



Mail



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Contacts



Email Settings



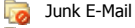
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Drafts [4]



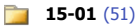
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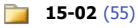
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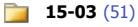
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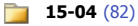
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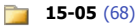
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15-04 (82)



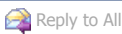
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Fwd: Newsletter from Senator Joel Ford

Joel Ford [joeldford@gmail.com]

Sent: Friday, May 29, 2015 2:52 PM

Subject: Newsletter from Senator Joel Ford**Vol. 2, Ed. 5****May 29, 2015****Committees**[Agriculture/Env./Natural Resources](#)[Appropriations/Base Budget](#)[Appropriations on Dept. of Transportation](#)[Commerce](#)[Finance](#)[Information & Technology](#)[Insurance](#)[Rules and Operations of the Senate](#)[Transportation](#)

Greetings Constituents and Friends,

Summer is approaching and the budget process is upon us in the General Assembly. As you may have already heard, our state will end the fiscal year with a forecasted \$400 million budget surplus. This may sound like good news on the surface, but this revenue was collected at the expense of working North Carolinians who saw smaller state returns for the 2014 taxable year. All the while, wages are stagnant in North Carolina and we continue to fall behind neighboring states in median income, ranking 47th in the nation.

I believe that we have the responsibility to balance the budget in a meaningful way in order to preserve our state's economic strength. However, the leadership in control of the legislature has balanced the budget on the backs of working North Carolinians. During the budget process, we must ensure that the budget "surplus" is used wisely in order to yield an even greater return on investment for all North Carolinians.

Please feel free to forward this letter to your family and friends so they can stay in the loop as to what is going on in Raleigh. Send us their contact information so we can add them to our Newsletter listserv!

As always, please continue to refer to the North Carolina General Assembly www.ncleg.net/, to track information on committee meetings, bill status, legislative updates, etc. The North Carolina state government, www.ncgov.com, is helpful for in-depth information regarding our state resources.

*****Main Street Democrats*****

On May 6th, I joined my Main Street Democratic colleagues for a [press conference](#) calling for an Economic Development plan for North Carolina. Recently, Volvo dismissed building a manufacturing plant in North Carolina which would have created over four thousand jobs for North Carolinians. The Legislature's failure to act on economic development initiatives is costing our state good paying jobs. We must act to create an economic environment that attracts businesses to expand in our state.



For more updates, visit our website here, www.mainstdems.org. You can also like our Facebook page at www.facebook.com/MainStDems and/or follow us on Twitter [@MainStDems](https://twitter.com/MainStDems).

LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

Property Protection Act – HB 405 would allow business or property owners to seek damages against employees who enter unauthorized locations in order to undermine the business or property through video or sound recording. The employee must enter a business or property with the intent other than doing their job to be liable under the trespassing provision of the bill. Further, employees who go to work and witness wrongdoing in the workplace and take appropriate action would not be liable under HB 405. I supported this bill because it strengthens the civil remedies available to property owners and it doesn't stop whistleblowers or law enforcement activity. The bill was amended in the House in order to ensure that legitimate whistleblowers are not liable under this bill. The Senate passed HB 405 and it was sent to the governor for ratification; however, he [vetoed](#) the bill on May 29th.

SEPA Reform Act – The State Environment Protection Act (SEPA) has been in place since the 1970s; since then, it has become outdated and burdensome for North Carolina. I believe that environmental regulations are necessary to keep our environment safe for our citizens, but I also believe that we need to have an environment where businesses can grow and prosper in our state. A healthy environment for both our citizens and businesses can coexist if we modify regulatory statutes. I supported this modification bill because it does nothing to scale back on environmental health regulations. North Carolina will continue to abide by federal regulations and this bill only backtracks on regulatory overlap between the state and the federal government.

The Budget: The House released and passed its budget with bipartisan support on May 18th. Thirty-two (32) Democrats joined sixty-one (61) Republicans in passing this particular budget. The budget increases public spending by 6% from the last budget due to the anticipated budget surplus.

