

NC House Updates



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Senate to Begin State Budget Process

Peace. This year the State Senate will begin the budget process for North Carolina's two-year budget plan. We are currently in the Long Session, where the state budget is the main project for both Chambers to complete. Next year during the Short Session, we will take up a smaller budget that tweaks funding depending on needs that arise or correct technical issues. The budget process begins in the Senate and after they pass a spending package, it will come to the House of Representatives for consideration. The Chambers typically end up passing different packages, requiring a need for a conference committee to iron out the details. The final spending agreement is then voted on by both Chambers and sent to the Governor for him to sign, veto or let it become law without his signature.

The budget is perhaps the most important legislation this body considers because it sets the funding amounts for state agencies, salaries for state employees and teachers, and more. It is often a place where other policies that did not pass as standalone bills can be inserted, so the budget can become contentious given it is usually one of the last opportunities to enact new policies before the General Assembly winds down for the year.

According to WUNC reporter Colin Campbell, leadership in the House and Senate have agreed to the amount of spending increases for the 25-26 and 26-27 fiscal years. Those amounts are \$800 million more for 25-26 and \$700 million more in 26-27. The budget process comes as Governor Stein has warned about an impending "fiscal cliff" as state revenue is projected to decline over the next few years. There are also concerns about how cuts from the federal government will impact critical funding for various state agencies.

The State Senate will release their budget proposals next week and should pass their package before Easter. The General Assembly building will be closed the following week, and when lawmakers return the House will begin its work on the budget. You can read Governor Stein's proposed budget [here](#).

NC Medicaid Expansion Crosses New Milestone

North Carolina's Medicaid expansion program has surpassed a new milestone. Governor Stein announced that 650,000 North Carolinians have officially enrolled in the program. Medicaid expansion was made possible through a bipartisan effort signed into law by former Governor Roy Cooper. More than 1 in 4 North Carolinians are now covered by NC Medicaid, if you include those who have benefitted from expansion.

However, federal policies being considered have put Medicaid in the crosshairs. The federal government currently foots 90 percent of the cost of Medicaid expansion in North Carolina. If that share were to drop, there is a trigger in place that would halt the program in our state. An end to Medicaid expansion would disproportionately affect rural North Carolinians who rely on the coverage provided. Many considered expansion a lifeline for rural hospitals, some of which closed in recent years due to the high costs of uncompensated care.

Meeting with AFL-CIO Leaders from Charlotte



L-R Ron Beamon, Cindy Foster, Rep Majeed, Nicole Cumberbatch, Scott Trower.

I had the pleasure to meet with a group of AFL-CIO members from Charlotte. They, along with other AFL-CIO members, were in Raleigh to meet with legislators to discuss upcoming bills regarding paid leave.

Federal Cuts Still Being Felt in NC

North Carolinians are bearing the brunt of federal cuts that are having impacts across our state.

North Carolina farmers are one example. Cuts from the United States Department of Agriculture have affected their ability to make money after the USDA cut their Local Food Purchase Assistance and Local Food for Schools programs. These programs helped fund locally grown food for North Carolina food banks and local produce for school lunches, respectively. Farmers rely on certainty when they plan their crops and these sudden cuts are having a major impact on their bottom lines.

Cuts to the US Department of Health and Human Services are [leaving](#) NCDHHS scrambling. Federal clawbacks from COVID-era funding will lead to 80 jobs being cut and \$230 million in federal funds reversed. The potential for more cuts amidst a restructuring of the federal department is leaving local workers anxious.

Researchers in the Environmental Protection Agency are also bracing for job cuts. Chapelboro [reports](#) that EPA employees are worried about not just their own careers but the impact that cutting these positions will have on our environment. Management learned about the impending cuts not from internal notices but through news reports.



Recently, I met with members of the North Carolina Association of Pharmacists (NCAP) to discuss fair business practices for small independent pharmacies.

OTHER NEWS

NC Newline: Wider DEI restrictions for NC colleges pass Senate, as House again punts its own DEI bill

N&O: NC could toss 65,000 ballots in Supreme Court election. So why aren't other races affected?

WRAL: 'Extending an olive branch': Stein, GOP work together toward bipartisan goals

WUNC: Latest federal education cuts would affect NC's poorest schools

Enjoy your weekend! Peace!

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