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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

*Last week I participated in activities and community events
throughout District 40.*

Joyce Waddell

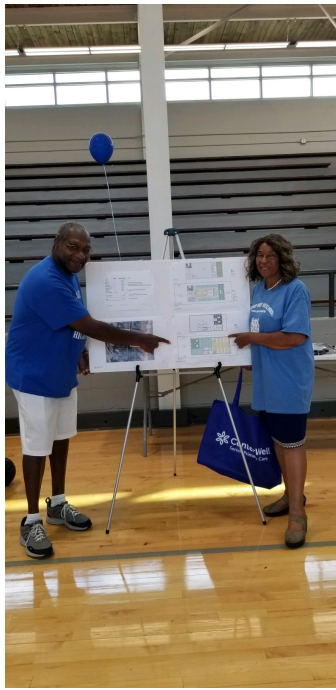
Prisoner Reentry

In an effort to improve outcomes for individuals released from prison and reduce recidivism, a newly established state panel has outlined a comprehensive plan to bring together various North Carolina state agencies. The Joint Reentry Council, created by the Governor through an executive order in January, recently approved a strategy to achieve over two dozen objectives using more than 130 different approaches.

The plan sets ambitious goals, including increasing the number of high school diplomas or skills credentials earned by incarcerated juveniles and adults by 75% by 2030, and reducing homelessness among formerly incarcerated individuals by 10% each year.

Several initiatives are already underway. The Department of Adult Correction, leading the reentry effort, has partnered with a driving school to train prisoners in obtaining commercial driver's licenses. Additionally, the Department of Health and Human Services has allocated \$5.5 million to support recently released individuals with serious mental health conditions.

I am so very excited about these initiatives. This will allow those who have had justice-involvement to be able to create a new path to success. Previously I served as a member of the Senate Prison Safety Committee and many great accomplishments for improving inmate services were achieved.



Second Ward High School

Senator Waddell participated in the 2024 reunion and annual meeting where they revealed the plans to renovate the Second Ward Alumni Museum.

The renovations are possible in part because of a grant championed by Senator Waddell.



Digital ID

The North Carolina State Board of Elections has approved the use of a digital ID for voting in the 2024 elections, marking a first in the state's history. In a close 3-2 vote, the board, led by its Democratic majority, decided to allow UNC-Chapel Hill's digital student identification to be accepted as a valid form of voter ID. While the board has previously approved over 100 student and public-employee IDs for voting purposes, this is the first instance where a digital ID has been given the green light.

The decision was met with opposition from the board's Republican members, who argued that it goes against the state's voter ID law. They expressed concerns about the security of digital IDs, emphasizing that state laws refer to "identification cards" without explicitly addressing digital versions.

The board's executive director, defended the decision by stating that UNC's digital ID meets all state requirements for voter ID, including the display of expiration dates, and is not merely a copy or photocopy. The board chair supported the move, noting that digital IDs reflect the growing trend of younger generations relying on digital versions of traditional identification.

UNC's physical student ID had already been approved for voting, but with the school now offering a digital version accessible via a mobile app, the board has extended its approval to this digital format. The digital ID functions similarly to digital credit cards and airplane tickets, which can be stored in apps like Apple Wallet.

Despite this, the move aligns with recent legislative efforts, as state lawmakers approved a bill in June to create a digital driver's license program, set to launch next summer. However, the digital driver's license is intended only as a supplement to a physical license.

Why is this story important to District 40? I believe it is important because this is the direction of the future. If this initiative is successful, you can expect all schools to adopt this digital ID decision within the next year, especially those in the UNC school system.

NC General Assembly

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