commitment. We welcomed the Office of the State Auditor's review, we support the referral to the Guilford County District Attorney's Office and State Bureau of Investigation, and we will continue to cooperate fully."

The investigation confirmed students received funds through connections to former university officials, with more than \$780,000 in Administrative Recovery Funds directed to students who were A&T employees, family members of university employees, or had personal or professional connections to the school. Twenty-four students who received more than \$238,000 combined were either university employees or family members of university employees. Among the examples cited:

- \$73,063 to the former executive director of the Real Estate Foundation's nephew received.
- \$23,052 to an A&T Center for Teaching Excellence External Advisory Board member's daughter.
- \$22,545 to the son of a former part-time English teacher.
- \$18,707 to the son of the former associate vice chancellor for campus enter-

prise.

- \$14,888 to the former assistant vice chancellor for business and finance's daughter.

There was also an instance where an unidentified former vice chancellor for business and finance directed a \$49,024 award to an out-of-state student through preferential treatment. The official also authorized \$36,654 and \$12,000 in tuition assistance for two friends of the same out-of-state student.

The State Auditor's probe also found a relationship between the unidentified former associate vice provost for enrollment management and former director of financial aid operations that resulted in the former vice provost's son to remain enrolled despite university policy that would have prohibited him from doing so. The student was found to have received a \$10,000 scholarship, which exceeded the \$2,000 allowed.

"I appreciate the work of State Auditor Boliek to complete a rigorous investigation, and I appreciate Chancellor Martin bringing forward the concerns originally," UNC System President Peter Hans said. "The chancellor and his team have been diligently working to correct issues and move forward with transparency and accountability. In this situation, the process worked to set things right again, and that's why we have layers of oversight in a public university."

Charlotte conference shows love and self-care for early childhood educators

By Herbert L. White

herb.l.white@thecharlottepost.com

Early childhood educators and the families they serve will find support and encouragement for well-being in Charlotte.

The Charlotte-based Family Child Care & Center Enrichment Foundation will host its annual conference April 30-May 2 at Embassy Suites by Hilton Charlotte, 4800 S Tryon St. The meeting centers on supporting early childhood educators mentally, physically and spiritually. Organizers expect childcare professionals from 10 states to attend the retreat-style gathering.

To register, go to fccef.org/conference/#register.

"We're based in Charlotte, and we wanted to recognize the providers and educators, early childhood educators here in Charlotte," said Vantionette Savage, FCEE's president. "The conference overall is about renewing your body, mind and soul, the relaxation to where you can step out of your zone and being with people that look like you and even do the work that you do, not always sitting around giving our energy just to the little ones."

"We're going to have folks who are going to provide different wellness practices," said Wanda Pendergrass FCEE's community outreach coordinator. "We'll have massage. We're going to have yoga instruction, line dance instruction, a myriad of different kinds of practices that we're presenting our teachers, so that it may be something that they'll tap into, that they'll want to adopt for themselves and continue to en-

gage in it throughout the year for their own wellness, because we know that mental health, mental wellness, is an issue in our society and in our world, and so we're trying to help establish a wellness pattern for the providers."

In addition to wellness gatherings, the conference includes Wave BootCamp, a forum to familiarize childcare entrepreneurs with the latest business practices and the National Parent Leadership Institute for parents of foundation-affiliated providers.

Part of the foundation's mission is to raise awareness of the value of early childhood educators. As business owners who often rely on government funds to hire and retain staff, state expenditures aren't keeping pace with the cost of sustainability.

In North Carolina, 59% of low-income families who qualify for NC Pre-K, the state-supported early education initiative, are enrolled, leaving thousands of children without its benefit when they enroll in kindergarten. Even when children qualify NC Pre-K, they aren't guaranteed a spot.

The forum's mission of centering physical, mental and spiritual renewal and reflection through interactive workshops for professionals in addition to empowering families to advocate for their children's academic and social well-being.

"We need to have somebody pour energy back into us, because we're burned out," Savage said. "It's all about giving back from the heart and soul to the providers that we most definitely [are] in need of, because right now, we're decreasing by the numbers, by the day. We're losing family childcare home providers. And what we're trying to do is give them a new avenue, or new want, of why they need to stay."



