

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



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NC Senate District 41



NC Senate District 41 Newsletter

June 16, 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:

- **HB140, Civilian Traffic Investigators.*** Allows municipalities to hire civilian traffic investigators to investigate car crashes involving only property damage. Civilian traffic investigators would have no power to arrest and would not replace current law enforcement officials. This will allow cities to use civilian investigators for minor traffic accidents, freeing up money and time for officers to respond to more serious matters and emergencies. Read more [here](#).
- **HB166, American Indians Graduating with Honors Act.*** Requires public schools to allow enrolled members of a State or federally recognized Indigenous Tribe, and those eligible to be members, to wear objects of cultural significance at school graduation ceremonies. **North Carolina has the nation's largest Native American population east of the Mississippi River, and the state officially recognizes 8 Native American tribes.** Read more about the bill and its necessity [here](#).
- **HB344, Mental Health Licensure Fair Practice Standards.*** Requires the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) to create an online dashboard that addresses mental health, intellectual and developmental disabilities, and substance use services agency performance and identifies trends and outcomes of reviews. **This update in regulation for mental health services will hold both providers and DHHS more accountable when addressing cases regarding mental health.** Using this data, DHHS would also be required to establish a workgroup in collaboration with providers, to address ongoing concerns, make annual training available to providers, and align its review processes to reflect technology in electronic health records and accept documentation presented through the electronic health record.

Key bills on which I voted NO:

- **SB582, North Carolina Farm Act of 2023.** Makes various changes to agricultural and wastewater laws of North Carolina. I voted NO on this bill because of a harmful provision that will end state protections for significant wetlands. **This provision opens the path to development for these unique, environmentally sensitive areas.** North Carolina's wetlands are crucial nurseries for fish and habitats for birds and act as protection from the storm surges frequently seen as a result of the hurricanes NC experiences every year. The wetlands also act as a filter for storm water runoff, which protects the quality of our rivers and streams. Decreasing the protections for wetlands will have devastating effects on the environment, as well as the communities that neighbor them. Read more about the bill [here](#).
- **HB130, Energy Choice/Solar Decommissioning Requirements.** Forbids local governments from prohibiting natural gas in new developments. I voted NO on this bill because it is an unnecessary, partisan overreach of the state government. Local governments are responsible for setting policy that reflects their community's values, and **this effectively silences the voices of people living in communities that value clean energy.** This bill explicitly protects natural gas but does not mention clean energy sources. It takes away local government authority to determine what sources of energy can be used in new developments. It prioritizes the interest of oil and gas companies and leaves out everyday consumers.
- **HB750, Address ESG Factors.** Addresses use of environmental, social, and governance criteria (ESG) by state agencies and state pension plan fiduciaries. I do not support this bill because we need to ensure that our investment funds are sound and stable; prohibiting ESG criteria runs counter to a global, forward-thinking investment plan. **It's essential for the future of the planet and for the companies' future that they consider the environment when investing, and important for human rights that social and governmental concerns are considered as well.** Not only does legislation like this (and the Senate's similar bill, [SB737](#)) pose concern for concepts such as environmentalism and equality, it can also be damaging to the economy and Charlotte businesses. The sponsor of this bill noted that it would likely require the state to not invest in companies like Bank of America and Wells Fargo because of their ESG policies.

*Passed Senate unanimously

Sponsored Legislation: SB748, the Voter Fraud Prevention Act



Last week, I introduced [SB748](#), the Voter Fraud Prevention Act, alongside Senator Michael Garrett (D-27) and Senator Sydney Batch (D-17). Twice in the last 20 years, a member of the General Assembly has switched parties following their election. **This bill is designed to address the lack of recourse for voters affected by post-election party switches.**

<p>THE VOTER FRAUD PREVENTION ACT applies if a legislator switches political parties and would:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Trigger a special election within 90 days ✓ Allow donors to the campaign to demand a refund ✓ Hold politicians accountable to their constituents 	<p>Voters deserve a way to replace their representative if they say one thing to get elected, then do the opposite once in office.</p> <p>Voters rely on candidates' party affiliation to indicate how they will legislate. That designation should mean something.</p> <p>The Voter Fraud Prevention Act (SB748) is a common-sense bill that promotes accountability and integrity.</p>
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It's time we did something to give voters tools to hold their elected representatives accountable and give political donors the right to seek a refund if their contributions are based on a false impression of the candidate. Read more about the bill and the press conference we held last week [here](#) or [here](#).

