



Leadership North Carolina Class 31

Government Session
November 7 – 9, 2023

Speaker Directory

Captain Derek L. Mobley

Assistant Director of Training
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Captain Derek L. Mobley joined the North Carolina State Highway Patrol as a Trooper in 2008. He has held positions of increasing responsibility throughout his career and now serves as Assistant Director of Training at the North Carolina State Highway Patrol Training Academy in Raleigh.

Captain Mobley holds a BS in Business Management from the University of Phoenix. He has been recognized for his many contributions to his community through volunteer service and mentorship.

The Honorable Shinica Thomas

Chair
Wake County Board of Commissioners
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Chair Shinica Thomas is a dedicated leader who has served on the Wake County Board of Commissioners since 2020, in which time she has led the Economic Development Committee and the Great Government Committee. Chair Thomas holds degrees from Fayetteville State University and Regent University, and she attended the Harvard Kennedy School's intensive Senior Executives in State & Local Government program in 2023. She most recently served as the Director of Advocacy and Educational Partnerships for Girl Scouts - North Carolina Coastal Pines, creating valuable opportunities for more than 26,000 future

leaders. After years of service and community involvement, Chair Thomas was appointed to the North Carolina Commission on Volunteerism and Community Service in 2019 by Governor Roy Cooper. In 2022, Chair Thomas had the honor of contributing to the North Carolina Association of County Commissioners' Connecting Counties Presidential Initiative, a task force to address broadband internet accessibility and data fluency. Additionally, Chair Thomas serves on the National Association of Counties' work group exploring artificial intelligence use in local government. Chair Thomas lives in Raleigh and enjoys spending time with her husband Raymond Thomas and their two adult sons.

Ms. Kara Millonzi

Robert W. Bradshaw Jr. Distinguished Professor of Public Law and Government
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Kara Millonzi joined the School of Government in 2006. She specializes in local government finance law, general county law, school finance, utilities finance, development finance, and incorporation. She administers the Coates' Canons Local Government Law Blog and has authored well over 100 posts on issues related to local government law and finance. Millonzi also administers NC Finance Connect, an online community portal centered around the topic of local government finance. She has authored numerous publications, including *A Guide to Billing and Collecting Public Enterprise Utility Fees for Water, Wastewater, and Solid Waste Services*, *Introduction to Local Government Finance* (4th edition), and *The Governance and Funding Structure of North Carolina Public Schools*. She teaches several core finance courses and directs the NC County Attorneys Conference and Fundamentals Workshop and Local Government Finance Officers Conference each year.

Kara is the lead faculty for Lead for North Carolina, a fellowship program that aims to recruit, train, and place the state's most promising young leaders in paid local government fellowships as a means of strengthening our public institutions, supporting our local communities, and cultivating a new generation of public service leaders. Before joining the School, Millonzi practiced law with Testa, Hurwitz & Thibeault, LLP in Boston and clerked for the Honorable Louis F. Oberdorfer, United States District Court for the District of Columbia. She is a member of the North Carolina State Bar and the Bar of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. Kara earned a B.A. in economics, *summa cum laude*, Phi Beta Kappa, from the University at Buffalo and an M.A. in economics from the University of Maryland at College Park. She earned a J.D., with highest honors, Order of the Coif, from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, where she served as editor in chief of the *North Carolina Law Review*.

Mr. John N. Davis

Editor

John Davis Political Report

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John Davis is a non-partisan political analyst whose 48-year career includes campaign work at all levels, from presidential and congressional to state executive and legislative races. From Maine to Montana, from Maryland to New Mexico, Davis has worked with business groups in half of the states in the country establishing political research operations.

From 1986 – 2008, Davis served as President of NCFREE, providing political analysis to North Carolina business, professional and medical organizations. He is recognized as one of the state's leading authorities on evaluating legislative and congressional districts, candidates for public office, and forecasting political races.

Today, Davis continues his work as a political analyst through public speaking and as author of the [John Davis Political Report](#), now in its 16th year of publication.

A native of Graceville, FL, Davis is a graduate of William Carey University in Hattiesburg, MS. He and his wife, Kathy, live in Raleigh. They have five grown children.

Mr. Chris Fitzsimon

President/Publisher

States Newsroom

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Chris oversees the content and themes of the organization, managing financial resources, and supervising the state editors. He also travels frequently to hire and visit editors and grantees and appears weekly on the TV political talk show NC SPIN.

From 2004 to 2017, Fitzsimon was the founder and original director of NC Policy Watch, North Carolina's leading online news and commentary outlet, where he led a team of seven journalists, hosted a weekly radio show and wrote a syndicated column on North Carolina politics and government.

Fitzsimon was also the founder and director of Common Sense Foundation, a progressive think tank in Raleigh. From 1991 to 1994, he was the spokesperson, speech writer and policy adviser for N.C. Speaker of the House Dan Blue. Before his stint with Speaker Blue, Fitzsimon was an award-winning television news reporter covering politics and government.

