

SPAM Latest Updates from the NCGA



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NC Senate District 41 Newsletter

March 26, 2021

Bills Introduced & Co-Sponsored



It has been a busy two weeks at the General Assembly. I want to provide some updates on bills I have introduced and co-sponsored since my last newsletter.

- **Clear Roadblocks to I-77 Toll Relief**, with Senators Sawyer (R-Iredell, Yadkin) and Mohammed (D-Mecklenburg), works to remove roadblocks to give Governor Cooper his authority back to renegotiate and/or cancel the contract. The bill is updated and reintroduced [from last session](#) and has not been assigned a new number yet.
- **Senate Bill 249, The SAVE Act**. This bipartisan bill delivers safe, accessible, value-directed, and excellent (SAVE) health care throughout the state by allowing advanced practice registered nurses to be eligible to complete more medical assessments and procedures within their scope of practice.
- **Senate Bill 254, Holly Springs Tree Ordinances**. This local bill is similar to the one I filed for the Town of Davidson, and would allow Holly Springs to regulate the removal and preservation of trees and shrubs as part of development projects.
- **Senate Bill 268, Film Grant Fund Appropriation**. This bipartisan bill provides additional funding for the film and entertainment grant fund.
- **Senate Bill 291, Citizens Review Board**. This bill authorizes the City of Fayetteville to establish a Citizens Review Board, similar to the efforts I have supported for the City of Charlotte.
- **Senate Bill 301, Expand Expunction Eligibility**. This bipartisan piece of criminal justice legislation allows for the expunction of up to two non-violent felonies and expands who may initiate a petition for expunction on behalf of those who fall under the protections of the Raise the Age Act.
- **Senate Bill 320, 2021 Unemployment Insurance Reform**. This bill addresses the fact that NC is among the worst states for UI benefits and will expand eligibility to a 26 week period and increase the maximum benefit amount to \$500 per week.

- **Senate Bill 323, Joint Municipal Power Agencies/Investments.** This bipartisan bill authorizes money in certain decommissioning funds established by the NC Municipal Power Agency to be invested through the State Treasurer's ancillary governmental participant investment program. It will help reduce electric rates in towns like Cornelius and Huntersville.
- **Senate Bill 327, Firefighting Foam Registry.** This bipartisan bill requires mandatory reporting and tracking of potentially cancer-causing firefighting foam usage and inventory by Fire Departments.
- **Senate Bill 331, Healthy Students - Nurses in Every School.** This bill requires at least one school nurse in every school and provides funding for the position.
- **Senate Bill 350, North Carolina Innovation Waivers Act of 2021.** This bipartisan bill will increase the number of innovation waiver slots to provide DHHS and Division of Health Benefits the flexibility to develop an additional system of serving individuals with intellectual or developmental disabilities who are on the registry of unmet needs. The wait for services is too long under the current system.
- **Senate Bill 364, Automatic Voter Registration.** This bill will provide automatic voter registration at DMV offices, public agencies, community colleges, and the UNC system, and will automatically register citizens when they turn 18.

If you have any questions about or would like to help support any of these bills, feel free to contact me at Natasha.Marcus@ncleg.gov.

Bills I Do Not Support



I want to take some time to discuss some bills that have been introduced recently in the Senate, and explain why I do not support them.

- **Senate Bill 300, Criminal Justice Reform.** This bill includes many positive reforms of the system, but also includes a broadly-worded measure to make any person involved in a "riot" guilty of a felony. This "poison pill" in the bill unnecessarily targets protestors, most of whom are peaceful, instead of protecting them by casting a wide net.
- **Senate Bill 312, Clarify Emergency Powers.** This bill would prevent the Governor from acting effectively to protect North Carolinians during an emergency.
- **Senate Bill 326, "Election Integrity Act."** Despite its name, this bill undermines free and fair elections. It would make voting by mail harder by narrowing the window to request an absentee ballot and throwing away all ballots received after election day, even when they are mailed by election day. Valid votes should count, regardless of slow downs at the USPS.
- **Senate Bill 335, Increase Penalty/Disruption of Open Meeting.** This bill targets protestors at public meetings, defining such boisterous remarks as disorderly conduct and increasing criminal penalties. This would discourage public comments and infringe on the First Amendment.

Press Conference on Election Protection Legislation



Yesterday I joined my Senate Democrat colleagues and voting rights champions for a press conference on improving elections and removing hurdles to voting in our state. With common sense legislation, we are committed to making voting easier for every eligible person. **We want every voter to feel empowered at the ballot box because we believe that your vote is your freedom.**

My Senate colleagues and I will file a few election-related bills in the coming weeks. We will seek free and fair elections, broad voter participation, and fair redistricting. More details coming soon.

