



Midseason impressions of JC Smith football as CIAA race heats up



CHARLOTTE AREA TRANSIT SYSTEM

The CityLynx Gold Line, which debuted in 2015, connects east and west Charlotte via rail. West Charlotte community activists acknowledge the need for new mass transit initiatives to keep pace with growth but fear the added threat of displacement among lower-income property owners.

Westside neighbors tally the cost of transit tax initiative

Advocates contend infrastructure and displacement mitigation are necessary

By Kylie Marsh
and Herbert L. White
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West Charlotte residents are skeptical about the efficacy of a proposed sales tax increase to fund transit improvements.

The November referendum proposing to use 1 cent of retail sales to pay for bus, road, and rail improvements over the next 30 years. Rickey Hall, chair of the West Boulevard Neighborhood Coalition, contends Charlotte Area Transit System's ambitious plan lacks anti-displacement measures. Without them, "we'll re-create the mistakes of the past" in an area that includes historically Black

neighborhoods and significant multimodal transit needs.

"We have been languishing for decades without a grocery store and other types of amenities," Hall said. "I would want for the residents who have historically invested in this area to stay in place and be able to enjoy the types of amenities that are sure to come with the rail line, if that comes. Long story short, I'm not anti-transit, I'm anti-displacement."

A cornerstone of Charlotte's public transit initiatives is the CityLynx Gold

Line, a 10-mile streetcar project that connects east and west Charlotte. When completed, its 37-stop route includes cultural destinations and major employers in the city's urban core; Novant Health Presbyterian and Central Piedmont Community College in the east and Johnson & Wales and Johnson C. Smith universities westward.

The Gold Line's first two phases - from Elizabeth Avenue in the east to the Charlotte Transportation Center and French Street in the west - are complete. Phase 3 ends at the Rosa Parks Place Community Transit Center. Service to the east extends to Eastland Community

Please see **WESTSIDE** | 2A

Law, order and scrutiny of Black city leadership

By Ashleigh Fields
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Charlotte has become the focus of a political shift in which President Donald Trump is dictating local law enforcement policy or threatening to do so.

Trump recently highlighted the city after the Aug. 22 stabbing death of Iryna Zarutka on a Lynx Blue Line train. Police arrested Decarlos Brown Jr., 34, and charged him with murder and a federal charge of committing an act causing death on a mass transportation system. He has pleaded not guilty.

"The blood of this innocent woman can literally be seen dripping from the killer's knife, and now her blood is on the hands of the Democrats who refuse to put bad people in jail, including Former Disgraced Governor and 'Wannabe Senator' Roy Cooper," Trump wrote in a Sept. 8 social media post.

"North Carolina, and every State, needs LAW AND ORDER, and only Republicans will deliver it!"

While Cooper, the state's former governor who left office in December, isn't in an elected capacity to influence a response to Zarutka's death. But Trump labeled him and other Democrats as insufficient for leadership ahead of next year's midterm elections. Cooper is running for the open U.S. Senate

Please see **LAW** | 2A

Can MAHA feed hungry kids through budget cuts?

By Fran Smith
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Children's nutrition is becoming the latest casualty of the White House war on DEI and government spending that supports families.

After canceling funding for research on health care disparities and higher-ed programs aimed at diversity, the administration is cutting initiatives known to improve nutrition in kids - especially low-income children, who have the highest risk of obesity and other chronic conditions.

First came the termination of several popular USDA initiatives that brought farm-fresh food and nutrition education to schools, child care centers and community-based organizations across the country. Then came USDA's "reinvigorated" farms-to-schools grants program, which changed the competitive application process in ways that disadvantage small rural districts and marginalized communities.

And as SNAP budget cuts and expanded work requirements kick in, millions of children may lose access to free school meals. While

Please see **CAN MAHA** | 3A

Post Best gala recognizes legacy of achievement

By Herbert L. White
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The Charlotte Post Foundation is celebrating the community's best and brightest.

The 28th annual Charlotte Post Best banquet is the foundation's largest fundraiser and recognition of achievement and contributions in academics, service and community impact. The Oct. 4 gala at Hilton Charlotte Uptown, 222 E. 3rd St., will honor the Luminary, Educator of Year, Top Senior and Top Senior runner-up.

The honorees are:

• Mel Watt (Luminary). A lawyer by training, Watt is a civil rights advocate, political operative and former state and federal lawmaker, was appointed director of the Federal Housing

Please see **POST BEST** | 3A

Rebuilding environment after natural disasters a difficult road across NC

By Rebecca Savidge
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One year after Western North Carolina was devastated by Hurricane Helene, many areas are still suffering the impacts of the storm - and one of the overlooked aspects that's still being rebuilt is the environment.

Jason Love, the associate director at the Western Carolina University Highlands Biological Station, said that Helene devastated the rivers in the western part of the state, affecting their surroundings, which will make the recovery of the whole area inevitably slow.

In addition to the flooding causing damage to the physical environment itself, he said that there are certain

species of animals that may not recover fully, simply because of houses, bridges and dams being destroyed right next to their habitats. The species are primarily aquatic, which might then also impact recreation from a fishery standpoint.

"When you put that infrastructure in the way and build in places that probably aren't the best places to build, you're going to have these impacts," he said.

Many of these homes are also built in floodplains because of the convenience of flat land, so they inevitably suffer more damage in extreme storms, heavily affecting the surrounding environment.

Please see **REBUILDING** | 2A

28th Annual Post Best Banquet

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Westside neighbors tally cost of 1-cent transit tax

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Transportation Center. Public transportation has always had an intimate relationship with the Black Charlotte. In the early 20th century, a streetcar serviced Washington Heights and Biddleville and later bus lines connected working class residents and students along the Beatties Ford Road corridor to the city at large. A concern among Historic West End residents is gentrification, which has gained momentum over the last two decades. Longtime residents who are elderly or low-income multigenerational homeowners are wary that the economic boom that impacted neighborhoods in the north and south along the Blue Line will raise property values ultimately displace them. Property taxes in communities east and west of Charlotte light rail have risen about 126%, but income levels have not kept pace, Hall said. Neighborhoods with high percentages of people of color have been significantly impacted, and Hall, an advocate of anti-displacement measures, said construction of the proposed Silver Line would be another impact. "I don't want to see people taxed out," he said. "I want to see a strong economic development component and a focus on jobs - not just job training."

Without higher wages or opportunities where people can earn a living wage while learning a trade, displacement is bound to happen, Hall said.

Colette Forrest, co-founder of the Black Voter Project, agrees. "We don't need more buses, we need more opportunities for our communities," she said.

