



Representative W. David Guice
North Carolina House of Representatives
District 113



An update from the North Carolina House

April 18, 2011

Raleigh, North Carolina – As always, the Halls of the General Assembly were very busy this week. It doesn't seem that there are enough hours in the day to get it all done but somehow we manage to work many long hours and accomplish our tasks. I don't think I have had a spare minute since I have arrived in Raleigh in January for this long session.

Tuesday afternoon, the appropriations sub-committee co-chairs unveiled their budget proposals to members of their respective committees and committee debate on these proposals began on Wednesday. These proposals begin a work in progress on the budget and are not final decisions but a beginning point from which the committees will work. The work being done now in each of these committees is just the next step in the budget process and there will be changes to the original proposals which have been rolled out so I would say to each of you who have concerns over a particular area of the budget to be patient as committees continue to make modifications in these projections. The most exciting component of the current proposals is the full funding of our K-12 classroom teachers as well as community college enrollment growth which is something Gov. Perdue did not do in her proposed budget. Many of the current programs in place which provide duplicity are currently being eliminated with the core functions of government being left intact. The budget options we saw this week represent a preliminary road map that puts North Carolina state government back on the path to economic sustainability.

Also on Tuesday, the body of the NC General Assembly had the privilege of holding session in the old state Capitol in Raleigh. While the quarters were cramped, filled with 120 members plus clerks and sergeant-at-arms, it was a very memorable event. Tuesday's session was held in honor of the 235th anniversary of the Halifax Resolves, a North Carolina resolution that served as a forerunner of the US Declaration of Independence. The Halifax Resolves demonstrate the important role North Carolina played in transforming thirteen British colonies into the original United States of America by empowering delegates from North Carolina to be the first colony to declare independence from Britain. Other states followed suit and less than three months later; on July 4th, 1776 the Continental Congress adopted the Declaration of Independence. Both our state flag and our official state seal bear the date of April 12, 1776 in honor of this historic day in our state's history.

Senate Bill 8, "Lift Cap on Charter Schools" passed a final House vote earlier this week and was returned to the Senate for concurrence where they failed to concur. As a result, a conference committee has been formed for the two chambers to work out their differences on the bill. Once this has been done, the modified bill will return to each chamber for a vote on the passage of the conference committee report.

On Thursday the House passed HB353, "Extend UI Benefits/Continuing Resolution". This is a bill which utilizes federal funds to extend unemployment benefits for thousands of unemployed citizens across North Carolina. The bill also includes a continuing resolution that enables our state government to operate at 87% of the current budget should a new budget not be signed into law by June 30th. This bill not only protects unemployed citizens across our state, but also provides assurance for our state employees, businesses and communities that state government will continue to function until a budget is passed. Unfortunately, we have received word from Gov. Perdue that she has exercised here veto power and vetoed this bill on Saturday afternoon.

Gov. Perdue also vetoed two other bills this week. The first one is SB265 regarding the state health plan which was passed a couple of weeks ago. This is the bill which I detailed at length regarding various components of the State Health Plan including premiums for state employees/retirees and moving oversight of the State Health Plan from the legislature to the State Treasurer's Office. The second bill she vetoed is HB7, "Community Colleges Opt Out of Federal Loan Program." The basis of this bill was for community colleges to be able to opt out of the federal loan program which basically loaned funds to students to attend community colleges without any ability to repay the loans thereby placing both the student and the college in jeopardy. In my correspondence with officials at Blue Ridge Community College, it was indicated that they encourage their students who fall into this category to apply for federal grant money rather than loan money so as not to create this issue at our local community college.

Several advocacy groups from across North Carolina were holding advocacy days this week at the General Assembly and many people from my district were in town to talk with legislators about various issues. I was honored to have several constituents from the district come by my office to discuss their concerns. Among those who I saw were Dorothy Knowles and Margaret Ryan from Brevard Music Center who were in Raleigh for "Arts" day at the legislature. Representatives from the Bayada Nurse program were by to see me as was Chris Stevens from Maxim Healthcare in Hendersonville who were in town for Home Health Advocacy Day. It was also great to hear that Crystal Fenner from Project Challenge in Brevard stopped by the office to see me even though I was very busy in committee meetings and unable to meet with her. Thank you for taking the time to stop in for a quick visit and also, thanks to all of those who have called the office this week and talked to me, my legislative assistant or left voice messages.

Even though it is very hectic here in Raleigh and my time is mostly delegated to meetings and legislative sessions each day, it is an honor and privilege to hear from each of you and I welcome visits, calls and e-mails to communicate your concerns on various issues. Your input continues to be very important as we listen and debate many issues in the legislative process and I do need to hear differing opinions to better understand the needs of our citizens. As I have always said, I am here in Raleigh serving my constituents not only to be a vote, but to be your voice in Raleigh.

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