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Legislative Updates from the Office of Rep. Nasif Majeed

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May 30, 2019

Representative Nasif Majeed



Representing District 99 Mecklenburg County

Legislative Updates:



PEACE. Last Thursday I was elated to stand with other state employees, witnessing Governor Roy Cooper as he signed [Executive Order No. 95](#) extending paid parental leave to the nearly 56,000 employees at cabinet agencies, departments and boards or

commissions under his authority.

As a sponsor of [HB696, NC Families First Act](#), I was invited to attend this signing. HB696 would require employers to fund paid family medical leave through payroll deductions.

Under this new Executive Order, eligible states employees will receive:

- 8 weeks of paid parental leave for employees who have given birth
- 4 weeks of paid parental leave for employees whose partners have given birth, or anyone who has had an adoption, foster care placement or other legal placement of a child.

Parents shouldn't have to choose between caring for their families and staying in their careers, but the reality is many of them—especially women—are still forced to do just that. Paid parental leave policies can help. They're good for child and family health and good for our economy. Benefits include:

- Ensuring babies are more likely to be born at a healthy weight, attend well care visits and have fewer health problems
- Lowering the risk of postpartum depression in mothers
- Bridging gender gaps at work and at home, where women are more likely to bear unpaid caregiving burdens on top of their careers
- Reducing demands on the social safety net
- Increasing worker retention, productivity and morale

Top employers in the private sector already offer paid parental leave to their employees, and they've seen success. This policy will help recruit and retain top talent to work in state government.

Parents will get 100 percent of their regular pay while they're on paid parental leave, giving parents and children time to stay healthy, giving families time to adjust and giving employees a financially secure way to balance parenthood and career. Governor Cooper said the included agencies and departments could cover the projected \$3.5 million cost of this measure out of their existing budgets.

He also encouraged officials at [Council of State](#) departments, which are not covered by this order, to offer similar leave to their employees.

"It'll help reduce gender inequality in our workplaces," Governor Cooper said, referring to his executive order, "and it'll help attract a strong workforce to state government."

Bottom line: Governor Cooper exhibited strong leadership in this move to improve the working environment for state employees. His paid parental leave executive order isn't just the right choice for families—it's good for our economy.

Passing a State Budget is not an easy process. Earlier this month, the NC House passed its version of the State Budget. This week the NC Senate is doing its version. Over the next few weeks the House and Senate will work out their differences and send a State Budget bill to Governor Cooper who can either sign the bill into law or veto it. Right now, a veto looks likely given both the House and Senate budgets refuse to expand Medicaid and continue to divert money from schools to corporate tax cuts.

This week's newsletter will focus on what is in (or not in) the Senate budget.

Medicaid Expansion Left Out Again

The biggest disappointment with the Senate budget is that it fails to expand Medicaid to close the coverage gap for 500,000 North Carolinians. Every year we send billions of tax dollars to Washington DC that never comes back to us. If it came back through Medicaid expansion, we would have more jobs and more health care for our citizens.

37 other states have expanded Medicaid to close the coverage gap. Most recently, our neighboring state of Virginia expanded Medicaid as part of a State Budget compromise agreed to by a Democratic Governor and a Republican General Assembly. If Virginia can expand health care coverage, lower costs for all of us, and grow health care jobs – why can't North Carolina?

Health Care Funding Cut

Failing to expand Medicaid is bad, but the Senate budget also underfunds the *existing* Medicaid budget by at least \$100 million. Because many of the dollars we invest in Medicaid are matched by the federal government, the state cut will lead to an even larger total shortfall of \$220 million.

Teacher Pay Plan Lower than the House Budget and Governor Cooper's Proposal

With the Senate budget, average teacher salaries would increase 3.4% over the next two years (compared with 9.1% for Governor Cooper's proposal). Teachers with 15 to 24 years' experience would receive a \$500 one-time bonus and those with 25 years or more experience would receive a \$1,000 one-time bonus.

We need to raise teacher pay to the top in the Southeast and to the national average. To put the Senate's 3.4% pay raise over two years in context, Governor Cooper had proposed a 9.1% increase. One of the reasons his proposal contains a bigger pay raise is he does not prioritize cutting corporate taxes which is a key feature of the Senate budget.

Significant State Employee Pay Raise But No Retiree Pay Increase

The Senate budget provides most full-time state employees a 5% raise over two years. The House proposal was only a 1% raise that did not go into effect until January 1, 2020 (6 months later than normal).

Unfortunately, the Senate budget contains no COLA and no bonuses for state retirees.

No Additional Funding for Clean Water

Governor Cooper requested \$6 million to fight water contamination from emerging compounds like Gen X. The Senate budget provides no additional funding.

The budget also delays hog waste water protections that were set to go into effect.

Judicial Independence Attacks

Cheri Beasley recently became the first African-American, female Chief Justice in North Carolina history. The Senate budget cuts her office's funding 50% with no adequate explanation why her budget should be half of what it was for former chief Justice Mark Martin.

The Senate budget also cuts judge positions from Wake and Durham counties – just as the workload for those courts is set to surge under the new Raise the Age law.

Finally, the Senate budget guts the staff for the Judicial Standards Commission, which hears complaints and recommends discipline against judges. It has existed since 1973.



I am in full support of joining the national movement to pass [The Veterans Bill of Rights](#), a new initiative to help veterans access jobs, college degrees, healthcare, suicide prevention services, and housing through proven, low-cost

Veterans make incredible sacrifices defending our country, but too often they face barriers to jobs, education, healthcare, and housing once they complete their service.

They deserve better and it's our legislature's duty to help ensure that North Carolina's veterans get the benefits and resources they deserve.

The Problem

Our nation's veterans serve and protect us in the military – but too often, we fail to serve and protect them when they return home: Only 30% return to civilian life with a job, nearly two million along with four million of their family members lack basic health coverage, 20 veterans die from suicide every day, and over 40,000 are without a home on any given night.

The Solution: The Veterans Bill of

programs and state law changes.

The Veterans Bill of Rights honors veterans' service to our country by:

- Increasing veterans' access to jobs;
- Increasing veterans' access to college degrees, certificates, and licenses;
- Increasing veterans' access to healthcare;
- Preventing veteran suicide and increasing veterans' access to mental health services; and
- Ending veteran homelessness.

Rights

Veterans deserve better. The Veterans Bill of Rights is a package of simple changes and cost-effective tools that will make a dramatic difference for veterans. From leveraging veterans' unique experience and training to propel them toward jobs, to proven programs that help with re-entry to civilian life, to services that make it easier for vets to access high quality healthcare and secure housing it is a common-sense way to improve veterans' lives and honor their service.

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