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THE HIDDEN ECONOMIC STORY BEHIND NORTH CAROLINA'S HB2

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“The sky is falling!!!” Those words remind us of the children’s tale, “Chicken Little” in which a chicken, struck on the head with an acorn, convinces her friend, Henny Penny, that the sky is falling and to join her to tell the Lion. While on their journey, a fox persuades them to take a shorter path. That shorter path leads to the fox’s lair where he devours Chicken Little and Henny Penny.

North Carolina’s HB2—the notorious “bathroom bill”—was North Carolina’s “Chicken Little.” Upon its passage in 2016, a handful of businesses and associations led the way pulling out of North Carolina in protest and predicting economic doom for the State. Similar to Henny Penny, aided by the media frenzy, other businesses joined the cacophony of naysayers. Legislators panicked, and soon they abandoned HB2. Five years later, corporate activists and Wall Street firms are leveraging their resources to pressure lawmakers on everything from voting reform and gun sales to social justice laws and women’s sports.¹

HB2, in reality, was enacted to protect privacy, safety and freedom for people and business owners to live and work according to their beliefs, and it in no way depressed the economy or business successes of North Carolina. In hindsight, it is clear that threats of economic doom were simply used by the LGBTQ community and some willing corporate allies to advance the agenda.

¹ Joshua Green, “Corporate Activism on Voting Rights Echoes Role in LGBTQ Battles,” (Bloomberg Law, April 29, 2021), <https://news.bloomberglaw.com/social-justice/corporate-activism-on-voting-rights-echoes-role-in-LGBTQ-battles>.

The Real Economic Story

HB2, named “An Act to Provide for Single-Sex Multiple Occupancy Bathroom and Changing Facilities in Schools and Public Agencies and to Create Statewide Consistency in Regulation of Employment and Public Accommodations”, was simply a response to ordinance number 7056 passed by the Charlotte City Council which exceeded the Council’s authority. In February 2016, the Charlotte City Council passed a nondiscrimination ordinance which expanded discrimination protections to include, among other things, “sexual orientation, gender identity, and gender expression.” Additionally, the ordinance protected these classes from discrimination in public “restrooms, shower rooms, bathhouses and similar facilities.” Under North Carolina law, municipalities did not have the authority to enact local anti-discrimination ordinances, and so one month after the ordinance was enacted, the General Assembly repealed it by passing HB2.

Almost immediately upon its passage, LGBTQ activists and their corporate allies screamed discrimination. Flexing their political muscle, these corporations predicted that the passage of HB2 would cause economic doom for North Carolina. They estimated that the annual loss of business revenue would range from \$3.76 billion,² to more than \$5 billion.³ Local governments were predicting losses in the hundreds of millions of dollars due to lost businesses or cancelled events.

Five states and multiple cities placed a ban on public travel to North Carolina, and, under pressure, the NCAA in 2016 announced seven relocations, including the Division I Women’s Soccer Championship and the future first-and second-round games of the men’s 2017 NCAA

² Bathroom bill’ to Cost North Carolina \$3.76 Billion.” U.S. News. March 27, 2017, <https://www.cnbc.com/2017/03/27/bathroom-bill-to-cost-north-carolina-376-billion.html>

³ Katherine Peralta. “House Bill 2 Could Cost N.C. \$5 billion a Year, Report Says.” May 11, 2016. <http://www.charlotteobserver.com/news/business/article76997927.html>

basketball tournament. The ACC followed by announcing ten relocations, including (i) the football championship in Charlotte, which generated \$32.4 million in revenue in 2016, (ii) the first-and second round games of the 2017 men's basketball tournament in Greensboro, with estimated revenues of \$14.6 million, (iii) men's and women's tennis championship and women's soccer championship in Cary (\$2 million), and (iv) baseball championship in Durham (\$5.2 million).⁴ The NBA estimated that its move of the 2017 All-Star game from Charlotte to New Orleans could have had an economic impact of over \$100 million.⁵

A handful of businesses did change their plans for North Carolina, including PayPal, Adidas, Duetsche Bank and Costar.⁶ PayPal was planning to hire 400 new people for a global operations center with an average wage of \$51,000. The combination of PayPal, Deutsche Bank and CoStar added up to nearly 1,400 jobs.⁷ The cancellations of Pearl Jam, Cirque Du Soleil and others allegedly left the Raleigh area with \$130,000 in lost wages.⁸ In Charlotte, Cirque du Soleil, Boston, Demi Lovato, Nick Jonas and Maroon 5 all canceled their performances. Several North Carolina cities reported conference and convention cancellations.⁹ Unemployment rates

⁴ Brian Schoeck and Jim Mcleod "Summary of Economic Impact of HB2" November 30, 2016. <https://www.jahlaw.com/summary-of-the-economic-impact-of-hb2-prepared-by-attorneys-brian-schoeck-and-jim-mcleod/>

⁵ Brian Mahoney "NBA Moving All-Star Game Out of Charlotte, Cites LGBT Law". Associated Press. July 21, 2016. <https://apnews.com/article/0a2fd6cffbc64f518a977f2b3e78c2e9>

⁶ Geoff Cutmore, Jenny Cosgrave, et. al. "Deutsche Bank Expects 2018 Will Be Its First 'Clean 'Year.'" www.cnbc.com. January 28, 2016. <https://www.cnbc.com/2016/01/28/deutsche-bank-post-loss-in-investment-banking.html>

⁷ Will Doran. "Top North Carolina Economic Official says HB2 Has Not Harmed the State Economy." www.politifact.com. October 28, 2016. <https://www.politifact.com/factchecks/2016/oct/28/john-skvarla/top-north-carolina-economic-official-says-hb2-has-/>

⁸ Steve Harrison. "Did Losing PayPal over HB2 Really Cost Charlotte \$285 million. newsobserver.com. May 26, 2016. <http://www.newsobserver.com/news/politics-government/state-politics/article80022012.html>

⁹ Alex Kotch "North Carolina's Anti-LGBT Law has Cost the State More than \$560M so Far". Facing South. January 6, 2017. <https://www.facingsouth.org/2017/01/north-carolinas-anti-lgbt-law-has-cost-state-more-560-million-so-far>

(not seasonally adjusted) rose across the state for a short period of time in 2016 before returning to pre-recession levels of 4.9% at the end of 2016.

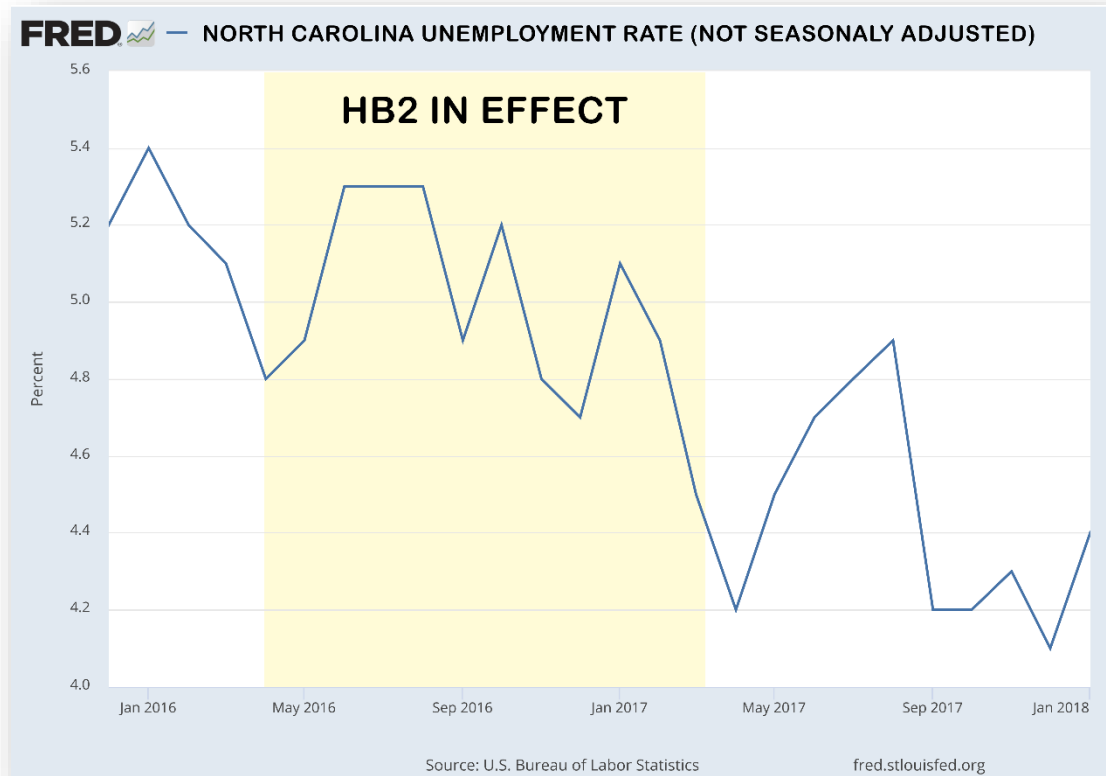


Chart 1: North Carolina Unemployment Rates During HB2

Curiously, with respect to at least two of these companies, PayPal and Deutsche Bank, HB2 may not have been the primary reason for the cancellation of their North Carolina plans. Five years later, PayPal has never established the global operations center in another state. Deutsche Bank suffered a staggering \$8.8 billion in 2015-2016 when it canceled nearly 500 planned jobs in Cary under the cover of HB2.¹⁰ Since its announcement, the Deutsche Bank has continued its worldwide efforts to lay-off 25% of its worldwide bank staff by 2022 as part of

