



Panthers defensive coordinator Ejiro Evero oversees a remade unit after a historically bad season

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The Southern Coalition for Social Justice is lobbying the city of Charlotte and Mecklenburg County to ensure people who are public transit-dependent are appointed to the Metropolitan Public Transportation Authority, which would be created if voters approve a 1-cent sales tax in November.

## Commuter diversity urged for regional public transit trustees

*Activists want city and county to include transit-dependent people on the board*

By Herbert L. White

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The Southern Coalition for Social Justice is pushing Charlotte and Mecklenburg County to appoint commuters from diverse backgrounds to the Metropolitan Public Transportation Authority.

Jacob H. Sussman, chief counsel for justice system reform and chief counsel for environmental justice Anne Harvey David wrote in a July 24 letter to Charlotte City Council and Mecklenburg commissioners, that transit-dependent commuters be appointed to the MPTA board of trustees, who create and ex-

ecute transit policy in the region.

House Bill 948, the PAVE Act, sets a November voter referendum for a 1-cent transit tax. If approved, it creates a board of trustees to govern the transportation authority. The PAVE Act mandates the city and county appoint 27 trustees to the board.

Charlotte leaders have pushed the 1-cent transit tax as an initiative to improve economic mobility. According to the National Campaign for Transit Justice, 60% of public transit riders in the United States are people of color, with Black people accounting for 25%, fol-

lowed by Hispanics at 20%.

"While we recognize that a local referendum in November 2025 would give your voting constituents a say in this matter, we are deeply concerned that, if approved, the decision-making power behind the Metropolitan Public Transportation Authority ... would, by design, be separated from those most affected by the policies to be created and executed," the letter reads. "We urge you and the powerful lobbyists supporting this initiative to be transparent with the public about who will truly hold decision

Please see COMMUTER | 2A

## NC's 'housing wage' up nearly \$2 since 2024

By Greg Childress

NC NEWSLINE

A full-time worker in North Carolina must earn a minimum of \$27.14 per hour to afford a modest, two-bedroom apartment, according to a recent report by the National Low Income Housing Coalition.

A year ago, the state's "housing wage" was \$25.21 per hour.

The NLIHC releases an annual report — Out of Reach: The High Cost of Housing — which shows what people must earn to afford rents. The "housing wage" is an estimate of what a full-time worker must earn to afford rent at the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development's Fair Market Rent without spending more than 30% of their income.

Individuals and families that spend more than 30% of income on housing are considered cost burdened. Nearly half — 48% — of the state's renters and 19% of homeowners are considered cost burdened, according to the N.C. Housing Coalition.

At \$27.14 per hour, North Carolina has the 30th highest housing wage in the nation. A worker earning the \$7.25 per hour minimum wage must work 150 per week to afford a modest two-bedroom apartment. An annual income of \$56,442 is needed to afford a two-bedroom home at the \$1,232 per month FMR.

"This report is a critical reminder that we cannot reduce the affordable housing crisis down to individual choice or supply alone," Stephanie Watkins-Cruz, director of housing policy for the N.C. Housing Coalition, said in a statement. "This report reminds us that wages are not keeping up with the cost of living and that more and more North Carolinians are experiencing the strain of cost-burden across our state."

Meanwhile, the national 2025 "housing wage" is

Please see NORTH CAROLINA'S | 2A



Moderator Justin Perry makes a point during a forum on Mecklenburg County's history of racial terror lynchings July 24 at Allegro Westbrooks Regional Library in Charlotte. The forum was sponsored by The Post and Charlotte-Mecklenburg Remembrance Project.

## Forum raises awareness of history of lynching by remembering victims

By Herbert L. White

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Storytelling is a valuable tool in racial justice.

A community forum on Mecklenburg County's lynching history commemorated a pair of documented lynchings in the 20th century — the lynching of Joseph McNeely in 1913 and Willie McDaniel in 1929. The July 24 forum, "Knowing and Healing Through History," sponsored by The Post and Charlotte-Mecklenburg Remembrance Project, drew more than 60 people at Allegro Westbrook Regional Library, including McDaniel's

descendants.

"There were folks who died and marched and sacrificed for many of the privileges that I hold, and it is a responsibility to continue the fight in every generation," said Mecklenburg County Clerk of Superior Court Elisa Chinn-Gary, a panelist and the Remembrance Project's community engagement chair. "I also believe that by telling stories, we unveil more stories. I have had the process myself to examine what families call a hushed history, to look back and to examine the things, the stories, the

Please see TRUTH-TELLING | 2A

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## Trump to farmers: No relief for bias

*Feds drop programs to relieve previous USDA discrimination*

By Herbert L. White

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Federal programs for farmers impacted by discrimination are no more.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture on July 10 published a rule removing requirements for the use of discriminatory racial and gender preferences in federal programs when they aren't required by Congress. President Donald Trump accused his predecessor Joe Biden of weaponizing USDA to "willfully discriminate on the basis of race and gender" according to a media release.



Rollins

Agriculture Secretary Brooke Rollins directed USDA to review Inflation Reduction Act funding and rescind so-called diversity equity and inclusion programs.

"We are taking this aggressive, unprecedented action to eliminate discrimination in any form at USDA," Rollins said in a statement. "It is simply wrong and contrary to the fundamental principle that all persons should be treated equally. President Trump has directed the cabinet to scrutinize all programs for illegal and unfair discrimination, and as long as I am Secretary of Agriculture, when we find leftover Biden discrimination in our programs, we will hold those persons who have committed these insidious acts accountable and take swift action to correct these illegal actions."

U.S. Rep. Alma Adams, a Charlotte Democrat and senior member of the House Agriculture Committee, criticized the rollbacks.

Please see US DROPS | 2A

## CLT airport contractors press case for work safety

By Kylie Marsh

FOR THE CHARLOTTE POST

Workers at an American Airlines support services contractor at Charlotte Douglas International Airport are demanding management agree to improved workplace conditions.

The temperature at Charlotte Douglas at 11 a.m. on July 21 was 92 degrees Fahrenheit when workers and supporters wearing purple Service Employees International Union T-shirts delivered their demands via letter. ABM employees have been vocal about unsafe conditions which create a cycle of high turnover.

Cited in their petition were lack of mandated breaks, access to cold water and paid sick leave. North Carolina has no state labor protections for extreme weather.

In an e-mail distributed to ABM employees the day prior, company management warned that "union agents may attempt to convince [employees] to leave work during your shifts to participate in these activities," reminding workers that "employees who refuse to work

Please see CLT AIRPORT | 2A

### STAY IN TOUCH

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# Commuter diversity urged for transit panel

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sion-making authority if the referendum is approved."

The PAVE Act limits board membership to people with "demonstrated experience or qualifications in the areas of law, finance, engineering, public transportation, urban planning, logistics, government, architecture, or economic development." The activists contend the law risks excluding people who rely on public transit most, like working-class commuters, seniors on fixed incomes, or riders with disabilities.

