

Rep. Carla Cunningham - December 2015 Newsletter

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Sent: Tuesday, December 22, 2015 12:25 PM

To: Steve Johnston

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A Holiday Message from Rep. Carla Cunningham

I want to take a moment to thank you for the privilege and the honor of representing you in the North Carolina House of Representative 106th District. Though there is still much work to be done in the N.C. House, as we enter the holiday season I want to wish each and every one of you a Merry Christmas and Happy Holidays.

The holiday season is an exciting time of the year, but it can also be chaotic, as we rush from task to task attempting to complete everything that must get done in such a short amount of time. All too often unfortunately, it is during this hectic time that the true meaning of Christmas is forgotten or overlooked. I believe this time of year is about the love that you share with your family and friends, not about what gifts you receive or what you can buy in the store. It is important to remember that this time of year is a special season that represents a time of peace and goodwill to all mankind.

Of course, not everyone will be with their loved ones this holiday season. I think it is especially important to honor the men and women of our armed forces who continue to selflessly protect the freedoms we hold so dear, and their families for the sacrifices they make in defense of our freedom. I offer them my most sincere gratitude, especially those who are separated from their families and friends during this holiday season.

I look forward to serving you in the coming year as we all work to tackle the issues that face our great state and nation.

Merry Christmas and Happy Holidays!
Rep. Carla Cunningham

News From Raleigh

[New Memo: Governor Prodded Top Adie on Prison Contracts](#)

Gov. Pat McCrory twice told his secretary of public safety about his concerns that private prison maintenance contracts held by his friend and political contributor would expire, according to a recently released memo from a top prison administrator.

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On December 1, 2015, Representative (Cunningham) and Mecklenburg County supporters went to the North Carolina General Assembly for the Election for the 2016 filing. Filing for 2016 on Tuesday, December 1, 2015 at noon, due to changes in the election calendar. Please let us know about the formal start to North Carolina's 2016 legislative session.

Read more here: <http://www.wral.com/campaigns/15145399/>

The memo, written earlier this year by Joe Prater, a deputy commissioner of correction, recounts events leading up to the McCrory administration's renewal of the contracts over the objection of senior prison officials. Prater's memo dates the phone calls as coming prior to a meeting that McCrory arranged and attended in October 2014 in Charlotte. In that meeting, Graeme Keith Sr. is said to have discussed his political contributions and said he wanted "something in return."

Read more here: <http://www.charlotteobserver.com/news/politics-government/article48229100.html>

Lawsuit: State Out of Compliance with "Motor Voter" Law

Advocacy groups and citizens sued North Carolina government leaders Tuesday over what they called a poor effort to fix previously disclosed problems that kept motorists and public assistance applicants from getting properly registered to vote. The state's elections chief contends that many problems already have been addressed and registration levels are rebounding. The lawsuit in Greensboro federal court comes several months after watchdog organizations wrote elections and health officials and the Division of Motor Vehicles threatening litigation unless they rectified issues associated with carrying out the 1993 federal "motor voter" law.

Read more here: <http://www.thetimesnews.com/article/20151215/NEWS/151219463>

Redistricting Lawsuit Underway

A trial over redistricting in North Carolina began last Wednesday morning in federal court. A federal judge will decide if General Assembly drawn maps are constitutional. The trial has been about four years in the making, which is when the maps were drawn. Democrats say Republicans used race as a reason to draw the maps and have been fighting to have them overturned. "They used race to try to achieve their political goals," said Bod Hall, Democracy NC. In 2013, the General Assembly rewrote school board election maps, turning two of the nine districts into regional seats, each covering half the county. Month later, lawmakers changed the Wake County Board of Commissioners election maps to match the school board lines.

