

Deb Butler

**Media Report**

**Draft**

**May 23, 2022**

# Part I Introduction

This report reviews electronically available news stories on NC State Rep. Deb Butler, who is running for re-election.

The Table of Contents in **Part II** of the report is a useful guide to the entire report and can be used as a stand-alone summary. In one section, it surveys the bulk of the news file, through the headlines we have assigned to each item.

**Part III**, the **Greatest Hits** section, identifies key points taken from available media articles.

**Parts IV, The News File**, contain edited copies of the most relevant electronically available stories.

We hope you find this useful.

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## Part III Butler: Greatest Hits from Media Review

### Background

- Education: Bachelor of Arts in English from the University of Tennessee; Juris Doctor from Wake Forest University School of Law
- Profession: Lawyer
- Political and public service experience: N.C. House District 18 incumbent; member of the New Hanover Commission for Women board, The Dance Cooperative, The Cape Fear Green Building Alliance and The Historic Wilmington Foundation; volunteer patient ambassador and courtesy van driver for New Hanover Regional Medical Center (Brunswick Beacon, 10/6/18)
- She had a brother, Frank, who died of alcoholism in March 2017. (Star-News, 10/26/17)

### Gay Partner

Butler is openly gay. Her partner, Anni Parra whom she “married,” died in late 2018.

- Anni Parra, a political activist and wife of N.C. Rep. Deb Butler who was described by her wife as kind and of constant cheer, died unexpectedly on Friday. She was 52. "I bet 400 people have come to my house in the last day and a half," Butler said Monday. "Almost every one has told me of an act of kindness Anni did without me knowing about it."
- Parra, a grant administrator for an aviation company, was also active in Democratic politics and had "a soft spot for animals," Butler said. Butler, a Democrat who represents much of Wilmington and northeast Brunswick County in the General Assembly, repeatedly fought back tears while talking about her wife of three years -- they were married in December 2015.....
- She said her wife played a supporting role as statewide and national issues, including the passage of the controversial House Bill 2 in 2016 and the revelation of contaminants, including GenX, in drinking water, "thrust me into the spotlight." (Wilmington Star News, 12/31/18)

### 2010 – Run for New Hanover County Commissioner

- Butler’s first known run for public office was in 2010, when she ran for a New Hanover County Commissioner seat and lost. This despite the endorsement of the Star-News which said “her volunteer work, most notably those dealing with historic preservation and human services, gives her a good perspective on what the community needs to make it an even better place to live. And she believes that, with good planning and “surgical” cutting, the county can deliver service and become more efficient.” (Star-News, 10/16/10)

## **2012 – Campaign for State Senate**

More significant was her unsuccessful run for State Senate against the conservative incumbent Thomas Goolsby. As a gay activist, she denounced Goolsby's support for the state's then-ban on gay marriage.

- "Rather than working on jobs like he promised back 2010, my opponent sponsored the Amendment that forced this hatred into the public square," she said. "It's a matter of priorities. We should be competing to bring more companies to North Carolina, not giving them reason to stay away. We've seen from national examples that states focused on dividing citizens and discriminating against their own have a harder time attracting top tier companies that bring good jobs with them. I think North Carolinians are more concerned about issues like job creation and preserving education, and that's what I'll focus on when I'm a state senator." (Star-News, 5/25/12)

Later in the campaign, Butler went after Goolsby for his pro-life position on defunding Planned Parenthood, and also his support of requiring ultrasounds before any abortion. She released an ad showing the use of a trans-vaginal wand to depict him as being overly meddling in the health of women. It put the race into the national spotlight.

- State Sen. Thom Goolsby's Democratic opponent in the general election, Deb Butler, has chosen a visually frank political advertisement to kick off her TV campaign against the Republican. As her campaign says, it may be the first ever appearance of a trans-vaginal ultrasound wand in a political ad.
- Goolsby, who represents New Hanover County, supported the bill last year that required women to receive ultrasound examinations before getting an abortion. The trans-vaginal wand is one method of conducting an ultrasound exam.
- The new law doesn't specify which kind of ultrasound method must be used; only that it be conducted four hours before an abortion, and that the image be described to the woman. The trans-vaginal method is used typically in early-stage pregnancy. It had not been considered controversial until Virginia legislators tried to require the wand in an abortion bill earlier this year, but that language was removed.
- Butler, who is a lawyer, said Wednesday that she has researched the medical issues and learned that the wand could be used in a number of circumstances. The main issue is, she said, "I don't think the legislature should be part of that conversation between a woman and her doctor." In her ad, Butler shows one of the devices and says, "Few would dare show you this, but this is Thom Goolsby's contribution to women's health."
- Butler says as a cervical cancer survivor she also criticizes Goolsby, a Wilmington lawyer, for voting to defund Planned Parenthood's women's health programs, which include cancer screenings and do not include abortions.

In response, Goolsby noted Butler's radicalism, which included acting as lawyer for the Occupy Wilmington group (The local version of Occupy Wall Street).



- Goolsby, reached by phone Wednesday, read a prepared statement in response: “Never forget, she’s Occupy Wilmington’s lawyer. Her economic plans are so radical and devastating to our economy that she’s trying to shift attention away from this fact. I’ll continue to focus on jobs and the economy.”

In addition, a pro-life group noted that required ultrasounds had been on the books since 1994 and that the 2011 law only provided more information.

- Tami Fitzgerald , executive director of the N.C. Values Coalition , which campaigned for the new law, pointed out that ultrasounds have been required before abortions since 1994, under administrative rules adopted by Gov. Jim Hunt . She said the new law provides women with additional information through the verbal description of the ultrasound. ”If ever there was a campaign ad that deserved a ‘fact check,’ this is it,” Fitzgerald said. “. . . I find it ironic that a Democrat candidate would attack a Republican senator on the basis of rules adopted under the administration of Democrat Gov. Jim Hunt.” (Star-News, 10/10/12)

Butler unapologetically defended her work for Occupy Wilmington.

- “If he were proud of the legislation, I suppose he would be talking about that, when instead he’s talking about my community service,” she said. “Yes, I represented Occupy Wilmington and their rights of free speech, their constitutionally-protected rights of free speech, assembly, and I’ll do it again and again and again.” (WWAY, 10/11/12)

Her Occupy Wilmington work became the subject of a Goolsby ad against her.

- Goolsby ad: “Lefty” Claim: “The radical group Occupy Wall Street, Deb Butler supported them. Obama stimulus money? She took it to start her own personal radio show. And your taxes? Deb Butler said raise them.”
- Analysis: We’ll take the claims one by one. First, on the “Occupy” movement, Butler appeared before the Wilmington City Council about a year ago to ask the city to approve a permit to let the group camp overnight in a park near City Hall. Butler said she represented the group pro bono and was there to argue in favor of its members’ First Amendment rights to free speech and assembly, not to advocate for their philosophies or message. ”The denial of a permit is an unconstitutional restriction of a First Amendment right,” Butler told city council members.
- Goolsby said Butler chose to give her pro bono time to that group. ”Not a group I’d choose,” he added. (Star-News, 10/30/12)

Social issues though were not the only thing they clashed over. A radio debate became contentious over the issue of a business tax exemption that had been part of the 2011 state budget deal.

- A prime example of the divide separating Thom Goolsby, the Republican incumbent, and Democratic challenger Deb Butler is the controversial business tax exemption approved last year by the General Assembly as part of a state budget deal. Originally touted as being a tax break for small businesses, the exemption has no cap on the size of businesses that qualify. The way the tax credit works is that businesses can claim an exemption for the first \$50,000 of income, meaning a business would pay about \$3,500 less in taxes -- costing the state about \$336 million a year.
- During a candidate forum at radio station WHQR earlier this month, the two candidates sparred over the exemption, provoking one of the most-heated exchanges of the event. Goolsby, 51, a lawyer in private practice and president of Empowered Investor Media Inc., not only defended the exemption, but said he would take it himself. He criticized Butler for opposing the exemption for small businesses.
- "She thinks somehow that's robbery," Goolsby said. "Well, Ms. Butler, I'll have you know I earned that money. I didn't take it in any kind of government Obama stimulus money for a radio program, I actually earned it and I will take my tax credit."
- Goolsby's jab about stimulus money used for a radio program was in reference to the "Retrofit Radio Show" hosted by Butler in her capacity as a former trustee for the Cape Fear Green Building Alliance. The 13-part series about home energy efficiency was funded by a grant awarded to the alliance from the N.C. Green Business Fund and the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act. Butler said she volunteered to host the show and was not paid.
- Butler, 51, a lawyer and a managing partner at The Butler Firm PLLC, and former broker in charge of Port City Properties, said she supports a tax break for small businesses, but criticized Goolsby and other legislators for not capping the exemption when they had a chance.
- "You, sir, and other lobbyists and legislators, are not small business," Butler said. "You had an opportunity to cap it on several occasions and you refused to do it. And you quickly say, 'Well 1 to 2 percent of the millionaires out there are the only ones who got it.' I don't care if it's 10 cents that went in your pocket instead of a pocket of a teacher, it's unconscionable."
- The tax break at one time included a cap that said only partners or owners of businesses with less than \$825,000 revenue would be eligible. That cap was removed before the budget bill was voted on by the state Senate, according to a June 3 story in the News & Observer. (Star-News, 10/20/12)

Goolsby won the election. After this, Butler attracted little attention for the next several years. She appeared at a protest outside a Trump rally in the 2016 campaign. Tellingly, the liberal Raleigh News Observer failed to identify her as a former State Senate candidate and activist, and tried to depict her as just an ordinary concerned citizen.

- More than 100 protesters lined up a couple hundred feet outside UNC-Wilmington's Trask Coliseum. "I really believed once Donald Trump started gaining in the polls that he would knuckle down and learn some foreign policy," Wilmington resident Deborah Butler, 55, said. "He hasn't. He hasn't begun to learn anything." (RNO, 8/9/16)

### **2017 - Appointed to House Seat**

Butler got into the state House as a result of a vacancy created when Rep. Susi Hamilton took an appointment in the Cooper Administration. She was selected by a committee of Democrats and vowed to fight "regressive" policies of the conservative super-majority that existed when she took office.

- Wilmington attorney Deb Butler was selected to fill the N.C. House seat vacated last week by former Rep. Susi Hamilton. "Well, it is certainly a privilege and an honor," said Butler, who was selected Wednesday night by a four-member panel of Democrats comprising an executive committee from New Hanover and Brunswick counties in a forum at the Leland town hall. "I will do my dead-level best to serve you with honor and with dignity."
- Butler, who unsuccessfully ran for state Senate in 2012, was one of 10 candidates hoping to replace Hamilton, who was named by Gov. Roy Cooper to serve as N.C. secretary of natural and cultural resources. She will represent the 18th District, which encompasses downtown Wilmington and the northeastern portion of Brunswick County.....
- Butler said she would work to fight "regressive policies" she said have come out of Raleigh. "If you know me at all, you know it's going to be a firestorm, so watch out," Butler said. (Star-News, 2/2/17)

Since then, Butler has been successfully elected twice, facing token GOP opposition both times.

- In 2018, she won re-election against GOP opponent Louis Harmati, who never campaigned. (Star-News, 11/7/18)
- In 2020, she defeated Republican Warren Kennedy with 60% of the vote. Kennedy put up more of an effort than Harmati, but it wasn't significant. Butler has not had to face a truly tough challenge since her failed run for the State Senate in 2012.

### **State House, 2017-22**

#### **Bathroom Bill Repeal and Gay Agenda**

As the first openly gay member of the State House at the time, Butler joined just as there was an intense fight over repealing HB 2 the so-called "Bathroom Bill." For her, nothing short of total repeal would be considered a success. She was a primary sponsor of HB 82, the most agenda-driven version.

- House Bill 82. Who’s backing it:
  - The LGBT advocacy groups Human Rights Campaign and Equality North Carolina held a news conference last week to introduce the bill. The primary sponsors are Rep. Pricey Harrison of Greensboro, Rep. Susan Fisher of Asheville, Rep. Deb Butler of Wilmington and Rep. John Autry of Charlotte. As of Tuesday, 21 additional House Democrats had signed the bill as co-sponsors. And on Tuesday, an identical companion bill was filed in the Senate by Sens. Jay Chaudhuri of Raleigh, Mike Woodard of Durham and Terry Van Duyn of Asheville.
- What it does:
  - In addition to repealing HB2, it would create a broad statewide nondiscrimination law that would include sexual orientation, gender identity, military veteran status and other categories. It would ban discrimination in housing, employment and public accommodations – including bathroom access for transgender people. The bill says “a place of public accommodation shall provide access to (bathroom) facilities based on a person’s gender identity.” That provision is similar to the Charlotte nondiscrimination ordinance that led to HB2 amid Republicans’ fears that sexual predators might use the provision to access the opposite gender’s bathroom facilities. (RNO, 2/14/17)

Butler expressed her fear that Cooper would seek too much of a compromise with the Republicans.

- Representative Deb Butler, a Wilmington Democrat serving her first term, says the chances of finding a way out of the box are fading for this session. Butler, the only openly gay woman in the legislature, says that while the governor is trying to work out a compromise, she doesn’t want to see him go too far to bail out the Republicans. She’s frustrated by the attempts at finding a murky, political solution to a law that shouldn’t have been passed in the first place.
- ”I’m almost to the point where I think the people that did this damage to the state of North Carolina are going to have to live with the political consequences,” she says. The economic damage has dominated the debate, Butler says, but the core issue is discrimination. “It’s wrong when individuals do it, but it’s unconscionable when the government does it,” she adds. (The Progressive, 4/1/17)

The compromise repeal version that emerged left her unsatisfied. She voted against it, just as conservative supporters of the original HB 2 also voted against it for different reasons.

- "This is so much bigger than basketball," added Representative Deb Butler, D-Brunswick and New Hanover, the other openly LGBTQ legislator. "The people of North Carolina want us to repeal HB 2. That is all. They care about fairness, dignity. They look to us to create a safe and a welcoming environment for all. The LGBT community, our families, our children, and the people who love and care for us do not support this bill. We would rather suffer HB 2 than to have this body one more time deny us the full and unfettered protections of the law." (Durham Independent Weekly, 4/5/17)

### **2017 - Public Venting On FB Over Legislation**

Her anger over the repeal, undoubtedly explained why she quickly developed a reputation for making angry floor speeches and posting FB videos to vent. It earned her this flattering profile.

- Being a freshman legislator in the minority party at the N.C. General Assembly can be frustrating. And Wilmington's Rep. Deb Butler, D-New Hanover, gets frustrated a lot. When she does, she takes a walk around the state legislative building. "There's so much regressive legislation going on there," she said in a recent interview at her Wilmington law firm. "Sometimes I just have to get outside and take a walk."
- That's common enough, but she's also taken to videotaping herself on her iPhone and posting the videos to her Facebook page. The videos are by no means professional quality, and she knows it. But that wasn't the point, Butler said, and the videos have become popular anyway, featuring multiple shares, comments and interactions on her Facebook page. "I don't know why I did it, except that I wanted to share my frustration with my Facebook friends," she said. (Butler had 3,293 Facebook friends as of last week).
- Politicians frequently post videos of themselves speaking at events or on a legislative floor or directly into a camera -- and they are generally on the dull side. But Butler said she believes her walk-and-talk videos have become popular because they are unique. "People thought it was real," she said. "It comes off as genuine because it is. It's not canned or rehearsed. It's not staged." Here are some snippets from each video:
- Partisan judicial elections
  - Butler's adventures in walking-while-self-filming began when the House voted to override Gov. Roy Cooper's veto of House Bill (HB) 100, which established partisan races for judicial elections. "OK, so this is Deb Butler outside the North Carolina General Assembly and taking a little walk because I'm disappointed that we were unable to sustain Governor Cooper's veto of House Bill 100," she said in her opening lines. "You'll recall that that is the bill that puts the Rs and the Ds back in judicial races, which is a big mistake."

- Hog farm litigation bill
  - Her next video was her way of venting about a bill that restricted the amount a property owner could sue large agricultural operations like hog farms, which are a huge industry in North Carolina. At the time of her tape-and-stroll, the bill was still slated to be retroactive and would have impacted an existing lawsuit against a subsidiary of Smithfield. "Now I'm going to tell you something right now, you don't get much more nefarious than that," Butler said. "House Bill 467 is a tragedy. Rep. Deb votes no. Thank you." An amendment that narrowly passed the House removed HB 467's retroactive clause. The rest of the bill passed the House.
- Education bill
  - In her latest video, posted late last week, Butler decried that HB 13, which would provide local school districts with flexibility in meeting new kindergarten through third grade class-size requirements and which passed the House unanimously, has apparently stalled in the Senate. If the bill doesn't pass, school leaders have said, school districts will have to cut numerous programs like art and physical education in order to create the new classrooms and hire teachers to meet the new requirements. "You know, we mandated a reduction in class size and then we don't fund it adequately," she said in the video. She also encourages people to call senators about the bill and "light 'em up." (Star-News, 4/24/17)

A compromise was worked on the 2017 education bill which reduced class sizes while preserving art and physical education classes.

- Rep. Deb Butler (D-New Hanover) said she wished the compromise had been unnecessary. "Music, art, and physical education are all vital components of a child's development and well-being," she wrote in an email. "We must adequately fund public education in the first place so that this sort of haphazard 'fix' isn't required in the future." (Star-News, 4/26/17)

### **2019 - "I Will Not Yield!"**

Butler endeared herself to liberals nationwide when a viral video emerged of her protesting the GOP House's override of Governor Cooper's budget veto during the long stand-off. The House override became possible when the GOP took advantage of the absence of most Democrats, thus preventing them from having sufficient numbers to sustain the veto. Even though the proceedings are not videotaped, another Democrat member had his cell phone recording and the video soon took off in liberal media circles.

- The Democratic North Carolina lawmaker who got national attention Wednesday for shouting "I will not yield" at the Republican House speaker during an override vote Wednesday told supporters Thursday that she's not backing down. Another Democratic lawmaker called for the resignation of the speaker, the day after the House overrode the governor's veto of the state budget in a move the governor called "an assault on our democracy." The veto was overridden with the

needed supermajority because most of the Democrats weren't there, under the impression that the morning session would be a no-vote session.

- When Rep. Deb Butler of Wilmington and other Democrats realized the override vote was being taken, they protested vehemently, with Butler's reaction recorded by another lawmaker. Democratic Rep. Deb Butler: 'How dare you do this, Mr. Speaker' Rep. Deb Butler (D) and her Democratic colleagues protest an unexpected vote in the NC House to override Gov. Roy Cooper's veto of the budget.
- On Thursday morning, Butler, who is also the House Democratic whip, spoke at a protest and news conference on the front lawn of the Legislative Building, where the General Assembly meets.
- "North Carolina is better than this. ... What happened yesterday was a shameful, shameful display," Butler told a group of other Democrats and progressives, including representatives from the N.C. NAACP and the N.C. Association of Educators. Butler described her outburst on the floor as "a meltdown." Someone in the crowd called out that it was a "melt up," and she repeated that. "What I did was remarkable only insofar that it happened in that building. We all have the capacity for that," Butler said.
- She paraphrased a message someone sent her afterward. "'One day she realized she was fierce and brave and strong, and her passion for the issues shone brighter than her fear.' And I think that's what happened yesterday, but it's in every one of us," she said. (RNO, 9/12/19)

She earned an appearance on MSNBC and a gushing tribute from one of the News-Observer's liberal columnists.

- State Rep. Deb Butler is drawing national attention after a video went viral of her repeatedly declaring on the N.C. House floor: "I will not yield." Butler was protesting Republican Speaker Tim Moore's sudden unannounced call last week for a vote to override Democratic Gov. Roy Cooper's veto of the state budget while only a handful of Democrats were in the chamber.
- Butler wouldn't yield the floor, but the Democrats got run over anyway. The veto override passed 55-9 and now goes to the Senate, where a slight swing in votes could make the Republicans' budget law.
- But in losing, Butler achieved a moral — and a political — victory. The response to her tirade — "If this is the way you think democracy works, shame on you!" — brought approval far beyond her Democratic caucus and the state.
- Along with the video, Butler appeared on MSNBC's political show "The Last Word with Lawrence O'Donnell." Sen. Elizabeth Warren tweeted her approval, as did actor and liberal activist Alyssa Milano and comedian Sarah Silverman. She received emails and calls from backers in many states and even Canada and Ireland. Her Twitter followers ballooned from 1,200 to 23,000 almost overnight.

- "The response has just been staggering from every corner of the country. I've only received five negative responses compared to thousands of positives. So I'm going to take that as a victory," said Butler, a Wilmington Democrat who was appointed to the legislature in 2017. She replaced Rep. Susi Hamilton, who resigned to head the department of Natural and Cultural Resources. Butler was elected in her own right in 2018.
- Butler said the positive comments ran along the lines of: " 'Thank you for defending democracy.' 'You're my hero.' 'You said all the things I wanted to say.' 'I made sure my little girls have watched this video.' "
- Why such a national outpouring over an uproar in the North Carolina legislature? Butler thinks her outrage connected with a wider political frustration.
- "People feel so powerless right now," she said. "They feel like they are not being listened to. And they're not, and it's frustrating to them. We are starting to understand the fragility of this democracy. They saw someone fighting back in ways that they can't and that's why it resonated, I think."
- There's irony in Butler becoming the face and voice of outrage over Republican abuse of the democratic process. She joined the legislature thinking she could find a way to bridge partisan divides. She quickly learned otherwise. Republican legislative leaders promptly shunted her out of Hamilton's former corner office and into a windowless room she compared to a broom closet. They denied her committee requests. "It was a real knock in the head right out of the gate," she said then.
- Now Butler is a House whip and a firebrand fighting what she sees as the Republicans' high-handed tactics. She said the result of her viral protest is that "the entire country is now aware of the corruption we see in this House. The best way to drive the cockroaches back under the refrigerator is to shine a light on them. People would say that is strong language. I don't care. Strength is required at his point. Any niceties have long since evaporated." (RNO, Ned Barnett, 9/17/19)

Conservatives and Republicans though, noted that they merely employed the same interpretation of the rules Democrats had used in 2005 to get through a controversial state operated lottery bill.

- Last week, lottery opponent the Rev. Mark Creech, executive director of the Christian Action League, responded to the veto override votes in a what-goes-around-comes-around manner. "The Democrats' outrage over the alleged surprise vote overriding Governor Roy Cooper's veto on the budget doesn't ring with any moral authority," Creech said. "I remember quite well the deceit, the shenanigans employed by Democrats when they were in control of both chambers of the General Assembly and passed a state-operated lottery. The negative impact of that vote, the damage it's done to the poor and the weakest among us, lives onto this very day." (Winston-Salem Journal, 9/16/19)



## **2018 - HB 189 and GenX Pollution**

The other significant issue Butler focused on in these first years, was HB 189, the “GenX” bill passed unanimously by the House but blocked in the Senate and then amended in ways the House found unsatisfactory. The measure dealt with GenX contaminants in drinking water from the Cape Fear River that had been dumped by the chemical company Chemours, and the funding of new testing and equipment for GenX.

- Less than 24 hours after Republican leadership in the state Senate announced it would not consider a bill providing \$2.3 million for equipment and personnel to address emerging contaminants like GenX, Democrats pushed back.
- In a press conference Thursday afternoon, Rep. Deb Butler, D-New Hanover, said, "We passed it in the House and what seemed like minutes later, a memorandum came out from the Senate that said, 'No, thanks.' Now, if that wasn't orchestrated and contrived, I've never seen anything like it."
- While Butler and Democrat leadership of the N.C. Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) continued to advocate for the passage of House Bill 189, Republican leadership of the House insisted its actions were in good faith and Republican senators further explained their lack of support for the bill.
- Responding to Butler's remarks, Joseph Kyzer, a spokesman for Tim Moore, the speaker of the House, wrote, "Rep. Butler's baseless accusation of bad faith on H.B. 189 -- a bill she voted for -- is an appalling fabrication that directly contradicts comments by her colleagues in the House Democrat caucus. It is an utterly false assertion that she should immediately retract."
- Butler stood by her statement -- which included calls for North Carolina to vote in new leadership and become a national example for water quality. Butler also said saying the House Select Committee on N.C. River Quality had worked "in good faith" on the bill, only to be undercut by Republican leadership.
- "I very much wanted it to pass because we do need the equipment and we do need the manpower. I think it's fairly convenient that the Senate recessed and went home while we were still voting on it," Butler said.
- After passing the House unanimously, the bill must pass through the Senate's appropriations committee and a policy committee before reaching the floor, state Sen. Michael Lee, R-New Hanover, said Thursday.
- Lee said he first learned of the bill from state Rep. Ted Davis, R-New Hanover, on Monday and did not see the final version until Wednesday afternoon. "I personally have serious concerns about this legislation," Lee said Thursday in a text message, "as it does absolutely nothing to provide clean water to our citizens and may lead people to think otherwise." (Star-News, 1/11/18)

She opposed the amended Senate version.

- The state House of Representatives declined to address a Senate-amended version of House Bill 189 to fund testing and reporting for GenX and other contaminants Tuesday. "The House passed (its) version of the bill almost unanimously. But the Senate monkeyed with it so bad the House did not want anything to do with it," said Rep. Deb Butler of Wilmington, whose district includes the northern portion of Brunswick County.
- Butler said the bill is not expected to come up for discussion again until May's short session. "We've been in special session for 35 days and not one thing has passed related to GenX," she said. "It was 240 days ago I put a memorandum on every representatives' desk about Gen X and still we've accomplished nothing."
- Rep. Frank Iler of Oak Island said Monday that Rep. Ted Davis Jr. of New Hanover County, who introduced the original HB 189 Short Term Response to Emerging Contaminants Bill, which is now called the Water Safety Act, had concerns with amendments the Senate approved Feb. 9.
- The bill Davis proposed:
  - Directed the Department of Health and Human Services to consult with the Science Advisory Board, a board of health professionals set up by the secretaries of DHHS and the Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ), to develop health goals for the contaminants.
  - Directed the DEQ to study its permitting process to ensure it sufficiently protects public health and safety, and review its reporting and notice requirements for dischargers, then report back to the General Assembly by April 1.
  - Call for sharing water quality data with neighboring states.
  - Provided DEQ with funding for permanent positions and equipment to study water quality and safety, including purchasing a high-resolution mass spectrometer, which is considered critical for detection and analysis of chemicals such as GenX, DEQ secretary Michael S. Regan said.
  - The bill also directed the School of Government at UNC-Chapel Hill to study the civil liability of water utilities and report back by April 1.
- The House passed HB 189 by 116-0 on Jan 10, but the Senate referred it to the Committee on Rules and Operations on Jan. 12, essentially putting it on hold for the past month.
  - The Senate Select Committee on North Carolina River Water Quality — made up of Sens. Bill Rabon of Southport, Michael Lee of New Hanover County, Wesley Meredith of Cumberland County, Trudy Wade of Guilford County and Andy Wells of Catawba County — announced Feb. 7 they introduced a revised version of the HB 189.
  - The amended bill would provide \$2.4 million for DEQ and dedicate \$2 million from the budget to a policy research program at UNC-Chapel Hill.

- The bill would require DHHS to consult with the Environmental Protection Agency, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry, as well as the UNC system, to develop health goals for GenX and other related chemicals.
- DEQ would have to coordinate with environmental agencies in South Carolina, Virginia, Tennessee, Georgia and West Virginia to share information and data about contaminants in surface and ground water that often cross state borders.
- DEQ would be required to review the state's National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) permitting program and its disclosure requirements to ensure it is protecting public health and the environment, and issuing permits in a timely manner. And the bill would make sure DEQ cooperates with the EPA on any audit of the permitting program. (Brunswick Beacon, 2/13/18)

Butler filed her own GenX bill in May (which had no chance of passage) and Republicans countered with their own versions.

- The Republican bills would establish a framework to require Chemours to provide an alternate permanent water supply for private wells with elevated levels of GenX. They also would provide \$2 million in grant funding to help local governments expedite the extension of municipal water lines to homes with impacted wells. They make clear that Chemours will reimburse state taxpayers for any expenditures from this fund.
- The legislation also would allocate \$1.8 million for the Department of Environmental Quality to purchase a mass spectrometer and hire additional staff to support water quality sampling and analysis and address its permitting backlog. It would provide \$8 million for university researchers to conduct statewide sampling and analysis of GenX and other emerging contaminants in public water supplies.
- The bills also would provide more money to the Cape Fear Public Utility Authority to test a technology to treat its groundwater supply and replicate the water treatment technology in other parts of the state. They would set aside \$8 million for university researchers to conduct statewide sampling and analysis of GenX and other emerging contaminants in public water supplies.
- The Democrat bill would repeal the Hardison Amendment, a controversial state law that prevents regulators from setting a standard that is stricter than one set by the EPA..... Rep. Deb Butler of New Hanover County was one of the principal sponsors of the Democratic legislative proposal. She said the bill was crafted with input from scientists and environmentalists, "This is what the scientists and environmental community believe is necessary to get this water cleaned up, and streamline and modernize the permitting process," she said.

