

Chatham County Democratic Party Weekly News Digest December 18, 2023

Candidate Filings Are Complete for the 2024 Elections

Courtesy of the Chatham County Board of Elections, here's the list of candidates who have filed for the March 2024 Primary and November 2024 General Elections:

LIST OF CANDIDATES

[March 2024 Primary Election](#)

[November 2024 General Election](#)

###

Upcoming CCDP-Sponsored Events

December 29, 2 - 2:30 p.m., Event Team Orientation (Virtual event)

CCDP puts on LOTS of events every year, and we have SIX different events teams to do it all! Join this weekly Zoom to talk about which events team (or teams!) is right for you!

Sign up at: [Events Team Orientation](#)

After you sign up, you'll receive an email confirmation from Mobilize that will include the Zoom link.

January 27, February 10, February 24, (Times Vary), Training – Introduction to Voter Registration & Voter Education, CCDP Community Engagement Center, 628 East Street, Pittsboro

Get ready to register people to vote! This one-hour training will cover how to help people fill out a voter registration form and give you answers to questions newly registered voters are likely to ask.

This is a great way to prepare for working in the CCDP Community Engagement Center, greeting people at CCDP events, canvassing, and a variety of other volunteer activities.

Sign up [here](#).

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Other Upcoming Events

December 18, 11 – 11:30 a.m., Board of Elections Special Meeting, Board of Elections Office, 984 Thompson Street, Suite D, Pittsboro

The board meeting will be open to the public at the Board of Elections office; 984 Thompson Street, Suite D, Pittsboro, NC 27312 and online via GoToMeeting.

Meeting access information will be available to citizens prior to each meeting and available at the meeting.

To sign up to receive meeting notices click this link: <https://www.chathamnc.org/about-us/sign-up-for-e-notifier> .

Meeting Information:

Please join my meeting from your computer, tablet or smartphone.

<https://meet.goto.com/429404853>

You can also dial in using your phone.

Access Code: 429-404-853

United States: [+1 \(224\) 501-3412](tel:+12245013412)

Agenda: [Draft Agenda Special Meeting December 18 2023](#)

December 19, 7:30 p.m., What's Up With the Equal Rights Amendment? (Virtual Event), Sponsored by Red, Wine & Blue

Remember the Equal Rights Amendment - wonder what is going on with it? Did you know it has actually been ratified by all the states it needs to become part of our Constitution? And the ERA also plays an important role in protecting reproductive rights across our country. So why isn't it in effect yet? Learn the latest with Nicole Bates of Shattering Glass, a non-profit fighting for gender equality and equity and heavily involved in officially making the ERA the law of the land!

Sign up [here](#).

December 21, 7:30 p.m., Troublemaker Training (Virtual Event), Sponsored by Red, Wine & Blue

Ready to stand up to extremists causing chaos at school board meetings? Want to defeat calls for book bans in your schools? Learn how to effectively get people to join together and the tactics needed to impact issues in your community. Join us to learn how -- and make your voices heard in your community!!

Sign up [here](#).

December 22, Noon, TroubleNation 101 – You’ve Registered Your Group. Now What? (Virtual Event), Sponsored by Red, Wine & Blue

The title says it all -- you've set up your group but need help determining your next steps. We'll help you build out your group's landing page, grow your membership, and plan your first event. We'll also walk through all the features of TroubleNation so you can begin using the tools and resources to strengthen your group. If this time doesn't work for you, please sign up for 1:1 time with us by following this link:

<https://calendly.com/missy-rwb/30min>.

Sign up [here](#).

January 17, 7:30 p.m., Banned Book Club: The Kite Runner (Virtual Event), Sponsored by Red, Wine & Blue

Join us as we read *The Kite Runner*. The unforgettable, heartbreaking story of the unlikely friendship between a wealthy boy and the son of his father’s servant, caught in the tragic sweep of history, *The Kite Runner* set in Afghanistan at a tense and crucial moment of change and destruction. A powerful story of friendship, it is also about the power of reading, the price of betrayal, and the possibility of redemption; and an exploration of the power of fathers over sons—their love, their sacrifices, their lies.

Sign up [here](#).

