Charlotte Observer, The (NC) - October 20, 2024 - page 20

October 20, 2024 | Charlotte Observer, The (NC) | Charlotte, North Carolina | Page 20

PAGE 20A | SUNDAY **OCTOBER 20,** 2024

Mark Robinson says alleged comments in CNN report won't hurt his 2024 election chances

BY NORA O'NEILL noneill@charlotteobserver.com

Republican Lt. Gov. Mark Robinson on Thursday said he doesn't think sexually explicit and racist comments attributed to him in a CNN report last month will hurt his chances at being elected

governor. Robinson, who denies he made the posts and recently announced a lawsuit was filed against CNN over the report, told The Charlotte Observer at a meet and greet in south Charlotte that the comments posted on the website Nude Africa are "ridiculous." And while Robinson has repeatedly said the comments were not made by him, he specifically condemned the content of the comments on Thursday.

The comments included Robinson saying he was a Black Nazi and that he wished slavery would



Lt. Gov. Mark Robinson address a group of around 10 people during a meet and greet at

return, CNN reported. "Yes, I condemn the comments," Robinson

said when asked. "I mean, as a matter of fact, the comments were ridiculous. Some of the stuff that I read that I supposedly said on this site are

just nonsense. And so of course we condemn those

comments." He called CNN a "dishonest news organization" and that "many people, including a great number of independents," have no faith in news outlets. CNN reported it found multiple online accounts under the same email address used on Nude Africa and noted connections between the comments and Robinson's

other online activity. Robinson has a history of making controversial remarks, including on abortion, LGBTQ+ rights, Jewish people and Black Lives Matter. In 2019, a Facebook video showed Robinson saying that abortion is not about protecting women but rather killing children because "you weren't responsible enough to keep your skirt down."

Recent polls show Attorney General Josh Stein polling between 10-20 points ahead of Robinson, while the race for president is much tighter in the battleground state.

Robinson spoke to the Observer at a meet and greet event at Victory **Christian Center Campus** III where he addressed a room of around 10 people after arriving 30 minutes late. Robinson said he wasn't concerned about

the low turnout. "I kind of like smaller

groups. We did this kind of quickly. It wasn't something that we organized for months," he said. "We're certainly not discouraged by the size at all. We love how people can go out and be emissaries for us and give people a more in depth view of

actually who we are." Matt Hurley, a new addition to Robinson's campaign team after most of his former staff quit, said he has a big philosophy change for the campaign: instead of keeping Robinson "locked up," he wants to let Robinson speak to more people including news media. The event at Victory Christian Center Campus, Hurley said, was an attempt at outreach to the Black community.

Robinson spoke to the group about education, Hurricane Helene relief, state agencies and more, before taking questions from attendees.

"The size may look small, but there's people behind you," one attendee told Robinson at the end of his speech. "Don't be moved by what you see We're behind you. We're praying for you."

Nora O'Neill: noroneill

on cutting the drug off at

its source.

With fentanyl trafficking big business in the Queen City, feds want to run it dry

Victory Christian Center Campus III in Charlotte on Thursday.

BY JULIA COIN jcoin@charlotteobserver.com

Charlotte's fentanyl problem has prompted federal attention and in-

tervention. Officials involved in a U.S. Treasury program rolled out under President Joe Biden met in Charlotte Wednesday to join private and public leaders — from federal agents to sheriffs to bankers — to learn how to better shut down fentanyl traffickers' business operations.

Charlotte — the country's second-largest bank-

ing center — was one of the first seven U.S. cities the program, called PRO-TECT, visited since it launched in May. It is focused almost entirely on finding fentanyl dealers

and suppliers and severing

them from their money. The U.S. Attorney's Office for the Western District of North Carolina has a similar program in place, but the federal involvement will enhance how information is shared between private and public sectors — or between federal agents, sheriffs and bankers, officials said.

It is designed to give pros-

ecutors more insight into how dealers move money, from quick ATM deposits to big bank account trans-

Fentanyl has killed 37,000 North Carolinans in the last two decades, according to N.C. Department of Justice data.

The highly addictive and lethal synthetic opioid has flooded communities around Charlotte and overwhelmed local jails, police departments, courts and even classrooms, The Charlotte Observer previously reported.

Grassroots organizations, like the nonprofit

Fentanyl Victims Network of North Carolina, tackle the trickle-down effect of fentanyl's pervasiveness.

"A person like me -aperson with a dead kid — I'm worried about getting dealers off the street," said Barb Walsh, the executive director of the nonprofit.

