

Christy Clark

**Media Report**

**Draft**

**July 6, 2022**

# Part I Introduction

This report reviews electronically available news stories on Christy Clark, candidate for the NC House in District 98, the seat she formerly held.

The Table of Contents in **Part II** of the report is a useful guide to the entire report and can be used as a stand-alone summary. In one section, it surveys the bulk of the news file, through the headlines we have assigned to each item.

**Part III**, the **Greatest Hits** section, identifies key points taken from available media articles.

**Parts IV, The News File**, contain edited copies of the most relevant electronically available stories.

We hope you find this useful.

## Part II Table of Contents

<b>Part I</b>	<b>Introduction</b> .....	<b>2</b>
<b>Part II</b>	<b>Table of Contents</b> .....	<b>2</b>
<b>Part III</b>	<b>Clark: Greatest Hits from Media Review</b> .....	<b>4</b>
	Background and Resume .....	4
	Called More “Moderate and Pragmatic” By <i>Observer</i> (2018) .....	5
	Non-Gun Positions Before 2018.....	5
	Gun Control Activist.....	5
	Keeps Trying to Say She’s “Pro-Second Amendment” .....	6
	Got Market Chain to Ban Open Carry .....	6
	Lobbied to Amend HB 562 Conceal-Carry Bill .....	6
	Opposed SB 503 (Updating Handgun Permit Process) .....	7
	Opposed HB 746 (Eliminating Training for Conceal Carry).....	7
	2018 Election .....	7
	Gun-Obsessed in NC House (2019-20) .....	9
	Other Issues in House .....	11
	Loses 2020 Re-Match, Now Running Again.....	11
	Received Donation From Defund Police Group.....	12
	2022 - Gets A Different Grocery Chain To Drop Cooler .....	12
<b>Part IV</b>	<b>Clark: The News File, 2000-22</b> .....	<b>16</b>
	2000.....	16
	NOV 2000    Bridesmaid At Friend’s Wedding .....	16
	2001.....	16
	OCT 2001    Matron Of Honor At Friend’s Wedding .....	16
	2014.....	17
	SEP 2014    Wants Kroger to Adopt “Gun Sense” Policy .....	17
	NOV 2014    Petitions Kroger Parent Company .....	17
	2015.....	19
	JAN 2015    Still Petitioning Kroger Parent Company .....	19
	DEC 2015    Worked to Amend HB 562 .....	20
	DEC 2015    Organizes Anti-Gun Rally .....	21
	2016.....	23
	APR 2016    Press Release on Gun Action.....	23
	JUN 2016    Urges Not to Go Ahead With Conceal Carry Bill .....	24
	2017.....	26
	FEB 2017    Conceal-Carry Debate.....	26
	APR 2017    Criticizes SB 503 .....	29
	JUN 2017    Opposes New Conceal Carry .....	30
	JUN 2017    Denounces New Conceal/Carry .....	31
	JUN 2017    Conceal Carry Opposition.....	32
	SEP 2017    Says Gun Violence Threatens Transgender Community.....	35
	OCT 2017    Rips Congressmen Who Get NRA Help.....	36
	OCT 2017    Attends Vigil For Vegas Shooting Victims .....	36
	2018.....	38
	JAN 2018    Running For State House .....	38

FEB 2018	“Focused on Economic Growth” .....	38
FEB 2018	Could be Disqualified by District Changes .....	39
APR 2018	Local Columnist Praises Clark, Organization.....	39
APR 2018	Resume.....	41
MAY 2018	Observer Endorsement in Primary.....	42
JUN 2018	Didn’t Expect Gun Issues to Dominate .....	42
JUL 2018	Outraising Bradford Extensively .....	44
AUG 2018	Importance of Toll Lane Issue .....	45
SEP 2018	I-77 Issue in Campaign .....	48
OCT 2018	Observer Endorsement.....	51
NOV 2018	Democrat Fundraising Advantage .....	51
NOV 2018	Narrow Win .....	52
NOV 2018	Money Made the Difference .....	52
NOV 2018	CNN Interview on Gun Control.....	53
NOV 2018	Wins Final Margin of 415 Votes .....	54
DEC 2018	Mobilized by Anti-Gun Group.....	54
2019.....		55
FEB 2019	Failed to List Campaign Donors .....	55
FEB 2019	Pushing Gun Control Bills .....	55
FEB 2019	Wilson Times Denounces Clark Gun Bill .....	56
FEB 2019	Wants Hearings on Duke Energy Long Range Plans .....	57
FEB 2019	Introduces Bill to Change Grading of School Performance .....	58
MAR 2019	More Magistrates For Mecklenburg County.....	60
MAR 2019	Against ICE Cooperation.....	60
APR 2019	Co-Sponsors Bill to Block Duke Energy From Passing on Cleanup Costs .....	63
AUG 2019	Trying to Unblock Stalled Gun Bills .....	64
SEP 2019	New Map of District Still Favors GOP for 2020 .....	66
OCT 2019	Gun Bills Die .....	66
DEC 2019	Rematch With Bradford.....	71
2020.....		73
APR 2020	Introduces Bill to Expand Medicaid .....	73
APR 2020	Medicaid Expansion.....	73
JUL 2020	More Cash On Hand .....	74
SEP 2020	Received Donation From Defund Police Group Future Fund Now .....	74
OCT 2020	Charlotte Observer Endorsement.....	76
OCT 2020	Overview of Race .....	76
NOV 2020	Loses to Bradford.....	77
2021.....		78
JAN 2021	Pre-Election Feature Story .....	78
2022.....		80
JUN 2022	Will Speak At Gun March .....	80
JUN 2022	Harris Teeter Cooler .....	80
JUN 2022	Wilson Times Rips Clark Over Cooler Issue.....	81

## Part III Clark: Greatest Hits from Media Review

### Background and Resume

- Her maiden name was Christy Underwood. At some point she was married to someone named Laas and had three children from that marriage. She is married now to Chris Clark, and has two stepsons from this marriage. (Charlotte Observer, 4/17/18)
- She previously lived in Portland, OR and Roanoke, VA.

She described her professional resume in this profile after she became a state House candidate.

- “For the past 8 years, I have been working as a paralegal in corporate and intellectual property law. Previous to being a North Carolina Certified Paralegal, I worked in quality assurance in the field of transportation and logistics as well as manufacturing.” (CO, 4/17/18)

In a feature story that didn’t run until after she’d been voted out of office, she described how she put her paralegal skills to work as a member of the State House.

- Clark has rolled up her sleeves and pitched in to help her constituents navigate relief measures such as the federal CARES Act, state unemployment benefits, the Payroll Protection Program, and other services available to North Carolinians who need help. Normally, legislators rely on staff and state agencies to do research and help find answers to questions, but stay-at-home orders have kept staff away from the legislative buildings, so Clark relies on her paralegal skills and does it herself. It has become a labor of love.
- “I spend a lot of time on the phone and in Zoom meetings, just trying to find out what people need, because a lot of the time, they don’t even know what they qualify for,” she said. “The thought of losing your business, laying off your employees, and losing your livelihood can be overwhelming, and I see it as my job to help them get through all of that.”
- At home, Clark, who is a North Carolina Certified Paralegal, is mom in her blended family of five children. She co-founded CLARK.LAW in Charlotte alongside her husband, Chris Clark, and focused her paralegal work on corporate law and intellectual property. She is also a notary public and often serves as her local community’s resident notary, arranging to help notarize documents for her neighbors while following social distancing guidelines.
- In addition to her legislative responsibilities and providing direct assistance to her constituents, Clark is also campaigning for re-election this fall, facing opposition from the former representative she unseated two years ago. But instead of following the chicken-dinner circuit, speaking at local events, shaking hands, and making speeches, she is participating in digital town halls and candidate forums, attending virtual Democratic Party events, and working one-on-one with her constituents. She is also participating in a local effort to call voters in her district to check on their wellbeing. “I spend a lot of time on a screen and on the phone,” Clark said, laughing. (Carolina Paralegal News, 1/20/21)

## Called More “Moderate and Pragmatic” By *Observer* (2018)

In endorsing her in the Democratic Primary, the Charlotte *Observer* called her more electable in a Republican district because she is more “moderate and pragmatic.”

- “Clark, a paralegal, and Rosenlieb, who works in the IT field, share similarly progressive views on most issues. **Clark, however, is the more moderate and pragmatic of the two. (An example: Rosenlieb is a proponent of universal health care.)**
- “Clark offers a strong familiarity with the General Assembly thanks to five years of work with gun violence prevention groups. Also, as a paralegal, Clark helps entrepreneurs and business owners launch their companies, giving her a keener insight into their challenges.” (Charlotte Observer, 5/1/17)

The Observer repeated this line in endorsing her for re-election in 2020.

- Clark has worked on building relationships across the aisle and has shown she’s willing to represent all of her district, not just progressives. Both are smart lawmakers. We give the slight nod to Clark, who would flourish in a Democratic majority. (CO, 10/8/20)

## Non-Gun Positions Before 2018

Because guns have been a singular issue with Clark for the last five years as an activist, there is little regarding her positions on other issues prior to 2018. These are the only quotes that offer some suggestion there.

- “I’m running for office because I care about North Carolina and her citizens. I want to bring my dedication and determination to the General Assembly to focus on what is essential -- economic growth, good paying jobs, supporting our public schools and teachers, and affordable healthcare.” (Watauga Watch Blog, 1/30/18)
- "Because I've been active in gun violence prevention for the past five years, I was able to see first hand how our legislature operated and to see the impact an advocate can have on the passage of laws," said Clark. "I decided to make the change from advocate to candidate after I saw how our GOP-led legislature had lost focus on what was really important to the citizens of our state like public schools, clean air and drinking water, healthcare, small business growth and gun violence." (Mooresville Tribune, 4/4/18)

## Gun Control Activist

Clark has been associated with the group Moms Demand Action For Gun Sense In America for several years and has lobbied extensively for gun control measures.

### **Keeps Trying to Say She's "Pro-Second Amendment"**

To cast herself as a "moderate" on this issue, Clark will repeatedly say she is "pro-Second Amendment". This was when she was organizing a petition to force Kroger, the parent company of Harris-Teeter Supermarkets, to ban openly carried guns in stores.

- As a pro-Second Amendment mom, I want to be clear this isn't about guns – it's about the people holding the guns. In North Carolina, there are no requirements for training to openly carry a firearm. I stand with moms nationwide in asking the CEO of Kroger to adopt gun sense policies that will keep families safe in our local Harris Teeter and other Kroger stores nationwide. (CO, 9/24/14)

At a December 2015 anti-violence rally.

- At the anti-violence rally, Christy Clark, a Moms Demand Action volunteer, said the group supports the Second Amendment and the right to legally own guns. "We believe that responsible gun owners should continue to be allowed to use their guns for whatever enjoyment that they like," Clark said. But the group, she said, is working to limit access to people who might be a danger, applying pressure on lawyers to expand background checks before buyers are granted a permit to buy any type of gun. (CO, 12/12/15)

### **Got Market Chain to Ban Open Carry**

Her group's actions succeeded in getting one supermarket chain, the Fresh Market, to ban open carry for their customers.

- "Our volunteers in North Carolina are thrilled to see The Fresh Market listening to their customers and embracing a new policy that prioritizes customer and employee safety. Parents shopping for with their kids should not have to confront armed customers in the produce aisle," said Christy Clark, volunteer chapter leader with the North Carolina chapter of Moms Demand Action for Gun Sense in America. "The Fresh Market may be headquartered here in North Carolina, but this gun sense policy will keep people safe in all 168 stores across the country - that is the kind of leadership we want from our North Carolina businesses." (Targeted News Service, 4/1/16)

### **Lobbied to Amend HB 562 Conceal-Carry Bill**

- Several new laws went into effect Tuesday in North Carolina. Among them is a somewhat controversial law that loosens the state's background check requirements to own a handgun. Christy Clark is part of the group Moms Demand Action, and spent months working with state legislators to amend House Bill 562, specifically the provision about background checks. "While we don't like everything that has come through this bill the way it remains, we're happy we were able to preserve the background check system," Clark said. (NBC-36, 12/1/15)

### **Opposed SB 503 (Updating Handgun Permit Process)**

- North Carolina's gun battle flared again Wednesday when gun control advocates protested a measure they fear would eliminate background checks for handgun sales. The protest was aimed at Senate Bill 503, which would replace the current permitting system handled by local sheriffs with an online system. Critics say the bill would make it easier for guns to fall into the wrong hands.....In moving the process online, the bill eliminates current laws that require sheriffs to issue permits.
- "We're concerned about any bill that repeals background checks," said Christy Clark of Huntersville, the leader of the N.C. chapter of Moms Demand Action for Gun Sense in America. "We support maintaining the pistol permit system."

### **Opposed HB 746 (Eliminating Training for Conceal Carry)**

- Christy Clark of Huntersville is the North Carolina chapter leader for Moms Demand Action for Gun Sense in America, a group created to lobby legislators, companies and educational institutions for gun reform. Clark is involved with the local Charlotte group, and along with leaders from more than 10 chapters across the state has been encouraging supporters to call their local representatives and speak against HB 746 since its inception. Clark said her biggest concern is the elimination of the concealed carry permitting process, which mandates that gun owners go through eight hours of safety training before receiving the permit. **"Our main issue with the bill is that it will repeal the requirement for the people to have safety training, and that would allow people to carry hidden, loaded guns in public places with no safety training and possibly never having even fired a gun ever,"** she said. (Creative Loafing, 6/14/17)
- "Our legislators should be ashamed of themselves. By moving H.B. 746 out of the North Carolina House today, our representatives sent a clear message that the will of North Carolinians matters less to them than the wishes of a powerful gun lobby. This is an issue on which nearly all North Carolinians are united - recent polling showed that nearly 90 percent of North Carolinians, including 83 percent of gun owners in our state, support requiring a permit to carry a loaded handgun in public." (TNS, 6/8/17)

## **2018 Election**

Clark ultimately won a narrow election victory over incumbent Rep. John Bradford in a heavily GOP district. The key factors cited was more money available for her campaign and also the I-77 toll issue. Guns were never heavily debated as an issue.

- It should have been a district where a Republican would win easily. It's the northern tip of Mecklenburg County where, in 2016, Republican Rep. John Bradford easily defeated an unaffiliated candidate -- Democrats didn't even challenge him -- and Donald Trump won with 51 percent of the votes to Hillary Clinton's 43 percent in the area that would become Bradford's 2018 district.



- Instead Democrat Christy Clark, a first-time candidate and advocate for laws to protect people from gun violence, won Tuesday. Her victory helped Democrats end the Republican supermajority in the House. Republicans can no longer marginalize Democratic Gov. Roy Cooper on most issues because they won't have enough votes to easily overturn his vetoes.
- Voters in the state's largest counties of Mecklenburg and Wake replaced Republicans with Democrats up and down the ballot in a wave that also swept out three incumbent Republican county commissioners in Mecklenburg and a longtime Republican sheriff in Wake.
- Asked what made the difference in this year's races, GOP consultant Larry Shaheen said, "That's easy - money." In the state House races, Democrats in the closely contested races had significant financial advantages.
- Clark, a paralegal from Huntersville, outspent Bradford, founder and CEO of a real estate and property management company from Cornelius, by nearly 5-to-1. She got \$653,000 from the state Democratic Party. She beat Bradford by 333 votes in unofficial returns.
- It was a pattern in House races in the Wake and Mecklenburg suburbs where Republicans lost. Republicans were running in districts built to give them a partisan edge. They faced a wall of money and resources from the state Democratic Party that was part of an effort called Break the Majority. Cooper used his own donors and databases to help the effort raise about \$7 million.
- "They got away with it because the governor was able to put half a million dollars into Christy Clark's campaign and the Republican Party didn't have the resources to compete," Shaheen said.
- In an interview, Clark said the ads were important because they helped introduce her to voters. Television was part of a larger campaign that involved weeks of door-knocking and other voter contacts, she said. One ad tied Bradford to a local controversy, I-77 toll lanes.
- "Break the Majority ran an incredible field game. I got support from Moms Demand Action," Clark said. She is a former volunteer leader of the state chapter of Moms Demand Action for Gun Sense in America. "We got out the vote and contacted thousands and thousands of voters in this district," Clark said.
- Clark began volunteering after the 2012 shooting at Sandy Hook Elementary School, where 20 children and six staff members were shot and killed. "My youngest child was in first grade at the time," she said. "I could envision that being my child very easily."
- Clark has spent time in Raleigh talking to legislators about gun violence. The issue didn't come up in the campaign, Clark said, though she saw a mailer that referred to her as a radical protester. "I don't think they landed in the way they thought they were going to," she said. "People have met me and know the difference." (RNO, 11/9/18)

## Gun-Obsessed in NC House (2019-20)

Clark said the gun issue “didn’t come up in the campaign” but once in office she made it a pet issue of hers once again from the outset with gun-control bills introduced in February 2019.

- Gun-control advocates in the North Carolina legislature are pressing again for weapon restrictions they say will reduce the risk of mass shootings and other firearm violence.
- Several House Democrats filed omnibus gun-safety legislation on Thursday, the one-year anniversary of the school shootings in Parkland, Florida, that left 17 people dead.
- The measure would require background checks for all gun sales, beef up the safe-storage law and raise the age to own assault-style weapons to 21. It would also ban high-capacity magazines and let local governments set their own gun regulations.
- First-term Democratic Rep. Christy Clark of Mecklenburg County says the bill is a first step toward addressing gun violence she calls a “public health crisis.” Republicans leading the General Assembly have passed laws this decade actually loosening some gun laws. (AP, 2/14/19)

The *Wilson Times* denounced the bills as paternalistic, especially one with a requirement that all gun owners should purchase “firearm liability insurance.”

- Under the guise of preventing mass shootings, North Carolina lawmakers tried to chip away at the Second Amendment this week. State Rep. Christy Clark, D-Mecklenburg, called a Thursday press conference at the General Assembly to introduce the Gun Violence Prevention Act, a grab bag of restrictions on gun rights that range from the ineffectual to the unconstitutional.
- Among other provisions, the bill would require all gun owners to purchase firearm liability insurance, ban the sale or possession of bump stocks and trigger cranks, raise the age to purchase so-called assault weapons from 18 to 21 and require permits for the purchase of long guns in addition to handguns.
- Insurers could pay damages to victims of accidental shootings and may also pay legal costs for insured gun owners who fire a weapon in presumed self-defense and face criminal prosecution or lawsuits. Some gun owners choose to buy insurance for their own peace of mind, and the National Rifle Association partners with an insurer to sell NRA-branded policies.
- Proponents compare firearm insurance to car insurance, which is already a requirement here and in most states. But operating a motor vehicle on public roads is considered a privilege, while keeping and bearing arms is a constitutional right. Government can and already does impose more restrictions on driving than owning a gun.
- Also known as House Bill 86, the Gun Violence Prevention Act would mandate a minimum of \$100,000 in liability coverage. Premiums are far cheaper than those for car insurance, but they

would disproportionately pinch low-income gun owners who may live in crime-prone neighborhoods and have the greatest need to own a firearm for home defense.

- "Insurance policies cover accidents, not intentional crimes, and criminals with illegal guns will just evade the requirement," David B. Rifkin Jr. and Andrew M. Grossman wrote in a 2013 Wall Street Journal op-ed. "The real purpose is to make guns less affordable for law-abiding citizens and thereby reduce private gun ownership. Identical constitutionally suspect logic explains proposals to tax the sale of bullets at excessive rates."
- There's also the quandary of risk compensation -- just as studies show seat belts and anti-lock brakes make the average driver more aggressive, gun owners might feel their trigger fingers grow itchier if they believe insurance will lessen the consequences of an accidental or wrongful shooting. Requiring every gun owner to be insured may actually increase danger.
- As for banning bump stocks, the Trump administration already issued a federal regulation that makes them illegal beginning next month. Several states have passed redundant laws. Apart from outlawing the sale of new devices, making them illegal to possess is problematic. Few owners have voluntarily turned in their bump stocks. Will federal agents ferret out the accessories and confiscate them by force?
- Courts have deemed pistol purchase permit requirements to be lawful. It remains to be seen whether imposing similar restrictions on the sale of ordinary hunting rifles would survive Second Amendment scrutiny. As with handguns, criminals who want long guns will simply steal them or buy them on the black market.
- Clark is a freshman legislator who previously served as state director for the gun control group Moms Demand Action. Joining her as primary sponsors are Reps. Marcia Morey of Durham County, Pricey Harrison of Guilford County and Shelly Willingham of Edgecombe County.
- On its filing date, the bill had a total of 12 sponsors, all Democrats. The presence of House Democratic whip Deb Butler's name on the legislation could signal it has party leaders' backing.
- Many North Carolinians -- and indeed, most gun owners -- are sympathetic to reasonable reforms such as enhanced background checks, but this bill is no common-sense compromise. The insurance requirement is a gargantuan government power grab that misfires on curbing gun violence and instead takes aim at law-abiding Tar Heels.
- Fortunately, its chances in the Republican-controlled General Assembly are nil. That should give little comfort to the many Democrats who own guns for hunting and home protection and would rightly bristle at an insurance mandate.
- The House Democratic Caucus and N.C. Democratic Party must abandon this paternalistic push. Claiming to represent the disadvantaged can't be reconciled with a bill that would make poor people pay a premium in order to lawfully own a gun. Don't they deserve to feed their families through hunting and keep handguns to defend those families from intruders? As the sad legacy of

poll taxes taught us, putting a price tag on the exercise of a constitutional right is always wrong. (Wilson Times, 2/17/19)

The GOP house leadership bottled the bills up in committee. When another shooting took place in El Paso, Clark and others tried to make a public row about getting the gun bills out of committee.

