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Winston-Salem State and North Carolina Central renew their rivalry after 11 years.

Sleep apnea patients stuck after Philips CPAP recall

By Jason Wooden, Ph.D.

SPECIAL TO THE TRIBUNE

By now you've probably heard about the Philips CPAP recall. If not, just know it's a big one affecting around 2 million sleep apnea patients in the United States alone. The recall was voluntarily issued in June because of potential safety hazards from the sound abatement foam.

The potential risks from degraded foam include airway inflammation, irritation (skin, eye, and respiratory tract), headache, asthma, cough, chest pressure, sinus infection, and toxic carcinogenic affects. Affected devices include many of Philip's CPAP, BiPAP, and APAP machines sold from 2009 onward. To check if your machine has been recalled, locate the serial number and register on the Philips Respironics recall website:

https://www.philipssrcupdate.expertinquiry.com/?ulang=en.

Fortunately, the FDA has just greenlighted Philips fix for the sound foam issue. However, because of the sheer size of the recall, it could take up to a year to repair or replace affected units. The task has been made even more challenging because of the

Please see **SLEEP/2A**

The summer of hope ends in gloom

By Matthew Perrone and Dee-Ann Durbin

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

WASHINGTON — The summer that was supposed to mark America's independence from COVID-19 is instead drawing to a close with the U.S. more firmly under the tyranny of the virus, with deaths per day back up to where they were in March.

The delta variant is filling hospitals, sickening alarming numbers of children and driving coronavirus deaths in some places to the highest levels of the entire pandemic. School systems that reopened their classrooms are abruptly switching back to remote learning because of outbreaks. Legal disputes, threats and violence have erupted over mask and vaccine requirements.

The U.S. death toll stands at more than 650,000, with one major forecast model projecting it will top 750,000 by Dec. 1. "It felt like we had this forward, positive momentum," lamented Katie Button, executive chef and CEO at two restaurants in Asheville. "The delta variant wiped that timeline completely away."

It wasn't supposed to be this way. More than six months into the U.S. vaccination drive, President Joe Biden held a White House party on July Fourth to celebrate the country's freedom from the virus, and other political leaders had high hopes for a close-to-normal summer.

Then the bottom fell out. The summer wave was fueled by the extra-contagious delta variant combined with stark resistance to vaccinations that formed along political and geographic lines, said Dr. Sten Vermund, of the Yale School of Public Health. "The virus was more efficient in spreading among the unvaccinated so that you blunted the expected benefit of vaccines," Vermund said.

The crisis escalated rapidly from June to August. About 400,000 COVID-19 infections were recorded for all of June. It took all of three days last week to reach the same number. The U.S. recorded 26,800 deaths and more than 4.2 million infections in August. The number of monthly positive cases was the fourth-highest total since the start of the pandemic.

The 2021 delta-driven onslaught is killing younger Americans at a much higher rate than previous waves of the pan-

Plase see **COVID/2A**

COURTESY

Juneakcia Green, center, speaks at a rally in front of the Legislative Building.

School bus driver shortage has become a crisis in North Carolina public schools

By Rob Schofield

THE POLICY WATCH

Zac Campbell paused suddenly and took a minute to gather himself, while colleagues shuffled toward him to touch his back in support. The emotion that can accompany the act of baring one's soul in front of a phalanx of TV cameras, photographers, and notepad-bearing journalists on a controversial matter of public policy had briefly caught up with the veteran Wake County school bus driver. For someone who usually does most of his public speaking into a rearview mirror as he addresses a gaggle of energetic kids, speaking in public in front of the state Legislative Building last week was clearly a new and challenging experience.

After a few seconds, however, Campbell composed himself. He quickly made clear to the assembled audience the source of the emotion he was displaying: his passionate commitment to the children he serves and his deep frustration with the shameless cruelty of the state's Republican legislative leadership.

Please see **SCHOOL/2A**

Cooper vetoes NC bill limiting K-12 racial teaching

By Bryan Anderson

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

RALEIGH — North Carolina Democratic Gov. Roy Cooper vetoed two bills last week that would have limited how public school teachers can discuss certain racial concepts and raised penalties on those who engage in violent protests.

The vetoed education bill was part of a national effort by Republicans in more than two dozen states to combat views they associated with "critical race theory," a framework legal scholars developed in the 1970s and 1980s that centers on the belief that racism is systemic in the nation's institutions and maintains the dominance of whites in society.

GOP lawmakers across the country have used "critical race theory" and "indoctrination" as catchall phrases to describe racial concepts they find objectionable, including white privilege, systemic inequality and inherent bias. Republican governors in eight states have signed bills or

budgets into law banning the teaching of critical race theory in K-12 schools or limiting how teachers can discuss racism and sexism.