The U.S. Treasury Department exists in a different sphere, she said, but those spheres can't stay

separate for much longer. "If there's nobody else at the national level trying to help," she said, "then what we're doing won't matter."

Deputy Secretary of the Treasury Wally Adeyemo, in an interview with The Charlotte Observer, said the department is focused

"If you are a drug dealer or if you are someone who's running a distribution network," he said, "you should know, and your family should know that we're going to come after the money you are making by selling these drugs into these communities and killing our local citizens."

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Warrant reveals new details about NC police officer's accused misdeeds against a woman

BY JOE MARUSAK jmarusak@charlotteobserver.com

An arrest warrant revealed new details about a Mooresville police officer charged Tuesday with misdemeanors related to allegations of misconduct involving a woman he met.

Officer David Stephen Brashear, 45, of Mount Holly, is accused of "deleting digital evidence from a Town of Mooresville cell phone" as another Mooresville police officer conducted a crimi- formation of an indivi-

nal investigation involving Brashear, according to the warrant.

Mooresville Police Capt. Jaime Quinn obtained the warrant on Tuesday. Brashear was arrested on misdemeanor charges of resist, delay and obstruct and accessing computers.

The warrant was filed at the Iredell County Courthouse in Statesville. Brashear is accused of accessing a computer "to query a state-owned law enforcement database to

obtain the personal in-

without legal justification," the warrant states.

dual for personal use and

Brashear met the woman at a local establishment, according to a town of Mooresville news release Tuesday. Police didn't name the establishment.

The incident occurred Oct. 9, according to the

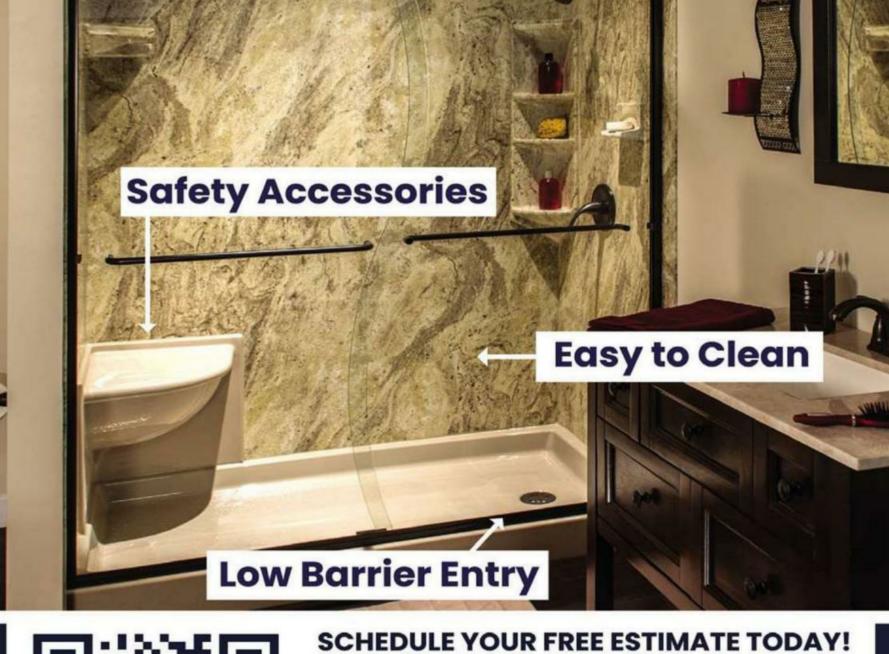
warrant. "This may not be an isolated incident," police officials said in the news release, urging anyone with more information about Brashear to call Quinn at 704-664-3311.

Police have declined to say if Brashear is still employed with the town, and if so, whether he is on paid or unpaid suspension.

Brashear is free on a \$10,000 unsecured bond, according to the warrant.

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Multiple people hospitalized after early morning house fire in Charlotte, officials say

BY MARK PRICE msprice@charlotteobserver.com

Five people have been hospitalized after being caught in house fire early Friday, Oct. 18, in northwest Charlotte, the Charlotte Fire Department

reported on social media. Details of how the peo-

ple were injured have not yet been released. One patient has

life-threatening injuries and three had minor injuries, Medic ambulance service said.

The home is located in the 2700 block of Coronet Way in the Smallwood community, just north of the Stewart Creek Green-

the structure by the time the firefighters arrived around 12:30 a.m., fire department officials said. The blaze was under control in about 20 minutes, fire officials said. "Charlotte Fire investi-

Flames had breached

gators deemed the fire to be accidental due to unattended cooking," fire investigator said.

The blaze caused \$25,000 in damage, officials said.

This is a developing story.

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