



'We know we're talented'

J.C. Smith climbs into the national Division II football rankings, but understand there's no room for error

THE VOICE OF THE BLACK COMMUNITY SINCE 1906

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TROY HULL | THE CHARLOTTE POST

Charlotte Mayor Vi Lyles on Monday pledged immediate changes in public safety approaches on public transit platforms as a response to the Aug. 22 murder of Iryna Zarutska on a Lynx Blue Line train in South End. Her death has grown into a political touchpoint with President Donald Trump accusing Democrats as soft on crime and North Carolina Auditor Dave Boliek launching an investigation into Charlotte Area Transit System's approach to security.

## Blue Line murder escalates into an urban safety dispute

*Lyles announces security upgrades Trump blasts 'soft on crime' Democrats*

By Herbert L. White

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The murder of a commuter on Charlotte's Blue Line has turned a public safety debate political.

Mayor Vi Lyles released a statement Monday pledging to beef up security on public transit in the aftermath of the Aug. 22 stabbing death of Iryna Zarutska as she sat on a train in South End. Lyles criticized the courts for releasing Decarlos Brown, who was charged with killing Zarutska, a refugee from Ukraine. Brown has pleaded not guilty.

"Over the past several weeks as our community has worked to understand this, what we know is that this was a tragic failure by the courts and magistrates," Lyles wrote in a statement. "Our police officers arrest people only to have them quickly released, which undermines our ability to protect our community and ensure safety. We need a bipartisan solution to address repeat offenders who do not face con-

sequences for their actions and those who cannot get treatment for their mental illness and are allowed to be on the streets."

North Carolina Auditor Dave Boliek, citing a string of commuter assaults on Charlotte Transit vehicles this year, announced Tuesday his office will investigate CATS's public safety structure, including private security contracts, metrics and data that

Please see BLUE | 2A



## Adams backs food assistance legislation

By Herbert L. White

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U.S. Rep. Alma Adams is co-sponsor of legislation that would increase federal food assistance funding for financially distressed Americans.

The Closing the Meal Gap Act would boost Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, or SNAP, benefits and allocate more funds to people with large medical and housing expenses. In addition to Adams, the bill is sponsored by U.S. Reps. Jahana Hayes (Connecticut), Summer Lee (Pennsylvania), and Nydia Velázquez of New York along with Sen. Kirsten Gillibrand of New York.



Adams

The bill would change the calculation formula for SNAP benefits from the Thrifty Food Plan to the Low Cost Food Plan by increasing the average benefit amount. Recipients now receive an average of \$6.20 per person daily. The bill also raises SNAP's standard caps for medical and shelter deductions to allow recipients to allow greater access to food assistance.

"No one in America should have to worry about where their next meal is coming from, but SNAP

Please see REP. ADAMS | 2A

## 'Persevere': Justice Jackson urges forum

By Kylie Marsh

FOR THE CHARLOTTE POST

Supreme Court Justice Ketanji Brown Jackson passed along the inspiration that helped her reach the U.S. Supreme Court.

A year after publication of her memoir, "Lovely One," Jackson sat down for a public conversation with former Charlotte Mayor Harvey Gantt at the Carolina Theatre Sept. 4.

Jackson became the first Black woman sworn in to the court in 2022 and is one of three Black justices in its 233-year history. Her memoir, which is the translation of her name, discusses the weight of her position.

Reading from the preface, Jackson spoke of her swearing in as the culmination of her "ancestors' wildest dreams," herself standing "on the threshold of history."

Jackson was born in 1970 to parents who were alumni of historically Black universities - her mother Tuskegee University in Al-

Please see PERSEVERE | 2A



Jackson

## NC voting rules updated, elections board looks for ways to ID noncitizens

By Lynn Bonner

NC NEWSLINE

Voters whose names or birth dates don't match ID numbers in the state registration file won't automatically have to use provisional ballots after all, under revised instructions the state Board of Elections approved Monday.

The latest revisions to efforts to collect and validate government IDs come after Democrats on the state Board objected at its last meeting to the requirement that voters whose names or birth dates did not match identifiers in government databases would need to continually use provisional ballots until the mismatches were resolved.

The state Board of Elections is trying to collect driver's license numbers or partial Social Security numbers from voters who don't have either of those

Please see NC | 2A

## « APPRECIATION »

### Joseph McNeil's act of sitting in stood up for racial equality

By Herbert L. White

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Maj. Gen. Joseph McNeil, one of four North Carolina A&T State University students to spark the sit-in movement, died Sept. 4 at age 83.

He was also the vanguard of campus activists who picked up the baton to elevate racial equality in the 1960s.

Gen. McNeil, who with Franklin McCain, Jibreel Khazan (formerly Ezell Blair Jr.) and David Richmond, sat at the whites-only lunch counter at a Woolworth's store in Greensboro on Feb. 1, 1960, to touch off a national movement for equal accommodation in public spaces. Khazan is

the lone surviving member of the quartet. Richmond died in 1990 and McCain in 2014. Gen. McNeil returned to A&T in February to mark the 65th anniversary of the protest, which quickly spread across the South, including Charlotte, and launched a generation of future civil rights and political leaders like Marion Barry, John Lewis and Diane Nash (Fisk University), Charles Jones (Johnson C. Smith University) Julian Bond (Morehouse College) and A&T's Jesse Jackson.

"Joseph McNeil and his fellow North Carolina A&T classmates inspired a nation with their courage

Please see SIT-IN | 2A



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## Blue Line murder turns into urban safety dispute

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used for the transit authority's security budget.

"One of the most basic duties a government owes the people is public safety," Boliek said in a statement. "The recent lawlessness and violence that have taken place on Charlotte's public transportation raise serious questions about the security measures in place. We will investigate CATS and examine its public safety contracts and operations."

