

Compromise Probable for North Carolina Coal Ash Bill

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On July 3, 2014, with a final vote of 93-16, the House gave **final approval to Senate Bill 729**, outlining the cleanup and closure of North Carolina coal combustion residuals surface impoundments, better known as coal ash ponds. Senate Bill 729 directs the closure of all coal ash ponds, whether high or low risk, by no later than 2029.

The Senate has scheduled Senate Bill 729 to be heard on concurrence on Monday, July 14. The Senate has previously scheduled the bill to be heard twice, postponing it both times.

Senate Bill 729 began in the Senate chamber as the “Governor’s Coal Ash Action Plan” and after eight weeks and 40 amendments considered on either the House or Senate floors, the bill has passed both chambers, now titled “Coal Ash Management Act of 2014.” [Representative Chuck McGrady](#), a Republican representing Henderson County and one of the members running the bill through the House Chamber, commented during the debate last week, that six months ago, they never thought they’d be at this place debating a coal ash bill, yet here they were.

During the debates House and Senate leadership tried their best to reject amendments from members naming specific sites located within the members’ districts as priority for cleanup efforts. The bill lays out a process for the experts, engineers and scientists, to determine the order for cleanup of the sites. Representatives McGrady, Samuelson, and Lewis made this point repeatedly during debate, while opposing such amendments.

Since Senate Bill 729 began in the Senate, and has now passed both chambers, the Senate must either vote to concur or not to concur. If the Senate does not concur, a conference committee will be appointed from each chamber to try to work out the differences between the Senate and the House’s plans. The Speaker of the House already named his conference committee, after the passage of the bill on July 3, 2014. [Senator Tom Apodaca](#) has publically stated the Senate would “absolutely not” agree with the House amendments, therefore requiring a compromise between the chambers.?

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