

Latest Updates from the NCGA



From Sen. Natasha Marcus <natasha.marcus@ncleg.gov>
To <sjohnston@tuesdayforumcharlotte.org>
Reply-To <natasha.marcus@ncleg.gov>
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NC Senate District 41 Newsletter

October 18, 2024

Special Session on Hurricane Helene



On Wednesday, October 9, the North Carolina General Assembly held a special session to vote on legislation regarding Hurricane Helene relief. The bill passed with unanimous support. A complete list of bills I voted on this session can be found [here](#).

Summary of HB149, Disaster Recovery Act of 2024:

- Creates both the Hurricane Helene and the Potential Tropical Cyclone #8 (PTC8) Funds
 - The Hurricane Helene Disaster Recovery Fund provides necessary and appropriate relief and assistance from Hurricane Helene's effects to any county declared a major disaster under the Stafford Act and Nash County.
 - The Potential Tropical Cyclone #8 Disaster Recovery Fund will provide necessary and appropriate relief and assistance to Brunswick and New Hanover Counties from the effects of PTC8.
- Transfers \$273M for the 2024-25 Fiscal Year to the Hurricane Helene Disaster Recovery Fund and appropriates funds received on or after September 1, 2024, under the Stafford Act and other federal disaster assistance programs for State disasters as a result of Hurricane Helene or PTC8.
- It allows flexibility in school calendars, approves remote instruction time to address days missed due to the storm, and allows employees and contractors of public school units to receive pay for those days missed.
- Waives the requirement for students enrolled in educator preparation programs affected by Hurricane Helene or PTC8 to complete clinical internships over a certain amount of time if the requirement would impact the students' ability to graduate in December 2024.
- Changes that Pertain Only to the November 2024 Election for the 25 Western Counties
 - Chief judges, judges, assistants, student election assistants, ballot counters, poll observers, and staff to early voting sites who are registered voters of the State can be appointed without regard to precinct or county of residence.
 - By bipartisan majority vote, one of the 25 county boards of elections impacted can modify the Plan for Implementation for early voting or adjust Election Day precinct polling places.
 - Once the county board of elections, by bipartisan majority vote, has established guidelines for the operation of the multipartisan team, multipartisan teams may assist any eligible voter in requesting an absentee ballot, may serve as witnesses to an absentee ballot, or may otherwise assist in the process of absentee voting.
 - State employees may serve as precinct officials without taking leave time.
 - Allows a voter impacted by the disaster to return a voted absentee ballot to any county board of elections office and early voting site while open for conducting elections and to the State Board of Elections when that office is open.
 - **Notably, this bill does not reinstate any grace period for mail-in ballots in the counties impacted by Hurricane Helene. I believe that is a mistake.**

The General Assembly will meet again on October 24 to consider further relief. SB149 was just the first step in a long process of rebuilding, clean up, and recovery.

You can learn more about the current legislative efforts and what will likely be needed to assist schools in the region [here](#). You can see a letter to the NCGA from a coalition of organizations seeking equitable recovery efforts [here](#).

Hurricane Helene Resources and Updates



Donating to the North Carolina Disaster Relief Fund

Earlier this month, I donated supplies and helped to load a semi heading to Western North Carolina. If you are able to donate money to help WNC, you can do so through [this link](#) or by mailing cash or a check to the **North Carolina Disaster Relief Fund** (20312 Mail Service Center, Raleigh, NC 27699-0312) or to NC Disaster Relief Fund, c/o United Way of NC (1130 Kildaire Farm Road, Suite 100, Cary, NC 27511). You can learn more about the Disaster Relief Fund [here](#).

Duke Energy Update

Duke Energy's restoration efforts have progressed faster than anticipated in complex repair and disaster rebuild areas. As of October 18, fewer than 1,000 Duke Energy customers remain without power in the mountain region of North Carolina. Since the damage initially sustained by Hurricane Helene, Duke Energy has restored power to 1.4 million customers. You can find up-to-date information regarding the progress [here](#).

