

Remembering the great floods of 1916 and 2024

October 17, 2024 | Duplin Times, The (NC) Author: D.G. Martin Columnist| Section: Columnists | 562 Words OpenURL Link

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

Miss Currie was the daughter of a Davidson College professor.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Meanwhile in Asheville, Bryan King and his wife Angela Koh are assessing the damage to their 12 Bones Smokehouse on Foundry Street in the River Arts District. As I wrote in my book, "North Carolina's Eateries," "Even if 12 Bones had not been made famous by Barack Obama's visits there, it would be a 'must-do' in Asheville."

When I first visited 12 Bones several years ago, it was located closer to the French Broad River. Had Bryan and Angela not moved the restaurant a few blocks up the hill it would have been completely washed away. At its current location they may be able to repair and survive.

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

Coincidentally, on October 15, the publisher Blair is releasing "River Road," a book of poems by mountain author

Wayne Caldwell. His fine poetry describes the power of the flooding waters on the French Broad.

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• Citation (aglc Style)

D.G. Martin Columnist, 'Remembering the great floods of 1916 and 2024', *Duplin Times, The* (online), 17 Oct 2024 https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19C493A9196311B8



Union County residents eligible for FEMA assistance

October 17, 2024 | Enquirer-Journal, The (Monroe, NC) Author: Union County | Section: Enquirer Journal | 395 Words OpenURL Link

MONROE, N.C. — Homeowners and renters in Union County who had uninsured damage or losses caused by Tropical Storm Helene are now eligible to apply for disaster assistance from the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA).

Residents who have unmet needs for necessities, such as food, temporary lodging, basic home repair costs, personal property loss or other needs caused by Helene can receive an initial \$750 in Serious Needs Assistance without an inspection.

Previously, several other counties and the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians were authorized for assistance to households.

On Oct. 16, FEMA announced 12 additional North Carolina counties are eligible, including Union County. The deadline to apply for assistance is Nov. 27, 2024.

FEMA aid can be used for temporary housing, home repairs, car damages, uninsured property losses, child care and other expenses. There are several ways to apply for FEMA assistance. However, if you have homeowner's insurance, you must first file your insurance claim with your insurance company before submitting an application with FEMA.

The quickest way to apply is to go online to DisasterAssistance.gov. You can also apply using the FEMA App for mobile devices or calling toll-free 800-621-3362. The telephone line is open every day, and help is available in most languages. Once you complete the application, it will generate your FEMA number.

What you'll need when you apply:

Your Social Security number

Contact information, including your phone number and address

A general list of damage and losses

Banking information if you choose direct deposit

If insured, the policy number or the agent and/or the company name

Once your application has been submitted, FEMA will contact you to explain your eligibility, assistance you will receive, and how to appeal. If you qualify for assistance, money will be deposited directly into your account.

If you have homeowners, renters' or flood insurance, you should file a claim as soon as possible. FEMA cannot duplicate benefits for losses covered by insurance. If your policy does not cover all your disaster expenses, you may be eligible for federal assistance.

The frequently asked questions at www.disasterassistance.gov/help/faqs may help you better understand what aid is available and how the process works. If you have questions about your application or the process, call the FEMA Helpline at 800-621-3362. The helpline is available from 7 a.m. to 10 p.m. every day.

For the latest information about North Carolina recovery, visit www.ncdps.gov/our-organization/emergency-management/hurricane-helene or fema.gov/disaster/4827.

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Union County, 'Union County residents eligible for FEMA assistance', *Enquirer-Journal, The* (online), 17 Oct 2024 https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19C494C65DE7E628



Red Cross: Blood donors vital in hurricane response

October 17, 2024 | Enquirer-Journal, The (Monroe, NC) Author: Kaitlyn Connolly American Red Cross | Section: Enquirer Journal | 355 Words OpenURL Link

CHARLOTTE, N.C. — The American Red Cross continues to work to restock critically needed blood products uncollected due to the ongoing impact of Hurricane Helene's devastation in the Southeast. Donors outside of affected areas are encouraged to make an appointment to give now and help keep the blood supply stable in the weeks to come.

Since making landfall, the storm and its aftermath have led to the cancellation of more than 100 blood drives, causing thousands of blood and platelet donations to go uncollected.

For so many people living with urgent medical care needs, blood transfusions are essential, and donations in the Southeast are key to keeping our nationwide network stocked. The Red Cross operates through a national inventory with the ability to move blood wherever and whenever it is needed most.

The time to give blood or platelets is now. Bring hope to those in need by visiting RedCrossBlood.org, calling 1-800-RED CROSS or by using the Red Cross Blood Donor App.

As the Red Cross continues to urge people to give blood or platelets now, our teams are also on the ground providing vital relief, like food, water, shelter and support, in communities devastated by Hurricane Helene. If you're able to help those impacted by disasters big and small across the country, like Helene, please consider making a gift of any amount.

All who come to give blood, platelets or plasma through Oct. 31 will receive a \$10 Amazon.com gift card by email, plus be automatically entered for a chance to win one of three \$5,000 gift cards. For full details, visit RedCrossBlood.org/Treat.

Upcoming Union County blood donation opportunities this month include:

Oct. 23, 9 a.m.-1:30 p.m., Central Academy of Technology & Arts, 600 Brewer Drive, Monroe

Oct. 29, 11:30 a.m.-4 p.m., Stonebridge Golf Course, 2721 Swilcan Burns Drive, Monroe

Oct. 30, 8 a.m.-1 p.m., Marvin Ridge High School, 2825 Crane Road, Marvin

Oct. 31, 8:30 a.m.-2 p.m., Piedmont High School, 3006 Sikes Mill Road, Monroe

Donations may also be made at the Indian Trail Blood Donor Center, 5880 W. U.S. 74, Suite 204. Hours vary, so visit RedCrossBlood.org or call 1-800-RED CROSS (1-800-733-2767) for details.

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81 people still missing in western NC after Helene

October 17, 2024 | Fayetteville Observer, The (NC) Author: Karrigan Monk, Ryley Ober , and Mary Boyte; USA TODAY NETWORK Section: News | 458 Words Page: A8 OpenURL Link

North Carolina Gov. Roy Cooper said Tuesday afternoon that 81 people remain missing in the western part of the state in the aftermath of Hurricane Helene.

A task force has been formed to find the missing.

"The task force, law enforcement and other partners will continue working to locate those who are unaccounted for and I am thankful for their efforts," Cooper said during a tour of the town of Swannanoa.

Cooper said that 77,000 individuals have applied for relief through the Federal Emergency Management Agency, and that FEMA has paid \$99million and is paying for temporary housing for 1,900 people.

The governor also addressed continued misinformation campaigns and domestic threats against recovery efforts.

"If you're participating in spreading (misinformation), stop it," Cooper said. "Whatever your aim is, the people you are really hurting is the people in Western North Carolina who need help."

Cooper said Lt. Gov. Mark Robinson, the Republican nominee for governor, is participating in the spread of disinformation. He said it was disappointing and wrong when candidates "are using people's misery to sow chaos for their own political objectives."

William Jacob Parsons, 44, was arrested on public terror charges Saturday after threatening to "go mess up some FEMA personnel," according to Rutherford County sheriff's office Capt. Jamie Keever. Parsons was armed with an AR-style rifle and two handguns at the time of the arrest, according to authorities.

On the same day, the U.S. Forest Service received an email from FEMA that said a National Guard unit working for the agency "came across some militia members who said they were out hunting FEMA," according to Jason Nedlo, a spokesperson for the Forest Service's Southern Area Blue Incident Management Team. The email was first reported by The Washington Post.

In response, FEMA advised all federal responders in Rutherford County "to stand down and evacuate the county immediately," an official with the U.S. Forest Service wrote to other federal agencies, according to The Post.

The threats caused FEMA employees to temporarily stop accepting in-person applications for federal assistance in some of North Carolina's mountain communities, according to a statement posted Sunday on social media by the Ashe County Emergency Management Department.

Cooper said at the news conference that he was not aware of any other threats but said the swirl of disinformation had demoralized volunteers and prevented those who could apply for aid from doing so. He has directed the North Carolina Department of Public Safety to provide more security for FEMA.

Contributing: James Powel, Christopher Cann, Josh Meyer, Minnah Arshad and Thao Nguyen, USA TODAY

Karrigan Monk and Ryley Ober are Asheville Citizen Times reporters. Mary Boyte is a Jackson Clarion-Ledger reporter.

• Citation (aglc Style)

Karrigan Monk, Ryley Ober , and Mary Boyte, USA TODAY NETWORK, '81 people still missing in western NC after Helene', Fayetteville Observer, The (online), 17 Oct 2024 A8 https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view? p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19C4388C95DE82C0>



High school football picks, predictions for Fayetteville teams in Week 9

October 17, 2024 | Fayetteville Observer, The: Web Edition Articles (NC) Author: Monica Holland, Fayetteville Observer | Section: Sports | 772 Words OpenURL Link

We're in the home stretch of high school football's regular season, and the slate of upcoming games will solidify standings and set seedings for state playoffs, which start Nov. 15.