¹⁰“ Deutsche Bank Plunges Back into the Red with \$2 Billion Loss” Hartford Business Journal. February 2, 2017. <https://www.hartfordbusiness.com/article/deutsche-bank-plunges-back-into-the-red-with-2-billion-loss>

their restructure and recovery plan. In 2020, Deutsche cited European financial markets and its investment in China's Hua Xia Bank, not HB2, as the full reason for its failure to keep its agreement with the state. Last year the bank laid off another 223 people and asked North Carolina to terminate its \$9 million incentive package tied to future jobs.¹¹ Regardless of the reason for their departure, the loss of these businesses and events barely affected the overall health of North Carolina's economy. Commerce Secretary John Skvarla, the top economic official in Governor McCrory's administration stated that "the law has basically had zero effect on the state economy."¹²

¹¹ Zachery Eanes. "NC Cancels an Incentive Agreement With Deutsche Bank's Cary Tech Hub After Layoffs" News & Observer. July 15, 2020. <https://www.newsobserver.com/article244214677.html>

¹² id, Schoeck and Mcleod

The Facts

North Carolina saw impressive economic growth in 2016. The GDP of \$517.9 billion represented a 1.6 percent growth from 2015 and .1% higher than the national average. The largest industries in North Carolina — finance, insurance, real estate, rental and leasing— experienced a 2.0 percent real growth.

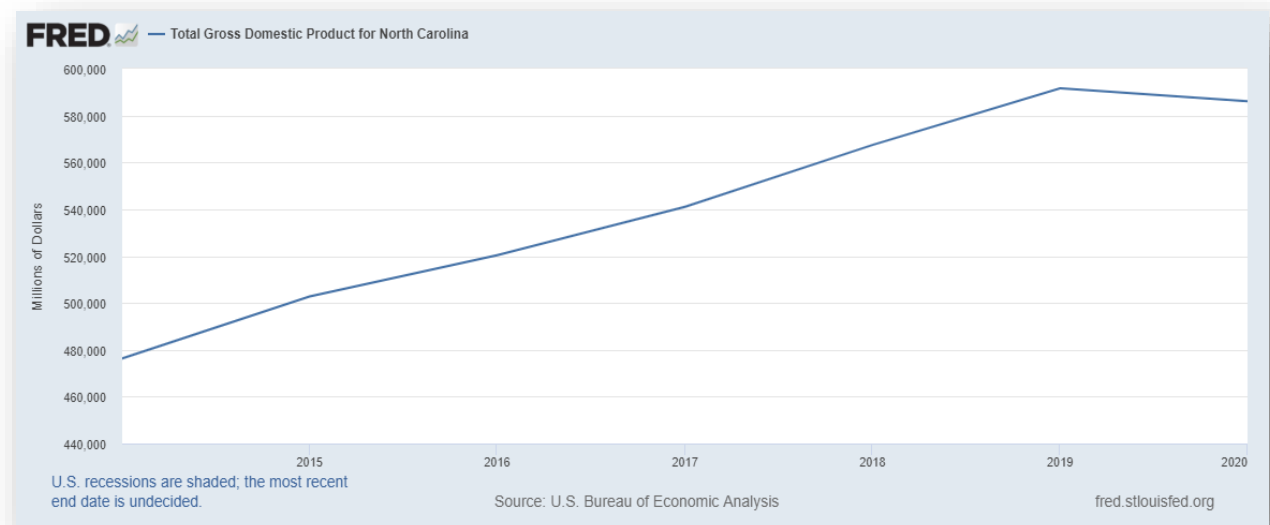


Chart 2: Total GDP for North Carolina 2015 to 2020

According to the U.S. Department of Commerce, North Carolina professional and business services were the largest contributor to real GDP,¹³ accounting for 0.5% of the total growth in real GNP. Business and association boycotts barely put a dent in the economy, representing less than 0.1% of the GDP.¹⁴ Moody's reported that North Carolina's 2016 revenue growth has outpaced the 20 largest states' average by more than 2-to-1. The State ended the

¹³ Doran, id.

¹⁴ Bureau of Economic Analysis. U.S. Department of Commerce. March 28, 2017. [www.bea.gov. https://www.bea.gov/regional/bearfacts/pdf.cfm?fips=37000&areatype=STATE&geotype=3](https://www.bea.gov/regional/bearfacts/pdf.cfm?fips=37000&areatype=STATE&geotype=3)

fiscal year with a \$425 million revenue surplus. S&P, Moody's and Fitch affirmed North Carolina's AAA credit rating, citing the state's continued diverse economic expansion.¹⁵

Business growth and retention, in particular, steamed ahead during HB2 and was in the Billions. Despite a few companies' exit from North Carolina, according to Southern Business and Development Magazine, between January 2016 until the Spring of 2017, at least 45 companies established, expanded or announced plans to bring their businesses to North Carolina. Alevo, Avadim, Baxter, Citrix, Corning Optical Communications, Novo Nordisk, Moen Inc., Pfizer, Snyder-Lance, and Tyson Foods announced plans to expand existing operations.¹⁶ In March, 2016 Novo Nordisk, a Danish healthcare company broke ground on a new plant in Clayton, NC with a projected \$2 billion investment creating 2500 construction jobs and 700 new employees.¹⁷ In July 2016, CSX announced a \$272 million investment to build an intermodal rail terminal in Edgecombe County.¹⁸ In December, 2016, auto parts manufacturer GKN Driveline announced an investment of \$179 million at 4 plants to create 302 jobs.¹⁹ In February 2017, Corning announced plans to create 410 jobs in two years and to invest \$176 million in facilities in Catawba and Cabarrus counties. In March 2017, Moen announced plans to expand their warehouse and distribution operations in Lenoir County, adding 35 new jobs and investing \$15 million over the next five years.²⁰

¹⁵ id., Schoeck and Mcleod

¹⁶ Southern Business Development Magazine. March 2016.

¹⁷ Novo Nordisk in the United States. novonordisk-us.com. <http://www.novonordisk-us.com/whoware/about-novo-nordisk/novo-nordisk-in-the-US/clayton-nc.html>

¹⁸ Business Facilities. "CSX Plans \$272M North Carolina Intermodal Rail Terminal" July 20, 2016. <https://businessfacilities.com/2016/07/csx-plans-272m-north-carolina-intermodal-rail-terminal/>

¹⁹ Amanda Hoyle. "Auto Parts Manufacturer to Expand 4 Plants in NC, Create 302 Jobs" Triangle Business Journal. December 20, 2016. <https://www.bizjournals.com/triangle/news/2016/12/20/gkn-driveline-expansion-jobs-nc.html>

²⁰ "Moen Facility Will Add 35 Jobs Over 5 Years" Kinston.com. March 11, 2017. <https://www.kinston.com/news/20170311/moen-facility-will-add-35-jobs-over-5-years>

Visitors flocked to the State during 2016 in record numbers and they brought their dollars with them. According to the Economic Development Partnership of North Carolina, 97 out of 100 counties enjoyed an increase in visitor spending.