Mr. John Hood

President

John William Pope Foundation

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John Hood is president of the John William Pope Foundation, a Raleigh-based grantmaker. Since 1986, he has written a syndicated column on politics and public policy for North Carolina newspapers. It currently appears regularly in the *Winston-Salem Journal*, *Greensboro News & Record*, *Gaston Gazette*, and newspapers in 40 other communities. Hood is a frequent radio and TV commentator and teaches at Duke University's Sanford School of Public Policy.

Hood is the author of nine books, including the novel *Mountain Folk*, a historical fantasy set during the American Revolution (2021), and its sequel *Forest Folk* (2022). His other books include *Catalyst: Jim Martin and the Rise of North Carolina Republicans* (2015), *Our Best Foot Forward: An Investment Plan for North Carolina's Economic Recovery* (2012), *Selling the Dream: Why Advertising Is Good Business* (2005), *Investor Politics* (2001), *The Heroic Enterprise: Business and the Common Good* (1996), and two volumes of family history. His articles have appeared in magazines such as *Readers' Digest*, *The New Republic*, *National Review*, and *Military History*, as well as newspapers such as *The Wall Street Journal* and *USA Today*. He also serves on the faculty and as board chairman of the NC Institute of Political Leadership; as co-chair of the North Carolina Leadership Forum, based at Duke University; as vice-chair of the James G. Martin Center for Academic Renewal; and on the boards of directors of the State Policy Network, the Student Free Press Association, North Carolina Public Radio, and the UNC Hussman School of Journalism and Media Foundation.

Hood received his B.A. in journalism from UNC-Chapel Hill. He earned a M.A. in liberal studies and a graduate certificate in nonprofit management from UNC-Greensboro. He is a Mecklenburg County native and currently resides in Wake County with his wife, two sons, and a stepdaughter.

Mr. James White

Principal Clerk

North Carolina House of Representatives

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James White began his career with the North Carolina House of Representatives in 2009. His journey to Principal Clerk of the House started as a House Intern and from that point progressed to increasingly complex roles within the administrative layers of the legislature—serving as House Legislative Assistant, House Committee Clerk, and then in 2012 accepting a position working within the House Principal Clerk's office as an Administrative/Voting Clerk. He is one of the youngest Principal Clerks in the nation and stays active within the American Society of Legislative Clerks and Secretaries. An Oregon native, James has spent the majority of his life living in North Carolina. He lives in Cary with his wife Julie and son Lucas, where the three enjoy the area's culinary adventures and active outdoor lifestyle.

The Honorable Gale Adcock

LNC Class 20 Alumna

Senator, District 16
North Carolina General Assembly
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Gale was raised in a small town in southwestern Virginia. She understands the value of hard work and the opportunities that come from education. Her mother worked swing-shift in a local textile mill from high school graduation to retirement. Gale attended local public schools, played flute in the high school band, worked for minimum wage at the local public library, and volunteered as a Candystriper at her hometown community hospital.

Gale obtained a nursing diploma from Virginia Baptist Hospital and then worked as an RN to pay for an undergraduate degree in nursing from ECU and a Master's of Science in Nursing from UNC-Chapel Hill. She has been a nurse practitioner since 1987 and was Chief Health Officer at SAS Institute for 26 years before retiring in October 2020.

Gale has been president of the North Carolina Nurses Association, chair of the North Carolina Center for Nursing, and a member of the North Carolina Board of Nursing. She served on the board of the Taylor Family YMCA in Cary and on the state Diabetes Advisory Council. She is an adjunct faculty member at Duke, UNC-Chapel Hill, East Carolina, and Case Western Reserve University. Prior to her 2014 election to the NC House, Gale was a gubernatorial appointee to the Legislative Study Commission on Access to Health Insurance and the Blue Ribbon Task Force on the State Health Plan for Teachers and State Employees. She is one of two legislators on the State Health Coordinating Council that submits the annual State Medical Facilities Plan.

During her terms in the NC House, Gale has proved to be a commonsense leader who works effectively with members of both parties. She has been a primary sponsor of dozens of bipartisan bills that have become law. Prior to serving in the NC General Assembly, she was a 2007-2014 member of the Cary Town Council and was elected by her Council peers to be mayor pro tem during her last 3 years. As a Council member, Gale voted for investments in infrastructure, maintenance of the town's AAA bond rating, and passage of annual budgets that kept Cary with the lowest property tax rate in Wake County.

Gale and her family live in Cary. They are members of St. Michael's Episcopal Church.

The Honorable Jim Burgin

Chairman of Senate Appropriations on Health and Human Services
Senator, District 12
North Carolina General Assembly
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Senator Jim Burgin is a longtime resident of Harnett County and current President & Owner of C&D Insurance with two offices located in Harnett County. Senator Burgin also serves as Chairman of the Board to New Horizon Insurance Group and President of B.C. Property, Inc., a real estate development company. He is also a partner in John Hiester Automotive, which owns Chevrolet and Chrysler Dodge Jeep dealerships.

