

# Elizabeth Paul: Local public schools are vital to community resilience

October 20, 2024 | Salisbury Post (NC) Author: Post Opinion | Section: Opinion | 762 Words OpenURL Link

Elizabeth Paul: Local public schools are vital to community resilience

Published 12:00 am Sunday, October 20, 2024

By Post Opinion

By Elizabeth Paul

Local public schools are more than a collection of classrooms and hallways lined with lockers. Our public schools provide a space for connection, bringing people together through sports, arts and activities to build relationships across generations. In times of need, our public schools are a place of resources and support for all students and families in the community, regardless of household income, race or ability.

In the aftermath of Hurricane Helene in western North Carolina, local public schools, teachers and staff have worked tirelessly to support children and families. Watauga High School, located just outside of Boone, spent four days accounting for each and every student, including by going door to door. Ashe County Public Schools opened three emergency distribution centers in their schools and served more than 800 hot meals out of a high school parking lot in one afternoon, free for anyone in need. Buncombe County School locations were used for water distribution and the principal, along with teachers, from North Buncombe Elementary brought birthday cupcakes and presents to one of their students while checking in on families in the community.

These are just a few of many examples of how local public schools are the cornerstone of a community, especially in a time of need. In fact, federal law mandates that students experiencing homelessness, including those displaced after a natural disaster, have the right to enroll immediately in a local public school in the community in which they are currently living, even if they do not have the paperwork typically required to enroll.

This is a testament to the unique and central role that public schools play in our state, which is why we need to support them more than ever. On Oct. 9, the N.C. General Assembly passed a \$273 million relief package for Western North Carolina that included \$16 million for the Department of Public Instruction to compensate school nutrition employees, along with compensation for employees and school calendar flexibility for districts impacted by the storm.

The bill included all but one of DPI's requests for help-\$150 million for building, equipment, and technology loss in impacted districts. DPI highlighted that their request for \$150 million to address needed repairs is only a first-round request, noting that it will not be enough. Yancey County Schools lost an entire elementary school building, which is estimated to cost \$42 million alone.

The ongoing need for support in western North Carolina comes as an override vote looms for Governor Cooper's veto of HB10, which would allocate an additional \$248 million of taxpayer funds to private school vouchers for the current school year. Although the voucher program was originally designed to provide scholarships for low-income families to attend private schools, the NCGA eliminated the income eligibility requirements beginning with the 2024-25 school year. This led to a drastic increase in applicants and a waitlist of around 55,000 families, the majority of which make over \$115,000 annually.

If passed, the veto override would take hundreds of millions from local public schools and instead send those taxpayer dollars to private schools that do not have to report what they teach or which students they accept. The

Public School Forum's analysis of the 200 private schools that received the most taxpayer dollars in the 23-24 school year revealed that only 42 percent were accredited, only 2 percent required teachers to hold state certification, and 89 percent utilized some form of discrimination in their admissions process. Moreover, children in rural public schools, including those in Western North Carolina, will lose the highest rate of funds. Even without additional voucher funding, the state is spending nearly \$20 million on private school vouchers for the current school year in the impacted districts alone.

The vast majority of North Carolina's families choose to send their children to local public schools; however, our state continues to rank near the bottom in public school funding — 48th in the nation — and spends nearly \$5000 less per student than the national average. Despite this, and even in a time of crisis, our public schools continue to serve their communities. If we continue to underfund these schools, we risk their closing, leaving families with no or few viable options, especially in rural communities.

We cannot take our local public schools for granted. They are often the backbone of our communities and serve over 1,500,000 children and their families. Those children need their schools to be funded and supported.

Elizabeth Paul is communications manager with the Public School Forum of North Carolina.

Copyright 2024 Salisbury Post, All Rights Reserved.

#### • Citation (aglc Style)

Post Opinion, 'Elizabeth Paul: Local public schools are vital to community resilience', *Salisbury Post* (online), 20 Oct 2024 <a href="https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19C52C83B0526838">https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19C52C83B0526838</a>>



# Fiery crash lands young man in ICU

October 20, 2024 | Salisbury Post (NC) Author: Elisabeth Strillacci| Section: News| 981 Words OpenURL Link

Fiery crash lands young man in ICU

Published 6:30 pm Sunday, October 20, 2024

By Elisabeth Strillacci

1 of 2

SALISBURY — The fiery crash of a Dodge 1500 on West Innes Street at midnight Sunday has landed a 20-year-old man in the ICU of Atrium Wake Forest Baptist Hospital, according to his family.

Caleb Treadway, who grew up in the Rowan County area but who had lived in Michigan where he met his fiance, Molly, 19, had moved his young family back to Salisbury just after Helene, according to Molly's mother, Sarah Lauback.

"He just started his job this past Monday," she said, and Molly is a stay at home mother to their one and a half year old daughter.

An official report of the crash has not yet been released, but according to one witness, the red pickup truck and she were the only cars on the road at the time, and the truck passed her before losing control for some reason. The female driver said the truck flipped into a ditch on the side of the road and burst into flames. She said she thought the truck might have been speeding when it passed her, but NC State Highway Patrol has not released an accident report yet.

She immediately called 911. She struggled, she said, to process what had just happened in describing it to the dispatcher, but she did her best to explain it.

That same witness said other drivers had stopped to help and at least one man pulled Caleb from the window of the truck. Firefighters had to work to put the fire out. At one point, a neighbor said she saw what appeared to be a small explosion and the fire flared up again, but that was after the driver had been removed.

Initial reports were the truck was a Ford F150, but that information has been updated to reflect it was actually a Dodge 1500.

Firefighters and EMS arrived and called for a medical helicopter. Air Care One landed on the soccer field at North Hills School to take the person to Atrium Wake Forest Baptist Hospital in Winston-Salem. North Hills School is on West Innes but connects to Sells Road, and EMS crews took Treadway to the helicopter through the gate on Sells Road.

Another witness, Kaiden Porter, said he was walking back from Catawba College when he "heard a loud car revving sound, then a crash and a pop, like a firework. I rushed over to the accident and there were five other people already there helping. Three of them pulled the unconscious man out of the car." He said he heard a dog crying but knew the dog did not survive. He said the truck was "completely in flames" in the ditch. Family said Treadway had both of the family dogs with him. One died in the crash but one survived, ran away after the crash but was back home safe and sound Sunday.

Lauback said the couple were so new that they haven't yet found an apartment, and were just making ends meet, having used their savings to make the move. They were "very resilient," but right now, her daughter is distraught, because "she leaned on Caleb." The couple has no family in the area, but she aid Treadway has a close friend who encouraged him to move down and go to work with him.

"Molly doesn't have a job, and now they have no vehicle, and because he just started working they had no medical insurance," Lauback said. "If he recovers, and right now we believe he will, it's going to be a long time before he can go back to work." She has started a GoFundMe for the family to help meet immediate needs while they figure out the next step.

"Molly told me he had gone out to get something for the baby, and minutes after he left, she looked at the clock and saw it was midnight and realized there probably was no store open," said Lauback. "She thought about calling him but then decided maybe he would find something." She said her daughter "had a sick feeling, and they live just up from where it happened, and the fire station is right there. When she heard the sirens go off, she checked his location on her phone and saw it was not changing and knew something was wrong."

The Lauback family has suffered its share of losses in the past four years. Their home in Michigan burned down and another young family member passed away unexpectedly.

"I was talking with my own mom and I said we just need a break," Lauback said. But she is convinced "God was watching out for Caleb, because this could have been so much worse." He is not completely out of the woods yet, though doctors are optimistic. Lauback said he has been intubated, has numerous contusions, broken bones, cuts and currently, a brain bleed. He is in a medically induced coma to allow his body to heal, but they may have to work to alleviate the pressure.

Lauback, who is a nurse, said Treadway "is an amazing dad. He is one of a kind, loves to restore mechanical things in his spare time, and he and Molly are both very into nature. But his daughter is his baby girl, and she loves her dad." She hopes that Molly and their daughter will help give Treadway the determination to heal.

Anyone who wishes to donate to help sustain this young family as they figure out how to move forward can find the GoFundMe here: https://gofund.me/0355237f

"When we lost our house, I was incredibly comforted by the way people came forward to help," said Lauback. "I have spent my whole life caring for other people (she was a director of nursing during COVID) but never thought about needing help myself. When we needed it, though, people were there. I hope they will be for my daughter's family, too."

Copyright 2024 Salisbury Post, All Rights Reserved.

#### • Citation (aglc Style)

Elisabeth Strillacci, 'Fiery crash lands young man in ICU', *Salisbury Post* (online), 20 Oct 2024 <a href="https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19C57F172BAE8A78">https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19C57F172BAE8A78</a>



# Hurricane Helene - FROM NC TO TALLAHASSEE - North Carolina family finds refuge in Florida

October 20, 2024 | Star, The (Shelby, NC) Author: Alaijah Brown; Tallahassee Democrat | USA TODAY NETWORK Section: News | 928 Words Page: A1 OpenURL Link

"I couldn't have asked for a better place to be to ride out the storm. We weren't even up there, and it still affected us. It affected us more than we originally thought."

## **Taylor Bonnell**

Taylor Bonnell watched as her two toddlers, Aria, 5, and Silas, 1, played on the playground at Jack McLean Park in a carefree manner, despite their displacement and her concern for their Western North Carolina home. The mother grew up in Tallahassee, but now her hometown has become a refuge after Hurricane Helene destroyed her community Sept. 26. "It's familiar so it's really comfortable to be here. I couldn't have asked for a better place to be to ride out the storm. We weren't even up there, and it still affected us," Bonnell told the Tallahassee Democrat on Oct. 11, over a week after Helene wreaked havoc on the southeastern states. "It affected us more than we originally thought."

Bonnell and her husband, Ethan, had no idea Western North Carolina would be hit so badly.

"There was no warning. I just remember there were flash flood warnings as it was happening on my app and that was it, so there were no evacuation warnings," Bonnell said. "They didn't know, it just happened so suddenly and so quickly."

Before Helene hit, Bonnell said the family traveled to Tampa for a wedding, which was postponed, so they hunkered down at an Airbnb in Plant City and then drove to Tallahassee to stay with her mother and ride out the storm. They've been here for over two weeks, but her heart has been with her community.

Bonnell met Ethan when they were students at Leon High School. After the couple married, they started to look for a place to call home, away from the Florida humidity they grew up in.

Beautiful mountain ranges, an intimate community and a cooler climate: These are the reasons Bonnell and Ethan moved to a quiet and small mountain community near Asheville to raise their children.

Now, the terrain is muddy from flooding and landslides, and their quaint town in Western North Carolina, destroyed by the storm.

"I thought there was just a little bit of flooding at first. I had been seeing it from afar on social media," Bonnell said.

"But it was really bad. I managed to get ahold of a couple of friends on Friday and then it was radio silence through Sunday."

Ethan left Tallahassee on Tuesday, Oct. 1, to check on their homestead about 45 minutes outside of Asheville, where they grow tomatoes, raise cows and chickens, and care for cats. Bonnell said she heard from her husband on Oct. 3, since there was no cell service.

"He assessed the damage and said our house is 'fine, wonderful,' our house is on a hill, so we didn't expect any flooding," Bonnell said.

But the road used to reach their home had been transformed into a river and the natural spring in the mountain

above their home, their only water source, was washed out in a landslide.

"I have friends that got out just in time and watched their house float away. I just saw something this morning where someone lost 11 members of their family in the landslide," Bonnell said.

As of Oct. 11, officials said 122 people were confirmed dead, with that number expected to rise as rescue crews continue searching for missing persons.

Bonnell said she wants her friends in Asheville to be cautious of the toxic muck left behind from the flooding, something she was wary of for her kids.

"I've been urging my friends with kids to get out of the areas with a lot of mud because of how sick people are getting, especially children," she said. "No one is talking about how toxic the muck that's left behind from the flooding, and how gross and unhealthy it is out there right now."

With no safe water, or roadways back home, Bonnell and her children have decided to stay with family in Tallahassee. She hopes to be able to return home by Thanksgiving.

"It's not easy bringing kids into people's homes, especially in the midst of uncertainty and not knowing how long we're going to be in a certain area," Bonnell said.

