

The Governor Outlines His Bond Priorities, House Files 313 Bills Before Deadline

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With the all-important House deadline to file public bills and resolutions setting the pace, last week the General Assembly was inundated with its final major wave of bill filings for the year. In only 4 days, 120 House members filed 313 unique pieces of legislation, representing roughly one third of all of the chamber's bill filings year to date.

By comparison, 50 Senate members filed 354 bills during the week of its public bills and resolutions filing deadline in late March. It's important to point out that while there are no constraints on the number of public bills a Senate member may file, House members are limited by House Rule 31.1(g) to no more than 15 public bills per session.

The House's profusion of new legislative proposals was as varied and dynamic as the Senate's was last month, with bills on topics such as:

- Allowing local governments to set the minimum wage within their jurisdiction;
- A bill to prohibit powdered alcohol;
- Another attempt to regulate video sweepstakes operations;
- A bill to appropriate funds for specific military uses in hopes of mitigating federal military spending cuts in North Carolina;
- A resolution honoring UNC Basketball Coach Dean Smith;
- Legislation that would promote competition within state information technology procurement;
- Licensing of naturopathic doctors; and,
- A 2.85 billion dollar bond proposal from Governor McCrory.

The Legislature also hosted a diverse group of visitors last week, including bankers, robots, geese, veterans, rescue dogs, and sororities.

Governor McCrory Proposes \$2.85 Billion Bond Package

With the help of several of the House's Appropriations Committee Chairs, Governor McCrory had legislation filed on Thursday that would authorize up to \$3 billion in state debt to pay for sweeping improvements to state buildings and transportation projects that currently lack funding. The bond proposal would have to be enacted by both chambers of the General Assembly, signed into law by the Governor, then approved by North Carolina voters on the ballot this November before taking effect.

If approved in full, the bond projects would come close to, but would not surpass, the \$3.1 billion university and community college system bond approved in a statewide referendum in 2000. The full list of proposed projects can be viewed here, beginning on page 195 of the bill.

House Tentatively Approves Bill to Restore Partisan Judicial Elections

Last Thursday, the House gave tentative approval to a bill that partially would reinstate the partisan judicial elections law the state voted to repeal in 2005. If also approved by the Senate and signed into law by the Governor, House Bill 8 would require North Carolina Supreme Court and Court of Appeals candidates to list their party affiliations on the ballot when seeking election. The legislation would not apply to District Court or Superior Court judicial races. The bill passed second reading by a margin of 65-48 on Thursday, but still requires a third passing House vote before it can be sent to the Senate. The vote mostly fell along party lines, with all but 3 voting Republicans supporting the measure and all voting Democrats opposing it.

Senate Proposes State Level Ridesharing Regulation

For nearly two years the General Assembly has contemplated how ridesharing companies like Uber and Lyft should be regulated and which government bodies should do the regulating. While the similarly situated taxi industry is regulated mostly at the local level, several state lawmakers have argued that oversight of the fast growing ridesharing industry should be handled by the state. House Bill 680, filed Monday, would authorize just that. If enacted, it would house state regulation of transportation network companies within the Division of Motor Vehicles while expressly prohibiting regulation by municipalities.

The legislation is designed to implement additional safeguards for the public, including a requirement that all ridesharing companies perform initial criminal background checks on their drivers as well as requiring drivers to have their vehicles inspected annually. Additionally, all transportation network companies would need to secure an annual permit from the state if the bill is enacted. An identical companion bill, Senate Bill 541, also was filed in the Senate.

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