Mental Health Recovery Help

Experiencing a natural disaster can be traumatic. **The National Disaster Distress Helpline** is a resource designed to provide round-the-clock disaster crisis counseling. The helpline is multilingual and available 24/7, 365 days a year to those impacted by natural and man-made disasters. The helpline provides immediate counseling, the skills necessary to recognize distress in loved ones, healthy coping mechanisms, and referrals to local crisis centers for further support. You can call or text **1-800-985-5990** to receive help. Learn more and find other mental health resources [here](#).

Help Filling Out FEMA Applications

Pigsah Legal Services is [offering free assistance](#) and walk-in clinics to help community members complete FEMA Applications. Help can be found, no appointment necessary, at their Asheville office (62 Charlotte St, Asheville, NC 28801). You can also call them at **1-800-489-6144** to receive help. Information on walk-in clinics throughout Western North Carolina, what is needed to fill out a FEMA application, and other useful tips can be found [here](#).

Catawba Riversweep



Catawba Riversweep is an annual event at which citizens from the areas surrounding and within the Catawba-Wateree River Basin come together to clean up the region's bodies of water. This year, Riversweep was held on October 5, but was reduced to fewer sites as a result of the damage sustained by Hurricane Helene. Sites located in SD41 on Lake Norman, Mountain Island Lake, and Lake Wylie were inaccessible to volunteers as a result of the recent flooding and high waters. These locations will need critical clean-up assistance; the event will be rescheduled for later this fall. Learn more about how to volunteer [here](#).

Honoring Dave Cable with the Order of the Long Leaf Pine



Last week, I had the privilege of presenting Dave Cable of Davidson with the [Order of the Long Leaf Pine](#), North Carolina's most prestigious award, for his service to our community and for his work in land conservation. Dave has served as executive director of the Catawba Lands Conservancy and the Carolina Thread Trail, founded Trees Charlotte, and has most recently volunteered, led, and serves as volunteer senior advisor to the Davidson Lands Conservancy. Dave has also served on the executive committee of the NC Wildlife Federation and on several other boards and committees for the Town of Davidson. Congratulations and thank you, Dave! Learn more [here](#) and [here](#).

October 22: Charlotte-Mecklenburg Community Relations (CRC) Hosts a Landlord/Tenant Forum



On Tuesday, October 22, Charlotte-Mecklenburg Community Relations will host a **Landlord/Tenant Forum designed to inform members of the community of resources that may be available to them, as well as their rights and responsibilities regarding renting.** The event will be held from 6:30 - 8:00 PM at the Blue Cross NC Charlotte Center (2336 Freedom Drive, Suite C, Charlotte, NC 28208), and will feature representatives from Legal Aid, Code Enforcement, and other agencies. Attendance is free, but space is limited. Please RSVP to the event [here](#). Learn more [here](#).

Mecklenburg County Homes Program Now Available for Homeowners in Charlotte and Davidson



The Helping Out Mecklenburg Homeowners with Economic Support (HOMES) Program has returned for another season. From **July 1 – Nov. 22, 2024**, Mecklenburg County is partnering with the City of Charlotte and the Town of Davidson to provide **grant funding to qualifying residential homeowners to help address the rising costs of retaining their homes**. Program recipients must apply for consideration annually.

Grant funds will be paid to the Mecklenburg County Tax Collector, **who will reduce the total amount of taxes due for qualifying recipients' primary residence**. The amount granted will equal 35% of the Mecklenburg County tax amount on the last available tax bill, rounded to the nearest dollar, not to exceed \$648.

Applicants must not be participants in any of the following programs:

- North Carolina Homestead Exclusion
- North Carolina Property Tax Homestead Circuit Breaker
- North Carolina Disabled Veterans Exclusion
- North Carolina Present Use Value (PUV) Program

To be eligible:

- The property must be located within Mecklenburg County, NC.
- The property must be the owner's legal primary residence at the time of application and consistently for the past three consecutive years, as verified by recorded legal documents.
- The resident grant recipient's name(s) must be on the recorded deed, title, or life estate.

