

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

November 15, 2024

Special Session: Power Grabs & Private School Vouchers



The Senate held a **one-day special session on Wednesday, November 20, 2024**, the first since Election Day. The most impactful new bill was [Senate Bill 382](#), which despite being dubbed a Hurricane Helene relief bill, did very little to address the needs in Western NC. Instead, it makes a number of **concerning changes to how and who will administer elections, changes about which votes will count, and shifts several powers of the Governor and the Attorney General from their offices and to the Republican-controlled Legislature**. Below are some of the most concerning provisions in the bill:

Funding Highlights

- Only 12 of the bill's 132 pages relate to Helene relief and it does not adequately address the relief needed in Western North Carolina. It shifts \$277 million from the NC Rainy Day Fund to the Helene Disaster Fund, but does not appropriate most of those funds. Other than a \$2M appropriation, the money is still sitting in state coffers, instead of getting to the people and businesses who need it urgently. Legislative leaders are reportedly waiting for the federal government to act first and will have to return to Raleigh to pass another bill to get aid flowing. Due to this failure, even the State Senator who represents Asheville voted NO. Learn more [here](#).
- Appropriates \$25 million from another fund for debris removal in WNC.
- Appropriates \$33.7 million in nonrecurring funds to continue the compensation grants portion of the child care stabilization grants. While not enough to address the federal funding cliff, it is undoubtedly better than nothing.

Gubernatorial, Attorney General, and Judicial Powers

- Transfers the State Board of Elections to the State Auditor, shifting oversight away from the Governor. The State Board will retain its statutory powers independently of the State Auditor, but its budgeting functions will fall under the Auditor's direction. No other state gives its Auditor authority to oversee elections. Learn more [here](#).
- Takes from the Governor the power to appoint the state board of elections and the chair of the local boards and gives it to the state Auditor, which is now held by a Republican. This ensures the State Board and all the county boards will be majority Republican, changing the current process whereby a majority of each board reflects the party of the governor.
- Creates two more special Superior Court judge positions which will be appointed by the Legislature, to serve at its pleasure, who can be chosen to serve on 3-judge panels and rule on cases involving challenges to laws enacted by the NCGA.
- Ends the terms of two Superior Court judges in Wake and Forsyth counties who ruled against Republican legislators in prior cases.
- Restricts the Attorney General's authority in cases challenging state laws by granting the General Assembly the ability to override representation or act as a direct client. This is particularly concerning for gerrymandering cases, as the General Assembly's attorney will have the final say on strategy and settlement.
- Expands the power of the Director of the Administrative Office of the Courts to manage legal counsel for the judiciary, bypassing Attorney General oversight.
- Removes the Lt. Governor from any potential Legislative Committee on Energy Crisis Management.
- Removes the Attorney General from input on the Emergency Energy Program in the event of an energy crisis.

Utilities Commission and Building Code Council

- Repeals the Energy Policy Council, consolidating energy oversight under the Utilities Commission, diluting executive influence on energy policies. It also removes one appointment from the Utilities Commission from the Governor and transfers that appointment power to the State Treasurer.
- Any changes to the North Carolina State Building Code, scheduled for a Code collection public update on January 1, 2025, have been delayed to July 1, 2025. This is especially egregious because many homeowners in WNC will not receive FEMA funding due to North Carolina's outdated building codes.

Law Enforcement and Justice

- Reduces oversight of the State Highway Patrol by the Department of Public Safety through restructuring the State Highway Patrol into an independent, cabinet-level department.
- Transfers the Center for Safer Schools to the State Bureau of Investigation from the Department of Public Instruction. This change may reduce the importance of educational perspectives in school safety policies and is likely in response to the election of a Democrat to lead DPI.
- Allows the Department of Health and Human Services' Division of Health Service Regulation to temporarily waive all rules covering confinement facilities if it determines an emergency poses a risk to the health and

safety of prisoners or staff. The language regarding what constitutes an emergency is vague.

Education

- Prevents the State Superintendent from appealing decisions made by the Charter School Review Board.
- Loosens Opportunity Scholarship domicile verification requirements. For the 2024-2025 and 2025-2026 school years, parents applying for the Opportunity Scholarship voucher program can simply self-certify that they meet residency requirements instead of providing electronic evidence through the State's domicile verification system.
- Parents are no longer entitled to an impartial due process hearing regarding eligibility determinations for potential students of the Schools for the Deaf and Blind.

