

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



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NC Senate District 41 Newsletter

October 20, 2023

Updates on Noteworthy Votes



Over the past two weeks, the Republican super-majority overrode the Governor's veto of several bills, all with names that suggest the exact opposite of what the bills actually do:

- **SB678** is called **"Clean Energy"** while actually undermining our current (bipartisan supported) clean energy law (**HB951**) passed last session. This bill will make our transition to renewable energy slower and is a bill pushed by utility companies that are resisting necessary progress. Read more [here](#).
- **SB747** is simply titled **"Elections Law Changes,"** but I call it the "Jumbo Jet of Voter Suppression." This bill will shorten the amount of time voters have to cast mail-in ballots and will result in innumerable valid votes being thrown away if they are not received at the Board of Elections by election day, regardless of when the voter put the ballot in the mail. It also allows ballots to be excluded for minor reasons and gives partisan poll "observers" more power to watch, listen, and record voters in the polling locations, despite widespread objections from election board members of both parties. **SB747 has already been challenged in court** on the basis of its voter disenfranchisement provisions. Read more [here](#).
- **SB749** is called **"No Partisan Advantage in Elections"** while actually giving the Republican-controlled General Assembly more control over election administration, including the ability to limit early voting locations to one per county, creating chaos in the process, and unconstitutionally usurping the Governor's executive powers for a power grab by the legislature. Read more [here](#).
- **HB600** is called **"Regulatory Reform,"** which suggests that regulations are being tightened or improved. Actually, this vetoed bill undermines the ability of minority and women-owned businesses (historically underutilized businesses) to get state contracts. It also undermines stormwater regulations that are needed to protect water and other important regulations. Read more [here](#).
- **SB512, Greater Accountability for Boards/Commissions,** will hurt the effective use of taxpayer money by impairing the Governor's duty to execute laws and violates the separation of powers enshrined in the North Carolina Constitution. Rather than providing the greater accountability the bill's title suggests, it interrupts the work of boards and commissions, which is critical and taxpayer-funded.

I voted to sustain the Governor's veto of each of these bills.

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

Key bills on which I voted YES:

- **SJR755, Confirm Quintin McGee, Special Superior Court Judge.** See the section on "Senate Judiciary Committee Updates."

Key bills on which I voted NO:

- **SB677, Surveyors Right of Entry/Expedite Commercial Building.** This bill forces expedited review for permit applications, burdening local governments to respond in an expedited manner or lose the authority to ensure safety and/or environmental impacts. Builders can ask local governments for a "pre-submittal meeting" ahead of filing for their permit, and regulators would have to schedule it within five business days. Once an applicant has filed, and the application includes "necessary plans and sufficient information," the city or county has 45 days to complete its review and make a decision unless it and the developer agree otherwise. If the government asks for more information or seeks changes, it has ten days to act once the answers or revisions come back. The provisions in this bill will be bad for local control of growth and safety.

Senate Redistricting and Elections Committee Updates



This week, the Senate Redistricting and Elections Committee met to discuss the **two new proposed Congressional district maps (SB756 and SB757)** and the **Senate district map** that will be used for the 2024 elections and for the rest of the decade. Despite the public's continued calls for transparency and fairness through this process, committee chairs announced that **no public comments will be permitted on these maps** (except written comments via the [Redistricting Public Comment Portal](#)) and were unable to point to a single example of any previous public comments that had been considered when they drew these maps. They also would not agree to make their redistricting records public, which are now shielded from public records requests by a new law. They did not allow Democrats to have any input while they drew these maps.

The maps have a heavy partisan leaning, double-bunk three Democratic incumbents (including me), and have districts drawn in unusual ways with seemingly little regard for the criteria traditionally used to judge a map's fairness like compactness.

Over the last two weeks, the NCGA has received almost 300 comments through the Redistricting Public Comment Portal. These comments were submitted prior to the release of the maps, so they are not specific or in reaction to these proposals. But most were concerned with transparency, fair map-drawing, and the creation of a nonpartisan election commission. Now that maps are available to the public, concerned citizens can submit their specific comments through the portal (see link above), but not in person. I cannot tell whether the chairs of the Senate Redistricting and Elections Committee will read or respond to the public's written comments.

You can watch my colleagues and me ask questions about the proposed election maps at the Committee meeting yesterday at [this link](#). Learn more [here](#), [here](#), [here](#), and [here](#).

Senate Judiciary Committee Updates



On October 10, the Senate Judiciary Committee voted to recommend Quintin McGee, a former district court judge, assistant district attorney, and assistant public defender, as a Special Superior Court Judge. He was nominated by Governor Cooper for this position and gave strong answers to questions posed by members of the committee about his background, experience and values. He received unanimous support from the members of the Judiciary Committee and was unanimously confirmed in the Senate Session later that afternoon.



I signed this senatorial statement on October 10, soon after the Hamas attack on Israel. My friend and former legislative assistant is living in Tel Aviv with her parents and fiancé. They are experiencing the horror of the terrorist attacks all around them. Luckily they remain safe so far, but are scared and worried. I don't claim to be an expert on the conflict, but I do know the terrorist assault was brutal, and I'm worried about my friend and her loved ones. I condemn attacks on all innocents, especially children. You can watch a video of the statement I gave regarding the event [here](#).

Senator Marcus in the Community



I attended the Second Annual Historic Hoskins Community Parade & Festival at Eva B. Barber Park last Saturday. Kudos to the organizer, Beverly Knox Davis, President/Founder of Historic Hoskins Coalition Group + A Brighter Day Outreach, and to everyone who turned out for the fun event.



