

## NYT's Kim Severson Fears 'Controversial' Conservatives Are Shifting North Carolina to the Right

By [Clay Waters](#) | December 13, 2012 | 08:28

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*New York Times* Atlanta bureau chief Kim Severson sounded worried about the "controversial" conservatives taking over the North Carolina governorship in "[G.O.P.'s Full Control in Long-Moderate North Carolina May Leave Lasting Stamp](#)," seeing "an increasingly conservative agenda" since Barack Obama won the state in 2008.

**With a Republican newly elected as governor and a Republican-controlled legislature, North Carolina, long a politically moderate player in the South, will soon have its most conservative government in a century.**

Pat McCrory, the longtime mayor of Charlotte, easily defeated Walter Dalton last month in the governor's race. Mr. Dalton entered the race after Bev Perdue, a Democratic governor bruised by low approval ratings and battered by the Republican-dominated Senate and House, decided not to run again.

It has been more than 28 years since North Carolina elected a Republican governor and more than 100 years since both that office and the legislature were controlled by Republicans. As a result, North Carolina is preparing for an ideological shift whose effects could be felt for decades.

"It's pretty much a stunning change," said Jeanne Bonds, a Democrat and frequent political commentator who served as the mayor of Knightdale, N.C. "The Republicans run a social agenda that's not what many North Carolinians are used to seeing."

**North Carolina has long been a purple state amid the red of the South, with business-minded moderate Democrats populating much of the political landscape and political power being balanced between conservative rural regions and Democratic strongholds in urban centers.**

**North Carolina supported, though by a whisper, Barack Obama in 2008. But the state began to shift, and an increasingly conservative agenda took hold in the ensuing years. The Republicans took over the legislature, pressed for tougher rules on immigrants and a voter identification law, and secured a constitutional ban on same-sex marriage.**

Though Severson and her headline writer paint North Carolina as a "moderate," "purple state" in order to portray the latest changes as an "ideological shift" to the right, *Times* reporter Helene Cooper called North Carolina "a conservative state" in a September 15, 2011 story, and Matt Bai has called it "conservative" twice in the *New York Times* magazine. Severson also sees something "controversial" about being "dedicated to conservative and free-market ideas."

"There's no question that the energy in the Republican Party is coming further from the right and the Tea Party," said Steven Greene, a political scientist at North Carolina State University. "Which way is he going to go? It's the big question right now."

Mr. McCrory first ran for governor in 2008 but was beaten by Ms. Perdue, then the lieutenant governor, who became the state's first female governor. As a mayor on the moderate side of his party, Mr. McCrory had bipartisan support and was perhaps best known for revitalizing Charlotte with projects like a light-rail system and the Nascar museum.

**His large transition team is being studied for signs of whether he will turn more conservative.** It is heavy with Republican politicians and business leaders, including former members of President George W. Bush's administration and former governors. **The most controversial figures on the team are the billionaire businessman Art Pope and some of his allies who are connected to the John William Pope Foundation. The group, which is dedicated to conservative and free-market ideas, has given millions of dollars to libertarian and conservative groups, including the Cato Institute, the Heritage Foundation and Americans for Prosperity.**

What's inherently "controversial" about giving money to conservative groups?

Read more: <http://newsbusters.org/blogs/clay-waters/2012/12/13/nyts-kim-severson-fears-controversial-conservatives-are-shifting-north-#ixzz2Ewi7yPzn>