



On the marquee: J. Cole brings The Fall Off Tour to Spectrum Center

The Charlotte Post

THE VOICE OF THE BLACK COMMUNITY SINCE 1906

WEEK OF JULY 9, 2026

VOLUME 52 NUMBER 41

WWW.THECHARLOTTEPOST.COM

\$1.50



MECKLENBURG COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE

Jail North in Mecklenburg County, formerly a juvenile detention center, is expected to reopen in 2026 to house adults.

Mecklenburg's Jail North to reopen without juveniles

County lockup will take on overflow of adults upon September opening

By Mackenzie Thomas

CAROLINA PUBLIC PRESS

As Mecklenburg County works to reopen one of its previously closed detention centers later this summer due to overcrowding at the existing jail, the North Carolina Division of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention continues to push for the return of juveniles to the county.

If and when that could happen remains to be seen.

The Mecklenburg County Sheriff's Office announced in May that it's planning to reopen the Mecklenburg County Detention Center North — also known as Jail North — to address the "unprecedented" overcrowding that has taken place at the existing facility, Mecklenburg County Detention Center Central,

according to a press release from the sheriff's office.

Bradley Smith, public information manager for the Mecklenburg County Sheriff's Office, told Carolina Public Press that while early August was the initial target for reopening, they've since had to push it back to September to ensure the facility is "ready to adequately house residents."

The current plan for the facility is to accommodate the adult resident overflow from Detention Center Central, but there's been ongoing discussions about the possible inclusion of juveniles.

While the county is trying to remedy the capacity crisis in its own backyard, the state Juvenile Justice division insists that reinstating juvenile beds at the center would have "considerable bene-

fits" for youth.

History of Jail North and juvenile detention

Matthew Debnam, communications officer for the North Carolina Department of Public Safety, said Jail North previously served as a juvenile detention center that had 72 beds total. It closed in May 2022 due to staff shortages at the adult jail.

When Juvenile Justice first learned of the plans for the juvenile detention center to close, it sent a memo to the Mecklenburg County Commissioners asking them to reconsider and offered a series of alternative next steps to avoid closure. Ultimately, in June 2022, the state agency learned that the county would not continue its existing contract for juvenile detention services and the

Please see **JAIL** | 2A

Criminal justice, state employment bills signed

Legislation addresses gang-related crime, paid parental leave

By Christine Zhu

NC NEWSLINE

North Carolina Gov. Josh Stein signed four bills Monday addressing public safety, housing, and state employee benefits.

Before lawmakers left last week for a break from session, they sent Stein nearly two dozen bills, including the long-overdue state budget he signed Tuesday.

Two of the bills Stein signed Monday stemmed from violent deaths in the state over the past year.

Republicans introduced Jaleeyah's Law after 13-year-old Jaleeyah Tune was shot and killed in Goldsboro in December. While her family hasn't spoken publicly about what they think happened that day, they've pushed lawmakers to increase penalties for gang-related crimes.

Jaleeyah's Law lowers the threshold for law enforcement to charge someone with being a gang member or engaging in gang activity.

"What Jaleeyah's law would do is, it would give prosecutors and law enforcement the tools to really go after those perpetrators and make sure that they do not hurt anyone else in this state," primary bill sponsor Rep. John Bell (R-Wayne) said.

The legislation marks some of the biggest changes to North Carolina's gang laws since the state passed the Gang Suppression Act in 2008.

"I cry daily because I miss my daughter," Jaleeyah's mother, Whitney Brown-Tune, said. "My kids are hurting, we are hurting, and this is not going to stop all the

Please see **CRIMINAL** | 2A



Stein

For young adults, media consumption — and its hazards — are on phone

By Jaslynn Vorachith

FOR THE CHARLOTTE POST

Linear news consumption is out. Digital is in.

In terms of age and educational attainment, Americans 50 years and older lean more towards traditional outlets like print and television. Unlike Americans with a college degree, they're more likely to use platforms such as news websites, apps, podcasts, or email newsletters while those without college degrees lean toward social media.

Pew Research's 2025 News Platform Fact Sheet found that 86% of U.S. adults get their news from digital platforms while 64% occasionally get it from television. There's less engagement with radio and print at 11% and 7% respectively.

Johnson C. Smith University professor Tonya Rivens, president of the Charlotte Association of Black Journalists, acknowledges Generation Z — people between 14 and 29 years old — have transformed the news industry through their engagement with media.

"We know that the change has been earth-shattering ... everyone's gone to streaming and social media for their sources," she said. "The younger millennials and Gen Zers, they're not turning on the television looking for media reports, they're getting that all from their cell phones is right in their pocket, which is a lot quicker. So, by the time you come on air talking breaking news, they've already seen that story."

Rivens, a longtime television and radio broadcaster, acknowledges the importance of history, transparency, and credibility in reporting. For trust

Please see **MEDIA** | 4A



STOCK PHOTO

A pilot program will bring play-based learning to kindergartens at seven Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools starting with the 2026-27 academic year.

CMS kindergarten initiative focuses on learning through play activities

By Max Poku-Kankam

FOR THE CHARLOTTE POST

Play-based learning is coming to Charlotte-Mecklenburg kindergartens.

The pilot initiative will start in the 2026-27 school year on seven campuses: Villa Heights, Eastover, River Gate, Elizabeth Traditional, Hawk Ridge, Lansdowne and Collinswood Language Academy. The schools will

focus on "adding one hour of screen-free choice time into kindergarten classrooms during which teachers will guide students through play that aligns with their curriculum," according to a media release.

According to Brightwheel, a childcare blog, play-based learning "embraces the innate curiosity and creativity of children to foster their

Please see **KINDERGARTEN** | 2A

US probe of transgender use of bathrooms keys legal issues

By Kate Denning

CAROLINA PUBLIC PRESS

Two North Carolina school districts, Buncombe and Cabarrus, are the subject of U.S. Department of Education Title IX investigations due to reported concerns of "biological males" being permitted to use women's facilities, despite legal precedent set by a US Court of Appeals' 4th Circuit decision that allows transgender students to utilize the facilities aligning with their gender identity.

The department said in its announcement of the investigation into Buncombe that a "concerned parent reported to (the department's Office of Civil Rights) that girls in the District are being forced to share their female-only restrooms with biological men."

An earlier release celebrating June as the second annual Title IX month mentioned its investigation in Cabarrus along with districts in other states.

"The Department's Office for Civil Rights (OCR) opened an investigation into Cabarrus County Schools (the District) in North Carolina based on reports that the Dis-

Please see **PROBE** | 3A

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://tcppc.com/Subscribe



Jail North to reopen without juveniles

Continued from page 1A

center would be closed, Debnam said. Juvenile Justice and the sheriff's office have been discussing the possibility of reopening the facility as early as its initial closure, having had several meetings with them and other officials between then and now, Debnam said.

While the facility has remained closed to residents through the years, Smith said it's been functioning as part of the office's training center and has been used for community events.

In October 2025, the sheriff's office announced that Juvenile Justice had asked them to start recruiting and training the staff needed to reopen the center. The request was met with initial pushback from the sheriff's office, which claimed reopening efforts would put an "undue strain" on existing recruiting efforts at the sheriff's office. It also noted the state's request was not a statutory requirement for the sheriff's office, according to a statement from the Mecklenburg County Sheriff's Office.

To reopen the facility, it would need to recruit and hire almost 100 detention officers and even more support staff, according to the statement.

In May 2026, the sheriff's office announced it would be reopening Jail North, not for juveniles, but to ease the significant overcrowding at Central.

"To maintain the safety and security of our staff, residents, and the community, we must take immediate action to address the growing population inside Detention Center Central," Sheriff Gary McFadden said.

"As we move into the summer months — when crime tends to increase — reopening Detention Center North is a necessary step to help manage the overcrowding while we continue working through these ongoing challenges."

Logistics of reopening

The sheriff's office announced in May that its goal is to hire up to 50 detention officers for the new facility right away and offer a \$7,500 sign-on bonus, according to the press release. Because the sheriff's office is still figuring out logistics for the facility, how many beds or residents it will accommodate remains unclear. Residents will be moved from Detention Center Central to Jail North once it opens, but exactly how many is yet to be determined, Smith said.

In May, the population at Central was 2,084 inmates, well above its capacity of 1,791. As the population has increased, so has the need for more meals, and more residents are having to sleep on "stack-a-bunks," Smith said, which are hard, plastic bases with a 3- to 4-inch mattress on top.

Some 288 inmates were staying in overflow areas and using "stack-a-bunk" sleeping arrangements because space is so limited. Roughly 60 inmates were staying at the facility awaiting a transfer to state prison, and some had to wait as long as almost three months after sentencing before being transferred, according to the May press release.

Most recently, the population at Central was 2,080 inmates, Smith said, a slight decrease from last month. But now, 323 inmates are staying in overflow areas and using stack-a-bunks, while 86 inmates are waiting to be transferred to state prison, Smith said. These numbers have increased from May.

