

Bucs owners double hurricane-relief donation to \$2M

October 17, 2024 | Courier-Times, The (Roxboro, NC) Author: Field Level Media| Section: National | 221 Words OpenURL Link

The owners of the Tampa Bay Buccaneers have increased their donation to nonprofit agencies that are leading hurricane-relief efforts to \$2 million. The club announced Thursday that the Glazer family added another \$1 million donation in the wake of Hurricane Milton, which made landfall on Oct. 9 along Florida's west coast. The family donated \$1 million to support local agencies following Hurricane Helene earlier this month. "The Tampa Bay region has experienced traumatic hardships caused by recent Hurricanes Milton and Helene and at times such as these, our community comes together to provide the support and resources that are desperately needed," the Glazers said in a team-released statement. "As we continue the tireless work of recovering from the devastation that so many have experienced, we are committed to supporting the local agencies that are providing crucial services to our neighbors in need. Despite the difficulties of recent weeks, our resilient Tampa Bay community will persevere and thrive once again." Raymond James Stadium, where the Buccaneers play their home games, sustained only minor damage in Hurricane Milton. The home of the Tampa Bay Rays, Tropicana Field in St. Petersburg, suffered significant damage, however. The storm left the Tropicana Field roof in tatters and the stadium won't be totally repaired by Opening Day, the Tampa Bay Times reported this week. --Field Level Media

Copyright 2024, The Courier-Times, All Rights Reserved.

• Citation (aglc Style)

Field Level Media, 'Bucs owners double hurricane-relief donation to \$2M', *Courier-Times, The* (online), 17 Oct 2024 https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19C49873C5627E88



Poll: Impact on voters' money most important issue

October 17, 2024 | Courier-Times, The (Roxboro, NC) Author: Alan Wooten | The Center Square | Section: State | 523 Words OpenURL Link

(The Center Square) – Inflation and prices, and jobs and the economy, are two choices that are first and third and account for 46.6% of North Carolinians' answer to, "Which is the most important issue in the 2024 election?"

The Carolina Journal poll of 600 likely voters Saturday through Monday had abortion in between the two economic concerns, with immigration fourth. The margin of error is \pm 1. 3.99%; sampling was provided by Cygnal.

The results mostly mirror a national polling of 2,560. The Center Square Voters' Voice Poll says likely voters are more concerned about inflation (47%), illegal immigration (40%) and the economy (32%). Next were abortion rights (26%), crime (22%), climate change (18%), health care access (18%), government corruption (16%) and national debt and government spending (14%).

There were no revelations by the Carolina Journal poll in the headline grabber races. The slight edge of Republican Donald Trump over Democrat Kamala Harris is 47.2%-46.6%, doubling his September 0.3% lead in the presidential race. Democrat Josh Stein's commanding lead over Republican Mark Robinson is 49.3%-35.8% in the governor's race, igniting a 6.3% September lead into a runaway with a controversial CNN report having happened in between.

"The road to the White House continues to run through the Old North State in the 2024 presidential election, with Trump and Harris locked in a statistical tie," said Donald Bryson, the publisher of Carolina Journal and CEO of the conservative-leaning John Locke Foundation. "But what's equally interesting is the state's long-standing pattern of ballot-splitting. North Carolina has split parties on the gubernatorial and presidential tickets in six of the last nine elections."

The trio of exceptions are Mitt Romney and former Gov. Pat McCrory in 2016 for Republicans, former President Barack Obama and former Gov. Bev Perdue in 2008 for Democrats, and former President George H.W. Bush and former Gov. Iim Martin for Republicans in 1988.

In the other nine Council of State races, Democrats lead for lieutenant governor, Rachel Hunt over Hal Weatherman 43.3%-40.8%; attorney general, Jeff Jackson over Dan Bishop 46.1%-43.4%; superintendent of public instruction, Mo Green over Michele Morrow, 45.7%-43.2%; and secretary of state, Elaine Marshall over Chad Brown 45.1%-42.9%.

Republicans lead for labor commissioner, Luke Farley over Braxton Winston 43.5%-41.7%; state treasurer, Brad Briner over Wesley Harris 43.4%-41.9%; state auditor, Dave Boliek over Jessica Holmes, 40.4%-40.1%; insurance commissioner, Mike Causey over Natasha Marcus 44.2%-41%; and agriculture commissioner, Steve Troxler over Sarah Taber 45.3%-38.4%.

Only Troxler's lead clears the margin of victory and is not statistically tied. The rade between Jackson and Bishop is the only one in the country matching two U.S. House representatives in a state executive office race.

Republican Jefferson Griffin leads Democrat Allison Riggs 44.7%-43.3% in the race for a seat on the state Supreme Court.

North Carolina's emergency authorities were given a vote of confidence – combining "great deal" and "some" – for ability to respond to natural disasters like Hurricane Helene by 66.5%. Only 29.7% had little or no confidence at all.

A question on favorable or unfavorable "opinion of the Federal Emergency Management Agency" went 48.3% unfavorable and 46.4% favorable. And 62.2% said disaster relief responsibility should be equally shared by federal,

state and local entities.

Copyright 2024, The Courier-Times, All Rights Reserved.

• Citation (aglc Style)

Alan Wooten | The Center Square, 'Poll: Impact on voters' money most important issue', *Courier-Times, The* (online), 17 Oct 2024 https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19C49873DFAAF6D0



US retail sales pick up pace in September

October 17, 2024 | Courier-Times, The (Roxboro, NC) Author: Beiyi SEOW| Section: National | 392 Words OpenURL Link

Retail sales in the United States accelerated in September, according to government data released Thursday, a positive sign for consumption as the election approaches.

Overall sales rose 0.4 percent to \$714.4 billion between August and September, according to Commerce Department data, beating analysts' expectations.

In August, sales edged up just 0.1 percent to \$711.3 billion.

Excluding auto and gas station sales, the overall monthly rise would have been even higher at 0.7 percent in September, the report added.

While the US central bank kept interest rates high for a large part of the year -- raising the cost of borrowing for households and businesses to tamp down inflation -- consumer spending has been more robust than expected.

Households have been drawing down on savings from the Covid-19 pandemic period, and the economy could be given a further boost with the Federal Reserve starting to lower rates more recently.

But stronger retail sales growth than forecast "adds to rising doubt" on the number of Fed rate cuts to come this year, said Nationwide chief economist Kathy Bostjancic.

Typically, lower rates are expected to support economic activity, and the robust spending in September caps off a strong advance in the third quarter, Bostjancic added.

This also provides "strong momentum" heading into the year-end, giving Fed policymakers potential reason to adapt their rate reduction plans.

- 'Encouraging' -

Compared with the same month a year ago, retail sales were up 1.7 percent in September.

"The details of the report were encouraging, with spending on food services and a range of retailers contributing," said economist Michael Pearce at Oxford Economics.

He added that a resilient jobs market, strong household balance sheets and declining interest rates point to consumption growth hovering close to three percent in 2025.

"While there have been some signs of tightening in consumer spending, September's numbers show consumers are willing to spend where they see value," said National Retail Federation chief economist Jack Kleinhenz.

"Clearly, consumers continue to carry the economy, and conditions for the retail sector remain favorable as we move into the holiday season," he added.

But Pearce warned that "the impact of Hurricanes Helene and Milton, together with large sales at online retailers Amazon and Walmart will make the October report particularly noisy."

Growth could also slow in the coming quarters with the rise in labor income cooling, credit conditions tight and as

households have exhausted excess savings, Pantheon Macroeconomics cautioned in a recent report.

bys/st

Copyright 2024, The Courier-Times, All Rights Reserved.

• Citation (aglc Style)

Beiyi SEOW, 'US retail sales pick up pace in September', *Courier-Times, The* (online), 17 Oct 2024 https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19C45B5377536BF0



Meet the 2024 NC House and Senate candidates

October 17, 2024 | Courier-Times, The (Roxboro, NC) Author: Staff Writer | Section: News | 2249 Words

OpenURL Link

N.C. House Candidates

Ray Jeffers

Occupation: Farmer

Political Experience: Current State Representative, Served 3 terms on the Person County Board of Commissioners

Civic Involvement: Roxboro Kiwanis Club, Roxboro Sertoma Club, Allens Masonic Lodge No. 676, H.B. Shaw Consistory No. 337 (33rd degree), El Jebel Temple No. 97 (Shriner).

Jason Chambers

Occupation: Sales Representatives

Political Experience: Volunteered on numerous political campaigns, including in 2022 for Courtney Geels congressional campaign, where I served as her Person County coordinator. I also ran in the Republican Primary in 2012 for N.C. House, where I came in second in a four-way primary.

Civic Involvement: I am active in my community and have volunteered for several organizations and charities. Previously served as a member of the Board of Directors on the Lebanon Volunteer Fire Department. Active member of Ridgecrest Baptist Church where I currently serve as an usher and volunteer with the annual Kids Fishing Expo.

