

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



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

June 2, 2023

Updates on Noteworthy Votes



Below are the noteworthy bills I voted on over the past two weeks. You can find a full list of bills I voted on [here](#).

Key bills on which I voted YES:

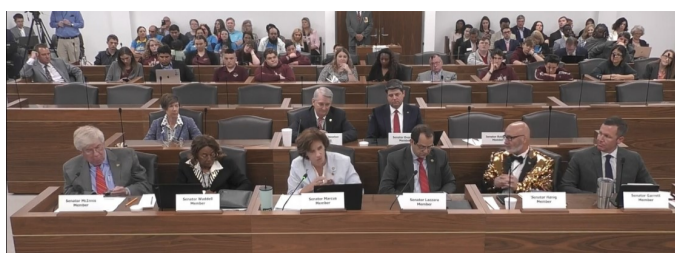
- **[SJR746](#), Confirm Charlotte Mitchell/Utilities Commission.*** Confirms reappointment of Charlotte Mitchell to the [Utilities Commission](#). The Utilities Commission was created by the General Assembly to regulate the rates and services of public utilities in our state and ensure ratepayers have protections.
- **[HB116](#), Modify Laws Affecting District Attorneys.*** Allows District Attorneys (DAs) to recuse themselves from a case for "good cause." Allows each DA to appoint at least one special investigator. Clarifies that written materials related to criminal investigations and prosecutions are not subject to the Public Records Act.
- **[HB347](#), Sports Wagering/Horse Racing Wagering.** Authorizes, regulates, and taxes sports wagering in North Carolina. While I have reservations about supporting this bill, an increase in the tax rate to 18% and the inclusion of UNC Charlotte as a beneficiary of the revenue made the choice more clear. Sports wagering is already happening here illegally and NC sports teams are at a disadvantage given that so many other states have legalized it. HB347 regulates the activity, provides protections to guard against problem gambling, generates tax revenue to the state, and allows citizens the freedom to participate in this form of entertainment. **The bill passed the Senate 37 to 11, with members of both parties voting for and against.** Now it heads back to the House for concurrence on the Senate's changes.

Key bills on which I voted NO:

- **[SB248](#), Nash Board of Education/Number of Members/Districts.** Decreases the size of the Nash County Board of Education from 11 to 7 and requires their members to be elected in the same districts as the county's Board of Commissioners. These changes will likely change the partisan and racial makeup of the Board in an undemocratic way. All Senate Democrats voted NO on this bill due to a lack of input and major concerns from Nash County elected officials and residents and the neighboring county of Edgecombe.
- **[HB346](#), Reorganization & Economic Development Act.** Allows Blue Cross Blue Shield (BCBS), a not-for-profit, to form a new parent holding company that will be exempt from the Public Trust Conversion Statute and to transfer significant funds from its reserves to the new holding company. BCBS's new parent holding company will then be able to invest that money without regulation. The siphoning off of reserves may result in higher premiums for the public. HB346 is opposed by the [Treasurer's Office](#), the [Department of Insurance](#), the Coalition for the Public Trust, and the [NC Budget and Tax Center](#). It passed the Senate, 41 to 5. You can read more about the bill [here](#).

*Passed Senate unanimously

Education Committee Updates



The following noteworthy bills were discussed in the [Senate Education/Higher Education Committee](#) over the past two weeks:

- **[HB8, Computer Science Graduation Requirement](#)**. Requires instruction in computer science and completion of a computer science course for graduation from high school. I am happy to see this bill moving through the Senate as we work to prepare our students for the 21st century workforce. I am concerned, however, about the lack of funding for the educators and laptops this new law will necessitate and hope the budget will address that aspect.
- **[HB166, American Indians Graduating with Honors Act](#)**. Allows American Indian students to wear cultural objects at public school graduation ceremonies.
- **[HB364, Self-Liquidating Projects/Property Transfers](#)**. Authorizes UNC system to finance and acquire or construct capital improvement projects approved by the Board of Governors. Requested by the UNC System.
- **[HB432, Principal Licensure Changes](#)**.* Updates principal licensure requirements and develops a portfolio-based assessment per recommendations from the [Department of Public Instruction](#).

