

**\*\*\*SPAM\*\*\* Latest Updates from the NCGA**

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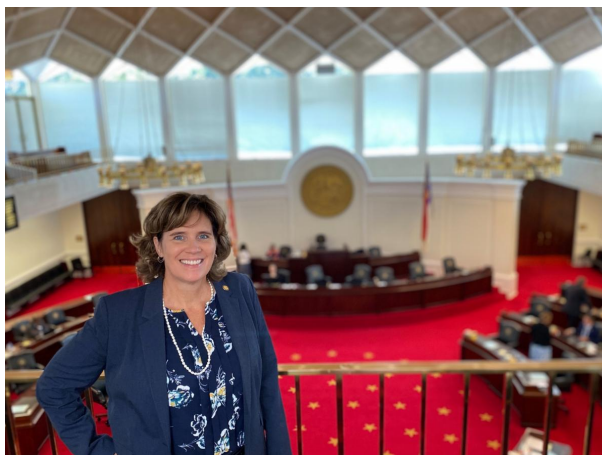
**Natasha**  
**MARCUS**  
NC Senate District 41



## NC Senate District 41 Newsletter

May 14, 2021

### Updates on Noteworthy Votes



Yesterday was the "crossover deadline" at the General Assembly -- the date by which bills must pass either the House or the Senate chamber in order to be eligible for consideration throughout the remainder of the 2021-2022 legislative session. Due to this deadline, we voted on many bills over the past 2 weeks. Below is a selection of noteworthy bills. You can find a full list of bills I voted on [here](#).

#### **Bills on which I voted YES:**

- **[H142](#), **UNC Building Reserves/Certain Projects**.** Appropriates funds for the University of North Carolina building reserve for building projects, including \$982,000 for the Science Building at UNC Charlotte. I am also a co-sponsor of the Senate's version of this bill, [S130](#).
- **[S35](#), **Max 4-Yr Age Difference to Marry Under 18 Yrs**.** Prohibits marriage under 18 years of age, unless they are at least 16 and, in that case, the spouse is no more than four years older. Under current law, the minimum age to marry in NC is only 14, the **[lowest of any state in the nation](#)** (tied with Alaska) and there is no law prohibiting minors from marrying much older adults. This outdated law has caused our state to become a destination state for child marriages, many of which are used to further child sex trafficking and/or involve significantly older men marrying children as young as 14. My caucus pushed to keep the original version of the bill, which would have required everyone to be at least 18 to marry, but Republican leadership insisted that the most they could agree to this compromise to address the most egregious cases of child marriage and improve current law. You can read more about the bill [here](#) and you can watch the debate in Judiciary Committee, when the bill was initially changed to allow 14 and 15 year olds to marry, at [this link](#). The bill is discussed beginning at the 48 minute mark and my comments are at 55:10-56:50.
- **[S172](#), **Additional COVID-19 Response and Relief**.** Appropriates additional federal funds from the American Rescue Plan. The bill includes funding to higher education institutions, social services including SNAP, emergency rental assistance, and more.
- **[S191](#), **The No Patient Left Alone Act**.** Ensures visitation rights for patients in most healthcare facilities during a declared disaster or emergency.
- **[S228](#), **Allow Employers to Offer EPO Benefit Plans**.** Lowers health care costs and expands access by allowing small businesses to offer exclusive provider benefit plans.
- **[S300](#), **Criminal Justice Reform**.** Comprehensive criminal justice reform bill that increases training and oversight for state and local law enforcement officers, requires use of the FBI's record of arrest and prosecution background system for law enforcement hiring, decriminalizes non-statutory criminal offenses, and more. The bill also includes changes to body camera laws, allowing family members to see police footage of a shooting within 5 days. More information [here](#).
- **[S408](#), **Stop Addiction Fraud Ethics Act of 2021**.** Requires marketing materials provided by treatment provider/facility to provide "accurate and complete information" and makes it unlawful for treatment provider/facility to offer anything of value to induce referral of a patient.
- **[S448](#), **Amendments to Schedule VI of the CSA**.** Allows a prescription drug approved under federal law and classified as a Schedule VI controlled substance (which includes marijuana and THC) to be lawfully used in North Carolina. **This is a great first step towards legalizing medical marijuana in North Carolina if and as soon as the federal government permits it.**
- **[S450](#), **Carbon Monoxide Detectors/School Bldgs**.** Requires installation of carbon monoxide alarms and detection systems in all public school buildings.
- **[S455](#), **Decriminalize Non-Statutory Offenses**.** Decriminalizes non-statutory criminal offenses and violations such as sleeping in a park, in order to cut down on low-level charges and unnecessary policing of the homeless population.
- **[S458](#), **Reinstate Mountain Island Lake Marine Commission**.** I am happy to report that my bill to restore the Mountain Island Lake Marine Commission has passed -- more information below.