- North Carolina’s legislature hasn’t passed gun control legislation since 2015. But in the wake of this weekend’s mass shootings in El Paso and Dayton, pressure is building to change that.
- Several bills changing gun policy have stalled in committee, and on Monday Gov. Roy Cooper and four House Democrats urged pulling two of them out for debate.
- House Bill 86 would restrict who can obtain firearms. Currently, North Carolina requires either a concealed-carry permit or a sheriff-issued pistol purchase permit to buy a handgun, but long guns including assault-style rifles can be bought with only a state I.D. and a background check at the counter.
- Under HB86, long guns like rifles would also require a permit, and there would be a 72-hour waiting period before the buyer could take the gun home.
- ”This includes the weapons that were used in the mass shootings this weekend,” said Rep. Christy Clark, a Mecklenburg Democrat who’s co-sponsoring the bill with Reps. Marcia Morey, Pricey Harrison and Shelly Willingham. They plan to file a discharge petition Tuesday to pry HB86 and another bill out of committee. (CO, 8/5/19)

The bills ultimately died without action. Her activism demonstrates that if the gun issue wasn’t stressed enough in 2018, it should be now.

### **Other Issues in House**

- She has co-sponsored a Medicaid Expansion bill. (Press Release, 4/29/20)
- She opposed the bill to make Sheriffs cooperate with ICE. (Winston Salem Journal, 3/28/19)
- She co-sponsored a bill to block Duke Energy from making customers pay for coal ash cleanup. (CO, 4/5/19)

### **Loses 2020 Re-Match, Now Running Again**

Despite having more cash on hand, Clark lost her rematch with John Bradford in 2020. Bradford prevailed 52-48%. (CO, 11/3/20)

### **Received Donation From Defund Police Group**

Clark's name was among those NC Democrats who received donations from the Future Fund Now group, which in 2020 came out for defunding the police (though Clark herself is not on record as having supported that).

- The issue: House Speaker Tim Moore accused House Democrats of taking more than \$100,000 from the group Future Now Fund in exchange for promising to support legislation that would defund the police.
- Why we're checking this: A series of news releases, tweets and a news conference Monday afternoon led to tension and accusations between Democrats and Republicans. House Minority Leader Darren Jackson called Moore's campaign news release "a lie" and "libelous" ahead of Moore's news conference Monday.
- "This entire press release is a lie," Jackson tweeted Monday. "The pledge folks signed 2 years ago (before this slogan defund even existed) is on the website. It says nothing about police funding. I don't blame you for not wanting to talk about Repub record on education and healthcare. But lying is wrong."
- Moore called signing the pledge "a betrayal of the basic public trust to keep families safe, particularly in times of crisis."
- "It is stunning that House Democrats in North Carolina would sign a pledge to defund law enforcement, and that so many in their caucus would join with radical national liberals promising to cut funding for police officers who protect innocent people," Moore said.
- What you need to know: The pledge in question is promoted by a group called Future Now Fund . Candidates pledge to work toward something called America's Goals. The group separately promotes a series of model policies under the heading of America's Goals, which includes "reallocating funds" related to law enforcement. Future Now Fund gave \$59,400 to 11 Democratic candidates for state House this year, giving each the maximum contribution of \$5,400.
- Those candidates include: Nicole Quick, House District 59 candidate Joe Sam Queen, District 119 incumbent Christy Clark, District 98 incumbent Ray Russell, District 93 incumbent Sydney Batch, District 37 incumbent Brian Farkas, District 9 candidate Kimberly Hardy, District 43 candidate Ricky Hurtado, District 63 candidate Frances Jackson, District 45 candidate Dan Besse, District 74 candidate Aimy Steele, District 82 candidate. (RNO, 9/14/20)

### **2022 - Gets A Different Grocery Chain To Drop Cooler**

The gun issue remains the biggest for Clark in her effort to beat Bradford again. A tweet of hers objecting to a cooler carried by the Harris Teeter grocery chain that was pro-2<sup>nd</sup> Amendment, led to it being pulled, and led to charges from Bradford that she was engaging in cheap symbolism over the gun issue.

- It seems Harris Teeter has landed in the crosshairs of a pro-gun crowd over reports of the sale - and possible removal - of can coolers at a local store.
- The items in question bear imagery that's common among right-wing groups, such as an angry-looking eagle clutching a firearm in its talons and a figure in colonial garb holding the same. Harris Teeter was called out on Twitter by Christy Clark, a Democratic candidate for N.C. House District 98.
- "I am disappointed these coozies are being sold in an NC store," Clark wrote. "110 Americans die every day from gun violence and most recently children, educators, health care providers, and family members were killed in mass shootings. Please remove them."
- John Ray Bradford, the Republican who currently represents the district that includes parts of Huntersville and Cornelius in the Lake Norman area, quickly fired back at her "political correctness."
- But what began as a social-media spat between political opponents has put the Matthews-based grocer - one of the Charlotte region's favorites, based on local market share - in headlines. After Harris Teeter and its parent company, Cincinnati-based The Kroger Co. (NYSE: KR), apparently acknowledged Clark's request, the issue was picked up by Fox Business as well as multiple TV stations.
- A reply from the Teeter on Clark's tweet indicates the items are being pulled from stores, though Kroger's response promised only to pass along the request to company leadership. (Charlotte Business Journal, 6/22/22)

The *Wilson Daily Times* ripped Clark's actions.

- A product meant to keep beer and soda cans cold made **Christy Clark** hot under the collar. A former North Carolina legislator and the current Democratic candidate for a suburban Charlotte seat in the state House, Clark took to Twitter on Monday to share pictures of two foam can coolers sold in supermarkets emblazoned with pro-gun rights messages.
- A bald eagle clutching a pump-action shotgun in its talons and Patrick Henry's oft-quoted "Give me liberty or give me death" adorn one beverage holder, while the other features a Founding Father bearing an AR-15-style rifle and a Second Amendment parchment scroll with the words "Arms Change, Rights Don't."
- "I am disappointed these coozies are being sold in an NC store," Clark wrote, tagging Harris Teeter and Kroger in her tweet. "110 Americans die every day from gun violence and most recently children, educators, health care providers, and family members were killed in mass shootings. Please remove them."
- Harris Teeter, a North Carolina-based company with 261 stores in the Southeast and the District of Columbia, pledged to pull the products just three hours later. The can coolers were recalled the same day, according to a tweet from the verified Harris Teeter account.

- Kroger, a nationwide grocery chain, offered a noncommittal response: “Thanks for reaching out, Christy. We will tell our leadership about your request that we remove those items from our shelves. We appreciate your feedback.”
- The candidate’s request - and its rapid success in getting the merchandise tossed from one of the supermarkets - touched off debate on #ncpol Twitter, the network of lawmakers, staffers, lobbyists, journalists and citizens who closely follow state politics.

Bradford noted how Clark then chose to limit who commented on her tweets.

- Clark’s Republican opponent, Rep. John Ray Bradford, chided her for enabling a feature that limits which users are able to comment on her tweets. “While standing up for her version of ‘political correctness’ she chooses to silence those who disagree by turning off their ability to leave comments,” he wrote. “Everyone has the right to be heard.”
- By way of answer, Clark released a screen capture of her direct message requests. Users lashed out with vulgar words and sexist insults. The candidate doubled down, writing that she wouldn’t shut up and would continue her fight against gun violence.

The Times called it “cheap political theater” on Clark’s part.

- The entire episode, a tempest in a Twitter teapot, was cheap political theater. Clark served up culture war catnip that invigorated the left and infuriated the right, elevating symbolism over substance. Getting can coolers evicted from a grocery store won’t curb mass shootings, nor will it erode the right to keep and bear arms.
- If Clark sincerely found the illustrations offensive and didn’t seek their removal as a calculated political stunt, perhaps she thought they epitomized what restrictionists consider America’s unhealthy obsession with firearms. Considering that many supermarkets sell see-through squirt guns, toy pistols with orange plastic tips and action figures accessorized with miniature weapons, she’s far from the bullseye on reforming gun culture.
- The foam containers that drew Clark’s ire don’t promote violence. They express a political sentiment - support for Second Amendment rights and opposition to gun control.
- If Democrats want to sell independents and moderate Republicans on a “common-sense gun safety” compromise, part and parcel of that effort must be refuting the alarmist narrative that they’re scheming to dispatch squads of federal agents to confiscate law-abiding gun owners’ firearms by force.
- Clark’s Twitter tantrum, then, is a failure of message discipline. Good luck convincing skeptics you don’t want to take their guns after haughtily demanding that stores purge mere pictures of guns from their inventory. Since the FBI began keeping national crime statistics, can coolers have been implicated in precisely zero deaths.

- Harris Teeter may have been hasty in pledging to pull the products in response to a lone complaint, but every retailer is entitled to decide which merchandise it will sell. Choosing addition over subtraction, however, would have been a better solution for both **Christy Clark** and the grocery chain.
- Why not create competing drink-saver designs with gun control slogans and ask supermarkets to sell them along with the others? Going that route would allow Clark to make her political point without depriving others of the chance to make theirs. (Wilson Daily Times, 6/24/22)



## Part IV Clark: The News File, 2000-22

**2000**

### NOV 2000 Bridesmaid At Friend's Wedding

Laura Melissa "Missy" Tardy and Walter Alex Kay were united in marriage September 2, 2000, at 4:00 p.m. in Cave Spring Baptist Church with the Reverend Lawrence Dodson officiating. The reception was held at the Patrick Henry Hotel, Grand Ballroom, immediately following the wedding.

The bride was escorted by her father and stepfather. The maid of honor was Whitney Bell of Woodside, N.Y. Bridesmaids were Debbie Dutton of Charlotte, N.C.; Leigh Walter Robbins of Richmond; Maria Kay, sister of the groom, of Roanoke; and Sherri Lewis of Martinsville. Honorary bridesmaids were **Christy Underwood** Laas of Portland, Ore.; Melanie Wade of Salem; Ginger Barnard of Vinton; and Crystal Barnard of Vinton. (Roanoke Times, 11/26/00)

**2001**

### OCT 2001 Matron Of Honor At Friend's Wedding

Kristie Faye White and Mark Edward Sinozich were married September 22, 2001, in First Baptist Church. Rev. Charles Ward officiated. A reception was held at the Patrick Henry Hotel. Maid of honor was Kristin Reed and matron of honor was **Christy Underwood**, best friends of bride. Bridesmaids were April Sinozich, Jennifer Boush, Misty Bingham, Janice Simmons, and Whitney Ross. Flower girl was Victoria Wells. Best man was Jeff Sinozich, brother of groom. Ushers were Kevin White, Chip Jolley, Trey Burnley, John O'Brien, David Farley, and Sterling Simmons. Ring bearer was Zachary Sinozich. Guestbook attendant was Janelle Blanton. Photography was by Jim Markey. The bride is the daughter of Paul and Linda White, Salem. She is employed as a corporate leasing director for Sunscape Apartments. The groom is the son of Ed and Leah Sinozich, Roanoke. He is a managing partner for Tsunaone Advertising. After a trip to the Grand Cayman Islands, British West Indies, they will live in Roanoke. (Roanoke Times, 10/14/01)

**2014**

**SEP 2014    Wants Kroger to Adopt “Gun Sense” Policy**

The writer is a member of Moms Demand Action for Gun Sense in America.

Harris Teeter, where I frequently shop with my children, is the last place I should expect to see someone openly carrying a firearm.

Surprisingly, Kroger, which owns Matthews-based Harris Teeter, does not prohibit customers from openly carrying guns.

As a pro-Second Amendment mom, I want to be clear this isn't about guns – it's about the people holding the guns. In North **Carolina**, there are no requirements for training to openly carry a firearm.

I stand with moms nationwide in asking the CEO of Kroger to adopt gun sense policies that will keep families safe in our local Harris Teeter and other Kroger stores nationwide.

**Christy Clark** (Charlotte Observer, 9/24/14)

**NOV 2014    Petitions Kroger Parent Company**

Members of the advocacy group Moms Demand Action delivered more than 72,000 petitions to Harris Teeter's Matthews headquarters Thursday, asking the company to ban openly carried guns in its stores.

The group has been asking Cincinnati-based Kroger, which bought Harris Teeter in January, to stop customers from carrying guns openly in its stores, even in jurisdictions where “open carry” is legal. They're encouraging customers to shop at retailers that ban openly carried guns, such as Whole Foods , instead of Kroger-owned stores.

”You don't have to have training or a permit to open carry in stores,” said **Christy Clark**, a Huntersville mother and a leader with Moms Demand Action.

She and other supporters hauled cardboard boxes of petitions into Harris Teeter's Crestdale Road headquarters.

Harris Teeter said it doesn't plan to change its policies, which allow open carry in states where it's legal. In North **Carolina**, gun owners can openly carry firearms in most public places. A permit is required to carry a concealed gun.

”We have and will continue to adhere to the firearms and concealed handgun laws as outlined by the states in which we do business,” said spokeswoman Danna Jones, in an email. “We believe this issue is best handled by lawmakers, not retailers.”

Jones said the company's policy was the same before its acquisition by Kroger. The grocery conglomerate also has a policy of allowing openly carried guns in places where it is legal. Harris Teeter operates about 200 stores in eight states, though most of them are in North **Carolina**.

"Our long-standing policy on this issue is to follow state and local laws and to ask customers to be respectful of others while shopping," reads Kroger's official policy . "We know that our customers are passionate on both sides of this issue and we trust them to be responsible in our stores."

Clark said that retailers ban other practices that are legal under state law, such as skateboarding and not wearing shoes.

"If you can ban those things, why can't you ban guns?" she asked.

Kroger is the second-largest grocer in the U.S., operating under a dozen other banners as well as Kroger and its Harris Teeter subsidiary.

Gun control advocates have been targeting national retailers. They've claimed some successes: In July, after lobbying from Moms Demand Action, Minneapolis-based Target said it would "respectfully request" that people not openly carry guns in its stores.

"This is a complicated issue, but it boils down to a simple belief: Bringing firearms to Target creates an environment that is at odds with the family-friendly shopping and work experience we strive to create," interim CEO John Mulligan said at the time.

The movement has been fueled by social media, with petitions starting on Facebook.

Retailers must walk a fine line: Some customers might support a ban on openly carried guns, others might not. Many Kroger locations are in politically conservative areas that typically support open-carry regulations.

And firearms advocates have organized events of their own, wearing pistols and assault rifles on trips to retailers such as Starbucks. After one such event last year, the coffee company asked people to stop bringing their guns to stores unless they are law enforcement officers, but it stopped short of an outright ban. (CO, 11/20/14)

## 2015

### JAN 2015 Still Petitioning Kroger Parent Company

An advocacy group staged a protest at Harris Teeter in the Myers Park neighborhood Saturday, demanding that the grocery chain stop customers from openly carrying guns in its stores.

Members of Moms Demand Action For Gun Sense in America chopped up their customer loyalty cards and told a store manager they would not shop at Harris Teeter unless the policy is changed.

”We’ll come back if the store is safe,” one protester said.

The group has been lobbying Cincinnati-based Kroger, which bought Harris Teeter last year, to ban openly carried guns in stores even in states such as North **Carolina** where “open carry” is legal. Members have recently seen success persuading well-known chains, including Target and Starbucks, to ask customers to leave firearms outside their doors.

But Harris Teeter said it won’t change its policies, which allow open carry in states where it’s legal. Harris Teeter operates about 200 stores in eight states, but most are in North **Carolina**.

Gun owners in the state can openly carry firearms in most public places. A permit is required to carry a concealed gun.

”We have and will continue to adhere to the firearms and concealed handgun laws as outlined by the states in which we do business,” Harris Teeter spokeswoman Danna Jones said in an email. “We believe this issue is best handled by lawmakers, not retailers.”

The company gave a similar response in November after Moms Demand Action delivered more than 72,000 petitions to Harris Teeter’s Matthews offices asking it to halt the open carry of firearms in stores.

Moms Demand Action, which pushes for tougher guns laws, was founded after the mass shooting at Sandy Hook Elementary School in Newtown, Conn., in December 2012. A gunman killed 20 children and six adults in the school.

The organization boasts members in all 50 states, including 384 in the local chapter that organized Saturday’s protest.

About 10 women, men and children held placards in the Harris Teeter parking lot, cut their customer loyalty cards in front of television cameras and carried a letter to the store manager.

They said they do not oppose the Second Amendment right to bear arms but added that some stricter controls are necessary to protect children.

”It’s not about the guns; it’s about the people,” said **Christy Clark**, a Huntersville mother and leader with Moms Demand Action. “Moms, kids and stores cannot tell the difference between a good guy and a bad guy.”

Kroger is the nation's second-largest grocery chain, operating under multiple banners, including Harris Teeter.

"Our long-standing policy on this issue is to follow state and local laws and to ask customers to be respectful of others while shopping," reads Kroger's official policy. "We know that our customers are passionate on both sides of this issue, and we trust them to be responsible in our stores." (CO, 1/24/15)

### **DEC 2015 Worked to Amend HB 562**

Several new laws went into effect Tuesday in North Carolina. Among them is a somewhat controversial law that loosens the state's background check requirements to own a handgun.

Christy Clark is part of the group Moms Demand Action, and spent months working with state legislators to amend House Bill 562, specifically the provision about background checks.

"While we don't like everything that has come through this bill the way it remains, we're happy we were able to preserve the background check system," Clark said.

As a result, North Carolina remains one of 18 states that still require background checks for handgun sales.

But now, instead of 20 years, local sheriffs can only look five years into a person's past when deciding whether they meet the state's "good moral character" standard to own a handgun.

NBC Charlotte reached out to several area sheriff's offices, but only heard back from Union County Sheriff Eddie Cathey, who says he was prepared for the changes, but doesn't fully agree with them.

"Actually I don't think [five years] is long enough," Sheriff Cathey said. "I think North Carolina had a pretty good process in place, so we'll just have to wait and see-- you know, it's hard to say."

The new law standardizes the permit process across the state, and requires looking at crimes recorded in a national database.

That's a win for store owners like Larry Hyatt of Hyatt Gun Store in Charlotte.

"For us, the most important single thing is there's a bigger requirement for the DOJ to report criminals to the NICS system, that's the National Instant Background Check system, and that includes mental health," Hyatt said. "So if someone has a mental problem or commits a crime, it's going to get in the system quicker."

Hyatt doesn't have a problem with the new law, but worries it won't do enough to cut down on illegal gun owners.

"So we have sort of two systems-- one heavily regulated, heavily watched, whether it's firearms or drugs--

and then a whole other system out on the streets where drugs and firearms are readily available to the bad people, and we have not addressed that yet," Hyatt said. (NBC-36, 12/1/15)

### **DEC 2015 Organizes Anti-Gun Rally**

The two scenes Saturday couldn't have been more divergent as the gun debate that has spread across America after deadly mass shootings in cities like San Bernardino, Calif., and Charleston was played out 8 miles apart in Charlotte.

At the Charlotte Gun & Knife Show in the Metrolina Expo Center, cars filled the parking lot and people lined up in triple file by the hundreds to get a look at a vast array of rifles, pistols, hunting bows, knives, holsters, stun guns, clothing and military memorabilia.

Some dressed in hunting gear. A few, hoping to sell rifles privately, strapped them over their shoulders with for sale signs.

In uptown's Romare Bearden Park, about 60 anti-gun violence advocates and elected officials made speeches and then walked nearly a mile among the skyscrapers chanting, "No more silence, end gun violence."

The event was part of a statewide series of rallies sponsored by the North **Carolina** chapter of Moms Demand Action for Gun Sense in America. They dressed in orange – adopted by the movement as a symbol valuing human life – and walked two days before Monday's third anniversary of the shooting at Sandy Hook Elementary in Connecticut that killed 20 first graders and six adults.

'Can't blame the guns'

Gun show promoters, The Dixie Gun & Knife Classic, Inc. , wouldn't grant reporters access to vendors. Two dealers told the Observer Saturday they were willing to answer questions but only after interviews were cleared by the promoters.

But buyers leaving the show defended their rights to buy guns and ammunition.

Robby Gruggett of Charlotte, toting two bags full of ammo, said guns are nothing but "hunks of metal. It ain't the guns that's killing the people. It's the people. They ain't outlawing alcohol, and people go out and kill people drunk driving. You can't blame the cars.

"Well you can't blame the guns."

Gordon White of Buncombe County locked a Winchester shotgun in his trunk. It's a Christmas gift for his 12-year-old grandson.