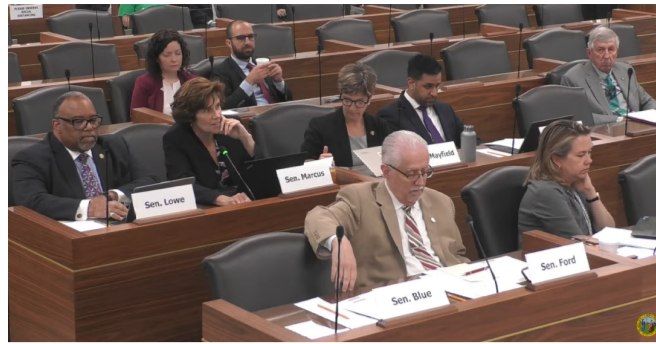
Judiciary Committee Updates



The following noteworthy bills were discussed in the [Senate Judiciary Committee](#) over the past two weeks:

- **[SB552, Modifications to Notary Public Act](#)**. Modernizes notarization laws to allow for remote and electronic notarization. Extends sunset date on the power of a notary to perform an emergency video notarization. Specifies that journal entries or communication technology recordings created by a notary in the course of performing a notarial act are not public records under State public records law.
- **[SB675, Land Use Clarification and Changes](#)**. Allows siting of schools via special use permit for areas zoned for commercial use, eliminates local government authority to set minimum lot sizes, and eliminates municipal extraterritorial jurisdictions (ETJs). **The North Mecklenburg Towns I represent oppose this bill for several reasons, the most important being the ETJ provisions.** I am grateful the bill sponsor was amenable to our concerns and amended the bill to exempt Mecklenburg (and other large counties) from the ETJ provisions. But the bill is still problematic due to its disregard for local government's planning for growth and development.
- **[HB87, Probation Modifications/Sheriff Authority](#)**. Allows a district attorney to file a probation modification petition, and allows the court to delegate the ability to shorten a period of probation to a probation officer.
- **[HB116, Modify Laws Affecting District Attorneys](#)**. See details in "Updates on Noteworthy Votes" section.
- **[HB142, Protect Our Students Act](#)**. Modifies penalties and definitions for certain sex offenses against students and increases the penalties for the failure of school administrators to report certain misconduct to the [State Board of Education](#).
- **[HB186, Division of Juvenile Justice Modifications](#)**. Amends various laws relating to juvenile justice proceedings, including authorizing the court to conduct a hearing to determine if a juvenile needs medical treatment and requiring the [Division of Juvenile Justice](#) and the [Department of Public Safety](#) to create a juvenile minority sensitivity and racial and ethnic disparities training annually.

Redistricting and Elections Committee Updates



The following noteworthy bills were discussed in the [Senate Redistricting and Elections Committee](#) over the past two weeks:

- **HB66, Partisan Boards of Education.** Changes non-partisan elections for the members of the Catawba County, Hickory City, Newton-Conover City, Pamlico County, and Buncombe County Boards of Education to partisan elections. I do NOT support this bill because **I do not believe we should be politicizing our local boards of education.** You can read more about efforts to politicize local races [here](#).
- **HB308, Alexander County Board of Education Referendum.** Requires a referendum on whether to change the election method for Alexander County Board of Education from nonpartisan to partisan. As I stated above, I do not support the politicization of local boards of education, but do believe this bill is a **more democratic way to handle this process**, as it will go directly to the local voters and will not be dictated by legislators in Raleigh.

Commerce and Insurance Committee Updates



The following noteworthy bills were discussed in the [Senate Commerce and Insurance Committee](#) over the past two weeks:

- **HB346, Reorganization & Economic Development Act.** See details in "Updates on Noteworthy Votes" section.
- **HB347, Sports Wagering/Horse Racing Wagering.** See details in "Updates on Noteworthy Votes" section.