Jim is currently serving his second term in the North Carolina Senate. Before this, he served two terms as Harnett County Commissioner and served as Chairman three years.

Jim and his wife Ann have been married 38 years and have three children and four grandchildren.

Jim was born in Knoxville, Tennessee. He attended The University of Tennessee Knoxville and graduated with honors possessing a Bachelor of Science degree in Business Administration.

The Honorable Erin Paré

Representative, District 37
North Carolina General Assembly
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Representative Erin Paré has served in the North Carolina House of Representatives since January 2021. She represents the people of District 37 in Southern Wake County.

For the 2023-2024 Legislative Session, Paré serves as a Chair of the House Committee on Health, and she serves as a Vice Chair of the House Committee on Appropriations for Health and Human Services and the Committee on Energy and Public Utilities. Paré also serves on the Committee on Rules, Calendar, and Operations of the House; the Committee on Military and Veterans Affairs; the Alcohol Beverage Control Committee; and the Committee on Regulatory Reform.

Paré has been appointed by Speaker of the House Tim Moore to serve on the Joint Legislative Commission on Governmental Operations, the Joint Legislative Oversight Committee on General Government, and the Joint Legislative Economic Development and Global Engagement Oversight Committee.

In her freshman session in 2021-2022, Representative Paré served as Chair of the House Select Committee on Advancing Women in S.T.E.M. In April of 2023, Paré was appointed to the Interstate Commission on Educational Opportunity for Military Children State Council.

Paré is a member of the Early Childhood Caucus, the Life Science Caucus, and the Joint Bipartisan Arts Caucus, and serves as an officer of the bipartisan Legislative Women's Caucus. Paré is a Leader of the Workforce Development legislative working group and a member of the Election Integrity and Homeland Security legislative working groups.

Representative Paré and her husband Wayne, a 24-year Army veteran, settled in Holly Springs after 12 years as an active-duty Army family. As a military spouse, Paré dedicated these years to strengthening military communities and supporting families of deployed soldiers, including serving as the Family Readiness Group Leader for 120 families of the 1st Battalion 75th Ranger Regiment in Savannah, GA, during the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. The majority of Wayne Paré's 8 deployments to the Middle East took place while the couple was raising their young children.

Prior to military life, Paré spent seven years as a government affairs professional in Washington, DC, representing businesses and trade associations on public policy matters and regulatory reform. Paré served as the director of the Regulatory Improvement Council (RIC), a business coalition that advocated for the improved use of transparency, sound science, and cost-benefit analysis in the federal regulatory decision-making process.

Representative Paré and Wayne Paré own a successful small business in Holly Springs called Play-It-Again Sports. Erin is also the founder and director of a non-profit organization serving community youth in music arts, which established a youth orchestra in Southern Wake County.

Prior to elected office, Paré served as PTA president and board member at Holly Ridge Elementary School. Paré served as the Vice Chair of the Town of Holly Springs Board of Adjustment.

Paré grew up in Herndon, Virginia, and graduated with an M.A. in International Commerce and Policy and a B.A. in Government International Politics from George Mason University.

A violinist and violin teacher to both children and adults, Paré works to promote the value of musical and creative arts in K-12 schools.

Paré has 2 sisters, one of whom is a special needs adult and the other a registered nurse. Born with hydrocephalus, Lisa is a survivor of lifelong, life-threatening health complications. Because of Lisa's story, Paré is an advocate for special-needs children and adults and their families.

The Honorable Robert T. Reives II

Representative, District 54
North Carolina General Assembly
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Representative Robert Reives II has served in the North Carolina House of Representatives since 2014. He represents House District 54, which includes all of Chatham County and portions of Randolph County.

Upon entering the NCGA, Robert was immediately tapped for leadership serving as Freshman Caucus Co-Chair and as treasurer of the NC Legislative Black Caucus. Currently, Robert is still looked to for leadership as he works across party lines in his role as Democratic Leader of the House.

During his tenure Robert has been recognized for his legislative leadership by the League of Conservation Voters with their Green Tie Rising Star Award and has been endorsed each election by the NC State AFL-CIO, the North Carolina Association of Educators, and the Sierra Club.

As a former assistant DA, Robert approaches legislation with an eye towards protecting those who are marginalized, vulnerable, and oppressed. His experience as a certified mediator and attorney gives him a skill set to help opposing factions reach consensus and resolve conflict.

Robert has sponsored legislation to strengthen public schools and to help protect children, the disabled, the environment, and property rights. He listens to the needs of the constituents and has championed specific legislation to help Chatham County meet its vision of tomorrow.

