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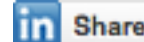
Capitol Commentary May 13, 2014

Jaye Maxx Alexander II [jayealexander@aol.com]

Sent: Wednesday, May 14, 2014 11:33 AM**To:** [Steve Johnston](#)

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Fear of Failure is followed by the Panic of Success.

From: Rep. Ruth Samuelson [mailto:Rep._Ruth_Samuelson@mail.vresp.com]**Sent:** Tuesday, May 13, 2014 7:47 AM**To:** jayealexander@aol.com**Subject:** Capitol Commentary May 13, 2014

Capitol Commentary

2226 Legislative Office Building, Raleigh, NC 27601-1096

(919) 715-3009 Ruth.Samuelson@ncleg.net**May 13, 2014****Legislative Update****Raleigh, NC**

Legislators from across the state are heading to Raleigh today for the six-week sprint known as the short session, which begins Wednesday.

The short session – always held in even-numbered years -- has typically been a time when we tackled issues left unsettled from the six-month long session, held the year before. But this short session – my fourth representing District 104 -- feels a bit different from short sessions past, as we accomplished much of what we set out to during the 2013 long session in the crucial areas of **tax cuts, education reform and regulatory easing**.

Still, there are some important items on our short session agenda, including:

- **The budget.** With Medicaid costs continuing to spiral and tax revenue running slightly behind projections, we will have a budget shortfall to plug that is currently estimated to be around \$455

projections, we will have a budget shortfall to plug that is currently estimated to be around \$450 million. When crafting the two-year budget last year, however, we responsibly set aside a healthy amount of tax money in reserve, for just such a situation. So I feel confident we will be able fill the gap without any backtracking on those tax cuts.

- **Teacher pay.** As part of the budget adjustments, we will be looking for ways to boost pay for teachers and other state employees. Gov. McCrory has been pushing a plan that would give teachers an average raise of 2 percent and all other state employees an across-the-board \$1,000 salary increase. I feel optimistic we can accomplish much of that.
- **Coal ash.** Since February, when coal ash from one of Duke Energy's storage ponds spilled into the Dan River, legislators have been working hard to develop legislation that ensures such a terrible accident never happens again. The disposal of waste from coal-fired power plants is a complex problem -- for which no other state has been able to come up with an ideal solution. But with input from all parties -- including our Utilities Commission, Duke Energy, Gov. McCrory and even Democrat legislators -- we will responsibly tackle this issue during the short session.
- **The environment.** An agriculture study commission has put forth a bill that would bar cities, towns and counties from imposing tree-protection rules on private property owners. As I am generally in favor of letting local governments develop tree ordinances to suit their particular circumstances -- as Charlotte has -- I hope this bill will not move forward in its current form. If it does, however, I will continue to work to prevent its passage.

And finally, a personal note: Though -- unlike most of my legislative colleagues -- I am not running for reelection this year, I want you to know that I intend to be fully engaged every day of this short session. So please don't hesitate to contact me in Raleigh with your questions or comments, either by emailing me at ruths@ncleg.net or samuelsonla@ncleg.net, or calling me at my legislative office at (919) 715-3009.

In your service,

Ruth

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