Education Committee Updates



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

- **HB574, Fairness in Women's Sports Act.** Bans all transgender girl students from participation on girls' sports teams. This includes all public and private schools K-12, as well as public and private colleges and universities in North Carolina. I do not support this bill because a) it is harmful to an already marginalized group of kids, b) it is bad for our state's reputation, and c) there are already effective procedures in place to determine on which teams transgender athletes should play on a case by case basis. **As a result of this legislation, it's certain that trans children will have a harder time feeling equal to their peers and safe at school.** In other words, this bill is unnecessary and harmful. Read more [here](#).
- **HB618, Charter School Review Board.** Proposes to convert the current Charter Schools Advisory Board (CSAB) to the Charter Schools Review Board and to shift the authority to approve charters from the N.C. State Board of Education (SBE) to the Review Board. This removes the SBE's ability to evaluate charter school applications and renewals entirely, and gives that power to individuals whose decision-making process is inherently biased. It would give the state legislature too much control over charter school applications and reviews, which will lead to even more **rapid expansion of charters schools with decreased oversight, which undermines public education and will lead to inferior schools receiving approval or renewal.** The Chairman of the SBE also opposes this bill, as the current process for application approval is transparent and fair. Read more [here](#).

Judiciary Committee Updates



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

- **HB600, Regulatory Reform Act of 2023.** Modifies watershed protections, stormwater regulations, and water quality regulations to dangerous degrees. Sections of this bill are not aligned with federal Clean Water Act and federal civil rights laws, leaving the state vulnerable to noncompliance. It limits the N.C. Department of Environmental Quality's authority to regulate companies' discharge of volatile compounds, such as PFAS. It exempts landowners from paying stormwater fees if stormwater controls are in place to "capture all stormwater on the property", but doesn't clarify what is to be done with that water once it is captured. Most of the properties that would benefit from this exemption are large commercial properties. Overall, this bill would **increase flooding to downstream public and private properties and degrade surface waters, lakes, and streams.** I am particularly concerned about the the modifications to watershed management requirements made specifically for Mooresville and Iredell County, as SD41 lies downstream.
- **HB813, The Pretrial Integrity Act.** Authorizes hearings for continued secure custody of 13, 14, or 15 year-olds alleged to have committed a Class A felony to be held every 30 days. Provides judicial discretion in determining whether defendants charged with certain felonies shall be granted pretrial release, and require a judge to set any conditions of release. This bill substantially alters pretrial release in NC and will allow for no bond to be set for as low as Class E felonies, potentially in violation of the 8th Amendment to the US Constitution and Art I, Sec 27 of the NC Constitution, both of which prohibit excessive bail. Not allowing bond for so many offenses could lead to a significant increase in jail populations, where there are already significant over-crowding issues. Because of how broad the language of this bill is in its current form, I worry that it will be used to harshly punish low-level offenses, rather than violent/serious crimes. The bill needs revisions. Read more [here](#).

Redistricting and Elections Committee Updates



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

- **SB747, Elections Law Changes.** Repeals the 3-day grace period for absentee ballots postmarked by election day, prohibits the state or county boards of elections as well as county commissioners from accepting private donations for election administration, purges individuals from voter roles based on jury disqualification, permits public inspection of absentee ballots at weekly county boards of elections meetings authorized through Election Day, requires two-factor authentication and computerized signature verification for mail-in ballots, and requires certain voters who utilize same-day registration at early in-person voting sites to cast a provisional ballot. **I do NOT support this bill**, as it would discourage certain voter from casting ballots and will cause valid ballots to be discarded instead of counted. When it was filed last week, I participated in a press conference held to discuss this bill's impact. In addition to the significant modifications to the voting process, the NCGA is not funding the boards of elections to ensure voters are informed of the new requirements and that ballots and polling locations will be ready and accurate in time for upcoming elections. Read more [here](#), [here](#), or [here](#).
- **SB749, No Partisan Advantage in Elections.** Restructures the State Board of Elections. Increases the number of members from 5 to 8, strips the governor of the ability to appoint members, and gives the power to appoint members to the Senate leader, House speaker and House and Senate minority leaders. In the event that the board is unable to determine who should be hired as the state director of elections, that tie is decided by the General Assembly. **This bill, based on the false premise that our current system is unfair, is designed to increase the legislature's influence on election administration.** Read more [here](#).

Commerce and Insurance Committee Updates



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

- **HB488, Code Council Reorganization and Various Code Amendments.** Reorganizes the Building Code Council, creates a new Residential Code Council, and amends various provisions of the North Carolina State Building Code and land development regulations. This bill splits the Building Code Council into 2 committees, commercial and residential, and limits the governor's appointment power to the council. **Additionally, it would block any updates to energy efficient building standards until 2031.** Our state building standards are already outdated, so further delay is a mistake and will result in higher energy costs for new homebuyers. This legislation could also mean that North Carolina would lose federal dollars under programs that require a modern energy code. Read more [here](#).
- **HB750, Address ESG Factors.** See details in "Updates on Noteworthy Votes" section.

