



## 24 North Carolina Leadership Forum alumni elected; NCLF wraps 2020 sessions on NC COVID response

This November, as an astounding 75% of North Carolinians cast ballots this fall in competitive elections for federal, state, and local offices, Duke University's North Carolina Leadership Forum was completing its 2020 series of sessions designed to foster constructive engagement across political differences. The Forum also congratulates the 24 NCLF alumni from the program's four years of programming who were elected or re-elected to office.

Established in 2015, NCLF brings public- and private-sector leaders together each year for candid conversations about challenging issues facing our state and nation. Each cohort includes North Carolinians from a variety of backgrounds, regions, and political perspectives, representing the rich diversity of the state in age, race, ethnicity, and gender. NCLF's goals are to help build a healthy, productive policymaking environment for North Carolina and to establish a model for similar efforts in other states.

### ***NCLF adapts to changing circumstances***

The topic originally selected for the 2020 cohort was how North Carolina can best respond to the opportunities and challenges of immigration. But after an initial in-person session in March, the group quickly shifted its format and topic, making North Carolina's response to COVID-19 its focus for the rest of the year. [Some two-dozen participants](#) met online from April through November, talking in small groups or as a whole. They discussed whether and how businesses should reopen, the reopening of K-12 schools, healthcare coverage, inclusion of immigrants in COVID response, protections for workers, and democratic decisionmaking during a public health crisis.

At the final November session, participating leaders said they deeply appreciated getting to know their fellow North Carolinians over the course of the 2020 sessions. One said the NCLF experience made him realize that "even the opinions you disagree with most are coming from people who hold them honestly and passionately." Another participant observed that "there are many sides to issues, not just my side and your side." NCLF will release a full report on its 2020 cohort proceedings by early 2021.

### ***NCLF Alumni elected to public office***

While the program intentionally includes leaders from multiple sectors, elected officials make up a sizable contingent of each cohort. We congratulate the 24 NCLF alumni who were elected or re-elected in 2020. Most are continuing their public service in the roles they held during their time with NCLF, while others — newly elected Supreme Court Justice Tamara Barringer and newly elected state senators Lisa Stones Barnes, Amy Scott Galey, and Julie Mayfield — previously held other offices.

Given their weighty public responsibilities, participating in NCLF requires each of these elected officials to give up a great deal of personal time. They see it as an experience that helps them better understand different points of views and build valuable relationships with their peers. We appreciate their commitment to public service and their deep personal investment in NCLF.

***NCLF builds leaders' capacity for constructive engagement***

By turning out in record numbers this year, voters in North Carolina and other states showed how they cared about major issues affecting their daily lives. Still, while political engagement is high, so is political disagreement. More than ever, North Carolina needs leaders who can listen to a range of perspectives, build trust, and work collaboratively across divides. We are counting on our alumni to draw on their NCLF experiences to continue building collaborative relationships and to work to understand and address the complexity of critical issues on behalf of all North Carolinians.

Multiple indicators demonstrate that the NCLF approach is effective. In post-participation surveys, 95% of leaders report they formed relationships with one or more people of differing views that they would not have otherwise, and at least two-thirds report a deeper understanding of the issues. 100% of participants in our cohort 3 program on education said they better understood the values, opinions or priorities about school choice held by people with different perspectives after the program. Several alumni have followed up the program by working together closely across difference on an issue of mutual interest in the year following their participation. To see reports from the previous three cohorts of NCLF leaders (on wages, energy and education), [click here](#).

In addition to the 2020 cohort discussing COVID-19, NCLF also convened alumni from the 2019 cohort (which focused on school choice) for new online sessions to explore the impact of COVID-19 on K-12 education. In 2021, we plan to increase the number of leaders we work with in North Carolina through regional and alumni events while also seeking to replicate the NCLF model in other states.

***NC Leadership Forum Alumni who were elected or re-elected to office in November 2020***

Justice Tamara Barringer (NCLF participant and Steering Committee member)

Senator Joyce Krawiec

Senator Ted Alexander

Senator Natasha Marcus

Senator Deanna Ballard

Senator Julie Mayfield (participated in NCLF as Asheville City Council member)

Senator Lisa Stone Barnes (participated in NCLF as Representative in NC House)

Representative Graig Meyer

Representative Mary Belk

Senator Mujtaba Mohammed

Senator Jay Chaudhuri

Representative Marcia Morey

Representative Ashton Clemmons

Representative Robert Reives

Senator Donald Davis

Senator Vickie Sawyer

Representative Jeffrey Elmore

Representative Carson Smith

Senator Amy Scott Galey (participated in NCLF as Alamance County Commissioner)

Representative John Szoka

Representative John Hardister

County Commissioner Kevin Austin

Senator Jeff Jackson

County Commissioner Jonathan Barfield

