

ALERTS

North Carolina Legislative Report - December 14, 2012

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On the Floor

The NC General Assembly completed the short legislative session on July 3rd and has adjourned sine die until January 9, 2013. The MVA Public Affairs Legislative Report on North Carolina will be distributed bi-weekly while the North Carolina Legislature is not in session.

While session is over, the General Assembly will continue to have various interim committee meetings throughout the year.

Committee Highlights

Revenue Laws Study Committee

The Revenue Laws Study Committee met on Wednesday, December 5, 2012. The committee introduced and approved draft legislation seeking to overhaul the unemployment insurance program and accelerate the repayment of the 2.5 billion dollars employers owe the federal government. In the proposed legislation, recipients would see their maximum weekly benefits reduced from \$506 to \$350. The maximum number of weeks that a recipient is eligible to receive benefits would drop from 26 weeks to a sliding scale between 12 and 20 weeks. The scale is based on the state's unemployment rate. The higher the rate, the longer recipients are able to collect benefits.

On the employer side, the draft bill would increase the minimum tax on employers from 0 to 0.6 and push the maximum tax from 5.7 to 5.76. The committee will convene again on January 8, 2013.

Health and Human Services Committee

The Joint Legislative Committee on Health and Human Services met on Tuesday, December 11, 2012. The committee, chaired by Sen. Louis Pate (R-Wayne) heard presentations on trends in global, state and local healthcare. Members of the committee were briefed on the status of state Medicaid spending for the current fiscal year. Reports showed that state Medicaid spending is currently on target through the first half of the fiscal year, but will likely end the year with a 12 million dollar shortfall.

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The office off MMIS briefed committee members on the status and projected launch date for the new Medicaid Management Information System This new system is designed to improve the claims process for healthcare providers across the state. The expected launch date is July 1, 2013.

Environmental Review Commission Meeting

The Environmental Review Commission held their final interim meeting on Thursday, December 13, 2012. Jim Womack, Chairman of the Mining and Energy Commission (MEC) presented the commissions first report since forming in 2012. The MEC has formed six committees on topics ranging from Water and Waste Management to Rule Making. Three study groups have also been established; Funding Levels & Sources, Local Government Regulations, and Compulsory Pooling. These study groups are comprised of MEC members and Commission staff and will hold their first meetings on December 18 prior to the meeting of the full Commission. In addition to his report, Womack requested a \$500,000 budget expansion for the hiring of additional staff, equipment, and travel reimbursements.

Reports were also given by Sheila Holman, the Director of the State Air Toxics Program regarding reform legislation, and from Michael Scott, Chief of the Solid Waste Program regarding fee schedules for permits on sanitary landfills and transfer stations.

In the News**NC board certifies 3 winners of close races (12/13/2012)**

The North Carolina State Board of Elections has made the winners of three close races official. The panel certified the victories of U.S. Rep. Mike McIntyre in the 7th Congressional District, Bill Cook in the 1st state Senate District and Amanda Stevenson in a District Court judgeship. Those races were still in the recount process when the board certified hundreds of other Election Day outcomes two weeks ago.

N.C. bank profits rise 53% (12/13/2012)

Profits at North Carolina banks jumped 53 percent in the first nine months of the year, according to federal data. Meanwhile, the total number of banks doing business in the state fell during the year ending Sept. 30, as did their employee rosters and loan volumes.

Pittsboro mayor to seek Democratic Party chairmanship (12/13/2012)

Pittsboro Mayor Randy Voller said he plans to seek the Democratic Party chairmanship next year when David Parker steps down. Voller, a 43-year-old real estate executive, plans to hold a news conference Friday morning at state Democratic headquarters to announce his candidacy. He will likely face state Sen. Eric Mansfield of Fayetteville, who is also expected to seek the post.