That NCHSAA playoff start date is a week later than originally scheduled, with time added to the season to allow for schools in western North Carolina affected by historic flooding in the aftermath of Hurricane Helene to recover.

Terry Sanford took control of the All American Conference standings last week, dealing Harnett Central its first league loss to leave the Bulldogs as the only AAC team without a conference loss. Seventy-First did the same, beating Jack Britt for the Bucs' first United 8 loss and leaving the Falcons alone at No. 1 in the league with four teams tied for second place.

This week, the conference battles continue with several intriguing matchups on the Week 9 slate.

Here are The Fayetteville Observer's picks and predictions headed into this week's competition.

Watch football games on NFHS Network

Terry Sanford (5-2, 4-0 AAC) at Westover (5-2, 2-2), 7 p.m.

This could be a trap game for the Bulldogs, who took sole possession of first place in the AAC last week in search of their first conference title since 2017. Led by 6-foot-3 junior quarterback Richard Vanderhost, who likes to sling it, the Wolverines rebounded from a two-game slide that started with an overtime loss to Pine Forest, with a two-game winning streak sealed by Ethan O'Neil Hubbard's game-winning 60-yard punt return last week at Overhills. Terry Sanford has won all of its league games handily as junior QB Jacob Moore and the offense look sharper every week. A conference title within their grasp should motivate the Bulldogs to keep focused for this one.

Radio: WFNC 640 AM

The pick: Terry Sanford

Western Harnett (0-7, 0-4 AAC) at E.E. Smith (1-6, 0-4), 7 p.m.

The Golden Bulls are coming off a hard-fought 52-32 loss to Pine Forest, and the Eagles haven't won a game since Oct. 14, 2022 — when they beat E.E. Smith 21-18. That should be enough fuel for the Bulls to put this one away.

Radio: WIDU 1600 AM/99.7 FM

The pick: E.E. Smith

Jack Britt (5-2, 3-1 U8) at Cape Fear (6-1, 3-1), 7:30 p.m.

Cape Fear got back on track last week with a 51-0 blowout at Byrd after falling to Seventy-First by 40 points in Week 7 for its only loss. The Colts have allowed just two teams to score more than a touchdown against them this season, and the Bucs come in averaging 25.6 points per game behind a balanced offense led by junior quarterback Gavin Stokes. They've had a big season already, notching a win over Scotland early on, but the Bucs face a tough challenge against a stout Colts squad playing their homecoming game.

Radio: Mid-South Sports Network 94.3 FM

The pick: Cape Fear

Lumberton (3-4, 0-4 U8) at Douglas Byrd (1-6, 0-4), 7:30 p.m.

One of these teams will get its first United 8 Conference victory this week. The Pirates average 22.1 points compared to Byrd's 13.0, but the Eagles have shown the ability to score on tough defenses, like South View and Jack Britt — both of whom shut out the Pirates this season. If Byrd's defense can step up and get some stops behind tackles leader Kymani Atiles and Justin Richardson has a good night running the ball, the Eagles could have their first win since Week 1.

The pick: Douglas Byrd

South View (5-2, 3-1 U8) at Gray's Creek (5-2, 3-1), 7:30 p.m.

Four teams are tied for second place in the U8, and they all face off this week. South View will need to lean on a physical defense to keep pace. The Tigers haven't given up a point since September, but they'll need to dig in to stop Gray's Creek's brutal rushing attack led by junior RB Zeke Reed, one of the top rushers in the state who's posted 106 points already and sits poised to surpass 1,000 on the season this week. South View has its own playmaking RB in Rashad Dockery, also set to top the 1,000-yard mark this week.

The pick: South View

Purnell Swett (2-5, 0-4 U8) at Seventy-First (7-0, 4-0), 7:30 p.m.

The Falcons go for their 38th straight regular-season win this week, on a three-season-and-counting tear dating back to their last regular-season loss in 2021 during the COVID spring season. They beat Swett 40-6 that year, and they've outscored the Rams by a combined 152-6 since. This isn't a fair fight.

The pick: Seventy-First

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• Citation (aglc Style)

Monica Holland, Fayetteville Observer, 'High school football picks, predictions for Fayetteville teams in Week 9', *Fayetteville Observer, The: Web Edition Articles* (online), 17 Oct 2024 https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view? p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19C4659A0C6CA230>



Early voting starts in 10 more states this week

October 17, 2024 | Gaston Gazette, The (Gastonia, NC) Author: Maya Homan; USA TODAY | Section: News | 524 Words Page: A14 OpenURL Link

In North Carolina, there are additional resources available for voters affected by Hurricane Helene.

Voters in 10 more states can start casting ballots this week as early voting rolls out for the Nov.5 general election.

Here's when early voting begins in these states and what voters should know.

Tuesday: Georgia

Early voting locations, sample ballots and other information are available on the Georgia secretary of state's My Voter Page.

Voters should bring a valid photo ID, such as a Georgia driver's license, Georgia Voter ID Card, U.S. passport or tribal ID to their polling place. Students from Georgia's public colleges, universities or technical colleges can also use their school ID cards.

Wednesday: Iowa, Kansas,

Rhode Island, Tennessee

For voters in lowa, in-person early voting is available at the local county auditor's offices or, in certain cases, at a satellite early voting station. Voters can contact their county auditor by visiting the secretary of state's website. If proof of residence is not listed on a voter's ID, voters should bring an additional document showing proof of residence.

Kansas voters can also vote early at county election offices or satellite voting locations throughout the state. Voters should bring a photo ID to the polls. Kansas residents can look up early voting locations using VoterView and find more information about their county elections office on the secretary of state's website.

Rhode Island voters should be sure to bring a photo ID with them to cast their ballot. The Board of Elections website has a full list of locations.

In Tennessee, voters need an excuse for an absentee ballot, but not to vote early. Early voting is available at county election offices or satellite locations. Check with their local elections commission for hours and locations.

Thursday: North Carolina

North Carolina requires a photo ID, such as a driver's license or a passport. However, voters who don't already have an accepted form of ID can apply online to receive a free voter ID card. Early voting sites are available online at the North Carolina State Board of Elections website. There are additional resources available for voters affected by Hurricane Helene.

Friday: Louisiana, Washington

Early voters in Louisiana will be asked to present a valid photo ID or sign a voter affidavit. More information about early voting in each parish can be accessed through Louisiana's voter portal, and a full list of early voting locations

is available at the secretary of state's website.

Washington is a vote-by-mail state, meaning all registered voters are automatically mailed an absentee ballot. Ballots can be mailed in or dropped off at a voting center. The secretary of state's website has a full list of voting centers and ballot drop boxes.

Saturday: Massachusetts, Nevada

Some first-time Massachusetts voters may have to show a photo ID, but voter ID is not required for the majority of voters. Early voting locations are available on the secretary of the commonwealth's website.

Nevada's registered voters automatically receive an absentee ballot, but voters can also vote in person at an early voting site. A list of locations is on the secretary of state's website.

Contributing: Sarah Gleason, USA TODAY

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Maya Homan, USA TODAY, 'Early voting starts in 10 more states this week', *Gaston Gazette, The* (online), 17 Oct 2024 A14 https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19C438AF60273B50



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From the Legislature

October 17, 2024 | Goldsboro News-Argus, The (NC) Author: Rep. Frank Iler | Section: Opinion | 477 Words OpenURL Link

Last week, the North Carolina General Assembly met to pass an emergency bill for disaster relief for Hurricane Helene impacted counties in western N.C. It also included provisions for Brunswick and New Hanover counties for damage from the unnamed storm in mid-September.

When we adjourned in September, we intended to return Oct. 9, if necessary, for further budget action or veto overrides. After Hurricane Helene hit western N.C. on Sept. 27 with unexpected rain and wind, our leadership immediately re-purposed the date for relief from our Rainy Day Fund.

As soon as the skies cleared, the House Speaker, the Senate President Pro Tem, as well as the Governor, surveyed the damage both in the air and on the ground. Many of our colleagues in the west and across the state pitched in to help with rescue efforts and donations, as did power crews and law officers.

We convened last Wednesday and passed House Bill 149 — Disaster Recovery Act of 2024. This was negotiated with all concerned parties in the Legislative and Executive branches. It passed unanimously in the House 113-0 and in the Senate 48-0, and was signed into law on last Thursday by the Governor.

It creates the Hurricane Helene Disaster Recovery Fund and the Potential Tropical Cyclone #8 (PTC8) Disaster Recovery Fund. It also extends the normal 30-day state of emergency until March 1, 2025.

Brunswick and New Hanover counties are named as impacted by PTC8, and the bill establishes a framework for funding for the two counties as soon as the damage assessments are complete. The Hurricane Helene fund has \$273 million in funding in several areas. The Dept. of Public Safety — Div. of Emergency Mgmt. will get \$250 million for all their additional expense during the ongoing rescue and recovery efforts. The Dept. of Public Instruction will get \$16 million for lost compensation for school employees in food service and other service jobs as well as other immediate costs incurred. The Office of State Budget & Mgmt. (OSBM), will get \$2 million which will be spent as grants for technical assistance with recovery funds. The State Board of Elections will get \$5 million to make and execute emergency plans for voting in the 24 impacted counties.