"This exclusionary approach conflicts with a core principle of effective governance: those who are closest to the problem are often closest to the solution," the letter reads. "Regular transit riders know which routes are late, which stops lack enough shelter, where safety issues exist, and how service cuts affect their ability to work and take care of their families. While professional credentials in urban planning or transportation engineer-

ing are valuable, they cannot replace lived experience navigating Charlotte's transit system."

Appointing commuters who depend on public transit for their economic and social wellbeing to the panel, the advocates argue, would add real-world experience and insight to the decision-making process.

"Public transportation cannot be governed solely by those who never use it," David and Sussman wrote. "The communities that depend on transit daily deserve real power in shaping their future — not empty consultation after decisions have already been made. Placing this consequential issue on the November ballot without clearly informing constituents about this critical provision of the PAVE Act would be fundamentally misleading."

The referendum prioritizes a 50% increase in bus service with 43 miles of new rail service along rapid transit corridors. If voters approve the measure, 60% of funds would go to roads and 40% for rail transit.

## Truth-telling goal of initiative that remembers local lynchings

Continued from page 1A

rumors, and begin to research them and see if there is validity.

"I also think that there is something that I've had an opportunity to experience called posthumous restoration. These gentlemen didn't just lose their lives. They lost their earthly possessions; they lost their future. They lost their dignity ... they lost their humanity."

The lynchings are the focus of the Remembrance Project's campaign to raise awareness of lynching in Mecklenburg and the racial climate that led to such attacks across the United States. McDaniel's death was the focus of a five-part series in The Post.

?McNeely was dragged from his hospital bed and shot to death by a white mob on Aug. 26, 1913, in front of Good Samaritan Hospital - the site of Bank of America Stadium - after an altercation with a white police officer.

McDaniel was found dead on June 30, 1929, after arguing with Mell Grier, a white landowner, over payment for work. McDaniel's body was discovered near his rented home in northeastern Mecklenburg at the site of Reedy Creek Nature Preserve by a Black girl. His neck was broken.

No one was tried for either death.

"The Remembrance Project documents lynchings from 1865 to 1950 - what I would call the peak period of lynching," said Dan Aldridge, a professor of Africana studies and history at Davidson College, and author of "Becoming American: The African American Quest for Civil Rights, 1861-1976." "It starts in the 1890s and it coincides with the disfranchisement of Black voters and the reassertion of white supremacy in the South after the end of Reconstruction. The culture of lynching

and the culture of control of Black people politically, culturally, socially and through terror are deeply intertwined."

Media during that period also set a narrative of white supremacy by whipping up fear of social, economic and even sexual subjugation by Black people. The result was often deadly confrontations.

"The media here in North Carolina in particular, was very complicit in trying to shape public opinion against Black people," said Fannie Flono, a retired Charlotte Observer journalist and author of "Thriving in the Shadows: The Black Experience in Charlotte and Mecklenburg County." "If you knew anything about the Wilmington race massacre back in the late 1800s when Wilmington was one of those places where Black people were actually progressing - in fact, were kind of a great example of what could happen if the whites in the area had allowed Black people to progress at their own pace without trying to keep pulling them back."

"... [I]n order to keep them down, the white people conspired against them and actually had the only documented political coup in this country, in Wilmington, overthrow the government that a lot of Black people were involved in, and ran them out of town."

In a social and political climate where race and history are ignored or threatened with erasure, sharing the story of lynching not only takes on urgency, but it's also necessary to reconcile the nation's transgressions.

"If there is something that we can do to restore that, it's our duty, responsibility and honor to take part in that," Chinn-Gary said. ... "I would say the ultimate goal is to eliminate racism in all the ways that it manifests itself, and that can't be done without truth-telling."

## US drops race and gender bias programs in agriculture industry

Continued from page 1A

"I was appalled and disappointed to learn that the USDA is no longer taking remediation steps for race- and sex-based discrimination in farm lending, conservation grants, loans, and other programs," she said in a statement. "According to the Trump Ad-

ministration, the 'socially disadvantaged' designation is no longer needed since past discrimination has been 'sufficiently addressed.' Who is the administration trying to fool? And where's the data?"

According to the 2017 Agriculture Census conducted by USDA, North Carolina has less than 1,500 Black farmers, which account for 3% of the state's 46,000 agricultural producers. A little more than a third of them - estimated at 530 - are women.

Black people once owned as much as 25% of North Carolina's farms in the 20th century.

While USDA contends it has addressed past discrimination, federal data shows socially disadvantaged agriculture producers

on average have fewer financial resources than their white male peers, making land purchases more difficult.

Earn significantly less in median household income than non-SDA farmers at approximately \$60,000 compared to \$75,000.

Are more likely to operate smaller farms and face greater financial challenges compared to white farmers.

Black farmers in 2024 began receiving payments from the \$2.2 billion Dis-discrimination Financial Assistance Program. Two years earlier, Biden signed the Inflation Reduction Act Section 22007 that authorized compensation for farmers who faced racial discrimination in USDA's farm lending practices before 2021.

An estimated 43,000 farmers received payments of up to \$500,000, with the average award \$82,000.

In 2022, the National Black Farmers Association filed a class action lawsuit charging Black farmers lost approximately \$326 billion of land due to discrimination during the 20th century. USDA has previously acknowledged its role by rejecting loan applications at higher rates than

white farmers. Previous settlements between USDA and Black farmers, include a \$1 billion payout in 1999 and a \$1.25 billion settlement in 2013. Similar agreements have been struck between the government and Hispanic and women farmers (\$1.3 billion), Native Americans (\$800 million), and the Cobell case settlement (\$3.4 billion).

"Exclusion of these populations from USDA programs is blatantly sexist and racist," Adams said. "Women make up half the population so excluding half the population and all communities of color who are hard-working taxpayers from USDA programs is outrageous, unfair, and wrong. This is a perverse, deliberate, and intentional effort to undermine the protections of the 1964 Civil Rights Act and turn the clock backwards on progress made."

"The USDA has been found to have consistently discriminated against both its employees of the department and the farmers, ranchers, and stakeholders who seek legally protected access to the benefits Congress has authorized and approved. It is shameful."



Adams



KYLIE MARSH | THE CHARLOTTE POST  
Employees gather at the Charlotte office of ABM, a contractor to American Airlines at Charlotte Douglas International Airport, to confront management with demands for workplace safety improvements on July 21, 2025.

## CLT airport contractors press case for work safety

Continued from page 1A

will not be paid for hours not worked," and that "employees who participate in a strike or work stoppage are also not eligible for unemployment benefits."

Delivering demands is legally protected activity, SEIU organizer Jacob Plittman said. He believes the email was an attempt to intimidate workers from documenting their complaints to management.

One worker shared with The Post he received a phone call from human resources at ABM threatening his Temporary Protection Status should he participate, which is also false.

The U.S. State Department maintains that migrants with TPS have the right to ask for help from a labor union free from

retaliation. The National Labor Relations Act also mandates that making complaints and demands of management is legal and protected.

Antjuan Loven, ABM's general manager in Charlotte, met SEIU organizer Seneca Davis at the door to the office but refused to allow a contingent of about 30 employees and supporters into the building. Loven said he would allow four workers to come in, but they declined and remained at the front door in the heat.

