



# Legislative Newsletter

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**Next Legislative Session Agenda Unclear:** An unanswered question swirling around Raleigh these days is: What's on the agenda when the NC General Assembly reconvenes next month? The Legislature adjourned last month until Nov. 7. But Senate leader Phil Berger of Eden said this week there are no current plans to take up substantive legislation then. A representative for House Speaker Thom Tillis confirmed similar non-action plans, according to news reports.

Berger said he expects the Legislature to adjourn again on Nov. 7. But it's unclear until when. The next regular session is set for May. One ranking GOP leader told NCACTE that the session could be used to make some technical tweaks to bills. Still, legislators and legislative staff say that the legislature may only hold a skeletal session.

Whether lawmakers do more will depend at least partly on whether the U.S. Justice Department approves redistricting plans or if lawsuits challenging the new legislative and congressional districts are filed by then. Although the Justice Department could act by the date of the reconvened session, any lawsuits may still be weeks away. Lawmakers also are continuing to examine possible changes to the gaming compact that allows the Eastern Band of Cherokee to operate its casino in western North Carolina.

**Lottery Sales Up:** Improving ticket sales have helped the North Carolina lottery transfer more money to the state for education. The North Carolina Education Lottery announced it sent nearly \$115 million in lottery profits this week in its first quarterly transfer of the fiscal year. Lottery executive director Alice Garland said ticket sales grew 10 percent for the three months ending Sept. 30, compared with the same period a year ago. The transfer included about \$7 million in profits generated during the last fiscal year. More than \$2 billion in lottery money has gone to the state since 2006.

**Declining State Work Force Draws Fire:** Critics of Republican legislative leaders pounced on news of a declining government work force, saying it shows that the GOP-authored budget approved this year is hurting state employees and teachers. Republicans have said they provided full funding for local school districts to keep public school classroom employees working this fall and have suggested district leaders made the decisions that led by August to about 1,800 layoffs in those areas, not legislators.

The General Assembly, however, also directed districts to find an additional \$124 million in cuts. "Lawmakers' attempts to deny the harmful cuts they made to education or to blame others for teacher layoffs are losing credibility by the day," said Gerrick Brenner with the liberal fiscal watchdog group Progress North Carolina. The recently released report, he added, "is more evidence that lawmaker's aren't shooting straight with the people of North Carolina."

**GOP Counter:** Sen. Jerry Tillman, a key GOP education budget-writer, projected earlier this month that the just-released figures would show fewer public school classroom workers out of a job compared with the summer. That's because, Tillman noted, that many classroom workers were rehired after the first few weeks of classes.

At first blush, Tillman said, numbers don't appear to provide the detail about state-funded public school positions that he had been led to believe would be present to confirm his projections. People like Brenner are speaking hyperbole about the budget, according to Tillman, who said he's still confident accurate numbers will ultimately prove his contention that more teachers are still working than previously calculated, according to The Wilmington Star-News.

**Dropout Prevention Committee Meets Next Week:** The North Carolina Committee on Dropout Prevention will hold its quarterly Meeting from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. on Oct. 31 in the Imperial (F) Ballroom at the Sheraton Greensboro at Four Seasons. The purpose of this meeting is to review the final evaluation of the 2009 Dropout Prevention Grant Program. Individuals who wish to attend via teleconferencing may dial 605/562-3000 and enter participant code 776267. For more info, contact Evangeline Atkinson ( [Evangeline.Atkinson@dpi.nc.gov](mailto:Evangeline.Atkinson@dpi.nc.gov) or 919/807-3630). Also, a related website is here: [www.ncpublicschools.org](http://www.ncpublicschools.org).

**Republican Leadership Change:** Scott Laster, the lead strategist in the Republicans winning the state House last November, is expected to be the state GOP's new executive director. State Republican Chairman Robin Hayes is recommending Laster for the post. Laster is a political veteran who was House campaign director for the N.C. Republican Party last year when the GOP captured the House for the first time since 1994. He will be in charge of day-to-day party operations during the 2012 elections, during the presidential, gubernatorial, congressional and legislative elections.

