



## Leadership North Carolina Class 32

Government Session  
November 12 – 14, 2024

### Speaker Directory

#### **The Honorable D. Reid Wilson**

Secretary  
North Carolina Department of Natural and Cultural Resources  
109 East Jones Street  
Raleigh, NC 27601  
(919) 814-6750  
[reid.wilson@ncdcr.gov](mailto:reid.wilson@ncdcr.gov)

D. Reid Wilson is the secretary of the North Carolina Department of Natural and Cultural Resources. He brings a wealth of experience in land conservation, environmental protection, and government and nonprofit leadership to the department.

Secretary Wilson has set five major priorities across the department: expanding educational content for school-age children; protecting public health; boosting local economic development; strengthening our commitment to diversity, inclusion, equity, and accessibility; and addressing climate change and community resiliency.

From 2017-2020, Wilson was the department's chief deputy secretary, responsible for the agency's natural resource divisions. Prior to joining DNCR, Wilson was the executive director of the Conservation Trust for North Carolina, a statewide nonprofit that advances land conservation and connects people to the outdoors. Under his leadership, the group's budget nearly doubled and CTNC became a national leader in bringing greater diversity and engagement with young people to conservation.

In 2001 and 2002, he was a public affairs consultant to national environmental groups as senior vice president with M & R Strategic Services in Washington, DC. Prior to that, he served for nearly eight years at the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency as a political appointee in the Clinton administration, first as the agency's public liaison director, then deputy chief of staff, and finally chief of staff under administrator Carol M. Browner.

Wilson was national political director of the Sierra Club from 1989-1993, managing the nation's largest environmental political action committee, and before that was an environmental advocate for the U.S. Public Interest Research Group in Washington.

Wilson has a Bachelor of Arts in Political Science and Biology from Grinnell College in Iowa. He and his wife, Karen Rindge, live in Raleigh. One of their children attends a state university in North Carolina, and the other one recently graduated from one.

### **Dr. Denise Young**

Director

North Carolina Museum of Natural Sciences

121 West Jones Street

Raleigh, NC 27601

(919) 707-9801

[denise.young@naturalsciences.org](mailto:denise.young@naturalsciences.org)

Dr. Denise Young joined the North Carolina Museum of Natural Sciences as director in June 2023. In this role she oversees the Museum's mission to illuminate the natural world and inspire its conservation. Through the flagship location in downtown Raleigh and regional sites in Whiteville, Greenville, Grifton, and west Raleigh, Young guides over 250 staff to fulfill the vision of creating a knowledgeable and empowered society, making decisions informed by science.

Prior to joining the North Carolina Museum of Natural Sciences, Young served as executive director of the Bell Museum from 2016 to 2023. In this role, Young led the transformation of the state natural history museum, which is located on the University of Minnesota Twin Cities campus, including the addition of the only dedicated public planetarium in the state.

Prior to joining the Bell Museum, Young was director of Education and Planning at Morehead Planetarium and Science Center in Chapel Hill. While there, she co-founded the North Carolina Science Festival, an annual celebration of the cultural, educational, and economic benefits of science that has engaged over 3 million North Carolinians since its inception in 2010. She previously taught at the UNC School of Education and as a classroom educator in Durham Public Schools.

Young received a bachelor's degree in Early Childhood Education and American Studies, a masters in School Administration/Educational Leadership, and a doctorate in Curriculum and Instruction from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

### **Dr. Eric Lund**

Dueling Dinosaurs Lab Manager

North Carolina Museum of Natural Sciences

121 West Jones Street

Raleigh, NC 27601

(919) 707-9280

[eric.lund@naturalsciences.org](mailto:eric.lund@naturalsciences.org)

Eric is interested in the paleobiology and functional morphology of ceratopsian (horned) dinosaurs and faunal evolution in the Western Interior Basin during the Cretaceous Period. He has had the opportunity to conduct paleontological field work in many parts of the United States including Utah, Montana, and North Carolina, and around the world including Mexico, Tanzania and Madagascar. Eric is currently focusing his research around ceratopsid evolutionary morphology and functional anatomy of the skull.

He has had the pleasure of being part of the collaborative works naming and describing several genera of ceratopsid dinosaurs including Coahuilaceratops (2010), Nasutoceratops (2013), and Machairoceratops (2016). Eric is currently serving as the lab manager and volunteer coordinator for the paleontology department.