The Rev. Ben Boswell of Collective Liberation Church, city council member LaWana Mayfield, and state Reps. Beth Helfrich and Jordan Lopez were also in attendance. In their attempts to speak with Loven, Helfrich and Lopez said it felt "confrontational."

## North Carolina's 'Housing wage' increases by nearly \$2 since 2024

Continued from page 1A

\$33.63 per hour for a two-bedroom rental home and \$28.17 for a one-bedroom rental home. Last year, the national "housing wage" was \$32.11 per hour for a two-bedroom rental. It was \$26.74 for a one-bedroom rental.

"Housing is more than just shelter, it is foundational to well-being and dignity," said NLIHC President and CEO Renee Willis. "This year's Out of Reach report shows that, despite economic gains for some, low-income renters continue to face impossible choices between paying rent and meeting basic needs."

Willis said the report findings reinforce the conclusion that cutting federal housing investments would only deepen the

housing crisis. "Congress must protect and expand housing programs that ensure stability, opportunity, and a pathway out of poverty for millions of renters," Willis said.

California has the highest housing wage at \$49.61 per hour. A worker there must clock 120 hours per week to afford a two-bedroom apartment at the state minimum wage of \$16.50 per hour. An annual income of \$103,184 is needed to afford a two-bedroom home at the FMR of \$2,580 per month.

The report's authors noted that California is one of 30 states across the nation, the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico and 64 local governments that have minimum wages above the \$7.25 per hour

federal minimum wage. Those wages range from \$8.75 per hour in West Virginia to \$17.50 per hour in the District of Columbia.

"Yet even in areas with higher minimum wages, the reality remains grim: nowhere in the United States - no state, metropolitan area, or county - can a full-time minimum-wage worker afford a modest two-bedroom rental home at Fair Market Rent," the authors wrote in the report's introduction.

They noted that the outlook for one-bedroom homes is only slightly better with just 7% of counties nationwide - 219 out of more than 3,000, excluding Puerto Rico - have a one-bedroom Fair Market Rent that is affordable for a full-time minimum-wage worker.

## Queens trustee Jesse Cureton transitions to chief executive

By Herbert L. White

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Jesse Cureton is Queens University of Charlotte's new acting president and CEO.

Cureton, the university's trustees chair, was elected in a unanimous vote by the board. He assumes the top position while a national search is conducted for President Dan Lugo's replacement. Lugo resigned in June.

Cureton, who earned a master's degree in business administration at Queens, was previously chief consumer officer and executive vice president at Novant Health. Before that, he spent 25 years at Bank of America and held leadership roles on several boards, including UNC Chapel Hill, HomeTrust Bancshares, and Charlotte Regional Business Alliance.

"Especially as a Queens alumnus, this institution holds a special place in my heart. It helped shape who I am, and I'm honored to give back in this capacity during such a pivotal time," Cureton said in a statement. "Serving as acting president is a privilege. I'm committed to providing steady leadership and supporting our students, faculty, and staff as we navigate this monumental transition, and I'm

proud to help lay the groundwork for the university's sustained success."

Trustees vice chair Brandon Perry was named acting chair. Perry, who joined the board in 2017, was chair of the finance and audit committee.

"We are incredibly fortunate that Jesse stepped forward to accept this role. His deep institutional connection and extensive leadership experience will provide critical continuity as we move forward with the national search for our next president," Watts Hamrick, Queens trustee and chair of the transition committee said in a statement. "As anyone who has been involved in a leadership search can attest, the process is not entirely predictable. Our work has been even more challenging given the effects of the rapidly changing higher education landscape. We remain fully committed to finding the right long-term leader for Queens University."

"It's an honor to step into the role of board chair at such a significant moment for Queens," Perry said. "I look forward to working alongside Jesse in his new leadership role to ensure a strong path forward. His deep understanding of the institution and unwavering commitment to our mission make him well-suited to lead the university during this transition."

### «CORRECTIONS

An article in the July 24 Post, "CMPD eyes drone expansion initiative," contained a quote erroneously attributed to a spokesperson for California-based drone manufacturer Skydio.

The company did not provide a spokesperson to discuss the company's drone program or its relationship to Charlotte

Mecklenburg Police. We apologize for the error.

The July 17 article "No surprise as Lyles files for a fifth mayoral term" erroneously stated Charlotte City Council member Dimple Ajmera's representation on the panel. She is an at-large incumbent.



Former Gov. Roy Cooper is expected to be the presumptive Democratic nominee for North Carolina's open U.S. Senate seat.

## Dems cheer as Cooper teases Senate campaign

By Brandon Kingdollar  
NC NEWSLINE

In his first public event after news of his impending Senate campaign broke, former Governor Roy Cooper asked everyone in the audience planning to run for office in 2026 to please stand for a round of applause.

Glancing at his feet with a grin, he quipped, "Hey — I'm not sitting down, am I?"

Previewing his run for Senate in a speech before North Carolina Democratic Party leaders and supporters Saturday night, days ahead of an expected campaign announcement, Cooper was met with a standing ovation and cheers of "Run Roy, run!"

"Look at what's happening in Washington — they are running up our debt, they are disrespecting our veterans, they're cutting help for the hungry, and they're ripping away with health care for millions of people," Cooper said. "All to give tax breaks to the millionaires and the billionaires, and it's not right."

Cooper is expected to declare his candidacy for the Senate seat being vacated by Sen. Thom Tillis (R-N.C.) next week, a development first reported by Axios on July 23. He would be vying to become the state's first Democratic senator in more than a decade, with the party's last Senate victory coming in 2008 when President Barack Obama won the state.

Tallying up his resume at the party's annual Unity Dinner, Cooper expressed pride in passing Medicaid expansion and expanding coverage to more than 675,000 people, raising pay for public school teachers, eliminating billions in medical debt for North Carolinians, and taking a stand against a 12-week abortion ban that Republicans ultimately passed over his veto.

"Right now, we're living in a time in this country, I think, that is as fragile as I can remember," Cooper said. But this beautiful experiment we call democracy — it only works when we work for it, which means that everybody needs to stay engaged and find a way to do something. We cannot let our progress slip away."

The popular two-term governor is expected to compete in the general election against Republican National Committee chair Michael Whatley, who is also anticipated to declare as a candidate in the days to come, as first reported by Politico on July 24. This follows Tillis' announcement that he would not seek reelection after voting against Trump's "big, beautiful bill," citing cuts to Medicaid.

Cooper is poised to be a formidable candidate for Senate, after departing office at the end of 2024 with broad popularity. A March 6 survey of 662 voters by Public Policy Polling found that 47% of held a favorable view of the former governor, while 42% held

an unfavorable view — a net favorability rating 28 points better than that of Tillis, who the poll found Cooper leading in a hypothetical match-up 47% to 43%. Pollsters have yet to publish surveys of a prospective Cooper-Whatley matchup.

On Saturday night, Cooper followed state Supreme Court Justice Anita Earls, also running in 2026, and preceded Illinois Governor J.B. Pritzker, who is widely expected to seek the presidency in 2028. His fellow Democrats ranged from similarly coy about his plans to openly delighted at his imminent entry into the race.