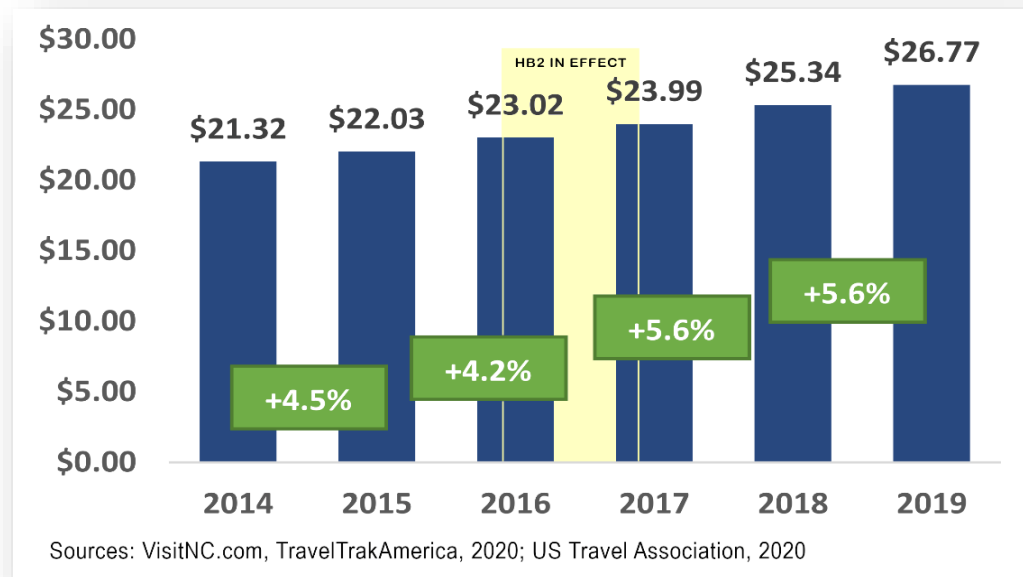


Chart 3: Direct Visitor Spending in North Carolina 2014 to 2019 (In Billions)

In Mecklenburg County visitors spent over \$5 billion. In 2016, the Charlotte region hosted approximately 27.8 million visitors, an increase of one million visitors from 2015 according to the Visit Charlotte.²¹ Former Charlotte Regional Visitors Authority CEO Tom Murray reported, "Charlotte's visitor economy has grown every year since 2010" when publishing their 2017 Annual Report.²²

²¹ Charlotte Regional Visitors Authority. Crva.com. 2016 Annual Report. <http://www.crva.com/news/visitors-spent-67-billion-charlotte-region-2016-nearly-52-billion-mecklenburg-county>

²² Charlotte Regional Visitors Authority. Crva.com. 2017 Annual Report. <http://www.crva.com/news/2017-visitor-spending-hits-record-7-billion-charlotte-region-nearly-54-billion-mecklenburg>

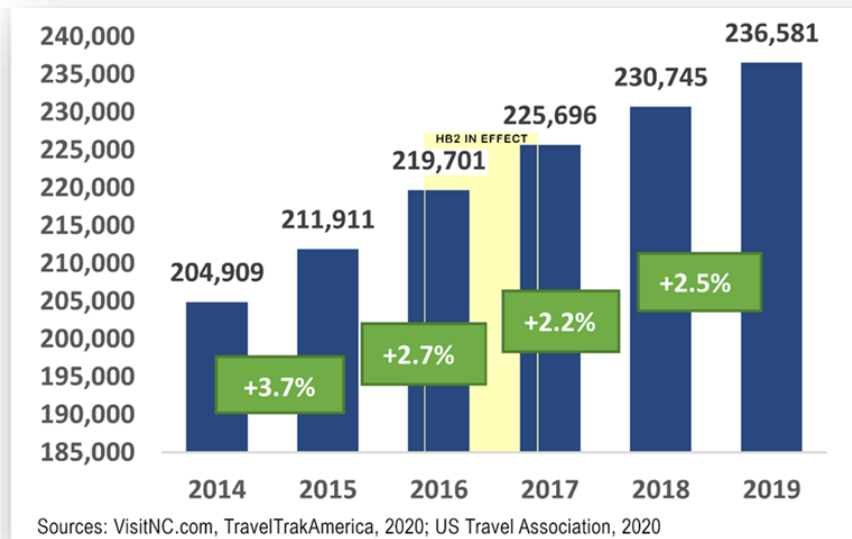


Chart 4: Direct North Carolina Tourism Employment 2014 to 2019

In Wake County spending topped \$2 billion; and Guilford, Dare and Buncombe Counties each reaped \$1 billion in visitor dollars. Due to this spending, the state collected nearly \$1.2 billion in state taxes; local governments collected more than \$693 million. Visitor spending supported 219,094 jobs which translated into \$5.6 billion in payroll income across the State.²³

²³“ Visitor Spending Rises in 97 NC Counties in 2016”. August 16, 2017. [www.witn.com. http://www.witn.com/content/news/Visitor-spending-rises-in-97-NC-counties-in-2016-440644123.html](http://www.witn.com/content/news/Visitor-spending-rises-in-97-NC-counties-in-2016-440644123.html)

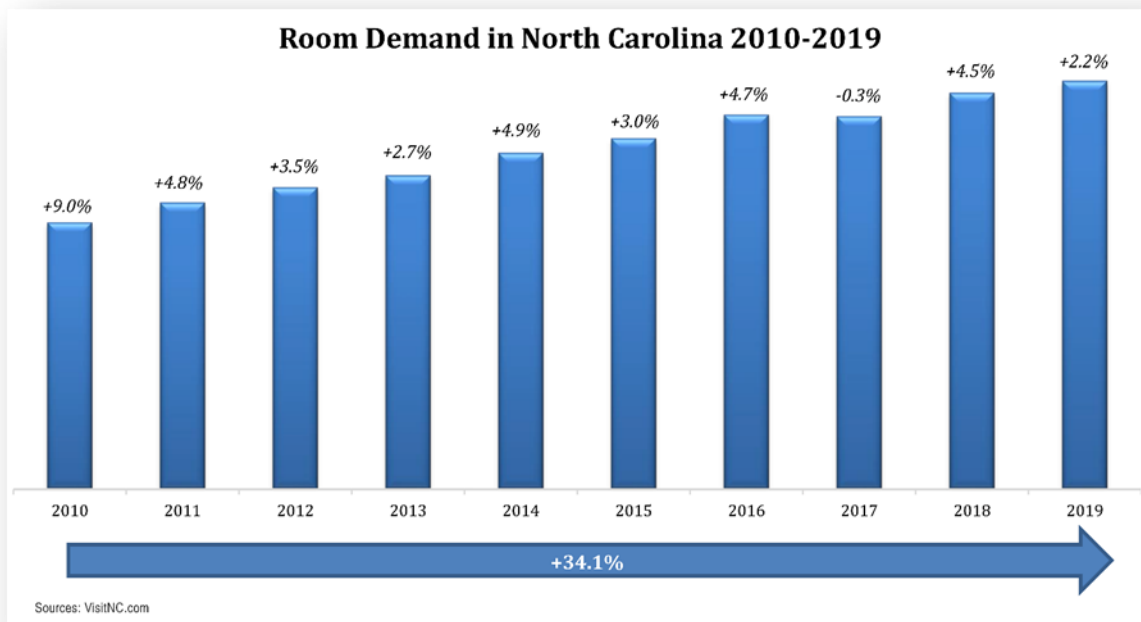
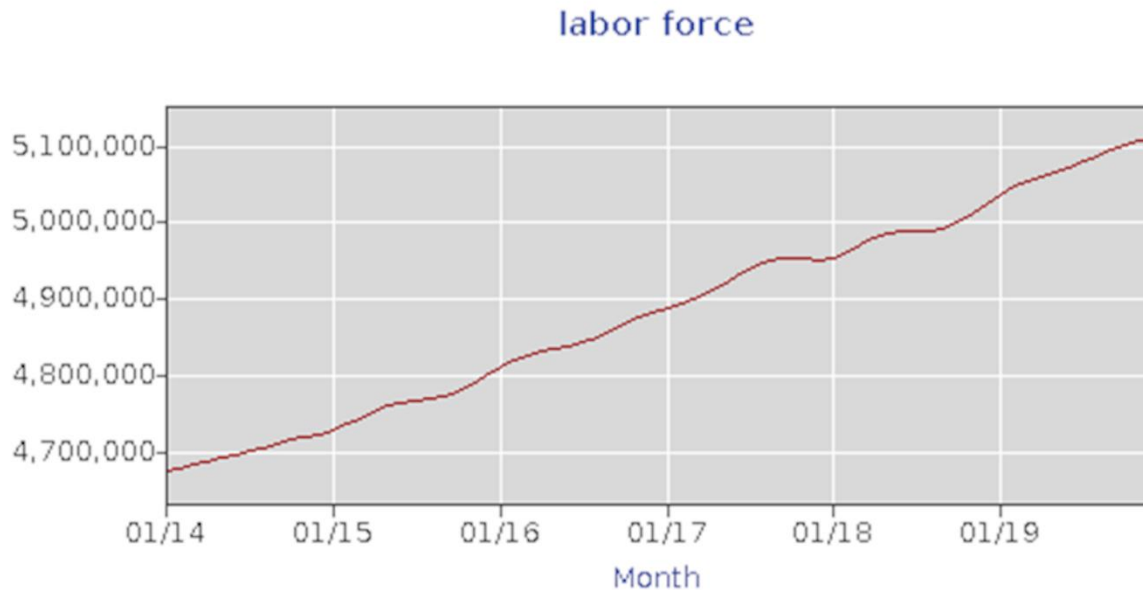


