

### Chatham County Democratic Party News You Can Use February 24, 2025

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## **CCDP Events**

Training – Join Our Office Crew March 6, 11 a.m. – 12:30 p.m., CCDP Office, 628 East St. Suite A, Pittsboro

Volunteer at CCDP's Community Engagement Center! This training covers everything you need to know to feel comfortable and competent staffing the office along with an experienced volunteer. After this one-time training session, you will be a CEC Associate Office Staff Member and you will be paired with a Senior Office Staff Member. We will work with your availability and preferences and get you on the Staffing Calendar.

Sign up here.

### **Other Upcoming Local Events**

# Fearrington Democratic Club Meeting, "Women and (Political) Leadership," February 25, 7 p.m. (Virtual Event)

The speaker will be Nancy Roman, who will talk about "Women and (Political) Leadership." Nancy was most recently president and CEO of the Partnership for a Healthier America, a nationwide nonprofit devoted to children's health, started by Michelle Obama. Before that, she was a leader at the United Nations World Food Program and before that vice president of the Council on Foreign Relations. She speaks internationally on the subject of women in leadership. Now retired, she lives in Fearrington Village.

This event will be live streamed on Zoom. To request the Zoom link, please use the form on the Club's website: Contact Us by 5:00pm on the day of the event (sooner is better).

## Pack the NCGA Gallery, February 26, 12 – 2 p.m., North Carolina General Assembly, 16 W Jones St, Raleigh

Join the North Carolina Democrats as we pack the gallery of the North Carolina General Assembly. Let's show our legislators that their constituents are engaged, informed, and ready to hold them accountable. This is our opportunity to send a strong message: We're watching. We care. And we expect action on the issues that matter most to North Carolinians. Let's fill every seat in the gallery and remind our elected officials who they serve! Time may change, depending on the call of the general assembly, a more specific time will be shared the day before. Sign up at: Pack the NCGA Gallery

## Doubling Down - C2C & NoC 2025 Kickoff, February 27, 2025 7 – 8 p.m. Virtual Event

Democratic Caucus Leaders NC Rep. Robert Reives and NC Sen. Sydney Batch will preview what's ahead in the legislative session and remind us of the urgency of our mission. Then we'll talk about how we can take action now! Optional social time beginning at 6:30 p.m. Sign up at: **Doubling Down** 

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## **News from the North Carolina Democratic Party**

#### **Training Opportunity**

Mark your calendars for TWO upcoming training sessions to sharpen your skills and make a difference in 2025! Sign up using the links below!

How to Organize a Voter Registration Drive, February 25, 6 – 7 p.m. Sign up at: Organizing a Voter Registration Event

How to Influence Elected Officials, February 26, 6 – 7 p.m. Sign up at: How to influence your elected officials

The 2025 NCGA session has officially begun! It's time to make sure you and your friends know who their elected officials are! Visit <a href="NCLEG.GOV/FINDYOURLEGISLATORS">NCLEG.GOV/FINDYOURLEGISLATORS</a> and search for your address! Be sure to get acquainted and save their contact info so you are always prepared to reach out! We'll be packing the NCGA gallery again on Wednesday, Feb. 26. Sign up here.

Our digital messages this week are:

Protect Her in The Courts - Who would've thought you could win an election by 734 votes... three times... and still be fighting for what's rightfully yours? This is the reality Allison Riggs faces. Despite three recounts, an opponent trying to throw out over 60K votes, and multiple lawsuits, she continues to fight for the voices of North Carolinians and the integrity of our democracy. Now, as Jefferson Griffin takes this to the Court of Appeals—the very court on which he sits—we must do everything we can to support Justice Riggs. If you're able, please donate to help her end this battle and protect our democracy. If you've already donated or can't at this time, please share this with friends and family as spreading awareness is just as important.

**Get In Gear -** On December 11, 2024 - over three months ago - SB382 authorized \$100M in crucial relief funds for our local governments. Since then, Republican State Treasurer Brad Briner has been sitting on his hands, and the funding! This delay is hurting local governments, school systems, and communities that desperately need these resources to meet their budgets and rebuild after the devastation of Hurricane Helene. We can't let this continue. It's time to demand action and make sure Western North Carolina gets the support it deserves. If you're already calling your legislators, just add Brian's number to your list: (919) 814-4000

**The Wolf -**N.C. Republican Congressman Tim Moore is too busy day trading MILLIONS of dollars to protect the jobs of those helping Western North Carolina recover from Hurricane Helene. Recent filings show that, while North Carolinians fear for their jobs on the road to recovery, Moore is profiting off his position in office. It's shocking, but unfortunately not surprising. Time and again, it's clear that Republican officials care more about lining their pockets than serving the people who elected them. We. Deserve. Better.

