



# LEGISLATIVE NEWSLETTER

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### What's Up Politically

**Forsyth School Bonds Referendum:** Forsyth County will have a \$430 million bond referendum this fall on building projects mostly for schools. A final public hearing on the issue was held last week before the Forsyth County Board of Commissioners -- the last chance for teachers, taxpayers and other interested parties to speak for or against the \$350 million proposed for Winston-Salem/Forsyth County Schools that makes up the bulk of the bonds. The smaller proposals -- \$65 million for Forsyth Technical Community College and \$15 million for the Forsyth County Parks and Recreation Department -- went virtually unmentioned, the Winston-Salem Journal reports, with interest expressed for the school bonds..

**Wake School Board:** Wake County voters will likely elect county commissioners and school board members in November using district lines that were in place for most elections since 2011 -- not the lines introduced by state lawmakers that were ruled unconstitutional. U.S. District Court Judge James C. Dever III on Tuesday instructed the Wake County Board of Elections to put three county commissioner seats and all nine school board seats on the ballot this fall. A three-judge panel of the 4th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals on July 1 ruled the district lines created by the General Assembly violated equal representation -- or "one person, one vote" principles in the U.S. Constitution.

**Debates:** Gov. Pat McCrory and challenger Attorney General Roy Cooper have agreed to their second public debate. WRAL News reports that the North Carolina Association of Broadcasters announced that NBC's "Meet the Press" host Chuck Todd will moderate an hour-long gubernatorial debate between the Republican and Democrat on Oct. 11 at 7 p.m. The debate will be at the University of North Carolina Television studios in Research Triangle Park and will air on WRAL-TV and up to 30 other television stations and a statewide radio network.

**Legislative Districts Shuffle:** Federal judges last Thursday rejected nearly 30 North Carolina House and Senate districts, saying they are illegal racial gerrymanders but that they will allow General Assembly elections to be held using them this fall. The three-judge panel's decision

comes six months after another set of judges struck down North Carolina's congressional districts for similar reasons. The latest ruling covering 19 House and nine Senate districts runs counter to GOP lawmakers' legislation passed in North Carolina, which has seen several laws it enacted either partially or wholly overturned by federal or state courts.

### Other News

**Legislative Rankings:** The conservative Civitas Institute released its annual ranking of state legislators recently based on how they voted on eight bills, including the state budget, House Bill 2 and an unsuccessful proposal to eliminate tolls on Interstate 77. Twenty House legislators received a score of 57.1 out of 100 points, including House Speaker Tim Moore, a Republican from Black Mountain, and seven Democrats. All were tied for 65th place.

The ranking system reportedly penalized Moore because he did not vote on several of the bills. Other GOP leaders weren't near the top of the list, including House Rules Chair David Lewis (71.4 of 100 and 32nd place) and Speaker Pro Tem Paul "Skip" Stam (also tied for 32nd). Civitas gave perfect scores to 11 Republican House members: Marilyn Avila of Raleigh, Dan Bishop of Charlotte, John Blust of Greensboro, Rick Catlin of Wilmington, Carl Ford of Rowan County, Kelly Hastings of Gaston County, Chris Millis of Pender County, Michael Speciale of New Bern and Larry Pittman of Concord. Democrat Evelyn Terry of Winston-Salem also received a perfect score because she had excused absences for several of the bills, the News & Observer reports.

**State Voucher Program Update:** Nearly a quarter of faith-based private schools in Mecklenburg County get taxpayer funds through a state voucher program while parts of their handbooks forbid lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender students from enrolling. The Charlotte Observer reports that the schools are within state law which prohibits discrimination in nonpublic schools based on race, gender and national origin -- but does, but does not address sexual orientation or gender identity. The vouchers, called Opportunity Scholarships, offer up to \$4,200 per year to students from low-income families for private school tuition. The scholarships are financed through the state's General Fund.

The state's voucher program, which this year was allotted nearly \$25 million, has more than 400 schools participating, with many having written policies against discrimination, but they don't address gender identity or sexual orientation, the newspaper reports. By the 2027-28 school year, almost \$145 million will go to the voucher program.

### Quote of the Week

*"There's nothing more exciting than being shot at – and missed."* – Winston Churchill