- Butler blasted the provision in the Republican bill giving Gov. Roy Cooper authority to close Chemours as being politically motivated. She said the General Assembly has largely worked to strip the governor's office of power since Cooper won election in late 2016.
- "Give the governor the power to shut down Chemours, put him in an untenable spot, so if he shuts them down and stops our water from being polluted, he's a job killer in the same breath," she said. (Fayetteville Observer, 5/18/18)

The short session in June 2018 led to a final version that left Butler less than satisfied.

- GenX: The budget contained funds to have the N.C. Policy Collaboratory create a drinking water contaminants baseline using state university system resources and provided \$1.3 million for equipment and time-limited positions at the N.C. Department of Environmental Quality. It was less comprehensive than previous competing Democratic and Republican bills -- both of which differed in how to approach the issue.
- N.C. Sen. Michael Lee, R-New Hanover, who was a prime sponsor of the original GOP bill, said he was satisfied with the final result. "While not as expansive as my original bill, I was happy the budget pulled a number of items from it -- including treatment to the Cape Fear Aquifer and established a statewide monitoring and early warning system for GenX and related emerging compounds in the GenX family," Lee said.
- N.C. Rep. Deb Butler, D-New Hanover, who sponsored the Democratic bill, said the final result fell far short of what was needed to address the issue of pollution in the river. "If I had my wish list however, we would have committed our resources in favor of clean drinking water and made the law tougher on polluters. We didn't do that in our budget because partisan politics sadly got in the way," she said. (Star-News, 6/28/18)

## **Gun Control**

Butler has pushed a number of gun control bills and positions.

- In March 2018, she voted against "open carry." (Star-News, 3/7/18)
- In February 2019, she co-sponsored the "Gun Violence Prevention Act" which "would require all gun owners to purchase firearm liability insurance, ban the sale or possession of bump stocks and trigger cranks, raise the age to purchase so-called assault weapons from 18 to 21 and require permits for the purchase of long guns in addition to handguns." (Wilson Daily Times, 2/17/19)
- In August 2019, she pushed a stalled "red flag law" bill. "We need six (Republicans) with the fortitude to walk into the clerk's office, affix their signature to that petition that says let's have a conversation about how to keep North Carolina safe. How hard can that be?" asked state Rep. Deb Butler, D-New Hanover. "I'm calling upon my Republican colleagues to do just that. To step up and in this moment, do something. Let this be the moment when you made history. When you did something truly courageous and made your grandchildren proud." (Winston-Salem Journal, 8/7/19)

- In May 2021, she criticized a House bill to let elected members with concealed weapons permits carry guns in prohibited places. "We just spent untold dollars protecting our means of ingress and egress. And we have a robust police force," said Rep. Deb Butler, a New Hanover County Democrat. "I just think that this is just a terrible idea." (AP, 5/10/21)

### **Confederate Monuments**

Her remarks after Charlottesville on supporting statue removal.

- State Rep. Deb Butler, D-New Hanover, said she had a hard time coming to terms with the events around the Civil War, saying her ancestors were slave owners. She said she has come to realize that history books glossing over the events of the war and slavery's role in it led many to live "under a false narrative on this subject." Butler said she supports Cooper's call. "I understand how hard it is for many Southerners to take a hard, cold look at their heritage," she said. "I think it's really time for us to take a look at the entirety of our history and not just the glorified version of it." (Star News, 8/17/17)
- In January 2019, she co-sponsored a bill to repeal the 2015 law that essentially protects Confederate memorials. (HB 10)

### **Minimum Wage**

Butler supports and has co-sponsored a number of bills related to hikes in the minimum wage to \$15 per hour including HB 366 in 2019.

- Bill Id: 2019 NC H.B. 366 (NS)
- Sponsor: Jean Farmer-Butterfield, Susan C. Fisher, Pricey Harrison, Rosa U. Gill, Carla D. Cunningham, Evelyn Terry, William O. Richardson, Mary Belk, Deb Butler, Mary Ann Black, Marcia Morey, Allison A. Dahle, Zack Hawkins
- SUMMARY: AN ACT increasing the minimum wage to fifteen dollars per hour over five years and then adjusting the minimum wage automatically each year by increases in the cost of living; ending the subminimum wage for persons with disabilities; phasing out the subminimum wage for tipped employees over eight years; ending the exemption for agricultural and domestic workers."

And she co-sponsored HB 359 which does the same for non-certified school employees.

- Bill Id: 2019 NC H.B. 359 (NS)
- Sponsor: Verla Insko, Marvin W. Lucas, Jean Farmer-Butterfield, Susan C. Fisher, Garland E. Pierce, Pricey Harrison, William D. Brisson, Elmer Floyd, Darren G. Jackson, Rosa U. Gill, Charles Graham, Phil Shepard, Carla D. Cunningham, Jon Hardister, Yvonne Lewis Holley, Rena W. Turner, Evelyn Terry, Graig R. Meyer, Cecil Brockman, William O. Richardson, John Autry, Cynthia Ball, Mary Belk, Kevin Corbin, Joe John, Amos L. Quick, III, Larry C. Strickland, Donna McDowell White, Deb Butler, Marcia Morey, Christy Clark, Ashton Wheeler Clemmons, Allison A.

Dahle, Terence Everitt, Zack Hawkins, Nasif Majeed, C. Ray Russell, Raymond E. Smith, Jr., Julie von Haefen

- SUMMARY: AN ACT TO require the hourly rate of the minimum salary for NONCERTIFIED PUBLIC SCHOOL EMPLOYEES to be at least FIFTEEN DOLLARS per hour.

### **Meals Tax-Brunswick County**

She and Rep. Frank Iler (a Republican) twice introduced a bill to let Brunswick County raise the meals tax through referendum.

- House Bill 398 - Brunswick County/ Municipal Meals Tax allows towns in Brunswick County to levy a prepared meals tax of up to one-half percent to fund beach nourishment and infrastructure needs. It can be done by resolution or referendum.
- It was officially requested by Southport and Oak Island, and was mentioned by officials of other towns. Rep. Deb Butler, who also represents Brunswick County, and I agreed to sponsor it for any town in the county that wants it and for the county, if it ever decides to do it.
- This conforms to what other counties have done, but most of them have done a full percent. As an example, this will be 10 cents on a dinner tab of \$20. (Brunswick Beacon, Frank Iler, 3/21/17)

The restaurant association was opposed to it.

- At the urging of local government officials, Reps. Frank Iler and Deb Butler recently introduced House Bill 398, which authorizes Brunswick County to collect an additional half percent meals tax from consumers on prepared food and drink served in the county. If the county chooses not to levy the tax, each of the 19 incorporated municipalities in the county will have the authority to levy the tax. If this bill passes, the new tax will be the first meals tax implemented in North Carolina in nearly 25 years. In other counties across the state, citizens have resoundingly defeated such proposals.
- Under this bill, Brunswick County consumers will be taxed on all prepared food and drinks purchased at restaurants, hotels, grocery stores, doughnut and coffee shops, and convenience stores in the county. Prepared food and beverages are already taxed a total of 6.75 percent, representing 4.75 percent distributed to the state and 2 percent allotted to the county. This new tax adds an additional half percent to each bill.
- Far from a sin or luxury tax, the meals tax isn't targeted at those with disposable income or persons splurging during a night-on-the town.
- The primary targets for this tax are Brunswick County residents who regularly rely on restaurants - people who visit the drive-thru after Little League practice, pick up coffee before a long commute or stop at the convenience store for a quick snack.

- While proponents say this new tax would be paid by visitors, tourists are predominantly in town during the busy eight- to 10-week summer season. For the rest of the year, it's residents of Brunswick County who will shoulder the new tax burden. This new meals tax would add another burden on families who are already stretched by layers of taxes and rising monthly living expenses.
- Furthermore, the meals tax singles out only one business - restaurants and other foodservice establishments - putting even more strain on local businesses that are a vital component to a healthy Brunswick County economy. In a county stressed with a high cost of living and rising property taxes, the meals tax seems like the last straw. Lynn Minges is president/CEO of the North Carolina Restaurant and Lodging Association. Reach her at (919) 844-3007 or lminges@ncrla.org. (Brunswick Beacon, 5/9/17)

### **Medicaid Expansion**

- Rep. Deb Butler, who is running for reelection, said she has brought up expansion every day since she joined the state House in 2017. "It is foremost on the legislative agenda for Democrats, because we recognize how critical it is for working families who are caught in the coverage gap. Particularly in this pandemic, we see just how many families don't have access to the health care they desperately need," said Butler, a Democrat. "If you see Democrats take charge in the Senate or in the House and maybe even just one or the other, I think you'll see Medicaid expansion is certainly our topline initiative." (CQ News, 10/29/20)

### **Miscellaneous**

- **2017**-Attended a rally against offshore oil drilling. (Brunswick Beacon, 7/18/17)
- **2017**-Tried to cut funding to crisis pregnancy centers that are pro-life. (RNO, 6/1/17)
- **2018**-Filed a bill for ratification of the ERA rooted in the un-Constitutional premise that ratification of it has not expired. "In North Carolina, state representative Deb Butler, a Wilmington, N.C., lawyer, introduced a ratification bill, although, she says, the conservative legislative leadership is intent on pushing it aside. "I wanted to at least file and get the conversation started," she says. "The public will drive this discourse.'" (Press Release, 11/6/18)
- **2019**-Opposed the "Born Alive" bill further demonstrating her abortion radicalism. "By practice, and according to the law of North Carolina, as well as federal law, all living infants in North Carolina are legally entitled to the care that they need," said Democratic Rep. Deb Butler of New Hanover County, the only legislator Wednesday to speak against the bill. The measure, she said, would have created "division between caregiver and patient." (AP, 6/5/19)
- **2019**-Opposed to more natural gas for energy needs. "We want to reduce our dependence on any type of fossil fuel, and it would be a fool's errand to explore natural gas when we haven't fully

exhausted our solar and wind options,” said State Representative Deb Butler, “Secondarily, insofar as tourism is a huge economic driver for Eastern North Carolina, I would never risk one drop of oil on our shores, because that would upend our tourism industry as well as our way of life.” (Press Release, 12/4/19)

- **2020**-Referred to President Trump as a “draft dodger.” Democratic Rep. Deb Butler, who represents parts of Wilmington in the North Carolina General Assembly , tweeted her displeasure with Trump’s visit Tuesday evening. ”I feel sick that the draft dodging bone spur President will disgrace our beloved USS North Carolina tomorrow,” Butler wrote, adding a hashtag: “#WeWillNotYield.” (RNO, 9/2/20)
- **2021**-Opposed the Republican “Return to Work” legislation, SB 116. (Winston-Salem Journal, 6/2/21)
- **2021**-Denounced Lt. Governor Robinson. “He is clearly a very ignorant and petty fellow,” said Rep. Deb Butler, a Wilmington Democrat and member of the LGBTQ community, “He is just a very small-minded, little man in a big, gruff body, which makes him a bully. And nobody likes a bully, particularly an ignorant one.” (RNO, 10/8/21)



## **Part IV Butler: The News File, 2010-22**

**2010**

### **OCT 2010 Star-News Endorsement for County Commissioner**

This election year, New Hanover County voters will replace two long-serving incumbents on the Board of Commissioners. When they take office in December, four of the five county commissioners will have served two years or less.

But with change comes a learning curve, so it will be important to consider which candidates are best equipped to jump into weighty issues such as the budget, economic development, growth and public services.

Two candidates stand out, but one has clearly demonstrated that he has the judgment, the knowledge and the wisdom to make decisions based on what's best for New Hanover County as a whole.

Rick Catlin has been active in community service here for years, and his occupation gives him an insight into environmental issues that has been lacking on the Board of Commissioners.....

His fresh approach to problem-solving would be a welcome asset, as would the addition of Democrat Deborah Butler to the board, a lawyer who also runs her own real estate brokerage in Wilmington. Her volunteer work, most notably those dealing with historic preservation and human services, gives her a good perspective on what the community needs to make it an even better place to live. And she believes that, with good planning and "surgical" cutting, the county can deliver service and become more efficient.

She understands that the current board hasn't been as responsive or as open as it should be, and she aims to change that.

Together, Catlin and Butler would bring new ideas and responsible leadership to a board that could use a strong injection of both. (Wilmington Star-News, 10/16/10)

### **OCT 2010 County Commissioner Candidate**

From illegal immigrants to neighborhood schools, candidates for New Hanover County offices debated their positions Tuesday on a variety of issues facing local and state governments at UNCW.

With the election approaching Tuesday, candidates for New Hanover County commissioner focused on budget and tax matters, Titan America's cement plant and jobs and economic development.

The two men vying for the N.C. Senate District 9 seat, Thom Goolsby and Jim Leutze, focused on political control of the capital, illegal immigration and the state budget.

For the eight candidates running for the county board of education, one issue dominated -- the diversity of the schools and support or opposition of the neighborhood school concept.

## County commissioners

The four candidates for county commissioner are Republicans Brian Berger and Rick Catlin and Democrats Deborah Butler and Sid Causey.

While they differ on some issues, Berger, Butler and Catlin all believe New Hanover County can do a better job of budgeting, managing the Cape Fear Public Utility Authority and promoting transparency.

Causey said he believes the county commissioners have done a good job, and have cut what they can. While he doesn't support tax increases, he said any cuts would have to be to non-mandatory services such as libraries, parks and museums.

"I'm not sure there's a lot left to cut," Causey said.

Berger said he wants to lower taxes and fees to promote job and business growth.

Butler said she wants to reform the way county boards are appointed.

Catlin said he will push for term limits.

Causey said he can work well with Republicans and Democrats to promote good government service. (Wilmington Star News, 10/27/10)

## 2012

### **MAR 2012 State Senate Candidate**

DEBORAH BUTLER - NEW HANOVER COUNTY

Strong State Senate candidate Deborah Butler is shown in this picture after she addressed the Black Student Union at UNC-Wilmington on April 29th. She talked about state political issues and answered students questions. Deborah is unopposed in the primary and New Hanover Democrats feel she has a good chance of unseating the GOP incumbent in November. (Press Release, 3/30/12)

### **MAY 2012 State Senate Race**

Even before the primary election, the race for New Hanover County's state Senate seat in November is heating up.

Democrat Deb Butler's campaign brought in nearly \$83,000 through April 21, easily outraising incumbent state Sen. Thom Goolsby, her opponent in November.

Goolsby's campaign raised about \$8,000 from Jan. 1 to April 21, according to campaign finance reports filed with the N.C. State Board of Elections.

Butler had more than \$77,000 remaining to spend as of the end of the reporting period;

Goolsby's campaign had \$53,000 on hand.

Butler's campaign cash included a \$50,000 personal loan, which she said demonstrated that she is "profoundly committed to winning in November."

"We are extremely organized," Butler said of her campaign. "I have a huge number of engaged volunteers who take this Senate race very seriously."

Goolsby, a Republican, said he didn't do much fundraising in the first quarter, as he was focused on his job as an attorney and helping other Republicans raise money for primary challenges. He said Thursday that he had a fundraiser scheduled for that night at the home of a Wilmington doctor and others in the near future.

"I don't think resources will be a problem for folks with a good track record about taking care of the public's business," Goolsby said. He put more than \$200,000 of his own money into the 2010 Senate race, when he won his first two-year term in the 50-member Senate.

Goolsby and Butler, both attorneys in downtown Wilmington, will square off in November in the 9th Senate District, a race expected to garner much attention during the next few months. The district includes most of New Hanover County. Neither candidate has a primary opponent.

Butler said the race would be a “bare-knuckle fist fight.” She deemed Goolsby a “polarizing figure, precisely what we do not need in the North Carolina Legislature.”

Goolsby said he wouldn’t rise to any “negative campaigning on her part.”

”This should be about issues, not about her mean and spiteful comments,” he said.

Butler recently demanded that The Big Talker FM allow her equal time on the radio after Goolsby filled in for morning talk show host Chad Adams. The station obliged, and Butler said she would host Adams’ show from 6-10 a.m. May 21.

The nonpartisan N.C. FreeEnterprise Foundation, which keeps a close eye on General Assembly races across the state, characterizes the 9th District as a “swing” district, which generally means a Republican or Democrat could win there. The rating takes into account voter registrations, recent voter performance, demographics and other information.

Jonathan Kappler, FreeEnterprise Foundation research director, said he was surprised Butler had more money on hand than Goolsby at this point.

”Sen. Goolsby will be tough to beat in the fall, but that could be a close election, and even at this early date it’s clear that that race is one to keep an eye on,” he wrote in an email. (Wilmington Star News, 5/5/12)

### **MAY 2012    Gay Activist**

Deb Butler [<http://debutler4senate.com/home>], a Wilmington Democrat challenging Republican state Sen. Thom Goolsby [<http://www.thomgoolsby.com/>] in the November election, will participate in a protest against a preacher who, in a recent sermon, advocated putting lesbians and gays in pens 50 or 100 miles long with electrified fences and flying over and dropping food in for them. The Rev. Charles Worley of Providence Road Baptist Church in Maiden said it was his plan to get rid of the “lesbians and queers.”

”You know what, in a few years they’ll die,” he said in a videotaped sermon posted on YouTube that has garnered national attention.

Butler plans to speak at a “peaceful protest” from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. Sunday on the lawn of the Catawba County Justice Center in Newton, according to a news release from her campaign.

She plans to leave Wilmington on Saturday in a convoy she’s calling the “Carolina Caravan Against Hate,” with stops in Chapel Hill, Winston-Salem and Boone.

But in the news release announcing the event, Butler also took a jab at Goolsby for his support of the recent constitutional amendment banning gay marriage. The amendment passed in a statewide vote earlier this month.

”Rather than working on jobs like he promised back 2010, my opponent sponsored the Amendment that forced this hatred into the public square,” she said. “It’s a matter of priorities. We should be competing to

bring more companies to North Carolina, not giving them reason to stay away. We've seen from national examples that states focused on dividing citizens and discriminating against their own have a harder time attracting top tier companies that bring good jobs with them. I think North Carolinians are more concerned about issues like job creation and preserving education, and that's what I'll focus on when I'm a state senator."

Butler is challenging Goolsby in Senate District 9, which includes most of New Hanover County. We have a call and text out to Goolsby this morning for a response. (Star News, 5/25/12)

### **OCT 2012 Butler-Goolsby Debate**

--In a broadcast candidate forum that had the air of a courtroom trial, lawyers Deb Butler and Thom Goolsby answered questions about job creation, taxes and education Monday night at WHQR's MC Ermy Gallery.

Butler, a Democrat, is challenging Republican incumbent Goolsby for the N.C. District 9 Senate seat in November's general election.

Goolsby pointed to Republican accomplishments since taking control of the legislature in 2010, including lowering sales and gasoline taxes, funding film incentives and giving small businesses a tax credit.

"You can't tax a state into prosperity," he said.

Goolsby also said Republicans passed medical malpractice and tort reform, and repealed involuntary annexation.

"We worked very hard to see to it that North Carolina could be poised to come out of this economic recession."

Butler said the Republican legislature's mantra is "cut taxes, deregulate and hope for the best."

"That is not sufficient," she said. "We need bold, innovative strategies. This is an emergency. This is a jobs emergency."

She slammed Goolsby for running as a jobs candidate, saying he had not put forth any legislation to create jobs.

"That's not how you react in the light of an emergency," she said.

She urged investigating micro-lending policies and trying to lure more firms such as PPD and AAIPharma to the state.

The candidates were asked what the state has to do to help local school systems become a desirable place for teachers to work.

Goolsby said the state has to put more money into the classroom, including targeting reading programs. He said Republicans gave teachers their first pay raise in four years, balanced their state health care plan and gave the teachers' retirement plan a 1 percent cost-of-living adjustment.

"We had an increase in the graduation rate in North Carolina, we had an increase in the standardized test rates here in New Hanover County on both of those fronts," he said.

Butler took Goolsby to task for suggesting he had added jobs or dollars to the education budget.

"Tom, that is a fiction. It is a lie," she said. "You have laid off thousands of educators in this state."

She said the test scores he proudly referenced were the result of the Smart Start early education program started in 1993, which saw its budget cut 20 percent under Republican rule. (Star-News, 10/9/12)

### **OCT 2012    Runs Militant Pro-Abortion Ad Against Goolsby**

State Sen. Thom Goolsby's Democratic opponent in the general election, Deb Butler, has chosen a visually frank political advertisement to kick off her TV campaign against the Republican.

As her campaign says, it may be the first ever appearance of a trans-vaginal ultrasound wand in a political ad.

Goolsby, who represents New Hanover County, supported the bill last year that required women to receive ultrasound examinations before getting an abortion. The trans-vaginal wand is one method of conducting an ultrasound exam.

The new law doesn't specify which kind of ultrasound method must be used; only that it be conducted four hours before an abortion, and that the image be described to the woman. The trans-vaginal method is used typically in early-stage pregnancy. It had not been considered controversial until Virginia legislators tried to require the wand in an abortion bill earlier this year, but that language was removed.

Butler, who is a lawyer, said Wednesday that she has researched the medical issues and learned that the wand could be used in a number of circumstances. The main issue is, she said, "I don't think the legislature should be part of that conversation between a woman and her doctor."

In her ad, Butler shows one of the devices and says, "Few would dare show you this, but this is Thom Goolsby's contribution to women's health."

Butler says as a cervical cancer survivor she also criticizes Goolsby, a Wilmington lawyer, for voting to defund Planned Parenthood's women's health programs, which include cancer screenings and do not include abortions.

Goolsby, reached by phone Wednesday, read a prepared statement in response: "Never forget, she's Occupy Wilmington's lawyer. Her economic plans are so radical and devastating to our economy that she's trying to shift attention away from this fact. I'll continue to focus on jobs and the economy."

The General Assembly passed the bill along party lines last year and then overrode the governor's veto. However, the law is on hold because Planned Parenthood challenged in court the requirement that the ultrasound image be described in detail.

Paige Johnson , spokeswoman for Planned Parenthood of Central North Carolina, said, "Last year's legislative session was the worst on record for women in North Carolina. I applaud Deb Butler for holding her opponent accountable for voting against women and women's health 100 percent of the time."

Tami Fitzgerald , executive director of the N.C. Values Coalition , which campaigned for the new law, pointed out that ultrasounds have been required before abortions since 1994, under administrative rules adopted by Gov. Jim Hunt . She said the new law provides women with additional information through the verbal description of the ultrasound.

"If ever there was a campaign ad that deserved a 'fact check,' this is it," Fitzgerald said. "... I find it ironic that a Democrat candidate would attack a Republican senator on the basis of rules adopted under the administration of Democrat Gov. Jim Hunt ." (Star-News, 10/10/12)

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A trans-vaginal wand is part of a campaign television ad in a North Carolina legislative race.

Democrat Deb Butler of Wilmington is running a commercial this week in which she holds a wand used to perform a medically invasive form of an ultrasound. Butler calls the wand Republican Sen. Thom Goolsby's "contribution to women's health."

Goolsby voted for a 2011 law that would require a woman to receive an ultrasound four hours before she gets an abortion. A federal judge has since blocked enforcement of that provision and others related to the ultrasound.

The law doesn't require use of a trans-vaginal wand, but such devices often are necessary for an ultrasound early in a pregnancy. (AP, 10/11/12)

### **OCT 2012 Environment NC Endorsement**

Senate 9: Deb Butler believes in community planning and responsible growth and energy conservation. She is running against Senator Thom Goolsby, who has a lifetime 0% score for his votes in favor of offshore drilling, fracking, and ignoring sea level rise science, among others. (Press Release, 10/16/12)

### **OCT 2012 Overview of Race**

Voters in N.C. Senate District 9 have a clear choice in the Nov. 6 general election. The two candidates running for the seat couldn't be farther apart in their stands on taxes, job creation, education and women's issues.

A prime example of the divide separating Thom Goolsby, the Republican incumbent, and Democratic challenger Deb Butler is the controversial business tax exemption approved last year by the General Assembly as part of a state budget deal.

Originally touted as being a tax break for small businesses, the exemption has no cap on the size of businesses that qualify. The way the tax credit works is that businesses can claim an exemption for the first \$50,000 of income, meaning a business would pay about \$3,500 less in taxes -- costing the state about \$336 million a year.

During a candidate forum at radio station WHQR earlier this month, the two candidates sparred over the exemption, provoking one of the most-heated exchanges of the event.

Goolsby, 51, a lawyer in private practice and president of Empowered Investor Media Inc., not only defended the exemption, but said he would take it himself. He criticized Butler for opposing the exemption for small businesses.

"She thinks somehow that's robbery," Goolsby said. "Well, Ms. Butler, I'll have you know I earned that money. I didn't take it in any kind of government Obama stimulus money for a radio program, I actually earned it and I will take my tax credit."

Goolsby's jab about stimulus money used for a radio program was in reference to the "Retrofit Radio Show" hosted by Butler in her capacity as a former trustee for the Cape Fear Green Building Alliance. The 13-part series about home energy efficiency was funded by a grant awarded to the alliance from the N.C. Green Business Fund and the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act. Butler said she volunteered to host the show and was not paid.

Butler, 51, a lawyer and a managing partner at The Butler Firm PLLC, and former broker in charge of Port City Properties, said she supports a tax break for small businesses, but criticized Goolsby and other legislators for not capping the exemption when they had a chance.

"You, sir, and other lobbyists and legislators, are not small business," Butler said. "You had an opportunity to cap it on several occasions and you refused to do it. And you quickly say, 'Well 1 to 2 percent of the millionaires out there are the only ones who got it.' I don't care if it's 10 cents that went in your pocket instead of a pocket of a teacher, it's unconscionable."

The tax break at one time included a cap that said only partners or owners of businesses with less than \$825,000 revenue would be eligible. That cap was removed before the budget bill was voted on by the state Senate, according to a June 3 story in the News & Observer.

Perhaps the most-publicized episode of the campaign so far has been Butler's use of a trans-vaginal ultrasound wand during a television commercial attacking Goolsby for his support of a North Carolina law that requires women to have ultrasound exams before getting abortions.

Butler doesn't directly reference the wand -- sometimes used for early-stage pregnancy exams -- during the commercial, but holds it as she blasts Goolsby.



”Few would dare show you this, but this is Thom Goolsby’s contribution to women’s health,” Butler says in the commercial. “He promised us his first priority would be jobs, but instead he’s following us into the doctor’s office.”

Goolsby issued a prepared response to the commercial that essentially said Butler was trying to shift focus of the campaign away from her economic plans, describing them as “radical and devastating.”

The abortion bill became law last year when Gov. Beverly Perdue’s veto was overridden by the Republican-led General Assembly. The new law is on hold after being challenged in court. At issue is a requirement that the ultrasound image be described in detail to a woman seeking an abortion.

The two candidates do agree the state needs more jobs. Goolsby points to tax reduction as the key to attracting businesses to the state. Butler urges the use of micro-lending and targeting biotech firms like PPD and AAIPharma.

On the issue of education, Butler chided Goolsby for supporting legislation that cost teachers’ jobs. Goolsby pointed to a teacher pay raise and higher graduation rates as accomplishments on his watch.

While Democrat Butler holds a slight voter-registration edge, a deciding factor for both candidates on Election Day could be the unaffiliated who make up nearly a third of voters in the district that encompasses New Hanover County.

Members of the General Assembly, other than top officers, are paid \$13,951 a year, with an expense allowance of \$559 a month. (Star-News, 10/20/12)

### **OCT 2012 Contentious Race**

-Democrat Deb Butler and Republican state Sen. Thom Goolsby are locked in a contentious race for New Hanover County’s state Senate seat.

Both candidates have slung mud in recent television ads. We’ll take two of them below -- one from each side -- and provide an analysis to help show whether they are fact, fiction or somewhere in between.

Butler ad: “Failure”

Claim: “Goolsby sponsored 41 bills (in the state Senate in 2011 and 2012). Not one of those bills had anything to do with job creation.”

Analysis: In his first, two-year term in the 50-member Senate, Goolsby was the “primary” sponsor of 41 bills, according to information on the General Assembly website, [ncleg.net](http://ncleg.net).

Of those 41, clearly most weren’t intended as “jobs bills,” such as proposals to reform campaign finance laws, designate a state butterfly, incorporate Castle Hayne and permit terminal groins along the coast.

But Goolsby countered that at least a couple of the bills that he was the “primary” sponsor of -- including Senate Bill 378 (Energy Crops for Biofuels Feedstocks) -- would help create jobs.

That bill, Goolsby said, would allow farmers to use more land to grow certain crops to be used in ethanol fuel production at a proposed refinery in Sampson County built by Wilmington-based Chemtex International Inc. The company plans to build an ethanol plant to convert high-energy grass varieties into 20 million gallons of ethanol a year. The plant is expected to create 65 full-time jobs, with another 250 expected for people who grow and deliver the feedstock grasses, The Associated Press reported in August.

Goolsby also said that a bill he sponsored which allowed property owners in the Monkey Junction area to decide through petitions whether they wanted to be annexed led to the deannexation of that area and kept property owners there from having to pay additional taxes. As a result, they would have more money to spend elsewhere to help the economy, Goolsby said.