Overcrowding like this can reduce efficiency and increase the risk of incidents, according to a 2025 press release from the sheriff's office.

While the sheriff's office is "always willing to discuss the possibility of housing juveniles again" at the facility, its primary focus right now is addressing Detention Center Central's "rising population" and is only planning for adult residents at Jail North, Smith said.

Jenny Harbin, director of the Children's Alliance, said discussions regarding the possibility of housing juveniles have hit a wall due to the preexisting staffing concerns.

"The sheriff ran a fantastic juvenile detention center when it was open, and so we want to support him in making sure that if it reopens, it's as successful as it can be," Harbin told CPP.

"If he sees staffing as an issue, then certainly we don't want to move forward with something that could be harmful."

The sheriff's office confirmed staffing is indeed still a factor in the decision.

"Opening that facility for juveniles would require MCSO to hire a large number of additional staff to properly run it. As of right now we are focused on the overcrowding at Detention Center Central which is a mandated function of the Sheriff's Office," Smith said.

"As always, we will remain open to discussing the possibility of housing juveniles one day, but our primary focus right now is Detention Center

Central."

The Children's Alliance has been a strong advocate for moving juveniles back to Mecklenburg County, Harbin said, citing reasons of loss of connection with families, services and the cost of transporting them when placed in facilities outside of the county. William Lassiter, deputy secretary for Juvenile Justice, told CPP previously that one of the priorities of the division is to place juveniles in facilities that are close to home to provide them with the best support system possible during rehabilitation.

As of now, most of the Mecklenburg County youth reside in the Cabarrus County facility, which has an intended capacity of 64 residents — even lower than the capacity of Mecklenburg's juvenile detention center when it was open — and is struggling with overcrowding and staffing issues as well, Harbin said.

When Jail North first closed in 2022, Juvenile Justice was already struggling with its own overcrowding and staffing issues. Efforts have been underway since then to remedy its capacity crisis by opening more facilities in Rockingham, Perquimans and other counties, but reinstating juvenile beds at Jail North would help even more, Debnam said.

"The Jail North facility is well-suited for serving youth from Mecklenburg County, providing dedicated spaces for education, programming and family engagement. An agreement with Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools previously allowed youth at the facility to remain enrolled in their local school system, minimizing interruptions to their educational progress," Debnam said.

"Research consistently shows that housing youth near their communities leads to better outcomes for both juveniles and families, and Mecklenburg JDC was a prime example of this model."

When the center closed to juveniles in 2022, many of these benefits were lost, Debnam said.

Larger issue of overcrowding

Overcrowding isn't an isolated issue in Mecklenburg County. It's affecting detention centers across the state, both adult and juvenile facilities alike. The Wake County jail was almost 100 inmates over its capacity in April, previously reported by WRAL News.

Sheriff Willie Rowe told CPP that the Wake County Sheriff's Office is currently working on plans to renovate its detention annex building, which will add hundreds of more beds and improve infrastructure and security measures.

"The mission of the Wake County Sheriff's Office is to manage our detention facility population while keeping our staff, the community, and those in our care safe and ensuring that we meet, and exceed, state standards," Rowe said in a statement to CPP. "Those priorities highlight the necessity of the planned renovation of our detention annex building."

Other jails struggling include the Robeson County jail, which has a capacity of 410 but was housing 501 inmates as of May, reported by The Assembly.

Even in juvenile detention, the division was short 12 beds on average each day last year, with that number increasing during population surges. This continued despite the division opening three more juvenile detention centers within the past couple of years, according to the division's 2025 annual report.

While officials have attributed the issue to a myriad of factors, a few keep coming up, one of those being the passage of House Bill 307 in October 2025, also known as Iryna's Law. Enacted in response to the murder of 23-year-old Iryna Zarutka on the Charlotte light rail, the law came up with a new way to address defendants with mental health concerns, got rid of written promises to appear and overall created stricter pretrial release conditions for those charged with a violent offense.

Right after the law took effect, McFadden acknowledged its "well-intentioned" nature, but criticized the legislation for the lack of additional resources and funding it provided, which wouldn't help with an expected increase in population, according to the 2025 press release.

"Mecklenburg County Sheriff's Office (MCSO) expects a surge in its detention center population due to stricter release policies, affecting individuals with minor charges," the press release said.

Mental health also plays a role. Defendants who don't have the mental capacity to move forward in court can stay longer in the detention center, McFadden said in a news briefing from April.

A backlogged system of convicts who have been sentenced for their crimes but are staying at the detention center until they can be transferred to state prison is another factor.

Criminal justice and state employment bills signed

Continued from page 1A

violence, but it will help." Under another new law, involuntary commitment evaluations will move from hospitals to jails.

House Bill 1104 makes changes to Iryna's Law, a judicial reform package passed after the August 2025 killing of Iryna Zarutka by a person with mental illness. The measure required more suspects to receive psychiatric assessments in emergency rooms.

But hospital leaders were worried about the safety of staff and patients, saying they'd prefer those assessments take place in jail.

H1104 allows law enforcement agencies to use telehealth to conduct psychiatric assessments in jails, rather than tying up officers and creating long lines and potentially unsafe situations in emergency rooms.

The bill also requires studies into ways to further improve the involuntary commitment process, such as mobile crisis units and stronger training for examiners.

"We see far too often that mental health crises are funneled through the justice system instead of the mental health treatment system," Health and Human Services Secretary Dev Sangvai said.

State employees will have 12 weeks of paid parental leave under a new law that changes how the state hires and retains employees. Previously, state employees giving birth received eight weeks of parental leave, while other state employees received four weeks.

Senate Bill 1041 is the state's most comprehensive human resources modernization in about 50 years, according to Stein. It passed the state legislature with the backing of state human resource officers and had overwhelming bipartisan support.

The new law gets rid of longstanding administrative rules for state hiring, making it easier and faster for state agencies to hire workers, and helps spouses of service members to find jobs in state government.

Pregnant state employees and new moms with their babies surrounded Stein as he signed the bill. One parent holding twins handed off a baby to the governor as others spoke about the new law's benefits.

"With this state policy, we're making it easier for parents to succeed in the state's workforce," the governor said.

Stein also signed House Bill 162, which bans municipalities from requiring housing developers to include a minimum number of parking spaces.

The measure aims to create more affordable housing and increase flexibility for developers.

"We need to remove unnecessary and expensive barriers like burdensome parking lot requirements that lead to higher housing costs," Stein said.

Additionally, H162 allows local governments to offer incentives to developers when implementing stormwater controls. This would protect properties by reducing flooding.

Kindergarten initiative focuses on learning through play activities

Continued from page 1A

development."

"It's extremely beneficial," said Mollie Auerbach, founder of K Needs Play. "There's so many ways it supports children's math skills, spatial awareness, it even supports their reading skills. I have always been an elementary educator," Auerbach said. "In my time teaching kindergarten, first, and second grade, I saw how important it is for kids to have this time to play and have agency over their day."

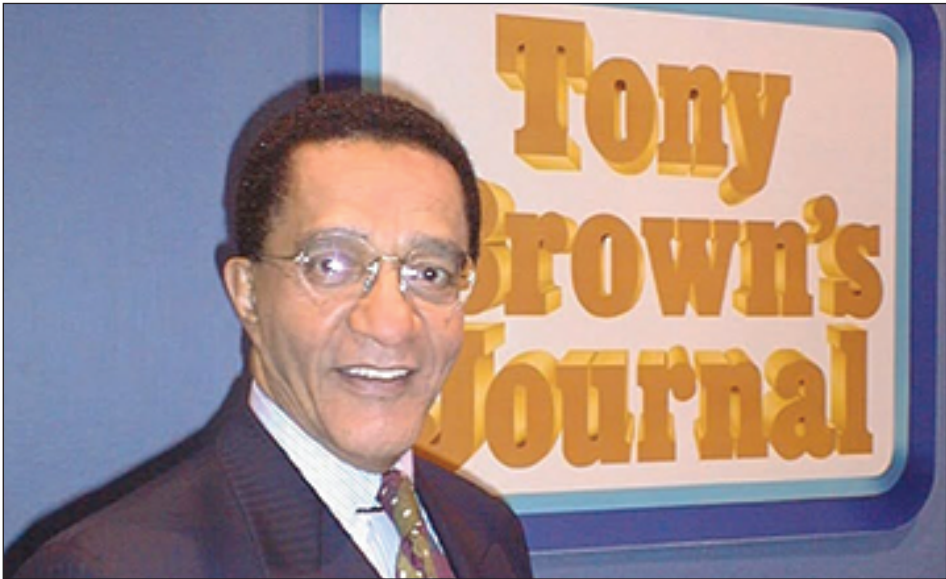
K Needs Play held a fundraiser for the initiative and train teachers over the summer and two companies - Crowder Construction and Brad Financial - donated \$150,000.