Among the most upfront was Earls, who introduced him as "Governor and we hope soon-to-be Senator Roy Cooper" to rousing cheers.

"He knows this state and how to get things done in difficult times," she said. "His passion for the well-being of every North Carolina is evident in all of his accomplishments, most recently persevering in the quest to extend Medicaid, resulting in healthcare coverage now for more than 650,000 additional people."

"The top of the ticket matters tremendously to my race, and you can tell from the enthusiasm in this room that he is someone that the party across North Carolina would be thrilled to have as our candidate," Earls told reporters after the speeches.

Pritzker, the keynote speaker, said serving alongside Cooper as a governor during the first Trump administration gave him a "true master class in the humility and integrity that marks the best of public service."

"Roy, I know I speak for Democratic governors across the country when I say: we can't wait to support you in the next stage of your career delivering for the people of North Carolina," Pritzker said, applauding the former governor.

"I'm excited. North Carolina Democrats are ready to put a Democrat in the Senate office next year, making sure that we're representing everybody in North Carolina," state party chair Anderson Clayton said after the dinner. "I think tonight, Governor Cooper alluded to the fact that he's excited to be able to put somebody in that same office and do the same thing."

The enthusiasm reflects a party that had all but lined up to support Cooper before the candidate even made his plans public. Attorney General Jeff Jackson, who gave remarks in private to a VIP Reception preceding the dinner, made headlines earlier this month when he endorsed Cooper for Senate before the former governor entered the race. Former U.S. Rep. Wiley Nickel, the first Democratic entrant in the Senate race, is expected to drop out and run for Wake County district attorney with Cooper's announcement.

### APPRECIATION

## Vicki Foster broke gender barriers as Charlotte-Mecklenburg police executive

By Herbert L. White

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Vicki Foster, who broke barriers with the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Police Department, died July 25 in Concord at age 56.

Ms. Foster rose through CMPD's ranks through a 29-year career, becoming assistant chief in 2017 top become the highest-ranking woman in the department's history. She retired in 2020 to become a consultant and work in real estate.

"Retired Assistant Chief Vicki Foster was a dear friend and it was an honor for me to know her for the past 30 years," CMPD Chief Johnny Jennings posted on X. "I was saddened and hurt by the news of her passing today and will pray for her family during this time. She will truly be missed."

Mecklenburg County District Attorney Spencer Merriweather posted to social media: "Retired CMPD Assistant Chief

Vicki Foster was an innovative leader and a consummate public servant with a true heart for victims of crime and for our community's young people. She was an exemplary partner for so many prosecutors in the DA's Office."

As deputy chief, Miss Foster managed all criminal and special investigations, including violent crime, cybercrime, gangs, missing persons and domestic violence. During a seven-month stint as chief of staff in 2010, she was responsible for human resources, fiscal affairs and media relations and as a major (2007-10), she managed communications, 911 operations, the crime reporting unit and records division.

Mecklenburg County Sheriff Garry McFadden, who as a CMPD homicide detective was a colleague with Miss Foster, mourned her passing.

"Assistant Chief Foster's remarkable achievements and dedication to public service left an incredible mark on the law enforcement profession," the department said in a statement.



## State seeks missing identity numbers for 103,000 voters

By Sarah Michaels

CAROLINA PUBLIC PRESS

North Carolina State Board of Elections Executive Director Sam Hayes is setting off on a mission to correct 103,000 North Carolinians' voting records from which some information is missing.

He maintains that the process, dubbed the Registration Repair Project, will not remove any eligible voters from the state's voter rolls.

According to the state elections board, 103,270 North Carolina registered voters have records that lack either their driver's license number, the last four digits of their Social Security number or an indication that they have neither.

Last year, this missing information became the stuff of headlines, lawsuits and the high-profile election protest of Republican Court of Appeals Judge Jefferson Griffin, who lost his bid for state Supreme Court to the incumbent justice, Democrat Allison Riggs, by 734 votes.

In April, the North Carolina Supreme Court declined to remove ballots from the count based on missing identification numbers; they said the state elections board, not voters, was responsible for a faulty voter registration form that didn't make it abundantly clear that this information was required.

While Griffin lost, the issue he raised remains salient for a newly Republican elections board and the U.S. Department of Justice, which promptly sued the state board over alleged violations of the federal Help America Vote Act's voter registration provisions.

Hayes told reporters that a process he unveiled in late June to gather these missing identification numbers had begun in earnest.

"We must put this issue behind us so we can focus our attention squarely on preparations for accurate and secure municipal elections this fall," he said.

### Collect missing information

There are two groups of voters under Hayes' plan.

The first group includes registered voters who have never provided a driver's license, the last four digits of their Social Security number or an affirmation that they lack both. The state elections board has asked county election boards to check their records for these numbers, in case they were provided but not correctly entered into the system.

In early August, the state elections board will send letters to the remaining voters in this group requesting the missing information. If affected voters do not comply, they will vote provisionally in future elections. The elections board will

create a flag on these voters' records for poll workers.

The second group includes registered voters whose records do not show that they've provided an identification number, but have shown additional documentation at the polls proving their identity and eligibility under HAVA. These voters may vote a regular ballot.

However, the elections board will still send them a letter in a second mailing asking for the missing identification number to bolster the state's voter records. Even so, if they do not oblige, they still will not be at risk of being disfranchised, NCSBE General Counsel Paul Cox said.

County election boards have already made progress, and their work will continue as the mailings go out, Hayes said.

Voters can check to see whether they're on the list of those with missing information by using the Registration Repair Search Tool. If voters don't want to wait for the August mailing, they can submit an updated voter registration form using their driver's license through the online DMV portal or visit their county elections board in person with their driver's license or Social Security card.

"We anticipate the number of voters on the list will decrease quickly as word spreads about this important effort," Hayes said.

The State Board of Elections unanimously approved the plan last month, despite some concerns from Democrat Jeff Carmon about putting up an extra obstacle for voters because of a problem with missing information that the voters didn't cause.

"It's hard to understand starvation if you've never felt the pangs of hunger," Carmon said. "It's the same situation with voting obstacles. Your perspective of an obstacle may not be the same as someone who's consistently had their identity and their validity questioned."

Nonetheless, Carmon and fellow Democrat board member Siobhan Millen ultimately voted in support of the plan.

### Same ballot, different rules

Normally, when a voter casts a provisional ballot, the county elections board determines whether their ballot counts by the post-election canvass, held nine days after an election.

Voters may have to provide documentation or information to prove their eligibility to vote in order to be accepted.

The same process applies to the 103,000 affected voters, with a catch. Their vote may be accepted for federal contests, but not state contests, due to a difference in law.

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## Good thing NC lawmakers didn't pass a budget

As legislators resume their session that started Jan. 8, they will face issues potentially as hot as the July temperatures.

However, the big question being asked by teachers, state employees, and many others is when they will pass a budget for the year that started July 1? I have concluded the state is better off that they haven't passed one before now. Allow me to explain.