How to help out in Asheville

Bonnell operates "Taylor Bonnell Photography," providing services for all of life's special occasions. Now she is turning her business into a fundraising effort to benefit recovery efforts in Western North Carolina.

She is offering discounted 30-minute mini photoshoot sessions to Tallahassee clientele, for special moments like marriage engagements and pregnancy announcements, to help her community rebuild. Even though she isn't with them physically, she is encouraged by their mission to rebuild.

"Most of the help has been totally self-initiated, and from the kindness of their hearts. It's a very self-driven community out there. Everyone's family up there, they want to help each other," she said.

And there are other ways the people of Tallahassee can help too, she said.

Here are links to websites for Asheville charities to support recovery efforts, personally shared with the Tallahassee Democrat by Taylor:

www.828strong.com

www.samaritanspurse.org

www.belovedasheville.com

www.mannafoodbank.org

Adopt a family through Harbor of Hope: https://forms.gle/CEm4Qe9EqEcU5SYX6

Alaijah Brown covers children & families for the Tallahassee Democrat. She can be reached at ABrown1@gannett.com. Follow her on Twitter/X: @AlaijahBrown3.

"I couldn't have asked for a better place to be to ride out the storm. We weren't even up there, and it still affected us. It affected us more than we originally thought."

# **Taylor Bonnell**

Copyright, 2024, The Star, All Rights Reserved.

# • Citation (aglc Style)

Alaijah Brown, Tallahassee Democrat | USA TODAY NETWORK, 'Hurricane Helene - FROM NC TO TALLAHASSEE - North Carolina family finds refuge in Florida', *Star, The* (online), 20 Oct 2024 A1 <a href="https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?">https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?</a> p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19C533DC5E84F148>



# Helene spoils Tenn. agritourism season - Area's farms are known for beef cattle, produce

October 20, 2024 | Star, The (Shelby, NC) Author: Hayden Dunbar; Knoxville News Sentinel | Section: News | 997 Words Page: A14 OpenURL Link

JONESBOROUGH, Tenn. – The season is "done for" before ever really starting at Fender's Farm. The brief and spooky agritourism opportunities farm owners rely on each fall have been spoiled by the real-life horror of Sept. 27, when Hurricane Helene caused the Nolichucky River to overflow, ravaging farm fields, equipment and infrastructure.

Owners Bonnie and Carroll Fender, who began building on the Washington County property in 1984, are in their 70s now. Considering all the canceled field trips — which alone would have brought 5,000 people to the farm this season — the couple must decide whether rebuilding makes sense for their family.

"We're going to have a good talk with our daughter and grandchildren," Carroll said. "If they want to continue on here, we'll apply for any assistance we can get."

They are far from alone in their post-Helene struggle. Forty-seven percent of Washington County is farmland, and 99% of farms are family farms, according to the USDA's 2022 Census of Agriculture and calculations made using USDA data. Washington County has a "multimillion-dollar industry" known for its beef cattle, according to Anthony Shelton of the University of Tennessee Institute of Agriculture, and the Nolichucky River Valley is known for its produce — "some of the best anywhere," Carroll said.

Agriculture and forestry contribute approximately \$89billion to Tennessee's economy each year, according to Tennessee Farm Bureau, while tourism in Tennessee generated a record \$30.6billion in direct visitor spending in 2023, according to Visit Nashville TN. Agritourism combines the two and extends to opportunities beyond just the farming itself – think corn mazes, hayrides and petting zoos.

The Fenders pivoted from their produce model to agritourism in 2000, adding a corn maze, gaga ball pit, giant sandbox, haunted maze, pedal cart track, tube slide and zip line over the years. All were ruined in the recent flooding. Carroll estimates \$250,000 worth of equipment went underwater. He's not sure how much will be salvageable.

"Not only have we lost this year's revenue, the revenue we made last year was put back in to get started this year. It's gone because it's washed away," Carroll said. "And then if we do get back up and going, it'll take next year's revenue to pay for that."

The Farm Market and Paw Paw's Pumpkin Patch at Fender's Farm are still open, but the other closures come at an exceptionally challenging time. This was the Fenders' first year selling season passes, many of which won't be used at all. They plan to refund them, or honor them next season — if the farm is reopened.

"There's more gone than what you're seeing," Carroll told Knox News while driving his ATV on a tour through the wreckage. "I just can't explain how fast all this happened."

Still, "we probably need to concentrate more on what we have left than what's gone," he said.

That includes the farm's livestock. Carroll's granddaughter, 17-year-old Sadie Buchanan, lives on the property and helped save the animals when the Nolichucky rose.

Buchanan recalled walking through ankle-deep water to the pens, where she and other helpers grabbed animals

and started heading to higher ground. By that point, she said, the water was so high they had to swim.

But they rescued all the animals – more than 20 chickens, goats, rabbits, pigs, sheep and turkeys.

What's left also includes the people, including those who traveled from near and far to help clean up the property and to distribute hot meals and supplies.

"That's the way that people love on each other here," Carroll said.

Not far from Fender's Farm is Saldana Farms, encompassing more than 27 acres along the Nolichucky River in Washington County. Bruce Saldana bought the property in 2015 with his parents, who planned to retire from their full-time jobs in 2025 to spend more time growing produce, including sweet corn and potatoes.

They plan to continue, Saldana told Knox News in a text message, but "it will be a challenge for the next few years."

The family was able to save some larger equipment. But the shed that housed it — which they also used as an outpost to sell produce — was severely damaged, causing what Saldana estimates as \$10,000-\$20,000 worth of damage to tools and supplies.

About 9 acres of timber were destroyed, and about an acre of land that was used for growing produce has become a massive ditch. It will have to be filled in and regraded before the family can continue growing, Saldana said.

Still, "we are extremely lucky compared to others who lost homes, and some fields are beyond repair," Saldana said. "Fields that once had acres of tomatoes, corn, watermelon, pumpkins, beans, etc., will never be able to be farmed again."

The main house at Still Hollow Farm in neighboring Greene County, where 52% of the land is farmed, was built in 1860.

The Birdwell family has been living there for six generations, George Birdwell told Knox News. He grew up in the house and his parents, Jay and Ann Birdwell, were living there until Sept. 27.

Still Hollow is a Century Farm, meaning it's recognized by the state as having been owned by the same family for at least 100 years.

On Sept. 27, George Birdwell and his parents made a decision they thought would preserve their precious belongings: They took everything upstairs.

But the latest round of flooding brought water to a higher level than ever before: past the main level and to the second story, where water rose an additional 7 feet.

Though the family knows the river could flood again, they are rebuilding – with a few modifications. The most badly damaged side of the house will become a screened-in porch, and Birdwell said he'll be installing drains in the remaining rooms.

The house has too much history to be forgotten.

"This old house has thousands of stories," Birdwell said. "And this is just one of those stories. That's why we're building back. It's just another story."

Copyright, 2024, The Star, All Rights Reserved.

#### • Citation (aglc Style)

produce', *Star, The* (online), 20 Oct 2024 A14 <a href="https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?">https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?</a> p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19C533DC36D45C98>



## Gardner-Webb to host benefit concert for Western NC

October 20, 2024 | Star, The (Shelby, NC) Author: The Star | Section: News | 529 Words Page: A1 OpenURL Link

Gardner-Webb University and the Office of Student Engagement will host the Western N.C. Benefit Concert on Sunday, Oct. 27, at 5 p.m. in the Brinkley Amphitheater. The event will raise funds and collect donations for disaster relief efforts in the wake of Hurricane Helene. Three musical acts will share their talents — The Local Boys, Howltree, and Mason Cole — and offer the community an opportunity to come together in support of those impacted by the storm in Western North Carolina.

Admission to the event will be monetary donations or pop-top canned goods. All donations will go to the N.C. Baptist on Mission for ongoing disaster relief efforts in the region. Tickets will be available at the gate on the day of the event.

## Hurricane Helene's Impact

Hurricane Helene, which struck Western North Carolina last month, left a path of destruction that included widespread flooding, power outages, and significant damage to homes and businesses. Several counties have been declared disaster areas, and recovery efforts are still ongoing. Thousands of families are facing challenges as they work to rebuild their lives after the devastation.

Relief organizations, including N.C. Baptist on Mission, have been on the ground providing essential services to affected communities. From distributing food and supplies to offering cleanup and rebuilding assistance, their efforts are vital to the recovery process. By supporting this concert, attendees can directly contribute to these continuing missions and help bring hope and healing to those in need.

## The Musicians Performing

The concert will showcase three talented acts, each with deep roots in North Carolina, and known for their unique styles of music:

The Local Boys are a well-loved bluegrass band, bringing high-energy performances and a blend of traditional bluegrass with modern influences. The band has performed throughout the region and is known for their skilled instrumentals and lively shows that engage audiences of all ages.

Howltree offers a mix of folk, southern-infused blues, and Americana; they're known for their rich vocal harmonies and soulful voices. Their music tells stories of life, often reflecting themes of resilience and community — making their performance particularly meaningful for this event.

Mason Cole, a local country music artist and rising star, rounds out the lineup. His soulful voice and heartfelt songwriting have earned him a growing following. Cole's music draws from his experiences growing up in the Carolinas and speaks to themes of love, loss, and hope.

In the spirit of compassion and service, this event provides a platform for the Gardner-Webb community and local residents to extend a hand to their neighbors in need. The concert is a reminder of the power of coming together in times of crisis and offers a meaningful way for individuals to contribute to the rebuilding efforts in western North Carolina.

What: Western N.C. Benefit Concert for Hurricane Helene Disaster Relief

When: Sunday, Oct. 27, at 5 p.m.

Where: Brinkley Amphitheater, Gardner-Webb University

Admission: Monetary donations or canned goods.

Tickets are available at the gate. All proceeds and donations will go directly to N.C. Baptist on Mission. For those unable to attend, and would still like to make a monetary donation, you can do so at baptistsonmission.org/Donate.

For more information about the N.C. Baptist on Mission and their disaster relief efforts, visit baptistsonmission.org Copyright, 2024, The Star, All Rights Reserved.

#### • Citation (aglc Style)

The Star, 'Gardner-Webb to host benefit concert for Western NC', *Star, The* (online), 20 Oct 2024 A1 <a href="https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19C533DC54892038">https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19C533DC54892038</a>



# All NC voters should 'be prepared'

October 20, 2024 | Star, The (Shelby, NC)

Section: News | 827 Words

Page: A5
OpenURL Link

The County Compass is a tabloid-sized weekly publication distributed free to Pamlico, Beaufort, Craven, Jones and Carteret Counties. It claims to offer "360 degrees of thorough and honest news coverage – furnished FREE to thousands of loyal readers every week." The truth is that it is about 90 percent ads, and any editorial content is so far to the right as to make Atilla the Hun look liberal.

The issue for September 12-16 caught our attention. On page 15 and bleeding over to page 16 is a big article for the "2nd Amendment Patriots of North Carolina." We assume it was a paid ad; however, it is not identified as such.

There is a slug in a box within the message showing the County Compass logo. The group further identifies itself with the Pamlico County GOP, and the ad was published within the Pamlico GOP website.

In a big bold box heading the ad is the slogan "If you want peace, prepare for war."

The message attempts to connect the modern-day group to colonial militiamen, reminding readers that men between 16 and 60 were required to train regularly. It urges gunowners to stock up on ammo, get to the range and practice, claiming that protecting freedom is their job today.

Unwritten, but implied, is the message that if this election doesn't turn out right, with Trump winning, there will be violence and bloodshed.

In 2023, the Southern Poverty Law Center identified 50 hate and anti-government groups in our state. Twelve have a statewide footprint. But there is only one legal militia in North Carolina – The North Carolina National Guard.

"Be prepared" appears to be a common theme of these groups. All North Carolinians would be well advised to heed this warning.

The misinformation campaign since Hurricane Helene struck our state has grown to such proportions that federal officials have joined Governor Roy Cooper and leaders from both political parties in warning people not to listen to the lies. Trump has been the genesis of many of the lies about disaster response. Marjorie Taylor Greene is posting garbage saying the National Weather Service and meteorologists can control the weather. Because of malicious and fallacious social media posts, federal officials who are trying to help have received threats in at least two counties.