Prior to becoming a legislator, Robert earned a renowned Pogue Scholarship while studying at UNC-Chapel Hill for a B.S. in Business Administration/Finance. Robert continued his studies at UNC-Chapel Hill and received his J.D. from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill School of Law. After graduating from law school Robert returned to his community, serving as a prosecutor for the Lee County District Attorney's Office. A little over four years later Robert entered private practice and has been a partner in the law firm of Wilson & Reives for almost two decades. Wilson & Reives is known as a community benefactor, sponsoring education scholarships and numerous community events.

Robert continues his service to his community outside of the NCGA by being a board member of the Lee County Educational Foundation, a board member of the First Citizens Bank local advisory board, a board member of Lee County Boys & Girls Club, a member of the Executive Committee of the Lee County Democratic Party, past president and present member of the Eleventh District District Bar Association, and past president and present member of the Lee County Bar Association.

Robert is married to Cynthia (Taylor) from Goldston and they have two children, Brianna and Robert, III. The Reives attend Roberts Chapel Missionary Baptist Church in Goldston.

The Honorable Machel Baker Sanders

Secretary

North Carolina Department of Commerce

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In February 2021, Governor Cooper appointed Secretary Machel Baker Sanders to lead the North Carolina Department of Commerce, enlisting her experience as former Administration Secretary, strong background as a business leader and her extensive knowledge of what it takes to build a globally competitive workforce. Secretary Sanders' vision for North Carolina's post-pandemic economic restoration is to work with partners to attract better paying jobs, support small businesses, and stimulate our state's innovation and entrepreneurial economy. Her bold and purposeful leadership aims to ensure North Carolina's diverse state is an inclusive one that works for all people.

Sanders brings 30 years of strong management and leadership experience to Commerce as a seasoned pharmaceutical and biotechnology executive, previously serving as vice president of manufacturing and general manager of Biogen's largest manufacturing facility in Research Triangle Park. She's also held leadership positions overseeing manufacturing, global quality assurance and quality control functions at Biogen, Purdue Pharmaceuticals, and Diosynth-Akzo Nobel.

A graduate of North Carolina State University, Sanders holds a Bachelor of Science in Biochemistry and a Master of Health Administration from Pfeiffer University. As a native North Carolinian and mother of twin daughters, she is passionate about improving the status of women in our state. She is a member of the International Women's Forum and OnBoard NC. Some of her work includes creating a Women's Innovation Network at Biogen and the Lady Cardinals STEM Program for High School students while at North Carolina Department of Administration. After all, as Sanders puts it, "Improving the status of women in North Carolina is not just a woman's issue — it is a family, poverty, and economic issue."

Sanders is also a strong supporter of diversity, equity and inclusion, believing that "you can't be what you can't see." She previously served as the Chair of the North Carolina Commission on Inclusion, North Carolina Complete Count Commission, and the Andrea Harris Social, Economic, Environmental, and Health Equity Task Force. Additionally, she serves on the Interagency Council for Coordinating Homeless Programs (ICCHP), Commission of Indian Affairs, and the North Carolina State University Board of Visitors.

As North Carolina's Commerce Secretary, Sanders serves on many boards and commissions, including the Rural Infrastructure Authority, the board of the Economic Development Partnership of North Carolina, the NCWorks Commission, the state's Travel & Tourism Board, and the Carolinas Pandemic Preparedness Task Force.

Sanders also serves on the boards of three public life science companies. At Radius Health, based in Cambridge, Massachusetts, she sits on the Board of Directors and is a member of the Nominating Committee; at Novan, Inc., based in Research Triangle Park, she is a member of the Compensation Committee; and at BioCryst Pharmaceuticals, Inc., based in the Research Triangle Park, she sits on the Board of Directors and is a member of Science Committee.

Secretary Sanders' experience and passion to improve the lives of North Carolinians uniquely positions her to lead North Carolina's portfolio of work in economic, community, and workforce development.

The Honorable Sam Hamadani

Judge

Wake County District Court

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Sam Hamadani was born in Iran, but her parents immigrated to the United States in search of a better life when she was fifteen months old. Sam grew up in Winston-Salem, NC. She attended college at The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, where she studied psychology and sociology. After graduating from college, Sam committed her life to public service. First, she moved to Washington, DC, where she worked as a Legislative Correspondent for then-Senator Joe Biden. Then, after a few years in DC, Sam returned to NC to attend the University of North Carolina School of Law. Upon graduation, Sam served Wake County as an assistant public defender, representing thousands of indigent individuals in criminal court. In June 2017, Sam was appointed by Governor Roy Cooper to serve as a Wake County District Court Judge. Sam is the first Iranian American judge in North Carolina. Sam presides over the following courtrooms: traffic and criminal courts, DWI court, juvenile delinquency court, recovery court, civil and criminal domestic violence courts, family court, bond forfeiture court, and felony criminal district court. Sam ran unopposed in 2018 and 2022 to keep her seat on the District Court bench.

