



NORTH CAROLINA BURGLAR AND FIRE ALARM ASSOCIATION

LEGISLATIVE REPORT

MAY 20, 2008

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INTRODUCTION

The 2008 short session of the General Assembly began on Tuesday, May 13th, at 12:00 noon. It felt somewhat like the first day of school with some legislators seeing each other, lobbyists, staff, and others for the first time in many months. There was a lot of excitement in the air as most legislators believe that the session will be short and that they will be home for part of their summer. The House and Senate Appropriations Committees and Subcommittees already scheduled meetings last week and all this week to review the Governor's budget proposal, discuss the revenue projections for the state, review the estimated prison population problems, and other matters affecting the state budget. There were even meetings occurring on the afternoon of the first day of session, making it clear that both the House and the Senate want to move forward quickly with the budget and complete it before the June 30th deadline.

There were no committee meetings scheduled to hear bills last week; however, many of the study committees that met between sessions held their last meeting to prepare and approve their final recommendations for the General Assembly. The bill filing deadlines for the study committees are this week and all other legislation must be filed by May 28th. Legislators must move quickly to file any new legislation for the short session.

There was a new face at the General Assembly with Representative Sandra Spaulding Hughes being sworn in to take the place of Representative Thomas Wright who was removed from the General Assembly and was later convicted of various crimes involving campaign finances. Representative Wright is currently serving time in federal prison along with several other members of the House that were convicted involving scandals surrounding former Speaker Jim Black. There were also several legislators who lost their primary and will not be back for next year's session. Representative Drew Saunders from Mecklenburg County, Representative Mary McAllister from Cumberland County, Representative Karen Ray from Iredell County, and Representative Joe Boylan from Moore County all lost in their primary and will not be back for the 2009 General Assembly. Many other legislators have general election opposition and also want the session to be short so they can get back to their home districts and campaign for the November election.

The House and Senate adjourned on Thursday and reconvened Monday, May 19th, at 7:00 p.m.



If you would like a copy of any of the legislation introduced or considered by this year's General Assembly, you may receive one copy of as many bills as you are interested in, free of charge, by calling the General Assembly's Printed Bills office at 919/733-5648. They will need to know if it is a House bill or Senate bill and the bill number. (For example, Senate Bill 8). Copies are also available on the General Assembly's World Wide Web site: <http://www.ncleg.net>.

GOVERNOR'S 2008 BUDGET PROPOSAL

In another sign that legislators want to complete their work quickly on the budget and adjourn the session, the Governor released his budget on Monday, May 12th, the day before the session began. The budget proposal only includes changes made to last year's budget to either increase or decrease funding for specified programs. Although revenue for the state was above what was projected last year by \$150 million, the state is not growing as fast as it has in years past. With limited funds available, Governor Easley was not able to fund the projects he wanted; therefore, he has provided in his budget increases in cigarette and alcohol taxes, which are also known as "sin" taxes, as well as across the board cuts in agencies' budgets. The Governor has requested an increase of 7% in salaries for teachers to fulfill his promise to increase teachers' pay up to the national level. He also provided a 1.5% increase for state employees along with a one-time \$1,000 bonus and one week of paid vacation. Both the House and the Senate will draft their own budget proposals soon; however, we will provide a brief summary of the relevant budget provisions of interest to your association.

Education

Director of Technical and Vocational Education. The Governor's budget would provide over \$83,000 to create a Director of Technical and Vocational Education to develop and oversee a plan to improve and enhance technical and vocational programs at community colleges.

General Government

Fire Protection Grant. The Governor's budget would provide \$300,000 for fire protection grants-in-aid to assist local fire districts that provide services to state-owned facilities.

Training and Inspection Travel. The Governor's budget would provide \$150,000 for training and travel related to state and federal mandates for the inspection of fire departments in the 1,512 fire districts requiring inspections every five years.



Capital Improvements

UNC System Fire Sprinkler Systems. The Governor's budget would provide \$20 million to allow all UNC campuses to revise their plans and expedite the installation of sprinklers, with a completion goal of Fall 2012.

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