Already we see attempts trying to discredit and disrupt our elections. The state GOP filed a lawsuit trying to get 225,000 registered voters thrown off the rolls. Another lawsuit from them claims the state is not canceling the voting registration of persons who refuse to serve on a jury because they aren't a citizen. The State Board of Elections vehemently denies this claim. Republicans are challenging absentee ballots that aren't sealed in the proper envelope...there are two envelopes enclosed with the ballot. They are also challenging ballots of overseas voters born in our state but who aren't living in our state. And the most preposterous of their claims is that Helene was merely an attempt to steal the election.

Some of the polling places in the western part of the state no longer exist and the State Board of Elections is doing all it can to ensure western voters are able to cast their ballots. It could only benefit Republicans if they helped instead of trying to disrupt. A close look at voting trends shows these western counties are almost solid red Republican.

And we need to be prepared for interference in polling places.

We're told outcomes might be learned later than election night this year to assure votes are accurately reported. It might take a week before the final presidential outcome is known. Our State Board of Elections has implemented rigorous procedures to ensure votes are recorded and tallied accurately, however they are also preparing for a barrage of expected challenges.

Donald Trump has intimated that if he doesn't win there might be bedlam. In an April Time magazine article, Trump, when asked about possible violence said, "If we don't win, you know, it depends." In another interview he said, "If everything's honest, I'll gladly accept the results. If it's not, you have to fight for the right of the country."

Trump has never thought any election he was involved in was honest. He's never accepted the results. Not with Hilary Clinton. Not with Joe Biden. And he won't with Kamala Harris. He is still claiming the 2020 contest was rigged.

Are we so gullible, so partisan and mistrustful that truth no longer matters? Can we not understand that these deliberate misinformation campaigns are designed to cause us to lose faith in all institutions? What happens when we no longer trust anyone?

Is it too late to stand up for the values that we once held dear? I cannot believe that lies and misinformation, that authoritarians who divide us, and that fairness and justice no longer matter.

What has happened to us?

Tom Campbell is a Hall of Fame North Carolina broadcaster and columnist who has covered North Carolina public policy issues since 1965. Contact him at tomcamp@carolinabroadcasting.com.

Your Turn

Tom Campbell

## Guest columnist

Copyright, 2024, The Star, All Rights Reserved.

#### • Citation (aglc Style)

'All NC voters should 'be prepared'', *Star, The* (online), 20 Oct 2024 A5 <a href="https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19C533DC2C392AC0">https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19C533DC2C392AC0</a>



# FEMA talks facts vs fiction - How to get assistance in Cleveland County

October 20, 2024 | Star, The (Shelby, NC) Author: Rebecca Sitzes; Shelby Star | Section: News | 913 Words Page: A1 OpenURL Link

The Cleveland County Chamber of Commerce held a luncheon Wednesday focused on sharing information and facts about disaster recovery after Hurricane Helene to combat the spread of misinformation.

The FEMA Disaster Recovery Fact vs Fiction was held at the Earl Scruggs Center, and a panel of people representing various sectors - from Duke Energy and FEMA to county emergency management and Allstate insurance - were present to answer questions and share useful information to aid in recovery efforts.

Courtney Ashley, executive director of the Cleveland County Economic Development Partnership, shared numbers related to relief efforts both locally and further afield. She said following the hurricane, the county used the job-ready shell building on Randolph Road to store donations from FEMA and the community. Some of those donations went to residents of Cleveland County and others were sent to locations around Western North Carolina. Ashley said as of Tuesday, they had given out water and Meals Ready to Eat from FEMA and donations of paper towels to more than 1,000 people in the county. They also sent out 51 shipments to other parts of the state and had over 260 volunteers pitch in to help.

"We've seen an incredible amount of support," she said. "We rallied together immediately ... and we saw that in every inch of the county."

She said a total of 19 community organizations from big industries to small businesses jump in to help.

Jeff Ross, market strategist with Atrium Health, spoke about the response from the health care system.

He said Atrium deployed MED-1, a mobile hospital and the only one of its kind in the world.

"No one else has it except Atrium," Ross said.

Everything that can be found in a hospital, from beds, to labs and X-rays, are contained in the mobile hospital.

He said MED-1 set up near Lake Lure to treat people. Atrium also worked with North Carolina Disaster Relief and sent out a step down clinic and partnered with Samaritan's Purse and sent 10 providers out by Blackhawks. He said they were set down in the middle of Asheville and had to trek through water and go door to door to see if people had healthcare needs.

In Cleveland County, he spoke about how they partnered with the health department to provide a shelter for people who were on oxygen and had no power.

One of the highlights of the session was a presentation by representatives of FEMA.

Gail Adams, with FEMA, said not only is she passionate about what she does, but it is personal because she lived through Hurricane Katrina and lost everything she owned.

"Business, home, you name it," she said. "I'm really hoping the people of North Carolina will use my story and others and know that there is hope, and there is life after you think you've lost it all."

Adams had all the attendees stand and declare themselves ambassadors.

She said there have been many rumors and disinformation being spread about FEMA that are not true and getting the right information out is vital to assist with individual recovery and the recovery of communities.

"It's literally life or death," she said.

Adams recommended going to credible sources for information and sending other people to credible sources, including FEMA.gov.

"It is critical during this time because this is not a short game," she said. "This is a long game, and the community and the individuals in the community will need you long term."

She said rumors that FEMA has run out of money are not true, and Congress has appropriated funds to FEMA. She said the agency has not set a limit of \$750, but assistance depends on various factors. She said rumors that FEMA will be leaving North Carolina to go to Florida are also false.

"Right now there are least 1,200 of us in the state of North Carolina and probably more on the way," she said.

Recently, she said 12 additional counties in the state have been added to the disaster declaration and are eligible for FEMA individual assistance.

She said FEMA releases daily fact sheets on how many FEMA employees are in the state, where to find disaster recovery centers and more.

Adams said she encourages people to apply for assistance because it opens the door to other benefits and resources.

"If you don't apply, we cannot assist," she said.

During the question and answer session, Adams was asked to describe what FEMA can and can't do.

"FEMA is not going to make anyone whole," she said. "What we can do is, we can come in and bridge the gaps when there is a disaster."

She said the agency can help with immediate needs. They can provide transitional and temporary housing, help with obtaining medication, reimbursements for the loss of food and other items and connect people to other resources.

They also will hire local people who may have lost their jobs to do work in the community to help restore it.

Adams said turnaround time to receive assistance can vary depending on how quickly people submit all the needed information, but response times are quick because they realize that people need help now.

Disaster assistance teams will also go out into the community to help people fill out applications before the Nov. 27 deadline.

Shirley Rivera, with FEMA, said starting Thursday in Casar, FEMA teams would be going door to door to assist people and will be moving across different towns in the county. Kingstown will also have a fixed location beginning Monday that will help Cleveland County residents apply for assistance and answer questions.

For more information, visit FEMA.gov.

Reach reporter Rebecca Sitzes at rsitzes@gannett.com.

Copyright, 2024, The Star, All Rights Reserved.

# • Citation (aglc Style)

Rebecca Sitzes, Shelby Star, 'FEMA talks facts vs fiction - How to get assistance in Cleveland County', *Star, The* (online), 20 Oct 2024 A1 <a href="https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19C533DC596C4530">https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19C533DC596C4530</a>



# Opinion: Voters should be prepared for misinformation, disruption and violence

October 20, 2024 | StarNews (Wilmington, NC) Author: Tom Campbell | Section: Opinion | 855 Words OpenURL Link

The County Compass is a tabloid-sized weekly publication distributed free to Pamlico, Beaufort, Craven, Jones and Carteret Counties. It claims to offer "360 degrees of thorough and honest news coverage – furnished FREE to thousands of loyal readers every week." The truth is that it is about 90 percent ads, and any editorial content is so far to the right as to make Atilla the Hun look liberal.

The issue for September 12-16 caught our attention. On page 15 and bleeding over to page 16 is a big article for the "2nd Amendment Patriots of North Carolina." We assume it was a paid ad; however, it is not identified as such.

There is a slug in a box within the message showing the County Compass logo. The group further identifies itself with the Pamlico County GOP, and the ad was published within the Pamlico GOP website.

In a big bold box heading the ad is the slogan "If you want peace, prepare for war."

The message attempts to connect the modern-day group to colonial militiamen, reminding readers that men between 16 and 60 were required to train regularly. It urges gunowners to stock up on ammo, get to the range and practice, claiming that protecting freedom is their job today.

Unwritten, but implied, is the message that if this election doesn't turn out right, with Trump winning, there will be violence and bloodshed.

In 2023, the Southern Poverty Law Center identified 50 hate and anti-government groups in our state. Twelve have a statewide footprint. But there is only one legal militia in North Carolina – The North Carolina National Guard.

More from Tom Campbell: Opinion: Let's stop the steal in NC, but not the Trump way

"Be prepared" appears to be a common theme of these groups. All North Carolinians would be well advised to heed this warning.

The misinformation campaign since Hurricane Helene struck our state has grown to such proportions that federal officials have joined Governor Roy Cooper and leaders from both political parties in warning people not to listen to the lies. Trump has been the genesis of many of the lies about disaster response. Marjorie Taylor Greene is posting garbage saying the National Weather Service and meteorologists can control the weather. Because of malicious and fallacious social media posts, federal officials who are trying to help have received threats in at least two counties.

Already we see attempts trying to discredit and disrupt our elections. The state GOP filed a lawsuit trying to get 225,000 registered voters thrown off the rolls. Another lawsuit from them claims the state is not canceling the voting registration of persons who refuse to serve on a jury because they aren't a citizen. The State Board of Elections vehemently denies this claim. Republicans are challenging absentee ballots that aren't sealed in the proper envelope...there are two envelopes enclosed with the ballot. They are also challenging ballots of overseas voters born in our state but who aren't living in our state. And the most preposterous of their claims is that Helene was merely an attempt to steal the election.

Some of the polling places in the western part of the state no longer exist and the State Board of Elections is doing all it can to ensure western voters are able to cast their ballots. It could only benefit Republicans if they helped instead of trying to disrupt. A close look at voting trends shows these western counties are almost solid red Republican.

And we need to be prepared for interference in polling places.

We're told outcomes might be learned later than election night this year to assure votes are accurately reported. It might take a week before the final presidential outcome is known. Our State Board of Elections has implemented rigorous procedures to ensure votes are recorded and tallied accurately, however they are also preparing for a barrage of expected challenges.

More from Tom Campbell: OPINION: The NC Republican Party needs to do a better job vetting candidates

Donald Trump has intimated that if he doesn't win there might be bedlam. In an April Time magazine article, Trump, when asked about possible violence said, "If we don't win, you know, it depends." In another interview he said, "If everything's honest, I'll gladly accept the results. If it's not, you have to fight for the right of the country."

Trump has never thought any election he was involved in was honest. He's never accepted the results. Not with Hilary Clinton. Not with Joe Biden. And he won't with Kamala Harris. He is still claiming the 2020 contest was rigged.

Are we so gullible, so partisan and mistrustful that truth no longer matters? Can we not understand that these deliberate misinformation campaigns are designed to cause us to lose faith in all institutions? What happens when we no longer trust anyone?

Is it too late to stand up for the values that we once held dear? I cannot believe that lies and misinformation, that authoritarians who divide us, and that fairness and justice no longer matter.

What has happened to us?

Tom Campbell is a Hall of Fame North Carolina broadcaster and columnist who has covered North Carolina public policy issues since 1965. Contact him at tomcamp@carolinabroadcasting.com.

Copyright, 2024, StarNews, All Rights Reserved.

#### • Citation (aglc Style)

Tom Campbell, 'Opinion: Voters should be prepared for misinformation, disruption and violence', *StarNews* (online), 20 Oct 2024 <a href="https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19C56368B635A3C8">https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19C56368B635A3C8</a>



#### **HUB OF HOPE**

October 20, 2024 | Statesville Record & Landmark (NC) Author: Staff Writer | Section: Mapping | 789 Words OpenURL Link

I never lost power during Hurricane Helene .

When friends and family called me about the hurricane, I had to tell them I was extremely lucky.

The storm was bad. A lot of North Carolinians lost family and friends, their home, their cherished belongings, their pets. Some saw their real estate literally washed away.

But I can't claim any of those stories.

I've tried to imagine the terror of seeing a wall of water crashing toward me, sweeping away my home and neighbors, pets, virtually everything I own.