Ms. Amy Bason

Deputy Director/General Counsel

North Carolina Association of County Commissioners

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Amy Bason is the Deputy Director and General Counsel for the North Carolina Association of County Commissioners. The NCACC is a non-partisan organization that serves as the official voice of all 100 counties on issues considered by the General Assembly, Congress, and federal and state agencies. Previously, Amy served as the General Counsel to the Senate Majority Leader at the North Carolina General Assembly. She has also worked as an Assistant Attorney General in the NC Department of Justice and began her legal career as an Assistant District Attorney in North Carolina's first judicial district.

She holds a J.D. from the University of North Carolina School of Law and a B.A. in Political Science from Rutgers University.

Ms. Rose Vaughn Williams

Executive Director
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Rose Vaughn Williams was named Executive Director of the NC League of Municipalities in December 2021. Prior to that, she served in a leadership role at the League for nearly seven years, most recently as the Associate Executive Director of Public and Government Affairs.

Rose came to the League from the North Carolina Department of Insurance (NCDOI), where she served for eight years as the Legislative Counsel to two statewide elected Commissioners of Insurance. While at NCDOI, she worked on major reforms to the property insurance system and workers' compensation system, issues arising in auto liability insurance, and health insurance issues, most notably the integration of the federal Affordable Care Act. In this role, Rose was recognized as one of the state's top 50 lobbyists by the Center for Public Policy Research.

Rose also served as a District Court Judge and as a member of the North Carolina State Board of Elections. Prior to her five-year judgeship, Rose was a partner in a private law firm where she represented insurance companies and claimants, as well as other private and commercial clients. She also clerked for a NC Supreme Court justice prior to practicing law.

Rose is a North Carolina native, born in Eden and raised in Raleigh. She received her undergraduate and law degrees from UNC-Chapel Hill. Rose is married to Jon Williams, and they have two children.

Mr. Doug Bean

Director of Government Services, Raftelis Financial Consultants, Inc.
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Doug Bean is director of government services for Raftelis Financial Consultants, Inc., a utilities financial management and consulting firm with offices in Charlotte, NC. He is also an adjunct instructor at the University of North Carolina School of Government. Prior to joining Raftelis, he was director of the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Utilities Department for sixteen years. He served as city manager for the City of Asheville from 1986 to 1994, city manager for the City of Morganton from 1978 to 1986, and assistant city manager for the City of Morganton from 1976 to 1978. He received the 2004 Distinguished Practitioner Award from the Southeastern Conference on Public Administration and National Achievement Awards from both the American Water Works Association Management Division and the National Association of Counties. Bean holds a BA in history from Lenoir-Rhyne College and an MPA from UNC-Chapel Hill.

Ms. Tracy Miles

Adjunct Instructor

UNC School of Government

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Tracy Miles is an independent consultant in nonprofit management, operational excellence, strategy development, and human-centered continuous improvement. In a career that includes private, public, and nonprofit-sector experience, from Fortune 100 companies to grassroots nonprofits, the common thread has been connecting, developing, and managing relationships and strategies for organizational success. Tracy's work focuses on leading teams and empowering individuals of diverse backgrounds toward common goal achievement. Her facilitation efforts help organizations to develop a strategy that connects mission and priorities to outcomes, develop cross-functional and cross-sectorial relationships, analyze, and improve organizational and service performance, and increase public awareness.

Tracy's experience includes working for General Electric, John Deere, The American Heart Association, Girls on the Run, and serving as deputy director of the School of Government's Center for Public Leadership and Governance. Tracy earned a B.A. in psychology from North Carolina State University, an M.P.A. from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, and also a Lean Six Sigma Certification.

Tracy works across the state and enjoys serving on nonprofit boards for organizations she is passionate about, including the UNC MPA Alumni Association.

Class 31 Government Session Planning Committee

The following members of LNC Class 30 make up the planning committee for the Class 31 Government session.

Mr. Ron Barnes *Out of State (SC)*
Assistant Vice President
Federal Reserve Bank of Richmond
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Ron Barnes is an Assistant Vice President at the Federal Reserve Bank of Richmond. Ron is a native North Carolinian and grew up in the town of Rockingham. After earning his BA from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, he worked with the North Carolina Center for Public Television (now PBS North Carolina) until pursuing his MBA at UNC Charlotte. Ron joined the Federal Reserve Bank of Richmond in 1995 and is based in Charlotte. He currently has responsibility for the Statistics function and chairs the Federal Reserve's Committee on Reserves Administration. Ron serves on the Board of Directors of Therapy Resource Group, a non-profit counseling practice that specializes in trauma survivors including those that have difficulty with affording the help that they need.

Ron and his family now live in Heath Springs, SC, where they are learning about homesteading. They are also passionate about traveling. They love cruising in the Caribbean because it allows them to leave electronic connection to the rest of the world behind and unplug. Carolina beaches have always been a tradition for their family, and they routinely seek out national parks and monuments.