Read more here: <http://wncn.com/2015/12/16/trial-over-redistricting-in-nc-set-to-begin-today/>

Schools Sue to Recover Share of State Funding

More than 80 North Carolina school districts have joined a lawsuit against the state to recover millions intended for schools, but given to county jails instead. Fifteen districts in our area, including Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools, are part of the suit. "It is mind boggling," said Steve Oreskovic, an eight-grade social studies teacher in Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools and vice president of the Classroom Teachers Association of North Carolina. "Wherever it went, I'm not worried about," he said. "I am worried about the fact that it didn't go to the kids," Oreskovic asserted. The money would have come from a \$50 surcharge imposed on drivers for improper equipment. However, these funds have been diverted from schools to house inmates at county jails since 2011. The surcharge fines total more than \$46 million over the last four years.

Read more here: <http://www.wncn.com/story/news/politics/2015/12/16/nc-schools-sue-state-to-recover-money-intended-for-schools/77464930/>

Low pay, lack of respect causing teachers to rethink their chosen profession

NC SPIN | December 10, 2015 | 2 Comments

by Lindsay Wagner, NC Policy Watch, December 9, 2015.

By any measure, Asheville Middle School's Chris Gable was a teaching star.

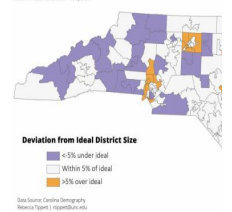
Gable outperformed all of his colleagues as measured by his students' test scores, and he had a gift for engaging his students. He coached young writers and was always finding innovative ways to make language arts interesting.

But a salary low enough to qualify him and his family for Medicaid and food assistance, combined with a lack of other professional support, **forced him to leave his beloved town and state in search of a living wage.**

"I feel guilty," said Gable, who left two years ago for a teaching position in Columbus, Ohio. There, Gable said, he would earn nearly \$30,000 a year more than the \$38,000 he was making in North Carolina with 10 years' experience and a master's degree.

"I wanted to continue to serve this community, but the state legislature has made it

Estimated Deviation from Ideal District Size (NC H
Ideal District Size = 82,866



Population Shifts Will Have P

A new analysis by the Carolina Population Carolina at Chapel Hill confirms what any p trends already knows: the lines that define state legislative districts are in for a big re dynamic is particularly highlighted," said Re Demography at the Carolina Population Ce are growing slowly or losing population con population centers such as Raleigh and Ch that means Wake and Mecklenburg countie seats – and political clout.

Read more here: <http://www.wral.com/pop consequences/15181070/>

NC VO
BEGINNING IN 2016, MOST VOTERS WILL NEED A PHOTO ID TO VOTE

NC DRIVERS LICENSE/PERMIT
(may be expired up to 4 years)

US PASSPORT/PASSPORT CARD
(unexpired)

VETERANS IDENTIFICATION CARD
(unexpired, if there is an expiration date)

IF YOU DO NOT HAVE ONE OF THESE FC YOU ARE ELIGIBLE FOR A FREE NC IDENT

UNABLE TO GET AN ACCEPTABLE PHOTO ID?

Voters who are unable to obtain an acceptable photo ID due to a **reasonable impediment** may still vote a provisional ballot at the polls. A reasonable impediment may include the lack of proper documents, family obligations, transportation problems, work schedule, illness or disability, among others. Voters must also:

- (1) Sign a declaration describing the impediment they face, and
- (2) Provide their date of birth and last four digits of their Social Security number, or present their current voter registration card, or present a copy of an acceptable document with their name and address.

VOTING ABSENTEE BALLOT BY MAIL?

Photo ID is not required to cast a mail-in absentee ballot. Absentee Ballot Request Forms are available online at the county board of elections and at all one-stop early voting locations, and can be submitted until 5:00 p.m. on the Tuesday before the date of the election.

OVER THE AGE OF 70?

Voters who are 70 years of age or older may use any acceptable photo ID that has been expired for any length of time, provided the photo ID expired after their 70th birthday.