Senator Marcus in the Community & Meetings in Raleigh



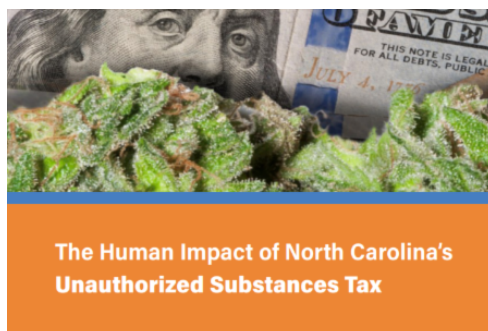
I met with constituents from Mecklenburg County and House District 112 preceding the press conference held on the Voter Fraud Prevention Act, SB748. We discussed their frustrations following their representative's recent party switch. Two of these constituents, Mary Jane Conti and Dr. Ann Newman, R.N., spoke during the press conference.



I volunteered at the library's laptop distribution event to address the digital divide, which is a serious barrier to education and employment. I was moved when I saw the impact that the event had on those who were able to receive free refurbished laptops.



I was happy to attend the City of Charlotte's Fourth Parallel Runway Groundbreaking Ceremony at [Charlotte Douglas International Airport](#). CLT is the 7th busiest airport in the world and the construction of this runway will promote continued growth in SD41 and the surrounding area.

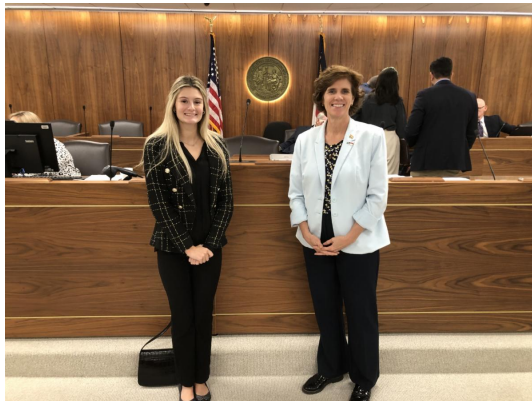
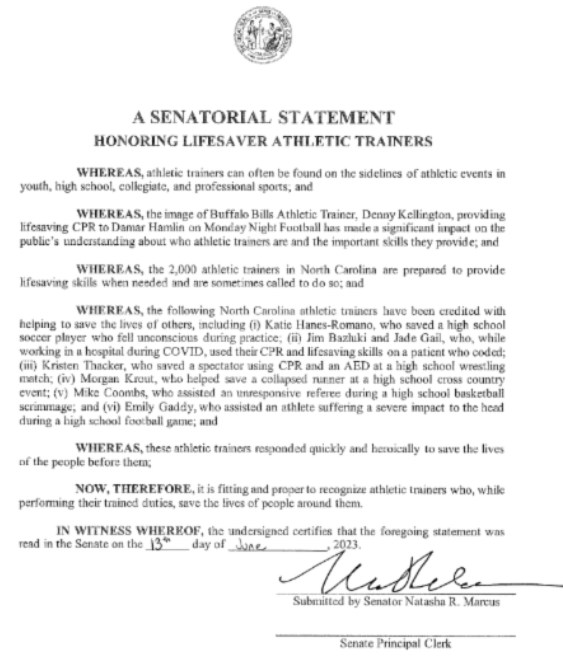


I attended a presentation by members of the [NC Justice Center](#) and [Forward Justice](#) on North Carolina's Drug Tax. This is an unfair and harmful tax assessed on people who can least afford it. Most people do not know the tax has been assessed and some end up owing tens of thousands of dollars. This is a huge barrier for mostly low income people who are trying to rebuild their lives. Read more about the impact of this fee and others [here](#).

As a member of the [State Climate Policy Network](#) (SCPN) this week, I attended a program created by [Climate XChange](#) which gives advocates and policymakers the tools necessary to push for modern, effective climate policies. We shared research, resources, and spoke about climate-based initiatives in several states.



This week, I honored seven athletic trainers who saved lives at sporting events and other locations around the state: Katie Hanes-Romano, Jim Bazluki, Jade Gail, Kristen Thacker, Morgan Krout, Mike Coombs, and Emily Gaddy. I issued a senatorial statement and had them recognized for their life-saving work during the Senate session earlier this week. I'm grateful to the members of the [N.C. Athletic Trainers' Association](#) who helped organize the event, including the President of the association, Nina Walker, and Dr. Ashley Long.



