



# The Senate Connection

Connecting Davie and Rowan Counties with news from the  
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**June 8, 2010**

## **Spotlight on Ethics Reform**

This week at the North Carolina General Assembly, Republicans in the Senate and House held a press conference to draw attention to ethics issues that should be addressed immediately. Since May 19, 2009 three ethics bills (House Bills 944, 961, 1136) that passed with broad bipartisan support by the house have been sitting in the Senate Judiciary I Committee chaired by Democratic leader Martin Nesbit. None of the three have been scheduled for committee consideration, which is cause for great concern for ethics. House Bill 944 requires disclosure of campaign contribution activity by those appointed to critical positions in state government, which would simply provide more transparency for the public. House Bill 961 is aimed at prohibiting conflicts of interest involving political contributions by important state contractors and House bill 1136 would prevent certain employees of the executive branch from registering as lobbyists for six months after leaving employment with the state. Senate Democrats have had a year to consider these common sense measures now it's time to act.

In addition, Senator R.C. Soles (D-Brunswick) has drawn much criticism from supporters of ethics reform and even Brunswick County Democrats because of 3 bill filled this spring. ("Brunswick Dems urge R.C. Soles Jr. to withdraw controversial bills," Cape Fear Watchdog\$, 5/28/10) Senate Bill 1341 is a bill that would change the pension eligibility for judicial branch employees who retire after their 62nd birthday with 20 years or more of creditable service. This bill appears designed to benefit the Brunswick County 's District Attorney and Longtime ally to Soles, Rex Gore, who recently lost his re-election primary. Senate Bills 1340 and 1408 would split the judicial district in Brunswick, Bladen, and Columbus counties. In hopes to stop these three pieces of self-serving legislation Senator Berger (R-Rockingham) sent letters to Senator Marc Basnight and Governor Bev Perdue asking them to do everything in their power to see that these bills are never signed into law. If Democratic state leaders are truly interested in strengthening ethics in state government, they must make it clear that they will do everything possible to stop these bills from becoming law

## **Democrats Borrow and Spend tactics**

Senate Bill 1378 was passed in the Senate this week largely along party lines. This bill authorizes nearly \$500 million dollars for 1) repair and renovation of university projects 2) Community College equipment and 3) engineering research buildings at NC-A&T and NC-State. All of these projects are worthy and needed, few will deny this. You can also argue that interest rates are low and building projects are coming in at favorable prices in today's market. I wish this was all there was to this issue. Sadly, it is not.

## Spending (Continued)

I do not know many businesses that would borrow \$450 million dollars when facing a \$3 to \$4 billion dollar deficit (projected for 2011-12), it is just not reasonable. Senate Republicans attempted to make this a voter approved, general obligation bond, and to split the project into two smaller packages spread over a 2 to 4 year period. Voter approved bonds carry a more favorable interest rate than other government approved bonds. These amendments were defeated largely along party lines.

Where is the logic behind spending all of this money? Well, when you are spending someone else's money, you tend to use less logic and more good old taxpayer dollars. It seems so easy to do. Our leaders have grown quite comfortable with bypassing the voter. Our founding fathers knew full well that amassing large debt, without voter approval was a bad idea. We do it anyway.

We are in the midst of a large and stubborn recession. The legislature is desperately trying to find \$800 million or so just to fix the 2010-11 budget hole. Have Senate leaders totally forgotten about the huge \$3 to \$4 billion deficit coming in 2011-12? This recession is far from over and borrowing for capital projects of this nature is not prudent and should not be done at this time. Maybe the House will see this and defeat SB 1378.

## The latest "Budget" News

The House is expect to put it's stamp of approval on its version of the 2010-1 budget and send it back to us in the Senate. They scheduled a 12:01am Friday morning session in order to meet the two day vote requirement. The House version will differ from the Senate version; as it always does. This will require a conferees on both sides to develop a final budget. This could take two week or even more... The House budget is counting on \$500 million in Federal Medicaid money which the state has not received and is not sure if it will. Some people might call this Federal Medicaid money, "Hoped for" money. North Carolina citizens don't balance their spending with hoped for money, so how can the state?

It was a pleasure seeing everyone that stopped by this week from Davie and Rowan Counties to voice there 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>