Many other provisions in House Bill 149 affect school instructional hours, election procedures, child care, court procedures, and recalling retired state and local employees, among others. I encourage anyone looking for further details to read the bill by going to ncleg.gov and entering House Bill 149 or H149 in the search box at the top of the page.

This is just a start. We plan to return to Raleigh on Oct. 24 for further action for these counties, as well as Brunswick and New Hanover. We have been told our Rainy Day Funds are too large. That may turn out to be incorrect in the light of these recent unforeseen events.

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Rep. Frank Iler, 'From the Legislature', *Goldsboro News-Argus, The* (online), 17 Oct 2024 https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19C45B313693F838



Letters to the Editor

October 17, 2024 | Goldsboro News-Argus, The (NC) Author: Staff Writer | Section: Opinion | 1656 Words OpenURL Link

World on Fire

To the editor:

Under the Biden/Harris Administration, the world has become exponentially more dangerous. The disastrous withdrawal from Afghanistan demonstrated American weakness and incompetence and has led to cascading trouble. Russia invaded Ukraine, Iran and its proxies attacked both Israel and Middle Eastern shipping and China has become far more aggressive towards Taiwan, the Philippines and expanded its influence in the South China Sea, as well as Africa. Weakness and appeasement always lead to war.

The Biden/Harris Administration approved the Nord Stream pipeline, released billions to Iran and relaxed restrictions on Iranian oil. These measures helped both Russia and Iran fund their wars. In addition, the administration's war on American energy has kept energy prices high benefiting both Russia and Iran. Absurdly, Biden/Harris policies funded both sides of the wars in Ukraine and Israel.

The Biden/Harris immigration policy has left Americans less safe. Terrorists have illegally crossed our border and the latest ICE statistics regarding known illegal alien murderers, rapists and other known felons is truly alarming and indefensible. The human and economic costs are crushing cities and towns across America and leaving American taxpayers in the dust.

Biden/Harris unleashed inflation on America with their profligate spending and their war on energy and real wages declined. Harris was the deciding vote in the Senate for the costliest spending bills and has gone on record to cancel the Keystone pipeline and ban fracking.

Neither Harris nor Walz have any real foreign policy experience and appear to be no match for the enemies we face. Harris, "the last person in the room," is way more liberal than Biden and Walz is a self-described socialist knucklehead.

Save America and Western Democracy. Vote Trump/Vance.

Greg Kent

Ocean Isle Beach

Lies have consequences

To the editor:

It was once said to me that "people with nothing will do anything to get something." This piece of philosophy has stuck with me for many years. This unfortunate scenario is just what Trump and his minions are using to create fear, give an excuse and to create chaos, when he loses. He has no intention of staying out of jail and this fear tactic will energize those well-armed, having nothing to lose folks to riot, only this time all over the country, not just in the capital.

Anyone with half a brain knows Democrats are not trying to kill him. Hattians are not eating pets. These giant lies, ones of thousands he has told and Fox amplifies, will only fuel more hatred and division in the country. I have never

seen such division in this country.

I was in the military during the Viet Nam era and remember how people were opposed to the war. People in the '60s protested to get voting rights and civil rights. There was never this much lie-generated hatred in this country in my 80 trips around the sun ... a method more serious to create destruction to our democracy never seen before than what is happening today.

Donald J. Trump will do anything to stay out of jail, and he will destroy our democracy in order to avoid going to jail. Remember he is still awaiting a sentencing for his past crimes and will be assigned a "parole officer," no matter what.

Joseph Gironda

Ocean Isle Beach

Women should make decisions about their own selves

To the editor:

The authors of the Constitution did not deem women worthy of full rights. It took 72 years from the first Suffragette meeting for women to be granted the right to vote. Women, who usually bear the brunt of child-rearing in this country, did not have legal access to birth control until 1965. The Equal Rights Amendment, which reads, simply, "Equality of rights under the law shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any state on account of sex," has failed to become law. Women still earn 84 cents while men earn one dollar for the same work.

Today, Mark Robinson, a Trump protégé, tells us to just "keep our skirts down" with no responsibility for men. Donald Trump says he couldn't have abused E. Jean Carroll because she's "not his type," not that he was incapable of abusing her. Project 25, written by associates of Trump, will remove a woman's right to decide with her doctor what is best for her health and put that decision in the hands of the government. Vance has made it clear that a woman without children has nothing to offer our country.

Now we hear Trump offering to "protect" women. He will be our best friend. Everything will be rainbows and unicorns if he's elected. Shall we believe the man who has cheated on every woman he's been married to? Joked he could grab a woman's intimate areas with no regard to the actual human being he's groping?

Seems like Trump and his ilk are the ones women need protecting from, and I think it's high time that we women band together and declare that we are smart enough, responsible enough and worthy enough to make our own decisions about our own selves.

Linda Gallo

Leland

Lower quality and safety of healthcare at our hospitals

To the editor:

Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services, CMS, provides star ratings to help patients make decisions about where to get health care and encourage hospitals to improve the quality of care they provide. There are 14 five-star hospitals in North Carolina. Novant Health Wilmington has been a 2-star hospital from 2021 through 2024. Only 12.8% of hospitals in our country have a 2 star rating from CMS.

I wrote and called Congressman David Rouzer a total of 5 times to determine if there is a plan to improve the quality and safety of our hospital. No response. After reading last week's letter, "Rousing Rouzer," I shouldn't be

surprised by his lack of interest.

I also contacted both US senators and our state senator and state representative. No response.

While I find the lack of response both disturbing and surprising, my greater concern is the lower quality and safety of healthcare at our hospital. As a Certified Profession in Healthcare Quality, I know that where you go for health care matters. Star ratings reflect the quality of care. We deserve to have safe and high quality health care offered by the 14 five-star hospitals in the state. I just don't know who cares enough to do something about it.

Nancy Cash

Leland

Drowning in MAGA's lies

To the editor:

"Planet of the Apes" ends as Charlton Heston finds a half-buried Statue of Liberty and realizes that the nightmareworld he's trapped on is future Earth. "You maniacs," he screams, "you blew it all up! Damn you all to hell!"

Half-buried Asheville is our Charlton Heston moment. Maniacal climate-change deniers blocked action for decades despite scientists' dire warnings. Trump adds insult to injury, inciting panic with lies about Biden playing politics with relief because Trump did that as president!

Senator Thom Tillis (R-NC) praised federal responders' "extraordinary work" and begged people to stop spreading "conspiracy theory junk," which hinders the relief effort. Trump ignored them, like he ignored pleas to stop spreading dangerous lies about immigrants eating pets.

Instead of acknowledging problems and fixing them, MAGA-Republicans block progress by denying problems with their firehose of falsehoods.

National Security Adviser Robert O'Brien told Trump in January 2020 that COVID would be "the biggest national security threat" of his presidency. Trump told Bob Woodward he knew COVID was "deadly stuff" but "I wanted to always play it down." Because Trump discouraged lockdowns, mask-wearing and vaccinations ... 43% more Republicans died than Democrats. The Covid Crisis Group estimates that 500,000 Americans died needlessly.

MAGA-Republicans, like the disgraced Mark Robinson, mock school-shooting victims as "media prostitots" and block common-sense gun safety laws most Americans support. Easy access to guns is the greatest cause of death for American children. We have just 5% of the world's population but 46% of its civilian guns, and, by far, the highest gun-death rate among high-income countries.

Trump stripped women of their right to choose, then lied that they asked for it! In fact, 72% of Americans support choice, including Melania. Trump's irony-free response? "I'm not going to tell [Melania] what to do." Other American women aren't so lucky. Trump's actions caused maternal mortality to spike nationally, including a 56% jump in Texas.

Elect Harris and Walz. MAGA's lies are killing us.

Michael Maisel

Sunset Beach

Trump will worsen inflation

To the editor:

On Oct. 9, the Consumer Price Index reported that inflation dropped to 2.4%, even lower than Trump's 2.5% rate in January 2020. The Dow Jones and S&P 500 stock indexes closed at record highs.

Trump would flush all that away. His 60% tariff on Chinese imports and 10% tariff on imports from other countries ignores the fact that tariffs are sales taxes passed on by importers as price increases paid by consumers. The American Action Forum, a center-right think tank, estimates Trump's sales tax will cost you another \$3,650-\$4,300 every year.

Sixteen Nobel-Prize-winning economists condemned Trump's proposals, warning that his national sales tax and "fiscally irresponsible budgets" will raise prices and reignite inflation. They credited the Biden/Harris Administration's policies with "lowering long-term inflationary pressures" and called them "vastly superior."

Trump and Project 2025 propose merging airlines and oil companies, creating more monopolies, eliminating competition, increasing prices and reigniting inflation.

Trump would scrap the Biden/Harris Administration's renewable energy efforts. That would pump more greenhouse gases into the atmosphere, make climate change worse, increase costly and deadly climate disasters like Hurricanes Helene and Milton, and reignite inflation.

