

Senator Joyce Waddell's July 14, 2016, Newsletter

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*Serving District 40 and
 Mecklenburg County*



Committees

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The Waddell Weekly Bulletin

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Dear Friends:

On July 1, 2016, the General Assembly concluded the Short Session for the year and will reconvene on January 11, 2017. Before the end of session, the legislators pressed several pieces of legislation to the Governor.

Most notably, the finalized version of the budget was agreed upon. Many of the allocations were designated for education-related purposes and raising pay for state employees and teachers. More highlights can be found in the "Final Budget 2016 – 2017" section below. The budget has been sent to the Governor for signature.

Coming to the close of my first term as Senator for District 40, I can look back at the wonderful journey that serving the people of this great state has been. My responsibilities do not cease when session adjourns. Between sessions, I will be home in Mecklenburg County attending to the needs of my constituents. I will regularly travel to Raleigh for committee meetings to review and research policy and future legislation.

I cannot achieve anything without the support of my constituents. Thank you very much for your continued support!

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 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 2016 - 2017

➤ EDUCATION

· Student Accommodations

- Teach an additional 5,875 students projected to enter the public schools statewide this fall, at a cost of \$46.8 million.
- \$2.5 million more for instructional supplies, materials and equipment, bringing the total to \$47 million.
- Accelerate carrying out the state's Digital Learning Plan for the public schools with \$4.7 million.
- Raise textbook and digital materials spending by \$10 million to \$71.5 million.
- Set aside \$34.8 million to pay for scholarships for low-income K-12 students to attend private or religious schools, with plans to raise it annually by \$10 million through mid-2028.
- Raise funding for special education scholarships for children with disabilities to attend private school or receive tutoring by \$5.8 million to \$10 million.

· Community Colleges

- Adjust downward money for community college enrollment by \$26.2 million, reflecting a 4.1 percent decline in enrollment.
- \$6 million for community college campus equipment.
- Reduce cost savings the community college system must fund annually by 11 percent to \$46.8 million.

· UNC System

- \$31 million to teach an additional 3,125 full-time equivalent students expected at University of North Carolina system campuses this fall.
- \$1 million for assistance to help eight UNC schools establish laboratory schools for K-8 public school students to help train classroom teachers and principals.
- \$2.3 million for a program to help college students unable to complete their bachelor's degrees to finish their schooling.
- Restore \$16.3 million for UNC campuses because of the repeal of a law last year prohibiting campuses from spending more than \$1 million in operating funds for private fundraising activities.
- Lower cost savings the UNC system must locate annually and return to the state by \$16.3 million to \$62.8 million.
- Direct Elizabeth City State University, Western Carolina University and UNC-Pembroke to set fall 2018 tuition rates at \$500 per semester for in-state students and \$2,500 for out-of-state students. Give \$250,000 for Elizabeth City State to market the NC Promise Tuition Plan.
- Freeze UNC in-state tuition for incoming freshmen this fall for the next eight or 10 semesters, depending on the program.
- \$300,000 to administer new Cheatham-White Scholarships, which will give full scholarships to 50 students at North Carolina Central University and North Carolina Agricultural and Technical State University beginning in fall 2018.

➤ PROJECTS IN MECKLENBURG COUNTY

- Provides a grant-in-aid of \$500,000 to the Town of Matthews to complete sidewalks to handle increased pedestrian traffic and provides a grant-in-aid of \$500,000 to the Town of Mint Hill to complete sidewalks in and around the downtown area. The revised net appropriation for these sidewalk projects is \$1.0 million.
- Provides grants-in-aid of \$1,000,000 to the Mecklenburg County Sportsplex. The focus of this facility is to host a wide variety of weekend tournaments; soccer, rugby, lacrosse, football, field hockey, etc., as well as, weekday practices and league play for local teams and organizations.

➤ STATE EMPLOYEE SALARY & ADMINISTRATIVE ADJUSTMENTS

· Teachers & Schools

- \$10 million pilot program to give third-grade reading teachers bonuses whose student growth scores rank in the top 25 percent of similar teachers statewide and in each school district. A teacher could receive bonuses of up to \$6,800.
- Use \$57.3 million more in state lottery funds to pay the salaries of public school clerical workers, custodians and support staff, on top of the \$315 million in lottery funds for non-instructional personnel already appropriated for the coming year.
- \$4.9 million for a two-year pilot program to give teachers \$25 or \$50 bonuses for each student that receives good grades on Advanced Placement and International Baccalaureate course tests or on career and technical credentialing tests.
- \$5 million more for North Carolina Educational Endowment Fund, designed to give bonuses to public school teachers.
- Reduce public school central office administrative spending by \$2.5 million to \$92.6 million.
- Beginning teacher pay would stay at \$35,000.
- The average teacher pay increase would be 4.7% depending on years of service. The increases are weighted toward mid-career and veteran instructors. Current teachers would receive raises ranging from \$750 to \$5,250, depending on years of experience and where they sit on the most common salary schedule.

