



Is Biden bringing Black voters back to the polls?

By Brian Gordon
USA Today Network

Working as a radio DJ in Durham gives Brian Dawson unique insight into how his community feels at any particular moment. Of late, the opinions voiced by callers — most of whom like Dawson are Black — tell him this election is different from the one four years ago.

“We’re energy voters, and I don’t think the energy was there in 2016,” Dawson said

while awaiting former Vice President Joe Biden’s visit to Durham on Sunday. “But I definitely feel more energy this year. With the (Black Lives Matter) movement and the treatment of Blacks, people are starting to get fed up, and they’re starting to feel like the only way to enact a change is through the vote.”

Biden, the Democratic presidential nominee, should hope Dawson is correct.

In the 2016 election, Black

voters in North Carolina overwhelmingly supported Hillary Clinton over Donald Trump — by 80 percentage points according to some exit polls. But fewer Blacks voted in 2016 than had four years prior.

Michael Bitzer, a political scientist at Catawba College, found nearly 170,000 Black Democrats in North Carolina cast ballots in 2012, but stayed home in 2016.

Whether Biden can inspire these voters to come back to the

polls could make a vital difference in whether he or President Trump claims North Carolina’s 15 electoral votes in a toss-up race.

‘A whole new dynamic’

With the first weekend of early voting in the books, more than 1.5 million North Carolinians have cast ballots this election — one in five of all registered voters. This dwarfs voting levels from this point in 2016, when fewer than 500,000 people had voted early.

“We’re in a whole new

dynamic,” Bitzer said.

While he noted intense voter enthusiasm from both political parties, Bitzer said it’s difficult to draw specific conclusions on turnout amid this year’s swell of early voting.

“We’re trying to make comparisons that we normally would make but in a year that’s not normal,” he said. “It’s like, how do you compare a watermelon to a kiwi?”

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A crack (center) in the top of the arch of St. Philip’s Church at Brunswick Town/Fort Anderson State Historic Site in Winnabow is believed to be damage done by a tornado during Hurricane Isaias in August. [HUNTER INGRAM/STARNEWS]

Historic church damaged: Brunswick Town colonial site’s arch damaged by hurricane tornado

By Hunter Ingram
Wilmington StarNews
USA TODAY NETWORK

WINNABOW — From the ground looking up, it may not seem like a cause for alarm.

Depending on one’s eyesight, someone may even need to squint to see it. But there it is, a crack in between the bricks that form the predominant arch of St. Philip’s Church at Brunswick Town/Fort Anderson State Historic Site.

The roofless church, opened after an extensive construction in 1756, is already a patchwork of its age and innovation, proudly wearing the marks and mixed materials of its previous renovations for all to see. But any disturbance in the structural foundation of the colonial church is a big deal — especially when it is due to a tornado spawned from Hurricane Isaias in August.

Jim McKee, site manager for the state historic site, said the crack likely opened up after a tornado touched down during the storm and clipped the opposite end of the church, as evidenced by the torn branches and toppled trees nearby.

“We believe the shock of it



St. Philip’s Church at Brunswick Town/Fort Anderson State Historic Site was built in the 1750’s and was a centerpiece of the settlement in the years before the American Revolution. [HUNTER INGRAM/STARNEWS]

hitting that corner was enough to send all the force this way around the church and into that arch, opening up that crack in the bricks,” McKee said, standing at the center of the church’s four three-foot-thick brick walls.

The church has weathered plenty of hurricanes during its two-plus centuries and even the rattles of the bombardment that took down Fort Anderson during the Civil

War.

Based on damage to the grounds, McKee has mapped out tracks of damage from three possible tornadoes that hit the site during Isaias.

Although the small crack in the church’s arch is easy to miss, it can be seen on both the exterior and interior walls, meaning it is substantial enough that a quick repair is necessary to avoid additional damage.

“A little problem can grow into a big problem really fast and without anyone knowing,” McKee said, noting the arch is one of two main architectural features that help bear the weight the brick around it.

McKee said it was sheer luck that they even noticed the church’s damage.

“We have a volunteer who is doing a 3D model of the church, and he was measuring the arches on Sept. 20 and noticed the center arch was ever so slightly flatter,” McKee said.

To confirm it during the time of the hurricane, he went back to look at photos taken of the church periodically over the summer and noticed the crack wasn’t visible.

Additionally, Wayne Thompson, who previously did extensive masonry work on the church during its renovation in 2016-17, visited the site on July 23 and examined the structure without any mention of the crack.

“He can look at this church in ways I can’t, and he never saw that,” McKee said. “He’s done a lot around that very spot and would have noticed it.”

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High court to review two cases involving Trump border policy

By Jessica Gresko and Mark Sherman

The Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The Supreme Court on Monday agreed to hear two cases involving Trump administration policies at the U.S.-Mexico border: one about a policy that makes asylum-seekers wait in Mexico for U.S. court hearings and a second about the administration’s use of money to fund the border wall.

The justices’ decision to hear the cases continues its practice of reviewing lower court rulings that have found President Donald Trump’s immigration policies illegal over the past four years.

Most notably, the high court reviewed and ultimately upheld Trump’s travel ban on visitors from some largely Muslim countries. In June, the court kept in place legal protections for immigrants who came to the U.S. as children.

The justices will not hear either new case until 2021, and the outcome of the presidential election could make the cases go away, or at least reduce their significance. If Democrat Joe Biden wins the White House, he has pledged to end “Migrant Protection Protocols,” which Trump considers a cornerstone policy on immigration.

In the border wall case, much of the money has already been spent and wall constructed. It is unclear what could be done about wall that has already been built if the administration loses, but it could conceivably be torn down. Biden has said he would cease wall construction if elected but would not tear down what was built under Trump’s watch.

The court has allowed both policies to continue even after they were held illegal by lower courts, a sign the challengers could face long odds when the justices ultimately decide the cases.

The Trump administration policy known informally as “Remain in Mexico” began in January 2019. It became a key pillar of the administration’s response to an unprecedented surge of asylum-seeking families from Central American countries at the border, drawing criticism for having people wait in highly dangerous Mexican cities.

Lower courts found that the

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