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Focusing on Legislative Representation

LEGISLATIVE REPORT February 3, 2025

2025-2026 SESSION BEGINS!

Legislators convened for a one-day session during the second week of January for their swearing-in ceremony and to formally elect key leaders in both chambers. The House selected Destin Hall as its new Speaker, marking the first leadership change in a decade. Hall, a 37-year-old attorney and former House Rules Chair under now-Congressman Tim Moore, will lead the Republican-controlled chamber. During his acceptance speech, Hall credited his rural Caldwell County upbringing, saying, "Our number one job here is to make sure that we make it as easy as possible for the folks of our state to also live that American dream." He also set forth a top priority for the House in 2025: "The No. 1 priority of this body, starting today, because today is day one, is doing all we can to rebuild Western North Carolina."

The Republican-led Senate re-elected Sen. Phil Berger as its leader, continuing his role as the longest-serving Republican Senate president pro tempore since 2011. Berger defended Republican leadership, stating, "There were naysayers 14 years ago. Frankly, there still are naysayers. But our conservative approach has lifted our state out of a dark place."

Republicans hold a 71-49 advantage in the House and 30-20 in the Senate, just one seat shy of a veto-proof supermajority. Hall expressed confidence in gaining bipartisan support, saying, "The business of this building is trying to reach some compromise and get the votes that you need." Berger also voiced optimism, adding, "I'm hopeful that we'll be able to find common ground." Wednesday also marked Lt. Gov. Rachel Hunt's first public appearance in the Senate. Hunt, the daughter of former Gov. Jim Hunt, will preside over Senate debates and will be able to cast a vote in the case of a tie.

LEGISLATIVE SCHEDULE

The House and Senate also set their general calendar in terms of legislation and bill filing deadlines. The new rules now allow both chambers to file certain bills at any time during the session.



NORTH CAROLINA COLLEGE OF EMERGENCY PHYSICIANS



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House		
Drafts	Requested by 4 PM	Filed in House by 3 PM
Local Bills	Thursday, Feb. 20	Thursday, March 6
Public Bills & Resolutions	Thursday, March 6	Thursday, April 3

Senate		
Drafts	Requested by 4 PM	Filed in Senate by 4 PM
Local Bills	Thursday, Feb. 13	Thursday, February 27
Public Bills & Resolutions	Thursday, February 27	Tuesday, March 25

2025 Crossover Deadline: Thursday, May 8

Bills Eligible to be Filed in 2025 With No Deadlines		
Types of Bills	House	Senate
Redistricting bills for House, Senate, Congress, or local entities	✓	✓
Ratification of amendments to the Constitution of the United States	✓	✓
Bills providing for action on gubernatorial nominations or appointments	✓	✓
Appointments by the General Assembly	✓	✓
Adjournment resolutions	✓	✓
Bills introduced on the report of the House Committees on Appropriations, Finance, or Rules	✓	
Bills proposing amendments to the North Carolina Constitution		✓
Statutory changes necessary to implement State constitutional amendments		✓
Bills addressing election laws		✓

SENATE COMMITTEE APPOINTMENTS

Senate leader Berger announced committee assignments for the 2025 legislative session. “The lion’s share of legislative work is done during our committee meetings,” Sen. Berger said. “The committee process shapes the legislation we vote on and allows for robust debate and public input. The senators appointed to these committees bring a wealth of knowledge and experience, and I look forward to seeing what they can accomplish this biennium.”

Agriculture, Energy, and Environment

Chairs: Sens. Brent Jackson, Norman W. Sanderson, Lisa S. Barnes

Members: Sens. Bob Brinson, Jim Burgin, Jay J. Chaudhuri, David W. Craven, Jr., Michael Garrett, Lisa Grafstein, Bobby Hanig, Steve Jarvis, Julie Mayfield, Tom McInnis, Natalie S. Murdock, Buck Newton, Paul Newton, Bill Rabon, DeAndrea Salvador, Eddie D. Settle, Kandie D. Smith

