

For Immediate Release



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

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Greetings:

The Senate held session last week on Wednesday. We voted on several items with responsibility shifts and the third phase of Hurricane Helene relief funding. The Senate is planning on meeting for one more session before the year's end.

Joyce Waddell

Hurricane Relief Funding

The General Assembly has passed the third phase of Hurricane Helene relief funding, allocating \$227 million. However, some lawmakers raised concerns about the legislative process behind Senate Bill 382 (SB 382), which also includes significant policy changes beyond disaster relief.

SB 382, a 132-page conference report, was shared with Democratic House members just hours before a vote. The bill appropriates limited disaster relief funds, with only 12.5 pages dedicated to recovery efforts.

Democratic lawmakers expressed disappointment, citing inadequate time to review the bill and concerns about prioritizing partisan politics over urgent disaster recovery. Some called the process rushed and criticized the inclusion of unrelated policy changes in a disaster relief bill. Lawmakers argued that true recovery requires speed, transparency, and collaboration, which they felt this process lacked.

Some legislators defended the bill, emphasizing that it is part of ongoing recovery efforts and that additional funding and legislative review are forthcoming. They acknowledged the complexities of balancing immediate relief with long-term recovery planning, citing the estimated \$50 billion in damages caused by Hurricane Helene.

The bill passed with a 63-46 vote in the House and 30 Republican votes in the Senate, bringing the total allocated for Helene recovery to \$1.1 billion. It now awaits the governor's decision.

I believe that we need to sit down together to determine the true needs of those families in Western North Carolina. When we rush these things, we tend to miss opportunities to provide the required help.

Power Shifts in North Carolina Legislation

At last weeks session, majority leaders introduced a bill presented as disaster relief for those impacted by Hurricane Helene. However, much of the 131-page legislation focuses on reducing the authority of recently elected key positions, including governor, attorney general, and state superintendent of schools.

The bill bypassed the typical legislative process by amending an existing bill on dental services that had already passed both chambers in differing forms. This maneuver allowed lawmakers to avoid committee hearings and additional votes, advancing the changes through a conference report requiring only a single vote in each chamber.

This week's bill continues the pattern of power adjustments. Among the changes is the removal of the governor's control over the State Board of Elections, transferring oversight to the state auditor. The timing of the legislation follows election results that indicate the majority may lose their supermajority in the state House, making it more difficult to override vetoes from the incoming governor.

One lawmaker expressed concerns, noting that the legislation offered minimal aid to Western North Carolina and questioned why it was labeled as disaster relief.

The Senate later passed the bill along party lines, continuing the trend of significant power shifts within the state's political landscape.

I am optimistic that we can find a better balance for how we govern. It is important for a true democratic process that we have equality and a mixture of thoughts and solutions. Hopefully, we can find the ability to bring equal minds together.

NC General Assembly

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