

William D. Brisson: House District 22

Bladen, Johnston, and Sampson Counties

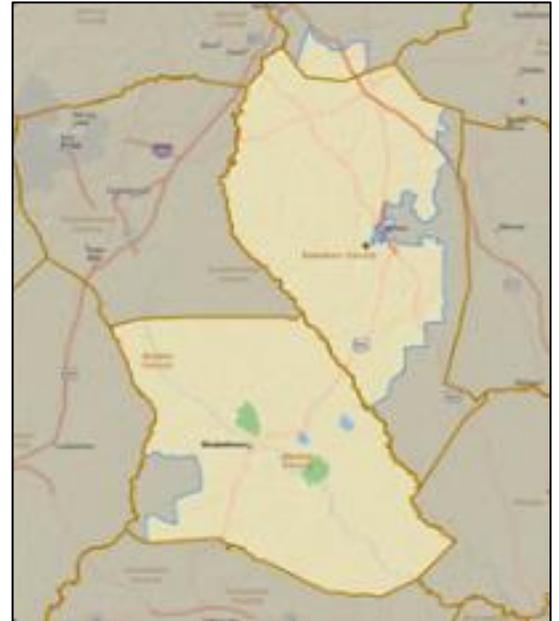
“Growing up in Dublin, NC (where I still live), I know the challenges that we face as a rural area” – [William Brisson](#)

In a series of Real Facts NC reports examining key North Carolina legislators, we look at William Brisson, who has represented House District 22 since 2006. Rep. Brisson is the current vice-chairman of four House standing committees, including Agriculture and Appropriations. Brisson claims that he wants to protect and help those who cannot do so themselves, but his record tells a different story. Brisson has consistently voted to make things worse for folks in his district, from cuts to education to ending tax credits for working families making less than \$40,000 per year. In 2013, Brisson said, “It has been about the people and will always be about the people with me.” Despite Brisson’s assertion that it is about the people, his time in Raleigh has proven otherwise.

Summary

- Brisson’s constituents in Bladen, Johnston, and Sampson Counties have been struggling.
- Despite NC’s struggles with educational attainment, Brisson voted for the 2017 Republican budget which continued the trend of per pupil cuts to education.
- In 2013, Brisson voted to end the Earned Income Tax Credit, which reduced poverty and helped families working for low wages.
- Brisson voted for H467, which limited the liability of big corporate farms that caused damage to their neighbors’ property, and even voted against a popular amendment that kept the law from applying to current law suits.
- Brisson voted to protect corporate farms despite being a farmer who has received over \$1.3 million in subsidies from the federal government.

House District 22



Rep. William Brisson



Bladen County Statistics

Poverty and Economic Hardship

- 25.4% of county residents lived in poverty and struggled to make ends meet in 2015; the state poverty rate was 16.4%. (Budget and Tax Center, retrieved [8/21/17](#))
- 35.2% of children in the county lived in poverty in 2015, compared to 23.4% statewide. (Budget and Tax Center, retrieved [8/21/17](#))
- 7,366 of the county's residents received assistance from the food and nutrition services (or food stamps) program in December 2016, with 21% of residents receiving assistance. (Budget and Tax center, retrieved [8/21/17](#))
- These were dollars that helped workers make ends meet by allowing them to keep more of what they earned to support their children. (Special Data Request, NC Department of Revenue, Preliminary Run of 2013 Individual Income Tax Extract, Budget and Tax Center, retrieved [8/21/17](#))

Medicaid Expansion

- 9,193 people in the county were eligible for Medicaid in December 2016, an increase of 16.2% since December 2007 when the recession began. Estimates suggest that 2,288 North Carolinians in the county would benefit from Medicaid expansion, delivering \$19.9 million in economic benefits to the county. (NC Division of Medical Assistance, December 2007 and 2016; and Cone Health Foundation. "The Economic and Employment Costs of Not Expanding Medicaid in North Carolina: A County-Level Analysis." December 2014, Budget and Tax Center, retrieved [8/21/17](#))