N.C. Senate Candidates

Graig Meyer

Occupation: Social Worker, Education Consultant

Political experience: One term N.C. Senate; 4 1/2 terms N.C. House

Civic involvement: Executive Board Member, Southern Regional Education Board; Advisory Board Member, Playmakers Repertory Company; Advisory Board Member, Grace+

Laura Pichardo

Occupation: Accounts Payable

Political experience: I have not served as an elected official. I canvassed door-to-door as a volunteer to get Ted Budd elected as U.S. Senator. I advocated for access to broadband in Caswell County. I advocated to my commissioners and my county manager that we needed broadband internet because it was crucial for us to have internet access to complete schoolwork and work from home. I have also served as the treasurer for the Caswell Republican Party.

Civic involvement: I have been a strong advocate for expanding internet access in rural areas, in rural Caswell

County, to ensure residents can work and study from home; I served on the Caswell Economic Development board, working to promote job creation and economic growth in my community; I encouraged Tourism Development through The Bucks & Bass, LLC: I help promote tourism and small business growth via Bucks & Bass, LLC Bass Fishing Tournaments at Hyco and Mayo lakes. I also work on promoting the Bucks & Bass, LLC Guided Fishing Tours. Supporting tourism development helps small businesses in the area. My involvement highlights my dedication to enhancing economic growth, job creation, and support for small businesses and residents in Person and Caswell County.

Why should you be the voters' choice on election day?

N.C. House candidates

JEFFERS: I am the only candidate with the experience to effectively advocate for Person County in the General Assembly. Having served three terms on the Board of Commissioners, and one term in the N.C. House of Representatives, I have built a rapport across the aisle and have proven my capability of working in a bipartisan manner to secure funding and policies that positively affect Roxboro and Person County.

CHAMBERS: As a proud native who has lived my entire life in the district, I care deeply about this area and the people who live here. The people of Person County (as well as northern Durham County) deserve someone who shares their values representing them in Raleigh. I am a common sense conservative who will always vote in a manner that I believe is in the best interests of my constituents.

N.C. Senate candidates

MEYER: Although I have only represented Person County for two of my 10-plus years in the General Assembly, I can honestly say that I love y'all. The people of Person County are salt of the earth, hard working and generous of spirit. It is an honor to represent you in the General Assembly, and I hope to continue to do so. I promise to continue to direct my public service through the three word mantra of listen, unite, lead.

PICARDO: I am deeply committed to the wellbeing of our community, with a clear vision to address the unique challenges we face. My background in business and community service equips me to make informed, fiscally responsible decisions that benefit all residents. I strongly support education, prioritizing key issues like public safety and economic growth, while maintaining an approachable and transparent leadership style, ensuring that your concerns and ideas are heard and valued.

What are the biggest issues facing the district? What legislation is needed to address those issues?

N.C. House candidates

JEFFERS: Some of the biggest issues facing the district are our infrastructure needs to include repair of roads and bridges, continued expansion of broadband, school construction, and water and sewer. The other areas I have been working on are funding needs for public safety, to include equipment needs of the Sheriff's office, and volunteer fire departments capital needs to include new station construction. This past year, the majority has been exploring the expansion of gambling in the state that could bring new revenue, and if passed I will advocate for these areas to be funded.

CHAMBERS: While there are many issues that need to be addressed, the biggest challenge we have is the need for more good paying jobs in the district and in Person County, in particular. If elected, I will work alongside my colleagues to propose meaningful legislation to incentivize businesses to come to the district as well as spur entrepreneurs to start their own businesses. I also want to help our current business owners, particularly our small businesses, so they can expand and hire more employees.

N.C. Senate candidates

MEYER: I see so much opportunity for Person County over the next decade. Uptown Roxboro will become a thriving hub again. People will be living in the buildings, storefronts will be full, tourists will come for day trips. New employers, large and small, will increase the number of people who can work in the county instead of driving elsewhere. Smart housing policy will accommodate new residents while still keeping living in the community affordable.

All of this is possible with strong leadership from the local and state level. I'm hopeful that we can work on this together. My role is to support economic development, affordable housing, and strong public schools — all of which are needed for a thriving community. This requires a combination of legislation, advocacy with state agencies and private partners, and constituent services.

PICARDO: Senate District No. 23 faces several key issues that require focused legislation to address:

- 1. Economic Development and Job Creation: We have limited economic opportunities. Legislation is needed to incentivize small businesses and attract new industries through grants, investments in infrastructure like water, sewer, and broadband expansion. These efforts can create more jobs and improve economic growth, particularly in rural parts of the district.
- 2. Education and Teacher Support: Schools in the district face challenges with underfunding and teacher shortages. Legislation that increases teacher pay, provides resources for classroom development, and promotes vocational and technical education would strengthen the education system and better prepare students for the workforce.
- 3. Rural Infrastructure and Internet Access: Many rural areas lack adequate infrastructure, including reliable high-speed internet. Passing legislation that funds infrastructure upgrades and ensures affordable broadband access will help bridge the digital divide, improving access to education, healthcare, and job opportunities.
- 4. Public Safety and Law Enforcement: There is a need for investment in public safety, including providing law enforcement with the resources, training, and equipment necessary to keep communities safe. Legislation should also focus on building stronger relationships between law enforcement and the communities they serve, improving trust and transparency.

Do you support the opportunity scholarship or school voucher program? Is the legislature doing enough to fund education at the local level?

N.C. House candidates

JEFFERS: I do not support the voucher program, and voted against it. The office of State Budget and Management has reported due to its passage, Person County Schools will lose over \$700,000 in funding. The state is already failing at providing its statutory responsibility of funding public schools, now on top of this loss it is clear the State is not doing enough to fund public education.

CHAMBERS: First of all, I am fortunate enough to know many excellent teachers and even have several who are members of my family. I will always support adequate funding for our public schools. I also believe in an "all of the above" approach to education. While there are many great public schools throughout our state and in the district, there are others that are not performing well and as a result, our children are not receiving the best possible education that they deserve. That is why I also support private and charter schools as well as homeschooling as alternatives. The opportunity scholarship provides parents the ability to give their children a quality education to succeed in life.

N.C. Senate candidates

MEYER: I completely oppose using taxpayer funds for private school tuition. The proposed expansion of the voucher program is nothing but a government handout to the richest people in North Carolina, who already afford to send their children to private schools. They're welcome to make that choice, but you and I shouldn't have to pay for it.

I am specifically concerned about how the expansion of the voucher program will damage Person County Schools. Every child who pulls out of public schools takes funding with them. And Person County Schools need every dollar they can get.

PICARDO: We need to cap the opportunity scholarship or school voucher program. We need to analyze if we are benefiting from it in our district. No, we need additional funding for public school teachers in Person and Caswell County. We need to get them access to inventory and increase teacher pay.

Are there any local projects in Person County you would like to see receiving state funding?

N.C. House candidates

JEFFERS: I have worked closely with the other local elected leaders and boards in the county. After hearing from them some areas of needs I plan to advocate for are school construction/maintenance funds, funds for construction of a lab building at the city's water treatment plant, PCC General Ed Building construction, Airport Terminal Expansion, equipment upgrades at the sheriff's office, and capital funding for volunteer fire departments.

CHAMBERS: If I am fortunate enough to be elected, I will work with my colleagues in the legislature as well as consult with local elected officials in Person County to ensure that we receive any and all resources that are needed to grow our economy. Ultimately, I want to do my small part to make Person County an even better place to live, work, raise a family and retire.

N.C. Senate candidates

MEYER: I think we're all interested in making sure the Megapark lands a large, clean, and high-paying tenant. To do so, we'll need to provide some significant tax incentives for job creation. I also continue to advocate for funding for Person County to have a public swimming pool.

PICARDO: I want to advocate to help the public school teachers. They are my priority because as a first-generation U.S. citizen; public school teachers were the ones who provided me with guidance to direct me to my next step in life and the love of lifetime learning. I want to remain a strong advocate for small business in the area and the PCC small business resource center for all the support they help with guiding small businesses.

If elected, what are your goals for the upcoming legislative session?

N.C. House candidates

JEFFERS: My goal is to continue to work on the needs of Person County as highlighted in the above questions, and to secure the funding needed to ensure we continue to grow in a responsible manner. With the announced development coming to Person County, we must make sure we have the infrastructure in place to welcome not only new families but industry as well.

CHAMBERS: My goals are simple, I want to represent you and be your voice in Raleigh. I pledge to be a true representative that will be open and transparent and keep you informed on what is taking place in the legislature.

N.C. Senate candidates

MEYER: Obviously, one of our top priorities will have to be ongoing efforts for Hurricane Helene recovery, which I will be directly involved with through my roles on the committees that oversee Transportation and State and Local Government.

I also plan to continue my multi-year work on supporting public schools and addressing climate change. The other issue I hope to lead on in the next session is affordable housing.

PICARDO: I will advocate for funding for public school teachers, law enforcement, and infrastructure projects.

