

SPRING/SUMMER 2019

FAMILY

north carolina

THE "CHARMING"
AND ALARMING
FACE OF NEW
MARIJUANA

A Child-Centric
Approach to
Public Policy

Depolarizing
America

ISBN 0-9785025-1-5



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OUR VISION:

A state and nation where God is honored,
religious freedom flourishes,
families thrive and life is cherished.



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FEATURES

- 6** **An Evidentiary Guide to Marijuana**
 “New” marijuana is a far different drug than it was back when it was associated with hippies and peace signs in the '60s. Concentrations of THC in pot have skyrocketed from 2 percent to as high as 60 percent, and this is causing some frightening physical and mental health issues. Big corporations are investing millions in the hopes that recreational marijuana will be legalized all over the country, while medical professionals are urging everyone to slow down!
- 14** **A Child-Centric Approach to Public Policy**
 The idea that parents should sacrifice for the good of their children used to be a universally accepted premise. But in our current me-centered culture of convenience, children are often viewed as more of a commodity to be parcelled out to adults. Approaching public policy through a child-centric lens has the dramatic effect of focusing our attention on what's most important for the future of families in America. Katy Faust, founder and president of the non-profit Them Before Us, walks us through some of the key issues this perspective influences.
- 18** **Q & A**
 Get a glimpse into NC Family's radio show and podcast, *Family Policy Matters*: Russell Moore, President of the Southern Baptist Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission, challenges our culture's perspective on family; former Planned Parenthood clinic director Abby Johnson talks about the impact of the new movie *Unplanned*; clinical psychologist Dr. Frank Moncher contends that suffering can be useful and should not necessarily be avoided at all costs; and political analyst Mitch Kokai talks about what it takes to amend the North Carolina Constitution.
- 20** **Depolarizing America**
 As much of America continues to spiral into deeper and deeper political division, there are groups spontaneously popping up across the country who are determined to set a different course. From living rooms to churches to local coffee shops, people from opposite sides of the political spectrum are sitting down to listen and talk. The goal is not necessarily “disagreeing less, but disagreeing better.” Alysse ElHage is involved in one of these groups and she explains why they are resonating with so many.

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DEPARTMENTS



Crouching At The Door

The image of New York State legislators and Governor Andrew Cuomo laughing and wildly applauding after signing a law that legalizes abortion up until birth is seared on my brain. I can't get away from it. These representatives also erased from their state's criminal statutes any penalty for violence against unborn children. As a consequence, if someone delivers a forceful kick to the stomach of a woman who is nine months pregnant in New York State and the baby dies, that person will be charged with assaulting the woman. No charges for the death of that child. In celebration of their achievement, the Governor ordered all of the state's most beloved monuments to be lit up pink, including the 9-11 memorial. Weeks later, it's still enough to make me sick to my stomach.

These radical abortion advocates had been filing similar laws in New York State every year for nearly a decade, to no avail—until enough pro-life lawmakers were voted out of office. Then, they acted quickly to strengthen the bill and push it through—on the anniversary of the historic abortion ruling, *Roe v. Wade*. The astounding symbolism was not lost on them or us.

What you might not know is that pro-abortion activists filed a similar bill last session in the North Carolina General Assembly. But because we have a strong pro-life contingent of lawmakers and pro-family advocates who work tirelessly day in and day out, that bill was never even considered in a committee. However, it's good to remember that, just as in New York, these activists with their radical anti-life bills are crouched at the door, waiting for the numbers to swing their way.

This is our motivation as we write our email updates and articles for *Family North Carolina* magazine. We work hard to provide concise and understandable explanations of sometimes complex issues, which are often clouded by misleading information and conjecture. We want you to have the information you need to be active in promoting family-friendly public policy in our state.

In this issue, we tackle three topics that we hope will help you to communicate with your friends, neighbors, co-workers and lawmakers. **Our main story is about the misinformation campaign being waged by those with a vested interest in seeing recreational marijuana legalized all over the country.** Despite overwhelming evidence that this new brand of marijuana may be having terrifying effects on individuals and communities, many people still believe it's harmless. We show you why it's not.

Have you ever felt a paradigm shift in your thinking? Someone frames an issue in a new way and, all of a sudden, you see things from a completely different perspective. That's the transformation that many have when they view some of our culture's key issues with a "child-centric" lens. Katy Faust, founder and president of Them Before Us, shows how viewing marriage, divorce, abortion, in vitro fertilization and adoption through the lens of what's best for the child, suddenly snaps each of these tough issues into focus.

Finally, we get an insider's look at some very unique and counter-cultural groups that are popping up all over the nation. These groups facilitate the gathering together of people very different from each other to sit down across the table to talk. The goal is to create a national conversation that is less polarized and more productive. Alysse ElHage is a member of one of these groups and she explains how they work.

We hope you find these articles to be helpful. Feel free to pass this issue along to others, or send me a note if you'd like a few extras to hand out at church and to your family and friends. 📧



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Internet

Visit us on the Internet at ncfamily.org, where you can read selected stories from this issue, including endnotes. Publication of website addresses of other organizations featured in our stories does not constitute endorsement by the North Carolina Family Policy Council of those groups or the contents of those sites.

Subscriptions

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But among you it will be different.
Whoever wants to be a leader
among you must be your servant.

—Jesus on Leadership, Mark 10:43 (NLT)

Now it looks just like the needle
that is used to supply the lethal
injection to the living unborn child.

—Thomas Peters on Twitter
pointing to the One World
Trade Center's spire, which
was shrouded with pink
light in celebration of New
York's new state law allowing
abortions up until birth.



