



NORTH CAROLINA BURGLAR AND FIRE ALARM ASSOCIATION

LEGISLATIVE REPORT

JULY 27, 2007

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INTRODUCTION

It has been a crazy two weeks at the General Assembly with the House and Senate scheduled to stop committee work by the end of this week, July 28, 2007. When that announcement was made, it was assumed that the budget was not far behind; however, negotiations continue between House and Senate leaders to determine the final budget plan. The process has been stop and go with rumors flying that the budget has been resolved and then continuing day after day with no resolution in sight. The negotiations continue to be stalled over the issues of Medicaid relief for the counties, temporary sales and income taxes, the proposed transfer tax, and an earned income tax credit. The continuing resolution that was passed back in late June is set to expire on July 31, 2007; so, if the budget is not reached within the next several days, another continuing resolution will have to be passed to continue state government operations. It is not clear whether committees will continue to meet after the 28th if the budget is not resolved or whether they will focus exclusively on the budget after that date.

After the sentencing of former Speaker Jim Black, the Legislature has exploded with more scandals, but with these involving inappropriate personal conduct rather than campaign finance or other financial problems. First, Representative Almond from Stanly County resigned after a complaint against him was made by a legislative staffer. Although the General Assembly will not release further information and Representative Almond is not stating the reasons for his resignation, the General Assembly is full of inside information and it is common knowledge at the General Assembly that the reason for his resignation is inappropriate conduct that this publication is too professional to mention. In addition, another Republican legislator faced allegations that he acted inappropriately toward other female legislators and although he has denied the allegations, the legislative family continues to discuss his issues. With the Republicans now facing their own scandals, it is not clear whether the Democrats or the Republicans have been hurt more in the public's eye. Most legislators would like to get home and end the session to stop the scrutiny it is currently under.

We learned Wednesday night that the House and Senate have tentatively agreed to the main provisions of a budget proposal. If the agreement holds up, then the budget will be completed and voted on before the end of July. With committees already winding down, it looks like the session could be completed next week.



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>.

BILL UPDATES

HOUSE BILL 735, Construction Plan Review. The Senate Commerce, Small Business, and Entrepreneurship Committee completely replaced the original bill with a bill that would streamline the construction plan review process. The bill would increase the threshold from 10,000 to 20,000 square feet for the requirement that the plan for a building used by any county, city, or school district must be pre-approved by the Commissioner of Insurance in terms of fire safety. **The bill as amended was approved by the Senate Commerce Committee and the full Senate and the changes were approved by the House. The bill will next be sent to the Governor for his signature.**

SENATE BILL 527, Contracts with Automatic Renewal Clauses. This bill would require businesses with automatic renewal clauses to clearly and conspicuously disclose the clause in the contract or contract offer. Information regarding how to cancel the contract would be required as well. A violation of this provision would render the automatic renewal clause void and unenforceable. **This bill was approved by the full House and the full Senate and will next be sent to the Governor for his signature.**

— Colleen Kochanek
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