

Senate Advances Bad State Budget Proposal



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Peace. The State Senate passed this week its version of the State Budget. This is the first step in the budget process. Next the State House will approve its version. Then both chambers will come up with a conference report that both chambers agree with. This conference report will go to the Governor for his veto or approval.

The Senate's Budget has some good provisions, but is bad in many ways and a major missed opportunity for once-in-a-generation investments in public education, teacher pay, health care, and infrastructure investments in clean water, schools, and broadband.

Here are a few features of the Senate Budget, compared with Governor Cooper's proposed Budget.

	<u>Senate Budget</u>	<u>Gov. Cooper's Budget</u>
<u>HEALTHCARE</u>	No Medicaid Expansion	Medicaid Expansion: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase access to over 600,000 NC citizens. • Lower health premiums for those who have health insurance now • Billions in federal dollars creating NC

health care jobs
and helping
hospitals

EDUCATION

Leandro: Does not properly fund our obligations to our children.

Leandro: Fully invests in our constitutional duty for a sound, basic education for every child.

Teacher Raises:
3% over two-years

Teacher Raises:
10% raise over two-years

School Psychologists:
\$41 million for new positions

Nurses & School Psychologists: \$80 million to hire new positions

Private School Vouchers:
\$76.8 million new money

Private School Vouchers:
No new money

STATE EMPLOYEES AND RETIREES

State Employees:
3% raise over two years

State Employees:
5% raise over two years for most
7.5% raise for UNC & community college employees

Retirees:
No COLA

Retirees:
4% recurring COLA increase

TAXES

Eliminates the corporate income tax.

Reinstates the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) to help more than 850,000 North Carolina families, nearly all of whom earn less than \$50,000 a year.

Cuts personal income taxes with most benefits going to households earning over \$200,00 a year.

Establishes a Child & Dependent Care Tax Credit (CDCTC) to help about 195,000 North Carolina families with out-of-pocket child care expenses.

POWER GRABS

Budget includes language that has nothing to do with the Budget that would:

Limit the Governor's Emergency Powers

Limit the Board of Elections Emergency Powers

Limit the Attorney General's Settlement Powers

NC House Votes to Reject Federal Unemployment Compensation

The NC House this week passed [SB 116](#) to reject federal unemployment compensation for North Carolina workers. I voted No.

It is a bad idea to cut compensation to unemployed North Carolinians by \$300 a week. This would impact around 300,000 unemployed workers. What makes it an even worse idea is that the cut would come from rejecting federal funds. If SB 116 becomes law, North Carolina would lose out on \$1.7 billion in federal funding. This is money that unemployed workers would be spending locally on food, rent, and other needs – money that would overwhelmingly go to local businesses. It makes no sense to turn it down.

NC's Unemployment Rate One of Lowest in Country

The State Employment and Unemployment report for May shows that North Carolina has one of the lowest unemployment rates in the country at 4.8 percent. The national unemployment rate is 5.8 percent. In May 2020 the rate was 13.5 percent.

North Carolina can continue to grow jobs and paychecks with infrastructure investments in our schools, water systems, and broadband. We also should accept federal money expand Medicaid and create thousands of health care jobs.

NC Farm Act Passes NC House

Every session the General Assembly considers the North Carolina Farm Act, a bill that typically contains provisions to help farmers and the agricultural industry but also provisions that impact the environment and workers, often negatively. This week the NC House heard [SB 605](#), this year's version of the Farm Act. **I voted Yes.**

Much of the bill is uncontroversial, making small changes to timber laws, forestry management, and other topics. Two provisions attracted a lot of attention: one involving workers and one involving the environmental impact of farm digester systems and biogas.

The worker provision was bad because it removed long-standing protections for workers against retaliation when they speak up against unsafe conditions. In the agriculture committee meeting, **I was successful in filing an amendment to remove this anti-worker language from the bill which was a good thing.**

The controversial environmental provision involved important issues surrounding biogas and hog lagoons, but the NC Department of Environmental Quality did not oppose the bill and I felt the provision did not make the existing situation worse. In fact, the new biogas digester technology will seal the waste in liners and capture the methane gas for commercial use. I have visited some of the sites in eastern NC and this technology eliminates odor and contains the effluent preventing ground water contamination. This is a good move in the right direction to address these environmental issues. With the other parts of the bill being positive, **I voted for the bill.**

Now that the NC House and NC Senate have passed different versions of the Farm Act, a conference committee will be appointed to work out differences between the two versions. Once the conference committee agrees on one version of the bill it will come back to us for a vote and then on to the Governor for his signature or veto.

Child Tax Credit Awareness Day

June 21 of this year was Child Tax Credit Awareness Day. The federal American Rescue Plan increased the child tax credit to \$3000 for families whose children are between 6-17 years old and \$3600 for families with children under 6 years old. It allows half of that tax cut to be paid to families in advance through a monthly check or direct deposit.

This year, a family with two young children would receive a tax cut of \$7200, with a monthly payment of \$600 starting in July. Almost all families who have filed taxes in the last two years will receive this tax cut automatically. Others will have to sign up.

To sign up your family or to help other families sign up, please go to

ChildTaxCredit.Gov for information on how to get involved.

Enjoy your weekend....PEACE!



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