Appropriations/Base Budget

Chairs: Sens. Brent Jackson, Ralph Hise, Michael V. Lee

Members: Sens. W. Ted Alexander, Val Applewhite, Lisa S. Barnes, Sydney Batch, Dan Blue, Danny Earl Britt, Jr., Jim Burgin, Kevin Corbin, Warren Daniel, Carl Ford, Amy S. Galey, Lisa Grafstein, Steve Jarvis, Paul A. Lowe, Jr., Graig Meyer, Natalie S. Murdock, Bill Rabon, Gladys A. Robinson, Norman W. Sanderson, Benton G. Sawrey, Vickie Sawyer, Joyce Waddell

Commerce and Insurance

Chairs: Sens. Todd Johnson, Danny Earl Britt, Jr., Eddie D. Settle

Members: Sens. Gale Adcock, W. Ted Alexander, Sydney Batch, Dan Blue, Jay J. Chaudhuri, David W. Craven, Jr., Michael Garrett, Mark Hollo, Brent Jackson, Steve Jarvis, Michael A. Lazzara, Michael V. Lee, Paul A. Lowe, Jr., Tom McInnis, Graig Meyer, Timothy D. Moffitt, Brad Overcash, DeAndrea Salvador, Vickie Sawyer

Education/Higher Education

Chairs: Sens. Michael V. Lee, Kevin Corbin, Brad Overcash

Members: Sens. Lisa S. Barnes, Woodson Bradley, Bob Brinson, Jay J. Chaudhuri, Sophia Chitlik, Amy S. Galey, Michael Garrett, Bobby Hanig, Mark Hollo, Dana Jones, Tom McInnis, Buck Newton, Gladys A. Robinson, Norman W. Sanderson, Kandie D. Smith, Caleb Theodros

Elections

Chairs: Sens. Ralph Hise, Warren Daniel, Brad Overcash

Members: Sens. W. Ted Alexander, Sydney Batch, Carl Ford, Amy S. Galey, Brent Jackson, Todd Johnson, Paul A. Lowe, Jr., Julie Mayfield, Mujtaba A. Mohammed, Paul Newton, Bill Rabon, Gladys A. Robinson, Benton G. Sawrey, Kandie D. Smith

Finance

Chairs: Sens. Paul Newton, Tom McInnis, David W. Craven, Jr.

Members: Sens. Gale Adcock, W. Ted Alexander, Val Applewhite, Sydney Batch, Dan Blue, Jim Burgin, Warren Daniel, Carl Ford, Ralph Hise, Brent Jackson, Todd Johnson, Michael A. Lazzara, Paul A. Lowe, Jr., Timothy D. Moffitt, Mujtaba A. Mohammed, Natalie S. Murdock, Buck Newton, Brad Overcash, Bill Rabon, DeAndrea Salvador, Vickie Sawyer, Joyce Waddell

Health Care

Chairs: Sens. Jim Burgin, Amy S. Galey, Benton G. Sawrey

Members: Sens. Gale Adcock, Val Applewhite, Lisa S. Barnes, Danny Earl Britt, Jr., Kevin Corbin, Michael Garrett, Ralph Hise, Todd Johnson, Michael V. Lee, Julie Mayfield, Timothy D. Moffitt, Mujtaba A. Mohammed, Natalie S. Murdock, Paul Newton, Eddie D. Settle, Joyce Waddell

Judiciary

Chairs: Sens. Warren Daniel, Danny Earl Britt, Jr., Buck Newton

Members: Sens. Sydney Batch, Dan Blue, Sophia Chitlik, David W. Craven, Jr., Terence Everitt, Amy S. Galey, Lisa Grafstein, Michael A. Lazzara, Michael V. Lee, Mujtaba A. Mohammed, Paul Newton, Brad Overcash, Norman W. Sanderson, Benton G. Sawrey

Pensions and Retirement and Aging

Chairs: Sens. Paul Newton, Carl Ford, W. Ted Alexander

Members: Sens. Val Applewhite, Woodson Bradley, Danny Earl Britt, Jr., Jim Burgin, Kevin Corbin, David W. Craven, Jr., Warren Daniel, Terence Everitt, Ralph Hise, Graig Meyer, Timothy D. Moffitt, Gladys A. Robinson, Joyce Waddell

