

Looking beyond the election and COVID: Aging issues from a State perspective

Lisa Riegel

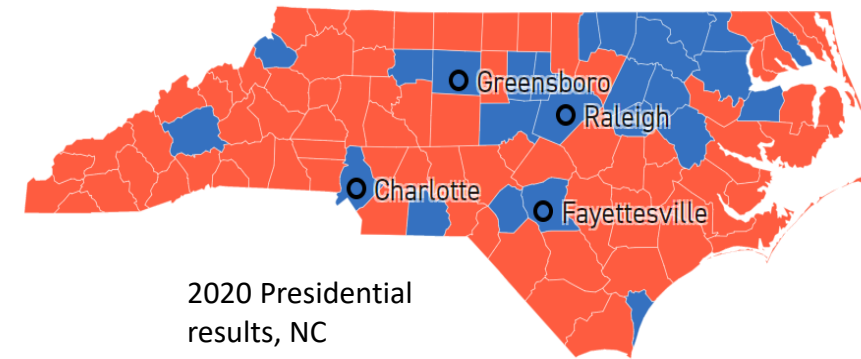
Manager, Advocacy & Livable Communities

AARP North Carolina

2020 Election results in NC

Overall – Status Quo

- **Historic voter turnout** in North Carolina in more ways than one
- Despite historic turnout much remained **unchanged** in NC's political landscape
- Republicans will continue to have control of **both chambers** of State Legislature
- Democratic Governor Roy Cooper re-elected by wide margin
- **Republicans** continue to control majority of **Council of State** seats
- Incumbent US Senator (R) Thom Tillis re-elected



Historic 2020 General Election

Fun Numbers:

MOST in NC History

- **7.36 million:** Registered NC voters
 - **5.55 million:** Ballots cast
 - **75.35%** turnout of registered voters
 - **1 million:** Absentee by-mail ballots cast
 - **348,000:** In-person early votes cast on October 15
 - **3.63 million:** In-person early votes cast
 - **900,000:** Approximate ballots cast on Election Day – NOT most in NC history!
-
- **14 million:** Items of **PPE** delivered to county boards of elections
 - **6 million:** Single-use **pens** delivered to county boards
 - **0:** **Clusters of COVID-19** tied to voting sites in North Carolina

Political Environment

DIVIDED GOVERNMENT

COUNCIL OF STATE

DEMOCRATS (4) :

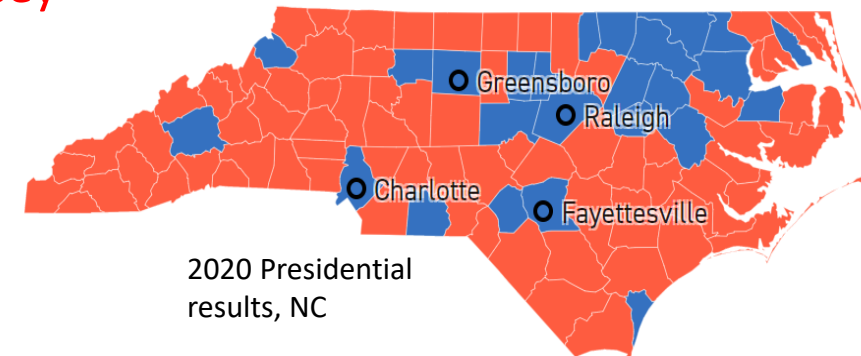
- ☐ Governor Cooper
- ☐ Attorney General Stein
- ☐ Secretary of State Marshall
- ☐ State Auditor Wood

REPUBLICANS (6):

- ☐ Lieutenant Governor Robinson
- ☐ State Treasurer Folwell
- ☐ Superintendent of Public Instruction Truitt
- ☐ Labor Commissioner Dobson
- ☐ Agriculture Commissioner Troxler
- ☐ Insurance Commissioner Causey

PLUS:

- ☐ State Senate
- ☐ State House



2020 Election Results

State Senate

Republican – 28 seats (of 50, net loss 1)

Democrat – 22 seats (net gain 1)

State House

Republican – 69 (of 120, gained 4 seats)

Democrat – 51 (lost 4 seats)

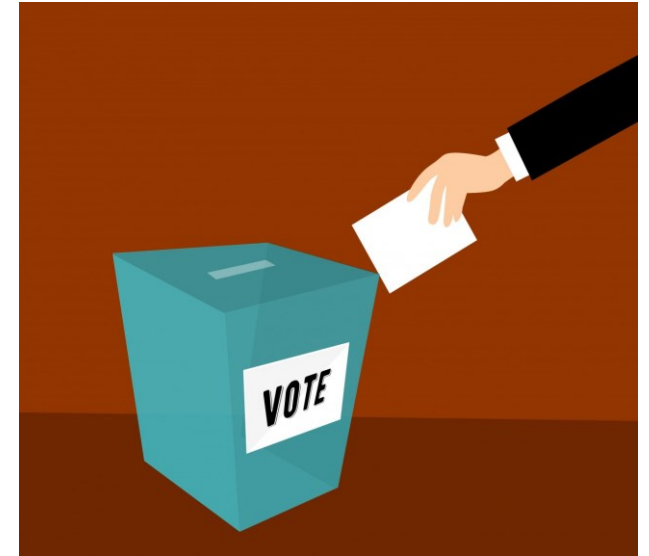
*source – NC Free

Net Effect: Republicans gained 3 seats in General Assembly



Beyond 2020 Election and COVID..