IF YOU NEED ASSISTANCE GETTING ACCEPTABLE PHOTO ID OR HAVE ADDITIO

NORTH CAROLINA
State Board of Elections **WWW.VOTERI**

If you have questions please feel free to contact us at <http://www.ncsbe.gov/ncsbe/Voter-Id> or 1-8

List of Resigning Legislator

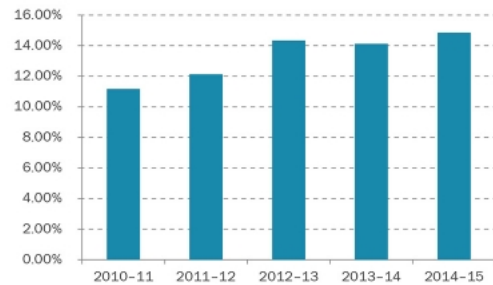
Lawmakers have to decide before Christmas election, and a growing number say this year they're leaving to run for other offices, retire

impossible," he said.

Gable is one of many. According to surveys conducted by the N.C. Department of Public Instruction, [teacher turnover rates have risen significantly over the past five years](#).

What's up for debate is why teachers are leaving. Some say the figure does not represent a mass exodus because teachers are fed up, but rather that teachers are simply retiring early or moving to other school districts within the state.

Teacher turnover rates, 2010-15



Source: N.C. Department of Public Instruction

NC POLICY WATCH

Exodus of teachers? — Teacher turnover rates have risen significantly. While some debate whether teachers are simply retiring early, moving to other school districts within the state or leaving the state or profession altogether, many teachers say they are exhausted, frustrated and ready to get out. (Source: N.C. Department of Public Instruction)

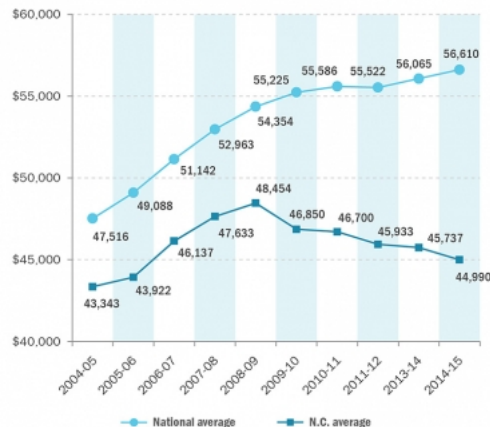
But what is clear is that the teaching profession in North Carolina has taken a lot of hits over the past several years and that many teachers are exhausted, frustrated and ready to get out.

Teacher pay hits bottom

In the 1990s, then-Gov. Jim Hunt persuaded legislators to lift teacher pay to the national average to make North Carolina an attractive destination for highly qualified teachers. But the commitment didn't last. Between 2008 and 2014, teachers saw their salaries frozen, save for a small increase offset by a rise in health insurance premiums. [By 2014, the state had fallen in national rankings on teacher pay to 47th.](#)

National Superintendent of the Year and former State Board of Education adviser Mark Edwards has a daughter who recently completed a teaching degree. [She didn't even try to teach here](#), Edwards told the State Board, instead taking a teaching job in Tennessee, where she will make about \$11,000 a year more than a starting teacher in North Carolina.

Falling behind: N.C. average teacher pay vs. national average



Sources: NEA Rankings of the States 2014 and Estimates of School Statistics 2015; N.C. Department of Public Instruction

NC POLICY WATCH

Sinking toward the cellar — Between 2008 and 2014, teacher salaries were frozen, except for a small increase to offset a rise in health insurance premiums. By 2014, the state fell in national rankings of teacher pay to 47th.

In 2013, the starting salary for beginning teachers was just \$30,800. Lawmakers have worked since then to bring the starting pay back up to \$35,000 (where it was in 2008, adjusted for inflation). But compare that with Texas' average starting salary of \$47,000.

