



NCACC Selects Kevin Austin, NCACC Past President and Chair, Yadkin County Board of Commissioners and Renee Price, Vice-Chair, Orange County Board of Commissioners for Outstanding County Commissioner Award

by Lacy Pate
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Each year, members of NCACC's Board of Directors submit nominations for the M.H. "Jack" Brock Outstanding County Commissioner Award. The NCACC Executive Committee selects the recipient(s) for the award for demonstrating special achievements

and far reaching efforts during the previous 12 months on behalf of county government. The award specifically recognizes regional, statewide, or national accomplishments that extend beyond a commissioner's home county.

This year, two commissioners were

named by their colleagues to receive the Outstanding County Commissioner Award - Kevin Austin, NCACC Past President and Chair, Yadkin County Board of Commissioners and Renee Price, Vice-Chair, Orange County Board of Commissioners. Both commissioners have been highly active in the North Carolina Association of County Commissioners as well as the National Association of Counties, holding various leadership positions and advocating for counties at the state and federal levels. NCACC President Ronnie Smith, Martin County Commissioner commented on this year's selection of the two award recipients.

"Traditionally we have chosen one recipient, but this year, the accomplishments of two nominees stood out and we wanted to honor them both. When Kevin Austin was President Elect, he was thrust into the role of President to fill a vacancy on our Executive Committee. He adjusted to the role with great agility, using every resource available to him and he did an outstanding job. He is the kind of leader who listens to others' opinions before making comments and focuses on teamwork. Renee Price has been an incredibly hard worker for many years. She has been deeply involved in our Association, as well as the National Association Counties and the North Carolina Association of Black County Officials, serving in several leadership roles. She just loves to serve people and we want to recognize her for all her hard work," President Smith said.

Kevin Austin, NCACC Past President, and Chair of the Yadkin County Board of Commissioners earned the award for taking on additional NCACC leadership responsibilities and working tirelessly to help counties guide youth on a pathway to career success. In

December 2018, President Austin assumed the role of president ahead of schedule due to a vacancy on the NCACC Executive Committee. For almost a full year, he was dual hatted, serving as both President Elect and President. He hit the ground running when he successfully presided over the Association's legislative goals conference in January 2019 and then in August 2019, he was officially sworn in as NCACC's 103rd president.

President Austin dedicated his presidential year to the Pathways initiative, which calls on all 100 counties in North Carolina to lead a local effort to reduce the rate of disconnected youth - young people age 16-19, who are neither working nor in school. His work culminated in an official [NCACC report and action plan](#) to help counties learn what has worked well and identify possible solutions for their community. He met with Governor Roy Cooper, U.S. Senators Burr and Tillis, U.S. Representative Virginia Foxx other state and federal leaders to raise awareness about the challenges disconnected youth face, the community-wide benefits of helping youth find their path toward career success, and how counties are involved.

As part of the Pathways Initiative, Past President Austin formalized a lasting partnership with myFutureNC, a statewide organization committed to increasing the educational attainment in North Carolina. The partnership was memorialized in a [resolution](#) adopted by the NCACC Board of Directors, which expresses support for myFutureNC's educational attainment goal that two million North Carolinians should have a high-quality credential or post-secondary degree by 2030. The resolution also states that NCACC along with leaders in business, education, state and local government, and community

organizations will continue to foster partnerships to achieve the goal.

As a member of the National Association of Counties (NACo) Community, Economic and Workforce Development (CEWD) Steering Committee, Austin introduced an amendment to NACo's Resolution on Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act Funding, which asked for a stronger county role in planning and administering federal WIOA funding. Austin's amendment passed unanimously and was adopted as part of the [NACo American County Platform and Resolutions](#) document for 2020-2021. This summer, Past President Austin was appointed to serve on NACo's CEWD Steering Committee as the Vice Chair of Work Force.

"I have seen some great friends win the Outstanding County Commissioner Award and I am honored to join such a distinguished group of individuals. The members of the NCACC Board of Directors and staff helped me tremendously and I could not have done it without their support," Austin remarked.

President Kevin Austin has served as a Yadkin County Commissioner since 2008 including serving as Chair. He has held various positions at Austin Electrical Enclosures since 1983, and currently works as Vice President of Manufacturing. Commissioner Austin is active in his community, serving on the Boards of the Yadkin Valley Economic Development District, Inc. and Piedmont Authority for Regional Transportation. He earned a B.S. in

Engineering Operations from North Carolina State University and was in the first graduating class of the UNC School of Government's Advanced Leadership Corps.

Renee Price, Vice-Chair of the Orange County Board of Commissioners, earned the Outstanding County Commissioner award for her active involvement as a member of the NCACC Board of Directors, the NCACC Justice and Public Safety and Health and Human Services Steering Committees, and as a member of the President's Economic Development Task Force, and the President's Special Task Force on Mental Health Engagement. Commissioner Price completed the UNC School of Government's Advanced Leadership Corps and graduated from the NACo Leadership Academy - in partnership with the Professional Development Academy - in 2019.

Commissioner Price represents counties at the national level and was recently appointed to serve in various leadership roles for the National Association of Counties (NACo) including Chair of the Arts and Culture Commission, Vice Chair of the Justice and Public Safety Subcommittee on Courts and Corrections, and as a member of the Rural Action Caucus. She also previously served as Chair of NACo's Community, Economic & Workforce Development Steering Committee, advocating for increased federal appropriations for the Community Development Block Grant



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program, and for programs funded through the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act and the Economic Development Administration. Commissioner Price is also completed her term this summer as President of the North Carolina Association of Black County Officials (NCABCO). She served as NCABCO President for four years.

"Being engaged in NCACC, NCABCO, NACo and NABCO [National Association of Black County Officials] has afforded me the opportunity to understand and realize the depth and breadth of my role as a county commissioner," she said. "These organizations offer courses and information on county-related issues and provide platforms for discussing and advocating on behalf of our constituencies. Over the past eight years, I have been able to share materials and ideas with my Orange County community on such initiatives as criminal justice reform and mental health awareness. Most importantly is the camaraderie; we are family," Commissioner Price stated.

Commissioner Price earned her Bachelor of Arts, cum laude, from Tufts University majoring in urban affairs, and Master of Regional Planning from Cornell University, with concentrations in city development planning, and environmental planning and design. She also studied at Colgate-Rochester Divinity School in the Master of Arts program.

Commissioner Price was born and raised

in Rochester New York – Monroe County. She began her career engaging in inner-city neighborhood revitalization, land-use planning and historic preservation. Among other accomplishments, she helped initiate the first low-income and affordable housing trust fund for New York State, worked in the Office of Environmental Impact for the City of New York, and served as Director of the Joint Legislative Commission on Rural Resources for the New York General Assembly.

Arriving in Orange County in 1990, Commissioner Price became active in sustainable agriculture, promoting small family farms, rural economic development, and natural resource conservation. She later spent two years in Alabama with the Federation of Southern Cooperatives where she developed and directed a sustainable forestry program for minority and traditionally marginalized landowners.

Commissioner Price has been involved in numerous community activities. In 2010, she co-founded Free Spirit Freedom, a cultural arts initiative that explores and celebrates the rich historical diversity of Orange County. Price was first elected to the Orange County Board of Commissioners in November 2012 and reelected in 2016. Commissioner Price also currently serves as a consultant to MENTOR North Carolina providing technical assistance to organizations focused on mentoring youth. 



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