More glaring than transit needs, neighborhood advocates say, are the need for amenities like a supermarket and jobs that pay living wages. Black voters, who historically support tax referendums like the half-cent sales tariff that paid for light rail in 1998, are taking a harder look this time - if they're looking at all. Municipal and mid-term elections historically result in lower turnout compared to presidential cycles - often barely reaching double-digit voter turnout in Mecklenburg County.

"They want the Black vote, but I don't know what they're guaranteeing or assuring that the Black community is going to get as a result of voting for this transit, except for a bunch of more broken promises," said Forrest, who lives in Wesley Heights. "Beatties Ford Road looks the same as it did in 1997."



Forrest



DAVID FLOWER | CITY OF CHARLOTTE

Charlotte Mayor Vi Lyles has pledged to upgrade public safety across the city after the Aug. 22 stabbing death of Iryna Zarutska on a Lynx Blue Line train.

Law, order and scrutiny of Charlotte's Black leadership

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seat in 2026 with the retirement of incumbent Thom Tillis.

As Democrats face intense scrutiny from the White House and beyond, Charlotte leaders are left to wonder if Trump will dispatch troops here.

Last year, Charlotte was ranked in the top 20 for violent crime per 100,000 residents, according to FBI data, with 7,413 cases reported and 111 murders.

In a city where the mayor, district attorney, police chief and city manager are Black, concerns about a federal crackdown are front of mind after Trump's promise to introduce new safety principles in cities throughout the nation.

"This will go further," he said after announcing the Washington takeover in August. "We're going to take back our capital ... and then we'll look at other cities also," singling out Chicago, Los Angeles, New York, Baltimore, and Oakland - all of which have a Black mayor.

However, the Democratic Mayors Association rejected the need for soldiers in U.S. jurisdictions.

"Let's be clear: Crime is down in most major cities - including Washington, D.C. - in spite of Donald Trump, not because of him," the group said in a statement. "While there is still more work to be done, Mayors need a federal partner who works with them, not against them."

Charlotte's crime rate has fallen 8% through August, with violent crime down 25%.

Mayor Vi Lyles, who is running for a fifth term, said she wants to see more reductions in crime.

"We are ready and willing to work with state and federal partners to make our community better and safer," she said. "I have always looked for ways for people to come together to find bipartisan solutions and will continue to do so."

"City leaders have been working to improve safety in our community and on our transit system and we will continue to do so."

She did not directly speak to Trump's claims that Democrats are responsible for public safety lapses.

"President Trump has highlighted the light rail killing in Charlotte, Vice President [J.D.] Vance has traveled to Concord to speak about it, and state Republican leaders have criticized Charlotte and passed legislation specifically," said Eric Heberlig, a professor of political science and public administration at UNC Charlotte. "All of this suggests that the president and other Republicans see substantial political benefits in publicly addressing the public's concerns about crime in general and this crime."

"We have seen President Trump send in National Guard troops to other cities to provide a greater security presence so that clearly suggests he would be willing to do so here. Similarly, he has not been discouraged from doing so because of objections from state and local officials."

North Carolina Republicans - who control both chambers of the General As-

sembly - passed a bill last month originally touted as criminal justice reform that emphasizes capital punishment as a key cornerstone.

The Republican-controlled state Senate on approved House Bill 307, or Iryna's Law, which includes a measure to revive the death penalty as part of the package by removing barriers that prevented executions. The bill would require review of death penalty appeals within two years.

Any appeal or motion filed more than two years ago must be scheduled for hearing by December 2026, and the hearing must take place by December 2027.

The country's political discord has gained momentum in violent acts in recent months, with assassination attempts on elected officials, the fatal shooting of conservative adviser Charlie Kirk and National Guard deployment in cities.

Black Democratic-led areas including Los Angeles, Washington, D.C. and now Memphis, Tennessee, have seen boots on the ground to reduce criminal activity. While Memphis and Washington both rank top 10 for violent crime, according to FBI data, neither has welcomed militarized law enforcement amid heightened political tensions.

"D.C. is under siege by our own federal government, with armed military patrolling our streets and masked agents scooping up neighbors and taking them away," Washington City Council member Brianne Nadeau said in a statement following the deployment. "Our residents are afraid, hesitant to go out and to work, angry that our limited autonomy is being eroded. There is nothing welcome about this."

Memphis Mayor Paul Young said he was informed about Trump's decision to deploy troops to his city during a Trump interview on "Fox & Friends," while Oregon Gov. Tina Kotek, a Democrat, said she learned soldiers would be deployed after Trump posted an announcement on social media.

Both said the federal presence is unwarranted and unneeded.

"As community leaders, we have an obligation to address these concerns, both the perception of crime and the reality of it," City Council member Malcolm Graham said after Zarutska's stabbing. "Simply, there's no choice but to meet this moment with clarity of purpose, by addressing root causes, admitting our shortcomings where they exist, and listening to community voices and acting swiftly to regain public confidence."

"We must block out the outside noise and focus on the urgent work in front of us. It would be a mistake to focus only on transit safety, though it is important. Instead, we must take a holistic approach that strengthens safety throughout the entire city, in our town, in our corridors of opportunities, in our neighborhoods, parks, schools, and beyond."



Graham



MEREDITH KEARSON | UNC MEDIA HUB

Durham, North Carolina's Eno River Bridge remains closed, with caution tape blocking access to the crossing that leads to Holden Mill, Cox Mountain and Fanny's Ford trails. The bridge is still littered with debris and several broken slats.

Rebuilding environment after natural disasters a difficult road

Continued from page 1A

Love said that often these buildings are then rebuilt in the same area, leading to the possibility of the same thing happening in the future, undermining the natural environment.

He believes that buying out at-risk properties in those areas and reconnecting the rivers to floodplains is a viable solution so that similar results do not occur in the future.

"That's where we should be putting our money," he said. "And not towards more engineering solutions where we're trying to build stuff right next to the river."

Less than a year after Helene devastated western North Carolina, another storm brought uncharacteristic damage to the central part of the state.

This past July, torrential downpours and strong winds from Tropical Storm Chantal led to record-breaking rainfall and flooding in parts of the Piedmont.

While most residents in the area did not lose power for more than a day or two, the environment is still experiencing the fallout of the storm months later.

In Chapel Hill, the Bolin Creek and Morgan Creek Trails, which many residents use daily for transportation and recreation, are still under repair, and some parts are still closed.

"We got extreme flooding, so there's a lot of scouring, which is when the soil next to the trail has been washed away," Chapel Hill Parks and Recreation staff member Kevin Robinson said. "So, there is, in some areas, a two-to-three-foot drop off right on the edge of the trail, and it's also washed out underneath the trail, so there's potential for the trail to collapse."

Additionally, Robinson said that some of the bridge railings and retaining walls along the creeks have been damaged, as well as the asphalt on the trails themselves.