"On starting teacher pay and average teacher salaries, we are below Virginia, we're below Tennessee, we're below Kentucky, we're below South Carolina, we're below

to take on other public service challenges, members and Senators will leave their chambers already cast their last vote as a lawmaker. seek re-election are Sen. Tom Apodaca, R-Coatham, D-Mecklenburg.

Read more here: <http://www.wral.com/lawn-running/15063815/>



On December 10-11, Rep. Carla Cunningham attended the America Southern Regional Conference in Charlotte. Cunningham received the Champion Award for Abuse.

Representative Cunningham thanks MHA, all Mental Health Organizations and Advocates of the Suicide Prevention Study Bill. Includes Veterans and Youth. Thank you!

[Sheriff: NC needs more treatment](#)

RAEFORD, N.C. — Housing mentally ill in court-ordered mental evaluations is a strain across North Carolina, Hoke County Sheriff

Peterkin, who is president of the North Carolina state lawmakers need to provide money to beds.

"They're trying to find ways to help us. Are you like them to? No, but we need help. It's costly to go through what we're going through right now."

North Carolina had 1,755 mental health beds dropped to 850 beds by 2012, according to the Department of Health and Human Services.

"We have to transport these patients all across the state," Peterkin said. "Dorothea Dix used to be the only hospital going to Goldsboro, all across (the state), and now we have to transport these persons."

Since the closing of Dorothea Dix Hospital in Goldsboro, the state operates three hospitals for mental health: Hospital in Butner, Cherry Hospital in Goldsboro, and Hospital in Morganton.

Central Regional needs about 400 additional beds.

Peterkin said inmates with mental illnesses are housed in the Hoke County jail, and he needs more beds.

Georgia,” said Keith Poston, executive director of the Public School Forum of North Carolina. “How can we expect to get the kinds of high quality teachers that we need when we can’t even keep our own teachers in North Carolina?”

While lawmakers raised beginning teachers’ salaries in 2014 and 2015, [veteran teachers were for the most part left behind](#), with minuscule pay bumps over the past several years, base salaries capped at \$50,000 and salary supplements eliminated for teachers who earn master’s degrees.

“Of all industries, education should reward lifelong learning,” said June Atkinson, the state’s top school official. “And there is plenty of evidence to show that a master’s degree in a teacher’s area of study really makes a difference in student achievement.”

CJ Flay, a teacher at North Iredell Middle School in Olin, expressed his disappointment in a letter to N.C. Policy Watch about the ending of salary supplement for advanced degree holders. “I would never have gone on to pursue my degree if that decision had been made prior to August 2006,” said Flay in his letter. He said his wife, also a teacher, decided not to pursue a master’s degree because she could not expect a raise that would help her repay the cost of obtaining that degree.

Lawmakers do away with Teaching Fellows

As teachers expressed frustrations with the changes inflicted on their profession by the legislature — not just low pay, but also cuts to classroom supplies and teacher assistants and the loss of tenure — [the UNC system has experienced a 27 percent decline in undergraduate and graduate teaching programs from 2010 to 2014](#).

One incentive was eliminated in 2011 when state lawmakers began phasing out the North Carolina Teaching Fellows program, which awards scholarships to North Carolina high school students to pursue teaching degrees in the state. Graduates of the highly selective program were then required to teach for four years in North Carolina. More than 75 percent of Teaching Fellows stay in the state beyond five years.

The legislators took money earmarked for the program and put it toward expanding the presence of Teach for America (TFA), a national program designed to provide college graduates without degrees in education minimal training and place them in jobs in low-performing schools.

Teach for America’s retention rates are poor, however. On a national level, only 28 percent of TFA teachers remain in public schools beyond five years, compared with 50 percent of non-TFA teachers.

While the Teaching Fellows program was relatively small, [doing away with it was a symbolic gesture, according to one of the program’s last graduates, Tacey Miller](#).