Trump would deport millions of immigrants employed in construction, agriculture, and food preparation, causing an economic collapse.

The US economy is the envy of the world. The dollar accounts for 60% of global foreign exchange reserves. Trump wants to squander that by devaluing the dollar to fight a trade war that will make us pay more for imports and reignite inflation.

Trump's niece says he paid someone to take his SATs. Trump's former professor at Wharton said, "Trump was the dumbest student I ever had." Trump's Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin called Trump an "idiot."

We should listen to sixteen Nobel-prize-winning economists instead of Donald J. Trump.

Nancy Briganti

Carolina Shores

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• Citation (aglc Style)

Staff Writer, 'Letters to the Editor', *Goldsboro News-Argus, The* (online), 17 Oct 2024 https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19C456425337BD20



County responds to Helene relief efforts - STRONG FAITH

October 17, 2024 | Graham Star (Robbinsville, NC) Author: Eric Reece | Section: Opinions | 521 Words

Page: 4A OpenURL Link

The good folks of Graham County have done it again. A call was sent out for help - and the response came back loud and clear: help the people affected by Hurricane Helene in Western North Carolina. The destruction from Helene is massive and I am still trying to understand the devastation. On a Zoom call, I spoke about concern for counselors in place to help the people. On another Zoom call, I was told that in times of extreme disasters, the stresses are so great people quit work, relationships break up and some people do not recover. Even the strongest things can break when enough pressure is applied.

Papa's Pizza to Go was inspired to help and led the way. They were able to get the use of a 48-foot trailer from Millsaps Trucking. United Community Bank offered a space for the trailer and volunteers to help load. Everyone got the word out and individuals, churches, businesses and people from out-of-state filled the trailer up with clothes, bottled water, sports drinks, food, hygiene items, batteries, flashlights, generators and many other items.

The trailer was delivered to Burnsville on Oct. 8. With a number of volunteers from all around, it was unloaded in record time. It took a little longer to sort things but immediately items were given out. A room of baby items was set up at the United Community Bank in Burnsville.

There are no working water and sewage systems in many of the Western North Carolina towns that were hit. Many are still without electricity. The pastor of West Burnsville Baptist Church, the Rev. Rick Fox said they are doing well with clothes, food and water - but he said what was needed was batteries and extension cords.

There are three phases to responding to first phrase is "Rescue." This is where trained personnel, first responders, firefighters and National Guard get to the affected areas quickly - often while the disaster is ongoing to save lives - secure the area and make the surroundings as safe as possible.

The second phase of response is "Relief." Relief agencies mobilize, connections are made and critical supplies from food, generators, gasoline, chainsaws to baby formula are sent. During the relief response, mobile kitchens are set up, water trucks are brought in, communications are improved and people are encouraged to apply for assistance. One hope is for the people to know they are not alone and others cared about them and their situation.

The third phase is "Recovery." This phrase can last for years as lives and communities are rebuilt. Different agencies and non-profit organizations continue to work together, long term to repair homes, businesses and support the community economically. Towns will have to build new infrastructure. Services will be overwhelmed as they try to get everything back to normal.

I give thanks to everyone for their kindness and concern for our neighbors in Western North Carolina.

Eric Reece is the faith columnist for The Graham Star. He is pastor of Robbinsville United Methodist Church and can be reached via email, ereece@wnccumc.net.

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• Citation (aglc Style)

Eric Reece, 'County responds to Helene relief efforts - STRONG FAITH', *Graham Star* (online), 17 Oct 2024 4A https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19C42CF3E2253600



Letters to the Editor

October 17, 2024 | Graham Star (Robbinsville, NC)

Section: Letters | 534 Words

Page: 4A OpenURL Link

Donation drive a success Thank you to all who reached down a little deeper into your wallets and gave your heartfelt donations to help your neighbors in the counties that were affected by Hurricane Helene. Every donation was much needed and appreciated. It is very humbling to witness the generosity of Graham County when others are in need. Thank you from the Robbinsville Post Office. Debbie Beasley Robbinsville The writer is postmaster of the Robbinsville Post Office. Grammie's views The presidential election is now! Are we better off now than we were four years ago? Yes, because we can see a path

forward - not going back. Donald Trump cannot end wars and restore world peace with a phone call. He is not the stable genius that he claims to be. Donald Trump is old and out-of-touch with reality. America is a huge country, with lots of different people with dreams and aspirations. Our leaders should help lift people up and not put or hold them down. Before Trump was president, he was a reality TV game show Host. His theme song was "Money, Money, Money, Money." I have a YouTube channel with 5, 113 subscribers from all over the United States and other countries. It has been a blessing to me. I choose love over hate; democracy over dictatorship - and not Project 2025; united over divided; truth over lies; and never a cult: always freedom. Antonia Welch Snowbird Where's the support? It is rare for members of a former president's inner circle of advisors to not support their boss for reelection. It is also highly unusual for members of the military to make political comments. Here are a few comments by former appointees of Trump: n Mike Pence, "Donald Trump is pursuing an agenda that is at odds with the conservative agenda that we governed on for 4 years." He is not endorsing Trump. n Mark Esper was the U.S. Secretary of Defense for President Trump. He stated, "Trump is not fit for office because he puts himself first, not country first." n James Mattis, a retired 4-star general also served as Secretary of Defense. He said of Trump, "His use of the presidency to destroy trust in our elections and to poison our respect for fellow citizens has been enabled but political pundits whose names will live on as profiles in cowardice." n Mark Milley, who served as Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, said Trump was a "wannabe dictator." He added, "We don't take an oath to an individual. We take an oath to the constitution, and we are willing to die to protect it." n John Bolton served as Trump's National Security Advisor. He said Putin wants Trump to win,

because he thinks he is an "easy mark." n John Kelly, a former Marine Corps general, served as Trump's Secretary of Homeland Security and White House Chief of Staff. Of Trump, he said, "He is a person who admires autocrats and murderous dictators. He has contempt for our democratic institutions, our Constitution and the rule of law." We should heed the warnings of these officials who see Trump for the danger he is to our country. Marlene Smith Tuskeegee

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'Letters to the Editor', *Graham Star* (online), 17 Oct 2024 4A https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view? p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19C42CF3E06503B8>



Victory: intercepted Victory: intercepted - Pick-six dooms Black Knights

October 17, 2024 | Graham Star (Robbinsville, NC)

Author: Kevin Hensley sports@grahamstar.com | Section: Sports | 644 Words

Page: 1B OpenURL Link

Robbinsville One errant pass. With 7:57 left in Friday's home game against Murphy, Robbinsville held firm to a 7-6 advantage. The Black Knights had not trailed all night and with the way things were going on the field, all they had to do was sustain the lead. A long punt by the visiting Bulldogs had placed Robbinsville at its own 4-yard line. Roman Jones quickly made up some ground, posting consecutive 4-yard carries to begin the series. On 3rd and 2, the Knights went for a quick pass, in an attempt to move the chains. The play did not go according to plan. Instead, the ball ended up in the clutches of Murphy's Camden Breazeale, who had no one in front of him as he sprinted 12 yards for an interception return.

Following a two-point conversion pass from quarterback Brady Grant to Kenyon Nichols, the Bulldogs led 14-7. Robbinsville failed to produce a response before the final buzzer. "We just didn't block well all night," said Black Knights head coach Dee Walsh. "We played great on defense and had a lot of enthusiasm, but on offense blocking is a selfish thing. We have worked on that all year." The low-scoring, smashmouth affair was indeed a defensive battle from the opening whistle, with both sides unable to cash in on turnovers and golden opportunities to find the end zone. Robbinsville (2-5, 1-1) finally broke a first-quarter stalemate with exactly one second remaining in the period, scoring in transition on a 2-yard Jones push. His successful venture was set up by a Quinn Jumper interception, which placed the Knights at the Murphy 33; Angel Cervantes connected for his lone PAT of the evening. The Bulldogs waited until 46 seconds remained before halftime to make their first dent: an 8-yard pass from Grant to Nichols. Bryce Adams broke through the scrum to block the PAT in resounding fashion, which solidified the score until the fourth stanza. Ryan Payne ended Robbinsville's attempt to tack on another before halftime with a deep interception, which proved to be the final big play of the clash until Isiac Collins pulled down a Grant pass to shift possession back to the Black Knights late in the third. But Robbinsville went 3-and-out after the theft and just a few minutes later, Murphy (6-1, 2-0) deflated the atmosphere surrounding the Big Oaks. Changes aplenty It turns out that Friday's game will not be the final one in Robbinsville this year. Due to the North Carolina High School Athletic Association's ruling that football season in Western North Carolina will be extended one week a fallout from the devastation of Hurricane Helene - the Black Knights will return home Friday, Nov. 1 to face the T.C. Roberson Rams (3-1). Kickoff will be at 7:30 p.m., and the game will be live-streamed on grahamstarsports.com. In exchange, Swain County and Robbinsville have elected to move the regular-season finale to Friday, Nov. 8. The action in Bryson City will be carried on the Maroon Devils Network. Immediately ahead are back-to-back road games: the Black Knights make the short trip to Andrews (4-2, 1-1) for a 7:30 p.m.,

appointment Friday, Oct. 18 against the Wildcats; before traveling slightly further to face Hayesville (2-5, 1-1) at 7:30 p.m., Friday, Oct. 25. Week 8: Oct. 11, 2024 n Cherokee 27, Andrews 0 n Hayesville 12, Swain County 7 n Murphy 14, Robbinsville 7 n Upcoming games: Andrews vs. Robbinsville; Cherokee (4-3, 1-1) vs. Hayesville; Murphy vs. Swain County (0-6, 0-2).