Being a near miss — or even a far miss — leaves its mark. Last week a Facebooker from Louisiana said she understood. She lived through Katrina, and could relate to the relief of being spared, but, at the same time, the overwhelming feeling of anxiety, numbness and profound sadness.

That's how it is with trauma. It takes diff erent forms, and in one way or another, we've all been traumatized by being so close to destruction. In the end, I don't know why we were spared and why the folks west of here were not.

Perhaps TV's Mister Rogers responded best when he explained disasters in a way kids could understand. When there are scary things in the news, he said, "Look for the helpers. You will always find people who are helping."

In the wake of Helene, ordinary people dropped everything to come to North Carolina's rescue. Men and women, young and old, helped turn Hickory into a hub of hope. Private pilots, many of them ex-military, arrived with their helicopters to make air drops to hard-hit areas. Community members rallied to organize places to bring necessary supplies and cash to support the eff ort. On my way to the collection point in the parking lot of Appalachian State University in Hickory, I found myself behind a horse trailer and a fl at bed. On the fl atbed was a generator and power tools. In the trailer were cases of bottled water, packages of diapers, toilet paper and more. Obviously, he was on a relief mission. Had I not been caught by a traffic light I would have given the driver a thumbs up.

Surely Helene will be one of those calamities by which we mark time.

Two days after Helene's wretched visit, I opened my T-shirt drawer to see, neatly folded, my shirt from Lake Lure. I remember the day I bought it. Cousin Renee was visiting from Illinois and wanted to see where "The Last of the Mohicans" was filmed. She's a Daniel Day-Lewis fan and wanted to tour the famous waterfall.

We enjoyed a sandwich lunch, poked around the Lake Lure Inn, and browsed the gift shop.

Later, we took the boat ride of the lake with its narration of how the lake was formed in Hickory Nut Gorge into a place where "summer" is a verb. The Morse family, who founded Carolina Mountain Power Company, paid to build a dam on the Broad River to create the lake back in 1927.

Our boat captain indulged us in movie lore, too, including spots used to shoot "Dirty Dancing," the film that made stars of Patrick Swayze and Jennifer Grey. We drifted past Firefly Cove and the stone steps where Jennifer Grey practiced her dance steps in cutoff shorts.

It's not that I have spent that much time at Lake Lure, but I've made enough visits to envy those who have. It had cottagey surroundings, stunning views, and laid-back ambiance. It was a place lost in time, a poignant reminder of a time and place that's been erased. Lake Lure sprouted up as a

My first visit to Lake Lure was about 30 years ago, when I attended a conference at the Inn. I remember imagining how the hotel would have appeared during the Gatsby era. In fact, Gatsby's cre-ator, F. Scott Fitzgerald, and wife Zelda stayed there back in the day.

A recent attraction was the Flowering Bridge. When it became known that the state would decommission the 1925 bridge, a group of citizens with green thumbs urged the structure to be saved and used as a garden space. They called it the Flowering Bridge. They say it attracted as many as 18,000 visitors a year.

Two years ago, the garden was expanded for pet owners and their furry friends to snatch a chewable from the Doggie Stick Library and enjoy a drink of water. Pet owners, wracked in grief, would visit the Rainbow Bridge, and pay tribute to departed pets, placing collars on the bannisters. People came from far and wide to memorialize pets that had passed on.

No one could imagine that a monster storm could churn its way northward and demolish the Flower Bridge, much less Lake Lure itself.

Tammy Wilson is a writer who lives near Newton. Contact her at tym50@bellsouth.net

© Copyright 2024, Statesville Record & Landmark, Statesville, NC

#### • Citation (aglc Style)

Staff Writer, 'HUB OF HOPE', *Statesville Record & Landmark* (online), 20 Oct 2024 <a href="https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19C5404FA673DF40">https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19C5404FA673DF40</a>



# Which roads remain closed in Western North Carolina?

October 20, 2024 | Times-News, The (Hendersonville, NC) Author: Maia Pandey and Joyce Orlando; USA TODAY NETWORK Section: News | 667 Words Page: A15 OpenURL Link

Western North Carolina roads are slowly reopening following the devastation from Tropical Storm Helene, but several major thoroughfares remain closed, including Interstate 40.

So far, the North Carolina Department of Transportation has estimated that damages will total up to several billion dollars, state Transportation Secretary Joey Hopkins said in a Monday news release. NCDOT has also identified nearly 7,000 sites where roads and bridges are damaged, and a large swath of WNC roads remain limited to essential travel only.

"The damage to our roads and bridges is like nothing we've ever seen after any storm, and this will be a long-term recovery operation," Hopkins said.

Here's the latest on road closures across WNC, including the I-40 reconstruction.

When will I-40 reopen?

Flooding from Tropical Storm Helene collapsed nearly the entire shoulder of parts of I-40, the third-longest interstate highway in the country.

The highway has been closed between exit 20 in North Carolina and exit 432 in Tennessee due to storm damage. However, as of Monday, the county has reopened sections of I-40 near Old Fort and in downtown Asheville.

NCDOT says the estimated repair time for I-40 is "currently unknown," though it seems early 2025 is the earliest the interstate highway will be fully reopen. On Monday, the agency announced it had signed a \$10 million contract with Wright Brothers Construction with incentives to stabilize I-40's westbound lanes to open to some traffic by Jan. 4.

The interstate's proximity to Pigeon River in Tennessee has made repairs especially challenging, NCDOT officials told the Citizen Times. The agency is currently working with Tennessee transportation officials and the Federal Highway Administration on a long-term reconstruction plan for I-40.

Alternate routes around I-40

Interstate 81 offers a bypass to I-40. Those in the northwest section of Western North Carolina, can look for a safe route to I-81 into Tennessee, which connects with Interstate 77 and provides an alternate route to other areas in North Carolina. If you're traveling from Tennessee to North Carolina, you can head north on I-81 and connect into Interstate 26, which provides an alternate route to Asheville and other areas of the state.

Those in the Southwest part of the state can still travel on part of Interstate 26, but sections of the road may be closed. People can also seek out safe routes to Interstate 85 and then head northbound to the Charlotte area.

Those south of Hendersonville can take U.S. 74 ALT to U.S. 74 East toward Shelby and then connect with I-85 to Charlotte and other points North and East.

U.S. 64 to U.S. 74 ALT just north of Hendersonville is impassable at this time due to landslides. The road is also impassable between U.S. 74 ALT and Slick Rock Road, according to NCDOT.

Which other highways are closed in Western North Carolina?

As of Thursday, NCDOT had reported more than 600 road closures due to Helene damage, with at least 100 of them on on interstates, and state and federal highways.

Along with I-40, road closures are in effect on U.S. Highways 64 and 19, as well as North Carolina Highways 215, 226 and 197. I-26 and I-40 are also closed along the North Carolina and Tennessee border, with travel between the states "extremely limited," especially for trucks longer than 30 feet, according to NCDOT.

Most of WNC remains limited to essential travel only. If you must travel, the agency warns people to plan for excessive traffic delays as emergency response teams are operating throughout the area.

Current Hurricane Helene road closure map

You can follow storm-related road closures at drivenc.gov.

There may be closed roads not listed on DriveNC.gov as many areas are not able to report at this time, according to NCDOT.

Which roads have reopened in Western North Carolina?

Though some highway stretches will remain shuttered for months, NCDOT has reopened at least 600 roads across WNC since Helene exited the state, the agency said.

As of Monday, reopened roads include I-26 in Henderson and Polk counties; U.S. Highways 221, 321 and 421 in the Boone area; and U.S. Highways 70 and 25 in Asheville.

Steve Howe contributed to this report.

Copyright 2024 Times-News, The (Hendersonville, NC), All Rights Reserved.

#### • Citation (aglc Style)

Maia Pandey and Joyce Orlando, USA TODAY NETWORK, 'Which roads remain closed in Western North Carolina?', *Times-News, The* (online), 20 Oct 2024 A15 <a href="https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?">https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?</a> p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19C53424F3075EA8>



# WNC fall color still shines - No tourists after Helene this year

October 20, 2024 | Times-News, The (Hendersonville, NC) Author: Angela Wilhelm; Asheville Citizen Times | Section: News | 132 Words Page: A1 OpenURL Link

ASHEVILLE – While fall color is hitting its peak in Western North Carolina this week, there are only a fraction of the millions of tourists - if any - who visit each year to witness nature's spectacular foliage display. In the wake of Tropical Storm Helene, which smashed into the WNC mountains and river valleys Sept. 27, washing away homes, vehicles, whole towns and dozens of lives, N.C. Gov. Roy Cooper has encouraged visitors to stay away. The region is a federal natural disaster zone and will take months, and in some areas, years to recover. But leaves are still turning. For more photos visit citizentimes.com.

Copyright 2024 Times-News, The (Hendersonville, NC), All Rights Reserved.

#### • Citation (aglc Style)

Angela Wilhelm, Asheville Citizen Times, 'WNC fall color still shines - No tourists after Helene this year', *Times-News, The* (online), 20 Oct 2024 A1 <a href="https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19C53425026CC210">https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19C53425026CC210</a>



# Homeowners beware - Avoid contractor fraud, charity scams after weather disasters

October 20, 2024 | Times-News, The (Hendersonville, NC) Author: Jade Jackson; USA TODAY NETWORK | Section: RealEstate | 921 Words Page: D4 OpenURL Link

ASHEVILLE, N.C. – Every year, hurricanes, tornadoes and other major weather events leave millions of Americans struggling to recover and rebuild their lives. Unfortunately, these events also provide an opening for dishonest contractors and scammers looking to take advantage of homeowners.

Ryan Cody with the North Carolina Licensing Board for General Contractors said that during times of disaster, unlicensed contractors from all over the country will go seeking "recovery money."

"And oftentimes they don't deliver on the services promised," Cody said. "They just take the money and leave. People have already been victimized by the storm and then these fraudulent contractors take advantage of hurricane victims. So, be wary of people coming door to door."

He reminds North Carolinians any project totaling over \$40,000 from Tropical Storm Helene's damage requires a licensed North Carolina general contractor, who comes with approval from their board for being certified in working on projects with the promise of continued education and renewing their license annually.

"Never pay a big deposit up front," Cody said. "Always have a written contract. I wouldn't pay anything until they have a certificate of compliance. Make sure all changes are in writing."

Chaddrick Francis owns Francis Crawlspace & Foundation Repairs LLC and said one common scam he's seeing is people pretending to offer charity work for disaster victims.

"They're offering to help or say they're going to help," Francis said. "But then they turn around and ask for money. Another red flag is contractors who keep changing the work or the change order and wanting to charge you more for it. Make sure those change forms are effective and a customer signs those papers before a change is made. I talk to my customers before I change anything."

His crawl space and foundation repair business specializes in waterproofing and structural repairs. Since Tropical Storm Helene hit, he said requests and inquiries have been more hectic with a lot of people worried about scams.

How to avoid getting scammed

According to the Legal Aid of North Carolina, you should ask for an official ID from anyone claiming to be from the government, power company or insurance company.

You can verify any contractor by name and license on the N.C. Licensing Board for General Contractors website. Cody said a license number can also be found on a contract written up by a contractor.

Contact your insurance company first if your property has been damaged by a disaster. Some insurance companies require the adjuster's approval before work can be done.

Shop around and compare estimates for any major repairs and know that legitimate contractors will provide written estimates for home repairs.

Avoid sharing personal information, such as Social Security or bank account numbers, with anyone who contacts you first.

If someone contacts you claiming to be from a government agency or organization, look up the number for that organization online and call to verify that the person is really an employee.

Remember that you should not be asked to pay to file any disaster assistance applications.

Other things to keep in mind:

Beware of contractors who knock on your door offering services because they noticed your home is damaged or are already working in your area. This is a common tactic of scam artists.

FEMA does not approve, endorse, certify, or recommend any contractors, individuals, or firms.

Do not hire a contractor who does not have a physical address or refuses to show ID.

Use a contractor who is backed by reliable references. The most reputable contractors have liability insurance, workers' compensation and are bonded.

Perform a quick Google search before hiring any contractor. Do they have a website? Have they scammed previous clients? Read any reviews.

Get a copy of your contract in writing from the contractor that includes the work to be done and, ideally, a completion date.