What is your proudest moment in public service?

N.C. House candidates

JEFFERS: My proudest moment this first term was being a primary sponsor on HB 344 that was passed and signed into law by the governor just seven months after I was sworn in. HB 344 was a bipartisan bill to direct the Division of Child Development and Early Education to study the quality rating improvement system, which is used to rate childcare centers. Also the bill directed the Division of Health Service Regulation to establish a dashboard that addresses mental health, intellectual and developmental disabilities, and substance use service agencies performance and identify trends and outcomes.

CHAMBERS: Since I am not the incumbent and have never held elective office, I do not think this question is applicable to me. However, I will say that if elected, I will be proud to represent the wonderful people of Person County (as well as northern Durham County) as the next state representative for NC House District 2.

N.C. Senate candidates

MEYER: I spent 16 years working in North Carolina's public schools. My proudest moments come when my former students excel, such as when Eugenia Floyd became N.C. Teacher of the Year. I love being able to work with her on public school advocacy and education policy.

PICARDO: I have not served in public service. It would be an honor to serve.

Copyright 2024, The Courier-Times, All Rights Reserved.

• Citation (aglc Style)

Staff Writer, 'Meet the 2024 NC House and Senate candidates', *Courier-Times, The* (online), 17 Oct 2024 https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19C49873D94A3288



Website gives up-to date donation locations and needs in western NC

October 17, 2024 | Courier-Tribune, The (Asheboro, NC) Author: Sharon Myers PAXTON MEDIA GROUP| Section: Local | 285 Words OpenURL Link

Three weeks after Hurricane Helene devastated western North Carolina, people are still wanting to help by sending clothes, food and other supplies, but there is confusion on what can be donated and where it is needed the most.

There is a website, supportingwnc.com, created by two North Carolina residents that lets people click on individual donation sites and see whether they are taking donations. It also has a breakdown by county on how many donations centers there are, what organization operates each site, as well as locations, collection days and times and contact information.

"This page is designed to be a central location of information around donation site information and volunteer needs," a statement on the website says. "We are a hub for community-driven change in Western North Carolina. Centralize your giving and find volunteer opportunities to make a difference."

The dashboard also tells whether a site is accepting all kinds of donations, limited donations or has stopped or paused taking donations. If you expand the screen, there is further information on what items are the most needed, including clothing, cleaning supplies, hygnine items or pet food.

Organizations that have registered with the website can update needs in real time. They also list whether they are a collection site needing items, or if they are an organization delivering food and supplies that needs volunteers.

The North Carolina Department of Public Safety is urging residents to be informed on disaster relief efforts through official channels, and it offers a variety of resources on how to donate money, what volunteer organizations working in the area and other information at ncdps.gov/helene.

The North Carolina Department of Justice also has information on how to spot and avoid any charity or relief scams at ncdoj.gov/charity.

Copyright 2024 The Courier-Tribune, All Rights Reserved.

• Citation (aglc Style)

Sharon Myers PAXTON MEDIA GROUP, 'Website gives up-to date donation locations and needs in western NC', *Courier-Tribune, The* (online), 17 Oct 2024 https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?
p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19C4AF429D251710>



Rob Schofield: Prepare for storms now to improve response later

October 17, 2024 | Daily Advance, The (Elizabeth City, NC) Author: Staff Writer | Section: News | 819 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 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.

As Bill Wilke, the Republican sheriff of hard-hit Haywood County, said Oct. 4 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.

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.

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.

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 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.

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.

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.

Copyright @ 2024 The Daily Advance. All rights reserved.

• Citation (aglc Style)

Staff Writer, 'Rob Schofield: Prepare for storms now to improve response later', *Daily Advance, The* (online), 17 Oct 2024 https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19C456E61AB21B40



John Hood: Helene shows value of NC's fiscal restraint

October 17, 2024 | Daily Advance, The (Elizabeth City, NC) Author: Staff Writer | Section: News | 650 Words OpenURL Link

The devastation wreaked on North Carolina by Hurricane Helene will take weeks to assess, months to clear out and years to repair or rebuild. Second only to the value of the lives lost will be the exorbitant fiscal and economic costs of our recovery.

Our state government is reasonably well prepared to shoulder its share. Our federal government is not.

Last week, the General Assembly authorized an initial \$273 million withdrawal from North Carolina's rainy-day fund to cover initial recovery expenses and changes in elections administration. Gov. Roy Cooper signed the bill.

That's only the first tranche of state expenditure. Lawmakers will return to the capital more than once before year's end, then commence regular session in early 2025. They'll appropriate much more money for various reconstruction efforts, from academic campuses and government offices to highways, bridges, water systems and other infrastructure.

North Carolina has lots of money set aside. The rainy-day fund itself still contains about \$4.5 billion. Other accounts and our unreserved credit balance contain billions more. I don't mean to minimize the storm's staggering costs. I'm just pointing out that the General Assembly won't have to cut other programs, raise taxes or borrow money to fulfill its responsibilities.

Congress is another story. Over the past couple of decades, presidents and lawmakers of both parties have run massive federal deficits and made exorbitant spending promises that far exceed any reasonable expectation of revenues at economically sustainable tax rates.

In a recent Reason magazine piece, Veronique de Rugy of the Mercatus Center pointed out that the federal debt now exceeds \$28 trillion — \$2 trillion more than last year and \$6 trillion more than when the Biden-Harris team entered the White House.

"This debt stands at 100% of America's gross domestic product, which, other than a one-year exception at the end of World War II, is the highest ratio we've ever had," she wrote. "Unlike in 1946, today's debt is only going to grow. Indeed, debt-to-GDP took a nearly 30-year dive to reach 23% in 1974. Today, federal debt is projected — under the rosiest scenarios — to rise to 166% in 30 years."

In other words, every dollar Congress authorizes and the executive branch distributes for hurricane relief in North Carolina is, in effect, a borrowed dollar. It represents a debt to be paid in the future, not a gift.

Of course, North Carolinians aren't the only ones who must pay each dollar back (with interest). Decades ago, our politicians essentially nationalized the provision of relief and reconstruction after natural disasters. I don't think that was wise. States and localities ought to make their own preparations and save their own money to handle future emergencies.

But at this point, I'm not sure how to extricate ourselves from this process. If Congress passed a law next year to slash federal disaster relief and then Kansas gets clobbered by tornados, their taxpayers could reasonably complain that they helped clean up after North Carolina's disaster and then didn't get their "turn" at withdrawing funds for their own.

The next best thing, then, is for future Congresses and presidents to take their budgeting responsibilities more

seriously. As I've pointed out many times, the opportunity to bring federal revenues and expenditures closer to alignment without painful adjustment has long since passed. The gap is too large.

It can't be substantially closed by eliminating "waste, fraud and abuse." Nor can it be substantially closed by "tax hikes on the wealthy." Contrary to popular misconception, the United States already has one of the most steeply progressive tax codes in the developed world. According to the left-wing Institute on Taxation and Economic Policy, the bottom quintile of American taxpayers pay an average of 17% of their income in federal, state and local taxes. The middle quintile pays 26%. The wealthiest 1% pay 35%.

Washington's fiscal recklessness should be one of the top voting issues this year. Alas, it isn't. But ignoring the problem won't make it go away.

Copyright © 2024 The Daily Advance. All rights reserved.

• Citation (aglc Style)

Staff Writer, 'John Hood: Helene shows value of NC's fiscal restraint', *Daily Advance, The* (online), 17 Oct 2024 https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19C456E612152E50



What's Up

October 17, 2024 | Daily Advance, The (Elizabeth City, NC) Author: Julian Eure | Section: Whats Up | 1162 Words OpenURL Link

TODAY

EC Morning Rotary

The Elizabeth City Morning Rotary Club will meet at the Pines of Elizabeth City at 8 a.m. Monique Pratts of the Albemarle Commission's Meals on Wheels program will be the speaker.

Little Rascals book

Betsy Hester, author of "Twenty-One Boxes: Robyn's Story and the Tragedy of the Edenton Seven," will give a talk about the book at the Pasquotank County Library at noon. The book is an analysis of the evidence in the Little Rascals day care case. Copies of the book are available at the Recycled Reader.

Donations for western NC

Food Bank of the Albemarle is accepting donations of non-perishable food, personal hygiene items and cleaning supplies for delivery to western counties in North Carolina hard hit by Tropical Storm Helene. Items will be accepted Monday through Friday from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. Contact: 252-335-4035.

Splash Week

Arts of the Albemarle's annual Splash Week continues in Elizabeth City's downtown through Saturday. Events for the artists' retreat will include the first-ever Splash Art Fair on North Poindexter Street on Saturday from 11:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. Artists and artisans are invited to sell their work at the fair. The event will also feature free music, family activities and crafts.

