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Focusing on Legislative Representation

LEGISLATIVE REPORT March 4, 2026

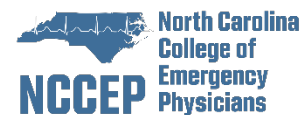
The 2026 primary election results are (almost all) in, and the results of several closely watched races will reshape North Carolina's political landscape in the months and years ahead. An astonishing eight incumbent members of the House and Senate appear to have lost their seats tonight and Senator Berger looks to have lost as well but it is too close to call.

While many contests were on the ballot, a handful carried particular weight for the balance of power in Raleigh and the direction of state policy. The most notable surely is Senate leader Berger's race, which he currently is losing - by just TWO votes - in a potential massive upset that could certainly send shockwaves through Jones Street and the upcoming short session and beyond. Berger, often cited as the most powerful state politician in North Carolina, has been the Senate Pro Tempore since Republicans took control of the NC House and Senate in 2011. He was the Senate Minority Leader prior to that. Campaign spending for his re-election was said to have reached \$10 million in this race to give you an idea of just how serious this primary match-up has been in Rockingham and Guilford counties.

Military and provisional ballots still need to be counted, and a recount and legal challenges are likely, so the final result will not be known for some time. If the results stick, however, Berger has indicated he would complete his current term, meaning he would remain Senate leader through the end of the year. Regardless, this result would shift internal dynamics within the Republican Senate caucus, as colleagues look toward new leadership, a possibility that hasn't taken place in a *long* time. It could also potentially grow our new Speaker Hall's influence, however, that could cut both ways. If Berger only has roughly half a year left after decades in leadership, he could dig in even deeper on his priorities before leaving. Likewise, his Senate colleagues could dig in on his priorities with him. Senate Republicans are generally in lockstep and have been very supportive of Berger. These leadership questions come as lawmakers prepare for continued budget negotiations that have already extended into the next fiscal cycle. The other Republican incumbents who appear to have lost tonight include Sen. Chris Measmer, Rep. Kelly Hastings, Rep. Keith Kidwell, Rep. Reece Pyrtle, and Rep. Mark Pless.



NORTH CAROLINA COLLEGE OF EMERGENCY PHYSICIANS



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FOR MORE INFORMATION:

Colleen Kochanek
Ashley Matlock Perkinson
Rachel E. Beaulieu
P.O. Box 1038
Wake Forest, NC 27588
919.809.5600

colleen@kochaneklawgroup.com
ashley@perkinsonlawfirm.com
rachel@beaulieuedlaw.com
www.kochaneklawgroup.com

Although Democratic Gov. Stein is not up for election, the outcomes of tonight will also directly affect his administration. The state's three most influential leaders are Stein, Senate leader Phil Berger, and House Speaker Destin Hall. Berger and Hall lead the Republican-controlled legislature, working at times in partnership with Stein on priorities, while clashing on other major policy issues. Gov. Stein has taken an active role in two Democratic primaries, backing a challenger to Rep. Carla Cunningham and supporting Rep. Rodney Pierce in his race against former Rep. Michael Wray. Cunningham and Wray have previously sided at times with Republicans. Although Stein did not endorse their opponents, Reps. Willingham and Majeed also have at times overridden vetoes with Republicans. It's notable that all House Democrats known for crossing the aisle on veto overrides in the past have lost re-election tonight to opponents who will likely sustain vetoes from our state's Democratic Governor, strengthening Stein's veto pen. While more loyal Democrats would likely be helpful to Stein in the long term, the short term still could be challenging. After endorsing her competitor and losing the race, Cunningham could be an even more reliable vote for Republicans between now and the new legislative body beginning in January 2027. Reps. Majeed and Willingham could be more open to joining their Republican colleagues now, too. This comes at a time when Republicans may already be pushing for major priority legislation with Senate leader Berger likely leaving and the midterm elections possibly reshaping the landscape away from a nearly veto-proof Republican supermajority in both chambers. One thing is for sure, it sets us up for a very busy year.

As last night's results continue to unfold, the implications extend far beyond individual races and will most certainly redefine dynamics at the legislature.

See below for some of the races we have been watching. The candidates in bold are believed to have won based off the results from last night.

US SENATE

US SENATE, DEMOCRATIC PRIMARY
FORMER GOV. ROY COOPER

US SENATE, REPUBLICAN PRIMARY
FORMER RNC CHAIR MICHAEL WHATLEY

US CONGRESS

NC DISTRICT 1, REPUBLICAN PRIMARY
LAURIE BUCKHOUT
Buckhout will face Democratic Congressman Don Davis in the redrawn CD1

NC DISTRICT 4, DEMOCRATIC PRIMARY
REP. VALERIE FOUSHEE v NIDA ALLAM
Foushee leads by 1246 votes as of this writing, with 3 precincts left to report.

NC DISTRICT 11, REPUBLICAN PRIMARY
REP. CHUCK EDWARDS

NC HOUSE

REP. JENNIFER BALKCOM v CHRISTOPHER LAMAR WILSON

REP. MIKE CLAMPITT v ANNA FERGUSON

REP. CARLA CUNNINGHAM v **RODNEY SADLER**

REP. EDWARD GOODWIN v JOHN SPRUILL

REP. KELLY HASTINGS v **CAROLINE EASON**

REP. JAKE JOHNSON v FORMER REP. MIKE HAGER

REP. KEITH KIDWELL v **DARREN ARMSTRONG**

REP. NASIF MAJEED v **VELERIA M LEVY**

REP. MARK PLESS v **JIMMY ROGERS**

REP. RODNEY PIERCE v FORMER REP. MICHAEL WRAY

REP. REECE PYRTLE V **SETH WOODALL**

REP. DONNA WHITE v MARGIE RIEDEL

REP. SHELLY WILLINGHAM v **PATRICIA SMITH**

NC SENATE

SENATE LEADER PHIL BERGER v **SHERIFF SAM PAGE**

SEN. CHRIS MEASMER v FORMER **REP. KEVIN CRUTCHFIELD**

SEN. BENTON SAWREY v CAITLIN MARSH

- Colleen Kochanek
Kochanek Law Group
919.809.5601
colleen@kochaneklawgroup.com
www.kochaneklawgroup.comⁱ

Ashley Matlock Perkinson
Perkinson Law Firm
919.210.8209
ashley@perkinsonlawfirm.com

Rachel E. Beaulieu
Rachel E. Beaulieu Law Office, PLLC
919.896.6296
Rachel@BeaulieuEdLaw.com

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