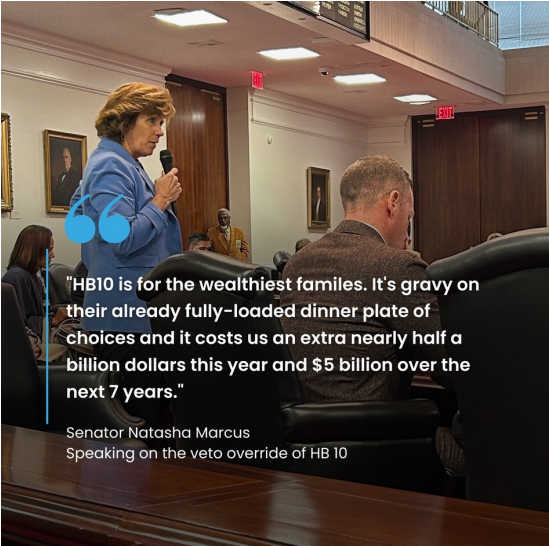
Election Changes

- Voters who need to cure their ballots due to missing information or valid ID will have to do so by noon on the third business day after the election. This shortens the normal ten days down to three, and will result in many more ballots being deemed invalid and uncounted.
- Absentee ballots received by election day must be counted immediately and all provisional ballots must be counted within three days, instead of ten.
- The State Board of Elections Director was not consulted on these changes and she has several concerns. She has advised that some of the new requirements are impossible, given the need to carefully review each ballot and given that there are more provisional ballots than ever before and that several county boards of election were unable to process them in the allowed ten days this year. This year, 67,000 provisional ballots were cast statewide, each requiring research consulting internal and external records. These new changes will certainly lead to inaccurate counts.
- SB382 prioritizes speed over accuracy and seeks to bolster false claims that counting ballots is somehow fraud.

The next session is scheduled for December 2, 2024. The calendar has not yet been made public, but we expect the reason for this session is so **the Republican supermajority can override the Governor's anticipated veto of SB382.** I will be there to vote in support of the veto.

General Fund Availability for November Session (Assumes HB 10 Override)		
	Recurring	Nonrecurring
1 Unappropriated Balance ¹	116,546,130	
2		
3 General Fund Budget Items		
4 DPI - School for Deaf Operating Funds (Sec. 2A.1)	120,000	-
5 UNC Performance Funds (2A.2)	-	13,068,267
6 UNC Enrollment Funds (Sec. 2A.3)	574,578	-
7 UNC Hold Harmless (ECU, WSSU, UNCP, UNCG, UNCA) (Sec. 2A.4)	-	7,837,646
8 UNC Building Reserves (Sec. 2A.5)	2,786,673	470,404
9 UNC Collaboratory - Office of Learning Research (Sec. 2A.8)	1,500,000	-
10 Childcare Grant Funding (Sec. 2B.1)	-	33,750,000
12 eCourts (convert FTE to Permanent) (Sec. 2D.2)	2,500,000	-
11 Private Assigned Counsel (PAC) Deficit (Sec. 2D.3)	-	8,200,000
13 Superior Court Judges (2 FTE) (Sec. 2D.4)	287,846	14,452
14 Rule Review Commission Litigation (Sec. 2E.2)	-	250,000
15 Fire Marshal Building Reserve (Sec. 2H.2)	2,300,000	-
16 New SHP Dept. (\$2.9 M starts 7/1/25) (Sec. 3E.3)	-	-
17 SBI - Center for Safer Schools positions (Sec. 3J.17(x))	370,000	
18 Future Building Reserve (Secs. 2A.5 & 2H.2)	(5,086,673)	(470,404)
19 Total Net General Fund Appropriations	5,352,424	63,120,365
20		
21 Unappropriated Balance Remaining	48,073,341	
22	Note: 1. If the General Assembly does not override HB 10 veto, then availability would increase by \$735.4 million for total availability of \$851.9 million.	

Non-General Fund Transfers & Appropriations (All NR)		
Item	Source	\$
23 Transfer to Helene Fund (Sec. 1A.5) (\$225 M remains unappropriated)	Savings Res.	227,000,000
24 DACS, Soil and Water Technical Assistance (Sec. 1D.1)	Helene Fund	2,000,000
25 DACS, Streamflow Rehabilitation Assistance Program (Sec. 1D.2)	SERDRF	25,000,000
26 NCORR for Rebuild NC (Sec. 1F.2)	SERDRF	50,000,000
27 NCSU Poe Hall Assessment (Sec. 2H.6)	SCIF	5,000,000
28 DNCR - Trails Funding (Sec. 2H.7)	SCIF	5,200,000
29 Total Transfers		312,200,000
30 Total Appropriations		87,200,000



"HB10 is for the wealthiest families. It's gravy on their already fully-loaded dinner plate of choices and it costs us an extra nearly half a billion dollars this year and \$5 billion over the next 7 years."

