

## For Immediate Release



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From the Office of Sen. Joyce Waddell, NC Senate  
Mecklenburg County

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## Greetings:

*The week was filled with community activities and events. The General Assembly held session this past Thursday to complete the business regarding hurricane damages.*

*Joyce Waddell*

## Relief Bill

North Carolina legislators completed an initial \$273 million relief package Wednesday to help spur recovery from Hurricane Helene, describing it as a down payment on aid and a way to help hard-hit counties gain more flexibility in holding elections already underway. The legislation, which was approved unanimously in the House and Senate, comes less than two weeks after the catastrophic flooding from the storm's historic rainfall in the North Carolina mountains. Over half of the 238 confirmed Helene-related deaths in Southeastern states in Helene's path occurred in North Carolina, a presidential battleground state where absentee voting has already begun.

Tens of thousands of electricity customers in the region remain without power and some people, including residents of Asheville, still lack running water. The voice of legislators from the ravaged region cracked with emotion when talking about the heavy blows dealt by Helene.

The storm's flooding has severely damaged some voting sites, making replacements necessary. Early in-person voting is held Oct. 17 through Nov. 2.

The legislation allows voters registered in the 25 counties, for example, to request an absentee ballot in person up until the day before Election Day. These voters also would have more ways to drop off those absentee ballots, including any open early voting site or county election office in any of the 100 counties, as well as at the State Board of Elections office in Raleigh. That goes beyond the additional options approved by the state board. Such ballots still must be turned in by 7:30 p.m. on Election Day to be counted.

## TikTok Lawsuit

North Carolina, along with more than a dozen other states, filed a lawsuit against TikTok and its parent company. The lawsuit claims that the platform, aware of the addictive nature of its algorithm and its harmful effects on children, still promoted the app to maximize user engagement and profit.

The lawsuit alleges that TikTok's design was intentionally crafted to be addictive, targeting children through features like infinite scroll, autoplay, and personalized recommendations. TikTok is also accused of misleading parents and the public by claiming to have safety measures in place, such as screen time management and content moderation, which the company knew were ineffective.

This lawsuit marks North Carolina's second recent action against a major social media platform. In October 2023, the state joined a coalition of 41 states in a lawsuit against Meta, the parent company of Instagram and Facebook, for allegedly harming children and violating online privacy protections for minors. Both lawsuits align with recent calls from U.S. Surgeon General for tighter social media regulations to address the mental health challenges among youth linked to these platforms.

Social Media can be a great tool for socialization and disseminating information, unless it causes harm to minors. We must continue to hold these companies accountable when their platforms target our youth. I believe there can be a balance, but we must stay vigilant and continue to go after those whose content can be harmful.

## NC General Assembly

Visit [www.ncleg.gov](http://www.ncleg.gov), the official website of the North Carolina General Assembly. Use this website as a tool to track bills, find and communicate with your state representatives, as well as follow chamber activity, meetings and issues before the General Assembly.

*You can view bills in full by visiting [www.ncleg.gov](http://www.ncleg.gov).*



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