

State Budget Passes and Becomes Law / Anti-Voter Participation Bills Pass House / Touring CPCC



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District 99 - Mecklenburg County**



State Budget Passes and Becomes Law

Peace. North Carolina has not had a State Budget since the 2018-2019 fiscal year. The consequence of this failure of leadership has been lost opportunities to invest in public education and other public services.

This week the General Assembly passed a State Budget and Governor Cooper plans to sign it into law immediately. It is a State Budget with good and bad in it. Sadly, it also does not include Medicaid Expansion costing the state billions of dollars in federal funding, thousands of health care jobs, lower health care costs for those with health insurance, and, most importantly, people will die or lead less healthy lives because of lack of health care access.

Good Things in the State Budget

- \$1 billion for broadband expansion across North Carolina.
- A 5% pay raise for most state employees.
- An average 5% pay raise for teachers over the biennium.
- Provides a 2% bonus to retirees this fiscal year and 3% next fiscal year.
- Increase the minimum wage for all non-certified personnel and community college staff to \$15 per hour.
- A \$2,800 bonus to most teachers using American Rescue Plan federal funds.
- Bonuses for all state employees using American Rescue Plan federal funds.
 - \$1,500 for state employees earning less than \$75,000 and for law enforcement, correctional officers, and 24-hour residential or

treatment facility employees.

- \$1,000 for state employees earning more than \$75,000.
- \$100 million for a new state-funded teacher salary supplement for 95 counties to boost teacher pay.
- Increases child tax deduction by \$500 per child.
- Increases to \$25,500 the tax bracket of people who would not pay state income taxes.
- Major investments in our universities, particularly are historically under-funded HBCUs.
- Eliminates state tax on military pensions.

Bad Things in the State Budget

- More tax cuts for corporations and the wealthiest North Carolinians.
- The elimination of corporate income tax.
- Does not fully fund our schools to comply with every North Carolina child's right to a sound, basic education (Leandro decision).
- Expansion of school voucher programs diverting more tax dollars away from our local public schools.
- The 5% teacher pay raise is not uniform, meaning some teachers will receive very little increase at all.
- Funding for so-called "crisis pregnancy centers" that give women inaccurate information about their reproductive health care.
- Law changes that have nothing to do with the Budget, but instead seek to transfer power from elected Democrats Governor Cooper and Attorney General Stein to elected Republican leaders.
- Law changes that have nothing to do with the Budget, but transfer power to special interests like billboard companies at the expense of local towns and cities.
- Five heavily Democratic counties were left out of the \$100 million teacher supplement bonuses: Wake, Mecklenburg, Guilford, Durham, and Buncombe.

After carefully weighing the good and the bad, I voted Yes on this budget. While far from perfect, it is a bipartisan budget that provides critical relief for families and businesses. Governor Cooper and Democrats forced legislative Republicans to increase their investments in teacher and state employee pay, critical infrastructure and aid to help families and businesses emerge from the pandemic stronger than ever. Our next step must be to continue to fight for Medicaid expansion, education funding, and other issues where the State Budget fell short.

Anti-Voter Participation Bills Pass House

This week the House of Representatives passed three bills to limit the ability of North Carolinians to exercise their right to vote. Two of these bills were entitled, "Election Integrity Acts," when all three should have been entitled,

"Election Disenfranchisement Acts."

The State of North Carolina has a very electronically protected and secure election system, with all North Carolina voters using paper ballots, marked either by hand or with a ballot-marking device, providing a paper trail of all votes cast that can be audited or recounted by elections officials.

As the old adage goes, "If It Ain't Broke, Don't Fix It!!"

A unanimous House Democratic Caucus voted against all three and it is expected that Governor Cooper will veto the bills.

[SB 326](#) would throw out mailed-in ballots if they do not arrive on or before Election Day. Currently, the law gives voters a three-day grace period for their ballots to arrive after Election Day to allow for postal delays. It is wrong to throw out votes because of postal delays when the voter has followed all of the rules.

[HB 259](#) would create a system where people could be purged from the voter rolls unnecessarily, potentially disenfranchising North Carolinians by no fault of their own. By the time voters are aware of the error, it could be too late for them to fix the issue and that voter is prevented from casting their vote. This is another bad idea that will make our election system worse.

[SB 725](#) would ban our elections boards from taking non-profit donations to help with election administration costs such as paying the non-partisan poll workers and providing PPE during the pandemic. Historically, the State has not provided sufficient funding leaving county taxpayers to foot the bill for some election costs. SB 725 would make this problem worse.

Touring Central Piedmont Community College





Last week I took a tour of Central Piedmont Community College (CPCC) campus with the Mecklenburg Delegation.

Dr. Kandi Deitemeyer, President, gave us a briefing and tour of the School of Nursing and the Mechatronics Engineering facilities.

GREAT NEWS!!!! CPCC is providing state-of-the-art/cutting edge technical training and has \$3 million dollars in scholarship funding for students needing financial assistance.

If you're interested in learning more, please contact the college at <http://www.CPCC.edu/afford>.

Enjoy your weekend. PEACE!

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