

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



**From** Sen. Natasha Marcus <natasha.marcus@ncleg.gov>  
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## NC Senate District 41 Newsletter

February 3, 2023

### Co-Sponsored Bills



The new long session started last Wednesday (photos above), but we haven't had any significant votes yet. Legislators have started filing bills. These are the bills I have co-sponsored so far. You can find a full list of the of the bills I have supported [here](#).

- **SB3, Compassionate Care Act.** Bipartisan bill that legalizes medical marijuana for qualified patients with certain medical conditions through a regulated medical cannabis supply system. This would be major progress for our state. I believe that we need to stop making caregivers, patients and veterans into criminals by denying them legal access to treatment that can help.
- **SB19, Codify *Roe* and *Casey* Protections.** Codifies the essential holdings of *Roe v. Wade* and *Planned Parenthood of Southern PA v. Casey* to ensure the constitutional right to an abortion and privacy in the state of North Carolina, as was the law prior to the *Dobbs* decision. I am proud that this important piece of legislation has **unanimous support from all House and Senate Democrats**. You can read more about SB19 [here](#).
- **SB51, Kayla's Act: Protecting Domestic Violence Victims.** Bipartisan bill that allows domestic violence victims to submit remote testimony in court.

### Committee Assignments

**SENATOR NATASHA MARCUS**  
2023-24 COMMITTEE ASSIGNMENTS

- Judiciary
- Education/Higher Education
- Redistricting and Elections
- Commerce and Insurance
- Appropriations/Base Budget
- Appropriations on Justice and Public Safety



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I have been appointed to the following committees for this biennium. I look forward to serving on my new committees (Education, Commerce/Insurance, Appropriations and Justice and Public Safety) and to continuing to serve on my regular committees. I will be sure to provide regular updates from these committees in this newsletter.

- [Judiciary](#)
- [Education/Higher Education](#)
- [Redistricting and Elections](#)
- [Commerce and Insurance](#)
- [Appropriations/Base Budget](#)
- [Appropriations on Justice and Public Safety](#)

## Mark Your Calendar: Upcoming In-Person Town Hall

YOU ARE INVITED TO A

**LEGISLATIVE TOWN HALL**  
**WITH STATE SENATOR NATASHA MARCUS**

ALLEGRA WESTBROOKS REGIONAL LIBRARY  
2412 BEATTIES FORD ROAD, CHARLOTTE

**SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 25 | 10AM**

RSVP AT [BIT.LY/MARCUSTOWNHALL2023](https://bit.ly/marcustownhall2023)




In order to be a better representative of the people of my district, I make it a priority to be accessible and come to the various communities in SD41. To that end, I hope you will join me for my first town hall of the year on **Saturday, February 25th at 10AM**. This will be an in-person event at Allegra Westbrooks Regional Library (2412 Beatties Ford Road) with an option to join virtually as well. You can sign up at [this link](https://bit.ly/marcustownhall2023). I'll provide **updates about my legislative priorities for the biennium, my committee work, bills moving through the NCGA, and what issues you can expect to be debated in Raleigh in 2023**. I'll also welcome your input and answer any questions you may have. Be sure to sign up in advance. Any questions? Email me or my legislative assistant.

I'll also host a town hall in the North Mecklenburg area. Stay tuned for details about that.

## Judiciary Committee Updates



On Tuesday, the [Senate Judiciary Committee](#) met to consider the Governor's [nomination of Todd Ishee as Secretary of the Department of Adult Correction](#). During Mr. Ishee's testimony, he shared his plans to safely supervise the approximately 106,000 people in state adult prisons **including medical care, to continue to rehabilitate the population, and to protect the safety of correctional officers**. He discussed the difficulty the department has in filling the positions, despite state budget increases for the department. He spoke about rebuilding the work release initiatives post-COVID restrictions and **reducing recidivism and misconduct** by providing secure network tablets to offenders that provide a gateway to re-entry, education, faith activities, and other self-help resources. He emphasized that **improved mental health services and access to education** are important supports as well. I voted to confirm Mr. Ishee.

## Education Committee Updates



I'm very disappointed that the Chairs of the [Senate Education Committee](#) have started this session with a divisive, hurtful bill ([SB49, Parents Bill of Rights](#)) that seeks to:

- erase and shame LGBTQ people,
- burden school staff with burdensome requests and objections w/o penalty for frivolous or abusive behavior,
- undermine our ability to gather anonymous survey data about student health and well-being, and
- forbid school staff from providing confidential advice or assistance to students by requiring them to report the information to parents, even if the student is not ready to do so.

