

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



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NC Senate District 41 Newsletter

May 28, 2021

This Weekend We Honor Those Who Died for Our Country



No Senate Budget Yet

Budget Impasse Among NC Republicans Breeds Impatience

WFAE | By Gary D. Robertson / Associated Press
Published May 28, 2021 at 9:41 AM EDT



It's the end of May and we still **have not seen even a first draft of the Senate's proposed state budget**. The new fiscal year begins July 1st and Republican Senators have not revealed their plan or priorities and are in a standoff with House Republicans, unable to agree on a proposal.

In contrast, **Governor Cooper released his budget proposal on March 24th**, which includes significant funding for broadband expansion, public school investments, college affordability plans, water and sewer upgrades, infrastructure needs and more. You can watch the press conference [here](#). We **have a budget surplus of about \$5 billion** due to higher than expected receipts and the lack of a state budget last biennium. We also have about **\$1.7 billion saved in the rainy day fund** and will receive **\$5.7 billion in federal funding** from the American Rescue Plan (more on the ARP later in the newsletter). **This positive financial situation gives us a once in a generation opportunity to make investments that could transform our state and position us for a prosperous future.** But, so far, we are still waiting for Senate Majority leaders to even release their plan.

As weeks pass and legislative leaders remain hardened in their impasse, I'm concerned that we are running out of time to consider and pass a comprehensive, bipartisan budget in the best interest of all North Carolinians. You can read more on the standoff and what may happen next in the articles below.

[Read More Here \(WFAE Article\)](#)

[Read More Here \(WRAL Article\)](#)

Senate Committees Update: Appropriations and Base Budget & Elections and Redistricting



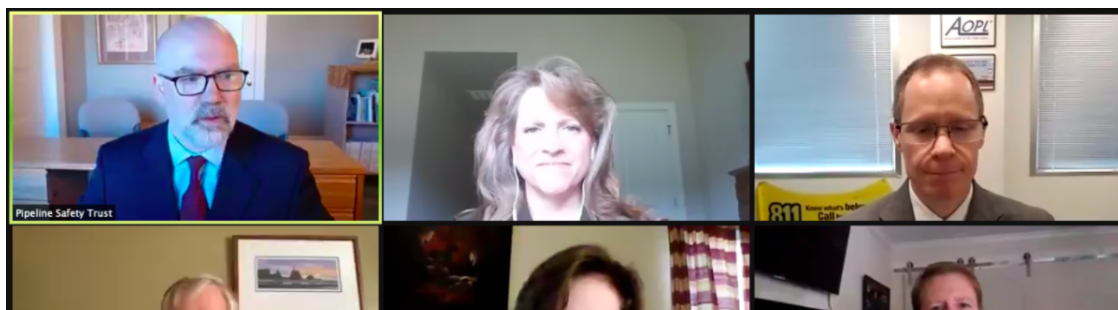


Yesterday the **Appropriations and Base Budget Committee** discussed the [PCS of House Bill 334](#), Jobs Grant and Tax Relief, which would make significant changes to our tax system. The bill includes some good policy, including a **reduced income tax rate** (from 5.25% to 4.99%), an **increased standard deduction** (\$2,000 per person) and **increased child deduction** (\$500 per child).

However, **I have concerns about other sections of the bill, including the proposal to reduce the corporate income tax each year until it is eliminated completely by 2028.** North Carolina's corporate tax rate of 2.5% is already **much lower than most other states** and eliminating it will mean that corporations won't pay anything to help our state make investments as we move forward. I'm not persuaded that further corporate tax cuts would be beneficial to our state. Instead, the benefits would flow mostly to out of state shareholders, while significantly reducing our revenue. The bill also **fails to assist low-income North Carolinians who are making poverty wages**, while proposing additional grants to businesses without any screening for whether they need additional help in 2021-22. Finally, the PCS rejects the House's proposal to align state tax policy to federal policy, which would have made PPP loans and the first \$10,200 of unemployment benefits tax exempt. All together, the proposed tax plan benefits corporations and wealthy families, limits what we can do for our state in the future, and will likely result in our having to continue with austerity budgets, while important investments are deferred even longer. Read more about the plan [here](#) and [here](#) and **let me know what you think of the tax proposal**. It will likely be up for a vote next week.

In **Elections and Redistricting Committee** we discussed [Senate Bill 722](#), Revise Municipal Redistricting/Census. The bill is **in response to delays in the census data**. Without the data, municipal elections based on districts that normally would occur in 2021, like Charlotte's, need to be postponed. (This does not impact elections that are not based on districts, like Davidson, Cornelius and Huntersville. Those elections will move forward this November.) I introduced a similar bill, [Senate Bill 287](#), regarding the Charlotte-Mecklenburg School Board election, which faces the same dilemma as the City of Charlotte. I am working with colleagues to find a path to solving that issue as well.

