

ALERTS

North Carolina Legislative Report - January 11, 2013

January 5 - 11, 2013

On the Floor

The NC General Assembly reconvened January 9, 2013 to open the long legislative session. Priority issues facing the Legislature include tax reform, jobless benefits, education reform and energy exploration.

Lawmakers adjourned after one day's work this week and will return to Raleigh January 30, 2013.

The MVA Public Affairs Legislative Report on North Carolina will be distributed weekly to keep you up to date on the latest legislative issues facing the state while the North Carolina Legislature is in session.

Committee Meetings

The Revenue Laws Study Committee

The committee has given a preview of things to come with respect to the State unemployment tax. Employers should expect higher unemployment tax rates and unemployed workers can expect fewer benefits in the future.

North Carolina's unemployment insurance trust fund has been depleted over the last several years and the State has needed to borrow significant sums from the federal government. As of October 31, 2012, the State owed approximately \$2.5 billion to the federal government for amounts borrowed to fund unemployment benefits.

The Revenue Laws Study Committee has recommended a proposal that would accelerate the repayment of the federal debt to avoid the worst of future increases in the effective federal unemployment tax rate. In general, the proposal includes changes to amounts paid by private employers, amounts paid by governmental entities and nonprofits, and benefits paid to recipients.

The proposal would make numerous changes to the payment of unemployment benefits. Major changes to benefits would include the following:

- A decrease in the maximum benefit from \$535/week to \$350/week.

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- A decrease in the maximum number of weeks of eligibility from 26 weeks to 20 weeks.
- A change to the methodology for calculating the weekly benefit that would have the effect of often lowering the benefit but never increasing it.
- A waiting period for each claim for unemployment benefits rather than a single waiting period during a year even if multiple claims were made.
- Elimination of most "good cause" exceptions that allow a person to claim benefits even if they voluntarily leave work.
- A change that would redefine "suitable work" to include any work offered after the claimant had received 10 weeks of benefits.

In the News

NC health agency picks LA official for Medicaid - 1/10/2013

North Carolina Gov. Pat McCrory's administration moved quickly Thursday to name a Louisiana health official to lead the state's huge Medicaid program. Health and Human Services Secretary Dr. Aldona Wos announced Carol Steckel, director of the Center for Health Care Innovation with the Louisiana state health and hospitals department, is the new director of the Division of Medical Assistance.

Raleigh gears up for 3 days of inaugural events - 1/10/2013

Pat McCrory has been North Carolina's governor for almost a week, but the celebrations are hardly over. Thursday began three days of traditional festivities expected to attract thousands to honor the state's new chief executive, Lt. Gov. Dan Forest and the eight other Council of State members - capped by Friday night's gala presentation and Inaugural Ball at the Raleigh Convention Center.

House Republicans setting up nonprofit - 1/10/2013

House Republicans are setting up a new nonprofit to help them talk to voters about the work they are doing and the challenges they are facing. North Carolina House Legislative Partners filed its paperwork to incorporate earlier this month, although the original filing does not offer a lot of specifics.

Longtime NC lawmaker Jean Preston dies - 1/10/2013

Jean Preston, who served seven terms in the state House and three in the state Senate before retiring last fall, died Wednesday of complications from a fall while vacationing in Connecticut, according to Senate President Pro Tem Phil Berger's office. The 77-year-old Republican represented Carteret, Craven and Pamlico counties.

Feds to explain test of NC coastal wind farms - 1/9/2013

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The Obama administration is holding public meetings as it gauges commercial interest in wind farms off North Carolina's northern Outer Banks and Cape Fear.

Capstrat acquired by PR giant Ketchum - 1/9/2013

Capstrat, one of the Triangle's largest communications firms, has been acquired by public relations giant Ketchum for an undisclosed sum.

NC critic to challenge Duke Energy merger in court - 1/9/2013

A group critical of the merger that made Charlotte-based Duke Energy Corp. the country's largest electric company says it will seek to undo or revise the deal in a North Carolina appeals court.

Ex-NC Rep. Gillespie now in environment department - 1/9/2013

North Carolina's environment agency is confirming a former top Republican budget writer in the state House is now one of its top deputies in Gov. Pat McCrory's administration. Department of Environment and Natural Resources Secretary John Skvarla announced Wednesday outgoing Rep. Mitch Gillespie of Marion is assistant secretary for the environment.