One-stop voting underway

One-stop voting for the 2024 election continues in area counties. In Pasquotank County, voting will be at the K.E. White Center weekdays from 8 a.m. to 7:30 p.m.; on Saturday, Oct. 19, Oct. 26 and Nov. 2, from 8 a.m. to 3 p.m.; and on Sunday, Oct. 20, from 2 p.m. to 6 p.m.

Medicare outreach

The North Carolina State Health Plan will host a 2025 open enrollment Medicare outreach event at Museum of the Albemarle from 10 a.m. to noon.

Hertford Ghost Walk

Masonic Lodge 106 and Church of the Holy Trinity will host the Historic Ghost Walk in Hertford today and Saturday from 6:30 p.m. to 9 p.m. each night. Tickets are \$10 and available at the Perquimans Chamber of Commerce Office at 118 W Market St., Hertford; Tommy's Pizza at 309 Ocean S. Hertford; and Church of the Holy Trinity both nights of tour.

We Love You Ministry

We Love You Ministry is holding a community yard sale at 605 Southern Ave., Elizabeth City.

SAturday

Mass casualty exercise

Pasquotank-Camden Emergency Management will hold a mock mass casualty exercise in Elizabeth City's downtown area roughly from 8 a.m. to 1 p.m. Event will feature a number of local law enforcement and other first-response agencies and require blocking off some streets between 4 a.m. and 1 p.m.

Wings Over Edenton

The Wings over Edenton air show and pilot fly-in will be held at Northeastern Regional Airport in Edenton from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. The free event will feature static displays of historic and current aircraft, an aerobatic demonstration, Young Eagle flights for youngsters, helicopter rides, a car and tractor show, vendor displays, and food trucks.

MONDAY

Red Cross blood drive

The American Red Cross will host a blood drive in the main room at Albemarle Area Association of Realtors in Elizabeth City, from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m.

Computer help

The Pasquotank County Library will host computer assistance program on PowerPoint; PowerPoint on Tuesday; Google Docs 2 on Wednesday, Oct. 23; and Word 2 on Thursday, Oct. 24. All programs at 4 p.m. and require pre-registration by calling Mike at 335-7536.

TUESDAY

Library storytime

The Pasquotank County Library will host a storytime program on the theme "Cake" for kids ages 3-5 with an adult on Tuesday; kids ages 1-2 on Wednesday; and kids 1 and younger on Thursday, Oct. 24. All classes at 10 a.m.

WEDNESDAY

Programming Room

The East Carolina Digital Literacy Program will host a program on how to search for trusted online sites at the Pasquotank County Library Wednesday, Oct. 23 from 10 a.m. to noon. To register, call the library at 252-335-7536 or visit https://bit.ly/47CNVIw. Each participant who completes the pre-test and post-test will be entered in a drawing to win an iPad. Light refreshments will be served.

Red Cross blood drives

The American Red Cross will host blood drives in the Sentara Albemarle Medical Center education rooms Wednesday, Oct. 23 from noon to 5 p.m.; JP Knapp Early College High School gym in Currituck Monday, Oct. 28 from 10 a.m. to 2:30 p.m.; the B&M Contractors, Inc. training room in Elizabeth City on Tuesday, Oct. 29, from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m.; and the City Road United Methodist Church fellowship hall in Elizabeth City Thursday, Oct. 31, from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m.

Programming Room

The East Carolina Digital Literacy Program will host a program on how to use healthcare online at the Pasquotank County Library Wednesday, Oct. 23 from 10 a.m. to noon. Students will learn how to use telehealth. To register, call the library at 252-335-7536 or visit https://bit.ly/47CNVIw. Each participant who completes the pre-test and post-test will be entered in a drawing to win an iPad. Light refreshments will be served.

Community Olympics

The Boys & Girls Club will host its Community Olympic Games at 108 East Ward St., Elizabeth City, Thursday, Oct. 24. Contact: ejmitchell@bgc-albemarle.org or call 252-216-5966.

YMCA Golf Classic

The 18th annual YMCA Golf Classic to benefit the Y's All Kids Swim Program will be held at the Pines of Elizabeth City, Friday, Oct. 25. Donations raised by the tournament will allow Albemarle Family YMCA to offer free swim lessons to area children. Check-in is 11 a.m. and shotgun start tee-off is at noon. Team of four costs \$450, individuals are \$113, and mulligans are \$10 each with a limit of two per player. Send payment to Jane Snyder, Albemarle Family YMCA, 1240 N. Road St., Elizabeth City, 27909 or email jsnyder@ymcashr. org.

Fall Litter Sweep

Green Saves Green will host the 2024 Fall Litter Sweep on Northside Road Saturday, Oct. 26, from 9 a.m. to 11 a.m. Participants should meet at Dixieland Speedway at 1520 Northside Road, Elizabeth City. Cleanup supplies will be provided.

Computer help

The Pasquotank County Library will host computer assistance program on Google Docs Monday, Oct. 28; mouse and keyboarding on Tuesday, Oct. 29; Google Drive on Wednesday, Oct. 30; and PowerPoint on Thursday, Oct. 31. All programs at 4 p.m. and require pre-registration by calling Mike at 335-7536.

Soil and water programs

The Northeast Ag Expo will sponsor a workshop for farmers on Tuesday, Oct. 29 at 8 a.m. at the Pasquotank Extension Office in Elizabeth City. Attendees will learn from FSA, Soil and Water and NRCS about various available programs and deadlines as well as the resources these agencies offer area farmers. To register, contact the Perquimans Center of NC Extension at 252-426-5428.

Library storytime

The Pasquotank County Library will host a storytime program on the theme "Halloween" for kids ages 3-5 with an adult on Tuesday, Oct. 29; kids ages 1-2 on Wednesday, Oct. 30; and kids 1 and younger on Thursday, Oct. 31. All classes at 10 a.m.

Landslide to perform

The Elizabeth City Area Chamber of Commerce will host its Appreciation & Celebration Extravaganza featuring Landslide, a Fleetwood Mac tribute band, at Sagos on the River Nov. 9 from 5 p.m. to 9 p.m. Drew Gregory and Chris Betts will be guest performers. Tickets are \$100, corporate tables are \$900.

Copyright @ 2024 The Daily Advance. All rights reserved.

Citation (aglc Style)

Julian Eure, 'What's Up', *Daily Advance, The* (online), 17 Oct 2024 https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view? p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19C45B7A90311888>



What we've witnessed

October 17, 2024 | Daily Courier, The (Forest City, NC) Author: BRENT TOMBERLIN Columnist| Section: Archives | 847 Words OpenURL Link

As Hurricane Helene made its way up from the gulf the last week in September, I stepped outside early Friday, September 27, to meet her. The rain had already been coming down through the night, and my memory of her is the amount of wind blowing through the treetops before daybreak. She was already announcing herself in a big way. A few hours later the power went out and the rain and wind picked up. Those hours were, and remain, horrendous for many people for a lot of reasons.

Devastation comes to us in waves. Sometimes, it is physical. Sometimes, it is mental. Sometimes, it is all of that wrapped up in a horrible ball thrown unmercifully.

Yet, as during the recent pandemic, people found survival in resilience. Neighbor helps neighbor with chainsaws and generators. Private planes began ferrying supplies to flooded areas. Nurses traveled by pack mule into developed areas turned into war zones by high winds and water. Men and women worked a full shift and then donated supplies to relief centers. Churches and schools held donation drives and cooked meals. People who were without power thought not to complain as much about it because they knew there were other priorities ahead of them. Service and selflessness are on display almost everywhere. These are the great things about the country we live in and the people who make it special.

Helene brought some early memories of Hugo many years ago. People remembered the wind, the power outages, and temporary school closures. Helene also brought back the mental weight individuals endured during the Covid pandemic as people felt isolated. Some neighborhoods were dark for a few days which played on the mental health of individuals. Yet, people found their resiliency again. People have done what they always do: find places to help and pitch in.

A couple high school swim coaches in Caldwell County hopped in a vehicle and drove west to help in any way they could. Families got out their board games in a darkened house, turned on a candle or lamp, and fellowshipped together. People, even if they were angry, showed kindness first. Social media posts tried to tell the story of the devastation, shared urgent notes about missing people, included hotline information, and created opportunities to help.

Too, in the midst of dealing with the effects of an horrific storm, both vice presidential candidates conducted themselves respectfully and soberly during the only debate they will have before the election. Civility was definitely on display which encouraged a lot of people. Of course, there were the cynics who said they did not attack each other enough. Well, maybe we don't need that just now.

Helene, through the storm and in her wake, has the possibility to change a lot of things about how we live: perhaps from how we navigate roads to the way some people educate themselves and work in the near future. Yet, it cannot touch the American spirit. What is on display as this column is being written is the fantastic ability of human beings in America to help one another and to show unity.

When I dropped off supplies recently at a collection area, workers from a medical office arrived to help with the sorting and packing of materials from water to baby formula. There was no question the moment was going to be a team effort. There are too many team efforts to mention as we speak. Praise God for the work they are doing.