Change in My Office: Welcome Sarah and Farewell Jessica



(From L to R): Sarah Reynolds (my new LA), myself, and Jessica Bolin (my outgoing LA)

I hope everyone will join me in giving a warm welcome to Sarah Reynolds, my new Legislative Assistant. I am excited to have her joining the office and assisting me in serving Senate District 41. She can be reached at the same office number, (919) 715-3050 or by email: sarah.e.reynolds@ncleg.gov. I am sad to say goodbye to my fantastic outgoing Legislative Assistant, Jessica Bolin. I've been so grateful to have her in my office for the past 2.5 years. She's going to graduate school and I wish her well.

Senator Marcus in the Community & Meetings in Raleigh



I had a great tour of the massive renovation happening at the [Carolina Theatre](#) in uptown Charlotte recently. I'm looking forward to seeing the completed facility once construction is complete.



I met with staff from the [ASPCA](#) this week to discuss their animal advocacy efforts and my bipartisan bill, [SB603](#), **Confidentiality of Animal Services Records**.



Thank you to Dr. Paige Sokolsky for coordinating my visit to Duke Regional Hospital this week. I had informative conversations with her and an OB physician to see how they handle the increased demand for mental healthcare, how the new abortion ban will impact their work, the need for higher reimbursement rates for Medicaid patients, and more.



I had a packed office for my meeting with the [NC Aids Action Network](#) for their "HIV Speaks on Jones Street" advocacy day. I'm grateful for their advocacy on this important issue.



I met with Billy Chung from the Taiwan Consulate to discuss the Taiwan Electric Vehicle Delegation and the country's interest in business opportunities in the Charlotte area. I learned that Taiwan was the first country in Asia to legalize gay marriage and that Taiwan's President Tsai Ing-wen is female.

More on the Budget: Private School Vouchers and Corporate Tax Breaks



I would like to highlight two issues with the proposed Senate budget that influenced my decision to vote NO: a massive expansion of public money going to private school vouchers and additional tax cuts.

I have always opposed use of public money for private schools, especially given the lack of accountability and their practice of discrimination against students based on religion and/or LGBTQ status. The proposed budget more than doubles the funding for private school vouchers and allows even the wealthiest families to use public money to help pay private school tuition. **The Office of State Budget and Management's analysis projects the voucher expansion will reduce the funding available for public schools by more than \$200 million in the 2026-2027 school year alone.** On this topic, members of the [North Carolina Association of Educators](#) met with the Democratic Caucus to discuss continued concern for the state of public education and how it will be affected by provisions in both the House and Senate budgets. Read more about the effect of private school vouchers on public education [here](#). Analysis on the vouchers from the Governor's Office can be found [here](#).

In addition to the detrimental effect on public education, the proposed changes to the personal income tax rate and the complete elimination of the corporate income tax will have severe negative ramifications for North Carolinians. Reducing the personal income tax to 2.49% (from the current rate of 4.75%) **will reduce revenue by \$7.6 billion annually.** The reduction primarily benefits the wealthiest households in North Carolina and does little to reach the poorest North Carolinians. On average, this change will give the wealthiest 1% of households in North Carolina a tax cut 40 times greater than that received by middle-income citizens.

Beyond the changes made to personal income tax, the budget maintains the elimination of corporate income tax. **If this tax change were to become law, it would reduce revenues by \$1 billion a year between 2025 and 2030.** Read more about the tax proposals and how they would set us up for a severe financial crisis [here](#).

Legislation to Look Out For: HB488



Last month, a bill designed to block modernization of North Carolina's energy efficiency standards passed through the House of Representatives and made its way to the Senate. The Building Code Council is supposed to review building codes every 6 years and the current rules on energy efficiency standards haven't been updated since 2012. **HB488 would delay updates to energy efficient building standards until 2026.** I oppose this bill because it's important for us to build energy efficient homes. Not only would code modernization allow homeowners to save money on utility bills, it would also increase the durability and long-term value of new construction. The bill has not moved through Senate committees yet. Read more about the subject [here](#), including an interview with a Davidson home builder.