**No Signal -** Tell me you know nothing of our government without telling me... Among all the radical executive orders and policies Donald Trump has pushed, this one falls as one of the worst yet. Donald recently signed an executive order aiming to give him unchecked power, completely disregarding the judicial duty established in Marbury v. Madison (1803), which determined that the courts decide what the law is. Remember when he said he'd be a "dictator on day one"? Looks like that's one promise he's actually planning to keep.

See y'all on the Internet,

NCDP digital

#### State Treasurer Brad Briner is holding up Helene relief funds

- SB382 became law on December 11th last year, over three months ago. The bill established **\$100m** in loans for local governments in Western North Carolina that have yet to be disbursed.
- Republican State Treasurer Brad Briner is keeping local governments in WNC from accessing \$100m in critical funds that will allow local governments and school systems to meet their budgets and help impacted communities rebuild.

#### State of the Race: Supreme Court - This Week's Updates

- Judges Valerie Zachary and Tom Murry both donated to Griffin, and they're also on the Court of Appeals, which may consider Griffin's suit trying to throw out the 65,000 votes. They still have not publicly recused themselves.
- On Wednesday, the <u>DNC filed a brief</u> with the North Carolina Supreme Court backing up the North Carolina State Board of Elections' brief, as well as joined the federal court battle that's happening in parallel with the state court fight. The DNC tagteaming this effort with the NC Dems and the Riggs campaign will help us fight the well-funded effort the Republicans have brought to the table with their RNC backing.

#### WHAT'S URGENT TO COMMUNICATE

- Allison Riggs won this election. She won it three months ago after two recounts confirmed the results for everyone to see. This has gone on for too long and Griffin needs to admit he was wrong and move on.
- This is next-level voter disenfranchisement. Griffin and the Republicans are changing the rules on a select few in Democratic leaning counties after votes are counted. If Griffin's lawsuits succeed, the courts have opened the door for Republicans across America to change the results of an election after voters have already decided.
- The will of the people must prevail. Griffin campaigned on fairness, impartiality, and law and order, but he thinks he gets to play by different rules. He is coming for our

democracy, but we have to stand together to tell him he can't take it from us. Jefferson Griffin must concede.

"We're Mad as Hell:" Across North Carolina, Voters Protest "Sore Loser" Jefferson Griffin's Efforts to "Destroy Our Democracy"

#### On February 18, NCDP issued the following press release:

"This weekend, North Carolina voters held 17 protests across the state to call out Jefferson Griffin for his shameful efforts to overturn his loss in the November 2024 election for the North Carolina Supreme Court and disenfranchise voters. From big cities like Charlotte to towns like Salisbury, North Carolina voters demanded that Griffin concede, stop wasting taxpayer resources, and thwarting the will of voters. Check out highlights of the coverage:

# WLOS: <u>Statewide protests happening against GOP attempt to overturn NC Supreme Court results</u>

[...] The latest attempt by Griffin is claiming the state broke election law by not requiring ID for military, early and overseas voters, which would throw out over 60,000 votes statewide. That includes 2,500 votes in Buncombe County and more than 300 votes in Henderson County. Voters at the Asheville "People vs Griffin" protest, like Cathy Walsh with Common Cause NC, say this is a waste of time and money. "We are protesting that he is holding this up," Walsh said. "It has cost thousands of dollars for each of the 100 counties in the state, the number of hours that have been wasted, it's just disgraceful." [...]

#### WUNC: 'Protect our votes' rally draws hundreds of Riggs supporters in Charlotte

A rally drew crowds to uptown Charlotte on Monday to protest Republican Jefferson Griffin's efforts to toss out tens of thousands of votes in the disputed North Carolina Supreme Court race. Hundreds of people gathered at Marshall Park to protest. They held banners that read "Protect our votes" and "Shame on Griffin" as they marched to the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Government Center. Griffin is hoping to change the results of his election loss to incumbent Democrat Allison Riggs.[...] Henry Young lives in the University City area.