President Donald Trump took to his social media platform to criticize "Democrats who refuse to put bad people in jail, including Former Disgraced Governor and 'Wannabe Senator' Roy Cooper" for Zarutsk's murder.

Trump and Boliek are Republicans. Lyles and Cooper are Democrats.

Lyles said the city has "partnered before on legislation like North Carolina's pre-trial integrity act, and we stand ready to partner again at the local, state, and federal level."

"I want to assure the community that we are taking action, and we will

continue to take action."

Charlotte Area Transit System officials last week made a presentation to City Council and the Metropolitan Transit Commission on security upgrades. CATS is redeploying security personnel on Blue Line platforms and including patrols with bike units and urban terrain vehicles later this month in addition to increased fare enforcement.

Charlotte-Mecklenburg Police will also boost patrols across the transit system.

Over the past two years, Lyles said, "we have doubled the number of CATS security personnel, tripled the safety and security budget from \$5.8 million to nearly \$18 million, and are shifting from a corporate security model towards a stronger transit policing model."

CATS also plans to recruit and hire nearly 30 additional security personnel in addition to forward an agreement for council's consideration at its Sept. 22 business meeting to expand the agency's security authority around the transit system.

## Rep. Adams backs federal food assistance bill for the vulnerable

Continued from page 1A

benefits are simply not enough to put food on the table. As inflation and cost of living continue to rise, we should focus on strengthening SNAP, not making deep, reckless cuts that only worsen hunger in the United States," Adams, senior member of the House Committee on Agriculture said in a statement. "The Closing the Meal Gap Act will help tens of millions of people—including seniors, people with disabilities, single mothers, veterans, and children—

become more food secure and support their households. Hunger is a policy choice and today, we are choosing to provide for the people who need it most."

The legislation would alleviate impacts of the One Big Beautiful Bill Act signed by President Donald Trump in July, which cut \$186 billion in food assistance. The Republican-backed law also cuts and restricts future updates to the Thrifty Food Plan, making the Low Cost Food Plan an alternative to calculate benefits for SNAP recipi-

ents. The law also removes internet service costs as an eligible deduction for SNAP benefits.

"In the richest country in the world, it is unacceptable that over 40 million Americans, including 15 million children, still face hunger. We must do more to combat hunger in New York and across the nation," Gillibrand said. ... "By enhancing SNAP benefits, this vital legislation will help put food on the table for those who need it most."



NORTH CAROLINA A&T STATE UNIVERSITY

Maj. Gen. Joseph McNeil in 2020 at the 60th anniversary of the sit-in movement's start in Greensboro. McNeil, the architect of what became a national campaign for equality in public accommodation, died Sept. 4, 2025 at age 83.

## Sit-in pioneer Joseph McNeil ushered in wave of new leaders

Continued from page 1A

geous, peaceful protest, powerfully embodying the idea that young people could change the world," A&T Chancellor James Martin II said in a statement. "His leadership and the example of the A&T Four continue to inspire our students today. The North Carolina A&T family mourns his passage but celebrates his long and incredible life and the legacy he leaves behind."

A&T will host a memorial service Sept. 11 from 2-4 p.m. on campus. Public viewing is 1-2 p.m.

Gen. McNeil, who served in the Air Force, and the A&T Four are venerated on campus with the February One Monument, a 15-foot-tall bronze and marble sculpture depicting the young men as they walked down the sidewalk to Woolworth's. Gen. McNeil is also celebrated in his hometown of Wilmington, N.C., where a historical marker commemorates his role in history and a portion of Third Street is named in his honor.

Gen. McNeil, who was born March 25, 1942, in segregated Wilmington, graduated all-Black Williston Senior High School and enrolled at A&T in 1959. On the trip to Greensboro, he was reminded of Jim Crow's grip on the South at a bus terminal when he went in to eat.

"They said, 'We can't serve you here — you have to go around the corner there,'" he recalled in a 2014 interview with WUNC FM. "And for me, that was the final blow of humiliation. And I had had enough. And I made up my mind that I had to do something."

Gen. McNeil, who was a 17-year-old freshman in A&T Reserve Officer Training Corps, turned his anger into an idea. He

sought input from NAACP member Ralph Johns about organizing a nonviolent sit-in and launched a student-led plan with McCain, Richmond and Blair, who lived on the same dormitory floor as McNeil.

On Monday, Feb. 1, the students walked downtown to Woolworth's and bought a few items. They sat at the lunch counter and asked for service instead of moving to a window at the back of the store where Black people were served. Counter staff refused; the students remained seated until the store closed.

Word quickly spread on A&T's campus and 20 students joined the foursome the next day. By week's end, the store was packed with protesters — primarily students from A&T, Bennett College, Dudley High School and UNC Greensboro. As the protest grew into a national story,

President Dwight Eisenhower sided with the students to "enjoy the rights of equality that are guaranteed by the Constitution."

On July 25, 1960, Woolworth's served four Black customers at the counter and adjusted its service policies across the South. Four years later, the Civil Rights Act signed into law by President Lyndon Johnson ended segregation of public accommodations.

"The sit-in was not about David Richmond, Frank McCain, Ezell Blair or Joe McNeil sitting down and having a cup of coffee next to a white person," Gen. McNeil said in 2014. "It was much deeper than that. It was about choice. It was about having the ability to say, 'I choose to sit down.' Or 'I choose to drink from that water fountain.'

"I don't choose Black water or white water or colored water. I want water."

## 'Persevere:' Justice Ketanji Brown Jackson on memoir

Continued from page 1A

abama and her father North Carolina Central University. She spoke of her "sheer gratitude" to "all who came before me and opened the door for me to walk through," because "no one achieves the highest of heights alone."

Having lived through the Civil Rights Movement and passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and Voting Rights Act of 1965 Jackson's parents encouraged her to "fully participate in society," an opportunity they didn't always have.

