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# The Carolina Times

THE TRUTH UNBRIDED

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## North Carolina A&T investigates use of force by officers

GREENSBORO (AP) - Two police officers at a North Carolina university were placed on administrative leave after video emerged of them grabbing a student's neck, forcing him to the ground and threatening to spray him with Mace during an arrest inside a university dorm.

North Carolina A&T State University said in a statement that it was investigating the confrontation, which happened in the early morning hours of Wednesday, and that officials had met with the student and the Student Government Association leadership to hear their concerns.

Some students gathered in front of the university police building March 18 to protest what they said was an example of campus authorities using excessive force on students, a Greensboro newspaper reported. In September, a university security guard was captured on video hitting a student inside a campus building, the newspaper said.

In video of the latest confrontation posted to Twitter, the university officers can be seen trying to handcuff a student, while one of the officers orders him not to resist, repeatedly saying: "If you resist, I'm going to Mace you."

One of the officers later grasps the back of the student's neck and another grabs the front. The two officers press him against a wall, bring him to the ground and hold his head to the tile floor, the video shows.

The confrontation happened about 1:30 a.m. March 18 inside a residence hall on campus, The News & Record quoted school spokesman Todd Simmons as saying. An online petition identified the student being taken into custody as Verdant Julius.

Julius was charged with trespassing and resisting, delaying or obstructing a public officer, University Police Chief Charles Wilson told the newspaper. The officers weren't identified.

Some students have signed a petition calling for the charges to be dropped. The petition says the encounter between Julius and the officers happened as a group of students were packing up and moving out of their residence hall after the university canceled in-person classes and told students they had until March 22 to vacate the dorms to protect against the coronavirus.

Julius and two friends were trying to return to their residence hall when a security guard turned away one of the students, saying she didn't live there, according to the petition's account. Police became involved and the confrontation escalated, the petition said.

North Carolina A&T is a historically black research university in Greensboro.



**WENDELL TABB**  
Hillside High School Names Theater after NCCU Alumnus and longtime Drama Director Wendell Tabb (See Story On Page 2)

## Trump Virus Makes State school closings extended, gathering size tighter

By Gary D. Robertson  
RALEIGH (AP) - North Carolina Gov. Roy Cooper on March 23 announced the extended shuttering of K-12 schools until mid-May as well as tighter assembly and business restrictions to attempt to dull the spread of the new coronavirus.

Cooper said he would issue a new executive order that, starting late March 18, would make it a misdemeanor for there to be assemblies of more than 50 people, compared to the current prohibition of over 100. The 50-person limit is in keeping with the guidance from the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Cooper's order also will direct that by 5 p.m. March 25 all hair salons, barbershops, gyms, fitness clubs and movie theaters must close, as well as similar businesses offering activities that run counter to social distancing. Across North Carolina, restaurants and bars can continue to remain open only for delivery or take-out meals.

Public schools statewide will now remain closed for in-person instruction until May 15, Cooper said. He had already ordered closings of at least two weeks beginning March 16.

"I know that these actions cause hardship and heartache for a lot of people, but they're necessary to save lives," Cooper said at a news conference. Cooper said he wasn't giving up yet on returning to class to complete the public school year. State education officials and lawmakers are working on plans to expand online instructional assistance beyond virtual efforts already underway. Universities already have shifted to online instruction.

"We can't treat this as a long break," Superintendent of Public Instruction Mark Johnson said, adding that his daughter's first-grade class had a video call with their teacher on March 23. He urged parents to keep their children on a schedule that includes a few hours of daily instructional time. His department has assembled distance-learning options. Johnson said high school seniors will still be on track to graduate in June. Cooper said plans also include ensuring school employees keep getting paid during this suspension.

As of Monday, March 23 morning, state health officials counted nearly 300 positive COVID-19 cases, an increase of more than 40 compared to March 22. No deaths have been reported, although about a dozen people are hospitalized. Mecklenburg, Wake and Durham cases account for over half of the total.