"We do now have the funding to give to CMS to provide furniture and supplies to 31 different classrooms," Auerbach said, adding she is "excited for the kindergarten students and the kindergarten teachers, because we sent out a big survey to parents and teachers, and they both said that students need this."

The initiative has renewed Auerbach's faith in other parts of the community that deserves attention as well.

"For me, it's really restored my faith in democracy," she said. "It's just a sign that when there is a problem in the community and you can bring attention to it, people do want to work together to make the world better."

« APPRECIATION »



BLACK PRESS USA

Tony Brown, who interviewed more than 1,000 Black newsmakers on the public affairs program "Tony Brown's Journal" on PBS for nearly 40 years died June 17 at age 93.

Tony Brown gave Black America an uncompromising TV voice

CHICAGO CRUSADER

For nearly four decades, millions of Americans welcomed Tony Brown into their homes each week.

But Brown was never interested in simply hosting another television program. He wanted to transform the way Black America saw itself—and the way the nation saw Black America.

Brown, the pioneering journalist, broadcaster, educator and civil rights advocate, died June 17 at his home in Newport News, Virginia. He was 93. His death marked the end of one of the most influential careers in Black media history, but his impact continues to resonate throughout journalism, public broadcasting and higher education.

Long before diversity became a corporate buzzword or television executives embraced inclusive programming, Brown fought to place Black voices, Black issues and Black leadership at the center of the national conversation.

His landmark television program, "Tony Brown's Journal," became the longest-running Black-produced public affairs television series in American history. Airing nationally for nearly 40 years, the program tackled race, politics, economics, education, criminal justice and culture with an honesty that was rare on American television.

Brown interviewed more than 1,000 newsmakers during his career, including the Rev. Jesse Jackson, Lena Horne,

Angela Davis, Sammy Davis Jr., President Ronald Reagan and countless scholars, activists, entertainers and elected officials. Yet he often said the most important question guiding every broadcast was remarkably simple: "Will it help Black people?"

That philosophy distinguished Brown from many of his contemporaries.

Rather than chasing celebrity interviews for ratings alone, Brown viewed television as an instrument of empowerment. He believed media could either reinforce damaging stereotypes or become a powerful force for education, economic advancement and self-determination.

His commitment to changing media was rooted in personal experience.

Born William Anthony Brown on April 11, 1933, in Charleston, West Virginia, Brown overcame poverty and segregation before serving in the Army and earning degrees from Wayne State University. After working as a social worker and journalist in Detroit, he entered public television at a time when African Americans were virtually invisible in television newsrooms and executive offices.

Brown never forgot those early barriers. Reflecting years later on his career, he recalled that when he entered broadcasting there were virtually no Black producers or on-air personalities.

"When I started out in television, television stations had almost zero producers,

Please see **JOURNALIST** | 5A



What would you like
the power to do?[®]

Own the place you live & play.

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**



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.



UNSPLASH

According to a survey by Pew Research, 86% of American adults access news on a digital platform. Gen Z – which prefers using smartphones to linear media is driving the digital charge, which is shaping changes in news media’s approach to engagement.

Media viewing – and its hazards – are on phone

Continued from page 1A

to exist, she argues, they must prioritize accuracy, balanced coverage, and ethical journalism.

“[Gen Z] prefer online, and the thing about online is a lot of these outlets are not newsworthy,” she said. “A lot of these outlets are there to entertain. A lot of these news outlets online are not factual. They are not validating it, taking the time to balance.”

For example, Rivens cited instances where she’s seen younger people engage fake news and believe it’s true.

“We see all the time artists dying over and over and over because someone decides to post this [as] fact, and people take the story and circulate it and run with it,” she said.

Jordan McNeal, a May JCSU graduate, relies on digital platforms for news. She views and listens to outlets like NPR, and MS NOW as well as blogs and social media like TikTok.

“I prefer digital platforms because my preference for listening to things is more audible, and I like fast-paced news,” she said. “Normally, I’ll just go into YouTube and I’ll look up a news segment throughout the day, and I’ll just put it on 2x speed. I think it takes time to want to watch the news. It’s something that you have to do, and you have to want to be able to go out and do your own research.”

McNeal has recently come across a news segment from Good Morning America reporting Gen Z has a poor work ethic – a story she said can deter younger people from engaging traditional outlets.

“Millennials called out what they were saying about Gen Z and work ethic and teens not being able to find a job,” she said. “You don’t understand it’s very out of touch to say something like that, given what’s going on in the economy.”

Social media, on the other hand, provides a unique platform that no news outlets can: collective commentary.

“I feel like when I’m on TikTok, I could actually see how people feel and agree on the same story,” McNeal said. “You could see it in real time, how people feel about something”



Nuness

Sha’Nautica Nuness, a senior mass communication student at JCSU and president of the campus chapter of the National Association of Black Journalists, said the approach to accuracy is what makes news outlets credible.

“A social media outlet, they have that AI fact checkers on Google, just to make sure that everything that’s coming out is authentic,” she said. “I feel like things are so easily misconstrued, because not many people are held accountable.”

“I was an intern at WBTV. We will always go to the courthouse, and we will always make sure that everything that you know we’re getting public, and also what we’re getting is truthful...and it comes from an actual real source. I know that if you’re coming from not just social media, but a real news outlet is usually coming from a primary source, like the courthouse in the files, the real files in the police reports.”

UNC Charlotte student Libni Garza Hernandez said the kind of content she engages led her to make lifestyle changes such as being more environmentally friendly and cautious in consumption habits.

“My feed has mostly become... switch away from plastic and go to a glass, or stainless steel, and...pans that are made out of Teflon are the best option,” she said. “I think that’s usually what my media is about – what’s geared towards me.”

Instagram has allowed Hernandez to be more aware of non-animal cruelty products and mindful of consumption habits such as buying fewer synthetic materials.

“My spending habits have improved after...if I keep on buying plastic junk that are gonna end up in a landfill, I should probably look for alternative things that I can buy that will be reusable in the future,” she said. “If it’s made out of polyester, you should probably not buy it, it’s not gonna last you that long because ... at the end of the day, you’re just wearing plastic, right?”

Nuness feels traditional and social media often gear towards sensationalism to engage audience.

“Coming from Gen Z, they’re looking for something that’s going to create a fitting feeling, or like a fantasy,” she said. “Things like ‘Love Island’ because that’s all I see all over social media...I feel like they’re looking for more of a feeling when they get online, or when they want to hear a big title.”

Although informative, Hernandez believes social media can instill fear as well.

“I would get reels back-to-back,” she said. ... “Polyester is terrible for you, and this, and that, or it affects your reproductive [system], or harms your health, and such, and I’m like, ‘Oh my God.’ I feel like to some extent, yes, plastic isn’t good also, where it ends up on earth is terrible, but I feel like sometimes it kind of ends up being fear mongering.”

No matter how believable some information is presented, Hernandez said she is cautious when consuming social media and urges verification.

“I don’t always trust the sources, because I feel like some things are a bit of a stretch,” she said.

Hernandez and McNeal contend traditional news outlets are often negative, which is a turn-off.

“It’s just a terrible way to start the day,” Hernandez said. “Listening to the news first thing in the morning, there’s always something tragic going on. I feel like sometimes it’s a little biased.”

McNeal notices how Gen Z doesn’t appreciate how they’re seen by the media.

“I don’t think they target it in a way that’s respectful and promotes Gen Z in a good light, given what they’ll say about Gen Z’s work ethic, among many other things,” she said, “But I’ve just noticed the things that Gen Z doesn’t want to do are things that maybe previous generations have done. Any news platform that’s been around that’s not in touch with how people feel, it’s gonna ruffle the wrong feathers.”

To Nuness, people are getting their news on social media is because of the accessibility and reliance on technology for everything.

“I do think everybody’s on TikTok, no matter the generation,” she said. “It’s right at the tip of your [finger], people wake up and get on social media. Everything’s in the phone, your entertainment’s in the phone... fast-paced information. It’s all there.”

Rivens contends change is inevitable when it comes to traditional news outlets adjusting to a new era. Younger consumers are pushing them to pivot.

“Media outlets are having to merge, combine, downsize even more, and we see that happening all around us, and it will continue because the consumer has changed their viewing and listening habits,” she said. “The way to survive is to adapt, and sometimes that means elimination of jobs, sometimes that means going completely digital.”



KATE DENNING | CAROLINA PUBLIC PRESS

The use of school restrooms designated for one sex by transgender individuals who are biologically of the opposite sex has become the subject of a federal investigation in Buncombe and Cabarrus counties.

Probe of transgender use of bathrooms keys legal issues

Continued from page 1A

strict violates Title IX by allowing males in girls-only intimate facilities.”

