

# Media Mention: NC Bar Blog Features Christensen's Short Session Article

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In late June, the North Carolina General Assembly adjourned for the 2018 Short Session. Apart from being particularly short, the session (which focused on the modification of the FY 2018-2019 state budget and high policy issues) was memorable due to several unusual conditions that governed the meeting.

Ward and Smith's government relations attorney Whitney Campbell Christensen explained what was noteworthy of this session in her article for the NC Bar Blog. Here's a

recap of the article:

The 2018 Short Session of the North Carolina General Assembly adjourned in late June and can boast something that many Short Sessions cannot: that it was genuinely short.

What else made it memorable? An unusual adjournment resolution, a pre-negotiated state budget, a renewed interest in amending the North Carolina Constitution, campaign pressures, a record-breaking protest on opening day and milk jokes... lots of milk jokes.

## **Short Session by the Numbers**

The intended purpose of the Short Session is to make modifications to the two-year state budget enacted during the previous Long Session based on changes in revenue projections, new priorities, and unforeseen events such as natural disasters. Legislation unrelated to appropriations may also advance during Short Sessions, but it is subject to a very restrictive body of eligibility rules imposed by each chamber.

The practical impact of these rules is that very few bills with statewide implications are introduced during a typical Short Session and only a small percentage of the bills introduced during the previous year's Long Session can be considered. Below is a quick look at the 2018 Short Session by the numbers.

6 - The number of weeks the 2018 Short Session lasted

129 - The number of bills enacted

1922 - The number of bills filed during the biennium (The Long Session and the Short Session occurring between each General Assembly election)

\$23.9 billion - The amount of total spending in the Fiscal Year 2018-19 state budget

2% - The minimum state employee pay raise in the budget

6.5% - The average pay raise for teachers in the budget

6 - The number of North Carolina Constitutional amendments legislators voted to put on the ballot for this fall's general election.

### **Quick Length Mostly Due to a Streamlined Budget Process**

Spanning just six weeks from opening day to adjournment, the 2018 Short Session was unusually efficient and concise, which was made possible largely by the decision of General Assembly leaders to release the state budget as a pre-negotiated conference report. This format did not allow for budget amendments from either party, which drew criticism from both sides of the aisle and later necessitated the approval of a budget technical corrections bill, but its positive impact on the Short Session's pace was undeniable.

Budget writers began work before the 2018 Short Session in order to have the budget ready for votes shortly after their fellow lawmakers returned to Raleigh. In most years, the budget is approved and sent to the Governor in the final days of June, just before the June 30 conclusion of the state's fiscal year. This year's streamlined budget process enabled both chambers to give the budget final approval by June 1.

To read the rest of the article, [click here](#).