Let's start by reviewing why a budget hasn't been passed. One of the biggest drawbacks was whether to further cut personal income taxes.

Legislators had agreed to personal income tax cuts from 4.25 to 3.99 percent for the year just begun July 1.

The Senate wants to reduce those rates to 3.45% in the 26-27 budget, but the Office of State Budget and Management has forecast that while revenues to the state would be stable and able to meet the \$32.6 billion spending levels both chambers had agreed upon for this year, those cuts would result in a budget deficit of some \$100 million the second year of the biennial budget. Some analysts have predicted a "fiscal cliff" for revenue receipts. The House is balking at further cuts.

There were other disputes. The House eliminated about 20% (around 3,000) of vacant state jobs; the Senate only cut 850. The House would give state employees a 2.5% pay raise; the Senate plan has a 1.25% increase and two-year bonuses. The House raises starting teacher pay to almost \$50,000, second highest in the Southeast. Teachers would receive an 8.7% pay raise over two years and restore supplements for advanced degrees. The Senate provided 2.3% increases for teachers and two-year bonuses. State retirees would get cost of living adjustments both years of the House plan.

The Senate proposed \$400 million in funding for a new children's hospital, operated by UNC and Duke. Some question why another children's hospital is needed when we already have them in Chapel Hill, Durham, Raleigh, Greenville, Charlotte and Winston-Salem?

The House disagreed with the Senate's proposal to create a new program like the federal DOGE federal initiative, putting the one-year tenured State Auditor in charge. If needed, shouldn't the legislature be in charge?

In a rare bipartisan move, many House Democrats sided with Republicans in passing their budget plan. Even Gov. Josh Stein had good words for it. New House Speaker Destin Hall did not cave to Senate demands and, with no agreement in sight, lawmakers decided to call a recess in late June.

So many things have changed since June 27 that any budget lawmakers could have passed would need revising or at least serious review. In late April, FEMA informed the state it would no longer match dollar-for-dollar expenditures for Hurricane Helene, a move that could cost our state \$200 million. The legislature did pass a bill allocating \$700 million additional funds to Helene Relief, appropriating \$500 million of it immediately.

On July 6 tropical depression Chantal dumped 9 to 12 inches of rain into 13 counties in central Carolina. Widespread flooding prompted the governor to declare a state of emergency. It is too early to estimate damages, but government relief will be needed.

Further, our schools begin a new year next month. The federal Department of Education froze \$165 million in funding to our state, potentially eliminating about 1,000 positions. North Carolina joined 24 other states in lawsuits against the move. The feds folded and the freeze thawed.

Then there's Trump's Big Beautiful Bill that threatens to eliminate Medicaid health insurance for some 600,000 North Carolinians. When our state finally agreed to expand Medicaid in 2023 it was with the provision that if the federal government reduced or cut the 90% funding for the expansion our state could cut the coverage to those participants.

It's bad enough so many might lose health insurance, returning them to already crowded hospital emergency departments. Many rural hospitals teeter on financial insolvency already. A flood of uninsured patients will threaten closure to more.

The BBB also threatens the 1.4 million residents who count on SNAP (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program) to eat. The bill requires the state to pick up the \$700 million annual cost. SNAP has been especially crucial to people in the west impacted by Helene.

Fortunately, neither the Medicaid nor the SNAP cuts take effect until October 2027 (after the next Congress takes office), so there's time enough to make decisions, but our lawmakers would be foolhardy not to initiate those discussions now. The bottom line is that conditions have changed dramatically, and lawmakers would be wise to factor in those changes into budget deliberations.

Tom Campbell is a Hall of Fame North Carolina broadcaster and columnist who has covered North Carolina public policy issues since 1965. Contact him at [tomcamp@ncspin.com](mailto:tomcamp@ncspin.com)

## Red states are about to go hungry

What do Louisiana, West Virginia, Oklahoma, and Alabama have in common?

For one thing, they're red states. For another, they're poor states. Each has among the top 10 highest percentages of residents on SNAP, or food stamps.

And finally, every one of their Republican lawmakers voted for President Trump's so-called "Big Beautiful Bill" — which will result in the largest cut to SNAP in history, at \$186 billion through 2024.

The bill doesn't just cut federal SNAP spending. It also, for the first time, shifts much of that burden to the states. So state governments will need to raise taxes, cut spending, or further slash benefits to meet these added expenses. Others may eliminate their SNAP rolls entirely.

SNAP offers taxpayers a tremendous return on investment. "One study estimates that every SNAP dollar invested in children returns \$62 in value over the long-term," the Center

## Break the cycle of generational injustice

By Leslie McDaniel Clay

SPECIAL TO THE POST

I viewed a documentary on TV about a racial injustice that took place over 70 years ago between a white landlord and Black tenant.

They got into an altercation about payment for work, which was no surprise to me. As I continued watching the program, the Black man's name was given along with his age. Now that was a surprise! My mind began to wonder if this young man was a bloodline relative, being my family name was the same as his: McDaniel.

I reached out to the website that was mentioned at the end of the program. I received a reply from the writer of the article for The Charlotte Post, Helen Schwab. Ms. Schwab is also associated with the Charlotte Mecklenburg Remembrance Project. She began communicating with me and researched my family history without hesitation. Through her dedication, I learned that Willie McDaniel was indeed my blood relative.

I experienced some strong feelings about this knowing how my family has been hit with this injustice. This same injustice has circled back in the McDaniel family, decades later. You see, Willie's cousin Steven Burke, at age 20, only two years younger than Willie was when he was murdered, faced yet another injustice. He was arrested, charged, and convicted of a crime he did not commit. No DNA or physical evidence was presented.

During the so-called investigation of Willie's murder, his wife stated someone had left a green stick where Willie's body was located. The green stick was never mentioned or presented again. At the 2003 trial of Steven, prosecutors for the state of North Carolina claimed that Steven had a shotgun. This mysterious shotgun was never brought into evidence as it was destroyed prior to the trial. Sound familiar?

It was the same cycle of injustice, decades later: 1929-2025. Time to cease the cycle. That is where the known beginning of injustice began for the McDaniel family; actually, no, it began with the color of their skin. People of color are wrongfully convicted every day and following that, they have uphill battles to fight to prove their innocence and for justice. There was no uphill battle for those that stormed the Capitol building as the entire United States and the world looked on, Jan. 6, 2021. There was plenty of evidence seen from our TV's and online as we were eyewitnesses to their crimes. So, a couple of years in prison, released by a president who pardoned them. I guarantee you if

This generational injus-

ticity reports.

So GOP lawmakers aren't making these cuts because we can't afford SNAP. They're doing it to offset some of their deficit-busting tax breaks for corporations and the wealthy.

Taking food from kids to give billionaires a tax break? Talk about Robin Hood in reverse.

In an open letter to congressional leaders, 23 state governors — including the leaders of historically red states like North Carolina, Kansas, and Kentucky — call these SNAP cuts "unrealistic" and warn they will "result in too many Americans forced to survive rather than thrive."

Red states will be among the hardest hit, but it's a truly national problem. In 2023, the USDA found that 13.5 percent of U.S. households were "food insecure," meaning they have a "limited or uncertain availability of nutritionally adequate and safe foods."