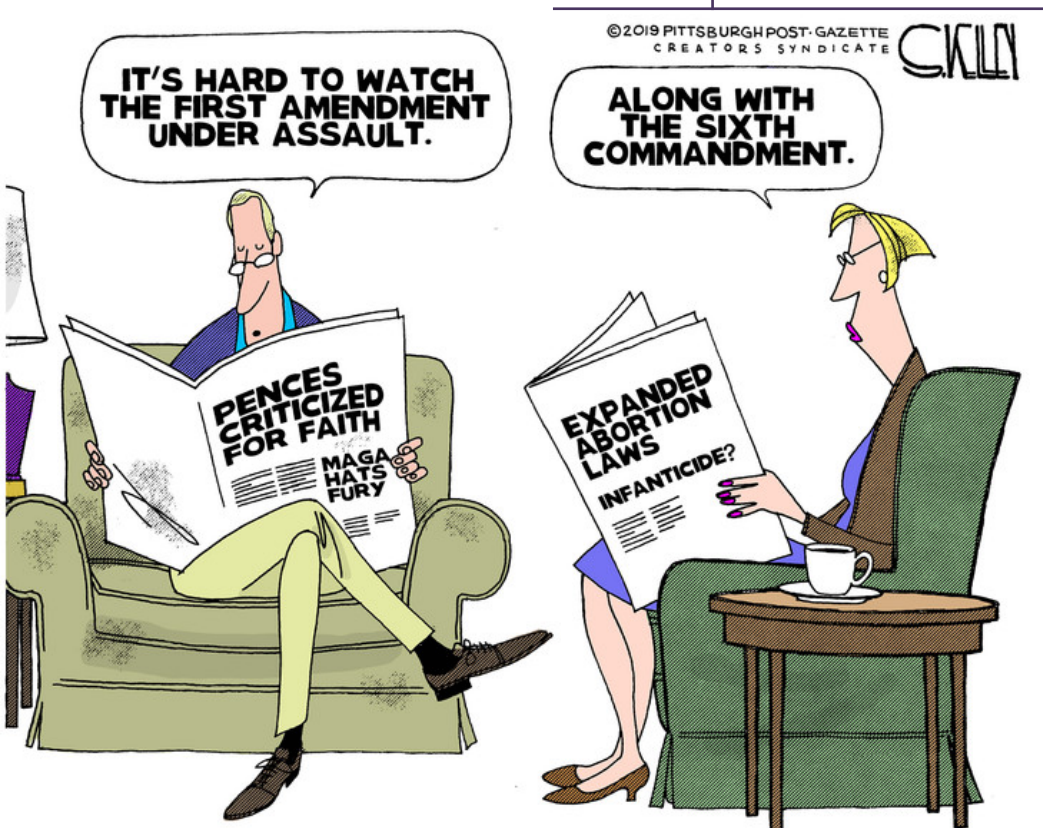
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We need to let the Bible frame the way we view
things and the way we treat people. No matter
what the radio talk show hosts say, no matter
what the political pundits say, no matter what
many of our political leaders do, we will cut our
own wake. We're Christians first and foremost.
That's our first team.

—Dr. Bruce Ashford, Provost at Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary,
speaking at NC Family's 2018 Winston-Salem Major Speakers Dinner

There's something about
love that builds up and
is creative. There is
something about hate
that tears down
and is destructive.
So love your enemies.

—Martin Luther King, Jr.



Because wherever I look,
I see nuances withering
away. On TV shows, we
have one anti-something
speaker situated against
a pro-something speaker.
Yeah? It's good ratings
[...] because it's a clash
between two certainties.
[...] So slowly and
systematically, we are
being denied the right to
be complex.

—Elif Shafak, Turkish-British novelist

An Evidentiary Guide to MARIJUANA

In this guide, our goal is to provide current and evidence-based information on marijuana and related substances in a succinct and easily accessible format. It is meant to provide a tool for those who wish to combat the flood of misinformation surrounding marijuana and to be an able assistant in, what can often be, a highly emotional debate.

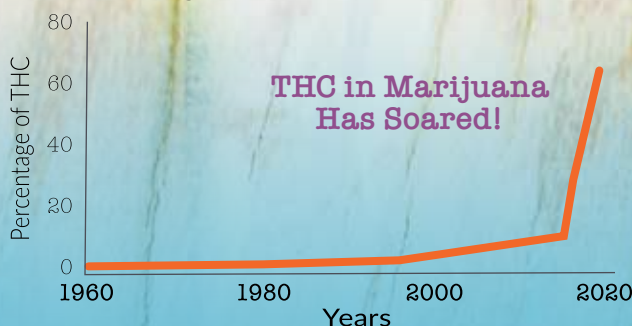
“Over the past 30 years, psychiatrists and epidemiologists have turned speculation about marijuana’s dangers into science. Yet over the same period, a shrewd and expensive lobbying campaign has pushed public attitudes the other way.”

—Alex Berenson,
Yale graduate, former investigative journalist with
Denver Post and *New York Times*.

Today’s Marijuana Is Far More Potent

The pot smoked today is a very different drug than that smoked by preceding generations. In the 1960s and 1970s, THC content was around 2 percent. According to researchers at the University of Mississippi, the average THC content of illicit marijuana seized by the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) increased from 4 percent in 1995 to 12 percent in 2014. A 2015 study found legal marijuana in Colorado with THC content up to 30 percent. And 2018 testimony reveals THC concentrations as high as 65 percent in Washington State. *(See graphic below.)*

We’re dealing with a drug that has been modified to be far more potent than it was in the past. Because of that, it is presenting unprecedented problems. States that have legalized recreational use of marijuana are serving as unfortunate testing grounds and revealing frightening physical, psychological and social effects, especially with more frequent use and at higher-than-ever THC levels.



THC

(tetrahydrocannabinol)
Marijuana's psychoactive compound that causes the "high." Low levels of THC are also found in hemp.

VS.

CBD

(Cannabidiol)

Found in both Marijuana (in lower levels) and Hemp (in higher levels). CBD is a non-psychoactive compound, which means it will not make you feel "high." In fact, there is evidence that CBD could counteract the psychoactive effects of THC.

CANNABIS

Marijuana and hemp BOTH are categorized as cannabis. They both contain differing levels of THC and CBD. THC and CBD are both "cannabinoids" and are often confused with "cannibidiol," which is the unabbreviated name for CBD.

MARIJUANA

In marijuana, THC is found in much higher levels and CBD in lower levels. Marijuana can be grown to minimize the CBD content and maximize the THC/psychoactive content. Marijuana remains illegal on both the federal and state level in North Carolina.

HEMP

In hemp, THC is found in much lower levels and CBD in higher levels. Under the guidelines of federal and NC law, hemp production is allowed if the concentration of THC is no more than 0.3 percent on a dry weight basis. However, the FDA maintains regulatory authority over it because it contains THC and CBD, which are active ingredients in FDA-approved drugs.

WHAT'S WHAT:

Cannabis,
Marijuana, Hemp,
THC, CBD

CBD

According to the FDA, it is illegal to sell any food containing CBD, to market CBD products as dietary supplements, or make claims that CBD provides therapeutic benefits, unless approved by the FDA.

Note that drug testing is not perfected to the point of consistently distinguishing between low levels of THC often found in hemp and higher levels found in marijuana. According to *Forbes* magazine, it is not uncommon for people using CBD to fail a drug test for marijuana and lose job opportunities.