###

News from the North Carolina Democratic Party

Trump Says Mark Robinson is “Better than MLK”

- Full quote from Trump: “I said, ‘You know what? I swear I think you're better than Dr. Martin Luther King,’ And I wasn't sure if he was happy about that. Dr. Martin Luther King was great. And I think he didn't like that comparison but he accepted it. But [Robinson] gives some speeches that were so incredible.”
- The statement highlights how devoid of reality these two men are and how dangerous it would be to have them leading our state and this country.
- The comment comes after Robinson recently [embraced Trump's false claims on 2020 election](#)

Justice Newby's Ethical Problems Highlighted in New Article

- Justice Newby's ethical problems were the focal point of a new investigative report by [The Center for Public Integrity](#).
- Since 2015, Justice Newby has heard at least six cases involving the massive utility Duke Energy, a company in which he and his wife had a direct financial stake. The report highlights that Newby and his wife said in a 2023 disclosure form that they owned at least \$20,000 in Duke Energy stock, and one or both owned stock while each of the six cases involving Duke and its subsidiaries was before the court.
- "This is a big deal. This does not look good," **said Gabe Roth of Fix the Court, which advocates for judicial transparency.** "Owning even one share of stock brings in that doubt that the judge might be biased."
- **It is against the law for federal judges to hear cases when they own stock in a party.** But state supreme court justices, in North Carolina and elsewhere, are not held to the same standard.

Statement from Chair Clayton:

"This is a damning report on Justice Newby and it highlights another disturbing example of corruption by Republicans at the highest level of our state government. Justice Newby is refusing to answer for these allegations and he should resign for the violation of the trust that North Carolinians placed in him. Republicans continue to embarrass our state and the voters are ready to go to the polls next November and restore the power back to the people."

Articles to Amplify

The Center for Public Integrity: [Not just the Supreme Court: Ethics troubles plague state high courts, too](#)

Axios: [The mysterious effort to oust NC's most powerful Republican](#)

###

News from NC House Democrats

Today officially marked the end of filing and we have been given our pathway for 2024.

Thanks to the hard work of Democrats across the state and the commitment of our candidates, we have 119 candidates filed to run against the NC GOP's 95.

We have repeatedly said it, but we will not accept anything less than victory in 2024 by redefining the state of power in NC. With House candidates challenging Republican power across NC, we are also challenging Republican power at every level of the Tarheel state.

Thank you for standing with us,

NC House Dems

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News from Neighbors on Call

NC Policy Update for November 11

Fair Representation

[A group of Black and Latino voters are suing to challenge new congressional district maps.](#) The lawsuit, filed on behalf of the voters by voting rights attorney Marc Elias's firm, [alleges that four districts are unconstitutional racial gerrymanders:](#) District 1 in Northeastern NC; District 6, which includes part of Greensboro and extends to suburbs of Charlotte; District 12 in Charlotte; and District 14, which is between Charlotte and Morganton. U.S. [Representative Kathy Manning of Greensboro has already announced she won't seek reelection](#) after her district was redrawn from a safe Democratic seat to a safe Republican seat.

###

News from NC Congressman Jeff Jackson

I knew several months ago that I was going to tell you this story, but I had to wait until I knew how it was going to end - and now I do.

I filed a bill back in April. It was to expand parental leave for folks in the National Guard and Reserve forces to include fathers and adoptive parents. For some reason, they've

never been included, which means they've never been entitled to leave upon the birth or adoption of a child. (I'm a dad in the National Guard so I happen to know about this.)

I found a member of the other party to file it with me, and another bill doing the same thing had been filed in the Senate.

So, we had both parties and both chambers supporting the same bill. Good to go, right?

Hahaha no.

I figured out pretty quick that my bill wasn't going anywhere - basically because I'm a new member of Congress so I don't have that kind of pull.

But I also figured that I could try filing it as an amendment to another bill.

I happen to serve on the Armed Services Committee, so I decided to file it as an amendment to the annual defense bill.

We started working with the staff on the committee to change the bill into an amendment.

Our first roadblock was that it cost too much money, even though it didn't really cost any money, it just let servicemembers take leave. But the way the Congressional Budget Office calculates things, that cost money.

So, we changed it to go into effect a few months later, and that got us under the amount we could spend.

Then the Defense Department had technical changes they wanted. We were able to change some language and fix it again.

Then we were told that the amendment would need approval from four different committees.

That's a dealbreaker. I'm a new guy and there's no way I'm going to be able to get four committees to work with me on this.

But we were able to change some language again so it only had to go through one committee, Armed Services.

The big day arrives. We're voting on the annual defense bill in committee.

I've filed the amendment and I'm ready to go. I've got a speech about why we should do this and answers ready for any question.

We spend all day hearing amendments - hundreds of them.