Regulatory Reform

Chairs: Sens. Tom McInnis, Steve Jarvis, Timothy D. Moffitt

Members: Sens. Woodson Bradley, Sophia Chitlik, Kevin Corbin, David W. Craven, Jr., Terence Everitt, Carl Ford, Lisa Grafstein, Bobby Hanig, Dana Jones, Michael A. Lazzara, Graig Meyer, Norman W. Sanderson, Vickie Sawyer, Caleb Theodros

Rules and Operations of the Senate

Chair: Sen. Bill Rabon

Vice Chair: Sen. Warren Daniel

Members: Sens. Gale Adcock, Lisa S. Barnes, Dan Blue, Danny Earl Britt, Jr., Jay J. Chaudhuri, Amy S. Galey, Michael Garrett, Ralph Hise, Brent Jackson, Todd Johnson, Michael V. Lee, Paul A. Lowe, Jr., Julie Mayfield, Tom McInnis, Paul Newton, DeAndrea Salvador, Norman W. Sanderson, Benton G. Sawrey, Vickie Sawyer, Joyce Waddell

State and Local Government

Chairs: Sens. W. Ted Alexander, Carl Ford, Bobby Hanig

Members: Sens. Gale Adcock, Val Applewhite, Bob Brinson, Jim Burgin, Kevin Corbin, Lisa Grafstein, Mark Hollo, Steve Jarvis, Dana Jones, Michael A. Lazzara, Graig Meyer, Gladys A. Robinson, Eddie D. Settle, Kandie D. Smith

Transportation

Chairs: Sens. Bill Rabon, Vickie Sawyer, Michael A. Lazzara

Members: Sens. Lisa S. Barnes, Bob Brinson, Jay J. Chaudhuri, Bobby Hanig, Mark Hollo, Steve Jarvis, Todd Johnson, Dana Jones, Julie Mayfield, Tom McInnis, Mujtaba A. Mohammed, Natalie S. Murdock, Buck Newton, DeAndrea Salvador, Eddie D. Settle, Kandie D. Smith, Caleb Theodros

Joint Legislative Commission on Government Operations

Chair: Sen. Phil Berger

Members: Sens. Ralph Hise (Ex Officio), Paul Newton (Ex Officio), W. Ted Alexander, Lisa S. Barnes, Sydney Batch, Dan Blue, Danny Earl Britt, Jr., Jim Burgin, David W. Craven, Jr., Warren Daniel, Carl Ford, Brent Jackson, Steve Jarvis, Todd Johnson, Michael V. Lee, Paul A. Lowe, Jr., Tom McInnis, Buck Newton, Bill Rabon, Gladys A. Robinson, Norman W. Sanderson, Vickie Sawyer, Joyce Waddell

Select Committee on Nominations

Chair: Sen. Bill Rabon

Members: Sens. Sydney Batch, Dan Blue, Warren Daniel, Amy S. Galey, Ralph Hise, Brent Jackson, Mujtaba A. Mohammed, Paul Newton, Gladys A. Robinson, Norman W. Sanderson

Appropriations on Agriculture, Natural, and Economic Resources

Chairs: Sens. Todd Johnson, Norman W. Sanderson, Lisa S. Barnes

Members: Sens. Bob Brinson, Paul A. Lowe, Jr., Julie Mayfield, Timothy D. Moffitt, DeAndrea Salvador, Eddie D. Settle, Kandie D. Smith

Appropriations on Department of Transportation

Chairs: Sens. Bill Rabon, Vickie Sawyer, Michael A. Lazzara

Members: Sens. Michael Garrett, Mark Hollo, Natalie S. Murdock, Caleb Theodros

Appropriations on Education/Higher Education

Chairs: Sens. Paul Newton, Kevin Corbin, Brad Overcash

Members: Sens. Val Applewhite, Jay J. Chaudhuri, Sophia Chitlik, David W. Craven, Jr., Dana Jones, Joyce Waddell

Appropriations on General Government and Information Technology

Chairs: Sens. W. Ted Alexander, Carl Ford, Bobby Hanig

Members: Sens. Woodson Bradley, Terence Everitt, Steve Jarvis, Graig Meyer

Appropriations on Health and Human Services

Chairs: Sens. Jim Burgin, Amy S. Galey, Benton G. Sawrey

Members: Sens. Gale Adcock, Dan Blue, Kevin Corbin, Gladys A. Robinson

Appropriations on Justice and Public Safety

Chairs: Sens. Danny Earl Britt, Jr., Warren Daniel, Buck Newton

Members: Sens. Sydney Batch, Lisa Grafstein, Mujtaba A. Mohammed, Norman W. Sanderson