Savage



Pendergrass

What would you like the power to do?®

Get an assist with owning a home.



Bank of America is here to help you achieve your homeownership goals.

We're with you

Find resources, support and guidance whether you're a first-time homebuyer or a seasoned pro.

Homebuyer grants

Get up to \$17,500 when combining down payment and closing costs grants. (Restrictions apply.)

Learn more at BofA.com/HomeTeam



BANK OF AMERICA

PROUD TO SUPPORT



Down Payment program and America's Home Grant program: Qualified borrowers must meet eligibility requirements such as being owner-occupants and purchasing a home within a certain geographical area. Maximum income and loan amount limits apply. Minimum combined loan-to-value must be greater than or equal to 80%. Must be a first-time homebuyer (no homeownership in the past three years) for Down Payment Grant program. The home loan must fund with Bank of America. Bank of America may change or discontinue the Bank of America Down Payment Grant program or America's Home Grant program or any portion of either without notice. Not available with all loan products, restrictions apply, please ask for details. Bank of America, N.A., Member FDIC. Equal Housing Lender ©2026 Bank of America Corporation. NMLS ID 399802. Credit and collateral are subject to approval. Terms and conditions apply. This is not a commitment to lend. Programs, rates, terms and conditions are subject to change without notice.

The Charlotte Post

The Voice of the Black Community

Gerald O. Johnson | CEO/PUBLISHER

gerald.johnson@thecharlottepost.com

André P. Johnson | CHIEF OPERATING OFFICER

andre.johnson@thecharlottepost.com

Herbert L. White | EDITOR IN CHIEF

herb.white@thecharlottepost.com

Published weekly by The Charlotte Post Publishing Company Inc., 5118 Princess Street, Charlotte, NC 28269 (USPS #965500). Subscription is \$65 per year. Periodicals postage paid at Charlotte, NC. Postmaster: Send address changes to The Charlotte Post, PO Box 30144, Charlotte, NC 28230

Jesse Jackson was vilified — and ultimately redeemed

In 1984, the Rev. Jesse Jackson lost his campaign for the Democratic nomination for president, just as he did in 1988.

Big party politics has an inertia to it, and it favors the surer bet. Jackson—who died Tuesday, February 17, at the age of 84—was never that, even if his 1984 speech at the Democratic National Convention is the purest distillation of modern liberalism you will ever see.



BILLY BALL

Jackson may have been known as a national figure, but he was a preacher born in the "slums" of Greenville, S.C., and educated at North Carolina A&T State University in Greensboro, the same place that birthed the South's sit-ins.

In the years that followed his presidential campaigns, Jackson became a joke in white homes like mine, especially in his native South. This, even though he picked up 13 primaries and caucuses in the 1988 Democratic primary race — and came in a close second in North Carolina.

Jackson was ridiculed for his speaking style. He was divisive and scary, they said. He sounded too Black. He hated white people. He was a perennial loser. The right-wing pundit Rush Limbaugh joked that all police composite photos looked like Jackson.

The lies they told about Jackson persisted after he retired from electoral politics, even as he negotiated the release of hostages in places like Syria and Iraq.

In Jackson, many white Southerners made a villain out of a native son, but it's possible that the region never had a better champion on the big stage.

His message is one the South would do well to reconsider today.

In his marathon 1984 address at the Democratic National Convention, Jackson promised that "the linchpin of progressive politics in our nation will not come from the North," but from the South.

"President Reagan is depending on the conservative South to return him to office," Jackson told the DNC. "But the South ... is the poorest region in our nation and, therefore, [has] the least to conserve."

He was a presidential candidate who spoke passionately against the anti-poor policies of the conservative Republican Party, and the contented obeisance of moderate Democrats.

"Rising tides don't lift all boats, particularly those stuck at the bottom," he said. "For the boats stuck at the bottom, there's a misery index."