Sampson County Statistics

Poverty and Economic Hardship

- 21.4% of county residents lived in poverty and struggled to make ends meet in 2015; the state poverty rate was 16.4%. (US Census Bureau, Small Area Income and Poverty Estimates, 2015, Budget and Tax Center, retrieved [8/21/17](#))
- 29.5% of children in the county lived in poverty in 2015, compared to 23.4% statewide. (US Census Bureau, Small Area Income and Poverty Estimates, 2015, Budget and Tax Center, retrieved [8/21/17](#))
- 12,735 of the county's residents received assistance from the food and nutrition services (or food stamps) program in December 2016, with 19.9% of residents receiving assistance. (NC Division of Social Services, FNS Individuals Data, December 2016 & NC Office of State Budget and Management, Population Estimates, July 2016, Budget and Tax Center, retrieved [8/21/17](#))

- In 2013, 7,176 tax filers in the county claimed the state Earned Income Tax Credit, which lawmakers allowed to expire that year. The tax credit went to people that worked but earned low wages, and the benefits totaled \$834,472 in the county. These were dollars that helped workers make ends meet by allowing them to keep more of what they earned to support their children. (Special Data Request, NC Department of Revenue, Preliminary Run of 2013 Individual Income Tax Extract, Budget and Tax Center, retrieved [8/21/17](#))

Medicaid Expansion

- 17,933 people in the county were eligible for Medicaid in December 2016, an increase of 34.7% since December 2007 when the recession began. Estimates suggest that 4,141 North Carolinians in the county would benefit from Medicaid expansion, delivering \$36.6 million in economic benefits to the county. (NC Division of Medical Assistance, December 2007 and 2016; and Cone Health Foundation. “The Economic and Employment Costs of Not Expanding Medicaid in North Carolina: A County-Level Analysis.” December 2014, Budget and Tax Center, retrieved [8/21/17](#))

Johnston County Statistics

Poverty and Economic Hardship

- 36.3% of the county’s residents were low-income on average from 2011-2015, meaning their incomes were less than twice the federal poverty level. (US Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2011-2015, Budget and Tax Center, retrieved [8/27/17](#))
- In 2013, 14,583 tax filers in the county claimed the state Earned Income Tax Credit, which lawmakers allowed to expire that year. The tax credit went to people that worked but earned low wages, and the benefits totaled \$1,640,006 in the county. These were dollars that helped workers make ends meet by allowing them to keep more of what they earned to support their children. (Special Data Request, NC Department of Revenue, Preliminary Run of 2013 Individual Income Tax Extract, Budget and Tax Center, retrieved [8/27/17](#))

Medicaid Expansion

- 39,095 people in the county were eligible for Medicaid in December 2016, an increase of 70.1% since December 2007 when the recession began. Estimates suggest that 9,490 North Carolinians in the county would benefit from Medicaid expansion, delivering \$188.6 million in economic benefits to the county. (NC Division of Medical Assistance, December 2007 and 2016; and Cone Health Foundation. “The Economic and Employment Costs of Not Expanding Medicaid in North Carolina: A County-Level Analysis.” December 2014, Budget and Tax Center, retrieved [8/27/17](#))

Brisson consistently voted for budgets that let education in North Carolina fall further behind.

- **Note:** Rep. Brisson voted for the budget on [6/2/17](#), voted for the conference report on [6/22/17](#), and voted to override the Governor's veto on [6/28/17](#).

Gov. Cooper's proposed budget would have increased education spending by \$755 million. "Cooper increased education spending in the coming year by \$755 million; the House and Senate weakly approved half that much." (News & Observer, Editorial, [6/3/17](#))

The Republican budget spent 30% less on education than the Governor's proposed budget. "Most public school teachers will receive a pay hike of 9.6 percent over the next two years, which is a significant jump. However, starting teachers and our most experienced teachers receive little or no raises. Total education spending came in about 30% less than Gov. Cooper's proposed spending. (\$755m to \$520m) and per pupil spending is still 6.7% below pre-Recession level. In the spring of 2016, Senator Phil Berger unveiled a plan to bring average teacher pay to \$54,224 in the 17-18 school year. This budget fails to meet Senator Berger's promise." (Stronger NC, [6/26/17](#))