These extensive damages have led Chapel Hill to keep parts of the trail closed or less accessible so the public cannot use them.

"It's a big disruption to people's day-to-day lives," Alex Carrasquillo, Chapel Hill's communications manager, said. "We know a lot of people count on that trail to be able to get around, both for leisure and to get to work and school and those things."

While the town is encouraging residents to find alternative routes for transportation - like utilizing Chapel Hill transit routes - those who regularly use the trails and rivers for recreation are still being disrupted.

Ava Acton, a UNC student and member of the Naval ROTC program, said the

group regularly uses the Bolin Creek Trail for one of its physical fitness tests at the beginning of the fall semester. However, the closure of the trail made that impossible, forcing the group to move to a different location.

"It just generally affected the operational capacity of the UNC NROTC, and we had to make a logistical change early in the semester that we didn't anticipate," she said. "So [it was] largely inconvenient."

In repairs, Chapel Hill is looking to not only rebuild parts of the trails that were damaged but also create solutions to mitigate similar damage in the future.

"We don't want to go in there and just open up the trail and do some work, and then two months later, we've wasted those efforts because another flood comes through," Robinson said. "So, we're really looking at it, and that's why we're kind of taking our time. We're going to figure out what the best approach is to move forward and build something that will withstand this, so that we hopefully don't have these same issues the next time this occurs."

Similar damage was seen in surrounding areas in the Piedmont, most notably including Jordan Lake and the Eno River State Park, from the same storm.

According to Kris Anne Bonifacio, the public information officer at North Carolina State Parks, Jordan Lake experienced substantial flooding, and a large amount of debris washed into the lake. However, while the lake and its surrounding trails were closed for several weeks directly after the storm - and the opening of two new facilities managed by the park, the Deep River in Moncure and the Lower Haw River State Natural Area in Pittsboro, was delayed - most areas of Jordan Lake are now open.

But much of the area's significant damage occurred less than 40 miles north at the Eno River State Park.

The park experienced unprecedented flooding, with the river reaching a historic high of 25.6 feet, compared to its typical range of 2 to 2.5 feet.

While some parts have reopened in recent weeks, including parts of the Fews Ford and Cole Mill Accesses, major damage was sustained at the swinging bridge at Cox Mountain Trail, which remains closed.

Though there is no exact date for when the remaining parts of the park will reopen, Bonifacio said they are working, in collaboration with volunteers, to continue improving conditions to increase accessibility.

Minority-owned businesses shut out of financing as denials soar

By Stacy Brown

BLACK PRESS USA

The doors of opportunity remain locked for too many.

A new LendingTree analysis reveals that Black-owned businesses faced the highest rejection rate for financing in 2024, with 39% denied loans, lines of credit, or merchant cash advances. Hispanic-owned businesses followed at 29%. By contrast, just 18% of white-owned businesses were turned away.

The figures draw a map of inequality, where capital flows freely to some and is dammed up for others. The report shows that one in five businesses overall - 21% - were denied financing last year, a number nearly unchanged from 2023. But beneath that flat surface lies a story of disparity: while white-owned companies hit roadblocks less often, Black and Hispanic entrepreneurs carried the brunt of rejection.

Size and age also stacked the deck. Firms with just one to four employees were denied 26% of the time, five times the rate of larger firms. Startups fared

poorly, but even businesses with three to five years under their belts faced the highest denial rate, at 29%. By loan type, SBA loans and lines of credit proved the hardest to secure, with nearly half - 45% - rejected.

The reasons mirror a harsh economy. High interest rates, inflation, and an unsteady job market have made banks wary. Community development financial institutions, often praised as a lifeline for underserved communities, turned down applicants 34% of the time.

Large banks followed at 31%. Matt Schulz, LendingTree's chief consumer finance analyst, said the trend is part of a larger retreat by lenders. "Inflation, tariffs, high interest rates, and a slow job market are making things tough on small businesses and the customers they're trying to attract," he said. "[With] this uncertainty, banks pull back - as they tend to do in risky, unpredictable times."

Standards for lending to consumers and businesses have generally been tight for some time, and that's unlikely to change soon.

Can MAHA feed hungry kids through budget cuts?

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these are a lifeline for poor students, government funding formulas have extended their reach far beyond low-income families until now.

Earlier this month, Agriculture Secretary Brooke Rollins unveiled a new version of the Patrick Leahy Farm to School Grants Program, which she'd canceled in March. She presented the revamped program in support of the MAHA — Make America Healthy Again — strategy to address chronic disease in children. The competitive grants program, established by the Obama administration in 2013, funds projects such as edible gardens, youth-run farms and the development of local food procurement systems.

Under the old rules, most grants were under \$100,000 and many were half that amount or less. Prioritizing equity, the scoring system for awarding grants gave bonus points to applicants that work with emerging, veteran and socially disadvantaged farmers and serve racially diverse and low-income student populations, many in remote areas.

For example, the School District of Bayfield in northern Wisconsin, which has just over 400 students — 83% of them members of the Red Cliff Ojibwa Nation — received a \$75,000 grant to teach middle- and high-schoolers about Native agriculture, food sovereignty and wellness.

USDA's revamped grants program has dropped the equity focus. In the name of streamlining, it will award larger grants — \$100,000 to \$500,000 — and likely fewer ones. "Not many schools are going to get those grants," said Donna Martin, a school nutrition consultant and retired school district nutrition director in Georgia.

On the plus side, Rollins committed \$18 million for the grants in the 2026 fiscal year, the largest one-year investment in the program's history. But that doesn't begin to make up for USDA's termination of a \$660 million program for schools to buy local food.

"I've talked to school nutrition directors all over the country," Martin said. "It has decimated their farm-to-school programs."

The Biden administration created the purchasing program in 2021 to help school districts deal with the supply disruptions of the pandemic and help small and mid-size farmers

and food producers survive the upheavals. The program emphasized "purchasing from historically underserved producers and processors." Many food service directors suspect that emphasis sealed the program's fate under the current administration.

The sweeping changes to farm-to-school initiatives appear to undermine the MAHA's stated commitment to make American children healthier. But the cuts fit squarely with President Trump's Inauguration Day executive order eliminating "diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility" (DEIA) mandates, policies, programs, preferences, and activities in the Federal Government, under whatever name they appear.

And these changes are just the start. Federal budget cuts have killed SNAP-Ed, the nutrition education arm of the food stamp program. In 2024, nearly 1.3 million people, including more than 900,000 children, took part in SNAP-Ed classes, workshops and other events aimed at helping low-income families make healthy food choices on a tight budget. Evaluations have shown that students who participated in SNAP-Ed classes ate more fruits and vegetables, were more physically active and gained knowledge about nutrition.