Americans run to the roar - no question about it. There are things to do now and there will be things to do in the future to sustain this immediate work and to help in areas which will be revealed as this recovery continues. Think about finding a place to step in and help.

Early on in this recovery, we have seen the amazing influence of private groups and organizations providing incredible help. Local, state, and federal government agencies are also bravely assisting towns and people wiped out.

Already, we are seeing that roads can be rebuilt, traffic can be rerouted, debris can be cleared, and hope in the midst of severe loss can be provided and sustained.

When rescue workers are searching for the living, rescuing animals, or recovering the dead - things which will happen in the days and weeks ahead, their effort will be a process based on their training and their will. When a family living in a shelter receives the supplies and the care they need, such will depend on Providence and the rest of us and what we can do.

There are times when people do not know when, where, and how to help. It can be easy to feel hopeful, but helpless. In these cases, we all must stay connected and work to share information.

There are things we can do, and we are up to the tasks at hand.

It is one of those miracles of humanity that, amidst the worst things which can possibly happen, the best things about people are on display. Adversity definitely reveals character.

This is our home. We will rebuild. Western North Carolina STRONG.

Copyright 2024, The Daily Courier, All Rights Reserved.

• Citation (aglc Style)

BRENT TOMBERLIN Columnist, 'What we've witnessed', *Daily Courier, The* (online), 17 Oct 2024 https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19C4595750F965E0



USDA offers resources, adds flexibilities to disaster assistance programs

October 17, 2024 | Daily Courier, The (Forest City, NC) Author: STAFF REPORTS | Section: Archives | 1204 Words OpenURL Link

In the aftermath of Hurricane Helene, which devastated communities, homes, farms and businesses across parts of the Southeast, the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) has deployed staff to assist with response and recovery efforts. USDA is also putting in place contingency plans and program flexibilities to ensure farmers, and foresters and communities are able to get the support they need. USDA is sharing information today to help impacted people learn about resources that may be available to them, according to a press release from the United States Department of Agriculture.

On Thursday, Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack and Farm Service Agency Administrator Zach Ducheneaux traveled to Florida and Georgia with President Biden to assess damage and meet with farmers and residents in the wake of the storm. In remarks, Secretary Vilsack highlighted that USDA is taking measures like extending program signup opportunities and using waivers and emergency procedures to expedite recovery efforts on America's working lands. The department has also deployed 190 staff, including many from the U.S. Forest Service, to assist with response efforts, including removal of debris from roads, according to the press release.

"At USDA, our thoughts and prayers go out to all the families and farmers who have been impacted by this storm," said agriculture secretary Tom Vilsack. "Our job is to try to keep farms viable and operational, to help rural communities remain resilient, and at the end of the day to get as much help as quickly as possible to as many people as possible."

Here are steps USDA wants farmers to know about to ensure they can access the tools and resources that USDA offers, according to the press release.

How to Contact USDA

USDA has offices in virtually every county. However, some remain obstructed or without power due to the storm. Other USDA offices in affected states are stepping up to help triage and take producers' calls. The Farm Service Agency Call Center, available at 877-508-8364, can help direct producers to available staff. More program information is also farmers.gov.

Leaders with USDA's Farm Service Agency (FSA), Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), and Risk Management Agency (RMA) will hold a virtual briefing on Monday, Oct. 7 at 11 a.m. EDT for agricultural producers and stakeholders to share information on disaster assistance programs for agricultural operations. Visit farmers.gov/hurricane for details on how to join, according to the press release.

Through the Farm and Ranch Stress Assistance Network, USDA also partners with several organizations to offer mental health resources. Anyone in need of extra support in light of stressful circumstances is encouraged to contact the Southern Ag Exchange Network Farmer Support Hotline at 888-381-7243, which is available 24/7, according to the press release.

Expediting Crop Insurance Payments

USDA estimates there are more than 38,000 crop insurance policies, covering more than 4.8 million acres, in place in the affected areas. USDA has instructed crop insurance companies to expedite loss adjustments that are necessary to make payments, and we expect payments to be made within 30 days. If you have Federal crop insurance, contact your crop insurance agent as soon as crop or livestock losses are apparent, according to the press release.

Documenting and Reporting Losses

USDA reminds producers to document damages and losses, including gathering farm records, herd inventory, receipts and pictures of damages or losses. USDA advises livestock producers to document livestock numbers by taking time and date-stamped video or pictures of injury or loss, to the extent possible. USDA asks producers to report crop, livestock and farm infrastructure losses to FSA at your local USDA Service Center. Producers can call the FSA Hotline for assistance if their local Service Center is currently closed, according to the press release.

Flexibilities for Disaster Assistance Programs

In addition to RMA's Federal crop insurance flexibilities, FSA has added flexibilities to several programs. A full list of FSA disaster assistance programs is available on the Hurricane webpage on farmers.gov. To help expedite assistance through the Emergency Conservation Program (ECP) and Emergency Forest Restoration Program (EFRP), FSA has taken the following measures:

Extended ECP and EFRP signup that begins Oct. 15, 2024, and runs through June 1, 2025, in states affected by Hurricane Helene.

Executed Emergency Response (ER-850) authorization of emergency National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) circumstances to expedite FSA approval of practices involving surface debris removal, fence restoration and nonground disturbing activities.

Waiver of onsite inspection requirement for non-engineering practices for ECP and EFRP.

Waiver of requirement for producers to obtain prior approval to conduct surface debris removal, fence repair and hazard tree removal to support critical disaster recovery efforts. Producers should contact FSA for any questions on allowable activities. Additionally, the Livestock Indemnity Program (LIP) provides benefits to livestock owners and contract growers for livestock deaths in excess of normal mortality caused by eligible loss conditions including eligible adverse weather. FSA has issued guidance to FSA County Committees and local staff to exercise maximum flexibility in determining acceptable loss documentation and to ensure LIP applications are acted on timely. Through the Emergency Assistance for Livestock, Honeybees, and Farm-Raised Fish Program (ELAP), FSA provides assistance to owners of livestock, and producers of honeybees and farm-raised fish for feed and death losses due to an eligible natural disaster event. FSA is providing assistance to help cover above normal costs to transport livestock to feed and/or transport feed/forage to livestock in hurricane-impacted states, and assistance to help cover above normal costs to haul water to livestock in hurricane-impacted states. The Tree Assistance Program (TAP) provides financial cost-share assistance to qualifying orchardists and nursery tree growers to replant or, where applicable, rehabilitate eligible trees, bushes and vines lost by natural disasters. FSA has extended assistance to trees, bushes and vines that have not died but are no longer capable of production (not economically viable). This assistance program complements the Noninsured Crop Disaster Assistance Program (NAP) or federal crop insurance coverage, which covers the crop but not the plants or trees in all cases.

Under NAP, FSA has waived the 72-hour notification requirement on hand harvested crops, extended deadline to file a Notice of Loss, and provided flexibility for FSA staff to perform loss adjustment activities and/or waive field inspections in cases where the cause of loss can be verified through other means. For producers with Marketing Assistance Loans (MAL), FSA is providing additional time for producers to deliver commodities to a buyer to repay MALs with sale proceeds and postponing MAL foreclosure letters applicable to losses or damages due to hurricanes for up to 90 calendar days. A full list of FSA disaster assistance programs is available on the Hurricane webpage on farmers.gov.

USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) also offers recovery options for producers through the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) and for communities through the Emergency Watershed Protection Program (EWP). Learn more on the NRCS Disaster Recovery webpage.

Nutrition Assistance

USDA's Food and Nutrition Service, at states' request, has already issued flexibilities and waivers at the for its many nutrition programs in Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Ohio, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, Virginia, and West Virginia, in order to help emergency meal providers reach more people quickly. USDA is ready to issue additional flexibilities upon request. More information on those recovery and assistance efforts can be found on the FNS Disaster Assistance webpage, according to the press release.

Copyright 2024, The Daily Courier, All Rights Reserved.

• Citation (aglc Style)

STAFF REPORTS, 'USDA offers resources, adds flexibilities to disaster assistance programs', *Daily Courier, The* (online), 17 Oct 2024 https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19C49374102DB940



Working on a building

October 17, 2024 | Daily Courier, The (Forest City, NC) Author: ANN EVERHARDT SMITH Columnist| Section: Archives | 706 Words OpenURL Link

It has been a rough few weeks as we continue to clean up from hurricane Helene in Western North Carolina and see and hear news about a second hurricane, Milton, that brought more destruction to our neighbors to the south. We pray that we have finally seen the worst of it. A typical hurricane season generally runs from June1 through November 30, so we aren't out of the woods just yet. In its August forecast, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Association predicated this season could rank among the busiest on record, extending into December. Pray with me that North Carolina and our neighbors to the south have seen the last of the destruction and heart break these storms bring.