"It's about time the boy learns to shoot," White said. "I've been shooting since I was 6. My grandfather first took me."

The boy's mother, White's daughter, isn't happy about the gift. She relented, White said, because "she wants him to learn how to do it safe and learn that a gun can be dangerous and hurt people. She knew he'd learn that with me."

He said he understands why some people are pressing for laws to control access to guns.

"People are afraid," he said. "But no matter how many laws you have, bad people are still going to get their hands on guns."

Need to close loopholes

At the anti-violence rally, **Christy Clark**, a Moms Demand Action volunteer, said the group supports the Second Amendment and the right to legally own guns.

"We believe that responsible gun owners should continue to be allowed to use their guns for whatever enjoyment that they like," Clark said.

But the group, she said, is working to limit access to people who might be a danger, applying pressure on lawyers to expand background checks before buyers are granted a permit to buy any type of gun.

Democratic state Rep. Kelly Alexander of Charlotte told the crowd that North **Carolina** is one of 18 state that has a sensible law, requiring a background check of anyone wanting to buy a pistol. He wants the law extended to "long guns," – rifles, shotguns, assault weapons.

"Right now we have a big loophole," said Alexander, a gun owner. "It's possible for you to be denied a pistol permit, ... but you can still get a long gun. So you can not go and do something crazy with a pistol, but you can still do something crazy with a long gun because nobody ever had to investigate.

"We ought to close that loophole."

New Charlotte City Council member Julie Eiselt told the crowd that she got involved in politics after a man tried to abduct her at gunpoint in the middle of the day eight years ago.

She said surveys show 87 percent of North Carolinians believe that background checks make sense.

Yet, she said, "Americans continue to buy more guns and our federal government continues to fail to pass tougher gun laws. How do we build consensus ... to say guns should be kept out of dangerous hands? How do we honor the Second Amendment, but close the loopholes which allow bad people to access guns?"

Charlotte Mayor Jennifer Roberts urged people to pay attention to laws that allow guns in public parks and on school grounds in locked trunks.

"The prevalence of guns increases ... the probability of death from gun violence," Roberts said. "We can work together to stem the access to people who want to do harm." (CO, 12/12/15)

**2016**

**APR 2016 Press Release on Gun Action**

-- Moms Demand Action for Gun Sense, a campaign of Everytown for Gun Safety, issued the following news release:

Moms Demand Action for Gun Sense in America, a part of Everytown for Gun Safety, today applauds Greensboro-based The Fresh Market for adopting a new gun safety policy asking customers to refrain from bringing firearms into their stores. The new policy developed by The Fresh Market follows a petition effort led by volunteers with the North **Carolina** chapter of Moms Demand Action. North **Carolina** moms also traveled to The Fresh Market locations around the state, asking managers to consider responsible gun policies in their stores. The Fresh Market policy will take effect today in all 168 stores in 27 states nationwide.

"Our volunteers in North **Carolina** are thrilled to see The Fresh Market listening to their customers and embracing a new policy that prioritizes customer and employee safety. Parents shopping for with their kids should not have to confront armed customers in the produce aisle," said **Christy Clark**, volunteer chapter leader with the North **Carolina** chapter of Moms Demand Action for Gun Sense in America. "The Fresh Market may be headquartered here in North **Carolina**, but this gun sense policy will keep people safe in all 168 stores across the country - that is the kind of leadership we want from our North **Carolina** businesses."

The Fresh Market's new policy states, "The unique atmosphere of our stores is an essential part of what makes The Fresh Market a special place for both our customers and employees. In order to maintain that comfortable, safe, and inviting experience, we respectfully request that our customers refrain from bringing firearms and other weapons into our stores."

"Moms are grateful The Fresh Market shares our concerns about customer and employee safety. Given that mothers make the majority of spending decisions for their families, this is also a smart business move," said Shannon Watts, founder of Moms Demand Action for Gun Sense in America. "As a result of our nation's lax gun laws, there's no way for a mom to know if the person openly carrying a firearm in the cereal aisle is a threat or just there to pick up Cheerios. Millions of gun sales take place in America without a background check, and there is no requirement to have a permit or training to open carry in most states. Until lawmakers do their part to keep constituents safe, Moms Demand Action volunteers will continue to press the places we shop and eat with our families to keep their customers safe."

North **Carolina** law, and the laws in a majority of states, allows people to openly carry loaded rifles and shotguns in public with no permit and no training. Combined with the fact that millions of guns are transferred without a background check in the U.S. each year, this means that people in most states can legally carry loaded semiautomatic rifles in public without ever having passed a criminal background check.

Open carry also means that law enforcement's hands are tied - as was exemplified last fall when a woman in Colorado Springs called the cops because she was worried about a man she saw openly carrying two



guns. Because open carry is legal in Colorado (as it is in North **Carolina**), police couldn't do anything about it because the person wasn't breaking the law - until he shot and killed three people.

The Fresh Market's commitment follows similar actions from Trader Joes, Target, Chipotle, Sonic, Chili's and Jack in the Box that led these companies to take swift action to stand with Moms Demand Action volunteers and enforce or adopt policies that prohibit open carry to protect the safety of their employees and customers. Moms Demand Action also played a pivotal role in getting Safeway and Albertsons, the country's second largest grocery chain, to clarify their company-wide policy prohibiting firearms in their stores. And just weeks ago, Facebook acted to end all unlicensed gun sales on its platforms following months of discussion with leaders from Everytown for Gun Safety and Moms Demand Action. More information on Moms Demand Action's corporate campaigns is available here. (<http://momsdemandaction.org/corporate-responsibility/>) (TNS, 4/1/16)

### **JUN 2016     Urges Not to Go Ahead With Conceal Carry Bill**

A day after the mass shooting in Orlando, state lawmakers in North Carolina pushed for a bill that would loosen the state's gun regulations, but critics said it could jeopardize safety.

The bill in question would amend the state's constitution "to repeal the provision which provides that the General Assembly may prohibit the practice of carrying concealed weapons."

Rep. Mike Spicale (R-3rd), who is one of the bill's sponsors, says the regulations the way they are now are infringing on people's rights to carry a weapon in the first place.

"It's the right of the people. The right of the people to keep and bear arms shall not be infringed. That's pretty clear. It doesn't matter what the Supreme Court says in my mind or in a lot of the citizens' minds," he said. "Criminals are not getting their stuff legally, so they're not going through the permit system. So, they're carrying anyway."

The bill was introduced in the House Monday night and assigned to a committee for review.

Under the bill, you would still be able to get a permit to go across state lines. However, you still wouldn't be allowed to carry a concealed weapon inside the legislature, at courthouses or places that serve alcohol.

The group Moms Demand Action gathered at the legislative building Monday, urging lawmakers not to go forward with this plan.

They say not only will it compromise people's safety but it's a poor response to what just happened Sunday in Orlando, in which a gunman killed 49 people and injured 53 others at a popular gay nightclub.

"The timing, I think, is poor in the sense that yesterday the nation was shocked," said Christy Clark. "We should be thinking more about gun violence prevention and less about making it easier for dangerous individuals to have access to guns."

Kim Yaman, who survived a shooting at the University of Iowa in 1991 in which five people were killed,

said she worries about how common mass shootings have become since then.

"We're becoming as a society where there's an actual demographic of people who have survived shootings," said Yaman. "We can't make this an everyday thing, where our main motivator of walking around in the world is fear."

If the bill passes the legislature and gets the governor's signature, it would still need approval from voters in November because it's a proposed constitutional amendment. A spokesman for Speaker of the House Tim Moore said he hadn't had a chance to review the bill yet and had not committed to bringing the bill up for a vote before the end of the legislative session. Leaders in the House and Senate are aiming for the session to end by the July 4th holiday. (CBS-17, 6/13/16)

**2017**

**FEB 2017    Conceal-Carry Debate**

Two new North Carolina House bills aim to do away with permits for carrying concealed handguns and eliminate the state's ability to regulate concealed weapons.

The moves, which have failed to get traction in previous sessions, have been denounced as dangerous by leaders in law enforcement and gun control advocates. But groups and lawmakers supporting the bill say it's the next step in North Carolina's recent history of gun deregulation.

Under House Bill 69 - the "Constitutional Carry Act" - any U.S. citizen 18 years or older would be able to carry a concealed handgun, unless otherwise disallowed by state or federal law.

The bill is sponsored by 13 House Republicans. Its four primary sponsors - Rep. Larry Pittman (R-Cabarrus), Rep. Michael Speciale (R-Craven), Rep. Beverly Boswell (R-Dare) and Rep. Jay Adams (R-Catawba) - either did not respond to calls and emails on the bill or declined to be interviewed.

Pittman, a primary sponsor of the bill, did recently grant an interview to The Charlotte Observer.

"A gun is a tool," Pittman told the Observer. "It is only as good or bad as the intentions of the person carrying it.

"Concealed or open carry makes no difference, except that if we can carry concealed, criminals and terrorists have no idea which lawful citizens just might fight back. The government should not interfere with our freedom to do so."

Pittman has failed to get similar bills passed - including one last year. This bill is more narrowly tailored than last year's bill, which attempted to amend the state constitution on the issue.

But another bill, filed Tuesday, would do that as well.

House Bill 145 would amend the state constitution to eliminate the state's ability to regulate the carrying of concealed weapons. That bill's sponsor, Speciale, declined to discuss it.

What law enforcement says

In North Carolina, carrying a concealed handgun without a permit is a Class 2 misdemeanor on first offense and a Class H felony for subsequent offenses.

Some of the state's most prominent law enforcement officials say there's good reason for that.

"I am very much for Second Amendment rights," said Guilford County Sheriff BJ Barnes, co-chair of the N.C. Sheriff's Association's legislative committee. "But these are terrible ideas.

"A gun is a tool - a powerful tool," he said. "To just put that in the hands of anyone who is 18, even if

they've had no safety training, no proficiency, no training in what the gun laws are, is not going to make the public safer and it's not going to make my officers safer."

In North Carolina, those seeking a concealed carry permit must complete eight hours of classroom training, demonstrate familiarity with gun operation and safety and pass a test at a firing range. They also have to undergo a check that looks at any criminal convictions, pending charges or mental health problems.

If gun owners aren't willing to show that level of respect for their own safety and that of others, Barnes said, they should think twice about carrying a concealed weapon.

With more than 600,000 concealed carry permit holders in the state, Barnes said, it's obvious that the permitting process isn't keeping people from obtaining a permit if they wish to do so.

"I have spoken to a lot of sheriffs about this and I haven't met one yet who didn't agree," Barnes said.

Gun rights advocates disagree

Paul Valone, president and co-founder of the gun rights group Grassroots North Carolina, said Barnes and other sheriffs are missing the point.

"The fact is if I'm a criminal and I want to carry concealed right now, I'm going to do it anyway," Valone said. "People are buying firearms right now without any safety education. All this process is doing is making it so that law-abiding citizens have to get a government permission slip to exercise their constitutional rights."

Valone's group claims membership of about 20,000 people - but their reach is much broader, through an "alert database" of about 120,000.

"That's why whenever we tell people to light up a legislator's office, it lights up but good," Valone said.

Valone's group has been working to loosen gun restrictions in the state since the 1990s. He said their success has been slow but steady.

"The naysayers claimed there would be shooting at traffic lights every time some new restriction was gone," Valone said. "When we expanded the right to carry into parks, they claimed gang members would be shooting up parks. When we expanded it to restaurants that served alcohol, they claimed drunks would be shooting people. None of that happened."

Getting the concealed carry permit done away with completely has been a long-term goal, Valone said. Though attempts have been frustrated in the past, he said the number of states doing away with such restrictions over the last few years make it more likely that North Carolina will follow.

Other states

Just this week, New Hampshire governor Chris Sununu signed a constitutional carry bill into law, making it the 12th U.S. state with such a law. The others are Alaska, Arizona, Arkansas, Idaho, Kansas, Maine,

Mississippi, Missouri, Vermont, West Virginia and Wyoming.

Several other states have variations on the law that allow for the carrying of concealed weapons outside city limits or by residents of states that do have such laws, for instance.

"None of those states have had problems with it," Valone said.

There does appear to have been a shift in public perception of concealed carry laws and their impact on safety.

A 2015 Gallup poll found that 56 percent of those polled thought more concealed handguns would make the U.S. safer - but it included a training and permitting process as part of the question.

A 2012 poll by Republican pollster Frank Luntz for the group Mayors Against Illegal Guns found that a vast majority of those polled - and even a majority of NRA members - favored a permitting process for concealed carry, including an age limit of 21.

Research on the issue can be difficult because laws function differently in various states, but a 2014 Stanford University study concluded that the passage of "right-to-carry" laws does correlate with an increase in violent crime.

That's why groups like Moms Demand Action and North Carolinians Against Gun Violence oppose the recent North Carolina bills.

"We are opposed to proposals that would dismantle our state's concealed handgun permit system and allow people with no safety training - including some dangerous people - to carry hidden, loaded handguns in public without a permit," said Christy Clark, the state chapter leader for Moms Demand Action. "We hope the General Assembly will show the same concern for public safety they have in the past by rejecting this proposal again."

Becky Ceartas from North Carolinians Against Gun Violence agreed.

"I think it's unfortunate we have seen some restrictions that we had in place go away," Ceartas said. "But I think in 2015 we saw strong opposition to these kinds of changes from grassroots organizations and people all over North Carolina and Democrats and Republicans in Raleigh came together in a bipartisan way to make sure this permitting system stayed in place, among other things."

Rep. Darren Jackson (D-Wake), the House minority leader, said he anticipates that will happen again this year.

"Remember that any member can file any bill," Jackson said. "That does not necessarily mean it has support. Right now, I don't think it's going to go anywhere."

If bills like these do begin to pick up support, Jackson said, he feels confident that having new Democratic Gov. Roy Cooper in place will help to prevent them from becoming law.

"Not everyone who wants to carry a concealed gun should carry one," Jackson said. "We have to have some training. We have to have some standards. I think that's something most people agree with."  
(Asheboro Courier-Tribune, 2/25/17)

### **APR 2017 Criticizes SB 503**

North **Carolina's** gun battle flared again Wednesday when gun control advocates protested a measure they fear would eliminate background checks for handgun sales.

The protest was aimed at Senate Bill 503, which would replace the current permitting system handled by local sheriffs with an online system. Critics say the bill would make it easier for guns to fall into the wrong hands.

Sen. Jeff Tarte, a Cornelius Republican and the bill's chief sponsor, said North **Carolina** is the only state that still uses a paper permitting system.

"The intent would be to join the 21st Century," Tarte said, "and use the technology available to us to be able to work in minutes instead of months. This (new) process won't make the system more safe or less safe. It'll just bring the system online."

Now handgun buyers must get a permit from the sheriff, who does a background check. Tarte's bill would have gun dealers to do the federally required checks through the National Instant Criminal Background Check System, which is run through the FBI. The dealer would then have to notify the sheriff of each background check.

In moving the process online, the bill eliminates current laws that require sheriffs to issue permits.

"We're concerned about any bill that repeals background checks," said **Christy Clark** of Huntersville, the leader of the N.C. chapter of Moms Demand Action for Gun Sense in America. "We support maintaining the pistol permit system."

Eddie Caldwell, executive vice president and general counsel of the N.C. Sheriffs' Association, agreed.

"As we read the bill, it would repeal the requirement that people who transfer handguns get a pistol purchase permit," he said. "The bill does more than just automate the process... The sheriffs believe it does not provide an equivalent amount of public safety protection."

As they have around the country, gun laws have always been contentious in North **Carolina**.

In 2015, lawmakers passed a watered-down version of a bill that that clarified the rights of gun-owners. But they removed a provision at the time that would have repealed the pistol permit system that requires handgun buyers to get permits from their local sheriff.

Last week, the House passed a bill that would allow gun owners to bring weapons to church services held at school buildings. (CO, 4/5/17)

## **JUN 2017    Opposes New Conceal Carry**

Handgun owners would no longer have to take gun safety courses or submit their fingerprints for background checks in order to carry concealed weapons in public, under a bill under debate by the N.C. House.

Concealed-carry permits would no longer be required under the measure, which a House judiciary committee endorsed Wednesday evening. The bill also would let 18-year-olds conceal guns, down from the current age threshold of 21.

The North **Carolina** Sheriffs' Association has taken no position on the bill, but said it's pleased legislators didn't also move to revoke permits required to buy handguns. County sheriffs are a key voice in the debate because they issue handgun permits.

"Our position is that we believe the concealed-carry statute should continue in existence and is valuable, but between the two, the purchase permit is most critical," said executive vice president Eddie Caldwell.

Caldwell noted that the House bill still requires owners carrying concealed weapons to make law enforcement officers aware of their guns. It also lets permit applicants release their mental health records without making a second trip to their local sheriff's office.

Mecklenburg County Sheriff Irwin Carmichael won't take a position on the bill, but says the current permit system works well.

"Because of the training requirements, I think it's a good process," Carmichael said. "If you have a person who's 18, who has no training whatsoever, they don't understand the laws, they don't understand the legalities, and that causes pause for me."

Mecklenburg is among sheriffs offices that have complained that slow access to mental health records have delayed processing of permits, which they're supposed to do within 45 days. Mecklenburg recently reported a "significant backlog" for records from **Carolinas** Medical Center for concealed-carry applicants.

Gun rights advocates argue Mecklenburg and other urban counties are using problems in obtaining mental health records as an excuse to purposely delay issuing concealed-carry permits.

Carmichael "doesn't seem to be doing much to shepherd the bureaucrats," said Paul Valone, president of Grass Roots North **Carolina**. Mecklenburg County makes applicants wait as much as six months to even apply for a permit, he said.

Carmichael denies any such slow down. "Why would we hold up the process?" he said. "We're try to speed up the process."

Gun control advocates say concealed carry permits offer scrutiny of buyers of privately-sold guns and ensure that gun owners have basic safety training.

”This bill would roll back one of North **Carolina’s** core public safety laws by allowing people to carry hidden loaded handguns in public with no permit and no firearm safety training,” **Christy Clark** of Huntersville, state chapter leader of Moms Demand Action for Gun Sense in America, told judiciary committee members Wednesday, WRAL reported.

Grass Roots North **Carolina** said 13 other states have lifted concealed-carry permit requirements with no repercussions.

”This is a logical evolution to enhancing the ability of citizens to protect themselves,” Valone said. “It removes obstructions and burdens on people to carry concealed for protection, while presenting absolutely no additional risk to public safety as demonstrated in 13 other states.”

The gun-rights group objects to language in the current law that lets sheriffs deny permits because of “physical or mental infirmity,” a standard that may be interpreted differently. The House bill substitutes that standard by specifying mental disorders “ as defined by the most recent edition of the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders published by the published by the American Psychiatric Association .

Sponsors in the House said the intent of the bill was to allow people to carry concealed guns in places where they are already able to carry them openly. It’s already legal to wear a visible handgun, except where restricted.

”If someone can legally carry openly there’s no legal reason for that person not to be able to carry concealed,” co-sponsor Rep. Larry Pittman, a Republican from Concord, told the committee.

Current state law denies concealed-carry permits to a range of applicants including those who are felons, use drugs, have committed violent crimes, been convicted of impaired driving or been involuntarily committed for mental health treatment. (CO, 6/1/17)

### **JUN 2017    Denounces New Conceal/Carry**

The North **Carolina** chapter of Moms Demand Action for Gun Sense in America, part of Everytown for Gun Safety, today denounced the North **Carolina** House vote advancing H.B. 746, legislation that would dismantle North **Carolina’s** concealed handgun permitting system, allowing people as young as 18 to carry hidden, loaded handguns in public without a permit or firearm safety training.

### **STATEMENT FROM **CHRISTY CLARK**, VOLUNTEER CHAPTER LEADER WITH THE NORTH **CAROLINA** CHAPTER OF MOMS DEMAND ACTION FOR GUN SENSE IN AMERICA:**

”Our legislators should be ashamed of themselves. By moving H.B. 746 out of the North **Carolina** House today, our representatives sent a clear message that the will of North Carolinians matters less to them than the wishes of a powerful gun lobby. This is an issue on which nearly all North Carolinians are united - recent polling showed that nearly 90 percent of North Carolinians, including 83 percent of gun owners in our state, support requiring a permit to carry a loaded handgun in public. This disgraceful and dangerous vote. (TNS, 6/8/17)



## **JUN 2017    Conceal Carry Opposition**

Imagine for a moment that you're at a concert in Charlotte at one of any number of small-to-midsize venues that don't explicitly prohibit guns inside by posting a sign at the door. Shots ring out at the other side of the venue, some disagreement near the bar that escalated far too quickly. You instinctively move toward the exit to get away.

What you don't realize is that between you and that exit is a group of teenagers, and now to everybody's surprise, they're returning fire in the interest of saving innocent lives. These are the good guys with guns you hear so much about, waiting in the wings with weapons concealed ready to play hero if they're needed.

There's one big problem, however, and it's a terrifying one: none of these teens has ever fired a gun — save for playing Call of Duty on their PlayStation 4 — and their first experience with doing so is in a dark room under chaotic conditions, with your life at stake.

