



LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF NORTH CAROLINA

LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

From **The Raleigh Report of the NC Council of Churches**

The summer's "short session" of the North Carolina General Assembly convened on May 12, a continuation of the 2009 session. Its primary task will be to adjust the 2010-11 budget adopted last year, though it can also take up bills that made it through one house last year, bills coming from study commissions, and bills amending the state Constitution.

The Senate moved with lightning-quick speed and passed its version of the 2010-11 budget on May 20. The budget is now in the hands of the House, which may take a bit more time, but the chances are better than some years that the budget will be in place before the start of the fiscal year on July 1.

This issue of **Raleigh Report** will include bills which were introduced in the first two weeks of the session. A report on the budget will follow shortly.

ENVIRONMENT

Bills have been introduced by the Legislative Commission on Global Climate Change. The full report is at

<http://www.ncleg.net/documentsites/legislativepublications/Study%20Reports%20to%20the%202010%20NCGA/Global%20Climate%20Change%20-%20Legislative%20Commission.pdf>. All bills were introduced by Reps. Harrison, Underhill & Wilkins and by Sen. Stein. They include:

- **H 1803/S 1224, Study NC Programs that Impact Environment.**
- **H 1804/S 1225, Energy Policy Council Green Energy Study.**
- **H 1805/S 1222, Funds to Assess/Monitor NC Climate Change.**
- **H 1806/S 1221, Establish NC Commission on Climate Change.**
- **H 1807, Supporting Comprehensive Federal Climate Change Legislation.**
- **H 1808/S 1223, NC Climate Adaptation Strategy.**
- **H 1809/S 1220, Study Carbon Offsets and Carbon Sequestration.**

Another environmental bill:

H 1668, Sales Tax Exemption: 100% Recycled Material, would eliminate the sales tax on the purchase of goods made entirely of recycled materials. (*Introduced by Rep. Lucas. Referred to House Commerce Committee.*)

Health

As most of you are aware, Congress passed comprehensive health care reform earlier this year, moving our country closer to universal health care access and ending some of the more egregious aspects of our current health care and insurance systems. You probably also know that there is continuing opposition from people who benefit from the current system or who are content with the current system (many of them, ironically, people on the federal government's Medicare program) or who are fearful of change in

the system. One avenue of their opposition is to bring challenges at the state level, including the following bills:

S 1157, 10th Amendment/Health Reform, would propose an amendment to Article 14 the NC Constitution. (The bill's title may be a reference to the 10th Amendment to the US Constitution; the bill doesn't mention a "10th Amendment" except in the short title.) The proposed amendment, which reads more like a statute, complete with definitions of terms, purports to "preserve the right of North Carolinians to provide for their health care". Of course, we who advocate for universal access to health care have long argued for an amendment to the state constitution to say simply that there is a right to basic health care. Now we know what opponents of universal access believe in this regard – that individuals have a right to "provide" for their health care. No mention here about how this "right" impacts those North Carolinians who don't have insurance, now estimated to be over 1.5 million in number, many of whom work or are recently laid off, can't afford to buy individual coverage for themselves and their families, and have a serious pre-existing condition. (*Introduced by Sen. Forrester. Referred to Senate Rules Committee.*)

H 1674/S 1134, Protect Health Care Freedom. Because of the rules of the short session, this new item is not eligible for consideration unless 2/3 of each house vote for it to be introduced. These identical bills are the ones which would authorize introduction of a substantive bill. While we don't know exactly what the substantive provisions would be, the bill title on H 1674/S 1134 speaks of "freedom to choose health care and health insurance," once again raising questions about how much that "freedom" is worth to the uninsured and uninsurable people in our state. (*Introduced by Reps. Stam, Tillis, Barnhart & Burris-Floyd and by Sen. Clary. Referred to House and Senate Rules Comms.*)

IMMIGRATION/IMMIGRANTS

H 1672/H 1679/S 1258, Disapprove Community College Rule/Illegal Aliens (*sic*), would reject the decision of the Community Colleges Board to admit undocumented students and would prohibit the adoption of a similar decision in the future. (*Introduced by Reps. West, Guice, Cleveland, Burris-Floyd, Neumann & Moore and by Sen. Snow. Referred to House Judiciary I and Senate Education Comms.*)

TAXES

S 1155, Reduce Corporate Income Tax, would reduce the tax from 6.9% to 6.4%, retroactive to the first of this year. (*Introduced by Sen. Forrester. Referred to Senate Finance Committee.*)

Contacting your State Legislators

By telephone: All legislative offices can be reached through the legislative switchboard - (919) 733-4111.