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• Citation (aglc Style)

Kevin Hensley sports@grahamstar.com, 'Victory: intercepted Victory: intercepted - Pick-six dooms Black Knights', *Graham Star* (online), 17 Oct 2024 1B https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?
p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19C42CF3ECD0AFD0>



State representative presents grant check to school system - Funding allocated for new elementary facility

October 17, 2024 | Graham Star (Robbinsville, NC) Author: Kevin Hensley editor@grahamstar.com | Section: Education | 445 Words Page: 10A OpenURL Link

Robbinsville - It was more of a formality, but Graham County Schools was presented with a \$42 million check Friday, which will go toward the much-needed construction of a new Robbinsville Elementary School. District 120 Rep. Karl Gillespie (R-Franklin) personally delivered the check to Graham County Schools Superintendent Robert Moody. Also on-hand were school board chairman Rodney Nelson; vice chairman Chip Carringer; assistant superintendent David Matheson; county commissioner Connie Orr; and county commission chairman Jacob Nelms. All have played a vital role in the planning of the new school. The presentation came on the heels of a press release from the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction, which provided more details about the funding and a description of the school itself. According to the release, seven school districts were awarded a total of \$360 million in lottery-funded grants, under the Needs-Based Public School Capital Fund - which was launched in 2017 by the General Assembly.

Other systems afforded the funds were Edgecombe (\$62 million); Hyde (\$36, 574, 482); Jackson (\$52 million); Martin (\$62 million); Sampson (\$62 million); and Swain (\$52 million) counties.

"Hurricane Helene has reiterated the necessity of our students having access to safe, modern and structurally sound learning environments," said state superintendent Catherine Truitt. "Each year, this funding does so much to support districts in modernizing infrastructure to improve safety and to enhance access for students to specialized learning facilities where they gain hands-on experience in new facilities like STEM labs, media centers and in career and technical education fields.

"I'm so thrilled to see these grants get into the hands of some incredibly deserving districts as we seek to help every student in the state reach their full potential."

"More than half of the \$1 billion raised by the lottery last year went to build new schools and renovate and repair older ones," added Chief Executive Officer of the N.C. Education Lottery Mark Michalko. "You can see ground-breaking and ribbon-cuttings events for new schools occurring all across our state. It's a wonderful use of lottery funds and these new schools and classrooms will help move our students forward." The department of public instruction received 122 applications totaling \$1.78 billion in requested funding.

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• Citation (aglc Style)

Kevin Hensley editor@grahamstar.com, 'State representative presents grant check to school system - Funding allocated for new elementary facility', *Graham Star* (online), 17 Oct 2024 10A https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view? p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19C42CF3EA5FA800>



Disasters ltest leaders. Trump fails every time.

October 17, 2024 News & Record (Greensboro, NC)

Section: Main | 732 Words

Page: 5A OpenURL Link

In 2019, residents of Alabama were unnecessarily alarmed after then-President Donald Trump incorrectly said Hurricane Dorian was headed their way. However, instead of acknowledging he made a mistake, Trump questioned the National Weather Service and showed Americans a falsified weather map - which is against the law.

Today the former president is spewing lies about relief efforts and federal resources at a time when those affected by Hurricanes Helene and Milton need guidance and aid. State and local Republicans have asked him to stop, because apparently misinformation mucks up rescue and relief efforts. Of course, Trump doesn't care so long as his lies also muck up the election.

What can I say? Same Trump, different year.

After he intentionally played down the threat of COVID-19 in those initial months of 2020, Trump said he purposefully misled the public to prevent panic. As a result, we were ill-prepared as a country. Our hospitals became quickly overrun, with people dying in school gyms and bodies held in refrigerated trucks as morgues overflowed.

The pandemic began with him lying to us about the severity of the virus. Four years later, and once again Trump's instinct as a leader during a national crisis is to lie to the American people and complain about "The View."

Elections have consequences. The first Trump term added \$8.4 trillion to the national debt and forced rape victims to give birth after the overturning of Roe vs. Wade by Trump justices. If you flip through Project 2025, the plan conservatives put together to reshape the federal government under a second Trump administration, you'll see that Round 2 would be much worse.

Trump would even make natural disasters worse.

The 2025 blueprint calls for chopping up and selling off large chunks of the federal government's agency devoted to gathering data about weather - the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration. That's where the National Hurricane Center is housed. The expert who suggested that Trump scrap this agency for parts, Thomas F. Gilman, was a lifer in the automobile industry before joining Trump's Commerce Department in 2019, the same year Trump redrew the route of a hurricane with a Sharpie.

Project 2025 sets out to replace tens of thousands of experienced civil servants who have relevant expertise with political appointees who are first loyal to Trump - people like Gilman. If you're still wondering how bad that could be, consider that while the nation was bracing for Hurricane Milton - on the heels of Hurricane Helene - one of Trump's allies, Rep. Marjorie Taylor Greene, R-Ga., used her platform to tell Americans "they" control the weather.

That's how the Party of Lincoln has sadly become the party that responds to national emergencies by scapegoating others: claiming "they" control the weather; "they" are eating pets; "they" are paid actors rather than traumatized survivors of a school shooting. To this day, House Speaker Mike Johnson refuses to say who won the 2020 election. Instead when reporters ask, he accuses them of hurling "gotcha questions" at him.

All of which brings me here: For more than 50 years, since Richard M. Nixon faced off against John F. Kennedy, televised debates have been a benchmark in presidential politics. With Trump at the center of attention, the first Republican primary debate of 2016 gave Fox the most-watched nonsports event in cable history. The second

debate also brought high ratings. Trump didn't start skipping debates in the primary until Fox News announced it would be using video of previous appearances to hold candidates accountable for their words.

That's why he and his running mate, Sen. JD Vance (R-Ohio), oppose fact-checking during debates and interviews. Accountability is why Trump avoided debating Ambassador Nikki Haley during the 2024 primary. It's why he got into a fight with journalists at a news conference this past summer. It's why he's afraid to debate Vice President Kamala Harris again.

When a businessman is accustomed to escaping consequences for his misdeeds by filing for bankruptcy as often as Trump has, I can see why he'd be uncomfortable with being held accountable.

However, a president or candidate doesn't get to avoid accountability any more than the country can escape the consequences of an election. Trump's lies in office did damage. His lies today are hurting people who need help. And no one should be surprised: In every crisis, Trump has shown himself to be a liar, not a leader.

LZ Granderson is an Op-Ed columnist for the Los Angeles Times.

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• Citation (aglc Style)

'Disasters Itest leaders. Trump fails every time.', *Greensboro News & Record* (online), 17 Oct 2024 5A https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19C438309EA7EA68



Task force investigates Helene death toll, missing cases

October 17, 2024 | Herald-Sun, The (Durham, NC) Author: Adam Wagner; Staff Writer | Section: News | 299 Words

Page: 1A OpenURL Link

Tropical Storm Helene has caused 95 confirmed deaths in North Carolina, Gov. Roy Cooper said at a Tuesday press conference. And almost as many, 92, remain missing.

Buncombe County has had the most Helene-related deaths, with 42. Yancey County has had 11 confirmed deaths; Henderson County has had seven; and Haywood County has had five, the N.C. Department of Health and Human Services said Tuesday.

"The vast majority of these are directly related to flooding leading to landslides, blunt force, flooded cars, etc. We are still going through the detailed review of deaths records on other specific causes and elements," DHHS Secretary Kody Kinsley said.

Drowning is the leading cause of death, with 20. That's followed by landslides and blunt force injuries, each of which are confirmed to have killed 11 people, and trauma from wind or tree, which killed six people, according to DHHS.

The state has established a task force that is working with local law enforcement officials to investigate cases of people who are still unaccounted for.

Cooper warned that the number of people missing is likely to fluctuate, with people being both added and removed as more cases are uncovered or resolved.

This story was produced with financial support from the Hartfield Foundation and Green South Foundation, in partnership with Journalism Funding Partners, as part of an independent journalism fellowship program. The N&O maintains full editorial control of the work. If you would like to help support local journalism, please consider signing up for a digital subscription, which you can do here.

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• Citation (aglc Style)

Adam Wagner, Staff Writer, 'Task force investigates Helene death toll, missing cases', *Herald-Sun, The* (online), 17 Oct 2024 1A https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19C46E1569D1A0A0



NC DMV reopening after Helene, but not yet in Western North Carolina's largest city

October 17, 2024 | Herald-Sun, The (Durham, NC) Author: Richard Stradling; Staff Writer | Section: News | 511 Words Page: 6A OpenURL Link

RALEIGH The N.C. Division of Motor Vehicles driver's license office in Marion will open Wednesday for the first time since Hurricane Helene slammed Western North Carolina with historic wind and rain.

