

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



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## NC Senate District 41 Newsletter

April 19, 2024

### Joint Legislative Elections Oversight Committee



### Change in Absentee Ballot Deadline

- 2024 Primary: 1,128 absentee-by-mail ballots returned after the deadline (7:30 PM Election Day)

2020:	
Voter Party	Count
DEM	397
REP	116
UNA	287
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>800</b>

2024:	
Voter Party	Count
DEM	445
LIB	3
REP	268
UNA	412
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>1128</b>

On Wednesday, **the Joint Legislative Elections Oversight Committee** met to discuss a report from the State Board of Elections (SBE) on the 2024 Primary Election and plans for the upcoming General Election. Details from the committee meeting are below:

- During the SBE's presentation, it was noted that 1,128 absentee/mail-in ballots were not counted during this primary election. We received a correction today, however, and now know that the correct number is **1,170 uncounted ballots. This number of discarded ballots was the result of the new absentee deadline under SB747.** Prior to SB747, there was a grace period whereby ballots that are postmarked by Election Day, but arrive in the three days after Election Day, still count as valid votes. This was the first election in which the 3-day grace period was eliminated and, as I predicted, it resulted in valid votes being rejected. SBE reports that 754 of the 1,170 rejected mail-in ballots did arrive within the 3 days of Election Day and, therefore, would have counted prior to SB747. Those disenfranchised voters were not alerted and had no way to cure/correct the deficiencies. I continue to believe that this result is the opposite of election integrity. This problem will likely get worse in the November election, as citizens who vote only in Presidential elections tend to be less informed about the details of election law changes compared to primary election voters.
- **Over 99% of people who came to vote in person brought valid photo ID,** which is now required to vote in North Carolina (unless an impediment form is completed). This shows that the education efforts of the SBE worked for those who voted in the primary. However, we cannot know how many people did not attempt to vote in the primary due to a lack of valid ID. The SBE does not and cannot track that data. The SBE will be working hard to ensure the general election voters know about the new requirements and how to get their ID. Find out more about the Voter ID rules [here](#).
- **The Board of Elections is tasked with election security, including cyber attack prevention, voter registration, and maintaining accurate voter rolls. SBE is woefully underfunded.** Millions of dollars in funding will be needed to get SBE's IT modernized and staff trained to do the job. The current systems cannot accurately check for discrepancies, or name changes, and not-exact-matches confound the current system, which results in errors/gaps in our information. The SBE needs approximately \$8 million to update this system, but has only received \$5 million so far. We need more staff members to address requests for data because the SBE receives so many more requests and the volume is substantial. The SBE Director said that our current system is like the old game system Atari, the first generation of computer games, and needs updating desperately. I am hopeful we can address this need in the short session.
- **There were questions from legislators about how the voter rolls are updated.** The Director said that if North Carolina participated in the Election Registration Information Center (ERIC), our ability to keep our voter registration lists would be improved. We would get notice of deaths from other states, as opposed to only receiving notice of North Carolina Deaths as we do now; the system would flag duplicate voter registrations, and we would have many other benefits for election security. The NCGA was ready to join a couple years ago, but then blocked our access to ERIC for political reasons. On a positive note, state death records are now electronic and faster and updated on a weekly basis.
- The Board of Elections database includes much more than just the active, registered voters—it includes candidate filings, election finance data, inactive voter, and more. Right now, the SBE has only one person who can maintain this database and no backup staff for this work.
- The report from the SBE expressed **high turnover in County Election Directors due to harassment, new pressures, and frequent changes to the law.** While we aren't sure what a standard rate of turnover would be in this position, we are definitely losing institutional knowledge. Some county boards of elections have no experienced staff now, and one county has zero staff. The Board of Elections regional field staff will have to step in to train, guide, support, and in some cases, do the actual work. Those regional staff persons are fewer than in past years which will create a further strain throughout the General Election. The SBE is asking that the NCGA fund the full regional staff positions it needs.
- **The pilot signature verification software program required by SB747 has been difficult to procure.** SBE is working to find a vendor who can meet the unique requirements of SB747, which calls for a computer check of mail-in voters' signatures against the signatures on file. There are many ways in which this verification can be done incorrectly, and we must be careful not to invalidate votes incorrectly due to computer error.
- **Counties are questioning the costs of run-off elections or second primaries.** Turnout is very low, and early voting requirements are the same as for all elections and must be consistent on hours and days throughout the county. More voters of all parties are using early voting, so the Director doesn't think we should restrict that access by reducing EV days to less than 17 days. We may want to change the hours certain locations are required to be open.
- There were only 5,702 same-day registrants during the primary, but we expect significantly more in the general election. It is too early to determine the impact of SB747's new rules about how to determine which applications are accepted.
- The deadline is in May for colleges to have their Student IDs approved for use in

voting. All UNC systems have been approved, the majority of community colleges have applied, and some private colleges are ready as well. Digital Student IDs are becoming more common, and none of them have been approved because they don't display an expiration date as required by law. This is an emerging issue.

