

North Carolina Legislator Profile

Rep. Michele D. Presnell: District 118
Haywood, Madison, and Yancey Counties

Rep. Michele Presnell, who represents House District 118, has served three terms in the House since being elected in 2012. She previously served on the Yancey Board of Commissioners in 2010.

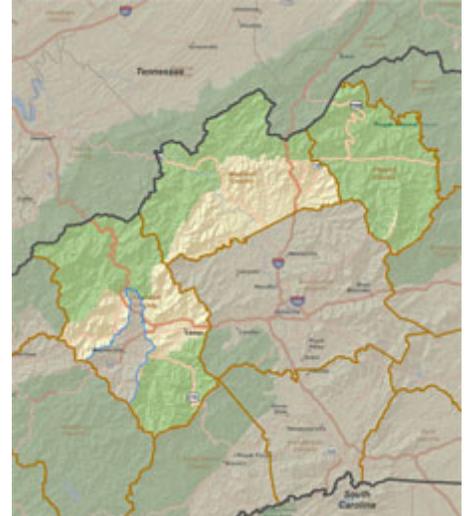
Presnell's claims of being pro-education do not coincide with her actions. Presnell falls in line with other Republicans in the General Assembly and prioritizes tax cuts for big corporations over funding public education. Thanks to Presnell's votes, NC is ranked among the lowest for teacher pay and per pupil spending, according to an NEA report.

Instead of advocating for her constituents, Presnell accepted thousands in donations from Duke Energy and voted to allow them to pass the cost of cleaning up coal ash on to ratepayers after the devastating coal ash spill.

Presnell voted against protecting coverage for people with pre-existing conditions and blocked Medicaid expansion that would have provided health care to 500,000 North Carolinians and lowered costs for everyone. Meanwhile, North Carolina has some of the most expensive health care in the country, in part due to decisions by the Republican-led legislature.

Despite Presnell's claims that she is "pro-jobs," she consistently voted to give tax cuts to corporations and millionaires. Ignoring the fact that more than 50 percent of children in Haywood County live in poverty, Presnell put the wealthy ahead of everyday families.

Read on for more about Presnell's record.



Summary

Despite claiming she is an advocate for more education funding and resources, Presnell repeatedly voted against more education funding, instead favoring tax breaks for corporations and keeping NC ranked among the lowest in the nation on education spending.

- *Presnell claims she is an advocate for more education funding and more educational resources.*
- *In 2017, Presnell voted for the Republican budget that shortchanged teachers and students by failing to meaningfully raise teacher salaries and prioritized tax cuts over funding public education.*
- *In 2016, Presnell voted to raise taxes for middle class families and cut funding for public schools.*
- *Presnell voted to let education funding fall even further behind, keeping NC education funding ranked among the lowest in the country in 2015.*
- *The 2013 budget Presnell supported cut more than \$500 million from education funding, cut teacher pay, and divested public education dollars into private schools.*

Presnell accepted thousands of dollars in donations from Duke Energy and voted to pass the cost of cleaning up Duke's coal ash to ratepayers, prioritizing big corporations over North Carolinians.

- *Presnell received at least \$3,000 from Duke Energy.*
- *Presnell voted for the "Duke Bailout Bill" that passed the cost of cleaning up Duke Energy's coal ash to constituents.*
- *A regulatory bill Presnell voted for allowed Duke Energy to avoid coal ash cleanup.*
- *Presnell voted against an amendment that would have protected ratepayers from paying the outrageous cost to clean up coal ash.*

Presnell voted to remove protections for people with pre-existing conditions and blocked Medicaid expansion that would have covered 500,000 people and saved lives.

- *Presnell voted against Medicaid expansion that would have covered 500,000 low-income North Carolinians and was fully funded by federal money for three years, costing the state \$15 billion in new economic activity.*
- *Refusal to expand Medicaid cost the state anywhere from 455 to over 1,000 lives annually.*
- *Presnell voted to support an amended H933, a school safety bill that was changed to destabilize health care coverage for people with pre-existing conditions.*

Presnell claimed her "biggest issue is JOBS;" however, she repeatedly voted for bills that cut taxes for the wealthy and corporations, following every foolish whim of the GOP.