SNAP's expanded work requirements, which are just beginning to be implemented, and the broader budget cuts to the program will be an even bigger blow to child nutrition.

Children from families that receive federal benefits such as SNAP automatically qualify for free school breakfast and lunch. The Congressional Budget Office estimates that 96,000 children in a given month will lose this easy access after their families are dropped from SNAP as a result of new work requirements for parents with children ages 14 and older.

That may not seem like a huge decline in a nation with some 55 million K-12 students. But it's a double whammy for a lot of families.

"It's not just that the family is getting off SNAP," said Riona Corr, deputy director of the nonprofit New Hampshire Hunger Solutions. "Now the child is not getting fed two meals a day, and the family is going to have to figure out how to get that food to the child."

Post Best gala celebration

Continued from page 1A
ing Finance Agency, which he did for five years during the Obama administration.

· **Elijah Watson** (Educator of the Year). Watson leads the STARS Math and English Academy he founded. The nonprofit provides academic enrichment, life skills training and mentoring to students in grades 3-12. His work has been especially impactful at Ranson International Baccalaureate Middle School, where he teaches and most students are behind grade-level proficiency. STARS stands for Striving Together, Achieving Real Solutions. Its Ivy Baker Center hub operates on Saturdays.

· **Kyla Hudson** (Top Senior of the Year). A 2025 Mallard Creek High School graduate, Hudson is the second person in her family to earn the award and corresponding scholarship. Her sister Myla was the 2022 senior of the year. The similarities don't stop there — Kyla, who graduated with a 4.78 grade point average, is enrolled at North Carolina A&T State University, where she plans to major in chemical engineering.

· **Ajae Purnell** (Top Senior runner up). The Cato Middle College High School graduate finished with a 4.6 grade point average and was already earning college credits. Enrolled at Wake Forest University in Winston-Salem, Purnell's goal is to graduate medical school and become an anesthesiologist.



Watson



Hudson



Purnell



ADVERTISEMENT FOR BIDS

Habitat for Humanity of the Charlotte Region will receive separate sealed bids for the Townes at Carya Pond Infrastructure Development Project, a mixed-income, codeveloped community with Striver's Row, Inc. The project consists of horizontal infrastructure for 72 townhomes located on an 8.34-acre site in the Hickory Grove area of Charlotte. Subcontracting bids will be accepted for the packages listed in the Bid Package Manual. The under 80% portion of the project is partially funded with City of Charlotte Housing Trust Fund dollars and a potential award of federal Self Help Opportunity Program (SHOP) funds. Bids will be received at the Habitat Charlotte Region office located at 3816 Latrobe Drive, Charlotte, NC until **Tuesday, October 21st at 3pm**.

Key dates include:
Optional Pre-Bid Conference (Virtual): Thursday, 10/2 at 10 am

Deadline to submit questions: Thursday, 10/9 at 5 pm

Addendum published responding to questions: 10/13 by 5 pm

Bid deadline and opening: Bids must be received by Tuesday, 10/21 at 3 pm. Bids can be mailed to 3816 Latrobe Drive, Charlotte, NC 28211 or hand delivered to 3816 Latrobe Drive, Charlotte, NC 28211.

The project manual, construction documents, bid schedule and additional project details can be found on Habitat for Humanity of the Charlotte Region's website at: **www.habitatcltregion.org/bids**.

Questions related to grants and MWBE can be directed to: **bids@habitatcltregion.org**

Questions related to the RFP and civil plans can be directed to: **mcantalupo@harmonconstsvc.com**



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Attack on federal workers an attack on Black workers

By Fred Redmond

SPECIAL TO THE POST

During the 2024 presidential campaign, now-Director of the Office of Management and Budget Russell Vought said he wanted to put federal workers “in trauma.”

Project 2025 called union representation of government workers “incompatible with democracy” and recommended Congress make having a voice on a federal job illegal.

Now, as president, Trump has taken drastic steps to turn the Project 2025 agenda into a frightening reality. In addition to appointing Vought, he gave the world’s wealthiest person, Elon Musk, unfettered access to federal data and systems while his team of inexperienced groupies slashed core government functions and the workers who supported them—the more cruel and random the better.

Nine months into Trump’s second term, 1 in 8 federal workers have been pushed out of their jobs—about 300,000 in total, the largest single-year reduction since World War II. In March, the Trump administration stripped nearly a million federal workers of their right to collectively bargain in the single biggest act of union-busting in history. And then, right before Labor Day, added more workers to that list. Nearly 450,000 workers at the departments of Agriculture, Health and Human Services, Homeland Security, and Veterans Affairs, as well as the Environmental Protection Agency, have had their union contracts canceled altogether.

Attacks on federal workers aren’t just a problem for their families or their unions—they hurt all of us and jeopardize the essential government services we rely on daily. These workers make sure our food and water are safe and our communities are free from pollution. They protect our families during public health emergencies, care for our veterans, and monitor extreme weather and natural disasters. When workers can’t speak up on the job and make sure their offices are serving the American people, we are all at risk.

For Black Americans, Trump’s attacks on the federal workforce threaten to reverse decades of progress. In 1948, well before the passage of the Civil Rights Act, President Truman signed executive orders to abolish segregation in the military and prohibit race-based discrimination in the federal government. Government jobs became one of the few places Black Americans could put their education and skills to use and reliably get good benefits and pay in return, and for many, they opened the door to the middle class.

Today, that legacy is clear just by looking at the numbers. About 12% of the civilian workforce overall is Black—but Black workers constitute nearly 20% of the federal workforce. In some agencies—such as the Postal Service and the departments of Education, Housing and Urban Development, the Treasury, and Veterans Affairs—we are 1 in 4 employees.

With more than 90% of federal workers living outside the nation’s capital, the effect of Trump’s attacks on the federal workforce spreads nationwide. This is especially true in the South, where Black workers make up 35% of the federal workforce in a handful of states, including nearly 45% in Georgia alone. Black workers are able to stay and build a stable career in these jobs; 21% of Black federal employees have worked in the government for 20 years or more. And Trump’s attacks are especially harmful for Black women, who themselves are 12% of federal workers, nearly double their share of the workforce overall, and work at some of the agencies hit hardest by the administration’s cuts.

By August, the unemployment rate was 6.7% for Black women and 7.1% for Black men—numbers not seen since the pandemic.

Behind these numbers are real people who are bearing the brunt of this administration’s anti-worker, anti-Black agenda. Nonpartisan federal workers, kicked out of the job they relied on for decades, now having to scramble to put food on the table for their families.

Dedicated health care workers who have been champions for the care of their patients, now afraid to speak out without their union contract. Cherished colleagues and mentors pushed out of their workplaces by some arbitrary decision about which federal workers’ rights and jobs matter—and which don’t.