### **The Honorable Shinica Thomas**

Chair

Wake County Board of Commissioners

301 S. McDowell Street

Raleigh, NC 27601

(919) 856-5566

[shinica.thomas@wake.gov](mailto:shinica.thomas@wake.gov)

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

Associate Dean for Research and Innovation

Interim Faculty Lead, Environmental Finance Center

UNC School of Government

Knapp-Sanders Building, Campus Box 3330

Chapel Hill, NC 27514

(919) 962-0051

[millonzi@sog.unc.edu](mailto:millonzi@sog.unc.edu)

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 over 200 articles 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 was the founding 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. She currently is serving as interim Faculty Lead for the School's Environmental Finance Center. Before joining the School, Millonzi practiced law with Testa, Hurwitz & Thibault, 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. Paul Shumaker**

Founder and President  
Capitol Communications, Inc.  
Post Office Box 12107  
Raleigh, NC 27605  
(919) 971-9020  
[paul@paulshumaker.com](mailto:paul@paulshumaker.com)

Paul has been described as the “‘Data Guy’ Behind North Carolina Republicans,” who, as one of the longest-serving political consultants in the state, is distinguished by clear and honest direction based on historical, current, and projected data business and political climates.

For over five decades, Paul Shumaker has created winning, data-driven strategies for candidates and businesses at every level, leading to a historical transformation of North Carolina's political landscape.

Paul has won more U.S. Senate races in North Carolina than any consultant in the state for the last 25 years, with five Senate wins. In 2014, Paul set the record for winning the most expensive U.S. Senate race in American history and then beat this record again in 2020, with Senator Thom Tillis's historic win in a race that cost \$300 million.

As the founder and president of Capitol Communications, Inc., Paul has also worked with countless U.S. House of Representatives members, including Congressman Chuck Edwards' upset victory over incumbent member Madison Cawthorn, the past three North Carolina House Speakers, three Chief Justices of the Supreme Court of North Carolina, and many members of the North Carolina General Assembly.

Paul is also the co-owner of Strategic Partners Solutions, an issue management firm based in Raleigh. He is a graduate of Appalachian State University, lives in Raleigh, and is married to the former Ruth Ann Burton, with whom he has three adult children. He loves to fish and hunt during his spare time.

#### **Mr. Morgan Jackson**

Partner and Co-Founder

Nexus Strategies, Inc.  
301 Hillsborough Street, Suite 950  
Raleigh, NC 27603  
(919) 829-1132  
[mjackson@nexusstrategies.com](mailto:mjackson@nexusstrategies.com)

For over two decades, Morgan Jackson has overseen some of the largest and highest-profile political campaigns in North Carolina history.

During his career, Jackson has served in senior roles with presidential, gubernatorial, and congressional candidates, as well as advising Governors, US Senators, and Members of Congress. A longtime advisor to Governor Roy Cooper, he was instrumental in the historic 2016 campaign that resulted in the first defeat of an incumbent Governor in North Carolina history and in Governor Cooper's re-election in 2020. He continues to serve as Governor Cooper's Chief Political Advisor and serves in the same role for Attorney General Josh Stein.

A co-founder of Nexus Strategies, a Raleigh-based political and public affairs firm, Jackson has also successfully managed and implemented numerous campaigns, communications and advocacy efforts and serves as a strategic advisor for many leading Fortune 500 companies, trade associations, and non-profits.

Jackson is a sought-after expert on North Carolina and national politics and is frequently quoted in The New York Times, Politico, The Washington Post, The Raleigh News and Observer, The Charlotte Observer, as well as other North Carolina newspapers.

Morgan Jackson received a Bachelor of Arts in Political Science from the University of North Carolina at Wilmington. A proud Seahawk, he currently serves on the UNCW Foundation Board and is the past Chair of the UNCW Board of Visitors. He and his wife, Shawn, are the proud parents of Emsley and Colt.

#### **Mr. Tim Boyum**

Political Anchor  
Charter Communications  
(919) 612-3099  
[tim.boyum@charter.com](mailto:tim.boyum@charter.com)

Emmy award-winning journalist Tim Boyum was one of the original members of the Spectrum News 1 North Carolina team in January 2002.

Tim currently hosts the nightly political show, Capital Tonight. He also hosts and produces the award-winning weekly podcast Tying It Together with Tim Boyum. Most recently, Tim developed, hosts, and produces a monthly magazine show called Front Porch Politics.