- *Presnell said one of her main focuses is jobs and she commends the leadership in Raleigh for doing a "great job" with less regulations on businesses.*
- *Despite the economic hardship in Presnell's district, she voted for a budget that favored tax cuts for the wealthy, did not restore child care tax credits, and siphoned money away from public education.*
- *Presnell voted for H998, tax overhaul legislation that benefited and cut taxes for the wealthy and corporations, including tax breaks for private jets and yachts.*

Despite claiming she is an advocate for more resources for education, Presnell repeatedly voted against more education funding.

Presnell claims she is an advocate for more education funding and more educational resources.

Presnell said the state should allocate more resources to vocational education in North Carolina. (North Carolina FreeEnterprise Foundation, 2012)

On a FreeEnterprise Foundation survey, Presnell said state lawmakers should not raise taxes in order to raise teacher pay. (North Carolina FreeEnterprise Foundation, 2012)

Presnell voted for the 2017 budget that shortchanged teachers and students by failing to meaningfully raise teacher salaries and prioritized tax cuts over funding public education.

- **NOTE:** Presnell voted for the 2017 Republican budget and voted to override the governor's veto. (S257, House Veto Override [6/28/17](#))

The 2017 Republican budget shortchanged teachers by failing to meaningfully raise teacher salaries and provide a stipend for out-of-pocket expenses.

Many educators, including veterans of 25 years, will only see an increase of \$30 a month, merely a tank of gas. “The newly unveiled North Carolina state budget does include increases in teacher pay, but they are neither big nor dramatic. Many educators – including veterans who have devoted 25 years or more to our state’s children – will see an increase of \$30 a month. That amounts to little more than a tank of gas, which will hardly be enough to allow teachers to quit their second or third jobs.” (Charlotte Observer, Op-Ed, [6/21/17](#))

The Republican budget continues the trend of cutting taxes rather than raising per pupil spending. “This budget will cut individual income tax rates to 5.25 percent from 5.499 percent and the corporate rate to 2.5 percent from 3 percent in the second year, costing the state \$900 million annually when fully implemented. This means that the legislature will eventually have cut \$3.5 billion annually in all its tax cuts –money that could have gone for services. North Carolina, for example, ranks 41st nationally in per pupil spending for public education. Here is a question for lawmakers: Which is most likely hindering industrial recruitment and economic development in small-town North Carolina –high taxes or poor schools?” (News & Observer Editorial, [6/24/17](#))

Teachers across the country spent \$500 to \$1000 out-of-pocket for classroom supplies and job-related expenses last year. “According to a recent report from ‘Time,’ the Education Market Association says most teachers across the country spent \$500 to \$1,000 annually out of their own pockets for classroom supplies and job-related expenses last year. The report said that \$1.6 billion in school supply costs are shifted from parents or cash-strapped school districts onto teachers themselves.” (Gaston Gazette, [5/6/17](#))

In 2016, Presnell voted to raise taxes for middle class families and cut funding for public schools.

➤ **NOTE:** Presnell voted for 2016 budget. (H1030, signed [7/14/16](#))

“Billions of dollars in tax revenue that could have lifted North Carolina’s schools to new heights instead has been diverted into tax cuts that have produced no tangible results.”

“This Election Day should be a day of reckoning for North Carolina’s Republican legislative leaders who have shirked their responsibility and broken a long state tradition of strong support for public schools. Instead of investing in the state’s children, instead of improving education as a way for poor children to escape poverty and all children to achieve goals, the Republican-led General Assembly has chosen to reduce state taxes, mostly to the benefit of the wealthy and big corporations. Billions of dollars in tax revenue that could have lifted North Carolina’s schools to new heights instead has been diverted into tax cuts that have produced no tangible results. Republican lawmakers are acutely aware of their culpability in this choice, but instead of defending it or apologizing for it, they’re denying it. Even worse, they’re claiming credit for increasing spending on public education. This is duplicity joined with sophistry, and it should stir the smoldering anger over the neglect of public schools into outrage.” (News & Observer, Editorial, [8/20/16](#))

“The wealthy and big corporations are paying less and middle- and low-income earners are paying more” with low-income families and individuals being hit “particularly hard.”