Goolsby also suggested that it’s misleading to base his record on job creation only on the bills of which he was the primary sponsor. He said he also was a “co-sponsor” or voted for many other bills that he said would create jobs by cutting spending, lowering taxes and reducing regulations on businesses and individuals.

”When you keep money in people’s pockets so they can hire more employees and buy goods and services, it is absolutely a job creator,” Goolsby said.

He also pointed out that he voted in favor of legislation that extended the state’s film tax incentives for a year.

Butler said Goolsby is simply following the Republican line about less spending and less regulation. But that, she said, isn’t enough in a “jobs emergency.”

Butler argued that more direct intervention is needed, such as finding ways to extend capital to small businesses and building on the strengths of eastern North Carolina, such as the biotech industry and marine research and development.

Summary: It’s safe to say most of the bills Goolsby was the primary sponsor of had nothing to do with job creation. But it’s false to say none of them did and misleading to suggest that he did nothing to try to create jobs in his first two years in the Senate. Whether he did enough is open for interpretation.

Goolsby ad: “Lefty”

Claim: “The radical group Occupy Wall Street, Deb Butler supported them. Obama stimulus money? She took it to start her own personal radio show. And your taxes? Deb Butler said raise them.”

Analysis: We’ll take the claims one by one. First, on the “Occupy” movement, Butler appeared before the Wilmington City Council about a year ago to ask the city to approve a permit to let the group camp overnight in a park near City Hall. Butler said she represented the group pro bono and was there to argue in favor of its members’ First Amendment rights to free speech and assembly, not to advocate for their philosophies or message.

"The denial of a permit is an unconstitutional restriction of a First Amendment right," Butler told city council members.

Goolsby said Butler chose to give her pro bono time to that group.

"Not a group I'd choose," he added.

Second, "The Retrofit Radio Show" on Saturday mornings on The Big Talker FM was funded by a grant through the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, commonly known as the "stimulus." Butler hosted the show as a former board member of the Cape Fear Green Building Alliance.

Butler said she believed the grant was worth \$3,000 to \$4,000 and paid for a 13-week educational series about saving money through energy efficiency. The money went to the radio station, Butler said. She wasn't paid, and she disputed the language in the ad that it was her "personal" show.

Butler said she didn't see any problem with spending the tax money educating people on how to save more than that in energy costs.

"This is a topic that should not be exploited for partisan purposes," she said.

Many Republicans who consider President Barack Obama's \$800 billion economic stimulus program as wasteful government spending have used it to attack their Democratic opponents.

Goolsby said he took no stimulus money.

And third, did Butler say your taxes should be raised? Yes. The Goolsby ad cited an April 2010 StarNews article in which Butler, who was running for New Hanover County commissioner at the time, was quoted as saying she supported an additional quarter-cent sales tax in the county. At the time, the county commissioners sought the extra tax in a May 2010 referendum -- which voters approved -- to help stave off cuts to non-mandated services, such as libraries, parks and senior services and lessen potential property tax increases.

Butler said she believed the sales tax was a "fairer" way to deal with the budgetary shortfall. Sales taxes would be paid by everyone who buys goods in the county, including tourists, rather than putting the entire burden on property owners alone.

Butler also said that she, like many Democrats, would have supported the extension of a three-quarter-cent state sales tax, which Republicans in charge of the General Assembly allowed to expire last year. Leading Democrats had argued that the tax should have been kept in place to help avoid spending cuts Republicans were making to public education.

"I probably would have (supported extending the sales tax) because education is so important to me," Butler said.

Said Goolsby: "I've not voted anywhere, anytime to increase taxes on anybody, and I'm not about to."

Summary: The three claims in the ad are largely true, but some context should help voters decide how effective they are as attacks against Butler. (Star-News, 10/30/12)

### **NOV 2012 Loses Election**

Despite a grueling race for the N.C. Senate District 9 seat that gained national attention for its personal attacks, re-elected Republican incumbent Thom Goolsby said he will focus on serving the people of New Hanover County, not on himself.

Goolsby said he think voters focused on the work he's done over the last two years to reduce taxes and over-regulation, and to get people back to work, rather than on Democratic opponent Deb Butler's attack commercials on TV.

"I appreciate the trust and confidence the people of this county have put in me," Goolsby said. Issues he plans to tackle in the next two years are beach nourishment, tax policies, the environment and education, he said.

"We are going to be tackling a lot of tough issues," Goolsby said. "We are going to push forward on getting this state solvent, getting our people back to work."

Political advertising for the race drew landed national press when Butler displayed a trans-vaginal ultrasound wand during a TV commercial attacking Goolsby for his support of a law that requires women to have ultrasound exams before getting abortions.

Goolsby and Butler also clashed over the controversial business tax exemption approved last year by the General Assembly as part of a state budget deal.

Originally billed as a tax break for small businesses, the exemption has no cap on the size of businesses that qualify. Businesses can claim an exemption for the first \$50,000 of income, meaning a business would pay about \$3,500 less in taxes.

Goolsby, 51, a lawyer in private practice and president of Empowered Investor Media Inc., defends the exemption, and said he would take it himself. He criticized Butler for opposing the exemption.

Butler, 51, a lawyer and a managing partner at The Butler Firm PLLC, and former broker in charge of Port City Properties, said she supports a tax break for small businesses, but criticized Goolsby and other legislators for not capping the exemption when they had a chance.

The tax break at one time included a cap that said only partners or owners of businesses with less than \$825,000 revenue would be eligible. That cap was removed before the budget bill was voted on by the state Senate, according to a June 3 story in the News & Observer.

The abortion bill Butler referenced in her commercial became law last year when Gov. Beverly Perdue's veto was overridden by the Republican-led General Assembly. The new law is on hold after being challenged in court. At issue is a requirement that the ultrasound image be described in detail to a woman seeking an abortion. Goolsby employed a commercial featuring his wife to defend his stand on women's

issues. Butler's follow-up commercial featured a longtime physician critical of the incumbent's support of the law. (Star-News, 11/7/12)

**2013**

**JAN 2013 Lost Election**

Women voters are the largest voting bloc in New Hanover County, making up more than 50 percent of actual voters in both 2008 and 2012.

Nationally, women's issues were discussed frequently as campaigns courted the female vote, but only one local candidate continually brought it to the forefront in New Hanover County.

Deb Butler, a Democrat who ran an ultimately unsuccessful state Senate campaign against Thom Goolsby, ran an ad that showed her wielding a transvaginal probe against Goolsby's record on women's health issues.

"He promised us his first priority would be jobs," she said in the commercial. "But instead he's following you into the doctor's office."

The ads, which sparked conversation across the state, also received national attention.

The right-leaning N.C. Values Coalition ran ads against Butler after seeing it.

"Her ads were extreme, untrue and voters knew it," said Tami Fitzgerald, the N.C. Values Coalition director. Fitzgerald said ads like Butler's are not the way to target women. (Star-News, 1/4/13)

**SEP 2013 Appears At Home of Mother Whose Son Killed in Gang Shooting**

Residents from the Forest Hills and Beaumont neighborhoods gathered at 5 p.m. Monday on Mercer Avenue at the home of Darlene Williams, mother of 18-year-old Joseph David "JD" Williams, who was killed Saturday in a nearby shooting.

About 30 well-wishers brought food, flowers and funeral donations for the mother of the slain man, as well as emotional support for a family reeling from loss and calling for an end to area violence.

The donations and support were organized by Lynn Leake after Williams was killed in front of her home on Forest Hills Drive.

"It has been emotional for us, but we have an opportunity here in our neighborhood to make a huge difference in someone's life," Leake said. "A lot of us have been woken up by this. We have changed in a huge way, and I think this community is not done helping."

Lynn Shoemaker, another area resident, characterized the Forest Hills neighborhood as a "bulls eye" trapped between territory being fought over by rival gangs.

"This crime is coming from outside the community, not within," Shoemaker said. "It isn't us against them in this community, so we made a decision to open our doors to one another and support this family."

Shoemaker said neighborhood residents use email and social media to stay in touch and organize anti-crime efforts and support for families like the Williamses.

"We want to show that one mother's loss is everyone's loss," Shoemaker said. "It's been hard for us sandwiched between two gangs. Several years ago we made a conscious decision to support each other."

Wilmington lawyer and former N.C. Senate candidate Deb Butler heard about the event from friends in the area and, after seeing "mean-spirited" social media postings about the victim, visited with a donation of drinks to speak with Darlene Williams.

"I hope that after the dust settles, she (Williams) can take some small comfort from this," Butler said. "Violence knows no boundaries. I wanted to extend my support and show some love."

Gloria Williams, the victim's aunt, explained that her family was frustrated with the "hateful" response on social media to her nephew's killing and his characterization as being involved in possible gang activity.

"JD was a loving child. He was on the street out of peer pressure, not because he was doing bad," Williams said. "We want the violence to stop. Killing the boy who shot JD won't bring him back. We just want it to stop, so we will pray for him, too."

Pastor Eria Nesbitt, also an aunt of the victim, said she was very grateful for the community response. (Star News, 9/24/13)

**2016**

**AUG 2016    Protests At Trump Rally in Wilmington (RNO Doesn't Mention Ex-Candidate)**

More than 100 protesters lined up a couple hundred feet outside UNC-Wilmington's Trask Coliseum. .  
"I really believed once Donald Trump started gaining in the polls that he would knuckle down and learn some foreign policy," Wilmington resident Deborah Butler, 55, said. "He hasn't. He hasn't begun to learn anything." (RNO, 8/9/16)

**2017**

**JAN 2017 Vying For Vacant State House Seat**

Nine Democrats vying for the seat vacated by former Rep. Susi Hamilton tried to sell themselves to a room of Democrats during a forum Monday night.

"I've never picked a fight, but I've never backed down from a fight either," said Deb Butler, who ran unsuccessfully for state Senate in 2012.

In addition to Butler, the candidates are Andrew Barnhill, who unsuccessfully ran against N.C. Sen. Michael Lee, R-New Hanover, last year, New Hanover County NAACP President Deborah Maxwell, Northwest Mayor James Knox, Jan Brewington, Dawson Gage, Judy Justice, Brenda McMillan, Kojo Nantambu and Harper Peterson.

Nantambu did not appear at Monday's event, which featured a standing-room-only audience at the New Hanover County historic courthouse to hear candidates looking to replace Hamilton, who was named N.C. secretary of natural and cultural resources.

The new representative will be selected at 7 p.m. Wednesday at the Leland town hall by a four-member panel of Democrats from New Hanover and Brunswick counties.

**Issues**

The candidates identified education, teacher pay, raising minimum wage, confronting the heroin epidemic and repealing the state's controversial House Bill 2 law as top priorities.

"Education, to me, is not only important for students to be ready for the workforce, but it's a social issue," Peterson said.

"HB2 must be repealed," Barnhill said. "We have to work to get it to the floor for a vote."

Barnhill said the new representative should also work "across the aisle" with freshman N.C. Rep. Holly Grange, R-New Hanover, who has identified addressing the region's opiate epidemic as a top priority.

**Doing the work**

Several candidates said keeping constituents informed was essential and the personal sacrifices were worth it to serve in the office.

"To me, serving is a reason for existing," Justice said.

"This is a privilege and a joy, rather than a job," Gage said.



Knox and Maxwell said they would listen first, then help determine what the needs are for either serving in office or campaigning for re-election.

"In order to serve the people, you must know the needs of the people," Maxwell said. "We have to be clear about finding out what the needs are."

Knox got the night's biggest laugh when the candidates were asked if the legislative salary of about \$13,000 was enough.

"I've been the mayor of Northwest, which I've been doing for ..." Knox said while holding his hand in a "zero" gesture. (Star-News, 1/31/17)

### **FEB 2017     Appointed to Vacant State House Seat**

- Wilmington lawyer Deborah Butler was voted the appointee to fill state Rep. Susi Hamilton's Dist 18 seat in the General Assembly with overwhelming support from New Hanover County's Democratic Party representatives.

Two voting members each from New Hanover County and Brunswick County Democratic Parties made up the executive committee electors who met Feb. 1 at Leland Town Hall.

Earla Pope and Millie Elledge were the New Hanover County representatives. Carl Parker and Charles Carroll represented Brunswick County.

The four heard brief statements from nine applicants for Hamilton's seat: Andrew Barnhill, Jan Bruington, Butler, Dawson Gage, Judy Justice, James Knox, Deborah Maxwell, Brenda Faye McMillian and Harper Peterson.

Executive committee votes were weighted by population, giving Brunswick County 101 votes and New Hanover County 158 votes.

Elledge designated 54 of her votes for Butler and Pope committed her total of 79 votes to Butler, giving more than enough votes to avoid a runoff.

A majority of 130.5 votes of the 259 total votes was required for a nominee to be elected.

Carroll voted his entire allotment, 50.5 votes, for Knox, the mayor of Northwest. Parker gave Knox 40.5 votes, allotting his remaining 10 votes to McMillian, the only other Brunswick County applicant.

The only other candidates receiving votes were Barnhill with 15 votes and Peterson with 10 votes, both coming from Elledge.

The decision will be recommended to Gov. Roy Cooper by the party representatives. State law requires Cooper to accept the recommendation.

Cooper pulled Hamilton out of her seat to serve in his administration as secretary of the Department of Natural and Cultural Resources to oversee North Carolina state parks, museums, aquariums and historic sites, the State Archives and Library, and arts programs, taking on additional duties that were originally part of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources.

Hamilton served as state representative of District 18 since 2010. She won her second term in the House in 2012, when she began representing Brunswick County residents. Hamilton was re-elected to the seat in 2014 and again in the November 2016 general election. District 18 used to cover part of New Hanover County but was realigned in 2012. It is now made up of Wilmington in New Hanover County and the northern end of Brunswick County.

Before the vote, Leland resident Veronica Carter spoke to all the candidates: “Whoever is selected, please don’t let this be the last time you are on this side of the river.”

”While I have not spent time in Brunswick County. I look forward to it,” Butler said, adding she has Brunswick County clients and supporters who will ensure she comes back over the bridge. “There are a number of people here who will hold my feet to the flame.” (Brunswick Beacon, 2/7/17)

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-- Wilmington attorney Deb Butler was selected to fill the N.C. House seat vacated last week by former Rep. Susi Hamilton.

”Well, it is certainly a privilege and an honor,” said Butler, who was selected Wednesday night by a four-member panel of Democrats comprising an executive committee from New Hanover and Brunswick counties in a forum at the Leland town hall. “I will do my dead-level best to serve you with honor and with dignity.”

Butler, who unsuccessfully ran for state Senate in 2012, was one of 10 candidates hoping to replace Hamilton, who was named by Gov. Roy Cooper to serve as N.C. secretary of natural and cultural resources. She will represent the 18th District, which encompasses downtown Wilmington and the northeastern portion of Brunswick County.

In addition to Butler, the candidates are Andrew Barnhill, who unsuccessfully ran against N.C. Sen. Michael Lee, R-New Hanover, last year, New Hanover County NAACP President Deborah Maxwell, Northwest Mayor James Knox, Jan Brewington, Dawson Gage, Judy Justice, Brenda McMillian, Kojo Nantambu and Harper Peterson.

The candidates for the job participated in a forum earlier this week in front of a packed house at the New Hanover County historic courthouse.

”I would like to thank each and every one of them for their interest in serving,” said N.C. Sen. Don Davis, D-Greene, who served as the executive committee’s secretary. “But at the end of the evening, just one will be selected to serve.”

The committee members' votes were weighted according to the population each county contributes to the district. The New Hanover County members, Millie Elledge and Earla Pope, had 79 votes each and Brunswick's Chip Carroll and Carl Parker had 50.5 votes each.

Butler said she would work to fight "regressive policies" she said have come out of Raleigh.

"If you know me at all, you know it's going to be a firestorm, so watch out," Butler said.

Davis said the governor is bound by statute to support the nominee. If Cooper doesn't accept the nomination, he said, Butler will become the House member after seven days. (Star News, 2/2/17)

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Democrats in New Hanover and Brunswick counties have picked a replacement for N.C. Rep. Susi Hamilton, who resigned from the legislature to become Gov. Roy Cooper's secretary of natural and cultural resources.

Deb Butler, a Wilmington attorney, will serve the remainder of Hamilton's two-year term. She'll be formally appointed by Cooper based on the recommendation of the local Democrats, who chose her over nine other contenders for the seat.

Butler, who is gay, will be the second openly LGBT member of this year's legislature. When the legislature approved House Bill 2 last year, no openly LGBT people were serving. Chris Sgro, director of the LGBT advocacy group Equality NC, was later appointed to serve the remainder of the 2016 session. After he left, Democratic Rep. Cecil Brockman of High Point announced he is bisexual.

Butler ran unsuccessfully for an N.C. Senate seat in 2012. She was endorsed by Equality NC in her bid for Hamilton's seat.

We have another #lgbt member of the #ncga! @equalitync board member Deb Butler has been appointed to fill @RepSusiHamilton seat. #ncpol-- Chris Sgro (@cristoferosgro) February 2, 2017 //

Butler's appointment leaves one seat to be filled in the House. Durham County Democrats haven't yet selected a replacement for Rep. Larry Hall, who is now Cooper's secretary of veterans affairs.

According to the Wilmington Star-News, Butler said she plans to fight "regressive policies" of the current legislature. "If you know me at all, you know it's going to be a firestorm, so watch out," she said. (RNO, 2/2/17)

## **FEB 2017 Profile**

-- Deb Butler settled into a chair at her small Wilmington law firm the day after being appointed to fill former Rep. Susi Hamilton's vacated seat. She's asked if she's a little tired.

"I am," Butler admitted during her first interview as the newly minted District 18 N.C. House representative. "I was so excited, I couldn't sleep."

That night featured numerous phone calls of congratulations, including from Wilmington Mayor Bill Saffo, N.C. Sen. Michael Lee, R-New Hanover, and from Hamilton.

She noticed that a camera was raised as she begins talking about film incentives, the region's opiate epidemic and House Bill 2.

"See if you can take a couple pounds off and put some mayonnaise on the lens," Butler joked.

Butler, whose previous political experience included an unsuccessful run for state Senate in 2012, may need that sense of humor. The New Hanover County Democrat heads to the state capital as the lowest member on a totem pole that represents the minority party in the state's General Assembly.

That's OK, Butler said.

"You've got to start somewhere," she said. "I like being an underdog. You can speak louder without fear. It's kind of liberating, truthfully."

Her predecessor, who was appointed N.C. secretary of natural and cultural resources, said Butler will be ready to serve immediately.

"Her professional background, years of experience and personal commitment to Southeastern North Carolina is going to serve her well and serve the people of the 18th District well in the General Assembly," Hamilton said.

## Issues

Butler's views on issues nearly mirror those of Hamilton's when it comes to film industry incentives and the state's controversial HB2 law, which has been decried as discriminatory against the gay and transgender communities.

"We need to repeal it," said Butler, who was sworn in to her position on Monday in Raleigh.

She said funding for the film industry needs to be restored to the incentive-based program that existed before the program was converted to a grant-based program with a capped budget. The state's once-thriving film industry has since diminished, as film companies took advantages of more generous programs in other states.

"I am extremely disappointed that our film industry doesn't have the blessing of the Legislature," Butler said. "They crushed it. We built 30 years of talent in the film industry and they've all left for Georgia or California."

She said she plans to back Gov. Roy Cooper's plans upon arriving at the state House, including supporting expanding Medicaid, which was something resisted by former Gov. Pat McCrory, a Republican, and the GOP-dominated General Assembly.

"I'm sure my focus is going to align with the governor's agenda," Butler said. "I know the battle lines have been drawn on Medicaid (expansion) and HB2."

She said the state must do more to address mental health and the opiate crisis, calling them diseases that need to be treated.

"There's this lingering belief that substance abuse and alcoholism are a character failure," Butler said. "They're as much a disease as diabetes or cancer and we need to treat them as such." (Star-News, 2/7/17)

### **FEB 2017 Introduces Gay Agenda Bills**

The following information was released by the Human Rights Campaign:

Today, Equality NC and the Human Rights Campaign (HRC) praised the introduction of companion bills in the North Carolina House and Senate to repeal HB2 and replace it with statewide, LGBTQ-inclusive, non-discrimination protections -- the same commonsense protections that exist in 19 states and more than 100 cities across the country. The comprehensive legislation was introduced by Representatives Pricey Harrison, Deb Butler, Kelly Alexander, Susan Fisher and Senators Terry Van Duyn, Mike Woodard, and Jay Chaudhuri.

My hometown of Greensboro has suffered enormously from economic losses because of HB2, and the potential economic harm from the NCAA pull-out for the next 6 years is even greater. Representative Pricey Harrison, one of the sponsors of the House legislation. The bill introduced today is a clean repeal of HB2 and provides enhanced statewide non-discrimination protections. This bill reflects North Carolina values, unlike HB2. It is long overdue and we will work our hardest to enact this legislation.

HB2 denies equal protections to our LGBTQ brothers and sisters, said Senator Terry Van Duyn, one of the sponsors of the Senate legislation. It targets them, and excludes them from the same rights and assurances many of us take for granted. I cannot ignore the unfair and unequal persecution of some members of my community while enjoying protections that they don't have. HB2 codifies the marginalization of people just because of who they are. That kind of discrimination is not only cruel, but it is bad for North Carolina and it is bad for business. It is time that we repeal HB2 and reaffirm that every citizen in North Carolina deserves the opportunity to pursue their dreams and to be treated with equal respect. Then we can say North Carolina is truly open for business.

It's a fact that every single day, HB2 has hurt our economy. It's a fact, that lesbian, gay, bisexual, queer and especially transgender people, like myself, are at direct risk for discrimination and even violence because of this awful law, said Equality NC Director of Transgender Policy Ames Simmons. Repealing HB2 is just the first step to fixing our state and making sure we are open for business. Our goal should not be mediocrity but excellence. We need fully inclusive, comprehensive

non-discrimination protections. Senator Berger and House Speaker Moore must immediately repeal HB2, and enact common sense protections.

The economic fallout over HB2 continues to mount, and it's far past time for lawmakers to take action by repealing and replacing this vile, reckless law, said HRC Field Director Marty Rouse. The only law in the nation that mandates discrimination against transgender people, HB2 is an unprecedented attack on LGBTQ North Carolinians and visitors to the state. By repealing it and replacing it with fully inclusive, commonsense non-discrimination protections, the state can finally begin to repair the incredible harm HB2 has caused.

The comprehensive repeal and replace legislation introduced today comes after the North Carolina Sports Association sent a letter to lawmakers warning of a loss of NCAA championship games through 2022 if HB2 is not immediately repealed. In the letter, the North Carolina Sports Association warned lawmakers that the NCAA decision could cost the state at least another half a billion dollars in economic activity when other sports organizations follow the NCAA's lead in moving events out of the state. In November 2016, Forbes estimated that the state had already lost hundreds of millions of dollars in business due to HB2.

In November, North Carolina Governor Pat McCrory became the only incumbent governor from either party to lose on election day specifically because he championed and signed HB2 into law. North Carolina polling released by HRC and Equality NC found that HB2 was the number one issue leading to Governor Pat McCrory's defeat -- the only incumbent governor from either party to lose on election day. The survey found that 62 percent of voters opposed HB2, while only 30 percent supported the law. HB2 was also listed as the leading reason to vote against McCrory -- with 57 percent citing the bill, 17 points above any other issue.

Equality NC is a statewide organization working to secure equal rights and justice for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer North Carolinians. For more information, please visit [www.equalitync.org](http://www.equalitync.org)

The Human Rights Campaign is America's largest civil rights organization working to achieve lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer equality. HRC envisions a world where LGBTQ people are embraced as full members of society at home, at work and in every community. (Press Release, 2/9/17)

.....  
**North Carolina** House representatives today introduced a bill that would fully repeal the state's anti-LGBT law, House Bill 2, and expand state nondiscrimination laws for housing, employment, credit, insurance, public accommodations, and education to protect lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender North Carolinians.

House Bill 82 was filed by Reps. Pricey Harrison, Susan Fisher, and **Deb Butler**.

H.B. 2, which became law in March 2016, bans many transgender people from restrooms matching their gender and prohibits local municipalities from extending nondiscrimination protections to LGBT people. The American Civil Liberties Union, ACLU of **North Carolina**, Lambda Legal and the law firm of Jenner

& Block are challenging H.B. 2 in federal court on behalf of four LGBT North Carolinians and members of the ACLU of *North Carolina*.

“It’s long past time for the General Assembly to repeal the hateful House Bill 2, which has brought so much harm to our state and its people, and to take much-needed steps toward protecting LGBT North Carolinians from discrimination based on their sexual orientation and gender identity in many areas of their lives,” said Sarah Gillooly, Policy Director for the ACLU of *North Carolina*. “H.B. 2 has made LGBT people, who were already not fully protected under the law in *North Carolina*, even more vulnerable to targeting and discrimination. These new protections would bring us closer to guaranteeing that all North Carolinians are treated equally under the law.”

“H.B. 2 sends a terrible message that LGBT people, particularly transgender people, aren’t worthy of equal treatment. It’s a stain that continues to damage the economy as well as the image of *North Carolina* and its people,” said Simone Bell, Southern Regional Director at Lambda Legal. “The repeal and replacement of H.B. 2 with this new bill, a real non-discrimination bill, a bill that recognizes the contributions LGBT North Carolinians make to this state, is a critical and essential step forward.” (Forest City Daily Courier, 2/10/17)

## **FEB 2017 For HB 82**

Gov. Roy Cooper’s proposed House Bill 2 repeal compromise Tuesday was the latest in a series of four bills introduced by Democrats in recent weeks.

All would repeal House Bill 2, the controversial LGBT law that threatens to cost North Carolina years of NCAA and other sports events. But three of the four proposals go beyond simply repealing HB2, with some adding provisions intended to attract Republican support.

So far, no Republican lawmakers have announced support for any of the proposals, so there’s a good chance none of them will get a hearing at the legislature. But the bills show a Democratic Party that’s united in opposition to HB2 yet divided on exactly how accomplish that goal.

Here’s a look at the four HB2 repeal bills:

### Senate Bill 25

Who’s backing it: Sen. Jeff Jackson of Charlotte with six co-sponsors: Sen. Angela Bryant of Rocky Mount, Sen. Floyd McKissick of Durham, Sen. Valerie Foushee of Hillsborough, Sen. Paul Lowe of Winston-Salem , Sen. Gladys Robinson of Greensboro and Sen. Joyce Waddell of Mecklenburg County

What it does: Repeals HB2 and restores local nondiscrimination ordinances that were struck down by HB2

### House Bill 82

Who’s backing it: The LGBT advocacy groups Human Rights Campaign and Equality North Carolina held a news conference last week to introduce the bill. The primary sponsors are Rep. Pricey Harrison of

Greensboro, Rep. Susan Fisher of Asheville, Rep. Deb Butler of Wilmington and Rep. John Autry of Charlotte. As of Tuesday, 21 additional House Democrats had signed the bill as co-sponsors. And on Tuesday, an identical companion bill was filed in the Senate by Sens. Jay Chaudhuri of Raleigh, Mike Woodard of Durham and Terry Van Duyn of Asheville.

What it does: In addition to repealing HB2, it would create a broad statewide nondiscrimination law that would include sexual orientation, gender identity, military veteran status and other categories. It would ban discrimination in housing, employment and public accommodations – including bathroom access for transgender people. The bill says “a place of public accommodation shall provide access to (bathroom) facilities based on a person’s gender identity.”

That provision is similar to the Charlotte nondiscrimination ordinance that led to HB2 amid Republicans’ fears that sexual predators might use the provision to access the opposite gender’s bathroom facilities.

#### House Bill 78

Who’s backing it: Rep. Cecil Brockman of High Point , with Rep. Larry Bell of Clinton and Rep. Yvonne Holley of Raleigh signing on as co-sponsors.

What it does: This bill also features a statewide nondiscrimination law identical to HB82, but it also adds tougher penalties for crimes committed in bathrooms – something Brockman says could help address Republicans’ safety fears. His bill includes longer minimum prison sentences for people who commit rape or other sex crimes while in a changing facility designated for the opposite sex.

#### House Bill 107

Who’s backing it: Cooper, House Democratic Leader Darren Jackson of Knightdale and Senate Minority Leader Dan Blue of Raleigh

What it does: In addition to repealing HB2, Cooper wants to require local governments to give the legislature 30 days’ notice before passing nondiscrimination ordinances. His proposal also includes tougher penalties for crimes committed in bathroom, including longer prison sentences.

Dallas Woodhouse calls on Gov. Cooper to find HB2 compromise N.C. Republican Party executive director Dallas Woodhouse calls on Gov. Roy Cooper to find a compromise on House Bill 2 and criticizes Cooper and attorney general Josh Stein for their opposition to President Donald Trump’s immigration order. (RNO, 2/14/17)

### **FEB 2017    Spat With Davis on Education**

Wilmington officials and state representatives assembled over breakfast sandwiches and coffee Monday morning to discuss the city’s goals for the upcoming legislative session.