Nobody knew this group of newly minted adults fresh out of high school was packing, and if they had known, most folks would have been out of that exit long ago, but they were kept in the dark, literally and figuratively, and could very well die in the dark because of a new law that lowered the age for folks allowed to carry concealed handguns and did away with certain provisions that ensured those carrying them would know how to handle them.

The story told above is an obviously far-fetched hypothetical one. You're no more likely to be cut down by confused gamers with guns while watching your favorite local band you are to fall victim to a mass shooting in Walmart at the hands of some radical extremist because government regulation has disarmed you (neither is going to happen), and yet it's reminiscent of the type of fear mongering Republican lawmakers have used to try to pass laws like the one described above which passed through the N.C. House on Thursday, June 8, in a 64-51 vote.

Among other things, House Bill 746 — also known as the Omnibus Gun Changes bill — would do away with the concealed carry permitting process, allowing anyone 18 and over to carry a gun hidden in their clothes.

While gun control advocates and law enforcement agencies across the state have taken strong stances against the bill, Republicans such as Chris Millis of Pender County have simply insisted that opponents haven't read the bill, while Rep. John Blust of Guilford County tweeted a drawing of "bad guy" stick figures pointing guns at unarmed "good guys" to explain how we are all in imminent danger if we're not all armed.

Christy Clark of Huntersville is the North Carolina chapter leader for Moms Demand Action for Gun Sense in America, a group created to lobby legislators, companies and educational institutions for gun reform.

Clark is involved with the local Charlotte group, and along with leaders from more than 10 chapters across the state has been encouraging supporters to call their local representatives and speak against HB 746 since its inception.

Clark said her biggest concern is the elimination of the concealed carry permitting process, which mandates that gun owners go through eight hours of safety training before receiving the permit.

"Our main issue with the bill is that it will repeal the requirement for the people to have safety training, and that would allow people to carry hidden, loaded guns in public places with no safety training and possibly never having even fired a gun ever," she said.

To be clear, North Carolina is an open-carry state, meaning gun owners 18 years old and up can already carry a gun in plain sight without having gone through any permitting process.

Current law states that a person has to be 21 or older to obtain a concealed carry permit. Carrying any gun — openly or concealed — is restricted for people who are otherwise prohibited from owning a gun for reasons that include having been convicted of a felony or having been deemed mentally unfit to own a gun. That would remain so under HB 746.

For Clark, the existing open-carry laws don't justify the creation of relaxing concealed carry laws that were working fine.

"It is concerning that now they like to say, 'Oh well it's going to be where people can already carry guns, because open carry is allowed there already,'" she said. "My issue with that is that we shouldn't be allowing more people to carry guns without safety training. We want to make North Carolina more safe, not less."

John Rudisill, a Charlotte attorney who's involved with multiple anti-gun organizations including Everytown for Gun Safety, has been watching in dismay as the bill has already moved further through the state legislature than previous efforts to eliminate the concealed carry permitting process.

"This bill is the triumph of sheer lunacy in the name of fear ideology," Rudisill said. "All the law enforcement organizations are against it, and the only parties that will benefit from it are the funeral homes and the hospitals, both of whom have enough business."

As Rudisill mentioned, gun control advocates are not alone in their opposition to HB 746. Law enforcement agencies across the state have been overwhelmingly against the bill, stating that it will put both police officers and residents in greater danger.

Two of the state's largest three police associations — the North Carolina Association of Police Chiefs and the North Carolina Fraternal Order of Police — have taken official stances against the bill. The third, the North Carolina Sheriffs' Association (NCSA), has not officially endorsed or denounced the bill, although the organization has stood against earlier efforts to repeal the concealed carry permitting process, and its leadership has been openly critical of HB 746.

In a legislative report released June 2, the NCSA noted that one aspect of the new law would require that people applying for a concealed carry permit (permits would still be available for reasons that include helping along the process of purchasing a firearm) to have a current diagnosis or ongoing mental disorder to be denied a permit. As it stands now, the sheriff's office has access to any available mental health evaluations and mental health orders for applicants, and analyzes them before deciding if that applicant

can obtain a permit.

"This proposed change has the potential to allow individuals with serious mental illnesses who have not yet been diagnosed to be eligible for a concealed handgun permit," reads the NCSA report.

Christopher Kopp, a sergeant with the Charlotte Mecklenburg Police Department and owner of Lockdown International, for which he travels the country teaching classes related to gun safety in active shooter situations, explained why the law is viewed by many as being unsafe for police officers.

"For us to stop and frisk somebody, we have to have a legitimate fear that they're possibly carrying, that they're armed, and we have to articulate why we felt we had to pat them down," Kopp said. "Now, if it's legal to carry concealed, that takes away law enforcement's ability to what I would consider deescalate a situation. It can quickly turn a voluntary contact into a very dangerous situation."

Kopp, who spoke with Creative Loafing not as a representative of the CMPD but as a business owner familiar with gun safety, downplayed the effects of cancelling the permitting process, which includes safety training.

"Everybody goes through the training, but you only go through eight hours once every five years," Kopp said. "Think of the last eight-hour training session that you've gone to. Five years later, do you remember everything that was told to you? Even our current concealed policies that we have in the state are kind of subpar."

Kopp believes it's up to each gun owner to educate themselves on gun safety and to do it consistently.

"It really comes down to the individual themselves actively going out there and training themselves with it," he said. "If you're going to carry the gun, no matter if you go to get a [concealed carry permit] or you want to open carry it, you better know how to use it for safety purposes."

Carolina Sporting Arms offers the eight-hour classes currently required for someone to get a concealed carry permit, but store manager Donald Ingram isn't as concerned with the potential loss of revenue as he is with bolstering the rights of his customers.

"They're basically saying constitutionally you should have the right to carry a concealed weapon if you're legal to do so — permit or otherwise," Ingram said. "It allows you to do that without jumping through the hoops of the permit. So I'm OK with it, and most people in the industry are for it."

Ingram agreed with Kopp that the responsibility of educating one's self should fall on the individual, rather than the mandates of the government.

"Regardless of whether [HB 746] goes through or whether it's changed, in anything we all do, it's incumbent upon you as a participant to be as educated as you can about it," Ingram said.

"I guess you could say there's the potential of someone carrying without knowing the legal ins and outs — what they can and can't do — and if they don't take that responsibility, they'll pay the cost for violating the law."

It's still unclear whether HB 746 will pass through the Senate, and if it does, Gov. Roy Cooper may still shoot it down. Cooper has voiced mild concern with the bill, but has not stated whether he plans to veto it should it pass through the N.C. Senate.

Judging by the margin with which it passed through the House, it does not currently seem as if the bill could survive a veto. However, it's a safe assumption that if (or when) Republicans miss the mark on this one — as has been the case before — they'll only keep firing. (Creative Loafing, 6/14/17)

### **SEP 2017    Says Gun Violence Threatens Transgender Community**

a transgender woman.

The Charlotte-Mecklenburg Police Department won't comment on whether the death of a person it identified as Derrick Lee Banner – referred to by friends as Derricka – was a hate crime. The investigation continues.

"There has been no information or evidence gathered at this point of the investigation to indicate that Derrick Lee Banner was killed because of gender identity," police spokesman Robert Tufano said Thursday.

North **Carolina's** hate crime statute does not include sexual orientation or gender identity.

For a North **Carolina** case to be prosecuted as a hate crime, the federal government has to bring charges under the Matthew Shepard Act, named for a student who was tortured and murdered near Laramie, Wyo. Police departments can report suspected hate crimes to the FBI to investigate.

An FBI spokeswoman in Charlotte said Thursday that the agency is not involved in the investigation.

Banner, 26, of Lenoir, was found sitting in a vehicle on Rosetta Street, dead, as rain and wind from Hurricane Irma lashed Charlotte at 3 a.m. Tuesday. Banner was pronounced dead at the scene of an apparent gunshot wound.

Detectives charged Montavious Sanchez Berry, 18, late Tuesday with murder, armed robbery and shooting into an occupied vehicle, police said.

Tufano said Banner and Berry "had communicated on previous occasions." Homicide detectives ask that anyone with information about the incident call 704-432-8477 or call Crime Stoppers at 704-334-1600.

Friends said on Facebook that Derricka Banner was a transgender woman, and called the death one inspired by hate. Banner's obituary referred to Derrick "Ms. Bow Bow" Lee Banner. A family member didn't return a phone call Thursday.

Banner's killing was the 64th homicide in Charlotte this year.

The news site QNotes, which serves the **Carolinas**' lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender community, called it "the second murder of a trans woman of color in Charlotte this year."

A transgender woman named Brian Fitzgerald Sherrell Faulkner, 46, was found injured beside a garbage bin in Charlotte last Nov. 30. Faulkner died May 16 from injuries sustained in the attack, police said.

QNotes said Banner's death was the 20th known murder of a transgender person, mostly people of color, in the U.S. this year. At the time of Faulkner's death, Equality NC, the state's largest LGBTQ advocacy organization, said transgender people "are facing a national epidemic of violence."

Charlotte will host the North **Carolina** Trans Pride event Friday through Sunday.

The North **Carolina** chapter of Moms Demand Action for Gun Sense in America said Banner was at least the 21st transgender person killed in the U.S. this year.

"I am angry that yet again another black transwoman has become the victim of a heinous gun crime," **Christy Clark**, volunteer chapter leader, said in a statement. "My thoughts go out to Derricka's family and friends, as well as to the LGBTQ community in North **Carolina**. We can no longer afford to ignore just how much of a threat gun violence is to so many marginalized communities in our state, as well as our entire country. Public safety is a right that should be enjoyed by all Americans, and not just some." (CO, 9/14/17)

### **OCT 2017 Rips Congressmen Who Get NRA Help**

**Christy Clark** of Huntersville, who leads the state chapter of Moms Demand Action for Gun Sense in America, a group affiliated with Bloomberg, said she's confident that lawmakers "will take steps to reduce gun violence."

"We elect our members of Congress to serve their constituents and not the organization that wrote them the biggest paycheck," she said. (CO, 10/4/17)

### **OCT 2017 Attends Vigil For Vegas Shooting Victims**

Dozens gathered in uptown Friday night to remember the victims of Sunday's mass shooting in Las Vegas and to call on Congress to take action.

"My heart is with those people in Las Vegas because I know firsthand what kind of pain they're going through," said Sharon Risher.

Risher knows the devastation of losing family to tragedy.

Her mother and two cousins were gunned down at the Emanuel AME Church in Charleston when Dylan Roof opened fire on nine black parishioners.

Friday, she lit a candle for her family and for the 58 people she didn't know, who lost their lives in Las Vegas, in what's become the deadliest mass shooting in the United States.

Risher, along with Moms Demand Action, believes it is too easy for the wrong people to get guns.

"Ever since that time, I've been an advocate for common sense gun laws and we just hate that we have to have these vigils," she said.

While honoring those killed and the hundreds more injured, in what was supposed to be a fun night enjoying country music, many here are calling on Congress for change.

"Going to a concert, you're supposed to be out having fun in Las Vegas where you're meant to be celebrating and enjoying friends and family and to have their entire life changed by the bad decisions of one man," said Christy Clark, North Carolina Chapter Leader of Moms Demand Action. (NBC-36, 10/6/17)

## 2018

### **JAN 2018    Running For State House**

District 98 takes in north Charlotte suburbs and the Mecklenburg towns of Huntersville, Cornelius, and Davidson. It was Thom Tillis's old seat, and we know what happened to him.

Incumbent Republican: John R. Bradford III, a real estate investor and residential property manager, was first elected to public office in 2011 as a Cornelius town commissioner (again, following in Thom Tillis's footsteps). He's risen fast in the NC House Republican leadership, becoming right out of the gate the Freshmen Majority Whip. He's young and photogenic (think Dan Soucek, but with gainful employment.)

Democrat Christy Clarkis newly announced (just yesterday) and has not yet built out a campaign platform in social media, but she's on Twitter and has a Facebook page . Quoting from the latter, "I'm running for office because I care about North **Carolina** and her citizens. I want to bring my dedication and determination to the General Assembly to focus on what is essential -- economic growth, good paying jobs, supporting our public schools and teachers, and affordable healthcare." She appears to be one of those "super volunteers" that every community needs, always selflessly working for others. This campaign is going to be more of the same. (Watauga Watch Blog, 1/30/18)

### **FEB 2018    "Focused on Economic Growth"**

Here's are today's announced candidates:

Joe Fowler, HD 76, who's focused on cleaning up coal ash and GenX water pollution and investing in public education.

**Christy Clark**, HD 98, small business owner focused on economic growth, investing in public education, and affordable health care. [ChristyClarkNC.com](http://ChristyClarkNC.com)

Steve Buccini, HD 59, an electrical engineer running to "get our state legislature focused back on the right issues – not partisan games." [Stevenfornc.com](http://Stevenfornc.com)

Lowell Simon, HD 52, small business owner who "will fight for our fair share and bring a renewed focus on economic development in rural North **Carolina**." [simonfornc.house.com](http://simonfornc.house.com)

Dan Besse, HD 75, Winston-Salem City Council Member running to bring "a new set of priorities" to Raleigh. [Bessefornc.com](http://Bessefornc.com) (US Official News, 2/7/18)

### **FEB 2018      Could be Disqualified by District Changes**

Six months after that defining moment on the trails of Big Bend National Park, Senah Andrews remains busy navigating her new path toward Raleigh and the North **Carolina** General Assembly.

She's joined now not by an anonymous swarm, but by a growing community of support. Both she and LeGrand are active members of a Facebook messaging group they call "Women Taking Back the State."

The group offers members chances to share struggles and celebrate successes along their campaigns.

"The biggest common denominator is we're all doing this for the first time," said LeGrand. "There's a tremendous learning curve. We're all juggling family responsibilities, juggling jobs and running a campaign for the first time."

Recently, the group offered comfort to **Christy Clark**, who is running for N.C. House District 98. Impending district changes had the potential to disqualify her from the race.

She was already planning to find another woman to take her place and to shift her focus to campaign managing.

"Christy, please come manage us!" said Andrews in the chat. "We'll pay you, fight with you to win back the NCGA. Girl power!"

Clark is still in the running following the Supreme Court's rejection of the special master's redrawn districts in Mecklenburg and Wake counties. But the interchange illustrates one strength in the new wave of candidates: their heart for others.

"We are wired for relationships," said Young. "We build compromise. We try to jointly design so that we meet all interests. I think women have less competition and more collaboration in their approach."  
(Salisbury Post, 2/11/18)

### **APR 2018      Local Columnist Praises Clark, Organization**

When I heard about the shooting at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, Fla., where 17 students and teachers were killed Feb. 14, I thought of a joke.

Hear me out before you start typing angry emails to the newspaper.

The joke goes: A man prays to God to win the lottery. As weeks go by without the big win, he pleads angrily, "Why haven't I won?"

God responds in a booming voice: "My son, buy a lottery ticket!"

We can't continue to shake our heads, or shrug and offer thoughts and prayers and expect gun-related violence to stop. We have to take action ourselves. We have to buy a ticket, if you will.



My "ticket" was attending a Moms Demand Action for Gun Sense in America meeting March 13 in Charlotte.

Members of the non-partisan organization support the Second Amendment and believe common-sense legislative solutions can decrease the country's escalating epidemic of gun violence.

Apparently, I wasn't the only mom sick and tired of people being shot and killed in schools, churches, movie theaters, musical venues, on the streets and inside private homes by their domestic partners.

Moms Demand Action had moved the meeting from a smaller venue to the Triple C Brewing Company's Barrel Room (meeting coordinators knew how to draw us in, didn't they?) to accommodate the approximate 250 women -- and some men -- who attended.

This number was a dramatic increase from past monthly meetings where fewer than 20 people regularly attended, said Christy Clark, a former state and local chapter leader for the organization.

In fact, in the three weeks prior to the March meeting, 75,000 people joined Moms Demand Action nationwide with 15 new chapters popping up in just the metro Charlotte area, said Rebecca Trotsky, the organization's Charlotte chapter leader.

Similar to how Mothers Against Drunk Driving, or MADD, has influenced policy and changed our culture about drunk driving, Moms Demand Action seeks change from legislators, companies and educational institutions to help establish common-sense gun reform.

The organization supports more thorough gun background checks, keeping guns out of the hands of known domestic abusers and preventing people from carrying concealed guns in public without a concealed carry permit or across state lines.

Today, it seems we are at a pivotal moment in the movement against gun violence. Students, parents and reformists are marching for change.

When I go to public places, I'm tired of looking for the nearest exit and thinking how I would escape with my two school-aged children in case someone started shooting.

I worry about armed citizens with good intentions who may return fire during a shooting and hurt or kill my children in the crossfire.

And, lately, I worry that legislators will require teachers to arm themselves at school. My cousin Abby, a woman in her mid-20s, didn't become a teacher to fight to the death.

Believe me, she's not paid enough for that.

I worry that bullet-proof backpacks, lock-down drills and fortified doors and jambs will become the norm at school.

In Mooresville, parents at Coddle Creek Elementary School are currently raising funds to purchase 75 door barricade devices for \$200 each to use in the event of an active shooter or emergency.

I get it. Better to be prepared. But, I just can't believe it's come to this.

Ninety-six people are killed by gun violence each day in the U.S. with seven of these victims children or teenagers, according to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

I've had enough.

And so has Clark, who is running as a Democrat against N.C. Rep. John Bradford, a Republican, in House District 98, which includes North Mecklenburg County.

"Because I've been active in gun violence prevention for the past five years, I was able to see first hand how our legislature operated and to see the impact an advocate can have on the passage of laws," said Clark. "I decided to make the change from advocate to candidate after I saw how our GOP-led legislature had lost focus on what was really important to the citizens of our state like public schools, clean air and drinking water, healthcare, small business growth and gun violence."

So buy your ticket. Attend a meeting, run for office like Clark, donate your money, march in the streets for whatever cause you support.

But you have to do something. Buy your ticket. (Mooresville Tribune, Kate Stevens, 4/4/18)

## **APR 2018 Resume**

**Christy Clark (Democrat)**

Age: 46

Education: BA, English, Roanoke College ; Paralegal Certificate, Duke University

Professional experience: For the past 8 years, I have been working as a paralegal in corporate and intellectual property law. Previous to being a North **Carolina** Certified Paralegal, I worked in quality assurance in the field of transportation and logistics as well as manufacturing.

Previous public offices held: N/A

Family: Chris Clark - Husband; Grady, Hadley and Quincy Laas - children; Matthew Clark and Will Clark,- stepsons

Website: christyclarknc.com (CO, 4/17/18)

## **MAY 2018 Observer Endorsement in Primary**

District 98

Two Huntersville Democrats, **Christy Clark** and Branden Rosenlieb, are running for the chance to face incumbent Republican John Bradford in this district north of Charlotte.

Clark, a paralegal, and Rosenlieb, who works in the IT field, share similarly progressive views on most issues. Clark, however, is the more moderate and pragmatic of the two. (An example: Rosenlieb is a proponent of universal health care.)

Clark offers a strong familiarity with the General Assembly thanks to five years of work with gun violence prevention groups. Also, as a paralegal, Clark helps entrepreneurs and business owners launch their companies, giving her a keener insight into their challenges.

In this comfortably Republican district, a moderate Democrat has a better chance of unseating Bradford, and Clark boasts a stronger network of support. Democrats who want to gain a seat in the NC House should give her the nod. (CO, 5/1/18)

## **JUN 2018 Didn't Expect Gun Issues to Dominate**

Even though **Christy Clark** had been North **Carolina** director of a national gun control group, she didn't expect to talk much about gun issues when she began campaigning for the state House. Then a shooter opened fire at a high school in Parkland, Florida.

"When I started running I didn't think gun violence prevention would be at the forefront of my campaign," said the Huntersville Democrat. "But then the Parkland shooting really brought that issue to the top of people's minds."

After school shootings in Parkland and Santa Fe, Texas, Democrats appeared to have the momentum on gun issues. Polls began showing Americans more receptive to gun control. In Raleigh, Democratic lawmakers tried to introduce measures that would, among other things, extend the waiting period and raise the age to buy a gun.

Parkland students determined to fight for gun reform Tanzil Philip, a sophomore at Marjory Stoneman Douglas high school, vocalizes his frustration with the lack of discussion around introducing new gun control legislation, days after the Parkland mass shooting.

But North **Carolina** Republicans aren't about to cede the high ground.

In the legislature they've pushed their own measures to bolster school safety. And they frame gun control efforts as a challenge to Americans' constitutional rights. At their convention in Hickory on Saturday, they're even planning a "Second Amendment Gala."

"We need to . . . remind people of our history," said U.S. Rep. Ted Budd, a gun store owner and a keynote speaker at the gala. "When guns are removed from good people's hands, the criminals hang on to theirs' and crime goes up. Guns are the great equalizer."

NC gun shop owner: Obama gun laws will hurt law abiding gun owners Ed Nicely, owner of Ed's Gun Shop in Vass, N.C., describes what it takes to purchase a handgun or a long gun in North **Carolina**.