HOUSE COMMITTEE APPOINTMENTS

Speaker Hall has unveiled committee chairs for the next biennium, with committee memberships and vice-chairmanships to follow shortly. Hall said, "I am proud to announce the committee chairs for the 2025-2026 legislative session. These leaders have demonstrated exceptional dedication, expertise, and a strong commitment to serving the people of our state. Each member brings a unique perspective and valuable experience to their respective committees, and I look forward to working with them."

Agriculture and Environment

Senior Chair: Rep. Jimmy Dixon

Chair: Rep. Karl Gillespie

Chair: Rep. Jeff McNeely

Chair: Rep. Howard Penny

Alcohol Beverage Control

Chair: Rep. Celeste Cairns

Chair: Rep. Reece Pyrtle

Chair: Rep. Ray Pickett

Appropriations

Senior Chair: Rep. Donny Lambeth

Senior Chair: Rep. Dean Arp

Senior Chair: Rep. Kyle Hall

Senior Chair: Rep. Larry Strickland

Chair: Rep. Erin Paré

Chair: Rep. Hugh Blackwell

Chair: Rep. William Brisson

Appropriations, Agriculture and Natural and Economic Resources

Senior Chair: Rep. Jimmy Dixon

Chair: Rep. Karl Gillespie

Chair: Rep. Ed Goodwin

Chair: Rep. Jennifer Balkcom

Appropriations, Capital and Information Technology

Chair: Rep. Matthew Winslow

Chair: Rep. Jake Johnson

Chair: Rep. Kelly Hastings

Appropriations, Education

Chair: Rep. Tricia Cotham

Chair: Rep. David Willis

Chair: Rep. Brian Biggs

Appropriations, General Government

Chair: Rep. Dennis Riddell

Chair: Rep. Donnie Loftis

Chair: Rep. John Torbett

Appropriations, Health and Human Services

Chair: Rep. Tim Reeder

Chair: Rep. Larry Potts

Chair: Rep. Donna White

Appropriations, Justice and Public Safety

Chair: Rep. Ted Davis

Chair: Rep. Dudley Greene

Chair: Rep. Charlie Miller

Chair: Rep. Carson Smith

Appropriations, Transportation

Chair: Rep. Frank Iler

Chair: Rep. Phil Shepard

Chair: Rep. Allen Chesser

Chair: Rep. Steve Tyson

Commerce

Chair: Rep. John Sauls

Chair: Rep. Steve Ross

Emergency Management and Disaster Recovery

Chair: Rep. Dudley Greene

Chair: Rep. Mark Pless

Education, K-12

Chair: Rep. David Willis

Chair: Rep. Brian Biggs

Chair: Rep. Tricia Cotham

Higher Education

Chair: Rep. Ray Pickett

Chair: Rep. Kelly Hastings

Election Law

Chair: Rep. Hugh Blackwell

Chair: Rep. Sarah Stevens

Energy and Public Utilities

Chair: Rep. Kyle Hall

Chair: Rep. Dean Arp
Chair: Rep. Matthew Winslow

Ethics

Chair: Rep. Shelly Willingham
Chair: Rep. Harry Warren

Federal Relations and American Indian Affairs

Chair: Rep. Mike Clampitt
Chair: Rep. Jarrod Lowery
Chair: Rep. Bill Ward

Finance

Senior Chair: Rep. Julia Howard
Senior Chair: Rep. Mitchell Setzer
Senior Chair: Rep. Neal Jackson
Chair: Rep. Keith Kidwell
Chair: Rep. Steve Ross

Health

Senior Chair: Rep. Larry Potts
Chair: Rep. Tim Reeder
Chair: Rep. Donny Lambeth
Chair: Rep. Donna White