North Carolina's bill would have prevented educators from compelling students to personally adopt any of 13 beliefs, and it was the focus of heated debate in the legislature. Cooper said that the measure would have inserted politics into education. "The legislature should be focused on supporting teachers, helping students recover lost learning, and investing in our public schools. Instead, this bill pushes calculated, conspiracy-laden politics into public education," he said in a news release announcing the veto.

Top Republican lawmakers in North Carolina said House Bill 324 sought to reveal questionable classroom activities and respond to parents' frustrations over how teachers and

Plase see **TEACHING/2A**

Benefits ended? 7 ways to keep going

By Robin Hartill, CFP

THE PENNY HOARDER

Labor Day weekend marked a grim milestone for millions of people out of work due to the pandemic. Unemployment benefits ended for about 7.5 million people after President Biden's administration declined to ask Congress to extend federal benefits again. Another 3 million people lost a $300 weekly federal boost to state jobless benefits, though governors in 26 states had already withdrawn early from the program.

If your unemployment benefits ended or got cut, don't wait to act. Here are seven steps to take ASAP.

1. **Look for a job in an industry that hires fast.** If you're still searching for employment, consider a bridge job. Basically, it's any job that helps you pay the bills, even if it's not your ideal job. Because many businesses are having trouble recruiting employees right now, you may be able to negotiate better wages than you could in pre-pandemic days in fields that don't traditionally pay well.

2. **Take up a side hustle.** Your goal here is to find any way to start generating income before your benefits end. There are plenty of easy side hustles you can take on now with little upfront cost to start earning extra cash.

3. **Search for rental assistance.** While the federal eviction moratorium expired Aug. 26, help is still available. Congress has allocated nearly $47 billion to help distressed renters but getting a piece of that money is maddeningly complex. As Vox reported, more than 340 agencies are administering that aid, each with their own set of rules.

To learn more about relief in your area, check out your state guide to rental assistance programs. Another good resource is the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau's rental assistance page. You may also qualify for help with utilities and energy costs.

The 211 helpline, which is operated by the United Way, may also be able to help you navigate local assistance programs. You simply dial 211, and you'll be connected with someone who knows about resources in your community. Because of the lengthy process involved, it's essential that you take this step ASAP.

4. **Get food assistance.** The 211 hotline can also connect you with food pantries near you. Also visit benefits.gov to determine whether you're eligible for SNAP benefits. It can take up to 30 days to receive benefits

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School bus driver crisis has NC in bind

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The event at which Campbell was speaking had been organized by the North Carolina Association of Educators to protest the ongoing refusal of the General Assembly to pass a state budget that provides a living wage for school bus drivers. And, as the compelling testimony offered by Campbell and his colleague, 20-year veteran Juneakcia Green, made clear, the current situation across the state is dire.

Simply put, school bus driver pay is absurdly lousy in North Carolina – so lousy that drivers have abandoned the profession in large numbers. And that fact has led to a chronic, debilitating and dangerous driver shortage.

As Green and Campbell made clear in painful detail, what has always been an enormously difficult job – drivers wrestle a giant vehicle on labyrinthine routes; maintain order; break up fights; keep tabs on crying, homesick 5-year-olds; aid the hungry and even shoeless children out of their own pockets – has recently descended into an almost chaotic situation, especially with the added demands posed by the pandemic. In 2019, Campbell – who used the word "unraveling" to describe the current situation – served two schools and two routes twice per day. Now it's six schools and seven routes, and kids routinely arrive 30 minutes or more late.

Green must now service five schools and drive her routes as fast as various speed limits allow in hopes of minimizing the amount of time late her charges arrive at school. What's more, as Green, Campbell and the dozens of others in attendance reported, the bus driver shortage is a statewide crisis.

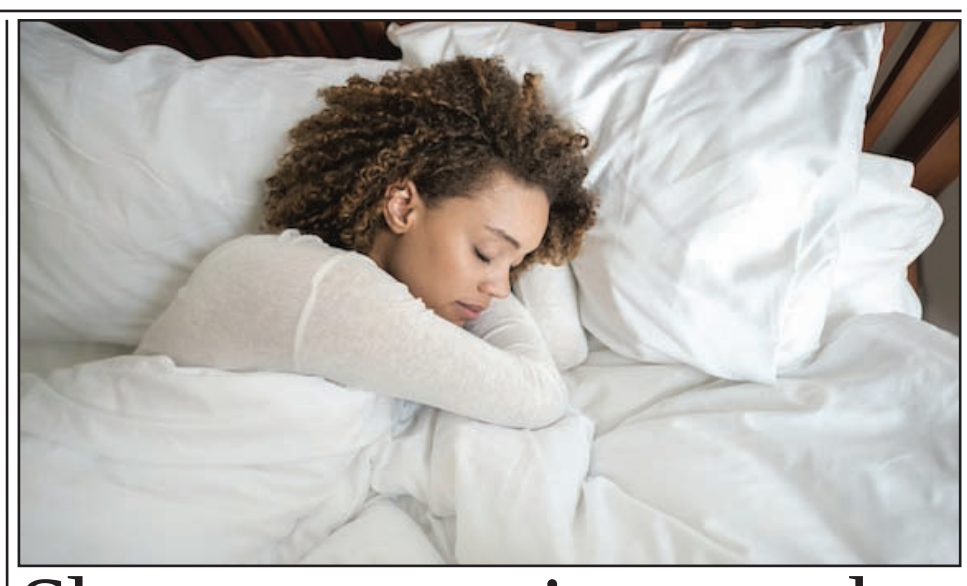
In multiple counties, drivers are working for fast food money – $12.75 per hour during a pair of daily split shifts – and many rely on food stamp/SNAP benefits to feed their families. Despite this appalling state of affairs, one of the most powerful, and even poignant, aspects of the event was the remarkable modesty of the group's central demand – namely, merely to be included in the group that's covered by North Carolina's existing $15-an-hour minimum wage for state employees.