The labor movement is no stranger to attacks like these, and we’re not afraid to fight back. Federal workers have been organizing to join and remain part of their unions, even in the face of the Trump administration’s union-busting.

They are speaking out and telling their stories, refusing to be silenced about why their jobs and their contracts matter. And we’re fighting to pass the Protect America’s Workforce Act, legislation that would overturn Trump’s union-busting executive orders.

Fred Redmond, the highest-ranking African American labor official in history, is the secretary-treasurer of the AFL-CIO, the nation’s largest labor federation, representing 63 unions and nearly 15 million workers.

Appalachian Renaissance man

Whether you are an expert in folk music or if you can’t tell a banjo from a mandolin, a new biography, “Doc Watson: A Life in Music,” by Eddie Huffman, will draw you in. Along the way you’ll discover not just Doc’s story, but the rich history of our state and the impact of its traditional music.



D.G. MARTIN

Huffman, a Greensboro resident, confesses that he was more a fan of the pop music and rock-n-roll of the ‘70s and ‘80s of his youth, “dismissing country music as that cornball stuff they played on ‘Hee-Haw.’”

But he poured himself into Doc’s world: tracking down rare recordings, listening to every album, combing through archives across the state and beyond, watching old television clips, reading concert reviews, bootlegs, radio transcripts — and more.

Folks in the High Country in northwestern North Carolina welcomed him in, introduced him to people who knew and loved Doc, and even drove him through the backroads and hills that shaped Doc’s world.

Huffman gives us a close-up look of what it was like to grow up in the mountains near Boone in the 1920s and ‘30s, introducing us to Arthel Watson, the child who would one day be known as Doc.

You get the feeling that young Arthel would have happily welcomed us into his world, which was full of love – and full of hardship. In Deep Gap in Watauga County, his family had no running water, no electricity, and no insulation.

Blind from toddlerhood, Watson was keenly fascinated with sound. He made instruments out of whatever he could get his hands on-- from pots to cowbells and delighted in sitting on the porch listening to the wind blowing through the trees.

Huffman paints a portrait of Watson as a jack of all trades, an Appalachian Renaissance man. He could have made a good life as a farmer, a carpenter, an electrician, a writer, a preacher, or just about anything that called for steady hands, a clear mind, and a generous heart.

Huffman’s book is, of course, not a self-help book, but it offers a powerful example: a life shaped not by ease or fame, but by courage, grit, and quiet humility. Here are just a few takeaways that reverberate through Huffman’s

thoughtful exploration of Watson’s life and legacy:

1. Take things apart... and creatively put them back together.

“You can’t really love something until you understand it,” Doc said. As a boy, he tinkered with record players and homemade instruments. Later, he wired his first home by hand. Music was no different—he took songs apart, note by note, then put them back together in his own way. “I figured I’d better build on it,” he said, “so I’d be at least halfway original.”

2. Embrace... and exploit your limitations. Over and over, Doc turned his blindness into a strength. He could guess with accuracy how fast a car he was riding in was going, he could avoid stepping in potholes on a dirt road that his sighted friends stumbled into, he could identify 16 different birds singing, he could chop wood with an axe with a crooked handle.

After a stint at the School for the Blind and Deaf in Raleigh, Doc decided that was not the place for him and returned home. So, he had more free time on his hands than some sighted teenagers who had to attend school or work full time.

This allowed him to lean into his passion and become a master.

3. Grieve... and move forward. After the tragic loss of his son and the musical partner, Merle, Doc Watson nearly gave it all up. But a dream—Merle guiding him from a desert toward light—changed his mind. So Doc kept playing, knowing Merle would not want him to quit. And with his family, he started MerleFest, a tribute that still brings thousands together each year in Wilkesboro to celebrate the music they both loved.

4. Travel... and be a homebody. Doc Watson traveled from coast to coast, playing in the biggest cities. That alone — navigating it all without sight — is remarkable. But no matter how far he went, he was always ready to get home.

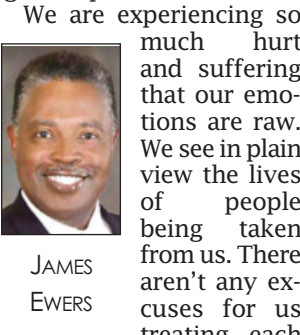
“Us mountain folks feel pretty strongly about family,” he said. “Fireside, the supper table, breakfast with your wife — that means a whole lot. And I reckon that ain’t nothing to be ashamed of.”

These lessons — and many more — await in this moving biography. By the end, you’ll know plenty about Watson’s music. You will likely be not just a fan of his music, but of the man himself.

D.G. Martin is former host of PBS NC’s “North Carolina Bookwatch.”

I can only imagine what will happen next

Where do we begin with the meanness and hate that is occurring in our great republic?



JAMES EWERS

We are experiencing so much hurt and suffering that our emotions are raw. We see in plain view the lives of people being taken from us. There aren’t any excuses for us treating each other in this vile way. It must stop.

Our good senses have taken leave of us. We bring hurt and harm to those around us. Gunshots ring out in our cities almost as if it was second nature. Our disagreements should not lead to violence and death. It is a sad fact however we are living in dangerous and unstable times. You and I see the statistics, so we don’t have to go over them in this space.

Stress is upon us daily. It hangs like a cloud over our heads. We are nervous and on edge when we leave our homes. Our workplaces, in

too many instances, have unhappy people in them. The least little thing sets them off.

Remember the old expression, “sticks and stones may break my bones, but words will never hurt me.” Well, that is not true in today’s world. Folks are troubled by what is said and how it is said. Back in my day, scuffles did not happen at the drop of a hat.

People just didn’t lose their cool like they do today. Do you like going to work? Are you afraid to speak up because you fear retaliation? If you are working in a good and healthy work environment, then you should be thankful each day.

During my professional life, I was blessed to have worked in some emotionally fulfilling places. I loved going to work because of the people that I was interacting with daily.

Well, when you finish your workday, you will probably go to the grocery store. The first thing you will see is the long lines. The second thing will be

the high prices.

The long lines are attributable to employers not hiring more staff. Trying to do more with less seems to be the corporate mantra these days. Everyone can agree the prices are higher. Business leaders have acknowledged that fact.

The frustration with increased pricing is that they will be with us for the foreseeable future. The tariffs which are aligned with the price hikes aren’t going to be lifted so we are stuck with them. If you are a part of the boomer generation, you are trying to juggle grocery prices and prescription medications.

You must couple that with many hospitals, especially in rural areas, shutting down some of their services. These are challenging times for those in the fourth quarter and in overtime.

