



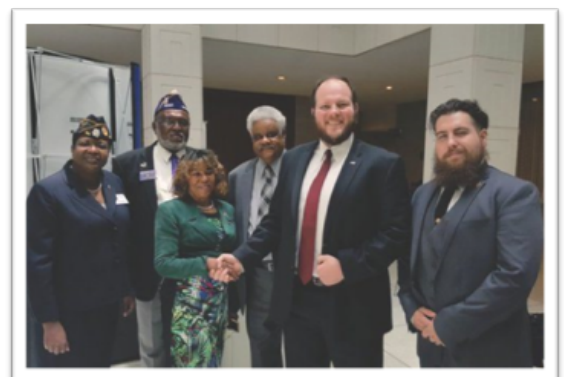
a study be conducted by the Department of Transportation (DOT) to determine the influence of changes made to the State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA) on transportation projects. The DOT would assess savings and cost reductions due to the shortening of production time lines. The Department is expected to submit a full report of their findings and recommendations to the Environmental Revenue Commission and the Joint Legislative Transportation Oversight Committee by December 1, 2016. I voted in support of this bill. It passed the third reading in the Senate and will be reviewed in the House.

- **[Modify School Performance Grades \(Senate Bill 855\)](#)** – This bill would enact changes to the state's current Education Value-Added Assessment System (EVAAS), also known as the A-F Grading scale. EVAAS was designed to assess the performance of North Carolina based on a formula adding the school achievement score and the school growth score. This legislation would modify the way EVAAS accounts for the quality of each school by requiring that the school achievement score accounts for 50 percent and the school growth score for 50 percent. The previous system calculated the school achievement score at 80 percent and the school achievement score at 20 percent. This new scale is designed to better display the quality of each school's education. I am a primary sponsor of this bill.
- **[Mortgage Forgiveness Tax Benefit \(Senate Bill 861\)](#)** – This legislation stands as an add-on to the proposal of [Senate Bill 726, IRC Update](#), an act to update the reference to the internal revenue code and to decouple from certain provisions of the federal Protecting Americans from Tax Hikes Act of 2015 (PATH Act). Senate Bill 726 would reduce the amount that small and medium-sized businesses can have deducted from taxes using section 179 tax policies. If Senate Bill 726 passes, Senate Bill 861 requests that any debt cancellation that had been declared during the year be reported on tax returns. If the bill does not pass, Senate Bill 861 proposes adding canceled debt as a deduction during tax reports. I am a co-sponsor of this legislation.
- **[Increase NC Minimum Wage/Set COLA \(Senate Bill 864\)](#)** – This bill proposes an increase of the minimum wage to \$12 per hour, effective January 1, 2017. Every subsequent September 30<sup>th</sup>, wages would be adjusted at a rate comparable to changes in the Consumer Price Index (CPI-U), to dilute the impact in changes to cost of living. The Commissioner of Labor would calculate the value of adjustments using the CPI-U and ensure they are commensurate to the U.S. Department of Labor. This bill would also appropriate \$2,000,000 in state funds to compensate State Employees for these adjustments for 2016-2017. I am a co-sponsor of this legislation.
- **[NC Healthcare Jobs Initiative 2016 \(Senate Bill 863\)](#)** – This legislation seeks to create jobs for North Carolina's citizens and boost the state's economy through the expansion of the Medicaid system. It would expand the eligibility for the Medicaid program to include all citizens under the age of sixty-five that have incomes equal to or less than 133% of the federal poverty guidelines. The amount of federal funding would increase by expanding the Medicaid system. This legislation would also help the private sector by increasing the available market of health care recipients. I am a co-sponsor of this bill.

## At the General Assembly



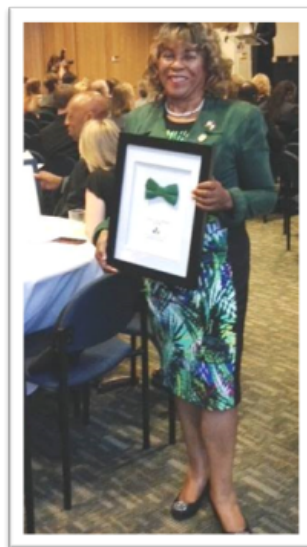
Senator Joyce Waddell meets with the American



Senator Joyce Waddell meets with veterans at the 2016

Association of Retired Persons (AARP) to discuss  
legislation that improves the lives of family caregivers on  
Tuesday, May 10, 2016.

North Carolina Student Veteran Legislative Conference  
on Wednesday, May 11, 2016.



The North Carolina League of Conservation Voters recognized  
Senator Joyce Waddell as a Rising Star at the  
2016 Green Tie Awards on Wednesday, May 11, 2016.

## **The County News**

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From the desk of Senator Joyce Waddell

## Affordable education

CHARLOTTE NC — The defunding of public schools in North Carolina makes access to quality education difficult to achieve. State funding to Local Education Agencies decreased dramatically, shifting much of the burden of education costs to counties, which has led to inequities in the level of education children receive from county to county.

Our state has seen a 15 percent decrease in NC pre-K per pupil spending since 2009. This lack of funding for public programs paired with the decline of teacher pay has led to a 28 percent drop in registration to teacher preparation programs and a shortage of educators willing to work in the state of North Carolina.

The NC House is considering passing House Bill 1031, Special Fund/Help Educators with Loan Payment, which would establish the Loan Repayment Assistance Program for Teachers and make \$38.5 million of the state lottery proceeds to help teachers repay their student loans. Full-time teachers in public and charter schools, who have been employed in the North Carolina school system for 2-8 years, would be able to access the funds to repay loans for up to four years.

During the period of loan reception, teachers must submit status updates annually to verify their eligibility. Eligible teachers can receive up to \$10,000 per year and would not be required to repay their loan should they remain employed as an eligible teacher for a period of four years per loan.

Loan recipients must notify the State Education Assistance Authority of any changes in employment and must repay their loans in full plus interest, should they change professions, or leave the state. Eligible teachers who die, become disabled, take a leave of absence, or are discharged will not be allowed to continue receiving loans, but will also not have to repay any outstanding disbursements.

The bill is an effort to provide an incentive for educators to continue working in North Carolina and attract new ones to the state.

The National Education Association (NEA) has also made efforts to make teachers feel their work is being appreciated and to encourage people to share stories of educators who have impacted their life.

The NEA held National Teacher Appreciation Week from May 2-6 to encourage people to acknowledge the hard work of educators across the country. The NEA asked people to share stories and pictures last week with their favorite teachers on social media and use the hashtag #ThankATeacher.

Sharing success stories can still be done beyond National Teacher Appreciation Week.

"In this legislative session, providing quality education must be a priority for the General Assembly. I have prepared some draft bills, such as Raise Teacher Pay and UNC Fixed Tuition Plan, to propose in sub-committees and plenary sessions that support increasing teacher salary and making education more affordable. The provision of affordable schooling for North Carolina's citizens is my top priority. Our state has to start providing incentives to attract and retain quality educators. If not, we will continue to lose educators and citizens to seek education degrees," said Senator Joyce Waddell.



Waddell

Senator Waddell's office is open Monday through Friday during Session. You may reach her office by calling her Legislative Assistant, Jyrita Moore, at 919-733-5650 or by email at [waddelljila@ncleg.net](mailto:waddelljila@ncleg.net).

All committee meetings and press conferences can be heard on the General Assembly's website at [www.ncleg.net](http://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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