

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



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

July 28, 2023

Governor's Vetoes and Overrides



Over the past two weeks, Governor Cooper vetoed the following bill:

- [HB219](#), Charter School Omnibus. Allows unfair pre-lottery priority admissions to charters for certain preschools, prevents the Charter Review Board from considering impacts of charter approvals and renewals on local public schools, removes restrictions on growth for low-performing charters, and allows counties to appropriate property taxes to fund charter school capital needs. The State Board of Education should continue to oversee the enrollment of charter schools to assure success and North Carolina should continue to cap the enrollment of low-performing charter schools. For these reasons, I support the Governor's veto of the bill. Read more [here](#).

This bill marks the 14th veto of the year. We expect to be called back into session to vote on motions to override all or most of these vetoes soon. I will vote to uphold the vetoes.

Legislation Highlight: Elections Overhaul



Several alarming elections changes are making their way through the North Carolina General Assembly. While I've previously discussed [SB747](#) and [SB749](#) and the dangers they present to voting rights in North Carolina, [HB772](#) also raises many concerns. House Bill 772 allows poll watchers to "move freely" around polling sites, standing as close as 5 feet away from voters and poll workers. It also allows poll watchers to listen to conversations at the polling site, including those that identify voters and their addresses, take videos or photos of tabulation equipment at the start and finish of voting, and use cell phones for note-taking and communication.

While SB747 presents a threat to ballot accessibility and SB749 jeopardizes the integrity of state and local elections boards, the powers granted to poll watchers by HB772 would threaten the privacy of voters and the ability to cast votes without intimidation. Read more [here](#).

Senator Marcus in the Community



While I am away from Raleigh waiting for the budget to be released, I am able to attend local events in the district like the Historic Camp Greene neighborhood meeting. I provided a legislative update for residents and heard some of the community's concerns.

Ms. Kimberly Bose, Secretary
 Federal Energy Regulatory Commission
 888 First St NE, Room 1A
 Washington, DC 20426

Re: Mountain Valley Pipeline Southgate Extension Request - Docket #CP19-14-000

July XX, 2023

Dear Secretary Bose,

As members of the North Carolina General Assembly, we respectfully request the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission **deny an extension of the Certificate of Public Convenience and Necessity for the Mountain Valley Pipeline Southgate (MVPS).**

Over the last five years since the proposed MVP Southgate was announced, we have increasingly heard from neighbors, residents and constituents about the real and significant concerns the MVPS poses to our communities. The North Carolina Department of Environmental Quality (NCDEQ) has twice denied MVPS a 401 Water Quality Certification on the grounds that they did not meet water quality requirements, concerns the mainline would never be completed, and the lack of need for the project.¹ The proposed 74-mile project is set to terminate in Alamance County, North Carolina, where the Alamance County Commissioners unanimously passed a resolution against the project in 2018.

Notably, the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) Virginia State Conference² and local Pittsylvania Branch passed resolutions opposing FERC granting the MVP mainline extension request and the proposed MVPS Lambert compressor station, respectively³.

Additionally, more than 270 groups from across the country asked FERC to deny MVP's four-year extension request last year, and they were joined by 60 legislators from Virginia⁴ and North Carolina⁵, and more than 30,000 individuals⁶. Transco also publicly opposed the proposed Mountain Valley Pipeline Southgate extension.⁷ Finally, just this month, East Daley Analytics released an analysis saying "due to downstream constraints...the Mountain Valley Pipeline (MVP) will run below half its capacity of 2 Bcf/d when the project is finally built" and "the Southgate project has been placed on indefinite hold after the denial of an air quality permit."⁸

Therefore, **we ask the Commission to deny MVPS's request** for these reasons:

1. **The MVP's developers have never demonstrated need, and they say the project may never be built**

I signed this letter encouraging the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission to deny a permit for the Mountain Valley Pipeline (MVP) fracked gas project. I do not support this project for a number of reasons: MVP developers have not demonstrated a need for the project, the MVP is still **missing multiple required permits**, and the company is in dire financial trouble. Additionally, the proposed project is **an example of environmental injustice**, as it would run through largely impoverished and rural areas.



