

Governor Cooper Proclaims Juneteenth in North Carolina

On June 19 Governor Roy Cooper proclaimed Juneteenth in North Carolina, the oldest known celebration honoring the end of enslavement in the United States.

It was on June 19 in 1865, more than two years after President Abraham Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation, that Union General Gordon Granger proclaimed the end of slavery in Galveston, Texas. This authorized United States Colored Troops to enforce emancipation and ultimately the 13th Amendment in that state, just as they had been in Georgia, North Carolina, South Carolina and Virginia.

"Juneteenth is a reminder that even 155 years after the last slaves were notified of their freedom, we must still fight together for change and champion racial equity. I am committed to making our education, economic, criminal justice, and healthcare systems equal and fair," said Governor Cooper.

Despite gaining their freedom, newly freed Black men, women, and children were met with brutality, socio-economic racism, and domestic terror. Throughout history, people have fought these systemic injustices and are, yet again, demanding an end to white supremacy and racial inequality in America.

Acknowledging the progress that still must be made in North Carolina, Governor Cooper created the Andrea Harris Social Economic Environmental Health Disparities Task Force to address longstanding, intersectional racial disparities. He also established the North Carolina Task Force for Racial Equity in Criminal Justice to end racially discriminatory law enforcement practices and promote a more equitable criminal justice system.

Juneteenth gives all North Carolinians an opportunity to celebrate freedom and honor those who have fought bravely for it from Abraham Galloway, George H. White and Ella Baker to all Freedom Fighters spanning many generations. It is an important reminder to confront racial injustices ingrained in society and commit to working for a better future.

More information about the North Carolina African American Heritage Commission is available at aahc.nc.gov.

You Decide: Are We In For a Strong Economic Recovery?

By Dr. Mike Walden: My best friend at N.C. State University was a physicist. We had much in common. We were both transplants from the North. Our spouses taught elementary school. We were passionate baseball fans. He grew up in New England, so he rooted for the Boston Red Sox, while I cheered for the team of my birthplace, the Cincinnati Reds. We also enjoyed weightlifting at the Hillsborough Street YMCA in Raleigh.

My friend has been retired for over a decade. He's amazed I'm still working, soon starting year 43. Before he retired, my friend – whose specialty was water dynamics – developed models for predicting the number and severity of hurricanes each season. Around this time each year he'd be receiving a lot of media attention.

We used to tease each other about who had the better track record for their forecasts – he for the number of hurricanes, or me for predicting the direction of the economy. After a couple of years of poor forecasts by my friend, I told him I was now going to expect the opposite of what he said; that is, if he expected an active hurricane season, I would assume a mild season, and if he said mild, I would anticipate active!

My friend is probably laughing now about the latest big missed forecast by economists, including from yours truly. As most know, the economy has been weighed down by government orders closing businesses and restricting travel in order to limit infections, hospitalizations and deaths from the coronavirus. As a result, national and state economies have suffered, with millions losing their jobs and signing up for unemployment compensation. In April, unemployment rates hit the mid-teens. When the May job numbers for the nation were released a couple of weeks ago, almost all economic forecasters saw millions of more lost jobs and an unemployment rate reaching 20 percent.

These predictions made sense given that most states didn't begin softening restrictions of businesses and workers until late May. And even once some businesses reopened, it was widely thought people would be cautious and only slowly return to visiting stores and restaurants.

Well, economists were wrong – indeed, very wrong. Instead of millions – some economists thought as many as 8 million – of additional jobs being cut in May and the jobless rate soaring to 20 percent or above, the exact opposite happened. Nationally, 2.5 million jobs were added, and the unemployment rate went down, not up.

The good news continued in our state. Although the unemployment rate was the same in May as in April in North Carolina, during May almost 120,000 more individuals were employed than in the previous month.

First, let me say – and I think I speak for most economists – if I have to be wrong, I'd rather be wrong predicting a bad outcome and be surprised by a good outcome. Still, this mistaken forecast was a doozy. Why were most economists so off with their predictions? First, we may have underestimated how anxious consumers were to get out and spend when they could. They had – what economists call – pent-up demand – meaning consumers were just itching to spend. In addition, consumers had the ability to spend. Although unemployment has been high, the federal government supplemented state unemployment checks to make them comparable to – and sometimes better than – the income that many were receiving from working. Add to this the stimulus checks that most people received, and the situation is that many households have been flush with cash. When the opportunity came to spend some of it, they did.