Pipeline Safety Trust Spring Conference About The Colonial Pipeline Leak





The Pipeline Safety Trust invited me to be the keynote speaker at their 2021 conference about the Colonial Pipeline Disaster last week. This national nonprofit works to promote pipeline safety through education, advocacy, and access to information through partnerships with residents, safety advocates, government, and industry. Alongside other panelists, we discussed the impacts of the Colonial Pipeline spill on Huntersville and its residents, my [Improve Pipeline Safety Bill, S549](#), and ways to ensure that a disaster of this scale does not happen again. The panel included some very knowledgeable folks and attendees, including some from Huntersville who raised good questions.

You can watch the full conference below -- my remarks are from 3:48 to 13:55. (I apologize for the way my eyes are not lined up to the camera. I had my remarks on a different screen and didn't realize that it made me look like I was looking to the sky as I spoke! You'd think I'd have this tech stuff mastered by now.)

[Watch the Conference Here](#)

Join Me for an Online Town Hall in June



Join me for my second town hall of the year on **Wednesday, June 16th at 7pm**. You can sign up at the link below. I'll provide updates on the legislative session including my bills, the budget, and redistricting and answer any questions you may have. **Be sure to sign up in advance to get the log-in information emailed to you.**

[Sign Up for the Town Hall](#)

Mecklenburg Delegation Hosts

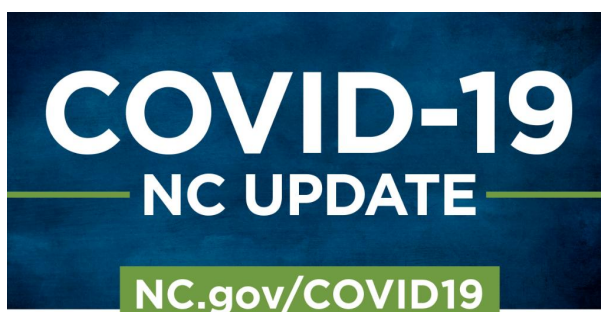
Second Online Listening Session of the Year



Thank you to everyone who joined the Mecklenburg Delegation for our second online listening session of the year. **Constituents from across the county came together to discuss affordable housing, healthcare, COVID19 relief efforts, and more.** We will host another listening session later in the year. I will provide updates in the newsletter and on social media once it is scheduled. You can watch the full listening session below.

[Watch the Full Listening Session Here](#)

COVID-19 Updates: \$25 Summer Cash Cards and Vac Clinic at Lake Norman Charter



Mecklenburg County is part of the \$25 Summer Cash Card 4-County Pilot Program. As part of its ongoing effort to get more North Carolinians vaccinated and safely bring summer back, the North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services is offering **\$25 Summer Cash Cards at select vaccine sites to offset the time and transportation costs of getting vaccinated.**

Through June 8, select vaccine sites will offer Summer Cash Cards in Mecklenburg,

Guilford, Rowan and Rockingham counties. Anyone 18 and older who gets their first dose of a COVID-19 vaccination — or drives someone to their vaccination — will receive a \$25 cash card after vaccination at a participating location while supplies last. Cards are for the first dose only for both the person being vaccinated and the driver. This helps offset the costs for those who help family, friends and neighbors find their spot for a vaccine and drive them to their shots.

Those interested in the program can visit www.YourSpotYourShot.nc.gov or call **888-675-4567** to find a participating location.

Also, Lake Norman Charter is hosting a free vaccination event on Tuesday, June 1 from 8:00am until 3:00pm in the middle school gym. This opportunity is open to everyone ages 12 and up. Registered pharmacists will administer the Pfizer vaccine. A second event will be held on Tuesday, June 22 from 8:00am until 3:00pm for people to receive the second dose of the vaccine. You can sign up by going to www.takemyspot.nc.gov. Search for Lake Norman Charter Middle School by entering zip code 28078 and make your appointment. When they reach 400 participants, they will raffle off \$100 Chick-fil-A gift cards. If you have any questions about this event, please call 704-755-5656.