Learn more about the hearing [here](#) and [here](#).

## New Session Starts Soon



The Short Session officially starts on Wednesday, April 24, 2024. I will keep you posted about what bills come forward for our consideration.

## April 2024 Consensus Forecast Revisions



We received the following report from the NCGA's Fiscal Research Division and the Office of State Budget and Management:

The Fiscal Research Division and the Office of State Budget and Management have reached a consensus on revised General Fund, Highway Fund, and Highway Trust Fund revenue forecasts for the FY 2023-25 biennium. These revised forecasts adjust revenue from the certified budget projections, which reflected the May 2023 revised forecast adjusted for legislative changes made during the 2023 Regular Session. We expect to release a more detailed report early next week.

### General Fund Forecast

The following table summarizes the impact of the General Fund forecast revision:

April 2024 General Fund Consensus Revenue Forecast Revisions			
Fiscal Year	Revised Consensus Revenue	Change from Certified Budget	% Change from Certified Budget
2023-24	\$34,139	\$413	1.2%
2024-25	\$34,369	\$1,004	3.0%

*(\$s in millions)*

Revenue collections for FY 2023-24 are projected to surpass budgeted revenue by \$413 million. There are two primary reasons for anticipated and year-to-date over-collections:

- Individual income tax collections are stronger than anticipated due to low unemployment, continued wage growth, and a growing labor force.
- Sales tax collections are modestly higher, as wage growth has led to additional consumer spending, and prices of goods have continued to rise.

Revenue collections in FY 2024-25 are estimated to surpass budgeted revenue as well, totaling \$34.4 billion in FY 2024-25, an increase of \$1.0 billion from the May 2023 consensus forecast. This forecast assumes that the economy will grow at a rate close to, but slightly below, the long-term pre-pandemic trend. As inflation continues to moderate, the Federal Reserve will likely lower interest rates during the fiscal year, easing pressures on consumer and business lending. The forecast anticipates labor force participation to remain strong, with unemployment eventually rising but remaining at an economically healthy level. The labor market is likely to continue driving increases in wages and salaries, which will further increase personal income tax collections. Retail sales will also continue modest growth with sustained low unemployment.

Overall, these expectations represent a return to economic normalcy after the major pandemic-related disruptions, including global supply chain issues, temporary increases in federal spending, and rapidly rising interest rates – factors that caused large temporary swings in State revenue.

While the chance of a recession has diminished since the May 2023 consensus forecast, risks remain. Although inflation has moderated significantly, it remains above the 2% Federal Reserve target. If inflation does not decrease, or begins to increase again, the Federal Reserve is likely to hold interest rates steady or increase them. This could cause issues in the banking sector and real estate market, with the potential to increase the chance of a recession. Geopolitically, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict could escalate into a regional war, which could cause price increases in energy and consumer goods, with interruptions to global shipping. Finally, income tax collections from final payments due in mid-April are difficult to predict, as income from dividends, capital gains, and businesses can result in sizable positive or negative swings in collections. The Fiscal Research Division and Office of State Budget and Management will assess collections when this data becomes available in early May and issue a revised forecast if revenue deviates significantly from estimates.

**Transportation Forecast**

The following table summarizes the impact of the combined Highway Fund and Highway Trust Fund forecast revisions.

<b>April 2024 General Fund Consensus Revenue Forecast Revisions</b>			
<b>Fiscal Year</b>	<b>Revised Consensus Revenue</b>	<b>Change from Certified Budget</b>	<b>% Change from Certified Budget</b>
2023-24	\$34,139	\$413	1.2%
2024-25	\$34,369	\$1,004	3.0%

*(\$s in millions)*

Transportation revenue collections are projected to surpass budgeted revenue by \$213 million over the biennium. Reasons for increased collections include minor adjustments to expected motor fuels tax collections as well as the growth in sales tax revenues mentioned above. In FY 2023-24, 4% of sales tax revenues are transferred to the Highway Fund and Highway Trust Fund. This percentage increases to 6% in FY 2024-25 and future fiscal years.

**Senator Marcus in the Community**



I participated in the kickoff to the Mayor's Fitness Challenge this year. The three north Mecklenburg towns - Cornelius, Davidson, and Huntersville - join together each spring to compete for the title of Fittest Community. While the program runs from April 7 to May 19, it's never too late to register. At the end of the six weeks, the Town with the highest average active minutes per participant will be awarded the Fittest Community Trophy. Registration is required to participate in the challenge, and can be done here ([Cornelius](#)), here ([Davidson](#)), and here ([Huntersville](#)).



