

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



From Sen. Natasha Marcus <natasha.marcus@ncleg.gov>
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Reply-To <natasha.marcus@ncleg.gov>
Date 2023-09-08 16:55

Natasha
MARCUS
 NC Senate District 41



NC Senate District 41 Newsletter

September 8, 2023

Budget Update



Although nothing has been officially calendared yet, signs are strong that the overdue two-year state budget will be revealed next week and that the NCGA will return to Raleigh to vote on it. Some Republican leaders are hoping to include gambling expansion, including authorization of several new casinos and legalization of slot-machine-style consoles, in the budget bill. It's unclear at this point whether there are sufficient votes to pass a budget that includes these provisions. If they are included, lawmakers will be forced to vote with little time to review or debate the idea. Negotiations about casinos have reportedly been happening in private, delaying implementation of raises for teachers, bus drivers and school support staff, Medicaid expansion, benefits for state retirees, and the [ongoing inability to hire adequate employees at NCDMV](#) and most other state agencies. You can read more about the latest on these topics [here](#). **Please let me know what you think about the idea of adding multiple gambling casinos and slot machines in our state.**

Senator Marcus in the Community



Last week, I attended an anti-human trafficking training hosted by the [Lantern Project](#), a North Carolina-based non-profit whose primary goals are to educate the public, identify the signs, and generate strong community ties to prevent human trafficking. This webinar was designed to teach legislators how to recognize the signs that someone is a victim of human trafficking and how we can help protect people, especially children.

September 1, 2023

North Carolina General Statutes Commission

Dear Chairwoman Faires and Commission Members,

We, the undersigned members of the North Carolina General Assembly, hereby declare our support for the proposals made by the ERA-NC Alliance Task Force on General Statutes. These proposals attempt to bolster people's rights and access points for opportunity and improve equity in our state through the power of language.

In 2022, the ERA-NC Alliance (501(c4) requested that the law firm of Winston & Strawn, LLP conduct a comprehensive review of the North Carolina General Statutes (NCGS) to examine and identify any gender-specific terms contained in the NCGS text. Notably, only about 900 pages of statutes (out of the nearly 50,000 total pages) did not have gender-specific search terms. 70 Winston & Strawn attorneys reviewed the entire NCGS, including those chapters with no gender-specific search terms. A group of enlisted N.C. practitioners with relevant expertise conducted a separate and independent review to provide additional insight.

The U.S. legal code currently defaults to masculine gender except in states that have passed measures implementing a generic language change in their own state legal codes. California, Minnesota, New Mexico, Ohio, Oregon, Washington, and Wisconsin are among the states that have passed such measures. We want North Carolina to join this group of states.

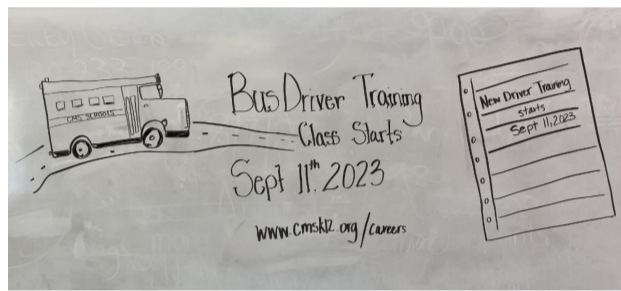
Because the Alliance Task Force on General Statutes and the NCGS Commission recognize the magnitude of the task to change all gender-specific terms, we agree the Commission should address the most pressing statutes. Attached is a list of the current statutes needing urgent change and the recommended changes to reflect non-gender-specific language.

Thank you for your consideration. Please know document signatories support the Alliance's proposals and the Commission's efforts. We are looking forward to the success of this project.

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Representative Julie von Haefen N.C. House District 36	Representative Deb Butler N.C. House District 18
Representative Marcia Morey N.C. House District 30	Representative Zack Hawkins N.C. House District 31
Representative Rosa Gill N.C. House District 33	Representative Maria Cervania N.C. House District 41
Representative Cynthia Ball N.C. House District 49	Representative Renee Price N.C. House District 50
Representative Robert Reives II N.C. House District 54	Representative Kanika Brown N.C. House District 71
Representative John Autry N.C. House District 100	Representative Eric Ager N.C. House District 114
Representative Lindsey Prather N.C. House District 115	Representative Caleb Rudow N.C. House District 116
Senator Lisa Grafstein N.C. Senate District 13	Senator Val Applewhite N.C. Senate District 19
Senator Mike Woodard N.C. Senate District 22	Senator Natasha Marcus N.C. Senate District 41

