



Many NCGA lawmakers use a preferred name. Why can't students use theirs?

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A bill making its way through the NC General Assembly seeks in part to make the first day of school more nerve-racking by requiring parent notification before a school staff member may address a student by any altered name.

- (5) Prior to any changes in the name or pronoun used for a student in school records or by school personnel, notice to the parent of the change.

From SB 49 "Parents' Bill of Rights"

My student rosters after Day 1 are full of revisions as I seek to show the most basic level of respect to my students: addressing them by their preferred name and pronouncing it correctly.

The NC State Board of Elections [candidate filing document](#) is also full of revised names to appear on ballots.

In fact, 83% of current NC General Assembly members who have now or in the past supported a so-called “Parents’ Bill of Rights” have modified their legal names to appear differently on general election ballots.

The names highlighted below indicate Senators sponsoring the bill who have modified the way their legal names appear on the ballot:

Sponsors: Gale; Lee; Barnes (Primary)
 Alexander; Corbin; Daniel; Ford; Hanig; Hise; Jarvis; Johnson; Krawiec; Lazzara;
 McInnis; Moffitt; B. Newton; P. Newton; Overcash; Perry; Sanderson; Sawrey;
 Sawyer; Settle

Here’s a full list of Senators who alter their ballot names but voted in favor of the bill denying students the dignity to use their preferred names without bureaucracy:

Ayes (Republican)

Alexander; Barnes; Berger (Chair); Britt; Burgin; Corbin; Craven; Daniel;
 Ford; Gale; Hanig; Hise; Jackson; Jarvis; Johnson; Lazzara; Lee; McInnis;
 Moffitt; B. Newton; P. Newton; Overcash; Perry; Proctor; Rabon;
 Sanderson; Sawrey; Sawyer; Settle

Sens. Berger and Craven acknowledge their legal name modification in their preferred ballot names:

STATE BOARD OF ELECTIONS

| CANDIDATE NAME | NAME ON BALLOT | PARTY | FILING DATE |
|------------------------------------|--------------------------|-------|-------------|
| NC STATE SENATE DISTRICT 26 | | | |
| BERGER, PHILIP EDWARD | Philip E. (Phil) Berger | REP | 02/25/2022 |
| NC STATE SENATE DISTRICT 29 | | | |
| CRAVEN, DAVID WAYNE JR | David (Dave) Craven, Jr. | REP | 12/07/2021 |

Sens. Alexander and B. Newton did not:

NC STATE SENATE DISTRICT 44

ALEXANDER, WILLIAM THEODORE III Ted Alexander REP 12/07/2021

NC STATE SENATE DISTRICT 04

FITCH, MILTON FREDERICK JR Milton F. (Toby) Fitch DEM 03/02/2022

NEWTON, ELDON SHARPE III Buck Newton REP 12/07/2021

To be clear: if instead of being Senators these folks were students in my classroom, I would of course call them “Buck” and “Ted” as requested. I just wish Sens. Jim, Bobby, Buck, Bill, Brent, Jim, Tom, Phil, Dave, Steve, Todd, Vickie, Brad, Ted, Dean and Tim would offer students the same courtesy instead of making it a potential legal affront to the full names given to them by their parents.

Last year when Allison* (name changed for privacy) asked me to call her “Allie” in class but refer to her as “Allison” when communicating with her parents, I respected the request. According to SB 49 as written, I could be violating the law by stepping on her parents’ rights if I do this in the future without seeking their permission.

Last week, the bill was discussed in a House committee. During the meeting, proponents of the bill claimed the bill is necessary to keep parents informed and avoid a district “stiff-arming” parents when information is requested.

Ironically, that same [House committee meeting](#) did not allow public comment on that bill despite a [commitment for 10 speakers](#), and [apparent 18 minutes](#) that would have been available if the meeting started on time, and was not adjourned early.

The chair of that committee also imposes a double standard on students with her own candidate filing record:

NC HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES DISTRICT 112

COTHAM, PATRICIA ANN

Tricia Cotham

DEM

03/04/2022

Is one’s preferred name an affront to the full legal name given to them by their parents? If party labels are the pronouns of politics, it’s also notable she changed her party affiliation to “Republican” earlier this year after running as a “Democrat” last year.

Two years ago, a “Parents’ Bill of Rights” was voted on by the House. Those voting in favor can be found below. Many of those members who voted to approve it are still in office. 19 of them used preferred names as ballot names after voting to deny students the same courtesy. They’re set to do it again this year.

Ayes (Republican)

Adams; Arp; K. Baker; Bell; Blackwell; Boles; Bradford; Brisson; Brody; Bumgardner; Carter; Clampitt; Cleveland; Davis; Dixon; Elmore; Faircloth; Gillespie; Goodwin; Greene; D. Hall; K. Hall; Hanig; Hardister; Hastings; Howard; Humphrey; Hurley; Iler; Johnson; B. Jones; Kidwell; Lambeth; McElraft; McNeely; McNeill; Miller; Mills; Moffitt; Moore (Speaker); Moss; Paré; Penny; Pickett; Pittman; Pless; Potts; Riddell; Rogers; Saine; Sasser; Setzer; Shepard; C. Smith; Stevens; Strickland; Szoka; Torbett; Tyson; Warren; Watford; Wheatley; White; Willis; Yarborough; Zenger

House Speaker Moore, bill sponsor Rep. Hardister and co-sponsor Rep. Clampitt prefer modifications of their legal names as their ballot names:

NC HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES DISTRICT 111

MOORE, TIMOTHY KEITH

Tim Moore

REP

03/04/2022

NC HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES DISTRICT 059

HARDISTER, JONATHAN YATES

Jon Hardister

REP

12/07/2021

NC HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES DISTRICT 119

CLAMPITT, JAMES MICHAEL

Mike Clampitt

REP

12/07/2021

Rep. White prefers to change her legal middle name altogether:

NC HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES DISTRICT 026

WHITE, DONNA MARIE

Donna McDowell White

REP

12/07/2021

When a student asks me to call him “Trey” though I don’t see that listed as a form of his legal first or middle name, I call him Trey.

If Sarah Jane Smith asks me to call her Jane, I say “Nice to meet you, Jane.”

When a student whose family has new roots in our country asks me to use an “English” name instead of their legal name, I honor their request.

I don’t follow up with Chris, Alex, or Cam to see if their request for the diminutive version of their full names has anything to do with a potential change in pronoun preference.

If SB 49 becomes law, these straightforward Day 1 interactions would become more complex because they could be seen as [keeping secrets from parents](#) if I amend names on my roster without prior permission from each student’s parent.

What do lawmakers voting in favor of this bill suggest I call these students while awaiting confirmation from their parents?

This bill treats kids as property, not as people. It harms a necessary rapport between school staff, parents and students in the first stage of building that partnership by demeaning a preferred name or family nickname with bureaucratic hurdles before school staff may use it.

I have no issue with candidates using their preferred names on the ballot. I have an issue with politicians hypocritically picking on kids by creating obstacles for use of their preferred names.

As [Rep. Cotham said](#) at the end of the House K-12 Education committee meeting, “There are rules of this body that apply to everyone in here, including you.”

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