As any parent who's ever chaperoned a school field trip or otherwise set foot on a crowded school bus can readily attest, it is a job of enormous responsibility that requires great skill and Job-like patience. In a just state that hadn't so long underfunded public schools and demeaned and diminished the jobs filled disproportionately by women and people of color, driving a school bus would be a solid and attractive middle-class job that paid $25 to $30 an hour or more. The fact that even those doing the work have set their sights so low is a testament to how out of whack and unjust things in our state have become.

But, of course, low school bus driver pay is far from the only powerful indicator of the aggressive disinvestment in public education that state Republican lawmakers have pursued over the past decade. As has repeatedly been made plain by analysts, advocates and courts of law, the list of neglected and underfunded line items in the state education budget is a long and growing one that includes custodians, cafeteria workers, teachers, nurses, counselors, social workers and psychologists – not to mention buildings, HVAC systems, technology, textbooks and school buses themselves.

Meanwhile, thanks in large part to the largesse of the federal government, the misers on Jones Street sit athwart a pile of several billion dollars in surplus funds – dollars that can and should be used to stop the bleeding and commence the process of constructing a truly constitutional public education system. Instead, GOP budgets have earmarked to an obscene degree another round of regressive tax cuts aimed at the wealthy and profitable out-of-state corporations.

The bottom line: One hopes that heroic public servants like Green and Campbell, who proudly referred to the vehicle in which he transports his precious cargo as a "mobile yellow classroom" and a "sanctuary," will hang in there. But skinflint Republican budgets are making that tougher and tougher, so much so that one is left to wonder if that hasn't been the plan all along.



Sleep apnea patients stuck after Philips CPAP recall

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global chip shortage and nagging supply chain issues from COVID.

Philips is advising patients to stop using their machines and to check with their doctor about the best options for continuing sleep apnea treatment. (In some cases, your doctor might decide the benefits outweigh the risks of continued use because of your health status.) This is a real bummer because CPAP is one of the most effective sleep apnea treatments and can be life changing once started.

The risks from untreated sleep apnea are pretty serious. It's been linked to high blood pressure, heart disease, stroke, diabetes, and depression. And research at John Hopkins University has shown that severe sleep apnea in middle or old age can raise your risk of dying prematurely by up to 46%. So, if you're stuck without use of your CPAP machine, it leaves you in a tough spot. The lawsuits are on the way. That's no surprise. The FDA has recorded more than 1,200 complaints and over 80 injuries since the recall was first announced, according to MedTech Dive. Meanwhile, what can sleep apnea patients do to stay out of trouble? The good news is that there's plenty of practical things you can do on your own and with the help of a doctor to keep your sleep apnea under control:

* Keep up your sleep hygiene. There's a long list of issues that can affect sleep and many of them arise from your everyday habits. This makes it important to practice good sleep hygiene, the foundation of quality sleep. Poor sleep hygiene can sabotage the other things you do for your sleep apnea.

* Lifestyle changes. Avoid substances like alcohol that may relax your throat muscles too much or smoking which can have harmful effects on the lung. Smoking can aggravate and worsen inflammation in the airway causing your sleep apnea symptoms to be more severe.

* Sleep on your side. Did you know that over half of obstructive sleep apnea sufferers have symptoms that are "position-dependent?" Their symptoms are worse if they sleep on their back.

Depending on the severity of your sleep apnea, sleeping on your side instead of your back may help keep your throat more open and improve symptoms.

* Lose some weight. About half of people with sleep apnea are overweight, even a small amount of weight loss can help improve symptoms.

* Exercise. Besides helping with weight loss, physical activity is known to promote deeper sleep, and there's evidence it can help reduce sleep apnea breathing disruptions.

* Dietary changes. Eating healthier can help with weight loss and keep you from eating foods in the evening that may come back to wreck your sleep. A low-carb anti-inflammatory diet may also help since sleep apnea has been connected to excessive inflammation.