Jackson wasn't the joke his biggest critics made him out to be, though. He just told us the punch line. In 1984, he mocked the exchange of "flags and prayer cloths for food, and clothing, an education, health care, and housing," but in 2026, that swap is still happening.

In former President Ronald Reagan's time, Jackson called the white evangelical alliance a lie, and in our time, Trump — a preening, billionaire bully and convicted felon who lingered with sexual predators — proved it by winning their votes again.

He was a part of big party politics, but rarely seemed to take the easy path, advocating for LGBTQ people, Palestinians, the environment, and women leaders when such things weren't mainstream.

When young people today say they want a stronger liberal party, Jackson was passionately speaking for it before they were born.

If Jackson was "divisive," it was because the truth can divide. If he "obsessed" with race, it was because he lived in a time and a place that told him he could not be a Black civil rights advocate and a major party candidate at the same time.

Someday, Southern white homes, like the one I grew up in, must hear the wisdom in many of the things Jackson said. The system isn't strictly anti-Black or anti-brown. It is anti-working class, anti-poor. And no one group will make it better without the others, without the "patchwork quilt" Jackson spoke of.

In his 1984 speech at the DNC, Jackson, a man well acquainted with tragedy, often cut the bitterness with the sweet.

"If in my high moments, I have done some good," he said, "offered some service, shed some light, healed some wounds, rekindled some hope ... then this campaign has not been in vain."

Look at his eyes in coverage from 2008 as he watched Barack Obama become the first Black president in American history — nearly 25 years after Jackson made people, against all inertia, talk about such a thing.

It was not in vain.

This column is adapted from the original from *The Living South*. Billy Ball is also senior editor at *Cardinal & Pine*, an online news site that covers North Carolina politics.

NC Democrats flip Leandro script

By Kate Denning

CAROLINA PUBLIC PRESS

As the legislative short session kicked off last week, House Democrats wasted no time acting on the North Carolina Supreme Court's reversal of a key decision on the Hoke County Board of Education v. State of North Carolina lawsuit, known by most as the Leandro case.

In 2022, the court ordered the legislature to fund the Comprehensive Remedial Plan partially, which would have significantly increased funding for public schools on account of Leandro's original claim that the state was not fulfilling its constitutional duty to provide a sound, basic education to all children.

But a partisan shake-up led the court to rehear oral arguments in 2024. Leandro's fate hung in the balance for just over two years until the eventual

decision this month, which said the court actually does not have the authority to tell the legislature how to spend its money.

Now, Rep. Julie von Haefen, D-Wake, is attempting to take matters into her own hands — for the seventh time.

"Well, here we are again," von Haefen said at a press conference on Tuesday.

"The short session's starting today, and when I sat down to write my remarks for today, all I could think of is, I'm tired. I'm tired of asking, I'm tired of filing these bills. I'm tired of standing at microphones begging this state to fund public education. I'm tired of being ignored by this legislative majority, and I'm tired of being dismissed by the Supreme Court."

House Bill 1017, "Sound Basic Education for Every Child," is von Haefen's seventh bill seeking to fund

the Leandro plan. She called the court's recent decision a "procedural sidestep," as it didn't address past rulings that said North Carolina is not meeting its constitutional obligation to provide every child with a sound, basic education, only that the legislature wasn't obligated to follow the court's previous order.

"The last determination by the Supreme Court on the constitutionality of our public education system was back in 2022 when the court found that the legislature failed to guard and maintain the constitutional rights of North Carolina school children," von Haefen said.

"And then, in his April 2 decision, Justice Newby had the audacity to state that, 'The judicial branch is not the venue in which to seek educational policy reform.' This ignores the entire foundation of Leandro.

The state Constitution is not a policy preference."

The judicial branch has washed its hands of this issue and thrown it back to the legislature, she said.

"Well, fine, then let's own it," she said.