Then, three minutes before midnight, they call my amendment for a vote - *and it passes unanimously without any debate.*

Outstanding. Wonderful. We're rocking.

Then it goes to the House floor as part of the defense bill - *and passes.*

Sooo that's it, right? Success?

Nope - one senator was opposed to our amendment.

So, when the Senate passed their own defense bill, they did it *without* our amendment and with lots of other changes, which meant there were now two defense bills.

A special committee was created to iron out the differences between the two bills.

We figure this is our last shot, so we gather up the main supporters for our amendment and send a letter requesting that it be put back in the bill.

We hear nothing. The letter sails into a black hole.

Until one afternoon last week. I had just sat down at my desk when a member of my staff - who has been working on this for months - burst into my office and told me they put our amendment back in the bill. The *final* bill.

This week it passed the Senate, then it passed the House, and now the president is going to sign it into law.

Our amendment will get no press, no one other than those of you who are reading this will ever know how all this happened, but from now on, it'll make a difference to a lot of young families in the National Guard and Reserve.

And if that's the type of work you're interested in doing then you should run for office because in my experience that's how a bill *actually* becomes a law.

Flowers on the floor

A couple weeks ago, Rep. Alma Adams spoke at a campaign event for me and she was incredibly kind, so I thought I'd say thank you by giving her some flowers.

I usually see her on the House floor, so that's where I thought I'd give them to her.

So yesterday, I walked onto the floor of the house holding a bunch of flowers - and holy smokes the effect was dramatic.

As it turns out, you get a lot of attention just walking onto the House floor holding some flowers.

Members of both parties kept coming up to me and asking if the flowers *were for them*. I could see the hope in their eyes.

As I walked through the crowd, it felt like everyone was watching to see who was going to get the flowers, almost like a reality TV moment.

I had to walk through a press gaggle with the flowers and all the reporters looked up from their phones with curious expressions. A couple of them asked what my intentions were with the flowers and one of them actually mentioned it *in his newsletter* this morning.

It was kinda great. Honestly, I should make a monthly habit of just randomly bringing flowers onto the House floor because it caused such a delightful commotion.

I did give the flowers to Rep. Adams, and she appreciated it, and I'm very grateful for her work and her friendship.

###

News from County-to-County

WHAT THE NC REPUBLICAN LEGISLATURE HAS DONE TO NORTH CAROLINA

December 13 — By Diana McDuffie

The North Carolina Legislature is controlled by Republicans, and it has been under Republican control for over 10 years. In the State House the current composition is 72 Republicans and 48 Democrats. In the State Senate the composition is 30 Republicans and 20 Democrats. The NC Legislature has a veto-proof majority in both chambers and thus can override any veto by the Governor. Last year, voters elected enough Democrats to avoid a veto-proof majority, but when Rep. Tricia Cotham switched parties from Democratic to Republican she gave Republicans their veto-proof majority. Republicans have overridden the [Governor's veto 19 times](#) since they gained that control.

So, what has the Republican-controlled legislature delivered with this unchecked power? They have:

- Restricted access to reproductive health care, scaling back [access to abortion](#) from 20 weeks to 15 weeks.
- [Severely gerrymandered](#) state and federal election districts to keep the Republican Party in control of districts for many years to come.
- [Made changes to NC Election Law](#) by unbalancing members of the state election board and transferring the resolution of disputes to the General Assembly rather than the Governor's party (judges temporarily blocked these changes).
- [Stripped millions of dollars](#) from public schools, transferring those funds to unaccountable private and charter schools.
- Blind-sided UNC campus governing boards with [new program decisions](#).
- Stripped the Governor's office of [appointment power to governing boards](#).
- Passed the controversial "Parent's Bill of Rights." [Here is what's in the bill](#).
- [Stripped environmental safeguards to help the business community](#).

Unless we elect more Democrats in 2024 to break the Republican supermajority, we can expect: continued attacks on reproductive rights (maybe even restrictions on access to birth control); continued defunding of public education; continued erosion of local control by school boards; and a continued focus on the culture war. The latter is simply a ploy to distract North Carolinians from the transfer of power and tax payer dollars behind-the-scenes. The wealthy and large corporations will, no doubt, be the recipients of such GOP largesse.

