



LEGISLATIVE NEWSLETTER LEGISLATIVE NEWSLETTER

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NC Legislative Report Presented at NCACTE BOD Meeting

Where Things Stand: Dave Simpson, Lobbyist for NCACTE, briefed the NCACTE Board of Directors on Friday at its meeting in Atlantic Beach on legislative developments. Highlights of the long session to date, he said, included:

Since the NC General Assembly returned to work on Jan. 25 after an organizational meeting two weeks before, House and Senate members have filed **more than 240 bills**. Six bills have passed the House, including allow school districts greater class size flexibility in grades K-3. The only Senate-passed bill is a resolution adjourning the organizational session.

The long, odd-year session is expected to stretch into the summer, with the top priority of the GOP-led budget being passage of the biennial budget. It's the Senate's turn this year to craft the budget and make recommendations to the House before a deal is cut by both chambers and sent to Democratic Gov. Roy Cooper.

After continuing to move through organizational stages, work in coming weeks will be cranking up in committees as calendars are expanding. Still, the House won't take any votes on Mondays and should be able to wrap up early on Thursdays for the next few weeks, House Speaker Tim Moore announced this week.

As of Feb., 16, 17 committee meetings were scheduled for the week of Feb. 20-24, many of those joint meetings of appropriations subcommittees. Senate leaders have called for a more committee-oriented, deliberative process this year. Both chambers have adopted temporary rules. The House is scheduled to take up its permanent rules package on Tuesday.

Significant Developments Affecting Education

Budget Surplus Solid: House and Senate appropriations committees met this week on the heels of state economists this month projecting a revenue surplus of **more than \$550 million** for the current fiscal year ending June 30. Executive and legislative branch staffers believe the surplus could result in an **additional \$1.5 billion** in collections starting July 1 through mid-2019.

Reserve Fund: The House on Wednesday quickly approved legislation calling for annual deposits into the state's so-called "rainy day fund." The bill would require lawmakers every year to put away 15 percent of the growth in the budget from the previous year. That saved money could only be used for budget shortfalls, disaster relief or other unforeseen expenses up to 7.5 percent of the budget.

School Funding: North Carolina lawmakers are looking for a new way to budget public school dollars. A bill filed in both chambers of the N.C. General Assembly would create a **task force to study new ways to distribute money among the state's 115 public school systems and 148 public charter schools.**

Under the legislation, the task force would move the state toward a weighted student-funding model – a move being adopted by school districts and states around nationwide. Under that model, the task force would set a new base amount of money to be distributed per student, then identify characteristics of both students and school systems that would be considered for weighted funding. Characteristics could include such things as disability status, family income level and a school system's size.

State Rep. Craig Horn, R-Union, said the state's current funding system is outdated and favors larger, wealthier school systems. **House Bill 6** would create a task force of 18 members, nine each from the House and Senate. Should the bill pass, the task force will begin meeting by October and submit a final report -- including proposed legislation -- by July 2018. The House's committee on K-12 education considered the bill Tuesday and will continue studying it before possibly passing it on to the full House.

Other Action

Class Size (K-3): The N.C. House voted unanimously Thursday to ease class-size reduction that school districts said could force them to cut arts and physical education classes. Legislators had reduced maximum class sizes starting this fall in kindergarten through third grade. **Under the current law, maximum individual K-3 class sizes will drop from 24 students to between 19 and 21 students,** depending on grade level, and the maximum average class sizes for a school district would be even lower. **House Bill 13, which now heads to the Senate, would cap individual K-3 class sizes at 22 to 24 students, depending on grade level.**

State Board of Education

State Superintendent of Public Instruction Mark Johnson is joining a court battle over a new law that moves power from the State Board of Education to him. The BOE recently filed suit to block the legislation, House Bill 17, which was approved in a special legislative session in December, and a Superior Court judge enjoined a temporary restraining order to prevent the new law from taking effect Jan. 1. That restraining order will remain in effect until a three-judge panel decides on the legality of the law.

Key Committees

Senate:

- **Education/Higher Education:** Chairs: Chad Barefoot, David Curtis, Michael Lee; Members: Deanna Ballard, Tamara Barringer, Bill Cook, Don Davis, Cathy Dunn, Chuck Edwards, Valerie Foushee, Joyce Krawiec, Louis Pate, Ron Rabin, Erica Smith-Ingram, Jeff Tarte, Jerry Tillman, Joyce Waddell
- **Appropriations Subcommittee on Education/Higher Education:** Chairs: Chad Barefoot, David Curtis, Michael Lee; Members: Deanna Ballard, Erica Smith-Ingram, Jerry Tillman, Joyce Waddell
- **Appropriations/Base Budget:** Chairs: Harry Brown, Brent Jackson, Kathy Harrington; Members: Chad Barefoot, Andrew Brock, Angela Bryant, Jay Chaudhuri, Rick Gunn, Jeff Jackson, Paul Lowe, Louis Pate, Bill Rabon, Shirley Randleman, Gladys Robinson, Norman Sanderson, Jeff Tarte, Jerry Tillman, Tommy Tucker
- **Rules:** Chair: Bill Rabon

House:

- **Education - K-12:** Chairs: Debra Conrad, Jeffrey Elmore, Craig Horn, Linda Johnson
- **Appropriations Subcommittee on Education:** Hugh Blackwell, John Fraley, Craig Horn, Pat Hurley
- **Appropriations:** Nelson Dollar, senior chairman, Dean Arp, John Faircloth, Linda Johnson, Donny Lambeth, Chuck McGrady
- **Education - Community Colleges:** Mark Brody, John Sauls
- **Rules, Calendar, and Operations of the House:** David Lewis

Noteworthy

Aaron Fleming, Longtime Former NCACTE Leader, Moving Up: Congratulations to Aaron Fleming, past chair of NCACTE's Legislative Committee and a leading player to the Speaker of the House. Fleming, education policy adviser to House Speaker Tim Moore, recently stepped down from that post to become interim Superintendent of Harnett County Schools. Finally, it was noted that the **NC Legislative Policy Seminar plans are well under way for the March 28, 2017 annual meeting, which begins at 9 a.m. that day in the lobby of the NC Legislative Building at 16 West Jones St.**