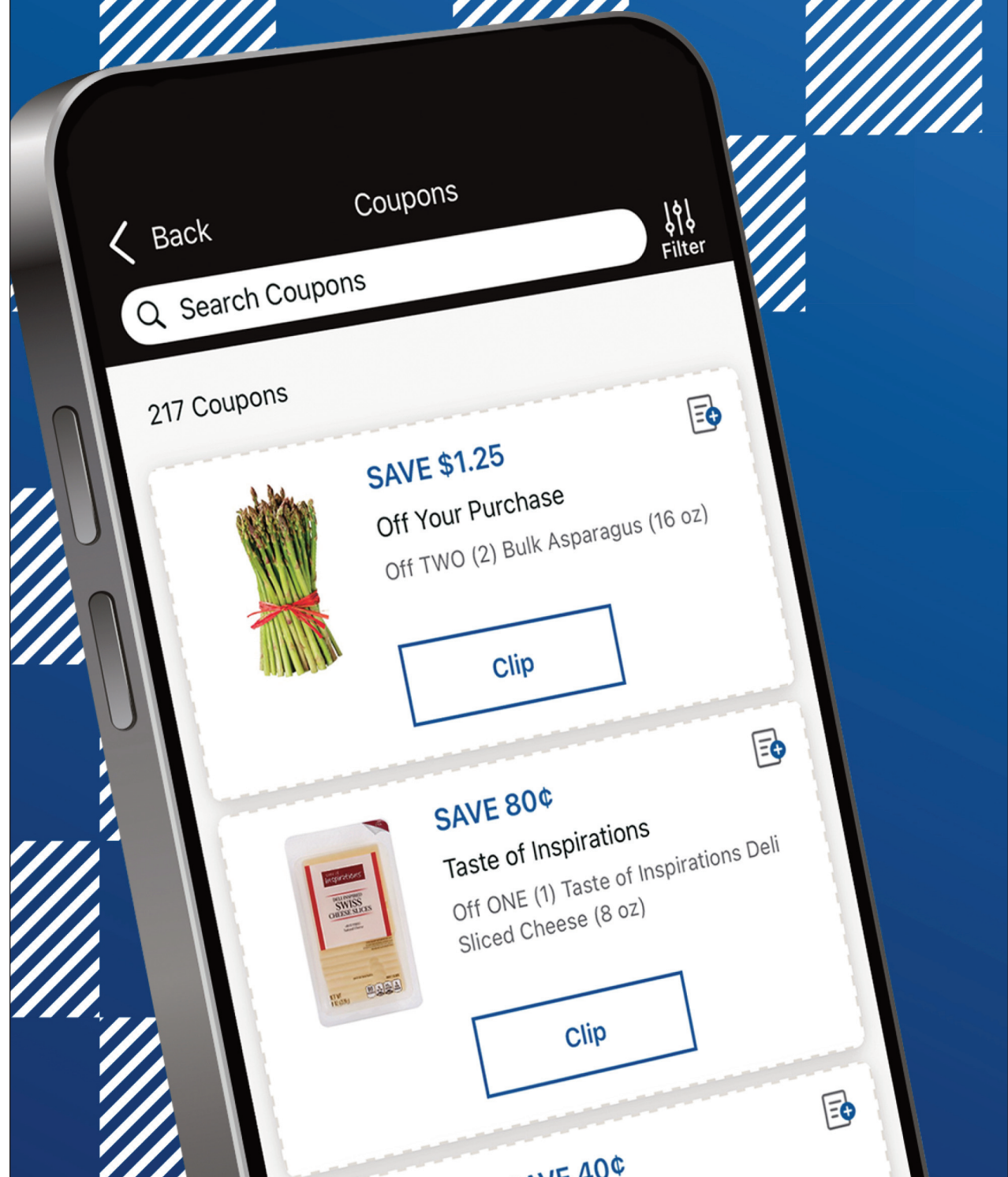
"It is our responsibility now, and now there's nobody left to hide behind. There's no more excuses, no more delay, no more deflection, no more shifting blame."

The 47-page bill proposes changes like expanding the NC Teaching Fellows forgivable loan program; salary supplements for teachers, school psychologists and nurses; and incrementally increasing appropriations for low-wealth counties like those in the Leandro case.

Of the bills von Haefen has filed related to Leandro, not one of them received a hearing by a committee.