“Growing tax revenue doesn’t mean happy days are here again for most North Carolinians. It means the wealthy and big corporations are paying less and middle- and low-income earners are paying more. Johnson notes, ‘The regressive sales tax hits low-income families and individuals particularly hard, as they spend a larger share of their income on goods and services subject to the sales tax. Thus, to point to increased revenue as evidence that low- and middle-income North Carolinians are better off is an inaccurate assessment of reality.’ The revenue numbers are not only about a shift in the tax burden. They are also about what’s missing. Had the General Assembly’s tax changes been revenue neutral – as McCrory originally requested – the state would be seeing a much larger revenue increase as the economy recovers.” (News & Observer, Editorial, [1/16/16](#))

Presnell prioritized tax breaks for corporations over more education funding. “We need to lock up the lottery and make sure that money is being used for its original purpose. We must also bring our tax dollars back; Michele Presnell voted to give big tax-giveaways to corporations that shipped North Carolina jobs overseas. I want to see that money in the classroom where it belongs. In terms of teacher pay, we must bring salaries up to at least the national average. If Michele Presnell thinks every educator in our state makes at least \$50,000 a year, she obviously does not spend enough time talking with our educators.” (Asheville Citizen-Times, 11/5/16)

Presnell voted for the 2015 Republican budget that let education funding fall even further behind, keeping NC education funding ranked among the lowest in the country.

➤ **NOTE:** Presnell voted for H97 and the conference report. (H97, signed by Gov. [9/18/15](#))

Presnell “emphatically” voted yes for the 2015 budget that according to her website “provided a larger pay raise for teachers than any other state in the nation” despite the 2015 budget providing less education funding. “Funding for education under the current

administration has increased by \$1.5 billion. Anyone who tells you education funding has decreased in recent years is simply not telling you the truth. Numbers don't lie. Michele Presnell emphatically voted yes for the 2015 budget that provided a larger pay raise for teachers than any other state in the nation." (Presnell.House, retrieved [6/26/18](#))

NC teacher pay ranked in the bottom 10, only beating Mississippi and West Virginia in the Southeast. "Despite an effort to raise starting salaries, North Carolina is expected to remain in the bottom 10 states nationally in average teacher pay, according to a report released Wednesday. The National Education Association estimates the average salary for a North Carolina public school teacher in the 2014-15 school year at \$47,783, which ranks 42nd nationally." (WRAL, [3/18/15](#))

Per pupil spending decreased from 2014 to 2015 and NC ranked 46th. "The report put the estimate for per pupil expenditures at \$8,620 this year, lower than Tennessee, South Carolina, Virginia, and other states in the region." (News & Observer, [3/18/15](#))

<p>Presnell supported the 2013 budget that cut more than \$500 million from education funding, cut teacher pay, and divested public education dollars into private schools.</p>
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The 2013 Republican budget cut more than \$500 million from education spending, increased class size, cut Master's pay and kept NC's national teacher pay near the bottom of the nation. "Here's what the Senate and House budget plan, set for a vote this week, does to N.C. schools: It cuts education spending by almost \$500 million in the next two years, including a decrease in net spending for K-12 public schools. It invites bigger and more chaotic classrooms by removing the cap on some classroom sizes and cutting funding for elementary school teacher assistants. School systems can offset those cuts if they somehow find money in their shrinking budgets, but if they don't, more than 3,850 second- and third-grade teaching assistants will be gone. It phases out extra pay for teachers who earn a master's degree, removing at least some incentive for teachers to improve themselves and their classrooms. Most critically, it continues to pay N.C. public school teachers abysmally. The budget doesn't give teachers raises next year, which guarantees that N.C. will continue to rank near the bottom of national rankings in teacher pay." (Charlotte Observer, editorial, 7/23/13)

The 2013 Republican budget cut teacher pay.

