



The Senate Connection

Connecting Davie and Rowan Counties with news from the
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Helping at-Risk Students

This week at the North Carolina General Assembly, Republicans offered an [amendment](#) to [Senate Bill 1248](#) that would provide students who are certified as academically at-risk the opportunity to receive \$2,500 annual scholarship to be used to pay tuition at a non-public school if the child's parent decides that is the best choice for the child's educational future. The original bill offered by Senator Don Davis (D-Greene) required school districts to identify children who were deemed to be at-risk of academic failure in the fourth grade but did not address how to improve the opportunity the student has to succeed in the future. The amendment offered by Senate Republican Leader Phil Berger (R-Rockingham) gives parents an enhanced role in their child's educational future. The child would be eligible to continue receiving the scholarship as long as he or she is eligible to attend a public school or until graduation. Because the state currently funds public education at approximately \$5,000 per student, the state's education budget would realize \$2,500 for every student taking advantage of the scholarship. In addition, local districts would save on average \$1,900 per student.

The bill along with the amendment was referred back to the Committee on Appropriations/Base Budget upon the motion of Senator A.B. Swindell (D-Nash), a co-chairman of that committee. Senator Berger wrote a letter to Senator Swindell asking that the bill along with his amendment receive prompt committee consideration.



This modest proposal could make a big difference for at-risk students. Parents and students, particularly those at risk of failure or dropping out, need additional options to maximize their chances for educational success. Parents should have the freedom to make choices they determine are best for the educational future of their children. I hope this bill and the policy it reflects will receive consideration.

Update on the "Democratic budget"

The 2010-2011 budget is now in the hands of a conference committee made up primarily of Democratic members of the Senate and House. We received additional bad budget news on two fronts. First, the State Health Plan—the insurance plan for state employees and retirees—is slated to be as much as \$500 million short in 2012. We also found that \$450 million of the expected revenue for 2010-2011 is federal money that may not be sent. All of this underscores the serious fiscal problems facing North Carolina and the need to at a minimum hold the line on spending now.

It was a pleasure seeing everyone that stopped by this week from Davie and Rowan Counties to voice their opinion and give support. If you can't make it up to Raleigh this session please feel free to call or email the office with your questions, concerns, or support any day of the week. You can also follow me on Facebook or Twitter by going to the following links:

- <http://www.twitter.com/andrewbrock>
- <http://www.facebook.com/pages/Andrew-Brock/36906410211?v=wall&viewas=763400077>

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