Mrs. Amanda Bryant *Buncombe*
Executive Director
Asheville Museum of Science (AMOS)
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Amanda Bryant is the Executive Director of the Asheville Museum of Science (AMOS) and the co-owner of Red Tree Builders. Amanda leads a team of passionate museum advocates, scientists, and STEAM educators all working to grow and expand the science museum and its reach. Red Tree Builders designs and builds healthy homes using green, conservation, and indoor air quality building practices. Amanda gets to combine her love and passion for building teams, education, and conserving natural resources at both organizations.

Prior to serving at AMOS, Amanda was a Strategic Communications Executive at the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) based in Washington, DC, with a focus on preparedness, community resiliency, climate change, and risk communications.

Amanda is a Western North Carolina native with a heart for public service. As a lifelong learner, she knows firsthand that education can change lives and believes when you invest in education you can help solve the world's greatest challenges. She is passionate about communicating about our changing climate and hopes her work inspires action and provides information to all to help others make informed decisions.

Dr. Sara Imhof, Program Chair *Wake*

Senior Director

North Carolina Biotechnology Center

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Sara is an interdisciplinary and collaborative leader; a catalyst and opportunity creator; a strategic organizer; an impactful messenger and facilitator; and a health and life sciences policy advocate. Professionally, Sara serves as Senior Director and a leader of the Focused Initiatives Team (FIT) for the North Carolina Biotechnology Center. Her primary responsibilities include conducting Federal Affairs Outreach and Engagement, leading interdisciplinary and multi-institutional collaborations, and leading the North Carolina Precision Health Collaborative (NCPHC).

Critical recent Federal Affairs efforts include successfully leading a multistakeholder Coalition to receive \$25M federal dollars under the Economic Development Administration's Build Back Better Regional Challenge. Sara also secured the advancement by both Senators Burr and Tillis of a Directed Congressional Spending request for NCBiotech's Military Outreach & Veterans Engagement (MOVE) program. Finally, Sara is facilitating a multistakeholder effort to house the newly created federal Advance Research Projects Agency for Health (ARPA-H) in North Carolina. With the NC Precision Health Collaborative, Sara champions a growing statewide precision health ecosystem that delivers leading technology innovation and proven thought-leadership in the field, across North Carolina and the U.S.

Sara formerly served as Director of Education and Grassroots Advocacy for The Concord Coalition, Senior Analyst, Health Care, at the Government Accountability Office, Executive Director of the Iowa Counties Public Health Association, and Assistant to the Director for the Center for Macular Degeneration at the University of Iowa Hospitals and Clinics.

Sara earned a Bachelor of Science degree in Nursing, a Master of Arts degree in Health Promotion, and a Doctorate in Health Management and Policy, at the University of Iowa. She is a graduate of Leadership North Carolina Class 30, program chair for Leadership North Carolina Class 31, and a member of the Leadership North Carolina Board of Directors.

Mr. Justin Kurkiewicz *Wake*

Senior Vice President, Corporate Relationship Manager

PNC Bank

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Justin is a Senior Vice President and Corporate Relationship Manager with PNC's Corporate Banking Division. In his role, Justin delivers a complete set of lending, treasury management, advisory and capital markets-related products and services to corporations in Eastern North Carolina.

Justin is active in the community through his commitments as a Director of the Raleigh-Durham Chapter of the Association for Corporate Growth, where he curates speaking content for monthly luncheons. He is also as an Executive Board Member of the Carolinas Gateway Partnership, where he recruits new business and fosters existing growth in Nash and Edgecombe Counties.

Justin completed his undergraduate degree in Business Economics from Brown University, where he was a Running Back on Brown's football team. Upon graduation, Justin started his career in Pittsburgh with PNC. While working for the Bank, Justin obtained his MBA from the University of Pittsburgh. In conjunction with PNC's acquisition of RBC US in 2012, Justin moved to Raleigh to execute PNC's proven business model in the Carolinas.

In his spare time, Justin focuses on health and fitness and enjoys watching the Pittsburgh Steelers. Justin and his wife, Ashley, have two beautiful daughters, Skye and Aubrey.

Dr. Ray Levy Wake

Executive Director, Data Science Academy
North Carolina State University
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Rachel Levy (Ray) has devoted her life's work to empowering learners of all ages to use data and mathematical modeling to make decisions and gain insights. She develops educational processes that provide learners with genuine choices and flexible pathways to ensure a high probability of success. She returned to NC after almost 15 years away to found the Data Science Academy at NC State University, where she is also Professor of Mathematics. The Academy networks data science across the whole institution and provides learning opportunities for North Carolinians in any field of study or job.

In her research, teaching, and writing, she seeks creative and interdisciplinary spaces. She has taught or collaborated with artists, choreographers, scientists, writers, digital humanists, and engineers. Outside work she loves meals with family and friends, the ocean, dancing, and NC seasons.