S101 Updates: Require Cooperation with ICE 2.0



I want to provide some updates on [Senate Bill 101, Require Cooperation with ICE 2.0](#), which I heard at both Judiciary Committee and on the Senate floor last week. I have been working closely with Mecklenburg County Sheriff McFadden to make sure the bill sponsors heard about the problems the bill would create for local law enforcement (which the Sheriff expressed at the committee hearing earlier this week). I support Sheriff McFadden's position that the bill a) unfairly shifts the costs of detainment from ICE to local sheriffs and b) makes it harder for local law enforcement officers to do their job by undermining relationships with victims and witnesses. Additionally, this bill would instill fear in immigrant communities. **I oppose this bill and [voted against it](#)**, and hope that the Governor will veto it, like he did [last biennium](#).

COVID-19 Vaccine Updates



Mecklenburg County Public Health (MCPH) is opening more first dose vaccination appointments at Bojangles' Coliseum for appointment dates through March 31, 2021. Groups 1-4 are eligible for these appointments at this time.

Individuals in Groups 1 and 3 working in Mecklenburg County, Group 2 County residents 65 years and older and Group 4 residents who are 16-64 years old with one or more high-risk medical conditions for severe disease from COVID-19 and people living in close group settings, specifically shelters and detention centers, may make a first dose appointment now at [StarMed.Care](#) or by calling **MCPH COVID-19 Hotline at 980-314-9400 (Option 3 for English and Option 8 for Spanish)**. If no appointments are available, eligible individuals may join the waitlist at [MeckNC.gov/COVID-19](#).

Groups currently eligible for the COVID-19 vaccine include:

- Group 1: Health care workers fighting COVID-19 & Long-Term Care staff and residents—people in skilled nursing facilities, adult care homes and continuing care retirement communities
- Group 2: Anyone 65 years or older regardless of health status or living situation
- Group 3: Frontline essential workers who are required to be on-site for work
- Group 4: Residents 16-64 years old with one or more high-risk medical conditions for severe disease from COVID-19 and people living in close group settings,

specifically shelters and detention centers. The remainder of Group 4 will be eligible beginning March 31st.

On April 7th, all North Carolinians aged 16+ will be eligible for a shot.

Mecklenburg County vaccine providers are administering three safe and highly effective COVID-19 vaccines that have been issued Emergency Use Authorization by the U.S. Food & Drug Administration: Johnson & Johnson, Moderna, and Pfizer-BioNTech. These COVID-19 vaccines are available to everyone at no cost to the person receiving the vaccine, no matter whether you have health insurance.

If you are having trouble finding a vaccine appointment, try using this [Vaccine Finder Tool](#).

Updates from Senate Judiciary Committee



This week, the Senate Judiciary Committee convened to discuss bills related to criminal justice and property laws. Below are some of the bills we discussed:

- [Senate Bill 207](#), Various Raise the Age Changes/Juvenile Justice Reinvestment Act Recommendations. This bipartisan bill allows more defendants between the ages of 16-18 to remain in the juvenile system.
- [Senate Bill 255](#), 2021 Administrative Office of the Courts Changes. This bill makes various changes and technical corrections to the laws governing the Administration of Justice.
- [Senate Bill 278](#), Property/Family Law-Reimburse Property Expenditures. This bill limits the prohibition on a spouse receiving reimbursement from the other for expenditures made to a property during a tenancy by the entirety to "after a tenancy by the entirety has been terminated by death".
- [Senate Bill 301](#), Expand Expunction Eligibility. See discussion above.

They are now back to the Rules Committee, and may be up for a vote on the Senate floor soon.

Updates from the Senate Redistricting and Elections Committee



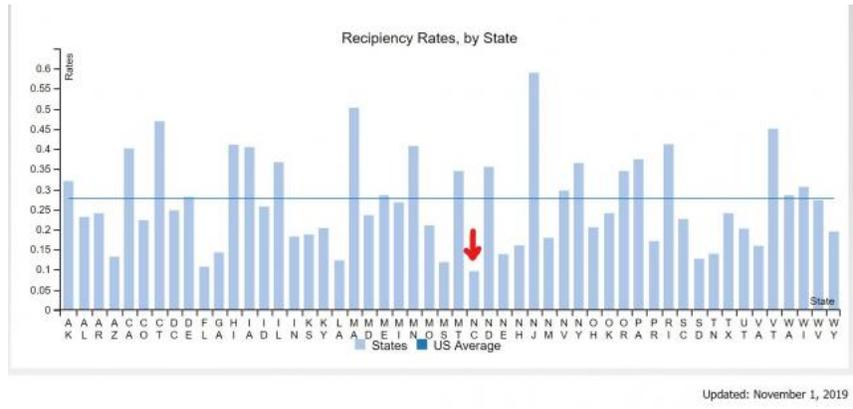
This past Wednesday, the NC Board of Elections Director Karen Brinson Bell withstood two hours of partisan grilling in the **Senate Redistricting and Elections Committee**. Republicans on the committee sought to support their narrative that the Director should have defied the bipartisan Board of Elections' settlement terms and the 4th Circuit Court that approved the settlement. They think she should have thrown out the 2,000 valid ballots that arrived more than five days after Election Day due to mail delays and the 8,000 ballots that lacked a valid signature or otherwise needed to be cured.

