



2007-08 Legislative Goals

PRIORITY GOALS

1. **Medicaid Relief** – Seek permanent Medicaid relief for counties.
2. **School Construction** – Support legislation to provide state assistance to meet school construction needs caused by increased enrollment and mandated reduction in class size, through a statewide referendum on a bond issue and/or through authority for counties to raise additional revenues to meet school facility needs.
3. **Revenue Options** – Seek legislation to allow all counties to enact any or all of several revenue options from among those that have already been authorized for any other county, including local option sales taxes, impact taxes and real estate transfer taxes.

Tax and Finance

1. **Fiscal Modernization Study** – Support legislation to extend the life of the State and Local Fiscal Modernization Study Commission beyond its scheduled sunset of May 1, 2007, to provide for a report in May 2008 and to expand the examination of service delivery needs to include infrastructure associated with service delivery; with the understanding that most counties face immediate school construction funding crises.
2. **Definition of Charity** – Support legislation to clarify the definition of “charity” for hospitals, including facilities financed through bonds issued by the Medical Care Commission, and continuing care facilities, and require that any property valuation exclusion formula provide for a higher test of “charity,” to include a calculation of the cost of non reimbursed care delivered.
3. **Manufactured Home Taxes** – Support legislation to require all taxes levied on a manufactured home to be paid before the home may be moved, repossessed or sold on site.
4. **Sales Tax Exemption** – Support legislation to exempt counties, cities, public schools and community colleges from payment of state and local sales taxes on purchases within North Carolina. The legislation shall contain a provision permitting the state to repay the last refund over a multi-year period to minimize state budget impacts. Alternatively, the Association will support legislation to restore public schools’ access to sales tax refunds.
5. **Investment and Administration of Post Employment Benefit Investment Pool Funds** – Support legislation to permit, but not require, investing assets for other post-employment benefits similar to retirement funds.
6. **Taxes Paid Before Building Permit Issued or Deed Recorded** – Support statewide legislation to allow, but not require, a county to withhold issuing a building permit or recording a deed until delinquent taxes are paid.
7. **Central Listing and Assessing of Cellular and Cable Companies** – Support legislation to centrally list and assess cellular companies and cable companies as public service companies.

Public Education

1. **Public School Capital Building Fund** – Support legislation to assure that the Public School Capital Building Fund remains intact and to direct the State Treasurer to report on long-term commitments that are dependent on this Fund.
2. **Education Current Expense Funding** – Support legislation to assure that the state define and support an adequate basic education in all local school systems and appropriate adequate operating funds to fully fund its education initiatives with revenue that is earmarked to pay the costs of those initiatives. Specifically, the state should:
 - continue to fully fund the Low Wealth School Fund,
 - reinstitute state funding to meet local school system utility costs,
 - appropriate funds to add school health personnel in all counties so that each school system reaches a nurse/student ratio of 1:750, and
 - appropriate funds for school resource officers on the basis of one position allotment for each middle school and high school building for all school systems across the state.
3. **Community College Funding and Governance** – Support legislation:
 - to fund expansion budget requests of the community college system to meet demands resulting from increased enrollment and to train and retrain workers responding to a changing economy, and
 - to study the effects of “community college low wealth funding” provisions included in the 2006 amendments to the Current Operations and Capital Appropriations Act of 2005 to determine whether the provisions create a more equitable funding formula; and
 - to review the process through which members of the various boards of trustees of the several community colleges are appointed, to determine whether the system provides for adequate representation from counties responsible for supporting multi-county campuses.
4. **Education of Children in Group Homes** – Support legislation to amend G.S. 115C-140.1 to provide for reporting by social services agencies of the number of children with special needs that are placed in or assigned to group or foster homes on a non-emergency basis, and the related costs, to better enforce the requirement that local school administrative units in which such children are domiciled transfer appropriate funds to the local school administrative units in which the group or foster homes are located.

Intergovernmental Relations

1. **County Maintenance of Effort Requirements** – Seek legislation to revise county maintenance of efforts requirements related to the State Aid to Public Libraries grant fund.
2. **State Aid to Public Libraries** – Seek legislation to make \$830,248 in General Assembly appropriations to the State Aid to Public Libraries grant fund recurring.
3. **Register of Deeds Retirement Fund** – Seek legislation to reduce county contributions to the Register of Deeds (ROD) retirement fund, consistent with sound actuarial analysis, and with the need to maintain the financial integrity of the Retirement Fund.
4. **North Carolina Housing Trust Fund** – Support legislation providing appropriations by the General Assembly authorizing recurring funds for the North Carolina Housing Trust Fund to provide affordable new home ownership opportunities and affordable rental homes for those qualified under the North Carolina Housing Trust Fund, while looking to enhance federal funding opportunities where appropriate.
5. **Rural Transportation Planning Organizations** – Support legislation providing continued funding of rural transportation planning organizations (RPOs), enabling increased participation in transportation planning for the state’s non-urban areas by local governments.
6. **State Workers’ Compensation System** – Support legislation to reform the state Workers’ Compensation system to reduce disability findings and open-ended streams of payment to address the trend in favor of long-term disability findings, to diminish control over these findings on the part of claimants and their legal representatives, and to curtail adoption of rules that limit return-to-work efforts.
7. **Funding for Councils of Government** – Support legislation to increase state funding for the 17 regional councils to carry out community and economic planning and development activities for local governments.
8. **Second Primary** – Support legislation to eliminate the Second Primary.
9. **Study Revaluation Impact** – Support legislation to provide for a study of the system for reevaluation of ad valorem property and its effect on low-income taxpayers.
10. **Building Code Industrial Machinery** – Support legislation to clarify that industrial machinery is not subject to regulation under the State Building Code.