The investigations into transgender bathroom use could result in the districts losing federal funding, but experts say the move is more realistically an attempt to force “involuntary compliance” on school districts to align with the department and President Donald Trump’s own interpretation of Title IX.

Details of investigation limited

Specifics of the investigations into both districts are limited at this time, and the department did not respond to Carolina Public Press’ requests for further details. The initial press release regarding Cabarrus stated the subject of the investigation pertained to transgender individuals in dressing room facilities.

“Multiple female students have reported being required to dress and undress in the presence of males and that the District ignored, ridiculed, and dismissed their pleas for protection,” the department said.

“One student recounted that her former principal said that ‘there isn’t anything (the District) can do’ to protect female students and that girls ‘can go somewhere else’ if they feel uncomfortable.”

A Cabarrus schools spokesperson told CPP the district is limited in what it can say regarding specific allegations given they are the subject of a pending OCR investigation.

“We will fully cooperate with the investigation and will continue to do so throughout the process. Cabarrus County Schools remains committed to providing a safe, respectful, and legally compliant learning environment for all students,” the statement read.

“We will continue to follow applicable laws and court decisions while the OCR process proceeds and will not comment further on the specifics of the pending investigation.”

Buncombe schools said the district “follows the law regarding students’ rights ensuring that all students have access to safe restrooms, locker rooms, and other school facilities.”

“Our schools work with all students and families to ensure that every student has access to facilities that meet their needs in a safe and private manner,” the statement continued. “The school system will fully cooperate with the US Department of Education on its inquiry.”

Senior attorney for Lambda Legal, a civil rights organization focusing on LGBTQ+ issues, Nicholas Hite told CPP the nature of the transgender bathroom use investigations is intentionally vague and sweeping, though that hasn’t always been the norm.

It’s also important to note that the complaints cited by the department, such as the “concerned parent” referenced in the Buncombe County investigation, can come from virtually anywhere, Hite said. That means sometimes they rely on unsubstantiated, anecdotal evidence.

“Many of these investigations start because of complaints from third party interest groups who are not residents in the district but know that there are policies in place because they heard through the grapevine or on Facebook or on social media,” Hite said.

In recent months, the NC Values Coalition — a nonprofit lobbying group that describes itself as nonpartisan but advocates for traditionally conservative policies and endorses Republican politicians — has posted several videos to its Facebook page showing self-identified students, parents and former employees of Buncombe and Cabarrus schools expressing discomfort with both districts’ bathroom and locker room policies in relation to transgender students. NC Values did not respond to CPP’s request for comment.

Other groups like the Pavement Education Project in North Carolina and Moms for Liberty in other parts of the country have also been outspoken about their opposition to gender-affirming bathroom policies.

Results may vary

These investigations are best described as administrative procedures, Hite said. The department investigates to see whether it can make modifications or reach an agreement with a school district. If those steps are unsuccessful, the US Department of Justice could step in, thus making it a legal proceeding.

While the investigation is in the administrative stage, the department could look

to existing law as a guide, such as the decision made by the U.S. Court of Appeals’ 4th Circuit in 2016 and was effectively upheld in 2021 when the US Supreme Court declined to hear the case.

The appellate court found in *Grimm v. Gloucester County School Board* the Equal Protection Clause and Title IX included protections for transgender people, specifically that it permits them to use bathrooms and other facilities that align with their gender identity.

But the department doesn’t appear to be considering such legal precedents, Hite said.

“If the Department of Education were to take existing law into consideration, they would be aware that this ruling exists,” he said.

“That they are continuing an investigation, even though there’s a court ruling that there’s no violation of the law, indicates to me that they aren’t interested in what the law says. They’re interested in what the president says.”

The immediate goal of the transgender bathroom use investigations appears to be to scare districts into compliance, Hite said, though it could theoretically result in revoked federal funds.

“Depending on its size and resources, having to fight federal lawsuits that could last for years potentially is a terrifying cost for school districts,” Hite said.

“School districts’ primary function is to serve their communities, not to fight the federal government in order to do so. So I think first is to try and strong-arm compliance, involuntary compliance, quite frankly, then legal action can be taken that can mandate a policy or practice for a school district, or a change in policy or practice by the Department of Education.”

Many of the department’s announcements of its recent investigations have referenced former President Joe Biden’s approach to Title IX and how the current administration is changing course.

“The Trump Administration has fought to protect the integrity of Title IX since Inauguration Day,” the department said.

“Within two weeks of being in office, the Department returned to enforcing the Trump Administration’s 2020 Title IX rule after the Biden Administration’s damaging and illegal rewrite was vacated by a federal court. This action realigned Title IX’s sex-based protections with biological reality, not ideological fantasy.”

Biden’s 2024 changes to Title IX added updates for pregnant and parenting students and clarified protections for LGBTQ+ people, undoing many of the changes Trump made in 2020. But they were quickly challenged and removed at the start of Trump’s second term.

This cyclical reinterpretation of Title IX makes for a difficult dynamic for school districts that care about the wellbeing of their students but also want to be compliant, Hite said.

Not the first issue around transgender bathroom use
Western Carolina University also faced an investigation last year after a viral video showed student Payton McNabb confronting a transgender woman for using the woman’s restroom.

McNabb was already a prominent anti-trans activist at the time of taking the video at WCU. She gained a social media following after she received a traumatic brain injury in 2022 from being hit by a volleyball spiked by a transgender player.

Districts in several other states are being investigated for similar claims, including for allowing transgender students to play on women’s school sports teams. The U.S. Supreme Court ruled Tuesday publicly funded schools can ban transgender girls from participating in sports on the basis of Title IX. But it’s important to note the court was clear their decision doesn’t change anything about how Title IX is applied, Hite said.

The department recently announced its Office of Civil Rights will be relocated to the US Department of Justice — a component of the conservative policy agenda Project 2025, which Trump attempted to distance himself from during the 2024 election, and a move toward the Trump administration’s goal of eliminating the department altogether.

This makes for a murky picture of how OCR will handle these investigations as the transition occurs. Even if it is essentially operate in the exact same way, Hite said it’s concerning that OCR, which should be the most transparent and accessible, is now riddled with question marks.



GETTY IMAGES

Congressional Black Caucus Chair Yvette Clarke (D-N.Y.) speaks at a press conference opposing the SCORE Act May 19, 2026, in Washington, D.C.

Black lawmakers hit by Supreme Court ruling

By David Lightman

STATELINE

WASHINGTON — The long, often agonizing struggle for Black political clout in Washington faces a new, uncertain and potentially troublesome chapter.

Black political power in the nation's capital is centered on the Congressional Black Caucus. In the U.S. House, the caucus has enough members to comprise roughly one fourth of the votes needed to reach a 218-vote majority, including some of the most senior and influential Democrats in Congress. Their numbers and cohesion have been enough to push landmark legislation such as the Affordable Care Act across the line.

But the April 29 U.S. Supreme Court decision in *Louisiana v. Callais* narrowing the scope of the federal Voting Rights Act, as well as this year's aggressive Republican redrawing of congressional district lines in conservative states, is a serious threat to Black political momentum. Analysts see more than 20 caucus members possibly at risk of losing their seats.

"Not since Jim Crow have we seen this level of systematic disenfranchisement of Black voters," Black Caucus Chair Yvette Clark, D-N.Y., said in a statement.

In May, the Congressional Black Caucus joined with the NAACP to demand that Black athletes withhold financial and athletic support from public universities in states where redrawing congressional lines has threatened to unseat Black lawmakers.

Among the schools that could be impacted are historic football powers Alabama and Georgia, as well as Florida, South Carolina, Mississippi, Tennessee, Texas and Louisiana.

Black progress and setbacks

Black progress in Congress was supposed to get rolling after the Civil War when voting rights were significantly strengthened and the first Black senator and House member began serving in 1870.

Then came the end of Reconstruction in 1877, the rise of the Jim Crow segregationist South, and the brutal erosion and in effect the denial of Black voting rights in the South. From 1881 until 1967, the U.S. Senate did not have a single Black member. The House saw a 28-year drought in the early 20th century.

The post-World War II civil rights movement led to the 1965 Voting Rights Act, a landmark achievement that truly marked the start of a new era for Black political representation — and influence.

Thirteen Black lawmakers created the Congressional Black Caucus in 1971. Today it has 60 members.

Rep. Hakeem Jeffries, D-N.Y., is the House minority leader, in line to become the first Black speaker if Democrats win control of the House in November.

Caucus members are the top Democrats on four of the House's committees: Reps. Maxine Waters, D-Calif., Financial Services; Bennie Thompson, D-Miss., Homeland Security; Bobby Scott, D-Va., Education and the Workforce; and Gregory Meeks, D-N.Y., Foreign Affairs.

A new Jim Crow era ?

The clash over what constitutes fair representation has been raging since the country, now celebrating its 250th anniversary, was created.

The *Louisiana v. Callais* decision opens a new — or in some eyes, a recycled and disturbing — debate.