Ms. Ashley Ruffin, Session Co-Chair Wake

Chief Impact Officer
Civic Federal Credit Union / Local Government Federal Credit Union
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Ashley Ruffin serves as Chief Impact Officer at both Civic and Local Government Federal Credit Unions (LGFCU). She joined LGFCU in 2002 as a Membership Development Officer and later served as Senior Vice President of Marketing and Chief Strategy Officer.

Ruffin is a lifelong resident of North Carolina. Before joining LGFCU, she worked as the Human Resources Director for both the Town of Morrisville and the City of Sanford. She holds a Bachelor of Arts degree in political science, a Bachelor of Science degree in administration of criminal justice from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, and a Master of Public Administration degree from North Carolina State University.

Ashley serves as a director on the board of the Carolinas Credit Union Foundation and works through Civic Local Foundation to enrich NC communities. She also serves on the National Advisory Board for the Institute of Emerging Issues at NC State University. She has collaborated internationally through the World Council of Credit Unions and is a founder of the North Carolina Sister Society of the Global Women's Leadership Network. She is a Credit Union Development Educator and has completed

numerous certification programs through the Credit Union National Association and the UNC School of Government.

Mrs. Dawn Russell Wake

Downtown Development Manager, Town of Fuquay Varina
Executive Director, Fuquay-Varina Downtown Association
drussell@fuquay-varina.org

Dawn Russell is the Downtown Development Manager for the Town of Fuquay-Varina. As a member of the economic development team, she promotes and supports the development, growth, and sustainability of businesses in Fuquay-Varina's downtown business districts. Dawn also serves as the Fuquay-Varina Downtown Association's Executive Director, where she runs the town's NC Mainstreet Program. This public-private partnership is dedicated to improving the quality of life in Fuquay-Varina by promoting a vibrant downtown through historic preservation, shop local initiatives, and building community. Dawn is a certified Main Street America Revitalization Professional, the highest credential available through the Main Street America Institute, and the first in North Carolina to complete the certification.

Dawn's ability to develop and maintain strong strategic partnerships with stakeholders that produce positive results to leading employment engagement among her coworkers shows her dedication to developing an economically stronger, livable, and distinctive community through planning, partnerships, and team deployment with passion, resourcefulness, and creative solutions. She is a true professional, adept at navigating challenging situations and finding creative and amicable solutions. Dawn is passionate about shaping her community with transformative projects that will benefit generations to come.

Dawn is a North Carolina native originally from Lumberton. She attended UNC-Wilmington, where she met her husband, and moved to Fuquay-Varina where they raised their two sons.

Ms. Jade Manley Smith Wake

Manager, Community Relations
Fidelity Investments
jade.manley@fmr.com

Jade Manley Smith is Manager, Community Relations for Fidelity Investments, one of the world's largest financial services providers. She leads community relations efforts for Fidelity in North Carolina and Florida by creating meaningful community partnerships that provide opportunity and access to underserved communities. In her role, she is dedicated to empowering financial futures through collaboration with non-profits and schools to promote financial education and narrow the racial wealth gap.

Previously, Jade worked for the state of North Carolina for both the North Carolina Department of Commerce and North Carolina Department of Transportation. At both state agencies, she worked closely with Governor-appointed boards and commissions overseeing external relations, long-range planning, community grants, program evaluation and policy development. Jade holds a bachelor's

degree in Political Science from Winston-Salem State University and a Master of Public Administration degree from North Carolina Central University.

In the community, Jade serves on the Durham Public Schools Foundation and is an active member of Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Incorporated (AKA), the oldest Greek-letter organization established by African American college-educated women. A native of Raleigh, NC, Jade lives with her husband and their new puppy, a Goldendoodle named Milo, in Wake Forest, NC. In her spare time, she likes trying new restaurants, supporting local businesses, and binging 90s sitcoms.

Dr. Sarah Tomlinson *Durham*

Senior Dental Consultant, NC Medicaid Division, Division of Health Benefits
North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services
sarah.e.tomlinson@dhhs.nc.gov

Sarah Tomlinson, DDS, RDH, serves as the Senior Dental Consultant in the North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services, Division of Health Benefits. A native of North Carolina, she obtained both her undergraduate and dental degrees at UNC. Sarah's experiences in dentistry have been diverse: she spent a decade as a dental hygienist, worked as a general dentist in both private practice and the dental safety net, and became an instructor in the Community College System before entering public health as the State Dental Director in 2014. Early in 2023 Sarah transitioned to the Division of Health Benefits to work more intimately in oral health policy.

As Senior Dental Consultant for the Medicaid Dental Program, Dr. Tomlinson responds to the policy needs of enrolled providers across North Carolina. In this changing landscape of Medicaid Managed Care, with its accompanying provider networks, care coordination, and technological connectivity, Sarah envisions a transformed dental workforce, strengthened all along the provider ladder, that effectively engages patients, medical colleagues, and communities for improved oral health throughout North Carolina.

