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The latest news for you

Representative Nasif Majeed [majeedla@ncleg.net]

Sent: Friday, November 15, 2019 6:42 PM

To: Steve Johnston

November 15, 2019

Representative Nasif Majeed

District 99 - Mecklenburg County





LEGISLATIVE UPDATES

STATE BUDGET UPDATE

PEACE. The State Budget stalemate continued with two mini-budget bills passing this week: one dealing with transportation and one with disaster relief. **I supported both bills because both would help North Carolinians** in important ways but, unfortunately, legislative leaders mixed in unrelated bad provisions in each.

The transportation bill ([SB 356](#)) provided state funding and loans from the General Fund to the Department of Transportation which has run very low on funds. The shortfall in cash has caused delays in planning of future projects (not current projects) and forced a number of layoffs with transportation contractors. Normally, transportation projects are funded through the Highway Fund (which is funded by gas tax revenue, but not income or sales taxes).

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Why does the Department of Transportation have a cash flow problem? Three reasons that all came together at once. First, recent natural disasters have created an unprecedented amount of transportation-related clean up costs. The State will get reimbursed for these costs from the federal government, but that has not happened yet which creates a cash flow problem.

Second, court decisions around the Map Act have resolved the legal uncertainty around those eminent domain cases and prompted the State to pay out settlements to a large number of landowners whose lands were taken by the State.

Third, prior to the Map Act settlements and the recent flurry of destructive storms, the Highway Fund reserves had grown too large. While that may sound like a good thing, it also means that needed transportation projects that we have paid taxes for are not happening because money is just sitting around. So the General Assembly ordered the Department of Transportation to lower its reserves and the Department did so – unfortunately, just as the Map Act settlements and the storms of the past few years began to happen.

[SB 356](#) will provide an infusion of funds to ease the Highway Fund's cash flow problems. Planning for future projects will get back on track and thousands of North Carolina workers across the state will get back to work.

The disaster relief bill ([HB 200](#)) is badly-needed. It spends money from the State's reserve accounts to be used as money on disaster relief projects that will get matching federal funding. Everyone agrees this is a good idea.

Unfortunately, legislative leaders put in the disaster relief bill unrelated provisions that take away some of the budget administration flexibility that Governor Cooper currently has. House Democrats attempted to divide the bill so that lawmakers could vote on disaster relief separately from the power grab language, but the House Speaker did not allow the bill to be divided.

NEW CONGRESSIONAL LINES IN NORTH CAROLINA

North Carolina has been in the middle of the gerrymandering fight for the entire decade. Previously, a unanimous United States Supreme Court tossed out our Congressional districts because those lines were an unconstitutional racial gerrymander. The General Assembly drew new lines for the 2018 elections, but a panel of three state judges halted the use of those districts in 2020 because they amounted to an "extreme partisan gerrymander."

Basically, the situation is the Republican majority has drawn Congressional lines that almost always result in 10 Republicans and 3 Democrats representing North Carolina – an outcome that is very different from the fact that North Carolina is a pretty balanced state.

This week the NC House drew new Congressional lines. It was a process more open than the past, but still involved politicians drawing lines without meaningful public input or transparency.

The result was a Congressional map that has 8 safely Republican seats and 5 safely Democratic seats with each district's election result pretty much a foregone conclusion after the party primaries.

The new map is better than the old one, **but falls far short in giving every citizen to**

have their voice heard when voting for a member of Congress. So I voted No. The courts will now review the new maps and may accept them or take over the process of drawing them.

UTILITY SCAM AWARENESS WEEK

Next week is [Utility Scam Awareness Week](#) and utilities across the country are joining forces to arm customers with the knowledge to spot scams and protect their information.

From January through September 2019, more than 6,000 Duke Energy customers in North Carolina reported scam attempts, which has resulted in nearly \$150,000 stolen by scammers. Unfortunately, scammers continue to become more sophisticated so it's important for customers to be alert and ready to spot scams.

Three of the most common scams are a threat to disconnect service, a request for immediate payment and a request for prepaid debit card information. Duke Energy never asks or requires a customer with a delinquent account to purchase a prepaid debit card to avoid disconnection, and customers with delinquent accounts receive an advance disconnection notification from Duke Energy with the regular monthly billing – never a single notification quickly before disconnection.

Customers who suspect a scam should hang up and call Duke Energy immediately at the phone number listed on their bill, followed by a call to the police.

For additional information, I encourage you to read our [illumination story](#). By knowing what to look for and asking questions,we can help shut down scammers.

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The **NC Teaching Fellows Program** has been a primary tool for recruiting the best and brightest in North Carolina to become teachers. Teaching Fellows is a competitive, merit-based forgivable loans for service program that **provides up to \$4,123 a semester (\$8,250 a year)** for up to four years to highly-qualified students committed to teacher special education or a STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering or Mathematics) subject in a North Carolina public school.

The program is open to the following categories of applicants:


- A North Carolina high school senior
- A student applying to transfer to an educator preparation program at one of the five Teaching Fellows partner institutions (Elon University, Meredith College, NC State University, UNC Chapel Hill, or UNC Charlotte)
- A student already enrolled at one of the five Teaching Fellows partner institutions who transitions into an educator preparation program
- An individual with a bachelor's degree pursuing preparation for teacher licensure at one of the five Teaching Fellows partner institutions

REMEMBER: Applications will be accepted until midnight on Monday, January 13, 2020.



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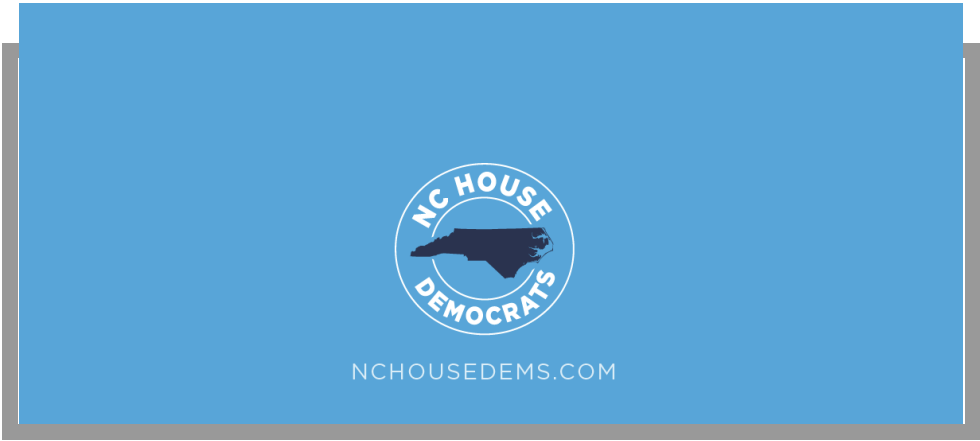
Have a great weekend, PEACE!



#IWillNotYield

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Representative Nasif Majeed, District 99 | Legislative Building, 16 W. Jones Street, Room 1008,
Raleigh, NC 27601

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