"The backward-looking U.S. Supreme Court decision in *Louisiana vs. Callais* opens the door to a new Jim Crow era by drastically diluting the right of Black voters to choose lawmakers who represent their concerns," said Karen Dolan, senior fellow at the Institute for Policy Studies, a liberal research organization.

She estimated that one-third of the Congressional Black Caucus seats could be at risk, as well as thousands of state and local elected officials over the next few years.

Conservatives offered a different take. Constitutional amendments

adopted just after the Civil War, establishing voting rights among other things, "were forged at tremendous human cost to secure a constitutional order grounded in equality before the law—not racial classifications," said Kevin Roberts, president of Heritage Action, a conservative advocacy organization.

He said the court decision "restores that understanding and reaffirms that the Constitution does not permit sorting Americans by race in the exercise of political power."

Why the Black Caucus matters

Since the Voting Rights Act and subsequent revisions that until recent years strengthened its provisions — and routinely won bipartisan support — the Black Caucus has acquired leverage from its numbers as well as its generally consistent unity on policy.

Its members, usually almost all Democrats, have for years supported an agenda grounded in civil and worker rights, education and health care.

The Affordable Care Act was the 2010 bill that overhauled the nation's health care system, creating new help for people to buy insurance and adding strong consumer protections.

"Without representatives of Black voters from the South, there would be no ACA," said Bishop William Barber II, founding director of the Center for Public Theology and Public Policy at Yale Divinity School. The bill passed the House by seven votes. No Republicans voted for it.

The caucus has also been active in securing funding for Historically Black Colleges and Universities, which the caucus says in its agenda statement "have always been agents of equity, access, and excellence in education — especially for students of color."

Connected with the caucus is the nonprofit Congressional Black Caucus Foundation, which provides scholarships, leadership training, research and other programs. Its annual legislative conference in Washington, scheduled this year for mid-September, is regarded as an important forum for Black policy debate and advocacy. It says its mission is to "advance the global Black community."

Struggles and victories

The 15th Amendment to the Constitution, ratified in 1870, bars federal or state denial or curbs on voting rights because of "race, color, or previous condition of servitude."

But once Reconstruction effectively ended in 1877, in many instances so did federal protection for Black voting rights in the South.

"Once U.S. troops withdrew, the federal ability to protect minority voting rights in the South was substantially limited until Congress enacted the Voting Rights Act in 1965," said a June report by the Congressional Research Service.

Black voting, particularly in the South, was severely curbed, as people in the community could be subject to nearly impossible-to-pass literacy tests, poll taxes, and outright intimidation.

Democrats controlled much of the South after the Civil War, until civil rights laws eroded its grip starting in the mid-1960s.

"One-party control in many areas, even entire states, meant that the party often wielded at least as much power as the government itself. Even where voter protections were enshrined in law, they could be avoided," CRS said.

"These and other voting barriers meant that, practically, African Americans remained disenfranchised throughout much of the South."

The civil rights movement of the 1950s and 1960s spurred radical changes. In January 1964, the 24th Amendment was ratified, banning the poll tax or any other tax as a condition for voting.

In August 1965, President Lyndon Johnson signed the Voting Rights Act, which barred barriers to voting such as literacy tests.

It also established "preclearance," which required the Justice Department to approve any changes in voting procedures in certain places with a history of racial discrimination.

Journalist Tony Brown was an uncompromising voice

Continued from page 2A

zero Black faces on the air," Brown said in an interview reflecting on his career. "I never dreamed I would ever work in television."

He remembered approaching a Detroit television station as a young man after being encouraged by a college friend to pursue broadcasting. Rather than receiving encouragement, Brown was laughed at by a station executive who considered the idea of a Black television host unimaginable.

Instead of accepting rejection, Brown helped change the industry.

After producing Detroit public television's first program focused on African Americans, he was recruited in 1970 to lead *Black Journal*, the groundbreaking national public affairs program produced by New York public television station WNET. Under Brown's leadership, the program grew in influence before eventually becoming *Tony Brown's Journal* in 1977.

Week after week, Brown challenged viewers to confront difficult conversations about race, inequality, economics and public policy. His interviews often generated controversy because they addressed issues many national programs ignored altogether.

Brown also understood that representation behind the camera mattered as much as representation in front of it.

He consistently advocated for more Black producers, writers, executives and decision-makers throughout the television industry. He argued that authentic storytelling required diverse leadership in newsrooms and production offices.

His work extended beyond broadcasting.

Brown served as the founding dean of the School of Communications at Howard University before later becoming the inaugural dean of the Scripps Howard School of Journalism and Communications at Hampton University, where he helped mentor a new generation of journalists committed to public service and

ethical reporting.

He also wrote books, syndicated a newspaper column and hosted radio programs while encouraging Black entrepreneurship and economic independence.

Not everyone agreed with Brown's evolving political views or philosophy. Throughout his career, he challenged conventional thinking across the political spectrum, drawing criticism from both liberals and conservatives. Yet even critics acknowledged his willingness to ask difficult questions and spark conversations that mainstream media often avoided.

Perhaps Brown's greatest legacy lies in the doors he helped open.

Today's television landscape—with Black news anchors, network executives, producers, documentary filmmakers and nationally recognized journalists—is dramatically different from the one Brown entered more than six decades ago.

He often credited public television, particularly WNET, for giving him an opportunity when few others would.

"It helped shape my life in a direction nothing else was prepared to do," Brown said while reflecting on the station's commitment to diversity and public service.

For generations of viewers, however, Brown did far more than shape his own career.

He proved that Black public affairs journalism could command a national audience without compromising its mission. He demonstrated that television could educate as well as entertain. And he reminded America that telling Black stories truthfully was not a niche endeavor—it was an essential part of documenting the nation's history.

In an era when conversations about media representation continue to evolve, Tony Brown's career serves as a reminder that progress often begins with those willing to challenge the status quo.

His voice may be gone, but the platform he built—and the journalists he inspired—continue carrying forward the conversation he began decades ago.

Follow The Post on social media



@thecharpost



The Charlotte Post



thecharpost



The Charlotte Post

While We Don't Deliver Door-to-Door, We Do Deliver to Your Mailbox

Stay connected to the stories that matter.

Have the Post delivered straight to your mailbox with a convenient mail subscription.



www.thecharlottepost.com

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

A win-win approach to higher education

Colleges and universities are under pressure from many directions, but perhaps none are more important and essential than student recruitment and retention. The competition for student enrollments is stiffening.

At its peak, in 2025, North Carolina had 120,990 high school graduates, but that number is projected to drop to 112,340 by 2030 because of the sharp decline in birth rates. Not only that, but the number of students opting out of enrolling in higher education is swelling.

Dr. Allen Guidry and Chris Stansbury of East Carolina University recently made very interesting presentation to the ECU Board of Visitors, focusing on the increased competition colleges now face to enroll students, but they said an even bigger issue is keeping them enrolled. Nationally we are told the dropout rate of first year college students is between 22-24 percent. ECU's goal is not just to keep students enrolled but also to achieve the ambitious goal of a four-year graduation rate of 55 percent. An NBC news report indicated just 41-45 percent graduate within this time frame.

The university understood it needed much more data, such as understanding when and why students might drop out of school. Students face a variety of hurdles during their journey; housing issues, personal problems at home or with an instructor, a bad grade, financial, marriage or other issues. Freshmen have a brand-new environment, away from home for the first time.

Armed with better data, work groups established an initiative titled Pirate 360, an all-out effort to head off dropouts and establish success paths for each student to graduate, a major undertaking.

We were fascinated with ECU's renewed emphasis on and importance of student advisors in the retention and graduation success. With training, better aids and data, coupled with more in-person meetings with the student, the advisor can better understand students and help them identify issues, sometimes before the student even understands they have one. The advisor can help apply "triage" in ways to help the student around, over and through hurdles and stay on track to graduate.

ECU has ambitious goals and expectations for advisors. It wants the advisor to meet with the first-year student during summer orientation, helping the freshman to choose a course schedule, provide contact information and be available. The advisor then checks in with the student before week three, the so-called "drop zone," when students can drop courses. If students need help or expresses concerns the advisor helps assuage their fears, letting them know they aren't alone. The advisor is also to contact the student once again before or after mid-terms to ensure finishing the first semester strong.

Unless there are extenuating circumstances, advisors need to ensure the student enrolls in at least 12-15 hours per semester, the number needed to be eligible for financial aid and to complete the 120 hours needed to graduate in four years. Sometime the advisor needs to intervene to get a student enrolled in courses needed to stay on track.

This BHAG (big hairy ambitious goal) is exciting. It ensures the university is involved in the student's success. This exciting effort is a win-win all around. The big winners are obviously the students, but the university and the state also benefit.