SB49 is unnecessary, since parents already have many of the rights the bill contemplates (ability to see report cards for example) and is harmful to all students, especially LGBTQ students and their families. I also worry about the **negative impacts the bill, known as "Don't Say Gay," will have on our state's reputation and ability to attract business investment.**

I am grateful to all the students, parents, educators, and mental health professionals who came to the committee meeting to speak out against SB49. As I was quoted saying in [this EdNC article](#), I hope that the bill sponsors consider the input we receive from the citizens of North Carolina as this bill moves through the NCGA.

## Meeting with Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools on Their 2023 Legislative Agenda



The Charlotte-Mecklenburg Board of Education

**2023 - 2024 Legislative Agenda**

January 24, 2023

Yesterday the Mecklenburg Delegation met with [Charlotte-Mecklenburg School](#) Board Members and staff to discuss their 2023 legislative agenda. Below are some of their top priorities for the year:

- Fully funding *Leandro*
- Free lunch for all students
- Local calendar flexibility to allow final exams to happen before winter break
- Greater funds for early childhood education initiatives
- Reinstate Master's pay and full retirement benefits for all employees hired since January 2021
- Restore longevity payments for all LEA staff
- Provide \$2,000 per teacher for classroom supplies

I have worked to change state law to serve CMS students better during previous sessions and will continue to do so now that I've been appointed to the Education Committee.

## Ada Jenkins Center Offering Tax Assistance Services



During Tax Season 2023, the [Ada Jenkins Center](#) will again host two program sites — Davidson and Huntersville — for Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) and Tax Counseling for the Elderly (TCE).

VITA volunteers will assist neighbors with incomes of \$60,000 or less prepare their taxes for free. In 2022 they helped 173 households, saving them a total of \$43,250 in tax preparation fees. Appointments are required. Register for the Davidson location [here](#) and the Huntersville location [here](#).

## Update on State Employee's Health Insurance



Due to a decision by the State Treasurer, the health insurance provider for state employees and teachers will transition from Blue Cross Blue Shield to Aetna beginning on January 1, 2025. You can learn more about this change to the State Health Plan [here](#). If you have any questions about this transition and how it will impact your benefits, please contact my office and we can help get you the answer.

## Davidson Hosting Civics 101 Course



The Town of Davidson is hosting a **Civics 101 course for Town residents**. It is 10-weeks long and has active discussion, facility and town tours, and the chance to get an **inside look at how local government works in Davidson**. The course has been revamped to offer more content about the work the town is doing on the Strategic Plan and other important initiatives. The free class runs late February through mid-May. Register [here](#).

## Road Safety Concerns



Driving on dark, wet roads can be difficult. I've heard from constituents around the district about how hard it is to see the painted lines. **Several roads in our area are scheduled for re-stripping with fresh reflective paint.** Others are waiting for the next round of funding. Here is the partial list of some of the state roads next on deck for re-stripping:

- WT Harris Blvd, 1-85 to 1-77
- Mount Holly Rd. & near Mount Holly-Huntersville Rd.
- N. Tryon St., Orr Rd. to Charlotte Motor Speedway
- NC 49 (1-485 to Lake Wylie)
- South Blvd. ( I-485-Woodlawn Rd.)
- 1-485 Mainline including ramps and collectors from I-85 to South Tryon
- Hwy 51 – From Lemmond Dr to Phillips Rd. (Matthews)
- Hwy 74 – From Windsor Square to Matthews Mint Hill Rd. (Matthews)

I'm working on getting a full list and will share that when it's available. If you know of a particularly dangerous stretch of road, please let me know.

### "Lowe's Hometowns" Initiative



Lowe's Home Improvement has recently announced its "Lowe's Hometowns" initiative, which is a **five-year, \$100 million grant program with the intention of improving and revitalizing communities across the country.** You can learn more about the program [here](#).

You can nominate a project (i.e., revitalizing a playground, building a community garden, etc.) through February 20<sup>th</sup>, and project winners will be announced and work subsequently begins in June of this year. Note that grants cannot be obtained for individual home repair or projects.