* Try getting a CPAP machine from a different company. Philips isn't the only game in town. You can try getting your hands on a CPAP device from ResMed, the other leading manufacturer. Be sure to do something sooner rather than later as they will have a hard time keeping up with demand.

* Try a new treatment. Now could be the perfect time to try a different type of sleep apnea treatment. Your options include body positioning devices and new pacemaker like devices.

Do what you can on your own and your doctor can help you explore what else you can do.

COVID-19 has taken the fun out of summer

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demic in the Northeast last spring, the Sun Belt in the summer of 2020 and the deadly winter surge around the holidays. During the peaks of those waves, Americans over 75 suffered the highest proportion of death. Now, the most vulnerable age group for death is 50 to 64, according to data from U.S. officials. Overall, the outbreak is still well below the all-time peaks reached over the winter, when deaths topped out at 3,400 a day and new cases at a quarter-million per day.

The U.S. is now averaging over 150,000 new cases per day, levels not seen since January. Deaths are close to 1,500 per day, up more than a third since late August. Even before the delta variant became dominant, experts say there were indications that larger gatherings and relaxed social distancing measures were fueling new cases. "We had been cooped up for over a year and everyone wanted to get out," said Dr. David Dowdy, an epidemiologist at the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health. "In the face of that kind of strong change in behavior, even getting almost two-thirds of our adult population vaccinated wasn't enough."

The COVID-19 vaccines remain highly effective against hospitalization and death, but many tens of millions of eligible Americans remain unvaccinated. Nearly 40% of Americans 12 and older are not fully protected. In Rapid City, South Dakota, school officials have recorded nearly 300 cases among students and staff since classes began less than two weeks ago. Still, the majority of school board officials voted this week 5-2 against a proposed two-week mask mandate. "Nobody wanted to be here. Everyone wanted the personal freedom to be away from masks and free of illness," said Amy Policky, who introduced the proposal with one other member. "But we have to look at the facts: We're having illness rage through the school and the community, so what can we do?"

Still, Yale's Vermund sees reasons to be cautiously optimistic about the next few months. Cases in most states appear to be plateauing and are likely to decline in the fall, buying health authorities more time to vaccinate adults and teenagers before flu season. "If we can continue making progress between now and Thanksgiving, we may be able to substantially blunt the coronavirus surge in flu season," Vermund said.

Button, the North Carolina chef, was feeling great heading into the summer. Her team was mostly vaccinated in May and restrictions were loosening. But the crisis soon changed direction.

Button supports the mask mandate that was recently reinstated in her county but said her employees are exhausted by having to enforce it. And since she has no outdoor seating, some diners have been less comfortable coming in. "It's hard to take a step forward and then take three steps back," she said.

7 moves to make if your unemployment ended

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through the regular application process, but you may qualify for expedited benefits, depending on your state.

5. **Contact your unemployment office.** You may still be eligible for your state's unemployment benefits, but the rules will vary by state. Most states have a limit on how long you can receive benefits. As difficult as dealing with your state's unemployment office can be, it's essential that you contact them immediately to find out whether you'll qualify for state assistance. In some cases, you may need to submit a new application or apply for an extension.

6. **Ask your creditors for forbearance.** Though banks aren't widely advertising forbearance programs the way they were a year ago, contact your lenders to see if skipping or pushing back payments is an option. The best time to do this is always before you've missed a payment. Be sure to ask how they'll report your payment status to the credit bureaus. If they'll be reporting your payments as delinquent, your credit score will plummet.

If you have federal student loans, take advantage of the automatic forbearance that's in effect through at least Jan. 31, 2022. You can ask for a refund of any payments you've made since March 2020.

7. **Don't pay debt if you're putting your health or housing at risk.** A bare-bones budget includes only your basic necessities: housing and utilities, food, health care and minimum debt payments. But in a true emergency, you may have to make even deeper cuts.

Try to work with your lenders. But focus on paying rent and utilities, keeping food on the table and getting medications you need before you make payments on credit cards or loans. Yes, you'll damage your credit score if you miss payments without your lender's permission. But you can recover from bad credit. While your credit score is important, your health and housing are far bigger priorities.

Robin Hartill is a certified financial planner and a senior writer at The Penny Hoarder.

Cooper vetoes NC bill limiting K-12 racial teaching

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school districts operate. But Republicans, who did not appear to have sufficient votes to override the Democratic governor's veto, have not identified a single case of alleged "indoctrination" that the North Carolina measure would have prevented.

State Senate leader Phil Berger, a Republican, issued a statement decrying Cooper's move. "It's perplexing that Gov. Cooper would veto a bill that affirms the public school system's role to teach students the full truth about our state's sometimes ugly past," he said. The other vetoed measure would have allowed business owners to sue individuals who damaged their property for three times the actual damages they incurred, charged those who assault emergency responders with a more serious felony, even if nobody was physically injured, and jail those charged with rioting or looting for up to 48 hours without bond.