FOOD LION

Clip coupons picked just for you



Sports

THURSDAY, APRIL 30, 2026



TEXAS A&M ATHLETICS

The Carolina Panthers drafted former Texas A&M cornerback Will Lee III in the fourth round of the 2026 NFL Draft to compete for playing time at nickel corner.

Panthers 'challenge the roster'

Carolina's 2026 draft class includes a mix of developmental candidates and long-term starters

By Jeff Hawkins
FOR THE CHARLOTTE POST

Carolina Panthers general manager Dan Morgan played his game during the NFL Draft.

Morgan executed three trades on the final day, positioning Carolina to pick their final four prospects: cornerback Will Lee III, center Sam Hecht, safety Zakee Wheatley and linebacker Jackson Kuwacht.

"I think you saw us maneuver around the board a little bit," Morgan said. "I think it worked out in our favor in the

end."

Time will tell.

From early analysis, it appears the Panthers, who filled most of their projected 2026 roster voids during free agency, drafted more on potential and long-term development.

Coach Dave Canales disagreed. "For me, it's all about right now," he said.

GM makes moves

Morgan's primary goal entering the draft was to create competition through depth.

"I feel good about what we accom-

plished," he said. "We are bringing in guys to challenge the roster."

Morgan worked to pick Lee, whose nickname is "The Blanket," by engineering two fourth-round transactions before picking Lee at No. 129 overall.

Initially slated to open Day 3 of the draft at No. 119, Morgan made a deal with the Jacksonville

Jaguars to move back five positions. Morgan also acquired the No. 166 pick

in exchange for the 196th.

The Panthers held those picks for less than five minutes. Morgan moved those assets to the Chicago Bears for the right to pick Lee and the No. 144 selection.

At 6-foot-1, 189 pounds, Lee, who compiled four career interceptions, earned 2024 second-team All-SEC honors, earned his nickname by collecting 16 passes defensed over two seasons at Texas A&M. He could compete with Chau Smith-Wade for time at nickel

Please see **PANTHERS** | 6A



Morgan

Hunter and Brazzell pencil in as immediate contributors

By Jeff Hawkins
FOR THE CHARLOTTE POST

Bulk and speed.

That's the direction Panthers general manager Dan Morgan went during Day 2 of the draft. In the second round, Carolina selected Texas Tech nose guard Lee Hunter. In the third, Tennessee wide receiver Chris Brazzell II - a fan of former Panthers quarterback Cam Newton since he was in third grade -

received the call.

"It's a dream come true," Brazzell said.

Panthers bulk up defensive line with Hunter

The Panthers needed to do something about their run defense.

In 2024, the first season of the Morgan-Dave Canales era, Carolina yielded an all-time single-season record 534 points. The unit surrendered the league's most total yards per game

(404.5) and 59 offensive touchdowns. One of the most consistent problems, though, has been an inability to stifle opponents' run game. Two seasons ago, they finished with an NFL-high 179.8 yards per game and in each of their final six games, surrendered at least 200 yards rushing.

Last year, while backing into the NFC South title with an 8-9 record, a healthier unit placed 16th in total defense, al-

lowing 327.2 yards per game.

To address the situation, Morgan traded picks Nos. 51 and 159 for the right to move up two spots and draft the 6-foot-4, 318-pound Hunter. The Panthers also received pick No. 196.

Hunter revealed the attitude he's bringing to rookie minicamp May 8-10.

"I'm ready to run through a (expletive) brick wall for them," he said.

Please see **CAROLINA** | 6A

Top pick Freeling fills a rotational need on offensive line

By Jeff Hawkins
FOR THE CHARLOTTE POST

Dan Morgan enjoyed an easy opening night at the draft.

While he prepared for a possible chaotic experience in the Carolina Panthers war room at Bank of America Stadium, Morgan found himself sitting back and "let the picks come to us."

Waiting at No. 19 overall, Morgan discovered the opening round started "falling our way." With needs at offensive line, safety and edge, Morgan targeted a "couple of guys."

When the Panthers' pick arrived, Georgia offensive tackle Monroe Freeling "was there at our pick and we were sure he would be there," Morgan said. "It was an easy pick for us."