Our hearts and souls are deeply touched as we continue to see the death toll rise in neighboring communities and see photos shared by friends in communities that in some cases have been destroyed. Millions of dollars from the state and federal government will be required to rebuild roads and communities. In the beginning, I truly wondered if anything would ever be the same again, but almost immediately, I began to see and witness individuals, churches, businesses and non-profit organizations all coming together to meet the needs of families they're never met before. They're not only meeting the basic needs of those who have been affected but are also working to supply warm clothing and heat resources to people in the mountains who will soon face winter and much cooler temperatures.

In addition to the rebuilding of roads and bridges to help people get back to their homes, helping with cutting trees and clearing property, I'm witnessing something even bigger than all those things. I'm witnessing the rebuilding of people, the hands reaching out to lift them up, the hugs and reassurances from strangers who have become new friends, now helping families who may have lost everything that is material know that all is truly not lost. That kind of building is something that money just can't buy. They're giving them hope and sharing the love of Christ, community and friends who care and want to help them.

If you read my column, you know I often reference my grandfather and his love of music. He's been in heaven since 1982, but forty-two years later I can still see and hear him humming or singing part of a tune. He and other members of my family loved bluegrass, and they taught me to love it too. We listened to bluegrass on the radio and went to churches who had what they called "Special Singing" on Sunday nights. One of the songs that comes to mind now fits what my North Carolina brothers and sisters are going through in the mountains and what many people are doing to try to help them. The song is called "I'm Working on a Building". It starts out like this. "I'm working on a building, working on a

building, I'm working on a building for my Lord. It's a Holy Ghost building, it's a Holy Ghost building, a Holy Ghost building for my Lord." I hope you check out the Bill Monroe version on Google. The mandolin player is great, and one of the singers has a high-pitched voice like my grandfather. I wonder if he's singing that in heaven right now.

In first Peter chapter 5 verse 10 we read "In his kindness, God called you to his eternal glory by means of Jesus Christ. After you have suffered a while, he will restore, support, and strengthen you, and he will place you on a firm foundation, all power is his forever and ever." I continue to pray for all those who have been devasted by loss of family and property and I pray and give thanks for all who are finding ways to help them.

I always look forward to your comments by email or in person. Thank you for continuing to share your stories with me and when you ask, I'm glad to share more of my personal stories with you. Email me at ibelieve1068@gmail.com or stop me to talk when we see each other in the community. Ann Everhardt-Smith is a Hudson Town Commissioner and serves on several local boards in the community.

• Citation (aglc Style)

ANN EVERHARDT SMITH Columnist, 'Working on a building', *Daily Courier, The* (online), 17 Oct 2024 https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19C4595764E48CB0



IRS warns taxpayers of charity scams following recent hurricanes; provides tools to help people verify legitimate groups

October 17, 2024 | Daily Courier, The (Forest City, NC) Author: STAFF REPORTS | Section: Archives | 444 Words OpenURL Link

In the aftermath of Hurricanes Milton and Helene, the Internal Revenue Service today cautioned taxpayers of scammers who use fake charities to gather sensitive personal and financial data from unsuspecting donors, according to a press release from the IRS.

Scammers commonly set up fake charities to take advantage of peoples' generosity during natural disasters and other tragic events, according to the press release.

"Many people want to help survivors and their families by donating to charities," said IRS Commissioner Danny Werfel.

"Too often, criminals take advantage of would-be donors' kindness by stealing money and personal information from well-meaning taxpayers.

You should never feel pressured by solicitors to immediately give to a charity. It's important to do the research to verify if they're authentic first."

Tax-Exempt Organization Search (TEOS) toolThose interested in making donations should first check the Tax-Exempt Organization Search (TEOS) tool on IRS.gov to help find or verify qualified, legitimate charities, according to the press release.

With this tool, people can:

Verify the legitimacy of a charity,

Check its eligibility to receive tax-deductible charitable contributions, and

Search for information about an organization's tax-exempt status and filings.

Tips to avoid fake charities Always verify. Scammers frequently use names that sound like well-known charities to confuse people. Fake charity promoters may use emails, fake websites, or alter or "spoof" their caller ID to make it look like a real charity is calling to solicit donations. Potential donors should ask the fundraiser for the charity's name, website and mailing address so they can independently confirm the information. Use the TEOS tool to verify if an organization is a legitimate tax-exempt charity.

Be cautious about how a donation is requested. Never work with charities that ask for donations by giving numbers from a gift card or by wiring money. That's a scam. It's safest to pay by credit card or check — and only after verifying the charity is real.

Don't share too much information. Scammers are on the lookout for both money and personal information. Never disclose Social Security numbers, credit card numbers or personal identification numbers.

Don't give in to pressure. Scammers often pressure people into making an immediate payment. In contrast, legitimate charities are happy to get a donation at any time. Donors should not feel rushed. The IRS also encourages individuals encountering a fake or suspicious charity to see the FBI's resources on Charity and Disaster Fraud, according to the press release.

Claim a deductionTaxpayers who give money or goods to a charity can claim a deduction if they itemize deductions, but these donations only count if they go to a qualified tax-exempt organization recognized by the IRS, according to the press release.

Copyright 2024, The Daily Courier, All Rights Reserved.

• Citation (aglc Style)

STAFF REPORTS, 'IRS warns taxpayers of charity scams following recent hurricanes; provides tools to help people verify legitimate groups', *Daily Courier, The* (online), 17 Oct 2024 https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view? p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19C49374173E4970>



IRS warns of charity scams following hurricanes, provides tools to verify

October 17, 2024 | Daily Dispatch, The (Henderson, NC) Author: DISPATCH STAFF| Section: Archives | 401 Words OpenURL Link

WASHINGTON — In the aftermath of Hurricanes Milton and Helene, the Internal Revenue Service cautioned taxpayers of scammers who use fake charities to gather sensitive personal and financial data from unsuspecting donors.

Scammers commonly set up fake charities to take advantage of peoples' generosity during natural disasters and other tragic events.

"Many people want to help survivors and their families by donating to charities," said IRS Commissioner Danny Werfel.

"Too often, criminals take advantage of would-be donors' kindness by stealing money and personal information from well-meaning taxpayers. You should never feel pressured by solicitors to immediately give to a charity. It's important to do the research to verify if they're authentic first."

Tax-Exempt Organization Search toolThose interested in making donations should first check the Tax-Exempt Organization Search tool on IRS.gov to help find or verify qualified, legitimate charities. With this tool, people can:

Verify the legitimacy of a charityCheck its eligibility to receive tax-deductible charitable contributionsSearch for information about an organization's tax-exempt status and filings

Tips to avoid fake charities

Always verify. Scammers frequently use names that sound like well-known charities to confuse people. Fake charity promoters may use emails, fake websites, or alter or "spoof" their caller ID to make it look like a real charity is calling to solicit donations. Potential donors should ask the fundraiser for the charity's name, website and mailing address so they can independently confirm the information. Use the TEOS tool to verify if an organization is a legitimate tax-exempt charity.Be cautious about how a donation is requested. Never work with charities that ask for donations by giving numbers from a gift card or by wiring money. That's a scam. It's safest to pay by credit card or check — and only after verifying the charity is real.Don't share too much information. Scammers are on the lookout for both money and personal information. Never disclose Social Security numbers, credit card numbers or personal identification numbers.Don't give in to pressure. Scammers often pressure people into making an immediate payment. In contrast, legitimate charities are happy to get a donation at any time. Donors should not feel rushed.

The IRS also encourages individuals encountering a fake or suspicious charity to see the FBI's resources on Charity and Disaster Fraud.

Claim a deductionTaxpayers who give money or goods to a charity can claim a deduction if they itemize deductions, but these donations only count if they go to a qualified tax-exempt organization recognized by the IRS.

Copyright 2024 Daily Dispatch, All Rights Reserved.

• Citation (aglc Style)

DISPATCH STAFF, 'IRS warns of charity scams following hurricanes, provides tools to verify', *Daily Dispatch, The* (online), 17 Oct 2024 https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19C4EB8A45E80620



Tom Campbell: Helene brings out the best — and worst — in us

October 17, 2024 | Daily Reflector, The (Greenville, NC) Author: Staff Writer | Section: News | 790 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 came 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 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 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 Daily Reflector. All rights reserved.

• Citation (aglc Style)

Staff Writer, 'Tom Campbell: Helene brings out the best — and worst — in us', *Daily Reflector, The* (online), 17 Oct 2024 https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19C45B634C57CA40



Rob Schofield: Prepare for storms now to improve response later

October 17, 2024 | Daily Reflector, The (Greenville, NC) Author: Staff Writer | Section: News | 819 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 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.

As Bill Wilke, the Republican sheriff of hard-hit Haywood County, said Oct. 4 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.

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.

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.

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 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.

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.

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.

Copyright © 2024 The Daily Reflector. All rights reserved.