By e-mail: Legislative e-mail addresses follow the pattern of <first name dot last name @ [ncleg.net](http://www.ncleg.net)>. (Example: Speaker Joe Hackney's address is Joe.Hackney@ncleg.net.) If you have any question about whether your legislator's e-mail address uses a nickname, you can confirm addresses at the General Assembly's web site: www.ncleg.net.

By postal service mail: All legislators can be addressed at: North Carolina General Assembly, Raleigh, NC 27601-1096.

To find out who your legislators are, go to the General Assembly's web site: <http://www.ncleg.net>. Look for "Who Represents Me?" near the bottom right side of the homepage. All you need is your nine-digit ZIP Code, and there's a link to the Postal Service if you don't know yours.

For Legislative Information

A wealth of information is available at the General Assembly's web site: www.ncleg.net. Look for bill information, texts of all bills, current status and legislative history for bills, information on all members (including e-mail addresses, office telephone numbers, etc.), committee memberships, calendars for the next legislative day, legislative districts, and links to state government agencies. You can even listen in on floor sessions.

You can get the current status of a bill by calling (919) 733-7779. This is **not** a toll-free call.

To Contact the Governor

By phone: (919) 733-4240

By Fax: (919) 733-2120

By mail: Governor Bev Perdue
Office of the Governor
20301 Mail Service Center
Raleigh, NC 27699-0301

By e-mail: governor.office@nc.gov

From Democracy NC

The NC General Assembly is making tough choices on cuts to schools, health care and vital services, ***but it's not closing \$1 billion a year in tax breaks that are protected by wealthy, special-interest campaign donors.*** That's why we must change the system itself -- with voter-owned public financing programs that give candidates an alternative source of money and put people ahead of special interests.

We have a unique opening right now to make progress. Because of ethics scandals, Democratic leaders in the General Assembly are writing a major "ethics reform" bill. Our allies in the NC House say the bill should include expanding voter-owned elections programs, but Senate leaders are holding back.

We urgently need you to tell Senate leaders Marc Basnight and Martin Nesbitt that they must support and expand voter-owned elections reform. To send a message please visit:

[http://www.capwiz.com/democracync/issues/alert/?alertid=15074061&type=CU.](http://www.capwiz.com/democracync/issues/alert/?alertid=15074061&type=CU)

Here's why we need you to take action now:

- **Senate Democratic leaders need to hear that Voter-Owned Elections (VOE) reform is a priority this year.** Your Senator needs to speak up for reform - NOW. Senate leaders think people don't care about reform, even though a recent poll shows that 71% of North Carolinians favor a "major overhaul" of the campaign finance system and, by a 2-to-1 margin, would support legislators who vote to expand VOE programs. People want real change and will vote for change-makers this fall!
- **More disclosure and ethics laws are not enough!** We can track how big money flows and punish wrongdoers, but unless we give politicians an alternative way to finance their campaigns, they'll stay dependent on special-interest money and we'll get more scandals. Voter-owned, public

financing is the best tool to combat special interests and give people a voice in government decisions.

Your action can make a difference!

Call the General Assembly at 919-733-4111 and leave a personal message with Sen. Basnight and Sen. Nesbitt.

Sincerely,

Bob Hall
Democracy NC

For additional information on The League of Women Voters of North Carolina and our policies and partners, please visit www.lwvnc.org. The Legislative Update is compiled by Beverly Kawalec (bevkwalec@nc.rr.com). If you wish to subscribe or unsubscribe, please email Patty Dale at daleph55@gmail.com.