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Teacher pay still almost \$10K less than the national average

North Carolina's average teacher salary for 2017 is \$9,543 less than the national average. (NEA Rankings & Estimates, [2016-17](#))

Headline: "Average teacher pay in NC falls short of \$50,000 mark." "Average teacher pay in North Carolina this school year falls short of the \$50,000 mark touted by state lawmakers and former Gov. Pat McCrory last fall, according to data released this week by the Department of Public Instruction. The actual figure is \$49,837, which is hardly a huge miss at less than \$200 off the mark, but critics say that gap points to deeper problems with how state and local governments pay educators." (WRAL, [2/3/17](#))

| 2015 Average Salary of Teachers | 2015 Rank | 2016 Average Salary of Teachers | 2016 Rank | 2017 Estimated Average Salary of Teachers | 2017 Estimated Rank |
|---------------------------------|-----------|---------------------------------|-----------|---|---------------------|
| \$47,497 | 40 | \$47,941 | 41 | \$49,407 | 36 |

(NEA Rankings & Estimates, [2016-17](#))

North Carolina ranked 47th in teacher job opportunity and competition, 44th state overall for teachers. Job opportunity and competition ranking was based on average starting salary, median annual salary, average teacher pensions, average teacher demand, public school enrollment growth and 10-year change in teacher salaries. (WalletHub, [9/26/2016](#))

North Carolina projected to spend less per student in 2017 than 2016

Dropped ranking from 42 to 43 from 2016 to 2017

North Carolina was ranked 42nd in per pupil spending in 2016. (NEA Rankings & Estimates, [2016-17](#))

North Carolina was projected to rank 43rd in per pupil spending in 2017. (NEA Rankings & Estimates, [2016-17](#))

North Carolina decreased per pupil spending from 2016 to 2017

- **NOTE:** NEA rankings include federal funding in per pupil spending totals, chart below breaks down per pupil expenditure by government entity.

North Carolina's per pupil spending in fall enrollment in 2016 was \$8,887.56. (NC Public Schools, accessed, [5/17/2017](#))

North Carolina's per pupil spending in fall enrollment projected for 2017 was \$8,940. (NEA Rankings & Estimates, [2016-17](#))

North Carolina only ahead of Mississippi in the Southeast in per pupil spending

North Carolina only beats Mississippi for per pupil spending in the Southeast. (NEA Rankings & Estimates, [2016-17](#))

North Carolina spent \$3,044 less than national average per student

North Carolina's per pupil spending in fall enrollment projected for 2017 was \$8,940. (NEA Rankings & Estimates, [2016-17](#))

The US Average per pupil spending in fall enrollment projected for 2017 was \$11,984. (NEA Rankings & Estimates, [2016-17](#))

N.C. Per Pupil Expenditures

| School Year | Local | State | Federal | Total |
|-------------|----------|----------|----------|----------|
| 2015-2016 | 2,157 | 5,724.21 | 1,005.83 | 8,887.56 |
| 2014-2015 | 2,134.82 | 5,638.39 | 1,011.13 | 8,784.34 |
| 2013-2014 | 2,095.47 | 5,390.12 | 991.41 | 8,477 |
| 2012-2013 | 2,084.55 | 5,399.64 | 1,030.02 | 8,514.21 |

(NC Public Schools, accessed, [5/17/2017](#))

County Rankings by Per Pupil Expenditures (nutrition included)

| LEA Name | State Rank | Federal Rank | Local Rank | Total Rank |
|-------------------------|------------|--------------|------------|------------|
| Bladen County Schools | 43 | 14 | 104 | 52 |
| Johnston County Schools | 96 | 103 | 73 | 106 |
| Sampson County Schools | 47 | 42 | 107 | 81 |

(NC Public Schools, *per pupil expenditure ranking, child nutrition included, 2016*)

In 2013, Rep. William Brisson voted for H82, ending the Earned Income Tax Credit, which reduced poverty and helped families working for low wages