“Teaching Fellows was created in North Carolina and used as a national model for other programs looking to do something similar,” said Miller, who questioned why there is a will to eliminate a program that has worked so well to prepare future teachers and lure those thinking about teaching into the profession.

Due process rights eliminated

Another serious blow to the profession is the elimination of tenure, formally known as “career status.”

Tenure isn’t a guarantee of a job, but rather an assurance of due process before a teacher can be fired or demoted. It was an important benefit for teachers who often found themselves at the mercy of politicized school boards if they spoke out against harmful policies.

Legislation passed in 2013 would have eliminated tenure for all teachers by 2018, [but the courts rolled back part of that law last year, saying it violated the state constitution](#). The courts also rejected lawmakers’ proposal to offer some tenured teachers fatter pay raises and four-year contracts in exchange for giving up their tenure before 2018.

The result is that currently tenured teachers retain that benefit for the remainder of their careers, but teachers hired since August 1, 2013, can no longer rely on any kind of due process if they are fired or demoted. Instead, they get temporary year-to-year contracts — unless pending litigation overturns the law.

The list of hits to the teaching profession is taking its toll.

Melissa Noel, an AP English teacher in Johnston County with 19 years in the classroom, came to North Carolina five years ago to support her aging in-laws.

“It feels like we’re being encouraged to leave the profession,” said Noel. “Sending money to private schools in the form of school vouchers, reducing public school budgets, telling us our advanced degrees are not appreciated, and now our governor says experience is not appreciated? I know a lot of my colleagues will leave.”

County Sheriff Earl “Moose” Butler said abusers in his detention center are occupied with treatment, not criminal incarceration.

“Our jail is nowhere as big as Cumberland’s, but we’re under the same pressure, the same strain because of the same type of situation — transporting and looking

Read more at <http://www.wral.com/sheriff-remains-mentally-ill/15183736/#TXPIL26oLhKv7i8y>.



In nearly every mass shooting and gun-related incident, while only a small percentage of people are injured or killed, the damage to the community is often irreparable.

Early identification and help is needed to prevent mental health issues from happening, and that’s exactly what the Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services bill promotes early intervention factors, along with research and treatment from a serious mental illness.

In memory of all who’ve left us so violently, we honor the Sandy Hook Promise and call on the Senate to pass the bill.

[New Abortion Rules](#)

New regulations governing how North Carolina’s abortion clinics are being quietly implemented more than two years after they were first proposed and protested loudly against lawmakers and Governor Roy Cooper. Legislation directing rules be updated. The regulations were signed off on the changes. Some clinic rules were implemented in the mid-1990s. There were no formal objections. The Commission approved the rules developed by the Department of Health and Human Services. At least 10 of them would have been challenged at the General Assembly next spring. The regulations are now in effect, and neither abortion-rights advocates nor the state’s Department of Health and Human Services are displeased with the final regulations.

Read more here: <http://www.wral.com/apnc-new-abortion-rules-now-in-effect/15182699/>

[True Jobless Rate Lost in Calculation](#)

Technically speaking, Kelly Thibault lived in North Carolina for years, but she didn’t want to again. The Leicester resident, 40, was laid off from her job in 2013. It was the same year North Carolina reduced the number of people eligible to collect unemployment insurance benefits. To search for full-time employment, Thibault

<http://www.ncpolicywatch.com/2015/12/09/losing-its-luster/>

Please feel free to contact my Legislative Assistant Ms. Sherrie Burnette at 919-733-5807 (cunninghamla@ncleg.net) or me at 704-509-2939 (carla.cunningham@ncleg.net) if you have any questions. We are here to serve you.

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work as a part-time cashier at a grocery store. Or in economist-speak, a part of the "stagnant minimum wage for 20 hours a week at a cash job apartment because I couldn't pay rent," Thi

Read more here: <http://www.citizen-times.com/story/news/2015/12/01/asheville-labor-unemployment-insurance-labor-economy-claims/76445686/>

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