State to vote on proposal for online charter schools - 1/9/2013

North Carolina children as young as 5 may soon be able to receive their public school education online from for-profit companies. The State Board of Education plans to vote Thursday on a special application for virtual schools that want to run public charters and receive taxpayer money.

GOP leaders soften stance on voter ID - 1/9/2013

Republicans grasped historic dominance at the statehouse Wednesday, starting the legislative session with a supermajority in the House and Senate, even while expressing interest in compromising on a political flashpoint.

Franklin, Nash Dems choose Richardson for NC House - 1/8/2013

Democratic leaders in a northeastern Piedmont legislative district have named a local educator to fill a vacancy in the North Carolina House.

NC egg operation may face clean water regulation - 1/8/2013

A North Carolina judge says a hearing is needed to determine if a complex of high-rise hen-houses where more than three million chickens lay eggs is polluting neighboring land, including a federal wildlife refuge.

Shanahan picks ex-FBI agent to help run Department of Public Safety - 1/8/2013

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New state Department of Public Safety Secretary Kieran Shanahan has named former FBI agent Frank Perry to be his interim chief operating officer.

Duke Energy seeking another rate hike - 1/8/2013

Less than a year after the N.C. Utilities Commission OK'd a 7.2-percent rate hike for Duke Energy customers, the power company has put the state on notice it plans to ask for another increase.

Environmental groups seek clean up of 14 coal ash pits - 1/8/2013

Conservation groups filed a lawsuit on against the state Environmental Management Commission, Duke Energy and Progress Energy seeking the cleanup or shut-down of 14 ash pits that collect tons of waste from coal-burning power plants across the state.

State won't return Medicaid program to county - 1/8/2013

New official says supervision of Meck Medicaid funds stays with outside agency

N.C. Health and Human Services Secretary Aldona Wos told Mecklenburg leaders Monday that she stands by a decision to reassign supervision of the county's federal Medicaid funds for mental health services to an outside agency.

Governor McCrory Announces Three Staff Appointments - 1/7/2013

Today, Governor Pat McCrory added three members to his new staff by naming Tony Almeida as Senior Advisor to the governor for Jobs and the Economy, Fred Steen as the governor's Legislative Liaison and Chris Estes as State Chief Information Officer.

McCrory repeals Perdue's judicial commission - 1/7/2013

The first executive order signed by new Gov. Pat McCrory today repealed an order by his Democratic predecessor creating a state commission to nominate new judges.

Forest is sworn in as new NC lieutenant governor - 1/7/2013

Dan Forest became North Carolina's newest lieutenant governor on Monday, saying he hopes to be part of a dramatic change in how state government is run as Republicans take clear control of the state's executive and legislative branches.

John Randolph Ingram, former N.C. insurance commissioner, dies - 1/7/2013

Former state insurance commissioner John Randolph Ingram, a well-known and often controversial figure in North Carolina politics throughout the 1970s and 1980s, died of heart failure Sunday evening at his home in Myrtle Beach.

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Joyner steps down from Turnpike Authority - 1/5/2013

David Joyner Jr. retired Friday after nearly nine years as the first executive director of the N.C. Turnpike Authority, a few days after completion of the state's first modern toll road.

N.C. appeals ruling on anti-abortion license plate - 1/4/2013

The state is appealing a federal judge's ruling that it can't offer anti-abortion license plates unless it also makes plates available for people who support abortion rights.

NC furniture maker hailed as US job creator closed - 1/4/2013

A start-up North Carolina furniture company so celebrated as a sign of America's manufacturing rebound its head was President Obama's White House guest at last year's state of the union address has closed suddenly.

Legislative Calendar

Mon, January 14, 2013

- 4:00 PM Program Evaluation Oversight Comm., Jt. Leg. 643 LOB

Tue, January 15, 2013

- 9:30 AM House Finance (Joint) 544 LOB

Wed, January 16, 2013

- 10:00 AM Lottery Oversight Committee 414 LOB

Tue, February 19, 2013

- 9:00 AM Rep. Moore/Common Cause Lobby Day 605 LOB
- 12:00 PM Press Conference/Rep. Moore Press Room LB
- 1:00 PM Rep. Moore/Common Cause Lobby Day 605 LOB

Wed, February 20, 2013

- 10:00 AM Program Evaluation Oversight Comm., Jt. Leg. 544 LOB

Wed, February 27, 2013

- 9:00 AM NCTA PRESS CONFERENCE Press Room LB