"It's very unlikely that the effects of old [lower concentration THC] cannabis and new [higher concentration THC] cannabis on population health are the same. This is critically important because almost all our research is on old cannabis."

—Keith Humphreys, Section Director for Mental Health Policy in the Department of Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences at Stanford University.

“You can’t trust the people who sell the drugs to be upfront with the risk.”

—Dr. Erik Messamore
Psychiatrist at Northeast Ohio Medical University commenting on marijuana

WARNING:

Beware of official-looking research journals often touted by marijuana advocates. Some of these journals are nothing more than a front for providing one-sided “evidence” to push legalization.

Delivery

MARIJUANA AND HEALTH

Severe Reactions to Marijuana Use

Emergency Room visits have skyrocketed in Denver since marijuana was legalized in Colorado in 2014. A March 2019 research study published in *Annals of Internal Medicine* shows a three-fold increase. “Marijuana-infused foods and candies, called edibles, also led to trouble. Patients came to the ER with symptoms such as repeated vomiting, racing hearts and psychotic episodes.” Three deaths have also been reported. Nine out of ten cases were Colorado residents, not out-of-state visitors experimenting with the drug, as some have suggested.

“When users had acute toxic reactions to old [lower THC] cannabis and came into the emergency room, it looked much like a panic attack. Unpleasant, to be sure, but the person had not lost touch with reality as in a psychotic reaction. In the age of new [higher THC] cannabis, the risk for acute psychotic reactions is much higher—we can see that in E.R. data both in the U.S. and Europe.”

—Keith Humphreys, Section Director for Mental Health Policy in the Department of Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences at Stanford University

A European study just released in March 2019 in the preeminent psychiatry journal *The Lancet Psychiatry* found an even more alarming link: “People who smoked marijuana on a daily basis were three times more likely to be diagnosed with psychosis compared with people who never used the drug. For those who used high-potency marijuana daily, the risk jumped to nearly five times.”

In addition, a National Academy of Sciences report found:

- “Cannabis use is likely to increase the risk of developing schizophrenia and other psychoses; the higher the use, the greater the risk.
- Heavy cannabis users are more likely to report thoughts of suicide than non-users.
- Regular cannabis use is likely to increase the risk for developing social anxiety disorder.
- For individuals diagnosed with bipolar disorders, near daily cannabis use may be linked to greater symptoms of bipolar disorder than non-users.”

Not only is today's marijuana much more potent, it is often consumed in ways that increase THC intake. And since THC is slow-acting, users often accidentally ingest dangerous levels, a fact that has led to a jump in emergency room visits in Colorado, where marijuana is legal for recreational use (see page 6).

THC can be extracted from marijuana and made into oil concentrates. These can be added to joints (cannabis cigarettes), or put into edibles—cookies, brightly colored gummy bears and lollipops, brownies, rice krispie treats, and candy bars—which can be consumed in much higher volumes, much more easily and quickly. Popping a handful of THC-laced gummy bears can be far more toxic than smoking marijuana.

Confusion for Lawmakers, Law Enforcement, Teachers and Parents

The ability to ingest THC in the form of junk food is creating difficulties for the enforcement of drug laws. Unlike alcohol intoxication, there is not yet a quick test to check for use of marijuana, even for those driving under the influence. Children can be eating THC-laced treats around parents, teachers and other authorities without arousing suspicion. In addition, drug-sniffing dogs may have trouble distinguishing between the non-psychoactive CBD oil and products that contain THC.

— CNBC, 2019: "Legal Hemp, Pot's Look-Alike, Creates Confusion For Police"

Dangers for Youth and Children

Teens who become weekly marijuana users by age 18 have a 37 percent higher chance of depression as adults. Researchers in Australia found that, among teens in Australia and New Zealand, those who became daily cannabis users before age 17 were seven times as likely to commit suicide, eight times as likely to use other drugs in their 20s, and 60 percent less likely to finish high school. More research is needed to consider pre-existing conditions and the effects of marijuana combined with alcohol.

— *The Lancet Psychiatry*, 2014

Brain development during adolescence can be harmed by frequent cannabis use, and cognitive functions can be permanently reduced. [...] Cannabis use in adolescence has also been associated with increased risk of psychosis in adulthood."

—*The Lancet Psychiatry*, 2014

"Colorado now holds the dubious distinction of leading the country in first-time drug use. And the rate of monthly marijuana use among 18-to-25-year-olds in states with legal weed is nearly three times as much as states that haven't legalized it."

—"National Survey of Drug Use and Health" from the U.S Department of Health and Human Services



FDA Cites Limited Research on Medicinal Use



Although the American Medical Association maintains its opposition to legalization of marijuana by state legislatures, the organization supports increased research. Medical research continues on the use of chemicals derived from cannabis for prescription medications. However, at the time of this writing, the FDA has approved only one CBD-based medication, which is used to treat severe childhood epilepsy. There are two FDA-approved drugs containing a synthetic chemical similar to THC and used for treatment of nausea caused by chemotherapy and to increase appetite in patients with extreme weight loss caused by AIDS. The United Kingdom, Canada, and several European countries have approved a mouth spray containing THC and CBD for treatment of muscle control problems caused by multiple sclerosis, but it isn't FDA-approved.

Research in the U.S. proceeds in states where laws permit it. According to their website, FDA.gov, "the FDA supports researchers who conduct adequate and well-controlled clinical trials which may lead to the development of safe and effective marijuana products to treat medical conditions." The FDA website suggests there is data that seems to point to a drop in opioid abuse in states where marijuana is legalized, but emphasizes that there is no research to back this up at this point. And there are promising signs regarding treatments for cancer. Initial findings show "marijuana extracts may help kill certain cancer cells and reduce the size of others" when used in combination with radiation.

Meanwhile, research continues on claims that cannabis is useful in treating "anxiety, pain, arthritis, drug cravings, convulsions, and inflammation, [...] epilepsy (the only ailment with the FDA stamp of approval), PTSD, fibromyalgia, endometriosis, Parkinson's, and M.S."

However, the FDA prohibits the marketing of cannabis products, such as CBD and THC, for therapeutic and medical uses unless approved by the FDA, because they "have not been evaluated as to whether they work, what the proper dosage may be if they do work, how they could interact with other drugs, or whether they have dangerous side effects or other safety concerns."