• Citation (aglc Style)

Staff Writer, 'Rob Schofield: Prepare for storms now to improve response later', *Daily Reflector, The* (online), 17 Oct 2024 https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19C45B635D074E10



John Hood: Helene shows value of NC's fiscal restraint

October 17, 2024 | Daily Reflector, The (Greenville, NC) Author: Staff Writer | Section: News | 650 Words OpenURL Link

The devastation wreaked on North Carolina by Hurricane Helene will take weeks to assess, months to clear out and years to repair or rebuild. Second only to the value of the lives lost will be the exorbitant fiscal and economic costs of our recovery.

Our state government is reasonably well prepared to shoulder its share. Our federal government is not.

Last week, the General Assembly authorized an initial \$273 million withdrawal from North Carolina's rainy-day fund to cover initial recovery expenses and changes in elections administration. Gov. Roy Cooper signed the bill.

That's only the first tranche of state expenditure. Lawmakers will return to the capital more than once before year's end, then commence regular session in early 2025. They'll appropriate much more money for various reconstruction efforts, from academic campuses and government offices to highways, bridges, water systems and other infrastructure.

North Carolina has lots of money set aside. The rainy-day fund itself still contains about \$4.5 billion. Other accounts and our unreserved credit balance contain billions more. I don't mean to minimize the storm's staggering costs. I'm just pointing out that the General Assembly won't have to cut other programs, raise taxes or borrow money to fulfill its responsibilities.

Congress is another story. Over the past couple of decades, presidents and lawmakers of both parties have run massive federal deficits and made exorbitant spending promises that far exceed any reasonable expectation of revenues at economically sustainable tax rates.

In a recent Reason magazine piece, Veronique de Rugy of the Mercatus Center pointed out that the federal debt now exceeds \$28 trillion — \$2 trillion more than last year and \$6 trillion more than when the Biden-Harris team entered the White House.

"This debt stands at 100% of America's gross domestic product, which, other than a one-year exception at the end of World War II, is the highest ratio we've ever had," she wrote. "Unlike in 1946, today's debt is only going to grow. Indeed, debt-to-GDP took a nearly 30-year dive to reach 23% in 1974. Today, federal debt is projected — under the rosiest scenarios — to rise to 166% in 30 years."

In other words, every dollar Congress authorizes and the executive branch distributes for hurricane relief in North Carolina is, in effect, a borrowed dollar. It represents a debt to be paid in the future, not a gift.

Of course, North Carolinians aren't the only ones who must pay each dollar back (with interest). Decades ago, our politicians essentially nationalized the provision of relief and reconstruction after natural disasters. I don't think that was wise. States and localities ought to make their own preparations and save their own money to handle future emergencies.

But at this point, I'm not sure how to extricate ourselves from this process. If Congress passed a law next year to slash federal disaster relief and then Kansas gets clobbered by tornados, their taxpayers could reasonably complain that they helped clean up after North Carolina's disaster and then didn't get their "turn" at withdrawing funds for their own.

The next best thing, then, is for future Congresses and presidents to take their budgeting responsibilities more

seriously. As I've pointed out many times, the opportunity to bring federal revenues and expenditures closer to alignment without painful adjustment has long since passed. The gap is too large.

It can't be substantially closed by eliminating "waste, fraud and abuse." Nor can it be substantially closed by "tax hikes on the wealthy." Contrary to popular misconception, the United States already has one of the most steeply progressive tax codes in the developed world. According to the left-wing Institute on Taxation and Economic Policy, the bottom quintile of American taxpayers pay an average of 17% of their income in federal, state and local taxes. The middle quintile pays 26%. The wealthiest 1% pay 35%.

Washington's fiscal recklessness should be one of the top voting issues this year. Alas, it isn't. But ignoring the problem won't make it go away.

Copyright © 2024 The Daily Reflector. All rights reserved.

• Citation (aglc Style)

Staff Writer, 'John Hood: Helene shows value of NC's fiscal restraint', *Daily Reflector, The* (online), 17 Oct 2024 https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19C45B6352BC2868



State Mutual Aid Agreement adopted by Magnolia in board meeting

October 17, 2024 | Daily Reflector, The (Greenville, NC) Author: Shonda Kennion Correspondent| Section: Local | 952 Words OpenURL Link

Shortly after witnessing the destruction brought by hurricanes Helene and Milton, the town of Magnolia Board of Commissioners adopted a State Mutual Aid Agreement during its Oct. 8 meeting in the Magnolia Municipal Building Conference Room.

Town Manager Twig Rollins explained, "Mutual aid agreements have been around for a long time. What they say is, if you need help you can get it from a sister agency. Fire departments have had it for decades — probably hundreds of years — and police departments have it.

"The state has a Mutual Aid Agreement," Rollins said. "I have to confess, I didn't know they had a statewide agreement. (That information) was an email that had come out after Helene. Basically, if you have this in place at the time of disaster and you request help, and there's a state of emergency designated by the state or federal government, those agencies coming to help you will be paid by somebody else.

"So, everybody going to the mountains to help that has a State Mutual Aid Agreement is paid by state and federal funds," he said. "So it's really a formality. If they requested (help) and we had the spare staff to send up there, they would pay the bill for our staff. Or if we have a disaster, we request them. That's what this is.

"We didn't have (the agreement) in place, but what this would do is authorize the need to execute — not if we need help, but when we need help — we would be able to execute this and not have to pay those bills for the people coming to help us," Rollins said.

"And if we could ever spare people to go to the mountains, then they would be paid to go, or to any disaster area," he said.

A motion to adopt the State Mutual Aid Agreement was passed, unopposed.

Planning Board

Rollins also discussed whether the town should reinstate its planning board. He offered commissioners some insight on their options.

First, he noted, the board could decide not to have a planning board. However, Magnolia has had a planning board in the past and since commissioners have the ultimate authority on all planning of the zoning issues, they would not be forced to go along with all of the board's decisions.

Rollins said it is best practice to have a planning board so its members can review local development to ensure it is up to town standards.

Rollins sought feedback from the commissioners on whether they wanted a planning board. If so, he said, the plan is to advertise it on the Town of Magnolia's website so the public will know the town is looking for sign-ups.

A five-member board is recommended, but the board can have as few as three people, Rollins said. With scheduling conflicts and whatnot, however, five is an optimal number.

He recommended people serve for four years and that four of the five members should live in the town, and one can be from the extraterritorial jurisdiction, which stretches about one mile outside of town.

Commissioners voted to establish a planning board, populated with public residents and one commissioner.

Safety Grant

Commissioners also discussed a \$23,000 public safety grant for cameras, radar equipment and body armor.

Rollins noted, "It is customary when we get a grant that we must amend our budget. We have to add it to our budget so we can spend it out of our budget."

Mayor Dawn Ward asked for a motion to amend the fiscal year 2024-25 budget to include the anticipated grant funds. The motion was made and it carried without opposition.

Financial custodian

The commissions also unanimously approved the appointment of an official financial custodian. Rollins said that federal law mandates that the town have an official custodian who has authority over its funds in the bank.

Rollins was the custodian, but he noted that since he was leaving his manager's position on Oct. 12, a new custodian was needed.

"I'm recommending we appoint our finance officer, Sonia Jaimes, to be that official custodian. You can change it from her to the new town manager or you can leave it with her because she is your financial officer," he said. "I know I've said this a lot, but we're just covering all the bases."

The motion was carried and Jaimes was named as officer.

Manager's departure

In relation to Rollins' departure, a member of the public who attended the meeting took time to praise the manager's contributions to the town.

"You've only been here a short time, but you've really got the town heading in the right direction now and you've really been working on improving the town," said Danny Gregory. "I believe that you've gotten our commissioners in a better spirit of doing that, and they've been to a lot of different programs where they've learned more about what they need to be doing and they have attended a lot of meetings. They have just been doing a really good job.

"You came in and went to work on day one," Gregory said. "You've gotten grants that nobody ever knew they could get, and you just really worked, and you've been very knowledgeable about running a town. We hate that you're leaving but we understand, too, that you're bettering yourself and we don't blame anybody for bettering themselves. So, thank you Twig, for everything you've done for our town for the short time you've been here."

The meeting ended with the town manager's report, the mayor's report, and the commissioner's report. Before adjourning, gratitude was expressed to Rollins for all he's done for the town of Magnolia from each commissioner, the mayor and Police Captain Jason Holliday.

The meeting was attended by Mayor Ward, commissioners Jeanine Cavenaugh, Perry Raines, Eric Graham, Elvenia Wilson and Ethelene Southerland, Rollins, Jaimes, Attorney Joseph Ezzell and Holliday.

Copyright © 2024 The Daily Reflector. All rights reserved.

• Citation (aglc Style)

Shonda Kennion Correspondent, 'State Mutual Aid Agreement adopted by Magnolia in board meeting', *Daily Reflector, The* (online), 17 Oct 2024 https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view? p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19C45B639EC931F0>



Tom Campbell: Helene brings out the best — and worst — in us

October 17, 2024 | Duplin Times, The (NC) Author: Staff Writer | Section: News | 790 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 came 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 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 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 Duplin Times. All rights reserved.

