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Forced congressional election to top \$1.2M

By Emery P. Dalesio

RALEIGH (AP) - The new election in a North Carolina congressional district required after last year's contest was deemed tainted by a Republican political operative's ballot collection efforts is expected to cost taxpayers more than \$1.2 million, the state elections board said March 29.

The 9th congressional district contest now headed toward a 10-candidate Republican primary contest in May could top \$1.7 million if no candidate gets more than 30 percent of the vote. If that happens, the second-place finisher could force a second round of head-to-head voting in September by asking for a runoff, delaying the general election until November.

North Carolina legislators late last year required that if the state elections board ordered a new election, a primary was also required. The elections board decided unanimously last month that the operative working for Republican Mark Harris collected an unknown number of ballots that could have been altered and a new contest was needed.

Harris is not running again after what he thought was his narrow win in November's election. Democrat Dan McCready is running again and faces no primary opponent.

The state elections board collected its total from estimates by elections directors in the eight counties that make up the district. The costs are for holding the unplanned elections, not employee salaries and other office operations. The projected costs include paying for poll workers, required legal notices in newspapers, ballot preparation and printing, postage, and polling place supplies and rental fees.

One Republican candidate said if no one snags 30 percent of the GOP vote in the May primary and he finishes second, he won't ask for a primary runoff.

"I've pledged that I won't do that because we need to face McCready in September and have a more equal election throughout the district instead of waiting until November

where all the municipalities will be voting," said Union County Commissioner and Republican congressional candidate Stony Rushing. "It will also save some costs."

Union County would pay \$600,000 if a second primary was required, but about \$400,000 without one. Rushing said he's going to ask the state legislature to reimburse his county's costs for the re-do election. Mecklenburg County, the state's most populous, would spend about \$250,000 because only a portion is included in the congressional district.

The congressional district stretches from suburban Charlotte to suburban Fayetteville along the South Carolina border. It has been in GOP hands since 1963 and President Donald Trump won it by 12 percentage points in 2016.



CHARLES FOSTER

NCCU Track Legend Charles Foster Dies

Charles Foster, who won five NAIA and NCAA individual national championships and was the top-ranked hurdler in the world during his collegiate career at North Carolina Central University, passed away on Sunday (March 31) at the age of 65.

A 1975 graduate of NCCU, Foster was a dominant force on the track during his college career from 1971-75, specializing in the hurdles. After NCCU, he placed fourth in the 110-meter hurdles at the 1976 Olympic Games in Montreal and enjoyed an accomplished career as a college coach.

During his junior and senior campaigns at NCCU, Foster repeated as the NAIA national champion in the indoor 60-yard hurdles, setting the meet record in 1975 with a time of 6.9 seconds, and the outdoor 120-yard/110-meter hurdles, breaking the meet record in 1974 in 13.4 seconds. He also captured the NCAA outdoor 120-yard hurdles national championship in 1974 with a time of 13.35 seconds.

In 1974, Foster was ranked as the No. 1 hurdler in the world.

As a freshman, Foster helped lead the Eagles to the 1972 NAIA outdoor track & field team national championship, running a leg of the 440-yard relay that set a meet record with a time of 39.5 seconds.

Foster was inducted into the NCCU Athletics Hall of Fame as part of its inaugural class in 1984, and has also been enshrined in the Mid-Eastern Athletic Conference Hall of Fame (1981) and the Penn Relays Wall of Fame (2016).

With Congress seat in grasp, NC urges census participation

By Gary D. Robertson

RALEIGH, (AP) - Gov. Roy Cooper says positive prospects for North Carolina to obtain another seat in Congress make it all the more important that the state generate the most accurate and complete census count.

Monday, April 1 marked the one-year countdown to the decennial census required by the U.S. Constitution. Cooper and other state officials marked the date with a news conference urging people to participate next year.

The state and local populations are used in part to distribute well over \$600 billion in federal funds.

State populations also are used to re-apportion 435 voting seats in the U.S. House. North Carolina now has 13 seats and Cooper says there's a good chance the state's population had grown enough to gain a 14th seat. The population was estimated at 10.3 million people in 2017.



NORMAN FRANCIS
Courtesy Hampton University

Former Xavier-Louisiana president honored by Notre Dame

NEW ORLEANS (AP) - The retired president of the only historically black and Catholic university in the U.S. will receive what Notre Dame University calls the most prestigious award for American Catholics.

The Laetare Medal will be given May 19 to Norman Francis, who was president for 47 years at Xavier University of Louisiana, Notre Dame announced April 1.

"For more than 50 years, Dr. Francis has been at the center of civil rights advocacy by leveraging the power of Catholic higher education," Notre Dame President Rev. John I. Jenkins said in a news release. "In bestowing the Laetare Medal upon him, Notre Dame recognizes his leadership in the fight for social justice through educational empowerment."

During Francis' tenure, enrollment nearly tripled, the endowment grew eightfold, and the university became the leading producer of African-American undergraduates who complete medical school. Xavier also ranks first nationally in the number of black students earning undergraduate degrees in four areas: biology and life sciences, chemistry, physics and pharmacy.

Francis, who retired in 2015, is the second New Orleans resident in four years to receive the Laetare Medal. In 2015, it went to musician Aaron Neville.

Xavier was founded in 1925 by St. Katharine Drexel, after the U.S. Supreme Court found "separate but equal" education constitutional. Drexel's philanthropy also paid for the Catholic schools that Francis attended in Lafayette, Louisiana, as a child.

He graduated from Xavier in 1952 and became the first African-American admitted to Loyola University Law School in New Orleans.

"I did not build Xavier; I was part of Katharine Drexel's mission to provide a quality education for all," Francis said. "All the people I worked with were part of this plan and mission, which was not only honorable, but was totally necessary when you look back at what the United States was at the time."

After time in the Army and at the U.S. Attorney's Office, where he helped integrate federal agencies, he became Xavier's dean of men in 1957. Four years later, he opened a school dormitory to Freedom Riders after the civil rights group's bus was bombed in Alabama.

Texans share history of convict leasing, unearthed remains

By Kathryn Eastburn

the Galveston County Daily News

GALVESTON, Texas (AP) - Negotiations are underway between the Fort Bend Independent School District and Fort Bend County to determine who will ultimately own land near Sugar Land where last year the remains of 95 former state of Texas convict laborers were unearthed.

The Galveston County Daily News reports the bodies, 94 male and one female, were in unmarked graves, ranged in age from 14 to 70 and were buried there between 1878 and 1910 when large sugar plantations operated under such harsh conditions that the place came to be known as the Hellhole of the Brazos.

Galveston County resident Samuel L. Collins III and Reginald Moore, of Houston, meanwhile, have been updating groups on the Sugar Land 95, the history of convict leasing in Texas and progress toward permanently creating a suitable memorial at the site where the bodies were found.

On April 12, Collins and Moore will lead a one-day seminar at Rice University, and in June, they will speak at The Bryan Museum in Galveston.

On March 11, Collins and Moore led a seminar at the Hutchins Center for African & African American Research at Harvard University, "Unearthing the Truth of Slavery by Another Name."

"Our hope is that a story like this one becomes a chapter or an entire volume in American history, not merely a footnote," Collins said.

Moore, who was a prison guard for three years in the 1980s at the Jester State Prison Farm near where the bodies were unearthed, became interested in Texas' and the Gulf Coast region's history of leasing convicts for unpaid agricultural labor

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