Insurance

Chair: Rep. Chris Humphrey
Chair: Rep. Jennifer Balkcom

Judiciary 1

Chair: Rep. Ted Davis

Judiciary 2

Chair: Rep. Sarah Stevens

Judiciary 3

Chair: Rep. John Blust

State and Local Government

Chair: Rep. John Torbett
Chair: Rep. Sam Watford
Chair: Rep. Keith Kidwell

Housing and Development

Chair: Rep. Mark Brody
Chair: Rep. Jeff Zenger

Homeland Security and Military and Veterans Affairs

Chair: Rep. Ed Goodwin
Chair: Rep. Joe Pike

Chair: Rep. Donnie Loftis

House Standing Oversight Committee

Chair: Rep. Harry Warren

Chair: Rep. Brenden Jones

Chair: Rep. Jake Johnson

Pensions and Retirement

Chair: Rep. Carson Smith

Chair: Rep. Diane Wheatley

Regulatory Reform

Chair: Rep. Dennis Riddell

Chair: Rep. Jeff Zenger

Chair: Rep. Allen Chesser

Rules, Calendar, and Operations of the House

Chair: Rep. John Bell

Transportation

Chair: Rep. Steve Tyson

Chair: Rep. Jeff McNeely

Chair: Rep. Jay Adams

Chair: Rep. Phil Shepard

Wildlife Resources

Chair: Rep. Jay Adams

Chair: Rep. Ben Moss

Speaker Hall has reduced the number of House standing committees for the new session by 25%, lowering the total from 44 to 33.

Seven committees have been removed altogether:

- Banking
- Families, Children, and Aging Policy
- Marine Resources and Aquaculture
- Redistricting
- State Personnel
- UNC Board of Governors Nominations
- Unemployment Insurance

Others were merged:

- Appropriations, Information Technology to Appropriations, Capital and Information Technology
- Local Government to State and Local Government
- Environment to Agriculture and Environment
- Ed, Community College to Higher Education
- Ed, Universities to Higher Education

SELECT COMMITTEE ON HURRICANE HELENE RECOVERY

Speaker Destin Hall has officially formed the Select Committee on Hurricane Helene Recovery to address ongoing recovery efforts for the 2025 biennium. The bipartisan committee will assess needs, fill resource gaps, and ensure effective state and federal aid distribution. “Hurricane Helene caused widespread devastation across North Carolina, and it’s our duty to ensure impacted communities have the resources they need to rebuild stronger than before,” said Speaker Hall. He continued, “We are fully committed to Western North Carolina and will see this recovery through to the very end, and this committee will play a vital role in providing the oversight and leadership needed to ensure a strong and lasting recovery.”

The committee will be led by Co-Chairs Rep. John Bell and Rep. Dudley Greene. Rep. Jennifer Balkcom, Rep. Mike Clappitt, Rep. Karl Gillespie, Rep. Jake Johnson, Rep. Ray Pickett and Rep. Mark Pless have been appointed Vice Chairs. The committee will begin work immediately, providing updates and recommendations to the General Assembly, with an appropriations bill expected, as well.

STATE SUPREME COURT RACE

The legal battle over a North Carolina Supreme Court seat remains unresolved as candidates continue filing court motions. Democratic Justice Allison Riggs is leading Republican Jefferson Griffin by 734 votes, a result confirmed by multiple recounts. However, Griffin is challenging over 60,000 ballots, arguing they should be invalidated.

Despite prior rulings allowing the challenged ballots, the Republican-majority state Supreme Court has temporarily blocked Riggs from being declared the winner. Two justices dissented, including Republican Justice Richard Dietz, warning of dangerous precedents if legal votes are later discarded by the courts. Meanwhile, Griffin has hired a former clerk to Supreme Court Justice Samuel Alito, signaling a potential appeal to the U.S. Supreme Court. The Fourth Circuit must now decide whether to take over the case or let the state court proceed.

The state’s Republican-majority Supreme Court rejected Republican candidate Jefferson Griffin’s request to fast-track his lawsuit seeking to disqualify over 60,000 ballots. Griffin attempted to bypass lower courts and appeal directly to the State Supreme Court. The justices unanimously ruled the case must first go to trial in Wake County Superior Court to gather evidence. This is neither an entire “win” for Griffin or for Riggs. Griffin and allies have fought to keep the case entirely limited to the state courts, while Riggs and her allies have fought to keep the case entirely in federal court. There are currently two nearly-identical cases: one in federal court and one in state court. Griffin had hoped to have the case heard quickly by the Republican-led State Supreme Court to hopefully impact, or at least complicate, any later ruling from the federal court. Since the State Supreme Court is sending it back to trial, a ruling in the case in federal court could come first.

