

Locals organize efforts to help Western NC

October 10, 2024 | Enterprise, The (Martin County, NC) Author: John Foley | Section: Local | 483 Words OpenURL Link

Efforts have been mounting across the state and locally to provide necessary essentials to citizens in western North Carolina devastated by Hurricane Helene.

Those efforts are now underway in Martin County and two separate individuals are organizing them.

Shaw's BBQ owner Gary Manning is organizing a food caravan for the folks in Asheville and western North Carolina, which is leaving Sunday. Manning plans on setting up early Monday morning and begin feeding people by 10:30 a.m. Manning also wants to provide food for home.

"We've partnered with Gashes Creek Baptist Church in Asheville to provide lunch and meals for those in need in the Asheville Community. The need is like never seen before in that area and we want to contribute in any way we can. Our plan is to serve lunch and pass out take home meals on Monday, Oct. 14," said Manning.

Manning made the connection with Gashes Creek Baptist Church through a friend from his masonry business days that attends the church.

While Manning is organizing this effort on his own, there are ways residents can help other residents in need.

Manning is accepting monetary donations and is also looking for assistance in serving.

"If you want to travel up and help to pass out meals, we would love for you to come along with us. Just reach out to us and let someone here at Shaw's know of your intent and if you will be providing your own transportation or if you would like to ride with us," encouraged Manning.

Manning is also accepting perishable donations such as meat, cabbage and hamburger buns. Manning makes his own coleslaw and is particular about the ingredients, hence his need for cabbage.

The chef is also encouraging anyone that would like to add to the amount of food they will be carrying can donate as well.

Currently a box has been provided at Shaw's for cash donations. All funds collected this week will be used to buy products to bring west.

Manning has also reached out to local suppliers who have agreed to donate items and discounted prices in support of Shaw's BBQ efforts.

"Pray for our safe travels and most of all continue to pray for our neighbors to the west that have suffered so much," said Manning.

Those interested in helping or donating can call Shaw's and ask to speak to Gary in regards to any details.

Williamston resident David Richmond is also organizing an event in downtown Williamston focused on entertainment and donations.

Music for the Mountains will be an effort to collect winter items for the needy. The event is scheduled for 10 a.m. until 10 p.m. on Saturday, Oct. 26. Plans are still underway, and Richmond is planning a lineup of entertainment.

The event is scheduled at Walter Whitfield's park and the Community Stage. Food trucks will be available from noon throughout the day. Donations will be accepted all day. Richmond is looking for new winter clothes, jackets, socks, boots and gloves.

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• Citation (aglc Style)

John Foley, 'Locals organize efforts to help Western NC', *Enterprise, The* (online), 10 Oct 2024 https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19C1EF3C679262E8



After Helene, 'everyone is here to pitch in'

October 10, 2024 | Fayetteville Observer, The (NC) Author: Hayden Dunbar; Knoxville News Sentinel | Section: News | 1001 Words Page: A2 OpenURL Link

ELK MILLS, Tenn. - The Sugar Hollow General Store and Café — which locals in Elk Mills, Tennessee, still call its former name, the Elk Mills General Store — has become a hub of activity in Carter County following floods caused by Hurricane Helene.

Before, it was a gathering spot for Tennessee residents of Bob's Island, Poga and Elk Mills to pick up odds and ends, whether that be food or household products. Local resident Kelley Carter called it "the center of the community."

Now, the store is more like a base for collecting and distributing supplies that have become necessary since the Sept.27 flooding. Surrounding the store are trailers of canned goods, camp stoves, medical supplies, baby products, camp stoves, gas, propane, and food for pets and livestock. The site also is equipped with shower trailers, hot meals and Starlink internet.

The National Guard, using Black Hawk helicopters, has regularly dropped supplies outside the store, near where the Elk Mills-Poga Volunteer Fire Department used to stand before being destroyed by flooding.

Parts of the area are best reached with an ATV or UTV, unless you're willing to travel on long, out-of-the-way routes. Most families are still without power in these communities.

In Carter County, eight cell towers were destroyed, and about 14 bridges were lost. Although there were no flood-related deaths in the county, more than 650 homes in Carter County had been assessed and declared damaged by flooding caused by Hurricane Helene.

It's not just local volunteers. People from nearby areas, distant Tennessee cities — even from as far away as Florida, Kentucky and Virginia — have made their way to the store to offer help, said Carter, who is helping to coordinate volunteer efforts.

Volunteers first arrived Sept.27, and some people have returned day after day to lend a hand.

"We've all come together as one, no matter where we're from or financial situation or anything, everyone is here to pitch in," Carter said. "In this day and time, people are so caught up in their own lives. But when something like this happens, it hits their heartstrings and they just really want to help."

Carter County Mayor Patty Woodby, who grew up in the area, traveled on Black Hawk helicopter drops and helped guide the National Guard to what she calls the communities' "nooks and crannies." She knows her people are resilient and has been reminded "just how resourceful our mountain people are."

"As long as we're getting supplies in there, they will be very resourceful," she said. "I'm super proud of Carter County. ... I really think this is gonna bring our community closer."

Mike Rice lives nearby and works remotely for Microsoft. He was essential in providing the area with Starlink internet access, which residents have relied on for communication. Rice collected six of the Starlinks that have been used in these communities and drove them down from the Washington, D.C., area, he said.

It's not just the closest communities that are receiving support from the general store base.

"We're trying to reach everybody we can reach. Doesn't matter what county you're in," said Doug Carter, Kelley's husband, who's also helping coordinate volunteer efforts.

Some volunteers have formed their own teams, leaving together from the general store on ATVs and UTVs, the primary mode of transportation in the area for both residents and those who have traveled there to help.

Chris Wiley said he and Austin Droit came from Illinois to Carter County after seeing the extent of damage on Twitter and TikTok. They met Rogersville natives Melanie Range and her 12-year-old daughter, Kynzlee Tester, at Walmart while buying supplies to donate.

The group of four combined forces with Dallas Townsend, of Jonesborough, along with his dog Lady May. Kyle Mahoney, of Oliver Springs, also joined the group after striking up a conversation at the local Tractor Supply.

"Everybody's pitched in and bought stuff," Townsend said.

They departed the general store Oct.4 on a mission to find a man in Beech Mountain, North Carolina, who needed supplies, particularly for his wounded hand. The group had only the name of his street to go on.

Dark Ridge Road, about a 30-minute UTV drive from the general store, has been damaged by flooding. There are several houses, and the crew drove by each one to look for the wounded man.

They heard he had children, which made a wood-sided home with kids' toys in the yard a strong contender. But when Mahoney knocked on the door, no one answered.

It wasn't until the convoy knocked on the door of a house up the road that they confirmed their original suspicions. The wood-sided house was the right one, but the man wasn't home, likely having traveled to a nearby community center for a hot meal.

Townsend and Droit drove the UTVs back, and the crew deposited supplies on the doorstep, including a camp stove, propane, food, paper products, socks, wound care items, backpacks and plush stuffed animals for the children.

Back in Tennessee, Mahoney reflected on the day. "You'll never get everything everywhere. We're just doing our best."

More than a week into relief efforts, people in hard-to-reach areas had received many of the supplies they needed. Some things, such as food and fuel, will need to be restocked. But the urgency has started to dissipate.

As of Oct.5, some supplies that are no longer needed were slated to be sent from the general store to Bristol Motor Speedway in Bristol, Tennessee. The speedway is the Northeast Tennessee Disaster Relief Center, a designation coordinated alongside TEMA.

Fire chief Mike Walsh is proud of the self-reliance of his community, from beginning operations at the general store base to rebuilding roads. He's also grateful for volunteers who have traveled in to offer help, but he believes it's time for a new phase of recovery to begin.

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• Citation (aglc Style)

Hayden Dunbar, Knoxville News Sentinel, 'After Helene, 'everyone is here to pitch in'', *Fayetteville Observer, The* (online), 10 Oct 2024 A2 https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19C1EACE8B025818>



Fla. fields price gouging reports ahead of Milton - High prices for fuel, water, lodging reported

October 10, 2024 | Fayetteville Observer, The (NC) Author: Ana Goñi-Lessan; Tallahassee Democrat | Section: News | 463 Words Page: A1 OpenURL Link

TALLAHASSEE, Fla. – Florida Attorney General Ashley Moody received more than 200 complaints about price gouging as many thousands of Floridians prepared to evacuate for Hurricane Milton.

As of Monday, most complaints were about the price of fuel and water, said Moody's spokesperson Kylie Mason. The top three counties for complaints were Highlands, Hillsborough and Pinellas. There were also scattered instances involving overnight accommodations, including one Airbnb listing of a "room in Tallahassee" for nearly \$6,000 a night.

"Our team already reached out to our (Airbnb) corporate contact and tracked down the owner," Mason said. "We are sharing a copy of the price gouging statute ... and making them aware of their legal responsibility."

During a storm-related state of emergency, Florida law prohibits price gouging for equipment, food, gasoline, hotel rooms, ice, lumber and water needed as a direct result of the event, according to the state Attorney General's Office. Violators are subject to civil penalties of \$1,000 per violation and up to a total of \$25,000 for multiple violations committed in a single 24-hour period.

Moody extended Florida's Price Gouging Hotline as Hurricane Milton barreled across the Gulf of Mexico and toward the Florida Peninsula, and millions scrambled to wrap up storm preparations and evacuate vulnerable areas – activities that often involve paying for water, lumber and hotel rooms, among other expenses.

More than 450 complaints of price gouging were received after Hurricane Helene, which made landfall as a Category 4 storm on Florida's Nature Coast in late September.

Attorneys general in several states warned people to be wary of an onslaught of scammers who usually show up in the wake of natural disasters and who some say have arrived since Hurricane Helene tore through the South.

Georgia Attorney General Chris Carr urged people to be on the lookout for home repair fraud, charity fraud, impostor scams and price gouging.

"As we pray for the families of those who lost their lives and all Georgians affected by Hurricane Helene, our consumer protection division continues to actively monitor reports of potential home repair fraud and other storm-related scams," Carr said. "By doing research on a company or contractor, you can help to prevent one tragedy from leading to another."

Authorities in Hillsborough County, Florida, issued a set of tips on how to avoid falling for a sham contractor, adding, "If it sounds too good to be true, it usually is."

Tips include:

Ensure repairs are covered by insurance and have an insurance company evaluate damage before arranging repairs.

Obtain three written, itemized estimates for repairs.

Never pay the full cost of the repairs up front. Be wary of providing large deposits.

Contributing: Michael Loria, Michael Ventura, USA TODAY

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Ana Goñi-Lessan, Tallahassee Democrat, 'Fla. fields price gouging reports ahead of Milton - High prices for fuel, water, lodging reported', *Fayetteville Observer, The* (online), 10 Oct 2024 A1 https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view? p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19C1EACE990F9A88>



Harris criticizes Trump on 'The View' - VP refuses to distance herself from Biden

October 10, 2024 | Fayetteville Observer, The (NC) Author: Francesca Chambers , and Michael Collins; USA TODAY Section: News | 1008 Words Page: A7 OpenURL Link

WASHINGTON – Vice President Kamala Harris declined on Tuesday to distance herself from President Joe Biden's record during an appearance on "The View" – and she hit back at former President Donald Trump's claims about the White House's handling of the southern border and hurricane relief.

It was one of several interviews that Harris, the Democratic nominee for president, has done this week as her campaign tries to reach less-politically engaged voters with the election less than a month out and early voting beginning in some states.

Harris has repeatedly opted for platforms such as the popular podcast "Call Her Daddy," instead of political news shows. She also sat down with radio show host Howard Stern and appeared on "The Late Show with Stephen Colbert" during a media blitz in New York.

In her first of three appearances on Tuesday, Harris was asked on "The View" whether she would have done something differently than Biden over the past four years.

