

For Immediate Release



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From the Office of Sen. Joyce Waddell, NC Senate
Mecklenburg County

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Greetings:

The General Assembly is in its final stages of completing redistricting maps for the state. Once this is complete and a budget is agreed upon, long session will be complete.

Joyce Waddell

Community Events

Mecklenburg County Redistricting Meeting



Sen Waddell attends Mecklenburg Redistricting Meeting at Central Piedmont Community College



Sen Waddell listens to constituent concerns about redistricting maps



Sen Waddell speaks with constituents at the Mecklenburg Redistricting Meeting at Central Piedmont Community College



US Representative Alma Adams presents Senator Waddell one of the winning prizes for the hat contest.



Luncheon participants share ideas.

Grocery Shortages

Shoppers continue to encounter empty shelves and higher prices at many grocery stores around North Carolina as a result of global supply chain disruptions. In some cases, the empty shelves and price hikes can seem random. Bananas and peanut butter appear plentiful while Lunchables and fish sticks are harder to find.

Studies show that there are many reasons why grocers were struggling to keep certain products in stock, many could be traced back to the COVID-19 pandemic. Many food producers have had to scale back or shut down production due to COVID outbreaks and labor shortages at their plants.

Meat and poultry processing plants have been especially hard hit in North Carolina. More than 5,400 COVID cases and 28 deaths have been linked to meat and poultry plants around the state since April 2020, and another 430 cases and one death have been tied to other North Carolina food processing plants. In one case, one of the world's largest hog slaughterhouses, a NC county plant, nearly closed because of a COVID outbreak in April 2020.

Some of the nation's busiest ports are also experiencing labor shortages and other pandemic slowdowns, causing businesses to wait longer for products from overseas. The trucking industry is also experiencing a shortage of drivers. The professor said heatwaves in the west this summer also affected many crops, and Hurricane Ida and the collapse of Texas' energy grid amid a deep freeze last winter also affected the production of resin needed for plastic packaging.

This means there could be a myriad of reasons for why a single product might not be in stock. "It might be truck drivers. It might be packaging — you know, the plastic resins that's used in bottles — there might be a shortage of that. There might just be a shortage of manufacturing and distribution workers," he said. Consumers should plan for the supply problems to last through the holidays, the professor said, and possibly get worse.

Food Stamps

More than 1.6 million North Carolinians are enrolled in Food and Nutrition Services. The U.S. President's administration announced an increase to the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, or SNAP in mid-August, describing it as the largest in the history of the food stamp program. At the beginning of this month, the average monthly benefits for SNAP increased by 25 percent.

The increase came just in time for the approximately 1.6 million North Carolinians who benefit from the program and who would no longer receive a temporary pandemic-related state subsidy. On Sept. 30, the 15 percent boost that had been funded with Emergency Coronavirus Relief Act aid expired. Now, the average monthly per-person benefit will be \$157, or \$36 more per month than it had been since 2006. The increase has roots in the 2018 Farm Bill. Congress ordered the federal Department of Agriculture to reevaluate the Thrifty Food Plan to reflect the cost of a practical, healthy diet while also factoring in how a household with constrained resources might be able to afford them. This was the first time in at least 45 years that the process for figuring out the per-person supplement was not driven by efforts to maintain "cost neutrality."

Feeding America, a network of food banks across the country, estimates that more than 1.4 million North Carolinians are facing hunger and of them 419,470 are children. A range of adverse health outcomes that come with food insecurity includes high blood pressure, diabetes and mental illness. Children, whose brains are developing, are particularly vulnerable to long-term impacts.

Several bills were filed during this session to assist with SNAP. I will continue to support any legislation that helps North Carolinians in need with food assistance.

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