• Citation (aglc Style)

Staff Writer, 'Tom Campbell: Helene brings out the best — and worst — in us', *Duplin Times, The* (online), 17 Oct 2024 https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19C459BE093423E0



Michael Nicklas: Climate change is here; it's costly, devastating

October 17, 2024 | Duplin Times, The (NC) Author: Bobby Burns | Section: News | 672 Words OpenURL Link

Hurricane Helene carved a path of unprecedented destruction across six states in our region. We are still assessing our tremendous losses, giving thanks to first responders, celebrating every life that was spared and mourning those who we lost.

Now, as we dig out and begin to rebuild, we must take a sober look at what factors caused this devastation. What lessons can we apply from this tragedy to increase our resilience in the face of climate change caused by the burning of fossil fuels over the past century?

Climate scientists have long predicted intensification of hurricanes, floods and disasters similar to Helene because of climate change, and now North Carolinians are paying the price for decades of climate change denial made possible by the fossil fuel industry and its well-paid lobbyists in Washington.

As a citizen, a taxpayer and a voter, I want to know why Republicans have for decades ignored — and continue to ignore — the urgent warnings from climate scientists. I want to know:

Why does Donald Trump call climate change a "hoax" and why does Mark Robinson call climate change "junk science?"

Why does Project 2025, the blueprint for a new Trump administration, eliminate most of the federal government's climate initiatives while abolishing the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, which provides timely, life-saving weather information that the nation relies upon?

Why would Trump overhaul the U.S. Department of Energy to promote oil and natural gas while de-emphasizing our abundant, affordable and reliable renewable energy resources such as solar?

Why did Trump recently promise the well-heeled chief executives of oil and gas companies that if they gave him a billion-dollar contribution, he would "significantly deliver for them once elected?"

Why did every Republican in Congress oppose legislation providing over \$425 million in funding to support communities to prepare for and adapt to worsening threats brought on by the climate crisis?

And perhaps most importantly for North Carolina, why did Donald Trump deny 99 percent of federal recovery funds requested for North Carolina in 2017 after Hurricane Matthew struck Robeson, Cumberland, Edgecombe and Wayne counties?

Why? Because our governor was a Democrat! Of the more than \$900 million requested by our state for this disaster, Donald Trump's administration approved only \$6.1 million. This is brazen, unacceptable conduct for a president of the United States.

Trump sees hurricanes and natural disasters as opportunities to divide our country even further. Look at how he has already exploited the aftermath of Hurricane Helene for political gain, spreading malicious lies about the federal responses. This only underscores the former president's unfitness to hold office or any position of responsibility ever again.

North Carolina experienced 67 climate-driven disasters between 2010 and 2023, and each one had financial losses totaling over \$1 billion. Taxpayers in North Carolina and around the country are footing the rapidly increasing bill for

climate disasters around the country.

The impact of climate disasters on North Carolinians is consistently one of the most significant in the country. In 2018, when comparing the financial losses of climate disasters in relation to each state's Gross State Product, North Carolina experienced the highest disaster costs of any state in the nation, placing the damage between 3% to 5% of our GSP.

And these numbers do not even tally the enormous human costs that we have seen with Helene.

I am sick and tired of Republican politicians like Donald Trump and Mark Robinson denying climate change in one breath and then expressing "thoughts and prayers" for the victims of climate change in the next breath.

Happily, a recent poll (conducted before Hurricane Helene smashed into our region) showed that 72% of North Carolinians believe that action to address climate change is needed today. The great majority of Americans, including 66% of "moderate" Republicans, want our politicians to act now to reduce the amount of human-induced greenhouse gas emissions being dumped into our atmosphere.

When you cast your ballot for all elected offices this year, please remember who would support policies to protect you, your property and your loved ones from future climate-induced disasters.

Hint: It's not Republicans. And that should scare us all.

Copyright © 2024 The Duplin Times. All rights reserved.

• Citation (aglc Style)

Bobby Burns, 'Michael Nicklas: Climate change is here; it's costly, devastating', *Duplin Times, The* (online), 17 Oct 2024 https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19C459BDF9F693C8



State Mutual Aid Agreement adopted by Magnolia in board meeting

October 17, 2024 | Duplin Times, The (NC) Author: Shonda Kennion Correspondent| Section: Local | 952 Words OpenURL Link

Shortly after witnessing the destruction brought by hurricanes Helene and Milton, the town of Magnolia Board of Commissioners adopted a State Mutual Aid Agreement during its Oct. 8 meeting in the Magnolia Municipal Building Conference Room.

Town Manager Twig Rollins explained, "Mutual aid agreements have been around for a long time. What they say is, if you need help you can get it from a sister agency. Fire departments have had it for decades — probably hundreds of years — and police departments have it.

"The state has a Mutual Aid Agreement," Rollins said. "I have to confess, I didn't know they had a statewide agreement. (That information) was an email that had come out after Helene. Basically, if you have this in place at the time of disaster and you request help, and there's a state of emergency designated by the state or federal government, those agencies coming to help you will be paid by somebody else.

"So, everybody going to the mountains to help that has a State Mutual Aid Agreement is paid by state and federal funds," he said. "So it's really a formality. If they requested (help) and we had the spare staff to send up there, they would pay the bill for our staff. Or if we have a disaster, we request them. That's what this is.

"We didn't have (the agreement) in place, but what this would do is authorize the need to execute — not if we need help, but when we need help — we would be able to execute this and not have to pay those bills for the people coming to help us," Rollins said.

"And if we could ever spare people to go to the mountains, then they would be paid to go, or to any disaster area," he said.

A motion to adopt the State Mutual Aid Agreement was passed, unopposed.

Planning Board

Rollins also discussed whether the town should reinstate its planning board. He offered commissioners some insight on their options.

First, he noted, the board could decide not to have a planning board. However, Magnolia has had a planning board in the past and since commissioners have the ultimate authority on all planning of the zoning issues, they would not be forced to go along with all of the board's decisions.

Rollins said it is best practice to have a planning board so its members can review local development to ensure it is up to town standards.

Rollins sought feedback from the commissioners on whether they wanted a planning board. If so, he said, the plan is to advertise it on the Town of Magnolia's website so the public will know the town is looking for sign-ups.

A five-member board is recommended, but the board can have as few as three people, Rollins said. With scheduling conflicts and whatnot, however, five is an optimal number.

He recommended people serve for four years and that four of the five members should live in the town, and one can be from the extraterritorial jurisdiction, which stretches about one mile outside of town.

Commissioners voted to establish a planning board, populated with public residents and one commissioner.

Safety Grant

Commissioners also discussed a \$23,000 public safety grant for cameras, radar equipment and body armor.

Rollins noted, "It is customary when we get a grant that we must amend our budget. We have to add it to our budget so we can spend it out of our budget."

Mayor Dawn Ward asked for a motion to amend the fiscal year 2024-25 budget to include the anticipated grant funds. The motion was made and it carried without opposition.

Financial custodian

The commissions also unanimously approved the appointment of an official financial custodian. Rollins said that federal law mandates that the town have an official custodian who has authority over its funds in the bank.

Rollins was the custodian, but he noted that since he was leaving his manager's position on Oct. 12, a new custodian was needed.

"I'm recommending we appoint our finance officer, Sonia Jaimes, to be that official custodian. You can change it from her to the new town manager or you can leave it with her because she is your financial officer," he said. "I know I've said this a lot, but we're just covering all the bases."

The motion was carried and Jaimes was named as officer.

Manager's departure

In relation to Rollins' departure, a member of the public who attended the meeting took time to praise the manager's contributions to the town.

"You've only been here a short time, but you've really got the town heading in the right direction now and you've really been working on improving the town," said Danny Gregory. "I believe that you've gotten our commissioners in a better spirit of doing that, and they've been to a lot of different programs where they've learned more about what they need to be doing and they have attended a lot of meetings. They have just been doing a really good job.

"You came in and went to work on day one," Gregory said. "You've gotten grants that nobody ever knew they could get, and you just really worked, and you've been very knowledgeable about running a town. We hate that you're leaving but we understand, too, that you're bettering yourself and we don't blame anybody for bettering themselves. So, thank you Twig, for everything you've done for our town for the short time you've been here."

The meeting ended with the town manager's report, the mayor's report, and the commissioner's report. Before adjourning, gratitude was expressed to Rollins for all he's done for the town of Magnolia from each commissioner, the mayor and Police Captain Jason Holliday.

The meeting was attended by Mayor Ward, commissioners Jeanine Cavenaugh, Perry Raines, Eric Graham, Elvenia Wilson and Ethelene Southerland, Rollins, Jaimes, Attorney Joseph Ezzell and Holliday.

Copyright © 2024 The Duplin Times. All rights reserved.

• Citation (aglc Style)

Shonda Kennion Correspondent, 'State Mutual Aid Agreement adopted by Magnolia in board meeting', *Duplin Times, The* (online), 17 Oct 2024 https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19C45B76D400BA40