"There is not a thing that comes to mind," Harris said, noting that she has been "a part of most of the decisions that have had impact" in the Biden administration.

She pointed to legislation that capped the cost of insulin at \$35 a month for seniors, as well as other efforts to lower prescription drug prices.

"Those were all a shared priority," she told the talk show. Harris has said she would seek to expand the health care benefits to all Americans, regardless of age.

Hammering her Republican opponent, she accused him of being the reason that bipartisan immigration reform legislation had not passed in Congress, an allegation she's frequently raised.

"Donald Trump prefers to run on problems, instead of fixing problems. He is not solution-oriented," she said.

A bipartisan group of senators spent months last year crafting a border bill, but it quickly lost steam on Capitol Hill after Trump publicly opposed the push.

Harris also hit Trump for unsubstantiated claims that the Biden administration is intentionally withholding disaster aid from Republican areas and diverting relief funds to housing for undocumented immigrants. It's a charge that the FEMA administrator has refuted as "frankly ridiculous and just plain false" while back-to-back hurricanes have lashed over the Southeast.

"It's profound, and it is the height of irresponsibility and, frankly, callousness," Harris said on "The View" in response to a question about Trump's comments.

"People are losing their homes with no hope of ever being able to reconstruct or return," Harris said as she discussed trips she made to storm-ravaged areas in Georgia and North Carolina. "The idea that somebody would be playing political games for the sake of himself, but this is so consistent about Donald Trump, he puts himself before the needs of others."

In the appearance, Harris urged Floridians in the path of Hurricane Milton to listen to their local officials. Harris said there may be a tendency by Florida residents who have weathered previous events to write the hurricane off.

"This one is going to be different," she warned.

The vice president said the severity of the storm is the reason why she has been trying to reach Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis. Her comments were the latest volley in a dispute with Florida's top official over the storm response.

"We have to have an agreement that at some point, we all need to work together to combine resources, especially federal, state and local resources, around these kinds of disasters. And I think it's a shame that that hasn't happened," she said.

DeSantis said in a Monday evening interview on Fox News' "Hannity" that Harris had never called him until Hurricane Helene hit. He said he'd been in touch with Biden and FEMA about coordinating resources.

"She has no role in this. In fact, she's been vice president for three and a half years. I've dealt with a number of storms under this administration. She has never contributed anything to any of these efforts," he said.

Harris had told reporters, in response to a question about a report that DeSantis was ducking her calls, that "playing politics" during an emergency "is just utterly irresponsible, and it is selfish, and it is about political gamesmanship, instead of doing the job that you took an oath to do, which is to put the people first."

Later on Tuesday, during Harris' appearance on "The Howard Stern Show," the radio host asked her about a revelation in a new book by journalist Bob Woodward, who reported that Trump secretly sent COVID test kits to Russian President Vladimir Putin for his own personal use.

Harris called it "the most recent stark example of who Donald Trump is," that he would secretly send kits to Putin, "an adversary to the United States," at a time when they were in short supply.

"People were dying by the hundreds, everybody was scrambling to get these kits," she said. "... And this guy, who is president of the United States, is sending them to Russia to a murderous dictator for his personal use."

Trump's campaign immediately denied the reporting. Spokesperson Steven Cheung rejected Woodward's reporting in a statement, calling it "made up stories" from a "truly demented and deranged man."

DeSantis and Trump weren't the only Republicans Harris talked about on Tuesday. Asked whether she would appoint former Rep. Liz Cheney, R-Wyo., to her Cabinet, Harris dodged by pointing out that she has to win the election first.

But she described Cheney, a Trump critic who has endorsed Harris for president, as "remarkable" person who put her country before her party.

On a lighter note, Harris also described, during the interview, working at McDonald's when she was a college student.

"It's an experience," she said. "I was doing the fries, and you got to watch the timer, and it's hard work."

But Harris said she recognized that, as a college student, her McDonald's pay was spending money. For others working there, it was the source of their family income.

"We've still got a lot of work to do to make sure that folks cannot just get by, but get ahead," she said. Copyright 2024, The Fayetteville (N.C.) Observer

Francesca Chambers , and Michael Collins, USA TODAY, 'Harris criticizes Trump on 'The View' - VP refuses to distance herself from Biden', *Fayetteville Observer, The* (online), 10 Oct 2024 A7 https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view? p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19C1EACEA5B240D8>



NFL Week 6 power rankings - Heisman winner pushes his team up to No. 7

October 10, 2024 | Fayetteville Observer, The (NC) Author: Nate Davis; USA TODAY | Section: Sports | 1475 Words Page: B3 OpenURL Link

NFL power rankings entering Week 6 of the 2024 season (previous rank in parentheses):

- 1. Kansas City Chiefs (1): With their first double-digit win of the season on Monday night, K.C. became the 10th reigning champion of the Super Bowl era (since 1966) to start 5-0 and the first in five years. Now, they get a week off before their Super Bowl 54/58 rematch with San Francisco.
- 2. Minnesota Vikings (2): They wobbled out of London with a close-shave victory. However QB Sam Darnold looked like ... Sam Darnold. And RB Aaron Jones' hip injury further hindered the offense. Good thing there's more to this team like a ferocious defense and OLB Andrew Van Ginkel, the first player in league history to record at least three sacks and multiple pick-sixes in the first five weeks of a season.
- 3. Baltimore Ravens (3): What do you know? They actually overcame a double-digit fourth-quarter deficit Sunday in Cincinnati. But in all seriousness, if any club is going to emerge as a dominant force in 2024, it might well be this one the first in 18 seasons to rush for 1,000 yards through Week 5. Still, amazing as the Lamar Jackson-Derrick Henry duo is shaping up, the league's 31st-ranked pass defense needs to shape up.
- 4. Detroit Lions (4): Hope you fellas got your rest during the bye. Next up? A brutal five-stretch with road games at Dallas, Minnesota, Green Bay and Houston.
- 5. Atlanta Falcons (10): QB Kirk Cousins might be one questionable non-call against K.C. from being 3-0 in prime time with ATL. However, barring a flex Week 14 at Minnesota, anyone? "Kirko Chainz" is only scheduled to play one more night game this season. Thursday, he joined Tom Brady as the only players to pass for 500 yards and at least four TDs under the network lights.
- 6. Tampa Bay Buccaneers (6): After dealing with the wrath of Hurricane Helene, the Bucs are about to flee early to New Orleans as a storm that's apparently far more fierce (Hurricane Milton) takes direct aim at Tampa. Let's hope a good football team and its fans get a good outcome this week, despite current prognostications.
- 7. Washington Commanders (9): Lotta firsts here. First place. First team with 13 rushing TDs through five weeks since Gerald Ford was president. First rookie (Jayden Daniels) to start his career with 1,000 passing yards and 250 rushing yards five games in. Pretty soon, their supporters will be musing about the possibility of their first Super Bowl trip post-Joe Gibbs.
- 8. Houston Texans (13): Their record (4-1) is impressive. But the only division leader to be outscored by more than 10 points is probably a few breaks from being 1-4, and the injury concerns are only mounting with WR Nico Collins about to miss time with a bum hamstring.
- 9. Philadelphia Eagles (11): They should be rested coming off the bye, WRs A.J. Brown (hamstring) and DeVonta Smith (concussion) due back Sunday. And for a team that also figuratively needs to get healthy, a date with Cleveland is made to order.
- 10. Green Bay Packers (12): They only have to leave Wisconsin once (for Duval County) in the next six weeks. Green and golden opportunity to cement themselves anew as bona fide Super Bowl threats.
- 11. Buffalo Bills (5): Two weeks ago, QB Josh Allen was just about everyone's (very premature) MVP pick. Since

then? He's completed 42.4% of his passes, compiled a 65.0 QB rating and accounted for one TD and zero victories.

- 12. Arizona Cardinals (23): They're 2-0 against NFC West foes and feature the best QB-RB rushing tandem (Kyler Murray, James Conner) west of Baltimore.
- 13. San Francisco 49ers (7): They're 2-0 against AFC East competition, which is far less helpful when it's time to invoke tiebreakers especially given the Niners are off to an 0-2 start in their own division. Their 38-game winning streak under HC Kyle Shanahan in games with a double-digit fourth-quarter lead ended Sunday.
- 14. Dallas Cowboys (22): Maybe they've found something with RB Rico Dowdle. Maybe a defense fielding so many backups found a rallying cry. Maybe we'll know more in a week after they try to win their first home game of 2024 against a Detroit squad that lost at AT&T Stadium under dubious circumstances late last season.
- 15. Indianapolis Colts (15): Going back to last season in Cleveland, Joe Flacco has thrown for at least 300 yards and two TDs in his past five starts. At 39, he's the oldest quarterback in league history with such a string of games.
- 16. Pittsburgh Steelers (8): Not a great sign that QB Justin Fields was hit on about a quarter of his dropbacks Sunday night despite playing a defense missing its two top pass rushers maybe even more reason not to switch to QB Russell Wilson given the sad state of Pittsburgh's O-line.
- 17. Denver Broncos (18): Only the Chargers are allowing fewer points per game than the 14.6 of the Broncos, who also have 19 sacks and eight takeaways.
- 18. Los Angeles Chargers (17): Don't know how rejuvenated a battered group will be coming out the bye. We do know Denver has been a house of horrors for the Bolts, who have dropped 10 of 11 in the Mile High City.
- 19. Chicago Bears (21): A huge reason they've won a league-best eight in a row at Soldier Field? The defense has generated 18 turnovers in those games.
- 20. New York Jets (19): The speculation around potentially acquiring WR Davante Adams is all fine and good sensible even. But there's zero reason a team with RBs Breece Hall and Braelon Allen should rank last in the league in rushing (80.4 ypg).
- 21. Cincinnati Bengals (20): A highly competitive 1-4 team has basically exhausted its margin for error but isn't scheduled to face an opponent with a winning record until its Week 10 rematch with the Ravens.
- 22. New York Giants (27): Since his disastrous Week 1 return to the lineup, QB Daniel Jones has accounted for four TDs, one turnover and a 95.8 passer rating including Sunday's win at Seattle, when WR Malik Nabers and RB Devin Singletary were sidelined. Maybe paying Jones \$40 million per is reasonable after all.
- 23. Seattle Seahawks (14): A weak schedule has masked some issues here, including the NFC's second-worst turnover differential (-3). But most concerning is an offense that's entirely unbalanced, throwing the most passes in the league and running the ball the fewest times.
- 24. Los Angeles Rams (24): Think they've become a little too reliant on RB Kyren Williams? He has a team-high 109 offensive touches ... 89 more than anyone else on the team.
- 25. New Orleans Saints (16): A three-game slide marked by plummeting offensive production seemed quite likely Monday night to be exacerbated by QB Derek Carr's injury, one that apparently left him unable to effectively throw the ball. Now a league-worst 1-6 in prime-time games over the past three seasons, the Saints also suddenly don't seem like a prime-time option for Adams, either, particularly if Carr can't play.
- 26. Carolina Panthers (25): For all the focus on their quarterback issue, they've allowed a league-high 20 offensive touchdowns four more than any other team.

- 27. Las Vegas Raiders (26): For all the focus on their quarterback issue, they've committed a league-high nine turnovers which, admittedly, gets back to their quarterback issue, one that may be in flux.
- 28. Tennessee Titans (29): For all the focus on their quarterback issue, they've committed a league-high nine turnovers (in just four games) which, admittedly, gets back to their quarterback issue, one that may be in flux depending on Will Levis' injured shoulder.
- 29. Miami Dolphins (30): For all the focus on their quarterback issue, they've scored a league-low 60 points (after scoring 70 in one game last season) which, admittedly, gets back to their quarterback issue, one that may be temporarily stabilizing with Tyler Huntley.
- 30. Jacksonville Jaguars (32): With former LSU teammate Nabers concussed, WR Brian Thomas Jr. now leads all rookies with 397 receiving yards and all AFC players (minimum 20 receptions) with 18.0 yards per catch.
- 31. New England Patriots (28): For all the focus on their quarterback issue ... well, it's only going to intensify for a team averaging a league-low 119.4 passing yards per game and seemingly nearing a switch to rookie first-rounder Drake Maye.
- 32. Cleveland Browns (31): For all the focus on their quarterback issue ... well, theirs has been sacked a league-most 26 times. But Deshaun Watson almost surely isn't going to get sacked by upper management any time soon as he'd still incur a nearly \$173 million cap hit if cut next spring.