For most people, the coronavirus causes mild or moderate symptoms. But for older adults and people with existing health problems, it can cause more severe illness, including pneumonia.

In the effort to ensure children in low-income families have enough to eat during the school closures, the state's 115 school districts, helped by food banks, churches and volunteers, had served 1.2 million meals and 6,500 snacks through Sunday, Cooper's office said.

The State Board of Education agreed earlier Monday to seek an exception to federal K-12 testing and accountability requirements this year. Board Chairman Eric Davis said he was talking with state legislative leaders about how to eliminate public school accountability mandates specific to North Carolina. The legislature convenes in late April, and Cooper said broader requests for state lawmakers - potentially in a special session - would flow based on gaps in any upcoming congressional funding deal.

Limits on commerce, including the prohibition on dining-in at eateries and bars, has led to a massive number of unemployment claims in North Carolina. The Division of Employment Security said Monday it had processed 113,000 claims between March 16 and Monday morning, compared to 3,500 on a usual week in recent months. Seven out of every eight claims have been related to COVID-19 displacement. People could file claims for layoffs or reductions in hours due to the virus.

While state and local movement restrictions haven't halted outdoor exercising for individuals, access to dedicated places for recreation continue to diminish.



M&F Bank Grand Re-Opening and Ribbon Cutting Ceremony - Executive Team. M&F Photo See story and photos on page 13.

## Senators sold stock before steep market losses from virus

By Mary Clare Jalonick  
WASHINGTON (AP) - Senate Intelligence Committee Chairman Richard Burr, R-N.C., sold as much as \$1.7 million in stocks just before the market dropped in February amid fears about the coronavirus epidemic.

Senate records show that Burr and his wife sold between roughly \$600,000 and \$1.7 million in more than 30 separate transactions in late January and mid-February, just before the market began to fall and as government health officials began to issue stark warnings about the effects of the virus. Several of the stocks were in companies that own hotels.

The stock sales were first reported by ProPublica and The Center for Responsive Politics. Most of them came on Feb. 13, just before Burr made a speech in North Carolina in which he predicted severe consequences from the virus, including closed schools and cutbacks in company travel, according to audio obtained by National Public Radio and released March 19.

Burr told the small North Carolina audience that the virus was "much more aggressive in its transmission than anything that we have seen in recent history" and "probably more akin to the 1918 pandemic."

Burr's remarks were much more dire than remarks he had made publicly, and came as President Donald Trump was still downplaying the severity of the virus.

There is no indication that Burr had any inside information as he sold the stocks and issued the private warnings. The intelligence panel did not have any briefings on the pandemic the week when most of the stocks were sold, according to a person familiar with the matter. The

person declined to be identified to discuss confidential committee activity.

Burr said on Twitter March 19 that Americans were already being warned about the effects of the virus when he made the speech to the North Carolina State Society.

"The message I shared with my constituents is the one public health officials urged all of us to heed as coronavirus spread increased," Burr wrote. "Be prepared."

Burr sent out the tweets before reports of his stock sales. A spokesperson for the senator said in a statement that Burr "has been deeply concerned by the steep and sudden toll this pandemic is taking on our economy" and supports congressional efforts to help the economy. The spokesperson declined to be identified in order to share the senator's thinking.

The North Carolina senator was not the only lawmaker to sell of stocks just before the steep decline due to the global pandemic. Georgia Sen. Kelly Loeffler, a new senator who is up for re-election this year, sold off hundreds of thousands of dollars worth of stock in late January, as senators began to get briefings on the virus, also according to Senate records.

In the weeks that followed, Loeffler urged her constituents to have faith in the Trump administration's efforts to prepare the nation.

"(at)realDonaldTrump & his administration are doing a great job working to keep Americans healthy & safe," Loeffler tweeted Feb. 27.

The Daily Beast first reported that Loeffler dropped the stock in late January. The senator is married to Jeffrey Sprecher, the chairman and CEO of Intercontinental

