



The Senate Connection

Connecting Davie and Rowan Counties with news from the
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◆ Senate News:

This week marks the 12th week of the General Assembly's 2009-2010 session and things are still moving swiftly. The week started on Monday with the passage of a resolution honoring the 75th anniversary of the Great Smoky Mountains National Park, a favorite vacation destination for many North Carolina Families. On Tuesday morning, Senate and House republicans hosted a news conference highlighting differences with Legislative Democrats on the State Health Plan bailout, changes to the public school sex education curriculum and taxpayer financing of municipal political campaigns.

With regard to the State Health Plan, [Senate Bill 287](#), Senate Republican leader Phil Berger said,

“Legislative Democrats are bailing out the bankrupt government-run State Health Plan at a tremendous cost to North Carolinas taxpayers and state employees. This legislation harms North Carolina families by costing taxpayers over 700 million dollars, hiking premiums for dependents of state employees and increasing co-pays and deductibles.” A [conference report](#) was adopted Wednesday by both the House and Senate largely along party lines and the bill now goes to the governor.

Democrats in the House passed legislation last week requiring the inclusion of so-called “comprehensive” sex education curriculum in the public schools. Current law provides for teaching sex education using a curriculum emphasizing abstinence before marriage. Republicans amendments made several changes to what House republican leader Paul Stam (R-Wake) called “an otherwise bad bill” during committee consideration and floor debate. As a result, the bill no longer required that students be forced to take the “comprehensive” sex education curriculum if a parental consent form is not returned. Republicans also succeeded in having the bill’s sponsors removed language requiring middle school students to be taught that “long term committed relationship” are equivalent to marriage. The bill will next be considered in the Senate.

On Tuesday, House Democrats also passed legislation which would force taxpayers to pay campaign expenses for candidates for local municipal office. Republicans argues that this will force citizens to fund the campaigns of candidates they do not support. “With the fiscal problems currently facing our state local governments, the last thing we need is a new spending plan to line politicians packets,” said Berger. Senate action on the bill is expected before the legislative session concludes.

When asked by a reporter at the news conference about a Federal Prosecutor probing allegations that former Democratic Gov. Mike Easley and His family were provided personal use vehicles at no charge by a Robeson county Car dealership, Senator Berger said that the U.S. Attorney’s office should complete the Investigation. The Obama administration is expected to name a new U.S. Attorney in the near future. Senator Berger said “ I call on the new U.S. Attorney, whoever that might be, to retain the professional staff that’s there.” Concerns were also express about the apparent failure of Democratic Attorney Roy Cooper to take action regarding the issue.



♦ **Finance Committee Proposal:**

The Senate Committee previewed an outline of legislation Wednesday designed by democrats to raise additional revenue to cover the 500 million dollar gap in their spending plan. This proposal would also result in significant changes in North Carolina's tax system. Initial indications are that the bill would slightly reduce sales and income tax rates, increase the base of income subject to taxation, add a new sales tax to several personal services such as mechanical and home repairs and raise taxes on cigarettes and alcohol. Senator Berger of Rockingham said "While I support efforts to improve our tax system and lower income tax rates, Democrats are using this bill as a way to hike taxes under the guise of modernization. This is the tax part of their tax and spend."

Visit the link for the Institute of Emerging Issues website and check out the [tax calculator](#) to see the effect of rate changes on the states revenue and balance the budget on your own!

♦ **Upcoming Legislative Bills:**

-[Senate Bill 400](#)

No increase in UNC In State Tuition

-[Senate Bill 87](#)

Taxpayer Protection Act, Impose Constitutional limits on the growth of the State Budget

-[Senate Bill 571](#)

Televise Legislative Session, An act to study the possibility of televising the legislative session and committee meetings.

-[Senate Bill 123](#)

An act to allow warrantless searches of probationers and parolees by law enforcement officials.