- **State Employees And Retirees**

- The annual salaries for specified judicial branch officials and employees of the Judicial Department for the 2016-2017 fiscal year, are increased by 4.5%.
- Rank-and-file state employees would get 1.5 percent raises and bonuses equal to 0.5 percent of their income. There is an additional \$28 million for one-time merit bonuses equal to 1 percent of salaries that would be distributed by agencies.
- Public retirees will get one-time cost-of-living bonuses equal to 1.6 percent of their annual payments.
- \$1.8 million for experience-based salary increases for Highway Patrol troopers.
- \$500,000 for raises for State Bureau of Investigation and Alcohol Law Enforcement agents.
- \$16.9 million to continue efforts to raise pay for state prison officers, supervisors and administrators.
- \$4.9 million for experience-based salary increases for assistant and deputy clerks of Superior Court and magistrates.

➤ **MEDICAID AND HEALTH**

- Serve another 260 children through the North Carolina Pre-K program with \$1.3 million, raising the program total to 29,400 slots.
- \$4.8 million to serve another 260 children through the state child care subsidy program and to raise subsidy rates.
- \$9.2 million to improve state and county child welfare programs and provide more oversight.
- \$478,000 on mosquito surveillance, control and education to prevent the Zika virus and other related viruses.
- Adjust Medicaid funding growth downward by \$318.6 million to reflect lower enrollment and service use by enrollees.

➤ **TAXES AND FEES**

- Increase standard deductions for individual income taxes both this calendar year and for 2017 by \$500 (single, married filing separately), \$800 (head of household) or \$1,000 (married filing jointly) annually. In 2017, the standard deduction will range from \$8,750 to \$17,500.
- Increase newborn screening fees from \$24 to \$44 to offset increase costs and the inability to reimbursement the costs from Medicaid.

In Charlotte, NC



Senator Waddell attends press conference with Charlotte-Mecklenburg Police Chief, Kerr Putney, to discuss the recent tragedies across the nation and its impact on the city of Charlotte.

[Please click on this link to view the article and video clip of the press conference.](#)

The County News

From the desk of Senator Joyce Waddell 

Lawmakers consider amending NC income tax rate

CHARLOTTE, NC – Senate Bill 817, Constitutional Amendment – Maximum Income Tax Rate of 5.5%, may appear on the ballot in the November election. If the majority of the voters approve this measure, it would become constitutional law and go into effect on January 1, 2017. The North Carolina State Constitution may be amended by a constitutional convention or by legislative action. If a proposed amendment is approved by three-fifths of both the House and Senate, then it would be submitted to eligible voters of the state at the general election.

Senate Bill 817 proposes to permanently limit the current state personal income tax rate at 5.5 percent rather than the current constitutional 10 percent cap. Although the tax limit may seem beneficial at first glance, the legislation holds serious implications for the state's future. Since the current income tax rate sits at 5.75 percent, dropping it down to 5.5 percent would lead to a drastic decrease in state revenue. In turn, this would result in cutting funding to public education, healthcare, parks, transportation, and other services in the community. It would also bar future lawmakers from the ability to respond to fiscal needs of the state as the population grows. The passage of this amendment would likely result in the increase in other taxes, such as sales tax, to make up for the loss of revenue. It is estimated that more than \$2 billion of revenue would be lost.

The tax cut would mostly benefit the wealthy while taking away a vital source of revenue to North Carolina's communities. The constitutional amendment would put more money into the pockets of the state's wealthiest households and profitable businesses. There is no evidence that the tax cuts would create

jobs or boost the economy. The tax cuts would drain the state resources used to support broad public investments. An increase in sales tax would be a way to alleviate some of the imbalance in revenue, but this would be most harmful to the middle and lower classes.

Senate Bill 817 has been through the Senate Committee on Finance and is expected to reach the Senate floor. The legislation has been absorbed into House Bill 3, Omnibus Constitutional Amendments, along with two other proposed constitutional amendments concerning eminent domain and the right to hunt, fish, and harvest wildlife. The constitutional amendment on the income tax cap can be found in Part II of House Bill 3, hidden in jargon that seeks to persuade voters to support the transfer of some monies into the State Emergency Reserve Fund to "protect taxpayers."

"We should not make decisions that would bar future lawmakers from doing what is necessary to ensure that North Carolinians lead quality lives. Furthermore, supporting this legislation would mean that we are reaching further into the pockets of the middle and lower class while the wealthiest families in the state continue to prosper. We need to think about the greater good for the majority of our citizens and the future prosperity of North Carolina," 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, Jyrta Moore, at [919-733-5650](tel: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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