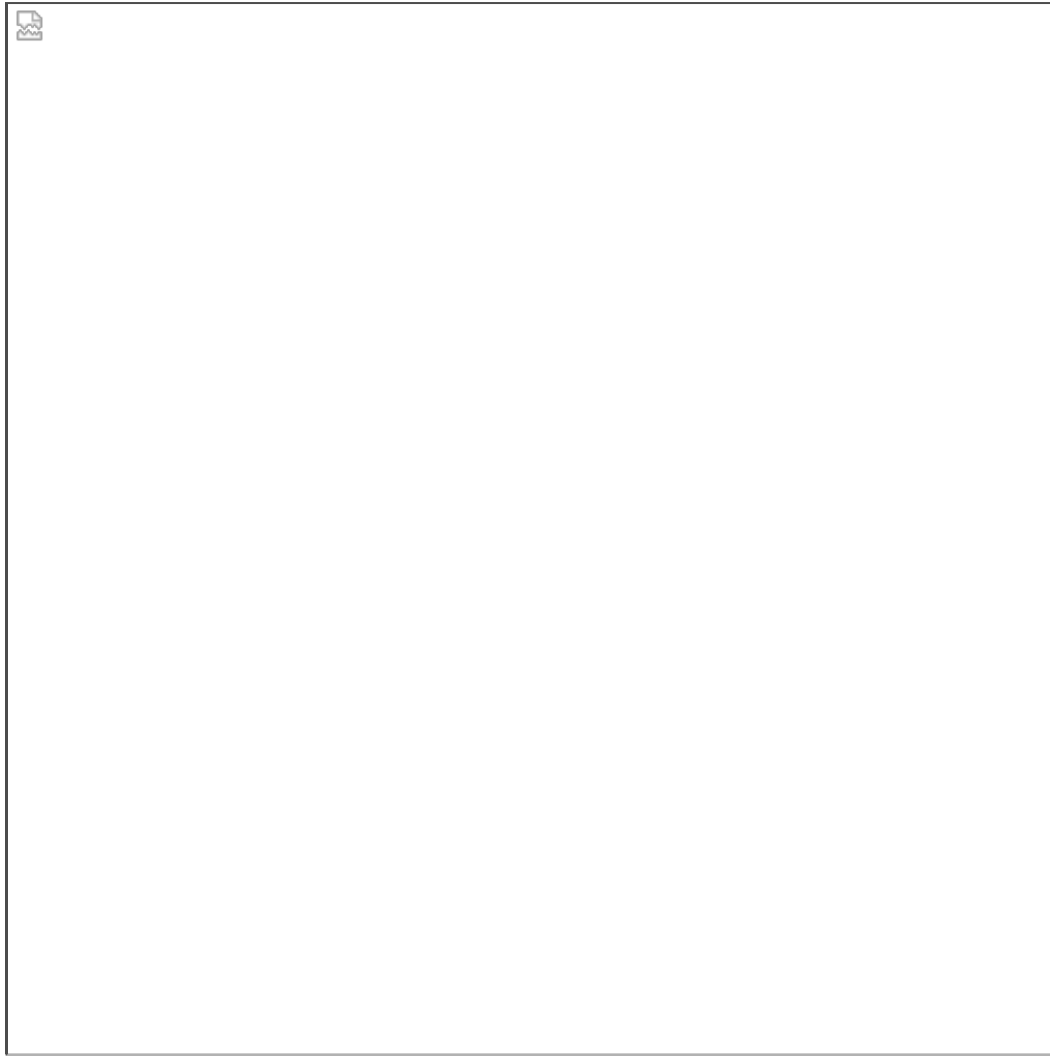
I signed this letter in support of the ERA-NC Alliance's request to change gendered language in many of our North Carolina statutes. The group met with the NC General Statutes Commission in June to review the changes. During this meeting, the Commission asked that the suggested changes to the statutes be narrowed down, which the group has done. **Hopefully, with the support of legislators, these changes will be approved so our statutes apply equally to all people, regardless of gender.**



Last week, I joined Governor Cooper, fellow legislators, and local elected officials for a visit to the CMS bus lot in Senate District 41 on Wilkinson Blvd, to meet the drivers who ensure our children are delivered safely to and from school each day. There is a shortage of drivers this year, which we would like to address by offering a competitive wage in the new state budget. Until more drivers can be hired and certified, CMS will use satellite stops to economize. **Anyone interested in becoming a CMS bus driver can sign up [here](#) - Classes start September 11.** Also, Governor Cooper announced that he will release funds from his discretionary fund to relieve the bottleneck at the training and certification stage, so we can get more drivers behind the wheel faster. Read more [here](#).