Ultimately, what we can expect if the Republicans' candidate for governor wins the election is that the great divider Mark Robinson, together with his "willing" GOP legislature, will further take rights from North Carolinians. As [Robinson predicts](#), "If I had all the power right now, let's say I was governor

and had a willing legislature, we could pass a bill saying you can't have an abortion in North Carolina for any reason." The North Carolina Robinson and his supporters envision is one in which the bodies of pregnant women become wards of the state, one in which science and social studies will have no place in the elementary school curriculum, and one in which "traditional public schools might be a thing of the past." A chilling image indeed.

STUDENT DEBT UPDATE

December 13 — By Sam Bohmer

Student loan borrowers have been making payments since October 2023.

The pause on student loan payments [ended](#) "60 days after June 30," or around Sept. 1, 2023, per the agreement between House Speaker Kevin McCarthy (R-CA) and President Joe Biden to raise the debt ceiling, with payments coming due in October. With this pause ending, interest on these student loans is once again beginning to accrue. Interest has been one of the [key drivers](#) of surging student loan balances due to capitalization, the piling on of accrued interest that can swell the balance owed.

President Biden is currently working on a plan to provide broader relief to borrowers by [using](#) the Higher Education Act of 1965. This law requires the Biden administration to go through the negotiated rulemaking process, which includes holding public hearings and a series of negotiations to craft the final debt-relief plan. While this will hopefully be more effective than the administration's original plan, it will take at least a year due to finalize.

Additionally, the Biden Administration also announced [\\$39 billion in debt relief for over 800,000 borrowers](#) because of a one-time account adjustment for borrowers on income-driven repayment plans. The department is also set to re-evaluate borrowers' accounts every two months

to identify other borrowers who have met the 20 or 25 years of payments required for this relief.

Since this pause ended, the Biden administration has seen measurable debt cancellation for borrowers. Despite being struck down by the Supreme Court, the Biden administration has been able to [cancel](#) \$127 billion in loans for 3.6 million borrowers — facilitating the biggest wave of student debt cancellation since the government began backing student loans over 60 years ago. This has been done by adjusting Education Department regulations and temporarily waiving requirements to expedite debt-relief. The four largest programs currently in use include Public Service Loan Forgiveness (\$51 billion canceled for 715,000 borrowers), Income-Driven Repayment Adjustment (\$42 billion canceled for 855,000 borrowers), Borrower Defense to Repayment and Closed-School Discharge (\$22.5 billion canceled for 1.3 million borrowers), and Total and Permanent Disability (\$11.7 billion canceled for 513,000 borrowers).

As background, the amount of student debt [nationwide](#) is a staggering \$1.75 trillion, 92% of which is from the Federal student loan program. \$500 billion of this debt is owed by borrowers between 25 to 34, \$620 billion by borrowers between 35 and 48, and \$620 billion by Americans between 35 and 49. Sadly, student debt even follows borrowers into their senior years, with 2.4 million borrowers 62 and older on the hook for \$98 billion.

Looking specifically at [North Carolina](#), in 2022 over one million North Carolinians owed \$49.2 billion (8th in the nation) in Federal student loan debt, with an average per borrower amount of \$37,721. This debt load severely limits the ability of North Carolinians to buy a home, provide for their families or invest for retirement.

Debt relief is particularly [urgent](#) for women and people of color. In fact, women, who on average earn less than their male counterparts, account for almost 2/3 of student loan debt. Whereas 77% of African American students take out federal loans, a percentage considerably higher than the national average of 60%, after graduation, when those loans come due, this group earns 23% less than the national median after-graduation income.

Federal student loan programs were meant to level the playing field and to allow all Americans access to both quality undergraduate and graduate education and the economic benefits that accrue from higher education. Although these programs have achieved their objective of providing those with modest family incomes with access to higher education, they have, nevertheless, saddled many of these students with hefty debt, as state funding for public universities has fallen and tuition costs have escalated across the country.

According to a November 2021 [report](#) from Georgetown University, the cost of college has increased by 169% since 1980, while pay for young workers has only grown by 19%. This staggering difference is the prime reason why the programs introduced by President Biden, which follow the lead set by other developed countries, are essential. Think about it: no politician argues when asked to bail out a state or a region following a natural disaster. And over the past three decades, FEMA has [spent](#) \$347 billion (in 2022 dollars) from the Disaster Relief Fund to respond to fires, floods, hurricanes, and tornados. It is time to face the fact that the student loan crisis has itself reached true disaster levels.

Along with the Biden Administration's efforts, North Carolina Democrats and Democrats across the country must work to overcome Republican opposition to debt forgiveness programs. If we can't, higher education will become a privilege reserved only for the elite.