"If there were swim lessons, I was in them. If there were piano lessons, I was in them," Jackson said, adding she knew her parents "could not rely on the greater society" to instill in her the value of her own intelligence. As a child, she'd sit at the kitchen table with coloring books across from her father, who had his law books, and they'd "work together."

Jackson's parents' encouragement to achieve academically gave her the confidence to follow her dreams. In high school in Miami, Florida, Jackson sharpened her skills as an excellent public speaker, winning the speech and debate championship at Harvard University, where she eventually set her sights for college. In her admissions interview, Brown Jackson said it would help her achieve her goal of becoming the first Black woman Supreme Court justice.

Her time at predominantly white Harvard was not always easy. One day, while walking across campus questioning if she'd made the right choice, a Black woman walking toward her leaned toward close and said one word: "perse-

vere."

In her one-hour conversation with Gantt, Jackson's tone was lighthearted and candid; the audience, many of them Black women, could have been mistaken as a large group of friends. Jackson's comments were met with head nods, applause, and murmurs of agreement. For example, she acknowledged not being the only Black woman worthy or capable of sitting on the nation's highest court.

Gantt praised Jackson as "outspoken" and "vocal" in dissenting opinions on the Supreme Court.

"It's very traditional," Jackson said.

"But you don't seem to be following tradition," Gantt countered. Jackson explained: "The court is a really interesting institution. ... There are built-in mechanisms for freedom of expression of opposition."

Jackson's career trajectory was planned, but her accomplishments and experience cannot be denied, as Gantt said, she is "not a DEI hire." Her resume includes serving three clerkships and tenure as a district and appellate court judge while balancing marriage and raising two daughters.

"I was not the mom baking cookies for the bake sale," she said. However, it was her youngest daughter, at just 11 years old, who took it upon herself to write a letter to then-President Barack Obama to encourage her mother's appointment.

"I was raising a child who was not afraid to speak her mind, even to the president of the United States," she said. "It made me feel like I must be doing something right."

## NC voting rules updated, board looks for ways to ID noncitizens

Continued from page 1A

identifiers connected to their names in the state voter registration database.

In some cases, voters may not have supplied the numbers. In other cases, misspelled names, transposed numbers in dates of birth, or changed names created data mismatches.

For example, if a woman registers before she's married and again after she's married with a different last name, her Social Security number won't match to the new registration.

Letters have gone out to voters who apparently did not supply one of the required numbers, asking them for the information. If they haven't supplied it by the next time they vote, they'll be asked to fill out a provisional ballot. The provisional voting application asks for one of those numbers.

People who supplied numbers that couldn't be validated will vote regular ballots if they show an acceptable ID.

Under the plan, county election boards will review records for data errors. Beginning in January, letters will go out twice a year to voters whose ID numbers won't validate, asking them for help figuring out why.

The U.S. Department of Justice sued the state

Board over the missing numbers. The state and the DOJ reached a settlement that District Judge Richard Myers II signed Monday.

As the Board unanimously approved the new instructions, members engaged in a wide-ranging discussion about whether enough was being done to cull noncitizen voters.

Board member Robert Rucho, a former Republican state senator, questioned whether someone should be allowed to vote using a utility bill.

The federal Help America Vote Act lists utility bills among the documents voters or new registrants can use to establish identity and residency. North Carolina law requires voters show a photo ID or fill out a form explaining why they don't have one.

"I just don't think that we're doing what our responsibility requires us to do," Rucho said.

A Canadian citizen was charged late last month with illegally registering to vote in North Carolina and voting in federal elections in 2022 and 2024.

Board member Jeff Carmon, a Democrat, said he hasn't seen a widespread problem with noncitizen voting in his six years on the board, and told Rucho he shouldn't have said staff wasn't making a maximum effort.

"What we're doing is according to the law," Carmon said.

"Maybe the law is insane," Board Chairman Francis De Luca interjected.

Board member Stacy "Four" Eggers IV, a Republican, said there's still interest in using the federal SAVE database to verify voters' citizenship.

Elections officials are working with the U.S. Department of Homeland Security on a memo "that would lay out the parameters of any potential data exchange with regard to the last four of Social Security," said state Elections Director Sam Hayes.

Officials want to work with the state DMV to obtain full Social Security numbers, Hayes said.

A bill proposed by House Republicans would require voters to supply their full Social Security numbers when registering. Voting and privacy experts told NC Newsline that provision would violate federal privacy law.

The DVM, however, collects full Social Security numbers.

Hayes said lawmakers are working on legislation "that would compel that data sharing, and we're certainly supportive of that as well."

## Infant Mortality Awareness Month highlights issue in NC

By Eric Tegethoff

NORTH CAROLINA NEWS SERVICE

September is National Infant Mortality Awareness Month, shining a light on a difficult and persistent issue.

The infant mortality rate in North Carolina was 6.9 deaths per 1,000 births in 2023, which was the 10th-highest rate in the nation. There are also large disparities along racial lines, with Black infants dying at three times the rate of white infants.

Kaitlyn Richards, health policy manager for the advocacy group NC Child, said the top two causes of infant mortality in North Carolina are low birth weight and birth defects.

"That can be tied directly back to access to early prenatal care within the first trimester of a pregnancy," Richards said. "Black mothers typically have less access to prenatal care."

"We cannot overstate how important Medicaid access

is to that prenatal care in their first trimester, compared to white mothers and those of other races and ethnicities."

State policymakers are looking into ways to reduce the infant mortality rate. Each year the North Carolina Child Fatality Task Force sends a report to the governor and General Assembly, which includes recommendations for reducing child deaths.

Richards pointed out one vital resource is home visiting programs, in which doulas or community health workers go to new parents' homes during pregnancy and postpartum to educate them around things such as safe sleep practices. She noted another important resource is access to prenatal care.

"Richards added it is still unclear what the cuts will mean but they will likely have effects on North Carolina children's well-being for years and decades to come."