I had the opportunity to enjoy the partial eclipse from the balcony of a 15th floor office in downtown Raleigh. Did you see it too?

## Sun Bucks Solve Child Hunger During the Summer



The USDA has launched a permanent program to provide food assistance to children and families during the summer. SUN Bucks will provide grocery-buying benefits to qualifying families with school-aged children during the summer months when schools are on summer break. SUN Bucks will be issued to EBT cards that families can use to purchase nutritious food. Beginning in summer 2024, families will receive \$120 per eligible child for the summer period. More details about eligibility, issuance dates, and frequently asked questions will become available [here](#) as it is released. Some families will have to apply for the program, but many students will automatically qualify. Children will automatically qualify if they already participate in any of the following programs:

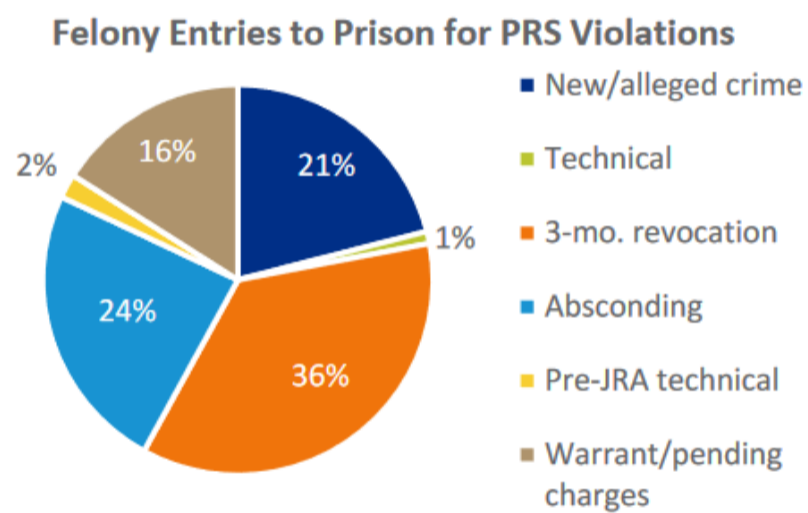
- Free or Reduced-Price (FRP) meals at school because they have an approved FRP application at school, or
- Food and Nutrition Services (FNS, food stamps), or
- Work First (Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), cash assistance), or
- Medicaid with household income below 185% of the federal poverty level, or
- Foster care.

## National Council of Insurance Legislators Conference



I traveled to Nashville last weekend for the National Council of Insurance Legislators Conference, where I learned about nationwide market trends: reinsurance, coverage of weight loss prescriptions and mental healthcare, mitigation of storm damage losses, catalytic converter theft, regulation of Air B&Bs and payday loans, and the affordability and availability of insurance. I met Insurance Commissioners and industry professionals from other states, and had the opportunity to enjoy the music of the city.

## NC Sentencing and Policy Advisory Commission Report



As a member of the Joint Legislative Oversight Committee on Justice and Public Safety, I received a report from the NC Sentencing and Policy Advisory Commission evaluating the implementation of the Justice Reinvestment Act. The most salient details are below:

- There were 172 Advanced Supervised Release and 69 felony habitual breaking and entering prison entries in 2023.
- There were 1,019 habitual felon prison entries in 2023; most were sentenced in Class C or Class E.
- Of the 76,757 offenders under community supervision on December 31, 2023, most were assessed as either moderate risk and/or moderate need.
- Overall, the largest categories of felony prison entries were absconding from probation supervision (28%) and 3-month revocations for Post-Release Supervision violations (36%).
- The overall community corrections population has declined 29% since December 2011.
- The overall probation revocation rate has decreased substantially since 2011.

It's great to see a decrease in the probation revocation rate. You may view the full report [here](#).

## Building And Maintaining Family Ties During Incarceration



Parent Day was recently held at Orange Correctional Center, a state-run minimum security prison in Hillsborough. The event allowed five fathers and one grandfather to spend four hours bonding with their children and grandchild. For parents who rarely see their children, and for children who have hit milestones and grown over the course of months or years away from their parents, this event was crucial. For one parent, James Albright, the only two times he has seen his son throughout his incarceration have both been Parent Days. Incarceration affects the whole family, and events like this are important for family health and reentry. Learn more [here](#).

