

# NORTH CAROLINA ASSOCIATION OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS



## LEGISLATIVE GOALS HANDBOOK

FALL 2016

### **NCACC Legislative Goals Process Mission Statement**

The Association's Legislative Goals process is thoughtful, deliberative, inclusive and fair. The investment of time and energy, and value of full discourse, strengthens our Association as we advocate for counties. The process is designed to create an informed grassroots organization and to build a cohesiveness of purpose within the organization that, in turn, grants a degree of credibility to the Association. All counties and all county officials are invited and encouraged to participate in the legislative goals process.

## Contents

This handbook is intended to offer the reader an overview and guidance about the rules and processes used to develop the legislative agenda of the North Carolina Association of County Commissioners. Information is presented in a format that tracks the chronological course of action for the goals adoption process.

Page 6	Background & 2016-2017 Timeline
Page 7	Stage 1 - Seeking Goal Proposals
Page 8	Stage 2 - Steering Committee Review
Page 10	Stage 3 - Legislative Goals Committee
Page 11	Stage 4 - Board of Directors Consideration
Page 12	Stage 5 - Legislative Goals Conference
Page 15	Guidance Outside of Legislative Goals Process



## Background and 2016-17 Timeline

Every two years, in the months preceding a long session of the General Assembly, the North Carolina Association of County Commissioners engages in a process to determine the legislative goals it should set in the best interest of the counties. The process is thorough, deliberative, and time intensive. It is designed to allow for input from as many county commissioners, county officials and stakeholders as possible. By maximizing participation from so many of the organization’s members, it is possible to reach agreement on goals that are important to all members of this diverse organization.

The NCACC goals-setting process begins in July of each even-numbered year and consists of five stages. These stages are described in detail in this handbook.

Below is the recommended timeline for the 2016-17 legislative goals process:

### Legislative Goals Process Timeline

When	What
July - September 2016	Submission of county goal proposals
October	Steering committees review goals
November	Legislative Goals Committee reviews steering committee recommendations, approves package of goals for Board of Directors
December	Board of Directors finalizes package to be presented to full membership
January 2017	Membership adopts goals at Legislative Goals Conference

## Stage 1 - Seeking Goal Proposals (July - September)

The Association’s goals-setting process begins with an effort to solicit proposals that members think should be part of the county legislative “package” for the upcoming legislative biennium. Through *CountyLines*, e-mail communications and other means, the Association solicits proposals from county boards of commissioners. Suggested goals can be submitted by

- adopted resolutions from full boards,
- a letter from Board Chairmen on behalf of the full boards
- a letter from the president of an affiliate and related county organizations (which are groups of county officials/staff organized by function)

Presently, the following organizations are included as Affiliate and Related organizations:

### Affiliates

- Association of North Carolina Boards of Health
- N.C. Association of Assessing Officers
- N.C. Association of County Boards of Social Services
- N.C. Association of County Attorneys
- N.C. Association of County Clerks to the Board
- N.C. Association of County Directors of Social Services
- N.C. Association of Government Finance Officers
- N.C. Association of Emergency Medical Services Administrators (NCAEMSA)
- N.C. Association of Local Health Directors
- N.C. Association of Registers of Deeds
- N.C. Tax Collectors’ Association

### Related Organizations

- NCACC Board of Trustees
- Joint Regional Forum
- N.C. City/County Managers Association
- N.C. Association of County Department of Social Services Attorneys

The Association intentionally casts a wide net to encourage inclusiveness and full membership participation. Discussion and action on proposed goals by full boards of commissioners is requested because this interaction contributes to the deliberative process and builds consensus.

Goals may also be submitted via the NCACC website at [www.ncacc.org/legislativegoals](http://www.ncacc.org/legislativegoals). This streamlines the internal processing of proposals.

## Stage 2 - Steering Committee Review (September – October)

The Steering Committee Review is the first step in our legislative goals development process. The Association has seven Steering Committees, organized by subject matter. These are permanent, standing committees. Membership on the Steering Committees is open to any county official – elected, appointed or administrative; chairs are appointed by the Association President following each annual conference. The Steering Committees are:

- Agriculture
- Environment
- General Government
- Health and Human Services
- Justice and Public Safety
- Public Education
- Taxation and Finance

Proposed goals are sorted according to subject matter by NCACC staff and referred to the appropriate Steering Committees for review. A goal may be assigned to a “lead” steering committee that will take action on the goal, but the same goal may also be assigned to a secondary steering committee for the purpose of receiving “comments only.” The intent of this process is to allow for the issues raised in a proposed goal that may bridge two or more subject matter areas, to receive greater review and opportunity for committee input. The comments will be sent to the Legislative Goals Committee for their review. Steering Committees may hear from county officials who submit goal proposals and also may review staff research and analysis. The participation of county staff on Steering Committees provides professional expertise that can be critically important when Steering Committees deliberate. Though staff expertise is critical, particularly at this early stage, as the goals-setting process moves forward elected county commissioners will ultimately decide the legislative goals package.

