



Larry D. Hall
House of Representatives
29th District



The Raleigh Report

From the Office of Representative Larry D Hall

March 13, 2009

The pace of our work in the General Assembly continues to increase and our committees are meeting regularly to consider some of the hundreds of bills that have been proposed. The economy, our budget and job creation remain our top priorities as we weigh what we can do in these difficult times. The assistance we will receive from the federal recovery funds will be the object of much discussion and debate. Concerns regarding the state health plan also generate much discussion.

Governor Beverly E. Perdue delivered her historic first “State of the State” address this week to the General Assembly. In her speech, the governor made it clear that, despite the economic slowdown, education will remain the state’s top priority. Protecting and improving education will be imperative to our state’s economic survival in the long term. It will also be vital to break down the financial barriers that restrict access to higher education for many young people. She further pledged to provide for senior citizens and create jobs and provide job training.

These will be challenging times that will require the best efforts of all of our citizens. It will also be a time during which change will be necessary. Our challenge as a state will be to improve our current effectiveness and create a better future. The key to sacrifice during these times will be ensuring cuts and sacrifices are shared equitably.

As always, I welcome your thoughts and ideas about my work in Raleigh and I have included below information about some of the legislation we are considering. I look forward to hearing from you.

Health- A bill to prevent smoking in workplaces and public spaces passed the House Health Committee this week. House Bill [2](#), “Prohibit Smoking in Public & Work Places,” has now been referred to the House Judiciary I Committee for further consideration. Peg O’Connell, the wife of former Insurance Commissioner Jim Long, attended the Health Committee meeting to lobby in

support of this bill. O'Connell attributed her husband's recent deadly stroke to his long-time smoking habit and said he favored more stringent smoking regulations, both because of his belief that it saved money and because he believed it helped smokers quit.

_ Proposed legislation would allow the state health director to inspect poultry processing plants. The intent of the legislation ([HB 390](#)) is to protect the health of plant employees.

_ Adolescent Health Care Centers would get more money under legislation filed in the House this week ([HB 354](#)). If enacted, the legislation would appropriate \$750,000 more a year for 2009-10 and 2010-11. The money would be used to help school-based and school-linked adolescent health centers that have been experiencing a growth in caseloads. The centers would have to be credentialed by the state or in the process of earning credentials or provide high quality services in a limited capacity.

_ Legislation filed in the House this week ([HB 329](#)) would enable retired nurses in the Teachers' and State Employees' Retirement system to return to employment as nursing instructors without losing retirement benefits.

_ Insurance companies would have to report the details of settlements of medical malpractice claims under a proposed law. If enacted, the bill ([H 332](#)) would require insurance companies to report actual damages and settlements to the Department of Insurance.

Education- A bill that would make it unlawful for a school board member to willfully fail to discharge the duties of office has been approved in the House. House Bill [43](#), "School Board Members/Failure to Discharge Duty," allows school board members who fail to discharge their duties to be charged with a Class 1 misdemeanor. They would be subject to removal from office by the court as a part of the punishment for the offense. The bill now goes to the Senate for consideration.

North Carolina's high school dropout rate would be clarified under legislation filed in the House this week ([HB 470](#)). The bill would amend the powers of the State Board of Education, to specify that calculations of the dropout rate must not include students who transfer to a community college, college, or university and enroll in a degree program, but that students who voluntarily withdraw or are expelled from school and do not finish at another school shall be considered to have dropped out.

_ Community colleges would be authorized to teach developmental courses and college success skills courses at any time during the year, including the summer term if a new bill ([HB 491](#)) is approved. A separate proposal would allow community colleges to include certain occupational extension courses in the headcounts they use to qualify for state money based on enrollment.

_ An act to repeal the sunset on the law authorizing teachers to take personal leave without penalty under certain circumstances was filed in the House this week ([HB 441](#)). The bill would give teachers some additional freedom to take paid days off.