Chart 5: North Carolina Hotel/Motel Room Demand 2010 to 2019

The hotels and motel industry set record-breaking occupancy rates in 2016. According to a 2016 lodging report by Visit North Carolina, hotel/motel occupancy increased by 3.4% over 2015 and room demand increase by 4.7%. This increase in occupancy was coupled with increased room rates (ADR) of 3.6%, a record high for the state, with each month setting a record high from any year on record. Additionally, every month in 2016 showed an increase in demand for rooms statewide.²⁴

²⁴“ 2016 North Carolina Lodging Report.” Visit North Carolina.
<https://partners.visitnc.com/contents/sdownload/64084/file/2016-Year-End-Lodging-Report.pdf>



Source: US Bureau of Statistics: North Carolina Employment 2014-2019

Chart 6: North Carolina Labor Force 2014 to 2019

North Carolina's economic prosperity in 2016 brought with it a rise in employment and a rise in per capita income for North Carolinians. The number of North Carolinians employed between January 2016 and January 2017 increased by over 100,000 from 4,834,351 to 4,934,991.²⁵ Based on American Community Surveys (ACS), between 2015 and 2016, the median household income rose from \$48,420 to \$50,584, an increase of 4.5% with a margin of error of +/- 1.2%. The per capita personal income (PCPI) increased by 3.0% in 2016 averaging \$42,002.²⁶ Unemployment numbers remained the same at 5.3% over a 12-month period between

²⁵ "North Carolina's January Employment Figures Released." North Carolina Department of Commerce. March 13, 2017. <https://www.nccommerce.com/news/press-releases/north-carolinas-january-employment-figures-released-0>

²⁶ Gloria G. Guzman. "Household Income: 2016." U.S. Census Bureau. September 2017. <https://www.census.gov/content/dam/Census/library/publications/2017/acs/acsbr16-02.pdf>

January 2016 and January 2017.²⁷ North Carolina added 5,000 jobs in the last three quarters of 2016.²⁸

North Carolina's business growth during the lifetime of HB2 reaped several national awards. Site Selection Magazine Awarded North Carolina its Prosperity Cup for 2017, 2018 and 2020 besting Texas with which North Carolina had tied in 2016. In announcing the award, Site Selection stated "HB2 didn't change the strategic significance of a North Carolina location to companies already there, nor to most considering North Carolina a potential addition to their real estate portfolios."²⁹ Additionally, Site Selection ranked North Carolina fourth in attracting and expanding businesses and first in the South Atlantic region for drawing corporate facilities.³⁰ CNBC chose North Carolina as number five for America's Top States for Business both in 2016 and 2017.³¹ North Carolina was named one of the top five states with the best climate for business by corporate executives, according to a report by Development Counsellors International,³² and Forbes, in 2017, ranked North Carolina number two in the nation for business, a position it has held for several years,³³ before raising to best in nation for the last three years.

²⁷“ Databases, Tables & Calculators by Subject.” Bureau of Labor Statistics.
[https://data.bls.gov/timeseries/LASST370000000000005?amp%bdata_tool=XGtable&output_v](https://data.bls.gov/timeseries/LASST370000000000005?amp%bdata_tool=XGtable&output_view=data&include_graphs=true)
[iew=data&include_graphs=true](http://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2017/mar/20/with-bathroom-bill-north-carolina-economy-expandin/)

²⁸ id, Schoeck and Mcleod

²⁹ Site Selection Magazine. May 2017 <http://siteselection.com/issues/2017/may/prosperity-cup.cfm>

³⁰ Bradford Richardson and Valerie Richardson. “Tourism Thriving, Economy Expanding in North Carolina Despite Bathroom Bill Desertions.” The Washington Times. March 20, 2017.
<http://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2017/mar/20/with-bathroom-bill-north-carolina-economy-expandin/>

³¹ America's Top States for Business 2017 Rankings. CNBC.com.
<https://www.cnbc.com/2017/07/11/americas-top-states-for-business-2017-overall-ranking.html>

³² Jeff Jeffrey “North Carolina Ranks No. 5 Among States for Business Climate, Corporate Execs Say” Triad Business Journal. September 18, 2017. <https://www.bizjournals.com/triad/news/2017/09/18/north-carolina-ranks-no-5-among-states-for.html>

³³“ Forbes: Best States For Business.”forbes.com.
<https://www.forbes.com/best-states-for-business/#2296adb6e754>

It is now clear that the fight to repeal HB2 was never initiated out of concern for the economic welfare of the State. Rather, it was simply used as a false argument to advance an agenda far more dangerous than an economic downturn.

The LGBTQ Lobby's Transformation of Corporate America

The fight to repeal HB2 exposed the inroads the LGBTQ lobby has made in Corporate America, beginning almost 40 years ago. From the outset, LGBTQ activists knew that mainstream America would not flock to their cause outright. Corporate America, a symbol of prosperity, economic freedom and leadership, provided the perfect foil.

For some companies, convincing them to join the LGBTQ cause wasn't difficult. In 1986, Apple sanctioned gay groups within the company.³⁴ In 1987, AT&T sanctioned League, a company network for gays.³⁵ By the early 1990's, corporations began dialoguing with LGBTQ activists to discuss providing benefits to same sex couples.³⁶ In 1995, the CEO of IBM, Louis V. Gerstner, formed several task forces, including one for LGBTQ employees. 1996, Proctor & Gamble allowed its gay and lesbian employee group, GAMBLE, to create an email network in the company and eventually adopted GAMBLE's point of view. In 1998, P&G pulled their ads from Dr. Laura Show³⁷ and in 2003 IBM stepped up and offered critical support for a National Gay and Lesbian Chamber of Commerce just getting off the ground.²⁵

³⁴ Richard Socarides. "Corporate America's Evolution on L.G.B.T. Rights. NewYorker.com. April 27, 2015. <http://www.newyorker.com/business/currency/corporate-americas-evolution-on-l-g-b-t-rights>

³⁵ Marc Gunter. "Queer Inc.: How Corporate America Fell in Love with Gays and Lesbians. It's a Movement." fortune.com. November 30, 2006. http://archive.fortune.com/magazines/fortune/fortune_archive/2006/12/11/8395465/index.htm

³⁶ Richard Socarides. "Corporate America's Evolution on L.G.B.T. Rights." April 27, 2015. <http://www.newyorker.com/business/currency/corporate-americas-evolution-on-l-g-b-t-rights>

³⁷ id., Queer, Inc.

By the early 2000s the LGBTQ movement had made enough progress transforming internal policies in corporations that it went public. In 2002, the Human Rights Campaign (HRC), an organization advocating for LGBTQ rights, authored a report entitled, “The Corporate Equality Index” and rated companies by their pro-LGBTQ policies, highlighting those who had reached 100% approval rating and those who scored 0%. Such pro-LGBTQ policies included non-discrimination covering sexual orientation and gender identity, health insurance for same-sex domestic partners, LGBTQ support groups and “corporate action that would undermine equal rights for [LGBTQs]. Thirteen companies achieved a 100% score;³⁸ three companies scored a zero.³⁹

In 2004, lobbying efforts became more organized and public. That year, Equality Forum, a LGBTQ advocacy group, established the FORTUNE 500 Project. The Project’s goal was to convince corporate CEO’s, Boards of Directors and shareholders of FORTUNE 500 companies to include sexual orientation protection in their internal policies.⁴⁰

The Project’s efforts worked. Between 2005 and 2012, shareholders collectively offered 237 LGBTQ inclusive resolutions in 177 companies. 50% of these resolutions included employment discrimination protection for sexual orientation and gender identity. Shockingly, despite rejection by shareholders, the majority of these companies reformed their discrimination policies to include discrimination protection based on sexual orientation and gender identity.