Poor pay for NC teachers meant they were forced into other jobs or had to rely on Medicaid if they continued teaching. "Lindsay Kosmala Furst loves teaching, but leaving the profession may be a matter of survival for her family. A North Carolina teacher since 2007, Furst's income is so low that her two young daughters, ages 1 and 3, qualify for Medicaid. The Buncombe County high school English teacher sent legislators a letter Monday about her job and her family after learning that the state budget has no raises for teachers. 'We never wanted to live in luxury,' she wrote. 'We did, however, hope to be able to take our little girls out for an ice cream or not wonder where we will find the gas money to visit their grandparents.' Teachers on Monday said cuts in the state budget released Sunday amount to the legislators forsaking public education. Teacher pay will remain near the bottom of national rankings. More than 3,850 teacher assistant positions will be gone. The extra pay for teachers who earn master's degrees will be phased out..." (News & Observer, 7/22/13)

Teacher said of the budget: “It is genuinely scary. I get the feeling that our legislators have a vendetta against teachers.” “Dov Rosenberg, a teacher at Rogers-Herr Middle School in Durham, said he isn’t concerned about losing his job but worries for the teaching profession and the future of public education in the state. ‘It feels like a slap in the face when they talk about how they want to attract high quality teachers, and this budget seems to do nothing but discourage people from entering the teaching profession,’ he said. ‘It is genuinely scary. I get the feeling that our legislators have a vendetta against teachers.’” (News & Observer, 7/22/13)

The 2013 Republican budget was a “slap at North Carolina’s teachers and public education system delivered by the budget.” “The slap at North Carolina's teachers and public education system delivered by the budget. The House-Senate compromise represents a major push toward privatization, with a program allowing taxpayer money to be used for private school tuitions; an end to current teacher tenure; and again, no pay raise for the state's teachers, who already rank near the bottom in pay in the nation. Spending on teacher assistants drops a staggering \$120 million. Yevonne Brannon, a volunteer with the group Public Schools First NC, said, ‘This budget reflects a very aggressive campaign to privatize public education and dismantle the teaching profession. We're just paddling backward as fast as we can go.’” (Asheville Citizen-Times, editorial, 7/23/13)

Presnell accepted thousands of dollars in donations from Duke Energy and voted for bills that passed the cost of cleaning up Duke's coal ash spill to the ratepayers.

Presnell received at least \$3,000 from Duke Energy.

Presnell received at least \$3,000 from Duke Energy PACs. (North Carolina State Board of Elections, retrieved [6/29/18](#))

Date	Name	Amount
8/19/16	DUKE ENERGY	2000
1/20/16	DUKE ENERGY CORP PAC	1000
		Total: \$3,000

Presnell voted for the "Duke Bailout Bill" that passed the cost of cleaning up Duke Energy's coal ash spill to constituents.

➤ **NOTE:** Presnell voted for H630. (H630, House concurred, [6/30/16](#))

SELC attorney said "Duke Bailout Bill" is "damning proof" that families cannot rely on the state to protect drinking water from Duke Energy's pollution. "Environmental groups quickly chastised the legislation. 'This coal ash bill is damning proof that the families and communities of North Carolina can't rely on state politicians to protect their drinking water supplies from Duke Energy's coal ash pollution,' said Frank Holleman, senior attorney at the Southern Environmental Law Center, in a statement. Added Holleman: 'This Duke Bailout Bill is a betrayal of the North Carolina people who participated in good faith in the process and followed the rules established by the legislature in 2014. Public participation led to the conclusion that the law and science require Duke Energy to excavate its coal ash from its leaking, unlined pits. Duke Energy didn't like the results and so today the North Carolina Senate turned its back on the people and clean water and threw into the trash can public process, facts, science, and the law.'" (WUNC, [6/29/16](#))

Covering coal ash in unlined pits "could continue allowing toxic pollutants to escape for decades." "The reevaluation would allow regulators to see if fewer pits would need excavation. 'The deadlines in the coal ash law are too compressed to allow adequate repairs to be completed,' state environment secretary Donald van der Vaart said in a statement. 'The intent was not to set pond closure deadlines based on incomplete information. Making decisions based on incomplete information could lead to the expenditure of billions of dollars when spending millions now would provide equal or better protection.' The alternative method of closing all of Duke Energy's coal-ash basins is to drain off excess water and cover the remaining residue in plastic and dirt. Environmentalists warn covering the unlined coal ash pits could continue allowing toxic pollutants to escape for decades." (AP, [5/18/16](#))

This bill was good for Duke's bottom line, saving them billions of dollars.