While Republicans believed the measure would hold rioters and looters accountable and better keep the public and law enforcement safe, Democrats and civil rights groups thought the punishments outlined in the bill were excessive and could deter people from taking to the streets.

Judge sets deadline for North Carolina to boost school funding

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

RALEIGH — A North Carolina judge has set a mid-October deadline for state lawmakers to follow a court-ordered plan to provide full funding for improving public education or he will take action himself.

State Superior Court Judge David Lee said he was "very disheartened" that the General Assembly is funding a small part of a plan calling for at least $5.6 billion in new education funding by 2028, news outlets reported. Lee has scheduled a court hearing on Oct. 18, and said if the plan isn't fully funded by then, he will consider options on how the court can resolve the matter.

Pat Ryan, a spokesman for Senate leader Phil Berger, also accused Lee of overstepping his authority, The News & Observer of Raleigh reported. "I don't know how much clearer we can be," Ryan said in a statement. "If Judge Lee wants to help decide how to spend state dollars — a role that has been the exclusive domain of the legislative branch since the state's founding — then Judge Lee should run for a seat in the House or Senate."

Lee's warning marks the next stage in the Leandro school funding case first filed in 1994 by low-wealth school districts to get more state funding. The case is named after a Hoke County student who has since graduated from college. The N.C. Supreme Court assigned Lee to oversee the case after Judge Howard Manning retired.

Over the years, the state Supreme Court has ruled that the N.C. Constitution guarantees every child "an opportunity to receive a sound basic education" and that the state wasn't meeting that standard. In June, Lee approved a seven-year plan agreed to by the State Board of Education, Democratic Gov. Roy Cooper's administration and the plaintiffs. The $5.6 billion plan includes a 5% pay raise this year for teachers, more money for low-wealth school districts and expanding the NC Pre-K program.

Republicans in the House and Senate each passed their own versions of the budget and are trying to reconcile the differences. The Leandro plan calls for $690.7 million in new education funding this year and $1.06 billion next year. The Senate budget included $191.6 million this year and $213.7 million next year. The House had $370 million this year and $382.1 million next year.

NC felons who registered recently can still vote

By Gary D. Robertson
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

RALEIGH — Certain felons released from prison or never incarcerated and who registered to vote recently in North Carolina will remain eligible as litigation over their right to vote continues, the state's highest court has ruled.

The state Supreme Court, in a lawsuit challenging when North Carolina residents convicted of felonies have their voting rights restored, essentially declined to reinstate a order last month that declared any offender no longer behind bars could register. That order would have affected about 56,000 people who were still serving probation, parole or other supervision, according to court records.

On Sept. 3, the state Court of Appeals blocked last month's trial order amid pending litigation filed by civil rights groups and ex-offenders challenging state law on the restoration of voting rights. Those plaintiffs immediately appealed to the Supreme Court, which declined to block the Court of Appeals order but also declared it would be implemented only going forward.

That means a felony offender who registered between Aug. 23 and Sept. 3 — when the trial judges' order was in place and based solely on that order — can't be removed from voting rolls and "are legally registered voters" until told otherwise, the Supreme Court wrote. So those offenders who registered will be able to vote in this fall's municipal elections. Early in-person voting for October elections begins this week. It wasn't immediately known how many people who qualified under the Sept. 23 order actually registered.

Plaintiffs in the 2019 lawsuit that led to the orders and appeals said the ruling was disappointing but urged those who registered to cast ballots. The lawsuit contends current state law on restoring voting rights is racially discriminatory by disproportionately affecting Black offenders and violates the state constitution. "We are now a step closer to our goal, and even in the face of this temporary delay of full justice, we are celebrating," the plaintiff organizations said in a news release. "We remain committed to the vision of an equal democracy, untainted by laws illegally designed to disenfranchise Black people in this state."

State Republican legislative leaders, some of whom are named defendants in the lawsuit along with the State Board of Elections, have said the trial court went too far with its expansive order so close to an election. "The Supreme Court made the right call," Sen. Warren Daniel, a Burke County Republican and co-chairman of the Senate elections committee, said. "A judge cannot just write a new law because he or she doesn't like the old one."

The order was signed by Associate Justice Tamara Barringer on behalf of the court, which is composed of four registered Democrats and three Republicans. There was no legal explanation for the decision. The N.C. Constitution forbids a person convicted of a felony from voting "unless that person shall be first restored to the rights of citizenship in the manner prescribed by law." A 1973 law laying out those restoration rules requires the "unconditional discharge of an inmate, of a probationer, or of a parolee."

But the Aug. 23 order had said election officials couldn't deny voter registration to any convicted felon who is only on probation, parole or post-release supervision. A plaintiff's attorney said last month the trial court's decision would represent the largest expansion of North Carolina voting rights since the 1960s. There are more than 7.1 million registered voters in North Carolina.