³⁸ Kodak, Nike, American Airlines, Intel, Lucent and J.P. Morgan Chase & Co HRC Index 2002 <https://www.business-humanrights.org/en/latest-news/13-companies-earn-perfect-score-on-first-hrc-corporate-equality-index-usa-2/>

³⁹ Cracker Barrel, Emerson Electric and Lockheed Martin Corp. HRC Index 2002. https://assets.hrc.org/files/assets/resources/CorporateEqualityIndex_2002.pdf?_ga=2.78906196.1323544204.1507561269-1377686309.1502416103

⁴⁰“ FORTUNE 500 Non-Discrimination Project.” Equality Forum. <https://equalityforum.com/fortune500>

In those companies where shareholders voted to remove LGBTQ policies already in place, 100% of these companies refused to comply with shareholder resolutions.⁴¹ By 2005, 100 businesses scored 100% by HRC. In 2004, the criteria placed a greater emphasis on transgender inclusion, rather than just gay rights. By 2011, the number of businesses that scored 100% climbed to 337.⁴² In 2013, the Human Rights Campaign added a requirement that contractors and non-profit organizations receiving gifts from these companies must adhere to pro-LGBTQ policies.⁴³ In 2015, 306 Fortune 500 companies received a 100% score.⁴⁴ By 2021, the number of businesses scoring 100% had exploded to 767 companies including 94% of America's Fortune 500.⁴⁵ Veterans of the LGBTQ movement are now petitioning an expansion of the Index to include affirmative political engagement beyond social issues.

This month the Gay and Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation (GLAAD), the world's largest lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer media advocacy organization, amplified HRC's efforts by setting out to influence corporations by announcing its first Social Media Safety Index (SMSI). The new index seeks to limit nonconforming speech and content found on social media platforms in order to achieve true equality.⁴⁶

⁴¹ Neel Rane. "Twenty Years of Shareholder Proposals After Cracker Barrel: An Effective Tool for Implementing LGBTQ Employment Protections." 162 U. Penn. L.R. 929 (2014). http://scholarship.law.upenn.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=7691&context=penn_law_review p. 949-950.

⁴² "Corporate Equality Index 2012: Rating American Workplaces on Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Equality." Human Rights Campaign. https://issuu.com/humanrightscampaign/docs/corporateequalityindex_2012

⁴³ "Corporate Equality Index: Why the Criteria Change." Human Rights Campaign. www.hrc.org. Feb. 6, 2017. <http://www.hrc.org/resources/corporate-equality-index-why-the-criteria-change>

⁴⁴ "Corporate Equality Index 2015." Human Rights Campaign. <https://issuu.com/humanrightscampaign/docs/cei-2015>

⁴⁵ "Corporate Equality Index 2021." Human Rights Campaign. <https://hrc-prod-requests.s3-us-west-2.amazonaws.com/CEI-2021-revised-030121.pdf>

⁴⁶ GLAAD Calls The Entire Social Media Sector 'Unsafe for LGBTQ Users'. Adweek. May 10, 2021. <https://www.adweek.com/media/glaad-calls-the-entire-social-media-sector-unsafe-for-lgbtq-users/>

LGBTQ's Alliance with Corporate Sports

The NCAA's and the NBA's opposition to HB2 reflects a close relationship between these organizations and the LGBTQ rights movement.⁴⁷ As early as 2009, the NCAA teamed up with other pro-LGBTQ groups and participated in a think-tank entitled, "On the Team: Equal Opportunity for Transgender Students." With the exception of a few professors and one student, the think tank was composed of LGBTQ activists. In 2010, the NCAA Executive Committee published a periodical entitled, "NCAA Inclusion of Transgender Student Athletes," pledging to provide programming and education "which sustains foundations of a diverse and inclusive culture across dimensions of diversity including, but not limited to ...gender expression."⁴⁸ In 2011 the NCAA adopted a non-discrimination policy for transgender athletes. In 2016 the NCAA took this policy a step further by encouraging college Presidents to sign a similar pledge to "establish initiatives for achieving....gender equity and inclusion", the buzzwords for transgenderism.⁴⁹

The NBA's endorsement of the LGBTQ agenda has been more subtle. For years, the NBA has partnered with the Gay, Lesbian, and Straight Education Network (GLSEN), one of the most rabid pro-LGBTQ education advocacy groups in the country.⁵⁰ In 2011 the NBA adopted a non-discrimination policy against, among other things, sexual orientation and gender

⁴⁷ Nelson, Alex Jackson and Cronn-Mills, Kristin. 2017. LGBTQ-Athletes Claim the Field: Striving for Equality. Minneapolis, MN. Twenty-First Century Books. 89.

⁴⁸ NCAA Inclusion of Transgender Athletes. ncaa.org. August 2011.
https://www.ncaa.org/sites/default/files/Transgender_Handbook_2011_Final.pdf

⁴⁹ NCAA Presidential Pledge. <http://www.ncaa.org/about/resources/inclusion/ncaa-presidential-pledge>

⁵⁰ "NBA Will Move All-Star Game Due to HB2." GLSEN.com. July 21, 2016.
<https://www.glsen.org/article/glsen-statement-nba-announcement-move-2017-all-star-game-out-north-carolina-response-hb-2>

identity. In 2012, the NBA's support for the LGBTQ agenda became more public when it fined a player \$50,000 for making an anti-gay comment, and in 2013, the NBA publicly supported one of its players who announced that he was gay.⁵¹

⁵¹ Eric Brady. "NBA Player Jason Collins Come Out As a Gay Man." USA Today. April 9, 2013. <https://www.usatoday.com/story/sports/nba/2013/04/29/jason-collins-gay-athlete/2121127/>

Corporations' Social Activism

Commentators have observed that two events completed the transformation of businesses into LGBTQ activists: New York's legalization of same sex marriage in 2011 and the Supreme Court's 2015 decision in *Obergefell v. Hodges*, finding unconstitutional state statutes defining marriage as between one man and one woman.⁵² As one author stated, "The Supreme Court gave corporate America the political cover to speak out."⁵³

Before 2011, few companies were willing to sponsor any LGBTQ event or produce pro-LGBTQ advertising. By 2014, five of the largest companies in the U.S. —TD Bank, eBay, Hilton, Macy's and Wells Fargo —were pumping thousands of dollars into gay pride parade sponsorships.⁵⁴ TD Bank, one of the largest banks in the country reportedly spent over \$1 million annually on LGBTQ events and initiatives in North America sponsoring 160 LGBTQ community initiatives and 83 pride events.⁵⁵ Today, sponsorships by corporations are fairly common. In 2015, the year of the Supreme Court's legalization of same sex marriage, at least seven corporations produced pro-LGBTQ ads. One, paid for by Clean and Clear, featured transgender Jazz Jenner, the company's transgender spokeswoman.⁵⁶

⁵² Jena McGregor. "Corporate America's Embrace of Gay Rights Has Reached a Stunning Tipping Point." The Washington Post. April 5, 2016. <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/on-leadership/wp/2016/04/05/corporate-americas-embrace-of-gay-rights-has-reached-a-stunning-tipping-point/>

⁵³ James Stewart. "Corporations No Longer Sit Idly By On Discrimination." New York Times. March 31, 2016. <https://www.nytimes.com/2016/04/01/business/corporate-north-carolina-perks-up-against-discrimination.html>

⁵⁴ Kathryn Blackhurst. "5 of the Biggest Corporate Sponsors of Pride Parade Events." Newsmax. June 8, 2015. <https://www.newsmax.com/FastFeatures/pride-parade/2015/06/08/id/649376/>

⁵⁵ Brady McCombs. "Sponsorship of Gay Pride Parades on the Rise. USA Today. June 26, 2014. <https://www.usatoday.com/story/money/business/2014/06/28/gay-pride-parades-sponsors/11450345/>. Also see Connected Communities. td.com <https://www.td.com/ca/en/about-td/ready-commitment/connected-communities/>

⁵⁶ Natasha Madov. "See the Top 10 LGBTQ-Themed Ads of the Year." Advertising Age. Dec. 25, 2015. <http://adage.com/article/advertising/top-10-LGBTQ-themed-ads-year/301923/>

Corporations' Legal Activism

In 2011, corporations began flexing their muscle to pursue legal changes for the LGBTQ community. In 2012, 379 elite corporations, including Coca Cola, Goldman Sachs, Google, Amazon, AT&T and Morgan Stanley, signed an amicus brief challenging the constitutionality of marriage amendments defining marriage as between one man and one woman.⁵⁷ In June of 2015 their efforts bore fruit with the Supreme Court's decision that state laws defining marriage between one woman and one man are unconstitutional.⁵⁸

In 2015, big business pounced again on Indiana for enacting a religious freedom law. That law, entitled the "Religious Freedom Restoration Act" (RFRA), modeled after the 1993 federal RFRA, sought to legally protect individuals from being forced by the government to participate in events and speech that violates their deeply held religious beliefs. Threatening boycotts, big business vigorously fought for the law's repeal. Eventually, the law was amended to the pleasure of the LGBTQ community.