"It's pretty irritating when you vote and your votes then don't count, and that's exactly what's happening with this," he said. "(Riggs) was fairly and freely elected. ... It feels like they want to change things so that they win. And that's why we're out here. We're mad as hell." [...]

Salisbury Post: <u>Angered by Griffin vote challenge, protesters gather at</u> courthouse

[...] On Sunday afternoon, the storms stopped as just over 100 people gathered on the front steps of the Rowan courthouse on North Main Street, carrying signs expressing their frustration with Griffin. The sun came out as speakers began to come to the microphone to share their personal experiences with the vote challenge. And as one voter whose ballot is being challenged explained, many of the issues Griffin is raising were resolved long ago.

Mary Miller James moved to Salisbury more than 20 years ago, and has not missed a vote since. More than a decade ago, when she went to vote, she was told her registration was indeed missing that information, but the law at the time allowed that if she provided proper photo identification at the ballot box in November, her eligibility was guaranteed, not just that day but going forward permanently. She did, and since then, has never once had an issue with voting. "As of January of last year, voter registrations have to have those numbers or they can't be processed, but 20 years ago requirements were different, and I still met the standards required. Since then, I've voted in 33 elections over 23 years and never had an issue," James said. Until Griffin's challenge, and now, she says, "he's trying to tell me that what was correctly resolved under the law, all those years ago, was not actually resolved." [...]

## Charlotte Observer: <u>Hundreds march in Charlotte to protest Griffin's challenges</u> to NC Supreme Court votes

[...] Mark Taylor brought a sign to Monday's march that read "WTF! Do Voters Matter Anymore?" For years, Taylor has worried about the state of democracy, he said, and Griffin's challenge is just the latest example. "Like the sign says: W.T.F., man?" he told a reporter. [...]

Charlotte-Mecklenburg NAACP President Corine Mack described Griffin's challenges to the election as "an attempt to destroy our democracy." "My mother and father sacrificed so much to give me the opportunities that I've got," Mack said. "Unfortunately, our grandchildren and great grandchildren will not have our rights if we don't stand up. We are the foundation of their future." [...]

## Greenville Daily Reflector: <u>Local voters rally against GOP judicial candidate</u> working to disqualify them

Residents of Pitt and neighboring counties whose votes are among more than 60,000 challenged by a candidate for the N.C. Supreme Court expressed their confusion and disdain during a Monday at Greenville's Boyd Lee Park. [...]

Connie Nelson, 79, is a social worker and resident of Winterville. She found out her vote was being challenged in mid-January after she voted early in November's election. Her initial confusion was quickly replaced by anger and an urge to fight, she said. She told those assembled at the rally that she refuses to give up in the face of Griffin's challenge. "Just thinking about the injustice of it, and that it's just being done because they're a sore loser," Nelson said. "They don't want to accept loss. "There's already been two

recounts that show that he didn't win. It's sort of like, how much more court action does there need to be before a final decision is made?" [...]

"That's just not right," Burke said. "I don't understand how this all happened but I hope, I hope that our words get heard a lot. Hopefully, even across the country, that they understand that things are going on that shouldn't be going on." Burke said she has received no indication about grounds Griffin has to challenge her vote. [...]

#### WNCN: Hundreds rally in North Carolina against Jefferson Griffin

[...] Jefferson Griffin appealing judge's decision in North Carolina Supreme Court race. One of those votes was cast by Dr. Amy Bryant, who said she was shocked to receive a flyer in her mailbox after the election. "The idea that my vote could just be thrown out on absolutely baseless pretenses is just outrageous to me," Bryant said. "How could my name be on the list?" she said. "I've voted in every single election since 2011 here in North Carolina." [...]

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# "Do Not Comply in Advance: DEI Edition," by NC State Senator Graig Meyer

As I was preparing dinner on Friday night, Kym read a 63 page <u>court order</u> out loud to me. In today's America, I'm going to recommend you also consider this type of romantic evening.

All day I had been in a funk about the state of things. Both my political work and my fulltime job in education feel like they are fighting uphill these days. The court order snapped me right out of it.

# "Do Not Comply in Advance" means not rushing to change your behavior in response to dictates, when those dictates are illegal.