Caution Urged

A 2017 National Academy of Sciences report issues a strong caution that **"unlike other substances whose use may confer risk, such as alcohol or tobacco, no accepted standards for the safe use or appropriate doses are available to help guide individuals as they make choices regarding the issues of if, when, where, and how to use cannabis safely and, in regard to therapeutic uses, effectively."**

The American Medical Association website has issued a statement that the AMA **"believes that scientifically valid and well-controlled clinical trials conducted under federal investigational new drug applications are necessary to assess the safety and effectiveness of all new drugs, including potential cannabis products for medical use."** However, the statement goes on to say that the AMA **"believes that cannabis for medicinal use should not be legalized through the state legislative, ballot initiative, or referendum process."**

Marijuana is still classified as a Schedule 1 controlled substance by the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA). The DEA has twice denied petitions to reschedule marijuana **"because it does not meet the criteria for currently accepted medical use in treatment in the United States, there is a lack of accepted safety for its use under medical supervision, and it has a high potential for abuse."**



“But why are the promoters of the industry so desperate to get [laws legalizing marijuana] passed? It’s simple: The pot industry is longing to become the next Big Tobacco and will do everything in its power to decrease regulations and maximize its own profits—at the expense of public health and safety.”

—Dr. Kevin Sabet, president of Smart Approaches to Marijuana Action and a former drug policy advisor to the Obama Administration.

Marijuana is Big Business

Marijuana advocates have effectively framed the issue of legalized marijuana as a battle against “Big Pharma” and a “big bad” government that wants to deny relief for those suffering. They have been highly effective in branding pot as a miracle drug with lifesaving properties and no negative side effects—largely ignoring evidence and cries for caution from major medical associations and scientists.

By some counts, they appear to be running an effective public relations race, even if evidence is not on their side. According to the 2018 General Social Survey, conducted by the University of Chicago, “Support for legal marijuana hit 61 percent in 2018, up from 57 percent two years ago.” This support appears to cut across all age groups and political parties. “The 2018 poll is the first in which a majority of Republicans support legalizing marijuana—54 percent, up from 45 percent in 2016.”

Those who have dared to question the marijuana talking points have often been stunned by the backlash. Alex Berenson, award-winning author and investigative reporter, has written an expose and even a book on the dangers of marijuana abuse. According to an article in *The Christian Institute*, “the married [...] father-of-two received death threats on social media, while other activists called his home to threaten his children. [...] He said that some were threatening to give cannabis or cocaine to his children.”

*“The Marijuana Business Factbook is projecting marijuana sales to soar to nearly \$22 billion by 2022. [...] There aren't a tremendous number of industries with growth projections like that, which is why entrepreneurs and big-business leaders are rushing to find their place in the cannabis ecosystem,” most notably beer companies. “Corona brewer Constellation Brands made massive waves by investing \$3.8 billion into Canadian marijuana grower Canopy Growth Corp. And according to *The Wall Street Journal*, Heineken and Molson Coors Brewing Company are close behind, having announced development deals for cannabis-infused drinks.”*

—Green/Entrepreneur, Dec 2018: “Big Business Is Cashing In On The Cannabis-Fueled Green Rush”

Causation or not, it's interesting to note that “the first four states to legalize marijuana for recreational use were Colorado and Washington in 2014 and Alaska and Oregon in 2015. Combined, those four states had [...] an increase of 37 percent for murders and 25 percent for aggravated assaults, far greater than the national increase even after accounting for differences in population growth.”

—Alex Berenson, Yale graduate, former investigative journalist with *Denver Post* and *New York Times*.

NC Should Not Be An Early Adopter

In this Guide, we have done our best to provide accurate information on both sides of this critical health issue. Regarding negative evidence about marijuana use, John Stonestreet, president of the Colson Center for Christian Worldview says, “critics will respond, ‘That’s correlation, not causation.’ [...] But as I heard [Journalist Alex] Berenson say just last week in Denver, of course it’s correlation and not causation. The only way to prove causation would be to ask half a sample group to experiment with something that may harm them. That’s not ethically possible. By the way, all the studies that made us believe that cigarette smoking causes lung cancer were correlated studies too, but that was enough to convince us all.”

No matter what the potential payoff might be, North Carolina should not be an early adopter in the marijuana arena—especially in regard to non-prescription medical and recreational use. Research on medical applications should continue and even be accelerated. However, the potential costs to the physical, psychological and social health of our citizens are too high and the evidence of potential harms is too great to proceed at this time. 🚫

Contributing writers and researchers:
Traci DeVette Griggs, Jere Royall, and Julie Tisdale.
For a footnoted version of this article
please visit www.ncfamily.org.

Pastors Luncheon

NC Family hosted a pastor lunch in Raleigh, spearheaded by Pastor Outreach Director Thomas Graham, that featured a message on the intersection of faith and culture by Dr. Bruce Ashford of Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary. Pastors and church leaders from all over the state were in attendance. After being challenged by Dr. Ashford and praying for our state, attendees were invited to visit their legislators at the NC General Assembly.



Rustin speaks at FRC event

In partnership with Family Research Council, NC Family President John Rustin spoke at a Pastors Briefing in Unionville, outside of Charlotte, as part of FRC's Watchmen on the Wall Ministry.

New Staff Members

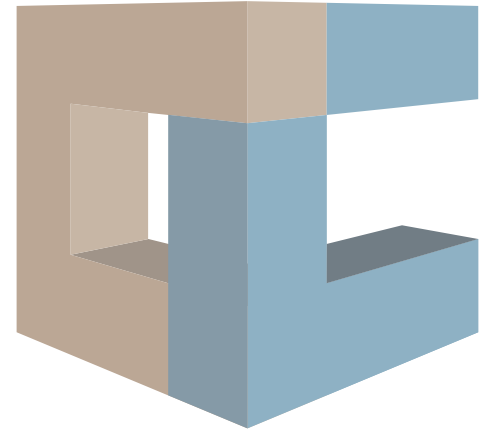
NC Family welcomed two new staff members to our team this past December, Betsy Wilson and Calley Mangum. Betsy joined as our new Administrator, and Calley as Communications Assistant. We are excited to welcome them both to the NC Family team!



Rustin and Royall Watching Your Back

Another session of the North Carolina General Assembly is in full swing and with it come great opportunities to promote pro-life and pro-family laws in our state!

However, challenges are always a major possibility too. John and Jere spend countless hours monitoring hundreds of bills, fostering relationships with lawmakers, and watching out for the interests of NC families.



