

## **Lack of Legislative Progress in North Carolina: Vitriol, Asperity and Acrimony**

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Unease on Jones Street has shifted just a tad for the worse. We prefer to update you on bills and committees but the lack of legislative progress the last three weeks is becoming its own thing.

This morning we learned via the twitter feed of one state senator that the Governor spent some time with the Senate Republican Caucus this morning discussing budget sticking points, and there may be positive developments. Later, in committee, that tweeting senator was invited out for some "hallway hang time" with a member of leadership. (A caucus meeting is private and closed to the public so it's mysterious. A caucus member tweeting about a caucus meeting makes it not). Later the Majority Leader told reporters that the Governor and the caucus had "good dialogue" but did not reach agreement.

The main items the Senate and the Governor disagree on are Medicaid program and funding, teacher pay raises, and teacher assistants. The House and the Governor are generally together on these items; that probably makes it worse.

House members are discouraged but aren't quite ready to throw in the towel on the session or on the budget. (Remember that in 2013 the Legislature enacted a 2-year budget so this year's budget is simply an adjustment to that one. They could leave it on the table, but some important things are addressed during the budgets of even years like planning for increased school population, adjustments to federal programs, and pay raises). We think there is a political risk to leaving town with no new budget and heading into the election with no teacher and state employee pay raises.

And for the third time in two weeks we heard that someone in Senate Leadership will do what he can to keep Thom Tillis from being elected to the US Senate. The longer this legislature is not wrapping things up, not finalizing and budget and not passing some of the bills that are important to Speaker Tillis and the House, the harder we think it will be for him to unseat incumbent US Senator Kay Hagan in November. If you follow that to its logical conclusion does that mean some Senate Republicans are for Kay Hagan???

I've said it before: if Democrats in Raleigh weren't crying, they'd be laughing.

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