

Senator Joyce Waddell's October 15, 2015 Newsletter

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Sent: Thursday, October 15, 2015 11:51 AM

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**The Waddell
Weekly Bulletin**

Vol. I Ed. 16

October 15,
2015**Dear Friends:**

Thank you for all of your support as I travel this legislative journey. Your valuable input helped guide me in my policy making decisions. Now that the long legislative session has come to an end, I would like to break down parts of the budget to inform you of how the state of North Carolina will be using the allotted funds for the 2015-16 budget.

Our education still lacks the necessary funds to be truly progressive for our students. The state of North Carolina is well below the national average in regards to teacher salary and per-pupil spending.

According to a recent report released by the Department of Public Instruction, more than 1,000 North Carolina teachers left the profession to teach in other states. About 1,200 expressed their dissatisfaction with teaching and plan to change career paths. The State's turnover rate slightly increased from 14.12% in 2013-2014 to 14.84% in 2014-2015. These figures must improve if we are to provide our children with the right tools to accomplish their true potential. While the raise we have given teachers is a step in the right direction, there is certainly more to be done.

Thankfully, there have been additions to the infrastructure and highway budget; for too long our roads and bridges have been in disrepair and in need of a large overhaul. The monies that have been allocated will be used to ensure that our highways and bridges will be brought to safer conditions.

Please continue to refer to the North Carolina General Assembly website www.ncleg.net. You will be able to track legislation, sign up for committee notices and review the in depth citizen's guide.

I encourage you to contact us with your thoughts, comments, or suggestions. Please feel free to have others join in on conversation by sending contact information to Joyce.Waddell@ncleg.net.

I look forward to hearing from you!

Final Budget 2015 - 2017

The K-12 budget refers to schools that provide primary education for the child and young adult population of North Carolina. It is one of the highest funded portions of the North Carolina budget. It is comprised of eight and a half billion dollars for 2015-16 and will be spent among the various school districts across the state.

- Teacher Raise- Instead of a 2% raise initially offered by the North Carolina House of Representatives, teachers will receive a one-time raise of seven hundred and fifty dollars.
- Starting Salary- Beginning teacher pay will start at \$35,000 a year.
- Teacher Assistants- Positions will remain funded, as they were in 2014-15, but will remove the discretion school districts had in usage of the funds.
- Low Income Vouchers- Increases the funding for low-income families to use private school vouchers.

• **UNC SYSTEM**

The UNC System budget is the money that has been appropriated to the public colleges across North Carolina. It also includes funds that have been set aside to support Elizabeth City State University. The UNC System has been appropriated two and three-quarter billion dollars for 2015-16.

- Enrollment Growth- The budget will add an additional forty-nine million dollars for the purpose of growing the enrollment numbers for the UNC college system.
- East Carolina Medical School- The ECU Brody School of Medicine will receive sixteen million dollars over the next two years.
- Elizabeth City State University- ECSU will receive three million dollars a year to stabilize enrollment.
- Hunt Foundation- The budget will cut \$737,000 in recurring state funding from the Hunt Institute, a public education think-tank based out of the University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill.

• **NORTH CAROLINA'S MEDICAID & HEALTH BUDGET PROVISIONS**

The Senators and Representatives have been working on a reconstruction of the state's Medicaid system. This new program will be one of the main focuses of the appropriated funds, along with the enrollment growth that is adjusted annually to accommodate the demand of the Medicaid system.

- Enrollment Growth- Provides \$796 million over two years for Medicaid services based on increased enrollment and demand.
- Transition- Allocates \$225 million to aid in the transition process of the Medicaid overhaul.
- Eugenics Victims- The budget will direct payments of \$15,000 to hundreds of people determined as victims of North Carolina's past eugenics program. The first set of payments was distributed to the victims last fall.

• **NORTH CAROLINA'S TRANSPORTATION PROVISIONS**

The Transportation budget is another important facet of the North Carolina budgetary process. It will provide more funding to the highway fund to help bolster the infrastructure of North Carolina and pay needed attention to the bridges and roads.

