

For Immediate Release



From Sen. Joyce Waddell <joyce.waddell@ncleg.net>
To <sjohnston@tuesdayforumcharlotte.org>
Reply-To <waddellja@ncleg.net>
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From the Office of Sen. Joyce Waddell, NC Senate
Mecklenburg County

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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CONTACT: Sen. Joyce Waddell
(919) 733-5650
Joyce.Waddell@ncleg.net
<https://joycewaddell4nc.com/>



Greetings:

This year is quickly coming to an end. Most of the legislative business is complete, but we have not ended the long session yet. I will continue to meet at the General Assembly for committee meetings and session until they end "sine die", which means legislative business has concluded for that particular session.

Joyce Waddell

Community Happenings with Senator Waddell





Senator Waddell enjoys the festivities of the Charlotte Thanksgiving Day Parade.

Budget Highlights

I am sure you have seen a few of the good that were presented in the new budget that was adopted a couple of weeks ago, but I wanted to highlight a few great things this budget will provide for the many citizens of North Carolina. I voted in favor of this budget because it will help many. While the budget does not adequately fund many of the things we wanted to see included, it has more good things than it does bad.

- \$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.
 - o \$1,500 for state employees earning less than \$75,000 and for law enforcement, correctional officers, and 24-hour residential or treatment facility employees.
 - o \$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.

Leandro Funds

Despite historic levels of state and federal spending in the new budget enacted last week, state leaders have still fallen short of the spending needed to fulfill the remedial plan ordered by the judge in the long-running Leandro court case. The Leandro lawsuit, first filed in 1994 by families in five low-wealth counties and those counties' school boards against the state, alleges that schools were not sufficiently funded. Two North Carolina Supreme Court rulings favored the plaintiffs. The second ruling in favor came in 2004, when the court ordered the state to remedy its shortcomings, while giving sufficient deference to the General Assembly to do so.

Even with a state surplus of around \$8 billion, more than four times the sum needed, lawmakers still did not meet the target. Senate Republican leaders say their Leandro-related spending in the budget was \$933 million over the biennium, well short of the \$1.7 billion ordered. An analysis by the nonpartisan Public School Forum agrees that this year's budget funds only about half of the needs outlined in the Leandro plan.

Forum director said the budget does spend more on teacher supplements, school psychologists and other support personnel. It appears that it is a missed opportunity. The director is specifically worried about equally historic tax cuts in the new budget. They will mean less revenue available over the next few years as the remedial plan is implemented and more funding is required.

It is unclear what the judge will decide to do about the order, set to take effect Dec. 10.

An attorney representing the Charlotte-Mecklenburg NAACP, a plaintiff-intervenor in Leandro, says the judge could order the state to release the balance of the \$1.7 billion that doesn't appear in the budget plan. If the state does not comply, the attorney hopes the judge will take further action.

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