Tim has spent the last 20+ years focused on delivering a fair and objective look at politics in North Carolina and the many ways these stories affect citizens daily. During Tim's impressive tenure as a North Carolina politics reporter and anchor, he has covered every national political convention and interviewed more than two dozen presidential candidates and one sitting president. He's also moderated several U.S. Senate debates.

Tim was recognized multiple times as one of the top capitol reporters by the Washington Post. He's won six regional Emmy awards, been nominated for 20 regional Emmy awards, and won numerous accolades for his political reporting, both television and podcast, from the Radio Television Digital News Association of the Carolinas.

Tim, his wife Melanie, and their two children live in the Triangle. When he's not chasing politicians around the country, his family loves to vacation and watch sports together.

**Ms. Kelly Williamson**

President, North America  
APCO Worldwide  
301 Hillsborough Street, Suite 1000  
Raleigh, NC 27603  
(202) 778-1000  
[kwilliamson@apcoworldwide.com](mailto:kwilliamson@apcoworldwide.com)

Kelly Williamson is a strategic advisor and an entrepreneur at heart. As a member on APCO's Global Leadership Team, she is accustomed to exploring new territory and capturing opportunities. From creating APCO's global key client initiative, to founding of our Raleigh presence and helping grow it into a flourishing business; to regularly galvanizing new and creative ideas from around the world; or simply challenging herself, her clients, and her managers to think bigger and act more boldly, Kelly is a force of nature who challenges the status quo. She is president of APCO's North America region. Kelly's tenure features career highlights across diverse industry sectors and regions. She created APCO's Accelerate What's Right program that addresses systemic racism and builds inclusive cultures for our teams, clients, and community. She's a specialist in issues, advocacy, and corporate reputation, particularly for regulated industries.

In recent years, Kelly was honored several times for her significant career accomplishments. She was named an Industry Game Changer 2023 by Ragan Communications. She also won a 2022 Top Women in Communications Award in the Diversity, Equity & Inclusion Champion category, was named a Champion in the 2018 PRWeek Hall of Femme, and was named a 2018 Top Women in PR by PR News.

Kelly is on the board of advisors at the University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill in the Media and Journalism School as well as on the board of the Institute for Public Relations. Prior to joining APCO she served as a financial management consultant for the Principal Financial Group. She holds a Bachelor of Science degree in communication with a concentration in public relations and business from James Madison University.

**Mr. James White**

Principal Clerk  
North Carolina House of Representatives  
16 West Jones Street, Room 2320  
Raleigh, NC 27601  
(919) 733-7760  
[James.White@ncleg.gov](mailto:James.White@ncleg.gov)

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 Jim Burgin**

Senator, District 12  
North Carolina General Assembly  
300 North Salisbury Street, Room 620  
Raleigh, NC 27603  
(919) 733-5748  
[Jim.Burgin@ncleg.gov](mailto:Jim.Burgin@ncleg.gov)

Senator Jim Burgin is a longtime resident of Harnett County and current President and Owner of C & D Insurance. Senator Burgin also serves as Chairman of the Board to New Horizon Insurance Group, President of B.C. Property, Inc., a real estate development company, and partner in John Heister Automotive, which owns Chevrolet and Chrysler Dodge Jeep Dealerships.

Senator Burgin is currently serving his third term in the North Carolina Senate where he serves as the Chairman of Healthcare, Appropriations on Health and Human Services and the Joint Legislative Oversight Committee on Health and Human Services. Before his time as a North Carolina State Senator, he served two terms as a Harnett County Commissioner.

Senator Burgin and his wife, Ann, have been married 44 years and have three children and four grandchildren. He was born in Knoxville, TN, and attended The University of Knoxville. He is proud to serve Harnett, Lee and a portion of Sampson counties.

## **The Honorable Robert T. Reives II**

Representative, District 54  
North Carolina General Assembly  
300 North Salisbury Street, Room 506  
Raleigh, NC 27603  
(919) 733-0057  
[Robert.Reives@ncleg.gov](mailto:Robert.Reives@ncleg.gov)

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 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.