Paper applications can also be obtained from:

- Department of Community Resources (**3205 Freedom Drive, Suite 1000, Charlotte, NC 28208**)
- County Assessor's Office (**3205 Freedom Drive, Suite 3500, Charlotte NC 28208**)
- Ella B. Scarborough Community Resource Center (**430 Stitt Road, Charlotte, NC 28213**)

Learn more about the program and complete the application [here](#). Contact the HOMES Program at **980-314-4663** or 4homes@mecknc.gov for help with the application process.

Get Free COVID-19 Home Tests



Free COVID tests are available again. [Here is the link to order yours](#). You may also find free tests available for pickup [here](#). Be safe!

Financial Update on the State's General Fund

Beginning Cash, Friday, October 04	11,774,660,429.31
Add Receipts:	
Tax and Non-Tax Receipts	451,992,036.28
Coronavirus Relief Receipts	0.00
Other Receipts	461,055,090.07
Less Disbursements:	
Payroll	217,376,479.94
State Aid	87,209,268.13
Medicaid/Other Provider Payments	231,148,132.43
Tax Refunds/Distributions	569,323,697.34
Debt Service	0.00
Coronavirus Relief Transfers Out	0.00
General Operating	338,082,546.02
Ending Cash, Friday, October 11	11,244,567,431.80
Less Reserved Cash:	
Due to Local Governments – Sales and Use Tax Payable	496,030,975.07
Other Reserves	22,325,650.39
American Recovery Plan Act Reserve	4.99
Carry Forward Reserve	242,611,457.87
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	703,182,000.00
Federal Infrastructure Match Reserve	121,758,723.00
Housing Reserve	0.00
Hurricane Florence Disaster Recovery Reserve	27,058,497.64
Information Technology Reserve	356,099,521.00
Local Fiscal Recovery Reserve-ARPA	0.00
Local Govt Coronavirus Relief Reserve	0.00
Local Project Reserve	0.00
Medicaid Contingency Reserve	726,512,736.00
Medicaid Transformation Reserve	0.00
NC GREAT Reserve	0.00
NC Innovation Reserve	0.00
Opioid Abatement Reserve	48,571,688.89
Public School Contingency Reserve	0.00
Public School Need Based Capital Reserve	0.00
Reg Economic Dev 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	732,567,089.95
Transportation Reserve	0.00
Unfunded Liability Solvency Reserve	0.00
Wilmington Harbor Enhancements Reserve	283,800,000.00
World University Games Reserve	0.00
Unreserved Cash Balance, Friday, October 11	1,734,047,973.02

The Office of the State Controller (OSC) released the General Fund Cash Watch numbers for the week ending Friday, October 11. 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 \$1.734 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](#) at **704-332-2513** and they can help you.

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](#).

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](#) 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](#).

Contact Our Office

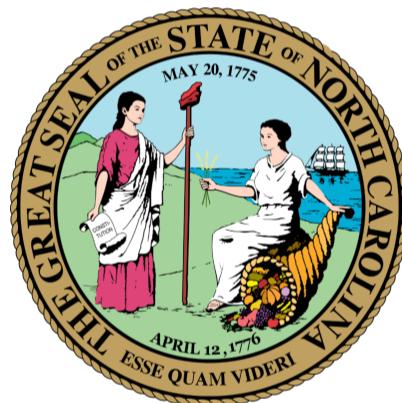
Phone: (919) 715-3050

Email:

Natasha.Marcus@ncleg.gov
Sarah.E.Reynolds@ncleg.gov

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](#)



Sen. Natasha Marcus, District 41 | 300 N. Salisbury Street | Raleigh, NC 27603 US

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