Tour of Carolina Raptor Center



From L to R: Jim Warren (Executive Director), Senator Marcus, Michele Miller Houck (Associate Executive Director)

Last week I got a sneak peek tour of the **Carolina Raptor Center's new Quest Adventure Center**. Their mission is to promote environmental education, the rehabilitation of injured and orphaned raptors, and environmental stewardship. The Quest Adventure Center, which is not yet open to the public, was built in partnership with Mecklenburg County Parks and Rec at the Latta Nature Preserve to **expand conservation efforts and increase access to education programming and will have an estimated \$3.88 million/year economic impact**. The project includes:

- A modern, 13,000-plus-square-foot center with:
 - Interactive exhibits focused on the ecosystem at Mountain Island Lake
 - Expanded indoor/outdoor learning spaces to offer year-round programming

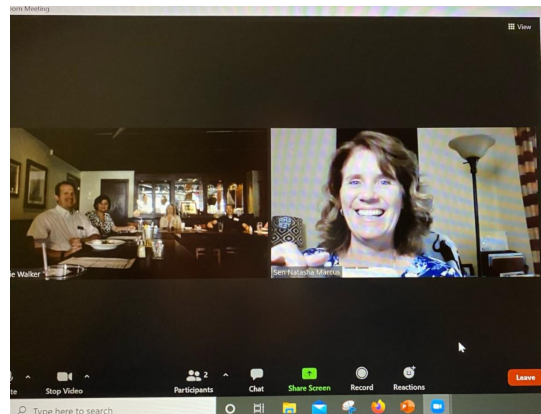
- Increased administrative space for staff and volunteers
- Improved amenities for visitors including a 1,000-square-foot gift shop
- A new raptor trail system to include a modern resident bird care facility and exhibit, aviaries for more than 35 species of raptors and a technologically advanced amphitheater.
- A renovated Raptor Medical Center to include increased capacity for the care and treatment of injured birds of prey, including eagles, owls and hawks.

The Raptor Center is one of North Carolina's many science museums and a member of the NC Grassroots Science Museum Collaborative. It gets some state funding, but relies mostly on donations, grants, sponsorships and ticket sales.

Legislative Update at Davidson Rotary Club

Thank you to the **Davidson Rotary Club** for the invitation to join you for your meeting last week to give a legislative update.

We discussed bills I have filed in the Senate, updates on the budget, proposed and passed legislation, and redistricting plans.



Smithville Community Coalition Meeting



[Home](#) [Blog](#) [About Us](#) [Revitalization Plans](#) [Stakeholder Feedback](#) [Contact](#)



On May 24, I joined the Smithville Community Coalition's meeting, to hear an update about the **plans to save Smithville from gentrification**. There is hope that the neighborhood could qualify for funds from the American Rescue Plan and I'm in contact with the group's leaders to work on that potential funding source. If you want to help or learn more, contact the Coalition via [their website](#).

Colonial Pipeline Updates



On May 12th Colonial Pipeline sent a response to NCDEQ regarding their Notice of Continuing Violation. You can read the letter [here](#). It has a lot of technical language, which I am not expert enough to decode, but my layperson's takeaways are a) Colonial Pipeline is still unable to provide an update on the volume of additional free product in the new, deeper pocket, b) they are considering various models and methods to use to assess and remove that free product, and c) **there is a possibility that the deeper deposit of free product could migrate**. If true, that's concerning. I've asked DEQ to tell me whether my interpretation is correct. While I continue to wait for that, I wanted you to have this information.

Today was the deadline imposed by NCDEQ for Colonial Pipeline to provide additional information about the status of the cleanup and assessment. The update was not as detailed as I'd expected. Key portions of that update include:

- "The additional data also brings more clarity to where the product is located and therefore assists in safely recovering product and remediating the site, which remains our top priority. This data also shows our recovery plan is working as designed; **however, it does not indicate the volume of product located deeper in the soil.**"
- "Based on continued recovery rates, we have notified the North Carolina Department of Environmental Quality (NCDEQ) that the **previous volume estimate will likely be exceeded.**"

Colonial's full response is posted [here](#).

\$5.7 Billion in Federal Pandemic Aid Coming to North Carolina



by investing \$500 MILLION in the NC
Guarantee Scholarship and other financial aid.

NCDEMOCRATS

This week, Governor Cooper presented his plans on how to use the \$5.7 billion in federal American Rescue Plan funding for North Carolinians. **The plans include broadband access, infrastructure development, aid to the restaurant industry, checks to low-income families, and more.** You can more read the full ARP proposal [here](#).