Environment

1. **Electronic Waste Recycling** – Support legislation establishing county electronics recycling programs, funded through consumer-paid advance disposal fees.
2. **Clean Up Abandoned Mobile Homes** – Seek legislation providing financial assistance to counties or private entities for the removal, recycling and disposal of abandoned manufactured housing, funded through advance disposal fees.
3. **Water and Sewer Infrastructure** – Support legislation providing the necessary capital for the maintenance, upgrade, installation and expansion of public water, sewer and stormwater infrastructure, with encouragement for water reclamation facilities.
4. **Burning Permits** – Seek legislation eliminating the open burning prohibition exemption that is currently available under G.S. 113-60.31, and granting local governments the authority to prohibit open burning without the State’s declaration of hazardous forest fire conditions.
5. **Funds for Regional Water Resource Management** – Support funding for regional councils to develop and implement multi-jurisdictional water resource management planning and programs in every region through the cooperation of local governments, water users and other stakeholders.
6. **Stormwater Economic Impact** – Seek legislation to require a substantial economic impact statement for legislation or rules affecting stormwater control.

Agriculture

1. **Compensation for Lost Taxes** – Support legislation to require compensation for lost property taxes when entities of government obtain any real property interest in previously taxed lands for mitigation in a county other than the site of the project.

2. **Fund Cooperative Extension** – Support legislation to increase funding for the extension function and the research function housed within North Carolina Cooperative Extension Services.

3. **Support Conservation of Working Lands and Farm Land Preservation** – Support efforts to promote and conserve working lands, including 1) legislation that includes horticulture, forestry and farmland as part of the state recreation and tourism plan, with emphasis on the protection and support of private working lands, 2) legislation that retains the present use value tax break for working agricultural, horticultural and forestry lands but does not dilute its status by expanding the tax break to non-agricultural, non-working lands including non-working conservation properties, and 3) legislation to expand funding of the Agricultural Development and Farm Land Preservation Trust Fund.

Justice and Public Safety

1. **Flexibility in Use and Preservation of E-911 Funds** – Support legislation to preserve county E-911 funds and to allow counties greater flexibility in the use of these funds, in accordance with an adopted three-year system improvement plan, giving priority to the updating of necessary software and the purchase or lease of related equipment, training, and services specifically aiding in locating, receiving, processing or dispatching emergency calls for law enforcement, medical, rescue or other public safety services.
2. **Gang Prevention, Intervention and Suppression** – Support additional funds for gang prevention, intervention and suppression activities.
3. **Court Facility Fees** – Support legislation to allow counties to collect additional facilities fees to help fund capital, operational and other needs associated with ever-increasing judicial activities.

Human Services

1. Mental Health

- a) Support an increase in alcohol taxes to fund mental health services for target populations that are not Medicaid-eligible, and support state funding sufficient to support a fee structure adequate to assure that private providers of Mental Health, Developmental Disability, and Substance Abuse services will make these services available, accessible, and affordable to all citizens.

2. Social Services

- a) Support legislation to identify and eliminate barriers to employment for direct caregivers to facilitate quality care in non-institutional settings.
- b) Support legislation to phase out the county share of the state-county Special Assistance program and to lengthen the time of in-state residence required to qualify for special assistance, preferably to one year.
- c) Support additional state funds for child care to eliminate the daycare waiting list.
- d) Support legislation to have indigent appeals in DSS cases handled by the court-appointed trial attorney, rather than the appeal being filed by the trial attorney, but perfected and prosecuted by the Office of Indigent Defense Services.
- e) Support legislation to restore the \$570,000 in Area Agencies on Aging state funds which were cut in 2003.
- f) Support legislation to streamline certification of foster children for residential treatment.

3. Health

- a) Support legislation to provide greater discretion at the county level to establish fees for the inspection of food and lodging facilities.
- b) Support elimination of health hazards of second hand smoke by providing local governments and Boards of Trustees of Community Colleges the option of designating their buildings/campuses smoke free.
- c) Support legislation to enable insurers to make direct payment to providers of ambulance services and other medical services provided by county agencies, as is the case with other providers of medical services.
- d) Support legislation to increase general state aid to county health departments by \$25 million.

4. Licensing and Oversight

- a) Support legislation to require that all group and family homes reimburse units of local government for public safety services rendered and that stricter licensing requirements be implemented to protect the residents' personal safety.
- b) Support legislation to enhance the enforcement of regulations governing adult care homes by enacting mandatory time and quality standards for the NC-DHHS Division of Facility Services to respond to the findings and recommendations of the local departments of social services.

5. Health and Social Services Automation

Support state funding for the Health Information System and the NC FAST automation initiative in social services.