

North Carolina Legislator Profile

Don Davis: Senate District 5 Greene and Pitt Counties

Sen Don Davis (D-Greene, Pitt) is currently serving his fifth term in the North Carolina Senate. Before his election, Davis taught sociology at Lenoir Community College, Pitt Community College, and East Carolina University. He also served eight years of active duty in the Air Force. Davis got his start in politics as the mayor of Snow Hill, serving from 2001 to 2008.

Since his election to the NC Senate in 2008, Davis has often been the lone Democrat to vote with Senate Republicans on several controversial issues. He repeatedly voted for Republican budgets and in favor of bills that failed to expand access to affordable health care and underfunded education. He was one of two Senate Democrats who refused to co-sponsor a bill that would expand Medicaid and the only Senate Democrat to not co-sponsor a bill that would restore Master's pay for qualified teachers.

Summary

Don Davis was one of two Senate Democrats who refused to co-sponsor a bill that would close the Medicaid gap for families in North Carolina.

- Proponents estimate the bill would benefit half a million people and create around 43,000 jobs.
- The bill would especially benefit rural North Carolinians, who make up most of Davis' district
- Davis supported allowing insurers to refuse to provide coverage to people with pre-existing conditions.

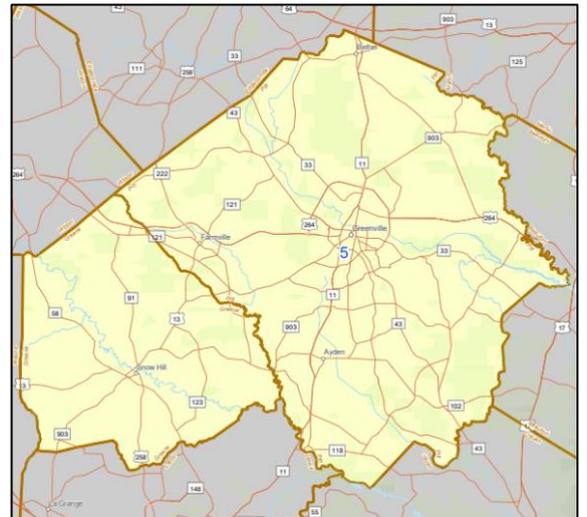
Don Davis, an educator himself with multiple advanced degrees, is the only Senate Democrat who did not co-sponsor a bill that would restore master's pay for qualifying teachers.

- Teachers with advanced degrees have been paid "abysmally" since Republicans slashed in 2013.
- A quarter of teachers in North Carolina work second jobs to make ends meet.

Sen. Don Davis



Senate District 5



Don Davis is one of two Democratic Senators who did not co-sponsor the 2019 Medicaid expansion bill that would close the coverage gap in North Carolina.

In early 2019, Democrats in the General Assembly filed a bill to bring health care coverage to at least 500,000 North Carolinians.

In early 2019, Democrats in the General Assembly filed a bill to close the Medicaid coverage gap in North Carolina. (S3, filed [1/31/19](#))

S3 would qualify individuals for Medicaid who have gross incomes at or below 133 percent of the federal poverty level, aged 19-65, who are not currently enrolled or otherwise eligible for Medicaid coverage currently. “This bill would allow individuals under the following criteria to be eligible for Medicaid benefits:

- Adjusted gross income at or below 133% federal poverty level (FPL)
- Age range: 19-65
- Not entitled or enrolled in Medicare Part A or B
- Not otherwise eligible for Medicaid coverage currently

Benefits would be received through an Alternative Benefit Plan established by DHHS. The co-payments for benefits would be the same as current Medicaid beneficiaries.” (North Carolina Medical Society, [2/1/19](#))

Expanding Medicaid could create 43,000 jobs by 2020, insure 500,000 people, bring in millions of federal dollars, and drive down insurance premiums for everyone.