The impacts of the transatlantic slave trade can be found on African people and global cultures and society five centuries after its start.

## Transatlantic slave trade: 500 years later, Diaspora still suffers from effects

By Stacy M. Brown

BLACK PRESS USA

The most enduring consequences of the migration for the migrants themselves and for the receiving communities were the development of racism and the corresponding emergence and sustenance of an African American community, with particular cultural manifestations, attitudes, and expressions.

The legacy is reflected in music and art, with a significant influence on religion, cuisine, and language, according to Paul E. Lovejoy, a distinguished research professor and Canada Research Chair in African Diaspora History at York University in Toronto.

"The cultural and religious impact of this African immigration shows that migrations involve more than people; they also involve the culture of those people," Lovejoy said in a recent post about the creation of the African diaspora.

American culture is not European or African but its own form, created in a political and economic context of inequality and oppression in which diverse ethnic and cultural influences, both European and African – and in some contexts, Native American – can be discerned, Lovejoy said.

"Undoubtedly, the transatlantic

slave trade was the defining migration that shaped the African Diaspora. It did so through the people it forced to migrate, and especially the women who were to give birth to the children who formed the new African American population," he said.

These women included many who can be identified as Igbo or Ibibio, but almost none who were Yoruba, Fon, or Hausa.

Bantu women, from matrilineal societies, also constituted a considerable portion of the African immigrants, and it appears that females from Sierra Leone and other parts of the Upper Guinea Coast were also well represented, Lovejoy said.

"These were the women who gave birth to African American culture and society," he said. After many rang in 2019 with celebratory parties and gatherings, there were still others who solemnly recalled the beginning of the transatlantic slave trade that started 400 years ago – 500 years, depending upon the region.

For Africans throughout the diaspora, their struggle not only traces back 400 or 500 years, but it continued and was underscored as recently as 135 years ago when the infamous Berlin Conference was held.

Please see TRANSATLANTIC | 3A

## The game: What Black city gets the National Guard

By April Ryan

BLACK PRESS USA

"I refuse to pretend that any of this is normal," Illinois Gov. J.B. Pritzker said over the weekend, referring to President Trump's threat to send National Guard troops to Chicago under what Pritzker called the "fake guise of fighting crime."

Large-scale protests with scores of demonstrators took to the streets in cities like Washington, D.C., and Chicago over the weekend in efforts to push back on Trump's plans for National Guard troops in those cities.

President Trump is playing in an almost game-like fashion as he seems to determine which city deserves National Guard troops. While Baltimore and Chicago were on his lips earlier last week, New Orleans is his latest pick. New Orleans Mayor LaToya Cantrell, who is Black, was recently indicted by a federal grand jury on charges including lying, conspiracy, and wire fraud.

New Orleans is located in Republican-controlled Louisiana. There have been growing concerns that the president has been racially bullyinging cities with Black mayors with diverse populations in democratic states.

Los Angeles was the first city to receive

a convergence of National Guard troops when the president declared an immigration crisis. A federal judge ruled that the administration's actions were illegal. Los Angeles is a diverse city with a Black mayor in a blue state. That same judge ruled the Trump administration violated the Posse Comitatus Act by using military personnel for domestic law enforcement functions, such as security patrols and crowd control.

Since the demobilization of most National Guard troops in L.A., a small contingent has remained, and California Gov. Gavin Newsome continues to protest. Washington, DC, has troops, and more states are sending reinforcements as the city cooperates with federal efforts. Just thirty miles north, in a city President Trump calls a "Hellhole," Baltimore's former mayor Kurt Schmoke told Black Press USA, "There is not a crime emergency in Baltimore."

Schmoke, president of the University of Baltimore, situated in the heart of Baltimore City, says that in the 1980s, when crime was worse, he considered calling in the National Guard. However, he decided against it, considering Baltimore would always carry that negative stigma if he did.

## Delta Sigma Theta engages voters to honor soror's memory

STAFF REPORTS

Members of the Charlotte Alumnae Chapter of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority honored the memory of Lucretia Moore by engaging west Charlotte residents to exercise their right to vote.

The sorority hosted the Lucretia R. Moore Women's Day of Voting Rally on Sept. 6 at Allegra Westbrooks Regional Library in Precinct 25, which has some of Mecklenburg County's lowest voter participation rates. A week earlier, Deltas knocked on 102 doors in the precinct as part of a community voter canvass during the early voting period.

In addition, Mecklenburg County commissioners proclaimed the first Saturday of early voting as Lu-



DELTA SIGMA THETA CHARLOTTE ALUMNAE CHAPTER  
Members of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority honored soror Lucretia Moore by engaging west Charlotte residents during the early voting period.

crecia R. Moore Women's Day of Voting.

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# The Charlotte Post

The Voice of the Black Community

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## Vaccines should remain prevalent

Vaccines are in the news now. It's not necessarily because it's vaccine season. It's more because there are those who want to take them out of our healthcare delivery system.

People like me who are part of the old school have been taking vaccines since childhood. It was simply a way of life. We called them "shots." We would go to the doctor's office, roll up our sleeves, cringe and have the shot.

Healthcare professionals would come to our school, and we could have them there as well. The needles used today are much thinner than back in the day. Upon reflection, the pre-hype about taking them was greater than the experience. I, along with my friends, bought into the angst and apprehension of getting vaccines.

Vaccination was a part of our school record. You couldn't attend school without them. And of course, that left us with no choice. Our parents cer-

tainly weren't going to keep us at home.

During the early days, we received vaccines for polio, tetanus, whooping cough, diphtheria and smallpox. As we understood it, the vaccines were for our protection. We never questioned our parents' wisdom and decision-making.

I don't ever remember having any side effects or sickness because of these vaccines. We were always healthy. At most, we had arm soreness but that soon dissipated. There weren't any stories in our neighborhood about health problems and children because of these vaccines.