NC Family Cornerstone Community

The Cornerstone Community is the special distinction NC Family gives to those who partner with us through monthly giving or larger gifts. By being part of the Cornerstone Community, supporters are given the opportunity to join a monthly Cornerstone Community call where NC Family provides updates and insights into the goings on around the state and nation. For the past few months, we've welcomed some special guests onto our Cornerstone calls, including former Speaker Pro Tempore of the NC House of Representatives Paul "Skip" Stam, President of Americans United for Life Catherine Glenn Foster and AUL's Chief Legal Officer Steve Aden, and Les Bernal, National Director of Stop Predatory Gambling.

If you are interested in partnering with us and becoming a part of our Cornerstone Community, please visit our website at ncfamily.org/cornerstone.



Rustin Speaks Against Sports Gambling

NC Family President John Rustin teamed up with former Speaker Pro Tempore of the NC House, Paul "Skip" Stam to present evidence on why legalizing sports gambling in North Carolina is a bad idea, on the Spectrum News program "In Focus."

A Child-Centric Approach to Public Policy

written by:
Katy Faust



Have you ever been accused of bigotry for your support of traditional marriage? Yeah, me too.

In fact it was that very accusation in 2012, from both Facebook friends and the media at large that finally made this non-confrontational pastor's wife... snap. That's when it became clear to me that no matter how many gay friends you have or how well-reasoned your arguments or how compelling your own lived experience, if you didn't support gay marriage you were the equivalent of a racist or a Nazi. As a woman who is very close to her mother and her mother's partner, and who also recognized the irreplaceable value of my father's presence in my life, I knew that there was no conflict between loving your gay family and friends and supporting traditional marriage.

When it comes to children, the mantra of the gay lobby is that mothers and fathers are optional. Having worked with kids for 20 years, I have never met a child who lost their mother or father who was not, at the very least, curious about their missing parent. Most of the time, however, their loss resulted in a life-long wound and struggles well into adulthood. Indeed, fatherlessness is a main contributor to every major social ill we are battling today including poverty, teen pregnancy, high incarceration rates, alcohol and drug use, mental health issues, behavioral disorders, and suicide. So I began writing about why marriage is a social justice issue for children.

Historically, marriage between a man and a woman has been the most child-friendly institution the world has ever known, and that is what the narrative around gay marriage fails to acknowledge. Government's interest in protecting marriage is not simplistically about protecting someone's love life. Marriage is protected by nearly every society throughout history because it unites the two people to whom children have a natural right—their mother and father. Growing up with married parents stacks the deck in a



child's favor when it comes to their physical, social and emotional health. It also happens to be what children want. How many kids experienced their parent's death or divorce or abandonment and loved it? Right... zero. Yet, the push to redefine the family is predicated on the assumption that gender and biology are irrelevant to parenting. Instead we are told that kids simply need "love and safety."

Once I began writing, other children with gay parents found me. Most were terrified to share their stories with the world, let alone their own families. Even so, they would share them with me. Stories such as:

"When I hit school I started to realize through observing other children and their loving bonds with their fathers that I was missing out on something special. I was lied to throughout school; I was told I didn't have a father... it was very difficult for me to affirm a stable identity. And my behavioral and emotional stability suffered greatly because of it..." —Millie

Me, my baby brother, Dad, and [his partner] Billy [were] the only family I had ever known. [I watched] The Land Before Time. It was a

traumatic experience. Littlefoot had a "Mother" and she died saving his life. Littlefoot spent the entire movie mourning the loss of his "Mother." It was in that moment, as a 5 year old girl, that I realized there was such a thing as a mother and that I did not have one. I spent the rest of the day crying into the arms of a teacher I would never see again for a mother that I never knew I never had. —Samantha

"I yearned for the affection that my friends received from their dads. As far as I was concerned, I already had one mother; I did not need another. My grandfathers and uncles did the best they could when it came to spending time with me and doing all the daddy-daughter stuff, but it was not the same as having a full-time father, and I knew it. It always felt secondhand." —Brandi

When the Supreme Court decided to legalize gay marriage for the entire country, it didn't wipe away the hurt of children like these. What it *did* do was make it discriminatory for any governmental or political institution to recognize that children *should* be raised by their mother and father. Now these children will likely believe they are the ones who are wrong for their feelings, not the law itself.

The reality is, these kids are just like every other human child who longs to be known and loved by the two people responsible for their existence. And, they're not alone when it comes to experiencing the pain of family breakdown. The children of no-fault divorce, abandonment, and those who have been intentionally denied a relationship with a parent via reproductive technologies experience the same pain. Turns out, none of these kids have ever had anyone officially advocating for their rights in family structure.

It's time for that to change.

The reality is, these kids are just like every other human child who longs to be known and loved by the two people responsible for their existence.



With the help of several other (adult) children who have experienced the loss of a parent whether by divorce, donor-conception or who have LGBT parents, I have founded the first-ever non-profit devoted to the defense of children's rights in family structure. We are committed to highlighting the child's perspective in the conversation around marriage, parenthood and family—in both the culture and the courtroom.

Until recently, our culture and laws have recognized that children have an innate right to their mother and father. When this right is violated, children become “items” to be cut and pasted into any and every adult romantic relationship. Of course, deadbeat biological parents and heroic step-parents exist. Yet studies reveal that children raised in households with a non-biological caregiver are more likely to be abused and neglected. Therefore, when both parents' personal choices and our laws honor children's rights

Until recently, our culture and laws have recognized that children have an innate right to their mother and father. When this right is violated, children become “items” to be cut and pasted into any and every adult romantic relationship.

to their mother and father, we stack the deck **in favor** of the next generation's mental, physical, and emotional health.

Approaching today's marriage and family issues through the lens of children's rights brings the true problem, and solution, into focus. Here are a few examples:

Divorce

Children thrive when they have daily connection with both their mother and father. Divorce forever disrupts the meeting of this need. It initiates what often becomes a lifelong cycle of transition and family disruption.

Studies show that two homes, two sets of expectations, two new partners/spouses are not better than one. After divorce, sometimes children lose contact with one parent, usually their father, altogether. Children of divorce suffer increased rates of teen suicide, juvenile crime, declining school performance, teen pregnancy, mental health struggles; and it diminishes the likelihood of having a healthy, lasting marriage when they reach adulthood.

There are circumstances where divorce is necessary because one parent is responsible for ending the marriage due to abuse, infidelity or abandonment. In such “at-fault” cases, the courts should be able to rule in favor of the innocent spouse. However, approximately two-thirds of all couples with children that choose divorce are considered to have “low-conflict” marriages where domestic violence or emotional abuse is not a factor. Major reasons cited for divorce include poor commitment, arguing, lack of preparation for marriage, or feeling like the relationship is unequal. Our current model of “no-fault” divorce means that a marriage is easier to dissolve than a contract with your cable company. Sadly, “no-fault” divorce often gives the greatest power to the spouse who has the least investment in the marriage. It nullifies any legal protection of the “innocent” party because the court splits everything, from time with each child to allocation of each dollar, right down the middle.

