



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



An update from the North Carolina House

June 6, 2011

Raleigh, North Carolina – Once again we have had an extremely busy week in Raleigh! Our days began earlier than usual and our sessions were long. This week we actually had a rare Friday session that lasted from 2:00 Friday afternoon until about 11:30 Friday evening. We took about a 30 minute break and went back into session just after midnight to hold a final vote on the budget Saturday.

The budget did pass through the Senate this week with changes from the House version of the bill that was passed earlier this session. As a result of those changes, the bill came back to the House for concurrence and in a rare vote, the House did vote to concur with the Senate version of the bill and it has now been sent to the Governor for signature. At this point, we do not know if she will sign the bill, veto the bill or just allow it to sit for 10 days and become law. This budget restores over \$300 million to K-12 education, and fully funds every teacher and teacher assistant position in the state. It also restores over \$100 million to the UNC system. It eliminates the sales tax which was due to sunset on July 1 of this year as was promised at the time it was applied and puts over a billion dollars back into the hands of North Carolina taxpayers. Separate studies show that the tax cuts in this budget will help create thousands of jobs throughout North Carolina. Further the budget streamlines government administrative costs and promotes efficiency in state departments.

I'm pleased to share the exciting news that HB 642, the "Justice Reinvestment Act", overwhelmingly passed the North Carolina House of Representatives with broad bipartisan and stakeholder support this week. This is a bill I have been working on for over a year and have spent countless hours with many stakeholders to bring the legislation to fruition in the House and HB 642 is now headed to the Senate for consideration. I plan to work the bill in the Senate committee in preparation for a full Senate vote prior to adjournment of the long session. I look forward to updating you on the progress of this important piece of legislation! Gov. Perdue has expressed her support for this legislation and hopefully it will become law sometime this summer.

The policies in this comprehensive criminal justice bill include new tools for probation officers to respond swiftly to violations, requirements that everyone convicted of a felony leave prison with supervision, and increased access to drug treatment programs both in prison and in the community. HB 642 will do much to increase public safety, while saving taxpayers money.

The legislation is based on research conducted over the last year in North Carolina by the Council of State Governments (CSG) Justice Center, in partnership with the Pew Center on the States and the Department of Justice Bureau of Justice Assistance, at the request of the governor, chief justice, and legislative leaders. With the help of stakeholders from across the state, a tailored set of data-driven policies were developed that balance the goals of increasing public safety with reducing spending on corrections.

Currently most people who leave North Carolina's prisons are released with no supervision in the community. With this legislation, approximately 15,000 people who would have walked out of prison with no accountability are now going to be supervised and held accountable for following the law. I often say that if we do not deal with the underlying issues, and provide the treatment that's necessary in order for offenders to come out of prison and to be supervised in our community, we'll see them at the front door of the courthouse again. HB 642 provides treatment to those who can benefit the most.

This Justice Reinvestment Act is a significant departure from business as usual in North Carolina. In the last 10 years North Carolina's corrections spending has increased 68 percent to \$1.51 billion. Our prisons are over capacity and the prison population is projected to continue growing by at least 10 percent in the next decade. Such growth could cost upwards of \$267 million in construction and operating expenses, all of which are avoided under this legislation. Experts at the CSG Justice Center estimate that adopting the justice reinvestment legislation would reduce spending on corrections by up to \$293 million over the next six years. The legislation uses those savings to reinvest \$2.5 million annually in supervision, and \$7.5 million annually in expanded access to drug treatment both in prison and in the community.

Again this week I was privileged to sponsor a page in the General Assembly. AJ Horner, a student from Wilkes County served as a page this week. AJ is the grandson of Mr. and Mrs. Thurman Horner of Brevard and it was an honor to have him with us this week.

As I prepare to begin another hectic week with crossover deadline on Thursday, I am mindful of the opportunities that you have afforded to me by allowing me to represent you here in Raleigh. We will be voting on many important pieces of legislation this week as we wrap up the voting for bills which have been filed in the House and sending them to the Senate for consideration. Typically with the passage of the budget and meeting the crossover deadline, we can see the end in sight so I anticipate that we will be ending our session prior to the 1st of July this year. Until then, I expect to see some long days and nights here in Raleigh as I continue to work for you.

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