All of this is happening as legislators are at odds with one another. They are hurling insults across the aisle thinking that’s winning them some brownie points with the American people. Well, it’s not. We

are looking for answers, not acrimony and dissent.

Right now, we are headed down the wrong road. It’s an unpaved road with potholes.

In a reflective moment recently, I imagined that it wasn’t that way. I can only imagine what if danger wasn’t lurking outside of our door each day. I can only imagine what if our communities were safe and that our children and grandchildren could play outside.

I can only imagine what if our jobs were happy places to be. I can only imagine if food prices were such that we could purchase all that we needed and some of what we wanted.

I can only imagine what if older Americans didn’t have to worry about making ends meet. And I can only imagine what if lawmakers passed laws and policies for the American people.

I can only imagine. *Winston-Salem native and Johnson C. Smith University graduate James Ewers lives in New Orleans.*

What if President Trump could cure cancer?

I have the argument dozens of different ways. Video of U.S. Rep. Lisa McClain (from March 25) is routinely recycled: Trump



WIM LAVEN

could have the cure for cancer and the democrats would still be upset. Normally this is the kind of trolling or red-meat-to-the-MAGA-base kind of statement I ignore, but these are not normal times. In critical thinking there are several ‘smell tests’ that can be applied to check the soundness of an argument. Fallacies and contradictions are always things for which critical thinkers should lookout.

For example, when a student writes in a paper: “I know it is not true, because Trump said it,” I indicate to the student that it is an ad hominem attack, in critical thought we must confront the idea, not the source. The fact that Trump lies very frequently is not proof that any specific claim is untrue. Untrustworthiness is good reason to have suspicion, but it is not proof of fraud or dishonesty.

There are different standards/burdens we experience in life. In a courtroom

there might be the heightened expectation “beyond reasonable doubt” (for good reason) but in other settings a preponderance or high likelihood might be sufficient. And, in others, we can have trust, perhaps because past behavior suggests a positive trend or because of current promises. Critical thinking frequently plays a crucial role in establishing trust, or in forming distrust. Given the volume of lies Trump tells, it would be reasonable for a person to require corroboration or validation before acting on one of his claims.

“Trump could cure cancer,” however, appears to be an obviously false premise. An unthinking individual could ask artificial intelligence and discover that Trump does not have medical training, has not conducted any experimental science (let alone work on a cure for cancer), and has woefully inadequate capacity for such a sustained activity.

The claim is obviously meant as a rebuke, to those pesky liberals who will never be satisfied, but I wonder what happens when people place such claims under scrutiny? What steps has Trump taken to cure cancer?

In 2018 Trump signed the Trickett Wendler, Frank

Mongiello, Jordan McLinn, and Matthew Bellina Right to Try Act into law, this was for all terminally ill patients, not just those with cancer. At Moms for Liberty 2024, Trump claimed

“I said, listen, there’s not going to be any liability. People are going to sign the documents that they’re not going to sue the country; they are not going to sue the state, they’re not going to sue the doctors or the medical platforms, are not going to sue anybody. They just want the drug. And we have saved thousands and thousands of lives.”

But unfortunately, there is no evidence that significant numbers of cancer patients (or anyone else) are benefitting from the legislation Trump signed.

Trump really didn’t introduce a concept by signing this legislation (it was already law in 41 states), “expanded access” already existed, and had been used for decades. The bill addressed a non-problem in expanded access by essentially removing Food and Drug Administration oversight.

He said there was too much red tape, but as fact checkers noted: the FDA had actually been quickly approving most requests. The FDA described the limited use of right to try as:

12 drugs 2018-22, 4 in 2023, and 5 in 2024.

In late November 2018, ERC-USA initiated treatment of Gliovac to treat a patient with glioblastoma, an aggressive form of brain cancer. Nine patients received this treatment with compassionate use/hospital exemption approval from the FDA. Now, all drugs (cancer or otherwise) can be considered in evaluating how much credit Trump should receive, for trying to cure cancer, credit would be given for making treatment available.

Glioblastoma, an aggressive cancer, is certainly worthy of attention. It is also a good example for putting your money where your mouth is—a great reflection of executive priorities. The National Cancer Institute a part of the National Institute for Health is a major player in cancer research and conducts trials for drugs like Gliovac.

The proposed budget for the NCI 2026 cuts it from its current \$7.22 billion down to about \$4.5 billion (or even less). If enacted, this would roll federal cancer research support back to inflation-adjusted low levels not seen in decades.

Wim Laven Ph.D. teaches courses in political science and conflict resolution.



TROY HULL | THE CHARLOTTE POST

Isaiah Perry (10) tied the JCSU record for longest kick return with a 100-yard touchdown in the Golden Bulls' 69-13 win against Bluefield State. Perry also scored on a 39-yard pass reception from Kelvin Durham.

JC Smith preps for the stretch drive

Even with a 4-1 start, the Golden Bulls are chasing three CIAA rivals at the season's midpoint

By Herbert L. White
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Midway through the season, Johnson C. Smith is on track to earn a berth in the CIAA football title game. But there's little room for error. The Golden Bulls, (4-1, 1-1) head into the second half of the season where a second loss could effectively end any chance of advancing to the postseason showcase. "What lies ahead in the next five is it's good to be coming off the first five 4-1," coach Maurice Flowers said. "We've shown that we can play at a high level, and we've shown that we have to play

at a high level if we want to reach the goals that we've set for ourselves." Outside a 28-10 loss at Virginia Union in Week 4, JCSU, which was the CIAA coaches' preseason pick to finish second to the Panthers, has played up to expectations. The loss to VUU, though, showed the Golden Bulls still have room for improvement, especially in stopping the run and finishing possessions with points. They did both in blowing past Bluefield State 69-13 last week, their widest margin of victory in Flowers' four season. The focus is on building that consistency going forward.

