



LEGISLATIVE NEWSLETTER

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Legislature Adjourns with HB 657 Dying

Legislative Wrap: The NC General Assembly ended its “short session,” living up to its name this year, without taking action on the controversial HB 657 that had at one time included language that would not have allowed CTE coursework to count for math credit. Conferees were named to work out a math standards compromise on the [Senate-amended version of HB 657](#) that had removed the objectionable CTE language.

The conferees (chaired by [Rep. Jeffrey Elmore](#) and [Sen. Jerry W. Tillman](#)) did not take any action on the bill after the House did not concur with the Senate version, killing the bill for this year. What was left of the bill involved **math standards** where lawmakers had considered retreating from a change to the way math is taught in high school. Students now take integrated math courses instead of separate classes on algebra and geometry. Efforts failed to either return to the traditional methods or give students a choice of systems. **The fact that the objectionable version of HB 657 never cleared the Senate was a major victory for NCACTE.**

In other action, the 68-day session came in shorter than the average 77-day short sessions since 2000. The short sessions occur in even-numbered, election years. This year’s session adjourned just before midnight on July 1, the start of the new fiscal year. Highlights of the \$22.3 billion spending plan and other action include:

- **Salary increases:** Public-school teachers, for the fiscal year that began July 1, pending budget approval by the Governor, will average **4.7 percent**. GOP legislative leaders note that the pay hikes will boost the average salary for the coming school year to **\$50,186 including supplemental pay by counties**. The raises are targeted for more experienced teachers because entry-level educators received pay increases last year.

The salary increases will range from 2 percent for teachers with 25-plus years of experience to 8.1 percent for teachers with 14 years of experience. **All state workers** will receive a **1.5 percent raise** and a one-time **bonus** equal to 0.5 percent of their

annual salary. The budget includes \$80 million for **targeted merit raises**, which would average 1 percent of employee salaries. State retirees would receive a one-time cost-of-living adjustment of 1.6 percent.

- **Tax changes:** Legislators reduced income taxes in the state budget that's on Gov. Pat McCrory's desk. It would increase the standard deduction from \$15,500 to \$16,500 for married couples filing jointly this year, with another increase to \$17,500 next year. For a single person, the deduction would increase from \$7,750 to \$8,750 over two years. The standard deduction is income that isn't taxed unless a taxpayer chooses itemized deductions.

The legislature's research staff used calculations showing that a married couple making about \$44,000 a year would save \$115 annually with the change. Projections also show savings of about \$60 for families making between \$10,000 and \$30,000 per year. And 70,000 to 75,000 additional filers would owe no income taxes because their income would be less than the standard deduction.

- **Charter schools:** Five low-performing traditional public schools will be run by charter-school management companies if McCrory signs a bill seeking to improve student proficiency. The five schools, selected statewide from struggling schools, would become part of an Achievement School District that would be overseen by a superintendent the State Board of Education selects. The charter management companies would run the schools for up to eight years.

In other charter legislation, lawmakers agreed that charter schools will no longer be reviewed at least once every five years to see that they are meeting academic, financial, and governance standards. Instead, if McCrory agrees, charter schools would be reviewed at least once before their charters expire. The State Board of Education would no longer revoke a charter simply because a school is continuously low performing. The low-performing charters can remain open if they meet standards for academic growth in the previous three years or if they have in place improvement plans and are working toward their goals.

Other Political News

Retiring Lawmakers: Before ending the session, Senate and House members honored veteran colleagues who aren't seeking re-election this fall, including Senate Finance Committee Co-Chair Bob Rucho, R-Mecklenburg, Sen. Tom Apodaca, R-Henderson, and powerful House Rules chair, Sen. Stan Bingham, R-Davidson, and Sen. Fletcher Hartsell, R-Cabarrus, who has been indicted on campaign finance issues. On the House side, retirees include Speaker Pro Tempore Paul Stam, R-Wake, Rep. Jim Langston, R-Johnston, and Rep. Leo Daughtry, R-Johnston, a former majority and minority leader and 2000 candidate for governor. In a farewell speech, Daughtry jokingly likened the legislature to an addiction but also added: "When I leave here, a part of my soul will be left in this place."

HB2: Just prior to adjournment, the two chambers also agreed to make a change to the law known as House Bill 2 as requested by McCrory, who wanted to restore the right of workers to sue for employment discrimination using a state law. It cleared the House by a vote of 85-15 and 27-14 in the Senate and now goes to McCrory, where approval is all but guaranteed. The legislation did not include a repeal of provisions that limited non-discrimination rules for lesbians, gays, bisexual and transgender people and directed which restroom transgender people can use.

House Principal Clerk: After adjourning late on July 1st, the House honored retiring House Principal Clerk Denise Weeks with a statement signed by all 120 House members and a fake resolution requiring her to remain in her post. A Wake County native and alumni of Fuquay-Varina High School and N.C. State University, Weeks began working at the General Assembly in 1977. The beloved clerk was first elected by the House as principal clerk in 1993 and has remained there ever since.

Weeks delayed her retirement earlier this year to work through the short session. Rep. David Lewis, R-Harnett, thanked Weeks for her "smiles" and "sneers" and "for treating each and every one who serves here or works here as if they're important." Rep. Mickey Michaux, D-Durham, said Weeks "has tamed all of us, without a whip and a chair, but with just a look and a smile." "Rarely do you work with anyone so professional, so kind, so sincere," said House Speaker Tim Moore, R-Cleveland.

Perkins Act Funding, Charter Schools

Perkins Act Funding Sought: Associated General Contractors of America (AGCA) officials said new employment numbers show that shortages of qualified workers are undermining the construction sector's ability to grow. Noting that this inability to hire will hinder broader economic growth, AGCA urged Congress to pass a new Carl D. Perkins Act that provides the flexibility and funding needed to allow schools to **set up career and technical education programs to prepare future construction workers.**

"We are at the point now where the lack of qualified workers is holding many construction firms back from expanding headcounts," said Stephen E. Sandherr, the association's chief executive officer. "It is time for Congress to pass legislation that will help reinvigorate the pipeline for recruiting and preparing students for high-paying careers in construction."

SBE Approves New Charter Schools: The State Board of Education on July 7 unanimously approved 11 new charter schools to open in August despite questions about whether some schools will be ready. Seven of the new charter schools were rated as insufficient in areas such as facility, enrollment numbers and financial information in a June progress report. Eight schools reportedly don't yet have a certificate of occupancy for their facility.

"It's July 7th and these are some key sort of principles, issues that in our business world they get covered way early," State Board member Greg Alcorn said before the vote. Alex Quigley, chair of the state Charter School Advisory Board, said many successful charters have found that opening occurs just before show time.

Quotes of the Week

"Never tell people HOW to do things. Tell them WHAT to do, and they will surprise you with their ingenuity."

- George S. Patton, military leader

"I'm sure they're just sending a goodbye present to me."

- Retiring state Sen. Tom Apodaca, R-Henderson, on a vote by House members killing his proposal to impose a district system on Asheville city council elections before legislative adjournment (WRAL NEWS, 7/01/16)

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