The annual event allows the two governing bodies to sit down and discuss a selection of issues city leaders feel are vital to the area and should be kept in mind as the representatives move through the session, which started last month.

Here are a couple of the highlights from the breakfast:

#### School funding

In a conversation about the local implications of measures like tax bills, state Rep. Deb Butler, D-New Hanover, talked about her view on how the state funds education.

"Today, we don't fund it the way we should," said the newest member of the region's N.C. General Assembly delegation, chosen Feb. 1 to replace Rep. Susi Hamilton. "Our teachers are not paid what they should be earning. We are at the bottom of the barrel across the country in terms of education funding."

That prompted a sharp rebuke from state Rep. Ted Davis Jr., R-New Hanover, who called her comment "absolutely incorrect." He said he knows North Carolina and Butler will see the facts and figures "when you get up to Raleigh."

Butler injected, telling Davis his response was "a little patronizing." Davis then told her, "Don't interrupt me."

"Don't sit here and say North Carolina is at the bottom of the barrel," he continued, before Councilman Neil Anderson tempered the heated argument with a change of subject. (Star-News, 2/27/17)

#### **MAR 2017 HB 49**

-- After a Wilmington charter school missed the deadline to get its staff on North Carolina's state health plan, local legislators have filed a bill to give the school access.

Girls Leadership Academy of Wilmington (GLOW) opened in August to its first 100 students. Like all charter schools in North Carolina, GLOW could opt in to the state health plan within 30 days of being established. School president Todd Godbey said a private insurer had offered the school a better rate and administrators were planning to sign employees up.

But Godbey said that insurer came back with totally different rates than it had promised -- by then GLOW's 30-day window had closed.

"We missed the 30 day period by like two days -- actually I think it was less than 48 hours," Godbey said. "We have had since then a plan that covers all of our folks, and now we're seeking to go onto the state health plan like almost every charter school in state. Because frankly, it's better coverage for less money."

A bipartisan group of three area legislators -- state Reps. Frank Iler, R-Brunswick, Holly Grange, R-New Hanover, and Deb Butler, D-New Hanover -- have sponsored House Bill 49 to provide the all-girls charter school with a waiver that would allow employees to access the state's health care plan.

The legislation was at first drafted by former state Rep. Susi Hamilton, D-New Hanover. Hamilton, though, is now secretary of the state's division of cultural and natural resources.

According to its website, GLOW has 13 staff members, including five teachers. Godbey said legislators have told him that this bill-filing process is always followed when a charter school misses the health plan deadline.

"The indication that I got going into this is that this is a very simple thing, happens all the time," he said. "This doesn't cost the state any money, it's just allowing us to have access to the state health plan."

Grange said she will support the bill, which passed a first reading and has been referred to the House Insurance Committee.

"If other charter schools have it, I see no reason why GLOW can't have it," she said.

But Grange said it might be asking a lot of the General Assembly, which is being told by newly minted N.C. Treasurer Dale Folwell that the state's health plan is bleeding money.

"It's not an opportune time for them to do it," Grange said.

In a call earlier this week with reporters, Folwell said the state's health plan "is on life support."

He said systems established for the state pension plan, where employees and employers contribute to pensions, was not established for the state health plan, resulting in "pay-go" appropriations of \$3 billion per year.

Folwell told reporters that he would be cautious about bringing new cities and towns onto the plan until he can assess its costs to the state. "I cannot be reasonably assured that the state is not losing money," he said. (Star-News, 3/2/17)

### **MAR 2017 Praises Cooper Budget**

If Gov. Roy Cooper gets his way, North Carolina teachers could get a 5 percent pay raise in each of the next two years.

The centerpiece of Cooper's proposed state budget, released March 1, is a plan to inject \$271 million into teacher pay. Beyond the raise, Cooper has pitched a slate of school changes valued at more than \$800 million. While visiting a Wilmington elementary school last month, the governor said North Carolina's budget surplus could cover his vision without a tax raise.

It's unlikely the final budget will resemble Cooper's proposal. But several local legislators said they expect it will include a raise for teachers, and compromises on other schools issues.

”While many of the details of the governor’s teacher pay proposal are still unclear as we do not have the final budget document, I am hopeful that we can find common ground,” Sen Michael Lee, R-New Hanover, wrote in a message.

”The actual budget won’t look anything like (Cooper’s), but it is a nice philosophical document,” said Rep. Deb Butler, D-New Hanover. “We just have to spend more money on education.” (Star-News, 3/10/17)

### **MAR 2017 Co-Sponsors Letting Brunswick County Decide on Meals Tax**

Last week in the North Carolina House of Representatives, we heard the State of the State address from Gov. Roy Cooper, we introduced and passed several important education bills, and we introduced more local bills for Brunswick County.

The session Monday night, March 13, was devoted to receiving the governor into a joint session of the House and Senate for his State of the State address. This takes place in the House chamber because it has more seating. Extra seating is brought in for senators, Supreme Court justices, Court of Appeals judges and the Council of State and Cabinet officers.

The governor spoke about some important priorities for the state. In education, he mentioned teacher pay, classroom supplies and pre-kindergarten expansion. In health care, he emphasized the opioid epidemic, as well as being sensitive to the huge changes coming in national health insurance policy. In economic development, he covered infrastructure needs such as transportation and preparing our industrial parks for large industries. He also mentioned film incentives.

Several education bills were moving through the Education K-12 committee, of which I am a member. One that also got to the floor was House Bill 235 - Teacher Mentor Qualifications. It makes it easier for principals to find mentors for new teachers by allowing them to use retired teachers as well as teachers from neighboring schools as mentors, not just current teachers in the same school.

A bill I am particularly interested in, House Bill 339 - North Carolina Teaching Fellows, provides scholarships for N.C. high school graduates who commit to teach three or four years in our schools. This program was discontinued a few years ago because of the politics of it and this bill brings it back with changes in its organization. I am pleased to be one of the primary sponsors of this bill and will help get it through the process.

On Thursday, March 16, I filed two local bills requested by Brunswick County towns. House Bill 397 - Carolina Shores De-annexation de-annexes a fraction of an acre from Carolina Shores at the request of the property owner and the town.

House Bill 398 - Brunswick County/ Municipal Meals Tax allows towns in Brunswick County to levy a prepared meals tax of up to one-half percent to fund beach nourishment and infrastructure needs. It can be done by resolution or referendum.

It was officially requested by Southport and Oak Island, and was mentioned by officials of other towns. Rep. Deb Butler, who also represents Brunswick County, and I agreed to sponsor it for any town in the county that wants it and for the county, if it ever decides to do it.

This conforms to what other counties have done, but most of them have done a full percent. As an example, this will be 10 cents on a dinner tab of \$20.

I expect to file at least two more local bills by the deadline of March 29.

Rep. Frank Iler, R-Oak Island, represents Brunswick County in the North Carolina House of Representatives. He can be reached in Raleigh at (919) 301-1450 or [Frank.Iler@ncleg.net](mailto:Frank.Iler@ncleg.net). (Brunswick Beacon, 3/21/17)



-- Brunswick County’s two members of the N.C. House have filed a bill that would allow the county or any of its municipalities to collect a sales tax on prepared food to pay for beach nourishment or other public projects.

State Rep. Frank Iler, R-Brunswick, said he filed the bill at the request of the city of Southport. House Bill 398 would allow Brunswick County to adopt a sales tax of up to 0.5 percent on prepared food and meals, like those in restaurants. It would be in addition to any state or local sales tax already levied.

A municipality could adopt its own tax under the bill, but the tax would be repealed if Brunswick County adopted a tax, according to the bill. Southport and Oak Island have said they would consider imposing a prepared food tax.

Southport Mayor Jerry Dove said he hopes the proposed meal tax bill passes because it would help fund, develop and maintain the Southport waterfront.

”We thought this was kind of a fair way to do it because it’s only a half a cent,” Dove said of the tax. “Everyone that comes and uses our restaurants and enjoys that beautiful waterfront and the waterfront park and all of that down there, that would be kind of a fair way for everyone to pitch in, so to speak, and contribute to it.”

The bill would not require the county or municipalities to adopt a tax.

”What I like about it is that it’s discretionary,” said state Rep. Deb Butler, D-New Hanover, who also represents the northern and eastern parts of Brunswick County. “They don’t have to do it. It’s not mandatory. It’s just a tool in the toolbox.”

The county and municipalities would be eligible to keep 3 percent of the collected revenue to pay for administering the tax. The remainder “shall be used for beach nourishment or to construct and improve public infrastructure and facilities or both.”

”It’s pretty broad,” Butler said of potential uses.

Numerous exemptions

Brunswick County Commissioners Chairman Frank Williams said he doesn't believe a countywide tax will be imposed in the near future.

"I know of no interest on our board in doing that at this time," he said.

The bill would provide numerous exemptions, including for food and drinks sold in boarding houses, in vending machines, on military reservations and most food sold in grocery stores. It would also not apply to food supplied by an employer to employees.

Butler said she was particularly pleased that grocery stores were -- for the most part -- exempted from the bill, saying lower-income people often turn to grocery stores for prepared food more than restaurants.

"I don't want it to disproportionately affect poor people," she said. (Star-News, 3/27/17)

### **MAR 2017 HB 445 With Rep. Iler (Republican)**

House Bill 445 - Brunswick Fire Protection Fees was filed by Rep. Deb Butler and myself at the request of county commissioners. It enables the county to adjust fire districts and to adjust fire fees. The district changes must be at the request of the fire departments or 15 percent of the citizens within the district. The fee section allows the county to adjust fees but does not mandate that it do so. (Brunswick Beacon, 3/28/17)

### **MAR 2017 Denounces Compromise Repeal of HB2**

Here is how Southeastern North Carolina's delegation to Raleigh voted Thursday on House Bill 142, a compromise bill to repeal House Bill 2:

N.C. Sen. Michael Lee, R-New Hanover (yes): "A compromise on policy is not a compromise on privacy. We need to keep (North Carolina) moving forward and I look forward to prioritizing the education of our children, workforce development, raising teacher pay, tax reform and job growth in our state."

N.C. Sen. Bill Rabon, R-Brunswick, (yes): "I think it was the right thing to do. This House Bill 2 had been looming over our heads and was a shadow over our state. What we did today finally cleared that up."

N.C. Rep. Deb Butler, D-New Hanover (no): "Shame on us. This is so much bigger than basketball. The people of North Carolina want us to repeal House Bill 2. That is all." (Star-News, 3/30/17)

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Right now, the North Carolina General Assembly is boxed in on repealing HB2, the so-called Bathroom Bill, one of the most glaring examples of the General Assembly’s overreach. Businesses and their allies in the Republican Party wish HB2 would just go away. But the Tea Party leaders that pushed it won’t let it die. Despite almost a year of pushback and economic boycotts, including the loss of several NCAA championships and the prospect of losing many more, House and Senate leaders are insisting that any bill changing the law be approved by a majority of Republican members, a nearly impossible hurdle.

They’ve also insisted that Cooper, whom they accused of purposefully sabotaging repeal efforts for political gain, come up with the compromise himself, even though the governor’s last attempt at a compromise, which even included tougher penalties for bathroom peeping and indecent exposure, was quickly rejected.

A new compromise out of the House is beginning to attract support, including among some conservative Democrats. But there’s a sense that time is running out for a deal.

Representative Deb Butler, a Wilmington Democrat serving her first term, says the chances of finding a way out of the box are fading for this session.

Butler, the only openly gay woman in the legislature, says that while the governor is trying to work out a compromise, she doesn’t want to see him go too far to bail out the Republicans. She’s frustrated by the attempts at finding a murky, political solution to a law that shouldn’t have been passed in the first place.

”I’m almost to the point where I think the people that did this damage to the state of North Carolina are going to have to live with the political consequences,” she says.

The economic damage has dominated the debate, Butler says, but the core issue is discrimination. “It’s wrong when individuals do it, but it’s unconscionable when the government does it,” she adds.

The final outcome on HB2 could be settled in the courts. This spring, the U.S. Supreme Court takes up a Virginia case that could decide the fate of HB2 and similar laws. If so, HB2 will join a growing list of controversial laws passed by the General Assembly and settled by judges.

Cooper continues his legal challenges to the laws passed in the waning hours of the McCrory administration that dialed back the governor’s powers and revamped the state elections board in the GOP’s favor.

Cooper and Attorney General Josh Stein, a fellow Democrat, withdrew the state’s petition to the Supreme Court for review of a decision overturning the GOP’s landmark voter ID and elections law. (The Progressive, 4/1/17)



”This is so much bigger than basketball,” added Representative Deb Butler, D-Brunswick and New Hanover, the other openly LGBTQ legislator. “The people of North Carolina want us to repeal HB 2. That is all. They care about fairness, dignity. They look to us to create a safe and a welcoming environment for

all. The LGBT community, our families, our children, and the people who love and care for us do not support this bill. We would rather suffer HB 2 than to have this body one more time deny us the full and unfettered protections of the law.” (Durham Independent Weekly, 4/5/17)

### **APR 2017    HB 587**

-- A state bill would add another layer of review to H2GO’s plans for a controversial reverse osmosis plant that could cost roughly \$30 million.

N.C. Rep. Deb Butler, a New Hanover County Democrat, and N.C. Rep. Frank Iler, a Brunswick County Republican, have sponsored H.B. 587, which would require the state’s Local Government Commission to conduct an economic impact study for certain big-ticket water and sewer capital projects.

The commission must approve issuance of debt -- such as through bonds -- by units of local government.

The bill, which was filed Wednesday, would require an economic impact study prior to sanitary districts accepting bids on capital projects of \$10 million or more.

”In my opinion, such large financial commitments require an in-depth review to make sure that there are no duplications of effort or expenses occurred,” Butler said in a news release.

The economic impact study would:

- \* Determine the impact the completed project will have on the district’s assets and expenditures and those of neighboring governments/authorities.

- \* Address the effect the expenditures will have on the cost of raw water in the sanitary district and areas served by neighboring governments/authorities.

In February H2GO’s board voted 3-2 in favor of a resolution to hire financial and legal assistance for securing a \$20 million bond for the project. Two board members who have vigorously opposed the plant unsuccessfully sought to delay the project until after the November election.

H2GO, which serves about 10,000 customers in northern Brunswick County, currently receives water from Brunswick County Public Utilities.

The proposed legislation would only apply to districts in counties with a population of at least 100,000 with more than one sanitary district. Brunswick County has more than 126,000 residents, according to 2016 U.S. Census estimates. Brunswick County has at least two operational sanitary districts. (Star-News, 4/6/17)

### **APR 2017    Opposes Bill to Ban School Boards from Suing County Commissioners**

An N.C. House committee voted Wednesday to ban school boards from suing their county commissioners over funding disputes.

The bill's sponsors say the change is needed to avoid costly lawsuits when school boards are seeking a bigger budget than county leaders are willing to provide.

"I've found that cooperation works a lot better than intimidation," said Rep. Larry Potts, a Lexington Republican and former county commissioner who's sponsoring the proposal.

Potts' co-sponsor, Republican Rep. Debra Conrad of Winston-Salem, said that funding disputes arise because county commissioners have to balance the needs of a variety of county services, while school board members are focusing solely on education.

"To let this go to a court level and have a judge and jury that does not understand the financial responsibilities of either group," she said, "can make outrageous awards that county commissions cannot handle."

The N.C. Association of County Commissioners says the bill is one of its top legislative priorities this year. Lobbyist Johanna Reese pointed to a lawsuit in Union County in which the court awarded the school board \$91 million, although that award was overturned on appeal. She said the case required \$2 million in legal fees that "did not go to education."

"We have had several cases where a school board comes in, says 'this is how much we want, if we don't get it, we're going to sue you,'" Reese said.

But the N.C. School Boards Association is opposing the bill. Lobbyist Bruce Mildwurf said a legislative study is currently under way to recommend alternative solutions to funding disputes.

"This is a contentious issue, it's emotional," Mildwurf said. "There's no urgency here because it's in a study committee. We just ask that you wait for the recommendation that the House unanimously asked for."

Rep. Deb Butler, a Wilmington Democrat, said the ability to sue could actually help resolve disputes because mediation is required before the issues reach a courtroom.

"It seems to me that the ability to avail yourself of the court system is what's keeping people at the bargaining table, and it's reducing the number of suits," she said.

A similar bill made its way through the House and Senate in 2015 but was ultimately watered down with the provision calling for the study report. After a split voice vote in the House State and Local Government I Committee, the bill now goes to the House Judiciary IV Committee. (RNO, 4/19/17)



The N.C. Attorney General's Office is reviewing the implications of a new state law that could restrict the Port City's ability to set new regulations on short-term rentals.

Last month, the General Assembly passed -- and Gov. Roy Cooper signed -- House Bill 142. It was passed as a compromise measure to repeal the state's controversial House Bill 2 law. That law was decried as discriminatory against the gay and transgender communities because it mandated that people use public bathroom facilities that matched the gender on their birth certificates and excluded gay and transgender people from protected classes against discrimination.

But the law also reads, "No local government in this state may enact or amend an ordinance regulating private employment or regulating public accommodations."

The provision was intended to apply to non-discrimination ordinances, but the language isn't specific, possibly leaving it open to apply to any ordinance, including the city's efforts to regulate short-term rentals like Airbnb and Vacation Rentals by Owner (VRBO).

Laura Brewer, a spokeswoman for the state attorney general's office, last week said the office hadn't yet formed an opinion on whether the law would apply to regulating short-term rentals.

"Our office is continuing to review the bill and its implications," she said.

The issue has divided the city council, which has haggled over the issue for years and has planned upcoming public sessions to discuss the matter further.

The city attorney's office issued an opinion stating that it believed the passage of HB 142 would have no impact on the city's ability to regulate short-term rentals.

But N.C. Rep. Deb Butler, D-New Hanover, who represents downtown Wilmington, said she believes the public accommodation clause of HB 142 could have "foreclosed" the issue at least until December 2020, when the provision sunsets.

Brewer did not say if or when the state attorney general's office would issue an opinion on the matter. (Star-News, 4/22/17)

### **APR 2017    Profiled Over Bills Annoyed By**

Being a freshman legislator in the minority party at the N.C. General Assembly can be frustrating.

And Wilmington's Rep. Deb Butler, D-New Hanover, gets frustrated a lot. When she does, she takes a walk around the state legislative building.

"There's so much regressive legislation going on there," she said in a recent interview at her Wilmington law firm. "Sometimes I just have to get outside and take a walk."

That's common enough, but she's also taken to videotaping herself on her iPhone and posting the videos to her Facebook page.

The videos are by no means professional quality, and she knows it. But that wasn't the point, Butler said, and the videos have become popular anyway, featuring multiple shares, comments and interactions on her Facebook page.

"I don't know why I did it, except that I wanted to share my frustration with my Facebook friends," she said. (Butler had 3,293 Facebook friends as of last week).

Politicians frequently post videos of themselves speaking at events or on a legislative floor or directly into a camera -- and they are generally on the dull side. But Butler said she believes her walk-and-talk videos have become popular because they are unique.

"People thought it was real," she said. "It comes off as genuine because it is. It's not canned or rehearsed. It's not staged."

Here are some snippets from each video:

#### Partisan judicial elections

Butler's adventures in walking-while-self-filming began when the House voted to override Gov. Roy Cooper's veto of House Bill (HB) 100, which established partisan races for judicial elections.

"OK, so this is Deb Butler outside the North Carolina General Assembly and taking a little walk because I'm disappointed that we were unable to sustain Governor Cooper's veto of House Bill 100," she said in her opening lines. "You'll recall that that is the bill that puts the Rs and the Ds back in judicial races, which is a big mistake."

#### Hog farm litigation bill

Her next video was her way of venting about a bill that restricted the amount a property owner could sue large agricultural operations like hog farms, which are a huge industry in North Carolina.

At the time of her tape-and-stroll, the bill was still slated to be retroactive and would have impacted an existing lawsuit against a subsidiary of Smithfield.

"Now I'm going to tell you something right now, you don't get much more nefarious than that," Butler said. "House Bill 467 is a tragedy. Rep. Deb votes no. Thank you."

An amendment that narrowly passed the House removed HB 467's retroactive clause. The rest of the bill passed the House.

#### Education bill

In her latest video, posted late last week, Butler decried that HB 13, which would provide local school districts with flexibility in meeting new kindergarten through third grade class-size requirements and which passed the House unanimously, has apparently stalled in the Senate.

If the bill doesn't pass, school leaders have said, school districts will have to cut numerous programs like art and physical education in order to create the new classrooms and hire teachers to meet the new requirements.

"You know, we mandated a reduction in class size and then we don't fund it adequately," she said in the video. She also encourages people to call senators about the bill and "light 'em up." (Star-News, 4/24/17)

### **APR 2017 Regrets Class Size Compromise Bill**

-- State legislators have pitched a deal for less drastic cuts to class sizes for the upcoming school year, a move local districts say will preserve arts and PE classes.

On Monday night, N.C. Senate leaders announced a compromise on House Bill 13 that would allow up to 23 students in kindergarten through third-grade classes during the 2017-18 school year. The revised bill pushes deeper class-size cuts -- mandated by the state budget -- back to 2018.

Sen. Michael Lee (R-New Hanover), was one of three legislators who proposed the changes. Local school officials said they were pleased with the deal, which was passed by the Senate and returns to the House for vote, likely Wednesday.

"We appreciate the Senate taking action on HB13 and reaching a compromise," New Hanover County Schools Superintendent Tim Markley wrote in an email. "This will allow us to move forward with planning for next year and should prevent the loss of our art, music and physical education teachers. Special thanks to the House members who voted for this and to Senator Lee."

New Hanover spokeswoman Valita Quattlebaum also wrote that the change will allow the district to reopen kindergarten spaces at Codington and Eaton elementary schools. Quattlebaum said district officials are currently calculating how many kindergarten seats will be made available; officials had previously said they would admit only siblings of current students if HB13 did not move forward.

Brunswick County Schools spokeswoman Jessica Swencki wrote in an email that district leaders appreciated the compromise.

"Moving the implementation date back a year will be beneficial as we continue to develop staffing and facility renovation plans that will be necessary in 2018-2019," she wrote. "We will continue to follow updates on the details of the bill as they are available."

Rep. Deb Butler (D-New Hanover) said she wished the compromise had been unnecessary.

”Music, art, and physical education are all vital components of a child’s development and well-being,” she wrote in an email. “We must adequately fund public education in the first place so that this sort of haphazard ‘fix’ isn’t required in the future.”

### Wiggle room

North Carolina’s school districts have long gotten enough money for 18-student kindergarten classes, 16-student first grade classes and 17-student second and third grade classes. But districts were allowed to have average class sizes of 21, or a maximum of 24 students. Many used that difference to pay for arts, PE and other enhancement teachers.

A provision in last summer’s state budget took away the wiggle room without providing extra funding for arts and PE. New Hanover, Pender and Brunswick county school districts estimated the change would have forced them to find a combined 96 new K-3 teachers. For all 12 districts in Southeastern North Carolina, it was 450 teachers.

Under the new HB13, next school year the average K-3 class size must be no more than 20 students, but an individual class can have up to 23 students. The original HB13 would have allowed maximum class sizes of 24 in kindergarten, 22 in first grade and 23 in second and third grades.

Since February, HB13 was stalled in the Senate’s rules committee. But on Friday it jumped to the Senate’s education committee, where the revised version got a favorable vote.

The new HB13 also calls for biannual reports on class sizes and the number of arts, PE, health and language teachers in each school, as well as how those positions are paid for. That information would go to the Superintendent of Public Instruction. (Star-News, 4/26/17)

### **MAY 2017 Restaurant Association Rips Meals Tax Bill**

At the urging of local government officials, Reps. Frank Iler and Deb Butler recently introduced House Bill 398, which authorizes Brunswick County to collect an additional half percent meals tax from consumers on prepared food and drink served in the county. If the county chooses not to levy the tax, each of the 19 incorporated municipalities in the county will have the authority to levy the tax. If this bill passes, the new tax will be the first meals tax implemented in North Carolina in nearly 25 years. In other counties across the state, citizens have resoundingly defeated such proposals.

Under this bill, Brunswick County consumers will be taxed on all prepared food and drinks purchased at restaurants, hotels, grocery stores, doughnut and coffee shops, and convenience stores in the county. Prepared food and beverages are already taxed a total of 6.75 percent, representing 4.75 percent distributed to the state and 2 percent allotted to the county. This new tax adds an additional half percent to each bill.

Far from a sin or luxury tax, the meals tax isn’t targeted at those with disposable income or persons splurging during a night-on-the town.

The primary targets for this tax are Brunswick County residents who regularly rely on restaurants - people who visit the drive-thru after Little League practice, pick up coffee before a long commute or stop at the convenience store for a quick snack.

While proponents say this new tax would be paid by visitors, tourists are predominantly in town during the busy eight- to 10-week summer season. For the rest of the year, it's residents of Brunswick County who will shoulder the new tax burden. This new meals tax would add another burden on families who are already stretched by layers of taxes and rising monthly living expenses.

Furthermore, the meals tax singles out only one business - restaurants and other foodservice establishments - putting even more strain on local businesses that are a vital component to a healthy Brunswick County economy. In a county stressed with a high cost of living and rising property taxes, the meals tax seems like the last straw.

Lynn Minges is president/CEO of the North Carolina Restaurant and Lodging Association. Reach her at (919) 844-3007 or [lminges@ncrla.org](mailto:lminges@ncrla.org). (Brunswick Beacon, 5/9/17)

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While Brunswick County officials wait to see if Senate Bill 126 is approved and redistributes sales taxes, House Bill 398 remains in play and could offer a small source of beach and waterway funding.

Rep. Frank Iler of Oak Island filed HB 398 on March 16. The bill would allow Brunswick County commissioners or municipal board members to levy a prepared food and drink tax up to one-half percent of the sales price at restaurants or groceries and stores where food is prepared, such as a grocer's deli.

"Tourists would pay a big chunk of it," Iler said.

The tax could be approved by the county board following a public hearing or with a referendum vote.

Proceeds would be intended for beach renourishment, to construct and improve public infrastructure and facilities, or both.

Rep. Deb Butler of Wilmington co-sponsored the bill after Iler reached out to her.

"Because I represent the northern part of Brunswick County, and it needed to be a county-wide endeavor, I agreed," Butler said.

"Folks have a misconception. We are not laying a tax upon them. It (would be) available to put on the ballot or for county commissioners (to consider)," Butler said. "I'm not one to impose a tax. But this is not initiating a tax. It's creating a tool. It's just a tool for the citizens to use or not use."

The bill passed a first reading March 20, then was referred to the State and Local Government committee the same day, to go to the Finance committee.

Iler said Southport and Oak Island passed resolutions requesting the bill's submittal. The funding could assist Southport with repairs to its waterfront bulkhead along the Cape Fear River.

And Oak Island could put the funding toward its beaches.

Iler added that while Southport and Oak Island passed resolutions to support the bill, he heard from other local leaders who also supported the proposal. "I've had a lot of conversations where that's the topic," he said.

Iler said Mecklenburg, Wake and Dare counties and the city of Monroe in Union County have passed similar bills, but they approved a full one-cent increase.

Iler reported the last week in April was crossover week, the deadline to approve all the bills the House wants to get to the Senate in the current session. But he said HB 398 was not subject to crossover deadline. The bill is still in the review process since it involves financing.

"It should be coming up in the Finance and State and Local committees," he said. They will have until the legislature adjourns to review HB 398, but he said the budget would be the big issue the finance committee takes on.

Even if HB 398 isn't taken up now, it will still be alive when they return for the next session, he added.

Butler said she has not been notified that it is on the committee calendar yet. She added that it might take submitting it more than just this one time to gain any traction.

Butler said the legislature needs to look at the bigger picture and realize something needs to be done for the beaches. She said this bill, while offering some assistance, does not scratch the surface.

"We need a recurring appropriation from the budget since federal money is going away," she said. (Brunswick Beacon. 5/11/17)

### **MAY 2017 Making Many FB Videos to Vent**

Only Democratic Rep. Deb Butler of New Hanover County is on the outside looking in, having been appointed in January to fill Hamilton's seat. She's on the bottom of the minority party's totem pole. Despite that, she has made herself heard, making floor speeches and even posting videos on Facebook to vent her frustrations with the GOP-led House. (Star-News, 5/20/17)

### **MAY 2017 Pilot Program For Opioid Overdose Response**

A pilot program for Wilmington spearheaded by Davis and cosponsored by Grange and Rep. Deb Butler, D-New Hanover, would set up a "quick response team" that would respond to opioid overdoses with emergency responders to help people seek addiction treatment. Funding of \$500,000 for the program is included in the House budget after also being inserted into the Senate budget.

"I do think (the program) will end up in the budget and I am supportive of it," Butler said.

"I think that's an extremely important endeavor to address this opioid crisis," Davis said. (Star-News, 5/29/17)

### **JUN 2017    Votes Against Megaproject Bill**

A bill that would have established a funding mechanism for large transportation projects beyond established state funding limits -- like the long-discussed plan to build a new Wilmington bridge over the Cape Fear River -- was killed by the State Senate Thursday afternoon.