Always check credentials.

You may wish to request a copy of your contractor's Certificate of Insurance before they begin work, to ensure that the contractor is legitimate and that you will be covered if the contractor causes any damage to your home.

"We also have a complaint and investigations division for anybody that feels a contractor has scammed them," Cody said. "You can also check with your local permit and inspection office to find out if a building permit has been obtained by a contractor."

Be cautious about paying contractors before they begin work. If possible, wait until the work is finished and you are satisfied. Reputable contractors generally do not expect customers to pay the entire price upfront.

Pay contractors by credit card if you can, so you can request a chargeback from your credit card company if they fail to do the work or if the work is unsatisfactory.

If you can't pay with a credit card, pay by check or get a written receipt from the contractor to keep a paper trail proving your payments.

"There may be times when a contractor has to make a change," Cody said. "It might be a situation where you want something, but the building code says you have to do it certain way. I would just make sure that a contractor is giving clear communication about any changes."

Cody understands that people want to make repairs as quickly as possible, but he cautions against rushing a project. He wants people to do their due diligence to ensure they're not being scammed or duped.

"People's homes are ruined," Francis said. "There's a lot of vultures out there that come during these times. Even licensed people, but make sure at the very least they do have some credibility."

Jade Jackson is a public safety reporter for IndyStar assisting The Citizen-Times, Asheville with Hurricane Helene coverage.

# getty images

Copyright 2024 Times-News, The (Hendersonville, NC), All Rights Reserved.

# • Citation (aglc Style)

Jade Jackson, USA TODAY NETWORK, 'Homeowners beware - Avoid contractor fraud, charity scams after weather disasters', *Times-News, The* (online), 20 Oct 2024 D4 <a href="https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?">https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?</a> p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19C53424C7DEFBF0>



# elections 2024 - Early voting brings in a steady crowd opening day

October 20, 2024 | Times-News, The (Hendersonville, NC) Author: Deirdra Funcheon; Hendersonville Times-News | Section: News | 708 Words Page: A1 OpenURL Link

HENDERSONVILLE – Outside the Henderson County Board of Elections office on the first day of early voting Oct. 17, 76-year-old Mattie Decker was dressed for crisp fall weather in a vest and scarf. She wiped tears away as she recounted driving to the polling site three weeks after Tropical Storm Helene devastated Western North Carolina when it landed Sept. 27.

"The road I came on, half of it's gone," Decker said.

It was her first day venturing out from the hard-hit area of Bat Cave in 21 days. She'd lost a friend whose house was caught in a landslide. Many of her neighbors had been airlifted out of the mountains. She'd just gotten power restored to her home. Voting was so important to her, "I wasn't going to miss it," she said.

A Doctor of Education who teaches forest therapy, Decker felt the storm was a wake-up call to take action against climate change and so, had voted for Democrats. "They care about other people, and they're not just about themselves and their 401(K)s," she said.

A steady stream of voters strode into the building, passing by candidates' signs stuck in parking lot medians and volunteers passing out flyers. Occasionally, a burst of clapping and bells rang out from inside the precinct, indicating that someone was voting for their first time.

Voters expressed support for both Republican and Democratic candidates, many saying they'd been motivated by the presidential race.

Eugene Mosesi, 83, said he supported Donald Trump and his running mate, J.D. Vance. "I want to make this country great again, that's all it boils down to." Mosesi felt the Republican candidates would be better on border security and the economy. "They're going to build a wall, first of all, all right? And they're probably going to deport a lot of people who are here illegally."

Giordani Acu, 73, who immigrated to the U.S. from the Philippines in 1979 — legally, he emphasized — said the election was "a question of whether we keep our Constitution or lose it, whether we keep democracy or not." He referenced a Supreme Court ruling, which found that that Donald Trump has immunity from criminal prosecution for official presidential acts.

"He's not the king," Acu said. He felt it was important to keep Democrats in Congress to counteract the Republican Party, which he likened to a cult.

Linda Koos, 78, was at a table volunteering to help Republicans. "I believe in Trump, and I trust him a lot more than Kamala [Harris]," she said. She called Harris a socialist, citing her support for universal healthcare and a proposal to help people with \$25,000 downpayments on homes.

"I just believe in supporting people's rights and the freedom of religion and the freedom to count all the votes and not try to make some of them illegal when they're not," Ann Twiggs of Hendersonville, said. "I want to vote for women's rights in their own bodies."

Candidates get face time at polling sites

Monica Gillett, 46, wearing a cozy hat and Prada sunglasses, flashed a white smile at passersby. A lawyer for 17 years, she is running for district court judge, a position that she said could adjudicate all types of cases from speeding tickets to custody battles across Henderson, Polk and Transylvania counties.

"I felt like it was time for me to do this, make this move in my career," she said. "I prayed about it and felt very confident that it's where God was leading me to go," she said.

Nearby, Mary Ellen Kustin, a United Way employee, explained why she was gunning for a School Board seat. "I'm running as a Democrat because I believe in fully funded schools and paying our teachers and setting our kids up for success."

Lynne Williams, 42, an eighth-generation local, said she was running unaffiliated with any party for Hendersonville City Council to preserve the character of the community. "I want to bring the community together," she said.

Of those asked, few people felt there was much chance of persuading Democrats or Republicans to change their minds or come together. Decker said "I think love is very large ... We have to really draw a larger circle around our world and include. That's what nature does."

Deirdra Funcheon is the Henderson County Reporter for the Hendersonville Times-News. Email her at DFuncheon@gannett.com.

Copyright 2024 Times-News, The (Hendersonville, NC), All Rights Reserved.

#### • Citation (aglc Style)

Deirdra Funcheon, Hendersonville Times-News, 'elections 2024 - Early voting brings in a steady crowd opening day', *Times-News, The* (online), 20 Oct 2024 A1 <a href="https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?">https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?</a> p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19C534250098B9A8>



# How to apply for aid through FEMA and check your application's status

October 20, 2024 | Times-News, The (Hendersonville, NC) Author: Perry Vandell; USA TODAY NETWORK | Section: News | 536 Words Page: A3 OpenURL Link

Millions of people on the East Coast are still sorting out their next steps as they continue reeling from the catastrophic damage inflicted by hurricanes Helene and Milton.

While plenty of questions remain regarding what the future holds and when impacted areas can expect a return to normalcy, there are at least some resources when it comes to determining where and when one can expect to receive aid from the Federal Emergency Management Agency.

Those living in a presidentially declared disaster area can be eligible to receive financial assistance through the agency, though it should be noted that not everyone may qualify for every assistance program FEMA has to offer.

How do I know if I am eligible for aid?

FEMA's website features an address-lookup tool that allows one to check if they're eligible to receive financial aid based on their area. The site also has a form users can fill out to see what other types of assistance programs they might be eligible for based on their unique situation.

How do I apply for aid through FEMA?

Those seeking assistance from FEMA can apply for aid by filling out an online application through DisasterAssistance.gov, or through the FEMA smartphone app. People can also apply by phone at 1-800-621-3362 or visit a Disaster Recovery Center, or DRC, in-person, the locations of which can found on FEMA's website.

What information will I need to provide when applying for aid?

According to FEMA's website, applicants will be asked to provide the following information:

Your Social Security number.

Insurance information.

A description of the damage caused.

Your annual household income.

Contact information.

Bank account information for direct deposit.

How can I check the status of my application?

Those who've already applied for assistance and are waiting to hear back can check the status of their application by logging onto their account at DisasterAssistance.gov if they created an account and click the "Check Status" button.

One can also check the status of their application by calling 1-800-621-3362 or visiting a DRC in-person.

What other types of services can FEMA provide?

FEMA offers tax relief to those eligible in federally declared disaster areas, which can come in various forms such as a tax-filing extension or expedited refund.

Disaster Legal Services, or DLS, provide free legal help to low-income individuals in a federally declared disaster area so long as the case won't generate a fee, as such cases are turned over to a local lawyer referral service.

Examples of cases that DLS might assist one with include:

Insurance claims for doctor and hospital bills, loss of property or loss of life.

New wills, powers of attorney and other legal documents lost in the disaster.

Home repair contracts and contractors.

Problems with landlords.

What if I need help but the disaster my area experienced wasn't federally declared one?

According to FEMA's website, the president typically bases their decision on whether to federally declare a natural disaster based on whether state and local governments are capable of providing enough help to disaster survivors on their own.

If federal assistance isn't available in one's area, FEMA recommends people check if the American Red Cross serves your community and what support they might provide along with your state's social services program.

Copyright 2024 Times-News, The (Hendersonville, NC), All Rights Reserved.

## • Citation (aglc Style)

Perry Vandell, USA TODAY NETWORK, 'How to apply for aid through FEMA and check your application's status', *Times-News, The* (online), 20 Oct 2024 A3 <a href="https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?">https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?</a>
p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19C53424CB8D2740>



# All NC voters should 'be prepared'

October 20, 2024 | Times-News, The (Hendersonville, NC)

Section: News | 829 Words

Page: A5
OpenURL Link

The County Compass is a tabloid-sized weekly publication distributed free to Pamlico, Beaufort, Craven, Jones and Carteret Counties. It claims to offer "360 degrees of thorough and honest news coverage – furnished FREE to thousands of loyal readers every week." The truth is that it is about 90 percent ads, and any editorial content is so far to the right as to make Atilla the Hun look liberal.

The issue for September 12-16 caught our attention. On page 15 and bleeding over to page 16 is a big article for the "2nd Amendment Patriots of North Carolina." We assume it was a paid ad; however, it is not identified as such.

There is a slug in a box within the message showing the County Compass logo. The group further identifies itself with the Pamlico County GOP, and the ad was published within the Pamlico GOP website.

In a big bold box heading the ad is the slogan "If you want peace, prepare for war."

The message attempts to connect the modern-day group to colonial militiamen, reminding readers that men between 16 and 60 were required to train regularly. It urges gunowners to stock up on ammo, get to the range and practice, claiming that protecting freedom is their job today.

Unwritten, but implied, is the message that if this election doesn't turn out right, with Trump winning, there will be violence and bloodshed.

In 2023, the Southern Poverty Law Center identified 50 hate and anti-government groups in our state. Twelve have a statewide footprint. But there is only one legal militia in North Carolina – The North Carolina National Guard.

"Be prepared" appears to be a common theme of these groups. All North Carolinians would be well advised to heed this warning.

The misinformation campaign since Hurricane Helene struck our state has grown to such proportions that federal officials have joined Governor Roy Cooper and leaders from both political parties in warning people not to listen to the lies. Trump has been the genesis of many of the lies about disaster response. Marjorie Taylor Greene is posting garbage saying the National Weather Service and meteorologists can control the weather. Because of malicious and fallacious social media posts, federal officials who are trying to help have received threats in at least two counties.

Already we see attempts trying to discredit and disrupt our elections. The state GOP filed a lawsuit trying to get 225,000 registered voters thrown off the rolls. Another lawsuit from them claims the state is not canceling the voting registration of persons who refuse to serve on a jury because they aren't a citizen. The State Board of Elections vehemently denies this claim. Republicans are challenging absentee ballots that aren't sealed in the proper envelope...there are two envelopes enclosed with the ballot. They are also challenging ballots of overseas voters born in our state but who aren't living in our state. And the most preposterous of their claims is that Helene was merely an attempt to steal the election.

Some of the polling places in the western part of the state no longer exist and the State Board of Elections is doing all it can to ensure western voters are able to cast their ballots. It could only benefit Republicans if they helped instead of trying to disrupt. A close look at voting trends shows these western counties are almost solid red Republican. And we need to be prepared for interference in polling places.

We're told outcomes might be learned later than election night this year to assure votes are accurately reported. It might take a week before the final presidential outcome is known. Our State Board of Elections has implemented rigorous procedures to ensure votes are recorded and tallied accurately, however they are also preparing for a barrage of expected challenges.

Donald Trump has intimated that if he doesn't win there might be bedlam. In an April Time magazine article, Trump, when asked about possible violence said, "If we don't win, you know, it depends." In another interview he said, "If everything's honest, I'll gladly accept the results. If it's not, you have to fight for the right of the country."

Trump has never thought any election he was involved in was honest. He's never accepted the results. Not with Hilary Clinton. Not with Joe Biden. And he won't with Kamala Harris. He is still claiming the 2020 contest was rigged.