- **[S465](#), **Trash Collection/Multifamily Residential**.** Sets forth requirements applicable to the use of doorstep refuse and recycling containers in apartment communities.
- **[S473](#), **Enhance Local Government Transparency**.** Allows more independence for annual local government audits, makes it a crime for elected officials to misuse their office for personal financial gain, and prohibits public officer serving on nonprofit board from self dealing with regard to award of public contracts.
- **[S490](#), **License to Work**.** Revises certain license revocation laws including for failure to pay upon demonstration of good cause to enable access to employment.
- **[S575](#), **Pharmacists Improve Public Health Needs**.** Expands access to healthcare by allowing qualified pharmacists authority to prescribe and dispense oral contraceptives, tobacco cessation medications, HIV drugs, and prenatal vitamins.
- **[S628](#), **Native Plants Right to Work Act**.** Requires the use of plants and seeds native to North Carolina in various State-funded projects that involve plantings or landscaping. I am also a **co-sponsor** of this bill.
- **[S654](#), **K-12 COVID-19 Provisions**.** Makes changes for the 20-21 and 21-22 school years to address the impact of COVID-19 in public schools related to achievement, growth, and performance scores and reports. It includes my "**[Save Spring Break Act](#)**" language allowing use of virtual days as make up days when all scheduled snow days are used up.
- **[S693](#), **Expedite Child Safety and Permanency**.** Amends various abuse and neglect laws to ensure the safety of children in out-of-placement homes and expedites permanency planning hearings for children who have been removed from the home.

#### **Bills on which I voted NO:**

- **[S405](#), **Born-Alive Abortion Survivors Protection Act**.** Infanticide is already illegal. It's illegal to kill a human being regardless of how they came into the world and regardless of their age. Moreover, the scenario in which this law would ever apply is when a pregnancy is terminated late in pregnancy due to a fatal fetal anomaly or emergency surgery. This bill would make that already difficult situation more traumatic by inserting politicians' views into the doctor-patient relationship. This bill was already defeated in 2019 and merely inflames sentiments on the issue of abortion. It's part of a nationwide playbook to undermine *Roe v Wade* and restrict women's control over their bodies by stigmatizing and criminalizing abortion care.
- **[S593](#), **Special Education Due Process Hearings**.** Allows parties to seek immediate judicial review of administrative law judge decisions in special education due process hearings. I support the rights of students with disabilities to get their cases heard quickly and to receive a taxpayer-sponsored private education when needed. However, I share CMS's concerns about how the appeals process in this bill will impact their ability to meet the significant financial obligations. The bill sponsor would not agree to accept my clarifying amendment, so I voted no.
- **[S605](#), **North Carolina Farm Act of 2021**.** Makes various comprehensive changes to agriculture and forestry laws. I have two major concerns about this bill. First, section 11 would allow hog farms to install "digester" systems on a long-term general permit, instead of a one-year permit with public input, and does not require more environmentally-sound biogas technologies used in other states. This essentially locks us into the harmful hog farm lagoons and sprayfield method which has been the reason for the myriad successful nuisance lawsuits brought by neighbors. You can read more about Section 11 [here](#). Second, section 13 is very

anti-labor. It amends the Retaliatory Employment Discrimination Act to restrict the right of employees in all industries who are retaliated against to pursue their claims in court.