_ A proposed law would require parents to give written permission to the schools before corporal punishment is administered to their children. The legislation ([HB 442](#)) would also require each local school board to annually report to the State Board of Education the number of times that corporal punishment is administered each year according to the student's grade, age, gender, race, and whether the student was receiving special education services.

_ The Nicolas Adkins School Bus Safety Act ([HB 440](#)) was filed in the House this week and would provide for the use of automated camera and video systems to detect and prosecute those who pass stopped school buses. The legislation would also allow admission of photos and videos recorded by these systems in any proceedings. Nicolas Adkins was a 16-year-old student from Rockingham County who was hit and killed by a driver who ignored the activated school bus sign and passed his school bus in January.

Public Safety and Courts - Crime/Justice

I cosponsored legislation that would prohibit cell phones in prison ([HB 8](#)). The bill was unanimously approved in the House this week. The bill also makes it unlawful for a prison guard or anyone else to knowingly provide a phone to an inmate. Some prison officials had reported that more prisoners were smuggling in phones.

-Counties and cities would have the authority to order evacuations in certain situations under legislation filed in the House this week ([HB 416](#)). The legislation is based on the recommendations of the Joint Select Committee on Emergency Preparedness and Disaster Management Recovery.

_A bill that establishes courtroom procedures for remote testimony by children has been approved in the House. House Bill [192](#), "Child Witness Testimony/Procedures," would allow judges to let children testify remotely if the court determined that testifying in front of the defendant would cause severe emotional distress or would harm the child's ability to tell the truth. The bill now goes to the Senate.

Energy - Legislation filed in the House this week ([HB 372](#)) would extend the sunset for the state's Renewable Energy Tax Credit to match the federal tax credit. If enacted, the legislation would encourage further development of alternative energy sources in the state.

_ North Carolina would create a Solar Energy Incentive Grant program to encourage the production of solar panels in the state according to a bill filed in the House this week ([HB 462](#)). The bill is modeled after a similar program in Virginia.

_ Builders of energy-efficient homes would receive a tax credit if legislation filed in the House this week ([HB 504](#)) is approved.

_ New incentives for high-performance homes for North Carolina residents and new incentives for renewable energy for commercial property have been proposed in a bill filed this week. The legislation ([HB 512](#)) would also require public schools and state institutions of higher learning to

report on energy usage.

Miscellaneous - The House has approved a change in the state ethics law that would add more continuity to the work of the Legislative Ethics Committee. The bill ([HB 104](#)) allows for four-year staggered terms of office for members. The shift will ensure that the terms of committee members do not expire at the same time. The bill also shortens the time legislators have to receive ethics training after coming into office from three months to two months.

_ Bill drafters and those who write rules for state agencies would be directed to use more respectful references to people with disabilities under a bill filed this week ([HB 353](#)).

_ Unauthorized use of another individual's personality for commercial purposes would be prohibited under the Right to Publicity Act ([HB 327](#)) filed in the House this week. If enacted, the legislation would create liability for sustained damages for any person who knowingly used another individual's personality for commercial purposes without prior consent.

Notes _ In recent weeks we received visits from the Girl Scouts, NC Chapter of American College of Nurse-Midwives, The American Heart Association and the NC Veterinary Association. Thanks to all of you for your interest in our state government.

Equality

_ The North Carolina Racial Justice Act ([HB 472](#)) was filed in the House this week to provide for the fair and reliable imposition of capital sentences. The legislation provides that no person shall be subject to or given a sentence of death or shall be executed based on race. The act would also establish a procedure for hearing such claims.

Legislative Page Report



Adonna Rowland, a student at Hillside High School, served as a Page for the North Carolina House of Representatives this week. She is the daughter of Lambert and Maricoma Rowland of Durham and was sponsored by Representative Larry D. Hall.

For decades, the State House has relied on the service of Pages, who help deliver bills and amendments for Representatives during daily House sessions and committee meetings, offer assistance in individual Representatives' offices, and run errands around the Legislature.

Adonna spent a week at the General Assembly assisting members and their staff and learning about the structure of North Carolina government.

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