**Ms. Kristi Jones**

Vice President, Public Affairs and Sustainability, NiSource  
Former Chief of Staff to North Carolina Governor Roy Cooper  
907 Celia Saxon Drive  
Durham, NC 27713  
[hyman771@hotmail.com](mailto:hyman771@hotmail.com)

Kristi Jones brings over 25 years of high-impact leadership in public service, specializing in strategic policymaking and delivering transformative results. As Chief of Staff to Governor Roy Cooper of North Carolina for the past seven and a half years, Kristi led the team's efforts to turn Governor Cooper's vision into accomplishments. Kristi played a pivotal role in this administration, which spearheaded initiatives to extend healthcare coverage to more than 600,000 newly eligible North Carolinians through NC Medicaid, propelled North Carolina to the top of CNBC's business rankings in 2022 and 2023, and led the charge towards a sustainable, clean energy future. Their efforts not only created jobs, reduced harmful emissions, and protected our environment, but also ensured a government that looks like the people it serves and works for all.

Prior to this, Kristi served as Chief of Staff to Attorney General Roy Cooper of North Carolina, where she played a key role in shaping policies and legal strategies, tackling crime, and safeguarding consumer rights. Her tenure as Executive Director of the North Carolina Initiative on Race under Governor Jim Hunt further showcased her ability to drive economic prosperity and improve race relations through strategic partnerships with business and community leaders.

Kristi is celebrated for her expertise in forging strategic alliances with policymakers, industry leaders, community advocates, and local and federal partners to move North Carolina forward. Her contributions have earned her numerous accolades, including the Women in Government Relations, Governor's Staff Award (2024), UNC School of Law Distinguished Alumni Award (2021), and the Humanitarian of the Year Award from the Wendell-Wake NAACP.

She is proud she chose to attend the best Historically Black College and University - North Carolina Central University. It has proven to be the foundation she needed. She then graduated from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill School of Law. Both esteemed North Carolina public universities prepared her professionally.

A compelling and dynamic speaker, Kristi's reputation as a dedicated and effective public servant precedes her, having represented the Governor, Attorney General, and the State of North Carolina on numerous influential platforms.

Kristi Jones recently accepted a job as Vice President for Public Affairs and Sustainability for NiSource. NiSource is one of the largest fully regulated utility companies in the United States.

### **The Honorable Anita S. Earls**

Senior Associate Justice  
Supreme Court of North Carolina  
Post Office Box 1841  
Raleigh, NC 27602  
(919) 831-5714  
[AEarls@sc.nccourts.org](mailto:AEarls@sc.nccourts.org)

Anita Earls is the Senior Associate Justice of the Supreme Court of North Carolina. Before taking office on January 1, 2019, she was a civil rights attorney litigating voting rights, police misconduct, school desegregation, employment discrimination, and similar civil rights cases for 30 years. Anita founded the Southern Coalition for Social Justice, a non-profit legal advocacy organization in Durham, North Carolina, and for ten years served as the Executive Director.

From 1998 to 2000, Anita was a Deputy Assistant Attorney General in the U.S. Department of Justice, Civil Rights Division, appointed by President Bill Clinton. She has also served on the North Carolina State Board of Elections, the North Carolina Equal Access to Justice Commission, and currently Co-Chairs the Governor's Task Force on Racial Equity in Criminal Justice. Anita teaches as an adjunct professor at UNC Law Schools and has published articles on voting rights and state constitutions. A graduate of Yale Law School and Williams College, Anita lives in Durham with her husband Charles Walton. She has two grown sons and two grandchildren.

### **Mrs. Janice McKenzie Cole**

Former Manager  
Town of Hertford  
271 Halsey Bay Road  
Hertford, NC 27944  
(252) 331-5216  
[jmc27944@gmail.com](mailto:jmc27944@gmail.com)

Janice McKenzie Cole was born and raised in New York City. She began her career in law enforcement as a New York City police officer and was among the first group of women given the same street patrol assignments as the male officers. Upon graduation from Fordham University School of Law she worked as an assistant United States attorney in the Eastern District of New York. In 1983, she started a private practice in Hertford. Seven years later she was elected a District Court Judge in the 1st Judicial District, where she was the first woman and the first African American elected as a judge in this District.

In 1994, President Clinton appointed her as the United States Attorney for the Eastern District of North Carolina. Subsequently, Ms. Cole returned to the private practice of law and founded Cole Immigration Law Center. Her portrait hangs in the Perquimans County courthouse annex. She served as a county commissioner from 2010 to 2016 and was chair for four of those years. She served as the Town Manager for the Town of Hertford from January 2022 through October 31, 2024.

