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## North Carolina governor takes office minutes into new year

**By Gary D. Robertson**  
RALEIGH (AP) - North Carolina Gov. Roy Cooper took his oath of office minutes after midnight Sunday morning (Jan. 1), getting an early start on his duties amid bitter partisan politics in the state but saying he believed there is a way forward.

Joined by a small group of family, friends and colleagues, the Democrat was sworn inside the old House chamber of the 1840 Capitol building nearly a week before his public inauguration.

A Cooper aide has said the state's 75th governor wanted to get started on gubernatorial duties following a transition period shortened by a protracted debate over vote-counting in his close race with outgoing Republican Gov. Pat McCrory.

"I'm aware of the solemn responsibility that I've been given and the duty that I have to uphold the Constitution," Cooper said shortly after state Chief Justice Mark Martin administered the oath to Cooper during the 15-minute ceremony. "I cannot wait to get started."

As governor-elect, Cooper already began taking legislative Republicans to court over the laws passed during a December special session. A state Superior Court judge on Dec. 30 temporarily blocked a law that would scale back the control governors exert over statewide and county election boards. Cooper's attorney said more legal challenges are planned this coming week.

Another of the laws requires Cooper's Cabinet choices to be confirmed by legislators. The state Constitution gives the Senate the ability to "advise and consent" to the governor's appointees by a majority vote, but that provision hadn't been used in at least several decades.

With the GOP still holding veto-proof majorities in the legislature, Cooper's five-minute address to the crowd of about 75 people and a television audience hit on themes of finding common

ground. Cooper said he would aim to be a governor for the entire state. "I know and I am confident that although we may come at it from different ways that other leaders in this state and I can work together to make North Carolina its very best, the kind of North Carolina that we know that we can be," Cooper said.

Cooper is a 30-year veteran of state politics - 14 years in the legislature before 16 as attorney general -- and claimed victory on election night. But it was another four weeks before McCrory conceded while dozens of ballot protests were considered and a partial recount was held in Durham County.

In the end, Cooper won by about 10,000 votes. A law McCrory signed last March limiting non-discrimination protections for LGBT people and directing which public bathrooms transgender people can use was a big issue in the fall campaign. Cooper wants the law known as House Bill 2 repealed.

Cooper has already begun ushering out stalwarts of the McCrory administration. Dismissal notices were given in the past week to a few dozen McCrory political appointees, Cooper spokeswoman Megan Jacobs said.

Turnover among those positions isn't uncommon, but the swiftness of the dismissals carries extra weight in light of the recent legislation that limits Cooper's number of political appointees to 425. That's less than a third of the number McCrory was allowed to have.

The Rev. Art Ross mentioned the Bible characters Moses, David and Esther in a prayer asking for courage and inspiration for the new governor.

"We're mindful of these current challenges and divisions, and so we pray that you would grant your servant to govern with wisdom and justice, that he be quick to confess when he is wrong and filled with perse-

verance when he is right," Ross said.

Sunday's ceremony began moments after nearby revelers in downtown Raleigh brought in the new year with fireworks and other festivities.

The public inauguration for Cooper and other statewide elected positions will be held Jan. 7, followed by a traditional downtown parade and nighttime ball. Cooper was one of four in these positions who decided to get sworn in on the first possible day allowed by law.

Insurance Commissioner Mike Causey of Guilford County and State Treasurer Dale Folwell of Winston-Salem held separate ceremonies just after midnight - Folwell at his home and Causey at a fire station. And Democrat Josh Stein, who succeeds Cooper as attorney general, scheduled a midday swearing-in inside the state Department of Justice Building.



**'Enough Is Enough: A Call for the Economic Boycott of North Carolina'** Says Rev. William Barber. See page 2.



**CONGRESSART - FOX News personality Eric Bolling encouraged his viewers demand the removal of David Pulphus' artwork from the U.S. Capitol. At the time of the painting, Pulphus was an 18 year-old high school student. (David Pulphus)**

## New N. Carolina governor wastes no time stepping into role

**By Gary D. Robertson**  
RALEIGH (AP) - North Carolina's new governor is wasting no time stepping into the role with a swearing-in minutes into the New Year.

Democrat Roy Cooper's decision to take his oath just after midnight Sunday (Jan. 1) reflects the unusual election cycle and the state's contentious partisan politics. One of his aides has said Cooper wants to get a quick start on gubernatorial duties after his transition period was shortened by a protracted debate over vote-counting in the close race against outgoing Republican Gov. Pat McCrory.

