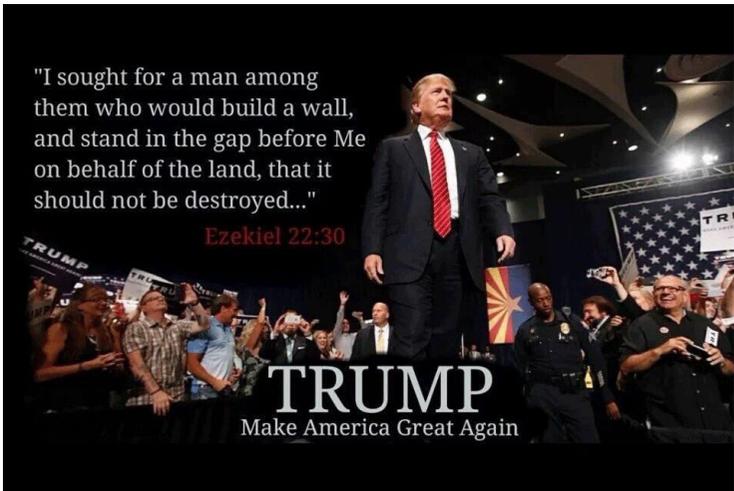


TRUMP Report Card

by Constance Hanna
conniehanna131@gmail.com



Practically everything on the President's agenda this week involved **the border wall and national security which are inextricably linked.**

The week started with the President in New Hampshire addressing **the opioid crisis.** New Hampshire has had the second highest rate of opioid overdose deaths in the country since 2014. This crisis affects every segment of our country from high school students, to office workers, to stay-at-home Moms. For obvious reasons, it has been labeled "The Crisis Next Door," and this week the President announced a new website, crisis.nextdoor.gov, where Americans can share their stories. The Administration's plan to address this crisis includes addressing over-prescription, educating Americans about the dangers, cutting off international and domestic supply chains, and helping the addicted through treatment and recovery support. The President vowed to toughen our borders to fight this epidemic, and the Attorney General has instructed federal prosecutors to seek the death penalty in drug cases whenever appropriate. This garners an "A."

The President held a round table discussion on **sanctuary cities** at the White House with cabinet officials, elected leaders, and law enforcement representatives. **The President made clear that his highest duty is to protect the safety of American citizens.** To that end, in 2017, ICE made 140,000 administrative arrests and effectively removed more than 225,000 criminal illegal aliens. The President said, "We're going to take care of the problem. **Our cities should be sanctuaries for Americans, not for criminal aliens.**" This is another security problem related to open borders, and his handling of it so far deserves an "A."

Finally, the President signed **the \$1.3 trillion Omnibus Bill.** This bill was

masquerading as a budget. However, it isn't a budget, and if the President plays his cards well, this can work in favor of we conservatives who want our borders secure and our country safe from its enemies. The President had two bad choices with this bill; sign it, or shut down the government. **Failing to sign it would have delayed national security funding, and this funding sends a powerful message to North Korea and China** as we approach talks with North Korea. Keep in mind that the bill contains national security funding, and that category covers a large area. The President mentioned in his remarks after the (disappointing in some ways) signing that **he considers the WALL a national security issue.** Our opioid and sanctuary city problems are two good examples of why a wall is needed. Islamic jihadist terrorists crossing the open border is another. The President may have a plan to use some of this national security funding for the wall, and that is certainly an appropriate use, don't you think? Plus, President Trump got what he wanted most, funding for our military, and that includes the largest pay raise for the troops in over a decade, a raise that is well deserved. Let's call his grade on this "incomplete" until we see how the national security funding is spent.

The DACA issue was not addressed, and the President hammered the Democrats for abandoning the dreamers. This issue will play well for members of the President's party in the mid-terms. In addition, keep in mind all the good things that have happened in the last 14 months. Think, SUPREME COURT! For a newcomer to a hostile environment, he is maneuvering extremely well. I still believe in President Trump, and I believe there is more good news on the horizon. To be continued...

Bold action needed; knowing the cost of health care will enable wise decisions

by Dale Folwell, CPA, North Carolina State Treasurer



Dale Folwell

With \$800 million dollars in taxpayer-funded pension and health care benefits paid out every 30 days, the N.C. Department of State Treasurer touches the lives of one in 10 North Carolinians. Next to their family and their faith, we affect the things state and local employees care about the most, their retirement and their health care.

Right now, **the state has a \$34 billion dollar unfunded liability for retiree health care.** Promises for lifetime health coverage were made to public sector workers, yet no money was ever put aside to pay for it. In 2017, the State Health Plan managed by our department spent \$3.3 billion dollars to provide medical benefits for nearly 730,000 retirees including teachers,

firefighters, other public servants, and their dependents.

All of this is in response to massive increases in medical and pharmaceutical costs for private and public health plans and insurers. We are in a medical arms race, and the State Health Plan is North Carolina's largest enabler. **With medical and pharmaceutical costs increasing by 5% to 10% per year, our trajectory is unsustainable.** Bold action is required.