Expanding affordable health care will create about 43,000 jobs and bring in around \$2 billion in federal funds each year. “Expanding health insurance in North Carolina would provide coverage to about 500,000 low-income people in the state. More than 300,000 of these people have no other insurance options available to them. Expanding health insurance in North Carolina would:

- Create approximately 43,000 new jobs by 2020.
- Bring more than \$2 billion in federal funds to the state every year.
- Save the state \$318 million between 2016 and 2020.” (NC Justice Center, Retrieved [2/25/19](#))

If North Carolina expanded Medicaid and closed the coverage gap it would give more than 500,000 people access to affordable health insurance. “Expanding health insurance in North Carolina would provide coverage to about 500,000 low-income people in the state. More than 300,000 of these people have no other insurance options available to them.” (Budget & Tax Center, retrieved [1/31/19](#))

Premiums were 7 percent lower in states that expanded Medicaid. “By comparing counties across state borders, and adjusting for several differences between them, the researchers calculated that expanding Medicaid meant marketplace premiums that were 7 percent lower. States that choose to expand Medicaid can offer government coverage for everyone earning below 133 percent of the federal poverty level, about \$16,000 a year for a single person. People earning more can buy insurance in the new Obamacare marketplaces.” (NY Times, [8/25/16](#))

Only West Virginians and Alaskans who buy their own insurance pay higher monthly premiums than North Carolinians who buy their own insurance. (Wallethub, [8/6/18](#))

The 4 out of 10 people who call NC's rural counties home face hospital closures and declining employment opportunities; Medicaid expansion would help solve these issues.

- **4 out of 10 North Carolinians live in a rural county.** (Budget & Tax Center, [9/24/18](#))

It costs more to operate rural hospitals in states that have not expanded Medicaid. “About 40 percent of rural hospitals operate with a negative profit margin, according to a study by the Chartis Center for Rural Health published in May called [“Rural Relevance 2017: Assessing the State of Rural Healthcare in America.”](#) “Rural hospital operating margins in Medicaid expansion states are statistically higher than rural hospitals in states that did not expand Medicaid,” the study reads.” (NC Health News, [9/29/17](#))

More than 13,000 jobs could be brought to rural counties if Medicaid was expanded. “More than 13,000 jobs could be added to the 80 rural counties in NC if the General Assembly expanded Medicaid.” (NC Justice Center, retrieved [1/31/19](#))

There are 44 rural counties in NC where the hospital is 1 of the 5 biggest employers. (NC Rural Center, Presentation to NCGA Committee on Access to Healthcare in Rural NC, [1/8/18](#))

Davis was one of two Democrats who did not co-sponsor Medicaid expansion.

- **Don Davis did no co-sponsor S3.** (S3, filed [1/31/19](#))

Davis' district (District 5- Pitt, Greene) includes a large number of low-income constituents living in rural areas. (Carolina Population Center, [2/26/16](#))

According to the Census Bureau, Greene County is one of 14 North Carolina counties with no urban areas. (Carolina Population Center, [1/5/15](#))

Since 2013, the North Carolina General Assembly has rejected federal dollars to expand Medicaid, leaving a large coverage gap of uninsured individuals.

Following a 2012 Supreme Court ruling, North Carolina Republicans chose not to expand Medicaid, creating a coverage gap. “However, in 2012 the Supreme Court ruled that each state could decide whether or not to expand Medicaid. This ruling created a health care coverage gap in states like NC that chose not to expand Medicaid. The coverage gap includes people who aren't eligible for Medicaid yet their incomes are too low to qualify for ACA subsidies. Most people who fall within the gap are working—more than 60% of them. But they don't get health care benefits from their employers or cannot afford to purchase insurance on their own. These hardworking North Carolinians are self-employed or work in industries such as retail, construction, food service and child care. For example, adults who earn between \$737 a month and \$1,674 a month for a family of three are in the gap and are currently left out of both Medicaid and ACA subsidies.” (Close the Gap NC, Retrieved [2/12/19](#))