Photo ID Requirements for In-Person and Mail-In Voting



On April 28, 2023, the **NC Supreme Court** issued a decision that **requires voters to present photo identification in order to participate in elections**. The first elections that will be affected by this ruling are the 2023 municipal elections. While all voters (in person and absentee) will be asked to show a qualifying photo ID before voting, the implementation of this ruling is complicated and it's not yet clear **which forms of ID will qualify**. The NC Board of Elections recently released **this notification** to colleges and universities about the steps they must take in order for their student IDs to qualify. More specific information should be available soon about what other forms of ID qualify. You can read more about the case and what it means for future elections **here**.

Also, **the State Board of Elections invites the public to comment on two temporary rules proposed to implement the photo ID requirement** for in-person and absentee-by-mail voters in North Carolina, beginning with the 2023 municipal elections. These rules are necessary to ensure uniform implementation of the photo ID requirement by all 100 county boards of elections and in all 3,000-plus polling locations. They are similar to rules adopted by the State Board and approved by the Rules Review Commission in prior iterations of the photo ID law.

The public comment period is open now and runs through June 23.

Members of the public may comment on the rules in any of the following ways:

Online: **[Public comment portal](#)**

Email: rulemaking.sboe@ncsbe.gov

Mail: Attn: Rulemaking Coordinator, PO Box 27255, Raleigh, NC 27611-7255

A virtual public hearing will be held at 11 a.m. on June 19, 2023.

How to join the public hearing:

Online: **[WebEx](#)**

By Phone: 1-415-655-0003, Enter Code: 2435 046 5077#, then passcode 62723

Information and links to the two proposed rules are below:

[Rule 08 NCAC 17 .0101 \(Verification of Photo Identification During In-Person Voting\)](#):

This proposed rule describes how election officials must determine whether the photograph on the ID reasonably resembles the voter and whether the name is the same as or substantially equivalent to the voter's name in their registration record. It also defines the process if an election official determines that the photograph or name on the ID do not satisfy the rule, as well as options that must be made available to the voter in this situation.

[Rule 08 NCAC 17 .0109 \(Photo Identification for Absentee-By-Mail Ballots\)](#): This proposed rule provides details about the requirement for absentee-by-mail voters to provide a copy of an acceptable photo ID with their ballot return envelope, or to complete a photo ID exception form. It also describes the process county boards of elections must follow in reviewing copies of IDs or exception forms returned with absentee ballots.

Safe Firearms Storage Campaign



The **Department of Public Safety** (DPS) recently launched the **NC S.A.F.E** (Secure All Firearms Effectively) public awareness campaign. This statewide initiative will include various advertisements and a new website with information on best practices for firearm storage. **DPS started this campaign due to the skyrocketing number of run-related deaths and injuries among young people**. Per DPS, child and youth deaths from firearm-related injuries rose 231% from 2012 through 2021. Guns have now become the leading cause of death among this age group. Governor Cooper will also kick off a week of safe storage related events beginning June 5. Read more about the initiative **here**.

The National Caucus of Environmental Legislators' Proposal To Limit Drinking Water Contamination



I am proud to be among the 278 state legislators who signed onto the [National Caucus of Environmental Legislators'](#) (NCEL) letter to the EPA encouraging the regulation of per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) in drinking water under the authority of the federal Safe Drinking Water Act. PFAS are a class of compounds considered "toxic forever chemicals" because **they do not naturally break down, and are linked to serious health problems such as cancer, immune disorders, and birth defects.** Read the letter [here](#).

DMV Offices Now Open for Saturday Appointments



Several DMV offices in Mecklenburg have opened up for Saturday appointments. Find the list of locations with Saturday hours [here](#).

Additionally, many DMV services, such as **driver license renewal, vehicle registration renewal, and personalized plate orders can be performed online.** View a full list of online services [here](#). Other tips for planning your DMV visit can be found [here](#).

Free Property Tax Assistance Services



Do you need help with your property taxes? The [Charlotte Center for Legal Advocacy](#) is providing free assistance to help homeowners prepare their NC property tax relief applications. Call 980-256-7952 or visit their website to learn more [here](#).