I had two opportunities to visit the Freedom School program at the Ada Jenkins Center last week. On Monday, I joined for the morning Harambee, which is a uniquely energetic way to start the day. And on Wednesday, I heard the scholars present their class projects on the topic of reducing gun violence. It was heartbreaking to hear so many children express their fear of losing friends to gun violence. They shared poems, songs and posters calling for more gun restrictions, less violence, fewer guns, and the need to keep guns away from kids.

Childcare Costs and the Benefits Cliff



Did you know that the average cost of infant care in North Carolina (\$9,480/year) is 35% more expensive than in-state tuition at UNC-Chapel Hill (\$7,020)? This is a problem for many reasons and our state needs to step up to supplement the cost, so that children get quality care and parents can work. These investments would stimulate our economy and help employers find workers to fill the high number of open positions across many industries.

One of the reasons some workers cannot afford to take low paying jobs, like childcare work, is what social workers call the "benefits cliff." This is the situation faced by many people who are working toward self-sufficiency by gradually increasing their income, but then reach a cliff when all benefits suddenly cut off, when they make even one dollar more than an arbitrary "poverty line." As explained by the Benefits Cliff Community Lab, "People face a benefits cliff when they receive public benefits in the form of housing vouchers, food (such as the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program) or childcare subsidy, earn a raise and then discover that they make too much money to continue to receive certain benefits. However, they are not making enough money to sustain themselves and their household because at times the value of the loss of public benefits is greater than the wage increase. Due to the loss of these programs, career advancement opportunities can result in the family being financially worse off (a benefits cliff) or no better off (a benefits plateau) than before the wage increase."

A better solution would be to adjust public assistance so that, as income gradually increases, public assistance gradually decreases until low-income workers reach self-sufficiency.

You can read more about the benefits cliff and how to advocate to address it [here](#).

Town of Davidson Accepting Grant Applications for Tree Canopy Enhancement Program



[Click Here to Apply!](#)

The Tree Canopy Enhancement Program is an opportunity for eligible nonprofits to enhance and promote Davidson's tree canopy through a town grant.

Eligible nonprofit organizations are encouraged to apply for funds to conduct tree canopy-related activities in the community on an annual basis, beginning in 2023. Eligible and qualified nonprofits are defined as any nonprofit that can complete work directly related to the town's tree canopy. Applications must be received by Thursday, August 11, 2023, to be considered.

Applicants must request a specific amount of grant funding for the project or program and provide a detailed description about how funds will be used if received.

Nonprofits can apply for a multi-year grant covering up to three years. Project outcome and financial accounting is required to verify and communicate success at the end of each year.

Grant funding will be awarded to approved projects/programs by the end of October.

New App Modernizes Hunting, Fishing Licensing



The North Carolina Wildlife Resources Commission has unveiled Go Outdoors North Carolina, a new system and mobile app that lets residents and non-residents apply for licenses, registrations and permits and shop for merchandise online. Through real-time license verification and secure digital storage, the app ensures that users can access their licenses at any time, from their mobile devices.

In addition to the licensure features, the Go Outdoors North Carolina app for iOS and Android users also provides resources such as virtual maps, regulations, vessel registration, and much more. Read more [here](#), or create your Go Outdoors North Carolina account [here](#).

Update: Madalina Cojocari Case



It's been nearly eight months since Madalina, now 12, was last seen walking off a school bus Nov. 21. Her mother last saw her at their Cornelius home Nov. 23, but she didn't report her daughter missing until Dec. 15. Since then, her mother and stepfather have been charged with failure to report the disappearance of a child. The Cornelius Police Department has not allowed her case to go cold. They are following up on every lead.

Newly unsealed search warrants in the case reveal that Madalina was spotted in surveillance photos on December 16 in Sugar Mountain. The newly-unsealed records also reveal that police intentionally housed Madalina's stepfather, Christopher Palmiter, with a confidential informant in jail and later seized his jail notebooks. Court records show the girl's mother discussed a big bag of money and withdrawing cash with her mother "and a theory that Chris gave the girl away for money." Read more [here](#).

