



## **NORTH CAROLINA BURGLAR AND FIRE ALARM ASSOCIATION**

**Weekly Legislative Report  
February 11, 2005**

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### **INTRODUCTION**

It is the second full week of session and although many bills are being filed, a great many of them are “blank bills”. These are bills that are filed with a title but with no content in the bill. Many legislators file these bills so that they comply with the bill filing deadlines but are able to fill in the content later as issues come up for their particular district. Although “blank bills” are generally not favored since they provide little, if any, notice to the public, an unusually high number of them are being filed this year. This week alone over 100 blank bills were filed.

The Joint Select Committee on Electronic Voting Systems released its report this week and almost a dozen bills were filed related to changes in voting laws. These include requiring a paper backup for each vote, pilot projects regarding expanding the concept of early voting, doing away with precincts, allowing the legislature to determine disputed elections, allowing re-voting if votes are lost and other voting and election law changes. There will be a great deal of discussion regarding these bills because of the problems in the most recent election for the Superintendent of Public Instruction and the Commissioner of Agriculture.

The House has not yet assigned chairmen, vice-chairmen or members for House committees although we expect those positions to be announced next week. Neither the House nor Senate has been meeting in committee except that there are several informational appropriations committee meetings scheduled to discuss the budget and the current revenue for North Carolina. These meetings started this week and will go into next week with both House and Senate members being invited to hear the financial details.

The House and Senate adjourned on Thursday and will reconvene next Monday evening.

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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 Web site: <http://www.ncleg.net>.

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## BILLS OF INTEREST

SENATE BILL 102, No Cell Phone Usage by Under 18 Drivers, would prohibit drivers who are under the age of 18 from using a mobile telephone while operating a motor vehicle. A presumption would be created that a driver holding a mobile telephone to or near the driver's ear while the motor vehicle is in motion is engaged in a call. The bill would not authorize the seizure of the mobile phone and would not apply to emergency calls to an emergency response operator, a hospital, a physician's office or health clinic, an ambulance company or a fire department. A violation would be an infraction punishable by a fine up to \$100. **Introduced by Senator Brock and referred to the Senate Judiciary II Committee.**

HOUSE BILL 76, Ban Smoking in Restaurants, would prohibit smoking in all restaurants throughout the state including bar or lounge areas attached to restaurants. The ban would not include outdoor or partially enclosed seating areas that do not have a ceiling and would not apply to stand alone bars. The bill would require that no smoking signs be posted in all restaurants and would require that restaurant management ask persons who are smoking to cease smoking or leave the restaurant. A violation would be an infraction punishable by a \$50 fine. The bill would not apply to private clubs, private functions or to places where organizations or religious groups are gathered when used solely by their own members or their families. **Introduced by Representative Holliman and referred to the House Judiciary IV Committee.**

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