My comments during the hearing: "Some Republicans here want to both accept the

outcome of the elections they won - such as the Supreme Court Justice race that was very close - but also cast doubt on the Board of Elections' work and the security of our election."

The hearing was an example of how **one party continues to allege election fraud conspiracies and lay the groundwork for voter suppression bills**. I used my position on the committee to try to draw out the truth about the secure and safe election held in our state.

North Carolina Unemployment Insurance



As discussed earlier in the newsletter, I am proud to be a co-sponsor of [Senate Bill 320](#), 2021 Unemployment Insurance Reform. **This bill will make the following important changes to our unemployment system:**

- Increase eligibility to a 26 week period
- Increase the maximum weekly benefit amount from \$350 to \$500
- Base the calculation of the benefit amount on highest paid quarter
- Increase benefits allowed for partial unemployment
- Provide benefits in cases where an individual leaves employment for spousal relocation, health reasons, or due to an undue hardship
- Authorize the forgiveness of non-fraudulent over payments caused by agency error
- Establish a short-term compensation program to benefit employers and employees

Since the start of the pandemic, I hear regularly from constituents about the complicated barriers to access unemployment benefits. We are currently [ranked last nationwide](#) in reciprocity, a measurement of how many unemployed people qualify for benefits. This bill would help.

Wake Forest School of Medicine Announces New Campus in Charlotte





This week the Wake Forest School of Medicine and Atrium Health came together to announce the opening of a **new medical school in Charlotte that will have an immense economic and educational impact in our area**. I was particularly excited to learn about the new scholarship for students in under-served areas that honors of **Bishop George E. Battle, Jr.** Bishop Battle is an influential Davidson resident and Bishop at the Greater Gethsemane A.M.E Zion Church in Charlotte.

Public Education and the Leandro Mandate



In 1997, the North Carolina Supreme Court ruled that **every student in the state has a constitutional right to a "sound basic education" in the Leandro case**. Earlier this week, the defendants finally **submitted a comprehensive plan** detailing how the state will work to comply to the landmark ruling.

We are hopeful that, with the additional funding available to us this year from the American Relief Plan and from our state budget surplus, we can finally make the education investments required to meet the guarantees of the State Constitution. The Governor included much of the Leandro funding in **his proposed budget**. We don't know yet how NCGA leadership will react to that proposal or the Leandro plan.

An Update on Senate Bill 103

GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF NORTH CAROLINA
SESSION 2021

FILED SENATE
Feb 16, 2021
S.B. 103
PRINCIPAL CLERK

S

SENATE BILL DRS15029-NBf-57*

D

Short Title: Reduce Reg. To Help Children with Autism. (Public)
Sponsors: Senators Perry, Lee, and Barnes (Primary Sponsors).
Referred to:

1 A BILL TO BE ENTITLED
2 AN ACT TO REDUCE UNNECESSARY REGULATORY CONSTRAINTS FOR APPLIED
3 BEHAVIOR ANALYSIS.

Thank you to everyone who provided their feedback and insights on **Senate Bill 103, Reduce Regulations to Help Children with Autism**. I appreciate all of your help to inform me about the impact of this bill. In a nutshell, current state law has created a bottleneck that blocks access to Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA) therapy for children with autism by requiring that their work be supervised by a psychologist. NC has a significant shortage of psychologists who can do such oversight, and it is not needed anyway since they are not trained in ABA therapy and are rarely involved in the daily progress the child is making. Thirty-two other states allow Board Certified Behavior Analysts (BCBAs) to provide ABA under independent licensure and this bill will allow NC to do the same, thereby making ABA available to more families. So, **it's a good bill that will help families with children who need this therapy**. I am proud to have voted **YES**. The bill passed the Senate and is moving through House committees.

That said, I've heard from a few folks that we should ensure that a person with autism be included on the Board. While we could not get the bill sponsors to add that to the bill in the Senate, we have made that suggestion. I also know that ABA does not work for everyone and is sometimes harmful; this bill does not require ABA for anyone who opts out.

