

Talking About Progressive Values and Issues in North Carolina

As progressives, we believe North Carolina should be a state of boundless opportunity, where all people can climb the ladder of economic opportunity. We believe this starts with providing high quality education to all. We believe we have a responsibility to future generations to protect the environment. We believe women should have the right to control their body. We believe the government should work for the greater good of all North Carolinians, not just those at the top

Economy Messaging

Overall, the economy has grown since the Great Recession. But a vast majority of this growth has been for those most well off. Working families are still struggling to get ahead. Republicans cut taxes for the wealthy, but many North Carolina families actually saw a tax increase.

In 2013, the right-winged legislature passed a tax “cut.” In reality, the reform shifted the burden of taxes to middle and lower income citizens, while cutting taxes for those at the top. This occurred by reducing the personal income tax to a flat rate and a cut to corporate income taxes. At the same time, they increased the amount of goods and services subject to sales taxation, things like auto repair or movie tickets. Additionally, the legislature also cut tax credits that aided the working class such as child-care tax credits, tax breaks for college savings plans (529s) and the Earned Income Tax Credit that helped families making \$50,000 or less. Many families saw a tax increase, while 2/3 of the benefits of the tax cut went to the top 1% of earners.

Public Education Messaging

Instead of investing in our public schools, politicians cut taxes for the wealthy.

North Carolina has always valued its public education. Public education is the key to setting up future citizens to succeed in the workforce. Since the Great Recession, public school budgets have been cut and funding remains stuck at pre-recession levels. Teacher morale is at an all-time low. Rather than investing in schools, the Republican legislature chose to prioritize tax cuts to those at the top

If we want our teachers to perform at their best, we need to treat them like professionals and raise their salary to at least the national average, while boosting per-pupil spending.

North Carolina ranks 41st in the nation in teacher pay, \$10,000 below the national average. As a result, Many North Carolina teachers could get a \$10,000 raise by simply moving across the border to a neighboring state.

College and University Messaging

College education has become more important than ever for people to get ahead in the workforce. Conservative politicians have made it more expensive for NC students to do this.

NC also has had a history of managing a robust system of public universities. Our state constitution explains how the state Values public universities: “The General Assembly shall provide that the benefits of The University of North Carolina and other public institutions of higher education, as far as practicable, be extended to the people of the State **free of expense.**” (Article IX, Sec.9)

North Carolina’s public colleges are some of the best in the world, providing affordable education to NC students. This has helped the state’s economy and millions of North Carolinians trying to raise themselves up. Over the last few years, state lawmakers have raised tuition, limited financial aid and removed tax deductions for college savings plans.

Health Care Messaging

Politicians have been playing political games with people's lives for too long. We need to increase access and affordability of healthcare for all. If right-wing politicians play politics with real people's health care, they will create a devastating public health care crisis.

In recent years the cost of healthcare dramatically increased. The cost of medical procedures, emergency visits and prescription drugs is rising faster than the inflation rate, while fewer employers are offering healthcare plans. Republicans in the NC legislature turned down Medicaid expansion and refused to create a state health exchange, leaving hundreds of thousands of people in NC without health insurance. Not only did this stop many people from having access to affordable healthcare, rejecting Medicaid expansion cost NC an estimated 43,000 new jobs, a \$15 billion injection into our economy, and put our rural hospitals at risk of financial ruin. Fortunately, the General Assembly's can still expand access at any time.

Meanwhile, President Trump and Congress have put millions of real people's health care on the political frontline, threatening to repeal the Affordable Care Act (ACA) without a replacement. The bottom line is that if legislators play politics with real people's health care, they will create a devastating public health care crisis. If the ACA is repealed:

- 29.8 million people could lose their insurance; the percent of Americans without insurance would almost double, from 11 percent to 21 percent.
- Parents will no longer be able to have their children on a shared plan until the age of 26
- Premiums will increase for anyone with pre-existing conditions, including asthma, cancer, diabetes and even pregnancy. Insurers will be allowed to charge women more than men for the same coverage.
- Insurance coverage preventive care and check-ups will be cut back and insurers will no longer have to cover things like breast cancer screenings or birth control.