COVID-19 Test & Vaccine Updates



[NC DHHS](#) is partnering with Project Act to provide **free COVID-19 tests to all North Carolinians.** This program used to just be available for select zip codes, but it is now available statewide. Order your free tests [here](#).

Additionally, DHHS has **approved additional booster shots for folks 65+ and/or who are at high risk for severe illness.** Anyone who meets the age requirement is eligible for a bivalent booster if it has been at least 4 months since their previous vaccine. Folks with compromised immune systems can get a booster if it has been at least 2 months since their last vaccine. More information [here](#).

Financial Update on the State's General Fund

Beginning Cash, Friday, May 19	14,594,236,005.73
Add Receipts:	
Tax and Non-Tax Receipts	1,342,147,150.55
Coronavirus Relief Receipts	0.00
Other Receipts	878,741,168.47
Less Disbursements:	
Payroll	1,146,661,100.01
State Aid	151,957,754.20
Medicaid/Other Provider Payments	158,831,386.58
Tax Refunds/Distributions	59,434,655.42
Debt Service	0.00
Coronavirus Relief Transfers Out	0.00
General Operating	493,800,930.64
Ending Cash, Friday, May 26	14,804,438,497.90
Less Reserved Cash:	
Due to Local Governments – Sales and Use Tax Payable	881,687,238.15
Other Reserves	0.00
American Recovery Plan Act Reserve	75,331,202.90
Carry Forward Reserve	211,503,652.34
Clean Water Drinking Water Reserve	0.00
Coronavirus Capital Projects Reserve	0.00
Coronavirus Relief Reserve	0.00
Earthquake Disaster Recovery Reserve	0.00
Economic Development Project Reserve	601,900,000.00
Federal Infrastructure Match Reserve	95,328,642.00
Housing Reserve	0.00
Hurricane Florence Disaster Recovery Reserve	60,464,335.35
Information Technology Reserve	108,943,174.00
Local Fiscal Recovery Reserve-ARPA	0.00
Local Govt Coronavirus Relief Reserve	0.00
Local Project Reserve	0.00
Medicaid Contingency Reserve	326,512,736.00
Medicaid Transformation Reserve	155,642,170.00
NC GREAT Reserve	0.00
Opioid Abatement Reserve	765,130.94
Public School Contingency Reserve	0.00
Public School Need Based Capital Reserve	0.00
Repairs and Renovations Reserve	0.00
Retiree Supplement Reserve	0.00
SCIF General Fund Reserve	0.00
Savings Reserve	4,750,000,000.98
Stabilization and Inflation Reserve	1,000,000,000.00
State Emergency Response/Disaster Reserve	748,773,988.62
Unfunded Liability Solvency Reserve	0.00
Wilmington Harbor Enhancements Reserve	283,800,000.00
World University Games Reserve	25,000,000.00
Unreserved Cash Balance, Friday, May 26	5,478,786,226.62

The Office of the State Controller (OSC) released the General Fund Cash Watch numbers for the week ending Friday, May 26. OSC provides a weekly update on the State’s General Fund cash position which can be found at osc.nc.gov. **The current unreserved cash balance in state coffers is \$5.479 billion.**

The State Controller is North Carolina’s chief fiscal officer and serves as an independent resource to ensure the financial integrity of the State.

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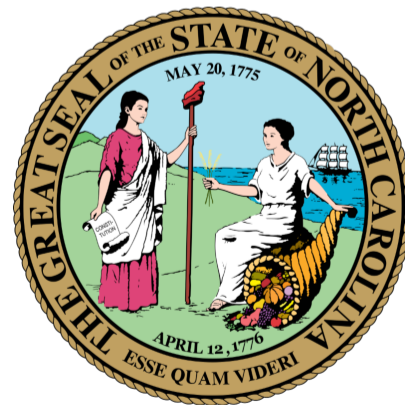
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How can we help you? Let us know and **reach out** to our office! We want to hear from you.

Senator Natasha Marcus | [Website](#)



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