## NC Insurance Companies Seek To Increase Mobile Home Rates



The North Carolina Rate Bureau, an organization that advocates on behalf of insurance companies, has requested an average 83% elevation in mobile home fire rates and a 50% increase for mobile home casualty policies over the next three years. The steepest rate increases would be seen in coastal counties, and the lowest west of Charlotte. These increases would impact 148,000 policyholders in North Carolina. The insurance commissioner has 50 days to accept the request or reject it and set a hearing date. **Insurance Commissioner Causey's office is accepting public comment until April 30.** Emailed comments should be sent by April 30 to [2024MH@ncdoi.gov](mailto:2024MH@ncdoi.gov), and written public comments should be mailed by April 30 to Kimberly Pearce, 1201 Mail Service Center, Raleigh, N.C. 27699-1201. Learn more [here](#), [here](#), and [here](#).

## April 27: The Great West Side Fish Fry





On April 27th from 1:00 - 7:00 PM, [Applesauce Group](#) will host some of the most talented chefs in the nation to offer you their variations of the fish fry plate that embodies their cultural identities. The event will be hosted at West Complex (1600 W. Trade Street, Charlotte, NC 28216), and will be free to attend! Free parking at 1601 W. Trade Street. There will also be free skating and skate rentals, live music, an art exhibition, karaoke, and much more. Learn more [here](#).

## Scholarship Opportunities from Sallie Mae and Thurgood Marshall Fund



Applications are now open for two college scholarship programs through the [Sallie Mae Fund](#) and the [Thurgood Marshall College Fund](#). The [Bridge the Dream Scholarship for High School Students](#) has increased from 25 to 40 scholarships, **awarding up to \$10,000 to students planning to pursue a two or four-year degree program, professional certificate, or vocational training program.** The [Bridge the Dream Scholarship for Graduate Students](#) will award \$10,000 to 10 graduate students committed to using their graduate degrees to advance social justice and support their local communities. **The application window for both scholarships is open until May 17, 2024.** Apply [here](#).

## Financial Update on the State's General Fund

Beginning Cash, Friday, March 29	11,485,343,337.85
<b>Add Receipts:</b>	
Tax and Non-Tax Receipts	589,906,075.80
Coronavirus Relief Receipts	0.00
Other Receipts	2,045,555,891.26
<b>Less Disbursements:</b>	
Payroll	227,865,231.70
State Aid	165,099,574.47
Medicaid/Other Provider Payments	1,304,207,357.81
Tax Refunds/Distributions	114,861,268.50
Debt Service	0.00
Coronavirus Relief Transfers Out	0.00
General Operating	823,543,057.87
<b>Ending Cash, Friday, April 05</b>	<b>11,485,228,814.56</b>
<b>Less Reserved Cash:</b>	
Due to Local Governments – Sales and Use Tax Payable	828,469,846.58
Other Reserves	25,560,854.34
American Recovery Plan Act Reserve	10,397,748.28
Carry Forward Reserve	250,018,838.20
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	248,550,000.00
Federal Infrastructure Match Reserve	121,758,723.00
Housing Reserve	0.00
Hurricane Florence Disaster Recovery Reserve	57,319,898.56
Information Technology Reserve	108,961,174.00
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	60,642,170.00
NC GREAT Reserve	0.00
NC Innovation Reserve	0.00
Opioid Abatement Reserve	26,296,039.85
Public School Contingency Reserve	0.00
Public School Need Based Capital Reserve	0.00
Reg Economic Dev Reserve	4,650,000.00
Repairs and Renovations Reserve	0.00
Retiree Supplement Reserve	4,683,216.00
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	669,464,451.49
Transportation Reserve	0.00
Unfunded Liability Solvency Reserve	0.00
Wilmington Harbor Enhancements Reserve	283,800,000.00
World University Games Reserve	0.00
<b>Unreserved Cash Balance, Friday, April 05</b>	<b>2,708,142,004.28</b>

The Office of the State Controller (OSC) released the General Fund Cash Watch numbers for the week ending Friday, April 5. OSC provides a weekly update on the State's General Fund cash position which can be found at [osc.nc.gov](https://osc.nc.gov). **The current unreserved cash balance in state coffers is \$2.708 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.

## Links to Helpful Information

**Domestic Violence Hotline:** If you or someone you know is experiencing domestic violence or partner abuse, please call [Safe Alliance](https://www.safealliance.org) 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 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](https://www.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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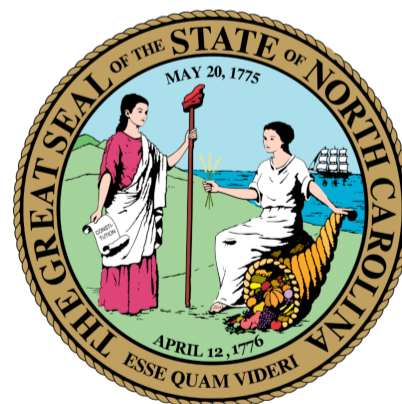
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How can we help you? Let us know and [reach out](#) to our office! We want to hear from you.



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