

Proposed amendments to N.C. Constitution

By Julie Carter
Staff writer

As the days counting down to the election grow fewer, many voters are wondering exactly what issues will be on this ballot. In previous issues, we have discussed many political issues from who the candidates running for the House of Representatives will be, to the gerrymandering in North Carolina decision. Another important topic to familiarize yourselves with before the election are the proposed amendments to the North Carolina Constitution. Here is your comprehensive guide.

Hunting and Fishing Amendment

This amendment states "The right of the people to hunt, fish and harvest wildlife is a valued part of the State's heritage and shall be forever preserved for the public good."

On the outside, this amendment appears to represent what many North Carolinians already believe. However, contrary to popular belief, this amendment alters no existing state law which has drawn in a lot of criticism.

Critics say that the amendment is merely a guise meant to cover up harsher amendments that follow on the ballot such as the proposed Voter ID Amendment. Critics also note that the amendment could block any proposed gun control reform that may come in the future.

Victims' Rights Amendment

This amendment would give victims of crimes the right to be heard at any court proceeding regarding their case and to ensure that restitution would be done in a timely manner as well as guaranteeing an enforcement of their rights.

Many are worried that this amendment would stretch existing resources for victims thin as property crimes would be handled with the same level of importance as personal crimes like assault and homicide from already struggling district attorneys.

Cap on Personal and Corporate Income Tax Amendment

This amendment would lower the personal and corporate income tax ceiling from ten percent to seven percent. It is important to know that this is not a tax cut as one might understand it as the state's personal tax rate is well under that ceiling.

The controversy in this amendment surrounds what state level government is able to do. Republicans tend to be more conservative on this matter than Democrats. Others fear what would happen should a recession occur, as the state would be left in a bind with regard to income tax.

Voter Photo ID Requirement Amendment

This amendment would mandate that voters in the state would have to present a state-issued form of photo identification at the polls in order to vote. In the past, this type of amendment or law has drawn a large portion of criticism as it is

viewed as another form of disenfranchisement.

Defenders of the amendment tend to say that the amendment is merely "common sense" to defend the privilege of voting by eliminating fraudulent voters. However, the State Board of Elections found that .01 percent of the state's ballots were cast by ineligible voters. In these circumstances, most of these were accounted as unknowing felon votes and two cases of people voting for deceased family members.

This amendment would block many voters in the state from exercising the right to vote. This could be the result of many issues such as not all forms of photo identification being accepted, not having a driver's license, or not being able to afford the cost of getting a photo ID.

It is unclear, if this amendment should pass, what North Carolina would do to remedy these issues.

Judicial Vacancies Amendment

Traditionally, governors have the power to fill judicial vacancies. The appointee would then hold the seat until the next election for the General Assembly, more than 60 days after the vacancy is filled.

The amendment is designed to make the process "less political." The amendment would create a "non-partisan" judicial merit commission of nine members. The governor, the General Assembly and Chief Justice would each select three members. The governor would then get to choose from nominees proposed by the General Assembly including at least two from the merit commission.

However, all the living former governors of North Carolina, Republican and Democrat alike, came together to say that the amendment is "an attack on the separation of powers" and is no more than a legislative power grab.

Altering the State Board of Ethics and Elections Enforcement Amendment

For years, the State Board of Ethics and Elections has been involved in a power struggle between the governor and the General Assembly. In a lawsuit against the General Assembly by Governor Roy Cooper, Cooper asserted that the board was purely under his control to which the state Supreme Court agreed.

The board has nine members. Four are Republicans. Four are Democrats. The ninth has no affiliation with either major party.

The governor picks the ninth member from a list provided by the other eight members.

This amendment would reduce the number of board members from nine to eight. The governor would be required to select appointees from a list proposed by both party leaders in the legislature.

Critics say that is a breeding ground for a deadlock. The amendment once again brought all of the living former governors of the state together to oppose the amendment.

BC Immersion team leaves for 21-day expedition

By Mary Lewé
Copy Editor

On Tuesday, Oct. 30, a group of 11 Brevard College students abandoned the confines of the classroom to gain hands on experience hiking, rock climbing and canoeing. Along with the challenges posed by their physical endeavors, they will also be learning to work as a team under the pressures of surviving in the backcountry.

Immersion is a graduation requirement for all Wilderness Leadership and Experiential Education (WLEE) majors. It involves an entire semester of classes devoted to gaining experience and proficiency in a variety of outdoor activities, as well as becoming Wilderness First Responder certified. Infact, participation in the WFR course is one of the first things the students complete during their Immersion semester, in order to assure the safety of all involved.

Molly Brown, a sophomore at BC, is very excited for the rock climbing portion of the trip in particular, but says she is worried about being cold on the trip. The group is likely to encounter 0° temperatures during their trip.

Molly smiled as she said she will also miss "food that I don't have to cook, is that bad?"

Emilie Abbott, another student participating, is worried that previous injuries may flare up during the trip. "I'm worried that I might have to be evacuated," she said.

Despite their nerves, the group has been preparing since August and is well-equipped for success.

"We started out the semester with a teambuilding trail run on North Slope in Pisgah," Abbott said. "It went really well, it was our first time performing as a team and getting to know each other."

The group has prepared physically and has already packed up food and gear for the duration of the trip. "We have four resupplies," Abbott said.

In addition, they have also prepared mentally. "We've done a lot of group dynamic work, a lot of interpersonal stuff," Abbott said. "It helps develop our relationships."

The Fall 2018 immersion group will be visiting many beautiful areas in the vicinity, including Linville Gorge, the New River and the Mountains-to-Sea Trail.