When HB2 was enacted, the business elite had two wins under their belt and they were primed and ready for another battle. Almost immediately after its passage, Salesforce CEO, Marc Benioff, began a massive lobbying effort to repeal the new law.⁵⁹ In large part due to Benioff's efforts, corporate allies fell in line. Businesses signed a letter penned by Equality NC

⁵⁷ Alexander Kaufman. "Here are the 379 Companies Urging the Supreme Court to Support Gay Marriage" Huffington Post. March 5, 2015. http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2015/03/05/marriage-equality-amicus_n_6808260.html

⁵⁸ *Obergefell v. Hodges*, 576 U.S. ____ (2015)

⁵⁹ Monica Langley. "Salesforce's Marc Benioff Has Kicked off New Era of Corporate Social Activism." www.wsj.com. August 2, 2017. <https://www.wsj.com/articles/salesforces-marc-benioff-has-kicked-off-new-era-of-corporate-social-activism-1462201172>

and the Human Rights Campaign to then Governor McCrory opposing HB2.⁶⁰ A few months later, 68 companies, including Apple, American Airlines, Red Hat and Morgan Stanley, signed onto an amicus brief claiming that HB2 condones “invidious discrimination and damages the companies’ ability to attract and retain a diverse workforce,” an absurd claim.⁶¹ Shoulder to shoulder with the LGBTQ lobby, corporations flexed their political muscles, predicted economic Armageddon and threatened boycotts. Finally, one year later, legislators with their tails between their legs, repealed the law the LGBTQ lobby and its cohort, Corporate America, found objectionable and replaced it with a much less clear prohibition on local nondiscrimination laws that expired in 2020.

⁶⁰ *Equality NC Letter to Governor Pat McCrory*, [https://assets2.hrc.org/files/assets/resources/NC_CEO_Letter_\(3\).pdf](https://assets2.hrc.org/files/assets/resources/NC_CEO_Letter_(3).pdf)

⁶¹ Dawn Chmielewski. “The 68 Companies (including Apple) Taking North Carolina’s Anti-LGBTQ Law to Court.” Vox.com. July 8, 2016. <https://www.vox.com/2016/7/8/12128698/apple-cisco-intel-salesforce-68-companies-north-carolina-anti-lgbt-law-hb2>

An Unholy Alliance - Economics, “Values” and the Government

For the past 40 years, corporations have used economics and “values” to justify their support for internal pro-LGBTQ policies and their opposition to marriage amendments and, recently, their opposition to religious freedom legislation and HB2.⁶² Despite claims by corporations and their LGBTQ activist motivators that pro-LGBTQ policies are “good for business,” there is no hard evidence linking economic growth and pro (or con) LGBTQ policies. An often-cited study, “The Business Impact of LGBTQ-Supportive Workplace Policies” from the pro-LGBTQ think tank, The Williams Institute, states the following:

In total, this study reviews 36 research studies that include findings related to the impact of LGBTQ-supportive policies or workplace climates on business outcomes. We conclude that this body of research supports the existence of many positive links between LGBTQ-supportive policies or workplace climates and outcomes that will benefit employers. *However, none of the studies provides direct quantitative estimates of the impact on the bottom line.*⁶³

In other words, there is no concrete proof provided by 36 research studies that pro-LGBTQ policies increase profits. Six years after Obergefell, GLAAD reports 61% of advertisers still voice concern over brand backlash when including LGBT people in their advertising.⁶⁴ An analysis by Credit Suisse, which appeared in the July 2, 2014 Harvard Business Review, echoed

⁶² Neha Thirani Bagri. “These are the 53 U.S. Companies Supporting a Lawsuit to Use the Bathroom of His Choice.” Quartz. March 3, 2017.

<https://qz.com/924135/53-us-companies-signed-an-amicus-brief-in-support-of-transgender-high-school-student-gavin-grimms-right-to-use-the-bathroom-of-his-choice/>

⁶³ The Business Impact of LGBTQ-Supportive Workplace Policies” The Williams Institute. <https://williamsinstitute.law.ucla.edu/publications/impact-lgbt-supportive-workplaces/>

⁶⁴ P&G and GLAAD Announce “The Visibility Project” and Release New Research to Advance LGBT Visibility in Advertising. Marketwatch.com. May 12, 2021. <https://www.marketwatch.com/press-release/pg-and-glaad-announce-the-visibility-project-and-release-new-research-to-advance-lgbtq-visibility-in-advertising-2021-05-12>

this same conclusion: “[The research] indicates quantitatively that an employer’s stance on LGBTQ issues does not make a material difference in its stock price, even in today’s economy.”⁶⁵

When examining the impact of pro-LGBTQ policies on economic development, authors of another study by the Williams Institute reached a similar conclusion. In November, 2014 the Institute released a study on the subject entitled, “The Relationship between LGBTQ Inclusion and Economic Development: An Analysis of Emerging Economies.” Though touted as a study showing a direct correlation between pro-LGBTQ laws and economic growth in developing economies, there is no evidence to support that result. Hidden among numerous conjectures about economic gain, the authors admit: “. . . **we cannot draw a firm conclusion about . . . whether more rights cause higher levels of development or whether more developed countries tend to introduce more rights.**”⁶⁶

By 2013, when defending their pro-LGBTQ positions, some members of the corporate elite had shed the economics argument. That year, as reported in the Seattle Times, Starbucks publicly issued the following statement defending its support for homosexual marriage as being philosophical:

This important legislation is aligned with Starbucks business practices and upholds our belief in the equal treatment of partners. It is core to who we are and what we value as a company. Internally the coffee retailer never slowed their plans to grow stores in the state.⁶⁷

⁶⁵ Eric Berger and Nicole Douillet. “What’s the Effect of Pro-LGBTQ Policies on Stock Prices?” Harvard Business Review. July 2, 2014. <https://hbr.org/2014/07/whats-the-effect-of-pro-LGBTQ-policies-on-stock-price>

⁶⁶ M.V. Lee Badgett, et. al. “The Relationship Between LGBTQ Inclusion and Economic Development: An Analysis of Emerging Economies. The Williams Institute. Nov. 2014. <https://williamsinstitute.law.ucla.edu/wp-content/uploads/LGBTQ-inclusion-and-development-november-2014.pdf>

⁶⁷ Andrew Garber. “Starbucks Support Gay Marriage Legislation.” The Seattle Times. Jan. 24, 2012. http://old.seattletimes.com/html/politicsnorthwest/2017323520_starbucks_supports_gay_marriage.html

Weeks after signing an open letter blasting the state, Starbucks signed a \$2.25 million ground lease for a new store in Hendersonville⁶⁸ and testing in-store kiosks in Charlotte and Winston-Salem with Publix.⁶⁹

PayPal CEO Dan Shulman adopted the same “values” argument. When PayPal pulled out of North Carolina, Shulman stated that he was canceling the operations center because he did not want to invest in a state where his employees “would not have equal rights.”⁷⁰ Both Starbucks and PayPal appear to have selective outrage about injustice. While shaming North Carolina legislators for passage of HB2, both corporations were expanding business opportunities in two of the most repressive countries in the world—PayPal in Cuba and Starbucks in China. In its 2021 report, Freedom House, an international organization dedicated to advancing freedom, gave both Cuba and China Freedom scores of 13 and 9, respectively, out of a 100.⁷¹ Bank of America, Wells Fargo, Time Warner and Merck Pfizer all signed onto the letter expressing outrage at the passage of HB2 with the Human Rights Campaign and then went on to make campaign contributions to lawmakers who voted for HB2 and the governor who signed it.⁷²