Both sides of the gun debate expect it to be a factor this fall. And each sees it as a way to galvanize their base.

Democrats were encouraged by the response of Parkland students, who not only mounted a national "March for Our Lives" but successfully pushed for changes in Florida law.

"I think all of us thought that the Parkland kids' response was going to give added momentum to this issue," said Rep. Pricey Harrison, a Greensboro Democrat who supports gun control measures.

A February poll for Progress NC Action, a liberal group, found that 84 percent of N.C. voters supported stronger background checks to prevent people with a history of domestic violence or mental illness from buying a gun. Sixty-percent favored a ban on "bump stocks," the devices that make a semi-automatic gun fire like a fully automatic weapon.

But Republicans found another way to frame the issue.

"Ask voters if they want their constitutional rights infringed upon," said Chris Turner, Mecklenburg County's GOP chairman. "The answer is 'No.'"

Tenth District GOP Chair Brad Overcash said blaming school shootings on guns is as misplaced as blaming trucks for terrorist attacks that mow people down on sidewalks.

"Attempts by the left to conflate the two are one, disingenuous, and two, a political tactic to fire up the left," he said.

1zxyj.S0.156.jpeg David B. McLennan is a political scientist at Meredith College .

David McLennan, a political scientist at Raleigh's Meredith College , said guns are a cultural issue for many voters.

"I think this is an attempt to get the cultural issues going so Republicans come out (to vote)," said McLennan. "It's all part of trying to gin up the Republican base. History tells us that cultural issues can be very effective for Republicans. It's a strategy that Republicans have used on a range of cultural issues."

Along with their defense of gun rights, Republicans plan to tout other steps they've taken in the name of school safety.

See why this lawmaker wants teachers to carry guns to school NC Rep. Larry Pittman says he wants teachers who have concealed carry permits and special training to carry weapons to school on a volunteer basis to head off school shooting incidents.

In Raleigh lawmakers have focused on building-safety upgrades, school resource officer training and mental health funding. Those were among recommendations made by a House study committee formed in response to the Parkland school shooting.

And in Washington Congress passed the STOP School Violence Act. Among other things it improves reporting systems for threats and includes training for students, teachers and law enforcement on preventing school violence. It put aside \$1.2 billion for programs that Republicans say might have prevented Florida authorities from missing signals about accused Parkland shooter Nikolas Cruz.

Clark, who faces Republican Rep. John Bradford in their north Mecklenburg district, said while supporting the Second Amendment is important, such policies are not the solution to gun violence.

Rally against gun violence

About 60 people, including Rep. Kelly Alexander and Charlotte mayor, Jennifer Roberts, gathered in Romare Bearden Park for a rally in remembrance of the Sandy Hook killings and to speak out against gun violence on Saturday, Dec. 12, 2015. The grou

”To put the focus on the Second Amendment and guns without thought to survivors is a little tone deaf,” said Clark, former state leader of Moms Demand Action for Gun Sense in America. “Parents ... are really worried about their children being shot and killed at school. And that there hasn’t been any action taken by Congress or the General Assembly to make schools safer.”

Budd agrees — to a point.

”Whether you’re opposed to gun rights or pro-Second Amendment we all share the same thing in common,” said the father of three. “We’re parents. Our ultimate ends are very much the same. We want our kids to be safe.” (CO, 6/7/18)

**JUL 2018    Outraising Bradford Extensively**

\* HD 98: Christy Clark (\$33,433 Q1) John Bradford (\$6,075 Q1) (Press Release, 7/10/18)

.....  
House District 98, Thom Tillis's old seat in north Mecklenburg County, now held by Republican incumbent John Bradford, spunky Democrat Christy Clark has outraised Bradford in combined First and Second Quarters \$70,890.47 to \$17,165.62. Democrat Christy Clark currently works as an intellectual property and business law paralegal at the law firm founded by her husband[2] in Charlotte. She received her undergraduate degree in English at Roanoke College and her Certificate in Paralegal Studies from Duke University. She's been particularly involved with gun violence prevention, serving as the North Carolina Chapter Leader of Moms Demand Action. In that role, she says[3], she has spent many hours

lobbying lawmakers in Raleigh, attending both committee meetings and House/Senate sessions. As a paralegal she's very familiar with the Secretary of State's office and is well informed on what's required for entrepreneurship in North Carolina. "Working with a wide range of individuals and businesses from all across the state has given me the insight into what is needed to grow a business." She lists education at the top of her issues page[4] (as do 99.9% of the Democrats running in North Carolina this year), and she's for expanding Medicaid under the Affordable Care Act (as are ditto). Her campaign is organizing neighborhood canvasses (sometimes in 90-degree heat), which speaks volumes about energy in that district. Not to forget the fundraising. (Watauga Watch, 7/19/18)

## **AUG 2018 Importance of Toll Lane Issue**

Opponents of the privately built toll lanes on Interstate 77 scheduled to open at the end of this year were [left frustrated and disappointed last week](#) after the state transportation secretary recommended improvements while cautioning it could be several years or more before those changes are funded and finished. Oddly enough, those same critics also came away with a sense of optimism.

John Hettwer, who represents the Lake Norman Chamber of Commerce on a state-appointed I-77 toll lanes advisory group, put it bluntly in an interview with CBJ this week.

He seized on a slide in the presentation by NCDOT chief Jim Trogdon. The slide, in large letters, stated, "Main Objective: Ultimately, the State of North **Carolina** will Operate this Facility."

That, Hettwer said, represents a major shift in perspective from NCDOT and state government. Hettwer summed up the state's endorsement of ultimately ending the contract by telling me, "I feel pretty good. Everybody is saying this thing's a pile of (expletive)."

Trogdon told reporters after the meeting last week that the state hopes to begin negotiations soon with I-77 Mobility Partners, the spinoff of Spanish infrastructure firm Cintra in charge of building the toll lanes. Recommendations include spending an estimated \$550 million to \$800 million to convert one of two toll lanes on each side along a portion of the route for general use (i.e., no tolls) and add a free additional lane on each side along the northernmost stretch. Those changes would likely not be ready before 2025.

More immediate changes backed by the NCDOT include caps on toll rates, discounts for frequent users and converting shoulders on each side of the highway for traffic during peak travel times.

Expect plenty of debate ahead over the toll lanes.

On Wednesday night in Huntersville, area business leaders will be briefed by Hettwer and others immersed in the subject. They're anything but neutral: A meeting notice this week included the headline, "The Economic Toll of a Fifty Year Blunder."

Hettwer and Kurt Naas, a Cornelius town councilman [who founded the grassroots website Widen I-77](#) several years ago in opposition to the Cintra contract, both pointed to Trogdon's willingness to listen as a significant change. Trogdon has attended seven of the eight advisory group meetings and has promised to keep pursuing improvements in the months ahead. He plans to update the advisory group early in 2019 as part of the next advisory group meeting at Lake Norman.

Gov. Roy Cooper, a first-term Democrat, [has called the I-77 contract a bad one](#) that should be canceled. Then-Gov. Pat McCrory, a Republican, was in office when the state negotiated the contract.

Controversy over the toll lanes became a subplot in the 2016 governor's campaign and McCrory saw his vote totals in the Republican red North Meck-South Iredell corridor [decline by 21% compared with his 2012 election](#). Cooper beat McCrory by 10,000 votes out of 4.7 million cast in a state where GOP presidential nominee Donald Trump, at the top of the ticket, defeated Democrat Hillary Clinton by 173,000 votes.

McCrory, a former **Charlotte** mayor, said then and has continued to assert that Cooper, then the attorney general, could have voiced concerns during routine contract approval and review of the Cintra contract. Such reviews by the attorney general's office are for legal soundness, not policy recommendations.

Regional transportation governing bodies approved the toll lanes agreement, McCrory and other supporters, including the **Charlotte** Chamber, have reminded people. They also note that relying on state funding to expand 77 and avoid tolls would have delayed construction by a decade or more.

For now, the I-77 project is the only toll expansion in the state being privately built and privately run; the N.C. Turnpike Authority operates the 19-mile Triangle Expressway in Raleigh-Durham and will run the 20-mile Monroe Expressway connecting **Mecklenburg** and Union counties scheduled to open later this year. Those projects, as well as future toll lanes planned elsewhere in the **Charlotte** region, have enjoyed much greater acceptance because they will be state-run. I-77 is still owned by the state, but Cintra/I-77 Mobility Partners has exclusive operating rights under the current agreement.

Naas, an advisory board member, sees cause for optimism despite his frustration over NCDOT lacking any options to pay for improvements beyond the highly competitive roads-funding process, known as the Strategic Transportation Investments law, or STI.

During the past year, Cooper's administration hired an outside consultant to study options for improving the toll lanes contract, created the advisory group that has included constant participation by the transportation secretary, and, most recently, declared canceling the contract as the state's desired outcome. Naas, who is a Republican, said those circumstances stand in contrast to the state's views when the contract was first signed during the McCrory administration.

In 2014, I-77 Mobility Partners and the state completed a deal committing the private company to build and pay for [\\$650 million worth of additional lanes](#) stretching from exit 11 just north of uptown and ending at exit 36 in Mooresville. Construction started in 2015 and the additional lanes are scheduled to open at the end of this year.

From exit 11 to exit 28, an existing high-occupancy vehicle lane on each side will become a toll lane, with a newly built toll lane next to the former HOV lane going north and south. Between exit 28 and 36, a single toll lane will be added on each side. I-77 Mobility Partners will guarantee drivers in toll lanes an average speed of 45 miles per hour.

In exchange for paying for the majority of construction - with the exception of \$90 million provided by taxpayers - I-77 Mobility Partners received a 50-year contract to become the exclusive operator of the toll lanes. Rates will be determined later this year in a public hearing.

I-77 Mobility Partners has not been invited to attend or participate in the advisory group meetings, which started in January. Trogon told me last week the private contractor wasn't included because "this is really about what is the policy, what is the strategy. Cintra's our contractor and the developer, they're not in the transportation policy business."

Jean Leier, an I-77 Mobility spokesperson, offered only a prepared statement on potential contract changes. It said, "This public private partnership provides the opportunity to work closely with NCDOT, which has allowed us to make

real-time changes to the design and construction scope, including significant roadway improvements for motorists on the I-77 corridor between **Charlotte** and Mooresville. We will continue to collaborate with our partner on decisions for the project that are mutually beneficial for both parties."

Residents, politicians and business owners in North **Mecklenburg** and Southern Iredell counties have spent the past several years seeking changes to the existing contract or a buyout by the state, hoping to reduce the number of toll lanes or do away with them altogether.

Trogdon, the head of NCDOT, told the advisory group that buying out the contract is the ultimate goal but said there is no timetable for achieving it.

A state-funded outside analysis of the contract last year estimated a price tag of \$392 million to \$623 million to buy back the toll rights once construction is finished. To date, the legislature has shown no inclination to pay for a buyout, leaving only the highly competitive state roads funding formula as an option - and a distant one at that.

**Mecklenburg** Republicans Jeff Tarte in the Senate and John Bradford in the House pitched buyout bills in the most recent session of the General Assembly, but lawmakers eventually killed off both pieces of legislation.

"If I live in Ashe County or Macon County or Halifax County, I don't care," former state Rep. Charlie Jeter (R-**Mecklenburg**) told me. Jeter, now the lobbyist at **Charlotte-Mecklenburg** Schools, said, "Let's for all intents and purposes say that everyone agrees this is a bad project and contract. How do you get out of it? It's a legally binding contract and the only way to get out of it is to give Cintra a ton of money."

The only way Jeter believes anything will change is if "Santa Claus comes down someone's chimney in Lake Norman with \$400 million."

Here is where the arguments, political and otherwise, heat up. Tarte, who is in what is anticipated to be a close race against Democratic challenger Natasha Marcus, dismissed the notion that Cintra and I-77 Mobility Partners retain all of the leverage in any discussion about making contract changes. Trogdon himself, when asked by a **Charlotte** reporter last week what would happen if Cintra declines to consider changes, took a lengthy pause before answering, "We'll keep working."

Before he entered state politics in 2012, Tarte worked at Ernst & Young and later started his own business consulting firm. This week, he referred to those experiences as reason to put him in charge of negotiating a contract buyout with Cintra.

"I've negotiated more, larger contracts than (Gov. Cooper) has - I did it for 40 years," Tarte told me. "I did that while he was sitting in the legislature."

If Cintra and I-77 Mobility are reluctant to negotiate, the state should begin an assessment of the toll lanes and start tallying up what Tarte believes to be a litany of problematic construction standards. NCDOT has praised progress on the project and last week reiterated their belief it will be finished by the end of this year.

"We strive every day to uphold the highest standards in all aspects of the project," said Leier, the I-77 Mobility Partners spokesperson. "We have multiple internal checks on construction, including inspectors in the field that work alongside NCDOT inspectors. NCDOT review is an important part of the construction process that allows us to ensure that the project meets or exceeds the department's standards."

"I'd take it to the nth degree," Tarte said of conducting quality assessments. The strategy, Tarte added, would be, "We're going to make them very uncomfortable."



On Aug. 17, two days after the presentation by Trogon at the Lake Norman Chamber of Commerce, a spokesman for Cooper issued a lengthy rebuttal to Tarte's previously quashed proposal (one the senator hopes to revive) to pay up to \$620 million to cancel the contract by using DOT money designated for other state or local road projects in the region.

According to Cooper's statement, Tarte's plan could put at risk 30 projects with a combined cost of \$1.4 billion in Mecklenburg and Iredell counties. The projects would also be forced to start anew in the data-driven scoring system that prioritizes roads funding, meaning the potential delays could go well beyond five years.

"North Carolinians should understand the stakes and potential consequences of Senator Tarte's reckless actions and political games," the administration concluded. " ... Senator Tarte should work with legislators, DOT and the Cooper administration to hold Cintra accountable, improve this contract and ultimately ensure that the state operates this project."

Marcus, the Democrat challenging Tarte, told me her opponent is part of the Republican super-majority in the General Assembly and, because of that, has already had ample opportunity to fix the Cintra contract. Instead, she said, the legislature this year tied the governor's hands by requiring 60 days' notice and asserting its authority as the final arbiter for any funding used to amend or cancel the toll lanes agreement.

Of Tarte, Marcus said, "My opponent claims he has secured funding, but he has not. I see a lot of political posturing."

Another Democrat trying to unseat an incumbent Republican state lawmaker along the I-77 corridor is Christy Clark, who is running against Bradford, the GOP House member whose attempted toll lanes fix failed to win support in the Senate, thereby ending its chances.

Clark told me that, after public school funding, toll lanes rank among the most important issues to voters in the House district. Voters tell her they don't like the 50-year contract term and they don't like the fact that I-77 Mobility Partners is a foreign-owned company. Asked how the contract stalemate can be resolved, Clark said it will take sustained pressure from the public to force the General Assembly to take action and find outside funding to end the agreement. (Charlotte Business Journal, 8/22/18)

## SEP 2018 I-77 Issue in Campaign

Democrat Christy Clark likes to talk about issues such as education and health care. But for a lot of voters in her north Mecklenburg district, there's only one issue that matters.

Interstate 77.

"Since they dammed the Catawba River (in 1963), this is the biggest issue facing north Mecklenburg and south Iredell," said Bill Russell, president of the Lake Norman Chamber of Commerce.

Clark is challenging Republican Rep. John Bradford, who's running for a third term in House District 98. Although the district leans Republican, it's one of a handful of unusually competitive seats in Mecklenburg County.

Clark, 47, is a paralegal from Huntersville who has been active in pushing for changes in gun laws. As former state director for Moms Demand Action for Gun Sense in America, a group that advocates

"common-sense" gun laws, she has worked the halls of the General Assembly and lobbied lawmakers from both parties.

"I saw first hand how citizen's voices could impact the legislative process and decided to move from advocate to candidate," she says on her website.

Bradford, 44, is a businessman and former town commissioner from Cornelius. He chairs the committee on regulatory reform and supported efforts to cut regulations. As deputy majority whip, he's backed GOP measures on taxes and education. He had an A rating from the National Rifle Association in 2016.

Bradford also has tried to end the \$650 million contract with a subsidiary of Cintra, a Spanish firm, that is building toll lanes on I-77.

In 2016, the House overwhelmingly passed a bill that he co-sponsored to cancel the contract with the private company. The bill died in the Senate. This year he introduced an amendment that would have earmarked \$300 million to buy out the contract and repay the money with toll revenues. It passed the House and the Senate but got stuck in a conference committee.

Along with Charlotte Democratic Rep. Chaz Beasley, he also introduced a bill to end the contract in 2017.

"I have worked relentlessly in the House to try to navigate the complexities of this," Bradford said in an interview.

There's little doubt that voters care about the issue. Even though Republican Donald Trump carried the district by nearly 9 percentage points in 2016, Democrat Roy Cooper narrowly defeated GOP Gov. Pat McCrory largely on the strength of the anti-toll vote.

But Cooper has faced criticism himself over the project. Last month his transportation secretary recommended ways to make the highway more driver-friendly but stopped short of offering to buy out the private contract.

"It just seems to me the governor needs to be held accountable just like McCrory was held accountable," Bradford said.

Clark criticized the contract and said "rarely have I seen a deal as one-sided as this."

On her website, she said, "Our current elected officials had multiple opportunities to resolve this issue but they have refused to fix the problem by either canceling the contract or appropriating the money needed so the state can take over."

In an interview, she said, "It's not productive to point fingers. The answer is to work together to find solutions."

Clark said she opposed last summer's House Bill 514 that authorized four Mecklenburg towns to operate their own charter schools. Bradford supported it. But both say they oppose the response of Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools, which passed a measure to block future school construction in those towns unless they pass a binding resolution not to pursue town charter schools. This month, two of the towns -- Huntersville and Cornelius -- voted to do just that.

Bradford said CMS "effectively red-lined" the four towns included in HB 514. Clark said CMS "instigated conflict" with its response.

"I would rather see everybody come in a room" and work it out, she said.

Bradford has tried to do just that, and not only with I-77.

In 2017 he co-sponsored a bill to repeal House Bill 2, the so-called "bathroom bill" that overturned a *Charlotte* ordinance that extended anti-discrimination protections to the LGBT community. He brought business leaders from across the state to the General Assembly to show support for a compromise that ended up going nowhere.

That same year he tried to act as middleman in a legislative dispute between craft brewers and beer wholesalers.

Beasley, whose district abuts Bradford's, said Democrats are energized and mad at the GOP-controlled legislature. "Even though this seat trends red, Christy has a decent shot at winning," he said.

But Cornelius Commissioner Denis Bilodeau said he's confident voters will return Bradford.

"He's someone you can count on to be involved," Bilodeau said. "He can get things done."

Jim Morrill, 704-358-5059; @jimmorrill

John Bradford

Age: 44.

Education: Executive MBA, University of Memphis, 2000; B.S. in Engineering, Clemson University, 1996.

Professional experience: Real estate management.

Political resume: N.C. House, 2015-present; Cornelius commissioner, two terms.

Family: Wife, Shea; four children.

Website: [electbradford.com/](http://electbradford.com/)

### *Christy Clark*

Age: 47.

Education: BA Roanoke College; Paralegal Certificate, Duke University.

Professional experience: Paralegal.

Political resume: First-time candidate.

Family: Husband, Chris, five children. (CO, 9/18/18)

## **OCT 2018    Observer Endorsement**

House 98

If Republicans want to maintain their House supermajority, they must hold on to this conservative north Mecklenburg district, where incumbent Republican John Bradford faces a serious challenge from Democrat Christy Clark. We recommend Clark.

Bradford faces the ire of some in the anti-I-77 tolls crowd who believe his early support for a private toll lanes contract matters more than the opposition he has since voiced. Just as important: Bradford was a co-sponsor of HB2, a discriminatory law that did great damage to North Carolina's reputation before the legislature crafted a replacement.

Clark, a Huntersville paralegal, knows her way around the General Assembly thanks to five years of work with gun violence prevention groups. She's a moderate Democrat who has helped entrepreneurs and small business owners launch their companies. She'll represent all of her district. (CO, 10/22/18)

## **NOV 2018    Democrat Fundraising Advantage**

New reports show the state Democratic Party has raised \$14 million this cycle. The state GOP has raised \$8.7 million while the Republicans' Senate Majority Fund has raised \$3.4 million.

The fundraising is one reason Democrats are hopeful that they can break the Republican super-majorities in the N.C. House and Senate. That would give Democratic Gov. Roy Cooper more clout by making it harder for Republicans to override his vetoes. Democrats have to flip four seats in the House and six in the Senate to break those majorities.

Party spokesman Robert Howard calls the fundraising "a sign of enthusiasm."

"It's also a sign that there is something larger brewing in the electorate," he said.

Democrats now have raised more money than Republican incumbent legislators in at least 26 districts.

GOP candidates had a cash advantage in some competitive rural districts, the Insider reported Wednesday.

The money allows Democratic candidates to be more competitive in districts that otherwise tend to vote Republican. Hunt, for example, has outspent Brawley 8-1 on broadcast ads alone, according to WRAL's political ad tracker.

