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Correction request x2, Tillis, Protests and Arrests

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To: truthometer@politifact.com

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Dear Truth-O-Meter,

PolitiFact North Carolina's [Jan. 19, 2023 fact check of a claim by Thom Tillis](#) contains two errors in need of correction. One involves a lack of digging by the fact checkers and the other consists of a simply false statement.

Out-of-context, and Arrested for What?

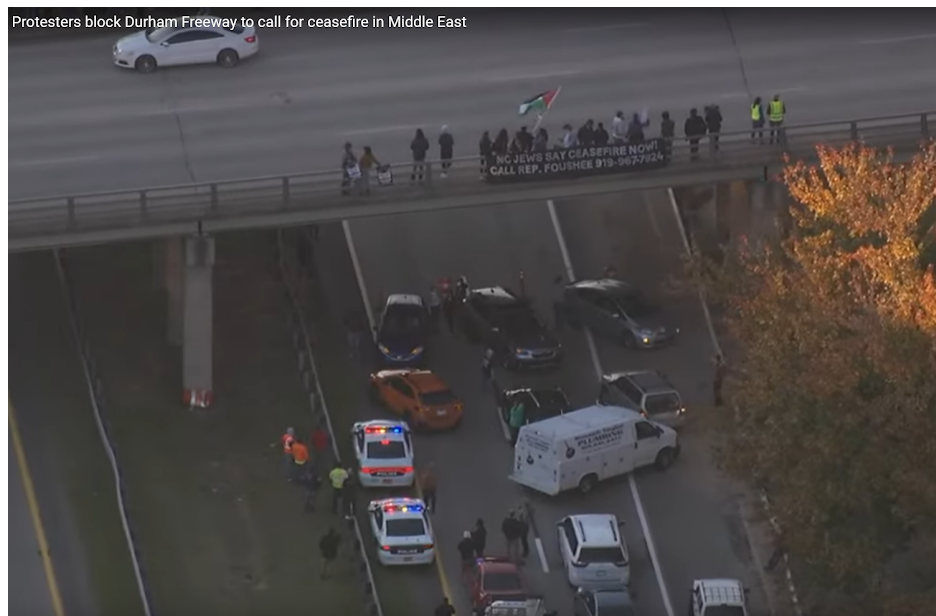
In context, Tillis was clearly alluding to the police failure to remove protesters from the highway via arrest. An arrest days later cannot assist travelers seeking to proceed along the highway.

Moreover, the fact check and associated news stories contain a substantial hole in the narrative. There were about two dozen protesters on the highway. Police were on the scene. Why were only four arrested? What became of your journalistic curiosity?

I [looked up a video of the incident](#). The video, which includes commentary from news reporters, notes at one point that three tow trucks arrived on scene. The reporters hypothesized the trucks were there to remove vehicles the protesters had left on the highway.

Three tow trucks. Four people arrested. Close to a match, right?

This image captured from the video shows at least three cars facing against traffic, blocking the highway.



The four persons who were charged in association with the protest received like punishments (bold emphasis added): "Comply with three months of unsupervised probation, **complete an in-person driving course**, and complete 36.5 hours of community service."

Why include a driving course as part of the punishment for pedestrian blocking of traffic? Doesn't make much sense, does it? Doubtless a journalist like Paul Specht has the ability to access the police reports to find the details of the charges. Odds are all four were charged for leaving vehicles on the highway to obstruct traffic. The police reports may have more details offering clues as to why as many as six cars were left to block the highway while only four persons

were charged for that offense.

These details omitted from the fact check add up to a picture at odds with the narrative in the fact check. If the four were charged based on their use of vehicles to block the highway, **that implies that no protester would have been arrested for merely sitting on the road to block the highway.** Again, the video shows a considerable police presence. What stopped police from asking for identification and issuing arrest warrants for each person obstructing traffic?



Who's buying the police chief's explanation? Could the police not roll a few buses onto the highway in addition to the three tow trucks and direct the protesters to board the buses and proceed to the police station for processing?

Tillis has a point. And at least one of us still remembers that [PolitiFact claims](#) that the most important part of a numbers claim is its underlying point. Tillis has a valid point regarding the Durham protest.

Arrest the Legislators!

PolitiFact probably should pay more attention to its social media accounts. I'll often point out problems on X that PolitiFact might correct promptly were it paying decent attention.

The fact check says of the law Tillis and Blackburn propose (second paragraph) "If enacted, lawmakers would face fines or up to five years of imprisonment."

I imagine the author had in mind the term "lawbreakers" and substituted the rhyming alternate "lawmakers." It's an absurd substitution. With at least three PolitiFact editors reviewing the story before voting on its "Truth-O-Meter" rating I would think at least one would notice the problem. That's even if none of them were curious about why only four of dozens of protesters were arrested.

Please correct the story to give your readers a more accurate picture of the events on the Durham highway and their safety/law enforcement implications. Also, transparently correct the absurd statement suggesting the law would punish lawmakers instead of people who obstruct roadways.

Thanks for your attention to this matter.

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Sincerely,

Bryan W. White
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