**Poll Rating Updates:** North Carolina voters remain split about the job performance of Democratic Gov. Bev Perdue. According to a new poll, 46 percent of the voters both approve and disapprove of the job she is doing as governor. The study, done for the Civitas Institute, a conservative advocacy group based in Raleigh, said that 7 percent said they were undecided or did not know. That is a slight up tick from a Civitas Poll conducted in September, which showed Perdue with a 42 percent approval rating and a 48 percent disapproval rating.

President Barack Obama's approval rating increased 5 percent from the previous month. His approval rating is now 46 percent, while 50 percent disapprove of the job he is doing, according to the poll.

**NC Congressional Races Developments:** [Is a Bob Etheridge comeback in the works?](#) Former U.S. Rep. Bob Etheridge was in Washington this week as part of a recruiting class that the Democrats are wooing to run for Congress next year, according to the National Republican Congressional Committee. The Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee is holding a day of workshops for 107 prospective candidates from 36 states...[Poll: David Price Leads Brad Miller...](#)[GOP congressional candidates offer views at debate.](#)

**Unemployment Rates Rises Slightly:** North Carolina's unemployment rate climbed upward one tenth of one percentage point in September to 10.5 percent as cuts to government jobs overtook gains in the private sector, according to the state Employment Security Commission. With 22,000 total job losses, North Carolina led the nation in job losses last month, according to a report Friday from the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics.

**More Business Friendly Legislature:** Republican lawmakers pledged to be more responsive than Democrats when they seized control of the General Assembly, and a new report suggests they are following through on the promise. The North Carolina FreeEnterprise Foundation said the Legislature was more business friendly this year compared to two years ago and rebounding compared to a general decline based on foundation data over the past decade. GOP lawmakers haven't controlled both legislative chambers simultaneously in 140 years until now. The General Assembly pushed through laws that limited certain medical malpractice awards, changed workers' compensation rules, restricted how local governments could offer high-speed Internet services and pulled back the rule-making authority of environmental regulators.

Based on voting tallies for these and other bills and evaluations from business leaders and lobbyists, the foundation labeled 66 percent of the 50 Senate members consistent supporters of a position that promotes free enterprise, compared to 42 percent two years ago. The proportion grew from 49 percent of the House members in 2009 to 61 percent today. John Rustin, executive director of the nonpartisan foundation, said the uptick reflects how lawmakers recognized North Carolina business needed to be spurred on during an economic downturn.

Among individual lawmakers, the top rankings belonged to Republicans, who received the first 29 spots in the Senate and the first 18 in the House. Rep. Harold Brubaker, R-Randolph, and Senate Majority Leader Harry Brown, R-Onslow, led their respective chambers. House Speaker Tillis, R-Mecklenburg, and Senate leader Berger placed second.

**Dems Revving Up for Legislative Campaigns:** North Carolina Democratic Party leaders said last week they are mounting an effort to reclaim the General Assembly and help retain the White House in 2012. To do that, they said, they'll need to mobilize their base and sway independent voters. "The Republicans won the last election (in 2010) because Democrats didn't vote," said Senate Minority Leader Martin Nesbitt, D-Buncombe, before addressing a crowd of the party faithful at the party's Western Gala fundraiser at the Grove Park Inn.

“We were complacent then, but in the coming year you’re going to see the ultimate political battle for the soul of this state and this country,” Nesbitt said. “At the state and national level, Republicans have killed jobs and attacked the people and institutions that are important to this country,” he added.

**Quotes of the Week:** *“In the depths of winter, I finally learned there was in me an invincible summer.”*

- Albert Camus, writer

*“Life is like a roll of toilet paper. The closer it gets to the end, the faster it goes.”*

- Andy Rooney, retired television commentator, on what he has learned.

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