"When you look at the schedule as a whole, and we did that (last) week... we know it's a gauntlet, and we know that we're going to have to play well," Flowers said. "We wanted to make sure that we did it (against Bluefield State). We had a good week of practice, and we brought that good week of practice to the game." The remaining schedule has its share of potential pitfalls, starting Saturday at Virginia State (2-2, 0-1), which is coming off a 34-13 loss at Fayetteville



Flowers

State (2-3, 2-0). The Trojans, who finished third in the preseason poll behind VUU and the Golden Bulls, will be motivated after losing at JCSU last year. The Golden Bulls also have incentive to keep the pressure on FSU, Livingstone and VUU, all of which are a game ahead in the CIAA standings. Livingstone is at Elizabeth City State on Saturday, while FSU is at Bowie State and VUU heads to Winston-Salem State. "We get the same opportunity that we just had two weeks ago," Flowers said. "We're going to Virginia; we're going to a hostile crowd. We're playing a very Please see **JCSU** | 6A

Homecoming romp puts Golden Bulls in much better mood

By Herbert L. White
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Johnson C. Smith used homecoming to reclaim what works best. The Golden Bulls recovered from a 28-10 loss at Virginia Union by mauling Bluefield State 69-13 Saturday at McGirt Field with historic results on several levels. The 56-point margin of victory was the largest since 1964 when JCSU beat Livingstone 83-77. Even the an-

nounced attendance - 7,833 - set a new on-campus standard. "We wanted to focus on just coming out and just playing our type of football," coach Maurice Flowers said. "What we know that we did not do last week was play good ball, play after play after play. So, the focus was really to come out and show who we are and what we are, what we say we are, who we think we are, as far as being a disci-

plined team and a team that can sustain drives, a team that can respond to adversity. I think we did it today, very pleased with our young men, very pleased with the performance." The Golden Bulls (4-1, 1-1 CIAA) set the tone early behind quarterback Kelvin Durham (18-of-22 passing, 297 yards, 4 touchdowns) and a ground attack that bludgeoned Big Blue for 220 yards and four scores. The special

teams were involved, too, with Isaiah Perry equaling the program mark for longest kick return (100 yards) and a 39-yard touchdown catch for good measure. JCSU also limited the mistakes that doomed them against Virginia Union with six penalties for 55 yards. "We all just do our job," said tailback Bobby Smith, who ran for 91 yards and Please see **HOMECOMING** | 6A

Competition is the Hornets' focal point

The Hornets are back and so is the Bugs' Life column.



CAMERON WILLIAMS

In what could be described as a wild offseason after a 19-win season, Charlotte coach Charles Lee and Vice President of Basketball Operations Jeff Peterson feel success is obtainable. "Winning is hard," Peterson said, "it is extremely hard at this level. As I've always said, getting to the playoffs once is not the goal. We want to build a program that can get there and sustain success year after year. By maintaining discipline and a strategic approach, we feel that once we do break Please see **HORNETS** | 6A



TROY HULL | THE CHARLOTTE POST

Charles Lee's second season as Charlotte Hornets coach starts with an influx of rookies with potential and a more experienced roster looking to improve on last season's 19-63 campaign.

NCCU makes a believer of Johnson

When Thomas Johnson got a recruiting call from a North Carolina Central assistant coach three years ago, he thought it was a hoax. "First of all, I'd never heard of NCCU prior to me coming here," the Lawndale, California, native said. "I was preparing to go to Long Beach City College." The assistant called on a Tuesday, Johnson said, and told him: "We're in the middle of our season, we need you. Be here by Sunday, and you've got a full scholarship." Johnson's response: "At first, I thought they were lying to me. There was no school out here." But one visit was all it took. Johnson played in 10 games that season, recording eight total tackles. He joined a stellar defensive unit that helped the Eagles beat Jackson State in the 2022 Cricket Celebration Bowl. He upped his stats as a sophomore with 24 tackles (seven solo) and two sacks, as the Eagles advanced to the FCS playoffs for the first time in their Division I era. Injuries curtailed his season after three games in 2024, but he's making up for lost time. Please see **NCCU** | 6A



BONITTA BEST

« MAGNIFICENT SEVEN »

No. 2 West Charlotte High, No. 3 Independence square off

By Herbert L. White
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Six weeks into the high school football season, Hough is still Mecklenburg County's best squad. They'll be there next week, too. The Huskies, who are the only unbeaten team in the Magnificent Seven rankings, are idle this week in preparation for a conference game against Garinger. After Hough, West Charlotte remains second after dismantling Mallard Creek last week and No. 3 Independence, which is heading to the Lions' place Friday. Palisades, which is also coming off an idle week, moves up to fourth, followed by Mallard Creek, which fell a spot from the previous week. Myers Park and Ardrey Kell round out the rankings.

1. **Hough** (6-0, 1-0, first). Mecklenburg's best team ran over West Mecklenburg 43-0 in the Greater Charlotte Athletic Conference opener, the Huskies fourth double-digit win in six contests. Next up is a conference game at Garinger.
2. **West Charlotte** (4-2, 1-0, second). After starting the season 1-3, the Lions are 3-0 and have outscored opponents 129-16. Dismantling Mallard Creek 32-9 last week was impressive and Friday's home game against No. 3 Independence will be a another opportunity to stake West Charlotte's early claim atop the Meck Power Six 7A/8A standings.
3. **Independence** (4-1, 0-0, third). The Patriots have a knack for persevering in difficult spots. They'll need it with Meck Power Six rival West Charlotte waiting to get down in Mecklenburg's game of the week.
4. **Palisades** (3-2, 0-0, fifth). The Pumas had a week to lick their collective wounds after losing to Independence in a back-and-forth battle. Next is a Southwestern Athletic Conference game at No. 7 Ardrey Kell.
5. **Mallard Creek** (4-2, 0-1, fourth). The Mavericks took a long tumble in losing to West Charlotte last week. They can get back on track this week with Meck Power Six foe North Mecklenburg rolling into Charlotte.
6. **Myers Park** (4-1, 0-0, sixth). The Mustangs are quietly putting together a special season. They have an opportunity to keep pace with Hough in the GCAC standings with Garinger coming to campus.
7. **Ardrey Kell** (3-2, 0-0, seventh). The Knights were off last week and host Palisades in the conference opener. The winner will take early pole position in the standings.



TROY HULL | THE CHARLOTTE POST

Johnson C. Smith redshirt freshman Bobby Smith has flourished at running back with a team high 376 yards and four touchdowns on 71 carries. Smith, who beat out incumbents Kamarro Edmonds and Avantie George in fall drills, also has a receiving touchdown.

JCSU prepares for the meat of CIAA schedule

Continued from page 5A
tough football team, and we've got an opportunity to play the type of football that we know that we can play. We know we learned plenty of lessons against Virginia Union, and we'll see how much we're going to see how much we learned."

Midseason observations
Surprise (the good kind)
· Bobby Brown: The redshirt freshman has flourished at tailback after beating out Kamarro Edmonds and Avante George for the starting role.
Through five games, Brown has rushed for 376 yards and four touchdowns on 71 carries. Half of those scores were in last week's 69-13 win against Bluefield State, and he added a touchdown catch to boot.
· Jalen Alexander: The South Mecklenburg High grad has taken a massive leap at defensive end. He's third among Golden Bulls with 20 tackles, leads with

2.5 sacks and nabbed an interception.
Surprise (the problematic kind)
· Too many chunk plays given up on defense. JCSU isn't as stingy compared to the previous two seasons, which is a concern. Virginia Union lived on them in a 28-10 loss and Bluefield State showed capability early before the Golden Bulls adjusted in the second quarter.
· Penalties: JCSU averages 83.2 yards per game compared to 64.4 for opponents. Winning teams can get by on talent; competing for championships takes discipline.
Expected, but more's needed
Quarterback Kelvin Durham is one of the CIAA's most capable dual-threat assets. He passes (89-of-130, 1,191 yards, 9 TDs) and runs (33 carries, 72 yards, 5 TDs) with equal impact and efficiency and will need to turn it up as the CIAA race kicks into high gear starting Saturday at Virginia State.