A child-centric approach to divorce would be a return to the “at-fault” model of divorce, which encourages both parties to be faithful to the marriage and to their children. Extending mandatory waiting periods for unilateral no-fault divorce and subsidizing counseling for struggling

couples have been shown to reduce divorce rates. Staying together “for the kids” actually is the best and most important reason of all to not divorce.

Donor-Conception/Surrogacy

Sperm/egg donation and surrogacy can be confusing for conservatives. After all, we love babies, so any practice that produces babies must be good, right? Not when viewed through a child-centric lens. These technologies fundamentally violate a child’s right to their mother and father, and often their right to life as well. Here are some common practices involved when babies are created in the lab instead of the womb:

- **Abortion.** For cost reasons, surrogate pregnancies often implant multiple embryos and then “selectively reduce” (abort around 20 weeks) the unwanted children, even if they are perfectly healthy.
- **Disposable embryos.** It’s common to create surplus embryos that are either frozen indefinitely, donated for research, or destroyed once the parents have a child.
- **Buying babies.** Sperm may cost you as little as \$300, eggs around \$8,000, and surrogate pregnancies into six figures. Fifty percent of children born via sperm donation later say they are troubled that money changed hands over their conception. One donor-conceived woman remarked, “My [sperm donor] father was paid \$75 to stay out of my life forever.”
- **Use of “donor” egg and sperm.** Third-party reproduction denies children a relationship with one or both biological parents. As a result, donor children struggle disproportionately with depression, delinquency, and substance abuse. Eighty percent of children conceived via sperm donation would like to know the identity of their donor.

Infertility can be a crushing burden, but we should not expect children to sacrifice their rights so single, same-sex or infertile adults can possess the child they desire. A child-centric approach to reproductive technologies restricts any aspect of the practice which denies children their right to life or their mother and father.

Adoption


Adoption is a redemptive and beautiful institution, but for the child, it always begins with great loss. Losing one’s biological parents and extended family creates a wound. Adoption is a just society’s attempt to mend that wound. A child-centric

In a culture that worships at the altar of adult desire, that's a radical and much-needed approach. It's an approach that puts Them (the children) Before Us (the adults)... it's an approach that can restore our country.

approach to adoption means no adult, whether heterosexual, homosexual, married or single, has a “right” to adopt. Rather, children who have lost their parents have the right to be adopted.

I once worked for the largest Chinese adoption agency in the world, and our mantra was “We aren’t here to find a child for every adult. We are here to find a family for every child.” That’s because placing children with unrelated adults is risky for children. Child-centric adoption means that prospective parents can and should undergo rigorous background checks, home studies, references, training and supervision. Adoption agencies need the freedom to evaluate all factors when they evaluate potential placements, including kinship bonds, gender and marital status, and readiness to care for the child’s special needs. Adoption is not a means for adults to “get kids.” It’s a way to find the right parents for children without any.

You’ll notice a common thread in all these child-centric approaches—adults are making sacrifices so that children’s rights and well-being are protected. Adults must work on their marriage so kids don’t suffer through a divorce. Adults must seek alternatives to reproductive technologies in the face of infertility. Adults should subject themselves to background checks and screenings through the adoption process so that children are assured safe placement.

And that’s exactly how it should be—adults sacrificing, so children don’t have to suffer needlessly. In a culture that worships at the altar of adult desire, that’s a radical and much-needed approach. It’s an approach that puts Them (the children) Before Us (the adults). And because all of society benefits when children’s rights are respected, it’s an approach that can restore our country. 

Katy Faust is founder and director of the children’s rights organization Them Before Us, committed to defending children’s rights in family structure. For a footnoted version of this article, please visit www.ncfamily.org.



On the Air With ... Dr. Russell Moore, President of the Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission of the Southern Baptist Convention, and author of *The Storm-Tossed Family: How the Cross Reshapes the Home*



John Rustin: Dr. Moore, what are the primary challenges you see that most families face in today's culture?

Dr. Moore: The main issue we have is this sense of idealizing family in a way that makes family an extension of oneself. You can see that in parents who sometimes see themselves in terms of their children's academic accomplishment or their athletic accomplishment... And they're ultimately disappointed, because no child can bear the burden of meeting all those expectations. And conversely, some people see a spouse—either a real spouse or future spouse or an imaginary spouse—as being sort of a soulmate that meets all of my needs... But that's not what a family is created for. Family is an arena for me to learn to "die to self" and to learn to pour myself out for others.

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Charlotte/Harrisburg	WOGF 88.3 FM	Saturday, 3:45 PM
Durham	WDRU 105.5 FM	Saturday, 6:00 AM
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New Bern	WSTK 104.5 FM	Saturday, 3:15 PM
Newland	WECR 1130 AM	Saturday, 9:06 AM
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Troy	WJRM 1390 AM	Sunday, 8:15 AM
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Winston-Salem	WPIP 880 AM	Sunday, 5:00 PM

Family Policy Matters is also available at ncfamily.org and as a podcast!

... Dr. Frank Moncher, clinical psychologist and consultant for the Diocese of Arlington and Catholic Charities USA



John Rustin: Dr. Moncher, what are some of the most common obstacles to patients and families making good ethical and compassionate decisions related to medical care and treatment for the elderly?

Dr. Moncher: I think the obstacles generally center around the idea of fear of suffering, or a misunderstanding of suffering, and not realizing that the time of death is really in God's hands and that this has been something that God knows before. And to fear suffering to too great an extent, or to misunderstand it, can really get in the way. We have to understand that it may be God's permissive will that some suffering occur for reasons that are not immediately evident, and so to hasten a death... or to avoid all suffering may not actually be the best thing.

Family Policy Matters is now available as a podcast on your favorite podcast app! Search for "NC Family's *Family Policy Matters*."



Family Policy Matters is a 15-minute weekly radio show and podcast featuring interviews with national, state, and local experts on a wide range of policy issues important to North Carolina families. *Family Policy Matters* airs each week on over 20 radio stations across North Carolina. You can listen and access a full transcript on the NC Family website at ncfamily.org. *Family Policy Matters* is also available on your favorite podcast app!



... **Abby Johnson**, the former Planned Parenthood clinic director whose story of transformation and redemption is featured in the film *Unplanned*.