Another important vaccine was for the influenza virus. Records show that early on, the vaccine was primarily used for military personnel. Subsequently, it was used by everyone.

Each year there is a different vaccine given for this virus commonly referred to as the flu. I know people who take a flu shot every year. These shots are given at healthcare facilities and drug stores as well.

Some folks have chosen not to take a yearly flu

shot. According to The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention approximately 43.1% of adults and 43.7% of children took the flu vaccine during the 2024 year and part of the 2025 year.

So, many Americans are not taking this precaution. It is my opinion that people are self-medicating and staying away from traditional vaccines. It will be interesting to see if this continues.

Much has been said about COVID-19, which happened a few years ago. According to reports, 1 million Americans passed away because of it. We all know someone whose life was cut short because of the coronavirus.

A vaccine was created which stemmed the tide of its spread. It was a lifesaver in my opinion. My family took the vaccine and thankfully we didn't suffer from it. Some people decided against taking the vaccine. Some are still with us while others aren't. Immune systems were compromised.

There have been debates about the effectiveness of this vaccine for COVID-19. Personally, I side with those who have a scientific background and can interpret the data.

Robert F. Kennedy Jr. has been at the center of the vaccine discussion. Criticism and conjecture have been at his doorstep. The Secretary of Health and Human Services has been challenged by both Democrats and Republicans.

Recently, Secretary Ken-

nedy appeared before the Senate Finance Committee to discuss COVID-19. The record shows that he fired all 17 members of the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices. He has replaced them with those who are aligned with his philosophies on health care and vaccines.

U.S. Sen. Bill Cassidy, a

Republican from Louisiana and member of the committee was troubled by the comments of Secretary

Kennedy. Cassidy is a medical doctor.

It is my thinking that the

American people still want

vaccines to be available.

We want them and our

children need them.

Winston-Salem native

James Ewers lives in New

Orleans.

## A lesson in civics

Two political junkies struck up a conversation. Jane, a staunch Republican well known in state politics, told me she enjoyed watching NC SPIN on television for many years.

"I liked the way you had people expressing different opinions without getting ugly or disagreeable," she said.

 I thanked her for the compliment, adding that we had only one rule on our show - "Tom's rule." It said that we were southern ladies and gentlemen, and we were going to act like it. If you couldn't, you wouldn't come back on our show.

We reminisced that people could reside in different parts of the state, from different political parties or have other differences, yet they could still talk and listen to each other and find things upon which they could agree. It was a more civil time.

My dad, a Democrat, served in the General Assembly representing Wilson, Nash and Edgecombe counties. In those days, Democrats running for election had to sign a loyalty pledge they would vote only for other Democrats. When dad's seatmate, Jim Holshouser, ran for governor as a Republican it presented a real challenge.

I was anchoring our radio station's election night returns broadcast in 1972. Hargrove "Skipper" Bowles, the Democratic nominee, took the early lead, but as the evening wore on the lead narrowed. It was approaching 11 p.m. and we were taking a commercial break when dad walked into the control room and said, "Son, I have a confession to make. You know I signed the loyalty pledge to vote only for Democrats, but Jim Holshouser is such a fine man that I broke that pledge and voted for him for governor."

I quickly added that he had said such good things about Holshouser I voted for him, too. About that time my yellow-dog Democrat wife walks in saying, "I voted for Jim, too." Holshouser took the lead and became the first Republican governor in 76 years in North Carolina.

When I first registered to vote, there were three Democrats registered for every Republican. The Pitt County Republican Party Chairman quipped he could hold the county party convention in the phone booth on the courthouse grounds. Democrats dominated state politics. I remember the heavy-handed leadership of Speaker Liston Ramsey and that of Marc Basnight in the Senate. Democrats treated Govs. Holshouser and Martin poorly. They were in charge but not mean-spirited.

Even in the early 1990s finding consensus was more common. I remember attending legislative receptions after session (before they were discontinued because of campaign contribution concerns). It wasn't uncommon to see a Democrat and a Republican standing side-by-side, eating the jumbo shrimp or ham biscuits and discussing legislative business.

Frequently, one legislator might ask another who had voted against a particular bill what it would take to get his support on the legislation. Often the two engaged in a conversation about how to make the bill better, sometimes reaching a compromise to get a measure passed. A lot of legislation was agreed upon in settings like this.

But today the political climate is so hostile and toxic I'm not sure I could moderate a civil television debate in the Old North State. Democrats and Republicans barely talk with each other. In today's legislature the caucus rules.

Legislators owe their allegiance to their caucus, not to the district that elected them or even to the state. There is little tolerance for members who don't toe the caucus line. Punishment is meted out to violators. It may be a committee chairmanship denied, a sponsored bill that goes nowhere, even a primary challenge.

Today the opposing party is the enemy, evil ones who must be defeated. It's a zero-sum game. There's no win-win. I win when you lose.

No wonder government isn't working well. There's less mystery why citizens have lost faith in the political process.

But this spring we may have seen a crack in this political iceberg.

New House Speaker Destin Hall was able to at least open discussions with House Democrats. Twenty-seven of the 47 Democrats present voted in favor of the House Republican budget bill. Granted, many voted for the House budget because they believed the Senate version was just so terribly wrong for the state. Even Gov. Stein had kind words for the bill. This was a milestone, a first step in trying to restore some bipartisanship to our legislature.

The Senate basically refused to compromise; ironic because Republicans were locked in partisan struggles with other Republicans instead of against Democrats. But this was a step and we applaud Speaker Hall, his caucus and Democrats for making it happen.

The important question is what can be done to expand this bipartisanship and improve our political process. Surely it begins by talking civilly and really listening to each other, exploring things on which we can agree.