Democrats were in charge of the legislature when the law, which lowered hurdles for ex-felons to vote, was approved. The GOP defendants said there's no evidence the law is carried out today in a racially discriminatory manner. Last year, trial judges ruled felony offenders couldn't be denied the right to vote if the reason their rights hadn't been restored was due to unpaid fines or restitution. The Supreme Court said that rule remains in effect.

Black Lives Matter: How far has the movement come since the beginning?

By Kwasi Konadu and Bright Gyamfi
THE CONVERSATION

Black Lives Matter has been called the largest civil rights movement in U.S. history. Since 2013, local BLM chapters have formed nationwide to demand accountability for the killings of dozens of African Americans by police and others. Since the summer of 2020, when tens of millions in the U.S. and around the world marched under the "Black Lives Matter" slogan to protest a Minneapolis police officer's murder of George Floyd, the movement has risen to a new level of prominence, funding and scrutiny.

BLM has long been seen as a coordinated yet decentralized effort. Lately, the movement and its leading organizations have become more traditional and hierarchical in structure. Public opinion is also changing, as BLM chapters call on the movement's leaders to be more accountable to its grassroots groups. We caught up with two scholars of worldwide African communities and cultures – Kwasi Konadu and Bright Gyamfi – to discuss BLM as both a movement and an organization.

What was the original structure of the Black Lives Matter movement?

Black Lives Matter started in 2013 as a messaging campaign. In response to the 2012 acquittal of George Zimmerman for shooting and killing Black teenager Trayvon Martin, three activists – Opal Tometi, Alicia Garza and Patrisse Cullors – protested the verdict on social media, along with many others. Cullors came up with the hashtag #BlackLivesMatter, which gained widespread use on social media and in street protests.

What's changed about BLM's structure since then?

While the Black Lives Matter Global Network Foundation says it is decentralized, over time it has followed a pattern similar to other social movements driven by individuals and organizations. It has become more of a conventional hierarchical organization, centralizing its operations and leadership. Its founders have won awards, book deals and notoriety.

The BLM Global Network Foundation has not developed any publicly known independent source of funding, nor was a decision ever made to rely primarily on grassroots support or small individual donations. As a result, it is dependent on corporate and foundation money to pay for its operations and programs. Amid the George Floyd uprisings in 2020, the BLM Global Network Foundation generated some $90 million in donations or grants from corporations and foundations.

Meanwhile, many frontline Black Lives Matters chapters have struggled to stay afloat. Some key chapters have begun calling for financial transparency and more democratic decision-making from national leaders at the BLM Global Network Foundation, as well as a share of the funds the national groups have raised. Others have disavowed the Black Lives Matter Network and defected from it, focusing on local community fundraising and organizing to support their work.

How is public opinion about the BLM movement changing and why?

Though the phrase "Black Lives Matter" has become a common sight, the movement is losing public support. According to a new Civiqs survey of 244,622 registered voters, support for BLM fell from two-thirds of voters in June 2020 to 50% in June 2021. Some of this shift may be due to growing public awareness of the movement's internal struggles, such as competing visions and competition over scarce resources, as well as questions about whether some BLM leaders have used donations for personal benefit.

Is it at all clear what structure BLM will or should have in the future?

Based on our research on civil rights-Black power organizations and on Black internationalism, BLM would benefit from a "starfish" organizational structure. Starfishlike organizations are decentralized networks with no head. Intelligence is spread throughout an open system that easily adapts to circumstances. If a leader is removed, new ones emerge and the network remains.

AP PHOTO/JULIO CORTEZ

Damarra Atkins pays her respects to George Floyd at a mural at George Floyd Square, in Minneapolis.

George Floyd fund has awarded over $50,000 in student scholarships

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

MINNEAPOLIS — A fund set up to honor George Floyd and raise awareness about racial injustice said Monday that it has awarded more than $50,000 in scholarships since it was created.

The George Floyd Memorial Foundation said it has recently given scholarships valued at $1,000 to 15 law school students, scholarships valued at $10,000 to interns, and $2,500 scholarships to undergraduate students.

The foundation said it has also awarded $25,000 to Fayetteville State University.

Foundation executive director Jacari Harris said the scholarships keep Floyd's memory alive and support students. "Our hope at the George Floyd Memorial Foundation is that these high-achieving students will become attorneys, activists and scholars who will work to ensure people are treated fairly around the world," Harris said in a statement.

Bridgett Floyd, George Floyd's sister and founder of the George Floyd Memorial Foundation, said: "As the days, months and years go by, one thing is true: my brother George's death truly changed the world and by offering support to these students, it will allow us to continue to bring hope to those in need."

The George Floyd Memorial Foundation, based in Fayetteville, was created in August 2020 and focuses on raising awareness of racial injustices, police brutality and ensuring everyone's civil rights are protected. Floyd, a 46-year-old Black man, died May 25, 2020, after a white former Minneapolis police officer knelt on his neck as Floyd said he couldn't breathe.