This week I sponsored Addi Gentle from Cornelius as a Senate Page. Addi is a junior in high school, with plans to major in Political Science and Journalism in college. She is interested in environmental protections and animal rights. I hope her experience at the General Assembly was informative and that her passion for the legislative process helps her meet her goals.

More on the Budget: The Government's Staffing Crisis

As budget negotiations between the House and the Senate continue to happen behind closed doors, the state of future raises for state employees is unclear. Though the [State Employee Association of North Carolina](#) has advocated for a 5% pay raise for state workers for the next 2 years, the House's proposed budget only includes a 4.25% raise, and the Senate's has a meager 2.5%. Almost one quarter of all state government jobs were vacant as of December 2022, according to a report by the Office of State Human Resources, and worker retention is incredibly low. **Higher vacancies hurt everyone, and make it much harder to provide services to the public such as at the DMV.** Learn more by listening to [this episode](#) of the [Politics Podcast from WUNC](#).

Sports Betting Legal in NC: What You Need to Know



Now that sports betting is legal across the state, it's important to understand what's within the law and how the process will evolve. **Betting will start within 12 months of Gov. Cooper signing the bill, which occurred this past Wednesday.** So, wagers will start on or before June of 2024. You must be at least 21 years old to wager, and eight current sporting arenas in North Carolina will be able to have sports betting on site. Read more about which sports qualify for wagers and which facilities could qualify for on site betting [here](#).

Invitation to Event in Charlotte: Environmental Justice Listening Session



OFFICE OF GOVERNOR
ROY COOPER

Save the Date: Environmental Justice Listening Session

JUNE 17, 12:30PM - 3PM

LOCATION: CAMINO CENTER

201 STETSON DR, CHARLOTTE, NC 28262

The Office of Governor Roy Cooper wants to hear about your ideas for achieving environmental justice in North Carolina.

Snacks, childcare, and Spanish interpretation services will be provided.

<https://forms.office.com/g/EfYxujv2E4>



If you would like to preview topics that will be discussed and/or provide feedback online, please click the link or scan the QR code above with your mobile device.

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](#).

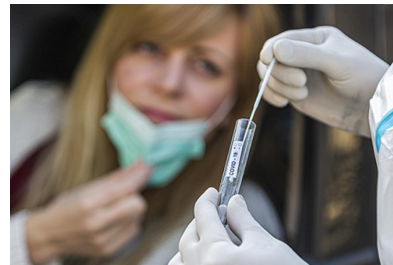
Additionally, many DMV services, such as **driver license renewal, vehicle registration renewal, and personalized plate orders can be performed online**. View a full list of online services [here](#). Other tips for planning your DMV visit can be found [here](#).

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, June 02	14,088,524,678.18
Add Receipts:	
Tax and Non-Tax Receipts	374,917,582.19
Coronavirus Relief Receipts	0.00
Other Receipts	1,578,012,869.08
Less Disbursements:	
Payroll	134,662,040.17
State Aid	11,132,329.97
Medicaid/Other Provider Payments	1,247,116,945.32
Tax Refunds/Distributions	30,875,622.91
Debt Service	0.00
Coronavirus Relief Transfers Out	0.00
General Operating	692,630,240.83
Ending Cash, Friday, June 09	
13,925,037,950.25	
Less Reserved Cash:	
Due to Local Governments – Sales and Use Tax Payable	901,375,940.60
Other Reserves	0.00
American Recovery Plan Act Reserve	75,331,202.90
Carry Forward Reserve	208,898,077.34
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	60,172,356.59
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	748,513,483.01
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, June 09	
4,582,855,035.89	

The Office of the State Controller (OSC) released the General Fund Cash Watch numbers for the week ending Friday, June 9. 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 \$4.582 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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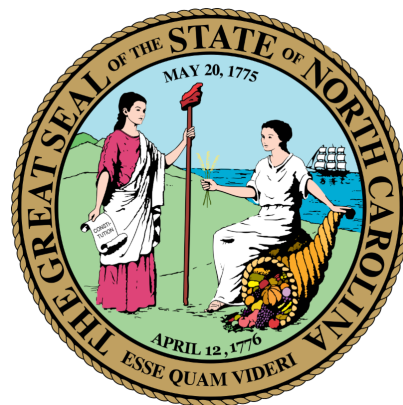
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How can we help you? Let us know and **reach out** to our office! We want to hear from you.



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