As I mentioned in my email "What Can We Do?" last week, litigation is currently the most powerful tool for stopping the immediate harms of Trump's unlawful actions. Paying attention to litigation can help give you the strength and direction you need to know what to do instead.

In Friday's court order, Judge Adam B. Abelson put a nationwide preliminary injunction on Donald Trump's January 21 Executive Order attacking Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion programs. Judge Abelson explains that the First and Fifth Amendment forbid the President's attempt to impose his views on the nation through attempts to restrict speech, without clarity or justification, and in complete disregard of the impact to the citizens he is supposed to serve.

Diversity, Equity and Inclusion policies and programs encompass a broad range of work which is both morally essential and legally required. A few examples from my own work

last week: I encountered a preschool director trying to be more effective with students with disabilities, a principal struggling with how to help high school students learn English, and a group of students asking their teacher to interrupt instances of racism.

As Judge Abelson points out, "ensuring equity, diversity, and inclusion has long been a goal, and at least in some contexts arguably a requirement, of federal anti-discrimination law." In other words, much of this work has grown out of legal (and moral) requirements to ensure that opportunities and benefits are more fairly distributed than they were in the past.

The work of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion means taking actions to ensure that every person (inclusion), no matter who they are (diversity), gets what they need (equity) to be successful.

The best leaders frame all of their work through that lens. Their actions are designed to build opportunity for all. We should expect nothing less, including from the President.

Ever since the Executive Order was issued, both of my jobs have included extensive discussion with education leaders attempting to come to grips with how to balance the supposed mandate of a presidential Order with educators' responsibilities to ensure the best education possible for all the children in their care.

All educational leaders want to be sure to obey the law, just as we teach students to. And it is frightening when the President of the United States threatens to withhold essential funding for schools who do not submit to his will. But this is not a time to rush into blind obedience. As we saw with Judge Abelson's order, much of what the President is demanding is unlawful. Comply with the law, not with the dictate. Follow our shared morals, don't bend to the immoral.

#### In the face of authoritarianism, we have a moral mandate to continue to care.

The threats against Diversity, Equity and Inclusion have been made across every sector, even private businesses. I understand how paralyzing this can feel. I find strength in focusing on why we enacted these efforts in the first place. And I find determination in knowing that as important as they were a month ago, they are even more important in the face of the hateful actions of the President.

America's commitment to liberty and prosperity can only be fulfilled when we show care for those most targeted by abuse of power and the intent to divide and harm. Some, including my fellow educators, have the responsibility of showing direct care to people under immediate threat. Others, like the brave plaintiffs that went before Judge Abelson, will need to stand up and challenge the President's action in court.

The private sector has a role as well. Over the past few years private institutions have enacted their own efforts to build prosperity through inclusion. The President has massively overstepped his legal authority in an attempt to bring even these private

companies with their own unfettered free speech rights into compliance. Their leaders make the choice of whether to work for a united America or bend to a racist man's will. We consumers have the power to support businesses that continue to live up to this country's values, and to consider a boycott of those that do not.

Above all, we need to remember our values and not let them be reduced to empty acronyms. Diversity. Equity. Inclusion.

As for my role, this fight is also coming to the North Carolina General Assembly. Last week a bill was introduced seeking to ban Diversity, Equity and Inclusion work in state and local government. Just like the President's Order, the bill is blatantly unconstitutional and in conflict with every law we have implemented to balance the scales of justice and opportunity. And just like the Order, the bill would negatively impact a host of important efforts that advance the state's work to create opportunity for all North Carolinians.

Because of my long history of fighting for racial justice and my current employment focused on educational equity work, Republicans have already hinted they intend to come after me personally. I'm ready for the attacks. I'm not afraid of their attempts to weaponize an acronym. I will proudly defend the values behind the words. I have given my life to attempting to make sure public education serves every single child, and I am not going to stop fighting for the future of those children just because MAGA has chosen DEI as their code word for advancing their racism.

Let me repeat: Inclusion, Equity and Diversity are all values that require us to take action to ensure every person, no matter who they are, gets what they need to be successful.

I'll stand behind those values no matter what Donald Trump or my colleagues try. And I ask you to as well.

Do Not Comply in Advance. Continue to Care.