Follow USA TODAY Sports' Nate Davis on X, formerly Twitter, @ByNateDavis.

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• Citation (aglc Style)

Nate Davis, USA TODAY, 'NFL Week 6 power rankings - Heisman winner pushes his team up to No. 7', *Fayetteville Observer, The* (online), 10 Oct 2024 B3 https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view? p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19C1EACEAC8A4C48>



Opinion: 'Get off Facebook.' NC sacrifices after disasters like Helene. What about before?

October 10, 2024 | Fayetteville Observer, The: Web Edition Articles (NC) Author: Rob Schofield, Section: Opinion | 949 Words OpenURL Link

Government officials and average citizens of all guises and stripes have done a mostly remarkable job of carrying out relief efforts in the aftermath of Hurricane Helene.

Notwithstanding the understandable frustrations of those in devastated areas still waiting for aid and the calculated lies of some cynical politicians and shameless social media creeps, the truth is that government agencies and elected leaders of both major parties have been working tirelessly, and even heroically, in the storm's aftermath.

OPINION Pitts: The Western North Carolina floods hurt all of us. Here's where I find hope.

As Bill Wilke, the Republican sheriff of hard-hit Haywood County said last Friday in response to the wild and false rumors and crazy conspiracy theories that continue to spread on social media: "turn that garbage off...get off Facebook and get out there and put on a pair of boots and pair of gloves and get to work."

Meanwhile, average citizens and private organizations across the state are heeding Wilke's call by contributing millions of dollars, tons of supplies, and where and when possible, large amounts of physical labor to the effort.

Helene cleanup shows we care about our neighbors. But the disaster has a familiar feel.

In some places, officials have been inundated by so many donations that figuring out a way to distribute them efficiently is one of the big current challenges.

And this latter fact helps illustrate an important good-news-bad-news truth about the current situation.

OPINION Helene devastated my NC community. What I saw next helped me survive.

The good news, of course, is that notwithstanding the yawning political divides that plague us these days, the vast majority of North Carolinians still care about their neighbors and are anxious to do what they can to help people in need – whatever their politics or beliefs. We may be a tense and quarrelsome body politic these days, but thankfully for most people, basic human decency still prevails.

The bad — or at least maddening — news in all this, however, is how sadly familiar it all feels. As with the societal outpourings of shock, grief, and goodwill toward the victims that invariably follow in the aftermath of the mass shootings that so plague us, the hurricane response is wonderful and inspiring. But it's also – as the old saying goes – a day late and a dollar short.

NC, U.S. needs more prevention — before disasters

In other words, the overwhelming societal response to Helene and other similar disasters demonstrates the happy fact that Americans remain willing to sacrifice for the common good. But as with the shootings, what's needed is not just post-disaster relief and sacrifice, but pre-disaster prevention.

Think about it: As climate change and population growth conspire to place millions and millions more people in harm's way, disasters like Helene are certain to become increasingly common (see Hurricane Milton's projected path) unless society comes together quickly to do two things that only government can spearhead.

First, is dramatically enhancing physical infrastructure and disaster planning, as well as the rules governing where

and how buildings are constructed.

Simply put, we can and should have water and sewer systems and power and communication grids that are vastly more resilient, but it will take money — lots of it — to construct and maintain them.

Political leaders need to tell hard truths; public needs to make a little sacrifice ahead of time

The same is true for the kind of pre-positioned disaster relief and recovery equipment and personnel that could spring into action in huge numbers on a moment's notice to the remotest mountain holler, and for stricter zoning and building codes that could make homes and businesses much tougher and storm resistant. We can have these things, but only if we're willing to pay for them.

What's lacking, sadly, are political leaders who have the courage to speak these hard truths, to say 'no' to greedy industry lobbyists who try to block every proposed regulation, and to ask voters to come together and sacrifice a little ahead of time so that a crazy patchwork of public and private relief efforts will be less necessary in the future.

And, of course, the same is true for climate change itself. As Helene made clear yet again, global warming and sealevel rise may appear to be steady, incremental processes when viewed from a distance, but up close, they are violent and episodic.

The U.S. has what it needs to reduce greenhouse emissions, slow climate change

Happily, we have the knowledge and capacity to reduce greenhouse gas emissions rapidly so that climate change doesn't spiral utterly out of control in the coming decades, but again, probably only if we're willing to make some modest sacrifices. And that means — at least initially — things like slightly higher taxes and energy bills, and lifestyle changes like winding down the overwhelming societal reliance on internal combustion vehicles.

Will a majority of American politicians ever get to the point — as is already the case in some more enlightened countries — at which they're willing to level with voters about these facts?

The current electoral cycle in which one side constantly repeats the virulent lie that climate change is a hoax, while the other mostly avoids the issue or implies that it can be addressed in a pain free manner inspires little confidence.

One prays that it won't take several more Helene-like disasters to convince a majority of Americans and their leaders to grasp the wisdom of sacrificing a little now to save a lot later.

This story was originally published in NC Newsline, a nonpartisan nonprofit news organization dedicated to fearless reporting and hard-hitting commentary that shines a light on injustice, holds public officials accountable, and helps improve the quality of life for all North Carolinians. It is published under a Creative Commons license.

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• Citation (aglc Style)

Rob Schofield,, 'Opinion: 'Get off Facebook.' NC sacrifices after disasters like Helene. What about before?', *Fayetteville Observer, The: Web Edition Articles* (online), 10 Oct 2024 https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view? p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19C234078694EBD8>



Virginia commit Hamrick returning to Crest High roots

October 10, 2024 | Gaston Gazette, The (Gastonia, NC) Author: Joe L Hughes II; Shelby Star | Section: Sports | 344 Words Page: B1 OpenURL Link

University of Virginia recruit and A.C. Reynolds quarterback Ely Hamrick has transferred to Crest, he confirmed via his X, formerly Twitter, account on Wednesday.

"Due to Hurricane Helene, I have transferred to Crest High School," he said. "I want to thank (A.C. Reynolds coach) Shane Laws for everything that he has done for me; it made a huge difference. I also want to thank (Crest football coach Greg Lloyd) and the entire coaching staff for this opportunity."

Hurricane Helene took a toll on the Asheville area, putting the football season at A.C. Reynolds and other mountain schools in question. It is unknown when Buncombe County Schools will reopen.

Through five games this season, Hamrick has completed almost 54% of his passes for seven touchdowns and an interception. He also has 141 rushing yards and two TDs.

Hamrick transferred to A.C. Reynolds this fall after spending the past two years as part of IMG Academy's "White Varsity" team, playing against teams ranked among the nation's top 250, in addition to occasionally traveling out of state.

As a sophomore, he led IMG White to a 9-1 record and the Sunshine State Independent Association state title, completing 59% of passes for 1,244 yards and 18 touchdowns.

"I really just progressed," Hamrick told the Asheville Citizen-Times earlier this year. "It was all growing and developing. I really think it was a great fit for me for the first two years of high school, having the mentorship of all these guys that have done it."

He joins a Crest team which is 4-1 overall (1-1 Big South 3A), though on the heels of a gut-wrenching 27-26 loss at South Point last Friday night.

By no means is the Hamrick name new to Crest, either. His father, Ryan, played quarterback as part of Crest's first NCHSAA state championship team in 1994. He went on to play wide receiver at NC State, catching 33 passes for 540 yards and two touchdowns from 1998-2000.

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• Citation (aglc Style)

Joe L Hughes II, Shelby Star, 'Virginia commit Hamrick returning to Crest High roots', *Gaston Gazette, The* (online), 10 Oct 2024 B1 https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19C1E86AC6355718



Applying for FEMA assistance in Gaston County

October 10, 2024 | Gaston Gazette, The (Gastonia, NC) Author: Chloe Collins; Gaston Gazette | Section: News | 319 Words Page: A1 OpenURL Link

Gaston is one of 25 North Carolina counties approved for a federal disaster declaration following damage from Hurricane Helene, which means impacted residents may qualify for assistance from the Federal Emergency Management Agency.

County officials are now encouraging impacted residents to apply for aid.

According to a press release, there are four ways to apply.

Residents can apply online at DisasterAssistance.Gov, online through the FEMA app, by calling 800-621-3362, 711 or Video Relay Service, or in person once a disaster recovery center is established, it said.

When applying, residents will need the following information:

Their address with zip code

Condition of the damaged home

Insurance information, if available

Social Security number

Phone number where they can be contacted

Address where they can get mail or email address to receive electronic notifications

Residents can receive funding through FEMA if they are uninsured, or if their insurance does not cover the damage sustained.

Those who have already applied will receive an eligibility letter from FEMA in the mail or by email, which will explain the application status and how to respond.

The release said the letter will include the amount of any assistance FEMA may provide and information on the appropriate use of disaster assistance funds.

Business owners can also find relief through the Small Business Administration.

The SBA offers low-interest disaster loans for homeowners, renters, businesses and nonprofit organizations to cover losses not fully compensated by insurance and other sources, the release said.

Business owners can apply online at SBA.gov/disaster or get my information by calling the SBA's Customer Service Center at 800-659-2955.

"Residents should not hesitate to apply simply because the damage their home sustained is not as significant as for homes in other parts of our state," the release said.

It also encourages residents to obtain information on Helene relief from trusted sources such as local, state and federal government accounts, to help avoid sharing misinformation.

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• Citation (aglc Style)

Chloe Collins, Gaston Gazette, 'Applying for FEMA assistance in Gaston County', *Gaston Gazette, The* (online), 10 Oct 2024 A1 https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19C1E86ADF58F2B8



Fla. fields price gouging reports ahead of Milton

October 10, 2024 | Gaston Gazette, The (Gastonia, NC) Author: Ana Goñi-Lessan; Tallahassee Democrat | Section: News | 435 Words Page: A8 OpenURL Link

TALLAHASSEE, Fla. – Florida Attorney General Ashley Moody received more than 200 complaints about price gouging as many thousands of Floridians prepared to evacuate for Hurricane Milton.

As of Monday, most complaints were about the price of fuel and water, said Moody's spokesperson Kylie Mason. The top three counties for complaints were Highlands, Hillsborough and Pinellas. There were also scattered instances involving overnight accommodations, including one Airbnb listing of a "room in Tallahassee" for nearly \$6,000 a night.

"Our team already reached out to our (Airbnb) corporate contact and tracked down the owner," Mason said. "We are sharing a copy of the price gouging statute ... and making them aware of their legal responsibility."

During a storm-related state of emergency, Florida law prohibits price gouging for equipment, food, gasoline, hotel rooms, ice, lumber and water needed as a direct result of the event, according to the state Attorney General's Office. Violators are subject to civil penalties of \$1,000 per violation and up to a total of \$25,000 for multiple violations committed in a single 24-hour period.

Moody extended Florida's Price Gouging Hotline as Hurricane Milton barreled across the Gulf of Mexico and toward the Florida Peninsula, and millions scrambled to wrap up storm preparations and evacuate vulnerable areas – activities that often involve paying for water, lumber and hotel rooms, among other expenses.

More than 450 complaints of price gouging were received after Hurricane Helene, which made landfall as a Category 4 storm on Florida's Nature Coast in late September.

Attorneys general in several states warned people to be wary of an onslaught of scammers who usually show up in the wake of natural disasters and who some say have arrived since Hurricane Helene tore through the South.

