

For Immediate Release



From Sen. Joyce Waddell <joyce.waddell@ncleg.gov>
To <sjohnston@tuesdayforumcharlotte.org>
Reply-To <joyce.waddell@ncleg.gov>
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From the Office of Sen. Joyce Waddell, NC Senate
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CONTACT: Sen. Joyce Waddell
(919) 733-5650
Joyce.Waddell@ncleg.net
<https://joycewaddell4nc.com/>



Greetings:

The week was filled with community activities and events. The General Assembly will be in session this Thursday to complete our business regarding the hurricane.

Joyce Waddell



Voting

Senator Waddell talks with UNC-Charlotte students about voting and encouraging them to recruit others to vote.



Port Disruption

Even though longshoremen on the East and Gulf Coasts agreed to return to work Thursday evening, the three-day strike at the Wilmington port could still have negative effects on North Carolina's economy, potentially slowing recovery efforts in the Western counties. Essential construction materials, such as lumber products needed for rebuilding after Tropical Storm Helene's severe flooding and landslides, enter the state through the Wilmington port.

The strike also caused some shipments to be rerouted through the West Coast, requiring them to be transported by truck across the country, which further complicates logistics.

Wilmington's port plays a critical role in North Carolina's economy, contributing nearly \$16 billion annually and supporting 90,000 jobs. In recent years, population growth in the Southeast has amplified the port's importance to the state's economy, making it more significant than before the pandemic.

While the contract between the International Longshoremen's Association and the United States Maritime Alliance has been extended until January 15, with a planned 63% pay increase for workers over six years, concerns about job losses due to future automation remain unresolved.

As a legislator, anything that affects any part of North Carolina affects the whole state. Many of North Carolina's goods come through the ports and having any kind of stoppage of the flow of goods can be detrimental to North Carolina's commerce. I hope that the subject of a strike does not resurface.

School Grades

On October 2, 2024, a presentation to the North Carolina State Board of Education highlighted concerns from state leaders regarding the reliability of current school accountability metrics. A report from the Office of Accountability and Testing showed that 23 school districts in the state are categorized as low-performing, with more than half of the schools in those districts receiving a grade of D or F. The grading model used is based on 80% state exam proficiency and 20% student growth. For the 2023-24 school year, 736 schools across 23 districts were classified as low-performing.

The Vice Chairman noted that North Carolina's accountability model is distinct from other states and often leads to misleading perceptions about student and educator performance. In February, the state Superintendent introduced a new accountability model that would assign schools four separate grades instead of a single A-F grade, incorporating factors like career readiness and chronic absenteeism in addition to student growth and proficiency. However, a legislative proposal to pilot this model did not advance.

Despite the setbacks with the redesign of the school performance grading system, one Board member emphasized the importance of finding ways to measure success and provide meaningful progress reports for schools.

The Board is expected to revisit these discussions at a December planning meeting to further explore how different definitions of success can guide efforts to enhance student achievement.

I strongly recommend procedures to redesign the model for grading schools.

NC General Assembly

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Sen. Joyce Waddell, District 40 | 1106 Legislative Building | Raleigh, NC 27601 US

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