The student (and parents) won't need to spend as much money if the student graduates in four years. More importantly, a UNC Return on Investment Study in 2023 found that a graduate with a UNC System Bachelor's degree will earn median lifetime earnings of \$1.2 million more than those entering the workforce without the degree.

The university also wins by not having to spend as much money recruiting students to replace dropouts. Better retention and higher graduation rates ensure more state funding for the university. But the biggest payoff is the great story it can tell parents and graduating seniors: "Come to our university and we partner with you, really partner, to keep you in school and to graduate in four years."

But North Carolina is also a winner. The ROI study mentioned above shows that for every dollar the state invests the student will earn an additional \$23 on its investment. Higher incomes mean a better state economy and more new businesses and jobs being created.

ECU is in the early stages of implementing this new ambitious initiative. They are training advisors, gathering data and supervising the implementation of Pirate 360. But initial reports already indicate success in student retention and lower dropout rates.

We look forward to learning more from ECU. It is likely not the only institution of higher learning addressing these issues, but it promises great potential for the future of our state.

Tom Campbell is a North Carolina broadcaster and columnist who has covered North Carolina public policy issues since 1965.

A look at North Carolina's collective power

I arrived at my neighborhood meeting a little late, but that didn't seem to surprise anyone. I took a seat and glanced at the agenda written in marker on butcher paper. Tonight's topics: Neighborhood newsletter, traffic on Boyd Street, illegal dumping concerns, affordable housing conversation, and the upcoming potluck.

Over the years, I've sat in hundreds of meetings like this and, if I am being honest, no matter the place or the people they are often the same. There's debate, there's questions, working groups are formed. Yet, even with this redundancy, I never tire of them. Community organizing meetings are the drumbeat of our democracy.

And they always have been. This has been on my mind as we prepare to celebrate the Fourth of July and, collectively, reflect on our nation's 250th anniversary.

While our democracy is a system of governance, it is the organizing of everyday people that has always moved it along. It's the

work of grassroots organizers, community groups, and movements that have advanced our country to live up to our shared ideals, from worker protections to defending the right to vote.

While who we elect matters to our democracy, so does the push and pull of the community members to ask questions, surface issues, uncover solutions and build pressure to make change.

Most of the wins we have achieved and the progress we have made over the last 250 years have been made through organizing.

Here in North Carolina, we have a tremendous organizing history. From the Equal Rights Leagues of the 1870s protecting Black suffrage or the hog waste activism of the 1990s that forced our legislative leaders to pass the Clean Water Responsibility Act, citizen organizing has always been the corrective power guiding North Carolina forward.

What strikes me is how I was never taught this organizing history in school — lessons that are as instructive as the wars and presidents we were tested on.

I went to high school in Raleigh and in Winston-Salem in the late 1990s,

and then to college in Chapel Hill, but it wasn't until I was nearly 40 that I learned about some of North Carolina's organizing contributions.

In the 1980s, it was organizing in rural Warren County that birthed the modern environmental justice movement. When the state proposed to dump polychlorinated biphenyl (PCB)-contaminated soil landfill there, local residents, who were overwhelmingly poor and Black, worked to oppose the landfill and led civil disobedience actions to block the trucks from entering their community. While the landfill was eventually created, their work raised national awareness of disproportionate environmental burdens on poor communities and communities of color, and influenced later policy discussions and research on environmental equity.

I also never learned about the massive — and, importantly, multiracial — union organizing in our state from Winston-Salem to Kannapolis, or about the Native activists who successfully organized to secure federal Indian Health Services and educational scholarships for Lumbee students.

And yet, the leadership

of North Carolinians in the Civil Rights movement was merely a paragraph in my high school textbook.

Looking back at this rich history of collective, multi-racial history in our backyard isn't just an important exercise. It's a blueprint for the next 250 years.

North Carolina's organizing legacy continues. Today, service workers in Durham, Raleigh and Charlotte are organizing for dignity on the job and a \$15 minimum wage, and rural North Carolinians organizing around coal ash have held Duke Energy to account. And just over the last few months, residents in dozens of towns across the state have come together across ideology to fight data centers and big tech.

So, while my neighborhood meeting probably isn't going to get a new environmental protection law passed or ensure the continuance of free and fair elections, what we are doing is a part of a long legacy of regular people coming together to try to shape our collective future.

Gwen Frisbie-Fulton is a North Carolina storyteller and organizer who writes about race, class, gender and politics in the South. Follow her work on Substack at Working Class Storytelling.

Small particles, big impacts for our air

Breathe in. And out. Do it a few more times.

Then think about what having clean air means to you — and to your health.

Research presents ample evidence that the quality of the air is related to the quality of your health. One of my mentors in graduate

school was a guy named Kirk Smith. He was the first person to measure the quality of indoor air in developing countries: He had women wear halter monitors that measured levels of particulates, carbon monoxide and other gases from indoor cookstoves.

Most of us aren't standing over a wood stove to cook day in and day out, but Kirk was a pioneer in measuring the effects of pollution on human beings. Years ago, he turned me onto the growing awareness of what were then called "ultrafine" particles, now known as PM 2.5. They're created in a variety of ways, but most

commonly by internal combustion engines.

There's a lot of research to show that schools (commonly built on cheap land next to highways (cheap land there!) have more kids who develop asthma as a result of their exposure to emissions and the PM 2.5 in those emissions.

Increased knowledge of these health effects are what drove, in part, changes in environmental regulations in the U.S. for several generations. And the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency has documented these effects in a giant document, the Integrated Science Assessment for Particulate Matter, that was published in 2019.

The ISAPM acknowledged places where more research was necessary, but it backed up the idea that exposure to PMs was "causal" for cardiac, respiratory and other effects, including the development of cancer and increased mortality. (By the way, I downloaded the ISAPM and uploaded it to our website, just in case it disappears as some other EPA documents have. You can peruse all 1,968 pages at your

leisure.)

Yes, it costs industry more to clean up what was coming out of smokestacks, but the benefit was the savings in the form of, say, fewer kids arriving at emergency departments because they had an asthma attack. Not to mention the benefit of having a healthy populace.

However, now the EPA is throwing that measurement rubric out the window. As of this month, agency leaders announced that for some major air pollutants, such as PMs and ozone, cost-benefit analyses will no longer include the dollar value of health benefits derived from limiting their emissions.

Agency leaders cited "uncertainties" in the estimates of the benefits.

"To rectify this error, the EPA is no longer monetizing benefits from PM2.5 and ozone but will continue to quantify the emissions until the Agency is confident enough in the modeling to properly monetize those impacts," the agency wrote.

In short, we've not generated randomized con-

trolled trials where one group of people breathes PM 2.5s while others get pure air, so we can't be absolutely sure of the effects. Instead, much of the data comes from multitudes of observational and epidemiological studies — which inherently have more uncertainty but make up for those uncertainties by large datasets that reduce the probability of error to a minuscule amount.

The agency will be taking into account the costs of mitigation to industry, however. Those are much easier to quantify...So, a cost-benefit analysis without consideration of the benefits. And industries will have the ability to sue to have standards loosened.

Enjoy that air, while it lasts.

Rose Hoban, the founder and editor of N.C. Health News, is a registered nurse and journalist who's been reporting on health care in North Carolina for two decades.

Byron Donalds makes case for leading Florida

By David L. Snelling

SOUTH FLORIDA TIMES

MIAMI - In 2018, then-Tallahassee mayor Andrew Gillum upset U.S. Rep. Gwendolyn Graham in the Democratic primary in the Florida gubernatorial race.

Gillum won despite his opponent's massive endorsements, a campaign war chest and support from her father, former longtime U.S. Senator and Florida governor Bob Graham.

Gillum was poised to make history as the first-ever Black governor in Florida's history, but he narrowly lost to Republican Ron DeSantis, who was hand-picked by President Donald Trump during his first term.

As DeSantis is preparing to leave political office this year due to term limits, U.S. Rep. Byron Donalds (R-Fort Myers) is seeking the same history-making distinction as Gillum. Buoyed by an endorsement from Trump, Donalds, 47, is the front runner for the GOP nomination. If he wins, it will most likely set up a showdown with potential Democratic nominee David Jolly, who's leading in the polls as the party's favorite.

But Trump's declining popularity, the GOP's latest actions including the war with Iran, high gas and food prices and an eco-

nomic downturn might impact Donalds' chances of making history, according to several political strategists.

In the latest poll, Donalds leads in the GOP primary by 54%, according to Fabrizio, Lee and Associates.

The percentage represents a nine-percentage point lead over Investor James Fishback (9%), Lt. Gov. Jay Collins (7%) and former state House Speaker Raul Renners who has just 2%, which is less than the survey's 4.78% margin.

Donalds' chances of becoming Florida's first-ever Black governor have doubled since 2025. He has also outtraced his opponents, taking in roughly \$81 million as of May and is positioned to heavily invest in Florida's expensive television markets and ground operations.