During the goal-setting process the Steering Committee members are asked to make specific recommendations and take action on each submitted goal. Committee actions include:

- Favorable – A goal is approved to send to the Legislative Goals Committee for further discussion and consideration.
- Amend – The committee may revise or amend a proposal.
- Unfavorable – The committee declines to send the goal forward.
- Forward Without Prejudice – The Committee has no opinion on the proposal, but wants the Legislative Goals Committee to consider it.
- Needs Further Study – The Committee has insufficient information to make an informed decision and requests that the sponsors either do further research or bring back answers to particular questions at a later date.

In addition to considering proposed goals submitted by counties and partner organizations, the Steering Committees review goals from the previous legislative session to determine whether they are still relevant and should be continued. The committees are also empowered to develop their own suggested goals when needed. Each committee submits its proposed goals to the Legislative Goals Committee. To focus the Association’s legislative priorities and efforts, the Legislative Goals Committee will select no more than 21 goals (three per Steering Committee subject area) for the organization’s legislative agenda.

While the goals set the organization’s legislative direction, the guiding principles and their review help to guide NCACC staff as they advocate in the best interest of counties.

## Guiding Principles Review

The Steering Committees also review the Association’s subject area guiding principles. The guiding principles are general declarations of ongoing positions that give guidance on broad policy objectives, such as “no mandates without funding.” These statements also guide the staff in dealing with unanticipated issues that arise in the legislative context or that affect the counties in other ways, as with proposed administrative rules and regulations or state agency policies.

Because the Steering Committees are ongoing and have broad member participation, they are a critical first step in the Legislative Goals development process. The committees meet quarterly and are available to review legislation during the legislative session; they are used to guide unanticipated legislative action and to recommend any actions that might be advisable to the NCACC Board of Directors for formal consideration and action. This issue is described in greater detail in a later section included in this handbook.

### Stage 3 - Legislative Goals Committee (November 2016)

The Legislative Goals Committee is a non-standing committee. The committee membership is traditionally no more than 35 members. It is newly appointed every two years and meets as needed. Members are selected to assure balance with respect to political affiliation, county population, race, gender and other demographic characteristics. Two co-chairs, a Republican and a Democrat, are appointed by the NCACC President to lead the Legislative Goals Committee.

#### The members of the Legislative Goals Committee include:

- Legislative Goals Committee Chairs
- Steering Committee Chairs
- The NCACC Board of Trustees Chair or their designee
- An elected commissioner from each of the Association's 18 districts
- Other members as appointed by the President.

The Legislative Goals Committee reviews the recommendations of the Steering Committees. Steering Committee chairs present their committees' recommendations and relay the committee discussion regarding each proposal. The county officials who want to advocate for their proposals are allowed to make presentations to the Legislative Goals Committee. The committee may also review research and analysis related to the proposals provided by NCACC staff.

The Legislative Goals Committee may and is encouraged to narrow the list of proposals; it also reconciles conflicts or duplication between steering committee recommendations, and prioritizes its recommendations. The Goals Committee may rank goals in a priority order and may also select a limited number of priority goals to assist in focusing the Association's legislative efforts. The proposals and guiding principles are then submitted to the Board of Directors for consideration.

### Core Values Statement Review

The Goals committee is also charged with reviewing the Association's core values statement. This statement provides fundamental policy guidance with regard to the Association's advocacy efforts. The Goals committee may review, evaluate and make suggested changes to periodically update these core values in recognition of changing advocacy environments. The Committee shall include the core values statement along with its recommendations to the Board of Directors for inclusion in the goals package to be presented to the full membership.

### Stage 4 - Board of Directors (December 2016)

As the Association's goal-setting process moves forward, the elected county commissioners become more involved in the decision-making process. The Board of Directors is almost exclusively elected commissioners, with the one exception of a non-voting county manager.



At its December meeting, the Board reviews the recommendations of the Legislative Goals Committee. As during earlier stages of the process, the Board may hear presentations, review research and analysis, add, delete or amend proposals, core values and guiding principles statements.