Georgia Attorney General Chris Carr urged people to be on the lookout for home repair fraud, charity fraud, impostor scams and price gouging.

"As we pray for the families of those who lost their lives and all Georgians affected by Hurricane Helene, our consumer protection division continues to actively monitor reports of potential home repair fraud and other storm-related scams," Carr said. "By doing research on a company or contractor, you can help to prevent one tragedy from leading to another."

Authorities in Hillsborough County, Florida, issued a set of tips on how to avoid falling for a sham contractor, adding, "If it sounds too good to be true, it usually is."

Tips include:

Ensure repairs are covered by insurance and have an insurance company evaluate damage before arranging repairs.

Obtain three written, itemized estimates for repairs.

Never pay the full cost of the repairs up front. Be wary of providing large deposits.

Contributing: Michael Loria, Michael Ventura, USA TODAY

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• Citation (aglc Style)

Ana Goñi-Lessan, Tallahassee Democrat, 'Fla. fields price gouging reports ahead of Milton', *Gaston Gazette, The* (online), 10 Oct 2024 A8 https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19C1E86AB32EC0B0



Harris criticizes Trump on 'The View' - VP refuses to distance herself from Biden

October 10, 2024 | Gaston Gazette, The (Gastonia, NC) Author: Francesca Chambers , and Michael Collins; USA TODAY Section: News | 1008 Words Page: A6 OpenURL Link

WASHINGTON – Vice President Kamala Harris declined on Tuesday to distance herself from President Joe Biden's record during an appearance on "The View" – and she hit back at former President Donald Trump's claims about the White House's handling of the southern border and hurricane relief.

It was one of several interviews that Harris, the Democratic nominee for president, has done this week as her campaign tries to reach less-politically engaged voters with the election less than a month out and early voting beginning in some states.

Harris has repeatedly opted for platforms such as the popular podcast "Call Her Daddy," instead of political news shows. She also sat down with radio show host Howard Stern and appeared on "The Late Show with Stephen Colbert" during a media blitz in New York.

In her first of three appearances on Tuesday, Harris was asked on "The View" whether she would have done something differently than Biden over the past four years.

"There is not a thing that comes to mind," Harris said, noting that she has been "a part of most of the decisions that have had impact" in the Biden administration.

She pointed to legislation that capped the cost of insulin at \$35 a month for seniors, as well as other efforts to lower prescription drug prices.

"Those were all a shared priority," she told the talk show. Harris has said she would seek to expand the health care benefits to all Americans, regardless of age.

Hammering her Republican opponent, she accused him of being the reason that bipartisan immigration reform legislation had not passed in Congress, an allegation she's frequently raised.

"Donald Trump prefers to run on problems, instead of fixing problems. He is not solution-oriented," she said.

A bipartisan group of senators spent months last year crafting a border bill, but it quickly lost steam on Capitol Hill after Trump publicly opposed the push.

Harris also hit Trump for unsubstantiated claims that the Biden administration is intentionally withholding disaster aid from Republican areas and diverting relief funds to housing for undocumented immigrants. It's a charge that the FEMA administrator has refuted as "frankly ridiculous and just plain false" while back-to-back hurricanes have lashed over the Southeast.

"It's profound, and it is the height of irresponsibility and, frankly, callousness," Harris said on "The View" in response to a question about Trump's comments.

"People are losing their homes with no hope of ever being able to reconstruct or return," Harris said as she discussed trips she made to storm-ravaged areas in Georgia and North Carolina. "The idea that somebody would be playing political games for the sake of himself, but this is so consistent about Donald Trump, he puts himself before the needs of others."

In the appearance, Harris urged Floridians in the path of Hurricane Milton to listen to their local officials. Harris said there may be a tendency by Florida residents who have weathered previous events to write the hurricane off.

"This one is going to be different," she warned.

The vice president said the severity of the storm is the reason why she has been trying to reach Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis. Her comments were the latest volley in a dispute with Florida's top official over the storm response.

"We have to have an agreement that at some point, we all need to work together to combine resources, especially federal, state and local resources, around these kinds of disasters. And I think it's a shame that that hasn't happened," she said.

DeSantis said in a Monday evening interview on Fox News' "Hannity" that Harris had never called him until Hurricane Helene hit. He said he'd been in touch with Biden and FEMA about coordinating resources.

"She has no role in this. In fact, she's been vice president for three and a half years. I've dealt with a number of storms under this administration. She has never contributed anything to any of these efforts," he said.

Harris had told reporters, in response to a question about a report that DeSantis was ducking her calls, that "playing politics" during an emergency "is just utterly irresponsible, and it is selfish, and it is about political gamesmanship, instead of doing the job that you took an oath to do, which is to put the people first."

Later on Tuesday, during Harris' appearance on "The Howard Stern Show," the radio host asked her about a revelation in a new book by journalist Bob Woodward, who reported that Trump secretly sent COVID test kits to Russian President Vladimir Putin for his own personal use.

Harris called it "the most recent stark example of who Donald Trump is," that he would secretly send kits to Putin, "an adversary to the United States," at a time when they were in short supply.

"People were dying by the hundreds, everybody was scrambling to get these kits," she said. "... And this guy, who is president of the United States, is sending them to Russia to a murderous dictator for his personal use."

Trump's campaign immediately denied the reporting. Spokesperson Steven Cheung rejected Woodward's reporting in a statement, calling it "made up stories" from a "truly demented and deranged man."

DeSantis and Trump weren't the only Republicans Harris talked about on Tuesday. Asked whether she would appoint former Rep. Liz Cheney, R-Wyo., to her Cabinet, Harris dodged by pointing out that she has to win the election first.

But she described Cheney, a Trump critic who has endorsed Harris for president, as "remarkable" person who put her country before her party.

On a lighter note, Harris also described, during the interview, working at McDonald's when she was a college student.

"It's an experience," she said. "I was doing the fries, and you got to watch the timer, and it's hard work."

But Harris said she recognized that, as a college student, her McDonald's pay was spending money. For others working there, it was the source of their family income.

"We've still got a lot of work to do to make sure that folks cannot just get by, but get ahead," she said. Copyright, 2024, The Gaston Gazette, All Rights Reserved.

Francesca Chambers , and Michael Collins, USA TODAY, 'Harris criticizes Trump on 'The View' - VP refuses to distance herself from Biden', *Gaston Gazette, The* (online), 10 Oct 2024 A6 https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view? p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19C1E86AD4FC92E8>



NFL Week 6 power rankings - Heisman winner pushes his team up to No. 7

October 10, 2024 | Gaston Gazette, The (Gastonia, NC) Author: Nate Davis; USA TODAY | Section: Sports | 1475 Words Page: B3 OpenURL Link

NFL power rankings entering Week 6 of the 2024 season (previous rank in parentheses):

- 1. Kansas City Chiefs (1): With their first double-digit win of the season on Monday night, K.C. became the 10th reigning champion of the Super Bowl era (since 1966) to start 5-0 and the first in five years. Now, they get a week off before their Super Bowl 54/58 rematch with San Francisco.
- 2. Minnesota Vikings (2): They wobbled out of London with a close-shave victory. However QB Sam Darnold looked like ... Sam Darnold. And RB Aaron Jones' hip injury further hindered the offense. Good thing there's more to this team like a ferocious defense and OLB Andrew Van Ginkel, the first player in league history to record at least three sacks and multiple pick-sixes in the first five weeks of a season.
- 3. Baltimore Ravens (3): What do you know? They actually overcame a double-digit fourth-quarter deficit Sunday in Cincinnati. But in all seriousness, if any club is going to emerge as a dominant force in 2024, it might well be this one the first in 18 seasons to rush for 1,000 yards through Week 5. Still, amazing as the Lamar Jackson-Derrick Henry duo is shaping up, the league's 31st-ranked pass defense needs to shape up.
- 4. Detroit Lions (4): Hope you fellas got your rest during the bye. Next up? A brutal five-stretch with road games at Dallas, Minnesota, Green Bay and Houston.
- 5. Atlanta Falcons (10): QB Kirk Cousins might be one questionable non-call against K.C. from being 3-0 in prime time with ATL. However, barring a flex Week 14 at Minnesota, anyone? "Kirko Chainz" is only scheduled to play one more night game this season. Thursday, he joined Tom Brady as the only players to pass for 500 yards and at least four TDs under the network lights.
- 6. Tampa Bay Buccaneers (6): After dealing with the wrath of Hurricane Helene, the Bucs are about to flee early to New Orleans as a storm that's apparently far more fierce (Hurricane Milton) takes direct aim at Tampa. Let's hope a good football team and its fans get a good outcome this week, despite current prognostications.
- 7. Washington Commanders (9): Lotta firsts here. First place. First team with 13 rushing TDs through five weeks since Gerald Ford was president. First rookie (Jayden Daniels) to start his career with 1,000 passing yards and 250 rushing yards five games in. Pretty soon, their supporters will be musing about the possibility of their first Super Bowl trip post-Joe Gibbs.
- 8. Houston Texans (13): Their record (4-1) is impressive. But the only division leader to be outscored by more than 10 points is probably a few breaks from being 1-4, and the injury concerns are only mounting with WR Nico Collins about to miss time with a bum hamstring.
- 9. Philadelphia Eagles (11): They should be rested coming off the bye, WRs A.J. Brown (hamstring) and DeVonta Smith (concussion) due back Sunday. And for a team that also figuratively needs to get healthy, a date with Cleveland is made to order.
- 10. Green Bay Packers (12): They only have to leave Wisconsin once (for Duval County) in the next six weeks. Green and golden opportunity to cement themselves anew as bona fide Super Bowl threats.
- 11. Buffalo Bills (5): Two weeks ago, QB Josh Allen was just about everyone's (very premature) MVP pick. Since

then? He's completed 42.4% of his passes, compiled a 65.0 QB rating and accounted for one TD and zero victories.

- 12. Arizona Cardinals (23): They're 2-0 against NFC West foes and feature the best QB-RB rushing tandem (Kyler Murray, James Conner) west of Baltimore.
- 13. San Francisco 49ers (7): They're 2-0 against AFC East competition, which is far less helpful when it's time to invoke tiebreakers especially given the Niners are off to an 0-2 start in their own division. Their 38-game winning streak under HC Kyle Shanahan in games with a double-digit fourth-quarter lead ended Sunday.
- 14. Dallas Cowboys (22): Maybe they've found something with RB Rico Dowdle. Maybe a defense fielding so many backups found a rallying cry. Maybe we'll know more in a week after they try to win their first home game of 2024 against a Detroit squad that lost at AT&T Stadium under dubious circumstances late last season.
- 15. Indianapolis Colts (15): Going back to last season in Cleveland, Joe Flacco has thrown for at least 300 yards and two TDs in his past five starts. At 39, he's the oldest quarterback in league history with such a string of games.
- 16. Pittsburgh Steelers (8): Not a great sign that QB Justin Fields was hit on about a quarter of his dropbacks Sunday night despite playing a defense missing its two top pass rushers maybe even more reason not to switch to QB Russell Wilson given the sad state of Pittsburgh's O-line.
- 17. Denver Broncos (18): Only the Chargers are allowing fewer points per game than the 14.6 of the Broncos, who also have 19 sacks and eight takeaways.
- 18. Los Angeles Chargers (17): Don't know how rejuvenated a battered group will be coming out the bye. We do know Denver has been a house of horrors for the Bolts, who have dropped 10 of 11 in the Mile High City.
- 19. Chicago Bears (21): A huge reason they've won a league-best eight in a row at Soldier Field? The defense has generated 18 turnovers in those games.
- 20. New York Jets (19): The speculation around potentially acquiring WR Davante Adams is all fine and good sensible even. But there's zero reason a team with RBs Breece Hall and Braelon Allen should rank last in the league in rushing (80.4 ypg).
- 21. Cincinnati Bengals (20): A highly competitive 1-4 team has basically exhausted its margin for error but isn't scheduled to face an opponent with a winning record until its Week 10 rematch with the Ravens.
- 22. New York Giants (27): Since his disastrous Week 1 return to the lineup, QB Daniel Jones has accounted for four TDs, one turnover and a 95.8 passer rating including Sunday's win at Seattle, when WR Malik Nabers and RB Devin Singletary were sidelined. Maybe paying Jones \$40 million per is reasonable after all.
- 23. Seattle Seahawks (14): A weak schedule has masked some issues here, including the NFC's second-worst turnover differential (-3). But most concerning is an offense that's entirely unbalanced, throwing the most passes in the league and running the ball the fewest times.
- 24. Los Angeles Rams (24): Think they've become a little too reliant on RB Kyren Williams? He has a team-high 109 offensive touches ... 89 more than anyone else on the team.
- 25. New Orleans Saints (16): A three-game slide marked by plummeting offensive production seemed quite likely Monday night to be exacerbated by QB Derek Carr's injury, one that apparently left him unable to effectively throw the ball. Now a league-worst 1-6 in prime-time games over the past three seasons, the Saints also suddenly don't seem like a prime-time option for Adams, either, particularly if Carr can't play.
- 26. Carolina Panthers (25): For all the focus on their quarterback issue, they've allowed a league-high 20 offensive touchdowns four more than any other team.