The statewide fundraising has translated into individual races:

Hunt, the daughter of former Gov. Jim Hunt, has raised nearly \$1.3 million in House District 103.

Brawley, who co-chairs the influential House Finance Committee, has raised \$410,000.

In north Mecklenburg's House District 98, Democrat Christy Clark has raised \$796,000 to Republican Rep. John Bradford's \$167,000. (CO, 11/1/18)

## **NOV 2018 Narrow Win**

House District 98

John R. Bradford III, R 49.58%

Christy Clark, D 50.42% (CO, 11/6/18)

## **NOV 2018 Money Made the Difference**

It should have been a district where a Republican would win easily.

It's the northern tip of **Mecklenburg** County where, in 2016, Republican Rep. John Bradford easily defeated an unaffiliated candidate -- Democrats didn't even challenge him -- and Donald Trump won with 51 percent of the votes to Hillary Clinton's 43 percent in the area that would become Bradford's 2018 district.

Instead Democrat **Christy Clark**, a first-time candidate and advocate for laws to protect people from gun violence, won Tuesday. Her victory helped Democrats end the Republican supermajority in the House. Republicans can no longer marginalize Democratic Gov. Roy Cooper on most issues because they won't have enough votes to easily overturn his vetoes.

Voters in the state's largest counties of **Mecklenburg** and Wake replaced Republicans with Democrats up and down the ballot in a wave that also swept out three incumbent Republican county commissioners in **Mecklenburg** and a longtime Republican sheriff in Wake.

Asked what made the difference in this year's races, GOP consultant Larry Shaheen said, "That's easy - money."

In the state House races, Democrats in the closely contested races had significant financial advantages.

Clark, a paralegal from Huntersville, outspent Bradford, founder and CEO of a real estate and property management company from Cornelius, by nearly 5-to-1. She got \$653,000 from the state Democratic Party.

She beat Bradford by 333 votes in unofficial returns.

It was a pattern in House races in the Wake and **Mecklenburg** suburbs where Republicans lost. Republicans were running in districts built to give them a partisan edge. They faced a wall of money and resources from the state Democratic Party that was part of an effort called Break the Majority. Cooper used his own donors and databases to help the effort raise about \$7 million.

"They got away with it because the governor was able to put half a million dollars into **Christy Clark**'s campaign and the Republican Party didn't have the resources to compete," Shaheen said.

Bradford could not be reached.

In an interview, Clark said the ads were important because they helped introduce her to voters. Television was part of a larger campaign that involved weeks of door-knocking and other voter contacts, she said.

One ad tied Bradford to a local controversy, I-77 toll lanes.

"Break the Majority ran an incredible field game. I got support from Moms Demand Action," Clark said. She is a former volunteer leader of the state chapter of Moms Demand Action for Gun Sense in America.

"We got out the vote and contacted thousands and thousands of voters in this district," Clark said.

Clark began volunteering after the 2012 shooting at Sandy Hook Elementary School, where 20 children and six staff members were shot and killed.

"My youngest child was in first grade at the time," she said. "I could envision that being my child very easily."

Clark has spent time in Raleigh talking to legislators about gun violence.

The issue didn't come up in the campaign, Clark said, though she saw a mailer that referred to her as a radical protester.

"I don't think they landed in the way they thought they were going to," she said. "People have met me and know the difference." (RNO, 11/9/18)

### **NOV 2018 CNN Interview on Gun Control**

[07:42:12] PAUL: 42 minutes past the hour. Two mass shootings in just two weeks. And now, there are families of those victims of the Thousand Oaks massacre who want tougher gun control. All of this is happening while there's this new CDC study that is out now, finding that gun-related deaths are on the rise in the U.S.

North Carolina District 98 State House Representative Christy Clark, with us now. She's one of the Moms Demand Action volunteers. And she won, was elected to office just this week. Congratulations. I need to say to you, as well.

And also with us, a reporter for ProPublica, Lois Beckett. Lois, good to have you here, also. Lois, by the way, was on the scene for the March for Our Lives.

Christy, I want to reference article in The New York in The New Yorker. It was back in March 2018 after Parkland. And here's what they said then. They said, "Is this the moment when the politics of guns shift? This moment does feel different, largely because the teenage survivors of the Parkland shooting have commanded the national stage with their raw and righteous indignation."

This is when they thought things were going to change. Let's fast forward to just the last three weeks. October 24th, two people die at a shooting at a Kroger in Kentucky. October 27th, three days later, 11 people die in Pennsylvania at a synagogue. On November 2nd, two people died in a Florida yoga studio shooting. And then, just this week, November 8, 12 people are dead in California because of the Borderline Bar shooting.

That's 27 people in three weeks. I know that its leader of the North Carolina chapter of Moms Demand Action. You were talking to a lot of legislators at the time. Now that you are one, how do you argue differently to have a different consequence for this now?

REP. CHRISTY CLARK (D), NORTH CAROLINA: Well, you know, gun violence has become a public health crisis. And so, when we're at the legislative table, we have to remember these are real lives and real people being impacted, and that it's on us as representative to do every single thing we can do to stop gun violence.

We need to keep our children and family safe and their communities. And that means making significant changes to our laws that can keep them away from the people who are a danger to themselves and to others.

PAUL: But how do you argue that differently that argument has been made? Nothing has been changed since March of 2018 with Parkland. And then, we're seeing all of this. As a legislator, can you do anything differently?

CLARK: What we can do is bring in the survivors of gun violence and have them testify on what it's like to lose a family member, or be personally impacted by gun violence. And because I'm connected to them through my experience with Moms Demand Action, they will be at the forefront of the conversation when I am in the legislature. And it is imperative that we do something about gun violence in this state, and around the country. (CNN, 11/10/18)

### **NOV 2018 Wins Final Margin of 415 Votes**

After the final ballots were counted, Democrat Christy Clark saw her lead grow over Republican Rep. John Bradford. Clark, who led by 333 votes on election night, increased her margin to 415 votes. The total appeared to put the race outside the 1 percent margin for a recount, with Clark leading by 50.52 percent of votes cast vs. 49.48 percent for Bradford.

"Now that all the votes have been counted, I would like to thank John Bradford for his commitment to public service and his work on behalf of this district and the state of North Carolina," Clark said in a statement. (CO, 11/15/18)

### **DEC 2018 Mobilized by Anti-Gun Group**

Moms Demand Action volunteers also boosted Christy Clark, a mother stirred to advocacy by school shootings who won a North Carolina state House seat north of Charlotte that Republicans had held for 18 years. Clark attributes that history in part to gerrymandering.

Clark started to think about running for office when her state legislators kept rescheduling hearings on a spate of guns rights bills, which she viewed as an attempt to shut out Moms Demand Action volunteers. But as a stay-at-home mom with a relatively flexible schedule, she was often able to stick around until the meeting occurred.

"I had this misconception that politicians wanted to hear from their constituents," said Clark, who also ran on expanding Medicaid and increasing funding for education.

"One of the most important things Moms Demand Action did was to provide training for volunteers — everything from letters to the editor to speaking to the media to understanding legislation to phone banking — everything you need to run a campaign," Clark said. "Running an issue-based campaign [for gun safety] translated pretty easily to campaigning for office." (Roll Call, 12/14/18)

## 2019

### **FEB 2019 Failed to List Campaign Donors**

N.C. Rep. Christy Clark failed to properly list some of her campaign donors on her latest disclosure report, prompting the N.C. Republican Party to file a complaint with the state elections board.

Clark, a Huntersville Democrat who unseated Republican Rep. John Bradford last year, did not list the names of numerous donors who'd given more than \$50 — a disclosure that's required by law. Instead, those contributions are listed under "aggregated individual contributions," a category that can only be used for donors who give less than \$50.

The complaint, signed by Robert Diamond, a leader of the Mecklenburg County GOP, says Clark "failed to disclose more than \$15,000 in aggregated individual contributions from at least 87 individuals." The complaint also calls on the state board to investigate what Diamond calls "suspicious donations," in which Clark is listed as receiving more than 260 donations of just \$1 in a single day.

Clark issued a statement Monday saying her campaign is working to correct the report.

"Issues with our campaign finance software resulted in reporting errors, which we are currently fixing," she said in an email.

Complaints to the state elections board typically trigger an audit of a campaign committee, and campaign treasurers are given an opportunity to correct reporting errors and forfeit illegal contributions. (RNO, 2/13/19)

### **FEB 2019 Pushing Gun Control Bills**

Gun-control advocates in the North Carolina legislature are pressing again for weapon restrictions they say will reduce the risk of mass shootings and other firearm violence.

Several House Democrats filed omnibus gun-safety legislation on Thursday, the one-year anniversary of the school shootings in Parkland, Florida, that left 17 people dead.

The measure would require background checks for all gun sales, beef up the safe-storage law and raise the age to own assault-style weapons to 21. It would also ban high-capacity magazines and let local governments set their own gun regulations.

First-term Democratic Rep. Christy Clark of Mecklenburg County says the bill is a first step toward addressing gun violence she calls a "public health crisis." Republicans leading the General Assembly have passed laws this decade actually loosening some gun laws. (AP, 2/14/19)



## **FEB 2019     Wilson Times Denounces Clark Gun Bill**

Under the guise of preventing mass shootings, North Carolina lawmakers tried to chip away at the Second Amendment this week.

State Rep. Christy Clark, D-Mecklenburg, called a Thursday press conference at the General Assembly to introduce the Gun Violence Prevention Act, a grab bag of restrictions on gun rights that range from the ineffectual to the unconstitutional.

Among other provisions, the bill would require all gun owners to purchase firearm liability insurance, ban the sale or possession of bump stocks and trigger cranks, raise the age to purchase so-called assault weapons from 18 to 21 and require permits for the purchase of long guns in addition to handguns.

Insurers could pay damages to victims of accidental shootings and may also pay legal costs for insured gun owners who fire a weapon in presumed self-defense and face criminal prosecution or lawsuits. Some gun owners choose to buy insurance for their own peace of mind, and the National Rifle Association partners with an insurer to sell NRA-branded policies.

Proponents compare firearm insurance to car insurance, which is already a requirement here and in most states. But operating a motor vehicle on public roads is considered a privilege, while keeping and bearing arms is a constitutional right. Government can and already does impose more restrictions on driving than owning a gun.

Also known as House Bill 86, the Gun Violence Prevention Act would mandate a minimum of \$100,000 in liability coverage. Premiums are far cheaper than those for car insurance, but they would disproportionately pinch low-income gun owners who may live in crime-prone neighborhoods and have the greatest need to own a firearm for home defense.

”Insurance policies cover accidents, not intentional crimes, and criminals with illegal guns will just evade the requirement,” David B. Rifkin Jr. and Andrew M. Grossman wrote in a 2013 Wall Street Journal op-ed. “The real purpose is to make guns less affordable for law-abiding citizens and thereby reduce private gun ownership. Identical constitutionally suspect logic explains proposals to tax the sale of bullets at excessive rates.”

There’s also the quandary of risk compensation -- just as studies show seat belts and anti-lock brakes make the average driver more aggressive, gun owners might feel their trigger fingers grow itchier if they believe insurance will lessen the consequences of an accidental or wrongful shooting. Requiring every gun owner to be insured may actually increase danger.

As for banning bump stocks, the Trump administration already issued a federal regulation that makes them illegal beginning next month. Several states have passed redundant laws. Apart from outlawing the sale of new devices, making them illegal to possess is problematic. Few owners have voluntarily turned in their bump stocks. Will federal agents ferret out the accessories and confiscate them by force?

Courts have deemed pistol purchase permit requirements to be lawful. It remains to be seen whether imposing similar restrictions on the sale of ordinary hunting rifles would survive Second Amendment

scrutiny. As with handguns, criminals who want long guns will simply steal them or buy them on the black market.

Clark is a freshman legislator who previously served as state director for the gun control group Moms Demand Action. Joining her as primary sponsors are Reps. Marcia Morey of Durham County, Pricey Harrison of Guilford County and Shelly Willingham of Edgecombe County.

On its filing date, the bill had a total of 12 sponsors, all Democrats. The presence of House Democratic whip Deb Butler's name on the legislation could signal it has party leaders' backing.

Many North Carolinians -- and indeed, most gun owners -- are sympathetic to reasonable reforms such as enhanced background checks, but this bill is no common-sense compromise. The insurance requirement is a gargantuan government power grab that misfires on curbing gun violence and instead takes aim at law-abiding Tar Heels.

Fortunately, its chances in the Republican-controlled General Assembly are nil. That should give little comfort to the many Democrats who own guns for hunting and home protection and would rightly bristle at an insurance mandate.

The House Democratic Caucus and N.C. Democratic Party must abandon this paternalistic push. Claiming to represent the disadvantaged can't be reconciled with a bill that would make poor people pay a premium in order to lawfully own a gun. Don't they deserve to feed their families through hunting and keep handguns to defend those families from intruders?

As the sad legacy of poll taxes taught us, putting a price tag on the exercise of a constitutional right is always wrong. (Wilson Times, 2/17/19)

### **FEB 2019      Wants Hearings on Duke Energy Long Range Plans**

Nine Mecklenburg Democrats in the N.C. General Assembly are calling on state regulators to hold additional hearings, including one with expert testimony, on the long-range plans for North Carolina's three largest electric utilities.

The seven House members and two senators want the N.C. Utilities Commission to hold a hearing in Charlotte allowing the public to comment on the 15-year-old plans of Duke Energy Carolinas, Duke Energy Progress and Dominion Energy North Carolina for new plant construction and for building out new smart grid technology.

"Further, we would ask that ... (an) official evidentiary hearing on the three (Integrated Resource Plans) be held," the letter sent to the commission last week says. "Like ratepayer's input, expert testimony relative to planned capacity mix and resource options is critical."

The commission has held one hearing already on Feb. 4 in Raleigh, allowing for public comment on the plans. But the legislators say that a second meeting should be held in western North Carolina. The letter is

signed by Reps. John Autry, Kelly Alexander, Mary Belk, Christy Clark, Wesley Harris, Carolyn Logan and Nasif Majeed as well as Sens. Jeff Jackson and Natasha Marcus.

”We may not all agree on everything, but we can agree on the necessity to move our reliance to clean, renewable energy,” the legislators say. “And to that end a thorough review of both our state’s utility plans and costs is needed.”

The long-range plans are meant as a guide for future construction expected by the state’s utilities. Those plans set out broad outlines for utility development but do not involve approval of any specific construction project or infrastructure upgrades. They do, however, plot the course on issues such as the use of renewables and, this year in particular, focus on the future of a more interactive “smart grid.” (Triangle Business Journal, 2/26/19)

### **FEB 2019     Introduces Bill to Change Grading of School Performance**

House Bill 145 was recently introduced and read Monday by Democratic legislators and has sparked confusion among the public.

The bill proposes changing the state of North Carolina’s official grading scale from a 10-point to a 15-point scale. According to the bill’s primary sponsor, Rep. Christy Clark (D-District 98), it needs some clarification.

”This bill is not related to student grades, but merely the system used to grade overall school performance,” she said. “Additionally, we are not changing the system; we are filing a bill to keep the grading system consistent with what has been in place since the inception of the A-F grading scale for school performance.”

House Bill 145 states in section 1(d), “Calculation of the Overall School Performance Scores and Grades,” the State Board of Education shall calculate the overall school performance score by adding the school achievement score and the school growth score, as determined using EVAAS (Education Value-Added Assessment System), earned by a school. EVAAS for K-12 is a customized software system available to all North Carolina school districts.

The school achievement score shall account for 80 percent, and the school growth score shall account for 20 percent of the total sum. For all schools, the total school performance score shall be converted to a 100-point scale and used to determine an overall school performance grade. The overall school performance grade shall be based on the following scale and shall not be modified to add any other designation related to other performance measures, such as a “plus” or “minus.”

The current law has a 10-point grading scale for overall performance and overall grading in the official statute shown below.

- (1) A school performance score of at least 90 is equivalent to an overall school performance grade of A.
- (2) A school performance score of at least 80 is equivalent to an overall school performance grade of B.

- (3) A school performance score of at least 70 is equivalent to an overall school performance grade of C.
- (4) A school performance score of at least 60 is equivalent to an overall school performance grade of D.
- (5) A school performance score of less than 60 points is equivalent to an overall school performance grade of F.

Since the change to the 10-point scale, legislators have introduced temporary sessions to maintain the 15-point scale. The 10-point scale despite being made law has been temporarily put on hold throughout the years and never used.

The House Bill 145 aims to permanently change the 10-point scale in 115C-83.15(d) to a 15-point scale as seen below.

- (1) A school performance score of at least 85 is equivalent to an overall school 17 performance grade of A.
- (2) A school performance score of at least 70 is equivalent to an overall school 19 performance grade of B.
- (3) A school performance score of at least 55 is equivalent to an overall school 21 performance grade of C.
- (4) A school performance score of at least 40 is equivalent to an overall school 23 performance grade of D.
- (5) A school performance score of less than 40 is equivalent to an 25 overall school performance grade of F.

Changing to a 10-point scale would not reflect positively on schools in North Carolina, Clark said.

”This has caused quite a bit of disruption in school systems across the state as schools that previously were considered passing would now be failing without anything changing in regards to that school’s performance,” she said. “Therefore, my home school system, Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools, reached out to request that we file a bill to keep the grading system as it was, before the new 10 point scale would come into effect.”

Additionally, Clark said the bill would not be seen as lowering the bar for schools and students.

”It is simply reversing a bill filed last session that many school districts felt would cause undo damage to schools,” she said.

Roanoke Rapids Graded School District Superintendent Dain Butler said the scale only impacts school evaluation scores, not individual student grades.

”I believe there is a misconception that this bill intends to create a new grading scale, when in fact, it intends to preserve the scale already in place,” he said. “We have always prioritized individualized learning opportunities for our students. In my opinion, a single letter grade never has and never will be a true indication of the successes of a school and district.”

Northampton County Schools Superintendent Monica Smith-Woofter said the district supports the bill.

”We would like to see growth weighted equally to proficiency,” she said. “All the schools in our district would then be rated above average.”

The change in scales does not affect the student performance, but instead reflects the overall performance and grade gathered from the schools. (Roanoke Rapids Daily Herald, 2/27/19)

### **MAR 2019 More Magistrates For Mecklenburg County**

Most Recent Action Date: March 7, 2019

Bill Id: 2019 NC H.B. 317 (NS)

Sponsor: Elmer Floyd, John Autry, Mary Belk, Christy Clark, Carolyn G. Logan, Nasif Majeed

SUMMARY: AN ACT to add five additional magistrate positions to mecklenburg county and to appropriate funds.

Summary Line

03/11/2019 HOUSE PASSED 1ST READING

03/11/2019 HOUSE REFERRED TO THE COMMITTEE ON JUDICIARY, IF FAVORABLE, APPROPRIATIONS, JUSTICE AND PUBLIC SAFETY, IF FAVORABLE, APPROPRIATIONS, IF FAVORABLE, RULES, CALENDAR, AND OPERATIONS OF THE HOUSE (Leg Alert, 3/7/19)

### **MAR 2019 Against ICE Cooperation**

An N.C. House bill cleared the first step Wednesday toward requiring all sheriffs in North Carolina to work with U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement to detain people suspected of living in the country illegally in local jails

House Bill 370 was recommended in a 17-9 vote by the House Judiciary Committee in Raleigh. It must clear the House State and Local Government, and Rules and Operations committees before going to the House floor.

The bill would compel sheriffs, with some exceptions, to fulfill ICE detainer requests used to hold suspects up to 48 hours. Sheriffs would not be allowed to stop immigration agents from conducting enforcement activities at jails.

The bill includes a provision that if a sheriff doesn't follow the legislation's requirement, that sheriff could incur fines of up to \$25,500 a day.

The bill would force local officials to check the immigration status of anyone charged with any misdemeanor or felony.

State Rep. Destin Hall, R-Caldwell, a primary sponsor of the bill, said during the judiciary committee meeting that “at the end of the day, this is about public safety. Only a small number of sheriffs are doing this.”

”There are a small number of sheriffs in some of our state’s largest counties,” Hall said, “who have decided to stop cooperating with federal immigration authorities, in many cases even deciding to stop communicating with federal immigration authorities, about illegal immigrants charged with crimes and currently in jail.

”These sheriffs are putting politics ahead of public safety. This bill would put a stop to that,” Hall said.

”We’re requiring our sheriffs to cooperate with ICE and comply with ICE detainers,” he said. “We would rather ICE do their job in a controlled environment rather than out in the streets or in the workplace.”

Given the expected political divide on the legislation, HB370 could become the first prominent test of Democratic Gov. Roy Cooper’s veto power. The bill, if signed into law by Cooper, would become effective Dec. 1.

Cooper’s veto power gained teeth after the November 2018 election ended Republican supermajorities in both chambers of the N.C. General Assembly.

However, with support from just one Democratic senator or five Democratic representatives, the GOP could override a veto.

Cooper spokesman Jamal Little said in a statement that “”North Carolina sheriffs make tough decisions every day to keep our communities safe, and Gov. Cooper has serious concerns about taking away local authority and making it harder for local law enforcement to do their jobs.”

