



LEGISLATIVE NEWSLETTER LEGISLATIVE NEWSLETTER

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Hot off the Press

New Cabinet Posts Named by New Governor: Making up for lost time after a protracted period of waiting to see who officially is NC's new state leader, Gov. Roy Cooper today began naming his Cabinet posts, a move that would have to be approved by the NC Senate, based on new state law.

WRAL-TV reports that senators plan to include guidelines for the confirmation process when they adopt rules next week governing how the chamber will operate for the coming two-year session. The process will likely be similar to the confirmation process used to approved special Superior Court judges and members of boards such as the Industrial Commission.

Who's Who So Far: Jim Trogdon is the governor's choice to lead the Department of Transportation and Michael Regan to head up the Department of Environmental Quality. Based on a law passed by lawmakers in a special session last month, the Senate must approve Cabinet posts. Cooper has challenged the law and hinted that he may file suit questioning the constitutionality of the law.

Trogdon spent more than two decades at the NC DOT, climbing to chief deputy secretary before he moving to the private sector about three years ago. He told reporters today that he will focus on easing traffic congestion, connecting people across the state with jobs and moving freight easily. Regan, an environmentalists' favorite, spent 10 years at the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, followed by eight years in management positions with the Environmental Defense Fund.

State Budget Director, Other Posts: Cooper announced on Monday his state budget director would be Charlie Perusse, who held the same job under the last Democratic governor, Bev Perdue. Perusse is currently the chief operating officer for the UNC system. He also served as a fiscal analyst for the General Assembly for nearly a decade.

William McKinney, special counsel for Cooper when he was the Attorney General, is transferring with Cooper to the governor's office, where he will be legal counsel. "We are putting together a

deeply talented team and I'm excited that these experienced leaders with proven results will help me move our state forward," Cooper said in a news release

State Board of Education Update

Restraining Order Invoked: A Superior Court judge last week issued a temporary restraining order to prevent a new law from taking effect Sunday that would strip various powers from the State Board of Education. The board filed suit last week to challenge House Bill 17, which gives incoming Republican Superintendent of Public Instruction Mark Johnson more flexibility in managing the state's education budget, more authority to dismiss senior level employees, control of the Office of Charter Schools and the ability to choose the leader of the new Achievement School District, which will oversee some of the state's lowest-performing schools in the state. Those powers have been under the State Board of Education's purview.

The state constitution empowers the State Board of Education to oversee the administration of North Carolina's public schools and how state education money is spent, said Bob Orr, a lawyer representing the board. House Bill 17, which the Republican-led General Assembly passed two weeks ago in a special legislative session, is "pointedly specific in its intent" to hand those duties over to the superintendent, he said. "If that is not a direct attempt to transfer the constitutional powers delegated exclusively to the State Board of Education, I don't know what does," Orr said. The temporary restraining order remains in effect for 10 days, WRAL News reports.

Other News

On the Out: Many state employees returned to work today not knowing about the status of their new bosses. Last week, then incoming Gov. Roy Cooper sent notices to dozens of high-level staffers in the 10 state agencies that make up his Cabinet. The letters said they would no longer have a job as of Sunday, Jan. 1, Cooper's first day as new gov.

Generally, state employees had Sunday and Monday off work. But for some, it's unclear who they report to when they returned to the office on Tuesday. A governor's spokesperson said most but not all Cabinet agencies have interim leaders in place as of Monday afternoon.

Teacher Bonuses: North Carolina is poised to hand out \$14 million in teacher merit bonuses this month, with rewards based on last year's third-grade reading tests and exams that show high school students doing college-level work, The Charlotte Observer reports. The state legislature approved the money in 2016, and the state Board of Education will vote this week to distribute it.

The bonus programs are designed to reward teachers who help children start with strong basics along with those who send teens into the adult world with advanced skills. The state earmarked \$10 million for third-grade teachers who ranked in the top 25

percent for the growth their students showed between the start and the end of last school year. Reading well by third grade is considered a key to success in future grades.

McCrory's Farewell: Former-Gov. Pat McCrory ended his four-year term Saturday with a 15-minute video message in which he underscored his administration's accomplishments and lambasted House Bill 2 opponents, the ACC's boycott of North Carolina and the news media. Saturday was McCrory's final day in office after losing his re-election bid to Democrat Roy Cooper.

Cooper was sworn in shortly after the new year began at midnight -- the earliest time he could legally take the oath of office. McCrory made no public appearances in his final days as governor, but he did announce a few last-minute appointments of top aides to state board positions.

On Saturday morning, he put up a YouTube video in which he boasted that his "accomplishments are greater than any administration during the past 25 years, and it wasn't because of me, it was because of the team I put together around me." As examples, he pointed to the \$2 billion "Connect NC" bond package that will fund higher education projects, state parks and other infrastructure; efforts to eliminate cost overruns in the state's Medicaid budget; and economic development efforts that helped the state unemployment rate to drop. He said "you don't read about this on the front page of the Raleigh or Charlotte newspapers."

Quote of the Week

"Right to disconnect" - [How France describes a new law](#) that officially makes it OK to ignore the boss's emails after hours.

- Daily Skimm (1/3/17)

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