The Senate Transportation Committee, on a controversial voice vote, reported House Bill 110 as favorable on Wednesday, but the Senate voted against the bill on Thursday. The bill would have created a new fund for "megaprojects," which currently could be limited by the State Transportation Improvement Plan's (STIP) cap of \$200 million per project.

N.C. Sen. Bill Rabon, R-Brunswick, was an architect of the STIP program, and acknowledged in an interview with WRAL that the bill may contradict the STIP's goal, which was to remove politics from decisions on road funding.

Several senators, including Republicans in the Senate majority, had voiced opposition to the bill, saying it places decisions about transportation funding back into the hands of politicians. WRAL reported that the bill moved out of the transportation committee despite opposition appearing to outnumber support among committee members.

The House bill, which was cosponsored by Rep. Frank Iler, R-Brunswick, narrowly passed the House on a 65-50 vote. It had bipartisan support and detraction -- 45 Republicans and 20 Democrats voted in favor, while 24 Republicans and 26 Democrats opposed it.

Among the region's delegation, Iler and Rep. Ted Davis, R-New Hanover, and Holly Grange, R-New Hanover, were in favor, and Reps. Deb Butler, D-New Hanover, and Chris Millis, R-Pender, were opposed to the bill. (Star-News, 6/1/17)

### **JUN 2017    Tries to Cut Funding For Crisis Pregnancy Centers**

The N.C. House shot down an effort to add funding to substance abuse programs by cutting budget money from "crisis pregnancy centers" that encourage alternatives to abortion.

The House budget includes \$1.3 million for the Carolina Pregnancy Care Fellowship, which describes itself as "life-affirming ministries" for pregnant women. The Senate budget includes \$400,000 for the group, and past state budgets have provided \$300,000 to the organization.

[\$1,000 state employee raises, varied teacher raises in NC House budget]

Rep. Deb Butler, a Wilmington Democrat, proposed an amendment to reduce the pregnancy center's funding back to the \$300,000 level, and instead direct the remaining \$1 million to state-run drug and alcohol abuse treatment centers.

"I can't find much transparency or accountability from the crisis pregnancy centers," she said. "I have not heard any identified rationale for the quadrupling of their funding. There are more urgent, critical and expensive challenges facing us in North Carolina."

[NC House rejects attempts to cut funding from private school vouchers and shift it to public schools]

But Rep. Dean Arp, a Republican from Monroe, said the legislature is already working to improve drug treatment services, and the pregnancy centers are important in preventing pre-term births that are "rampant" in rural communities and resulting in birth defects.

Arp said the centers are "located in the poorest areas of the counties where no other clinics or help is."

Arp called for Butler's amendment to be tabled without further debate, and the House voted 73-43 to kill the proposal. (RNO, 6/1/17)

### **JUN 2017    Votes Against Constitutional Convention**

In a protracted argument mostly among Republicans, the state House on Thursday narrowly voted against requesting a national convention to make changes to the U.S. Constitution.

The 53-59 vote killed the resolution, but the House later brought the issue back up and voted 66-45 to allow it to be considered again. The resolution was sent to the House Rules Committee, and Speaker Tim Moore said it could be brought up for a vote again next year. He says it's unlikely the resolution will be considered again this year.

Sen. Bert Jones of Reidsville argued for it, saying 12 other states have formally requested a convention of the states. The movement stems from the belief that the U.S. Constitution must be amended to make Washington politicians more responsive and stave off a growing national debt that conservative supporters say will eventually destroy the country's economy.

Jones said of all the hundreds of bills filed in the General Assembly this year "none are more important to the health of nation than this one."

Moore took the unusual step of participating in the debate from the House floor, supporting Jones' resolution.

The debate went on long enough that Jones eventually used a legislative maneuver to immediately bring the resolution to a vote even though eight representatives did not get their chance to speak.



Rep. Michael Speciale, a conservative Republican from New Bern, was among the House members who warned that there were dangers of holding such a convention because it could be expanded beyond its original purposes. He said it should be used only as a last resort.

Democratic Rep. Deb Butler of Wilmington spoke against the bill for the same reason as Speciale.

”We are living in an environment that is politically incendiary. We have to all agree on that,” she said. “There are extremists on either side of this debate who could co-opt a convention and do great damage to our Constitution.” (RNO, 6/29/17)

### **JUL 2017 Attends Rally Against Offshore Drilling**

An estimated crowd of 200 turned out for a rally Monday to protest offshore drilling and seismic blasting.

When event organizer Neil Gilbert, founding member and president of the Brunswick Environmental Action Team, moved to Brunswick County seven years ago with his wife, Barbara, “we were thinking it’s always going to be as lovely as it is now,” he said at the start of the July 17 event in Sunset Beach Town Park.

”But in recent months, we’re finding out that things might be changing,” he said.

Since 2010, 20,000 people have moved to Brunswick County, the fastest-growing county in North Carolina and 17th fastest-growing one in the United States, Gilbert said.

”We didn’t move here because we wanted oil on our beach,” he said. “We didn’t move here because we wanted oil off our coast. The reason why we moved here, along with those 20,000 other people, was because we fell in love with this special place that we call home now. Now there’s a move to allow seismic blasting off our coast and to allow drilling off our coast.”

Gilbert said the day’s speakers share the same passion as BEAT members. The crowd applauded when Gilbert noted Sunset Beach Town Council recently unanimously voted to oppose offshore drilling.

”We don’t agree on everything, but one thing we do agree on is we’re going to protect our beach,” he said. “We’re going to protect our coast.”

Petitions were also circulated at the rally. Gilbert said they would eventually be forwarded to U.S. Sens. Thom Tillis and Richard Burr of North Carolina, Gov. Roy Cooper and N.C. Congressman David Rouzer.

#### Butler speaks

The day’s second speaker, District 18 Rep. Deb Butler, D-Wilmington, told the crowd, “I don’t have to tell you that we are living in a politically tempestuous time. You can almost feel the proverbial sands shifting under your feet from day to day.”

In North Carolina, “we are doing what New York magazine called ‘scorched-earth politics,’ the worst in the country,” she said. “I don’t know about you, but as a member of your legislature, I’m not proud of that.”

Despite the “rancor and discord” in Washington and Raleigh, “I am nevertheless confident that there is at least one thing that all North Carolinians must agree upon, and that is that the health and vitality of our coastline is not for sale,” Butler said, drawing applause.

”When big oil threatens to blast the floor of our ocean and kill our marine life and dot our landscape with behemoth oil rigs, we are going to stand again together and we are going to say no,” she said, drawing more applause.

”Don’t let anybody tell you that these oil spills don’t occur,” Butler said, citing at least 70 within the last decade around the world and in the U.S. “There are oil spills and oil rigs leaking all over the planet right now. It doesn’t take just a half an hour to stop these things.

”When a spill like that happens, it not only condemns the people who live there and the environment, it condemns the economy as well. It is cataclysmic, it is horrific, it is expensive and it is long-term. It happens and it lasts for generations. This cannot be the path that we choose.”

Butler noted Brunswick County is one of only two counties in the state that “believe that offshore drilling is a good idea. It’s not. The better path I would say to you is to embrace emerging technology such as fuel cell technology, lithium air battery technology. These are the industries we should be inviting to our region. Let’s set our sights on game-changing technologies such as those. Let it not be said that we decided to hitch our wagon to a smokestack-style technology from the 19th century.”

Gilbert said Brunswick County is one of only two counties on the North Carolina coast that doesn’t have a resolution that favors banning offshore drilling.

”Let’s just say that we’re going to change that,” he said. “I think that’s happening beginning today.”  
(Brunswick Beacon, 7/18/17)

## **AUG 2017 Supports Confederate Statue Removal**

Cooper calls for statue removal

In the wake of violence during protests by white supremacists opposed to the removal of a statue of Confederate General Robert E. Lee in Charlottesville, Virginia, Cooper, a Democrat, has asked the Republican-dominated General Assembly to repeal a law passed in 2015 that forbids municipalities from removing memorials or statues without permission from the N.C. Historical Commission.

He also directed the N.C. Department of Natural and Cultural Resources, led by Secretary Susi Hamilton of Wilmington, to determine the cost of and logistics around removing Confederate monuments from state property and placing them in museums or historical sites. Cooper further asked that the Senate formally

reject a bill approved by the House that would indemnify motorists who accidentally hit protesters blocking a road.

”Some people cling to the belief that the Civil War was fought over states’ rights,” the governor said Tuesday. “But history is not on their side. We cannot continue to glorify a war against the United States of America fought in the defense of slavery. These monuments should come down.”

Cooper’s remarks came a day after a Confederate statue was toppled by protestors in Durham -- an action sparked by the Charlottesville rally over the weekend where an alleged white supremacist drove a vehicle into a crowd of counter-protestors, killing a woman.

Delegation response -- or not

State Rep. Deb Butler, D-New Hanover, said she had a hard time coming to terms with the events around the Civil War, saying her ancestors were slave owners. She said she has come to realize that history books glossing over the events of the war and slavery’s role in it led many to live “under a false narrative on this subject.”

Butler said she supports Cooper’s call.

”I understand how hard it is for many Southerners to take a hard, cold look at their heritage,” she said. “I think it’s really time for us to take a look at the entirety of our history and not just the glorified version of it.” (Star News, 8/17/17)

### **OCT 2017    Against Pender County Aquarium**

A little-noticed provision in the state budget, slipped in during conference committee work just before the budget was adopted and later amended, calls for spending \$300,000 to pay for planning a public satellite aquarium on the site of a planned private development on U.S. 17 just north of the New Hanover County line.

But the idea has spurred some controversy, including legislators questioning the need of the facility and the leader of the state Department of Natural and Cultural Resources saying the department never asked for it.

The budget line originally authorized DNCR to spend \$300,000 for “planning of Blake Farm satellite aquarium area in Scotts Hill.”

The item was inserted into the budget process in part by former N.C. Rep. Chris Mills, R-Pender, who said he merely wanted the idea studied.

But that original budget line was amended this week during technical revisions, almost a month after Millis resigned, to compel DNCR to develop a full-scale blueprint for the aquarium facility.

The idea

Raiford Trask III, whose company, Trask Land Co. of Wilmington, is developing Blake Farm, said the facility would highlight shellfish.

"It will focus on the aquaculture of the shellfish community ... and the ecology and biology that make coastal Pender and coastal North Carolina an ideal place for shellfish," he said. "It's fair to say that I participated in the development of the idea with Chris and others."

The Blake Farm development is huge -- featuring more than 2,000 residential units, along with retail and office space. And, if the aquarium is built, it will be open to the public, he said.

Trask said he hopes to break ground in April and that "the market will determine the velocity with which" the land is built out.

"We're always trying to create communities and projects that benefit our community. Obviously, having that satellite benefits everybody who lives nearby," Trask said.

Trask said the facility's design, size and scope "totally falls with the North Carolina aquariums. They're going to design it and build it out and operate it." He said his company anticipates leasing the facility to the N.C. Division of Aquariums.

Change in language

Originally, the budget adopted in June contained language calling only for the planning of the aquarium.

"I thought it was a good idea and favorable for constituents in the area," Millis said. "I left it to cultural resources and others to plan it out."

Things changed Wednesday.

The original budget line was amended Wednesday in a technical corrections bill to include that the aquariums division "is authorized to expend funds to engage architects and other program consultants to (i) collaborate with Blake Farms to design and permit the building housing the satellite aquarium area; and (ii) produce schematic, design, and final construction documents for the satellite aquarium area."

The measure passed the House and Senate on Thursday.

N.C. Rep. Holly Grange, R-New Hanover, said she and N.C. Sen. Bill Rabon, R-Brunswick, inserted the additional language to "make it clearer" that the facility is ultimately going to be built.

"It's really just a clarification," she said. "It wasn't clear before."

Millis had stressed last week that the budget line wasn't intended to dictate the building of the facility, which he said would amount to political largess and against his conservative values.

"I was not aware of any changes that were going to happen. This is as much news to me as it is to you," he said of Wednesday's change.

The matter came up for debate on the House floor Thursday, with many legislators criticizing the changed language and the idea itself.

"I don't support that," Rep. Ted Davis, R-New Hanover, who otherwise declined interview requests, said Thursday on the House floor. "I was not part of this being formulated and I'm concerned about the impact this will have on the aquarium at Fort Fisher, which is in my district."

Davis said he would support the overall technical corrections bill because it also contained a provision calling for the removal of a sunset on recurring film funding.

"It looks like taxpayers are going to be building an aquarium on private land to serve as an anchor for that development," said Rep. Pricey Harrison, D-Guilford. "I find this highly irregular."

#### Questioning the need

N.C. Rep. Deb Butler, D-New Hanover, called the idea "a big waste of taxpayer money spent on a pet project for a developer."

Butler said North Carolina already has four aquariums on the its coast: at Nags Head, Roanoke Island, Pine Knoll Shores and at Fort Fisher. The proposed aquarium satellite would be 31 miles from the aquarium at Fort Fisher.

"Why do we need one in Pender County?" she said.

Her comments were echoed Thursday on the House floor by Rep. Becky Carney, D-Mecklenburg, who said the Pender County facility would be nearly equidistant between the Carteret and New Hanover County aquariums.

And Butler, Carney and Harrison noted that the money was approved by legislators who have cut spending at the N.C. Division of Aquariums over the last several years.

"If we have \$300,000, we could divvy it up between those aquariums," Butler said. "There has to be better things we could use that money for. I could think of several if they need help with that."

Grange said the idea of the facility is to enhance, not detract, from other aquariums.

"It's going to be a small facility and focused on things that are unique to Pender County," Grange said. "It's not something that will duplicate the Fort Fisher aquarium. It's not a turf war. I don't consider it that at all." (Star-News, 10/5/17)

#### **OCT 2017    Brother Died of Alcoholism**

The opioid crisis is one of North Carolina's most pressing health issues, Gov. Roy Cooper said in an appearance in Wilmington Wednesday night.

"Four people a day. Four people die every day from overdoses. That is unacceptable," Cooper said.

Cooper said that, in the last year, \$1.8 billion was lost dealing with opioid overdoses.

"Not only is this costing us in lives and in pain, it's costing our economy," he said.

Cooper, a Democrat, noted that President Donald Trump, a Republican, appointed him to an opioid task force.

"It's an issue that requires a bipartisan solution. We need to work together," he said.

Cooper was in Wilmington, which one study called the number one area in the country for opioid abuse, as the keynote speaker at the 47th annual meeting for Coastal Horizons, which provides a host of services aimed at making the community healthier, including crisis prevention, mental health services and substance abuse treatment.

"I'm just so incredibly proud of this organization and how we've grown," said Margaret Stargell, executive director of Coastal Horizons.

Cooper will also appear at a roundtable discussion about the opioid epidemic Thursday morning at the Coastline Convention Center.

"I want a North Carolina where, at the end of the day, people are better educated, they're healthier, they have more money in their pockets and they have an opportunity to live a more abundant life," Cooper said.

Cooper said more needs to be done to remove the stigma of addiction, saying it should be viewed as a disease, like cancer, that needs to be treated.

"When you have substance use disorder, you should go and get treated," he said.

In his role on the president's commission, Cooper said he continues to try to fight to keep the Affordable Care Act, saying nothing would exacerbate the opioid epidemic than repealing the law and continuing efforts to fight Medicaid expansion.

"When I ask (experts) if Medicaid needs to be expanded, the answer is always 'yes,'" he said to applause.

N.C. Rep. Deb Butler, D-New Hanover, told the audience that addiction "spares no one," including her brother, Frank, who died in March while battling alcoholism.

"My family, like so many others, has suffered the scourge of addiction," Butler said.

In his remarks, New Hanover County Commissioners Chairman Woody White, who spoke after Butler, choked up when talking about the loss families can endure because of addiction.

”When I hear Representative Butler talk about her brother, who I never met ... there is nothing that regrettably unites us more than that realization” of loss, White said.

Cooper echoed that statement, saying groups like Coastal Horizons are key in the effort to fight addiction.

”There is probably not a person in this room who has not been touched by substance use disorder or mental health in some way,” Cooper said. “Coastal Horizons believes lives can be turned around.” (Star-News, 10/26/17)

### **DEC 2017 Puff Profile**

State Rep. Deb Butler of Wilmington is listed as a Democrat, but what she really is is an idealist. She thinks Republicans and Democrats can work together, drawing on each others’ experience, intelligence and ideas to make better legislation that makes a better state.

But that rosy view has been tested since she was appointed in February to replace Rep. Susi Hamilton, who resigned from the legislature to become Gov. Roy Cooper’s secretary of Natural and Cultural Resources. Butler shared her experience in an interview last week with me. It offers a window into this legislature’s hyper-partisan dysfunction and a ray of hope about how that might change.

Upon arriving in Raleigh, Butler enjoyed moving into Hamilton’s former legislative office, a corner one with a view. Republicans who run the legislature promptly moved her to a windowless location she likened to a broom closet. “It was a real knock in the head right out of the gate,” she said.

Things went downhill from there. She was denied the committee appointments she requested and put on low-profile panels that rarely meet. She was especially miffed at being denied a seat on the Environmental Review Commission or the House Select Committee on North Carolina River Quality, since a plant’s discharge of the chemical GenX into the Cape Fear River is a major issue in Wilmington. She went to one of the River Quality panel’s meetings anyway only to find “some (members) were asleep, some were absent and some clearly were not informed.”

The offices of House Speaker Tim Moore and House Majority Leader John R. Bell did not respond to requests for comment on Butler’s description of her freshman experience.

It’s not that Butler, 56, was politically naive. A Wake Forest University law school graduate, she had run unsuccessfully for the New Hanover County Board of Commissioners and the state Senate. And she knew there would be tensions beyond partisanship. She is one of only three LGBT lawmakers in the 170-member General Assembly, and she’s married to her longtime partner. She was going into a legislature that had passed the notorious anti-gay rights bill HB2, exempted magistrates from having to preside at same-sex marriages if they have moral objections and approved a

proposal in 2011 to ask N.C. voters to ban same-sex marriage in North Carolina.

Still, the views of some members caught her by surprise. She said, "Some are polite to your face, but then are supportive of policies that are so discriminatory it's hard to believe they are the same people who just held the door open for you."

But she thought there were areas beyond social issues where she and members of the Republican majority could reason together. Then she discovered that reasoning together isn't what happens on the House floor.

"I quickly realized the body is not deliberative in any way," she said. "People are on their phone. People are not listening to each other. People are just there to push the buttons. That's a product of extreme gerrymandering. It's really corrupted the process."

Butler got so frustrated she went for a walk outside the Legislative Building and made a phone video of what she thought was wrong with what was going on inside the building. She did it just to vent, but when she posted the video to Facebook, it received more than 1,000 views. Now she does the "walkabout" videos on a regular basis with views getting as high as 12,000. "I'm doing a little bit of a reality show," she said.

Despite the closed legislative process, Butler was encouraged by how members of the public still push for action. She said, "That building is abuzz not just with lobbyists but with citizens. That gives me hope, to see people protesting and demanding that their issues be given full consideration. All that is very refreshing to me."

But so far, protests seem only to have hardened the Republicans' commitment to raw and rigid partisanship that has shut

Democrats out of the democratic process. Butler said that a Republican legislator told her it was payback after Republicans were shut out during the Democrats' long rule that ended with the 2010 election.

If Democrats do regain power, Butler hopes there won't be another round of retribution. Instead, she will push for a new era of cooperation.

"If I have any influence, I'm going to work as hard as I can to get everybody to turn the other cheek and try to do a better job including people of different backgrounds," she said. "I think people are clamoring for that. Everywhere I go people say, 'You guys need to get it together,' and I agree." (Lenoir News-Topic, 12/12/17)



## 2018

### **JAN 2018 Sought Amendment to Let State Have Tougher Regs than Feds**

After the N.C. House passed legislation providing \$2.3 million in largely one-time funds to address GenX and other emerging contaminants, Senate President Phil Berger announced he and other Republicans do not support the bill.

House Bill 189 outlined several technical steps while also providing temporary funding for staff at the N.C. Department of Environmental Quality and for the purchase of a high resolution mass spectrometer.

"This funding is extremely satisfying to me in the fact that, if this is done, the House of Representatives will be funding the entire amount that Secretary (Michael) Regan has requested on behalf of DEQ," said Rep. Ted Davis, R-New Hanover, who chairs the N.C. House Select Committee on N.C. River Quality.

Berger, however, signaled late Wednesday that Senate Republicans -- who make up the majority of the body -- do not support the legislation and are unlikely to take additional action until the short session begins later this year.

"(HB 189) leaves North Carolina taxpayers holding the bag for expenditures that should be paid for by the company responsible for the pollution, fails to give DEQ authority to do anything they can't already do and authorizes the purchase of expensive equipment that the state can already access for free," Berger said in a statement.

The Senate, Berger said, will wait until studies ordered by House Bill 56 are completed before taking action.

Gov. Roy Cooper's office and environmental groups hit back at the Senate. In a statement, Molly Diggins, the state director of the N.C. Sierra Club, wrote, "Given what is at stake, it seems reprehensible that the Senate was unwilling to even consider the interim measure passed by the House. The House bill would start North Carolina toward a program to address the dangers of chemical contamination in drinking water."

Rep. Holly Grange, R-New Hanover, urged her fellow legislators to vote for Wednesday's bill fully aware it will not be the state's final action on the issue.

"We will be working on this issue for some time into the future. ... This is a process, and we need to continue looking at it as a process," Grange said.

Several efforts by Democrat representatives to amend the bill failed, including one by Rep. **Deb Butler**, D-**Wilmington**, that would have repealed the Hardison Amendment. Widely reviled in environmental circles, the Hardison rules prevent state regulators from making rules stricter than federal standards.

"When is the last time you guys abdicated your authority willingly to the federal government?" Butler asked the House. "I think **North Carolina** should be in charge of our destiny on this. ... We need to take the handcuffs off of our watchdogs."

Davis opposed the amendment, which was eventually defeated by a 71-44 vote, arguing regulators could come to legislators and ask for exemptions, should they become necessary. "We need," Davis said, "to deal with these (compounds) individually, case-by-case." (Star-News, 1/10/18)

### **JAN 2018 Rips GOP on HB 189**

Less than 24 hours after Republican leadership in the state Senate announced it would not consider a bill providing \$2.3 million for equipment and personnel to address emerging contaminants like GenX, Democrats pushed back.

In a press conference Thursday afternoon, Rep. **Deb Butler**, D-**New Hanover**, said, "We passed it in the House and what seemed like minutes later, a memorandum came out from the Senate that said, 'No, thanks.' Now, if that wasn't orchestrated and contrived, I've never seen anything like it."

While Butler and Democrat leadership of the N.C. Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) continued to advocate for the passage of House Bill 189, Republican leadership of the House insisted its actions were in good faith and Republican senators further explained their lack of support for the bill.

Responding to Butler's remarks, Joseph Kyzer, a spokesman for Tim Moore, the speaker of the House, wrote, "Rep. Butler's baseless accusation of bad faith on H.B. 189 -- a bill she voted for -- is an appalling fabrication that directly contradicts comments by her colleagues in the House Democrat caucus. It is an utterly false assertion that she should immediately retract."

Butler stood by her statement -- which included calls for **North Carolina** to vote in new leadership and become a national example for water quality. Butler also said saying the House Select Committee on N.C. River Quality had worked "in good faith" on the bill, only to be undercut by Republican leadership.

"I very much wanted it to pass because we do need the equipment and we do need the manpower. I think it's fairly convenient that the Senate recessed and went home while we were still voting on it," Butler said.

After passing the House unanimously, the bill must pass through the Senate's appropriations committee and a policy committee before reaching the floor, state Sen. Michael Lee, R-**New Hanover**, said Thursday.

Lee said he first learned of the bill from state Rep. Ted Davis, R-**New Hanover**, on Monday and did not see the final version until Wednesday afternoon.

"I personally have serious concerns about this legislation," Lee said Thursday in a text message, "as it does absolutely nothing to provide clean water to our citizens and may lead people to think otherwise."

Davis, who chairs the House river quality committee, did not immediately respond to a call for comment. Wednesday, he said DEQ officials had asked for the staff and funds included in the bill, including a high-resolution mass spectrometer -- a claim backed by DEQ Secretary Michael Regan.

"North Carolinians expect DEQ to ensure their water is safe and we need the tools to do our job," Regan said in a statement Thursday. "This equipment will help DEQ scientists perform the type of in-depth analysis that's now expected as part of the overall evaluation of water quality in North Carolina."

He added taxpayers could be on the hook for annual testing costs of \$615,000 if the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) is unable to conduct the regular tests. A spokeswoman for Phil Berger said Thursday the Senate president pro tempore stood by his vote, pointing to the EPA's support.

"Affected waters belong to the United States as well as the state," Amy Auth, a Berger spokeswoman wrote, "and there is no need to bill North Carolina taxpayers for a resource the state can already access for free." (Star-News, 1/11/18)

### **JAN 2018 House/Senate Stalled Over HB 189**

An effort to move forward with testing and reporting for GenX and other contaminants stalled in the North Carolina General Assembly last week.

GenX and three perfluorinated compounds were identified in the Cape Fear River, from which Brunswick County draws its drinking water, by a 2016 study by the EPA and N.C. State University.

But instead of blocking House Bill 189 — Short Term Response to Emerging Contaminants Bill along party lines, the House supported the measure while the Senate held off on taking action.

HB 189 was referred to the Committee on Rules and Operations of the Senate on Jan. 12.

Sen. Bill Rabon of Southport is the chairman of the Committee on Rules and Operations.

Attempts to reach him for comment on the bill were unsuccessful.

Rep. Frank Iler of Oak Island said Tuesday the House and Senate are still in the legislative session that began Jan. 10.

"Technically, we're still in it, so I hope that they will take it up. There are some time-sensitive reports in it," he said.

Iler said the Senate's Committee on Rules and Operations was like a holding area for the bill.

"(Rabon) can decide if and when it can proceed. I hope Sen. Rabon, (Senate President Pro Tem Phil) Berger or (New Hanover) Sen. Michael Lee will do something to help get it moving," Iler said. "If they get it done I'm sure the governor will sign it."

Iler said the House Select Committee on N.C. River Quality met Jan. 4 to send HB 189 to the House and Senate to take action during the one- or two-day session.

The bill would:

Direct the Department of Health and Human Services to consult with the Science Advisory Board, a board of health professionals set up by the secretaries of DHHS and the Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ), to develop health goals for the contaminants.

Direct the DEQ to study its permitting process to ensure it sufficiently protects public health and safety, and review its reporting and notice requirements for dischargers, then report back to the General Assembly by April 1.

Share water quality data with neighboring states.

And would provides DEQ with funding for permanent positions and equipment to study water quality and safety, including purchasing a high-resolution mass spectrometer, which is considered critical for detection and analysis of chemicals such as GenX, according to DEQ Secretary Michael S. Regan.

The bill would also direct the School of Government at UNC-Chapel Hill to study the civil liability of water utilities and report back by April 1.

The House passed the bill unanimously, 116-0, at 5:55 p.m. Jan. 10.

The only action taken by the Senate that day came was a statement issued by Berger announcing he did not support the bill.

"What the House passed today unfortunately does nothing to prevent GenX from going into the water supply," he said. "It leaves North Carolina taxpayers holding the bag for expenditures that should be paid for by the company responsible for the pollution, fails to give DEQ authority to do anything they can't already do, and authorizes the purchase of expensive equipment that the state can already access for free."

Berger also said the Senate Republicans "have already shown we are serious about finding real solutions that will actually improve water quality in the Cape Fear River and hold violators accountable for dumping GenX into the region's water supply.

"That's why several months ago we passed legislation to immediately and directly address the problem of GenX contamination in the lower Cape Fear Region," he said. "We provided funding to local public utilities to begin removing GenX from public water supplies. And we commissioned studies to quantify the amount of GenX in the Cape Fear River and determine the impact it could have on public health and safety."

Berger said the Senate will wait for the first round of information from the studies that are due in spring.

"We are waiting for the data we required in October so we can take meaningful action to address this problem in the short session," he said.

Rep. Deb Butler of Wilmington, who represents part of Brunswick County, said Tuesday she is frustrated that in seven months since the compounds were identified the General Assembly isn't one step closer to providing clean water.

"There is no sense of urgency by the General Assembly. They have not funded the DEQ in the way the governor and (DEQ Secretary) Regan requested," she said.

Butler called the Senate referral of the bill to the Rules and Operations Committee "theatrics."

"By the time we voted, the Senate had adjourned and left. They never intended to take it up," she said. "This was done for the purpose of trying to make people think something was done. But here we are and nothing has changed."

Regan released a statement Jan. 11 emphasizing the need for resources to address emerging contaminants.

"North Carolinians expect DEQ to ensure their water is safe and we need the tools to do our job," he said. "This equipment will help DEQ scientists perform the type of in-depth analysis that's now expected as part of the overall evaluation of water quality in North Carolina."