SNAP benefits currently serve more than 40 million Americans, almost half of them children.

Between cuts, burdensome new work and reporting requirements, and the cost shifting to the states, the "Big Beautiful

they were people of color in that same situation, they would not have been arrested, taken to trial, and sent to prison. Then granted a pardon by a president. No, they would have been shot and killed on sight on those steps of the Capitol in Washington.

In the 1920s, Willie McDaniel's family, my family, were fighting for justice for Willie. His murderer was swept away like dirt on the front porch. Willie was buried without knowledge of his family, no burial suit, no service, no grace. Just brown paper wrapping, like you get from the butcher's shop, to wrap neat to cover his naked body.

There is no lack of clothing in prison.

The concrete plantation provides clothing consisting of an orange jumpsuit or tan pants and a T-shirt. It is as if they are naked and dead, yet they are alive with no freedom. Willie's cousin Steven and his family are still fighting for justice and his freedom now at the age of 45.

The McDaniel family is one of many African American families in generational injustice and systemic racism. We will continue to fight for Steven.

more likely to report "excellent or very good" nutrition than those who don't receive benefits in low-income communities, pointing to the difference these benefits make for health. Pregnant mothers and kids in early childhood with access to SNAP also see improved long-term health outcomes.

"Do you know what it's like to hold two master's degrees, be called 'Reverend,' and still need food stamps?" said Reverend Regina Clarke at a rally led by Reverend William Barber's anti-poverty group Repairers of the Breach. Clarke is among the demographic of single parents who are SNAP recipients. "When you strip away someone's food security, you strip away their strength to lift others."

But lifting our voices and our communities is exactly what we need to do. Whether we live in red states or blue states, all of us need to speak out against this cruelty. Low-income kids and families shouldn't be going hungry so billionaires can claim another tax break.

Ta'Kyla Bates is a Henry A. Wallace Fellow at the Institute for Policy Studies.

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# Sports

THURSDAY, JULY 31, 2025



DONALD WATKINS | THE CHARLOTTE POST

Preseason All-CIAA defensive end Lamone Hill (4) is one of the top returnees to a Johnson C. Smith squad that went 8-2 in 2024, which tied for the best record in school history.

## JCSU's mission: 'Finish the deal'

*Golden Bulls motivated after missing NCAA playoffs despite tying school single-season wins record*

By Herbert L. White

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Maurice Flowers has no problem with Johnson C. Smith placing second in the CIAA preseason football poll.

Conference coaches picked Virginia Union - winner of the last two CIAA titles - first, followed by the Golden Bulls, who opened 2024 predicted to finish fourth and finished with a school record eight-game win streak before losing their final two games. An expected second-place finish - the highest in JCSU history - doesn't merit resentment.

"Not at all," said Flowers, who is

going into his fourth season as Golden Bulls coach. "It's not that huge a deal, and why would we be picked first? We haven't won a championship. I'm not disappointed to be ranked [second], an honor that we'll take for what it is because last year I think we made some history, too.

"I believe preseason No. 4 [was] first time in school history, so to be thought of No. 2? Yes. Upset at not being No. 1? Not at all, because we have not at Johnson C. Smith University won

a football championship since 1969, so if you haven't done that, why would you be favored to even finish the deal?"

The Golden Bulls, who garnered 101 points in the coaches' poll to Virginia Union's 103, have a roster capable of advancing to the CIAA title game for the first time since 1972. Under Flowers, JCSU has gone from lightweight doormat to rising power that spent three weeks in the national Division II rankings for the first time in 2024, rising as high as No. 16.

"When you're building a program from the beginning through every phase, you just know that every Saturday

people are looking to beat you, or think they can beat you, or have done it and have no reason to think that you can stop them from winning the game," Flowers said. "Johnson C. Smith is longer known as a stat game ... so it's up to us at Johnson C. Smith to be a formidable opponent every single week and give ourselves a chance to win."

The Golden Bulls' roster is built to succeed, starting with an experienced returning cast led by preseason All-CIAA picks receiver Brevin Caldwell, who obliterated school records for receptions (85) and receiving yards

Please see GOLDEN | 6A



**It's not that huge a deal, and why would we be picked first? We haven't won a championship.**



Johnson C. Smith football coach MAURICE FLOWERS on the Golden Bulls' No. 2 CIAA preseason ranking

## Evero's last stand? Panthers defensive chief back for more

By Jeff Hawkins

FOR THE CHARLOTTE POST

Carolina Panthers coach Dave Canales never wavered when it came to backing defensive coordinator Ejiro Evero.

During a 30-14 loss to the Dallas Cowboys at Bank of America Stadium on Dec. 15, 2024, the Panthers' injury-plagued defense yielded 211 rushing yards.

It was business as usual.

With several key personnel sidelined with season-ending injuries, Evero's crippled unit yielded at least 200 yards rushing in each of their final six outings, en route to surrendering 3,057 yards on the ground, third-most in NFL history.

Following the Week 15 loss to the Cowboys, Canales fielded a post-game question inquiring if he remained confident in Evero's 3-4

Please see EVERO | 6A



CAROLINA PANTHERS

Carolina Panthers defensive coordinator Ejiro Evero has head coach Dave Canales' vote of confidence despite a historically poor season in 2024.

## Will the Eagles fly to Atlanta twice?

North Carolina Central is in a familiar preseason spot. The Eagles have either been picked No. 1 or No. 2 for the past three seasons.

Yes, it's O-N-L-Y preseason, but fans want to see their team at the top from start to finish so they can brag all year long.

Last season's loss at South Carolina State still haunts Eagle Nation, just like the year before in Washington, D.C., against Howard. NCCU still got to play in the postseason with an NCAA at-large berth despite the Howard defeat, but everybody was home for the holidays last season.

Alumni can get spoiled really quick. Playoffs? Well, better than nothing. But we all know where they want to go in December.

"Last two seasons my Eagles fumbled the MEAC. What makes others think different this year. Put up or shut up," an alumnus wrote on our Facebook page.

This is the culture coach Trei Oliver has established heading into his sixth season (five on the field). High expectations are the norm.

Oliver has a message for any team that overlooks the Eagles this season: "You're going to get mopped," he said at MEAC Football Media Day in Baltimore.

The event was moved to handle the increased media attention after the hirings of DeSean Jackson to Delaware State and Michael Vick at Norfolk State. Although it's been several months, the media frenzy hasn't slowed. That's good for the

Please see EAGLES | 6A

## Charlotte 49ers look ahead to opening the Tim Albin era



AMERICAN CONFERENCE

First-year Charlotte football coach Tim Albin took the podium July 25, 2025, at the American Conference media day in Charlotte.

By Cameron Williams

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No podiums were harmed during the American Conference football media day.

That's because Tim Albin is Charlotte's new coach. He succeeded Biff Poggi, who didn't take kindly to being asked just three questions at his 2023 debut, which resulting in a loud thud on the podium.

More questions were asked to Albin, who is cautiously optimistic about his first season in Charlotte.