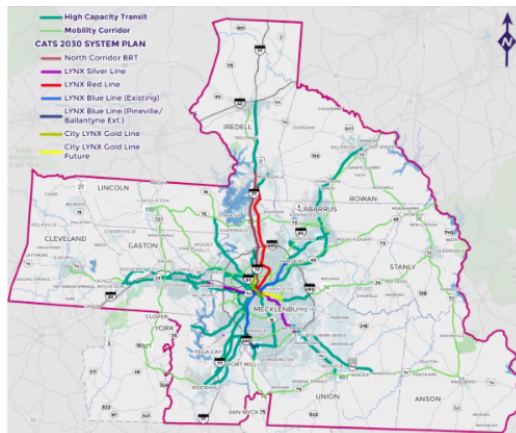
One local issue arose because Huntersville declined its metropolitan city status in favor of county status under the Community Development Block Grant program, which meant the town would have lost \$12 million of this critical funding. I am happy to report that the Governor's proposal **includes using flexible American Rescue Plan funds for local governments to make up the gap in funding, including the \$12 million that Huntersville would have otherwise lost.**

The proposal also includes provisions to **increase college affordability and access** by investing \$350 million to the **NC Guarantee Scholarship** and other financial aid for students and families making less than \$60,000/year.

CONNECT Beyond: Regional Mobility Initiative

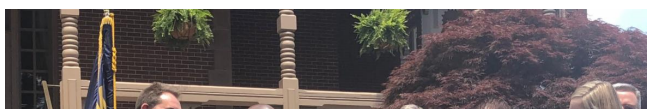
High Capacity Transit and Mobility Corridors

- HCT network
- Mobility corridors
 - Other types of transit improvements or mobility solutions:
 - Enhanced bus
 - Freeway-based express
 - Local bus connection
 - TDM strategies
 - Urban-rural connection
 - Freeway-based express
 - Transit supportive development strategies
 - Other
 - Corridors that may be good HCT corridors in the long-term



Last week I attended a presentation from CONNECT Beyond on their plans for a **regional mobility initiative**. This comprehensive plan will cover 12 counties in North and South Carolina, impacting approximately 2.6 million residents. Due to the county's continued growth, there is a focus on Mecklenburg County and how this regional plan will coordinate with the Charlotte MOVES Task Force. You can learn more about the initiative and give your feedback [here](#).

Autism Bill to Make Behavioral Analysis Therapy More Accessible Signed Into Law





On May 17th Governor Cooper signed [SB103](#) into law, which will make behavioral analysis therapy more widely available for children with autism. I am proud to have supported **this important bipartisan bill**. I believe that all children deserve access to the care they need to live happy, healthy lives. This bill shows that when the parties work together we can change lives for the better. More information about the bill can be found [here](#).

Prevent the Spread of Aquatic Nuisance Species



The **North Carolina Wildlife Resources Commission** and the **Lake Norman Marine Commission** are spreading the word about preventing the spread of aquatic nuisance species. Boaters in our area's lakes are encouraged to help prevent the spread of hydrilla and other problems by:

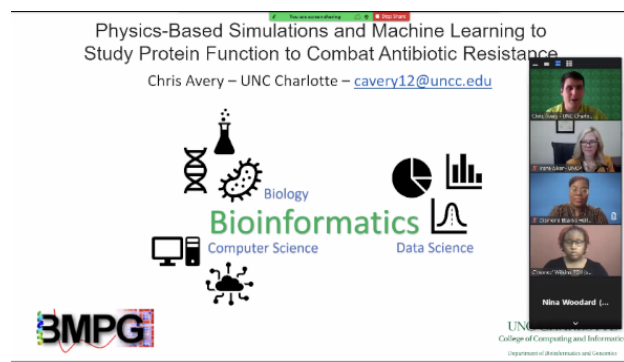
- Cleaning equipment of all aquatic plants, animals and mud
- Draining water from boats, live wells and equipment
- Drying equipment thoroughly
- Never moving fish, plants, or other organisms from one body of water to another

You can learn more about how you can do your part in the video below.

PSA Video

Graduate School Day

May 17 was Graduate School Day in North Carolina. **Graduate students throughout the state presented their research to me and other legislators.** Our high caliber universities are our state's crown jewels and supply the workforce employers need to grow our economy. One of the presenting graduate students, Mr. Avery, was from UNC-Charlotte.



New Application Period for NC HOPE Emergency Rent and Utility Assistance



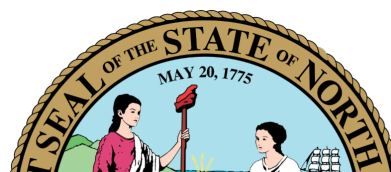
North Carolina's emergency rental assistance program has opened a **second application period for very low-income renters that are experiencing financial hardship due to COVID-19.** The N.C. Housing Opportunities and Prevention of Evictions (HOPE) Program promotes housing stability during the ongoing pandemic by providing rent and utility bill assistance to prevent evictions and utility disconnections. To date, the program has awarded over \$133 million in assistance to help more than 36,000 families statewide.

Mecklenburg County's Emergency Rental Assistance Program is being administered by Dream Key Partners. Residents can access the services at www.rampclt.com. They are handling the city and county programs.

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 and let me know you want to subscribe to the biweekly newsletter.

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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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