The federal government also provided a financial incentive for businesses to comply with pro-LGBT policies. Since July 2014, President Obama’s Executive Order number 13672 has

⁶⁸“ The Boulder Group Arranges \$2.25 Million Sale of Starbucks Coffee in North Carolina” Shopping Center Business. August 22, 2016. <https://shoppingcenterbusiness.com/the-boulder-group-arranges-2-25-million-sale-of-starbucks-coffee-in-north-carolina/>

⁶⁹ John Ceballos. “Publix Partners with Starbucks to Test In-Store Cafes”. The Ledge. September 15, 2016. <https://www.theledger.com/news/20160915/publix-partners-with-starbucks-to-test-in-store-cafes>

⁷⁰ David Paul Morris. “PayPal Canceling Expansion Plans in Charlotte Due to House Bill 2”. Charlotte Business Journal. April 5, 2017. <https://www.bizjournals.com/charlotte/news/2016/04/05/PayPal-canceling-expansion-plans-in-charlotte-due.html>

⁷¹“ Freedom in the World 2021.” Freedom House. <https://freedomhouse.org/countries/freedom-world/scores>

⁷² Jim Morrill. “Companies scorned HB2, but donated to lawmakers who passed it” Charlotte Observer. January 6, 2017. <https://www.charlotteobserver.com/news/politics-government/article124984619.html>

been in place—except for during the Trump Administration⁷³—requiring all federal contractors to incorporate policies prohibiting discrimination based on homosexuality or gender identity.⁷⁴ For 17 consecutive years the Exxon-Mobil shareholders rejected anti-discrimination policies which included homosexuality and gender identity. One year after the Executive Order went into effect, Exxon-Mobil did an about-face for fear of losing millions of dollars in government contracts.⁷⁵

Looking Back, the Corporate Boycott Movement Hasn't Aged Well

Democratic strategists inside the Biden administration continue to point to the success of HB2 to persuade corporate leaders on the value of corporate involvement in the LGBTQ movement.⁵⁷ The administration is counting on broad corporate support following the Capitol insurrection in the final days of the Trump Administration to leverage what they call the “emerging social conscious movement” to push for support of their political agenda and policies inside corporate boardrooms, but some corporations may have second thoughts.⁷⁶

Emboldened by HB2, early adopters of this new corporate activism set to influence public policy on their own with mixed results. Gillette received harsh backlash after weighing into the #MeToo Movement during its Super Bowl Ad in 2019.^{58b} Delta Air Lines, largely uncontroversial to this point, has found themselves in a battle twice with the state legislature

⁷³ id. Bloomberg Law

⁷⁴ Biden Moves to Leverage Corporate America's Falling Out With GOP". Politico.com. April 14, 2021. <https://www.politico.com/news/2021/04/14/biden-corporate-america-gop-481338>

⁷⁵ Scott Neuman. “Georgia Lawmakers Punish Delta Air Lines Over NRA Feud”. NPR.com. March 2, 2018. <https://www.npr.org/sections/thetwo-way/2018/03/02/590149921/georgia-lawmakers-punish-delta-air-lines-over-nra-feud>

⁷⁶ Tovia Smith. “Backlash Erupts After Gillette Launches A New #MeToo-Inspired Ad campaign” NPR January 17, 2019. <https://www.npr.org/2019/01/17/685976624/backlash-erupts-after-gillette-launches-a-new-metoo-inspired-ad-campaign>

after issuing statements of support on social issues. In 2018 Georgia's House of Representatives stropped the fuel tax credit after the airline went head-to-head with the National Rifle Association over gun control. In response, Georgia Lt. Gov. Cagle said, "Businesses have every legal right to make their own decisions, but the Republican majority in our state legislature also has every right to govern guided by our principles."⁷⁷ Months later the Georgia Governor Nathan Deal signed an executive order to recommence the credits to smooth over relations with the airline.⁷⁸

This year the airline was only a Senate vote away from losing the fuel incentives again after boisterously condemning Georgia's new voting laws. Over 100 companies joined and soon Major League Baseball announced it was moving the 2021 All-Star Game and draft out of Atlanta. The response from the public and Georgia State House was swift. Brands found themselves in the middle of a divisive political debate but this time customers from both sides were calling for boycotts. Lawmakers again voted to remove \$40 million in tax incentives, and social media was trending with outrage against the brands. CEO's quickly learned the cost of their vocal activism. Delta's CEO walked back his comments, and Atlanta-based Coca-Cola and Home Depot have attempted to stay neutral.⁷⁹

Likewise, the Save Women's Sports movement, which has gained popularity in 2021 has attracted strong support and opposition. The NCAA has resumed issuing LGBTQ policy

⁷⁷ Scott Neuman. "Georgia Lawmakers Punish Delta Air Lines Over NRA Feud". NPR.com. March 2, 2018. <https://www.npr.org/sections/thetwo-way/2018/03/02/590149921/georgia-lawmakers-punish-delta-air-lines-over-nra-feud>

⁷⁸ Joe Cortez, "Delta Faces Calls for Boycott Over Georgia's Controversial Voting Bill" March 30, 2021. <https://www.flyertalk.com/articles/delta-faces-calls-for-boycott-over-georgias-controversial-voting-bill.html>

⁷⁹ Hilary Russ "Church Leaders Call for Home Depot Boycott Over Georgia Voting Curbs" Reuters News. April 20, 2021. <https://www.reuters.com/world/us/home-depot-face-boycott-over-georgia-voting-curbs-2021-04-20/>

statements and threatening to once again boycott any state that considers legislation to prohibit transgender sports participation. The NCAA issued a statement saying, “when determining where championships are held, NCAA policy directs that only locations where hosts can commit to providing an environment that is safe, healthy and free of discrimination should be selected.”⁸⁰ Despite the threats, seven Governors have signed the bill into law.⁸¹ Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis has committed to signing the bill and South Dakota, Gov. Kristi Noem issued an executive order addressing the issue.⁸² So far the NCAA failed to follow through on their threat when it announced its softball tournament would be played in Alabama, Arkansas and Tennessee, all three states passed the Save Women’s Sports Act in 2021.⁸³

Long Past its Sunset Provision, the Media Won’t Let Go of HB2

When North Carolina’s ban on local nondiscrimination ordinances expired on December 1, 2020, Charlotte and other municipalities began to consider passing nondiscrimination ordinances. The press continues to disseminate the false narrative that HB2 harmed the State’s economy and led to widespread job and fiscal losses. LGBTQ groups in the State are calling for the General Assembly to pass a statewide nondiscrimination law.

⁸⁰ Jordan Dafnis. “NCAA Warns Okla. Transgender Sports Bill Could Impact Future Events”. Newson6.com. April 13, 2021. <https://www.newson6.com/story/60757613db5cc30bd505ff2e/ncaa-warns-okla-transgender-sports-bill-could-impact-future-events->

⁸¹ Save Women’s Sports <https://savewomenssports.com/state-legislation>

⁸² Lee Strubinger “South Dakota Governor Bans Transgender Girls From Sports Teams by Executive Order” March 29, 2021. Npr.com <https://www.npr.org/2021/03/29/982474861/south-dakota-governor-bans-transgender-girls-from-sports-teams-by-executive-orde>

⁸³ Scott McDonald “3 States With Anti-Trans Laws to Host Softball Regionals Despite NCAA Threat” newsweek. May 16, 2021 <https://www.newsweek.com/3-states-anti-trans-laws-host-softball-regionals-despite-ncaa-threat-1591962>

But the fact is, some of the most liberal tech companies in America have overlooked politics in favor of the rich, business-friendly, low-tax, highly academic climate in North Carolina and have chosen to invest billions to locate in the State. Apple, Google, Facebook, DC Blox, and Walt Disney have invested heavily into massive datacenters and engineering centers in North Carolina.⁸⁴ In 2021, Apple announced another billion-dollar investment into North Carolina to expand its Piedmont datacenter and establish an East Coast Hub in Wake County.⁸⁵

Even Amazon admitted that HB2 had nothing to do with its recent decision to choose Virginia over North Carolina for its second headquarters. In the recently published book, *Amazon Unbound*, author Brad Stone told the *News & Observer*, “Raleigh was the most impressive smaller city (on the list) by leaps and bounds. They [Amazon] were impressed by the city’s economic health and population growth, and they saw not just an opportunity for today but for the future.”⁸⁶ While the media suggested “HB2 gave Amazon ‘heartburn’” Stone said, “The positives really outweighed the negatives” when evaluating the city.⁸⁷ It was the size of the metro area, not HB2, which led Amazon officials to eventually select Arlington, Virginia according to Stone.⁸⁸

⁸⁴ For Apple, see: Sharon McBrayer “Apple Plans Another Expansion”. *The News Herald*. Dec 3, 2017. https://morganton.com/news/apple-plans-another-expansion/article_c16b18d8-d6f4-11e7-8c32-73f308446bbb.html. for Google, see: Zachery Eanes. “Google to Bring New Engineering Hub to Durham, Up to 1000 Jobs as Part of US Expansion”. *Newsobserver.com*. March 18, 2021. For Facebook, see: Brandon Goldner. “Tech Giants Building Massive Data Centers in North Carolina Foothills”. *WCNC-TV* November 1, 2018. <https://www.wcnc.com/article/news/tech-giants-building-massive-data-centers-in-north-carolina-foothills/275-610385223>. For DC Blox, see Scott D Yost. “\$305 Million Data Center Coming to High Point” *Rhino Times*. September 22, 2020. <https://www.rhinotimes.com/news/305-million-data-center-coming-to-high-point/>.