The DEQ has relied on Environmental Protection Agency labs to process water samples from the Cape Fear River since discharges from The Chemours Co. industrial facility in Fayetteville were reported in June 2017.

Chemours manufactures GenX for use in making Teflon and other products under a National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System permit with the Environmental Protection Agency that was managed by the DEQ. The permit governs Chemours' discharge of wastewater from its Fayetteville facility.

The DEQ said if the EPA labs end their assistance to North Carolina because they serve multiple states, it would have to contract with private sector labs at a cost of about \$615,000 per year to continue the state's emerging contaminant research and response.

GenX tests

Water samples taken at the Brunswick County's Northwest Water Treatment Plant on Dec. 14 had levels of 78.7 parts per trillion in the raw water entering the plant, county spokeswoman Amanda Hutcheson said.

NWTP finished drinking water tests showed 38.6 parts per trillion.

North Carolina Health and Human Services established the health goal for exposure to GenX in drinking water at 140 parts per trillion. (Brunswick Beacon, 1/16/18)

## **FEB 2018    Opposes Senate Version of GenX Bill**

The state House of Representatives declined to address a Senate-amended version of House Bill 189 to fund testing and reporting for GenX and other contaminants Tuesday.

"The House passed (its) version of the bill almost unanimously. But the Senate monkeyed with it so bad the House did not want anything to do with it," said Rep. Deb Butler of Wilmington, whose district includes the northern portion of Brunswick County.

Butler said the bill is not expected to come up for discussion again until May's short session.

"We've been in special session for 35 days and not one thing has passed related to GenX," she said. "It was 240 days ago I put a memorandum on every representatives' desk about Gen X and still we've accomplished nothing."

Rep. Frank Iler of Oak Island said Monday that Rep. Ted Davis Jr. of New Hanover County, who introduced the original HB 189 Short Term Response to Emerging Contaminants Bill, which is now called the Water Safety Act, had concerns with amendments the Senate approved Feb. 9.

The bill Davis proposed:

Directed the Department of Health and Human Services to consult with the Science Advisory Board, a board of health professionals set up by the secretaries of DHHS and the Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ), to develop health goals for the contaminants.

Directed the DEQ to study its permitting process to ensure it sufficiently protects public health and safety, and review its reporting and notice requirements for dischargers, then report back to the General Assembly by April 1.

Call for sharing water quality data with neighboring states.

Provided DEQ with funding for permanent positions and equipment to study water quality and safety, including purchasing a high-resolution mass spectrometer, which is considered critical for detection and analysis of chemicals such as GenX, DEQ secretary Michael S. Regan said.

The bill also directed the School of Government at UNC-Chapel Hill to study the civil liability of water utilities and report back by April 1.

The House passed HB 189 by 116-0 on Jan 10, but the Senate referred it to the Committee on Rules and Operations on Jan. 12, essentially putting it on hold for the past month.

The Senate Select Committee on North Carolina River Water Quality — made up of Sens. Bill Rabon of Southport, Michael Lee of New Hanover County, Wesley Meredith of Cumberland County, Trudy Wade of Guilford County and Andy Wells of Catawba County — announced Feb. 7 they introduced a revised version of the HB 189.

The amended bill would provide \$2.4 million for DEQ and dedicate \$2 million from the budget to a policy research program at UNC-Chapel Hill.

The bill would require DHHS to consult with the Environmental Protection Agency, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry, as well as the UNC system, to develop health goals for GenX and other related chemicals.

DEQ would have to coordinate with environmental agencies in South Carolina, Virginia, Tennessee, Georgia and West Virginia to share information and data about contaminants in surface and ground water that often cross state borders.

DEQ would be required to review the state's National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) permitting program and its disclosure requirements to ensure it is protecting public health and the environment, and issuing permits in a timely manner.

And the bill would make sure DEQ cooperates with the EPA on any audit of the permitting program.

EPA response letter

Rabon, Lee, Wade and Wells sent a letter Jan. 23 to the EPA seeking an audit of DEQ's permit and Public Water Supply programs.

The letter to EPA region 4 administrator Trey Glenn said the discovery of per- and polyflouroalkyl substances (PFASs) and other "emerging contaminants" in drinking water from the Cape Fear River questions the ability of the National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) Permitting Program and North Carolina's Public Water Supply (PWS) Program to adequately protect the public health.

The senators questioned if the federal Clean Water Act CWA allows state regulation of the compounds when there are no federal standards, if permit holders have specific disclosure obligations and if there is an appropriate level of public involvement in settlement agreements regarding enforcement under the CWA.

They requested the EPA audit North Carolina's NPDES Permitting Program to determine if this program implemented by the DEQ adequately protects the public health and the environment under the requirements of the Clean Water Act.

They asked for a review of the NPDES program's disclosure requirements to determine if they are sufficient for entities submitting application for new discharge permits, permit renewals, or permit modifications and also asked if DEQ's internal permit applications process needs improvements for more thorough and timely review of applications.

Glenn sent a letter Feb. 6 to Rabon responding to the senators' questions.

Glenn said that under the CWA, compounds like PFASs that don't have a federal standard are regulated as pollutants and can't be discharged without a permit.

He said permit holders' disclosure obligations require they provide specific information to assess discharges and under what condition to issue a NPDES permit.

States must meet the minimum federal regulations for public involvement in CWA enforcement but can establish procedures that go further in involving citizens in NPDES enforcement.

In regards to the audit requests, Glen said the EPA closely monitored the state's actions after the discovery of PFASs in the Cape Fear River and conducts audits of NPDES programs every five years. North Carolina was reviewed in 2015 and its NPDES program met federal requirements.

The EPA also audits state's public water system supervision programs every three years and North Carolina's review in 2015 showed it effectively implemented the program, Glenn said.

He added the EPA will provide North Carolina with the most up-to-date guidance on PFASs as new information becomes available. (Brunswick Beacon, 2/13/18)

**MAR 2018 Voted Against Open Carry**

H.B. 746 would remove the state's requirement for a concealed carry permit, changing state law to allow any U.S. citizen 18 or over who legally owns a gun to carry it concealed anywhere open carry is currently allowed.

The bill passed the House 64-51 on mostly party lines. No Democrat voted for it and most of the region's delegation to the House voted against the measure. N.C. Rep. Ted Davis (R-New Hanover), Rep. Frank Iler (R-Brunswick), and Rep. Deb Butler (D-New Hanover, each voted against the bill, while Rep. Holly Grange (R-New Hanover), had an excused absence on the day of the vote. Former Rep. Chris Millis (R-Pender), who resigned in September, was the bill's prime sponsor and voted in favor of it.

The bill is currently in the Senate Rules Committee, which is chaired by Brunswick County Republican Sen. Bill Rabon, and is eligible to be heard in the 2018 short session. (Star-News, 3/7/18)

### **MAR 2018 Rips GOP on Film Industry Grants**

Actress Maureen Mountcastle knows that talent is not everything. When it comes to the film industry, networking is key, and a trusting relationship with a casting director can take years to cultivate.

Over the past decade, Mountcastle has seen her network of Wilmington connections -directors, producers and casting agents - move to places like Atlanta to follow the money.

"I want to continue to work, and it's just very, very difficult," she said.

Mountcastle tries to remain optimistic, but she is at a crossroads in her career. She knows exactly who to blame for her inability to find local acting jobs - the North Carolina General Assembly.

The beginnings of "Wilmywood"

The film industry in Wilmington began through the efforts of producers Frank Capra Jr. and Dino De Laurentiis.

"Frank Capra was scouting locations for 'Firestarter' he and Dino De Laurentiis decided they could have a full professional studio here," said Barbara Rowe, the now-retired curator of the Cape Fear Museum, in an interview with WRAL in 2016.

"Firestarter" was filmed in Wilmington in 1983. Capra produced the film with De Laurentiis' production company, and the two decided to stay in the area. De Laurentiis built the first movie studio in the area, the De Laurentiis Entertainment Group Studios, which would later become EUE/Screen Gems.

"Wilmington literally was the town that Dino De Laurentiis built," said Jeff Goodwin, a Wilmington-based makeup and special effects artist. "In 1984, there was no downtown Wilmington. It was boarded up. Once Dino came in, and the film came in, the money started coming in."



In the years following the construction of the studio, Wilmington's TV and film industry boomed. Between 1983 and 2015, 128 different major motion pictures filmed scenes in Wilmington, notably "Iron Man 3" and "The Conjuring." From 1987 to 2017, 129 different TV series shot scenes in Wilmington locations, including "Dawson's Creek," "One Tree Hill" and "Under the Dome."

But Wilmington's film and TV industry has ground to a halt in the past couple of years.

The most recent movie to film in Wilmington, the upcoming release "Bolden!" finished filming in 2015. "Good Behavior" was the only scripted TV show filmed in Wilmington in 2017.

### Incentives and grants

In 2005, North Carolina began a film tax credit program for productions which filmed in-state. In 2012, North Carolina's direct spending peaked around \$340 million in 2012.

A study cited by the Greensboro News & Record showed the industry spent \$1.3 billion in North Carolina between 2007 and 2012, and through the incentive program, the state paid \$112 million to those production companies after audits. After the rebate, North Carolina earned a tax revenue of \$58.3 million from film productions during that period.

In January 2015, the Republican majority of the General Assembly replaced the tax credit program with the North Carolina Film and Entertainment Grant, which provides fewer financial incentives to production companies.

The change to the grant program resulted in a reduction in productions in North Carolina, said Johnny Griffin, the director of the Wilmington Regional Film Commission.

"Productions look for incentives," Griffin said. "It's one of the first things they look for, and you're either in consideration or not in consideration based on the amount of money they get."

The grant program carries additional restrictions on the use of grant funds, like a minimum spending qualification - \$1 million per episode average for TV series and \$5 million for feature-length films - and includes a per-project cap of \$9 million for TV series per season and \$5 million for feature-length films.

Production companies have moved to states like Georgia, where the incentive programs are more generous and favorable.

Griffin is hopeful about the future of the grant program, in part because of the elimination of its sunset date, or planned end date, last October, which he thinks will attract more T.V. series. However, there are no projects currently in production in Wilmington, and Griffin said he does not see the program changing anytime soon.

"It's just going to take time for us to sort of build that business up again," he said.

Why the shift?

In an article in the News & Observer from May 2014, during the time the state legislature was considering overhauling the tax credit program, the representative of House District 79, Julia Howard, was quoted as saying the tax credit program was “not acceptable to the body” but did not comment further.

Howard and several other legislators declined to discuss the issue for this article.

House Democrat: “It’s a real shame.”

Democrat Deb Butler, the representative of House District 18 - which includes Wilmington - in the North Carolina House of Representatives, said the grant program is unsuccessful compared to the tax credit program, and she considers it the product of political mismanagement.

”Extraordinarily conservative Republican leadership took hold and for whatever reason decided to really target the film industry and to dismantle the program,” she said. “And it’s a real shame.”

Butler said the loss of productions in North Carolina is a terrible loss for the state economically.

”This is the very type of industry we want to lure,” she said. “We didn’t have to build infrastructure for them, we don’t have to build roads or put in new power sources or water or sewer lines. It didn’t require any expenditure on the part of the community. It was just a pure profit situation, and it was just fun.”

With the Republican leadership of the state unwilling to overhaul the grant program, Butler said she thinks it is unlikely to change. She is optimistic that this year’s midterm election will elect more Democrats to the legislature that will be sympathetic to the state’s film industry.

”I’m hopeful that when we have productive midterm elections and we have more balance, we’ll be able to put it back the way it was,” Butler said. (Charlotte Post, 3/8/18)

### **MAY 2018 Files Democrat GenX Bill**

Reactions to the competing Democratic and Republican bills introduced in the N.C. General Assembly Thursday to address emerging contaminants like GenX were as divided on political and ideological lines as the bills themselves.

State House Democrats, including N.C. Rep. Deb Butler, D-New Hanover, filed a bill that would provide nearly \$10 million in recurring funds to the N.C. Department of Environmental Quality for 39 new staff members and overhaul the agency’s permitting process.

Within hours, N.C. House and Senate Republicans filed companion bills that would spend \$8 million to identify chemicals in the state’s waters, provide funding for new water lines for areas affected by contamination and give the governor new authority to shut down a company discharging pollutants. The Republican effort was led by area legislators, including Sens. Michael Lee, R-New Hanover, and Bill Rabon, R-Brunswick, and Reps. Ted Davis and Holly Grange, R-New Hanover.

While some smaller measures have passed the chambers previously, the bills represented the first major legislation -- with joint House and Senate support -- to address GenX and other contaminants since last June's revelation that the unregulated chemical GenX was in the Cape Fear River. The river is the region's primary source of drinking water.

"Frankly, after 11 months, the Senate, Mr. Lee and Mr. Rabon ... appear to be taking some necessary action," said Harper Peterson, a former Wilmington mayor and Democrat challenging Lee in this year's election. "But as you read into it, (the Republican bill) does not address (GenX or Chemours)."

Woody White, the Republican chairman of the New Hanover County Board of Commissioners, said both bills represented "tremendous progress."

"But, without question, the more thoughtful approach is the one offered by the House and Senate leadership," he said, referring to the Republican bill. "I think it is an exciting development on water quality."

#### Research entity questioned

Some criticized the Republican strategy of spending \$8 million to have the North Carolina Policy Collaboratory at the University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill study the state's waters to determine what chemicals it contains. The organization's research director is Jeffrey Warren, the former science policy advisor to state Senate President Phil Berger.

"The bill would give \$8 million to the North Carolina Policy Collaboratory at UNC established by the legislature and run by the former policy advisor to the President of the Senate, Senator Berger. Meanwhile, it provides a meager \$1 million in new funding to the Department of Environmental Quality, the agency with statutory authority to force Chemours to protect our air, water, and groundwater," Derb Carter of the Southern Environmental Law Center said in a statement.

"The proposal continues the Senate's trend toward using the the UNC Collaboratory as a legislative research shop, after seven years of starving DEQ of the resources the agency needs to address the threat of chemicals in our drinking water and other environmental threats," the Sierra Club said in a release. "Instead of giving the state better tools and adequate resources to address the problem, the bill may leave the state with weaker enforcement and a university-based research program that is disconnected from the needs of an underfunded state water quality program."

White, though, said he believed the GOP bill placed the burden on researching the water's contents onto subject matter experts and scientists and he noted that the bill provides funding "for DEQ's enforcement side."

"It is absolutely the best approach to take," he said.

#### Political issue

The issue became political shortly after it was broken in a StarNews story in June 2017, with Republicans and Democrats disagreeing, and pointing fingers at each other, early on how to approach the issue. Thursday's competing bills signals nothing has changed.

"Republicans sat on their hands for nearly a year while the GenX threat grew and now, instead of fully funding our state environmental regulators, they are shoveling money to one of their political cronies," Robert Howard, N.C. Democratic Party spokesman, said in a statement. "Governor Cooper and legislative Democrats have been ringing the warning bell on GenX for months and have a responsible plan that not only tackles GenX now but better prepares our state to fight other contaminants in the future."

Meanwhile, Dallas Woodhouse, executive director of the N.C. Republican Party, produced a chart comparing the Democratic and Republican proposals, featuring several angry red "Xs" and green check marks for the GOP plan for several categories, including: "Provides funding for local governments to begin the planning and analysis needed to expedite new water lines to impacted homes."

The Democratic version may be dead on arrival -- Republicans enjoy veto-proof majorities in both chambers. But Peterson, the former Wilmington mayor, said such a view misses a larger point.

"It's important that the counterpoint is made," he said. "That's what's missing in this legislature. There are no counterpoints. There's no debate. If nothing else, this bill accomplishes that." (Star-News, 5/18/18)

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- Republican and Democratic lawmakers in the state General Assembly introduced competing bills Thursday to deal with contamination connected to a Bladen County plant.

Proposed legislation introduced by Republicans would give Gov. Roy Cooper the authority to shut down a Bladen County plant if state regulators cannot stop further unauthorized discharges of GenX, a potentially carcinogenic compound. The legislation also would provide more than \$10 million for university scientists and state regulators to continue their research on the amount of GenX and other emerging contaminants in public water supplies.

A Democratic bill calls for several provisions related to GenX and other unregulated chemicals, including providing \$9.9 million in recurring funds to the state Department of Environmental Quality for at least 39 staff members and an overhaul of the agency's permitting process. The proposed legislation also calls for \$4.41 million in one-time funds, largely for laboratory upgrades and equipment.

State officials have been investigating GenX since June when news broke that researchers had found the compound in the Cape Fear River downstream from the Chemours plant. The facility is on N.C. 87 in Bladen County near the Cumberland County line.

GenX has since been detected in hundreds of private wells around the plant, and in rainwater, lakes, streams and swamps in the area.

The compound has been linked in animal studies to several forms of cancer, but it isn't known if the effect is the same in humans.

Chemours manufactures GenX at the plant. The compound is sent to other locations, where it is used to make non-stick cookware and other products.

Seven Democrats, including Cumberland County's Reps. Elmer Floyd and Billy Richardson, filed their proposed legislation Thursday morning. Several hours later, Republicans filed bills in the Senate and House, with Sen. Wesley Meredith of Cumberland County and Rep. William Brisson of Bladen County among the sponsors.

Republicans control veto-proof majorities in both chambers.

The Republican bills would establish a framework to require Chemours to provide an alternate permanent water supply for private wells with elevated levels of GenX. They also would provide \$2 million in grant funding to help local governments expedite the extension of municipal water lines to homes with impacted wells. They make clear that Chemours will reimburse state taxpayers for any expenditures from this fund.

The legislation also would allocate \$1.8 million for the Department of Environmental Quality to purchase a mass spectrometer and hire additional staff to support water quality sampling and analysis and address its permitting backlog. It would provide \$8 million for university researchers to conduct statewide sampling and analysis of GenX and other emerging contaminants in public water supplies.

The bills also would provide more money to the Cape Fear Public Utility Authority to test a technology to treat its groundwater supply and replicate the water treatment technology in other parts of the state. They would set aside \$8 million for university researchers to conduct statewide sampling and analysis of GenX and other emerging contaminants in public water supplies.

The Democrat bill would repeal the Hardison Amendment, a controversial state law that prevents regulators from setting a standard that is stricter than one set by the EPA.

Other sponsors of the Republican bills are Sens. Michael Lee and Bill Rabon, and Reps. Ted Davis, Holly Grange and Frank Iler. Lee, Davis and Grange represent New Hanover County; Rabon and Iler represent Brunswick County.

"We are pleased the House and Senate worked together to come up with a comprehensive plan that will help stop the pollution of our water supply, provide our families, neighbors and constituents access to clean, safe water and finally hold Chemours responsible for its pollution," the bill's authors said in a joint statement. "This plan accomplishes our immediate goal of addressing water quality in southeastern North Carolina and puts the tools in place to help protect North Carolinians from GenX and other emerging compounds going forward."

Rep. Deb Butler of New Hanover County was one of the principal sponsors of the Democratic legislative proposal.

She said the bill was crafted with input from scientists and environmentalists,

"This is what the scientists and environmental community believe is necessary to get this water cleaned up, and streamline and modernize the permitting process," she said.

Butler blasted the provision in the Republican bill giving Gov. Roy Cooper authority to close Chemours as being politically motivated. She said the General Assembly has largely worked to strip the governor's office of power since Cooper won election in late 2016.

"Give the governor the power to shut down Chemours, put him in an untenable spot, so if he shuts them down and stops our water from being polluted, he's a job killer in the same breath," she said. (Fayetteville Observer, 5/18/18)

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-- Under a bill submitted by Republicans on Thursday in the General Assembly, Gov. Roy Cooper would have the power to shutter the Chemours plant off N.C. 87 in Bladen County if further GenX contamination continues.

Chemours is a manufacturer of the chemical that is used in producing non-stick cookware.

Democratic state lawmakers also submitted a bill Thursday, but theirs did not include giving Cooper any authority to shut down the plant. Some Democrats saw the item in the GOP's bill as a political ploy to put the Democratic governor between a rock and a hard place.

New Hanover County Rep. Deb Butler went so far to say that, should Cooper be forced to close the Chemours plant at some point, he would be viewed as both a savior of those suffering water contamination as well as a "job killer."

Also under the Republican plan, more than \$10 million would be set aside for scientists and state regulators to continue research how much GenX and other chemicals are in public wells in the region; force Chemours to create an alternate and permanent water supply for those whose wells have been contaminated; allocate \$1.8 million for the N.C. State Department of Environmental Quality to hire additional staffing for water sampling and analysis; provide \$2 million for grants to assist local governments build water line extensions to those with contaminated wells; provide \$8 million for university researchers to sample and analyze GenX and other chemicals in the area's public well; and give funding to the Cape Fear Public Utility Authority to test new technology for treating groundwater supplies.

The GOP bill was filed in both the House and Senate by Sen. Wesley Meredith of Cumberland County, Sen. Bill Rabon of Bladen County and Rep. William Brisson of Bladen County.

Under the Democrats' bill, passage would repeal the controversial Hardison Amendment, which doesn't allow regulators from setting a standard that is more stringent than those set by the Environmental Protection Agency. It would also provide nearly \$10 million for the state's DEQ to add staff; reconfigure the agency's permitting process; and allow for more than \$4 million for laboratory improvements and equipment.

The Democrat's bill was filed Thursday in both the House and Senate by, among others, Reps. Billy Richardson and Elmer Floyd of Cumberland County.

"We are pleased the House and Senate worked together to come up with a comprehensive plan that will help stop the pollution of our water supply (and) provide our families, neighbors and constituents access clean, safe water -- and finally hold Chemours responsible for its pollution," the authors of the GOP bill wrote in a joint statement released Thursday. "This plan ... puts the tools in place to help protect North Carolina from GenX and other emerging compounds going forward."

A statement released Friday by Chemours officials:

"Two bills filed by the North Carolina legislature on May 17 address operations at The Chemours Company's Fayetteville Works manufacturing facility.

"As we have stated publicly, Chemours is committed to continuing to work collaboratively with North Carolina officials to address the concerns raised by the community related to our plant operations. In fact, Chemours recently submitted a comprehensive emission control plan to NCDEQ, which outlines specific commitments and significant investments that we are in the process of making both at the plant site and in the adjacent communities.

"These investments will bring specialized, state-of-the-art emission control technology to the facility that will essentially eliminate air and water emissions of all PFAS compounds, not just GenX. These changes are already underway and will result in the Fayetteville plant becoming a best-in-class facility and a model for other chemical manufacturing facilities around the globe.

"Chemours is confident that the solutions we are implementing in Fayetteville will meet the community's expectations with regard to environmental performance and stewardship; permit the plant to continue to be a source of high-quality, well-paying jobs for hundreds of North Carolinians; and allow us to meet the unique and critical needs of our customers, which include the U.S. military and the automobile, aerospace, and semiconductor industries, among others."

The state's Republican lawmakers currently hold a veto-proof majority in both the House and Senate, but there has been no word on when the two bills might be brought to the floor of either chamber. (Bladen Journal, 5/18/18)

### **MAY 2018    Headed to Easy Victory**

Incumbent Rep. Deb Butler, D-New Hanover, has raised the most of any of the region's members of the N.C. House, at \$91,518. Her challengers haven't kept up. Libertarian candidate Joseph Sharp has raised \$207, while Republican Louis Harmati filed an affidavit making his campaign inactive because he planned to raise no money for the race. (Star-News, 5/25/18)

## **JUN 2018 Short Session Summary**

-- While some of the region's delegation to the N.C. General Assembly called the 2018 short session a success, some initiatives they spearheaded will have to wait until next year.

In an often tumultuous short session, which is scheduled to wrap up Friday, the Republican-dominated House and Senate passed a budget crafted without input from Democrats and over the veto of Gov. Roy Cooper.

Legislators also dealt with (or not, depending on who you ask) several issues near and dear to the Wilmington region, including film incentives and the issues around the presence of the unregulated chemical GenX and other emerging contaminants in the Cape Fear River.

Here are some areas the region's legislators said were a success or things that still need to be addressed:

**GenX:** The budget contained funds to have the N.C. Policy Collaboratory create a drinking water contaminants baseline using state university system resources and provided \$1.3 million for equipment and time-limited positions at the N.C. Department of Environmental Quality.

It was less comprehensive than previous competing Democratic and Republican bills -- both of which differed in how to approach the issue.

N.C. Sen. Michael Lee, R-New Hanover, who was a prime sponsor of the original GOP bill, said he was satisfied with the final result.

"While not as expansive as my original bill, I was happy the budget pulled a number of items from it -- including treatment to the Cape Fear Aquifer and established a statewide monitoring and early warning system for GenX and related emerging compounds in the GenX family," Lee said.

N.C. Rep. Deb Butler, D-New Hanover, who sponsored the Democratic bill, said the final result fell far short of what was needed to address the issue of pollution in the river.

"If I had my wish list however, we would have committed our resources in favor of clean drinking water and made the law tougher on polluters. We didn't do that in our budget because partisan politics sadly got in the way," she said.

**Film:** New language in the budget expands the parameters of the film grant program by increasing the amount of funding a single project can receive to \$12 million for a season of television and \$7 million for feature films. It also lowered the qualifying local spending mark to \$1 million for made-for-TV films and \$3 million for feature films.

**Ban-the-box:** A bill that would have forbade state agencies from asking for criminal histories on job application forms, sponsored by N.C. Rep. Holly Grange, R-New Hanover, passed the House but died in the Senate.



"I was upset to hear that my ban-the-box bill would not be heard in Senate Rules (Committee)," Grange said.

Grange said she hopes the initiative, which would not apply to private companies, will become law in 2019.

Zip lines: A bill sponsored by N.C. Rep. Ted Davis, R-New Hanover, to strictly regulate aerial adventure operations, including zip lines, was never taken up by the House. Davis started advocating for stricter regulation three years ago, following the death of 12-year-old Sanders Burney of Wilmington in 2015 in a zip line accident.

While a bill was adopted last year that required operators to carry liability insurance, Davis, a distant relative of Burney's, advocated for state-level regulation.

"My biggest disappointment is that the zip line bill was not heard in the short session," he said.

Other notes:

\* Butler, a freshman legislator in the minority party, still saw two bills she sponsored -- to provide designation for the deaf and hard of hearing on drivers licenses and to establish fire protection fees for Brunswick County -- become law.

\* A bill sponsored by Davis to address the state's rape kits backlog became law.

\* Several bills that emerged from a legislative research committee on intellectual and developmental disabilities, chaired by Lee, went nowhere. "We have plenty of time to pick those up in the long session" in 2019, Lee said.

\* Legislators approved a bond to spend \$3 billion over 10 years to fund transportation projects. The bill was sponsored by N.C. Sen. Bill Rabon, R-Brunswick. (Star-News, 6/28/18)

### **OCT 2018 Star-News Interview**

WILMINGTON -- After serving nearly a full term in the N.C. House, Rep. Deb Butler is seeking her first electoral victory.

Butler, a Wilmington attorney, was appointed to the House 18 seat in February 2017 when former Rep. Susi Hamilton resigned to serve as the secretary of the Department of Natural and Cultural Resources under Gov. Roy Cooper.

The district includes downtown Wilmington, Wrightsboro and northern Brunswick County, including Belville and Leland.

In her time in the legislature, Butler has emerged as a vocal supporter of environmental causes and Cooper's administration.

TO SEE MORE LOCAL ELECTION COVERAGE, [CLICK HERE](#)

Butler, a Democrat, is being opposed by Louis Harmati, a Republican, and Joseph Sharp, a Libertarian. Neither challenger responded to a StarNews questionnaire.

The seat has a base salary of \$13,951, in addition to \$559 per month for expenses. Higher salaries are possible for leadership positions.

What improvements or changes, if any, would you advocate for in public policy or infrastructure needs in the wake of Hurricane Florence?

Butler: We must require that contract farmers and other concentrated farming operations utilize best technologies for managing waste. It is imperative that we demand protections for water quality and we do so in a way that rewards the utilization of best practices and state of the art technologies. It is important that we acknowledge climate change and prepare for its effects while trying to reverse those changes. I would also like to examine how to best ensure that portions of eastern NC are not “cut-off” due to flooded roadways and that may mean elevating certain portions of roadways.

What level of state support, if any, is appropriate for local beach nourishment projects?

B: Our beaches generate incredible revenue and much of our beach property is not only enjoyed by folks from across the state, but it is owned by them as well. It is true, however, that maintenance is a costly endeavor particularly with the number and strength of the storms we are experiencing. I believe that a partnership between the federal, state and local entities is the best approach. That will likely vary from one location to another, but by pooling resources, the burden doesn’t fall too sharply on any one group.

Outside of responding to the hurricane, what is the single most important initiative the state General Assembly should enact over the next two years? Why?

B: There is so much to do, I am hard pressed to choose one, but we have got to clean up our water and stop allowing it to be a dumping ground for big corporations and concentrated animal farming conglomerates like the Chinese-owned Smithfield Corporation. To me, this is now a public health emergency and it has got to come first.