”The governor will review any legislation that comes to his desk before making a decision,” Little said.

”This is almost certain to pass the House,” John Dinan, a political science professor at Wake Forest University and an expert on legislative issues, said Wednesday, “as signaled by the support of House leadership, and its passage in the Senate would also seem likely.”

House Speaker Tim Moore, R-Cleveland, spoke in favor of the bill when it was introduced.

”In the last several years,” Dinan said, “legislative passage of a bill virtually ensured it would become law.

”Now that the Republican supermajorities are lost in both houses, the governor becomes much more empowered to determine whether these bills go into law.”

Mitch Kokai, policy analyst with the John Locke Foundation, a conservative-leaning research group, said Wednesday that a Cooper veto “is most likely when the House and Senate approve a hot-button item along party lines.”

”But he’s also a former law-enforcement guy, so I wouldn’t predict it.”

#### Urban-rural divide

The bill is sponsored by 34 Republicans, including locally Reps. Debra Conrad of Forsyth County, Julia Howard of Davie County, Kyle Hall of Stokes County, Steve Jarvis and Larry Potts of Davidson County, and Sarah Stevens of Wilkes County.

Conrad is the lone House member from one of the state’s five metro counties - Durham, Forsyth, Guilford, Mecklenburg and Wake - to co-sponsor the bill.

That’s an important urban-rural North Carolina political factor.

Sheriffs in Forsyth, Buncombe, Durham, Mecklenburg and Wake counties have said they intend to stop honoring ICE detainer requests or end participation in the 287(g) program, in which sheriff’s deputies check the immigration status of people arrested.

Forsyth County Sheriff Bobby Kimbrough plans to end his office’s contract with ICE after it expires April 30.

However, Kimbrough said Monday at a sheriff’s forum that he will enforce HB370 if it becomes law.

”Regardless whether I disagree with it or not, there is only so much I can do,” he said. “I have to obey the law. I will obey the law; I have no choice.”

Kimbrough repeated that stance when contacted Wednesday.

State law currently instructs sheriff’s officials to check the immigration status of anyone charged with a felony or driving while impaired. Kimbrough said he and his deputies comply with that law.

Guilford County Sheriff Danny Rogers told N.C. Policy Watch that his office will continue to update ICE on the status of inmates suspected of entering the country illegally.

However, it won’t honor requests from ICE to hold inmates for up to 48 hours after their state charges have been resolved.

The N.C. Sheriff’s Association has not taken a stance on the issue but has notified its membership of the bill in a weekly newsletter.

’Gross overreach.’

one legislator says

Several Democratic House members, along with anti-ICE cooperation advocates, said HB370 is designed to take local autonomy away from county sheriff offices.

”It’s a gross overreach by the General Assembly to overturn the decisions by sheriffs who campaigned and won election on this very issue,” said state Rep. Wesley Harris, D-Mecklenburg.

”Who are we to tell our elected law-enforcement officers how they should behave,” Harris said, referring to legislators.

He said HB370 would expose sheriff’s offices to potential litigation alleging unlawful detention of individuals.

Hall responded by saying he believes voters in the urban counties “didn’t adequately understand what their sheriffs were going to do, to not cooperate with federal immigration officers.”

State Rep. Christy Clark, D-Mecklenburg, said Hall’s viewpoint “does a disservice to Mecklenburg voters to say they didn’t know about the issue.” (WS Journal, 3/28/19)

### **APR 2019 Co-Sponsors Bill to Block Duke Energy From Passing on Cleanup Costs**

N.C. House Democrats have moved to block Duke Energy from billing customers for billions of dollars to clean up its coal ash ponds — a task that grew dramatically more expensive this week.

The state environment agency ordered Duke on Monday to dig up and remove ash at six power plants, including two on lakes Norman and Wylie. Excavation is much more expensive than Duke’s preferred option of leaving the ash in place and covering it.

Duke estimates that the order would add \$4 billion to \$5 billion to the \$5.6 billion it had expected to spend to close its ash ponds in the Carolinas.

Who should pay those costs — Duke or its customers — has hung over ash disposal since it burst into public consciousness with a 2014 spill into North Carolina and Virginia’s Dan River.

Critics say the company should absorb cleanup costs because it has negligently handled the waste material, which contains heavy metals that can contaminate water. Duke paid \$102 million to settle a federal criminal case following the Dan River spill.

Duke maintains that ash cleanup, especially when it’s ordered by state regulators, is part of the normal operation of coal-fired power plants whose costs have historically been allowed to be recovered through electric rates.

Duke said Friday it doesn’t usually comment on pending legislation. Spokeswoman Paige Sheehan noted that the state Utilities Commission is charged with setting rates after reviewing the money Duke spends to operate its system and comply with regulations.



The commission appeared to support the company's argument in a Duke rate case that was settled last June. The commission fined Duke \$70 million for mismanaging its ash, but allowed the company to recover \$546 million it had already spent to close ash ponds as state law required.

Attorney General Josh Stein appealed the order, saying "consumers shouldn't have to pay for Duke's mismanagement of coal ash." The Utilities Commission has not ruled on the appeal.

The House bill introduced Tuesday was sponsored by Democrats Joe Sam Queen of Waynesville, Pricey Harrison of Greensboro, Christy Clark of Huntersville and Robert Reives of Raleigh. In a statement, Queen called clean water "a biblical gift of incredible proportions" and said polluters should have to pay for their actions.

Harrison was among the sponsors of a second Democratic bill, introduced Thursday, that included similar coal ash cost provisions in a measure that more broadly would hold polluters responsible for cleanup costs.

The prospects of the bills in the majority-Republican legislature are uncertain. (CO, 4/5/19)

### **AUG 2019    Trying to Unblock Stalled Gun Bills**

North Carolina's legislature hasn't passed gun control legislation since 2015. But in the wake of this weekend's mass shootings in El Paso and Dayton, pressure is building to change that.

Several bills changing gun policy have stalled in committee, and on Monday Gov. Roy Cooper and four House Democrats urged pulling two of them out for debate.

House Bill 86 would restrict who can obtain firearms. Currently, North Carolina requires either a concealed-carry permit or a sheriff-issued pistol purchase permit to buy a handgun, but long guns including assault-style rifles can be bought with only a state I.D. and a background check at the counter.

Under HB86, long guns like rifles would also require a permit, and there would be a 72-hour waiting period before the buyer could take the gun home.

"This includes the weapons that were used in the mass shootings this weekend," said Rep. Christy Clark, a Mecklenburg Democrat who's co-sponsoring the bill with Reps. Marcia Morey, Pricey Harrison and Shelly Willingham. They plan to file a discharge petition Tuesday to pry HB86 and another bill out of committee.

Clark ran on a platform of addressing firearms violence in the wake of the Parkland, Fla., school massacre last year.

The New York Times reported that the weapon used in Sunday's Dayton shooting was an AR-15 assault rifle, the same one as the Parkland shooting. HB86 would also ban high-capacity ammunition magazines, which were used in both of the weekend's shootings, the Times reported.

”No one needs a high-capacity magazine,” said Becky Ceartas, executive director of North Carolinians Against Gun Violence, which supports the bill.

HB86 would also restrict assault-style weapons from anyone under the age of 21. Currently, the legal age in North Carolina is 18.

Other measures in the bill would require citizens to purchase firearm liability insurance, to reduce the recognition of concealed-carry permits issued by other states, and to ban trigger cranks and bump stocks, the latter of which was federally outlawed last year.

Paul Valone, president of North Carolina’s largest gun rights group, Grass Roots North Carolina, called the measure “the we-want-everything” bill. Valone said the answer to mass shootings isn’t limiting access to firearms, and that his organization opposed every one of the bill’s measures.

Valone’s solution is simple: “Mass killers avoid armed victims.” His group advocates for opening up carrying laws to allow guns to be borne in more areas than currently permitted to discourage shooters from targeting unarmed civilians.

Valone also decried the second of the bills Cooper endorsed Monday, HB454. It’s what’s called an extreme risk protection or “red flag law,” and allows people to file a court order to take away the weapons of someone who they think may be a danger to themselves or others.

”The shooter in El Paso was clearly a white supremacist, and somebody must have seen warning signs,” Ceartas said. The bill would pull people’s weapons for a 1-3 week “waiting period,” and is aimed at reducing both shootings and suicides — the largest group of gun deaths.

Twenty-one states and the District of Columbia currently have some type of “red flag” law on the books.

”It’s more than just the mass shootings,” said Grace McClain of the Charlotte chapter of Moms Demand Action for Gun Sense in America. “There’s more that we can do to keep our families safe.”

McClain cited the growing number of gun deaths in the country, as well as the high murder rate in Charlotte this year as reasons to enact the two laws.

Her group is focused on petitioning North Carolina’s two U.S. senators to vote on a national background check bill that passed the House five months ago. Both Sens. Thom Tillis and Richard Burr were among the top four most well-funded congressman by the National Rifle Association last year.

Clark said the NRA’s influence over North Carolina’s Republican-majority legislature is one reason the state has stalled on gun control legislation.

Other gun control bills have also lingered in committee. HB 842 would require the registration of all assault-style weapons, as well as the reporting of any lost firearms. And HB 816 would lay out how weapons could be stored in vehicles.

There are also proposed N.C. bills that would reduce limits on gun ownership, such as one that proposes doing away with the concealed-carry system. And Valone's group supports a bill to train more teachers to carry in schools.

"When we're looking at what's happening in our country, and even Mecklenburg County, it's very tone-deaf to introduce a bill that would make it easier for someone to have access to firearms," Rep. Clark said.

In order for the bills supported by Cooper and the four representatives to leave committee and reach the House floor for debate and a vote, the discharge petition would require 61 votes in a House with 55 Democrats.

Clark said she believes that six Republicans may cross the aisle to vote. Valone disagreed, saying that the drive to pass gun control legislation comes from the political left.

"We have reached a point in time where you need to make a choice," Clark said. (CO, 8/5/19)

### **SEP 2019 New Map of District Still Favors GOP for 2020**

Of the 12 House seats in the county, all have some changes. Eight are heavily Democratic and four could be competitive, Bitzer found. Those four also were competitive in 2018.

Only one of those four would favor a Republican, according to Bitzer. That would be District 98 in north Mecklenburg. In 2018 Democrat Christy Clark unseated Republican Rep. Jon Bradford in the district.

"My district hardly changed at all, so I'm going to have the same race I had in 2018," Clark said Wednesday. (CO, 9/18/19)

### **OCT 2019 Gun Bills Die**

Two gun regulation bills filed by Democrats early in North Carolina's legislative session never made it out of committee. Now, as the session comes to a close, the attention that had been focused on those bills also is dwindling.

That wasn't the case in August at a news conference following several mass shootings across the country. State Rep. Christy Clark, a Huntersville Democrat, asked her fellow lawmakers to at least debate proposed gun bills.

"Make a choice. Do you side with [gun violence victims] or do you side with the gun lobby?" Clark asked.

Rep. Deb Butler, a Wilmington Democrat, said she hoped Republicans had the "courage to do what is morally correct," and move the legislation forward to a floor vote in the House.

Two months after Clark and Butler called for change, those who want stricter gun laws continue to blame the “gun lobby,” especially the National Rifle Association , for the lack of new laws.

The NRA spends millions of dollars every year to influence Congress , primarily Republicans, and lobbies for loose gun laws. But what about at the state level? The News & Observer researched campaign finance reports to find out how much influence the NRA has in the legislature.

Measuring influence by dollars may not be the point.

”Liberals continue to push this false narrative that money from gun lobbyist groups is one of the main driving forces for Republican candidates, but the reality is North Carolina is a state where many people feel very strongly about their right to bear arms, and vote for Republicans who will protect that right,” Senate leader Phil Berger said in a statement emailed to The News & Observer.

Republican state lawmakers, unlike Democrats, do not necessarily see gun regulation as the best response to mass shootings. And they view the Second Amendment differently than Democrats, who generally support stricter gun laws.

”It’s that simple and it’s also understood by North Carolina’s voters that Democrats are intent on advancing policies that violate the rights of law-abiding gun owners. As elected officials, it’s our duty to protect the constitutionally provided rights of our citizens,” Berger said.

Clark said that gun legislation like extreme risk protection orders should be a nonpartisan issue and could save lives.

So, how much is the NRA giving state lawmakers?

While the NRA may have President Donald Trump’s ear, its money flowing into North Carolina campaign coffers is much less than other groups.

In the 2018 election year, Berger received \$2,600 from the NRA, as did House Speaker Tim Moore, according to state Board of Elections campaign finance reports and data from the National Institute on Money and State Politics .

NRA Contributions to NC Legislators embed

Not all legislative Republican leaders reported donations from the NRA. Among those who didn’t is Rep. Jason Saine, also a leading House Republican. Corporations’ political action committees and many North Carolina groups and individuals not associated with gun issues actually give far more money to state lawmakers than the NRA gives, according to campaign finance reports.

Moore’s campaign reported bringing in \$311,500 in the first six months of 2019. Most came from political action committees, including \$5,200 from Blue Cross Blue Shield ; and individual donors like Raleigh developer John Kane of Kane Realty Corp. , who gave \$5,400.

From 2017 through the first half of 2019, the NRA gave \$14,800 total to all North Carolina lawmakers.

What is Grass Roots NC?

A statewide gun rights group known as Grass Roots NC is a statewide gun rights group that has donated much smaller amounts to state lawmakers.

Grass Roots NC Forum for Firearm Education has not donated any money to campaigns in 2019 as of June 30, according to its filing with the State Board of Elections .

In 2018, Grass Roots NC reported no donations in the first half of the year, a \$500 donation to the campaign of Rep. Larry Pittman in the third quarter and another \$500 in the fourth quarter that did not name the recipient. In 2017, Grass Roots reported no donations.

Paul Valone, president of Grass Roots NC, said it's run by volunteers aside from office staff and he does not consider Grass Roots to be the "gun lobby." He said it has a legislative action team and sends email alerts about gun issues.

Valone said Democratic state lawmakers who wanted to revive stalled bills after mass shootings "are simply exploiting tragedy, as the gun control movement always does."

UNC Charlotte shooting survivor urges state lawmakers to debate gun reform bills Drew Pescaro, a survivor of the mass shooting at UNC Charlotte in April, speaks during a press conference announcing that NC House Democrats are working to move two gun reform bills to a vote in response to recent mass violence in Texas and Ohio.

Who gets the most NRA money in Congress ?

The federal level of lobbying is a different ballgame. U.S. Sen. Richard Burr and Sen. Thom Tillis, both of North Carolina, were among the top five beneficiaries in Congress of money from the NRA, The News & Observer previously reported. NRA groups had spent nearly \$7 million on behalf of Burr as of early 2018, and \$4.5 million on behalf of Tillis, with much of it used to campaign against their opponents.

Who has the NRA endorsed in NC?

NRA money isn't only spent on campaign donations. It also pays for endorsement activities.

The NRA Institute for Legislative Action spent \$13,000 on endorsement postcards and phone calls for Gov. Pat McCrory's campaign for a second term as governor, according to an October 2016 state Board of Elections report. McCrory lost to current Gov. Roy Cooper.

The NRA made endorsements in the 2016 election for McCrory as well as three other Republican North Carolinians running for statewide office — current Lt. Gov. Dan Forest, current state Treasurer Dale Folwell and Buck Newton, who lost the attorney general race to Democrat Josh Stein. The endorsement called them "strong, pro-Second Amendment candidates who will stand up for the rights of law-abiding North Carolinians."

Does the NRA donate to Democrats, too?

Going back several years, the NRA also gave money to Democrats, though far fewer candidates. Gov. Roy Cooper, a Democrat, received \$2,000 from the NRA in 2004, when he was attorney general, and \$500 from the NRA in 1996, according to reports from the National Institute on Money and State Politics .

There are no recent reported NRA donations to Democrats in office.

Cooper's office responded to a request for comment about the prior donations with an emailed statement from spokesman Ford Porter.

"The Governor believes in responsible gun ownership and that extreme positions like opposition to background checks are harmful to public safety," Porter said in the statement.

What do North Carolinians think about gun laws?

According to Gallup, a majority of Americans have supported stricter laws on firearms sales since 2015. Gallup's poll in August also show a majority of Americans — 61% — support a ban when asked about "semi-automatic guns, known as assault rifles."

The Civitas Institute , a conservative policy group in North Carolina, shows similar results in its own poll. Civitas' poll results showed 58% of respondents saying the laws were not strong enough. Civitas also asked if people believe stricter gun laws would have prevented recent mass shootings, and just under half — 48% — did not believe they would have.

The Gallup poll also asked people's opinions overall of the NRA. It was split almost in half, with 48% saying they have a favorable view and 49% saying they have an unfavorable view.

Where are the gun bills in NC?

Clark, one of the Democrats leading recent stricter gun law legislation, was the volunteer leader of North Carolina Moms Demand Action for Gun Sense in America before running for office and winning in the fall of 2018.

Clark is a primary sponsor of House Bill 86, which was filed this legislative session but never made it out of committee.

HB 86 would, among other things, require a permit to purchase long guns. Right now, North Carolina law requires a permit only for pistols.

It would also require a 72-hour waiting period for firearm purchases, prohibit sales or possession of bump stocks, require safe storage of guns, require lost or stolen guns be reported and require gun owners to carry firearm liability insurance. In North Carolina, there is no waiting period to buy a handgun if you already have a pistol purchase permit.

RAL\_20190806\_gunsafety\_CAT\_104.JPG Drew Pescaro, a survivor of the mass shooting at UNC Charlotte in April, stands for a portrait outside the North Carolina Legislative Building displaying his scar left by multiple surgeries for injuries caused by a bullet that entered his back one inch away from his spine, after speaking during a press conference with legislators on Tuesday, Aug. 6, 2019, in Raleigh, NC. NC House Democrats announced they are working to move two gun reform bills to a floor vote.

Rep. Marcia Morey, a Durham Democrat and former judge, is the primary sponsor of House Bill 454, which she describes as a “red flag” bill. It would allow family members or law enforcement to petition a judge for what is known as an extreme risk protection order, which would restrict a person’s access to firearms if there was evidence of them posing danger to themselves or others.

Despite the renewed calls from Morey, Clark, Cooper and other Democrats to take up the legislation, Republican leaders did not move them out of committee.

Rep. David Lewis, a Harnett County Republican, told reporters in August that Republicans may be willing to discuss extreme risk protection orders but have concerns about due process. Lewis said there are existing laws that require background checks. Federal law requires background checks on sales by licensed dealers, and North Carolina law requires them on private sales of pistols.

Morey said she has talked with half a dozen Republicans about the extreme risk protection order bill, but those discussions have yet to lead anywhere. She is optimistic that protection orders will come up again.

Are Democrats targeted by gun groups?

When Morey introduced an extreme risk protection order bill in 2018 it got a lot of attention, including from people who sent her harassing and threatening emails and voice mails, she said. So much so she told the General Assembly Police Department, which looked into at least two of the people who contacted her. The Durham County Sheriff’s Office sent an officer to drive by her house, Morey said.

A photo of her as a judge was posted on a pro-guns website, which resulted in Morey getting several nasty emails from within the state, and threatening ones from mostly out of state, she said. She said it was intense and unnerving, but it didn’t change her policy position.

”I know that certainly doesn’t deter me or Rep. Clark or Rep. [Pricey] Harrison from doing what we think is the right thing,” Morey said. “I know many in our caucus are proud to say they wouldn’t accept any money from gun lobbying groups.”

Morey said that both sides of the political aisle can come together to pass common sense gun safety legislation.

”I think the NRA has been one of the most powerful lobbyists in the country. For a long time they have been untouchable, but there’s a crack in the armor,” she said. Morey cited changing public opinion on gun safety and problems within the NRA itself. (RNO, 10/10/19)

## **DEC 2019 Rematch With Bradford**

Last year Democrats swept to victory across Mecklenburg County, ousting five of the county's six Republican legislators and all three GOP commissioners.

Now, Republicans are trying to prove that was an anomaly.

At least four Republicans who lost seats in 2018 will try to regain them in 2020.

Former GOP Reps. Bill Brawley and John Bradford are running against the Democrats who beat them. And Matthew Ridenhour and Jim Puckett are running for the seats they held on the Board of County Commissioners.

Democrats benefited from several factors in 2018:

- Off-year elections typically favor the party out of power. Democrats were energized across the county, capturing the U.S. House.

"Last year the Democratic Party did a phenomenal job of get-out-the-vote," said Puckett. "I think it woke up many in the Republican Party who had become somewhat complacent."

- Democrat Dan McCready, running in the 9th Congressional District, carried the Mecklenburg portion of the district by more than 9,000 votes. That included most precincts in once-heavily Republican southeast Charlotte — the so-called wedge.

That helped Democrat Susan Harden beat Ridenhour in District 5 by 1,100 votes. She's not planning to run again.

- Democrats spent money on their legislative candidates to break GOP supermajorities in the General Assembly, which they did.

Democrat Rachel Hunt raised a record \$1.7 million in narrowly edging Brawley. Their race, decided by 68 votes, wasn't determined until two weeks after Election Day. She got \$900,000 from the state Democratic Party. That was twice as much as Brawley raised all together.