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MATT LACZKO | THE CHARLOTTE POST

Johnson C. Smith cornerback Rontay Dunbar hauls in an interception in the Golden Bulls' 28-16 win against No. 11 Valdosta State on Sept. 6, 2025. The win was J.C. Smith's second in as many years against a nationally ranked opponent at McGirt Field.

## 'We know we're talented' at JC Smith

*2-0 Golden Bulls, coming off win against Division II powerhouse Valdosta State, return to national poll*

By Cameron Williams

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Johnson C. Smith's biggest win in Maurice Flowers' four seasons includes a potential pitfall.

Last week's 28-16 result against Valdosta State, then ranked No. 11 in the NCAA Division II coaches' poll, is the Golden Bulls' (2-0) highest ranked victim in school history but Flowers' postgame message was simple: shift focus to Elizabeth City State.

"You could probably go back and see a couple interviews when the schedule came out, we said next week was the one that we worry about, and that's the

opportunity to have a letdown game in Elizabeth City," he said. "Our first game of the season was in Boston with all of that hurrah going on, the Essence Classic, major national TV. Now you have doggone Valdosta State, big time opponent. Get that win. Now you have to go to Elizabeth City and play your only opponent that's going to be on grass after coming off two big weeks."

"This is the opportunity for us to have a letdown."



Flowers

JCSU, which broke into this week's Division II media poll at No. 23, played through adversity against Valdosta State. After falling into a 10-0 hole in the second quarter, the Golden Bulls reeled off 21 unanswered points to seize control behind quarterback Kelvin Durham and suffocating defense. Durham completed 17-of-25 passes for 219 yards and a touchdown while accounting for 27 yards on eight carries and three scores. It's the second straight week

Durham, a transfer from Fort Valley State, had a hand in four touchdowns.

"I didn't start the game the way I wanted to, but (my teammates) kept me encouraged and uplifted, let me know they had my back," he said. "It was a big win for us. We're all excited. We already knew what to do throughout the week. ... We all put it together and came out victorious."

JCSU's defense, which limited Valdosta State to 268 yards and 9-of-32 passing for 134 yards, was key. Outside of two long-distance scores — Eric Watts' 75-yard run in the first quarter

Please see AT NO. 23 | 6A

## Stewart Ralph inducted to Clemson athletics hall of fame

By Herbert L. White

and Tia Wiggins

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Stewart Ralph, the first Black track and field athlete to earn All-America at Clemson, has been inducted to the Clemson Athletic Hall of Fame.

Ralph, a New Brunswick, New Jersey, native who lives in Charlotte, stepped

onto Clemson's track in 1975 and immediately made his mark in the javelin over four years. From 1975-78, he left a trail of firsts and records as the first Black track athlete in Clemson history to earn All-America in 1976. Ralph was a three-time All-American in javelin — one of only two Tigers to ever accomplish that — and won ACC titles in

1975, 1976, and 1978.

His 1976 ACC title came with a career-best throw of 81.2 meters, the second-longest in Clemson history at his weight category. That same year, he finished third at the NCAA Championships with a toss of 73.6 meters. He returned to the podium in 1977, finishing third with a throw of 78.33 meters,

which missed the national title by just 0.38 meters. In 1978, he finished second in the nation with a best of 80.26 meters.

Ralph is the only Clemson track athlete to compete in javelin at four NCAA national meets and the second Tiger athlete in any event to earn All-America status three times.



Ralph

## Hough still on top amid upheaval in Magnificent Seven

By Herbert L. White

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Carnage turned the Magnificent Seven upside down as the ranks of unbeaten teams is whittled to three.

Hough is No. 1 for the third straight week, followed by surprising Chambers, which debuted in the rankings a week ago. The Cougars are followed by Myers Park, who debut after beating Providence for a 3-0 start.

West Charlotte fell a couple of spots to fourth after losing their second game of the season, followed by Palisades, which lost for the first time. Independence, which fell out of the rankings last week, benefited from last week's carnage to grab sixth and Ardrey Kell pushes into the ranks for the first time.

This week's rankings, with overall record and previous week's ranking, if applicable.

Please see HOUGH | 6A



MATT LACZKO | THE CHARLOTTE POST

Hough High's Huskies are atop the Magnificent Seven for the third straight week, but the other six spots changed hands.

## Winless Charlotte 49ers turn their attention to improvement

By Cameron Williams

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It wasn't the performance Charlotte coach Tim Albin envisioned for a record crowd of 19,233.

The 49ers managed a field goal in a 20-3 loss against North Carolina, but unless you're shutting opponents out, three points aren't going to win games. There were improvements from the season opener but a lot more to be made. There was a decent amount to take away from this game, but we'll save you time and limit it to three.

Here they are:

**Charlotte's offense MUST get better**

It is fair to say after scoring just three points against North Carolina and 11 against Appalachian State in the opener that Charlotte's offense is struggling. Charlotte was 0-for-3 in the red zone, had two red zone turnovers,

three fumbles and 6-of-15 on third down — likely due to the average distance of just over 10 yards to go.

"There's no way I'm gonna get up here and blame anybody," Albin said. "Ultimately it is my fault. We have different things tonight than we had last week... positives. But I think we had five or six drives over 15 plays, and we didn't get any points on those drives. We have got to figure out how to get the ball in the end zone. ...

"But we are not playing together, all 11 guys at the same time doing their job enough times to finish the drives."

To add to their offensive woes, Charlotte had eight more rushing attempts than yards. That number is skewed based on two snaps where 49ers' quarterback Conner Harrell had to fall on the football for losses, but still. Running backs Rod Gaine Jr., Henry Rutledge,

C.J. Stokes and Cameren Smith combined for 38 yards. That is an average of 9.5 yards per tailback. That isn't a winning recipe at any level of football unless your quarterback has 500 passing yards to combat the lack of rushing attack.