What can realistically be accomplished in the next two years for per-pupil school funding and teacher pay, both of which remain below national averages?

B: Both teacher pay and per pupil spending can be increased in the manner suggested by the governor. The goal is to reach at least the national average over a four-year period and the per pupil spending should also increase in an incremental way. We pay for these increases by not giving additional tax breaks to the wealthiest among us, meaning those earning over \$200,000 a year. A teacher should not have to work a second or third job to make ends meet and investing in our students is our obligation.

Should North Carolina’s General Assembly and congressional districts continue to be drawn by legislators or should an independent body be created to handle redistricting? Why?

B: I support the creation of an independent panel who would be charged with this responsibility. The legislature has demonstrated that the process can be manipulated for extreme partisan gain and that should be avoided at all costs. I believe extreme gerrymandering is partially responsible for the incivility and discord we see in politics today and I believe that the public is sick of it. The voters should be choosing their legislators, not the other way around. The League of Women Voters has identified a mechanism for this to occur and I support their recommendations. (Star-News, 10/16/18)

**OCT 2018 Brunswick Beacon Profile/Interview**

Name: Deb Butler

Office sought: N.C. House District 18

Party affiliation: Democrat

Age: 57

Town of residence: Wilmington

Education: Bachelor of Arts in English from the University of Tennessee; Juris Doctor from Wake Forest University School of Law

Profession: Lawyer

Political and public service experience: N.C. House District 18 incumbent; member of the New Hanover Commission for Women board, The Dance Cooperative, The Cape Fear Green Building Alliance and The Historic Wilmington Foundation; volunteer patient ambassador and courtesy van driver for New Hanover Regional Medical Center

Identify the top issues in our community you plan to address: Among my top goals is joining with fellow legislators to implement bold initiatives to address our water quality problems. We must hold polluters accountable, make them pay for cleanup and prohibit any discharge into our waters unless and until it is proven safe. We must also require that hog lagoons use best practices and technologies to manage waste, negotiate an acceptable buy-out offer, or relocate away from our water sources. We have also got to increase teacher pay to the national average within four years and we must expand health care coverage to more North Carolinians by expanding Medicaid.

Explain how you will address these issues if elected: We can improve water quality by staffing up the Department of Environmental Quality whose resources have been drastically cut by the current legislature. We can also afford to buy state-of-the art testing equipment so we know exactly what is being discharged into the river. We can increase teacher pay without raising taxes by simply not allowing the wealthiest people another tax break. Additionally, expanding Medicaid should have been done long ago as it will create an estimated 26,000 jobs and provide health care to more of our citizens both of which are needed desperately, particularly in our more rural areas. (Brunswick Beacon, 10/16/18)

## **NOV 2018 Pushes ERA Ratification**

In North Carolina, state representative Deb Butler, a Wilmington, N.C., lawyer, introduced a ratification bill, although, she says, the conservative legislative leadership is intent on pushing it aside. “I wanted to at least file and get the conversation started,” she says. “The public will drive this discourse.”

The Equal Rights Amendment North Carolina Alliance has gathered a roster of 21 organizations and is holding a fall forum on the subject.

If one more state passes the ERA, the attention will shift to Congress. Proponents argue that Congress has the authority to repeal or waive the original ratification deadline. Currently, resolutions H.J. Res. 53 in the House and S.J. Res. 4 in the Senate sponsored by Rep. Jackie Speier (DCA) and Sen. Ben Cardin (DMD), respectively, seek to remove the deadline. (Press Release, 11/6/18)

## **NOV 2018 Easy Victory**

N.C. House District 18

Democrat incumbent Deb Butler of Wilmington faced challenges from Republican Louis Harmati and Libertarian Joseph Sharp.

With 20 of 20 precincts in the district reporting, Butler received 17,697 votes (6,058 in Brunswick County) to defeat Harmati, who earned 9,788 votes (6,664 in Brunswick County), and Sharp, who garnered 872 votes (356 in Brunswick County).

Butler, 57, is a lawyer who has served as state representative since being appointed in February 2017 after her predecessor, former Rep. Susi Hamilton, was appointed to serve as secretary of natural and cultural resources, a North Carolina state cabinet position.

Butler said joining with fellow legislators “to implement bold initiatives to address our water quality problems,” among her top goals. “We have also got to increase teacher pay to the national average within four years and we must expand health care coverage to more North Carolinians by expanding Medicaid,” she said. (Brunswick Beacon, 11/6/18)

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Rep. Deb Butler was resoundingly elected to the N.C. House on Tuesday.

In February 2017, the Democratic Party appointed Butler to the seat after then-Rep. Susi Hamilton was appointed to serve as Gov. Roy Cooper’s secretary of the N.C. Department of Natural and Cultural Resources.

For full results from across Southeastern North Carolina, [click here](#) for more stories.

"Having the governor's appointment is one thing, but then having the endorsement of the people is just the icing on the cake, and so I'm very privileged to serve, and I'll continue to be a loud voice for this region," Butler said Tuesday night.

Butler, an attorney, has long been active in Democratic politics, unsuccessfully vying for the N.C. State Senate in 2009. Since being appointed, Butler has vocally supported both environmental causes and Cooper's administration.

Butler was opposed by Louis Harmati, a Republican; and Joseph D. Sharp, a Libertarian, although neither campaigned. The N.C. House 18 seat encompasses downtown Wilmington and parts of northern Brunswick County.

In a pre-election questionnaire, Butler said one focus during a second term would be cleaning the state's drinking water. Tuesday night, she doubled down on that priority.

"Our water supply is threatened, it's jeopardized," Butler said. "We now have coal ash and GenX and hog waste in our water, so we're going to have to concentrate on that."

She also floated the possibility of a renewed push for Medicaid expansion in North Carolina.

"We need to expand Medicaid," Butler said. "North Carolina, we're leaving so many dollars on the table."

All election results are unofficial until the Nov. 16 canvass. (Star-News, 11/7/18)

### **DEC 2018    Gay Partner Dies**

Anni Parra, a political activist and wife of N.C. Rep. **Deb Butler** who was described by her wife as kind and of constant cheer, died unexpectedly on Friday. She was 52.

"I bet 400 people have come to my house in the last day and a half," Butler said Monday. "Almost every one has told me of an act of kindness Anni did without me knowing about it."

Parra, a grant administrator for an aviation company, was also active in Democratic politics and had "a soft spot for animals," Butler said.

Butler, a Democrat who represents much of **Wilmington** and northeast Brunswick County in the General Assembly, repeatedly fought back tears while talking about her wife of three years -- they were married in December 2015.

"It's OK. It's nice to talk about her," she said. "Just paint a loving, glowing picture of her. There was just a brilliance about her."

Butler said well-wishers have told her about times Parra brought meals to them because she thought they were lonely or cleaned the house of a woman who was recovering from back surgery.

She said her wife played a supporting role as statewide and national issues, including the passage of the controversial House Bill 2 in 2016 and the revelation of contaminants, including GenX, in drinking water, "thrust me into the spotlight."

"She was so supportive. She was so unselfish and she would let me have all of the spotlight," Butler said. "That's my Anni-girl. That's what I called her."

Butler said she and Parra met through mutual friends. "It was really serendipitous," she said. "I saw a picture of her and felt an immediate connection to her. "I have never seen a more megawatt smile on anybody. There was such a brightness about her." An outpouring of heartbroken sentiments flooded social media beginning the day of Parra's death.

"Anni was one of a kind, as beautiful on the inside as she was on the outside. I am devastated," local activist Jessica Cannon posted on Facebook. (Star News, 12/31/18)

## 2019

### JAN 2019 Watauga Watch Blog Fawning Profile

NC House Rep Deb Butler(HD18) -- An attorney long active in Democratic politics, Butler represents much of Wilmington and has become a prominent whistleblower about the toxin Gen-X in the Cape Fear River. She also fought the highly controversial House Bill 2 ("bathroom bill") in 2016. Tragically, Butler's wife of three years, Anni Parra, died suddenly and unexpectedly four days before New Year's. She was 52. This is perhaps the worst timing possible for this discussion, and I hope Rep. Butler will forgive me.

Butler's fight for LBGTQ rights predates her service in the House. She ran in 2012 for the NC Senate (SD8) and lost to creepy Thom Goolsby. When Democratic Rep. Susi Hamilton (HD18) resigned early in 2017 to take a cabinet post, Governor Cooper appointed Butler to her seat. Though she's new to the body, she immediately stepped out (both literally and figuratively) as an effective voice of resistance to the Republican super-majority. In November's election, she took over 60% of the vote.

Butler started posting commentaries as she walked around the General Assembly building, or in near neighborhoods, where she could get some fresh air and cool off -- talking clearly and effectively, with appropriate passion and resolve, about what the Republicans were up to that day. (I wish I could post one here, but I can't. They're on Butler's Twitter feed . Her most recent , on December 7, is riveting. The Republicans were overriding Governor Cooper's veto of the VoterID Bill, trying to distract everyone from the real and present ballot fraud down in NC-9, which would not have been stopped by voter photo ID, and Butler had had it.)

Here's her "walk and talk" from 13 June , when she was leaving the General Assembly at 11:30 pm, after hours of Republican bullying. She was flourescently a-light about what had just gone on.

Aside from proving she's pretty damn agile -- I can barely walk, let alone walk while videoing myself! -- she has the presence and the smarts to start a movement. Short version: I want to listen to her.

She told the Port City Daily , “I’ve been accused of being perhaps too straightforward sometimes, but I just don’t know any other way. There is a lot that needs fixing in North Carolina and in Washington, and I think people are tired of the arguing and are looking for intelligent, forthright, and candid representatives who focus on solutions instead of division and churning everyone up all the time.”

She supports an independent redistricting commission to end the practice of office-holders’ choosing their voters. She supports restoring the tax rebate program for the film industry, which worked for so many years to build businesses in Wilmington and across the state and which the Republicans repealed. The film industry took its business to Georgia and elsewhere. (Watauga Watch, 1/6/19)

### **JAN 2019 Elected to Party Leadership Post**

State Rep. Deb Butler, D-New Hanover, was elected one of the House Democratic Whips by her colleagues on Thursday, according to a release from her office.

”I am proud to serve on the leadership team of a caucus dedicated to fight for better health care for all through Medicaid expansion, better schools for our students through early childhood programs and higher investment in our public schools, community colleges and universities, and to aggressively address the GenX crisis,” noted Rep. Butler.

The five House Democratic Whips are among the top positions among the minority party in the House. Butler will serve “a key leadership role in communicating with caucus members on key votes and working to develop caucus strategy,” the release stated.

Butler was appointed to her seat representing parts of New Hanover and Brunswick counties in early 2017 after the appointment of former Rep. Susi Hamilton to a state cabinet post.

In her time in the House, Butler has been vocal on the House floor and in unique “walkabouts,” where she films herself taking walks around the legislative building venting about issues.

She was handily elected in November to a second term.

Butler’s House District 18 includes north and downtown Wilmington and most of northwest Brunswick County. (Star-News, 1/10/19)

### **FEB 2019 Opioid Bill Rolled Into State Budget**

After six months, Wilmington’s efforts to guide opioid users toward treatment is off to what local officials are calling a promising start.

The 2017 state budget included \$500,000 for Wilmington to be the pilot city for a quick response team -- a group of local health experts who would contact opioid overdose survivors in an effort to direct them toward treatment.

According to an update prepared for the N.C. General Assembly by Coastal Horizons, 53 of the 66 survivors who have come into contact with quick response team staff ultimately sought treatment. Coastal Horizons has two peer support specialists and two therapists who receive referrals of people who may be ready to receive treatment from paramedics, the New Hanover Regional Medical Center Emergency Department and nonprofits, among other places.

During a presentation at Coastal Horizons this week, Kenny House, the organization's vice president of clinical services, said, "This effort says, 'No, we're not waiting for you to walk in the door. We're going to intervene at a community level.' ... There's simply not funding and person power to be able to go out there into the community and find people, generally."

The October 2016 death of Mason Morgan Richardson, who was riding in a car stopped at the intersection of Shipyard Boulevard and Oleander Drive when the car was rear-ended at full speed by one driven by Jonathan Hayes is widely viewed as the event that galvanized political will among Wilmington-area legislators. At the scene of the accident, Hayes was revived with Naloxone for the fourth time.

Following Mason's death, law enforcement, medical and nonprofit personnel engaged in weeks of sometimes-tense meetings, with the quick response team gaining momentum.

"You'd encounter someone that had overdosed in the community -- if they refused treatment at the scene, we were left as a community to wonder what happened to these people after the fact," said Tony McEwen, Wilmington's assistant to the city manager for legislative affairs.

Less than six months after Mason's death, Rep. Ted Davis, R-New Hanover, introduced a bill that would have created the pilot program, with co-sponsors included Rep. Deb Butler, D-New Hanover, and Rep. Holly Grange, R-New Hanover. While the bill was left in committee, it was rolled into the state budget.

After hearing Monday's update, Davis said, "I think it's great because it's showing that we're making progress, it shows that what we're doing with the quick response team is working."

Sen. Harper Peterson, D-New Hanover, asked Monday how the program's outreach is being conducted.

"We are a model," Peterson said. "In response to this crisis, we are a model for other communities, so the success stories we have based on that aspect of it in terms of resources, money, complimenting their strategy is, I think, important for other communities to see."

The Coastal Horizons team has, according to the report, passed out 400 flyers in places such as fast-food restaurants, gas station bathrooms and doctor's offices, among others, while members of the team said Monday they have also placed flyers in areas known for being frequented by users.

New Hanover Regional Medical Center's community paramedics also partner in the program, with 126 overdose reversals since August. Of that group, 14 were immediately incarcerated for other reasons, leaving a pair of paramedics to follow up with the remaining 112 -- and about 58 of those agreed to a follow-up from the community response team, which happens three to five days after an overdose.



Sarah Rivenbark, a community paramedic, said, “We talk to them about, are they ready for treatment? If they are ready for treatment, we ask if we can refer them over to the quick response team.”

In total, about 15 of the 53 people who sought help from the quick response team were referred by community paramedics. Quick response team staff connect users to a wide variety of resources, including medication-assisted treatment, primary care and psychiatric services, among others.

”The more people we can get to touch,” House said, “the more people who aren’t ready for treatment will become ready because they realize it’s not this big unconquerable ogre -- that treatment is really friendly for them and their family members.” (Star-News, 2/5/19)

### **FEB 2019 Co-Sponsors “Gun Violence Prevention Act”**

Under the guise of preventing mass shootings, North Carolina lawmakers tried to chip away at the Second Amendment this week.

State Rep. Christy Clark, D-Mecklenburg, called a Thursday press conference at the General Assembly to introduce the Gun Violence Prevention Act, a grab bag of restrictions on gun rights that range from the ineffectual to the unconstitutional.

Among other provisions, the bill would require all gun owners to purchase firearm liability insurance, ban the sale or possession of bump stocks and trigger cranks, raise the age to purchase so-called assault weapons from 18 to 21 and require permits for the purchase of long guns in addition to handguns.

Insurers could pay damages to victims of accidental shootings and may also pay legal costs for insured gun owners who fire a weapon in presumed self-defense and face criminal prosecution or lawsuits. Some gun owners choose to buy insurance for their own peace of mind, and the National Rifle Association partners with an insurer to sell NRA-branded policies.

Proponents compare firearm insurance to car insurance, which is already a requirement here and in most states. But operating a motor vehicle on public roads is considered a privilege, while keeping and bearing arms is a constitutional right. Government can and already does impose more restrictions on driving than owning a gun.

Also known as House Bill 86, the Gun Violence Prevention Act would mandate a minimum of \$100,000 in liability coverage. Premiums are far cheaper than those for car insurance, but they would disproportionately pinch low-income gun owners who may live in crime-prone neighborhoods and have the greatest need to own a firearm for home defense.

”Insurance policies cover accidents, not intentional crimes, and criminals with illegal guns will just evade the requirement,” David B. Rifkin Jr. and Andrew M. Grossman wrote in a 2013 Wall Street Journal op-ed. “The real purpose is to make guns less affordable for law-abiding citizens and thereby reduce private gun ownership. Identical constitutionally suspect logic explains proposals to tax the sale of bullets at excessive rates.”

There's also the quandary of risk compensation -- just as studies show seat belts and anti-lock brakes make the average driver more aggressive, gun owners might feel their trigger fingers grow itchier if they believe insurance will lessen the consequences of an accidental or wrongful shooting. Requiring every gun owner to be insured may actually increase danger.

As for banning bump stocks, the Trump administration already issued a federal regulation that makes them illegal beginning next month. Several states have passed redundant laws. Apart from outlawing the sale of new devices, making them illegal to possess is problematic. Few owners have voluntarily turned in their bump stocks. Will federal agents ferret out the accessories and confiscate them by force?

Courts have deemed pistol purchase permit requirements to be lawful. It remains to be seen whether imposing similar restrictions on the sale of ordinary hunting rifles would survive Second Amendment scrutiny. As with handguns, criminals who want long guns will simply steal them or buy them on the black market.

Clark is a freshman legislator who previously served as state director for the gun control group Moms Demand Action. Joining her as primary sponsors are Reps. Marcia Morey of Durham County, Pricey Harrison of Guilford County and Shelly Willingham of Edgecombe County.

On its filing date, the bill had a total of 12 sponsors, all Democrats. The presence of House Democratic whip Deb Butler's name on the legislation could signal it has party leaders' backing.

Many North Carolinians -- and indeed, most gun owners -- are sympathetic to reasonable reforms such as enhanced background checks, but this bill is no common-sense compromise. The insurance requirement is a gargantuan government power grab that misfires on curbing gun violence and instead takes aim at law-abiding Tar Heels.

Fortunately, its chances in the Republican-controlled General Assembly are nil. That should give little comfort to the many Democrats who own guns for hunting and home protection and would rightly bristle at an insurance mandate.

The House Democratic Caucus and N.C. Democratic Party must abandon this paternalistic push. Claiming to represent the disadvantaged can't be reconciled with a bill that would make poor people pay a premium in order to lawfully own a gun. Don't they deserve to feed their families through hunting and keep handguns to defend those families from intruders?

As the sad legacy of poll taxes taught us, putting a price tag on the exercise of a constitutional right is always wrong. (Wilson Daily Times, 2/17/19)

## **FEB 2019 Fort Fisher Upgrades**

A bill introduced last week by a New Hanover County state legislator would complete long-awaited upgrades to the Fort Fisher State Historic Site.

House Bill 44 would provide \$7.5 million to the Fort Fisher site to build a new visitors center, among other projects, while also appropriating an additional \$500,000 to the state's Underwater Archaeology Branch to start planning for a new facility on the site's grounds.

The bill would not only provide funds for a revamped 20,000-square-foot visitor's center, but also provide for improvements to the now-gravel parking at the facility just south of Kure Beach and help expand the earthworks exhibit on the grounds. During the 2017-18 fiscal year, the Fort Fisher site had more than 900,000 visitors, making it the most-visited state historic site, according to the bill.

"I'm just excited about it because it's already getting that many people now, I fully anticipate getting a whole lot more when they get that new facility in," said Rep. Ted Davis, R-New Hanover, the bill's primary sponsor. Rep. Deb Butler, D-New Hanover, is among the bill's additional sponsors.

Should the bill be approved, Davis said, it would allow for more space for exhibits, a larger auditorium and space that could be used for classrooms, and storage facilities.

Fort Fisher's visitor's center project received \$5 million in the 2017-18 budget to begin the work, with an additional \$7.5 million later appropriated from the project reserve account. The total appropriations for the visitors center and associated upgrades would reach \$20 million if House Bill 44's requests are included in the state budget.

Previous appropriations for the site have not yet been spent, Si Lawrence, a Fort Fisher spokesman, said. That \$12.5 million is strictly meant to be used for construction work.

Detailed design work has begun, Lawrence said, and should be finished by 2020. All design work to this point has been funded out of a previous \$400,000 appropriation.

The Friends of Fort Fisher will, Davis said, need to fund the new exhibits which will be included in the revamped visitor's center. Those costs are, according to the department, estimated at about \$2 million.

"They need to have skin in the game, which makes it more palatable for the state to be a part of this," Davis said.

House Bill 44 would allow for the construction of two, possibly three, mounds, Davis said, with the Friends of Fort Fisher needing to provide the cannons that would sit atop them.

The underwater archaeology portion of the bill is, Davis said, separate from the Fort Fisher piece. According to the bill's text, the \$500,000 would be used to plan a new facility.

"That is something I'm doing at the request of Susi Hamilton," Davis said, referring to the former Wilmington-area state representative and N.C. Secretary of Natural and Cultural Resources. "There's some facilities down there, but they really are not adequate. What she'd like to see is a better facility."

HB 44 has passed its first reading in the House and been referred to the committee on state and local government. (Greensboro News and Record, 2/17/19)

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Who says bipartisanship is dead?

Congratulations to state Reps. Ted Davis (R-New Hanover) and Deb Butler (D-New Hanover) for teaming up to try to get \$7.5 million for the Fort Fisher State Historic Site.

It's a worthy goal. We have to hope that Davis' increasing House seniority offers some leverage. The money is long overdue, and with \$12.5 million already appropriated, the state can finally give Fort Fisher the upgrade it needs and deserves.

Fort Fisher is already the most attended state-run history facility, with some 900,000 visitors a year. With its nearby neighbor, the N.C. Aquarium, it provides a solid anchor for family tourism on Federal Point and the whole southern half of New Hanover County.

This is more than just history -- although there's plenty of history to be had here. Those 900,000 visitors will want to eat someplace, perhaps stay overnight and even shop a little. The multipliers to our local economy and the sales taxes from all those purchases are a big deal.

We need to give the tourists something worth seeing. That means an upgrade. With just one modest expansion in later years, the visitors' center is essentially the same one erected in the early 1960s. Fort Fisher's staff have done an outstanding job in stocking it and explaining the battle with what they have. But the place is just too small. Although matters are still in the preliminary design stage, early plans call for a new, bigger auditorium, more exhibit space and fix-ups to the half-century-old gravel parking lot, which can turn right muddy at times. That's all to the good.

But there's another problem: Most of Fort Fisher isn't there any more.

Heavy erosion in the 1960s, linked to some public works up the beach, washed away most of the giant earthworks that made the fort the "Confederate Gibraltar." The landside mounds (the sight of some pretty sharp fighting) are still around, as is Battery Buchanan, a big mound down by the ferry docks to the south. Still, seeing the fort as Johnny Reb and Billy Yank did back in 1865 takes some powerful imagination.

Thus, plans call for the re-creation of two or three mounds of the approximate dimensions of the works Col. William Lamb built up and oversaw. They wouldn't be the real thing, any more than the middle-aged, well-fed enthusiasts in Civil War re-enactor units can match the boys who died in the Late Unpleasantness. Yet they would give schoolkids and visitors an idea of what it was like.

One particularly wise provision is a half-million dollars set aside for the state's Underwater Archaeology Branch, which is headquartered in a complex of modest sheds to one side of the Fort Fisher parking lot. In the half-century since the first excavation of the blockade runner *Modern Greece*, just off Fort Fisher, the branch has amassed an impressive collection of artifacts that could teach people a lot. The tiny space available now, however, is totally inadequate. Give the archaeologists a little more room, and people will be dazzled.

One hopes the expanded, 20,000-square-foot visitors' center will have a little more room to cover the amazing story of the blockade runners, many of which still sit in waters almost in wading distance from the fort. There should be more room, too, for the story of Fort Fisher in World War II, when it housed an airstrip and an served as an anti-aircraft training site for Camp Davis, at Holly Ridge.

Locals are not off the hook on all of this. The Friends of Fort Fisher, the historic site's doughty nonprofit support group, would be expected to raise funds for new exhibits, as well as some more replica artillery pieces to place on the new mounds. When the time comes, we hope history-lovers in this area will be generous.

In the meantime, the appropriations measure, HB 44, makes a good start. Reps. Davis and Butler deserve our full support on this. (Star-News, 2/24/19)

**MAR 2019 Bill to Keep SPG Scale at 15**

It's a change local school districts have asked legislators to make for years: adjust how schools are graded by the state. But as bills in the N.C. General Assembly to do just that have gotten press and circulated on social media, parents have responded with outrage.

Several filed bills would permanently keep School Performance Grades (SPGs) -- the "A"-to-"F" grades schools earn based mostly on student test scores -- on a 15-point scale. Without legislation, that scale will shift to a 10-point scale next school year.

State data shows if the current scale disappears, 17 more schools in New Hanover, Brunswick and Pender counties would see their grades slip to an "F."

On social media, where stories are often shared without being read, many North Carolina parents assumed it was a 15-point scale being proposed for students' grades, rather than schools'.

A Feb. 26 Facebook post from WRAL-TV in Raleigh generated so much anger -- more than 1,000 reactions and comments -- that the station had to edit its post: "Please Note: This new scale applies to the grades schools receive based on performance. It would not change the scale used to grade students."

What would the bills actually do?

For years, North Carolina has used a 15-point scale for SPGs, meaning an "A" is a score of 100 to 85, a "B" is 84 to 70, and so on. But that would revert to a 10-point scale next year if no bill is passed.

On a 10-point scale, the minimum "D" score would jump from a 40 to a 60.

In 2017-18, just two traditional public schools in the region scored an "F": Virgo Preparatory Academy, which has since been taken over by the University of North Carolina Wilmington (UNCW), and West Pender Middle School.

But under a 10-point scale, 19 local schools would have scored an "F," including several currently graded "C."

Senate Bill 117, sponsored by state Sen. Harper Peterson, D-New Hanover, would also change the formula for SPGs, giving more weight to how much students improved, as opposed to mainly focusing on their test scores.

Currently, student test scores count for 80 percent of the SPG, while school growth -- how much students improved over the course of a year -- counts for 20 percent. SB117 would make that split 50-50.

LaChawn Smith, New Hanover County Schools' Assistant Superintendent for Instruction, said that's a more fair way to evaluate schools.

"This would greater recognize the continuous improvement that's happening at those schools," Smith said.

Other filed bills, including House Bill 145, co-sponsored by Rep. Deb Butler, D-New Hanover, would keep the 15-point scale without changing the growth-performance balance.

Why does it matter?

Ron Villines is principal at Williston Middle School in Wilmington, which last year lifted its SPG from a "F" to a "D." Despite its lower grade, Villines said year after year Williston is meeting its goals for student growth, something many "B"- and "C"-schools in the district are not doing.

Like most local schools that have struggled to lift SPGs, Williston has a disproportionate number of low-income students. As of January, 79 percent of Williston students were eligible for free or reduced-price lunch. None of the district's six "A"-schools have more than 48 percent of students in that category; at Wrightsville Beach Elementary, it's less than 14 percent.

Low-income kids, Villines said, are often coming into the public schools without pre-K or the outside-of-school opportunities of their high-income peers.

"Our at-risk kids start out behind a lot," he said. "That 80 percent proficiency is not taking into account how much that student is growing and how hard we are working to close that achievement gap."

With regard to the 10-point grade scale, Smith said a sudden letter drop would demoralize local schools.

"We think that would be very concerning for parents and very disheartening for students and school administrators," she said. (Star-News, 3/4/19)

### **MAR 2019    Calls For Henson to Resign**

A North Carolina legislator is facing calls to resign following accusations that he harassed his wife.

A judge last month placed a domestic violence protection order against NC Rep. Cody Henson of Transylvania County after his wife testified that she feared for her life, according to reports from WLOS

and Carolina Public Press. The county sheriff issued a criminal summons against Henson on March 6, Carolina Public Press reported.

On Thursday, the North Carolina Democratic Party called on Henson to resign. A party newsletter emailed Thursday morning included condemnations from party officials and NC Rep. Deb Butler of Wilmington.

”I have remained silent on this issue until this time because in the United States people are presumed innocent until proven guilty in a court of law,” Butler said. “Now that a judge has seen fit, after a hearing on the merits, to grant a permanent restraining order against Representative Henson, there has been a finding of domestic violence on his part. There is no place for domestic violence in our society, particularly on the part of an elected official who purports to be a role model for our youth.”

How to support victims of domestic abuse Whether someone has asked you for help or you sense someone is in distress, here are some general guidelines to help support possible victims of abuse, be it physical, emotional, sexual, psychological or financial.

The newsletter provided a link to a copy of the protection order, which orders Henson to leave his wife alone until Jan. 26, 2020. Henson, a Republican, served in the Marine Corps reserve between 2011 and 2017.

Henson’s wife Kelsey presented copies of text messages and records of phone calls while testifying that Henson continually harassed her, Carolina Public Press reported. “The Defendant will not quit ‘texting’ the Plaintiff at all hours of the Day,” the protector order says.

Carolina Public Press reported this quote from Henson’s wife: “Some people don’t think that’s abuse, or that it’s domestic violence,” Kelsey Henson said of repeated texts and phone calls. “But it is mental abuse, and that’s what the judge stated.”

Henson’s position in state government may have prevented his wife from getting help soon. Kelsey Henson told Carolina Public Press that she struggled to get law enforcement officers to intervene on her behalf.