Ms. Tracy Webb *Johnston*

Regional Trainer/Content Developer, North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services
State Human Resources Commissioner (SHRC)
ttwebb03@gmail.com

Tracy is currently employed with the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) as a Regional Trainer/Content Developer. She has served in state government for 20+ years in various positions in the areas of Accounting and Human Resources respectively. In the private sector, she was employed as a Human Resources Manager for several years. Additionally, Tracy served in roles as an Associate Campus Dean, as well as an Adjunct University Professor on the campus of Strayer University. Webb graduated from Elizabeth City State University with a Bachelor of Science (BS) degree in Accounting and received a Master's in Business Administration (MBA) with a concentration in Human Resources Management, from Strayer University.

During 2021, Governor Roy Cooper appointed Tracy to serve as a Human Resources Commissioner for the State Human Resources Commission Board. Tracy is a NC Election Precinct Official with the state's

Board of Elections, NC Notary Public, member of the State Employees Credit Union (SECU) Board of Advisors, member of the USA-Africa Chamber of Commerce Board of Advisors, and member of the State Employees Association of NC (SEANC).

In her spare time, Tracy enjoys serving tirelessly in her local church, riding her motorcycle, traveling, running local and international marathons, line dancing, overseeing community social causes events, and contributing/serving in her community. In addition, she continues her love and lifetime commitment daily to Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc. Webb enjoys leading from the front and selflessly serving others while continuing to empower and encourage others to “Be the change you want to see in this world” and model behind our great state’s motto: “To Be, rather than to Seem.”

Mr. Frank Williams, Session Co-Chair *Brunswick*

President and CEO, Pioneer Strategies

Brunswick County Commissioner

frank@pioneerstrategies.com

Frank Williams is President & CEO of Pioneer Strategies, a public relations and strategic communication firm he founded in August 2001, and Managing Member of Pioneer Specialties, a promotional products distributorship he co-owns with his wife, Lori. He is currently in his third term as a Brunswick County Commissioner, is a Past President of the NC Association of County Commissioners (NCACC), and currently serves as Chair of the National Association of Counties’ (NaCo) Resilient Counties Advisory Board.

Frank’s NCACC presidential initiative, 100 Counties Prepared, was borne out of his experience serving as Chair of the Brunswick County Board of Commissioners during Hurricanes Florence, Dorian, and Isaias, during which he observed a lack of emergency preparedness training suitable for elected officials. Sixty-one county officials completed the inaugural 100 Counties Prepared Emergency Preparedness Training for Elected Officials on August 11, 2022, in Cabarrus County, and officials from 25 counties participated in a second training in May 2023.

Frank is a past member of the NC Commission on Volunteerism and Community Service and has served on numerous civic boards, including Communities in Schools of Brunswick County, the North Brunswick Chamber of Commerce, the Brunswick Community College Small Business Center Advisory Committee, and the executive board of the Cape Fear Council, Boy Scouts of America. He is a charter member and current president of the Leland Area Rotary Club. Frank is also in his second stint as a member of the NC Leadership Council for the National Federation of Independent Business (NFIB). He has represented Brunswick County on numerous boards dealing with a variety of issues, including economic development, water and sewer, land use, and transportation planning.

A graduate of the NC State University Department of Communication, Frank is also the self-published author of two thriller novels.

Mr. Miles Wobbleton *Wake*

Founder, Chairman, CEO, and President
Gen KIND, Inc.

mileswobbleton@gmail.com

Miles, who works and resides in Raleigh, is the founding Chairman, Chief Executive Officer, and President of Gen KIND, Inc., a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization that funds the needs of America's youth by inspiring a movement of creative generosity. Miles is also the owner of Wobbleton Law, PLLC, a concierge law firm that services an exclusive business clientele. Miles previously practiced law with Mayer Brown LLP and Smith, Anderson, Blount, Dorsett, Mitchell & Jernigan, LLP, where he practiced in finance and private equity. Outside of work, Miles is devoted to civic and community service as a member of the Courts Commission at the General Assembly as well as through his service on the board of directors of Activate Good and Journeymen Triangle, the advisory board of the Public School Forum of North Carolina, and the community board of Band Together NC. Miles is also devoted to professional development, having graduated from Leadership Triangle, the North Carolina Institute of Political Leadership, and Leadership Raleigh.

Originally from Greenville, Miles spent his entire educational career in North Carolina: After attending D.H. Conley High School, where he graduated as valedictorian, he attended Campbell University, where he graduated summa cum laude, majoring in Political Science, and then the University of North Carolina School of Law in Chapel Hill, where he graduated with high honors. Miles wholeheartedly intends on remaining in North Carolina for the rest of his life and will continue, as long and as much as he is able, to serve his fellow North Carolinians.