- 27. Las Vegas Raiders (26): For all the focus on their quarterback issue, they've committed a league-high nine turnovers which, admittedly, gets back to their quarterback issue, one that may be in flux.
- 28. Tennessee Titans (29): For all the focus on their quarterback issue, they've committed a league-high nine turnovers (in just four games) which, admittedly, gets back to their quarterback issue, one that may be in flux depending on Will Levis' injured shoulder.
- 29. Miami Dolphins (30): For all the focus on their quarterback issue, they've scored a league-low 60 points (after scoring 70 in one game last season) which, admittedly, gets back to their quarterback issue, one that may be temporarily stabilizing with Tyler Huntley.
- 30. Jacksonville Jaguars (32): With former LSU teammate Nabers concussed, WR Brian Thomas Jr. now leads all rookies with 397 receiving yards and all AFC players (minimum 20 receptions) with 18.0 yards per catch.
- 31. New England Patriots (28): For all the focus on their quarterback issue ... well, it's only going to intensify for a team averaging a league-low 119.4 passing yards per game and seemingly nearing a switch to rookie first-rounder Drake Maye.
- 32. Cleveland Browns (31): For all the focus on their quarterback issue ... well, theirs has been sacked a league-most 26 times. But Deshaun Watson almost surely isn't going to get sacked by upper management any time soon as he'd still incur a nearly \$173 million cap hit if cut next spring.

Follow USA TODAY Sports' Nate Davis on X, formerly Twitter, @ByNateDavis.

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• Citation (aglc Style)

Nate Davis, USA TODAY, 'NFL Week 6 power rankings - Heisman winner pushes his team up to No. 7', *Gaston Gazette, The* (online), 10 Oct 2024 B3 https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?
p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19C1E86ABA9E0AE0>



Local support continues for Helene victims

October 10, 2024 | Goldsboro News-Argus, The (NC) Author: Dylan Phillips Brunswick Beacon Editor | Section: News | 860 Words OpenURL Link

After Hurricane Helene devastated much of western North Carolina on Sept. 27, Brunswick County continues to respond in a major way as residents assist local first responders, businesses, churches, nonprofits and other residents by donating essential food, water and items for those affected.

Throughout the week of Sept. 30, donation drop-off points were set up across Brunswick County. Dozens of trucks and trailers were loaded with necessary supplies for our western neighbors affected by Helene then transported to many affected counties during the week.

The remnants of Hurricane Helene slammed western North Carolina on Friday, Sept. 27, resulting in catastrophic and deadly flooding and mudslides that decimated much of the region.

As of Sunday, Oct. 6, 77 storm-related deaths have been confirmed in North Carolina by the Office of Chief Medical Examiner, according to the office of North Carolina Governor Roy Cooper, with that number expected to rise. Across western North Carolina, approximately 142,000 customers remained without power as of 12:30 p.m. on Oct. 6, down from a peak of more than one million.

"More than \$30.2 million in FEMA Individual Assistance funds have been paid so far to western NC disaster survivors and more than 96,747 people have registered for Individual Assistance," the governor's office notes. "Nearly 1,700 people are now housed in hotels through FEMA's Transitional Sheltering Assistance. Federal partners have delivered more than 6.1 million liters of water and more than 4.1 million individual meals in North Carolina to support both responders and people living in the affected communities."

Back in Brunswick County, residents still have ways to support those affected by last month's storm as recovery efforts are expected to last months. And with autumn upon us, it is expected to get colder in the mountains this week.

Batteries, lights, candles, propane heaters, small propane cylinders, bed pads, sheets, socks, gloves and blankets are now some of the primary needed in western North Carolina.

The North Carolina State Highway Patrol, in partnership with the Shallotte Police Department and local fire departments, set up a collection site at Lowe's off N.C. Highway 130 in Shallotte from Monday, Sept. 30 to Thursday, Oct. 3.

Carolina Creations has also partnered with the two law enforcement agencies, providing trailers to store and haul the collected supplies to the mountains. "We have a lot of people that are from Western North Carolina that work with us and everybody always helps out when we have hurricanes and stuff, so it's just the right thing to do," Carolina Creations Business Development Specialist John Thrift said.

The site was scheduled to continue collecting until Friday, Oct. 4 at 5 p.m., but closed a day early due to the outpouring of support that filled nearly a dozen trailers, including a couple tractor trailers, Shallotte Police Chief Adam Stanley said.

However, the site has reopened at the Lowe's from Monday, Oct. 7 to Thursday, Oct. 10 from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.

Chief Stanley's family friends, the Brittains, were down visiting from Henderson County, one of the 27 counties impacted by Hurricane Helene, when the storm hit western North Carolina. The family was stuck in Shallotte from

Wednesday, Sept. 25 till Saturday, Oct. 5, when Heather Brittain said they planned to return home.

She said Henderson County was not hit as hard as some other areas in western North Carolina, but noted they were waiting for water service to return before heading west.

Brittain, who is the assistant district attorney for Henderson County, said witnessing the outpouring of support by Brunswick County residents for western North Carolina was "amazing to see."

The Brunswick County Sheriff's Office (BCSO) set up a few collection sites throughout the county last week, as well. These sites were also closed earlier than originally expected thanks to the strong support from the community.

The collection sites were set to stay open until Friday, Oct. 4 at 5 p.m., but closed on Wednesday, Oct. 2 around 4 p.m. because the office's three trailers were already filled with donated items.

BCSO, along with other area law enforcement agencies, have deployed personnel to western North Carolina to aid with ongoing recovery and assistance efforts.

The Sunset Beach Fishing Pier, which is owned and operated by western North Carolina natives Gary and Teresa Massey, last week collected and distributed multiple truckloads of supplies to Avery, Buncombe, Mitchell and McDowell counties, as well as to locations in eastern Tennessee.

"It has been given to locations that are distributing where people are coming to pick up or they are delivering by side-by-sides (ATVs and UTVs) or vehicles if they cannot get out to the locations," Teresa Massey told The Brunswick Beacon.

The Masseys on Monday, Oct. 7 continued to collect food and essential items for those affected by Helene, but the collection was halted before noon on Monday as the tractor trailer was already full.

The couple told The Brunswick Beacon they are no longer collecting donations at this time, but assured local residents that the people of Western North Carolina will have more needs in the near future.

This is not an exhaustive list of local collection sites. The Brunswick Beacon encourages any organizations, churches and individuals who have set up collection sites to let us know so we can add the location to our online list.

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Dylan Phillips Brunswick Beacon Editor, 'Local support continues for Helene victims', *Goldsboro News-Argus, The* (online), 10 Oct 2024 https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19C2080888474728>



Helene brings out the best ... and worst in us

October 10, 2024 | Goldsboro News-Argus, The (NC) Author: Tom Campbell | Section: Opinion | 792 Words OpenURL Link

You can learn a lot about people when they are under stress. We see them at their best ... or worst. Hurricane Helene is revealing both.

My family has experienced what it is like to be without power, water and refrigeration, with mud and debris in your home. You feel alone, overwhelmed, and sad. We have also rejoiced when strangers we never met come to help muck out the house, haul out furniture and belongings that must be discarded, do carpentry work and saw tree limbs. Their biggest contribution is to provide comfort.

We can't thank these heroes enough. But they aren't looking for thanks. They see this as their responsibility, a calling to help another in times of distress. These are the people the musical group Alabama sang about in their wonderful song, "Angels Among Us:"

"I believe there are Angels among us,

sent down to us from somewhere up above.

They come to you and me in our darkest hours

To show us how to live, to teach us how to give.

To guide us with the light of love."

We are blessed by many angels. But times of distress also show the worst side of some.

We all remember when President Trump went to Puerto Rico after Hurricane Maria. His response to the devastation was tossing paper towels into the crowd. It took him weeks to release federal funding for the territory.

His response to Helene wasn't much better. Trump instructed his staff to find a place where the storm had ransacked a business and it was surrounded by rubble. With cameras rolling he declared his visit wasn't political, then started criticizing Governor Roy Cooper for doing a terrible job and "going out of their way to not help people in Republican areas."

The claim was totally fabricated. It was disgusting political pandering. This is no time for politics.

As has always been the case, there will be scammers preying on the elderly or those desperate for help, charging them outrageous prices. It is sometimes hard to distinguish between genuine helpers and those trying to make a quick buck. True volunteers won't ask for money. Much as you might need help, be cautious!

Those devastated by Helene are wondering why it is taking so long for help to arrive. Our federal and state government could perhaps have been better prepared to respond. They knew by Wednesday that Helene was going to impact Western Carolina and forecasters predicted it was going to be bad.

But no one could ever have imagined just how devastating this storm was going to be. Not since 1916 has the western section of our state had an event so destructive. By Friday afternoon and evening, when it was obvious how bad the damage was going to be, it was too late to put resources in place without potentially endangering their lives. Surging waters and sheets of rain destroyed roads, landslides demolished buildings and houses were swept

away, some with people inside. The death count is far greater than is being reported.

Media coverage has been uneven. Reporters, photographers and news crews were not allowed into many rural areas because of potential danger. Even so, most of the news coverage has focused on Asheville. It had great damage, but the media has largely neglected a great deal of suffering in smaller communities like Linville, Spruce Pine, Banner Elk, Swannanoa and less populous counties.

Folks are desperate for basic needs. They urgently need water — to drink, to wash themselves, and flush toilets. Wipes, toilet paper, paper towels and even diapers are needed, along with non-perishable food like pop-top tins of chicken, tuna, beans, applesauce fruit and peanut butter. Granola and protein bars and crackers are very welcome. Candles and flashlights with batteries are essential.

Our western neighbors need the right here, right now kind of help. Saying help is on the way when you are thirsty, alone and in darkness being doesn't help with immediate basic needs.

There are many ways you can help. Please don't just hop in the car and head west. DOT says heavy traffic on damaged roads is overwhelming efforts to repair roads. But groups of people can band together, accumulate supplies and transport them to coordinated safe staging areas, where they can be transferred to areas of most need. Have a plan for where you take supplies. Recognized charitable organizations will also welcome help.

Money is also badly needed. Fortunately, our state has several billion dollars in "rainy day funds" and the federal government will also provide large amounts of funding. But it is going to take more than money to help restore life for those affected. Regardless of your beliefs, praying for their safety and wellbeing will help.

We are North Carolina, the "goodliest land," with the goodliest people. Let us all do our best to help our neighbors. Copyright 2024 The Goldsboro News-Argus, All Rights Reserved.