Freeling entered the draft as the No. 2-rated tackle and 14th overall prospect, according to ESPN.

Freeling reinforces offensive line

The Panthers' need to bolster the offensive line's depth remained a prime objective. With Ikem Ekwonu (ruptured patella tendon) expected to miss at least half of the 2026 season, Morgan

inked free agent Rasheed Walker to a one-year deal. Freeling, who started just 17 games at Georgia, could slowly move into a rotational role in 2026.

The Panthers brass didn't seem overly concerned with his relative inexperience, focusing instead on his measurables, which include "34-inch arms and huge hands," Morgan said.

"To get a guy that's 21 years old and for all intents and purposes hasn't fully grown into his body completely and (he's) already 6-7?" coach Dave Canales said. "He's going to settle into some

good football."

Canales is eager to get Freeling into the offseason program that will allow the coaching staff to start molding him into a possible replacement for right tackle Taylor Moton.

"You always like to have guys with more games, more experience," Canales said. "Having a guy that has limited starts, you get a chance to imprint our style, our philosophy, our techniques and drills. There's a give and take there."

Charlotte basketball adds five transfers from portal

By Cameron Williams
cameron.williams@thecharlottepost.com

Charlotte 49ers basketball coach Wes Miller has been busy in the transfer portal.

Miller, who was hired in March, has added five new players including four from Cincinnati, where he coached them before he was fired in March. Charlotte hired Miller shortly afterward.

The new 49ers:

- Jizzle James: The first portal addition reunites with Miller after time together in Cincinnati. James, a guard, started 21 of 23 games last season as a junior. He averaged 10.9 points per game while shooting 44.2%

from three-point range last season. He also added 2.1 assists and 2.2 rebounds per game for the Bearcats.

James scored in double-figures 13 times last season and in three seasons with Miller scored double-figures in 54 games.

James saw a significant increase in three-point efficiency from his sophomore season to his junior campaign, jumping from 28.2% to 44.2% from range. He is expected to become an immediate backcourt threat for the 49ers.

- Keyshuan Tillery: Miller's second portal addition also comes from the Bearcats. Tillery, a 6-1 guard who appeared in 31

games as a freshman for Cincinnati a season ago, averaged 3.8 points, 1.8 assists per game in 12.5 minutes per contest.

Tillery, a consensus top 50 national recruit and top 10 point guard in high school, averaging 17 points, 5.3 rebounds and 6.1 assists per game while shooting over 50% from the floor.

He will likely make an immediate impact as a facilitator with Dezayne Mingo entering the transfer portal seeking a waiver for an extra year of eligibility.

- Dylan Grant: Miller's third portal addition comes from Rutgers, where the 6-8 forward

Please see **49ERS** | 6A

HBCU football scores an upgrade

If you want something done right, do it yourself.

The NCAA's four HBCU conferences - MEAC, SWAC, CIAA and SIAC - announced a collaboration to create a Black College Football Poll and Black College All-American Teams to debut July 1, the official start of the college football season. For the record, I never spell out the four conference names. If you don't know who they are, then why are you reading this column?

Both the poll and the All-American teams will be split into two divisions: FCS and Division II. And rightly so. "We're extremely excited to partner on the formation and creation of the Black College

Please see **BLACK** | 6A



BONITTA BEST

Winston-Salem State promotes Eric Burns to athletics director

By Herbert L. White
herb.l.white@thecharlottepost.com

The overhaul of Winston-Salem State athletics is complete.

Eric Burns, who oversaw the hiring process of the Rams' men's basketball and football coaches during the 2025-26 academic year, was promoted to the position full time.

Burns was hired as deputy athletics director and chief financial officer in March 2025 and in October was appointed interim director. Among the hires during his tenure was Tory Woodbury as football coach

and Jay Butler as men's basketball coach. Woodbury, a WSSU alumnus and former NFL player, was hired in December. Butler, who coached Virginia Union to four NCAA Division II playoff berths over 11 seasons, was hired this month.