Mecklenburg Shifting to eCourts





This week, I attended a briefing by the Administrative Office of the Courts about Mecklenburg County's imminent shift to eCourts. It is expected to make the court system work more efficiently and equitably, bringing us into the modern era and reducing the need for paper and cumbersome folders. We are assured that all stakeholders are prepped and ready to make it work, hopefully avoiding some of the problems encountered in other counties that launched earlier. If you have concerns or questions about the switch to eCourts, let me know and I can put you in touch with someone at AOC to assist you.

Deadline Approaching for CMS: Sex Education, Preferred Name, Pronouns, and Student Information Surveys



As a result of the Parents' Bill of Rights, parents with the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools district must fill out forms to let the district know a) what name and pronouns their child can use at school, b) whether their child can attend reproductive health and safety education programs, and c) whether their child can participate in protected student information surveys. **Previously, students received the instruction under (b) and (c) unless parents opted out; now parents must opt in.** This is creating a lot of administrative work for schools and they are asking for your cooperation. **The deadline to complete [the form](#) is Monday, September 11.** Learn more [here](#), including an interview I did with WCNC-TV about the new requirements.

Resources for Student Loan Borrowers Returning to Repayment



The pandemic-related pause of payments, interest, and collections for most federal student loan borrowers ended September 1st. As a result, tens of millions of borrowers will have or will soon receive a bill due this October. Many borrowers will be receiving this bill for the first time in over three years, and those who graduated during the pandemic are likely receiving this bill for the first time.

Because this process is confusing and the resources available may be difficult to navigate, please view [this helpful resource document](#) to learn about the process and review the help that may be available to you, as well as the options you have for repayment plans.

If borrowers are not able to make payments, even through an income-driven repayment plan, the Department of Education has instituted a special return to repayment on-ramp period, which will function like a grace period through September 30, 2024. During this time, loan servicers will automatically apply a forbearance to borrowers' accounts for the payments they miss, and borrowers will be able to avoid the most significant consequences of delinquency and default. Those who were eligible for the pandemic payment pause are eligible for this benefit.

Overdose Awareness Presentation and Q&A September 13th



A Community Conversation on Youth Drug Use, Fentanyl, and Xylazine

Learn the facts from community experts.



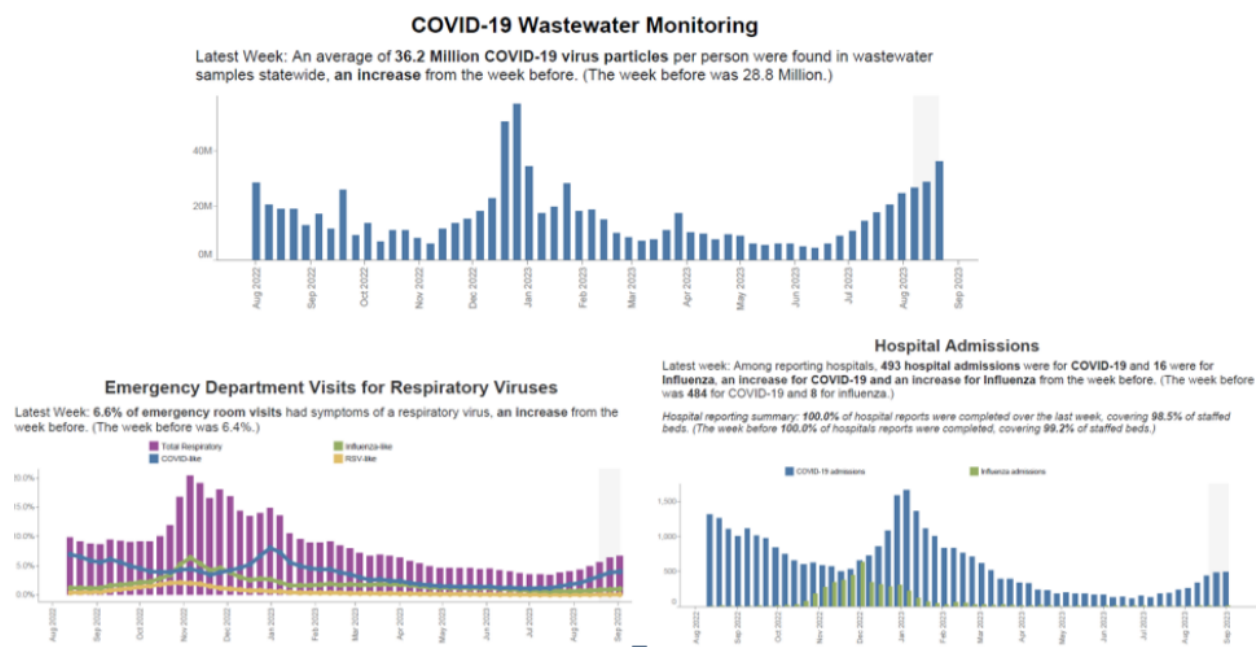
↓ Joins us:

Davidson Town Hall and Community Center
 251 South Street,
 Davidson, NC 28036

September 13, 2023
 6:30pm

Davidson Lifeline is hosting this community conversation and Q & A session on September 13th at 6:30 PM about youth drug use, Fentanyl, and Xylazine. The event will be held at the Davidson Town Hall & Community Center (251 South St, Davidson). This panel is designed to provide answers, resources, and help our community identify the signs of an overdose. Read more about the event [here](#).

COVID-19 Trends, Wastewater Monitoring, and Hospital Admissions



This week, I attended a briefing by NC DHHS about the recent surge in COVID-19 cases. We have seen steady increases in COVID-19 virus particles and hospital admissions this summer, as we saw in previous summers. As of the most recent week recorded:

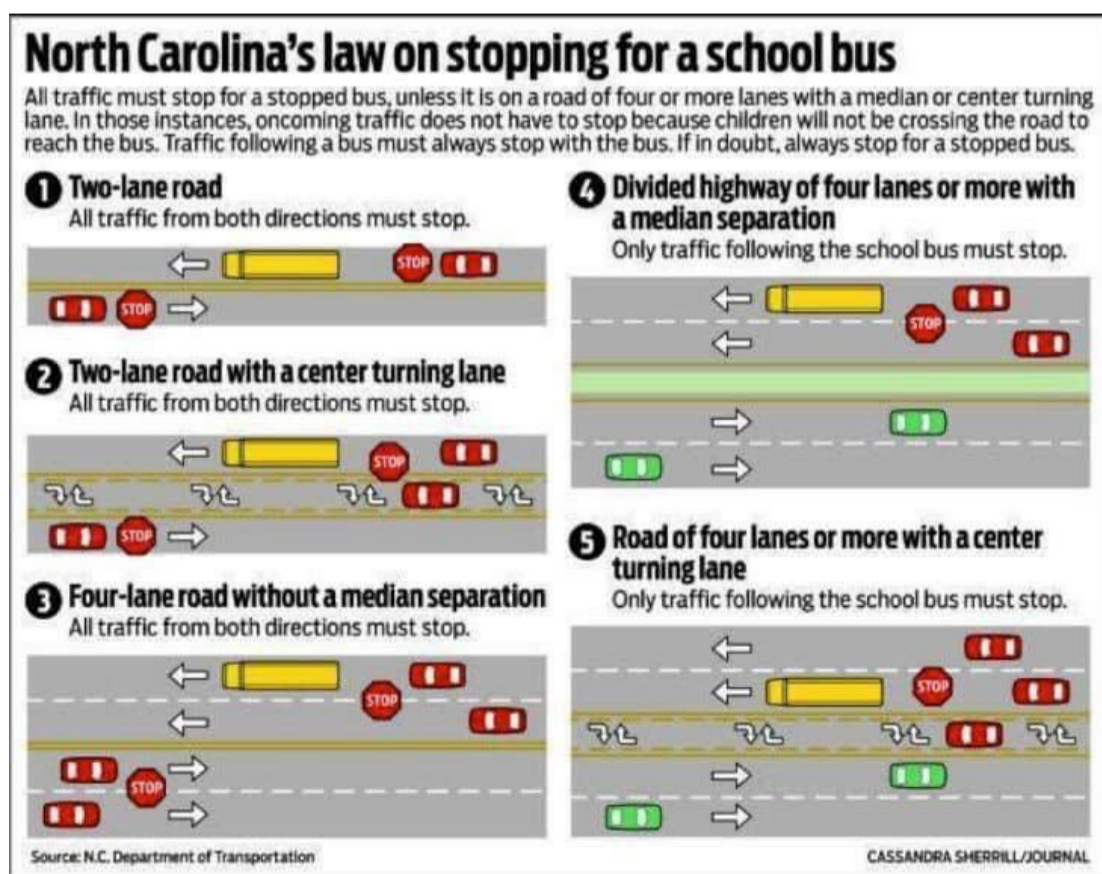
- An average of **36.2 Million COVID-19 virus particles per person were found in wastewater samples** statewide, an increase from the week before (28.8 Million)
- **493 hospital admissions were for COVID-19, and 16 were for influenza**, an increase for both viruses the week before (484 for COVID-19 and 8 for influenza)