DMV Kiosks Coming to Mecklenburg this Fall



The North Carolina Department of Motor Vehicles announced it will install 20 kiosks in grocery stores and other settings that are open for long stretches of the day. The first 10 kiosks will come online this fall and the following 10 will be available starting in 2024. The initiative is part of a pilot program and is designed to alleviate long wait times at DMV locations. Kiosks will first go to Wake, Mecklenburg, and Cumberland counties. Learn more [here](#).

Links to Helpful Information

Domestic Violence Hotline: If you or someone you know is experiencing domestic violence or partner abuse, please call [Safe Alliance](#) at 704-332-2513 and they can help you.

Suicide Prevention: If you have thoughts of harming yourself, **please call or text 988**, the Suicide Prevention Hotline for help.

Property Tax values and histories in Mecklenburg County can be searched on [this site](#) that includes links to Polaris and information about past assessments. You can find more detailed information on real estate values on the [Mecklenburg](#) site.

Mecklenburg's Department of Community Resources provides individuals and families with [immediate access](#) to a diverse range of Mecklenburg County Health and Human Services programs and community partner services in Community Resources Centers throughout the County.

Mecklenburg's County Bar website provides a list of pro bono resources for those unable to afford legal counsel.

Voter Information: You can find your current information on the [NC Voter Lookup page](#).

Unclaimed Cash! Visit [NCCash.com](#) today to see if you have unclaimed property under the supervision of the NC Treasurer's office.

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 Updates



COVID TESTS approved for use after expiration date.

The FDA granted another three-month shelf-life extension for the iHealth COVID-19 Antigen Rapid Test, which extended the shelf-life of all iHealth tests from 6 months to 15 months. Please use the tool at the link below to check the most updated expiration date of your kit. FDA for shelf-life extensions are issued every three months based on stability studies, and the new shelf-lives for our tests will apply to tests already produced as well as future production. More information [here](#).

Financial Update on the State's General Fund

Beginning Cash, Friday, July 14	14,492,960,839.57
Add Receipts:	
Tax and Non-Tax Receipts	1,773,606,076.81
Coronavirus Relief Receipts	0.00
Other Receipts	419,298,554.03
Less Disbursements:	
Payroll	62,907,793.84
State Aid	37,407,544.82
Medicaid/Other Provider Payments	176,836,854.90
Tax Refunds/Distributions	22,462,883.78
Debt Service	0.00
Coronavirus Relief Transfers Out	0.00
General Operating	266,107,874.54
Ending Cash, Friday, July 21	16,120,142,518.53
Less Reserved Cash:	
Due to Local Governments – Sales and Use Tax Payable	896,320,502.88
Other Reserves	11,415,062.17
American Recovery Plan Act Reserve	103,076,693.32
Carry Forward Reserve	157,532,676.27
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	59,860,339.84
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	4,750,001,113.98
Stabilization and Inflation Reserve	1,000,000,000.00
State Emergency Response/Disaster Reserve	873,489,333.22
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, July 21	6,670,554,943.91

The Office of the State Controller (OSC) released the General Fund Cash Watch numbers for the week ending Friday, July 21. 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 \$6.670 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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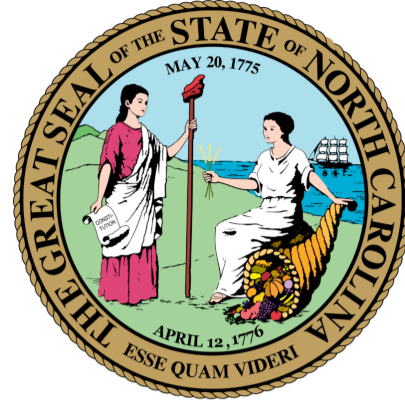
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How can we help you? Let us know and [reach out](#) to our office! We want to hear from you.

Senator Natasha Marcus | [Website](#)



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