"I'm looking forward to kicking this thing off," he said. "We just finished up our last summer workout ... Players (reported) Monday, and then we (started) Tuesday as we are looking forward to playing at Bank of America [Stadium] and a wonderful venue, Duke's Mayo Kick Off Classic versus an in-state school. We've got a lot of momentum and ticket sales, and we're in a good spot."

Here are a few notes from media day.

1. No quarterback decision — yet

Albin is probably exhausted from hearing the question about if he and his staff have chosen a

Please see 49ERS | 6A



**I don't want to get repetitive on what I'm saying, but I'm not getting a lot of sleep during the evaluation process.**



Charlotte football coach TIM ALBIN

## Golden Bulls' mission in 2025: 'Finish the deal'

Continued from page 5A

(1,090) in 2024 and defensive end LaMone Hill, who tallied 23 tackles and 3.5 sacks.

"We think we've got a talented roster, probably the most talented roster there's been at Johnson C. Smith," Flowers said.

The transfer portal helps. The Golden Bulls remade the defense by switching Quavaris Crouch, a former five-star recruit at Harding High, from running back to linebacker, where he was a second-team All-Big 10 at Michigan State to pair with Vincent Hill, an All-SIAC pick at Tuskegee in 2023.

Defensive end Quentin Williams, a Mallard Creek High graduate who transferred from Miami (Fla.) and Cam Williams, a second-team All-SIAC cornerback at Miles College (Ala.), are new-comers.

The offense has new playmakers in quarterback with Kelvin Durham, an All-SIAC pick who played for Flowers at Fort Valley State. Another transfer, receiver Armonie Harris, set Clark Atlanta single-season records for receptions

(75), receiving yards (1,004), and touchdowns (14) as the Panthers advance to the SIAC title game.

Kamarro Edmonds (86 carries, 455 yards, three touchdowns in 2024) inherits the top running back role from Crouch. Avante George (99 carries, 406 yards, 2 TDs) and Antonio Crim, a transfer from UNC Pembroke, are in the rotation.

The offensive line lost four starters from last season, but their replacements were rotation players who gained experience in backup or part-time starter roles.

"We played a lot of guys that are now starting," Flowers said. "You like that guys that are playing don't have to play more than they used to. They've got experience."

After missing out on the playoffs last year, JCSU is motivated to add a new chapter to the program's history. The pieces are in place to earn a berth to the CIAA title game, but nothing's guaranteed in a conference where six of its 11 teams posted winning records.

"Virginia Union, a two-time champion, they deserve every preseason ranking that they received because they've done it back-to-back years," Flowers said. ... "The CIAA [as a] conference is tough from top to bottom, and you have to bring it every week. It's a testament to the league."



Caldwell



Crouch

## Evero leads retooled defense

Continued from page 5A

base defense. Without hesitation, Canales said sternly: "Absolutely."

A few weeks later, after the Panthers concluded a 5-12 campaign, Canales announced Evero would return for a third season in 2025.

As the Panthers prepared for their initial training-camp practice Wednesday, Evero started prepping for his last stand.

Defensive coordinator Ejiro Evero's new assets

Despite commanding a unit that yielded 534 points, most in NFL history, and 6,877 total yards, the second-most ever, Canales lobbied for Evero to get another chance. He knows from experience the effectiveness of Evero's defense when all the assets are in place.

Canales faced Evero's defensive schemes as an assistant coach with the Seattle Seahawks and as the Tampa Bay Buccaneers' offensive coordinator in 2023.

"I've played against this defense," Canales said Jan. 8. "I've played against it in Seattle (against) the Rams for a bunch of years. I played against it twice last year. I know what this defense will look like. And I'm committed to that, Ejiro's committed to that."

"So, it's about developing the players we brought in. It's about evaluating our schemes, so we have to be able to look at our schemes and be really critical of all those things as well. And it's about seeing who's out there to challenge our roster, who can help us to get this defense to the place that we know we can."

To get to that place, Carolina general manager Dan Morgan acted swiftly on the first day of free agency, signing defensive linemen Tershawn Wharton and Bobby Brown III, edge Patrick Jones II, linebacker Christian Rozeboom and safety Tre'von Moehrig.

Morgan also secured multi-year deals with his top two cornerbacks, Jaycee Horn and Mike Jackson. The Panthers picked nose tackle Cam Jackson, pass-rushers Nic Scourton and Princely Umanmielen and safety Lathan Ransom in the draft.

Also, Derrick Brown (knee) was cleared to participate in all football activities. The 2023 Pro Bowler missed 16 games last season.

Can a rookie help reshape a beleaguered unit?

Out of the NFL playoffs since 2017 and losers of at least 10 games in each of the past six seasons, Morgan's offseason moves were targeted to provide Evero with stronger, healthier starters and dependable depth.

"It's hard to win football games when you can't stop the run," Morgan said last week. "Obviously, for us, this past offseason was an emphasis for us to build our front."

"We feel good about (the additions), but long story short, the guys have to put the work in. They all have to come together as a unit, create that continuity."

Evero's linebacker room took a hit last week when the Panthers released projected starter Josey Jewell, who continues to show concussion symptoms. Jewell could return if his health improves.

As poor as the Panthers' rush defense performed last season, their pass rush failed to provide consistent - if any - quarterback pressure. The unit generated just 32 sacks, the third fewest in the league. Since 2023, the Panthers produced just 59 sacks.

Enter Scourton, a second-round draft pick who signed a four-year contract Saturday. He was the final rookie to sign.

"I'm just happy to be here," Scourton said after a walk-through practice last week.

Evero is also happy the former Texas A&M and Purdue standout is there.

"We're certainly looking for everyone in that (outside linebacker) room — and really, on the entire defense, coaches included—to perform better," Evero said June 28.

As he adjusted to NFL life during the off-season program, Scourton recognized the opportunity he could earn as rotational asset behind presumed starters Jones and D.J. Wonnrum.

"Two guys I want to give a shout out to is D.J. Wonnrum and Pat Jones," Scourton said. "They helped me out so much. (They have) so much knowledge, so much experience. Even though we're competing (for playing time), they want to see me get better and help the team."

And reshape an all-time worst defense.

## Eagles' goal: 2 Atlanta trips

Continued from page 5A  
conference but possibly problematic for Jackson and Vick.

"We talked trash with them at the coaches' dinner, told them it's going to be rough their first year," Oliver said.

However, LeSean McCoy, who interviewed all the coaches and is a former Philadelphia teammate of Vick's, let it slip that while Vick and Jackson play the humble card in public, it's a different story online.

"We have a group chat. And in the group chat, they're not saying that," McCoy said.

"Who's all in the chat? Tell me their names," Oliver asked. There's always room for more bulletin board material.

**NIL vs. exposure**

Name, Image & Likeness is here to stay, and coaches are always asked how can HBCUs compete with the bigger institutions.

The answer is they can't monetarily. But they aren't dirt poor, either.