Are we so gullible, so partisan and mistrustful that truth no longer matters? Can we not understand that these deliberate misinformation campaigns are designed to cause us to lose faith in all institutions? What happens when we no longer trust anyone?

Is it too late to stand up for the values that we once held dear? I cannot believe that lies and misinformation, that authoritarians who divide us, and that fairness and justice no longer matter.

What has happened to us?

Tom Campbell is a Hall of Fame North Carolina broadcaster and columnist who has covered North Carolina public policy issues since 1965. Contact him at tomcamp@carolinabroadcasting.com.

Tar Heel Voices

Tom Campbell

## Guest columnist

Copyright 2024 Times-News, The (Hendersonville, NC), All Rights Reserved.

#### • Citation (aglc Style)

'All NC voters should 'be prepared'', *Times-News, The* (online), 20 Oct 2024 A5 <a href="https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19C53424AB5D6CD8">https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19C53424AB5D6CD8</a>



# Volleyball standouts - 23 WNC players to watch in playoffs

October 20, 2024 | Times-News, The (Hendersonville, NC) Author: Evan Gerike and Zachary Huber; Asheville Citizen Times Section: Sports 808 Words Page: B1 OpenURL Link

After nearly a month-long pause in the wake of Tropical Storm Helene, volleyball has returned to the court in Western North Carolina shortly before the arrival of the playoffs. WNC will have many teams competing for a state title, including Polk County and Brevard, who are the defending champs at the 1A and 2A levels, respectively. Many players who led those runs last season are back this year and on this watchlist. Here are 23 players to watch during the 2024 NCHSAA playoffs that begin Tuesday. Ella Alexander **Fnka** Setter | Senior Alexander led the Sugar Jets in kills, aces and assists last season. Enka won five of its first six games and was ranked No. 9 in Western North Carolina before the season was paused. Morgan Baldridge **Brevard** Setter | Junior Baldridge leads the Mountain Foothills 7 Conference in assists with 453 while contributing 104 digs, 94 kills, 58 aces and 25 blocks. Claire Barlow Robbinsville Middle hitter | Senior Barlow has recorded career highs in nearly every statistical category this season with 291 kills, 32 aces, 62 blocks and 214 digs. Mia Bradley

**Polk County** 

Outside hitter | Senior

Bradley leads the Mountain Foothills 7 in kills with 196 while adding 240 digs, 32 aces and 21 blocks.

Emma Bryson

West Henderson
Middle blocker   Senior
The Georgia commit has led West Henderson to an impressive 19-2 record. Bryson leads the Mountain 7 in kills (248), hitting percentage (.517) and blocks (51).
Liz Carpenter
Robbinsville
Outside hitter   Senior
Carpenter led the Smoky Mountain Conference with 266 digs in the regular season and finished tied for first with 56 aces. She was also third with 223 kills.
Mallory Corbett
Reynolds
Setter   Sophomore
Corbett has recorded 168 assists to lead Reynolds while adding 101 digs, 19 aces and 20 kills.
Holland Corbin
West Henderson
Setter   Junior
Corbin has paced the Falcons' offense, recording 597 assists, 144 digs, 39 kills, 20 aces and 11 blocks.
Alexis Davis
Cherokee
Middle blocker   Senior
Davis followed up last season's 1A All-State selection with 198 kills, 41 aces and 29 blocks, all of which were top five in the Smoky Mountain Conference, and 121 digs.
Ryan Green
Franklin
Middle hitter   Senior
Franklin needed someone to step up offensively after outside hitter Cali Queen suffered a season-ending injury early in the 2024 season. Green has filled the void, tallying 216 kills, 45 digs, 38 blocks and 17 aces.
Tika Hamel

Asheville High

Middle blocker | Senior Hamel's 28 blocks and .328 hitting percentage pace the Cougars, while her 109 kills are second on the team. The junior also has 27 aces and 28 digs in 20 matches. Karlie Henning Roberson Outside hitter | Senior Henning led the Rams in nearly every statistical category last season and has racked up more than 30 kills in multiple games this year, helping Roberson win their first seven games in conference play. Hayley Hooks Reynolds Outside hitter | Sophomore Hooks' 135 kills are tops for the Rockets, and she's second on the team with 113 digs. She also has 16 aces through 18 matches. Mable James Pisgah Middle blocker | Senior James accumulated 212 kills, 55 blocks, 38 digs and 21 aces. She has helped Pisgah achieve a 7-4 mark in Mountain 7 Conference play. Haleigh Kamer Asheville Christian Academy Outside hitter | Senior Kamer has led the Lions to an undefeated season so far. She has tallied 155 assists, 149 kills, 65 digs, 35 aces and 21 blocks. Kaley Parker Swain County Setter | Senior Parker is leading the Smoky Mountain Conference with 528 assists. She also has 50 aces on 94.8% serving and has accumulated 97 digs and 30 kills. Tristan Powell

Rosman

Libero   Junior
Powell leads the Tigers with 28 aces and 128 digs through 15 matches as Rosman searches for its sixth-straight season above .500.
Kenzie Robinson
Owen
Setter   Sophomore
Robinson recorded 208 assists in 13 games, the fourth-best total in the Western Highlands Conference. She also recorded 49 kills, 15 aces, 10 blocks and 110 digs.
Mia Roland
Owen
Outside hitter   Sophomore
In her second season, Roland led the Warhorses with 113 kills and 186 digs over 13 matches. She added 20 blocks and 18 aces.
Rosalie Sharp
Asheville High
Outside hitter   Junior
Sharp has recorded 208 kills, 46 aces, 154 digs and 18 assists in 20 matches, all among the top three on the Cougars. She also has 13 blocks.
Joscelyn Stamper
Cherokee
Middle hitter   Sophomore
Stamper has been a force for the Braves and leads the conference with 320 kills and 56 aces. She is top five with 56 blocks and 178 digs.
Claire Wilson
Brevard
Outside hitter   Senior
Wilson has racked up 161 kills, 171 digs, 38 aces and 19 blocks.
Morgan Yoder
Polk County

### Middle blocker | Senior

Yoder is vital if Polk County wants to defend last season's NCHSAA 1A state championship. She has recorded 159 kills with a .436 hitting percentage, 165 digs, 48 blocks and 40 aces.

Evan Gerike is the high school sports reporter for the Asheville Citizen Times. Email him at egerike@citizentimes.com or follow him on X, formerly Twitter, @EvanGerike. Zachary Huber is a high school sports reporter for the Asheville Citizen Times and Hendersonville Times-News. Email him at zhuber@gannett.com or follow him on X @zacharyahuber.

Copyright 2024 Times-News, The (Hendersonville, NC), All Rights Reserved.

## • Citation (aglc Style)

Evan Gerike and Zachary Huber, Asheville Citizen Times, 'Volleyball standouts - 23 WNC players to watch in playoffs', *Times-News, The* (online), 20 Oct 2024 B1 <a href="https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?">https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?</a>
p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19C53424B923AB98>



# Pennsylvania governor opens playbook for Harris - Onetime contender to be her running mate shares keys to must-win swing state

October 20, 2024 | Times-News, The (Hendersonville, NC) Author: Francesca Chambers; USA TODAY | Section: News | 2558 Words Page: A10 OpenURL Link

PHILADELPHIA – The crowd was electric. Its roar intoxicating. It was almost as if Pennsylvania Gov. Josh Shapiro had not been passed over by Vice President Kamala Harris to join her ticket hours earlier.

Shapiro stepped up to the microphone, donning his signature campaign uniform – a navy blue blazer with an American flag pin on its lapel, crisp white button down sans tie and black dress sneakers. He delivered one of the fieriest speeches of his career and pledged to work his tail off to elect Harris.

Harris is a friend of two decades, he said. A former state attorney general like him, she's courtroom tough, he added, and ready to face former Republican President Donald Trump.

"Let me tell you something. I ain't going back. I am not going back. I am not. And neither do you want to go back," Shapiro shouted at a fevered crowd as it repeated the line that has become Harris' unofficial campaign slogan.

He sounded like a presidential candidate.

Shapiro had sealed the deal on his ascent to governor in the same auditorium, Temple University's Liacouras Center, two years earlier during a joint appearance between President Joe Biden and former President Barack Obama.

He would go on to trounce his election-denying opponent, Republican Doug Mastriano, by nearly 15 points. He won north of 3million votes in that election, more than any gubernatorial candidate in Pennsylvania history.

To notch the victory, Shapiro rewrote the Democratic Party's playbook in the battleground state that has decided the past two presidential elections. He won over rural voters in staunchly Republican areas and defeated his opponent in swing counties that Biden lost in 2020, a year that Shapiro was also on the ballot seeking reelection to attorney general.

Democrats are hoping Shapiro, 51, can make lightning strike again. This time for Harris, who desperately needs a victory in Pennsylvania to win the November election. Harris' campaign is relying on Shapiro to help her run up the score in his home state, and elsewhere, with malcontent moderates, exasperated suburban women and rebellious Republicans.

Her honeymoon period over and the white working-class voters who were the backbone of the Biden coalition up for grabs, Harris has been struggling to convince skeptical independents to give her centrist economic vision and populist tax policy a chance.

"He needs to help her speak to industrial Pennsylvania," said former Republican Rep. Charlie Dent, a Biden backer who endorsed Shapiro for governor but is on the fence about voting for Harris.

Shapiro has made a reputation for himself as someone who's willing to compromise to get stuff done. He brokered a deal as a Pennsylvania state representative that put a Republican in charge as speaker of the House. He blew the lid off the Catholic priest sexual abuse scandal as attorney general and forcefully defended Pennsylvania after Trump made false claims about his electoral loss to Biden.

Shapiro spoke with humanity after a gunman injured Trump and killed one of his supporters at a rally in Butler, calling the family of Corey Comperatore before he delivered public remarks.

A family man. A person of faith. A hard worker. "He communicates extremely well. He radiates leadership ability, comes off as a confident, but not ridiculously conceited, but an intelligent guy who knows his stuff," said former Pennsylvania Gov. Ed Rendell. "He's almost the picture perfect candidate."

Almost.

Shapiro was young and ambitious, and he was going places. But his strong connection to his Jewish identity and how it informed his views on Israel became prominent issues in the competition to become Harris' running mate.

There was also his support for school vouchers, a draw for some Republicans but an impediment for progressives.

Shapiro would not be well-suited for the vice presidency, his detractors contended. Harris went a different way. Shapiro would be free to forge his own political course. It ran through Pennsylvania.

Pennsylvania becomes the national bellwether

For decades, Ohio had been the nation's bellwether. Now, it was up to the Keystone State. Trump won Pennsylvania in a 2016 upset; four years later, the manufacturing-heavy state elected Biden.

"I'm feeling the stress of the whole system being on us, constantly getting calls," Rose Huber, 50, an IT professional and school board officer from Upper Moreland Township in Montgomery County, said during a Shapiro-headlined Harris campaign event.

Like many of the states that make up the Rust Belt, Pennsylvania has been experiencing a demographic shift: its major cities deep blue, its rural areas ruby red, its population less white and its northeastern communities increasingly Hispanic.

From the western suburbs of Pittsburgh came the brash senator, John Fetterman; from the eastern suburbs of Philadelphia, the more polished governor, Shapiro.

Shapiro was born in Kansas City, Missouri, but the family quickly moved to Montgomery County in Pennsylvania. He would remain there until he left for college, attending the University of Rochester in New York. He returned to the area after a stint working at the Israeli embassy and in a handful of congressional offices in Washington, D.C.

Soon, he was on the ballot, rising quickly in his party. He went from the Pennsylvania legislature to the Montgomery County government to the attorney general's office to the governor's mansion within two decades.

He has a knack for working across the aisle. "He's into job creation, doing serious economic development, working with the business community, while being socially moderate and sensible," said Dent, the former GOP congressman from Allentown.

Shapiro said he achieved the victories by practicing the kind of politics that brings people together.

"The way you win in Pennsylvania is putting in the hard work, clearly articulating your views and your values," he said.

Along the way, he made a powerful ally. He endorsed Obama in 2007 during the then-Illinois senator's presidential primary fight with Hillary Clinton.