Homecoming springboard

Continued from page 5A
a couple of touchdowns on 15 carries in addition to a 14-yard scoring reception. "We actually talk about 1-11 - everybody do their one [of] 11, so we all play a part."
Defensively, JCSU limited Bluefield State to 252 yards, including 42 on the ground, and tallied a season-high five sacks. Big Blue managed some early offensive success to climb within 14-6 early in the second quarter on a pair of Danny Dales field goals, but the Golden Bulls clamped down afterward.
Ultimately, a dominant outing gave JCSU a chance to reset between falling flat at Virginia Union and ahead of a critical test at Virginia State (2-2, 0-1) in a high-stakes CIAA clash. The Golden

Bulls have momentum and motivation to stay in contention for a spot in the conference title game.
"I've said since training camp that this is probably the most talented roster that we've had since we've been at JCSU, and it's we've got a lot of guys that can play," Flowers said, "and what you saw today was really what we've been saying all along.
... "No Brevin Caldwell, All-American wide receiver; no Lamone Hill, All-CIAA defensive end. We have a lot of different guys that can make plays, and that's really some of the get after them a little bit ... because how can a team with all of his talent go put up 10 points [against Virginia Union]?"

NCCU football, culture makes believer of Johnson

Continued from page 5A
Johnson already has equaled his 25-tackle total of 2023 (16 solo), seven tackles for a loss of 43 yards and a career-high 5.5 sacks for a minus-39 yards.
Those are the type of numbers that can thrill and chill at the same time. While good for the team, it also can bring outside attention from recruiters with thick wallets.
But, for now, Johnson is happy to be an Eagle.
"I didn't know what I was stepping into. I love the environment, the culture; I felt it as soon as I got here," he said. "They (coaches) want you to develop and become a man."
Work in progress
For the second straight week, North Carolina A&T coach Shawn Gibbs apologized to Aggie Nation.
Gibbs apologized last week for his overexuberance in their comeback win

against Hampton. This week it was his players' performance against their hated rival.
"We were outcoached. We were outplayed and outcultured," he said at his Monday press conference. "We have a lot of work to do. I didn't have our guys prepared for the stage. I didn't put them in the best position to be successful. And I made some horrible decisions throughout the game that contributed to our defeat."
Gibbs issued another apology to NCCU coach Trei Oliver, who was squirted with a water bowl during pregame warmups.
"That's not how we're going to do stuff. The main thing that has to change is our culture, and that young man is no longer on this team," Gibbs said. "And anybody that's going to act like that will not be a part of this team."

Judging by the YouTube comments, Aggie fans are split on Gibbs. On the one hand, some like his candor with fans and media, while others are not so empathetic.
"As a Head Coach You Have To [sic] Many Excuses I Understand Being Held Accountable But You Talk To Much To The Media Some S*** Should Be In-house Only Bruh," wrote elitefam-ilysports8621.
And, as usual when the Aggies are losing, the questionable decision to leave the MEAC rises again.
"Their championship football team days are OVER! ...They allowed a check to trick them out of their #1 spot because they're seeking validation from people who don't even like them. SAD!!!" wrote AmandaNBS.
Bonitta Best is sports editor at The Triangle Tribune in Durham.

Hornets look for productivity

Continued from page 5A
through — and we will break through — we're in a position to stay there for a very long time. As we continue to lay the foundation for this organization, daily improvement is going to be a pillar for us. We know that we can't control every result or every outcome, but we do take pride in being able to control the process which will inevitably lead to the results that we want to seek."
Lee said the offseason gave him time to reflect on himself and what he can do better as head coach.
"It was really productive," he said. It's given me an opportunity to, No. 1, just reflect on last year. I think that there were so many lessons learned. There were so many positives that came from a 19-win season, but obviously we want to be better than that. I want to be better than that. I think there was a lot of situational basketball that I was able to learn from. I think that I was also able to see I'm really kind of prepared for anything. I think our team is prepared for anything. Our whole organization is just resilient, and I saw it in every game last year, competing to the fullest, finding ways to be flexible with all the injuries and all the things that kind of just happened. But we turn the page."
Turning the page is a good analogy. Guards LaMelo Ball and Brandon Miller missed time due to injuries; so did center Mark Williams, who was traded to Phoenix. So, staying healthy is going to be of utmost importance to the success of the 2025-26 season.
Miller sustained a wrist injury that limited him to 23 games last season. He has been practicing with tape on the wrist.
"I used to tape my wrist in high school," Miller said, "so I don't think that is going to be a problem. I think the confidence will eventually come and grow as the season goes. I think that is the main piece, just confidence and building my confidence back up. ... I think right now, I'm just more excited than anything else, to get back out

there and compete with my teammates to get better every day."
Ball added muscle mass in the offseason. It is not specified as to how much weight he has gained, but just in appearance he looks stronger.
"With coach Lee, we watched film and went over it," Ball said. "We saw some of the kinks and stuff. I knew [I needed] to get in the weight room and I did get stronger and stuff."
Ball is a man of few words when addressing media but added that he doesn't feel urgency as Charlotte's franchise player.
"I have no pressure," he said. "I am just going to play and try to get as many wins as we can and do the best I can do."
Ball said that he is fond of the Hornets' rookies, but Kon Kneuppel was one that surprised him most.
"I love all the rookies," Ball said. "Them winning the little Summer League thing, that was big, as you can tell, they take stuff seriously. ... [What surprised me about Kneuppel] was his bounce. He got a few dunks. I've seen [the movie] 'White Men Can't Jump,' but he was jumping all day though."
Said Kneuppel: "I'm not a highflyer by any means. I think I've had a couple [dunks] here in this month, so maybe that surprised people a little bit. But I think [I'll be able] to sneak up on people a little bit athletically. You have to be pretty athletic to play in the NBA, so it has been a good development."
Lee and Peterson emphasized daily competitiveness and that is what Kneuppel hopes to bring as a rookie.
"I think if you have a bunch of guys in a team or an organization that want to compete and want to win, you're going to have, at the end of the day, a competitive team, a competitive team that's going to win games," Kneuppel. So, having as many people that care about that as possible in the building is going to be really, really helpful. I just want to be one of them."



The Charlotte Post

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