



**Bulletin #06-01**

**Thursday, May 11, 2006**

### **GENERAL ASSEMBLY CONVENES**

The General Assembly convened this week for a short session designed to make minor modifications in the 2005-07 biennial state budget and to complete business left unfinished during the 2005 long session. Amid a flurry of bills related to new spending, given the fairly healthy budget surplus, there was also a steady flow of study bills, especially those related to lobbying reform and ethics, eminent domain and distribution of lottery proceeds. The Appropriations and Finance committees met in joint sessions to hear presentations on Gov. Easley's proposed expansion budget, which was released early this week. The plan calls for considerable expansion of court-related personnel but is silent on the issue of county Medicaid relief. Based on the Adjournment Resolution that concluded last year's session, the 2006 legislative session will be limited to adjusting the budget, as well as the following:

Budget bills – must be submitted to the Bill Drafting Office by 4 p.m. Thursday, May 18, and introduced (House) or filed for introduction (Senate) by 4 p.m. May 25.

Local bills – must have been submitted to Bill Drafting by Wednesday, May 17, and be introduced or filed by May 24. Any local bill must also be accompanied by a certificate signed by the sponsor stating that no public hearing will be necessary, that the bill is non-controversial, and that it has been approved by all legislators representing the area affected by the bill.

Study committee proposals – must have been submitted to Bill Drafting by May 10, and be introduced or filed by Wednesday, May 17.

Pension or retirement bills – must be submitted to Bill Drafting by Wednesday, May 17, and introduced or filed by May 24.

Bills approved in one chamber – must have been approved by either the House or Senate and received but not disposed of in the other body.

Other bills – Bills not included in the above categories can be considered, but only if a resolution to consider the bill is approved by a two-thirds majority in each house.

### **COUNTIES CONTINUE PUSH FOR MEDICAID RELIEF**

At the Association's 2005 Legislative Goals Conference, the NCACC adopted as its top priority for 2005-06 the approval of legislation to relieve counties of the crushing burden of mandated participation in funding Medicaid services. Specifically, our goal establishes a three-part strategy: 1) cap county Medicaid costs at current levels; 2) target additional relief to counties disproportionately affected by Medicaid costs, measured by Medicaid-eligible population; and 3) permanently phase out counties in Medicaid participation.

In the 15 months since adoption of this goal, Association leaders and other county officials have maintained their focus on this issue. You have been provided with comprehensive, detailed materials to enable you to have persuasive discussions with your House and Senate members. Other groups, such as hospitals, school boards and community colleges, are beginning to get engaged in these conversations; they understand we all gain by helping counties get Medicaid relief.

Now is the time to put your skills and materials to use. Practice your new lobbying techniques! Make those appointments; schedule those briefings; tell them what you need and why it is important. Ask whether they will vote in

favor of legislation to fund county Medicaid relief. All members of the House and Senate should be personally contacted by county officials armed with specific information about why Medicaid relief is important in YOUR county. Make your contacts now! If you need specific information for your county, please contact Rebecca Troutman at (919) 715-2893 or [rebecca.troutman@ncacc.org](mailto:rebecca.troutman@ncacc.org).

### LOCAL SALES TAX BILLS

On opening day, three House bills enacting local half-cent sales taxes were received in the Senate and referred to the Committee on Finance. These bills had been held in limbo since the adjournment of the 2005 legislative session, having passed the House and sent to the Senate, but not yet received and referred. [H756](#) (Chatham, Lee, Franklin, Vance Local Taxes), [H947](#) (Local Taxes for Public Schools/Community Colleges - II), and [H1050](#) (Local Taxes for Public Schools and Community Colleges), were all referred to the Senate Finance Committee. Each of these bills authorizes a local option half-cent sales tax to be used in the manner prescribed in the bills. The three bills authorize the local option in a total of 45 counties. The next action that must occur is consideration by the Senate Finance Committee. If your county is affected by one of these bills, contact your senator to find out when the bills will be heard. You should also be in touch with members of the [Senate Finance Committee](#). If your county would like to be added to a bill, please contact your senator.

### COUNTY ASSEMBLY DAY IS MAY 17

The Association's 2006 County Assembly Day will be held Wednesday, May 17, at the Sheraton Capital Center in downtown Raleigh. Registration opens at 1 p.m. Beginning at 2 p.m, the Association's leadership and legislative team will present a short seminar on the State Budget Act and the budget development process, a briefing on the current legislative environment, projected funds available for meeting budget needs, bills to work for and against, and a status report on the organization's goals – including Medicaid relief, revenue options and school construction funding.

At 4 p.m., NCACC Legislative Team members will conduct walking tours of the State House and Legislative Building complex, assisted by members of the staff strategic goals team that is charged with enhancing the ability of county officials to represent counties and the NCACC on local and statewide issues. We hope that by acclimating you to these buildings, the respective legislative chambers, and the resources available there, you will be better positioned to walk the halls with assurance when you go to the Legislature to promote county government issues. County officials are urged to meet with their legislators as these tours are taking place.

A reception honoring members of the General Assembly, and including the Council of State and Executive Branch department heads, will begin at 5:30 p.m. at the N.C. Museum of History, located directly across the street from the Legislative Building. Please make plans to host your legislators for dinner following this event.

### BILLS OF INTEREST

[S1209](#) (Purcell – Scotland; Berger – Franklin): **County Medicaid Share** – Utilizes savings from the federal Medicare Part D program to freeze county Medicaid costs at this year's levels and provide additional targeted relief for counties with high percentages of Medicaid eligible populations; creates a legislative study committee to develop a permanent financing strategy with recommendations due by Jan. 1, 2007. This bill would achieve two parts of the NCACC Legislative Goal.

[S1228](#) (East – Surry): **Phase Out County Share of Medicaid** – Provides for a four-year phase out of the county share of Medicaid services, reaching zero county participation by July 1, 2009.

[H1830](#) (Goforth – Buncombe; Rapp – Madison; Sherrill – Buncombe; England – Rutherford): **Lottery School Capital Funds** – Changes the formula for distribution of the lottery school capital funds to average daily membership basis.

[H1880](#) (Hilton – Catawba): **Lottery School Capital Funds** – Changes the formula for distribution of the lottery school capital funds to average daily membership basis.

[S1281](#) (Kerr – Wayne): **Clean Water Bonds Act of 2006** – Provides for a general obligation bond, if approved by the qualified voters of the state, for water infrastructure grants and loans.

### NCACC LEGISLATIVE BULLETIN SCHEDULE

The Legislative Bulletin will be communicated either electronically or in hard copy format, based on personal preference, to county officials, legislators and other interested recipients every Thursday during the legislative session.

You may obtain information about the status of any bill by contacting the Legislative Library, located in the Legislative Building, by telephone at (919) 733-7779, or by personally visiting the Librarians' desk located on the second floor of the Legislative Building. To obtain a free copy of any bill through the mail, call the Printed Bills Office at (919) 733-5648. Identify the bill being requested by house of origin and number (example SB33). The Internet home page for the General Assembly is [www.ncga.state.nc.us](http://www.ncga.state.nc.us), or [www.ncleg.net](http://www.ncleg.net). We encourage you to explore this site. You can find all bills by either number or text search, including all bills referenced in the NCACC Legislative Bulletin, in printable versions on this site. Should you need assistance with a search, please do not hesitate to call the NCACC staff.

While the Association does not advocate on behalf of local legislation, we know how important these bills are. We can provide information for you on the status of any local bills in which you have an interest on an informal basis. Let us know if we can help you in this way.

**James B. Blackburn, III**, General Counsel  
**David F. Thompson**, Executive Director