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Bulletin #11-01

Jan. 28, 2011

GENERAL ASSEMBLY CONVENES

The General Assembly convened for its long session Wednesday, Jan. 26. As was previously announced, Sen. Phil Berger (Rockingham) was elected Senate president pro tempore, while Rep. Thom Tillis (Mecklenburg) was elected Speaker of the House.

Six former county commissioners were among a very large freshman class. Reps. Bert Jones (Rockingham), John Torbett (Gaston), Chuck McGrady (Henderson) and Patsy Keever (Buncombe) will each be embarking on their first full term in the House (Keever was elected to the House in November 2010 for the first time, but she was appointed last fall vacated by Bruce Goforth). Sens. Stan White (Dare) and Jim Davis (Macon) are beginning their first term. White was recently chosen to replace Sen. Marc Basnight, who resigned his seat Jan. 25, while Davis was elected in November.

The General Assembly is hitting the ground running. Typically, there is not a lot of action during the first three weeks as the chambers get settled and leadership makes committee assignments. Most of that work was done prior to this session. Committee meetings are expected to begin next week. Substantive legislation was introduced during the first day of session, as bills seeking a constitutional amendment on eminent domain (**H8** – Eminent Domain) and a moratorium on involuntary annexations (**H9** – Involuntary Annexation Moratorium) were filed on the first day. Speaker Tillis, in his opening remarks after his election to lead the chamber, reiterated his desire to have a state budget adopted by June 30.

Leadership positions:

Senate Appropriations Co-Chairs: Pete Brunstetter (Forsyth), Richard Stevens (Wake) and Neil Hunt (Wake)

House Appropriations Co-Chairs: Harold Brubaker (Randolph), Jeff Barnhart (Cabarrus), Linda Johnson (Cabarrus) and Mitch Gillespie (Burke)

Senate Rules Chair: Tom Apodaca (Henderson)

House Rules Co-Chairs: Tim Moore (Cleveland) and Stephen LaRoque (Lenoir)

Senate Finance Co-Chairs: Bob Rucho (Mecklenburg) and Fletcher Hartsell (Cabarrus)

House Finance Co-Chairs: Julia Howard (Davie), Edgar Starnes (Caldwell) and Mitchell Setzer (Catawba)

Senate Majority Leader: Harry Brown (Onslow)

House Majority Leader: Paul Stam (Wake)

Senate Minority Leader: Martin Nesbitt (Buncombe)

House Minority Leader: Joe Hackney (Chatham)

To view committees and their members, visit the N.C. General Assembly Web site at

www.ncleg.net/gascripts/Committees/Committees.asp.

COUNTIES ADOPT LEGISLATIVE AGENDA

North Carolina counties voted as their top two legislative priorities on Jan. 21 to oppose any attempt by the state to shift funding responsibility for secondary roads to counties and to seek full reinstatement of lottery funds and ADM funds for school construction. In all, counties approved a top 5 priority list that also included ensuring adequate funding for mental health, protecting the existing local tax base and granting to all counties the ability to adopt any revenue options – by either referendum or resolution – already granted to at least one county.

More than 200 county officials from across North Carolina gathered for the NCACC's biannual Legislative Goals Conference, which was held in Durham County on Jan. 20-21. The membership adopted 54 goals for the 2011-12 biennium and also approved policy statements in each of seven subject matter areas (agriculture, environment, health and human services, intergovernmental relations, justice and public safety, public education and taxation and finance) that will provide guidance on policy issues not covered by a specific legislative goal.

The Association urges all county officials to become actively involved in helping counties achieve the legislative goals that were approved by the membership during the Legislative Goals Conference by meeting with your legislators on a regular basis. If you need any background information for your meetings, or you would like information about a specific bill, please do not hesitate to call on your Association staff. The goals are posted on the NCACC Web site (www.ncacc.org/legislativegoals_2011-12.html). Each commissioner and county manager will be mailed a booklet with the goals and policy statements in early February.

LOCAL BILL DEADLINES SET

The House and Senate have set their deadlines for local bills. For the House, local bills must be submitted to the bill drafting division by 4 p.m. on Wednesday, March 18. The bill must be filed in the House by 3 p.m. on Wednesday, April 1. For the Senate, local bills must be in bill drafting by 3 p.m. on Tuesday, March 3, and must be filed in the Senate by 3 p.m. on Wednesday, March 9.

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.

BILL FILED TO REMOVE CHARTER SCHOOL CAP

A Senate bill filed Thursday would remove the existing cap on charter schools. **S8** (No cap on number of charter schools) is sponsored by Sen. Richard Stevens (Wake) and had 16 co-sponsors. This bill eliminates the cap on charter schools by repealing G.S. 115C-238.29D(b), which limits the number of charter schools to 100 and to no more than five in any one administrative unit.

NCACC LEGISLATIVE BULLETIN SCHEDULE

The Legislative Bulletin will be communicated either electronically or in hard copy format to county officials, legislators and other interested recipients every Friday during the Legislative Session. If you received a hard copy of this issue and would like to receive the bulletin via e-mail, please send your name and e-mail address to communications@ncacc.org. Additionally, as events warrant, the Association sends e-mail alerts to the Legislative Bulletin e-mail list.

The Association will also be creating its weekly legislative video reports for the NCACC's YouTube Channel (www.youtube.com/ncacc1908). "This Week at the General Assembly" will be posted each Friday afternoon and will feature interviews with legislators, reports on legislation impacting counties and updates on county legislative priorities.

– David F. Thompson, Executive Director
– Kevin Leonard, Director of Government Relations