In 2013, Rep. Brisson broke from the Democrats and voted for H82, which ended the Earned Income Tax Credit. (NC Leg, H82, signed by Gov. 3/13/13, retrieved [8/24/17](#))

Brisson was the only Democrat to vote against an amendment that would have extended the Earned Income Tax Credit until January 1, 2019. (NC Leg, H82, signed by Gov. 3/13/13, retrieved [8/24/17](#))

Nearly one million North Carolina families claimed the state Earned Income Tax Credit each year. “Numbers show nearly one million North Carolina families claim the state Earned Income Tax Credit each year.” (WUNC, [3/15/14](#))

The EITC helped families working for low wages and reduced poverty. “They not only help families working for low wages meet basic needs but also reduce poverty, especially among children. And the benefits can be long-lasting: low-income children in families that get additional income through programs like the EITC do better and go farther in school and, as a result, work more and earn more as adults.” (Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, [1/13/14](#))

In 2013, the poverty rate for North Carolina was 17.8% and the child poverty rate was 25.1%. (Budget and Tax Center, 2013 Poverty and Income Estimates, [12/2014](#))

In 2013, the benefits from the Earned Income Tax Credit totaled \$433,809 in Bladen County

In 2013, the benefits for the Earned Income Tax Credit in Bladen County totaled \$433,809. “In 2013, 3,692 tax filers in the county claimed the state Earned Income Tax Credit, which lawmakers allowed to expire that year. The tax credit went to people that worked but earned low wages, and the benefits totaled \$433,809 in the county. These were dollars that helped workers make ends meet by allowing them to keep more of what they earned to support their children.” (Special Data Request, NC Department of Revenue, Preliminary Run of 2013 Individual Income Tax Extract, Budget and Tax Center, retrieved [8/21/17](#))

In 2012, at least 30.1% of total tax returns in Bladen County claimed the state EITC. (NC Department of Revenue, Preliminary Run of 2012 Individual Income Tax Extract, [2/2014](#))

In 2013, the poverty rate for Bladen County was 27.1% and the child poverty rate was 37.4%. (Budget and Tax Center, 2013 Poverty and Income Estimates, [12/2014](#))

In 2013, the benefits from the Earned Income Tax Credit totaled \$834,472 in Sampson County

In 2013, the benefits for the Earned Income Tax Credit in Sampson County totaled \$834,472. “In 2013, 7,176 tax filers in the county claimed the state Earned Income Tax Credit, which lawmakers allowed to expire that year. The tax credit went to people that worked but earned low wages, and the benefits totaled \$834,472 in the county. These were dollars that helped workers make ends meet by allowing them to keep more of what they earned to support their children.” (Special Data Request, NC Department of Revenue, Preliminary Run of 2013 Individual Income Tax Extract, Budget and Tax Center, retrieved [8/21/17](#))

In 2012, 25.1% to 30% of total tax returns in Sampson County claimed the state EITC. (NC Department of Revenue, Preliminary Run of 2012 Individual Income Tax Extract, [2/2014](#))

In 2013, the poverty rate for Sampson County was 24.3% and the child poverty rate was 32.8%. (Budget and Tax Center, 2013 Poverty and Income Estimates, [12/2014](#))

In 2013, the benefits from the Earned Income Tax Credit totaled \$1,640,006 in Johnston County

In 2013, the benefits for the Earned Income Tax Credit in Johnston County totaled \$1,640,006. “In 2013, 14,583 tax filers in the county claimed the state Earned Income Tax Credit, which lawmakers allowed to expire that year. The tax credit went to people that worked but earned low wages, and the benefits totaled \$1,640,006 in the county. These were dollars that helped workers make ends meet by allowing them to keep more of what they earned to support their children. (Special Data Request, NC Department of Revenue, Preliminary Run of 2013 Individual Income Tax Extract, retrieved [8/27/17](#))

In 2012, 20.1% to 25% of total tax returns in Johnston County claimed the state EITC. (NC Department of Revenue, Preliminary Run of 2012 Individual Income Tax Extract, [2/2014](#))

In 2013, the poverty rate for Johnston County was 16.6% and the child poverty rate was 21.6%. (Budget and Tax Center, 2013 Poverty and Income Estimates, [12/2014](#))

William Brisson voted for H467, which let big corporate farms not have to pay their neighbors for the damages they caused to their property and health.