• Citation (aglc Style)

Tom Campbell, 'Helene brings out the best ... and worst in us', *Goldsboro News-Argus, The* (online), 10 Oct 2024 https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19C1F03D73D3C2E0



Planetarium to present Elton John Laser Show for Helene Relief

October 10, 2024 | Goldsboro News-Argus, The (NC) Author: Staff Writer | Section: News | 170 Words OpenURL Link

Ingram Planetarium will present Elton John's Laser Show, "Rocket Man," three times to benefit those in western North Carolina who have been so hard hit by Hurricane Helene. Shows will be presented on Sunday, Oct. 6, at 4 and 5 p.m. and again on Thursday, Oct. 10, at 5 p.m.

All proceeds will be donated to World Central Kitchen, a not-for-profit, non-governmental organization that provides fresh meals in response to humanitarian, climate and community crises. WCK hit the ground in Asheville to provide relief earlier this week.

The show is presented through the generosity of its producer Audio Visual Imagineering, based in Orlando, Fla. Ingram Planetarium's former manager and current volunteer Katherine Hunt will be the guest laserist for the presentations.

AVI's Rocket Man includes some of the rock icon's biggest hits from Crocodile Rock and Candle in the Wind to Philadelphia Freedom and Pinball Wizard, all set to stunning laser lights.

The suggested donation for tickets is \$10 and they can be purchased at museumplanetarium.org at this link, Hurricane Helene Relief Tickets.

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• Citation (aglc Style)

Staff Writer, 'Planetarium to present Elton John Laser Show for Helene Relief', *Goldsboro News-Argus, The* (online), 10 Oct 2024 https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19C1F03D58504610



BCS amends calendar following storm closures

October 10, 2024 | Goldsboro News-Argus, The (NC) Author: Dylan Phillips Brunswick Beacon Editor | Section: News | 960 Words OpenURL Link

Following significant impacts to instructional time from the unnamed Sept. 16 storm that dumped as many as 22 inches of rain on parts of Brunswick County and led to Brunswick County Schools having to cancel school for a whole school week, the board of education has approved a calendar amendment to make up for the lost instructional days.

The Brunswick County Schools (BCS) Board of Education during its Tuesday, Oct. 1 meeting approved changes to the BCS 2024-2025 school year calendar that will ensure the first semester ends prior to winter break and the state requirements for instructional days per year are met.

The Monday, Sept. 16 storm, coined Potential Tropical Cyclone #8, somewhat unexpectedly dropped between 14 and 22 inches of rain in parts of the county, with the most rain falling in and around Bolivia, Boiling Spring Lakes, Supply, Southport and Winnabow. The storm led to catastrophic flooding and road damage, forcing BCS to cancel school for the remainder of that week.

BCS is allotted five days, built into the school calendar that can be missed for emergencies like the Sept. 16 storm, said Assistant Superintendent Jonathan Paschal during the Oct. 1 meeting. With the system-wide closure from Sept. 16 to Sept. 20, BCS used all those days, he added.

With road damage from flooding making many roads impassable, BCS went to asynchronous remote learning to start the week of Sept. 23 before transitioning most schools back to face-to-face learning on Wednesday, Sept. 25. Bolivia Elementary students returned to the classroom on Thursday, Sept. 26, and Virginia Williamson Elementary and Cedar Grove Middle students got back into the classroom on Monday, Sept. 30.

However, the threat of Hurricane Helene led to the school system to cancel school for all BCS schools on Friday, Sept. 27, as well. This was BCS's sixth lost instructional day of the year, meaning an additional instructional day had to be added to the calendar.

At the beginning of the week of Sept. 30, only students at Southport Elementary, South Brunswick Middle School and South Brunswick High School had not returned to in-person learning. South Brunswick Middle School and High School students returned to the classroom on Wednesday, Oct. 3, and Southport Elementary students were set to return to in-person learning on Monday, Oct. 7 on a modified schedule, per BCS.

Similar to emergency days, only five remote learning days are allotted to North Carolina school systems, Paschal noted, and BCS needs approval for additional remote learning days at schools that had not returned to the inperson learning as of the beginning of last week.

"We needed to make sure that we get approval for that," he said, "and we're working through that now and we're hearing a lot of good options coming to us that we'll be able to finalize."

During the BCS Board of Education's committees meeting on Sept. 20, the board requested the North Carolina General Assembly forgive the BCS's lost instructional time on Sept. 16 and 17. BCS during the Oct. 1 did not provide any updates on this request.

After surveying BCS parents and staff regarding proposed calendar changes, the board during last Tuesday's meeting formally approved the calendar changes to turn the scheduled Oct. 21 required teacher workday into an instructional day to make up for the lost day on Sept. 27.

Additionally, the changes designated additional days for emergency instructional make-up. Those days, according to the approved amended calendar, are Jan. 2, Jan. 3, Jan. 21 and Feb. 21. If any more instructional days must be missed, those missed days will be made up on the make-up dates.

The board also approved keeping Dec. 20 as the end of the first semester, which will end it prior to winter break, as feedback from BCS teachers indicated they can stay on the proper pace despite the lost instructional days.

"I am happy to say that our teachers strongly felt they could indeed keep up with the current pace. In fact, a lot of their pacing guides have already been changed and adjusted to meet the December deadline," Paschal said. "All of which is done because they are keeping in mind ... our Career and College Promise (CCP) students that are going to Brunswick Community College and keeping in mind some of our AP students."

Superintendent discusses recent closures

BCS Superintendent Dale Cole discussed the school system's recent weather-related closures, emphasizing that BCS will always prioritize having students in the classroom, learning face-to-face, if it is safe to do.

Following the week-long closure after Potential Tropical Cyclone #8 on Sept. 16, all BCS students were slated to learn remotely during from Monday, Sept. 23 to Friday, Sept. 27. However, as roads began to reopen, many BCS schools transitioned students back into classrooms throughout the week.

The school system faced some backlash after reopening Bolivia Elementary School to in-person learning on Thursday, Sept. 26, only to cancel school again on Sept. 27 ahead of Hurricane Helene.

"I saw that there was a lot of angst about the fact that we decided to have face-to-face school at Bolivia Elementary on Thursday, even though we were going to be closed for everybody on Friday," Cole said. "My answer to that is always going to be if we can have face-to-face instruction for kids, that is what we are going to do. That is what I'm going to push for, because one day of face-to-face instruction is better than three days of remote."

Cole also noted this would not be an issue if there was not a state of North Carolina school calendar, encouraging the board to continue advocating for a law change to allow individual school systems to make calendar decisions.

BCS Board of Education Chair Steven Barger said the board will continue to advocate for the state to change that law.

The updated schedule can be viewed here on page 29.

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• Citation (aglc Style)

Dylan Phillips Brunswick Beacon Editor, 'BCS amends calendar following storm closures', *Goldsboro News-Argus, The* (online), 10 Oct 2024 https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19C2080895FAD4C0



The great floods of 1916 and 2024

October 10, 2024 | Goldsboro News-Argus, The (NC) Author: D.G. Martin One on One | Section: Opinion | 750 Words OpenURL Link

One of Miss Letitia Currie's favorite topics in her history class in the 1950s at Davidson Junior High School was the Great Flood of 1916. Miss Currie was the daughter of a Davidson College professor.

Many of her students also knew what she was talking about because their parents had experienced that 1916 flood and talked about it whenever rain poured down hard.

Today, many of Miss Currie's students, their parents and grandparents, great grandparents, and their children and grandchildren are having a similar experience dealing with the flooding that followed Hurricane Helene.

And they will be talking about it for the rest of their lives, calling it "The great flood of 2024."

"News of Davidson," the news outlet in my hometown, published the following account by Gatewood Payne Campbell, granddaughter of Davidson professor Gatey Workman and niece of the late, great opera singer William Workman. Gatewood and her husband Johnny live near Black Mountain.

"Life has stopped. We don't know dates or times. Sirens are 24 hours a day. It's relentless. Helicopters invade our sky. Chainsaws sound nonstop and we run outside in hopes it's in our neighborhood.

"Let me back up. We awoke around 6 a.m. Friday morning without power. The storm was loud and pounding but we didn't know where we were in the storm. We could not get updates. Around 8:30 a.m., we lost internet across cell lines. I called a friend and got her to look at radar and let me know an ETA on rain ending. That was the last call I was able to make. By 9:30 a.m. ALL cell signal was completely lost. The rain was increasing. We could see the creek rising. Johnny stepped outside under the porch and was soaked from head to toe after 30 seconds.

"Around 11 a.m., we felt like we could go out and survey the neighborhood. We began to feel the weight of the destruction, yet we had NO clue. The creek had turned into a river greater than 50 yards wide. The noise of water heaters, propane tanks, bikes, grills, construction supplies and yard equipment banging on the rails of our bridge to Black Mountain was deafening. We saw two neighbors with trees on their homes and knew they were taking on water."

Meanwhile in Asheville, Bryan King and his wife Angela Koh are assessing the damage to their 12 Bones Smokehouse on Foundry Street in the River Arts District. As I wrote in my book, North Carolina's Eateries, "Even if 12 Bones had not been made famous by Barack Obama's visits there, it would be a 'must-do' in Asheville." When I first visited 12 Bones several years ago, it was located closer to the French Broad River. Had Bryan and Angela not moved the restaurant a few blocks up the hill it, would have been completely washed away. At its current location, they may be able to repair and survive.

Angela's sister writes, "As the floodwaters recede, we see catastrophic damage to homes and businesses, including the River Arts District, where 12 Bones was founded. Entire livelihoods have been lost. In nearly every direction you look, everything is caked in mud and scattered debris. Broken wood and mangled wiring now stand where intersections once existed."

Coincidentally, on Oct. 15, the publisher Blair is releasing "River Road," a book of poems by mountain author Wayne Caldwell. His fine poetry describes the power of the flooding waters on the French Broad as shown in the following excerpt:

Selection from "River Road" By Wayne Caldwell

The French Broad, being a river, floods. How many times over the millennia has it left its banks and moved whatever was swept up in it. To some far away (and sometimes ridiculous) place? Perhaps thousands. And each time it returned to its placid face.

The worst (in the last century) was in July 1916. Asheville's Riverside Park was washed away. Parts of which one could have seen rushing by my house, had it been there then. (Even this relatively high ground would have been inundated for several days.)

Only a half dozen people died in Asheville, which I'd consider a small miracle. Thanks to the telephone, warning came to Marshall, and only two or three drowned, even though the courthouse was about the only thing left on Main Street. Fifty-Three houses disappeared.

From high ground one could have seen rushing by, bales of cotton, houses, mules, gas tanks, vehicles, sheds, chickens, roosting on pieces of roof, tires, fences, trees, pigs, dogs, cats ... anything thing not tied down ... and many things that were.

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• Citation (aglc Style)

D.G. Martin One on One, 'The great floods of 1916 and 2024', *Goldsboro News-Argus, The* (online), 10 Oct 2024 https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19C20808CA938CD0



Letters to the Editor

October 10, 2024 | Goldsboro News-Argus, The (NC) Author: Staff Writer | Section: Opinion | 1542 Words OpenURL Link

About closing Brunswick County schools

To the editor:

On Monday, Sept. 16, about 60-70 employees of Brunswick County Schools had to stand in place in their car or at the work place. I understand the decision to close school is a weighty one. It affects a lot of people. Parents have to scurry to provide safety for their children while fulfilling work obligations. School officials and employees have to make alternative plans also. The safety of all is and should be the motive behind such a weighty decision.

In this day of instant news and weather reports, updates are constant and readily available. The teachers, school staff, and employees should not be burdened with the task. The persons or persons who make the initial decision should be responsible to keep updated with developing conditions.

The superintendent should be given the authority by the school board to say to all, "Stay Home." Even telling the teachers and staff to stay home would be preferable to people being stranded in their cars (some cars totally lost) and/or their places of employment overnight.

All should be included in a process that brings about a more equitable treatment of the heroes who staff our schools.

