



LEGISLATIVE REPORT

NORTH CAROLINA BURGLAR AND FIRE ALARM ASSOCIATION

JUNE 21, 2006

INTRODUCTION

The House approved their version of the budget last week with over 25 Republicans voting with all 63 Democrats in approving the budget plan. There are many similarities between all three of the budget proposals including tax cuts for the sales tax and the upper income tax bracket, funding for building new schools and funding for low wealth schools. All three budget proposals also included increased spending for the court system including new assistant district attorneys, clerks and district court judges. There are many differences in priorities, amounts of funding and timing for the different funding choices. The House and Senate will both appoint conferees to meet to work out these budget differences in the next two weeks. Additionally, the Governor's staff will be very involved with these negotiations to try to bring the budget closer to the Governor's priorities. Both chambers have announced that they expect to have the budget ready and approved to send to the Governor before the June 30th deadline. Since the final budget should be approved next week, we will summarize the final budget when it is completed.

Many rumors are flying regarding how quickly the session will end once the budget is completed. This session has moved at a record breaking pace to complete the budget both for the House and the Senate, but typically there has been some delay after the budget is complete for the session to be wrapped up. There are many schools of thought regarding how quickly the session will end, but it does seem clear that it will end sometime in July. There are important pieces of legislation that are still waiting for approval including all the legislative ethics bills that have been debated by the House, an increase in the minimum wage, storm water rules, private well regulation, sex offender law changes and a variety of the other issues that have received a lot of press coverage. These issues will either be resolved very quickly or will have to wait for next year.

BILL UPDATES

HOUSE BILL 2174, Raise Minimum Wage. This bill to increase the minimum wage to \$6.15 was approved by the full House and has been referred to the Senate Commerce Committee. The Senate included a minimum wage provision in their version of the budget; however, the House did not include the same provision. Although, both chambers have approved a minimum wage increase they must approve either the same bill or the increase must be provided in the budget for it to become law.



SENATE BILL 1289, Cell Phone Use by Drivers Under 18 Prohibited. This bill was amended in the Senate Judiciary II Committee to clarify a variety of the terms of the bill. Persons under 18 could use their mobile phones for emergency situations and also to contact their parent or legal guardian. In addition, a violation of the cell phone prohibition would not be negligence per se and would not be considered contributory negligence. No driver's license points or insurance surcharges could be assessed for failure to comply. **This bill was approved by the full Senate and will next be considered by the House Judiciary I Committee.**

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