John Rustin: Abby, one overwhelming thought that I had after seeing *Unplanned* is that everyone—and I mean everyone—needs to see this film. And they need to watch it from beginning to end. Because the message of forgiveness, of redemption and healing is as important as the truth we see about the horrors of abortion and the abortion industry throughout the movie. So what would you say as a word of encouragement to those who consider themselves to be both pro-life and pro-choice, who may still be on the fence about going to see *Unplanned*?

Abby Johnson: If we are pro-life, I think it's important that we are the best apologists for our faith and our causes as we can be. This film really exposes the abortion industry for what it is: that it's manipulative; that it's exploitive; that it's taking advantage of women. And we need to be equipped with that information if we're going to effectively fight for the unborn and their mothers. I would say, for people who are pro-choice, it's important for them to go watch this film because you need to know what you support. Don't be a cheerleader for something that you have never seen before. You know, you can walk into this movie and walk out still pro-choice, but at least know what you're actually supporting, what you're cheering for.

... **Mitch Kokai**, a senior political analyst at the John Locke Foundation



John Rustin: Mitch, what is the process for amending North Carolina's Constitution?

Mitch Kokai: Unlike other states, we don't have this citizen initiative process where anyone could try to get enough signatures so they could get some sort of item on the ballot... In North Carolina, it really comes down to the General Assembly. Both the State House and Senate have to vote to put a Constitutional Amendment on the ballot. And it's not a simple vote, they have to get what sometimes is referred to as the super majority... And then once it gets on the ballot, then it takes a simple majority of the voters to pass that amendment and to put it into the Constitution.

John Rustin: How unusual was it for voters to be confronted with six Constitutional Amendments when they went to vote [in 2018]?

Mitch Kokai: Six really is a large number for Constitutional Amendments on the ballot, John. Since North Carolina adopted its current version of the overall Constitution in the early 1970s, we have seen it...be amended 30-some times. So basically, not quite every year, but almost every year... So, it is not incredibly rare for North Carolina to have an amendment on the ballot, but it certainly is unusual to have as many as six contemplated at one time.

Depolarizing America

The art of
talking across
the aisle

written by:
Alysse ElHage



Imagine this: two political rivals sharing breakfast and conversation together with the goal of listening and understanding rather than debating or convincing. That's exactly what Traci Griggs, Communications Director at NC Family, and Tracy Hollister, former Program Manager at Marriage Equality USA, are doing on an ongoing basis. On paper, these women could not be more different. Griggs is a married Southern Baptist, who has been involved in the conservative movement in the Tar Heel State for decades. Hollister is a gay, married, Unitarian Universalist, who has been a long-time advocate for same-sex marriage and even quit her full-time job in 2012 to lead the state's largest phone bank against Amendment One. But despite their differences, they share a concern about the destructive "us versus them" mentality that pervades America, from social media to the halls of government. And both women are engaged with national movements working to reach across the aisle to build relationships. Hollister works with Living Room Conversations, a national organization that hosts in-person and on line conversations between citizens with different political views. Griggs is the co-chair of the Raleigh Better Angels Alliance, which brings conservatives and liberals together to learn how to communicate better.

These women are a tangible example of a growing grassroots movement in North Carolina and across the nation aimed at bridging the vast and growing partisan divide that is pulling us apart. **Agreement is not the goal. Listening and understanding the other's perspective is.** These gatherings are populated by people who are bored with the hate speech and mud-slinging that passes for intelligent and nuanced conversation in our culture these days.

At first glance, North Carolina might not seem like the ideal setting for political and cultural healing. A recent survey of 60 Democrat and Republican thought leaders, conducted by three of the state's leading newspapers, found that a majority agreed, "We're extremely divided, huddled into opposing camps and unwilling to compromise, or even hear



each other out.” As to the source of this division, they cited the erosion of civil discourse fueled by social media, the election of more “extreme” candidates by both parties, and an unwillingness to listen to the opposing side. Nationally, one survey found that 15 percent of Americans stopped talking to a friend or family member after the 2016 election.

At the N.C. General Assembly, the next few years are setting up to become a political standoff between Governor Roy Cooper (D) and Republican lawmakers, who retained majorities in both chambers but lost their supermajority in November 2018. As NC Family President John Rustin explained, this “means that the Republican majorities will have to work across party lines if they want to overcome the veto stamp of Democratic Governor Roy Cooper.”

Overcoming the polarization that grips our political and cultural discourse might seem impossible under these

conditions. But what’s happening in churches, workshops, living rooms, and at kitchen tables right here in North Carolina provides a reason for hope. This citizen-led movement is a reminder that instead of looking to our elected officials to start behaving and communicating better, we need to set an example for them to follow.

Listening to Understand

That’s the message from North Carolina native Pearce Godwin, who believes the movement for change begins with us. Godwin, who lives in Cary and attends Summit Church, was inspired by the political divisions in our land to launch a grassroots movement he hopes will help the nation heal “one conversation at a time.” A self-described “political animal” who previously worked in D.C., Godwin says everything changed in 2013, when he was traveling back from a mission trip in Uganda and heard about the Moral Monday protests back home.

“The temperature in North Carolina was incredibly hot, as a new governing majority and weekly protestors were at each other’s throats. We were vilifying each other because we see the world differently,” Godwin explains. “Juxtaposing coming home to the most prosperous nation in the world with its devastating political conflicts with what I’d just experienced in Uganda—a materially poor country yet spiritually and relationally rich—made the division here seem more inane than it ever had.”

Sitting on a bus that night, Godwin penned the blog post, “It’s Time to Listen,” which was later published in the *Raleigh N&O* and hundreds of newspapers nationwide. In it, he asked:

What if we turned off our favored news source, sat down with someone of a different, fresh perspective and listened, leaving as much bias and prejudice as humanly possible at the door?

His idea became the foundation of the Listen First Project, the nonprofit he founded that “creates opportunities and teaches skills for conversations,” prioritizing relationship.

Disagreeing Better

Another national group working in North Carolina to change the political and cultural temperature is based on a premise Arthur Brooks recently described in *The New York Times*: “What we need is not to disagree less, but to disagree better.” Better Angels was founded by think-tank veteran David Blankenhorn, marriage therapist Bill Doherty, and researcher David Lapp, who brought a group of Trump and Clinton supporters together for a workshop in Ohio shortly after the 2016 election to find out whether the political rivals could learn how to listen to and engage with each other in a healthier way. The experiment worked. Better Angels now has over 5,000 members, has hosted hundreds of similar workshops, and helped form Red/Blue Alliances in communities across the U.S., including North Carolina.