"Undecideds have moved toward Byron Donalds at a greater rate than any other Republican candidate since January," a polling memo reads. "Despite their constant lies and attacks, Fishback and Collins are not gaining any real traction, and Byron Donalds is clearly the overwhelming favorite to be the GOP nominee in this year's election for governor."

During an interview with an Orlando television station last week, Donalds

said he would, if elected governor, continue to have local law enforcement agents work with ICE agents to continue the crackdown on undocumented immigrants.

Donalds said law enforcement has his full support, and ICE has been operating within the confines of the law, "beyond a shadow of a doubt," despite what critics say.

"We have a decision to make, every Floridian has to make that decision," Donalds said. "Are we gonna abide by the law and be a law-and-order state, or are we going to choose to not do that? I choose to follow the law, and I choose to make sure that Florida complies with federal immigration law. We are going to continue that standard that Gov. DeSantis has set."

In previous interviews, Donalds said he had his eyes set on the Governor's Mansion when he served in the Florida House of Representatives as a Democrat. He switched parties in 2010 and became involved in the Tea Party movement.

GOP leaders encouraged Donalds to run for U.S. House of Representatives in 2012, but he finished fifth in a field of six candidates. He ran again four years later and won.

But Donalds prompted

backlash from several Black GOP and Democratic leaders for his comments about the Jim Crow era. During a political outreach event in 2024, Donalds said that during Jim Crow, Black families were together, and more Black people were not just conservative.

"Black people have always been conservative-minded, but more black people voted conservatively," he said. "And then, HEW, Lyndon Johnson, and then you go down that road, and now we are where we are. What's happened in America the last 10 years, and I say it because it's my contemporaries...you're starting to see more black people being married in homes raising kids."

After Black leaders pushed back on his remarks, Donalds denied "that Black people were doing better under Jim Crow" or that "Jim Crow is great" and denied having been inaccurate when he said that Black marriage rates were relatively high during that era.

During a campaign stop in Tampa, Donalds said his campaign is gaining momentum and is resonating with Black voters, even as he consolidates support within the GOP.



NATIONAL SOCCER HALL OF FAME

Joe Gaetjens (second from right), who scored the game-winning goal in the United States' 1-0 win vs. England in the 1950 World Cup, is among the historic achievements of Black soccer players chronicled in Akbar Majeed's documentary "Can We Kick It."

A pitch for greater soccer inclusion

Documentary produced by West Charlotte graduate dives into Black history and accomplishments

By Cameron Williams
cameron.williams@thecharlottepost.com

Soccer is growing in America and Black players have a lot to do with that. It is easy to focus on the sport during the FIFA World Cup as the world's best compete in the United States, but there's also an upswing in interest across the country. Over the last 10 years in Major League Soccer — the premier U.S. club league — annual total attendance has climbed from 6.1 million fans to over 11.2 million. It is also growing among Black Amer-

icans as well, with standout players like Tyler Adams and Weston McKinnie on the 2026 U.S. side that advanced to the World Cup's Round of 16. A new documentary, 'Can We Kick It,' dives into the history of soccer and how Black people have been key to the sport's past and its surge in popularity. The movie, which is produced and directed by Charlotte native Akbar Majeed, debuted in New York in May and makes its Charlotte debut July 12



Majeed

at Independent Picture House, 4237 Raleigh St. The screening is at 6 p.m. and tickets are available at tickettailor.com/events/canwekickitfilmllc. Majeed, a graduate of West Charlotte High and North Carolina A&T, spent four years gathering interviews and research to develop the film to show the role of Black players in soccer's growth for generations. Among the highlights: · Haiti-born Joe Gaetjens, who scored

the lone goal in the U.S.'s 1-0 win against England in the 1950 World Cup — considered one of the greatest upsets in the tournament's history · Howard University's 1970s dominance with a pair of NCAA Division I title game berths and the 1974 championship capping a 19-0 season. The 1971 squad was stripped of that season's championship — the first for by a historically Black school — by the NCAA over player eligibility issues. · Eddie Pope, a High Point native and Please see **FILMMAKER** | 8A

African teams make their presence felt at the World Cup

By Steve Goldberg
FOR THE CHARLOTTE POST

In this expanded 48-team FIFA World Cup, the number of African teams participating doubled from five in 2022 to ten in this year's tournament. Previously, no more than two African teams had made that leap in any World Cup. That increase has also come with a growth in success, with nine of those teams graduating from group play into the knockout rounds. Cape Verde, Egypt, Ivory Coast, Morocco and South Africa all finished second in their re-

spective groups, while Algeria, Democratic Republic of Congo, Ghana and Senegal were among the eight best third-placed finishers. "It's a source of great pride that there are so many African teams qualified for the round of 32," said DR Congo coach Sebastien Desabre, whose side advanced. That should not come as a surprise. Morocco made history in 2022 by reaching the semifinals, as well as becoming the first African team to finish top of their first-round group. Senegal

and Ghana reached the Round of 16. Two significant wins came in the group stage, with Cameroon beating Brazil and Tunisia beating defending champions France by 1-0 scores. This should bolster the argument that the Confederation of African Football, which has 54 members, just one less than the Union of European Football Associations, the largest confederation in FIFA, deserves more representation in the World Cup. While that participation doubled this year, Europe still had 16 teams. CONMEBOL,

the South American governing body, has just 10 member countries but six are in the tournament. Morocco moved on after dismissing the Netherlands on penalty kicks, but four of nine CAF teams were eliminated, all by one-goal margins. South Africa lost to Canada 1-0. Norway downed Ivory Coast, and England bested DR Congo by 2-1 scores. Senegal was hard done by a late penalty call against Belgium 27 minutes into the 30 of extra time after Please see **AFRICAN** | 8A

Finney-Smith adds 3-point shooting in frontcourt



GETTY IMAGES

The Charlotte Hornets traded for Houston Rockets power forward Dorian Finney Smith as well as three second-round draft picks in exchange for a \$13.3 million trade exception.

By Cameron Williams
cameron.williams@thecharlottepost.com

The Charlotte Hornets acquired power forward Dorian Finney-Smith and three second-round picks from the Houston Rockets in exchange for cash considerations believed to include a \$13.3 million trade exception to free space for the Rockets to sign veteran free agents. The Hornets acquired a 2027 second-round pick via Memphis, a 2028 second-round pick via Houston, and a 2033 second-round pick via the Rockets along with Finney-Smith, who has been on five teams over 11 NBA seasons. Including its own selections, Charlotte now holds 18 second-round picks over the next seven seasons. Finney-Smith is in the second season of a four-year \$52 million contract that carries guarantees over the first two years. His deal also gives the Hornets future salary flexibility in addition to a trove of draft picks that can be packaged with trade partners. Finney-Smith, 33, averages 8.0 points (43.3 Please see **FINNEY-SMITH** | 8A

CIAA at long last warms to football

The CIAA Football Media Day isn't until July 15, but the conference already has upstaged the coaches and players. The board of directors released a teaser at the 2026 spring meeting last month announcing an expanded football championship format to debut in the fall. Full details will be released at media day. Football has undergone changes the past few years. The championship game began with the two division winners battling it out for bragging rights and a hopeful chance at an NCAA playoff bid. The downside was the champion wasn't always the best team, so nobody went to the postseason. Officials changed the format in 2024 and eliminated divisional seeding. Teams are ranked No. 1-11, with the top two teams advancing to the title game. And the icing on the cake is the winner earns an automatic playoff spot. Now, word is the stakes will be raised higher with a playoff- Please see **CIAA** | 8A



BONITTA
BEST

A&T grad Al Holland, who pitched in '83 World Series, dies

By Brian Holloway
FOR THE CHARLOTTE POST

Al Holland, a North Carolina A&T graduate who helped the Philadelphia Phillies to the 1983 World Series, died July 4 in Fort Mill at age 73. Al Holland Jr. confirmed his father's passing, surrounded by family. The elder Holland, a 1975 A&T graduate, was a 2015 inductee to the College Baseball Hall of Fame in addition to the Aggies' (1994) and Mid-Eastern Athletic Conference (1993) halls of Fame.

"Al Holland was a big-league star, both on and off the field," A&T Chancellor James R. Martin II said in a statement. "He and his trademark phrase, 'Give me the ball,' personified the Aggie spirit of toughness, competitiveness and excellence that defines our university." Born on Aug. 16, 1952, in Roanoke, Virginia, Holland played for the Aggies baseball team from 1972-75 under head coach Mel "Big 10" Groomes. He is one of only three A&T student-athletes to have his jersey num-

ber retired on merit, along with men's basketball player and Naismith Hall of Famer Al Attles (Class of 1960) and football player and Pro Football Hall of Famer Elvin Bethea (1968). Holland's No. 17 jersey is inscribed on the left-field wall at World War Memorial Stadium, the home ballpark of A&T baseball. Before arriving at A&T, Holland graduated all-Black Lucy Addison High School, a segregated school for African Americans in the Roanoke area where he starred in football, basketball

and baseball. Holland enrolled at A&T in 1971, and his three younger brothers eventually followed him to Greensboro to play football. Holland made an immediate impact on the football field, leading the Aggies in rushing as a freshman in 1971. But baseball is where Holland became an Aggie, collegiate baseball and Phillies legend. As a freshman, he led the nation in strikeouts with 143 and finished second nationally in ERA (0.54). A 25-strikeout no-hit Please see **A&T** | 8A



CONFEDERATION OF AFRICAN FOOTBALL

Cape Verde coach Bubista led his team to the knockout stage of the 2026 FIFA World Cup, one of nine African nations to reach the round of 32. Ten African teams advanced to the tournament, double the number from 2022.