Onwards, Graig

## **Update from NC Attorney General Jeff Jackson**

**Executive orders** 

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## **Consumer Alert from NC Attorney General Jeff Jackson**

Watch out for Counterfeit Weight-Loss and Diabetes Drugs

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### Links to Events, Trainings, and Actions by Affiliate Organizations

**ACLU of North Carolina** 

**Chatham Voices for Justice** 

**Common Cause North Carolina and Common Cause** 

**Community Organizing for Racial Equity (CORE)** 

County-to-County, Volunteer Opportunities, Events, and Petitions Near Me

**Democracy North Carolina** 

**Democracy Out Loud** 

Indivisible

MegaphoneNC

**NC Counts Coalition** 

Neighbors on Call, Upcoming Events, Canvasses, NC Policy Update.

**New North Carolina Project** 

North Carolina Poor Peoples Campaign

Poder NC

Red, Wine, and Blue; https://redwine.blue/events/

**Swing Left Durham/Chapel Hill/Chatham** 

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## **Selected News and Opinion Stories**

America, America: Rooting Against Trump's America

**American Freakshow: Musk and the Master Race** 

Anderson Alerts: 'The Equities Are With the Voters': Berger Pushes Back on

**Griffin's Effort to Discard 60K Ballots Over Incomplete Registration** 

AP News: (1) <u>Top Russian and US officials meet in Saudi Arabia for Ukraine war talks without Kyiv</u>, (2) <u>Judge extends temporary block to huge cuts in National Institutes of Health research funding</u>

Asbury Park Press: <u>From Target to Walmart: Boycott Movement Targets</u>
Corporate America

Axios Raleigh: (1) North Carolina State Treasurer Brad Briner says State Health
Plan premiums must rise, (2) Republican Lawmakers File Bill To Strip
NCInnovation's Funding

**BBC:** Europe's leaders divided over their tactics with Trump

Cardinal & Pine: <u>Trump's spending freezes could disrupt clean energy boom in NC and increase household heating costs</u>

Carolina Forward: What Waffle House and Eggs Are Telling Us About Inflation, (2), North Carolina Needs a DOGE

Carolina Public Press: (1) <u>Signature verification program for NC voters is faulty, report says</u>, (2) <u>Bills from NC lawmakers expand gun rights</u>, <u>limit cellphone use</u>

Chaotic Era: <u>Democrats' gerontocracy problem is front and center in the Trump era</u>

Civil Discourse: (1) <u>Kash Patel, Confirmed</u>, (2) <u>Friday Night Massacre in the Military</u>

CNN: <u>Washington Post opted not to publish anti-Musk ad campaign after initially being open</u>

Common Dreams: <u>Thousands in Midwestern GOP Districts Attend Sanders' First Stops on Tour To Stop Oligarchy</u>

Futurism: Economist Warns That Elon Musk Is About to Cause a "Deep, Deep Recession"

Heather Cox Richardson: Letters From an American: <u>February 16</u>, <u>February 17</u>, <u>February 18</u>, <u>February 19</u>, <u>February 20</u>, <u>February 21</u>, <u>February 22</u>

Hopium Chronicles: (1) We Are The Ones We've Been Waiting For, (2) The Importance Of Community And Bearing Witness, (3) We Are Americans. Fighting For Freedom and Democracy Is What We Do, (4) Courage In A Georgia Townhall, (5) The Mad King Had A Bad Week (6) Sunday Hopium - The Mad King's Bad Week, House Budget Vote Tuesday, Supporting Anderson Clayton and The NC Dems

Inside Climate News: (1) <u>Climate and Environmental Justice Programs Stalled by Trump Freeze, Despite Court Orders</u>, (2) <u>Massive Cuts to a HUD Office Would Slow Disaster Aid to Hard-Hit N.C. Communities</u>

Let's Address This With Quasim Rashid: Trump Is Fueling a MAGA Civil War

**Lucas Kunce: America The Business** 

Lucid: (1) <u>States of Emergency: A Favorite Autocratic Tool</u>, (2) <u>Preparing Trump's</u> Military Purge: What MAGA Did Not Want the U.S. Naval Academy To Hear

MSN: <u>Tesla Sales Tank as Elon Musk Boycott Gathers Steam</u>

Newsweek: U.S. Threatens To Cut Ukraine's Starlink Access: Report

NBC News: <u>Judge blocks Trump administration from terminating DEI-related grants</u>

