

 **Legislative Update from Senator Caleb Theodros**



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Update on Operation Charlotte's Web

I wanted to begin this newsletter by providing an update on Operation Charlotte's Web, since many of you reached out after my last message asking for more information. Over the past few weeks, federal authorities have continued this large-scale enforcement operation in Charlotte, and one of the ongoing concerns is that there is still no clear communication about when it will end.

Federal officials now report that more than 425 people have been arrested. The operation, which began abruptly in mid-November, has continued without a consistent public timeline or coordinated messaging from the agencies involved.

Here is what we know at this point:

- There has been no unified explanation from the federal government regarding how long federal personnel will remain in Charlotte or what conditions would bring the operation to a close.
- Local schools, community organizations, and service providers have not received clear guidance, making it difficult for families to understand what to expect.
- Fear has had a measurable impact. School attendance dropped significantly immediately after the deployment, and many families remain cautious about daily routines because they do not know whether additional enforcement activity is planned.
- Small businesses in immigrant neighborhoods continue to report fewer customers, as many residents are limiting travel outside their homes due to the ongoing uncertainty.

At this time, the simple truth is that there is no reliable timeline for when Operation Charlotte's Web will conclude. The mixed messages from federal authorities have left families without the information they need to make basic decisions about work, school, and daily life.

I will continue pressing for transparency and clear communication from the federal government, and I will share verified updates as soon as they are available. Families deserve accurate information, and our community deserves stability.

Our Schools Deserve Reliability — Not Six Months of Delay

We are now entering the sixth month without a full state budget, and the consequences for our public schools are becoming harder to ignore. For 23

weeks, Republican leaders have chosen to delay a budget that teachers, students, and families are depending on.

This has real impacts. Teachers still don't know whether long-promised raises will happen. School leaders can't confirm staffing, buy needed supplies, or plan ahead. And students are paying the price in classrooms stretched thin by uncertainty.

North Carolina's educators were already working under difficult conditions. After more than a decade of underinvestment by GOP leadership, our schools are feeling the strain:

- We rank 43rd in the nation for teacher pay.
- Health insurance costs for teachers and staff continue rising as pay stays flat.
- Teachers spend over \$1,600 a year out of pocket on classroom supplies, among the highest in the country.
- Public schools are facing cuts while \$655 million is redirected to private-school vouchers.

During a Senate Democratic hearing in November, we heard directly from Mary Jane Bowman, Person County's 2025 Teacher of the Year. Her testimony should be a wake-up call.

Because the budget remains stalled:

- Teacher salaries are frozen, despite promises of raises.
- Many school employees are taking home less money this year because of rising health insurance premiums.
- More than half of teachers in her district did not receive a raise at all.
- Teachers and support staff had to downgrade their health plans just to afford coverage.
- Special education teachers are carrying double caseloads because they cannot hire additional staff without budget certainty.

She also shared the story of a young student who asked whether she planned to retire. When she said no, he said, *"Okay, good. Because if you did, you'd be the third teacher who left after having me in their class."* That is the reality too many children in North Carolina are living with, the fear that the adults they count on won't be able to stay.

Our educators show up for our kids every single day. The question is whether the legislature will show up for them. North Carolina's teachers deserve stability, fair pay, and respect. Our students deserve classrooms where teachers are able to stay, not forced out by political delay.

The longer this budget is stalled, the more damage is done.

Duke Energy Is Asking to Raise Your Power Bill — Again

At a time when families are struggling with higher costs across the board, Duke Energy has filed to raise electricity rates once again. This request comes while the company is pulling back on clean energy investments that could help lower costs over the long term.

Democratic leaders across the state, including me, my colleagues in the Senate, Attorney General Jeff Jackson, and Governor Josh Stein, have raised serious concerns.

Here's why:

New laws passed by the Republican majority shift the cost burden away from major industries and onto regular people. That means your bill goes up while large corporations pay less.

This matters because:

- North Carolina families already face some of the highest energy bills in the region.
- Cutting back on clean energy now means fewer savings and more pollution later.
- This rate increase comes on top of several others in recent years.
- The new cost-shifting law will move billions in expenses onto everyday ratepayers.

Electricity is not optional. It is a basic necessity, and families should not be asked to shoulder higher bills so that large industries can pay less. We need a long-term energy strategy that is fair, affordable, and forward-looking.

What you can do

- Watch for public hearings on the rate case, your voice matters.
- Stay engaged with state leaders, and let them know energy affordability is a priority for your family.

 **Closing Thoughts**

Thank you for taking the time to read this update. Whether it's the federal activity in Charlotte, the ongoing budget delay, or rising energy costs, these issues all affect the stability and wellbeing of families across our state.

My focus remains the same: pushing for transparency, advocating for fairness, and keeping you informed about decisions that shape daily life in North Carolina. As more information becomes available, I'll continue to share it.

Thank you for your engagement and for the trust you place in me to represent District 41.

Yours in service,

Caleb Theodros

State Senator, District 41

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