Paul Lombardi

Shallotte

Boot them all out of office

To the editor:

With the Biden/Harris Administration suddenly realizing the problems they created with 10 million illegals and open borders, County Commissioner chairman Williams and his cronies appear to have suddenly realized the problems they created approving 40,000+ units of development in Brunswick County that we have insufficient infrastructure to support.

Neither administration realized they can't undo the mess, and both can't claim they have a rational plan to fix it going forward. As taxpayers and residents, we have been harpooned by this indefensible ineptitude.

The only solution is to "boot them all out of office." To return them to their positions would be like giving a bonus to a fireman who sets your house on fire and then wants kudos for coming and watching it burn down.

Larry Hershoff

Sunset Beach

Policies have real world consequences

To the editor:

There's a lot of criticism going around about hurricane relief. Maybe if we inserted "Ukraine" on the NC map, relief would come so much faster. Funny!

Fact check. Thousands of National Guard were dispatched with rescue equipment and airlifts full of food and water. World Kitchen is serving up thousands of meals, mule teams are trekking up treacherous slopes loaded with supplies. Millions in relief funds are flowing into websites ready to take applications.

As a country, we are always in cleanup mode. How long must we bicker about climate change instead of doing everything we can to prepare? No one expected the impact of Hurricane Helene to be this bad. Why not? Scientists have been screaming from the rooftops, warning us for decades. We refused to listen.

Extreme weather is here to stay. The least we can do is pay attention to policies officials push for. Don't buy into bluster, empty rhetoric and finger pointing. The "other guy" pushed to shut down the government right before this multi-state disaster. I wonder how fast relief efforts would have been then? The other guy wants to cut funding for FEMA and shut down NOAA, the agency that tracks monster storms and warns us ahead of time. Remember the 2017 paper towel "relief effort" for Puerto Rico? That was not leadership. Policies have real world consequences. The leaders we choose can make the difference between life and death when disaster strikes. Someday, it could be your life. Choose wisely.

Debora Mawji

Sunset Beach

'JD' stands for Jarring Dishonesty

To the editor:

JD Vance is historically unpopular. He said kids are better off if mothers stay with husbands who beat them. He called women without babies "childless cat ladies" and suggested that their votes should count less. That was so offensive that Fox News' Trey Gowdy felt compelled to leap to the defense of nuns.

But Vance's unapologetic lying truly sets him apart. When neo-Nazis lied about Haitian immigrants in Springfield, Ohio eating their neighbors' pets, Vance repeated the lie. When Springfield's Republican Mayor and Ohio's Republican governor debunked it and begged Vance to stop, he refused. "If I have to create stories, then that's what I'm going to do," Vance confessed. "You just said this is a story you created," said a shocked interviewer. "Yes," Vance replied. Vance will literally say anything to get what he wants.

In 2016, Vance said, "I'm a 'Never Trump' guy." He called Trump "cultural heroin" and "an idiot" who is "unfit for our nation's highest office," adding, "I can't stomach Trump." Vance said Trump was "leading the white working class to a very dark place," and accused Trump of being "America's Hitler."

In 2024, when Vance saw the chance to become Trump's VP, he flip-flopped. "I was wrong," declared Vance, claiming he was duped by the media until he realized that Trump "delivered for the American people."

But that was just another lie. Vance told an acquaintance in 2020 that Biden would beat Trump because "Trump has just so thoroughly failed to deliver."

CNN's fact-checker found that Vance lied throughout the debate. "I never supported a national ban" on abortion, Vance lied, despite the fact that there's audio of him in 2022 saying, "I certainly would like abortion to be illegal nationally."

And, when Walz asked him "Did Trump lose the 2020 election?" Vance wouldn't answer. "That's a damning non-answer," said Walz.

Trump thought so, too. Two days later, valice laisely claimed that Trump won.
L. McGann
Leland
Trump retaliates, Rouzer refuses, Biden and Harris rush relief
To the editor:
In March 2020, Trump shut down the economy due to COVID, triggering America's worst economic contraction. Unemployment hit 14.8%. Gross Domestic Product, (GDP), the amount of goods and services the economy produces, plummeted 32.9%, the worst drop ever. Biden and Harris took office with Americans hurting.
They immediately brought relief, delivering 300 million vaccine shots in their first 150 days. They added more jobs and more GDP growth during their administration's first year than in the first year of any other administration in 50 years, thanks to the American Rescue Plan, an economic relief package enacted just seven weeks after they took office. Unemployment fell to 3.9%!
ARP brought NC over \$8 billion, benefitting 1.3 million families with 2.1 million children. David Rouzer, and every Republican representative and senator voted "NO."
I thought of that in September when I read that our commissioners accepted the latest installment of relief that ARP brought Brunswick County: \$1.42 million to expand broadband to 319 unserved rural families, even though 62% of Brunswick County voted 'Trump' in 2020.
After the recent storms, Biden and Harris are again bringing relief, with 500 FEMA staff and 1,000 soldiers helping deliver food, water and medicine to NC's ravaged rural areas.
Trump falsely accused them of "going out of their way to not help people in Republican areas." In fact, Georgia's Republican governor praised their responsiveness, saying "FEMA has been embedded with us since before the storm hit."
Trump is a liar who projects his own faults onto others. Former Trump aides Mark Harvey and Olivia Troye said Trump was flagrantly partisan, stalling urgent federal disaster aid for Democratic-voting regions like California and Puerto Rico.
Trump rewarded supporters in Florida with aid but withheld it from non-supporters. Rouzer refused to help his own supporters to keep Democrats from succeeding. Biden and Harris are rushing relief because they believe a president should help all Americans.
Rich Cooper
Leland
Storm damage worse because of Republican legislators
To the editor:
Brunswick County is represented in NC's Senate by Bill Rabon (District 8) and in NC's House by Frank Iler (District 17) and Charles Miller (District 19). All are Republicans with much to answer for, according to explosive revelations

in "How the North Carolina Legislature Left Homes Vulnerable to Helene," New York Times, 10/3/24.

Area residents were already upset because Republican officials consistently favor developers who fund their campaigns, allowing overdevelopment to threaten what makes Brunswick County special. The destruction of homes and loss of life from "three thousand-year storms" in nine years demonstrates that the actions of these Republican legislators made the damage worse.

Efforts to weaken NC building standards accelerated in 2010, when Republicans took control of both houses of the NC General Assembly. They rejected limits on steep slope construction, which could have reduced the number of homes lost to landslides; blocked a requirement that homes be built above the height of expected flooding; weakened wetland protections, increasing the risk of dangerous storm water runoff; and slowed adoption of updated building codes, making it harder for NC to qualify for federal climate-resilience grants.

The NC home building industry has systematically opposed rules requiring that homes be built to higher standards, according to Kim Wooten, an engineer who serves on the North Carolina Building Code Council, the group that sets home building requirements for NC.

"The home builders association has fought every bill that has come before the General Assembly to try to improve life safety," said Wooten, whose company, Facilities Strategies Group, specializes in building engineering. Wooten says many Republican lawmakers are themselves home builders or have received campaign contributions from the industry, and "vote for bills that line their pocketbooks and make home building cheaper."

We can protect ourselves and Brunswick County from developers' and their Republican enablers by electing Democrats Katherine Randall (Senate, District 8), Charles Jones (House, District 17) and Jill Brown (House, District 19).

Michael P. Rush

Leland

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• Citation (aglc Style)

Staff Writer, 'Letters to the Editor', *Goldsboro News-Argus, The* (online), 10 Oct 2024 https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19C1F03D8DB5EEF8



Mitigation after Helene - MY VIEW

October 10, 2024 | Graham Star (Robbinsville, NC)

Section: Opinions | 501 Words

Page: 4A OpenURL Link

While Robbinsville was mercifully denied the tragedy of our Western North Carolina neighbors, serious concerns lie ahead. There are economic realities the politicians and parts of the country who question the science of climate change must reconcile. FEMA is out of regular fiinding as of Aug. 7 -and that triggers "Immediate Needs Funding Guidance," which transitions to life-saving and critical needs of people. Many other FEMA programs are put on hold until Congress can appropriate more funds.

As part of the Biden/Harris Infrastructure Bill -and funds partly re-directed from COVID -a revolving loan fiind was created for climateimpacted areas to mitigate drainage systems, roads, bridges buildings, dams, etc. As the loans are repaid, the money goes back to address additional mitigation projects creating a self perpetuating source of funding, (fema.gov).

Making it harder for storms and other disasters to economically impact communities together with a forward looking plan to continue to fund hardening infrastructure is the best defense we have now.

The effects of climate change has been considered a national security issue by our military for years. Joe Bryan is the Pentagons' Chief Sustainability Officer and he said, "The nations that are most resilient and best able to manage the effects of climate change will secure an advantage."

He also said that the investments made in the 2023 Biden/Harris budget for hardening equipment and facilities are investments necessary for successful missions, (defence, gov) Conservative media typically characterizes the Biden/Harris administration on climate as not trustworthy. Not recognized is how dangerous and misguided the fossilfuel support of the former president will be to all of us. Despite all evidence to the contrary -even by our military -Trump defiantly supports expanding oil and gas, getting rid of Biden/Harris regulations regarding electrification of power and transportation -while ignoring the pollution and record breaking storms which will follow.

According to pewresearch.org, Repubhcan lawmakers rank climate change 20th among 20 categories surveyed. Research shows Republicans tend to prioritize the economic costs of carbon neutrality over the costs and intensification of deadly climate events. Younger Republicans are more likely to support a greener economy than older lawmakers -as they see future effects on their young families.

Exceedingly concerning to all who followed the storm coverage during Helene is the desire of Project2025 to dismantle NOAA and as Rick Thomas -an Alaskan climatologist -said, "The intent is clearly to cripple public weather forecasting."

Why? Republicans know NOAA studies and accumulates data on humancaused climate change that Republicans and their TV channels ignore or scuttle as fake news. In an effort to deprive the public of NOAA data on the true nature of climate change. Republicans can promote their anti-climate change agenda and half the country will sadly believe it.

This is a fascinating look at climate myths and facts spelled out by dedicated scientists. Whatever your concerns and doubts, you will find it here: skepticalscience.com/argument, php.

Republican climate deniers typically vote against climate solutions. Knowledge is power. Lynne Stevens writes a biweekly column for The Graham Star. She can be reached via email, geminga@mailfence. com.

• Citation (aglc Style)

'Mitigation after Helene - MY VIEW', $Graham\ Star$ (online), 10 Oct 2024 4A https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19C1DECE9B14B188



Helene brought out the best and worst in us

October 10, 2024 | News & Record (Greensboro, NC) Section: Main | 661 Words

Page: 5A OpenURL Link

RALEIGH - As we mourn the deaths and grapple with the destruction inflicted on our state by Hurricane Helene, I submit that the storm has brought out much that is good about North Carolina - and much that is vile about social media.

I'll start with the positive. Residents of the mountain counties most affected by Helene have fought heroically for their lives, their families and their neighbors, often against long odds and terrifying threats. They haven't fought alone. Others from across North Carolina and beyond flocked in to help.

We've only just begun to collect their stories of prudent planning, daring rescues, and dogged determination. These tales feature the likes of Hendersonville's James White, who led more than a dozen neighbors sheltering in his home to safety with ropes and lifejackets, as well as Eddie Hunnell, recently moved to North Carolina from Colorado, who leapt into the swollen New River to save a stranger, Lesley Worth, separated from her husband by the raging stream.

At larger scale, hundreds of churches, charities, companies and volunteer networks sprang to the assistance of their fellow Carolinians. So did law enforcement, fire and rescue teams, and emergency-response personnel from counties, municipalities, state agencies and other public authorities.