That officer, Derek Chauvin, has been convicted of murder and manslaughter and sentenced to 22 1/2 years. Three other former officers await trial on aiding and abetting counts.

BUSINESS BRIEFS

RALEIGH CHAMBER

* Sept. 23, 8:30-10 a.m. – Coffee with Mayor Baldwin, Raleigh Founded Gateway, 2409-107 Crabtree Blvd. Register at raleighchamber.org.

* Sept. 24, 7-9:30 a.m. – CPI Security First Responders Appreciation Breakfast, Raleigh Convention Center, 500 S. Salisbury St.

BRUNCH

My Brown is Luxurious brunch for women entrepreneurs is Sept. 26, 1-4 p.m., Studio Motif, 3206 Guess Road. Email thestudiomotif.com.

GRANT

The National Institute of Minority Economic Development has received a $300,000 donation from the Truist Charitable Fund. The grant will be used for more direct lending activities.

OPENING:

* Craft Avenue, a Black-owned craft store, has opened in Knightdale at 905-A McKnight Drive. Visit craftavenc.com.

* The NOW Massage is opening a new location in Brier Creek, 7930 Skyland Ridge Pkwy, Suite 103, this winter.

* Buena Papa, a Black-owned fry bar, is now open at Morgan Street Food Hall, downtown Raleigh.

Send business briefs to info@triangletribune.com.

Biden's child tax credit is delivering direct relief

By John Verdejo
SPECIAL TO THE TRIBUNE


Verdejo

As an Afro-Puerto Rican and the proud father of two young boys, I know firsthand how difficult the pandemic and the corresponding economic crisis has been on all families, especially communities of color. The combination of disparities in access to health care and economic opportunities were devastating.

The facts are telling. Black Americans make up 13% of the U.S. population but represent a disproportionate amount of COVID-19 deaths. Black families face higher than average unemployment rates and other economic challenges associated with the pandemic. Across the country, Black Americans are facing some of the highest unemployment rates. In January, 9% of Black workers (1.8 million people) were unemployed. Approximately 1 in 5 Black households is also struggling with food insufficiency, and more than 1 in 3 Black renters has fallen behind on monthly payments.

Similarly, Latino Americans have been devastatingly impacted by the pandemic. Hispanics and Latinos comprise almost 19% of the U.S. population but are 1.9 times more likely to contract the coronavirus, 2.8 times more likely to be hospitalized by COVID and 2.3 times more likely to die from the disease. In a recent study by Pew Research, roughly 62% of Latinos reported having financial difficulties throughout the pandemic while 35% of Latinos said they had trouble paying bills, and 31% had gotten food through a food bank or charitable organization.

That's why President Biden and Vice President Harris set out to deliver immediate relief for hard-hit Black and Latino families and small businesses from the first day of their administration to build a bridge towards economic recovery and reduce poverty in Black communities by 34% and 39% in Latino communities. By passing the American Rescue Plan just 50 days into taking office, President Biden laid out a comprehensive plan to address inequities worsened by the pandemic.

The expanded Child Tax Credit is one of the most significant components of the American Rescue Plan that is already making a big difference for communities of color, including in the Triangle. These payments, which are hitting families' bank accounts for the third month this week, are being provided to the families of nearly 2 million children in North Carolina –providing monthly payments of $300 to the families for each child under 6 years old and $250 to the families for each child between ages 6 and 17.

Multiple studies have already proven how much these monthly tax cuts are making an impact. One CNBC study found that in just one month alone, the expanded Child Tax Credit reduced financial anxiety for 56% of families across the country with "more than half of those surveyed said the payment was a 'huge deal,' and another 40% said it was 'helpful' to their family budget."

Another study found that over 3 million American households had enough to eat in July thanks to the expanded Child Tax Credit, particularly benefitting to Black and Latino households. And just last week, a new study showed that making the Child Tax Credit permanent would reduce poverty to less than 10% in almost every state, including decreasing child poverty by 44.3% in North Carolina.

It's clear that just in a few months, the expanded Child Tax Credit is delivering for all American families, but especially communities of color that were disproportionately devastated by COVID-19. President Biden and Democrats know that investing in families, particularly those historically underserved by our government, is needed to set all Americans up for success and boost our economy along the way.

John Verdejo serves as a DNC member for the North Carolina Democratic Party.

More people on the hunt for COVID-19 tests

By Anne Blythe
N.C. HEALTH NEWS

Maybe your child plays on one of the middle or high school sports teams where North Carolina public health officials have seen an acute rise in COVID-19 clusters since July. Perhaps you have an elementary school student in your household who is not eligible for a COVID vaccine but really wants to be in a classroom with their peers.

As more children become infected with the Delta variant, the testing and tracing of those with whom they were in close contact has been on the rise, too. While you could once pull up to a drive-thru clinic at some of the state's larger hospitals and get a COVID-19 test, many of those sites have been closed. Health care workers who worked at such sites have been shifted to COVID wards now packed with a fourth wave of patients who've landed there, infected with the delta variant.