**Mr. Scott Sauer**

County Manager  
Gates County  
115 Court Street  
Gatesville, NC 27938  
(252) 357-2411 option 2  
[ssauer@gatescountync.gov](mailto:ssauer@gatescountync.gov)

Scott Sauer serves as County Manager for Gates County, North Carolina. He assumed this role in January 2023 after serving as the interim County Manager for six months. Sauer had a distinguished 28-year career in public service, retiring in November 2019. Two years later, he returned to the workforce when he was recruited by the Gates County Board of Commissioners.

Sauer holds both a Master of Public Affairs degree and a Bachelor of Science in Urban Affairs and Transportation from Indiana University. Over the course of his career, he has earned additional professional credentials, including a County Administration Certificate from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and completion of the Public Executive Leadership Academy and Senior Executive Institute programs.

Sauer brings extensive experience in local government leadership, having also served as County Manager in Bertie, Harnett, Sampson, Scotland, and Caswell Counties in North Carolina. His tenures in these roles spanned from 1991 to 2019. Prior to his local government work, Sauer held budget analyst positions in Virginia. Committed to a three-year contract as the Gates County Manager, Sauer is eager to leverage his expertise to serve the local community and address its evolving needs.

**Ms. Lydian Altman**

Adjunct Faculty  
Center for Public Leadership and Governance  
UNC School of Government  
(919) 990-0271  
[altmanlydian@gmail.com](mailto:altmanlydian@gmail.com)

Ms. Lydian Altman retired as an Assistant Professor from the UNC School of Government in August 2024. Lydian now teaches and consults part-time for the School's Center for Public Leadership and Governance. Her current work includes consulting with elected and appointed leaders to create strategic plans, teaching leadership topics, and facilitating retreats for governmental and nonprofit organizations and cross-sector community groups to help them plan and work together to solve public problems.

**Ms. Tracy Miles**

Adjunct Instructor  
UNC School of Government  
Campus Box 3330, Knapp-Saunders Building  
Chapel Hill, NC 27599  
(336) 708-4953  
[tsmiles@sog.unc.edu](mailto:tsmiles@sog.unc.edu)

Tracy Miles is a relationship-driven public servant with experience in 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 impact. 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 currently serves as the SMS Cohort Manager for the North Carolina Association of County Commissioners and is an adjunct in the UNC-CH MPA program. Her experience includes working for General Electric, John Deere, The American Heart Association, Girls on the Run, and 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 a Lean Six Sigma Certification. Tracy works across our great state and calls Greensboro home, where she lives with her husband and two kiddos.

## Class 32 Government Session Planning Committee

The following members of LNC Class 31 make up the planning committee for the Class 32 Government session.

### **Meredith Archie Wake**

President

NC Chamber Foundation

[marchie@ncchamber.com](mailto:marchie@ncchamber.com)

Meredith Archie was named president of the NC Chamber Foundation in April 2022. Under her leadership, the NC Chamber Foundation serves as the long-term planning and research center for the NC Chamber. Through its data-based policy recommendations, thoughtful collaboration, and outcome-based programs, the Foundation works to secure a thriving future for our state and enhance the quality of life and creation of wealth for all North Carolinians.

A native North Carolinian, Meredith is from Rocky Mount where she grew up working for her family's business and gained a deep appreciation for businesses' contributions to communities and the opportunity provided through good jobs.

Before joining the NC Chamber Foundation, Meredith was at Duke Energy for seven years where she led communications and engagement strategy in North Carolina, including corporate communications, stakeholder engagement, executive positioning, and serving as company spokesperson. Prior to that, she directed communications efforts for the NC Chamber and NC Chamber Foundation from 2011 to 2015. She obtained her Bachelor of Arts in communication studies from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

Meredith lives in Raleigh with her husband, Charles, and two daughters, Addison and Caroline. She enjoys volunteering at her church and her daughters' schools, playing tennis, and going to the beach with her family.

### **Lisa Cherry Gates**

Planning and Economic Development Director

Gates County

[lcherry@gatescountync.gov](mailto:lcherry@gatescountync.gov)

Lisa was born and raised along the Virginia/North Carolina border; both are in the blood, literally. First, she resided in the Southwestern part of Virginia, then in the Hampton Roads Region of Virginia. Beginning her career as a civil servant, Lisa Cherry began working at the age of ripe old age of 20 with the Commonwealth of Virginia. Educated while at the Commonwealth in the functional areas of roadway and land use and design/analysis, Lisa retired in 2017 and began another career with the County of Gates. She transitioned into the planning and economic development functions of land use. Lisa is passionate about wanting to educate others about the planning and economic development opportunities within Gates County. She realizes she is learning new things every day and is excited about it. Lisa enjoys traveling (mostly the OBX) with her family and all the activities that come along with family and travel.

