



Senate Connection

News from the
Office of Senator Andrew Brock

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Sen. Andrew Brock
Republican

End of Session
Wrap Up

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The General Assembly Finally Finishes Its Work!

A MESSAGE FROM SENATOR ANDREW BROCK

After more than two months in Raleigh for our so-called “short session,” the General Assembly has finally finished its work for the year. As always, it’s been a tremendous honor to serve the hard-working people of Davie and Rowan Counties, representing your interests and sharing your concerns with the people who need to hear them. As things wind down, I’d like to give you a brief overview of the issues we tackled—or didn’t tackle—in the 2008 short session.

The Budget

The main goal of the short session is to prepare our state’s budget. As usual, the Democrat leadership was unable to get a budget prepared by the start of the new fiscal year on July 1. In fact, the budget and other issues kept us in session until July 19.

For all the time spent on the budget, Democrat budget writers still could not produce a bill for which I could vote. As in years past, the budget continued to grow the size of state government. In fact, almost the entire Republican caucus was opposed to the budget because it continued to increase spending and was chock full of ridiculous provisions.

For instance, one provision required that the state purchase bottled water in biodegradable bottles. One of my fellow senators, Republican leader Sen. Phil Berger offered an amendment to simply require the state to use tap water instead of buying expensive bottles. Of course, that solution was too common sense for the Democrat leadership and the amendment was never heard.

Another ill-conceived provision required that all new bridges built in North Carolina have a storm water purification system. At a time when our state’s roads and bridges are already crumbling beneath our wheels, this requirement would mandate millions of dollars in additional spending. We’re having a hard enough time as it is paying for road construction and maintenance and I see no reason to increase our costs.

With a budget full of silly provisions and increased spending, it shouldn’t come as a surprise to you that I voted against it. I have always stood for common-sense, fiscally-responsible government and I believe that the only way we will ever change things is to take bold stands against government excess. Not only did I vote against the budget, but I also lodged a formal protest under Article II, Section 18 of the North Carolina Constitution. I have included a copy of my protest statement in this newsletter. If you have the opportunity, please take a look at it because it address some very serious problems with our state’s budget.

Forced Annexation

One issue that I know is close to the hearts of many people in Davie and Rowan Counties is forced annexation. Unfortunately, the Democrat leadership blocked the progress that so many of you had hoped to see this session. As you know, I am one of the Senate’s biggest opponents of forced annexation. I have introduced bills to establish a moratorium on forced annexation in Davie and Rowan Counties and have also introduced legislation to require a referendum before a community can be annexed. Unfortunately, the Democrats who run the Senate don’t share my passion for fighting forced annexation and have blocked all my attempts to end this horrible practice. However, I remain hopeful that the strong grassroots movement formed to fight forced annexation will eventually prevail and convince the Senate leadership to bring these bills to a vote.

Tax Relief

Senate Democrats failed to provide any meaningful tax relief to the hard-working families of North Carolina. With the price of gasoline and food skyrocketing, this would have been the perfect time to ease the burden on families. But instead the leadership continued with business as usual, taxing and spending without a second thought. As we continue to weather this economic slow-down the smart thing to do would be to cut taxes and stimulate the economy.

Illegal Immigration

Like tax relief, the General Assembly has done nothing to address the problem of illegal immigration. Although this is primarily a federal problem, please don't be fooled by people who support illegal immigration when they say there is nothing that can be done at the state level to solve this problem. There are numerous bills floating in limbo which the Senate Democrat leadership has prevented from coming to a vote.

Jessica's Law

Although there's often bad news to report to you from the General Assembly, this session did see one bright spot. After years of advocacy by the Republican caucus, Senate Democrats finally passed Jessica's Law. Jessica's Law, named after Jessica Lundsford, a young girl from North Carolina who raped and murdered while living in Florida. The law mandates a 25 year prison sentence for child molestation and also mandates lifetime GPS monitoring for convicted child molesters. This is one of the very best bills passed this session. For far too long we have treated violent criminals as if they were the victims. Even today some members of the General Assembly are concerned that this bill is too harsh. But I think that 25 years in prison for molesting a child is the very least these disgusting individuals deserve. Protecting our children is one of the most important things I do in Raleigh, and I was proud to support the bill.

Official Protest Statement

On June 19, 2008 Senator Brock filed the following protest in the office of the Senate Principal Clerk:

“The North Carolina Constitution grants every member of the General Assembly the right to protest an action which they believe is “injurious to the public.” N.C. CONST. art. I, § 12.. Today, I exercise that right and protest the Senate's passage of the 2008 state budget. H.B. 2436, 2007 Gen. Assem., Short Sess. (N.C. 2008). Though the budget is rife with problems, two provisions are particularly harmful to the health and safety of the people of our state: Section 10.12, deceptively titled “Expand Health Choice/NC Kids' Care,” expands taxpayer-funded abortions and Section 19.3 requires the state to purchase bottled water in biodegradable bottles in the name of a clean environment but actually jeopardizes our entire recycling system. I cannot, in good conscience, support this budget or let my protest go unheard.