I attended the Charlotte Post Banquet where two African American top scholars were honored and given college scholarships and the principal of Harding University High School in SD41 was recognized for his outstanding leadership. Kieth Cockrell, President of Bank of America Charlotte, was also recognized for his community service work.



I attended the DavidsonLearns event at Town Hall for a lecture entitled "How Polarization of the Courts Threatens Our Democracy." Speaker Tom Ross, a former judge and former President of Davidson College and of the UNC System, said "democracy is at risk" for several reasons, one of which is because the people are losing trust in the courts. Political polarization in the courts is a major cause.



I attended the Mecklenburg Delegation Listening Session held via Zoom on Thursday, October 7. It was great to hear from constituents about what was on their minds and what they would like legislators to work on. If you missed it, watch this newsletter and my social media posts for notice about the next one.

New Revenue for Roads; Not Good News for EV Drivers



As part of an effort to reduce the state's reliance on the gas tax, people who own electric vehicles, take Uber, Lyft or a taxi, and anyone who uses a debit or credit card at the DMV will soon face new and higher registration fees, new taxes, and fees associated with card charges. The new fees introduced with the 2023 Appropriations Act are below:

- Increased the annual registration fee for fully electric vehicles from \$140.25 to \$180 on Jan. 1. The fee will be adjusted for inflation every four years, starting next July 1, when it's expected to go to \$214.38 a year.
- Enacted a new registration fee of \$90 a year for plug-in hybrid vehicles, which use both electricity and gas. That fee will begin Jan. 1 and also be adjusted for inflation next summer, to an estimated \$107.
- These fees will be in addition to the \$38.75 that all passenger vehicles pay the DMV each year.
- Enacted a new "transportation commerce tax" on taxis and rideshare companies such as Uber and Lyft. Starting July 1, 2025, passengers will pay an extra 2% of their fare for an exclusive ride and 1% for a shared ride, generating about \$11.5 million for the Highway Fund in the first full year.
- Allowed DMV to charge transaction fees on electronic payments starting next July 1. The fees, which can't exceed 2% of a transaction, will cover the charges the agency incurs from banks and card companies and will generate about \$30.7 million in the first full year.

While I agree that we need additional road funding to keep up with congestion in SD41 and surrounding areas, I worry that these changes disincentivize the shift to EVs at a time when we should be encouraging the shift in order to combat climate change. Read more [here](#).

Proposal to Launch a Passenger Commuter Train to Lake Norman Reignited



Norfolk Southern Railway Company and the city of Charlotte are actively discussing plans to launch a passenger train to northern Mecklenburg County/South Iredell County. If built, the train would carry commuters between Charlotte and Davidson, Cornelius, Huntersville and Mooresville. This plan dates back to the nineties and could mean great things for our future, providing folks with an energy-efficient alternative mode of transportation that would reduce congestion on I-77. Learn more [here](#).

Next E2D Tech Tuesday: November 21



TECH TUESDAY

E2D AVIDXCHANGE LAB
 920 HAMILTON ST. CHARLOTTE, NC 28206
 PARK ACROSS THE STREET @ AVIDXCHANGE!

3PM-5PM

PURCHASE PRICE: \$80 CASH OR \$84 CREDIT CARD

FALL 2023 TECH TUESDAYS:
 ► SEPT. 19TH ► OCT. 17TH
 ► NOV. 21ST

NEED A LAPTOP? MISSED OUR LAST DISTRIBUTION? CAN'T WAIT FOR THE NEXT BIG DISTRIBUTION DAY? EVERY 3RD TUESDAY OF THE MONTH, E2D WILL HOST TECH TUESDAYS WHERE YOU CAN PURCHASE A LAPTOP.

- E2D DEVICES ARE INTENDED FOR FAMILIES WITH DEMONSTRATED NEED.
- LIMIT TWO LAPTOPS PER FAMILY PER YEAR.
- VISIT WWW.E-2-D.ORG FOR MORE INFO ON UPCOMING DISTRIBUTIONS!

LIMITED QUANTITIES AVAILABLE ON A FIRST COME, FIRST SERVED BASIS! WE WILL SELL OUT!

The next E2D Tech Tuesday will be held Tuesday, November 21st, from 3:00 - 5:00 PM, at 920 Hamilton St, Charlotte, NC 28206. Laptops may be purchased for \$80, or \$84 with a credit card. More information [here](#).

COVID Updates and Information



As a reminder, every U.S. household can now place an order to receive four free COVID-19 rapid tests delivered to their home. The U.S. government will continue to make COVID-19 tests available to uninsured individuals and under-served communities through existing programs. Please contact a [HRSA health center](#), [Test to Treat site](#), or [ICATT location](#) near you to learn how to access low- or no-cost COVID-19 tests. Learn more [here](#).

The updated vaccines are available now. I got mine earlier this month. I hope you will too! For updated vaccine-related recommendations depending on health and age, click [here](#). To find a vaccine near you, click [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.

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

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 Energy Assistance Programs: Do you need help paying your heating or cooling bills? Mecklenburg offers [two different programs](#) to help eligible low-income households with their immediate energy needs.

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.

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

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

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

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](#).

Contact Our Office

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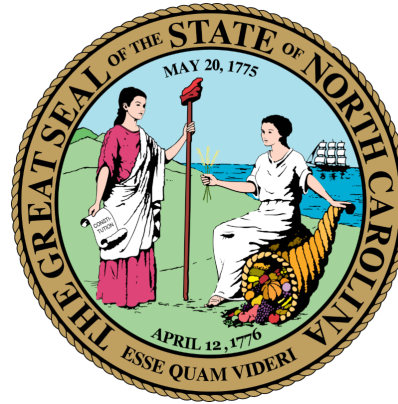
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How can we help you? Let us know and [reach out](#) to our office! We want to hear from you.

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