- **S636, Donor Privacy.** Allows politically active 501(c)(4) organizations to hide their major donors while using their money to support or oppose candidates and political issues. It would take NC backwards by encouraging more dark money in politics, at a time when people want more transparency about who is funding their elected officials and influencing policy. The bill purports to be only about protecting people who want to donate small amounts to their church or civic organization anonymously, but that is already allowed under current law. The bill is really about making sure wealthy donors can secretly support campaigns and political groups. I spoke out on the Senate floor against this bill and voted NO. You can read more [here](#).
- **S671, Changes to the K-12 Scholarship Programs.** Increases the amount of public funds going to private schools by increasing the income cap for private school vouchers, moving even further away from the intended purpose of creating the "opportunity scholarship" program. I believe it is fundamentally wrong to use public money for private schools especially when a) our public schools are so severely underfunded, and b) private schools are permitted to discriminate based on race, religion, disabilities and LGBTQ status.

## An Update on the Mountain Island Lake Marine Commission



My bill, **S458**, passed in the Senate this Wednesday. This legislation authorizes the reinstatement of the Mt. Island Lake Marine Commission by Gaston and Mecklenburg counties for the protection of Charlotte's main drinking water source. This is a great example of regional cooperation between the two counties.

The bill now goes to the House for votes, and then will be sent to the Governor's desk to sign. I am proud to have introduced this important bipartisan bill.

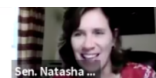
## Interview with League of Women Voters and Fair Districts NC



Earlier this month, I had an interview with the League of Women Voters and Fair Districts NC to discuss **election protections and redistricting plans** in the state. We discussed gerrymandering, harmful voting laws, and the [new congressional apportionment data](#) recently announced by the U.S. Census Bureau. We also talked about Senate Bills that tackle campaign finance reform, automatic voter registration, independent redistricting commissions, and clarify how to draw fair maps, and more. You can watch my interview with the LWV at the link below.

[Watch the Full Interview Here](#)

## Legislative Update at Connecting Cornelius Event



## LEGISLATIVE UPDATE NC SENATE



Natasha  
**MARCUS**

Earlier this month I joined the Town of Cornelius for their monthly Connecting Cornelius Event. I gave a **legislative update to town officials and constituents** on key priorities related to the town's agenda, public education, the environment, healthcare, and more. You can watch the full update at the link below. **My remarks are from 3:38 to 27:22.**

## Connecting Cornelius Video

### Colonial Pipeline Updates



As you have no doubt heard by now, Colonial Pipeline was the target of a cybersecurity attack this past week. In addition to the security and supply concerns that raises, I was concerned that this may impact their cleanup work in Huntersville. I spoke with Colonial representatives the next day and they assured me that **product recovery and environmental remediation efforts here are not affected by this cybersecurity attack.** Due to IT systems being impacted, they may be slower to respond to informational requests, but the environmental response remains a 24/7 operation.

Colonial Pipeline has restarted its pipeline operations which is good news for North Carolina. This incident is another reminder about the importance of enhanced pipeline safety and the need for my bill, [SB549](#), Improve Pipeline Safety.

### Deadline for NC Medicaid Open Enrollment

**Today, May 14** is the deadline to enroll in a health plan under NC Medicaid. Medicaid beneficiaries can call the NC DHHS Enrollment Brokers to determine their enrollment status, if they are mandatory, exempt, or excluded. If you do not choose a health plan by May 14, 2021, you will be automatically enrolled in one. This is required as part of NC's Medicaid Transformation.



Visit [ncmedicaidombudsman.org](https://ncmedicaidombudsman.org) or call **877-201-3750** for more information.