There is a steep upward trend in wastewater, reaching levels we've not seen since last winter, but not so much severity as shown in hospital admissions. These increases occur because of summer travel, the beginning of the school year, the evolution of variant strains, and the waning immunity of the population as more time passes since people's most recent infection and vaccination. View a live graph of the information [here](#).

To combat the spread of the virus, make sure you receive an updated vaccine as soon as it's available. People with the updated vaccine are 18.6 times less likely to die from COVID-19. COVID-19 vaccines are available to everyone 6 months and older, and you are due for another dose if your last COVID-19 vaccine was before September 2022. The new vaccine will be available later this month; watch [this link](#) for information about that. Find a COVID-19 vaccine near you [here](#).

Though the federal public health emergency ended May 11, **North Carolina will continue to offer free COVID-19 vaccines while supplies last.** You can get a free vaccine regardless of your immigration status. You can also get a free vaccine even if you don't have insurance. Once emergency supplies run out, COVID-19 vaccines will be available like other vaccines. Medicare, Medicaid, and private insurance will cover the cost.

North Carolina's Law on Stopping for a School Bus



Annual reminder: All traffic must stop for a stopped bus, unless it is on a road of four or more lanes with a median or center turning lane. Please see review this diagram for a reminder as we enter the new school year.

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 - this information still up to date



COVID TESTS are 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, August 25	17,011,435,049.81
Add Receipts:	
Tax and Non-Tax Receipts	306,176,733.84
Coronavirus Relief Receipts	0.00
Other Receipts	1,175,004,298.89
Less Disbursements:	
Payroll	990,231,436.81
State Aid	137,485,244.56
Medicaid/Other Provider Payments	320,541,633.34
Tax Refunds/Distributions	34,246,325.01
Debt Service	0.00
Coronavirus Relief Transfers Out	0.00
General Operating	774,470,772.54
Ending Cash, Friday, September 01	16,235,640,670.28
Less Reserved Cash:	
Due to Local Governments – Sales and Use Tax Payable	950,102,151.20
Other Reserves	15,548,345.80
American Recovery Plan Act Reserve	103,076,693.32
Carry Forward Reserve	293,199,529.20
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	596,900,000.00
Federal Infrastructure Match Reserve	95,328,642.00
Housing Reserve	0.00
Hurricane Florence Disaster Recovery Reserve	58,962,848.10
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	8,380,211.23
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	873,373,177.31
Unfunded Liability Solvency Reserve	10,000,000.00
Wilmington Harbor Enhancements Reserve	283,800,000.00
World University Games Reserve	25,000,000.00
Unreserved Cash Balance, Friday, September 01	6,580,869,878.14

The Office of the State Controller (OSC) released the General Fund Cash Watch numbers for the week ending Friday, September 1. 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 \$6.580 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.

Contact Our Office

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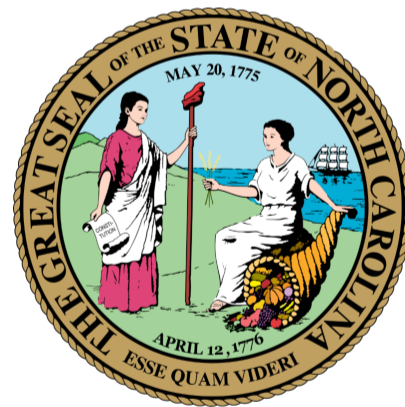
Sara

Mailing Address:

300 N. Salisbury Street,

Rm. 519

Raleigh, NC 27603



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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