Environmentalists speak out against Duke's 20-year energy plan (12/13/2012)

Environmental activists asked the N.C. Utilities Commission to hold a hearing in Charlotte on Duke Energy's 20-year energy plan for North Carolina. The commission has scheduled a Feb. 11 hearing in Raleigh on Duke Energy Carolinas' Integrated Resources Plan, or IRP, which spells out how the company expects to meet future power needs.

McCrory begins naming administration members (12/12/2012)

Gov.-elect Pat McCrory named three senior members of administration, including a former U.S. Ambassador to head health and human services and a Raleigh businessman lead the environmental agency.

Utilities panel formally closes Duke merger probe (12/12/2012)

The N.C. Utilities Commission has formally approved the settlement ending its investigation of the Duke Energy-Progress Energy merger, saying the agreement terms "restore the balance" intended between the two companies. The order affirms the commission's verbal approval last week.

US seeks interest for wind farms off NC coast (12/12/2012)

The U.S. government is measuring how much interest there is in developing wind farms offshore of North Carolina's northern Outer Banks and Cape Fear. The Bureau of Ocean Energy Management said it wanted to hear who would be interested in leasing blocks of ocean to build and operate offshore wind farms in three potential areas. One area is six miles off Kitty Hawk, while the other two are seven miles and 13 miles at sea south of Wilmington.

Ex-Charlotte mayor Gantt sells architecture firm (12/12/2012)

Former Charlotte mayor and two-time U.S. Senate candidate Harvey Gantt has sold his architecture firm to a New York-based company. The Charlotte Observer reported that Gantt Huberman Architects has been acquired by Bergmann Associates, a 375-person architecture and engineering firm with a dozen offices across the Northeast, Midwest and Florida.

Duke letter includes apology for criticizing utilities panel (12/12/12)

Duke Energy CEO Jim Rogers, in a contrite letter to the N.C. Utilities Commission, says Duke's public criticism of the commission over its investigation of the Duke-Progress Energy merger was inappropriate. The letter was required under a settlement agreement ending the probe that the commission verbally approved last week.

Perdue looking for NC group home funding solution (12/12/12)

Gov. Beverly Perdue said that she's looking for a solution to ensure that 2,000 people living in group homes across North Carolina can stay there without legislators being called back to Raleigh at the holidays. Perdue said in an interview that she hopes to avoid a special session of the General Assembly to direct money that would assist group homes, whose residents will no longer qualify for personal care services beginning Jan. 1.

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Lt. Gov.-elect Dan Forest getting sworn in early (12/11/2012)

Dan Forest isn't waiting until North Carolina's public inauguration to become North Carolina's next lieutenant governor. Forest's transition office said the Republican would be officially sworn in to the No. 2 executive branch position at noon on Jan. 7. The private ceremony is happening in the Senate chambers of the old Capitol building.

Sen. Tom Apodaca to retain Senate Rules committee chairmanship (12/11/12)

Senate President Pro Tempore Phil Berger plans to reappoint Sen. Tom Apodaca as chairman of the Committee on Rules and Operations of the Senate, according to a release from Berger's office.

McCrorry plans early inauguration (12/10/2012)

It won't take North Carolina's next governor long to break from tradition. Gov.-elect Pat McCrorry plans two weekends of inaugural events next month bookending a week of public appearances across the state.

McCrorry gets more outside prep help for NC governor (12/10/2012)

North Carolina Gov.-elect Pat McCrorry is getting more help from business CEOs, former and outgoing state legislators and high-level ex-government bureaucrats as the start of his administration approaches. McCrorry's transition team, announced two days after he was elected governor last month, has now expanded to include volunteers and staff in a dozen working groups examining Cabinet-level departments, the budget, tax modernization and job creation.

Funeral held for former NC Rep. Michael Gorman (12/10/2012)

A former North Carolina legislator who died was perhaps best known at the General Assembly for proposing to his future wife from the House floor. Covenant Funeral Service in Fredericksburg, Va., confirmed funeral services took place over the weekend for Michael Gorman, who died Dec. 2 at age 62. An online obituary said Gorman died after a long fight against a rare blood disorder.