"Winston-Salem State has a rich tradition of academic excellence, competitive success and a strong commitment to developing student-athletes both on and off the field," Burns said in a statement. "I am proud to be part of a community that values integrity, resilience and the pursuit of greatness. I'm grateful to Chancellor [Bonitta] Brown and the Board of Trustees for this opportunity."

While WSSU struggled in football and men's

basketball, the Rams excelled elsewhere during the academic year with women's basketball winning the school's first CIAA tournament title as well as a second straight conference championship in women's flag football.

"Eric Burns has done an outstanding job as interim athletics director since his appointment, and several of our athletic teams have flourished under his leadership," Brown said. "As the NCAA landscape continues to evolve, it is critical for Winston-Salem State University to maintain a competitive athletics department that enriches the lives of student-athletes while advancing the university's mission and elevating its stature."



Burns



TENNESSEE ATHLETICS

Carolina picked former Tennessee receiver Chris Brazzell, who runs the 40-yard dash in 4.34 seconds, in the third round of the 2026 NFL Draft.

Panthers deals open door for potential and depth

Continued from page 5A

corner. "They really haven't told me anything specific, but you know I am willing to play anywhere," Lee said. "I'm ready to put in the work."

The Panthers' second fifth-round pick netted former Kansas State center Hecht to fill a roster need.

After losing free-agent Cade Mays and signing Luke Fortner to a one-year contract in free agency, the 144th pick could be in line to take over the position in 2027.

After making his third trade Saturday, coordinating with the Miami Dolphins to move up in the fifth round, Morgan selected former Penn State cornerback Wheatley with the 151st pick.

Scout Inc. reported that Wheatley

may need to improve his tackling but has ball-hawking skills Panthers defensive coordinator Ejiro Evero covets. Dubbed the "Turnover King," Wheatley was credited with 11 career takeaways, including six interceptions, at Penn State.

"I would describe my game as versatile, fluent," Wheatley said. "I like going sideline to sideline, making plays. I'm someone who's going to be aggressive, be super tough and give it my all every single time I strap my helmet up."

Morgan took a seventh-round flyer with the addition of Kuwatch, who played at Miami (Ohio). He compiled 109 total tackles for the RedHawks in 2025 and likely will start his NFL career on special teams.

Carolina adds bulk with Hunter, speed in Brazzell

Continued from page 5A

Since 2023, PFF ranked Hunter first among defensive tackles with 146 total tackles, 38 tackles for loss or no gain and 81 run stops. He was also second with 75 quarterback pressures.

Nicknamed "The Fridge," Hunter was asked what his moniker means to him: "If people want to eat, they gotta get through you."

Carolina adds playmaker with Brazzell

Morgan went for athleticism with the 83rd overall pick.

Canales expects Brazzell, a 6-4, 198-

pounder who was clocked at 4.34-seconds in the 40-yard dash, to create mismatches for quarterback Bryce Young.

With Brazzell, 2025 rookie of the year Tetairoa McMillan, Jalen Coker and 2024 first-rounder Xavier Legette, Canales raved about Carolina's versatility - and potential.

"His vertical speed was one thing I was so impressed with," Canales said. "His acrobatic body balance was something I fell in love with. Now we got a guy who's really tall and fast."

Black college football scores upgrade with poll

Continued from page 5A

Football Poll and the Black College Football All-American Team," the four commissioners released in a joint statement.

"We view this strategic alliance as a game changer for our respective leagues and, undoubtedly, a significant step in the right direction towards unifying our collective conferences as it relates to preseason/postseason polls and awards while simultaneously recognizing the best Black College Football teams and student-athletes at the highest level."

The weekly poll will be conducted throughout the regular season by a panel of coaches and media members. They also will vote on preseason and postseason All-American first and second teams.

Individual awards for the coach of the year, freshman of the year, and offensive and defensive players of the year will be announced during the postseason.

There are a plethora of Black college football polls, all-conference teams and individual awards by a variety of white-owned and Black-owned media organizations. But this alliance changes the landscape. It's coming straight from the top.

This is the second major collaboration among the four conferences. Last July, they formed the "HBC4Us Association,"

dedicated to protecting the "integrity, legacy, cultural value and competitiveness of HBCU athletic programs."

