

Old North State Report – June 14, 2024

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LEGISLATIVE NEWS

BUDGET TALKS STALLED

Budget negotiations appear to be at an impasse. Consequently, House Speaker Tim Moore (R-Cleveland) is moving forward with “Plan B” which is to release the House budget proposal as early as Monday evening. However, Senate leader Phil Berger (R-Rockingham) stated that the House proposal would be rejected as soon as it reaches the Senate. At issue is how to allocate the \$1 billion surplus, with major items such as state employee raises, child care subsidies, and opportunity scholarship funding hanging in the balance. If negotiations don’t resume, Senator Berger hopes to conclude the session by June 30 without any adjustments to the biennial budget passed last year, meaning the \$1 billion surplus would be added to the state’s rainy day fund or made available for next year’s long session.

[Read more by WRAL News](#)

OPIOID EDUCATION LEGISLATION ADVANCES IN SENATE

Legislation in North Carolina may soon require medical professionals to discuss overdose drugs with patients who are prescribed opioids. The state Senate Health Committee has approved [House Bill 287](#) which would mandate doctors, nurses, and others to inform patients of the potential dangers of opioids and the available resources for treating overdoses. Between 2018 and 2023, overdose deaths in North Carolina rose by 62%. The bill, introduced by Representative Wayne Sasser (R-Stanly), would ensure patients are aware of overdose treatment options, such as naloxone hydrochloride nasal spray, which was approved for over-the-counter sale by the US FDA last year. The bill still requires passage by state lawmakers and Governor Roy Cooper's signature to become law.

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MASKING / CAMPAIGN FINANCE BILL PASSED BY THE LEGISLATURE

[House Bill 237](#), which enhances penalties for individuals who wear masks while committing crimes or blocking traffic during protests will be sent to Governor Cooper who is expected to veto it. Last week, the bill was amended to include campaign finance changes that would allow federal Super PACS to give to state political party committees.

[Read more by The Herald Sun](#)

PREDATORY ROOFING / INSURANCE REBATE REFORM LEGISLATION RATIFIED

A predatory roofing bill intended to protect consumers has been ratified by the legislature and has been sent to Governor Roy Cooper. If signed into law by Cooper, [Senate Bill 124](#) will address the issue of predatory, unlicensed contractors taking advantage of storm-damaged areas and pressuring citizens to sign contracts without insurance coverage confirmation. The bill aims to prevent contractors from accepting payment until insurance approval is obtained, allowing for emergency repairs but prohibiting additional work. Violators of the bill would face a Class 1 misdemeanor charge.

The bill also includes a provision that would allow insurers, insurance producers, or limited representatives to offer or provide products or services not specified in an insurance policy if certain conditions are met. Another provision would limit the commission, fee, or other valuable consideration given for the referral of insurance business by an unlicensed individual to a licensed insurance agent or broker to \$50.00 or less in value.

[Read more by NC Insider](#)

COUNTY TIER DESIGNATION STUDY BILL MOVES TO HOUSE APPROPRIATIONS

A bill authorizing a study to rank North Carolina's 100 counties based on economic wellbeing has received a favorable report in the House Local Government Committee. The bipartisan-supported [House Bill 1044](#) aims to revamp the current tier system used to determine county rankings, which affect eligibility for government funding and assistance. The rankings are crucial for low-wealth, rural counties. Currently, the 40 most distressed counties are labeled Tier 1, the next 40 as Tier 2, and the 20 least distressed as Tier 3, based on various factors like unemployment rate, median income, population growth, and property tax base. The bill calls for the study to assess the criteria used for ranking, the method of assigning tier designations, and the ranking timeframe. The study will be conducted by the North Carolina Collaboratory in consultation with relevant departments, and its findings will inform potential adjustments for more accurate rankings. The bill's sponsor, Representative Jake Johnson (R-Polk), emphasized the importance of ensuring the system's accuracy when distributing billions of dollars. The study is expected to lead to a bill next year to improve the system. Representative John Torbett (R-Gaston) highlighted the need to consider counties with both poverty and prosperity pockets.

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