⁸⁵ Stephanie Loder. “Apple to Build \$1-Billion East Coast Campus in North Carolina” *Engineering News-Record*. April 27, 2021. <https://www.enr.com/articles/51661-apple-to-build-1-billion-east-coast-campus-in-north-carolina>

⁸⁶ Zachery Eanes. “Raleigh Was a Top 3 Finalist for Amazon’s HQ2 New Book Says. Bezos’ Team Nixed the City”. *Newsobserver.com*. May 13, 2021. <https://www.newsobserver.com/news/business/article251365043.html>

⁸⁷ id. Earnes

⁸⁸ Brad Stone. *Amazon Unbound: JEFF BEZOS and the INVENTION of a GLOBAL EMPIRE*

The truth is Amazon has been betting heavily on North Carolina. It invested \$400 Million into its wind farm while HB2 was in place, and since has rapidly increased its warehouse and distribution system across the state.⁸⁹ Amazon currently operates 19 sites in North Carolina, including eight new delivery point stations, two Prime hubs and sort stations and distribution centers with several more in development.⁹⁰ Courtney Johnson Norman, a spokesperson for Amazon said, “North Carolina is great for business, and Amazon is excited to continue its growth and investment,”⁹¹ noting the company has created over 27,000 jobs in the state and invested more than \$2.1 billion as it announced another \$100 Million investment.⁹² There was never a mention of HB2.

⁸⁹ Lauren Ohnesorge. “Amazon’s \$400M North Carolina Wind Farm is ‘Days ’from Powering Up. Triangle Business Journal. February 3, 2017. <https://www.bizjournals.com/triangle/news/2017/02/03/developer-amazons-400m-north-carolina-wind-farm-is.html>

⁹⁰ Hank Lee. Amazon Announces New Fulfillment Center, Delivery Stations coming to Charlotte” WCNC-TV April 19, 2021. <https://www.wcnc.com/article/money/business/amazon-fulfillment-center-charlotte-north-carolina/275-c978ed35-7237-4dac-a675-c9c34bd4c51c>

⁹¹“ Amazon Investing \$100M in North Carolina” Business Facilities.com. May 12, 2021. <https://businessfacilities.com/2021/05/amazon-investing-100m-in-north-carolina-distribution-operation/>

⁹² Catherine Muccigrosso. “Amazon expanding in Charlotte area again. Here’s where new jobs will arrive this year.” Charlotte Observer. April 12, 2021. <https://www.charlotteobserver.com/news/business/whats-in-store/article250607664.html>

A summary of Amazon Major North Carolina Distribution & Sort Centers⁹³

| Open | Capital Investment | Amazon Name | City, County |
|-------|--------------------|-------------|------------------|
| 2017 | \$ 18,700,000 | CLT2 | Charlotte, NC |
| 2018 | \$ 85,000,000 | CLT3 | Concord, NC |
| 2019 | \$ 200,000,000 | CLT4 | Charlotte, NC |
| 2020a | \$ 200,000,000 | RDU1 | Garner, NC |
| 2020b | \$150,000,000 | GS01 | Kernersville, NC |
| 2022a | \$28,000,000 | DRT4 | Mills River, NC |
| 2022b | \$100,000,000 | | Smithfield, NC |

⁹³ On 2017, see: Ashley Fahey. “Amazon.com Seeks Several Positions for Charlotte Facility”. Charlotte Business Journal. August 29, 2016. <https://www.bizjournals.com/charlotte/news/2016/08/29/amazon-com-seeks-several-positions-for-charlotte.html>.

On 2018, see Scott Jensen. “Amazon Building \$85 Million Distribution Center in Kannapolis – Creating 600 Jobs for Region” Charlotte Stores. August 15, 2017. <https://www.charlottestories.com/amazon-building-85-million-distribution-center-kannapolis-creating-600-jobs-region/>

On 2019, see: Steve Harrison. “New Amazon Center Near Airport to Bring 1,500 Jobs, \$200 Million Investment” Charlotte Observer. June 26, 2018. <https://www.charlotteobserver.com/news/politics-government/article213819209.html>

On 2020a, see: Town of Garner “Amazon Chooses Garner for New Facility”. Garnernc.gov. August 10, 2018. <https://www.garnernc.gov/Home/Components/News/News/668/17>.

On 2020b, see: Richard Craver. “Amazon Confirms Plans for Kernersville Fulfillment Center with 1,000 Employees”. Winston-Salem Journal. May 29, 2019. https://journalnow.com/business/amazon-confirms-plans-for-kernersville-fulfillment-center-with-1-000-employees/article_5aafd2d1-c74e-5ca9-a603-e908cf43a423.html

On 2022a, see: “Amazon to Invest \$28M, to Create 200 Jobs at New NC Distribution Center” WRALtechwire.com. May 14, 2020. <https://www.wraltechwire.com/2020/05/14/amazon-to-invest-28m-to-create-200-jobs-at-new-nc-distribution-center/>

On 2022b, see: “Amazon Announces New Distribution Center for North Carolina”. Associated Press. May 11, 2021. <https://spectrumlocalnews.com/nc/triangle-sandhills/news/2021/05/11/amazon-announces-new-distribution-center-for-north-carolina>

Conclusion

In their essay, “Overhauling of Straight America,” a playbook on how to alter the values of America to normalize and promote homosexuality, Marshall Kirk and Hunter Madsen stated the following:

Give Protectors a Just Cause....Our campaign should not demand direct support for homosexual practices, should instead take anti-discrimination as its theme.... It is especially important for the gay movement to hitch its cause to accepted standards of law and justice because its straight supporters must have at hand a cogent reply to the moral arguments of its enemies.⁹⁴

Hindsight is 20/20. It is clear now that the fight over HB2 was never about economics. The economic disaster prophesied by the LGBT activists and Corporate America never occurred. Businesses didn’t engage in a mass boycott of the State. While Diversity Officers pushed a public narrative, the corporations quietly purchased land, invested in infrastructure and continued to hire North Carolina’s brightest and best university students to help their bottom-line. Not one company that was doing business in North Carolina before HB2 was passed pulled out and moved elsewhere. Economic Armageddon didn’t happen. Rather, the battle over HB2 was about perception of harm, the saber-rattling of a pubescent cancel culture and the advancement of the LGBT agenda to transform American values. If HB2 had any negative impact on the State’s economy and specifically direct tourism spending, the impact was too small to be detected by all available data.

⁹⁴ Marshall Kirk and Hunter Madsen. “The Overhauling of Straight America.” Guide Magazine. November 1987. reprinted at http://library.gayhomeland.org/0018/EN/EN_Overhauling_Straight.htm

In the end, the NCAA returned. The All-Stars played. The musical artists and celebrities rebooked their shows. In today's world of moral relativism, it is true as one writer has stated, "Business practices help both to define and reflect our values." Allies in Corporate America, transformed by the LGBT lobby, served as the perfect Goliath to argue the moral case against the "injustices" of HB2.

Will politicians continue to be led into the fox's lair by big business and the "values" of liberal activists, or will our elected leaders take a stand for the values they profess? Five years after HB2, there is abundant evidence that elected leaders should refuse to cower to big business and their vacuous threats of economic doom; our leaders should represent the people who elected them, not the corporate bullies who are manipulated by liberal activists.