EXECUTIVE ORDERS

Gov. Josh Stein declared a statewide state of emergency in preparation for the severe winter storm that hit North Carolina and marks Stein’s seventh executive order since taking office. On his first day in office, Gov. Stein wasted no time prioritizing the needs of western North Carolina. While visiting Asheville, Stein signed his first five executive orders to accelerate recovery efforts. With tens of thousands of homes damaged or destroyed, more than 12,000 residents remain without safe housing, and an estimated 8,000 private roads and bridges require repairs to restore access to emergency services, school buses, and other essential transportation. “Winter is here in western North Carolina, and we must act quickly to get people into temporary housing, repair private roads

and bridges, and keep people safe,” Stein stated. “I will do everything in my power to ensure we are both thinking creatively and acting swiftly to help our neighbors recover.”

His first two executive orders, approved by the Council of State, temporarily lift procurement regulations to increase the availability of temporary housing and expedite private road and bridge repairs. Three additional orders will:

- Establish the Governor’s Recovery Office for Western North Carolina (GROW NC) within the Governor’s Office and create a Division of Community Revitalization within the Department of Commerce to address housing needs and strengthen community resilience.
- Form the Governor’s Advisory Committee on Western North Carolina Recovery to guide GROW NC in delivering efficient and cost-effective solutions for affected communities.
- Authorize an additional 16 hours of Community Service Leave for state employees to volunteer in organized storm recovery efforts.

On Tuesday morning, Stein issued another executive order to help North Carolinians stay warm. Executive Order No. 6 temporarily lifts federal restrictions on driving hours for those transporting propane and other heating fuels.

Governor Stein recently issued what may be his first controversial executive order, aiming to protect access to reproductive health care. The order bars state agencies from assisting in prosecutions against certain providers of legal reproductive services, including abortion. It also mandates a review of data storage practices to bolster patient privacy and ensures continued access to birth control and reproductive health care services. Stein’s action builds on protections put in place by former Gov. Cooper in 2022, following the Supreme Court’s reversal of *Roe v. Wade*. While North Carolina remains one of the few Southern states without a six-week abortion ban, its Republican-led legislature did reduce the state’s 20-week ban to 12 weeks, in 2023, overriding Cooper’s veto. However, a federal judge later struck down part of the law that created additional documentation requirements for medication abortions.

With Republicans losing their House supermajority in the 2024 election, further restrictive abortion legislation could face greater obstacles, making Stein’s veto power more influential than his predecessor’s. His actions align with national trends of Democratic leaders to shield abortion access from potential federal restrictions under President-elect Trump’s administration. “I don’t know what will happen, but what I am trying to communicate to the people of this state is that they have a champion in me for their personal privacy and their right to make their own health care decisions,” Stein said at a news conference.

2026 US SENATE RACE BEGINS

As one election cycle ends, another begins! US Sen. Thom Tillis officially has a primary challenge ahead of 2026. Andy Nilsson, a high school teacher assistant and assistant football coach in the Triad region, filed paperwork with the Federal Elections Commission declaring his intention to run for the seat. Political analysts consider Tillis, first elected to the US Senate in 2014, to be one of the most vulnerable Republican incumbents in the upcoming midterms. Tillis’s support among the Republican base has weakened in recent years. In 2023, the North Carolina Republican Party formally censured Tillis, citing his role in protecting same-sex marriage rights and his initial—though later rescinded—opposition to President Donald Trump’s plan to fund border-wall construction using military funds.

Historically, the sitting President’s party tends to lose seats during midterm elections. It’s worth noting that Tillis has never lost an election, and his past performances on the national stage suggest

he will be a formidable candidate. In a high-stakes midterm cycle where Republicans will aim to defend every Republican seat, a Tillis primary loss—combined with a strong Democratic challenger, such as potentially former Gov. Cooper—could up the odds of a Republican loss. The state has exclusively elected Republican U.S. Senators for the past decade, but 2026 could test that trend and will certainly be a race to watch.