Senator Natasha Marcus
Speaking on the veto override of HB 10

Wednesday's schedule in the Senate also included an override vote for [HB10](#), the bill that **massively expands the private school voucher funding** and requires local sheriffs to cooperate with ICE.

HB10 removes the income restrictions so that all families, no matter how wealthy, can collect taxpayer funded vouchers for private school for their children. **It costs us an extra nearly half a billion dollars just this year and \$5 billion over the next 7 years** to cover the wealthiest two income tiers over the next ten years. This is a significant expansion of the funding already spent this biennium. **We cannot afford it**, especially when we need to rebuild WNC and when public education is so seriously underfunded.

This is not a bill about helping low-income families or about school choice. This is about expanding the program to the wealthiest families in our state, who are already easily able to afford their private school tuition bills.

The bill also requires all North Carolina sheriffs to do the work of U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) for detainer requests. While current state law requires sheriffs to try and determine the legal status of people they arrest and inform ICE, it does not require them to honor and pay for ICE detainer requests. Sheriffs of NC's largest cities have advised that these detainer requests place a significant burden on local sheriffs, will lead to decreased justice for victims by deporting perpetrators before they can be brought to justice, will increase racial profiling of Hispanic drivers, and will discourage undocumented immigrants from contacting the police.

I was the only Senator to speak against the bill - you can watch video of my remarks [here](#).

The vote was 30-19 to override the Governor's veto, and had already passed in the House, so the bill is now law.

Learn more from WCNC [here](#) and from WFAE [here](#).

Mecklenburg County Approves Settlement with Colonial Pipeline



On Tuesday, November 19, Mecklenburg County commissioners approved a settlement with the Colonial Pipeline Company regarding the 2020 spill of over two million gallons of gasoline in Huntersville. Colonial Pipeline reports having recovered more than 1.8 million gallons so far.

The company has agreed to acquire more land to give to the county, including a property on the north side of Davidson-Concord Road in Davidson, which will be purchased to make up for losses to the nature preserve where the spill occurred. The company will also pay \$600,000 into the county's Natural Areas Restoration Fund and continue cleaning up and monitoring the spill site. Colonial Pipeline will need additional years to complete the cleanup of the site. This settlement is in addition to fines Colonial paid to the State. Learn more [here](#) and [here](#).

Over \$14 Million Donated to North Carolina Disaster Relief Fund



Last week, Governor Cooper announced that **over \$14 million had been donated to the North Carolina Disaster Relief Fund**, which has helped to fund grants to 86 organizations working in 29 storm-impacted counties. You can donate [here](#). Visit the Disaster Relief Fund [FAQ Page](#) for more information.

Davidson College Scholar-Musician Awarded Rhodes Scholarship



Madeline Dierauf of Davidson College was selected last week as one of 32 students nationwide to receive a Rhodes Scholarship, one of the most prestigious graduate scholarships in the world. Only 103 scholarships are awarded per year, and Madeline is Davidson's 24th Rhodes Scholar in the college's history. She managed to maintain a 4.0 GPA at Davidson while also being a touring musician. She plans to pursue a master's degree in American Studies and Philosophical Theology at Oxford. Learn more about Madeline's music, educational path, and commitment to the preservation of Appalachian culture [here](#). Congratulations, Madeline!

CMS Magnet School Lottery Now Open



The Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools Magnet School Lottery is now open for the 2025-2026 school year. The application is an online process open from 6:00 AM - 10:00 PM daily until January 3. In order to participate, you must first complete your registration as a CMS student to obtain an ID and PIN, so be sure to register as soon as possible. Learn more about the student registration and lottery application process [here](#). Find your neighborhood school [here](#). Apply to the lottery [here](#). You can consult the CMS School Choice FAQ [here](#) for more information.

Free Books for Children



Smart Start of Mecklenburg County has partnered with Dolly Parton's Imagination Library to provide **parents of children ages 0-5 with a free book once a month**. 30,552 children are covered by Mecklenburg's Smart Start. You can register for the program by validating your address [here](#). If you have any questions about the program, please contact Alyssa Wood at 704-943-9496 or by emailing dpil@smartstartofmeck.org.