Environmental Messaging

Politicians can protect the environment while strengthening the economy.

Right-wing politicians have decided to protect big polluters rather than the people of North Carolina who deserve to breathe clean air and drink clean water. New state laws have provided polluters with amnesty for the damage they cause and others will pass the costs of cleaning up pollution from the polluters to the taxpayers. Laws have also passed decreasing restrictions on coal ash groundwater contamination, allowing mega-dumps (huge landfills that would take in garbage from states up and down the East Coast), and protecting polluters from civil penalties as long as they self-report their crimes. They also eliminated the tax credit for renewable energy and attacked our home-grown solar industry, which has created thousands of clean energy jobs across North Carolina, especially in rural areas.

Politicians continue to take Duke Energy's money while allowing them to pollute. It is time for Duke Energy to take responsibility for its mess, rather than passing off cleanup costs.

On Feb. 2, 2014, 39,000 tons of toxic coal ash was spilled into the Dan River by Duke Energy. The spill shed light on a much bigger problem. There are environmental issues at all 14 coal ash sites, threatening drinking water for the entire state. Republican politicians, passed a plan which delayed cleanup until after the election and didn't protect consumers from footing the bill for cleaning up Duke's mess. Duke Energy's CEO has said they plan to pass the cost of cleanup on to ratepayers – which they estimate could cost up to \$10 billion dollars. This is a problem because for many of these people, Duke Energy is their only option.

Our first priority must be to protect drinking water.

In 2014, Republican politicians in the General Assembly passed a law allowing fracking, despite promising to not allow fracking until a framework to do so safely was in place. The law permits fracking corporations to keep the chemicals injected into our land and water a secret from the public, even if they are toxic.

We must protect our drinking water using proven scientific methods.

Jordan and Falls Lakes, which provide water for a majority of the Triangle, are suffering from by pollution and excessive algae growth. Republican lawmakers have repeatedly delayed the “Jordan Lake Rules” which would regulate development and runoff upstream from the lake. Instead, they have used junk science to protect polluters such as spending \$2.8 million on the SolarBee water mixers - giant eggbeaters that run on solar power- to prevent algae growth. The program was suspended after it failed to increase water quality. Senate Republicans have even suggested introducing non-native mussels to the lakes to delay regulation.

Reproductive Rights Messaging

All people should be allowed to make choices regarding their own bodies. Politicians should leave those decisions to a woman, her doctor, her family, and God.

The right-wing General Assembly passed a bill that would put additional restrictions on abortion clinics and local governments that offer abortion coverage. In 2015, they added additional restrictions to abortion, including a mandatory three-day waiting period. They required doctors to send a copy of the ultra-sound to state government officials, for any abortion performed after 20 weeks. And their 2015 budget cut state funding for Planned Parenthood that went towards teen pregnancy prevention programs.

HB2 Messaging

No citizen should be discriminated against in North Carolina. Everyone deserves equal protection under the law.

Four years ago North Carolina passed a constitutional amendment banning same sex marriage. Thankfully the Supreme Court ruled bans to same sex marriage to be unconstitutional. Last march, North Carolina’s state legislature passed HB2. HB2 not only overturned Charlotte’s non-discrimination ordinance, but ordinances in several other municipalities. It prevents municipalities from implementing such protections again, leaving LGBT North Carolinians vulnerable to discrimination. HB2 bans transgender people from using the restrooms that correspond to their personal gender identity and made it legal to fire someone just for being gay.

Voting Rights Messaging

Voting is the lifeblood of our democracy. The government should make it easy for all citizens to vote. Sadly, conservative politicians have done just the opposite.

In 2013, the NC General Assembly passed legislation that will make voting more difficult. The law shorted the early voting period, eliminated same-day voter registration, ended straight-ticket voting, ended pre-registration for teenagers, and implemented one of the nation’s strictest voter ID laws. These measures depress voter turnout, especially in minority populations.