All eyes are on former Gov. Cooper as the potential Democratic candidate for the US Senate race in 2026, but contingency plans are taking shape should he decide not to run. As Democrats await Cooper’s decision on challenging Sen. Tillis, former US Rep. Wiley Nickel is positioning himself as a potential alternative. After the freshman Congressman’s competitive district was redrawn to favor Republicans, Nickel chose not to seek reelection in 2024 and instead filed paperwork for a 2026 US Senate bid.

US REP. FOXX NAMED HOUSE RULES CHAIRWOMAN

U.S. Rep. Virginia Foxx has been appointed chairwoman of the House Committee on Rules, making her the only woman leading a House committee in the 119th Congress. “For two decades, Dr. Foxx has been a stalwart in the House and a leader in multiple policy areas,” Johnson said in a news release. “Her drive and personality have established her as among the most universally respected members of our Republican Conference. Dr. Foxx is an example of how Members should serve, and our Conference will benefit greatly with her at the helm of the influential Rules Committee.” Foxx, 81, has previously served three terms in other leadership roles on the House Committee on Education and the Workforce. “I am humbled and honored to have been selected as Chairwoman of the House Rules Committee.”

REP. JOE JOHN

Sadly, Rep. Joe John, an 85-year-old former judge and longtime Raleigh legislator, passed away last week after resigning days earlier, announcing that his throat cancer was terminal. In his recent resignation statement, John expressed his hope his legacy would be remembered as “one of dedication to the common good — working to build bridges, advocate for the voiceless, and fight for justice.” John served 25 years as a judge in various courts and was first elected to the House in 2016, recently winning his fifth term.

PRESIDENT TRUMP VISITS WESTERN NC

President Trump visited Western North Carolina to receive a briefing on the recovery from Helene and visit some of the impact areas. Gov. Stein, Speaker Hall, Agriculture Commissioner Troxler, Franklin Graham, President of Samaritan’s Purse, and various lawmakers were also in Western North Carolina. “I think it is very good news for the people of Western North Carolina that this issue is front of mind for the new administration,” Stein said of the trip.

ACEP Update

Today, the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) released the [HHS Consolidation in Health Care Markets RFI Response](#) — a report in response to a tri-agency March 2024 [request for information](#) (RFI), in which HHS and the Department of Justice Antitrust Division and Federal Trade Commission (FTC) “launched a cross-government public inquiry into private-equity and other corporations’ increasing control over health care.” HHS indicated that the report “synthesizes findings and highlights certain key facts, lessons, and ideas gleaned from the comments;” and highlights two major trends in the health care sector: (1) “increasing consolidation of health care markets;” and (2) “a recent influx of private equity and other private investors into health care services.”

We had [commented](#) on that RFI, and our comments, more than any other medical society, are directly referenced and cited heavily in the report (see pages 10-11), especially highlighting the findings from our 2022 questionnaire on merger enforcement and direct anonymized quotes from respondents included in our comments.

While this is an RFI report and does not have any enforceable regulations attached to it, HHS concludes that "health care consolidation can negatively impact patients' and health workers' safety, quality, and cost of care" and that "the Agencies' past actions have not sufficiently addressed the harms inflicted by anti-competitive activity in the health care sector, and more effective and vigorous antitrust enforcement is necessary to stop or reverse the trend of consolidation." They signify future "partnerships with states and Congress to prevent harm from further consolidation, and collaborat[ion] with public and private partners in identifying effective remedies.

ACEP Board of Director's Update – 01/2025:

- ACEP 24 was a success with high turnout numbers. New formats worked well – attendees were able to connect with each other. Section Hall Crawl as the opening party. Looking for more of this in the future, as we plan for ACEP25 in Salt Lake City.
- Continue supporting members affected by the implosion of NES Health. Town hall conducted on 11/19.
- Practice survey and AI survey out and in process.
- Joined with Anesthesia and Radiology in December to send HHS letter about ghost rates – the practice of setting artificially low QPAs based on practitioners from other specialties. ACEP is working hard to push for fair compensation.
- Bad news on that front – Congress did not help us out. Looking for relief when Congress comes back into session, working with Dr. Murphy on that issue.
- Internal finances much improved. Continuing to work with external consultant.
- Executive Director Search underway. Position has been posted and search is underway. Dr. Gillian Schmitz chairs the Executive Director search committee
- Continued collaboration with AHRQ – new release of push for research projects with emphasis on boarding. Continue to advocate on this issue.
- Accelerate happening towards the end of January, aligned with Board meeting as well. The concept is 4 meetings combined into one location.
- ACEP continue advocacy to reauthorize the Dr. Lorna Breen Act