State mulls use of private broker for Medicaid trips to doctor (12/9/2012)

People on Medicaid in North Carolina who have no way to get doctor's offices have for years relied on counties to coordinate their trips. The state is considering handing that job over to a private broker, but local officials and advocates for older people worry the change will result in fewer rides for people with disabilities and the elderly.

NC legislature even more full of newbies in 2013 (12/9/2012)

The number of people with extensive experience in the North Carolina General Assembly has dwindled quickly in the House and Senate chambers. Two years after 44 freshmen legislators arrived when Republicans took control of both chambers for the first time in 140 years, another 52 newcomers will arrive when the legislature reconvenes to pick chamber leaders Jan. 9.

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More about corporations that funded N.C.'s Supreme Court race for Newby (12/8/2012)

Federal campaign finance reports that came out this week provide a closer look at who the corporations were behind the national GOP group that pumped more than \$1 million into one of the super PACs that backed state Supreme Court Justice Paul Newby's re-election.

Interloper threatens to spoil inaugural ball (12/8/2012)

Over the past 80 years the Junior League of Raleigh has hosted 20 inaugural balls for the state's governors. The celebration is by far the group's biggest fundraiser, which in turn provides hundreds of thousands of dollars for community programs like child-abuse prevention. But a last-minute competitor is horning in on next month's festivities: A new nonprofit political organization tied to Gov.-elect Pat McCrory will throw its own party as a fundraiser to promote conservative issues.

Former state senator Hector MacLean dies (12/8/2012)

Former Lumberton mayor and state senator Hector MacLean has died at the age of 92. MacLean died in his sleep, *The Robesonian* newspaper reported, citing an email from MacLean's son-in-law. He was the son of Angus Wilton MacLean, North Carolina's governor from 1925 to 1929. The 1996 N.C. Business Hall of Fame inductee was a former president of Lumberton Bank, which went on to become BB&T.

Speaker lays out agenda for N.C.'s new GOP supermajority (12/7/2012)

At times during a 30-minute interview, House Speaker Thom Tillis sounded like the same man who pursued the Republican agenda aggressively over the past two years and traded frequent barbs with Democratic Gov. Beverly Perdue on issues of the day. At other times, the Cornelius Republican expected to lead the N.C. House for two more years talked more like a moderate, advocating a slow and methodical approach on issues such as immigration reform and tax modernization.

Tillis floats virtual interim committee meetings idea (12/5/2012)

House Speaker Thom Tillis said he wants to allow legislators to participate in committee meetings that are held when the General Assembly is not in session without being present. Plans are being worked up to allow members to join meetings, and even cast votes, from secure remote sites, he said.

Legislative Calendar**Tue, December 18, 2012**

- 2:00 - 4:00 P.M. LRC Age of Juvenile Offender Cmte. 643 LOB
- 4:00 PM Mental Health Subcommittee 544 LOB

Wed, December 19, 2012

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- 10:00 AM House Select Committee on State-Owned Assets (House) 1228 LB
- 10:00 AM House Select Committee on State-Owned Assets Subcommittee on Surplus Property 1228/1327 LB
- 10:00 AM Blue Ribbon Commission on Transitions to Community Living 544 LOB
- 1:00 PM Emergency Management Oversight Comm., Jt. Leg. 643 LOB

Thu, December 20, 2012

- 9:30 AM Wetland and Stream Mitigation (LRC)(2011) 643 LOB

Tue, January 08, 2013

- 9:30 AM Revenue Law Study Committee 544 LOB
- 2:00 PM Health and Human Services, Jt. Leg. Oversight Comm 643 LOB

Wed, January 09, 2013

- 9:00 AM Session Convenes (House) House
- 9:00 AM Session Convenes (Senate) Senate

Wed, January 16, 2013

- 10:00 AM Program Evaluation Oversight Comm., Jt. Leg. 643 LOB

Wed, February 20, 2013

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