That leaves three DMV driver's license offices still shuttered as a result of the storm. They include Burnsville, Spruce Pine and the region's largest in Asheville.

The DMV does not know when those will reopen.

One license plate agency office, run by a private contractor, is also still closed, in Marshall.

Across Western North Carolina, 25 driver's license offices and 28 license plate agencies were closed on Sept. 27, the day Helene moved through the region.

Many remained closed because of damage or lack of access, power or water, said DMV Commissioner Wayne Goodwin. Getting them back on line has been a priority for the agency and those who provide access and utilities, Goodwin said.

"Everyone's had their shoulder to the wheel," he said in an interview Tuesday. "Driver's licenses are an essential service, and we have approached it as such."

The Asheville driver's license office on Patton Avenue was the only one open in Buncombe County before the storm. A smaller express office on Tunnel Road across town was already closed while the building's roof and HVAC system are replaced.

Like much of the city, the DMV office lacks water, Goodwin said. The agency is looking into some sort of portable water and bathroom system for the office, he said. In the meantime, employees from that office are working in other open offices in the area to increase their capacity.

The offices closest to the county of 275,000 are in Clyde, Hendersonville, Marshall and, starting Wednesday, Marion.

DMV adjusts in other ways

The DMV has asked for the authorization to waive late fees and provide no-cost duplicate licenses and IDs for people who lost theirs in the storm, said spokesman Marty Homan. The agency is waiting for Gov. Roy Cooper to issue an executive order to make that possible, Homan said.

Helene has also disrupted the delivery of driver's licenses and state IDs to people who order them online or visit a DMV office. The agency has developed alternatives for people who don't have mail delivery.

People who ordered their license or ID before Oct. 7 and have not received it by mail within 21 days can visit ncdot.gov/WNCcredentialPickup to find out where it can be picked up.

People who live in one of the 45 ZIP codes listed on that website and who ordered their license after Oct. 7 at a DMV office must return to that office after 21 days to pick up their card if it can't be delivered by mail.

Those who ordered their credential online and can't get it by mail must pick it up after 21 days at the office that corresponds with their ZIP code on the website.

Richard Stradling: 919-829-4739, @RStradling

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• Citation (aglc Style)

Richard Stradling, Staff Writer, 'NC DMV reopening after Helene, but not yet in Western North Carolina's largest city', *Herald-Sun, The* (online), 17 Oct 2024 6A https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?
p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19C46E15647FDB58>



Disinformation harms Helene effort, say Cooper, FEMA

October 17, 2024 | Herald-Sun, The (Durham, NC)

Author: Adam Wagner; Staff Writer | Section: News | 921 Words

Page: 1A OpenURL Link

Disinformation and misinformation are harming the ability of storm-battered communities in Western North Carolina to receive federal aid at the time they need it most, Gov. Roy Cooper and FEMA Administrator Deanna Criswell said this week.

The remarks come after a man was arrested and charged with going armed to the terror of the public after allegedly roaming Rutherford County and saying he was going to harm FEMA workers. Criswell decided to pause door-to-door canvassing efforts in the area, which have since resumed.

"Frankly, it's heartbreaking to see words or acts of hatred toward anyone, let alone federal responders who are here to help people in this critical time. So let me be clear: I take these threats seriously and the safety of these responders is, and will remain, a priority for me and my team," Criswell said.

As of Tuesday morning, FEMA had approved more than 77,000 applications for its Individual Assistance program in the Helene-impacted counties, with survivors receiving more than \$99 million. More than 171,000 people have applied for aid, said Lucas Hitt, a FEMA spokesman.

Cooper pointed to the storm happening about a month before an election as a key reason for the volume of inaccurate and outright false information that has been spread about the storm and response.

"Candidates are using people's misery to sow chaos for their own political objectives, and it's wrong. This is a time where we all need to pull together to help the people of Western North Carolina and it's disappointing when candidates, knowing full well what they're doing, are continuing this kind of disinformation filled with lies," Cooper said Tuesday.

Disinformation is the intentional spread of false or misleading information, while misinformation is false information shared without intent.

Former President Donald Trump, the Republican nominee for president, has singled out Cooper, a Democrat, for criticism. Trump has amplified false claims that Cooper and President Joe Biden have "gone out of their way" to avoid sending aid to Helene-damaged parts of Western North Carolina that are more likely to vote Republican.

Trump has also falsely claimed that FEMA is only giving Helene survivors \$750 in assistance. The \$750 payment is an immediate, urgent payment to help people impacted by the storm meet daily needs like baby formula, food or gasoline. Even after people receive that payment, FEMA said, the agency will continue to consider eligibility for other funds.

Cooper also called out Mark Robinson, North Carolina's lieutenant governor and the Republican nominee in the governor's race. Immediately after Helene, Robinson started to claim that Cooper was failing the people of North Carolina, a claim he has repeated persistently as he's campaigned and helped organize a donation drive.

"He needs to stop it, and there are other people who need to stop this disinformation which is ending up hurting people who've lost everything," Cooper said.

North Carolina's Department of Public Safety has made law enforcement available to coordinate with officials on the ground, including FEMA employees and other volunteers who may be threatened, Cooper said.

People still missing

There are now 95 confirmed deaths from Tropical Storm Helene in North Carolina, N.C. Department of Health and Human Services Secretary Kody Kinsley said Tuesday.

The state has also formed a task force that will work with local law enforcement to review missing persons reports and see how many people are still unaccounted for after the storm. As of Tuesday, 92 people had been reported missing and have not been found, Cooper said.

"I want to caution that this is not a definitive count because the task force is continuing its work. The number will continue to fluctuate as more reports come in and others are resolved," Cooper said.

Cold weather coming

As temperatures have started to dip in Western North Carolina, the state is working to send cold-weather items like heaters, blankets and coats to the region.

In Buncombe County, a weather station at UNC-Asheville's campus recorded a 36-degree Fahrenheit temperature at 8 a.m. Tuesday. That the second time since Helene hit on Sept. 27 that the station has recorded a temperature below 40 degrees.

"We've seen a shift from the type of commodities that were the focus two weeks ago, kind of food and water, and are now moving into more of that cold-weather gear," said N.C. Emergency Management Director Will Ray, adding the state is working to fulfill those requests "as quickly as possible."

The state is working with the National Guard and Department of Transportation to make sure that people who have lost their homes are able to stay warm, Ray said. That also includes finding room in shelters or more stable temporary housing.

There are still 13 shelters open in Western North Carolina housing more than 500 people and 80 pets, Ray said.

About 4,600 people with storm-damaged homes are staying in hotels via FEMA's Transitional Sheltering Assistance program.

"We're trying to get every available option on the table to support those that have been impacted, particularly related to housing," Ray said.

This story was produced with financial support from the Hartfield Foundation and Green South Foundation, in partnership with Journalism Funding Partners, as part of an independent journalism fellowship program. The N&O maintains full editorial control of the work. If you would like to help support local journalism, please consider signing up for a digital subscription, which you can do here.

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• Citation (aglc Style)

Adam Wagner, Staff Writer, 'Disinformation harms Helene effort, say Cooper, FEMA', *Herald-Sun, The* (online), 17 Oct 2024 1A https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19C46E158EA392E8



NC man's alleged FEMA threat - a reminder lies ruin democracy

October 17, 2024 | Herald-Sun, The (Durham, NC) Author: Issac Bailey | Section: Editorial/Opinion | 662 Words Page: 9A OpenURL Link

This past weekend isn't the first time a North Carolina man who had apparently been convinced an extreme conspiracy theory was true allegedly picked up a gun to take matters into his own hands.

It's unlikely to be the last time if former President Donald Trump, conspiracy-theorist-in-chief, wins the White House next month - or even if he doesn't. That's the uncomfortable truth we don't grapple with enough.

A 44-year-old man named William Jacob Parsons was arrested Saturday and accused of threatening FEMA workers who are helping western North Carolina recover from Hurricane Helene's wrath.

Police said he was armed with a handgun and an assault rifle, the kind of gun that has been a favorite of mass shooters and the young man who tried to assassinate Trump during a rally in Pennsylvania.

Parsons likely believed the lies Trump and too many of his supporters have been telling since Hurricane Helene hit western North Carolina.

They lied about the federal response, lied about the government blocking help from civilians, lied that people in the affected area would receive only \$750. They lied to struggling residents that federal officials are coming into the area to seize property and "bulldoze bodies under the rubble" rather than assist local and state officials and volunteers.

The lies have led to residents refusing help they desperately need, slowed recovery efforts as well as antisemitic and other threats against federal employees.

Though Parsons was the man with a gun - fears of an armed militia descending on Rutherford County convinced FEMA to temporarily remove personnel - he's indicative of something larger, more sinister and disturbing.

Shortly after the 2016 election between Hillary Clinton and Trump, then-28-year-old Edgar Maddison Welch drove from Salisbury to Washington, D.C. to rescue imaginary children from an imaginary child sex ring rumored to be run by Clinton and other Democrats. The children were supposed to be in the basement of Comet Ping Pong pizzeria. The restaurant has no basement. There were no children. Welch didn't figure that out until after shooting inside Comet.