NC Health News: <u>Rural North Carolina counties would suffer most from Medicaid</u> cuts

NC Newsline: (1) <u>State lawmakers introduce bill for nonpartisan judge elections in memory of Rep. Joe John</u>, (2) <u>US, NC representatives blast GOP plan to slash Medicaid funding for North Carolina</u>, (3) <u>Griffin and Other Conflicted Judges Must Publicly Recuse Themselves from Supreme Court Election Case</u>

New Branchhead: The Roots of Tillis's Spinelessness

NOTUS: <u>Senate Republicans Don't Want To Talk About the House's Proposed</u>
<u>Medicaid Cuts</u>

NYTimes: On Politics: (1) What is Elon Musk's job?, (2) It wasn't just a chain saw

NY Times: The Morning: (1) A disagreement on tariffs, (2) Ukraine's equation, (3) Sanctions against Russia, (4) The influence of aid, (5) Censoring Games

NY Times: The Evening: (1) <u>U.S. and Russia pursue closer ties</u>, (2) <u>The Evening: Trump feuds with Zelensky</u>, (3) <u>Kash Patel will lead the F.B.I.</u>, (4) <u>Trump to detain migrants on military bases</u>

NPR: DOGE released data about federal contract savings. It doesn't add up

Politico: (1) MAGA takes aim at the Republican hawks, (2) DOGE savings receipts riddled with errors, (3) Musk Says All Federal Works Need To Explain Their Work Immediately – Or Be Let Go, GOP Hawks Bristle at Trump's Anti-Ukraine Tirade

PoliticsNC: (1) North Carolina is ground zero in the fight for democracy, (2) Thom Tillis and the party of surrender, (3) Crocodile tears

ProPublica: What Are DOGE's Plans for the Social Security Administration?

Public Notice: (1) <u>Trump has already weaponized the Department of Education</u>, (2) <u>How Marco Rubio helped bury American soft power</u>, (3) <u>AOC shows how to fight back and strong</u>

Reuters: Trump's approval rating slips as Americans worry about the economy

Science News: Fired federal workers share the crucial jobs no longer being done

Stop The Presses: Why won't the media call fascists 'fascists'?

The Assembly NC: (1) <u>Fayetteville Museum Aims To Right the Record on Civil War History</u>

The Bulwark: (1) <u>Breaking Things Faster Than You Can Read About It</u>, (2) <u>Sleepwalking Congressional Republicans Consumed With Confusion</u>, (3) <u>Seven Myths Shattered by Trump 2.0 (and One True Thing)</u>, (4) <u>The DOGE Brain Drain Has Begun</u>, (5) <u>We're Negotiating with War Criminals</u>, (6) <u>Dems Shouldn't Run Away From the USAID Fight -- They Should Win It</u>, (7) <u>Inside DOGE's Dumbest Cut Yet</u>

The Contrarian: (1) <u>The American surrender to Putin</u>, (2) <u>Non-MAGA Trump voters</u> will soon lose patience, (3) They Broke It. They Own It., (4) The Democracy Index

The Message Box: How to Make Trump Unpopular Again

The Status Kuo: (1) <u>Elon Sees Dead People</u>, (2) <u>Hold My Beer, Neville Chamberlain</u>, (3) <u>Pushback</u>

Time: (1) Why Trump Is Downplaying Musk's Role at DOGE in Court, (2) What Medicaid Work Requirements Mean for Disabled People, (3) Mark Cuban: Democrats Too Inept to Exploit Trump's Chaos

Washington Post (May Require Subscription): (1) Opinion | Why Gen Z men love Trump's reign of destruction, (2) Musk's DOGE Says It Has Saved \$55 Billion. Not So Fast., (3)

WRAL: (1) NC Supreme Court won't fast-track lawsuit challenging 60K ballots in race for one of its own seats, (2) Trump taps North Carolina's Stein to lead council on state-federal partnerships, (3) Clayton wins second term as NC Democratic Party chair, (4) Statewide Wins, Harris' Loss, and Getting Off the Mat: NC Dem Chair Talks First Term, New Priorities

WUNC: (1) NC Senate leader dismisses concerns that tax cuts could create 'fiscal cliff', (2) Young voters disproportionately affected by Griffin challenges, (3) Elon Musk tells federal employees to document work in email or be fired; (4) What a 'fiscal cliff' could mean for NC