

For Immediate Release



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From the Office of Sen. Joyce Waddell, NC Senate
Mecklenburg County

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Greetings:

At the General Assembly *For the Week*

School is back in. Please exercise caution on the roads, especially in the mornings and afternoons behind the school buses. There were too many avoidable accidents as it relates to the children getting on and off the school buses.

I am officially declaring it "be kind to teachers" week. Many of our educators and staff, have been placed under a little stress trying to prepare for our children to get back to learning. Teachers work tirelessly to make sure all things are up to par for the students and need the help and support of the parents and caregivers.

Joyce Waddell



Increased \$\$ for training school bus drivers

*Senator Waddell
attends a press
conference that
highlights the school
bus driver shortage.*

*The Governor
announces \$1 million
dollar increase to
train and hire school
bus drivers.*



Driver Shortage

I participated in a press conference last week for an announcement regarding a new initiative for training school bus drivers. Alongside other colleagues, the Governor visited Charlotte Tuesday to announce \$1 million to bolster bus driver training — an amount he acknowledged is not nearly enough to fix a statewide problem. The investment is meant to help tackle North Carolina's school bus driver shortage impacting many of the state's 115 districts.

Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools, alone, is down 30 drivers, with 25 in the training pipeline.

I hope this injection of funds can bring new trainees to help the school system. It is very hard and disruptive to the students and school staff for the students to arrive late. We only have a certain amount of time to teach and when that time is taken away by events that are preventable, that becomes so much worse.

Energy Rates

"Experts" will be informing state regulators at a hearing beginning Monday as they consider Duke Energy's request for a big rate hike in its central and western North Carolina territory.

In January, Duke asked regulators for a 15.7% increase over three years for customers served by its Duke Energy Carolinas division, which stretches from Durham to the Triad to Charlotte to the mountains.

It is likely the North Carolina Utilities Commission will reduce Duke's request. That is what happened two weeks ago when regulators approved a smaller 11.3% increase over three years for Duke Energy Progress customers in eastern North Carolina and the Asheville area.

Meanwhile, even before the commission considers this increase, Duke Energy Carolinas rates are set to rise 12.6% on Sept. 1, mainly because of higher fuel costs.

North Carolinians cannot handle rising costs of anything else. Many who are already having a hard time making ends meet are struggling to put food on the table and pay bills, need some relief. We must find another way to offset these rising costs without burdening the community.

Vaccines

Getting vaccinated is still one of the best ways to avoid getting certain viruses or diseases. You should still avoid large crowds, wash your hands and be careful. COVID levels are rising and we are about to go into influenza season.

Getting vaccinated can help!



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