Ecological Recovery Project at Fisher Farm Park

Charlotte-Mecklenburg Storm Water Services recently made [a presentation](#) on their stream restoration projects, including at [Fisher Farm Park](#) in Davidson. The video provides information not only about stream restoration, but also clean water, wildlife, and quality of life. I recommend it.



2021 Holshouser Legislators Retreat: Critical Conversations in Education



Last weekend I attended a two-day seminar on education through the [Holshouser Retreat](#), hosted by the Hunt Institute. This retreat is a bipartisan collaboration whose goal is to develop goals and strategies related to quality education for all students in North Carolina.

One of the presentations was from [myFutureNC](#), a statewide nonprofit organization focused on educational attainment. It is the result of cross-sector collaboration between North Carolina leaders in education, business, and government. Their presentation included a report specific to Mecklenburg County's attainment on early learning and education, college readiness, postsecondary access and success, and labor market outcomes. I've included a link below.

[Read the Mecklenburg Attainment Report Here](#)

National Coverage of the RBG Act

The [RBG Act](#) is getting national attention! Thank you to the Center for Reproductive Rights on writing this [important story](#) on abortion access in North Carolina. I am proud to have written and filed this bill in the NC Senate.

| GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF NORTH CAROLINA SESSION 2021 | | FILED SENATE Mar 1, 2021 S.B. 167 PRINCIPAL CLERK |
|---|------------------------------|--|
| S | SENATE BILL DRS15051-NB-27A* | D |
| Short Title: Remove Barriers/Gain Access to Abortion Act. (Public) | | |
| Sponsors: Senators Marcus, Murdock, and Chaudhuri (Primary Sponsors). | | |
| Referred to: | | |
| 1 A BILL TO BE ENTITLED | | |
| 2 AN ACT TO REMOVE BARRIERS TO GAIN ACCESS TO ABORTION ACT (RBG ACT). | | |

Honoring Huntersville Teens Who Discovered and Reported Pipeline Leak



Earlier this month the Town of Huntersville [presented keys to the city](#) to Walker Sell and

Owen Fehr, who discovered the Colonial Pipeline leak last year. I want to congratulate Walker and Owen and thank them for alerting the public about this environmental disaster in our community. We don't know how long it was leaking before they noticed and we'll never know how much worse it could have been if they hadn't taken action.

I am in constant contact with the Department of Environmental Quality to get updates on the status of the leak. If you would like to be added to our listserv of constituent updates on the leak, please email me at natasha.marcus@ncleg.gov.

NCGA Joint Early Childhood Caucus



Last week the NCGA's Joint Early Childhood Caucus met to discuss universal Pre-K, childcare, literacy, and more. This bipartisan caucus was established to study issues and advocate for legislation related to children's lives from birth to age 8. Issues affecting early childhood have been exacerbated due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. I am proud to be a part of this new caucus to work to find innovative solutions for children across the state.

Watch the Meeting and Follow the Caucus Here

Letter to the Biden Administration: Infrastructure, Clean Water, and A Sustainable Future



Dear President Biden and Members of Congress:

We, the undersigned local elected officials, urge you to boldly invest in the kinds of infrastructure that will help put our nation's communities on a visionary and sustainable path. For far too long, our nation has allowed infrastructure to deteriorate - from crumbling roadways to broken sewage systems. Some infrastructure - including unnecessary highway expansions, lead service lines, combined sewers, giant landfills, power plants and pipelines - created new problems. As a result, our communities face far more pollution than we should tolerate while their core needs are often unmet.

I am proud to have joined over 360 local officials from 34 states to call on the Biden Administration to develop an **infrastructure plan that protects our health and environment**. **The letter**, written with Environment America and U.S. PIRG, calls for investments in the following areas: clean water, transportation, clean energy, solid waste, nature-based infrastructure, schools, and broadband. Wise investments in infrastructure can help NC and Mecklenburg County get back on our feet in 2021 & position us for a better future.

NC Department of Transportation Hosts Biannual "Litter Sweep"



The NC Department of Transportation is hosting their biannual statewide **roadside litter removal initiative, Litter Sweep**, from April 10-24, 2021. There will be maintenance crews devoted to litter pick up, but they also need volunteers to assist with these efforts. Learn more [here](#).

Free Cleaning Service for Seniors

The Mecklenburg County Department of Social Services is offering free cleaning services to seniors (60+) in the county.

If you are interested, call **980-314-6800** or email sfa-events@mecklenburgcountync.gov.



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How can we help you? Let us know and [reach out](#) to our office! We want to hear from you.

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