- Since political landscape will remain **unchanged** moving into 2021 long session many of challenges remain the same
- Governor and legislature never agreed to a **budget** due to dispute over **expanding Medicaid**, many question if this could happen again
- Neither party will have enough control to push through issues unchecked, **bipartisanship** will continue to be important
- COVID may have increased awareness of **aging issues**



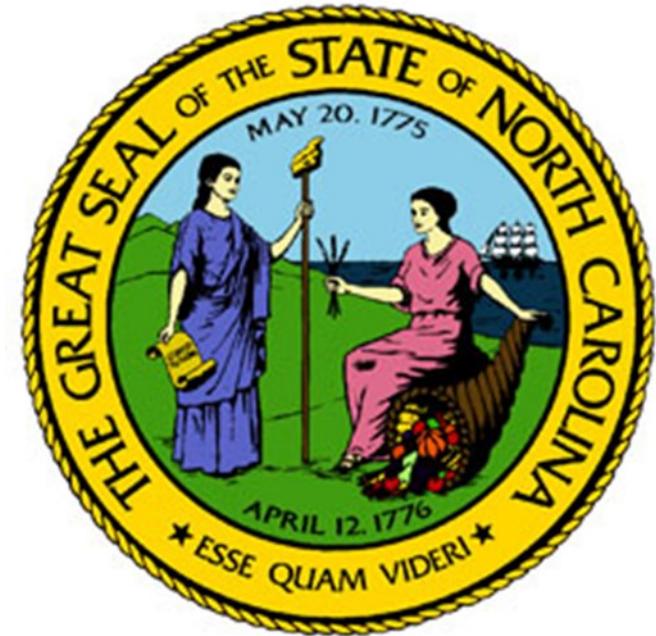
LEGISLATIVE TIMELINE – APPROX!

- ❑ January 13 – Return to Raleigh
- ❑ ~April 3 – Bills to Drafting
- ❑ ~April 23 – Bill Filing Deadline
- ❑ ~May 9 – Cross Over



STATE BUDGET AND REVENUE FORECAST

- ☐ Many advocacy issues require funding
- ☐ State budget outlook unknown, but likely defending programs
- ☐ Federal COVID Relief Funding Bill uncertain
- ☐ NC *Rainy Day* Fund was in good shape



AARP NC Priority issues for 2021

In consideration of Budget and ongoing COVID

Plan to weigh in on many issues but top 3 priority issues include:

- ✓ STATE-FACILITATED RETIREMENT SAVINGS PROGRAM
- ✓ APRN FULL PRACTICE AUTHORITY
- ✓ NURSING HOMES



State-Facilitated Retirement Savings Program

- ☐ Average Retirement Savings **only \$2,500**; \$14,500 near retirement age households
- ☐ Would help 53% of the workforce or **1.7 million** small business employees
- ☐ People **15X** more likely to save with workplace access
- ☐ No action has significant fiscal **impact on state budget and tax payers** (>\$468 million)
- ☐ State-facilitated, Privately administered IRA
- ☐ Working in 3 other states and 9 are beginning implementation.
- ☐ We need a NC solution.



Learn more at aarp.org

APRN Full Practice Authority

- ❑ Patients deserve access to high-quality, affordable, and timely care from the provider of their choice
- ❑ Modernizing nursing regulations to remove barriers to allow nurses to practice to the full extent of their education, experience and certification.
- ❑ Increases access, reduces costs, and helps address health equity gap.
- ❑ With the healthcare shortage hitting North Carolina hard, need to make the most of all the resources we have to provide quality health care locally for patients throughout the state—from small towns to urban hubs.



Nursing Homes

The pandemic hit older adults and nursing home residents the hardest where nearly 40 percent of the nation's COVID-19 deaths were nursing-home related.

Continue to advocate with Legislature to allocate funding and policies to protect older adults in LTC facilities:

- ☐ Testing and adequate personal protective equipment (PPE) for residents and staff—as well as inspectors and any visitors.
- ☐ Ensure access to safe in-person and virtual **visitation**
- ☐ Ensure quality care for residents through adequate **staffing**, oversight, and access to in-person formal advocates, called long-term care **Ombudsmen**.



Other Advocacy Issues for Aging Population – *Highlighted by COVID*

Closing the Health Care Access Gap

- Bipartisan Council for Health Care Coverage
- Combine with Telehealth, Scope, CON?

Direct Care Workforce (and LTC affordability/quality)

- Need comprehensive long-range solution

Long-Term Care Facilities

- Residents' Voting Rights

Supporting Caregivers

- Home and Community Care Block Grant increased funding



Restoring Transportation Cuts

Transportation Needs – ROAP and SMAP

- NCDOT overspending
- Significant drop in gas tax and other fees
- HB 77 cuts NCDOT's budget
- \$50 million needed



Actionable Advocacy Opportunities

Continue **building relationships** with local elected officials

- provide them relevant information on aging issues.

Be a **resource** for advocacy groups like ours

- you are there on front line helping with programs and can see things we can't.

Participate in forums with legislators as issue expert.



Adjusting Advocacy during COVID

- AARP: no in-person events including lobbying
- Virtual lobbying (emails, letters, phone calls, coalition partnerships)
- Engaging via Social Media (mainly Twitter)
- Taking advantage of Legislature's new live stream ability (will be upgraded in 2021 session)



Looking Ahead to 2021

- ✓ Preparation for **defending** programs essential for older adults that may face cuts or elimination all together due to COVID induced budget cut
- ✓ Continued need for **virtual lobbying** and advocacy until vaccine widely available
- ✓ Importance of using **COVID impacts that have highlights deficiencies** and needs in healthcare system such as nursing homes, APRN bill, direct care workforce
- ✓ Continued importance of **building and maintaining relationships** with elected officials



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