**Wesley Fountain** *Cumberland*

Vice Chancellor of External Affairs and Military Relations

Fayetteville State University

[wtfountain01@uncfsu.edu](mailto:wtfountain01@uncfsu.edu)

Wesley Fountain currently holds the position of Vice Chancellor for External Affairs and Military Relations at Fayetteville State University. He has had the privilege of serving in this esteemed role for twelve years. It is a position that drives the university's mission and strategic initiatives through effective legislative relations and community engagement. In this capacity, Wesley is responsible for developing, analyzing, and implementing legislative, budgetary, and program initiatives that directly impact the university's goals and aspirations. He represents Fayetteville State University before the legislature, education advocacy groups, and the general public, advocating for the institution's needs and vision.

Collaboration is at the heart of Wesley's role. He works closely with the Governor's Office, the North Carolina General Assembly, the University of North Carolina System, and state agencies to ensure the university's legislative agenda aligns with broader administrative policies. Additionally, he actively engages with county, city, business, and regional stakeholders, aiming to position Fayetteville State University as a valued resource and economic catalyst in the southeastern region of North Carolina.

Wesley brings a wealth of experience to this role, having earned a Bachelor of Arts degree in Political Science from Winston Salem State University and a Master of Arts degree in Political Science from Fayetteville State University. In addition, his involvement on various boards and commissions, such as the Greater Fayetteville Chamber of Commerce Board of Directors and the City of Fayetteville Planning Commission, allows him to contribute to the growth and progress of the community.

**The Honorable Tracey Johnson** *Washington*

Washington County Commissioner, Beaufort County Community College, and Past President, NCACC

[trajohn204@gmail.com](mailto:trajohn204@gmail.com)

Tracey A. Johnson is a lifelong resident of Washington County, NC. Tracey has served as a County Commissioner for over 16 years. Tracey has served as Chair of various organizations that include, but are not limited to Mental Health, Crime Stoppers, Recreation, and the Council of Government (COG). Tracey has represented North Carolina on the National Board of Directors (NACo) and most recently finished her term as the President of the North Carolina Association of County Commissioners (NCACC) representing 100 counties.

Tracey has worked at Beaufort County Community College for over 29 years with various responsibilities ranging from implementation of a campus-wide emergency plan to mailroom, graphic design, printing and copier repair. In recent years she has been the Assistant to the Director of Operations, which included HVAC systems, energy usage reports, water reports, and campus upkeep. Tracey is now retired. Tracey especially loves volunteering with recreation, coaching little kids, and advocating for rural underserved and unserved North Carolinians. Tracey believes life is a good movie, a great sporting event, a good book, and finding joy in each day.

**Matthew Kagel** *Out of State*

Director, State & Local Government Affairs

International Franchise Association

[mkagel@franchise.org](mailto:mkagel@franchise.org)

Matthew Kagel serves as IFA's Director of State & Local Government Relations, overseeing the association's advocacy efforts at the state and local level across the country and representing the franchise community in state houses and before city councils. With a decade of advocacy, public affairs, and government relations experience, Matthew works directly with Vice President of State & Local Government Relations and Council, Jeff Hanscom, and outside state and local groups to develop public policy initiatives, drive advocacy and build coalitions in support of franchising, and serve as the association's liaison with state and local policymakers.

Prior to joining IFA, Matthew was the director of communications and government affairs for Pepsi Bottling Ventures LLC (PBV), representing the nation's largest independent Pepsi-Cola bottler in North Carolina, South Carolina, Maryland, Delaware, and Virginia, and oversaw all internal and external communication initiatives. Before Pepsi, Matthew served as Associate Vice President at DDC Public Affairs in Washington, DC, where he managed a robust and diverse portfolio of clients handling issues related to retail, energy, healthcare, and agriculture. His career also includes a tenure as Deputy Communications Director for a victorious U.S. Congressional campaign in Virginia's 7th District.

Matthew received his bachelor's degree in public relations from Virginia Commonwealth University.