The Board gives final approval to a package of goal proposals, Association core values, and guiding principles that are to be voted on by the full membership at the Legislative Goals Conference in January. By taking this action in December, the individual county boards of commissioners have time and opportunity for a full review prior to the conference.

## Stage 5 - Legislative Goals Conference (January 2017)

The final stage of the Association's Legislative Goals process is the Legislative Goals Conference, to which all Association members are invited. Historically, more than 85 counties are represented. The conference is held over a day and a half, assuring time for thorough discussion, deliberation and debate. In recognition of the need to involve newly elected commissioners in the process, the Board appoints a Screening Committee to receive any new proposals that have not been through the development process by this stage. This process is discussed in greater detail below.



The goals conference is conducted according to rules designed to encourage participation, providing a balance between inclusiveness and respect for the process and efforts of the committees and the Board up to this point.

### Goals Voting Process and Procedures

- Prior to the conference:
  - The NCACC staff coordinate with the President, the Goals Chairs and the Parliamentarian to review the voting process and procedures.
  - Every member county appoints a voting delegate. A letter requesting notification of the county's voting delegate shall be sent from the Association to each county.
- At the conference:
  - There is a process by which voting delegates register to obtain appropriate voting credentials.
  - Every county in attendance has one vote. The voting delegate can be any county official, including non-elected officials, and a county may choose an alternate. No proxies are allowed.
  - Goals are presented en bloc by each Steering Committee subject category. Goals Committee Chairs present the goals to the

membership. The Association President or presiding officer is responsible for action.

- All motions will be ruled on by the Association President or presiding officer.
- The President of the North Carolina Association of County Commissioners will appoint a parliamentarian for the conference.
- Upon motion of any voting delegate, any individual goal proposal can be set aside for detailed discussion.
- Majority votes are required to approve or alter the proposed goals.
- Pursuant to Article VIII, Section Three of the NCACC Constitution the latest edition of Robert's Rules of Order shall be the parliamentary authority on questions not covered by the Constitution or by this handbook.

### Screening Committee Process

The Association adopted a Screening Committee process to allow for consideration of new goals or proposals previously presented but not approved. The Screening Committee is composed of the Legislative Goals Committee chairs and the seven Steering Committee chairs. The Screening Committee meets at the end of the first day of the conference to review and hear presentations on submitted proposals.

## Rules for the Screening Committee process

- Any new or previous goal proposal must be submitted by 1 p.m. on the first day of the conference.
- Goals approved and recommended by the Screening Committee are brought to the floor for consideration by the voting delegates on the second day of the conference. A majority vote of the delegates is required for approval.
- Any proposal not approved by the Screening Committee can only be brought to the floor for consideration upon a vote of two-thirds of the number of voting delegates present at 2 p.m. on the first day of the conference. (NOTE: This requirement recognizes that by the end of the second day, voting delegates may leave, and it protects the members from having their goals process circumvented by what could be a relatively small number of delegates.)
- The Screening Committee has the authority to request a Steering Committee to give further study to newly proposed ideas. Any Steering Committee recommendations that derive from this kind of study can be presented to the Board of Directors for consideration at a later date.

## Conclusion

All goals and policies approved at the Legislative Goals Conference are included in the official NCACC Legislative Goals package. The official document containing the Association's core values, guiding principles and legislative goals shall be mailed to all 100 counties and presented to each member of the North Carolina General Assembly, to the Governor, and to other executive branch leaders.

## Guidance Outside of Legislative Goals Process

Throughout the legislative biennium, new issues will arise that were not anticipated or considered during the organization's legislative goals process. The Association Steering Committees have the authority and responsibility to study new issues, to research and analyze the effect or implications of proposed legislation, and to make recommendations to the Board of Directors. Any such action is shared on a regular basis with the Association members through various NCACC communications methods.

Upon recommendation of the Legislative Goals Committee Chairs, the committee may meet between the legislative long and short sessions to review goal progress and make suggestions to the Board of Directors related to goal priorities, especially given an ever-changing legislative environment.



## **NCACC Vision Statement**

“EMPOWERING 100 COUNTIES TO WORK TOGETHER  
FOR THE BETTERMENT OF ONE STATE.”

## **NCACC Mission Statement**

“OUR ASSOCIATION SUPPORTS AND PROMOTES THE WELL-BEING  
OF ALL NORTH CAROLINA COUNTIES THROUGH ADVOCACY, EDUCATION, RESEARCH,  
AND MEMBER SERVICES.”



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