A Few Budget Highlights

- 2% salary increases for most rank and file state employees
- Increases beginning teacher salary to \$35,000
- Partially restores Historic Tax Credits
- Increases film grants budget to \$40 million

As the Senate leadership may very well reject this House proposal, Senate budget writers will draft a different budget that only aims at increasing spending by less than 3%. I will support a budget that prioritizes public education and one that focuses on job creation. We must invest state funds where it improves our communities and ensures accountability for tax payer dollars.

IN THE NEWS

We lost 4,000 jobs to South Carolina: Upon hearing that South Carolina will be the home of Volvo's new manufacturing plant, I am left frustrated that our legislature has continued to fail to attract manufacturing plants to our state. Once again, we lost a significant economic opportunity to South Carolina. Click on the [WBTV](#) link to watch a press statement from the Charlotte Chamber of Commerce and myself.



DISTRICT/RELATED NEWS

Congratulations! I want to personally congratulate the UNC-Charlotte and Johnson C. Smith University class of 2015 for graduating earlier this month. This class of graduates has worked hard to get where they are now and they are the future of this state and country. I wish you all the best and I applaud you as you strive to better yourself and your community.

Aviation Fuel Tax – The Charlotte International Airport is one of the few remaining major connecting airports in the eastern part of the United States. Its survival is due to efficient airport management and low cost structures. The Atlanta airport is Charlotte's largest competitor and there is one factor that keeps Charlotte from being more competitive. That factor happens to be an aviation fuel tax for American Airlines, a major airline that serves Charlotte. The Charlotte airport contributes \$30 million in fuel tax to the state, but the airport doesn't use any tax payer money to support itself. Therefore I believe that the Aviation fuel tax should be eliminated so the airport can be more competitive and continue to improve services for passengers flying to and from Charlotte. We should treat the airline industry similarly to other industries that rely on transportation fuel.



Thank You for Serving! I want to thank all of the Senate pages for serving in the Senate during the month of May 2015. We value the time you took to come to Raleigh and learn more about the legislative process. I hope your experience in Raleigh was rewarding and that you encourage other young leaders like yourself to serve!

Sponsored Pages

Haley Elizabeth Williams of Harrisburg, NC (May 11-14)

Korbin Aris Cummings of Harrisburg, NC (May 18-21)

Michyla Greene of Charlotte, NC (May 25-28)

Ranson IB Middle School Visit: On May 18th, I had the privilege to speak to over 400 eighth graders at Ranson IB Middle School during their End-of-Grade Pep Rally. During my visit, I got to see how Ranson IB Middle conducts its everyday routines to ensure that our children are provided with the skills that they need to succeed. Principal Alison-Welcher gave me a tour of the school and I'm impressed with the work that administrators, faculty, and staff are doing to ensure student success.

Throughout Charlotte and North Carolina, there are schools that are struggling to ensure that students meet academic growth, and it is the lack of school resources that keeps schools from meeting their goals. Ranson Middle strives to meet student needs, but it lacks funds to be fully operational and efficient. Ranson Middle like other schools lack resources for:

- Mental Health Professionals & school counselors
- Funding for Restorative Justice Practices
- Professional development time for teachers

Approximately 83% of Ranson Middle school students are economically disadvantaged and about 86% of students receive free or reduced lunch. This troubling statistic is seen across North Carolina, and I believe that we must take action to combat these trends, turn our schools around, and give every student an education environment where they can fully excel.



"Many thanks to Senator Ford, who demonstrated that legislators can and will oversee areas in which they serve." – Veronica Talton, K-12 educator, Ranson IB Middle School

SPECIAL THANKS

Thank you for voicing your issues, thoughts, and concerns through your many e-mails, phone calls, and office visits. I appreciate receiving input from you and am honored to be serving you in the 2015 Long

Legislative Session. Please feel free to contact me, or my office.

Senator Joel D. M. Ford
North Carolina State Senate
Legislative Building
16 West Jones Street, Room 1119
Raleigh, NC 27601
(919) 733-5955 phone
(919) 754-3254 fax
Joel.Ford@ncleg.net

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