Actually, the strong rebound in the economy during May is in line with the predictions of a few economists, one of them being Jason Furman, who was President Obama's chief economic adviser for several years. Furman thinks there will be a rapid snap-back during the initial months of the economic recovery from the virus, but then followed by much slower growth.

So, what are we to think? Will the economy shoot upward like a rocket during the next several months? The problem for economists is we don't have a previous playbook to follow. We've never had a recession that was mandated by the government in order to control a pandemic. Plus, there are many balls in the air, and we just don't know where they'll land. How will cases and hospitalizations change as the economy opens and more people interact? If the answer is "badly", will states have to reinstitute some restrictions? Also, will the virus return in the winter, and if so, how strongly? Finally, and perhaps most importantly, when will there first be a treatment available, and then – ultimately – when will a vaccine be perfected and ready to be used?

One factor is for sure. The coronavirus has caused permanent losses to the economy. We can't recover all the sales, revenues and incomes that have been lost since February. Sure, the government has tried to fill the gap, but those funds were either borrowed from the future or created without any real substantive backing. But a faster economic recovery will help. If everything works in the best way, the virus will soon subside and then vanish, allowing buying, jobs and incomes to come back. Then, a year from now, the coronavirus will be a bad memory. Is his wishful thinking? You decide.

Walden is a Reynolds Distinguished Professor and Extension Economist in the Department of Agricultural and Resource Economics at North Carolina State University who teaches and writes on personal finance, economic outlook and public policy.

Free Summer Home Cooked Meals 2 Days a Week at BRLC

This is a release from Burnsville Recreation & Learning Center: Burnsville Recreation & Learning Center will be open on Tuesdays and Thursdays throughout June until July. This special program will coincide with the Summer Fun Day Camp (SFDC) for children ages 5 and up. The SFDC started up June 23. This program will only operate 2 days a week, Tuesdays and Thursdays.

There will be free home cooked meals served to children and drive by meals for parents and seniors citizens. The free Hot Lunch Program is geared to help families that are experiencing hardships during the COVID-19 Pandemic.

All Anson County senior citizens who would like to take advantage of this program, call in and place your order. Only drive by and carry out plates will be available.

The schedule for free lunches is 11:00 a.m., to 1:00 p.m. All orders need to be called in advance.

Please contact BRLC at 704-826-8737 or 704-778-7478 to place your order for lunch pickup. All meals are free. This is a special summer program is to assist families in Anson County.

This will not interfere with the Emergency Food Pantry which operates on Wednesdays for families that need assistance with food. The Emergency Food Pantry will continue to operate on Wednesday mornings, starting at 9:00 a.m. and running until all has been served.

Drive by will continue until COVID -19 restrictions have been lifted.

Governor Cooper Proclaims June Pride Month

Governor Roy Cooper has declared June as LGBTQ Pride Month in North Carolina to honor the state's LGBTQ+ communities and their fight for equality.

"Pride Month is a time to both celebrate progress and increase our efforts in LGBTQ equality," Gov. Cooper said. "The U.S. Supreme Court got it right prohibiting LGBTQ discrimination in the workplace. Now comes the hard work of turning these legal protections into a reality of equality."

Pride Month commemorates the riots that took place at the Stonewall Inn on June 28, 1969, marking the start of the modern LGBTQ+ rights movement.

June is also the month the United States Supreme Court decisions ruled on several landmark cases upholding equality, including striking down the Defense of Marriage Act in 2013 and Obergefell v. Hodges, which affirmed same-sex couples' right to marry in the United States in 2015.

In August 2019, Governor Cooper signed Executive Order No. 97 to help protect LGBTQ+ children in North Carolina from conversion therapy. The Order made North Carolina the first state in the South to ban state funding for conversion therapy.

In January of 2019, the North Carolina DMV made it easier for transgender people to change their identified sex on driver's licenses and state IDs. The updated form allows authorization from physicians, physician's assistants, psychiatrists, psychologists, licensed therapists, counselors, case workers or social workers. Previously, changes in transgender identity could only be authorized by a surgeon who performed sex reassignment surgery.

The Governor also issued Executive Order No. 24, which created a Commission on Inclusion and established policies to prohibit discrimination based on sexual orientation or gender identity for state employees, in October 2017.

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- A mask must be worn at all times inside the office.
- Optical area entrance is by appointment only.
- One patient is allowed in the exam room at a time, except for minors.

These changes are for the safety of the other patients, and our staff. Please call with any questions or concerns.

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