Revisiting plan "would give Duke time to fix ash pond dams," and could "save Duke billions of dollars." "North Carolina's environment department decided Wednesday that all of Duke Energy's coal ash ponds must be excavated – but only for now. The Department of Environmental Quality said it will ask legislators to change the state's coal ash law to let DEQ reconsider its decisions in 18 months. That would give Duke time to fix ash pond dams and,

possibly, offer permanent alternative water sources to hundreds of homes with contaminated wells. It could also save Duke billions of dollars.” (News & Observer, [5/18/16](#))

Duke said it expected “to ask state regulators to allow it to pass along its coal-ash bill to electricity consumers.” “Duke Energy in 2014 floated a potential cost to excavate coal ash from 14 of its coal-burning power plants at \$10 billion. The company has said it expected to ask state utilities regulators to allow it to pass along its coal-ash bill to electricity customers. The company last year estimated the likely costs at about \$4 billion, which could raise power rates for the average North Carolina household by about \$18 a year over 25 years.” (AP, [5/18/16](#))

A regulatory bill Presnell voted for allowed Duke Energy to avoid coal ash cleanup.

➤ **NOTE:** Presnell voted for H74. (H74, conference report adopted, [7/26/13](#))

Duke lobbyists successfully got pet provision in 2013 regulatory bill allowing them to avoid coal ash cleanup, after giving \$95,000 to Republican legislators. “Still, regulators alone could not protect the company from its huge liability if the environmental groups persevered in court. So Duke officials lobbied — successfully — to change state law, itself... Data collected from Duke’s own monitoring wells showed contamination beyond that 500-foot limit at several of its properties, with high levels of arsenic, selenium, lead and other poisonous contaminants found in coal ash...Duke Energy and its executives have donated millions in recent years to both Republicans and Democrats. Though 2013 was not an election year, records show the company continued to give generously as its lobbyists sought to protect its ash pits. A political action committee underwritten by Duke employees sent another \$95,000 to Republican legislators and groups that support their campaigns — nearly five times the amount provided to North Carolina’s Democratic legislators over the same time period.” (Associated Press, [3/17/14](#); H74, adopted [8/23/13](#))

Presnell voted against an amendment that would have protected ratepayers from paying to clean up Duke’s coal ash spill.

➤ **NOTE:** Republicans voted to table S729, A16. (S729, A16, amendment tabled, [7/2/14](#))

Dan River spill under investigation spewed “enough toxic sludge to fill 73 Olympic-sized pools” which “contains arsenic, lead, mercury and a host of other chemicals.” “The spill at a Duke Energy plant in Eden spewed enough toxic sludge to fill 73 Olympic-sized pools, turning the river water a milky gray for miles. It was the third-largest coal ash spill in U.S. history. State health officials have advised that people not eat fish from the river and to avoid contact with the water. Coal ash contains arsenic, lead, mercury and a host of other chemicals that are highly toxic to humans and aquatic life.” (AP, [2/13/14](#))

Month after Dan River spill, Duke Energy cited for pumping coal ash east into Cape Fear River illegally. “North Carolina regulators say Duke Energy illegally pumped 61 million gallons of contaminated water from a coal ash pit into the Cape Fear River, marking the eighth time in less than a month the nation’s largest electricity company has been cited for environmental violations. The pumping violated the terms of Duke’s wastewater permit at its Cape Fear Plant, State Department of Environment and Natural Resources spokesman Jamie Kreutzer said Thursday. Kritzer said the agency has issued Duke a formal notice of violation, which could result in hefty fines.” (AP, [3/21/14](#))

Presnell voted to remove protections for people with pre-existing conditions and to block Medicaid expansion that would have covered 500,000 people and saved lives.

Presnell voted against Medicaid expansion that would have covered 500,000 low-income North Carolinians and was fully funded by federal money for three years, costing the state \$15 billion in new economic activity.