**Conner Harrell has more improvements to make**

Harrell is still acclimating to running this 49ers' offense. He took care of the ball, which is an improvement from Week 1. It could be play calling or a lack of comfort in pulling the ball and running, but there were a handful of occasions where it appeared Harrell made the wrong read and handed the ball off, but if he would have kept it could have gotten more yards.

"To speak to his play or how he did, I'd need to watch the tape," Albin said. "I thought there were some good things in there. He stood [in

Please see 49ERS | 6A

## Charlotte eyes ninth straight MLS win

By Steve Goldberg

FOR THE CHARLOTTE POST

Saturday was already building up to be an epic day in Charlotte FC history.

After their first road win against the New England Revolution gave the Crown eight consecutive wins, the chance to equal the Seattle Sounders' post-shootout record of nine is against vaunted Inter Miami with Lionel Messi.

That already guaranteed a large audience at Bank of America Stadium for the match, as MLS respects the international break where a diaspora of league players will represent their countries.

As if it needed more drama than that, Charlotte (16-11-2) is third in the Eastern Conference on 50 points, while Miami (13-5-7) is sixth with 46 points. The twist is that due to participation in the FIFA World Cup and other events, the Herons have a whopping four games in hand to gain points against the teams ahead of them.

For Dean Smith's boys, who sat atop the Eastern Conference nine games into the season, the horrors of May and June are a distant memory. They are seven points behind table-leading Philadelphia and two behind second-place Cincinnati. Charlotte is fifth in the Supporters Shield standings topped by

Please see CROWN | 6A



MATT LACZKO | THE CHARLOTTE POST

Johnson C. Smith receiver Biggie Proctor caught five passes for 96 yards in the Golden Bulls' 28-16 win against Valdosta State. JCSU debuted in the D2football.com national media poll this week at No. 23.

## At No. 23 JCSU, 'We know we're talented'

Continued from page 5A

and a 65-yard pass from Jameson Holcombe to Samuel Curry - the Blazers struggled to generate offense. Golden Bulls cornerback Rontay Dunbar, a graduate transfer who earned All-CIAA at Lincoln (Pa.), recovered a fumble to thwart a Valdosta State drive and an interception that led to Durham's 4-yard touchdown run for the go-ahead score in the third quarter. Ty Hines, who plays opposite Hill, broke up a team-high five passes. Linebacker Vincent Hill, an All-SIAC transfer from Tuskegee, led JCSU with seven tackles.

"We got off to a slow start, just couldn't get out of her own way, but very proud of our resiliency on offense, on defense, special teams, and ... when you say a team win, this was a team win," Flowers said. "Defense stepped up, big offense made plays when they had to, and then really showed our resilience by just having several things happen and bouncing back. That's the sign of quality."

Beating Valdosta State, whose program résumé includes seven national final appearances - including last season - and four titles, is a watershed moment for the Golden Bulls, who are in a renaissance under Flowers. Taking down the Blazers a year after knocking off nationally ranked CIAA rival Virginia Union - both at McGirt Field -

sends a message unraked JCSU can compete with anyone in Division II.

"Because of Valdosta State's championships and who they are, this one's a big win," Flowers said. "What this does for our program really, it just gives us more validation of what we said we wanted to do and what we wanted to build."

"We said we wanted to be a Division II team that can go to the playoffs and have an opportunity to compete in the playoffs. We didn't just want to set our goals on winning a CIAA championship and that be it. We want to do more than win a CIAA championship, so to even think like that, and to think that you can have an opportunity to win in the playoffs, you need to beat teams that have been in the playoffs. Valdosta State University is a team that stays in the playoffs."

The Blazers were "definitely one of the best teams I've played against," Durham said. "But one thing I've told my teammates [is there's] a reason for everything. There's a reason why this team has this game this year and to take advantage of it. You know we're talented. We know we're talented. Now it's time to show the world how talented we are. And that was the biggest message I tried to give to my teammates."

## Hough High still on top amid upheaval in Magnificent Seven

Continued from page 5A

1. Hough (3-0, first). Can anyone stop the Huskies? Highland Springs got close, but no cigar with Hough holding on 17-14. Next up is a home date against Mooresville.

2. Chambers (3-0, seventh). A week after breaking into the rankings, Chambers moves up five spots after polishing off Harding 31-0. Next week probably won't be as easy with Palisades heading to campus.

3. Myers Park (3-0, unranked). Another week, another newcomer to the rankings. The Mustangs join the fray after steam-rolling Providence 45-7. A huge test awaits in Mallard Creek, which is bound to be motivated after a 63-13 drubbing by Grayson (Ga.).

4. West Charlotte (1-2, second). Overtime

has been unkind to the Lions, who are 0-2 in games that have gone beyond 48 minutes. Last week it was a 10-7 loss to Rock Hill South Pointe. Unbeaten Myers Park awaits in the home opener.

5. Palisades (2-1, fifth). Clover (S.C.) dropped the Pumas from the unbeaten ranks with a 21-19 win, but fear not. Hitting the road to Chambers is all the incentive Palisades needs to focus on Friday.

6. Independence (2-1, unranked). The Patriots were displaced for a week but find themselves back in the mix after taking down Charlotte Catholic. Next is Lake Norman.

7. Ardrey Kell (2-1, unranked). Another first-time entry to the rankings. The Knights topped Marvin Ridge 15-3 and host South Mecklenburg Friday.

**The Charlotte Post**  
**SPORTS CHARLOTTE**  
**Podcast with a home team advantage**

## 49ers look for answers after poor start to season

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the pocket]. I think the pass that he hit Sean [Brown] on, he stood in there [with the defense] barreling down on him. He changed his arm angle and threw a nice ball. Took a pretty good shot there but hopped right up. So, there's good but we, again, had four drives over 10 plays and we didn't get anything out of it. So, I am discouraged with that, but again, my glass is half full and we have to figure out how to get the thing in the end zone."