The coverage gap includes people who aren't eligible for Medicaid AND have incomes too low to qualify for Affordable Care Act subsidies. “The coverage gap includes people who aren't eligible for Medicaid yet their incomes are too low to qualify for ACA subsidies. Most people who fall within the gap are working—more than 60% of them. But they don't get health

care benefits from their employers or cannot afford to purchase insurance on their own. These hardworking North Carolinians are self-employed or work in industries such as retail, construction, food service and child care. For example, adults who earn between \$737 a month and \$1,674 a month for a family of three are in the gap and are currently left out of both Medicaid and ACA subsidies.” (Close the Gap NC, Retrieved [2/12/19](#))

Since refusing to expand Medicaid in 2013, NC Republicans have ensured that over 300,000 people remain in the coverage gap. “If the NC General Assembly expanded Medicaid, an estimated 6400,000 North Carolinians would become eligible to get the coverage they need. An estimated 300,000 North Carolinians are in what’s called the “coverage gap,” meaning they make too much to qualify for Medicaid, but not enough to receive financial assistance on the Marketplace. The vast majority of people in the coverage gap work in industries that are fundamental to our economy, such as construction workers, fast food employees, and cashiers.” (NC Justice Center, [9/1/18](#))

Don Davis, a former educator with multiple advanced degrees, is the only Democratic Senator who did not co-sponsor a bi-partisan bill to fairly compensate teachers with master's degrees.

Since Republicans cut master's pay from the budget in 2013, teachers with advanced degrees have been paid "abysmally".

The 2013 Republican budget cut education spending by \$500 million, increased class size and cut teacher pay, including stipends for teachers with advanced degrees. "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." (Charlotte Observer, editorial, [7/23/13](#); S402, ratified, [7/25/13](#))

At the time, teachers felt the legislature had a "vendetta" against them. "'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](#), S402, ratified, [7/25/13](#))

Teachers are paid 35.5 percent less than other college graduates in North Carolina. "The ratio for the overall United States is 76.2 percent, meaning that, on average, teachers earn just 76.2 cents on the dollar compared with what other college graduates earn. We convert these ratios to a state wage penalty (one minus the ratio) and display the percentage wage penalty by state in Figure C ranked from the largest wage penalty to the smallest. Perhaps not surprisingly, four of the states where teacher protests emerged this year are those with the largest wage penalties, with Arizona (36.4 percent) having the largest penalty followed by North Carolina (35.5 percent), Oklahoma (35.4 percent) and Colorado (35.1 percent)." (Economic Policy Institute, [9/5/18](#))

As of 2016, a quarter of NC teachers work second jobs to make ends meet, the third highest rate in the country. "According to the National Center for Education Statistics, about 16% of teachers across the country work second jobs outside the school system. Yet in North Carolina, that number is much higher at nearly 25%, the third highest in the entire country. Many teachers maintain that low pay forces them to pick up the extra work. Teaching salaries in the state have declined more than 17% over the last 10 years, more than any other state in the country." (WNCT, [2/25/16](#))

S28, a bipartisan bill, would restore master's pay to qualifying teachers.

S28 would restore master's pay to qualifying teachers after Republicans slashed it from the budget in 2013. "S28 is a bill that would restore the salary supplements of a six-year

degree level or doctoral degree level to certified school nurses (whose positions require a master's degree), teachers who received these salaries prior to the 2014-2015 school year, teachers who completed a master's, six-year or doctoral degree prior to August 1, 2013, and teachers who do not yet have advanced degrees but spend 70 percent of their work time in classroom instruction related to their graduate preparations.” (S28, filed [2/6/19](#))

S28 is a bipartisan effort whose primary sponsors are Republican senators Danny Britt (R-Columbus, Robeson) and Rick Horner (R-Johnston, Nash). Co-sponsors include all Democratic senators except Don Davis. (S28, filed [2/6/19](#))

Don Davis, a former educator, is the only Democratic senator who did not co-sponsor this bill.

➤ **Don Davis did no co-sponsor S28.** (S28, filed [2/6/19](#))

Don Davis is a former educator. He holds a Doctor of Education in Educational Leadership and worked for several years as a professor of sociology at Lenoir Community College, Pitt Community College, and East Carolina University. He also served as a member of the East Carolina University Board of Visitors. (Don Davis campaign website, retrieved [2/12/19](#))