- **NOTE:** Presnell voted for H372. (H372, signed [9/23/15](#))
- **NOTE:** Presnell voted against an amendment to accept Medicaid expansion as long as it was fully funded by the federal government. (S4, ratified, [3/6/13](#); [Amendment 2, 2/13/13](#))

Republicans blocked Medicaid expansion that would have covered 500,000 low-income North Carolinians and was fully funded by federal tax money for three years, and 90 percent of costs thereafter. “The Medicaid expansion would cover about 500,000 low-income adults in North Carolina, providing them the insurance coverage required when the Affordable Care Act is fully implemented next year. The federal government would pick up the full cost of the expansion for the first three years and the bulk of the costs for several years after that.” (WRAL, [2/14/13](#))

Legislature’s refusal to expand Medicaid will cost NC \$21 billion in federal funds between 2016 and 2020. “North Carolina's Republican-dominated legislature has so far refused to expand Medicaid under the Affordable Care Act. It's already been noted by the North Carolina Institute of Medicine that not expanding Medicaid is costing around 500,000 state residents coverage. Now a new report from the Center for Health Policy Research at George Washington University commissioned by the Cone Health Foundation finds the refusal to expand Medicaid would cost North Carolina \$21 billion in federal matching funds between 2016 and 2020 and tens of thousands of jobs. The analysis looks at the costs to the state on a county-by-county basis.” (WCQS, [10/19/15](#))

Medicaid expansion would mean \$15 billion in new economic activity and 25,000 jobs for North Carolina by 2016. “The cost would be fully funded by the federal government for the first three years. For five years following that, the federal government would pay 90 percent of the cost, and the state would pay 10 percent. That’s a much more favorable cost share than regular Medicaid, for which the state pays one-third of the cost. If lawmakers approve the expansion, it would bring a projected \$15 billion into the state’s economy, creating an estimated 25,000 jobs in health care and related sectors by 2016.” (WRAL, [2/11/13](#))

Refusal to expand Medicaid cost the state anywhere from 455 to over 1,000 lives annually.

Blocking Medicaid expansion will cost 455 to 1,145 lives per year and could result in higher costs for employers. “Two studies out this month say turning down the federal Medicaid expansion could cost North Carolina the lives of hundreds of low-income uninsured people per year and leave businesses on the hook for tens of millions of dollars annually in tax penalties, beginning in 2015. An analysis released by tax preparation firm Jackson Hewitt urges policymakers debating Medicaid expansion to include “the very real costs of the shared responsibility tax penalties to employers” in calculating the net costs of expansion to the state... Another new analysis by health policy experts from Harvard University and City University of New York finds that opting out of Medicaid expansion will cost between 455 and 1,145 lives a year in North Carolina.” (WRAL, [1/31/14](#))

Presnell voted to support an amended H933, a school safety bill that was changed to destabilize health care coverage for people with pre-existing conditions.

- **NOTE:** H933 passed the House unanimously on 2nd reading on [5/17/18](#), Referred to Senate Rules on [5/21/18](#), Senate amended [6/13/18](#), House failed to concur [6/14/18](#)
- **NOTE:** Presnell voted to concur with the Senate's version of H933 that eroded coverage for pre-existing conditions.

The Senate Health Care Committee amended H933 to include insurance provisions.

“Senate Republicans unveiled the new portions of House Bill 933 at a committee meeting Thursday morning, potentially clearing surprise provisions aimed purportedly at lowering the threshold for small employers to offer self-funded health plans and, perhaps most importantly, clearing less-regulated association health plans for membership organizations like the [N.C. Farm Bureau](#).” (Progressive Pulse, [6/7/18](#); H933, House failed to concur [6/14/18](#))

The legislation would allow nonprofits to offer “health benefit plans” exempt of state and federal regulation. “Legislation poised for passage in the N.C. Senate would allow nonprofits to offer “health benefit plans” that would be exempt from nearly all state and federal regulations that govern health insurance. Supporters say the measure would allow nonprofits to offer health benefit plans that would be similar to health insurance, but could be cheaper than health insurance purchased on the Affordable Care Act exchange as well as other forms of insurance. But critics worry the legislation would open the door for products that would discriminate against those with pre-existing health conditions, offer skimpy benefits, and come with few or no consumer protections. The plans would be similar to those offered in Tennessee, where premiums on the ACA exchanges have climbed precipitously, in part because of the impact of these unregulated plans.” (North Carolina Health News, [6/14/18](#); H933, House failed to concur [6/14/18](#))