The Innovate And Educate Teacher's Grant

WE'D LIKE TO GRANT YOUR WISH!

The \$2,500 Innovate and Educate Teacher's Grant

Got a great idea for teaching financial literacy? The Coastal Credit Union Foundation wants to empower teachers so they can help spread financial knowledge across North Carolina.

SUBMIT A VIDEO
Submit a video under 3-minutes showcasing your most innovative, out-of-the-box ideas about bringing financial literacy to your classroom.

MAKE IT YOU
Your video can be anything you want: quirky, heartwarming, dramatic or cute.

A WISH COME TRUE
The top 8 submissions will receive a \$2,500 grant that can be used to make your ideas come to life.

Deadline is February 1, 2025.

Scan the QR code to apply.

COASTAL24.com/TeacherGrant

COASTAL CREDIT UNION FOUNDATION

The Coastal Credit Union Foundation is the philanthropic arm of the Credit Union, built as a separate entity, with its own board of directors. The Coastal Credit Union Foundation has a mission to enrich the lives of our members in the communities we serve by providing financial support to 501c(3) organizations in the 16 counties in North Carolina that Coastal Credit Union serves.

To participate you must be a credentialed teacher currently working at a public or private school in North Carolina. A video presentation of your idea must be uploaded and the online application form filled out by February 1, 2025. Recipients of the grants will be selected and announced by March 1, 2025. Employees and family members of the Foundation or Coastal Credit Union are not eligible. You do not need to be a member of Coastal Credit Union to enter. Visit COASTAL24.com/TeacherGrant for complete rules.

COASTAL CREDIT UNION

The Coastal Credit Union Foundation is awarding **\$2,500 grants to support teachers** with lesson plans centered on financial literacy. The deadline to apply is February 1, 2025. The program is open to all credentialed teachers in North Carolina public and private schools, regardless of their affiliation with Coastal Credit Union. Employees and family members of the Foundation or Coastal Credit Union are not eligible. Recipients of the grants will be selected and announced by March 1, 2025. More information and the application can be found [here](#).

The Learning Happens Here Field Trip Fund



Governor Cooper has announced \$1 million in funding for the Learning Happens Here Field Trip Fund. Any K-12 public school in North Carolina is eligible to receive a grant from the program, but priority is given to Title I eligible schools. The fund will offer reimbursements to public schools that visit sites managed by DNCR, including state parks, historic sites, museums, aquariums and the zoo. Learn more about the program and apply [here](#).

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, November 08	11,222,329,607.61
Add Receipts:	
Tax and Non-Tax Receipts	261,174,306.22
Coronavirus Relief Receipts	0.00
Other Receipts	827,894,586.77
Less Disbursements:	
Payroll	308,214,858.91
State Aid	77,390,811.42
Medicaid/Other Provider Payments	303,366,224.92
Tax Refunds/Distributions	505,265,122.47
Debt Service	0.00
Coronavirus Relief Transfers Out	0.00
General Operating	904,734,006.37
Ending Cash, Friday, November 15	10,212,427,476.51
Less Reserved Cash:	
Due to Local Governments – Sales and Use Tax Payable	447,785,354.33
Other Reserves	22,325,650.39
American Recovery Plan Act Reserve	34,063,161.12
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	95,676,125.00
Housing Reserve	0.00
Hurricane Florence Disaster Recovery Reserve	26,837,938.64
Information Technology Reserve	341,292,868.00
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	40,576,773.43
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	3,832,851,113.98
Stabilization and Inflation Reserve	1,000,000,000.00
State Emergency Response/Disaster Reserve	721,137,129.70
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, November 15	1,693,775,168.05

The Office of the State Controller (OSC) released the General Fund Cash Watch numbers for the week ending Friday, November 15. 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 \$1.693 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

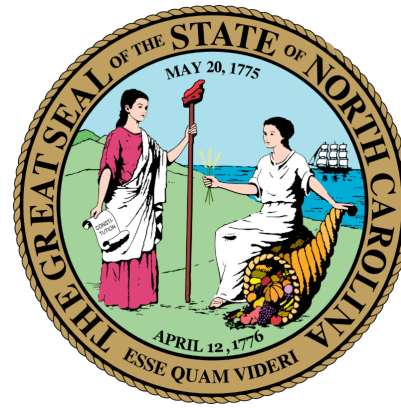
Sara

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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