HBC4Us was instigated after a presidential change created a hostile environment toward anything Afrocentric. The association released its four-prong mission:

- Student-athlete leadership and development
- Preservation of cultural heritage
- Competitive excellence
- Financial sustainability and partnerships

The announcement certainly falls under No. 4, which is sure to garner significant publicity, sponsorships and corporate dollars.

SWAC Commissioner Charles McClelland teased about a major announcement at the conference's golf championships, among other things - more to come.

"As stewards of our storied athletic programs, we are committed to honoring our legacy while creating opportunities that ensure the competitiveness and sustainability of HBCU athletics for generations to come," the HBC4Us statement said.

If you're going to talk the talk, then walk the walk.

Bonitta Best is sports editor at The Triangle Tribune in Durham.

49ers stock up on transfers

Continued from page 5A

former Bearcat new to the fold, McKinley the 6-9 forward comes to Charlotte after two seasons with Cincinnati, including a red-shirt season due to injury. He appeared in 25 games last season making three starts.

Grant scored in double figures 16 times for the Scarlet Knights and had several breakout performances. None were better than his career-high 29 points against Patriot League champion Lehigh. He also scored 22 points against American.

Grant - a four-star prospect - was the No. 22 power forward ranked by ESPN in high school and the No. 2 ranked player in Michigan's 2024 class.

• Tyler McKinley: Another

former Bearcat new to the fold, McKinley the 6-9 forward comes to Charlotte after two seasons with Cincinnati, including a red-shirt season due to injury. He appeared in 25 games last season making three starts.

McKinley averaged 1.8 points and 2.2 rebounds in 12.2 minutes per game. He is a former No.1 player in Ohio for the class of 2024 and a top 65 prospect according to 247Sports.

As a high school senior, McKinley averaged 18.5 points, 9.9 rebounds and 3.3 assists per game to earn Ohio's Mr. Basketball finalist honors.

• Jordi Rodriguez: Another piece to the puzzle from Cincinnati,

Rodriguez appeared in 15 games last season as a freshman for the Bearcats.

Rodriguez averaged 2.3 points and eight minutes per game. He scored a career-high 10 points in his collegiate debut against Western Carolina. He matched that against New Jersey Institute of Technology by hitting a trio of three-pointers.

The 6-6 wing brings a plethora of international experience to Charlotte having represented Spain in the 2023 FIBA U-19 World Cup. He averaged 13.6 points, 2.9 rebounds and 2.6 assists per game, resulting in a championship for Spain. He received all-tournament honors.

JCSU boosters honor football coach Flowers with Jimmie McKee Award

By Herbert L. White

herb.l.white@thecharlottepost.com

Johnson C. Smith football coach Maurice Flowers will be recognized by the school's boosters.

The 100 Club will salute Flowers with the annual Jimmie McKee Distinguished Leadership and Service Award June 6 at the New Science Hall on the JCSU campus. A reception starts at 6 p.m., followed by dinner at 7 p.m. with SIAC Commissioner and JCSU alumnus Anthony Holloman as speaker.

Holloman is a 2024 inductee to JCSU's sports Hall of Fame.

Retired East Mecklenburg High football coach Bill Dulin, who is also a JCSU gradu-

ate, will introduce Flowers.

Admission is \$100 and proceeds support all 16 JCSU-sponsored sports and the 100 Club's Educational Endowment and Scholarship Fund.

For tickets and to make donations, go to jcsu100club.com.

In four seasons, Flowers has coached JCSU to three straight seasons of seven wins or more, including a school record 10-2 campaign in 2023 that included the CIAA football title and the program's first berth in the NCAA Division II playoffs. JCSU finished the season ranked No. 18 in the final AFCA coaches' poll - another first.

The 100 Club presents the award in honor of McKee, who founded the organization in 1966 to celebrate JCSU's centennial. He also founded the Historic Excelsior Club in 1944.

Follow us on social media



@thecharpost



The Charlotte Post



@thecharlottepost

SPORTS CHARLOTTE

Podcast with a home team advantage