Critics warned that the provisions would open the door for products that would discriminate against those with pre-existing health conditions, offer skimpy benefits, and come with few or no consumer protections. “Legislation poised for passage in the N.C. Senate would allow nonprofits to offer “health benefit plans” that would be exempt from nearly all state and federal regulations that govern health insurance. Supporters say the measure would allow nonprofits to offer health benefit plans that would be similar to health insurance, but could be cheaper than health insurance purchased on the Affordable Care Act exchange as well as other forms of insurance. But critics worry the legislation would open the door for products that would discriminate against those with pre-existing health conditions, offer skimpy benefits, and come with few or no consumer protections. The plans would be similar to those offered in Tennessee, where premiums on the ACA exchanges have climbed precipitously, in part because of the impact of these unregulated plans.” (North Carolina Health News, [6/14/18](#))

These plans would not require employers to cover a minimum set of services and allow them to price-out certain preexisting conditions. “The legislation would allow nonprofit organizations that have existed for at least 10 years, and which offer membership in all 100 counties, to offer their members health benefit plans. Unlike other health insurance plans and coverage offered by employers, these benefit plans wouldn't be required to cover a minimum set of health care services. And plans could be priced at different levels so that people with preexisting health conditions would be charged more or else not have their pre-existing conditions covered.” (North Carolina Health News, [6/14/18](#); H933, House failed to concur [6/14/18](#))

According to the NC Justice Center, these new plans cherry-pick young, healthy enrollees and leave a sicker risk pool in the individual market, causing premiums to skyrocket. “Under the guise of improving affordability, the bill would allow for the creation of new health insurance plans that would not be subject to state and federal insurance rules. That means that these plans would be able to discriminate against North Carolinians with pre-existing conditions by either refusing to cover them or charging them higher premiums based on their medical history. Even those who are able to ‘pass’ the medical underwriting test may end up in plans that do not provide coverage for essential health care services they need, as these plans are completely exempt from existing insurance law. By cherry picking young and healthy enrollees, these new plans would leave a sicker risk pool in the individual market, destabilizing the insurance market and causing premiums to skyrocket for those in need of comprehensive coverage.” (Progressive Pulse, [6/7/18](#); H933, House failed to concur [6/14/18](#))

Presnell claimed her “biggest issue is JOBS” however she voted for bills that cut taxes for the wealthy and corporations while her constituents fell further behind.

Presnell said one of her main focuses is jobs and commended “the leadership in Raleigh” for doing a “great job” with less regulations on businesses.

Presnell said her “biggest issue is JOBS” and that “the leadership in Raleigh has done a great job so far.” “My biggest issue is JOBS. We must work on job promotion in Western North Carolina. Less regulations, less tax on small businesses. The leadership in Raleigh has done a great job so far, let's keep on the right track.” (PresnellForHouse.com, 1/15/12)

Despite the economic hardship in Presnell’s district, she voted for a budget that favored tax cuts for the wealthy, did not restore child care tax credits, and siphoned money away from public education.

- **NOTE:** *Presnell voted for S257 and for the veto override. (S257 Veto Overridden, [6/27/17](#))*

2017 budget favors tax cuts for the wealthy, lowering the corporate income tax rate to 2.5 percent from 3 percent. “The budget will make a series of tax cuts in 2019, a delay from earlier House and Senate tax cut proposals that would have taken effect in 2018. It will reduce the personal income tax rate from 5.499 percent to 5.25 percent and raise the standard deduction – the amount on which people pay no income taxes unless they itemize – to \$20,000 for married couples filing jointly from \$17,500. It will also lower the corporate income tax rate to 2.5 percent from 3 percent. “We are providing tax relief for middle class working families and businesses, and we’re doing it in a prudent way,” Dollar said.” (News & Observer, 6/28/17)

The 2017 Republican budget continues the trend of cutting taxes rather than raising per pupil spending. “This budget will cut individual income tax rates to 5.25 percent from 5.499 percent and the corporate rate to 2.5 percent from 3 percent in the second year, costing the state \$900 million annually when fully implemented. This means that the legislature will eventually have cut \$3.5 billion annually in all its tax cuts – money that could have gone for services. North Carolina, for example, ranks 41st nationally in per pupil spending for public education. Here is a question for lawmakers: Which is most likely hindering industrial recruitment and economic development in small-town North Carolina – high taxes or poor schools?” (News & Observer, editorial, 6/24/17)

The district Presnell represents is struggling economically.