Obama later appointed Shapiro to a task force that helped shape federal health care reform legislation. Obama provided a rare primary endorsement to Shapiro during his attorney general bid.

"He has always been one of the president's top people in Pennsylvania that we relied on for counsel and guidance over the years," said Eric Schultz, a senior Obama adviser.

Shapiro's speaking style and mannerism have drawn comparisons to Obama's. Trump running mate JD Vance mocked it as a "bad impression" of the former president.

If the two sound alike at times, it's because Shapiro regularly spends his Sundays in pews of the Black church, says his close friend Marshall Mitchell, pastor of Salem Baptist Church in Abington.

Shapiro is white and Jewish. He wears glasses and slicks back his hair. But like Obama, he has a distinct ability to work up a crowd.

"He's super charismatic," said Caroline Bradley, 46, a marketing consultant from Malvern who quit the Republican Party in 2016 and is volunteering for Harris.

In the final days of Shapiro's 2022 campaign for governor, Obama showed up in Pennsylvania with Biden. It was their only joint appearance that election cycle. The former president said Shapiro "had my back." The current one called Shapiro courageous.

Shapiro had outperformed him two years earlier to become the highest vote getter in Pennsylvania. He did better than Biden in Trump-won Beaver County, to the west of Pittsburgh, and conservative Cambria, east of the city and home to Johnstown.

He beat his opponent in Luzerne. Biden lost the county, where Wilkes-Barre is located, by more than 22,000 votes.

Shapiro was initially a Harris supporter, but the former California AG quit the Democratic primary in 2019 before any votes were cast. He eventually endorsed Biden, a native of Scranton.

When it was time for reelection, Biden put Shapiro on his surrogate list.

A week before Biden dropped out, Shapiro made his way with Harris through a maze of merchants at the Reading Terminal Market, a mainstay of downtown Philadelphia.

Placing her hand on his shoulder, Harris said the Pennsylvania governor "has been a great partner to the president and me." She invited Shapiro to address reporters.

"She's an outstanding vice president," he said. "I couldn't be more proud to support the Biden-Harris ticket."

A deeply personal decision for Harris - and for Shapiro

Biden was out. Harris was in. Shapiro's name was immediately floated as a potential VP pick.

The former prosecutors had met nearly 20 years prior when they were selected for the same class of fellows in a bipartisan leadership program. She was the San Francisco district attorney; he was a fresh-faced state representative.

"We immediately bonded," Shapiro said in an interview.

They read books and talked about leadership. "We traveled all around the country, in an opportunity to both forge alliances and more understanding with one another and to strengthen our leadership skills," he said.

As they rose through the ranks in their respective states, Shapiro said, "We maintained a close relationship."

Their careers intersected again. It seemed Shapiro could become Harris' running mate. His friends campaigned publicly for him.

But his refusal to call for a cease-fire, criticisms of young, pro-Palestinian protesters and the pressure he put on a Pennsylvania Ivy League university to break up a student encampment worked against him at a time of sharp division within the Democratic Party over the war in the Middle East.

Harris' other potential running mates were supportive of Israel. Yet, the focus was on Shapiro. It veered into territory that some deemed antisemitic.

Old complaints recirculated, too. He was an unpopular choice in certain progressive circles. His support for school vouchers ruffled teachers unions and members of the labor community. Concerns about the way he handled a sexual harassment allegation involving a former staffer also resurfaced.

Fetterman had bad blood with Shapiro over clashes they'd had on the state's parole board. (Fetterman favored commutations; Shapiro voted more often for denials). The senator made sure Harris' team knew.

The selection process had solidified Shapiro's status as a star. But it had also turned him into a target. The criticisms persisted as Shapiro settled into his new role as one of the party's most eligible future candidates for higher office.

He's out for himself, and he's disloyal, two Democrats who'd known him for more than a decade told USA TODAY. They brought up his decision in 2011 to run against his former mentor for office. They also made Harris' vetting team aware of their reservations.

"Everybody has pros and cons. You have a record, and some people are happy with it, and some people aren't," said Philadelphia Democratic Party Chairman Bob Brady, a friend of Shapiro's who pushed for him to become Harris' running mate. "He would have been a great choice, would have done a great job."

Shapiro repeatedly described it as a "deeply personal decision" for Harris and for himself. A source familiar said Shapiro had reservations about leaving Pennsylvania that he conveyed to Harris' team.

He declined in an interview to speak about his private conversations with Harris. "We had a really good and honest dialogue," he said, "and I think she made an outstanding pick in Tim Walz."

Two sources familiar with the conversation that took place put it in starker terms: It was evident from Shapiro's vetting interview that it would be a bad match. Shapiro tried to negotiate a policy portfolio for himself, and there were fears inside Harris' camp he would be more focused as vice president on furthering his own political ambitions than supporting hers.

Shapiro has main character energy, his allies acknowledged. Walz was a better fit for Harris.

"I thought he was the obvious choice, but she obviously went in a different direction," Dent said of Shapiro. "Shapiro was a better number one guy than a number two, and I think his personality would be better suited for the top spot."

Shapiro's friends argue that it may have worked out better that he wasn't on the ticket. He could direct all his attention to Pennsylvania, help Harris win the state and mount a bid in four to eight years on his own record of accomplishments.

"Now he's in the unusual place where the presidency must roll through Pennsylvania, and he is in a place with his numbers, where he can help to deliver it for her," Mitchell said.

The center of the political universe

Shapiro's motto is "GSD." He wins elections and gets (expletive) done for his state, he says. He dusted off his winning playbook to show Harris how.

He played the role of adviser, telling Harris not to ignore rural counties, where she could cut into Trump's margins.

"This may be the only thing that Kamala Harris and Donald Trump agree on – is that you've got to win Pennsylvania," Shapiro said.

Harris took his advice. She went to Beaver County on a bus tour on the eve of the Democratic National Convention. She visited Johnstown and Wilkes-Barre during a September swing.

She understands the importance of showing up in rural areas and parts of the state that are often overlooked, Shapiro said of her visits to Trump-won counties and towns outside of Pittsburgh.

Harris has not been able to spend much time in the state over the past three weeks. It has been up to Shapiro and Harris' other surrogates to run up the score.

"The set of states that will determine this race is limited, and with Pennsylvania at the top of that list, I don't believe we have a bigger asset to winning that state than Josh Shapiro," said Schultz, the Obama adviser.

Over the summer, Shapiro campaigned for her in Carlisle in Cumberland County – an area of central Pennsylvania near Harrisburg that he lost in 2020 but won handily in 2022. On Oct.10, Shapiro spoke at an Obama-headlined rally in support of Harris in Pittsburgh.

The vice president's last trip to Pennsylvania was Sept.25. She was set to join Walz on a bus tour in early October of central Pennsylvania but canceled her appearance as the administration grappled with the fallout of Hurricane Helene. Walz went without her.

Harris made her first visit to Erie, a bellwether county in the northwest corner of the state, on Oct.14. It was her 10th visit to Pennsylvania since her campaign launch.

Her strategy carries risks. Philadelphia and its four collar counties accounted for more than 40% of Biden's votes in Pennsylvania four years ago. She has not been to the area since mid-September.

Polls show a statistical tie in Pennsylvania, which Trump won by roughly 44,000 votes in 2016. Biden won by more than 80,000 votes in 2020.

Trump has been dragging Harris as an out-of-touch, California liberal as he tries to win back the working-class voters he lost four years ago.

Harris does significantly better than Trump in polling on abortion rights. But the former Republican president scores higher on the economy and immigration. The two issues ranked highest as voting issues in Pennsylvania, according to a recent USA TODAY/Suffolk University poll.

The more that Harris talks about her economic policies, including her plans to help small businesses and cap child care costs, the better she will fare, Shapiro said.

"As the days continue to go by in this campaign, more and more people hear about her plans, and frankly, the lack of any sort of coherent plan from Donald Trump, they'll see that there is a clear contrast here, and they're going to do better under Kamala Harris," he added.

He held up his own record of tax-cutting as a model for Harris' economic platform.

More popular than Taylor Swift

Shapiro's approval rating in Pennsylvania is higher than Harris'. Or Trump's. He's even better liked than Taylor Swift, who was born in Reading.

In a USA TODAY/Suffolk University poll taken in mid-September, just after the presidential debate, Harris had a 49% approval rating in Pennsylvania. Trump was at 43%. Shapiro was the most liked politician at 57%.

Copyright 2024 Times-News, The (Hendersonville, NC), All Rights Reserved.

### • Citation (aglc Style)

Francesca Chambers, USA TODAY, 'Pennsylvania governor opens playbook for Harris - Onetime contender to be her running mate shares keys to must-win swing state', *Times-News, The* (online), 20 Oct 2024 A10 <a href="https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19C53424A621FA68">https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19C53424A621FA68</a>



## Ohio hay convoy supplies Watauga County farmers

October 20, 2024 | Watauga Democrat, The (Boone, NC) Author: Luke Barber luke.barber@wataugademocrat.com| Section: Local | 814 Words OpenURL Link

WATAUGA – After driving eight hours leading a convoy of more than 50 tractor-trailers of hay to Watauga County, it didn't take Kelton Keller but a minute to hop from his truck and begin unloading the hay for local farmers recovering from Hurricane Helene.

The convoy set off from Keller Farms near Litchfield, Ohio, at 2 a.m. on Tuesday, Oct. 15, before finally arriving in Watauga County around 2:30 p.m. According to Alyssa Keller, wife of Kelton Keller, the immense support from Ohio farmers started with a simple social media post.

"Last time something like this happened, there were some fires out in Colorado. He and a buddy loaded up some trucks and trailers and took some hay out there. When this happened here, he said let's try it again but make a Facebook post and see who would be interested in helping, and it exploded," Alyssa Keller said.

In about a week, the post had garnered the support of farmers across Ohio. While some included friends and family members of the Kellers, the vast majority were strangers who simply wanted to help in whatever way they could.

In addition to square bales, round bales and small bales, the donations that flowed in for the ag community on Tuesday also included feed for horses, chickens, goats and other farm animals, and dry goods, tarps, baby supplies, posts and barbed wire fencing, and dozens upon dozens of donated goods.

"It's a significant amount, and we hope it helps a lot of people," Keller said.

Keller said they first heard about the first-hand effects of Hurricane Helene from a family friend who was from the Boone area. A couple of phone calls later, they were able to contact Wine to Water and other community members.

She added that helping one's fellow neighbors is simply a matter of putting oneself in another person's shoes after seeing everything they've worked for suddenly vanish.

"There was a dairy farm in southern Ohio where their milk parlor caught fire," Keller said. "So my husband was part of a bunch of people who were able to haul out close to 1,500 milk cows that needed to be dispersed to different farms throughout Ohio and West Virginia. In the agriculture community, if someone needs something, they're going. They don't want anything back. They just want to help."

Watauga Extension Director Jim Hamilton estimated that the donated hay will last many livestock farmers through the month of December. Fortunately, work continues to ensure farmers do not go without. Nevertheless, Hamilton said the ongoing effort remains significant.

"We were looking for locations to store hay. We had hay coming in from different sources across the state. When we first heard this was coming in, we heard 25 trucks, then 40, then it got over 50. That's when logistical planning had to come into play," Hamilton said.

The ag extension began providing hay distribution to local farmers on Thursday, Oct. 17. The distributions, affectionately known as "Hay Days," are held every Tuesday and Thursday from 1 to 6 p.m. Farmers must call ahead of time to make reservations to pick up.

On Thursday, Hamilton said 30 to 40 local farmers showed up to pick up the hay delivered from Ohio and expects most of it will be claimed within the next week or so. He described the efforts thus far as a "good start."

"It was an enormous response from the ag community across the state and really from east of the Mississippi. There are also other warehouse spaces in western NC where hay will continue to be brought to, and we will coordinate with those larger places when the need arises," Hamilton said. "We've been blessed with an enormous outpouring of support from other farmers who recognize how dire the situation is."

Kendra Phipps, livestock agent with the Watauga County Agricultural Extension, said the immediate needs for livestock producers in the county after the hurricane hit were fencing and containing animals. She added that hay will continue to be a priority as winter sets in.

"Hay is going to be a need, probably through February and maybe even into March. There are people that have lost 300 to 500 bails of hay. Everything they were going to feed their cattle with this winter is gone," Phipps said.