### Update on CharMeck Emergency Alert Error



In late January **emergency alert sirens for the McGuire Nuclear Station were activated in error.** It caused concern about our safety and residents were unable to find any information about the possible emergency for almost an hour. **While Duke Energy owns and maintains the sirens, the counties are in charge of testing and sounding the siren.** Charlotte-Mecklenburg Emergency Management has stated that the false alarm occurred due to county operators, who were intending to complete a silent test (which are done on a weekly basis per preexisting procedure), but pushed the wrong button. **I am working to collect information for residents about how to be prepared in the case of an emergency and will share that soon.**

You should sign up for CharMeck Alerts at [this link](#) and can learn more about Duke Energy's emergency preparedness protocols [here](#). Additionally, **WFAE recently did an informative radio show on the false alarm and the future of nuclear power in the Carolinas,** with commentary by local experts. You can listen [here](#).

### Scholarship Opportunity for Non-Traditional College Students



The ANSWER Scholarship is a non-profit organization operating under The Foundations For The Carolinas. They support mothers (25 and older) with pre-K to 12th grade child(ren), in a non-profit college, pursuing a degree that will lead to a career. They must live in and go to a college in the counties physically touching Mecklenburg County.

The scholarship provides not only financial support, but also professional/personal development opportunities and an army of mentors who walk along the scholars in their journey to complete a college education. The graduation rate is 83%, as opposed to the 33.7% national average.

The scholarship application is now open until March 1st. Apply [here](#).

## Senate Page Program Accepting Applications

**PAGE PROGRAM APPLICATIONS ARE LIVE**

The NCGA Page Program is open to NC high school sophomores, juniors and seniors to learn about and participate in the legislative process for a 1-week period during the 2023 Long Session.

**The program will be offered from Feb. 6 to June 29, 2023. Each Senator can select up to 5 pages for a one-week slot within the time frame listed.**

Interested applicants can email me at [natasha.marcus@ncleg.gov](mailto:natasha.marcus@ncleg.gov) for the application link. Learn more about the program at the link below.  
<https://ncleg.gov/Senate/PageProgram>

**Senator Natasha Marcus**

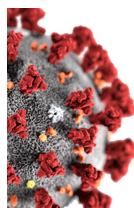
The graphic is a light green rectangular box with a dark blue and green geometric design in the top right corner. It contains bold text for the program title and details, followed by contact information and the senator's name.

The Page Program is returning to the NCGA for the 2023 Long Session. We will welcome high school sophomores, juniors, and seniors from across the state to the NCGA. **This one-week program offers young people the opportunity to learn about and participate in the legislative process of our state.** Senate Pages are important to the operation of the General Assembly as they assist the members and staff of the Senate during the legislative session.

The program will be offered for one-week sessions from February 6th to June 29th, 2023. Availability of weeks is based on a first-come, first-served basis. Each Senator can select up to five Pages for the Long Session and preference is given to students who live in the district. No experience necessary. Parents of pages will be responsible for securing lodging during the time their child serves.

**Applications are open now.** If you or someone you know is interested in applying, please email me at [natasha.marcus@ncleg.gov](mailto:natasha.marcus@ncleg.gov) for the application link. You can learn more about the application process and the Page Program [here](#).

## COVID-19 Updates



**COVID-19**  
INFORMATION  
AND UPDATES

Most children 6 months to 4 years are [now eligible for their updated COVID-19 vaccine](#), which protects against COVID-19 variants. These vaccine doses are becoming available in North Carolina this week following the Food and Drug Administration’s emergency use authorization and the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention’s recommendation](#).

Children 6 months and older may be able to get this updated COVID-19 dose along with other routine vaccines at the same visit. Parents should talk with a health care provider to make sure their child is up to date on COVID-19 and other vaccines. The COVID-19 vaccine is safe to take alongside the annual flu shot.

You can see updates on the key data points (wastewater testing, hospitalization, vaccine rates, etc.) on the [DHHS COVID-19 Dashboard](#).

**You can request free at-home COVID tests from the federal government at [this link](#).**

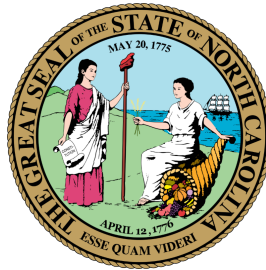
For more information about how vaccines for children work and where you can find a vaccination appointment nearby, visit [MySpot.nc.gov](#). Project ACT is also providing free COVID-19 at-home tests for certain zip codes in SD41, you can check if your home zip code is eligible [here](#).

## Contact Our Office

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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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