Taxpayer money should not be used to fund abortions. Regardless of one's personal belief on the right to life, there is generally a broad consensus that requiring pro-life citizens to contribute their hard-earned tax dollars to support the evil of abortion is wrong. Though there is a long-established precedent of prohibiting the use of taxpayer money to fund abortions—as is the case with our state Medicaid program—Section 10.12 allows for such expenditures. The Senate budget writers have neglected to put a similar prohibition on the NC Kids' Care program. I find it ironic that a program designed to provide healthcare for children can be used to pay for abortions.

When the Senate version of the budget was debated, I was prepared to offer an amendment which would close this loophole. My amendment would have mandated that NC Kids' Care spending be for life *saving* measures, not life *taking* measures. Unfortunately, the Senate leadership prohibited me from introducing this common-sense, fair-minded amendment. I can only conclude that the majority in the Senate *wanted* this loophole to remain open. Indeed, I believe this is a deliberate and clandestine attempt to make the taxpayers of North Carolina complicit in the destruction of the unborn. I cannot imagine anything more “injurious to the public” and strongly protest the actions of the Senate.

I also protest the Senate budget based on the ill-conceived requirement that the state provide drinking water in biodegradable bottles. Though it claims to be a more environmentally friendly practice, recent reports indicate these types of bottles are in fact an impediment to recycling. The Coca-Cola Company, one of the largest purveyors of bottled drinks in the world, has been hesitant to use biodegradable bottles. An article entitled “Coke's PET Project” in *Brandweek*, a marketing industry publication, stated that given current recycling

process, biodegradable bottles may do more than good. Since the bottles appear to identical to standard bottles, people often throw them into regular recycling bins. When the biodegradable bottles are sent through the recycling process they often damage the machines. There is currently no reliable process in place for separating the two types of bottles.

In short, the Senate's budget proposal mandates the use of biodegradable bottles to protect the environment, but inadvertently harms the environment by causing machines to break, thereby slowing down the recycling process. Though perhaps well intentioned, this provision in the Senate budget will not accomplish what it is intended to do while at the same time costing taxpayers more money.

There are many things wrong with the Senate's budget. I could vote against it for many reasons, but a health program that potentially increases abortions in North Carolina and biodegradable bottles that cost the taxpayers more money but do nothing for the environment truly stand out. I do not exercise lightly my right to protest; however, these problems with the state budget are truly injurious to the public. They cost lives and waste money and I cannot in good conscience support them."

Senator Brock Stands with Republican Leader Phil Berger

DEMOCRATS LEAVE COSTLY LEGACY *Debt, Crumbling Infrastructure, Public School Dropouts*

General Assemblies are often remembered not for legislation passed or rejected, but for the natural and predictable consequences of actions taken. Democrat legislators in the 2008 Short Session will be remembered because of debt they incurred, the infrastructure needs they ignored, and their failure to chart a new course in education.

The state budget includes new debt and capital obligations of nearly \$1 billion, approved with no voter input. This level of borrowing will adversely impact future budgets as it will make future budgeting more difficult, especially during hard financial times. With almost \$3 billion in new borrowing over the past several years, yearly debt service, which is now almost \$700 million annually, will reduce funds available to future legislators for needed recurring priorities, including education, criminal justice and transportation.

The State's Health Plan, which provides coverage for teachers and state employees, was barely discussed until the last days of session. A \$250 million shortfall in funding is projected for 2008-2009; knowledge of the existence and extent of the problem was kept from the vast majority of legislators and the public until after passage of the budget.

At a time when one out of every three children in North Carolina drops out of school, little was done to change North Carolina's education system. Instead, Democrats gave new and additional money to their one-size-fits-all educational approach and contend they can solve the dropout problem by spending millions of dollars on unproven dropout prevention grant programs. Inexplicably, vocational and technical education was again cut.

North Carolina's transportation system continues to deteriorate; maintenance backlogs expand and growing traffic counts are met with roads that are overcrowded and congested. Transportation was virtually ignored by Democrat legislators. The only noteworthy transportation move was instituting toll roads which would require drivers to pay a fee to drive on certain North Carolina highways. With little being done for transportation, North Carolina's roads will continue to crumble, projects will remain at a standstill, and road congestion will escalate.

Senate Republican Leader Phil Berger (R-Rockingham) made the following statement:

"Democrats, in charge of North Carolina's Senate for over 115 years, have left a ticking time bomb for next year's legislature. They defer cleaning up the state's fiscal house and disregard North Carolina's crumbling roads and education systems. Irresponsible is the only word that adequately describes their stewardship of North Carolina's government."