In north Mecklenburg, the party gave Democrat Christy Clark \$583,000, a good chunk of the \$742,000 she raised overall. She beat Bradford by just 415 votes.

"2018 is starting to look more and more like an aberration," said GOP strategist Larry Shaheen.

An aberration?

Bradford and Clark will face off in House District 98, which changed just slightly under new maps approved this fall. Michael Bitzer, a Catawba College political scientist who analyzed the new districts, said it's competitive but continues to lean Republican.



Bradford said he doesn't expect to get outspent nearly 4-1 like he was in 2018. And he expects more GOP voters will show up.

"It's going to be a high voter turnout so I just expect a more competitive race because more people will be coming out to vote," he said.

North Carolina, which hosts the GOP convention in Charlotte next summer, will be targeted by both parties in 2020. That, plus races for president, U.S. senator, governor and a host of other offices is expected to boost turnout for both parties.

Clark said she welcomes the rematch and believes Democrats will be just as motivated as they were last year.

"I won against him one time and can do it again," she said. "I don't think 2018 was an aberration." (CO, 12/4/19)

## 2020

### **APR 2020    Introduces Bill to Expand Medicaid**

Today, Democratic legislators from across North Carolina introduced House Bill 1040 to expand Medicaid in North Carolina and increase access to affordable health care for more than half a million North Carolinians. House Leaders joined together on a press call earlier today to discuss the new legislation.

North Carolina's failure, year after year, to expand Medicaid has left the state more vulnerable to pandemics and public health crises because of the state's high uninsured population.

"Health care for working families is more important than ever," said Representative Sydney Batch of Wake County. "When you have over 500,000 North Carolinians without coverage that means people are delaying care, which is bad for them and bad for the public health."

"Expanding health care coverage lowers costs for all families," said Rep. Christy Clark of Mecklenburg County. "When people are uninsured, they delay care until it is really expensive and then they go the Emergency Room where all of us end up paying through higher premiums and costs."

Medicaid Expansion is not just about making health care more available and more affordable. It also would create over 37,000 new health care jobs and boost paychecks across the state, according to a Cone Health Foundation report.

"Bringing federal funds to North Carolina to create jobs just makes sense," said Rep. Scott Brewer of Richmond County. "With the economic downturn, the need for more health care jobs and a stronger health infrastructure has never been greater particularly in rural North Carolina."

"It is time to stop kicking the can down the road," said Rep. James Gailliard of Nash County. "We have front-line workers and vulnerable individuals without health coverage. The importance of health care coverage has never been more dramatic. If legislative leaders will not allow a vote on expansion now, when will they ever?" (Press Release, 4/29/20)

### **APR 2020    Medicaid Expansion**

On the day when North Carolina surpassed 10,000 COVID-19 cases, a group of House Democrats gathered by teleconference to make the case for Medicaid expansion.

Mecklenburg County Rep. Christy Clark, a cancer survivor, believes the latest bill could provide health coverage to as many as 500,000 North Carolians who are working but can't cover the cost of insurance.

"Those are the very people who are keeping the state running during this unprecedented pandemic," explained Clark. "People deserve quality healthcare at a cost that will not break their bank or prevent them from seeking care at all." (Press Release, 4/30/20)

### **JUL 2020    More Cash On Hand**

In 2018 Clark beat Bradford by 415 votes in one of the state's closest House races. While competitive, the district still leans Republican after last year's redistricting.

Two years ago Clark and her allies outspent Bradford 4-1. This year she has raised nearly \$250,000 to his \$136,000, She has \$199,000 cash on hand. He has \$134,000.

"We know the district is still leaning red and we have an uphill battle," Clark said Tuesday. "We knew in 2018 that it was going to come down to hundreds of votes, and we expect it to again in 2020." (CO, 7/14/20)

### **SEP 2020    Received Donation From Defund Police Group Future Fund Now**

The issue: House Speaker Tim Moore accused House Democrats of taking more than \$100,000 from the group Future Now Fund in exchange for promising to support legislation that would defund the police.

Why we're checking this: A series of news releases, tweets and a news conference Monday afternoon led to tension and accusations between Democrats and Republicans.

House Minority Leader Darren Jackson called Moore's campaign news release "a lie" and "libelous" ahead of Moore's news conference Monday.

"This entire press release is a lie," Jackson tweeted Monday. "The pledge folks signed 2 years ago (before this slogan defund even existed) is on the website. It says nothing about police funding. I don't blame you for not wanting to talk about Repub record on education and healthcare. But lying is wrong."

Moore called signing the pledge "a betrayal of the basic public trust to keep families safe, particularly in times of crisis."

"It is stunning that House Democrats in North Carolina would sign a pledge to defund law enforcement, and that so many in their caucus would join with radical national liberals promising to cut funding for police officers who protect innocent people," Moore said.

What you need to know: The pledge in question is promoted by a group called Future Now Fund . Candidates pledge to work toward something called America's Goals. The group separately promotes a series of model policies under the heading of America's Goals, which includes "reallocating funds" related to law enforcement.

Future Now Fund gave \$59,400 to 11 Democratic candidates for state House this year, giving each the maximum contribution of \$5,400.

Those candidates include:

Nicole Quick, House District 59 candidate Joe Sam Queen, District 119 incumbent Christy Clark, District 98 incumbent Ray Russell, District 93 incumbent Sydney Batch, District 37 incumbent Brian Farkas, District 9 candidate Kimberly Hardy, District 43 candidate Ricky Hurtado, District 63 candidate Frances Jackson, District 45 candidate Dan Besse, District 74 candidate Aimy Steele, District 82 candidate.

The N.C. Democratic Party also received \$50,000 from the Future Now Fund on June 30, according to the Board of Elections . On June 25, Future Now Fund tweeted that it was matching an hour's worth of donations given during an NC Day of Giving fundraiser held by the party that day. Future Now Fund Executive Director Daniel Squadron said in a video the matching funds would support House Democrats.

At least 30 Democratic House members, along with dozens of candidates who either are running now or ran in 2018, have signed a pledge from Future Now Fund .

But Squadron said they did not sign on or pledge to defund the police or to carry out model legislation that riled up Republicans Monday.

"America's Goals Pledge is not a one-size fits all pledge or an endorsement of a single policy," Squadron told The News & Observer. "It's shameful and disgusting that the North Carolina House Speaker is lying to the people in his state. In fact, it's a lie built on a lie."

This is what happened.

In 2018 and 2020, some House Democrats and candidates signed the pledge.

Future Now says it serves as a way to "improve Americans' lives" by winning state legislative majorities and then working with those majorities to "achieve goals for the common good," according to the fund's mission statement.

Jackson told The News & Observer Monday that he is one of the Democrats who signed the America's Goals Pledge in 2018. He said when he signed the pledge, it contained only two topics regarding policing: ending mass incarceration and protecting constituents from racial profiling. He supports both.

Jackson said defunding police wasn't part of the pledge, and Squadron said Monday the organization has never taken a stance on the topic.

The pledge's landing page online has seven areas of focus that includes jobs, affordable quality health care, investing in children, empowering people over special interests, equal opportunity and rights, sustainable infrastructure, resilience and innovation and clean air, water and energy.

The signature statement reads: "By signing below, I pledge to advocate for these goals, and work to achieve these targets in my state by 2030 or sooner."

"The pledge is a commitment to work toward shared goals ... It's shocking North Carolina Republicans oppose these goals," Squadron said. "America's Goals is about results to improve lives. It does not define one-size-fits-all policies, just the measurable outcomes." The pledge has been signed by 1,011 candidates and lawmakers in 50 states. (RNO, 9/14/20)

## **OCT 2020 Charlotte Observer Endorsement**

HOUSE 98: In a rematch from 2018, incumbent Democrat Christy Clark faces Republican businessman John Bradford in this competitive north Mecklenburg district.

Bradford is a solid but reasonable Republican, one who voted for the discriminatory HB2 but also was a factor in its compromise repeal. Clark has worked on building relationships across the aisle and has shown she's willing to represent all of her district, not just progressives. Both are smart lawmakers. We give the slight nod to Clark, who would flourish in a Democratic majority. (CO, 10/8/20)

## **OCT 2020 Overview of Race**

### 98th District

Republican John Bradford represented the 98th District before losing the seat in 2018 to Democrat Christy Clark. A small-business owner, Bradford said it's crucial that North Carolina figures out not only how to reopen the economy fully, but be more prepared for any future pandemics.

"Completely reopening our economy in a safe manner is paramount because many of North Carolina's essential services rely on funding generated by a strong economy," Bradford said, adding he wants to see better collaboration between Democrats and Republicans going forward at a time of such stress on resources.

"I can help find common ground in a zero-based budgeting process. We need to fund our most pressing needs first such as public education, health care, unemployment and other essential services," Bradford said.

Bradford said public safety should not be a partisan issue: "All of our elected officials should support our law enforcement agencies because they put their lives on the line every day to keep us safe."

Democrat Clark said science, not politics, should determine the process and timeline for reopening the state fully in response to the pandemic.

"We need to stick to the data," Clark said, praising Dr. Mandy Cohen, who leads the state's department of health and human services.

Clark said striking a balance between health safety and the state's economy is about continuing programs that help businesses ride out the process.

"I do keep (businesses) in mind; I am worried about them," Clark said. "We have done some appropriations for low-interest loans and grants through the county. We need to continue to have those resources available to those folks until they can reopen safely." (CO, 10/27/20)

## **NOV 2020 Loses to Bradford**

Democrats won most of the Mecklenburg County legislative races Tuesday night, but one Republican candidate pulled ahead with a surge of Election Day votes in the 98th House District and recorded a surprising victory.

Republican challenger John Bradford clinched the race with 51.66% of the vote with 100% of the precincts reporting late Tuesday, after Democratic incumbent Christy Clark had taken an early lead.

District 98 is the northern-most House seat geographically in Mecklenburg County. Bradford's slim lead came via election-day voting: He tallied 4,464 votes cast Tuesday, compared to 1,911 for Clark, with all of the precincts counted.

Bradford represented the 98th District prior to losing a close election to Clark in 2018.

Democrats held all but one Mecklenburg-area district seats going into the 2020 election — four of five Senate seats, and all 12 House seats. And with a chance to flip control of the state's General Assembly on the line, it was crucial for local Democrats to hold onto those seats.

But now Republican Bradford has taken one of those seats away. (CO, 11/3/20)

.....

One state Democratic Party official said Trump's loyal North Carolina following created headwinds for all Democratic candidates.

GOP successes came despite being outspent in key races. In House District 98 in north Mecklenburg, for example, Democratic Rep. Christy Clark raised more than \$930,000 in her rematch with former GOP Rep. John Bradford, who had raised \$274,000. She got donations from around the country as well as \$350,000 from the party.

Bradford won Tuesday on the strength of early, in-person votes and Election Day votes. He'll be the only Republican in the county's 17-member legislative delegation.

”(Republicans) had to overcome the fundraising and expenditure advantage the Democrats had and I think they were left with little option but to put the effort into the turnout operation and the field (organizing),” said David McLennan, a political scientist at Meredith College . “They mobilized their supporters better than Democrats did. It's a pretty straight-forward kind of formula this year.” (CO, 11/4/20)

## 2021

### **JAN 2021 Pre-Election Feature Story**

Whether they are serving in elective office, running campaigns, dealing with disappointed high school graduates, or filling their weekends volunteering to help others, paralegals are making the most of social distancing and finding ways to stay connected to their clients and their communities.

Here are a few of their stories:

Rep. Christy Clark parlays her paralegal skills into constituent services

This spring, the COVID-19 pandemic helped define Rep. Christy Clark's superpower in her first term in the North Carolina House of Representatives.

Her paralegal career and the education and skills that come with it have made her a paralegal for her constituents, whom she has grown close to in ways she never imagined when she decided to run for elected office.

In 2018 the Democrat from Mecklenburg County, in her first election, defeated an incumbent to win her seat representing the 98th District. But Clark's freshman term is not turning out the way she envisioned it going in.

"There are a lot of small businesses and restaurants in my district, and they are suffering right now," she said in a phone interview. "These are my neighbors and people in my community who have lost their jobs and their businesses."

Clark has rolled up her sleeves and pitched in to help her constituents navigate relief measures such as the federal CARES Act, state unemployment benefits, the Payroll Protection Program, and other services available to North Carolinians who need help. Normally, legislators rely on staff and state agencies to do research and help find answers to questions, but stay-at-home orders have kept staff away from the legislative buildings, so Clark relies on her paralegal skills and does it herself. It has become a labor of love.

"I spend a lot of time on the phone and in Zoom meetings, just trying to find out what people need, because a lot of the time, they don't even know what they qualify for," she said. "The thought of losing your business, laying off your employees, and losing your livelihood can be overwhelming, and I see it as my job to help them get through all of that."

At home, Clark, who is a North Carolina Certified Paralegal, is mom in her blended family of five children. She co-founded CLARK.LAW in Charlotte alongside her husband, Chris Clark, and focused her paralegal work on corporate law and intellectual property.

She is also a notary public and often serves as her local community's resident notary, arranging to help notarize documents for her neighbors while following social distancing guidelines.

In addition to her legislative responsibilities and providing direct assistance to her constituents, Clark is also campaigning for re-election this fall, facing opposition from the former representative she unseated two years ago. But instead of following the chicken-dinner circuit, speaking at local events, shaking hands, and making speeches, she is participating in digital town halls and candidate forums, attending virtual Democratic Party events, and working one-on-one with her constituents. She is also participating in a local effort to call voters in her district to check on their wellbeing.

"I spend a lot of time on a screen and on the phone," Clark said, laughing. (Carolina Paralegal News, 1/20/21)



**2022**

**JUN 2022 Will Speak At Gun March**

Charlotte will march on Sunday to advocate for nationwide gun violence prevention reform following recent mass shootings in Uvalde, Texas and Buffalo, New York.

"This year alone, you see more shootings than in years past," Lora Henley, organizer of the March For Our Lives event in Charlotte, told The Charlotte Observer on Thursday. "It's just sickening, and we're over it. It's time for us to take a stand."

march for our lives\_02.JPG Huge crowds march up Caldwell Street in Charlotte, NC, on March 24, 2018, during March For Our Lives, a student-led rally against gun violence that's part of a national and global movement. Another march is planned in Charlotte for Sunday, June 12, 2022.

March For Our Lives is a nationwide march that began in 2018 after the shooting deaths of 17 students and teachers at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, Florida. Over 300 marches will take place this weekend across the country, but the main demonstration will be held in Washington. on Saturday.

"To bring attention is the main purpose of the march, and to show Washington that (the) majority of the country is for [gun reform]," said Henley, a rising senior at Myers Park High School.

The event in Charlotte will begin at 11 a.m. at First Ward Park before a march toward First United Methodist Church and then back toward the park. Marching in Charlotte was a priority because it is a relatively big city that is surrounded by smaller towns, so people wouldn't have to travel far to join the cause, she said.

Henley and other marchers are advocating for deeper background checks and raising the minimum age for gun purchasers to 21.

"If it's 21 for drinking because it's not safe enough, I think having a gun at 18 is definitely not safe enough," Henley said.

U.S. Rep. Alma Adams, state Sen. Jeff Jackson, former N.C. Rep. Christy Clark, Democratic Charlotte politician Kendrick Cunningham and local activists are scheduled to speak at the march, Henley said. (CO, 6/10/22)

**JUN 2022 Harris Teeter Cooler**

It seems Harris Teeter has landed in the crosshairs of a pro-gun crowd over reports of the sale - and possible removal - of can coolers at a local store.

The items in question bear imagery that's common among right-wing groups, such as an angry-looking eagle clutching a firearm in its talons and a figure in colonial garb holding the same. Harris Teeter was called out on Twitter by Christy Clark, a Democratic candidate for N.C. House District 98.

"I am disappointed these coozies are being sold in an NC store," Clark wrote. "110 Americans die every day from gun violence and most recently children, educators, health care providers, and family members were killed in mass shootings. Please remove them."

John Ray Bradford, the Republican who currently represents the district that includes parts of Huntersville and Cornelius in the Lake Norman area, quickly fired back at her "political correctness."

But what began as a social-media spat between political opponents has put the Matthews-based grocer - one of the Charlotte region's favorites, based on local market share - in headlines. After Harris Teeter and its parent company, Cincinnati-based The Kroger Co. (NYSE: KR), apparently acknowledged Clark's request, the issue was picked up by Fox Business as well as multiple TV stations.

A reply from the Teeter on Clark's tweet indicates the items are being pulled from stores, though Kroger's response promised only to pass along the request to company leadership.

It's not clear where the items have been sold or whether they are actually being removed from shelves. CBJ has reached out to Harris Teeter and Kroger for clarification, but no immediate response has been received.

Worth noting: Gun-control advocates have lobbied for years for the grocers to ban firearms in their stores. In a 2019 statement, Kroger said it would "respectfully" ask shoppers to refrain from openly carrying, except for law-enforcement officers, and the company no longer sells guns or ammunition. But it doesn't prohibit them. (Charlotte Business Journal, 6/22/22)

## **JUN 2022 Wilson Times Rips Clark Over Cooler Issue**

A product meant to keep beer and soda cans cold made **Christy Clark** hot under the collar.

A former North Carolina legislator and the current Democratic candidate for a suburban Charlotte seat in the state House, Clark took to Twitter on Monday to share pictures of two foam can coolers sold in supermarkets emblazoned with pro-gun rights messages.

A bald eagle clutching a pump-action shotgun in its talons and Patrick Henry's oft-quoted "Give me liberty or give me death" adorn one beverage holder, while the other features a Founding Father bearing an AR-15-style rifle and a Second Amendment parchment scroll with the words "Arms Change, Rights Don't."

"I am disappointed these coozies are being sold in an NC store," Clark wrote, tagging Harris Teeter and Kroger in her tweet. "110 Americans die every day from gun violence and most recently children, educators, health care providers, and family members were killed in mass shootings. Please remove them."

Harris Teeter, a North Carolina-based company with 261 stores in the Southeast and the District of Columbia, pledged to pull the products just three hours later. The can coolers were recalled the same day, according to a tweet from the verified Harris Teeter account.

Kroger, a nationwide grocery chain, offered a noncommittal response: “Thanks for reaching out, Christy. We will tell our leadership about your request that we remove those items from our shelves. We appreciate your feedback.”

The candidate’s request - and its rapid success in getting the merchandise tossed from one of the supermarkets - touched off debate on #ncpol Twitter, the network of lawmakers, staffers, lobbyists, journalists and citizens who closely follow state politics.

Clark’s Republican opponent, Rep. John Ray Bradford, chided her for enabling a feature that limits which users are able to comment on her tweets.

”While standing up for her version of ‘political correctness’ she chooses to silence those who disagree by turning off their ability to leave comments,” he wrote. “Everyone has the right to be heard.”

By way of answer, Clark released a screen capture of her direct message requests. Users lashed out with vulgar words and sexist insults. The candidate doubled down, writing that she wouldn’t shut up and would continue her fight against gun violence.

The entire episode, a tempest in a Twitter teapot, was cheap political theater. Clark served up culture war catnip that invigorated the left and infuriated the right, elevating symbolism over substance. Getting can coolers evicted from a grocery store won’t curb mass shootings, nor will it erode the right to keep and bear arms.

If Clark sincerely found the illustrations offensive and didn’t seek their removal as a calculated political stunt, perhaps she thought they epitomized what restrictionists consider America’s unhealthy obsession with firearms. Considering that many supermarkets sell see-through squirt guns, toy pistols with orange plastic tips and action figures accessorized with miniature weapons, she’s far from the bullseye on reforming gun culture.

The foam containers that drew Clark’s ire don’t promote violence. They express a political sentiment - support for Second Amendment rights and opposition to gun control.

If Democrats want to sell independents and moderate Republicans on a “common-sense gun safety” compromise, part and parcel of that effort must be refuting the alarmist narrative that they’re scheming to dispatch squads of federal agents to confiscate law-abiding gun owners’ firearms by force.

Clark’s Twitter tantrum, then, is a failure of message discipline. Good luck convincing skeptics you don’t want to take their guns after haughtily demanding that stores purge mere pictures of guns from their inventory. Since the FBI began keeping national crime statistics, can coolers have been implicated in precisely zero deaths.

Harris Teeter may have been hasty in pledging to pull the products in response to a lone complaint, but every retailer is entitled to decide which merchandise it will sell. Choosing addition over subtraction, however, would have been a better solution for both **Christy Clark** and the grocery chain.

Why not create competing drink-saver designs with gun control slogans and ask supermarkets to sell them along with the others? Going that route would allow Clark to make her political point without depriving others of the chance to make theirs.

Corey Friedman is editor of The Wilson Times and executive editor of Restoration NewsMedia. In this weekly column for Creators Syndicate, he explores solutions to political conflicts from an independent perspective. Follow him on Twitter @coreywrites. To read features by other Creators writers and cartoonists, visit [www.creators.com](http://www.creators.com). (Wilson Daily Times, 6/24/22)