As work continues to keep livestock farmers supplied throughout the winter, Phipps said recovery will be a long, sustained effort.

"These donations are coming from farmers across the country and across the state. They're not pity donations. They're agricultural community donations — farmers helping farmers. And I truly believe in my heart that if something like this happened anywhere else, we would be the ones helping. I know it's true because during the wildfires in Texas, we sent hay from North Carolina to Texas. That's just what we do. We help each other," Phipps said.

Call the Watauga County ag center's hay hotline at (828) 319-2543 to make a reservation to pick up hay.

 $\hbox{@2024 Watauga Democrat -}\ Mountain\ Times\ Publications,\ All\ rights\ reserved.$ 

### • Citation (aglc Style)

Luke Barber luke.barber@wataugademocrat.com, 'Ohio hay convoy supplies Watauga County farmers', *Watauga Democrat, The* (online), 20 Oct 2024 <a href="https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?">https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?</a>
p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19C555F652A5AE80>



Paying the price - Helene and Milton are both likely to be \$50 billion disasters, joining ranks of most costly storms - Monstrous hurricanes Helene and Milton caused so much complex havoc that damages are still being added up, but experts in economics, insurance and risk say they are likely to be in the pantheon of super-costly \$50 billion disasters

October 20, 2024 | Winston-Salem Journal (NC)

Author: SETH BORENSTEIN Associated Press | Section: B | 1289 Words

Page: 1 OpenURL Link

Monstrous hurricanes Helene and Milton caused so much complex havoc that damages are still being added up, but government and private experts say they will likely join the infamous ranks of Katrina, Sandy and Harvey as super costly \$50-billion-plus killers.

Making that even more painful is that most of the damage - 95% or more in Helene's case - was not insured, putting victims in a deeper financial hole.

Storm deaths have been dropping over time, although Helene was an exception. But even adjusted for inflation, damages from intense storms are skyrocketing because people are building in harm's way, rebuilding costs are rising faster than inflation, and human-caused climate change are making storms stronger and wetter, experts in different fields said.

"Today's storms, today's events are simply vastly different from yesterday's events. One of the things that we're seeing is the energy content that these systems can retain is significantly greater than it used to be," said John Dickson, president of Aon Edge Insurance Agency, which specializes in flood coverage. "The weather seems to be, in many cases, moving faster than we as a society are able to keep pace with it."

In the last 45 years, and adjusted for inflation, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration has counted 396 weather disasters that caused at least \$1 billion in damage. Sixty-three of those were hurricanes or tropical storms.

The \$50 billion mark for direct losses is a threshold that differentiates "truly historic events," said Adam Smith, the economist and meteorologist who runs the list out of NOAA's National Center for Environmental Information in Helene-hit Asheville, North Carolina.

Only eight hurricanes reached that threshold. Smith said he thought Milton and Helene have "a very good shot" of joining that list.

The first \$50 billion hurricane was Andrew in 1992. The U.S. went 13 more years before Katrina topped the damages chart, then seven years until the third costly whopper, Sandy. Helene and Milton would make seven in the last seven years.

Calculating damages is far from an exact science. The more complex and nastier storms are - like Milton and Helene - the longer it takes, Smith said. Damage is spread over different places and often a much larger area, with wind damage in some places and flood damage elsewhere. Helene, in particular, caused widespread flooding and in places not used to it. Estimates for those storms from private firms in recent days vary and are incomplete.

There's three categories of damage: insured damage, uninsured damage and total economic cost. Many risk and insurance firms only estimate insured losses.

Homeowner insurance usually covers wind damage, but not flood. Special insurance has to be bought for that. Flood insurance coverage rates vary by region and storms differ on whether they cause more wind or water

damage. Helene was mostly water damage, which is less likely to be covered, while Milton had a good chunk of wind damage.

Of the top 10 costliest hurricanes as compiled by insurance giant Swiss Re - not including Helene or Milton yet - insured damage is about 44% of total costs.

But with Helene, Aon's Dickson estimated that only 5% of victims had insurance coverage for the type of damage they got. He estimated \$10 billion in insured damage so doing the math would put total damage in the \$100 billion to \$200 billion range, which he called a bit high but in the ballpark. Insured losses for Milton are in the \$50 billion to \$60 billion range, he said.

With Helene, Swiss Re said less than 2% of Georgia households have federal flood insurance, with North Carolina and South Carolina at 3% and 9%. In North Carolina's Buncombe County, where more than 57 people died from Helene's flooding, less than 1% of the homes are covered by federal flood insurance, the agency said.

Risk modeling by Moody's, the financial services conglomerate, put a combined two-storm total damage estimate of \$20 billion to \$34 billion.

Karen Clark and Company, a disaster modeling firm that uses computer simulations superimposed on storm and insurance data, wouldn't give total damage estimates for the storms. But the company figured insured losses alone were \$36 billion for Milton and \$6.4 billion for Helene.

"The economic losses are going up because we're putting more infrastructure and housing in harm's way," said University of South Carolina's Susan Cutter, co-director of the Hazards Vulnerability and Resilience Institute, who added that climate change also plays a role. "Human losses and deaths are going down because people are being a little bit more vigilant about paying attention to preparedness and getting out of harm's way."

Much of the damage is because of flooding. Studies show that hurricanes are getting wetter because of the buildup of heat-trapping gases from the burning of coal, oil and gas. Basic physics dictates that clouds hold 4% more moisture for every degree Fahrenheit, and that falls as rain.

"There is scientific agreement that floods and flooding from these hurricanes is becoming more frequent and more severe. So it is likely that we're going to be seeing a higher frequency of storms like Helene in the future," said Karen Clark, who founded her namesake firm. "It's not really an insurance issue because it's not privately insured. This is really a societal issue and political question. How do we want to deal with this?"

Clark and several of the experts said it's time for society to think about where it builds, where it lives and if it should just leave dangerous areas and not rebuild, a concept called "managed retreat."

"At what point do you as an individual continue to build, rebuild, rebuild and rebuild versus saying 'OK, I've had enough'," Cutter said.

And when it comes to flood insurance, many homeowners in risky areas find it's too expensive, so they don't buy it, Clark said. But when a storm hits them, she said "all of us as taxpayers, we're going to pay it because we know there are going to be federal dollars coming into those areas to help people rebuild. So all taxpayers, we're actually paying for people to live in risky areas."

© Copyright 2024, Winston-Salem Journal, Winston-Salem, NC

## • Citation (aglc Style)

SETH BORENSTEIN; Associated Press, 'Paying the price Helene and Milton are both likely to be \$50 billion disasters, joining ranks of most costly storms Monstrous hurricanes Helene and Milton caused so much complex havoc that damages are still being added up, but experts in economics, insurance and risk say they are likely to be in the pantheon of super-costly \$50 billion disasters', *Winston-Salem Journal* (online), 20 Oct 2024 1 <a href="https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?">https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?</a> p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19C5334DB7B92300>



# Many schools still closed weeks after hurricane - Many schools are still closed weeks after Hurricane Helene. Teachers worry about long-term impact

October 20, 2024 | Winston-Salem Journal (NC)
Author: JOCELYN GECKER, MORIAH BALINGIT and MICHAEL MELIA Associated Press | Section: A | 1235 Words
Page: 9
OpenURL Link

Tens of thousands of students in the Southeast are dealing with school disruptions after Hurricane Helene wreaked havoc so severe - on homes, campuses and municipal power and water systems - that some districts have no idea when they will reopen.

While virtual learning helped during the COVID-19 school closures, that has not been an option for this crisis because internet and cellphone service has remained spotty since the storm struck in late September. In hard-hit western North Carolina, some districts warn students will miss up to a month of school, and others say they can't yet determine a timeline for returning to classrooms.

"I feel like a month is a lot, but it's not something that can't be overcome," said Marissa Coleman, who has sent her four children to stay with grandparents in Texas because their home in North Carolina's Buncombe County has no running water. "But if we get further into Thanksgiving and Christmas, it's like, how are they actually going to make this up?"

In mountainous Buncombe County, Helene swept away homes, cut power and destroyed crucial parts of the water system for Asheville, a city of about 94,000 people. The storm decimated remote towns and killed at least 246 people throughout the Appalachians, where massive cleanup efforts have been complicated by washed-out bridges and roads. It was the deadliest hurricane to hit the U.S. mainland since Katrina in 2005.

The Buncombe County School system, which serves over 22,000 students, told families Tuesday on the district's Facebook page no decision has been made "with regards to start date or length of day" because of a need to repair buildings, restore phone and security systems and redraw bus routes.

Even when schools reopen, educators worry the disruption could have profound effects on students' learning and emotional well-being.

Children who experience natural disasters are more prone to acute illness and symptoms of depression and anxiety, research shows. The physical and mental health impacts put them at greater risk of learning loss: Absences can undermine achievement, as can the effects of trauma on brain function.

The challenges come amid growing concerns about the impact of climate change on students. Wildfires have swept through communities, displacing families. Many school systems with inadequate heating or air conditioning have closed during extreme weather or forced students and educators to endure sweltering or frigid temperatures. According to the World Bank, 400 million children lost school days because of "climate-related closures" in 2022.

Days after Helene made landfall, Hurricane Milton roared ashore farther south along the same Florida coast as a Category 3 storm. While about half the state's districts were closed, all of them said they were planning to reopen by the end of this week.

Schools affected by Helene are trying to provide stability. The Buncombe district has suggested parents trade books with neighbors and friends for their kids. "Have them write, maybe about something they're looking forward to when school starts again," the district told parents on social media. "Turn everyday experiences into math problems."

Cécile Wight, a mother of two in Asheville, said she has been grateful for concern shown by schools, including surveys checking on families' well-being and an elementary school bus driver who took his own car to visit each child on his route.

"That has been huge, just having the emotional support from the school system and from the people we know at the school," she said.

But uncertainty remains. Wight said her family is able to stay at their home because they have well water, but many other families have yet to return since evacuating. Most of Buncombe's 45 schools still lacked running water as of Tuesday, meaning they're unable to meet basic safety and hygiene standards.

Schools have have begun exploring whether it would be possible to open without running water, relying on portable bathroom trailers. In a letter to families, Asheville Superintendent Maggie Furman said the district is considering drilling wells at each school so they don't have to rely on city water.

Coleman said her kids are eager for some kind of normalcy.

"I understand the schools are going to have to take some time to find a way to open safely, and I support that 100%. But I definitely am not in the camp of 'We need to wait until we get water back, until everything's normal again to open.' I just think that's going to be too long," Coleman said.

The Tennessee Department of Education is still trying to determine how many schools remain closed since Hurricane Helene and how many took too much damage to reopen.

Echoing the COVID-19 pandemic, several schools in Tennessee have postponed traditions like homecoming games, parades and dances. Many colleges are also granting extensions on application deadlines, officials say, to reduce high school seniors' stress.

In storm-drenched areas elsewhere, some early education providers may never reopen.

Private child care and preschool centers are particularly vulnerable in the aftermath of a natural disaster, said Militza Mezquita, senior advisor for education in emergencies at Save the Children. Many already operate on thin margins, meaning a temporary closure can easily turn permanent. As for-profit companies, they are also ineligible for many types of disaster aid. A natural disaster can wipe out 10% to 20% of providers, Mezquita said.

"Child care recovery is very critical to the whole recovery ecosystem," Mezquita said, noting the people essential to recovery - road workers, cleanup crews, doctors and nurses - often have young children that need to be looked after. "If they are not able to adequately get their children in care, they can't go to work."

Despite the instability, educators like Heather Smith, who was named North Carolina's Teacher of the Year in the spring, encourage families to see the lessons storms can provide. Smith brought along her two children, ages 8 and 4, to serve meals at her church.

"Our kids are learning so much every day, whether it's about adversity, whether it's about helping a community," said Smith, who rode out the storm at her home in Waynesville.

Similarly, Wight has been taking her children to volunteer for relief efforts at a school. She said it has helped them feel active and involved in the community.

"If COVID taught us something, it's that we can make things work. The kids are resilient," Wight said. "They will eventually catch up on the academic side of things."

 ${\small @}$  Copyright 2024, Winston-Salem Journal, Winston-Salem, NC

(online), 20 Oct 2024 9 <a href="https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?">https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?</a> p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19C5334DDD081D18>							