###

Selected News and Opinion Stories of Note

Carolina Public Press: [Habitat in Virginia Turns to 3D Printing. Would It Work in NC?](#)

NC Newslines: [Ballot Bites: Graham Garner's a Big Endorsement in Governor's Race, Robinson Looks to 'Trump' It](#)

NC Health News: [Access to Abortion Fraught With More Logistical Challenges As Patients Confront Increased Restrictions](#)

The Assembly NC: [Presumption of Guilt](#)

The Center for Public Integrity: [Not Just the Supreme Court: Ethics Troubles Plague State High Courts, Too](#)

Hopium Chronicles: [Zelenskyy Comes To Washington, The Remarkably Strong American Economy, Winning Suozzi/Keen](#)

WRAL: [Democratic Senator, Targeted in Redistricting, Jumps Into NC Insurance Commissioner's Race](#)

NY Times: [Special Counsel Asks Supreme Court to Decide if Trump is Immune from Prosecution](#)

Cardinal & Pine: [Gov. Roy Cooper Demands Affordable Access to Contraception](#)

Cardinal & Pine: [Video: Sampson County Puts Biden's Promise to Boost Rural Infrastructure to the Test](#)

Cardinal & Pine: [Two Years In, Here's What Biden's Infrastructure Law Has Done for North Carolina](#)

IndyWeek: [Disney "Storyliving" Residential Community Coming to Pittsboro in 2027](#)

NC Newslines: [In NC, One Man – Gov. Roy Cooper – Has the Power to Empty Death Row. But Will He Do It?](#)

Hopium Chronicles: [Another Encouraging Inflation Report, Trump's Historic Venality, and Women, Life, Freedom](#)

Carolina Public Press: [Migrant Farmworkers in NC Face a Challenging System](#)

NC Newslines: [Attorney General Josh Stein Makes It Official, Files to Run for Governor](#)

Hopium Chronicles: [Rents Are Falling, The Economy is Remarkably Strong, Progress in Florida, The Republican Party's Ongoing Betrayal of America](#)

Lucid: [The Wall and the Drill: Authoritarianism Means Controls for Some, License to Plunder for Others](#)

Washington Post (May Require Subscription): [Bridget Ziegler, Caught in a Sex Scandal, Refuses to Quit Florida School Post](#)

Cardinal & Pine: [Video: Here's What Finally Pushed NC Over the Edge on Expanding Medicaid](#)

Hopium Chronicles: [2023 Was A Very Good Year for Democrats. Let's Make 2024 Even Better – My Year-End Briefing for the Hopium Community](#)

Axios Raleigh: [The Mysterious Effort to Oust NC's Most Powerful Republican](#)

NC Health News: [Medicaid Expansion Means New Oral Health Benefits for Hundreds of Thousands of People. Will NC Dentists Step Up?](#)

NC Health News: [NC Pushes Back Medicaid Unwinding for Kids](#)

Hopium Chronicles: [Dow Hits All-Time High, Interest Rates Coming Down Next Year, Rents Are Falling – The Good Economic News Just Keeps Coming](#)

Carolina Public Press: [Do NC Nursing Homes Have Enough Nurses?](#)

Washington Post: [AI Chatbot Got Election Info Wrong 30 Percent of Time, European Study Finds](#)

IndyWeek: [Congressman Wiley Nickel Bows Out of 2024 Election](#)

WRAL: [State Auditor Beth Wood Pleads Guilty to Using a State Car for Personal Errands](#)

The Assembly NC: [Lee Roberts Named Interim Chancellor at UNC-Chapel Hill](#)

WRAL: [Trump Makes Surprise Endorsement in North Carolina Congressional Race](#)

NY Times: [Behind the Scenes at the Dismantling of Roe v. Wade](#)

Hopium Chronicles: [Three Things I'm Thinking About As We Head Into 2024](#)

Cardinal & Pine: [A Look Back at the Year Republicans Banned Abortion in North Carolina](#)

Hopium Chronicles: [Optimistic As We Head Into 2024, Wheels of Justice Are Turning, Republicans Ongoing Betrayal of the Country](#)

Robert Hubbell: [A Brief Reflection on Ruby Freeman and Shaye Moss.](#)

Lucid: [Sunday Digest: New Video on Trump's Dehumanizing Rhetoric; Fake Populist Milei Turns on Argentinians; Biden Impeachment Effort as "Garbage Politics"](#)