- Highway Fund- The new budget will end the annual two hundred and sixteen million dollar transfer from the Highway Fund to the general operating fund, leaving more money made available for road building and other transportation

needs.

- Light Rail- Limits state funding toward light rail funding to five hundred thousand dollars effectively crippling the Durham-Chapel Hill light rail project.
- Infrastructure- The budget will increase the money to bridges, road resurfacing, pavement preservation, and secondary road maintenance by one hundred and eighty-nine million dollars.
- Public Airport Development- State grants for the development of public airport development by seventeen million dollars the first year and twelve and a half million the next year.

• **NORTH CAROLINA'S SALARIES & BENEFITS PROVISIONS**

The salaries of the employees of North Carolina have been in need of a general raise. Although the budget is helpful, I feel that it is simply not enough to compensate the men and women of our state for the incredible work that they do.

- State-employee Salaries- All state employees and teachers will receive a seven hundred and fifty dollar raise by the month of December.
- Highway Patrol Officers – The minimum salary for Highway Patrol Officers will raise from thirty-five thousand dollars to thirty-six thousand and fifty dollars.
- General Salary Boosts- There will be thirty-eight million dollars allocated for higher correctional officer salary; thirty million dollars for community college salaries; and thirty-eight million dollars for Gov. Pat McCrory's administration to make targeted salary increases.

• **NORTH CAROLINA'S TAXES AND FEES**

The changes in the tax code, including some increased fees, will help the state fund the budget for the future biennium and build toward a general surplus that will allow the state to fund projects. It benefits the state as a whole.

- Personal Income Tax- The new budget will decrease the personal income tax from 5.75 percent to 5.499 percent starting in 2017.
- DMV Fees- DMV fees will be raised between twenty-five and thirty-three percent, generating approximately two hundred and twenty-seven million dollars.
- Historic Tax Credits- Restores version of historic preservation tax credits. These credits expired at the end of 2014.
- Film Credits- Film credits will be increased in the state of North Carolina from ten million dollars to thirty million dollars for film, television, and commercial productions.

• **NORTH CAROLINA'S OTHER AGENCIES & PROVISIONS**

Various monies have been appropriated to provide new programs and the reassignment of zoos and aquariums in North Carolina. One of the key new components is the inclusion of monies to equip police vehicles with cameras.

- The new budget will create a Department of Information Technology and Department of Military and Veterans Affairs, as requested by Gov. Pat McCrory.
- Zoos and Aquariums- All zoos and aquariums in North Carolina will be moved out from under the Department of Environment and Natural Resources to an expanded Department of Natural and Cultural Resources.
- Cruiser Cameras- The State Highway Patrol will install vehicle cameras on cruisers currently without them. This will cost the Highway Patrol approximately six million dollars.

• RESERVES & GRANTS

The important feature of these provisions is the boosting of North Carolina's Emergency Account, a fund which will provide for repairs and rebuilding efforts in the event of a natural disaster.

- State's Emergency Account- Six hundred million dollars will be held for North Carolina's Emergency Fund to be used for building repairs and renovations.
- Police Body Cameras- The budget will create a two and a half million dollars grant for the usage of police body cameras.
- Afterschool Programs- Six million dollars will be reserved in annual grant money to increase the productivity of after school programs, specifically those that focus on improving the reading levels of young children.

At the General Assembly



After a long day of Session, which lasted about 22 hours, Senator Waddell heads home to Charlotte, North Carolina, on September 28, 2015. State legislators wrapped up their longest session, eight months of lawmaking, in over a decade shortly after 4:00 AM.

Senator Waddell's office is open Monday through Friday during Session. You may reach her office by calling her Legislative Assistant Jyrta Moore at 919-733-5650 or by email at waddelljla@ncleg.net

All committee meetings and press conferences can be heard on the General Assembly's website at www.ncleg.net. Once on the site, select "[Audio](#)" and then make your selection: House Chamber, Senate Chamber, Committee Room or Press Conference Room. A schedule of committee meetings and other events is also available on the website.

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