"This right here is keeping us relevant," Oliver said at the MEAC-SWAC Challenge press conference earlier this month. "The culture of the HBCUs and without this,

where would we be? We don't have all that NIL money and stuff to pay kids. But when I visit somebody's home, I have the opportunity to tell them, 'we're going to play on ABC; we have the opportunity to play in the Celebration Bowl, the MEAC-SWAC Challenge; this is so much bigger than the game.'

**Welcome home**

Oliver lost four assistant coaches during the offseason. One vacancy was a shoo-in to fill. Record-setting quarterback Davius Richard was named QB coach in April.

Richard's professional career looked bright until he was injured in an HBCU all-star game that eventually ended his career.

Oliver, who still gets emotional when discussing the incident, said Richard's hire was a no-brainer.

"He did so much for our university. He had another opportunity to leave and make a whole lot of money, but he stayed true to our program. He had to medically retire. At some point, I had to take care of him. That was the least I could do."

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

## 49ers have decisions to make as fall camp unfolds

Continued from page 5A

quarterback yet. With three options in transfers Connor Harrell (North Carolina), Grayson Loftis (Duke) and Zach Wilcke (junior college), it is a good problem to have but needs to be resolved sooner rather than later.

Offensive coordinator Todd Fitch said during the spring that the goal was to have a sure-fire starter by game one.

"The month of August will be so critical on the evaluation process," Albin said. "We're going to be under the gun, and it'll probably require a little bit more meeting time with the coaches, one-on-one, as far as how they see it, and shuffling a depth chart, not only the quarterback position, but every position. ...

"We all know how important it is. It'll be a three-man race. I believe that, but those first two weeks are going to be critical, because you're not going to be able to rep three guys all the way up to game week."

Albin said that the staff may have to do live work with the quarterbacks to make a thorough decision. Each candidate can create plays and each of them are intelligent. All three are competitive, and it's leaving him with a very difficult decision.

"I don't want to get repetitive on what I'm saying, but I'm not getting a lot of sleep during the evaluation process," Albin said. "I should have just said that and shut up. But that's just a fact."

2. Charlotte is looking at being a running back by committee team

The 49ers lost transfer running back Don Chaney in the offseason. Chaney, who was previously at Louisville, was likely to be Charlotte's primary running back. However, he was declared ineligible for reasons the team won't disclose.

The 49ers do, however, have several candidates that Albin has said are capable backs. Henry Rutledge and C.J. Stokes will both likely get on the field more often as well as some others.

"The room is capable," Albin said. "Henry returns. [He is] electric. ... A return specialist. He wants to return punts, he wants to return kicks. He wants to be the guy carrying the ball 25 times a game. Todd Fitch

has got a tough job to find ways to get him touches. C.J. Stokes, it'll be by committee. We brought in a couple [backs] after spring practice that are going to be in the mix. My guess is it'll be by committee."

3. Albin loves defensive linemen

Albin was asked about the biggest thing he has learned in the offseason roster building process.

"They're unselfish," he said, "and they're like a group of D-linemen. OK, I love D-linemen. If you've got a good D-line room, a lot of the world's problems in the game of football begin to work themselves out. ... D-linemen, they don't ever get any credit. They take on double teams, keep the linebackers free so those guys can run and hit and get all the credit, get their name in their paper."

One defensive lineman who is going to be crucial is Utah State transfer Taz Williams. Albin was familiar with Williams from his time at Kent State, where Ohio and Kent State play other in the Mid-American Conference.

"Taz, we got a little history with him," Albin said with a smirk. "We played him when he was at Kent State prior to Utah State, and he's got a great personality. He'd be a perfect example of it's not about the money, equity piece, the transaction piece. I've got one shot left. I want to play and make some money in this game after I'm done, and so how am I going to do that? ... He's going to be a pain in the rear end come August for the [opposing] offenses, I can tell you that."

**Looking ahead**

Fall camp started on July 28 and there are four weeks of practice until opening week. Albin is excited and wants his team playing for something meaningful at season's end.

"I think a good goal for us would be, let's have that last game of the season ... be for something," he said. "What's that something? I don't know. ... I want it to be for something. That's what you want ... get to a bowl game, a championship, whatever it might be. That's what we're after to get done."

## Carolinians teams have high hopes in ACC football race

By Cameron Williams  
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NCSU did a solid job adding players in the offseason.

The Carolinians' ACC schools have big hopes for 2025.

**Clemson (10-4 in 2024, 7-1 ACC):** The Tigers go into the season as the favorite to win the conference title. Clemson won the 2024 title game on a walk-off field goal by Hough High alumnus Nolan Hauser. The Tigers' run in the College Football Playoff, however, was cut short with a 38-24 loss to Texas.

Clemson coach Dabo Swinney said the goal is still the same this season as it is every season. He feels he has a team capable of winning championships, but it is going to take hard work, and he feels his team is ready for the challenge.

"It's been a good off-season," Swinney said. "The guys have put the work in. We've been around a lot of good teams, and this team has the ingredients to be a really good team, but we've got to go do the work. We can't talk about it or predict our way into it. Y'all can't predict our way into it. We've got to go do it and do the work."

**Duke (9-4 in 2024, 5-3 ACC):** The Blue Devils come in under second year head coach Manny Diaz after an impressive showing in year one.

Duke brought in nine transfers to help construct the 2025 roster, and one transfer in particular will need to have an immediate impact.

Former Tulane quarterback Darian Mensah joined the Blue Devils during the off-season. Mensah, 6-3 and 200 pounds was Duke's highest-ranked transfer. In 2024 at Tulane, Mensah threw for 2,723 yards and 22 touchdowns to just six interceptions.

"It's been my dream to play Power [Four] football since I was a little kid," he said. "That was something that I wanted to do for sure. It's definitely not easy getting to know a new team when you had an old team just before and then moving to a new place that you're not familiar with. I'm excited for the challenges because I know that's where I'm going to elevate my game and my teammates as well."

**North Carolina State (6-7 in 2024, 3-5 ACC):** The Wolfpack had a lackluster 2024 by their standards. While they did beat rival North Carolina, the Wolfpack lost a handful of one-possession games that could have gone either way.

Coach David Doeren said that offensively, his team returns a lot on that side, especially at the skill positions. Defensively, the Wolfpack lost a good bit to graduation and transfers. However, he feels

"a lot of the conversations that I've had with coach Grier in high school are kind of similar to what coach Belichick brings," Shipp said. "He wants you to be tough, smart, dependable, and coach Grier echoed that same thing when we were in high school, and I feel like that's why we were so good at such a high-level high school program because of the way he carried himself and the things that he poured into us."

**Wake Forest (4-8 in 2024, 2-6 ACC):** After

a season far from what the Demon Deacons hoped for, they hired a new coach in Jake Dickert who came over from Washington State. He now has the challenge of getting his team united after bringing in 43 new players.

"It's been 217 days since I've been hired in late December," Dickert said, "and from the very first moment, we hit the ground running. We built a tremendous staff. We brought in 43 new players, eight from the high school ranks and 35 from the transfer portal. Our transfer portal guys bring in 17,000-plus career snaps of experience to our football team. Quickly, we created a vision. We established a standard, and we laid a foundation for what Wake Forest football is going to be like now and into the future."

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