

For Immediate Release



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Greetings:

At the General Assembly *For the Week*

Last week I had meetings throughout the district. Essentially, the business of the General Assembly is complete. We will continue to meet intermittently throughout the remaining part of the 2023.

Although I will mainly be working in the district, my Raleigh office will be open.

Joyce Waddell

School Raises

The new state budget, that passed Sept. 22 and became effective on Oct. 3, included base salary raises ranging from 3.6 to 10.8% for teachers over the next two years — with larger raises going to beginner teachers. The salary raises for all employees are retroactive to July 1.

Because the budget became effective this month, this month's paycheck is the earliest that educators can expect to see those raises. However, recent guidance from the N.C. Department of Public Instruction (DPI) says "there is no timeline stipulated related to implementing the salary changes or providing the retroactive adjustments."

The budget also included \$4.8 million recurring each year of the biennium to implement additional average 2% salary increases on top of the 4% for bus drivers in 2023-24. It will be up to the individual LEA to determine how much additional pay for bus drivers they can afford and how best to adjust their local schedules, how to implement.

The budget also provides a one-time cost-of-living supplement to retirees of 4% in 2023-34 — to be paid "on or before Nov. 30."

I agree wholeheartedly with the budget increases, and I have worked very hard to make this a priority and will continue to do so.



UNC-Charlotte's Naming Ceremony

It was wonderful celebration that took place at the University of North Carolina at Charlotte during the naming of the Joyce Davis Waddell center for Student Health and Wellbeing.

Unemployment Benefits

Years after more than 1 million North Carolinians struggled with long delays in receiving their unemployment benefits during the COVID-19 pandemic, state legislators are seeking answers on what went wrong and how to fix the problems in the future – especially since government officials have also alleged that fraud was widespread in those same unemployment claims.

On Wednesday the legislature’s House Oversight Committee met to question the head of the state’s unemployment division, as well as the NC State Auditor. Her office has previously published negative reports on the unemployment system’s actions during the COVID-19 pandemic.

North Carolina had about 5 million people in the workforce when the pandemic hit, and state data shows that by the end of 2021, more than 1.5 million of them had qualified for unemployment benefits.

They were paid a combined \$14 billion — nearly all of it coming through new federal unemployment programs created by the past president's administration, but administered by state governments, to respond to business closures in the early days of the pandemic.

The state has since said it gave improper payments in roughly one in every five cases. The most common cause was due to people who got rehired but did not report it, and continued improperly taking unemployment benefits even after they started working again.

It is important that workers are honest and trusting when reporting employment information. State funds and federal funds must be adequately distributed and every recipient must be accountable.

Vaccines

With winter peaking through, and this being respiratory virus season, please contact your healthcare provider to get your vaccines.



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