A NC Child report showed that more than half of Haywood County children live in poverty and nearly 25 percent of children in Haywood County live in food insecure households.

“The new Haywood County Data Card produced by NC Child, a statewide advocacy group, shows that child poverty and hunger remain major problems for children. NC Child reported that more than half of the children living in Haywood County – 52.2 percent – live in poor or near-poor homes, and one-fourth – 25.3 percent – live in food insecure households. Children living in poverty are more likely to face negative education, health and economic outcomes, and children in food insecure households have higher risks to their health, safety and ability to learn, according to NC Child, the statewide advocacy group that prepared the data cards.” (The Mountaineer, [4/4/18](#))

In Haywood County, the unemployment rate is only 4 percent, but the poverty rate is 17.6 percent. “In Haywood County, where the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics says the unemployment rate is just 4 percent but the U.S. Census Bureau says the poverty rate is 17.6 percent, the paycheck-to-paycheck poor but one step from homelessness are numerous, especially given the region’s well-documented affordable housing crisis.” (Smoky Mountain News, [12/6/17](#))

Presnell voted for H998, tax overhaul legislation that benefited and cut taxes for the wealthy and corporations, including tax breaks for private jets and yachts.

➤ **NOTE:** Presnell voted for H998. (H998, signed by Gov. [7/23/13](#))

Tax bill extended many loopholes valued by special interests and creates a tax code where a taxpayer earning \$40,000 a year will pay the same income tax rate, 5.75 percent, as someone making \$1 million. “Many economists don't consider the new tax structure reform because it extended many loopholes valued by special interests and didn't broaden the tax base. The new law creates a tax code where a taxpayer earning \$40,000 a year will pay the same income tax rate, 5.75 percent, as someone making \$1 million in 2015. The tax plan led to more spending cuts in the \$20.6 billion state budget, even though the state's improving economy gave lawmakers more money to allocate. The reductions in public education, from pre-kindergarten to universities, came as lawmakers earmarked money for private school vouchers for the first time and allowed charter schools broader ability to expand.” (News & Observer, [7/27/13](#))

Tax overhaul legislation eliminated personal exemptions and increased deductions. “At issue in the ads is a sweeping 2013 tax plan that was pushed by the North Carolina House speaker, Tillis, and other state Republican leaders. The plan included a lower, flat income tax rate of 5.75 percent by 2015 (down from the current three-bracket rates of 6, 7 and 7.75 depending on income). With regard to income taxes, the plan also — among other things — eliminated personal exemptions and increased standard deductions. In addition, the plan lowered the corporate income tax rate and expanded the state’s sales tax to include such things as manufactured homes and tickets for sporting events and movies. The Legislature also allowed the earned income tax credit for the working poor to expire. In other words, depending on one’s situation and spending habits, there are some things in the plan that could help a taxpayer’s bottom line, and others that could hurt it.” (FactCheck, [05/14/14](#))

The tax bill would eliminate deductions for severance pay, mortgage interest and property taxes. “Currently, personal income taxes in North Carolina are assessed under a three-tier rate structure, with rates ranging from 6% to 7.75%. The 2013 Tax Act replaces the current three-tier rate structure with a flat rate of 5.8% in 2014, which is further reduced to a flat rate of 5.75% in 2015 and later years. The act also includes several revenue-raising provisions in the personal income tax arena that offset part of the revenue lost to rate reductions. Specifically, the 2013 Tax Act: • eliminates personal exemptions (formerly found in G.S. § 105-134.6(a1)), • eliminates the short-lived \$50,000 deduction for net business income (formerly found in G.S. § 105-134.6(b)(22)), • eliminates the deduction for retirement income (formerly found in G.S. § 105-134.6(b)(6)), other than income exempt from tax pursuant to a settlement in the Bailey, Emory, or Patton cases, • eliminates the deduction for severance pay (formerly found in G.S. § 105-134.6(b)(11)), and • caps itemized deductions for mortgage interest and property taxes at \$20,000 (G.S. § 105-153.5(a)(2)b).” (H998, signed by Gov. [7/23/13](#))

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