On the ground, we've seen a great deal of cooperation across jurisdictional and political boundaries. Agriculture Commissioner Steve Troxler, for example, sent North Carolina Forest Service staffers familiar with the rugged terrain to guide National Guard units into position. On Oct. 7, Democratic and Republican appointees on the State Board of Elections voted unanimously to empower local boards in 13 hard-hit counties to modify the locations and hours of early-voting sites and other election procedures - but only by bipartisan votes of those boards, a prudent constraint to reassure a jittery public.

Democratic mayors have worked closely with Republican county commissioners to coordinate relief. Gov. Roy Cooper, U.S. Sens. Thom Tillis and Ted Budd, lawmakers from both parties - all have pitched in to comfort victims, survey damage, coordinate responses and convey timely, accurate information to the public.

That's not to say there haven't been miscues and disagreements. Tillis and Budd questioned the pace at which military personnel from Fort Liberty and other bases were deployed into the devastated counties after the storm. Others have criticized the adequacy of response by the Federal Emergency Management Agency.

While it will take some time to sort out all the claims and counterclaims, it's not too early to label these issues as legitimate topics for debate.

Unfortunately, much of the "debate" unfolding on social media over the past week has been anything but legitimate. Whether spreading wacky conspiracy theories about lithium mines and weather control or uttering grotesque slanders about Kamala Harris and Joe Biden intentionally "letting" Republican voters "drown," a host of very-online, supposedly conservative provocateurs and hacks have made a bad situation immeasurably worse.

Here's what a real conservative leader, state Sen. Kevin Corbin, had to say. "PLEASE help stop this junk," wrote Corbin, who represents North Carolina's eight westernmost counties. "It is just a distraction to people trying to do their job."

"Folks, this is a catastrophic event of which this country has never known. It is the largest crisis event in the history of N.C. The state is working non-stop. DOT has deployed workers from all over the state. Duke (Energy)] has 10,000 workers on this. FEMA is here. The National Guard is here in large numbers."

Some incendiary memes are likely the product of misunderstandings, such as emergency officials redirecting volunteers away from dangerous roadways or relief agencies refusing certain donated items they aren't equipped to store or distribute. Others may well be the result of bad calls made in good faith, in stressful conditions, by officials with incomplete information or inadequate training.

Can policymakers properly second-guess such decisions after the fact? Of course! That time will come. Right now, our immediate challenges remain rescue and relief - challenges our fellow North Carolinians have met with magnificent resilience.

John Hood is a John Locke Foundation board member.

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• Citation (aglc Style)

'Helene brought out the best and worst in us', *Greensboro News & Record* (online), 10 Oct 2024 5A https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19C1EA9EABDF52C0



Legislature unveils \$273M in relief funding

October 10, 2024 | News & Record (Greensboro, NC) Author: RICHARD CRAVER Staff Reporter | Section: Life | 1825 Words

Page: 2B OpenURL Link

State Republican legislative leaders cleared Wednesday a \$273 million Hurricane Helene relief funding bill that represents the state's initial recovery assistance.

About \$250 million will be made accessible to state agencies and local governments toward relief and recovery operations in the 25 affected counties that include Alleghany, Ashe, Watauga and Wilkes. The relief funding was inserted into

House Bill 149

via a gut-and-replace bill mechanism.

The Senate voted first to clear HB149, followed by the House. Democratic Gov. Roy Cooper is expected to sign the bill shortly.

The state has a rainy-day fund exceeding \$4.75 billion. The \$273 million will be used primarily as required state matches to secure federal funds. House speaker Tim Moore, R-Cleveland, said the expectation is a 10% state match of a 90% federal contribution.

"There is not a specific earmark of any of these dollars for a specific program," said Senate leader Phil Berger, R-Rockingham. "The bulk of the money at this point is going to provide the executive branch with some cash-flow flexibility for state agencies to do the things they're already empowered to do" in the recovery efforts.

When asked about why the legislature is not providing more from the rainy-day fund, Berger said, "This is not all of it, not by a long shot."

"We have to be aware that much of what we will need for recovery will be funded at the federal level by FEMA, and the state's obligation is a match of some sort.

"We don't want to get too far ahead of the federal government on that because we don't want to supplant those federal dollars with state dollars if we're not required to."

Proposed state relief money a drop in the bucket

Moore said legislators recognize that the first relief funding bill will not come close to meeting projections of billions of dollars in damages. He said those experiencing major residential damages, if not a total loss, include several western N.C. legislators.

"We know this is just a drop in the bucket to what's going to be the total cost," Moore said in addressing the bill. "We're well over \$10 billion, and it's going to be higher than that."

A second one-day session focused on disaster relief efforts is scheduled for Oct. 24.

"This will (be) multiple years that this (recovery) process has to be dealt with at the state level and the federal level," Moore said.

Berger said HB149 will suspend into at least early 2025 the post-COVID-19 pandemic law that requires the Council of State to renew every 30 days a governor's executive orders on declared emergencies.

The bill will waive temporarily driver's license renewals in those counties, along with certain environmental regulations, such as burning, road construction and wastewater, to accelerate the recovery process.

There will be small business loans made in conjunction with Golden Leaf Foundation that will be reimbursed through FEMA.

"Recovering from Hurricane Helene will be no small task," Berger said. "I believe, we, the people of North Carolina, are up to that task. This is just a first step."

Berger and Moore said they have met with Democratic Gov. Roy Cooper to get his input on the relief legislation, as well as those of minority leaders Sen. Dan Blue of Wake County and Rep. Robert Reives of Chatham County.

"North Carolina is facing an unprecedented disaster that requires an unprecedented response through a massive partnership among federal, state, local and non-profit partners to get Western North Carolina the help it needs to recover," Cooper spokesman Jordan Monaghan said.

"The governor welcomes the General Assembly's return to allocate critical recovery funding for communities hit by Hurricane Helene as a first of many steps in rebuilding Western North Carolina to be more resilient and stronger than ever."

Voting changes for NC general election

A legislative staff analysis of HB149 shows how legislators are providing guidance to board of elections in the 25 affected counties for handling the upcoming Nov. 5 general election.

Most of the affected counties are conservative leaning outside Buncombe, Mecklenburg and Watauga.

Berger said much of the emergency rule elections changes has been approved by the state Board of Elections, or in consultation with the board.

"These are all common-sense steps we can take to ensure that western North Carolinians in the affected counties can vote no matter where they are in the state," Berger said.

About \$5 million will be provided to county boards of elections for voter outreach and communication efforts.

Absentee ballots for voters in the 25 counties can be returned to any county board of elections, early voting sites or precincts, as well as establishing a hotline for displaced voters from the 25 counties.

Berger said there will be "additional flexibilities for appointing election judges and poll workers, including from outside a particular county," such as state employees without taking leave from their jobs.

There will be the ability to modify previously adopted early voting formats that could include changing and combining early voting sites and precincts, and amending the number of early voting hours and days.

Public school calendar changes

HB149 contains language providing direction for how school systems in the 25 affected counties can adjust their 2024-25 calendars.

HB149 allows public schools to excuse days missed for schools that closed during September and October related to Hurricane Helene damages.

Other elements include:

Expands the amount of authorized remove instruction time for schools in the 25 affected counties for the remainder of the school year. Treats employees and contractors of public school units as having worked on days deemed completed and provide funding to replaced lost compensation of school nutrition employees. Requires the state Department of Public Instruction to report on calendar flexibility and compensation provided. Waives requirements for students enrolled in educator preparation program to complete clinical internships over a certain amount of time if they were scheduled to complete the internships in December.

'Make sure everybody gets what they need up there'

Berger, Moore and several legislators representing western N.C. said they are hearing from frustrated and angry residents about the effectiveness of the relief efforts to date.

There is concerns about the repeating of misinformation claims that FEMA and the state are purposefully neglecting conservative-leaning counties.

Several western N.C. legislators praised FEMA and state relief efforts, but also expressed their concerns that it wasn't available as quickly as needed after the flooding began.

Some legislators said the mountain parts of western N.C. already tend to be overlooked, forgotten about, and may lean too much on their ruggedness and a culture of being uncomfortable with government assistance - all of which may lead residents not to reach out for help.

"There is a lot of distrust in the areas I have, but I hope we can begin to show that North Carolina is stepping up to its responsibilities and we are here for the people of the west," said Sen. Ralph Hise, R-McDowell.

Berger said legislators will study over the coming months the state's immediate relief efforts to determine what worked and didn't work, and how they can be improved.

"Now is not the time to litigate those sorts of things," Berger said. "There will be a time when we can go back and look at how things proceeded.

"We want to make sure everybody gets what they need up there. We want to identify those problems when they happen, try to correct them and make sure we know the reasons so in the future we don't have the same conditions."

Berger said "there is nothing in this bill" in regards to temporarily relaxing environmental regulations "will affect the health and safety in terms of rebuilding requirements."

Re-building concerns

There has been concern expressed that recent legislation that loosened some state building codes may have played a role in making buildings more susceptible to flooding and landslide devastation.

A New York Times article last week - titled "How North Carolina Left Homes Vulnerable to Helene" - cited that the state Republican supermajority has refused to limit construction of new homes on steep slopes, blocked a rule requiring said homes to be elevated above a certain height, and weakened protections intended to address potential landslides.

Moore responded to the story by saying "it was simply wrong, that regulatory reform in these cases somehow made buildings more susceptible to damage. That simply is not true. You have buildings that have been destroyed that have been there 60 years."

Democratic legislative leaders have discussed the rebuilding of western N.C. must take into consideration climate change realities in terms of permanent building solutions.

"We want to make sure that the rebuild that takes place to the extent that we're talking about something permanent, that we can get that moving as quickly as possible, and not that we want to cut any corners," Berger said.

Veto overrides on hold?

The House floor agenda lists a veto override vote on Senate Bill 445, titled "Recording of Court-Filed Documents," that the Senate overrode by a 27-7 vote on Sept. 9.

There has been expectations of both chambers casting Wednesday veto override votes on House Bill 10, which features Republican priorities of \$460 million in K-12 Opportunity Scholarship funding for the 2024-25 school year, and would require all sheriffs to cooperate with federal ICE officials.

Cooper vetoed HB10 on Sept. 10.

On Wednesday, HB10 was moved to the next 1-day session, on Oct. 24.

The Opportunity Scholarship language in HB10 allows North Carolina parents - no matter how much they make - to get vouchers to help cover tuition for K-12 private or religious schools for their children.

It's likely the Republican supermajorities in both chambers will override such a veto, as they have seven of Cooper's eight vetoes this session.

Cooper has declared a state public education emergency in response to the proposed Opportunity Scholarship expansion.

There are more than 72,000 voucher applications for this school year, but only about 16,000 students were approved before the money ran out. The \$460 million would cover the 2024-25 costs for all applicants.

The funding for the Opportunity Scholarship waitlist is retroactive, with eligible families qualifying for a tuition reimbursement from their schools.

Liberal-leaning response

Alexandra Sirota, executive director of the liberal-leaning N.C. Budget & Tax Center, said that "legislators have the opportunity to support the immediate response to Hurricane Helene's devastation in Western N.C. and ensure the people in every community impacted by climate disasters have what they need right now to be safe and begin the long road to recovery.

"While federal aid will be important, the state should take on the responsibility of ensuring that every disaster survivor - especially those historically marginalized and with low incomes including people of color, seniors, people with disabilities, people experiencing homelessness, people with limited English proficiency, and rural residents - is reached with food, housing, water, cash assistance and care to secure a full recovery."

Sirota said that since "the scale of need is historic, drawing down the Savings Reserve Fund that stands at \$4.75 billion is essential but insufficient.

"Lawmakers must also act now to pause the scheduled income tax reductions for profitable corporations and the wealthy few, which are scheduled for January."

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 Citation ((aglc Style)
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RICHARD CRAVER; Staff Reporter, 'Legislature unveils \$273M in relief funding', *Greensboro News & Record* (online), 10 Oct 2024 2B https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19C1EA9E77BC3810