That has sent many parents and others out to hunt for COVID tests. "A number of the hospitals and emergency departments have told us that people are often going there for testing, and we know that they are burdened now with sick people who are coming in," said Gov. Roy Cooper at a recent briefing with reporters. "We have worked to set up special clinics and places people can go and get tested."

Amir Barzin, a physician in family medicine at UNC Hospitals and director of the Carolina Together Testing Program, says the idea that a test is difficult to get could be another misconception in a pandemic that has dished up many. "There's a palpable difference between testing a year ago and testing now," Barzin said during a recent phone interview.

More pharmacies, doctor's offices and other independent sites provide COVID testing now, Barzan pointed out. What may be fueling some of the perception that testing is not widely available, he added, is how quickly test results are shared. Anyone looking for testing can find free sites run by the state at Find My Testing Place. "There's this misconception that I need my test result right now," Barzan said.

Though some testing sites are able to provide results within a day, some pharmacies estimate a three-day turnaround. Nineteen months into the coronavirus pandemic, North Carolina has completed more than 16.4 million PCR and rapid COVID tests, according to the state DHHS dashboard. The demand for COVID-19 tests more than tripled between the second week of August and the Labor Day weekend as public schools and college campuses welcomed back students and people made plans for the holiday.

The state continues to provide free testing. "We are doing an enormous amount of testing in these testing sites, some of the highest amount of testing that we've done," Mandy Cohen, secretary of the state Department of Health and Human Services, said during a briefing with reporters on Sept. 9. "I think it is why we are at a different moment in this pandemic than we were even a year ago. I'm really grateful for our partnership with a lot of our labs that have really built up capacity and can handle even more capacity to do lab tests."

Nonetheless, many parents are still trying to figure out the testing issue as in-person classes and sports teams return.

Suppression of voting rights in North Carolina

By Senator Valerie Foushee
SPECIAL TO THE TRIBUNE


Foushee

With North Carolina Senate Republicans having recently passed Senate bills 326, 724 and 725 — all measures designed to limit voting rights one way or another — it appears their goal is for North Carolina to remain at the forefront of a wave of repressive voter suppression laws sweeping the country.

According to the Brennan Center for Justice, more than 400 proposed voter suppression measures have been proposed in 49 states during the 2021 state legislative session. At least 18 states have fully enacted laws that will make early voting and voting by mail more difficult and inflict harsher voter ID requirements ,and make faulty voter purges more likely. The U.S. House of Representatives passed the John Lewis Voting Rights Act, but that federal remedy remains stalled in the U.S. Senate. As a result, nationally and locally, voting rights are under attack in ways not seen since the Jim Crow era of the late 19th and early 20th centuries.

Most people agree that there may be no more important right than voting to strengthen and sustain our democracy, as evidenced by the three constitutional amendments — the 15th, 19th and 26th — that helped guarantee and expand the right to vote to more Americans.

So, why do North Carolina Republicans seek to gut voting rights? The answer seems to be because they can.

In 2013, in the Shelby County V. Holder decision, the U.S. Supreme Court struck down a key provision of the Voting Rights Act of 1965 requiring "certain states and localities" with a history of discriminatory voting practices to submit proposed new voting procedures to the U.S. Justice Department before implementing them — a "pre-clearance" step ensuring voting procedures would not be discriminatory before they went into effect and harmed citizens.

Immediately, North Carolina, a state with a well-documented history of discriminatory voting practices, enacted new draconian voting restrictions. Several of the measures crafted by the Republican-led General Assembly were overturned by a federal court which said North Carolina's new laws were designed to "target African Americans with almost surgical precision."

SB 326 would make it harder for absentee ballots to count. Currently, they can be received up to three days after election day. SB 326 requires that they be received no later than 5 p.m. on election day to be counted. SB 326 also requires absentee ballots to be requested much earlier than before. But how can voters know when unforeseen circumstances will demand their need for an absentee ballot?

SB 724, while allowing visually impaired voters to vote online, would also impose further requirements that certain people who need voter IDs would need to vote in person, something that would particularly affect students, among others.

SB 725 would prohibit county boards of election, even in relatively poor counties, from using private donations to support their elections. Currently, 97 of North Carolina's 100 counties rely upon private donations to facilitate elections. Taken together, these bills constitute efforts to turn back the clock and make it harder for North Carolina citizens to vote.

I am proud that while all three bills passed the Senate, my fellow Democrats and I stood firm and not one of us voted for any of these repressive bills. I intend to keep working with my fellow democrats and Governor (Roy) Cooper to protect the hard-won rights of all North Carolinians to participate in our democracy and vote.

Valerie Foushee is the District 23 representative to the North Carolina Senate for Orange and Chatham Counties.