The lies have something uncomfortably in common with the FEMA lies. The "Pizzagate" conspiracy was a fantastical demonization of Trump's political opponents. The FEMA lies are designed to make it more difficult for Vice President Kamala Harris to defeat Trump in three weeks.

Maybe the worst lies are those that have convinced millions of Trump supporters that the 2020 election was stolen. Those lies led to a violent insurrection attempt on our Capitol that left multiple people dead, caused millions in damage and gave a black eye to our democracy that remains.

It's disturbing Trump and his supporters are not only quick to believe the lies and conspiracy theories, but to spread them. It's more disturbing that seemingly nothing can convince them to change course.

Trump chose a man as his partner, Sen. J.D. Vance, who refuses to admit the former president lost four years ago or commit to certifying an election if he becomes vice president.

Imagine if Harris did the same, decided to not certify next month's election if Trump wins. Imagine the chaos. Imagine the ugliness that would result. As bad as things got on Jan. 6, 2021, they would likely be worse if Harris is as irresponsible as Vance has said he'll be.

That's why the lies being told aren't only bad for western North Carolina, though slowing down recovery efforts when so many people need help is ghastly.

A man named Parsons apparently following in the footsteps of a man named Welch because each bought into lies is sobering. Because the lies are also affecting the underpinnings of our democracy that should scare every American, no matter who you want to win in November.

Issac Bailey is a McClatchy Opinion writer in North and South Carolina.

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• Citation (aglc Style)

Issac Bailey, 'NC man's alleged FEMA threat a reminder lies ruin democracy', *Herald-Sun, The* (online), 17 Oct 2024 9A https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19C46E15F88E12B8



They planned to wed in NC - on Nov. 9. Instead, in Helene's wake, there'll be four funerals.

October 17, 2024 | Herald-Sun, The (Durham, NC)

Author: Théoden Janes; Staff Writer | Section: News | 2588 Words

Page: 10A OpenURL Link

In their imaginations, Knox Petrucci and Alison Wisely were at their wedding - dancing.

Perhaps cheek to cheek, to a cherished song of Knox's, like Langhorne Slim's "Changes" or JFDR's "White Sun." Or maybe to a tune Knox had penned for the self-produced folk-rock album he'd been recording. Or, more likely, to a party favorite they could both just let loose to; with laughter cascading out of their mouths; surrounded by Alison's sons Felix (9) and Lucas (7), friends from all over Western North Carolina's Yancey County, and relatives from all over the country.

In their imaginations, this dancing would have followed a show-stopping speech by the precocious Felix, who was planning to kick off his remarks to their 50 or so guests with: "Thank you, everyone, for joining us on this auspicious evening..."

Which would have followed a big Italian feast. Which would have been preceded by Knox - in a brand-new navy-blue suit and an ascot - and Alison - in an embroidered top and white pants - standing in the shadow of Mount Mitchell and professing their undying love for each other.

They had been daydreaming about these moments for more than a year.

And in some ways, it was more than just a wedding. More than just a joyful excuse to assemble the people they treasured most.

It would be a moment of triumph, a climb to the top of their own personal mountains after years of tribulations. For Knox, who in recent years had reestablished a close relationship with his older sister Briana Yarbrough after a long, sorrowful estrangement. For Alison, who in the wake of a painful divorce had formed a healthy co-parenting situation with their devoted father, Lance Wisely.

But on Sept. 27, just over six weeks before they were to be married, Hurricane Helene unleashed a deluge that caused the normally peaceful river in front of their Green Mountain home to become a ferocious - and deadly - ocean.

So ferocious and so deadly, in fact, that nobody can give a full accounting of what that day was like for them because nobody survived to offer one: At roughly noon on that Friday, Knox, Alison, Felix and Lucas were swept away as they sought safety from floodwaters.

The only thing certain now is that the very day Knox and Alison had planned to marry is instead being reserved for four funerals.

He was 41. She was 35.

"It definitely feels like a bad movie," says Knox's sister, Briana, calling from her home in Palo Alto, Calif., sounding both deeply exhausted and deeply shattered. "I don't -" she starts to say, then she stops. Then she sighs. Then she starts, softly, to cry. "It's like I'm not talking about real life right now."

'I just made this beautiful human

my fiancée'

They originally bonded over - of all things - bees.

In 2019, Knox and Alison both found themselves employed at Honey & the Hive, a Weaverville beekeeping supply store that Knox had only applied to work for because he was looking for a job and they were hiring.

They started dating in short order, attracted by shared passions that included animals, and art, and camping, and creativity, and being members of the queer community in an area where it wasn't always easy to be a member of the queer community, among other things. (On top of that, Knox knew something of failed marriages, having been through one in his 20s.)

Before long, they were moving in together.

Their home was idyllic and idiosyncratic: a 1950s-era brick ranch with a fenced yard and a two-story barn, sprawling across a three-acre plot of land upon which also sat an older, larger, decommissioned outbuilding that long ago served as the little town's post office and general store. On the opposite side of their street were some railroad tracks, and on the other side of the tracks was the North Toe River.

As their relationship grew through the pandemic, their careers also seemed to snap into sharper focus.

Knox took to the whole bee thing with authority, becoming the store manager and eventually a teacher of beekeeping courses.

Meanwhile, although Alison likewise had an affinity for the winged insects, she also had a degree from Western Carolina in forensic anthropology - and felt called to pursue a vocation related not just to death, but also (ironically) to grief. So she went after and landed a job as operations manager at Carolina Memorial Sanctuary, a conservation and green cemetery built into the lush, green, rolling hills of Mills River.

By last year, they'd built a well-rounded life that they loved, so much so that on June 11, 2023, Knox slipped onto Alison's ring finger a piece of jewelry he'd blacksmithed himself using a small forge he'd bought.

Briana, the sister he'd been making up for lost time with, was the first person he told.

"I just made this beautiful human my fiancée," Knox wrote in a text to his sister, beneath a selfie of the bespectacled couple showing off the ring.

He knew, of course, that in proposing to Alison he also was proposing to be a stepdad to Felix and Lucas - and he knew, of course, that these weren't just any ordinary boys.

Baby swings, podcasts and misunderstandings

Lucas, 7, liked cows. A lot. He had at least nine stuffed ones, if not 10 or 11, and he would attempt to carry all of them with him. Everywhere. Even to the water park, while his dad Lance Wisely strenuously objected.

Lucas wanted to be pushed in a baby swing that still hung from a tree at Lance's house in Marshall, N.C., not because he liked being considered a baby but because his dad could strap Lucas in to the baby swing. Securely. Meaning his dad could then swing him as high as possible and then add in a good, hard, death-defying spin.

Lucas did gymnastics, had started taking aerial silks classes, could climb 20-foot-tall trees in rain boots, and - oh yeah, was bilingual, thanks to the Spanish immersion program at North Buncombe Elementary School.

Felix, 9, was stupefying his parents by the time he was just 3, when he was already expressing an interest in learning about obscure types of dinosaurs and (ironically) the most severe types of weather events, from tornadoes

to hurricanes.

Felix was incredibly curious, perceptive, and articulate, a future star on the debate team.

Felix could hang with adults in a lot of respects, and proved it by discussing wild creatures, folklore and supernatural topics with his mom Alison - as co-host of a podcast called "Beyond Legends" that they launched together just this past April.

This, his parents would probably admit, is classic Felix: The week of Sept. 16, Felix confronted his dad and asked him if he wanted to marry his partner, Sarah Sheahan of Minneapolis, Minn.; Lance said yes. Felix then called Sarah and asked if she wanted to marry his dad; Sarah said yes. Not long after that, when Lance was on the phone with Alison about figuring out the holidays with the kids, Alison said to Lance, "So, Felix tells me you guys are engaged..."

"That," Lance exclaimed, "is not what we said!"

On the morning of Friday, Sept. 20, Lance dropped the boys off at school in Weaverville. It would be the last time he'd see his sons alive.

A surge of optimism, then worst fears realized

Briana called from the West Coast to check in on Knox late Wednesday evening, a day before Helene was expected to hit.

He'd done some basic stormproofing, he informed her, but he didn't seem worried about it. And she wasn't either. Her brother lived in the mountains, after all. Not on the beach.

Thursday passed with no contact. Friday the line was quiet, too. She still wasn't overly concerned. They had been in fairly frequent touch since reconciling 2-1/2 years earlier, but it's not like they talked every day. It wasn't until some people she knew who had extended family in North Carolina reached out on Saturday to ask if she had heard from Knox.

"No," Briana said. "Why?"

They told her about the storm. She looked at the news. It was the first she was seeing about Helene, and headlines were screaming with words like "brutal" and "devastation."

She immediately texted Knox. She would never get a reply.

From 2,500 miles away, as Briana's panic rapidly intensified, she started trying to exploit social media and the internet to glean whatever information she could that might provide clues to how things were looking back in Green Mountain.