When I applied for the job of State Treasurer, I promised to reduce complexity and build value for the health plan. **In virtually every financial transaction that people make on a daily basis, they understand what they are paying for.** When you fill up on gas, you know how much you are getting and how much it will cost. This is true for **every purchase except health care.** We've got to change that.

First, we want to make sure that our health plan members understand that **Blue Cross and Blue Shield of North Carolina does NOT pay their medical costs; the members themselves and other taxpayers do.** Blue Cross just processes the

claims. To help members understand this, we have redesigned their insurance card to actually say "paid for by you and taxpayers like you."

Next, **we need to make sure members have a better understanding of what they are paying for when they consume health care.** To help with this, we are redesigning the Explanation of Benefit statements to more clearly communicate the services received and how much they cost. We want our members to become watchdogs over health care costs, and they need to know that when they pull their insurance card out of their wallets, **they are spending their own money as well as tax dollars.**

Lastly, we want to make sure that we leverage technology to better guide us in identifying ways to save money. We've just instituted an internal data center that gives us a broad view of what we're spending, who is spending it, and where they are.

Increased transparency will allow consumers to make informed decisions about their health care spending, and that will allow them to save money for themselves and for the taxpayers of North Carolina.

Are you what's missing in Raleigh?

An interview with NC Senator NORMAN SANDERSON

by Raynor James raynor@cctaxpayers.com



Sen. Norman Sanderson

Hal and I had an interesting visit with NC Senator Norman Sanderson. Hal had just heard Derwood Stevenson give a presentation on the Atlantic Coast Line Pipeline to the Craven County Board of Commissioners in which he said that Duke Energy gave NC money for the pipeline, but the money was diverted to schools, so Duke could not recover it, and that was somewhat confusing to Hal, so he asked Norm about it.

Senator Sanderson gave us an overview that will curl your toes if you're conservative. It seems that NC was the very last state to approve all the permits

necessary to let the project happen. Then, on the same day NC gave the final approval, Governor Cooper announced that Duke (and other companies involved) had offered \$57.8 million dollars to be under the control of the governor for the purposes of remediation if there should be an accident requiring such a thing involving the pipeline, economic development in the 8 NC counties the pipeline would traverse, and/or alternative sources of energy (solar and wind).

Was this \$57.8 million dollars extorted from the gas companies as the price of getting the final permit needed? Or did the gas companies bribe the governor in order to get that permit? That the two things happened on exactly the same day is suspicious.

A similar sum was given to Virginia, but it was solely for remediation. Also, it is a bit strange that the agreement with NC already required the builder of the pipeline to

handle any remediation needed. Why do this AND give monies for it in advance? Add to this the fact that the NC Constitution says that the General Assembly will decide how money in the NC Treasury is spent; the governor does not decide unilaterally. The situation was unprecedented, so the General Assembly considered its options, Senator Sanderson told us.

The General Assembly could give the money back (Norm's preference), they could put it into the state's coffers and decide what to do with it later, or (and this was what they eventually voted for) they could divide the money among the 8 counties (some of the poorest in the state) to add to their educational funds.

The General Assembly members saw this course of action as a challenge to Governor Cooper. They didn't want to have a precedent set in which the governor could make a deal with someone to have sums of money come under his direct control rather than the (See CCTA, page)

North Carolina that are not Constitutional. Is that a radical approach? I don't think so. Thomas Jefferson referred to nullification as "a rightful remedy," and I see it that way, too.

Let's look at how it might work in just one area. Education is an area in which the Constitution does not give any responsibility to the federal government. None. It is one of those items reserved to the states or to the people.

However, during Jimmy Carter's administration a whole unconstitutional department, the U.S. Department of Education, was formed. Like all governmental expansions, that department has grown like Topsy. It has doled out dollars with strings (more like steel cables) attached. Now, taxpayers' dollars provided via the federal government pay for

Most conservatives agree that the federal government is doing many things that the U.S. Constitution does not authorize it to do. However, hot debate is apt to arise over discussion of what to do about it.

One possibility is to elect people to every office from Board of Education to County Commissioners to members of the state House and Senate and the federal House and Senate, to all seats on court benches, to the Governor, Council of State, and the U.S. President who are firmly loyal to adherence to the Constitution. We'll explore that one day soon.

What I'd like us to consider today is the idea of North

Carolina's General Assembly's
refusing taxpayers' dollars
from the federal government
and nullifying things the federal
government tries to force on

Don't forget...

"Wake-Up Call"
Sundays at 11am & 8 pm
107.1 fm
The Talk Station



Happy graduates of one of CCTA's early Constitution classes. This one was based on The Making of America. Other classes use The 5,000 Year Leap. Let us know via "feedback" at www.cctaxpayers.com if you'd like to help start a class in YOUR area.

www.cctaxpayers.com

Join us.

Great Speakers - Hot Topics - Public Meetings
3rd Tuesday each month
Stanley Hall Ballroom, New Bern