



**Larry D. Hall**  
House of Representatives  
29<sup>th</sup> District



## **The Raleigh Report**

**From the Office of Representative Larry D. Hall**

*February 25, 2009*

We will be providing updates during session every two weeks to keep the reports short, but to ensure they are timely so that you can provide any feedback on developing issues. After the session we will return to our monthly update schedule with special bulletins as needed.

In the House of Representatives this past week we turned again this week to focus on our increased high school dropout prevention efforts. As a member of the education committee I have an acute awareness of this challenge. We hosted a public hearing in Durham last year at Shepherd Middle School to get your valuable recommendations..

Last week, I joined House Speaker Joe Hackney and approximately three dozen other legislators to announce the Speaker's intentions to continue his dropout initiative through the next two years. In these tough economic times we are committed to education.

Following up last year's effort I will join other members of the House in holding a series of public hearings throughout the state and will also visit some of the roughly 120 programs that have active grants. The programs are spread throughout the state and address dropout prevention in a variety of ways. Durham Public Schools received grant funding from the program last year.

This program, and the many others run by both public and private groups in our state, will help our state remain competitive. Education is increasingly important in a poor economy, when jobs are at a premium and employers have a greater pool of workers from which to choose.

According to the State Board of Education, the overall dropout rate in North Carolina fell from 5.24 percent during the 2006-2007 school year to 4.97 percent during the 2007-2008 school year. This was the first decline after two years of increase and we must work to keep pushing that number lower.

The following information highlights some of the bills that have been filed in recent days to help

improve our education system and keep more students in school.

### Dropout Prevention

\_Money would be appropriated for additional Learn and Earn high schools in North Carolina under legislation filed in the House this week (HB 184). The Learn and Earn initiative is a free program that allows high school students to get a jump start on their college education or to gain career skills. At this time, there are 60 Learn and Earn high schools across the state. The proposed money would be used for 11 additional Learn and Earn high schools that will be operational in 2009-2010. This bill was filed based on the recommendations of the Joint Legislative Commission on Dropout Prevention and High School Graduation.

\_Communities in Schools of North Carolina, Inc (CIS) would be allocated more than \$6 million in recurring funds according to a bill proposed this week (HB 185). CIS would be directed to use the money for programs and services, and to place no fewer than 100 graduation coaches in either middle or high schools statewide. CIS would be instructed to give priority to placing graduation coaches in schools that have a four-year cohort graduation rate of less than 65 percent. Last year, more than 21,000 students at-risk of dropping out were provided case managers by CIS, and 98 percent of them stayed in school.

\_State lawmakers have filed a bill (HB 187) that would direct local boards of education to work with business leaders and chambers of commerce to encourage employers to allow their employees time off to attend conferences with their children's teachers. The legislation would also encourage local boards of education to adopt policies that would (1) implement programs to provide students with a successful transition between middle school and high school years, (2) increase parental involvement in student achievement and graduation preparation, and (3) reduce suspension and expulsion rates and to provide alternative learning programs for students who receive short and long-term suspensions. In addition, the bill would direct local boards of education to help pregnant students and those who are parents remain in school until they graduate.

\_The Board of Governors at the University of North Carolina would be directed to order a study of the impacts of increasing the compulsory attendance age for public school students who have yet to receive a high school diploma under a bill (HB 188) proposed this week. If enacted, this legislation would change the compulsory attendance age from 16 to 17 or 18. This legislation is based on the recommendations of the Joint Legislative Commission on Dropout Prevention and High School Graduation.

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### Education

\_The offense of taking indecent liberties with a student would be added to the list of sex offenses that requires registration under the Sex Offender and Public Registration Program under legislation filed in the House this week (HB 209).

\_Money would be appropriated to the community college system office for the Minority Male Mentoring Program according to a bill (HB 156) that was proposed this week in the House. The program helps to increase the graduation and retention rates of minority males at our community colleges through mentoring, retreats, community service and counseling and other personal

growth opportunities.

\_Six-year olds would be required to attend school according to legislation filed in the House this week (HB 161). Under the current law, children under 7 are not required to attend school..

\_The State Board of Education would be directed to require one arts education credit for graduation from high school according to a bill proposed this week in the House (HB 149).

*Please remember that you can listen to each day's session, committee meetings and press conferences on the General Assembly's website at [www.ncleg.net](http://www.ncleg.net).*

*Larry D. Hall*