From Minnesota, where he had been visiting Sarah, Lance was doing the same. There had even been talk of the two of them trying to drive back to North Carolina in Sarah's four-wheel-drive vehicle, so they could try to navigate through the wasteland Helene had created to get to Knox and Alison's house themselves. They ultimately were discouraged from doing so, and stayed put.

Monday, Sept. 30, was the day that brought a surge of optimism after more than 48 hours of agony.

At the family's request, someone in Yancey County with a good telephoto zoom lens had gotten as close to the house as they safely could before confronting a severely washed out part of the road, and snapped a picture. It showed the structure still standing, and the door open. The house hadn't been swept away, Lance thought. Maybe they're OK after all. Maybe that open door means they're airing out the house.

But on Tuesday, Oct. 1, the worst of Lance's worst fears was realized, times four.

Sarah had been able to reach a fire department dispatcher, who had talked to a Green Mountain resident, who had reported this: Around noon the previous Friday - as the river turned into a sea that surged high above its banks, across the tracks and the road and into Knox and Alison's front yard - two adults with children were observed along their road getting into a white vehicle. Alison owned a white Mazda CX-5.

The violently swirling flood kept rising. The vehicle began to float. The people scrambled back out of it.

According to the eyewitness, the four were struggling to make their way through the water back to the house when a giant wave lifted all of them up - and rushing water carried them away.

'I'm realizing how much more I wish I knew them'

It's been a blur of immense sadness ever since Lance called Briana and told her she should sit down.

A blur of crying. Of sobbing. Of excruciating phone calls. Of having, Briana says, "to give that message over and over," and of every reaction being "the most painful thing to experience: that deep grief, the wail of people that loved my brother."

Of trying and routinely failing to make sense of the nonsensical.

Yet they've been heartened by an overwhelming outpouring of support from the community. The locals who chased leads for clues to what happened. The rescuers who were eventually able to find all four bodies, which on one hand made it really real but on the other gave them some peace. The more than a thousand people who've donated more than \$65,000 to a GoFundMe in Knox, Alison, Felix and Lucas' memories. The sanctuary where Alison worked offering to cover the costs of their burial and funeral expenses.

The friends and neighbors who have found and cared for their cattle dog, Reishi, and their cat, Mowgli, and who remain on the lookout for Moonpie, their still-missing hound.

And the beekeeper-buddy of theirs, Melissa Mejia of Burnsville, who hiked through the mud to the house with her husband, Marc, and salvaged - in addition to a handful of mementos the family will want - the boys' lizard, Sheila, alive.

Melissa has been back to the house multiple times since, with multiple people, because Knox's and Alison's families haven't been able to get to Western North Carolina, but also because it's an arduous process to sift through all the damage. Basically, it's like a bomb went off inside. "Like someone picked up the house, and filled it with water, and shook it around, and then everything settled - but then they added a bunch of mud to it," says Charlie Oak Blakely, one of the couple's best friends, who's been joining Melissa on the salvage missions.

"Everybody who goes in their house," Melissa adds, "gets stuck in the mud. There's always, for everybody, been a moment where you can't turn around. It's like quicksand. You're stuck, and then you're losing your balance, and it's like a moment of despair. But ..."

She pauses, then finishes the thought:

"... It feels wrong to be upset inside of their house. Because they were so kind and loving and joyful and positive."

Hanging onto the happiest feelings they can

In a weird way, in Lance's imagination, it almost seems as if the boys, Alison, and Knox are still there - in or around that house - together.

Lance still hasn't returned to North Carolina from Minnesota, and so in his imagination, "it feels, in some ways, like my children are just with their mother. Which, in a grim sense is true. But not in the sense that like, Oh, I'm gonna get them back next week. Which, sometimes, it still feels that way."

He's as shattered as any father can be. He'd give anything to push Lucas on the baby swing one more time, or to shake his head and smile in disbelief at something Felix did or said that made the boy seem twice his age.

But he also already is trying to imagine a future in which he's as happy as he was when they were alive.

"I mean, what can you do? Right?" Lance says. "I've known some parents who have lost their children, and ... a lot of them turn into shells of people - like, they're just hollowed out by it - and I don't want to do that. ...

"It's heartbreaking that they won't be here for me to share those things with anymore, to experience the joy of their silliness and their childlike perspective. They were such amazing, magical, ridiculous, curious, energetic, joyful children. And I want to keep the vitality that I was showing my children - you know, showing them how to just drink from life.

"I still want to do that."

In Knox's sister Briana's imagination, meanwhile, she and her 14-year-old daughter, Dahlia, are transported back to the week this past summer when they visited Green Mountain and Knox, Alison, Felix and Lucas.

They're catching fireflies around a bonfire. They're standing in front of that old post office and general store on Knox and Alison's property and listening to Knox talk about how he'd like to turn the building into an art center. They're out playing with the boys next to the river. Felix is trying to find watersnakes. Lucas is splashing in the ankle-deep water.

The river is being kind, being gentle, being a friend.

Briana can also envision an alternate current reality in which Knox and Alison are still alive, and they're bringing the kids along as they get up to their elbows in the various grassroots hurricane relief efforts all over Western North Carolina.

Finally, for a few fleeting moments here and there - in her imagination - it's November 9th, and Briana is attending not a somber private funeral but the joyful wedding that her brother and her would-be-sister-in-law had planned for that day. And when she can imagine that, she imagines this:

Knox and Alison, dancing.

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• Citation (aglc Style)

Théoden Janes, Staff Writer, 'They planned to wed in NC on Nov. 9. Instead, in Helene's wake, there'll be four funerals.', *Herald-Sun, The* (online), 17 Oct 2024 10A https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?
p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19C46E1634C769E0>



Early voting has begun in NC. Here's your guide to casting - a ballot before Election Day

October 17, 2024 | Herald-Sun, The (Durham, NC) Author: Evan Moore; Staff Writer | Section: News | 553 Words Page: 2A OpenURL Link

Early voting is officially underway in North Carolina, where millions of voters are expected to cast their ballots before the general election on Tuesday, Nov. 5.

In 2016, 62% of North Carolina voters cast early ballots, N.C. State Board of Elections (NCSBE) Executive Director Karen Brinson Bell said during a press event Tuesday. In 2020, that number jumped to 65%.

There are more than 400 early voting sites open across the state.

Here's your guide to casting a ballot during the early voting period in North Carolina.

Where can you go to vote early in NC?

You can use the NCSBE early voting search tool at vt.ncsbe.gov/EVSite to find an early voting site near you.

Just select your county you live in (or the one you're registered to vote in) from the drop-down menu for a list of early voting sites in your area and their hours of operation.

Early voting gives you more flexibility on when and where you you can vote. During the early voting period, voters can visit any early voting site in their county. While on Election Day, voters must visit their assigned polling place.

How to view your sample ballot in NC

If you're a registered voter, you can view your sample ballot by entering your information into the NCSBE voter search tool at vt.ncsbe.gov/RegLkup.

Once you've entered your information, click "Your Sample Ballot."

Do I need to bring anything when I vote early in NC?

Yes, you'll need to bring a photo ID starting this election to vote in North Carolina.

However, you can still vote without showing an ID by filling out an ID Exception Form.

On the form, voters can choose from the following permitted exceptions:

The voter has a "reasonable impediment" to showing photo ID. This means that something is preventing the voter from showing ID.

The voter has a religious objection to being photographed.

The voter was a victim of a natural disaster within 100 days before Election Day that resulted in a disaster declaration by the President or the Governor of North Carolina. (This is true for 25 North Carolina counties. See below for more information.)

Tips for filling out your ballot in NC

Here's what to know about filling out your ballot, according to NCSBE: With the marking device provided or a black ball point pen, completely fill in the oval to the left of each candidate or selection of your choice as shown. Where authorized, you may write in a candidate by filling in the oval and writing the name on the write-in line. If you tear your ballot and/or mark it incorrectly, return it to an election official and request a replacement. Can I drop my absentee ballot off at an early voting site in NC? Yes. You can deliver your absentee ballots to an election official at an early voting site while the site is open. Ballots will be kept securely and delivered to the county board of elections for processing. What to know about early voting in Western NC If you're registered to vote in one of the 25 counties in Western North Carolina affected by Hurricane Helene, you can drop off your ballot at any early voting site or county board of elections office in the state, or at the state board of elections in Raleigh. Those counties, according to FEMA, are: Alexander Alleghany Ashe Avery Buncombe Burke Caldwell Catawba Clay Cleveland Gaston Haywood Henderson Jackson Lincoln

Macon

Madison
McDowell
Mitchell
Polk
Rutherford
Transylvania
Watauga
Wilkes
Yancey
When does early voting end in NC?
Early voting in North Carolina ends on Saturday, Nov. 2 at 3 p.m.
Evan Moore: @evaninclt Copyright, 2024, The Durham Herald Company

• Citation (aglc Style)

Evan Moore, Staff Writer, 'Early voting has begun in NC. Here's your guide to casting a ballot before Election Day', *Herald-Sun, The* (online), 17 Oct 2024 2A https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view? p=AMNEWS&docref=news/19C46E162BE37940>