**Steven Martin, Class 32 Program Chair** *Wake*

President & CEO

Constellation Quality Health

[smartin@constellationqh.org](mailto:smartin@constellationqh.org)

Steven is the President and Chief Executive Officer (CEO) for Constellation Quality Health. An experienced and empathetic leader, Steven previously served as a Vice President within Atrium Health's Quality Division. His responsibilities included the comprehensive oversight for accreditation, medical staff services and quality, Section 1557 of the Affordable Care Act (Patient Non-Discrimination), and the Insurance and Payor Quality of Care Complaint process.

He served as a member of the Joint Commission's Health Systems Liaison Advisory Council and as Deputy for the COVID-19 Surge Operations Leadership Group at Atrium Health. His additional prior leadership roles include Vice President for Business Development/Senior Consultant at Courtemanche & Associates, Inc., and Director of Quality Management at Carolinas HealthCare System. Steven also served as a Hospital Surveyor with The Joint Commission.

Steven holds a Master's in Health Administration from the Medical University of South Carolina and a Bachelor of Science in Biology from Wofford College. His credentials include Fellow of the American College of Healthcare Executives (FACHE) and Certified Professional in Healthcare Quality (CPHQ). He is an alumnus of Leadership North Carolina Class 31 and serves as the LNC Class 32 Program Chair.

**Hannah Morecraft, Government Session Co-Chair** *Wake*

Deputy Managing Director

APCO Worldwide

[hmorecraft@apcoworldwide.com](mailto:hmorecraft@apcoworldwide.com)

Hannah works at APCO Worldwide as deputy managing director for APCO South, helping clients navigate business and policy issues in North Carolina and beyond. Hannah specializes in issues management, public affairs, and integrated communications campaigns. Most of her clients are in North Carolina in education, health, and energy. She loves working on issues at the intersection of business and policy and she thrives in chaos. Speaking of chaos, she has two young girls, and she chooses to escape the insanity with even more chaotic reality TV.

Hannah is fascinated by economic and workforce development in North Carolina. Before APCO, she served as Deputy Communications Director at the North Carolina Department of Commerce, where she managed economic and workforce development communications for the state. As part of that work, she helped introduce companies to North Carolina once they selected the state for major projects. Hannah also worked on communications initiatives for the NCWorks Commission and was part of the team that launched Governor Roy Cooper's NC Job Ready Program, the state's framework for workforce development. Before serving in state government, Hannah led integrated public affairs work for clients in health, energy, and financial services at Ketchum Raleigh, formerly Capstrat.

Hannah graduated from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill with a degree in journalism. She and her husband Todd have two daughters, Sarah Collins and Millie, and a Bernese Mountain Dog named Bear.

**Grace Rountree** *Wake*

Director, NC Public Affairs & Communications

Duke Energy

[grace.rountree@duke-energy.com](mailto:grace.rountree@duke-energy.com)

Grace Rountree is the director of public affairs and communications for Duke Energy. In this role, Grace is responsible for managing public affairs campaigns in support of the company's business priorities in North Carolina. She counsels leaders on advocacy strategy, corporate reputation, executive positioning, and Duke Energy Foundation impact. She previously served as a company spokesperson.

Prior to her role with Duke Energy, Grace managed diverse campaigns and clients at public affairs agencies in Washington, DC, (Weber Shandwick), and Raleigh (Capstrat).

Grace graduated from Elon University with a degree in Corporate Communications and Business Administration and resides in Raleigh with her husband and two children. She is a proud member of the Marbles Kids Museum Board of Directors and the Leadership North Carolina Board of Directors.



**Annette Taylor** *Wake*

Director, Office of Digital Equity and Literacy  
North Carolina Department of Information Technology  
[annette.taylor@nc.gov](mailto:annette.taylor@nc.gov)

Annette Taylor, a spirited advocate hailing from the charming landscapes of rural North Carolina, is a beacon of compassion and empowerment. With roots deeply intertwined in the heart of the Tar Heel State, Annette's unwavering devotion to her community is matched only by her fervor for breaking down barriers.

Daily, she leads efforts to close gaps for more than 1 million people on the wrong side of the digital divide. An advocate for education, Annette believes in the transformative power of knowledge. You'll often find her collaborating with schools, nonprofits, and faith and civic leaders to effect change for the disconnected. Annette's dedication to those who are left behind is a testament to her commitment to the heart and soul of her state.

Annette is passionate about the well-being of women, which drives her to actively engage with numerous organizations, including serving as Chair of the NC Council for Women. She is known for crafting pathways for progress and offering solace to survivors of domestic violence. Her own story of resilience and triumph over challenges lends authenticity to her advocacy.