**May 14, 2021**

NC Medicaid Program  
Open Enrollment Deadline



## Mecklenburg Delegation to the NCGA Hosting Second Virtual Listening Session of the Year

THE MECKLENBURG COUNTY DELEGATION TO THE  
NC GENERAL ASSEMBLY

SECOND VIRTUAL LISTENING SESSION OF 2021



Thursday, May 20 | 7-8PM  
Sign up here: <http://bit.ly/ncgamecksignup>  
\*Attendees must sign up in advance to join the Listening Session

The Mecklenburg County Delegation to the NC General Assembly is hosting our second virtual listening session of the year on **Thursday, May 20th from 7-8pm**. Please note that *this is a rescheduled time*, as the original time (May 13th at 7pm) interfered with the legislative calendar. The 17-member Delegation wants to hear from you about what is on your mind, what you would like us to know about your community, and what you would like us to work on. **This is your opportunity to talk to us and for us to listen.** Attendees must sign up in advance to join the Listening Session. I hope you will join us.

**Sign Up for the Listening Session Here**

## Cain Center for the Arts Groundbreaking Ceremony



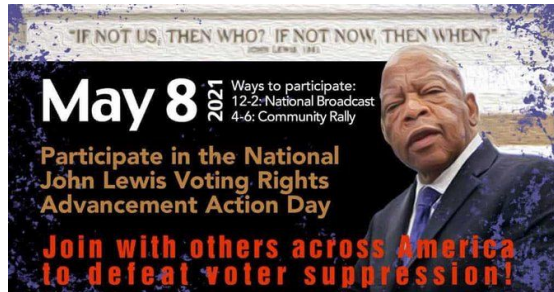


From L to R: Natasha Marcus, Jeff Michael, Chief Deputy Secretary Staci Meyer, and DNCR Secretary Reid Wilson

This afternoon I attended the groundbreaking ceremony for the Cain Center for the Arts in Cornelius. The Secretary of NC Dept of Natural and Cultural Resources and members of his department, **including Davidson's own Jeff Michael, the new Deputy Secretary for Natural Resources**, and several other local and state elected officials and donors were there. This center will be an artistic and cultural venue to revitalize and enrich the Lake Norman region. I also [filed legislation](#) earlier this session to secure state funding to help with the construction of this new center and have pledged to work with Rep. Bradford to get that funding in this year's budget. More on the ceremony today [here](#).

## National John Lewis Voting Rights Advancement Day of Action

I was honored to speak at the John Lewis Action Day rally earlier this month. At the invitation of [Unity in Community](#), I spoke about the continuing fight to **demand and protect voting rights for every American** and I called out efforts by some to undermine democracy. I am a co-sponsor of [S716](#), Fix our Democracy, a sweeping and comprehensive elections, redistricting, and campaign finance reform bill.



## COVID-19 Updates

**Effective Immediately:**  
~~Statewide Mask Mandate~~  
~~Mandatory Mass Gathering Limits~~





Effective immediately, **all mandatory capacity, gathering limits, social distancing requirements and most mandatory mask requirements are lifted in North Carolina.**

That means most people in most settings will no longer be required to wear a mask or be socially distant indoors or outdoors. **Note that the CDC recommends that you wait until you are fully vaccinated to go without a mask.**

There will continue to be a mandatory indoor mask requirement on public transportation, in child care, in schools, in prisons and in certain public health settings. There will be strong recommendations by DHHS for people to wear masks indoors in certain public places. There will also be **strong recommendations from DHHS for unvaccinated people to wear masks.** Certainly anyone who feels better protected or has received advice from a doctor should also continue to wear a mask. Private businesses and entities, as well as local governments, may still require masks or limit capacity if they choose. There is no announcement from Mecklenburg County yet, although we anticipate that it will follow the Governor's new guidelines.