GENERAL INTEREST LEGISLATION

We have seen quite a few bills filed in the first week of the session. Although many of these do not directly impact your organization, we want to make sure you know that they are being filed and may be discussed this session. Please let us know if you need additional information on any of these bills.

House Bill 5, NC Constitutional Carry Act, would (1) protect a person's right to carry a concealed handgun without a permit, (2) continue allowing persons to acquire a concealed handgun permit for the purposes of reciprocity or for any other reason desired, and (3) authorize officials elected in the state to carry a concealed firearm while performing their official duties if the official has a concealed handgun permit.

House Bill 7, NC REACH Act, would require at least three credit hours of instruction in American History or American Government in order to graduate from a constituent institution of the university of North Carolina with a baccalaureate degree or a community college with an associate degree.

House Bill 9, Firearm Discharge/Preempt Local Ordinance, would preempt local governments from regulating sport shooting ranges and discharging firearms on or within private property.

House Bill 11, No Tax on Tips, Overtime, Bonus Pay, would allow an income tax deduction for overtime compensation, up to two thousand five hundred dollars of bonus pay, and tips.

House Bill 12, Observe Standard Time All Year, would require the State to observe standard time the whole year.

House Bill 13, Charges for Payments by Credit or Debit Card, would regulate the amount a merchant may charge customers for payments by credit card or debit card so that the merchant could not charge more than the credit card fee charged.

House Bill 16, General Assembly: In God We Trust – Display, would require the Legislative Services Officer of the General Assembly to display the national motto "In God We Trust" directly above and behind the dais of the Speaker of the House of Representatives and the President of the Senate.

House Bill 20, Fair Maps Act, would amend the North Carolina Constitution to provide for an independent redistricting process, to establish the North Carolina Citizens Redistricting Commission, and to make conforming changes to the General Statutes.

House Bill 28, Gun Violence Prevention Act, would create the offense of possessing a firearm or weapon of mass death and destruction by a felon during the commission or attempted commission of a felony.

Senate Bill 10, Mobile Drivers Licenses, would require the Division of Motor Vehicles to provide mobile drivers licenses upon request, extend reciprocity to mobile drivers licenses issued by other states, require law enforcement officers to undergo training to ensure appropriate interactions with mobile driver's license holders, and clarify that a mobile driver's license satisfies the in-person voting photo identification requirement.

Senate Bill 14, Constitutional Amendment/Repeal Literacy Test, would amend the North Carolina Constitution to repeal the literacy test requirement.

Senate Bill 20, Prohibiting Certain Mass Balloon Releases, would prohibit certain mass balloon releases.

HEALTH CARE

House Bill 4, Sam's Law, would require a written, individualized health plan to be developed between a school unit and the parent of a student enrolled in the school who is diagnosed with a seizure disorder. The plan must include information regarding the student's identity, seizure medicine, dosage of the medicine and symptoms necessitating administration of the seizure medicine. **Introduced by Representatives Kidwell, Cairns, Biggs, and Pare.**

Senate Bill 24, Government Mandates Increase Healthcare Costs, states that government-mandated health insurance requirements for employers in North Carolina lead to higher premiums, placing undue financial strain on employers, particularly small businesses and that North Carolina ranks 50th out of 50 states in high healthcare costs. The bill would:

- Require that any piece of legislation containing one or more new health benefit mandates is required to also contain at least one provision that repeals at least the same number of health benefit mandates that are already in effect as of the date of the consideration of that piece of legislation prior to ratification of legislation.
- Require that any piece of legislation containing one or more health benefit mandates is required to also contain a provision appropriating recurring funds in the amount of the cost of that mandate to the Department of State Treasurer and the State Health Plan or any other relevant State agency prior to ratification.

Introduced by Senators Burgin, Galey, Sawrey.

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