Beyond professional endeavors, Annette finds joy traveling with her husband and two adult kids, beach getaways, and the electrifying rivalry of football, especially her alma mater, NCCU.

Annette's infectious energy and boundless enthusiasm make her a driving force for positive change. Her life story is a testament to the incredible impact one individual can have when guided by a desire to leave the world better than she found it.

**Stacie Walker** *Wake*

Chief Lending Officer  
State Employees' Credit Union  
[stacie.walker@ncsecu.org](mailto:stacie.walker@ncsecu.org)

Stacie is originally from Boone, NC, and has called Raleigh home since 2011. She received her bachelor's degree from Appalachian State University with a double major: Philosophy/Religion and Sociology with a minor in business. While a student, Stacie had various leadership roles and has continued her passion for Appalachian, serving on various committees and currently on the Foundation Board.

Stacie started her professional career at State Employees' Credit Union (SECU) in 2001 and has held various positions in the branch, including Vice President as well as Senior Operations Auditor in Audit Services. Currently, she serves as Senior Executive Vice President – Chief Lending Officer. SECU has served state employees of NC and their family members since 1937 and today SECU has 2.7 million members, making the credit union the second largest credit union in the United States.

When not serving in her professional role, Stacie enjoys giving back to the community. Since 2013, she has been an active member of the Junior League of Raleigh, serving in various roles including Treasurer and Executive Vice President. Currently, she serves on the Board of Directors for StepUp Ministries and

Designed for Joy. While very much a foodie, Stacie enjoys traveling, reading, needlepointing, and spending time with friends.

**Jordan Whichard, Government Session Co-Chair** *Wake*

Chief Deputy Secretary

North Carolina Department of Commerce

[djwhich@gmail.com](mailto:djwhich@gmail.com)

Jordan Whichard has served as Chief Deputy Secretary at the North Carolina Department of Commerce since early 2021, where he provides strategic leadership and oversight for teams and divisions across the agency. He also sits on the Board of Directors of the North Carolina Railroad Company and the North Carolina Global Transpark Authority. Jordan was previously Director of Intergovernmental Affairs for North Carolina Governor Roy Cooper and spent the first chapter of his career in national politics and government, with posts in the Obama White House, 2008 presidential campaign, the Democratic National Committee, and the Democratic National Convention Committee.

Jordan grew up in Greenville, NC, where he attended Pitt County Public Schools before spending four formative years at Episcopal High School in Alexandria, VA. He returned to the southern part of heaven to attend the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill where he endured four extremely mediocre football seasons and celebrated four incredible basketball seasons including Roy Williams' return to Chapel Hill and the 2005 National Championship. He also double majored in Political Science and Management & Society. Among his proudest accomplishments is organizing a pickup basketball game in the Smith Center for then-Senator Barack Obama and the 2008 Tar Heels.

These days, Jordan likes to spend as much time as possible near Bath on the Pamlico River in eastern North Carolina, where he spent much of his childhood fishing, hunting, and playing on the water. He now gets the chance to enjoy that place and life's many other adventures with his wife Jessica and daughters Eliza and Katherine.

**Valyce Woolaston** *Wake*

Senior Counsel

Dominion Energy Services, Inc.

[valyce.d.woolaston@dominionenergy.com](mailto:valyce.d.woolaston@dominionenergy.com)

Valyce Davis Woolaston is Senior Counsel for Litigation and Claims at Dominion Energy, supporting natural gas and electric operations. In this role, she advises company leadership on risks associated with various aspects of its operations, including incident response and policy development. Valyce also manages litigation matters involving personal injury and property damage claims. Prior to joining Dominion Energy, Valyce represented corporate clients as a litigator in matters involving tort, environmental, and financial services claims.

Valyce is a proud North Carolinian and product of the state's public education system. She grew up in Roanoke Rapids and completed her secondary education at the North Carolina School of Science and Mathematics. Valyce is a double Tar Heel, earning her Juris Doctor and Bachelor of Arts degrees from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. After law school, Valyce clerked on the North Carolina Supreme Court for the Honorable Cheri Beasley.

When she is not lawyering, Valyce enjoys reading fiction, baking confections, dancing (she was a competitive clogger), and serving the community as a member of Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Incorporated and the Junior League of Raleigh. Valyce lives in Garner with her husband, Dorian, and their pup, Ant.