**Defense was a bright spot after UNC's first drive**

It appeared it was going to be a long night for the defense yet again after North Carolina quarterback Gio Lopez hit Chris Culliver on a 51-yard opening drive touchdown. But Charlotte settled in after that and gave up just 13 points.

"That third play game, they just ran by us," Albin said. "... We didn't tighten things up, maybe a little bit more man [concepts] this week. I've got to look at the numbers.

But after that long play they had to work to get what they got. I know we had a couple turnovers and those types of things, but just as a defense, the way they stood together and kept fighting and really kept the score from getting out of hand."

Charlotte linebacker Shay Taylor said the 49ers were quick to regroup after giving up the quick score.

"We knew they were going to come out and try to get back from last week," he said. "Same thing happened when they played TCU, they had a big first drive but we hunkered down and tried to not let that affect us."

**Moving forward**

Albin is staying with a glass half full mentality. It's hard winning in college football, but to keep things in perspective, Albin struggled in his first season at Ohio before he firmly installed the culture he wanted.

The 49ers will host Monmouth (2-0 and 18th in the country in FCS) Saturday.

## Charlotte FC keeps the youth movement going with signings

By Steve Goldberg

FOR THE CHARLOTTE POST

via the U22 Initiative and will occupy an international roster slot.

"Baye is an exciting young talent that has impressed us with his strong performances in preseas and throughout the MLS NEXT Pro season," Kmetta said. "Baye will be a fantastic addition that strengthens our midfield through the final stretch of the 2025 season and beyond."

The Malian midfielder has featured in 21 matches with CLFC, where he ranks second on the team in minutes played (1,812). He gained attention playing with Mali's U-17 squad in 2023, earning nine caps and contributing Mali's third-place finish at the 2023 FIFA U-17 World Cup.

**Dance Dance Revolution**

Beyonc, Miley Cyrus, Lizzo, stand aside. It's Toklomati time. Or it was. After scoring a thundering header to take the win at New England, the 21-year-old striker added a booty shake to his celebration.

Unbeknownst to Toklomati, and everyone else, MLS pitches are twerk-free zones, as it was announced on Tuesday that "The MLS Disciplinary Committee has fined Charlotte FC forward Idan Toklomati for making an inappropriate gesture in the 87th minute of Charlotte FC's match against the New England Revolution on August 30th."

That decision took just three days to make. Five days since Inter Miami's post-game fracas against Seattle getting handled in the Leagues Cup final, it's still crickets from the Disciplinary Committee regarding potential suspensions for Luis Suarez, Sergio Busquets, and other players, including those from the Sounders, which could possibly have an impact on the final season standings.

Inter Miami published a statement of regret, offering no internal sanctions.

"Inter Miami condemns the altercations that took place following the conclusion of the Leagues Cup Final," it read. "These actions do not reflect the values of our sport, and we remain committed to upholding the highest standards of sportsmanship both on and off the pitch. We are working closely with Leagues Cup and MLS officials to ensure the situation is addressed appropriately."

## Crown aims for ninth straight

Continued from page 5A

the Union.

**But wait, there's more...**

Seattle set the consecutive wins record in 2018. Coincidentally, the Sounders

may have an indirect part in how this all plays out because of their Leagues Cup final win against Miami.

The boys in green made several of the boys in pink see red after handling MLS's glamour team a 3-0 pounding in front of 69,000-plus fans at Lumen Field. Seattle was strong in defense, opportunistic on offense and lucky as well with Messi missing from close range with only the keeper to beat. Tadeo Allende also missed the frame in similar fashion. Miami players were frustrated after the match, and some of them couldn't let it go.

According to various news reports, and visible on the live telecast video, Luis Suarez confronted Seattle midfielder Obed Vargas, who was the nemesis for Messi and Suarez much of the night, and put him in a headlock, and later, allegedly, though caught on video, spat towards the Sounders' director of player security.

While Suarez, a convicted biter, is no stranger to controversy, the normally calm Sergio Busquets was also reported to have accosted Vargas, putting hands to his face. Other Miami players,

including unused substitutes, could be seen swinging at Seattle players and staff.

With two weeks to evaluate the situation, MLS could suspend one or more Miami players for league matches, beginning with the Charlotte game.

**Team USA**  
 Tim Ream is back with the U.S. Men's National Team for matches against South Korea and Japan on Sept. 6 and 9. He was asked if there is an internal issue with coach Mauricio Pochettino putting 12 MLS-based players on the 23-man roster. While outsiders may argue the merits of what continent someone plays on, Ream, who competed nine seasons for Fulham FC before returning to MLS with Charlotte, said players don't care, and don't talk about.

"I think it's just competition in general," he said. "It's one of those things where we don't really look at the roster and say, 'Oh, there's this many guys in from this league, or there's this many guys in from Europe.' To us, it's competition... You have to go out there and earn your place and earn your spot."

In applauding the level of the American league, Pochettino has said, "We need to give MLS the value, because I think competing there, I think the player can show that they can perform

in the national team. It's not necessary to move from MLS to Europe, because sometimes MLS, under my assessment, maybe is more competitive than some leagues in Europe."

That was a caveat Smith mentioned in regard to Patrick Agyemang's departure to the English Championship and Derby County. While the financial windfall for the 24-year-old striker could not be denied, it is still undetermined if he will get the playing time needed to further establish himself as a potential U.S. World Cup player next year.

After scoring twice in the Gold Cup as a starter for Pochettino, Agyemang underwent surgery for a sports hernia in July, which ruled him out for this international window and the start of Derby County's season.

Ream, who has 75 caps for his country, says Pochettino "is giving guys opportunities to impress, making sure that he can get eyes on everybody who they've been watching from, maybe from afar. And that sends a little bit of a message that places are open. And I think that's only a good thing."

"Competition can drive you and push you, it prepares you and hardens you for the coming months," Ream said.