Rep. Brisson voted for H467 and to override Gov. Cooper’s veto of that bill. (NC Leg, H467, veto overridden [5/11/17](#))

House Bill 467 would limit the amount of money people could receive in lawsuits filed against agricultural operations for disturbances. “The bill would limit the amount of money people could collect in lawsuits filed against agricultural operations for disturbances such as

odors and pollution. Under the bill, the person suing could be compensated only for the decrease in rental income the property could generate because of the smells and gases coming from hog farms, as opposed to being compensated more generously for the loss of quality of life as a jury sees fit.” (News & Observer, [4/5/2017](#); H467, veto overridden [5/11/17](#))

In other states, payouts in similar lawsuits have been hundreds of thousands of dollars, but House Bill 467 would limit the payout to several thousand dollars. “The legislation would not affect those lawsuits, but would curtail financial payouts in any similar lawsuits filed in the future. In other states, jurors have awarded residents hundreds of thousands of dollars in similar cases. North Carolina’s legislation would limit the financial payments to several thousand dollars per household, according to some estimates.” (News & Observer, [5/5/2017](#); H467, veto overridden [5/11/17](#))

Brisson was in support of H467, saying the law firm “came in and stirred people up about nuisance laws.” “This firm worked in Iowa doing the same thing and then moved to North Carolina, because we’re near the top in the country with hog production. They came in and stirred people up about nuisance laws, which is why we needed this legislation.” (Bladen Journal, [4/13/17](#))

Brisson said that nothing was wrong with the current hog farm regulations. “There’s nothing wrong with the current guidelines,” commented Brisson. ‘Very few people have complained about hog farms for 21 years — until this firm came along — because the regulations work when they’re followed. Some farmers may not follow the rules, and that creates problems, but the regulations are good.’” (Bladen Journal, [4/13/17](#))

Brisson voted against the amendment that required the bill to only be applied to future lawsuits

Brisson was one of only two Democrats that voted against the amendment changing the bill to only apply to future lawsuits. (NC Leg, H467, veto overridden 5/11/17, retrieved [8/27/17](#))

Originally, H467 was written to limit damages in pending lawsuits. “Under the bill, the person suing could be compensated only for the decrease in rental income the property could generate because of the smells and gases coming from hog farms, as opposed to being compensated more generously for the loss of quality of life as a jury sees fit. The bill would limit financial damages not only on future lawsuits, but also on suits that are pending in court.” (News & Observer, [4/5/2017](#), HB467 passed second reading on [4/6/2017](#))

The legislation was written to nullify 26 federal lawsuits that are pending in federal court. “They say the main flaw of the legislation is that it’s written to nullify 26 federal lawsuits against a pork producer that are pending in federal court. ‘I would submit that this proposed legislation would...violate the N.C. Constitution in that it is specifically targeted at benefitting a particular industry,’ Robert F. Orr, a retired N.C. Supreme Court justice, wrote in his legal opinion for the attorneys suing pork producer Murphy-Brown.” (News & Observer, [4/5/2017](#); H467, Gov. Cooper vetoed H467 on [5/5/2017](#))

Lawmakers voted 59-56 to amend the bill to apply only to future lawsuits. “Lawmakers voted 59-56 to amend the bill to apply to future lawsuits only, then voted 68-47 in favor of the amended bill. (News & Observer, [4/10/2017](#); H467, Gov. Cooper vetoed H467 on [5/5/2017](#))

Brisson has received \$1,399,767.30 in subsidies from the US Department of Agriculture

Between 1995 and 2014, Brisson has received \$1,399,767.30 in subsidies from the U.S Department of Agriculture. (EWG’s Farm Subsidy Database, retrieved [8/27/17](#))

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