Additionally, based on a review of safety and effectiveness data from clinical trials in the United States and the expanded emergency authorization by the FDA, the CDC now recommends **Pfizer's COVID-19 vaccine for children ages 12-15.** Young people are vulnerable to the COVID-19 virus, just like everyone else. NCDHHS is working with pediatricians and family medicine doctors to make the Pfizer vaccine accessible across the state, including connecting larger vaccine providers who have the capacity to store the vaccine to smaller practices needing a more limited quantity. In addition, the department is helping interested schools connect with vaccine partners to hosted onsite and offsite vaccine events for students and their families. To find providers with the Pfizer vaccine, go to [MySpot.nc.gov](https://MySpot.nc.gov) and filter for Pfizer.

Information on COVID-19 in Mecklenburg County, including cases, vaccine information, and more can be found [here](#).

## Food Giveaway from Union Bethel AME Zion Church

AME Zion Church in the historic Smithville community in Cornelius is giving out **free food every Friday in May** from 12-2pm. Interested participants need to sign-up via the form to assist the organizers with health and safety precautions.



[Sign Up Here](#)



## Letter of Support to Join Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative



North Carolina General Assembly  
Senate Chamber  
State Legislative Building  
Raleigh, NC 27601-2808

May 13, 2021

The Honorable Governor Roy Cooper  
North Carolina Office of the Governor  
20301 Mail Service Center  
Raleigh, NC 27699-0301

Re: Support for Adoption of Rules to Reduce Carbon Pollution from the Energy Sector and to Join Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative

Dear Governor Cooper,

We commend you for your leadership in confronting the threats that climate change poses to our State. By bringing North Carolina into the U.S. Climate Alliance and issuing Executive Order No. 80 (EO80), your administration has established science-based carbon pollution reduction and clean energy goals which are critical to ensuring that we in North Carolina do our part to help avert the worst impacts of climate change. We endorse the goals of the North Carolina Clean Energy Plan (CEP) to achieve a 70% reduction in carbon dioxide emissions from 2005 levels by 2030 and achieve carbon neutrality by 2050.

Recommendation A-1 of the CEP resulted in a stakeholder process that identified options to achieve these carbon reduction goals. Of the options examined, joining the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative (RGGI) was identified as one of the most cost-effective pathways for North Carolina to swiftly and meaningfully reduce power sector carbon pollution. We write to urge your administration to continue the common-sense approach to reducing greenhouse gas pollution that you launched with Executive Order 80 by establishing enforceable limits on power sector carbon pollution and joining the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative (RGGI).

This week I joined my Senate Democratic colleagues in signing a letter to Governor Cooper urging him to reduce carbon pollution and join the regional greenhouse gas initiative. Achieving the North Carolina Clean Energy Plan will require swift action, which is why our letter calls for the Environmental Management Commission to adopt rules to set declining pollution limits for carbon dioxide from the electric power sector. Climate change is already impacting the health, natural resources, and economy of our state, and these actions would help ensure a safe and just environmental future.

## IGNITE: Political Power in Every Young Woman

At the beginning of the month I joined IGNITE, a nonpartisan organization working to **build our next generation of women leaders**, for a networking event. I met with young women who are interested in public service and politics, shared my story, and gave advice on how to get involved in public service.



If this newsletter was forwarded to you and you would like to receive future editions, please subscribe at [this link](#) or email me at [Natasha.Marcus@ncleg.gov](mailto:Natasha.Marcus@ncleg.gov) and let me know you want to subscribe to the biweekly newsletter.

### Contact Our Office

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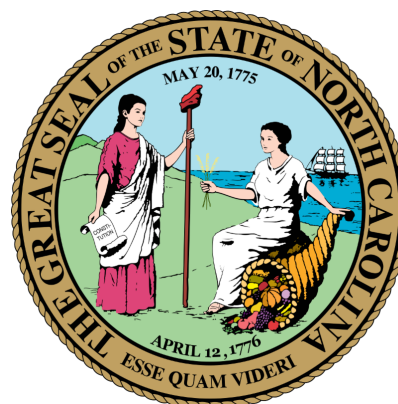
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How can we help you? Let us know and [reach out](#) to our office! We want to hear from you.

Senator Natasha Marcus | [Website](#)



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