The pared-down ceremony comes a week before Cooper's public inauguration, which will include a parade and other fanfare. McCrory took his oath of office during the day on Jan. 5, 2013 ahead of his public inauguration.

Political scientist Michael Bitzer of Catawba College said he couldn't recall another governor taking his oath just minutes after the clock strikes midnight, but he said it's not surprising in the contentious political environment that included new laws to strip Cooper of some of his power before he even took office.

"In our polarized political environment, it's not surprising that once a term in office ends, the new administration wants to assume that power," he said.

For his part, Cooper has already begun ushering out stalwarts of the McCrory administration. Cooper spokeswoman Megan Jacobs said Jan. 29 that dismissal notices were given in the past week to a few dozen McCrory political appointees.

Turnover among those positions isn't uncommon, but the swiftness of the dismissals carries extra weight in light of the recent legislation that limits Cooper's number of political appointees to 425. That's less than a third of the number McCrory had.

Cooper has threatened to take Republicans to court over the laws passed during a surprise December special session. A state Superior Court judge on Jan. 30 temporarily blocked a law that ends the control governors exert over statewide and county election boards. Cooper's attorney said more legal challenges are planned next week.

Another of the laws requires Cooper's Cabinet choices to be confirmed by legislators. The state Constitution gives the Senate the ability to "advise and consent" to the governor's appointees by a majority vote, but that provision hadn't been used in at least several decades.

## FOX Host and St. Louis Police Group Want Teen's Artwork Removed From U.S. Capitol

**By Lauren Victoria Burke (NNPA Newswire Contributor)**  
On December 29, Fox News personality Eric Bolling spoke out against a painting by a high school artist and constituent of Rep. Lacy Clay (D-Mo.), who represents greater St. Louis and the city of Ferguson, Missouri.

"I'm saying to the three million people out there right now. Call your Congressman or call Lacy Clay's office and say 'get that picture down' cops do not need to be depicted in this way. Blue Lives Matter," Bolling told the audience on the Fox News show "The Five."

The painting in question depicts a street scene that includes a protest march and animals in police uniforms. It also includes a depiction of a citizen facing a cop depicted as a horse-like figure pointing a gun at a citizen depicted as a wolf. The artwork is now hanging in a long hallway that connects the U.S. Capitol to the Cannon House Office Building where many members have offices.

The piece called "Untitled #1" was painted by David Pulphus, 18, and is amongst hundreds of other pieces of artwork by high school students as part of annual art competition by the student constituents of members of Congress across the country. The police killing of Michael Brown in August 2014 by a Ferguson Police Officer soon followed by the killings of Kajieme Powell and teenager Vonderrick Myers near St. Louis may have served as inspiration for the artist.

The day after Bolling's pronouncement to remove the painting from the Capitol, Congressman Clay issued a statement, in part, to correct inaccurate information in several press reports that Rep. Clay selected the winning art. Members of Congress typically use a panel of judges that select the winning art in the popular annual contest and take no part in judging the artwork.

"Members of Congress support student art competitions in our districts, but we do not select the young artists and we do not judge the artwork. I had no role in selecting the winner of this student art competition and I would never attempt to approve or disapprove artistic expression. The U.S. Capitol is a symbol of freedom, not censorship. The young artist chose his own subject and the painting will not be removed," Rep. Clay said in a statement on December 30.

Joe Patterson, president of the St. Louis County Police Association, said that "we are not about censorship, but good art and good taste are sometimes not the same thing," regarding the student's work. The work by the high school students hangs each year for a little less than



**Rep. Lacy Clay (D-Mo.)**

a year; new art is selected each summer. The U.S. Capitol features several pieces of permanent, paintings and sculpture of figures from American history many may find objectionable. Several racists, segregationists and confederate figures are featured as statues, busts and in paintings in the U.S. Capitol building including Confederate "President" Jefferson Davis, and pro-slavery Presidents Andrew Jackson and John Calhoun. A large portrait of the late Alabama Senator and segregationist James Eastland also hangs on the third floor of the U.S. Capitol above the Senate Chamber. Lauren Victoria Burke is a political analyst who speaks on politics and African American leadership. Lauren is also a frequent contributor to the NNPA Newswire and BlackPressUSA.com. She can be contacted at [LBurke007@gmail.com](mailto:LBurke007@gmail.com) and on Twitter at @LVBurke.