At a recent meeting of the Raleigh Better Angels Alliance, where I am a member, a group of conservative and liberal citizens sat around a table, sharing snacks and their perspectives on a number of seemingly polarizing topics, including abortion. While it became personal at times, the conversation remained respectful. And when the meeting ended, members parted as friends who still disagreed but understood each

This citizen-led movement is a reminder that instead of looking to our elected officials to start behaving and communicating better, we need to set an example for them to follow.

other better. One Democrat-leaning member said that after listening to the conservatives share their views on abortion, she felt like she better understood the pro-life position rather than just the stereotypes she'd held.

"We're insistent that we are not here to change each other's minds," Better Angels co-founder David Lapp emphasizes. "We're seeking a place where conservatives and liberals can bring their core convictions to the table and be themselves. We're interested in accurate disagreement, not phony agreement."

Can Our Political Leaders Talk To Each Other?

So, how do we take the goodwill happening among Democrats, Republicans, and Independents at the local level and transfer it to our elected officials in Raleigh and Washington, D.C.?

Perhaps it starts by remembering that our elected officials are often a reflection of us, so how we engage on issues can influence how they do politics. "That's the power of a grassroots movement," Godwin says. "Elected officials will respond to the demands of the electorate." And as Arthur Brooks emphasized in his recent column, "we can change the climate to reward leaders—and be the leaders—who uplift and unite, not denigrate and divide."

Furthermore, we must stay involved. We can't model a more civil discourse if we allow the ugliness of the current political climate to weary us to the point of disengagement or silence. On a personal note, the 2016 election left me feeling exactly that way, and I did disengage for some time. But my involvement with Better Angels, where I experienced Democrats and Republicans learning to disagree in a healthy way, refreshed my spirit and gave me hope that things can get better.


For inspiration, we can look to past examples in our own recent history. Consider what was accomplished in the North Carolina General Assembly on gambling, education and abortion back in the 1990s.

Former Speaker Pro Tempore Paul "Skip" Stam remembers: "In '95 to '98, Republicans had a majority in the House, but not the Senate, but what happened in those years? Charter schools started and parental consent before abortion [was passed]. So, the fact that there is no longer a supermajority in both Houses does not mean that we can't [get things done]."

NC Family's Jere Royall, who spends most weekdays during the legislative session at the General Assembly talking with Democrat and Republican lawmakers, has witnessed this first hand.

"God has designed our lives to be about our relationships with Him and with one another, and the area of public policy is no exception," Royall notes. "As we get to know those who have different world and policy views, we can sometimes find common ground as we become friends, and respect and listen to each other. In all our interactions, instead of being focused only on winning the issue, we at NC Family understand that we should be seeking to speak the truth in love and to glorify God."

A Biblical Responsibility

For many, the citizen-led movement to heal our polarized nation is part of what it means to obey what Christ called the second greatest commandment: "Love thy neighbor as thyself." Lapp agrees. "For me as a Christian, it's about learning how to better love my neighbors in politics—especially those with whom I disagree. 'Blessed are the peacemakers' has to mean something for our situation today," he says, adding, "To me, it means seeking truth with those with whom I disagree and doing it in a spirit of forgiveness, reconciliation, and radical generosity. Those seeking to follow Jesus have a lot of resources and wisdom to bring to this conversation." 

Alyse ElHage is editor of the IFS Blog, Family Studies, and a freelance writer. Prior to joining the Institute for Family Studies, she served



as associate director of research at the North Carolina Family Policy Council. For a footnoted version of this article visit ncfamily.org.

"A state and nation where God is honored, religious freedom flourishes, families thrive and LIFE IS CHERISHED!"

Dear Friends,

North Carolina is a great place to live. It's a great place to raise a family. And, it's a great place to run a business. The landscape is beautiful—from the mountains to the coast. The climate is ideal—we get to experience all four seasons. Our population is diverse and growing more so every day. We have so much to be thankful for!

North Carolina has also transitioned from operating in relative political anonymity to becoming one of the most competitive battleground states in the nation in the last decade. We have become a major target of presidential hopefuls, national super pacs, and political parties. We live at an incredibly exciting time in our state's history!

North Carolina is also a national leader. Our economy is booming, tourism continues to exceed record levels, and year after year we receive top marks in a myriad of national business rankings and economic ratings of states across the nation. Initial estimates suggest that we are likely to see a state budget surplus of over half-a-billion dollars in 2019. By all measures, North Carolina is experiencing great prosperity.

Under the surface, however, our state is facing a battle of monumental and fundamental proportions—a literal war over life and death!

As I compose this message, the North Carolina General Assembly is debating the future of a bill designed to protect the lives of newborn babies who survived a failed abortion attempt. What we are talking about here is a breathing newborn baby with a beating heart who is alive outside of its mother's body. The bill, Senate Bill 359—Born-Alive Abortion Survivors Protection Act, would require "any health care practitioner present at the time the child is born alive" to "exercise the same degree of professional skill, care, and diligence to preserve the life and health of the child as a reasonably diligent and conscientious health care practitioner would render to any other child born alive at the same gestational age."

Incredibly, the bill is necessary because ample evidence exists that abortionists are leaving surviving newborn babies to die and in some cases intentionally killing them. To the

abortionists, the unborn baby—and in this case the newborn baby—is not the patient, the mother is. The newborn baby is simply the product of a failed medical procedure.

The General Assembly has passed this bill, but Governor Roy Cooper promptly vetoed it. The State Senate overrode the Governor's veto on April 30 by the slimmest of margins. Now, the future of the bill and the lives of these precious newborn babies, sit in the hands of 120 members of the North Carolina House of Representatives.

Jesus, in a parable in Matthew 25, tells us "whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me." He follows that by saying "whatever you did not do for one of the least of these, you did not do for me."


If we fail to follow God's call to love our neighbor—including protecting the lives of the least, the weakest, and the most vulnerable among us—then all the other accomplishments and accolades the Old North State has achieved and received in recent years are utterly worthless. It's as simple as that.

The lives of these children and the fabric, character and future of our state is at stake!

Let us fervently pray that God will fill the hearts and minds of these state lawmakers with the will and resolve to enact this critical life-saving measure into law.

Please join NC Family as we pursue our vision of "A state and nation where God is honored, religious freedom flourishes, families thrive and LIFE IS CHERISHED!"

May God Bless You and Your Family,

John L. Rustin 

John L. Rustin is President of the North Carolina Family Policy Council.





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