African teams make their presence felt at World Cup

Continued from page 7A

drawing 2-2 in regulation. Senegal surged ahead 2-0 until giving up goals in the 86th and 89th minutes.

Prior to this year, African teams have made the Round of 16 12 times. Morocco was the first in 1986. Cameroon was the first to make the quarterfinals in 1990. Senegal (2002), Ghana (2010), and Morocco (2022) equaled that achievement. Only Morocco has made the semifinals.

Cape Verde, the second smallest country in the tournament with a population (535,000) about two-thirds that of Charlotte, were the early darlings. The Blue Sharks come from a group of 10 islands off the west coast of Africa and played their first national team match in 1978 but were able to hold

pre-tournament favorite Spain to a 0-0 draw. In fact, all their first-round matches were stalemates – 2-2 against two-time World Cup champions Uruguay, and 0-0 against Saudi Arabia.

“We are very happy to be able to participate in the World Cup. Football belongs to everyone. It does not belong only to wealthier countries,” said Cape Verde coach Pedro Leitão Brito, a former Cape Verdean player more commonly known as Bubista.

The face of their team is 40-year-old goalkeeper Josimar José Évora Dias, known as Vozinha. His heroics against Spain saw his popularity on Instagram grow from less than 50,000 to well over 5 million.

They lost 3-2 to Argentina and Lionel Messi in the knockout phase.

Filmmaker chronicles pitch for greater soccer inclusion

Continued from page 7A

National Soccer Hall of Fame inductee who played in three World Cups and scored the first golden goal in MLS Cup history to lead D.C. United to the inaugural title in 1996.

“The journey has always been about exposing the urban community to soccer,” said Majeed, founder of Concrete2Green, a nonprofit that turns abandoned basketball and tennis courts into mini soccer pitches in low-income communities. “We’ve pivoted a little bit into filmmaking, which is still about exposing urban communities to soccer. ...

“The film itself came about through conversations I have had with different people over the years about soccer ... so, I said, ‘Let’s put this to film.’”

The World Cup confirms soccer as a unifying sport, Majeed argues, and the pride fans have for their national teams is unique because of the sport’s global appeal.

“I always say that soccer is a microcosm of the world,” he said. “There is perception and then there is reality. The reality is that soccer is truly a unifying sport when it comes to just the passion and the love of the sport itself. Pele and players like [Diego] Maradona, these old players are revered not just for what they did on the pitch, but what they did to bring people together. That is the underlying piece of the film, is how do we show what they did to the urban communities.”

Growing soccer in economically and socially disadvantaged communities is a microcosm of America itself. In most countries, soccer is embraced as a working-class game where talent is

nurtured at the grass roots. In the U.S., access is generally based on a family’s ability to access equipment and coaching.

“America as a whole yet still hasn’t embraced the game of soccer,” Majeed said. “It is a much broader conversation than just the urban communities, but we start it there. ... I think it can be a combination of a lot of issues, resources being one. The whole issue of pay-to-play, especially in this country. Here I think it is more about an allocation of resources rather than just a lack of them. I think access is another one; access to fields, access to good coaching. A lot of that has to do with pay-to-play.”

Pay-to-play is the dominant U.S. youth sports model where families must pay upfront for participation on travel clubs, which traditionally have the best coaching and facilities. Those costs cover coaching salaries, tournament entry fees and travel. The drawback to this model is talented athletes from lower-income families are excluded.

“I think pay-to-play is probably here to stay,” Majeed said. “I think there could be an alternative role to that. I don’t think it will ever be broken or torn down, but I think there is an opportunity for an alternative route. Part of that goes into education from the global perspective... In conversations I have had with international federations and clubs, they have bought into the MLS model of getting the best available when, in reality that is just the best you see because they have been able to finance their way into that situation.”

Finney-Smith adds size, shooting at power forward

Continued from page 7A

FG%, 35.9 3P%, 72.1 FT%), 4.4 rebounds and 1.4 assists in 27.3 minutes per game for his career, which includes 628 appearances (445 starts) across 10 NBA seasons between Brooklyn, Dallas, Houston and Los Angeles. He has played in 44 playoff games in six postseasons.

A 43% shooter from the floor, Finney-Smith connected on 35.9% from three-

point range although he made good on just 27% of three-point tries in 2025-26, a career low. Finney-Smith adds depth at power forward, where Charlotte added Naz Reid via trade with Minnesota.

Trading Finney-Smith relieves salary cap pressure on the Rockets, who move under the first apron with about \$9 million to spend in free agency.



NORTH CAROLINA A&T ATHLETICS

Al Holland, a two-sport standout at North Carolina A&T who pitched on the Philadelphia Phillies’ 1983 National League championship team, died July 4 in Fort Mill, S.C., at age 73.

A&T grad Al Holland, Phillies 1983 World Series pitcher, dies

Continued from page 7A

ter against rival North Carolina Central became the highlight of his freshman season. He never posted a season ERA above 1.03, and he pitched a no-hitter in each of his four seasons with the Aggies.

A&T moved from the NAIA to the NCAA in 1974, where Holland continued his dominant performances. He finished with a 0.95 ERA and 105 strikeouts as a junior and a 0.26 ERA and 118 strikeouts as a senior. He finished his collegiate career as a two-time NAIA All-American.

“I am deeply saddened to hear of the passing of Mr. Holland, a true Aggie legend,” A&T baseball coach Ben Hall said. “I was so fortunate to become close with him and his wife, Mary, and their whole family when we went through the process of retiring his No. 17 jersey.”

“His no-hitters were legendary, and his fastball was all the pitches he needed. I will miss his periodic visits with our team. The Aggie baseball program sends our thoughts and prayers to his whole family during this tough time.”

Holland was first drafted by the Texas Rangers in the 30th round of the 1974 summer Major League Baseball draft before the San Diego Padres drafted him in the fourth round of the January 1975 draft.

He chose not to leave school both times.

After graduation, Holland went undrafted in the summer of 1975. However, Branch Rickey III, a descendant of baseball legend Branch Rickey, signed him to play for the Pittsburgh Pirates in June 1975.

Holland, who went on to play 10 MLB seasons, made his MLB debut Sept. 5, 1977, in a Pirates uniform. He finished seventh in the National League Rookie of the Year voting in 1980 with the San Francisco Giants.

Holland made his biggest mark in MLB in 1983 as a member of the Phillies, where he saved 25 games for the National League champion. The Phillies beat the Los Angeles Dodgers in four games in the NL Championship Series, with Holland saving Games 1 and 4. They lost the World Series to the Baltimore Orioles in five games although Holland earned the save in Game 1.

Holland’s breakout season earned him the NL Rolands Relief Man of the Year Award. He also finished in the top 10 of the Cy Young and NL MVP voting. The following season, he earned his first and only MLB All-Star Game appearance.

A&T officially retired Holland’s No. 17 in 2020.

CIAA finally embraces football

Continued from page 7A

style format. Of course, the change comes down to more money for the conference, more exposure for the schools and – did I mention more money for the conference?

As I’ve written many times before, a new era has arrived for CIAA football. No, it’s not a cash cow like the basketball tournament – that’s the conference’s fault – but it’s no longer a dull, ugly stepsister either. Or the butt of jokes by opponents.

Other agenda items

The conference needs to up its sponsorship game after the board of directors

extended Commissioner Jacqie McWilliams Parker’s contract through 2031.

According to a report by HBCU Gameday, McWilliams Parker earns over \$300,000 a year and is sure to get a raise with the extension.

“This conference has a rich legacy built by generations of leaders, member institutions, student-athletes, coaches and administrators,” she said. “Together, we have made tremendous progress in strengthening the CIAA’s brand, enhancing the stu-

dent-athlete experience, deepening sponsor and partner engagement, and elevating the overall fan experience.”

Women’s sports were also front and center at the meetings.

Flag football will officially become a varsity sport in the 2026-27 season. Women’s soccer teams are encouraged to join other conferences as associate members since the CIAA doesn’t sponsor the sport. Virginia State and Shaw are members of Conference Carolinas.

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



SPORTS CHARLOTTE

Podcast with a home team advantage