”Every time I tried to report it and called 911 or went to a magistrate to try to get help, I was denied,” Kelsey Henson told CPP. “I truly feel that was because of his position.”

Henson declined to comment and referred the N&O to his attorney, Michael Edney of Hendersonville. Henson is due to appear in court on March 28 for the criminal summons, Edney said in a statement.

”Rep. Henson looks forward to addressing this allegation in due course through our judicial system, and will not attempt to litigate the matter through the media,” Edney said. “Cody will continue to focus his love and energy on his two beautiful children and will continue to represent the people of District 113.” (RNO, 3/7/19)

How are North Carolina lawmakers different from movie directors? They find it hard to say “cut,” especially when giving Hollywood producers taxpayer subsidies to make films here.

A bipartisan group of state representatives filed House Bill 751, resurrecting a 25 percent tax credit program. Legislators voted in 2014 to end a similar subsidy, which paid filmmakers \$69 million in 2012 and \$61 million in 2013. Lawmakers replaced the credit the next year with the Film and Entertainment Grant Fund.

Reps. Jason Saine, R-Lincoln; John Autry, D-Mecklenburg; Becky Carney, D-Mecklenburg; and Deb Butler, D-New Hanover, are primary sponsors of H.B. 751. It re-enacts the \$20 million tax credit cap per film. It revives the refundable nature of the credits, meaning the state would pay cash to production companies even if they don’t owe enough taxes to claim a credit.

”We’ve got to do something to recreate what we had,” Butler said Tuesday, April 23. When North Carolina ended the tax credit program production companies migrated to Georgia, which lavished subsidies on them. Many residents in her district who worked on films followed filmmakers south.

Critics say the tax credit is an open draw on the state treasury. Indeed, other states are pulling out of the film incentives business.

Lawmakers replaced the tax credits with a \$31 million annual grant program. Unused money rolls over to the next year. A state Department of Commerce spokesman said \$32.2 million was in the fund as of Tuesday.

Butler said movie companies want to do business in North Carolina even though the grant program hasn’t gotten much use.

”I’ve heard it’s unwieldy. I’ve heard the process is difficult. For whatever reason it doesn’t serve the purpose of the studio,” Butler said of the grant program.

She cites other reasons movie studios may have pulled out. Killing the tax credit sent a negative message. They were vexed by passage of House Bill 2, the so-called bathroom bill which restricted use of restrooms to people of the corresponding biological sex.

”They want an environment that is welcoming of all people. They want a political climate that is stable, mature, and rational, and we haven’t portrayed that image very well,” Butler said.

Even though H.B. 751 has bipartisan sponsorship, and both parties have resisted killing film incentives, Butler isn’t sure the bill will pass.

Lawmakers in 2015 OK’d \$10 million a year for the grant program, but the current budget tripled the amount to \$31 million. In 2017 legislators removed a July 2020 sunset date, making the grant program permanent.

The present program lets production companies collect grants up to \$12 million for a TV series season, \$7 million for feature-length films including made-for-TV movies, and \$250,000 for commercials.



Gov. Roy Cooper's recommended state budget continues funding the film grant program at its current level for fiscal years 2019-20 and 2020-21, state Budget Director Charlie Perusse told Carolina Journal. Cooper's 2017 budget recommendation called for reverting to the tax credit system. The governor didn't do that this budget cycle.

Jon Sanders, director of regulatory studies at the John Locke Foundation, says reviving film tax credits is a bad idea. States are reversing course on film handouts because they aren't the economic catalyst advocates claim. North Carolina's nonpartisan legislative fiscal staff shredded claims about film subsidies industry insiders made in 2014 before the tax credit was killed.

Among other findings, Fiscal Research said the state lost \$45.3 million on the tax credits, receiving just 54 cents back for every dollar invested. And those losses didn't account for opportunity costs - the ways money spent on the film credit could have been used for other purposes in the general economy or to reduce public sector spending.

Fiscal Research staff said a glowing report by the film industry citing economic benefits of subsidizing filmmaking was replete with errors and mistaken assumptions. The staff attributed the mistakes to a series of misunderstandings about state tax laws. (Laurinburg Exchange, 4/24/19)

### **MAY 2019 Willing to Support Fantasy Sports Bill**

The North Carolina House Commerce Committee on Wednesday passed a bill that would regulate fantasy sports companies such as FanDuel or DraftKings, and officially declare that fantasy sports aren't gambling.

The bill still has to pass several other committees before a final vote, though, so its success is not guaranteed. Similar efforts have failed in recent years, due largely to concerns by religious groups that oppose gambling.

This bill, HB 929, would create a North Carolina Gaming Commission to oversee fantasy sports as well as the state lottery, boxing and bingo. The commission also would be tasked with studying sports betting, which the U.S. Supreme Court recently allowed in more states but has not yet been approved in North Carolina.

Fantasy sports allow fans to bet on which athletes they think will do well. Contests can last for an entire sports season or occur as frequently as daily.

John Rustin, president of the N.C. Family Policy Council religious group, spoke against the bill at Wednesday's committee. He said the state shouldn't officially recognize fantasy sports since he considers those ventures to be gambling and thus shouldn't be legal in the first place.

"Despite what this bill attempts to say, daily fantasy sports is gambling," Rustin said. "... The elements of chance predominate over the elements of skill and that's exactly how gambling is defined."

But Republican Rep. Harry Warren of Rowan County, one of the bill’s sponsors, said there’s no stopping people from playing fantasy football or other sports. He thinks the industry ought to at least be held accountable to protect players from being exploited.

”Fantasy sports has been going on in NC for a long time and it will continue going on with or without this bill,” Warren said. “The question is: Do you want it regulated.”

If the commission is approved, it would have nine members. The governor would appoint five and the legislature would appoint four.

Democratic Rep. Deb Butler of Wilmington said she had some initial concerns but is tentatively willing to support this bill, “recognizing that the activity is going on already, and recognizing the enormous revenue stream.”

She said other states tax revenue from fantasy sports anywhere from 6 percent to 15 percent, and North Carolina could use the extra money — especially to fund services aimed at helping people with gambling addictions. (RNO, 5/22/19)

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A repeat effort to regulate popular fantasy sports games in North Carolina advanced through a House panel on Wednesday, two years after a similar effort was derailed.

The House Commerce Committee voted for the measure, which would require companies that operate fantasy sports to pay registration fees to the state and abide by some rules. Failing to comply could result in fines of up to \$10,000 or registration revocation.

A 2017 bill directing registration by the Secretary of State’s Office didn’t get enough support, in part because social conservatives complained it would further legitimize gambling in the state.

This year’s measure also contains the creation of a new state Gaming Commission that would consolidate state oversight of the state lottery, bingo, raffles and boxing from several agencies, in addition to the fantasy games. Some House Republicans had sought this kind of consolidation in 2017. These activities are currently regulated by separate lottery and boxing commissions and state law enforcement agencies.

The fantasy contests usually entail creating lineups of players from professional sports leagues. The fantasy participants, with daily, weekly and season-long games, score points and win cash prizes on individual statistical performances.

Rep. Harry Warren, a Rowan County Republican and chief bill co-sponsor, said games operated by outfits such as FanDuel and DraftKings are “going on, and with or without this bill it’ll continue to go on. This bill would create a commission that would actually regulate it.”

This year’s measure, which passed with but a few “no” votes, also likely benefited from seat turnover after the 2018 elections, and a U.S. Supreme Court decision last year that opens the door to legalized sports

gambling in the states. The bill would direct the new commission to study the feasibility of direct betting on sporting events, permitting online lottery games and regulating steeplechase races.

While fantasy sports contests are operating in most states, not all of them have formally legalized the industry.

”Fantasy sports is happening all over the country,” said Sean Ostrow, a lawyer representing DraftKings, FanDuel, the NFL, the PGA Tour and the Major League Baseball commissioner’s office. He said he anticipates the commission would limit play to adults and bar fantasy sports company workers from playing: “It makes sense to have some consumer protections and guardrails around it.”

Still, the measure makes plain that fantasy sports contests don’t meet the state’s legal definition of gambling or any illegal activity.

John Rustin, executive director of the North Carolina Family Policy Council, told the committee the contests are clearly gambling based on the number of variables in the sporting events that are beyond the control of participants.

”The elements of chance predominate over the elements of skill,” Rustin said in urging the committee to oppose the fantasy sports portions on the measure. Rustin also said the monetary penalties were too low and worried that language in the legislation exempted these firms from criminal laws.

Sen. Deb Butler, a New Hanover County Democrat, said she would support the measure if it included taxing a portion of fantasy sports revenues and setting aside more money to address problem gambling. Warren responded that would be considered.

The bill must clear three more committees before reaching the House floor. If approved, it would have to pass the Senate. (AP, 5/22/19)

## **JUN 2019    Against De-Annexing Property**

Legislation to de-annex 21/2 acres from the village of Clemmons failed to advance out of the N.C. House Finance Committee in Raleigh last week, raising questions about the future of a proposed 38-acre development.

Sponsored by state Reps. Lee Zachary, R-Yadkin, and Debra Conrad, R-Forsyth, the bill took the unusual step of asking a municipality to surrender taxable property within its city limits. In this case, the property would have become part of unincorporated Forsyth County. De-annexation would mean the property would no longer be subject to the village’s laws and regulations. Instead, it would be governed by the county, which has a different set of planning guidelines.

Developer Stan Forester requested the de-annexation of part of the plot that he wants to develop in northern Clemmons, near the intersection of Styers Ferry and Lewisville-Clemmons roads. The remainder of the property is in Forsyth County.

The property in question is in Zachary's legislative district.

The Clemmons Village Council opposes the bill, unanimously passing a resolution that it sent to Zachary, Conrad and state Sen. Joyce Krawiec, R-Davie, the sponsor of the N.C. Senate version of the bill.

Forester told the council that he has been trying for 11 years to develop the property. The portion in Clemmons is not zoned for the kind of business that Forester envisions for the development.

The proposed development would include 11,200-square-feet of retail space, a 25,000-square-foot grocery store, two fast-food restaurants, a convenience store with 16 gasoline pumps and 360 apartment units, according to a traffic-impact analysis that Forester commissioned and submitted to the council.

According to that study, the development would add 16,500 vehicle trips every day on Lewisville-Clemmons Road, the village's main thoroughfare.

In his statement to the House Finance Committee, Village Council Member Mike Combest said traffic on the road would increase by 52 percent based on the most recent statistics from the N.C. Department of Transportation.

"Some 90 percent of our businesses are on the Lewisville-Clemmons corridor. Like wise, two of our major schools, Southwest Elementary and West Forsyth High School lie on the road, only 900 yards distant from this major development. And if the property in question is de-annexed, we will have zero input on how that development impacts those businesses, schools and residents," Combest said.

Members of the Clemmons Council have asked Forester to consider annexing all of the property into Clemmons.

"I don't doubt that what you would build might look OK except for fast food restaurants and big gas stations and things like that... I just wish you'd annex into Clemmons and do it by Clemmons' standards and we'll work with you," Council Member Pam Lofland told Forester in April.

Forester has said that he has philosophical differences with Clemmons on such things as signage and visibility. He criticized several new developments in Clemmons, including Peace Haven Village, home to a new Publix supermarket. In particular, he doesn't like how the backs of some businesses in that shopping center face a street.

Forsyth County commissioners support Forester's de-annexation request, according to Commissioner Don Martin.

At the finance committee meeting last week, state Rep. Deb Butler, D-Brunswick, told Zachary that de-annexing property sets a bad precedent.

"We have no business getting in between this battle," Butler said. "It's no place for this legislature. It sets up a situation where, when someone can't get what they want, they're coming to us for an end around. It's a terrible precedent."

The bill failed to advance after ending in a tie vote.

Combest said Krawiec's office told him that she wouldn't attempt to push the bill through the Senate, based on how the House bill fared.

"My perception is that this particular effort has been stopped. Nothing is ever dead," he said. "My sense is to prevent something like this in the future, we have to make sure our antennae is 100 percent out."

Where that leaves Forester's development is unknown. He did not return phone calls from the Winston-Salem Journal. Krawiec's office did not return a phone call Monday. (Winston-Salem Journal, 6/5/19)

### **JUN 2019    Speaks Against Born-Alive Bill During Failed Veto Override**

Bill opponents have said North Carolina doctors already are regulated by medical boards and physicians aren't neglecting these newborns.

"By practice, and according to the law of North Carolina, as well as federal law, all living infants in North Carolina are legally entitled to the care that they need," said Democratic Rep. Deb Butler of New Hanover County, the only legislator Wednesday to speak against the bill. The measure, she said, would have created "division between caregiver and patient."

Bill supporters attempted a full-court press before Wednesday's vote, bringing in two women who said they had survived unsuccessful abortions in the 1970s and 1980s.

"Everyone has value," Gianna Jessen said at a Legislative Building news conference before the vote, describing a 1977 saline abortion in California that she survived. "I'm so grateful to be alive." (AP, 6/5/19)

### **JUN 2019    Votes for Alcohol Sales at UCNW Sports Events**

Will alcohol be for sale at sporting events in UNCW's future?

House Bill 389, which would allow the University of North Carolina system schools to sell alcohol at stadiums, athletic facilities or arenas located on their property, is now awaiting Gov. Roy Cooper's signature.

The N.C. House voted 88-25 on Wednesday to approve the Senate version of the bill, sending the measure to the governor's desk. On the House side, New Hanover County Reps. Deb Butler, Ted Davis Jr. and Holly Grange all voted in favor of the proposal. On the Senate side, New Hanover County Sen. Harper Peterson also supported the bill.

"It is a socially acceptable activity at public events and sporting events now and when properly managed and supervised I think it enhances and doesn't distract from people that decide not to drink," Peterson said Friday afternoon.

If approved, the board of trustees of each school in the UNC system will vote on whether or not their institution will allow alcohol sales. If they vote in favor, they will then need to provide written notice to the N.C. Alcoholic Beverage Control Commission that permits will be allowed.

Jimmy Bass, UNCW's athletic director, on Thursday said the university wouldn't comment until the governor makes a decision on the bill.

The bill allows for the sale of malt beverages, unfortified wine, or fortified wine. The premises of a stadium, athletic facility, or arena would include any area that meets the following requirements: "It is within 500 feet of the furthest exterior building wall, perimeter fence, or permanent fixed perimeter; It is designated by the stadium, athletic facility, or arena in a map or written description that clearly defines the boundary of the area, and that map or written description is included in the permit application." (Star-News, 6/22/19)

### **JUL 2019 Guest Column on Budget Standoff**

The 2018 midterm election in North Carolina demonstrated that citizens are clamoring for balance in government. Folks are sick and tired of the gridlock. Everywhere I go, people tell me they miss the old "give and take" style of politics in which compromise eventually rules the day and the work of the people gets done. People are fed up and rightfully so, but nevertheless, that message appears to have been lost on the GOP leadership in our legislature.

Rather than acknowledging that North Carolinians elected more Democrats in the 2018 midterms, so many so that Gov. Roy Cooper has enough support to sustain his vetoes, the GOP leadership simply ignored all Democrats and have forged the 2019 budget in secret and adopted a "take it or leave it" approach.

The proposed legislative budget is predictable. Pretty quickly, you can see where their priorities lie insofar as their proposed legislative budget focuses on more tax breaks for corporations at the expense of our school children and our teachers.

Their budget once again underfunds critical agencies such as the Department of Environmental Quality and Health and Human Services at the expense of clean water and public health. Their budget makes no effort whatsoever to extend healthcare benefits to North Carolina's working poor, leaving them right in the coverage gap. In my district, that means that 20,000 of my constituents are left uninsured and likely being deprived of the health care they so desperately need.

It breaks my heart. Morality aside, I thought for sure the economics of expanding coverage would at least prevail, with an estimated \$235 million economic gain to District 18 alone. And, finally, rather than acknowledging what is estimated to be an \$8 billion need for school construction, and committing to long term investment in school construction by allowing for a school bond issue, this budget features a piecemeal approach that will never keep pace with growth.

For these reasons and a myriad of others, Gov. Cooper has vetoed this budget and has put forward a written compromise that actually embraces much of the legislative proposal, but invests more in health care, water quality, education infrastructure and teacher pay.

Thus far however, instead of any thoughtful consideration or negotiation, instead of sitting down and embracing that old style "give and take" that the public demanded with their votes, the Republican leaders have instead filled the budget with earmarks that would spend hundreds of millions of tax dollars on special "projects" in targeted districts, presumably to garner favorable votes on the budget veto override. Again, a tactic that the public rightfully finds loathsome.

Instead of compromising or negotiating, the GOP leadership would prefer to rule by fiat, telling the governor and every citizen in North Carolina to take their version of the budget or leave it. I will vote to leave it because I know that a budget forged in the spirit of compromise would serve all of North Carolina far better.

Wilmington's Deb Butler represents District 18 in the N.C. House. (Star-News, 7/15/19)  
**JUL 2019 Representing Plaintiff in Redistricting Lawsuit**

If you can't get a law, then go to court.

Such was the theme of opening testimony for Common Cause v. Lewis, the partisan redistricting lawsuit launched last year by Common Cause NC, the N.C. Democratic Party, and a handful of individual plaintiffs. Republicans violated the state constitution by carving out voting districts to their advantage, disenfranchising voters, plaintiffs say. GOP lawmakers deny any legal wrongdoing.

North Carolina needs redistricting reform, said Bob Phillips, executive director of Common Cause NC, during his July 15 testimony. Since legislators on both sides so far have refused to stop misusing power, the organization had no choice but to sue, he said.

But redistricting is a legislative issue, and therefore should be dealt with by lawmakers, not courts, said Phillip Strach, an attorney for the defense. An organization can't sue the General Assembly simply because legislators refuse to pass a law the group wants, he said.

The plaintiffs passionately contested those arguments. The legislature never will fix redistricting politics, Phillips said, and therefore courts must act.

The case is about how lawmakers - both Republican and Democrat - abuse power to stay in power, said Stanton Jones, an attorney for the plaintiffs.

"This is fundamentally unfair. It doesn't matter which party does it. It's wrong," Jones said.

Court involvement in partisan gerrymandering is hotly debated. The U.S. Supreme Court on June 27 ruled federal courts should abandon such cases. Claims against partisan gerrymandering "present political questions beyond the reach of the federal courts," Chief Justice John Roberts wrote in the high court's 5-4 majority opinion.

The ruling left cases like Common Cause v. Lewis to state courts. Republican maps violate the state constitution, which provides greater equal protection than the U.S. Constitution, and the courts must uphold the law, plaintiffs say. But Republican legislators argue maps were drawn constitutionally, following laws about district borders, grouping of residents, and minority voting power.

As long as maps are legal, courts have no business telling the General Assembly how much partisanship is too much when states draw legislative and congressional districts, lawmakers say.

After Phillips' appearance, the rest of the day was taken up with testimony from Senate Democratic leader Dan Blue of Wake County and Rep. Graig Meyer, D-Orange, who led the N.C. Democratic Party's legislative candidate recruitment and fundraising during the 2018 campaign. UNC Wilmington Professor Derrick Miller, one of the individual plaintiffs in the case, also testified. Miller, an activist and Democratic voter, told defense attorneys partisan gerrymandering has blocked fair representation for his district. Sen. Bill Rabon, R-Brunswick, holds the District 8 seat. Miller is represented in the House by Rep. Deb Butler, D-New Hanover, who serves as House Democratic whip, defense attorneys said.

Testimony and evidence in the trial may consume two weeks. A three-judge panel - Superior Court Judges Paul Ridgeway, Joseph Crosswhite, and Alma Hinton - is overseeing the trial. (Anson Record, 7/16/19)

### **AUG 2019 Pushing "Red Flag" Bill**

A group of Democratic legislators in the N.C. House in Raleigh is attempting to push two gun-control bills directly to the floor, hoping to ride momentum from an unexpected assist by President Donald Trump.

Trump said in a press conference Monday that he supports states adding "red flag" gun laws.

House Bill 454 is the red-flag bill that Democratic Gov. Roy Cooper cited Monday as an appropriate legislative response to the latest national tragedies in El Paso, Texas, and Dayton, Ohio, in which at least 31 individuals died.

CNN described a red-flag law as enabling individuals who have seen warning signs - typically a family member, but the provision could include law-enforcement officers - to ask for a court order to intervene and temporarily prevent someone who is in an apparent crisis from having access to a gun.

HB454 has not been acted upon in the House Judiciary Committee since being introduced March 27.

Another piece of legislation, House Bill 86, includes several provisions to improve background checks and deals with gun-ownership requirements. It has sat in the Judiciary Committee since being introduced Feb. 18.

Bill sponsors told House GOP leaders Monday night that they have created petitions to bring both bills out of committee. The petitions, known as a discharge request, are most often undertaken when the sponsors of a bill believe it has been languishing in committee and not given a fair review.

"We must make sure that those judged to pose a grave risk to public safety do not have access to firearms and that, if they do, those firearms can be taken through rapid due process," Trump said.

The main argument against red-flag laws is concern that law-enforcement officers and the courts could seize an individual's guns without due process.



HB454 would require the scheduling of a hearing within 10 business days to determine the nature of the danger with the individual, whether the weapons should be returned and whether the person needs treatment.

CNN reported that U.S. Sen. Lindsey Graham, R-S.C., a key Trump ally, said he has reached an agreement with U.S. Sen. Richard Blumenthal, D-Conn., on a federal grant program to assist with enforcing red-flag laws in 17 states and to “encourage” more states to adopt red-flag laws. Graham said Trump “seems very supportive.”

The grant would enable law enforcement to hire and consult with mental-health professionals to better determine which cases need to be acted upon, Graham said.

Petitions need support from six Republicans

”The time for condolences alone has long passed, and now it is time for action,” Cooper said.

”The General Assembly should move quickly to debate the details of these bills so that we can end up with legislation to keep deadly weapons out of the wrong hands,” he said. “I am also directing my administration to ensure we are doing what’s needed to try to prevent these tragic events.”

The petitions need at least six House Republican signatures, as well as those of every Democratic member, in order for the bills to be heard on the floor.

There is no deadline for securing enough signatures outside the adjournment of the legislative session.

”We need six (Republicans) with the fortitude to walk into the clerk’s office, affix their signature to that petition that says let’s have a conversation about how to keep North Carolina safe. How hard can that be?” asked state Rep. Deb Butler, D-New Hanover. “I’m calling upon my Republican colleagues to do just that. To step up and in this moment, do something. Let this be the moment when you made history. When you did something truly courageous and made your grandchildren proud.” (Winston-Salem Journal, 8/7/19)



Democratic lawmakers want the General Assembly to act on a pair of gun-control bills.

In a morning news conference, Democratic lawmakers urged Republicans to sign discharge petitions, which would move two gun-control bills out of committee and onto the House floor for debate.

”I invite my Republican colleagues to do what is sensible, to do what’s right, and to do what our state is demanding,” Rep. Marcia Morey, D-Durham, said. “Let’s have a conversation. Let’s take a vote, up or down. This is something we can’t ignore.”

The call to action comes after back-to-back mass shootings in El Paso, Texas and Dayton, Ohio, over the weekend.

House Bill 454 and House Bill 86 have stalled in the House Judiciary Committee since introduced earlier this year. Six Republicans would have to sign a petition to get either of the bills on the floor. No Republican has signed so far.

Rep. Ted Davis, R-New Hanover, who chairs the House Judiciary Committee, has said time is a factor in whether the bills are heard.

"We're winding down, and I don't know that there will be an opportunity for us to hear any of those bills this session," Davis told WRAL-TV. "I also don't know what the Senate's appetite is."

Davis didn't respond to a request for comment on this story.

The bill sponsors are tired of waiting.

"We are here today because we have heard the pleas of this nation, the chants of El Paso and Dayton to do something," Rep. , D-New Hanover, said. "They cry out, 'do something.'"

Butler led a brief chant of "do something" with some of the attendees. She slammed her fist on the podium multiple times and called on Republican lawmakers to find the political courage to sign the discharge petitions and move forward on the gun debate.

H.B. 86, Gun Violence Prevention Act, would require several changes to current laws in North Carolina. Under the bill, a purchase permit would be required for "assault weapons" and "long guns." Current state law requires only a purchase permit for hand-guns. High-capacity magazines, bump stocks, and trigger cranks would be outlawed. Gun owners would be required to buy firearm liability insurance and wait 72 hours after purchase before receiving their gun.

The other bill, H.B. 454, would establish Extreme Risk Protection Orders. ERPOs would allow the state to temporarily seize someone's firearms if a judge determines that person is a risk to others or to themselves. Bill sponsors said the ERPOs would be modeled after existing violence protection orders for victims of domestic violence. Seventeen states have already passed the so-called "red flag" laws.

Freshman Rep. Christy Clark, D-Mecklenburg, a primary sponsor of both bills, said it's time for lawmakers to decide whether they want to side with the gun lobby or with gun violence survivors and victims.

"When the next mass shooting happens in North Carolina and you're asked what did you do, is your answer going to be nothing, or is it going to be, 'I support common-sense gun law reform,'" Clark said.

Gun control advocates, such as Moms Demand Action, attended the news conference, as did Drew Pescaro, a survivor of a shooting April 30 at the University of North Carolina at Charlotte. Pescaro, of Apex, was one of six students who were shot. Two students, Reed Parlier and Riley Howell, were killed.

"I think this legislation would have prevented that tragedy," Pescaro said.

Pescaro, who showed attendees scars from the shooting, said he hopes Republicans will have a conversation about gun violence and take up the bills. He wonders why the UNC-Charlotte shooting wasn't enough to spark that conversation.

Republican lawmakers have been reluctant to discuss gun control. Speaker Tim Moore, R-Cleveland, formed the House Select Committee on School Safety after the 2018 shooting at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, Florida. The committee never discussed guns.

Rep. David Lewis, R-Harnett, published a Facebook post with comments about the recent shootings. Lewis, who chaired the House Select Committee on School Safety, said lawmakers have an obligation to delve into the deep-rooted societal issues that have led to the recent tragedies.

"I am interested in additional common sense proposals that will keep all North Carolinians safe," Lewis said in his post. "That being said, any effort to advance gun safety by preventing truly dangerous individuals from accessing firearms should be structured to fully protect the Second Amendment rights of law-abiding citizens."

Senate leader Phil Berger, R-Rockingham, said he's open to discussion.

"Senator Berger is always willing to listen to proposed solutions on any topic," Bill D'Elia, a spokesman for Berger, said in an email. "He is concerned about whether some of the ideas being discussed by Democrats at press conferences following the shootings would have stopped the recent tragedies." (Laurinburg Exchange, 8/7/19)

### **SEP 2019    Irate Reaction to House Budget Override Maneuver**

You might recall that expert report a few years back which determined North Carolina's democratic institutions are a mess, roughly on a par with those in Cuba, Indonesia, or Sierra Leone, and not quite as good as Rwanda. Republicans in the North Carolina House of Representatives apparently think the state needs to slide down a few ranks, so today they pulled a funny little trick to pass an override of Democratic Gov. Roy Cooper's veto of the state budget. All they had to do was tell Democrats that no votes would be taken in the morning session, and then, in the half-empty chamber, the Rs forced a vote on the budget override, which passed 55-9, HA! HA!

Gov. Cooper had vetoed the budget bill in June because it didn't include funding to expand Medicaid, and also because it skimmed on pay raises for teachers while giving tax cuts to corporations.

Oh, and for an extra bit of awful, many of the Democrats were reportedly out attending 9/11 memorials, although the Associated Press notes "it wasn't immediately clear how many lawmakers may have been attending memorials." Look, if they're too wrapped up in silly distractions, that's on them!

Following the vote, Democrats condemned the outrageous fuckery, noting that none of their leadership had been present in the House, and that Republican state Rep. David Lewis had told state Democratic

Leader Darren Jackson there wouldn't be any votes taken Wednesday morning. With that assurance, Jackson had told his caucus they didn't need to attend the morning session. And then came the switcheroo!

Jackson told the Raleigh News & Observer, that when a person with power says something will or won't happen, you tend to trust them. Lewis is the chair of the House Rules, Calendar and Operations committee, so that sounds like a guy with power to us!

"If we can't trust each other, this place will fall apart, it's just too big an entity to run, too many processes to require for everything to be in writing," Jackson said [...]

Jackson said he wants Lewis to recall the veto vote before it goes to the Senate, which is a simple majority vote.

Haw-haw, you wish, loser!

As proof that everything was just ducky and that no rats had been fucked, Republican Speaker Tim Moore, who had called the vote immediately after the day's session began, made a great show of pointing out that there had been no announcement on the floor that there'd be no voting, and even got the House's clerk to check the minutes to prove it. News & Observer reporter Lauren Horsch said on Twitter that, regardless of any announcement, "several reporters were told on background that no votes would be taken. So this was a shock to us as well."

The bullshit "we never promised you a memorial garden" excuse didn't seem to satisfy the few Democrats who were on the floor when the vote was suddenly called. State Rep. Deb Butler objected angrily, "This is a travesty of the process and you know it." No matter! With just 64 members present, the Rs pushed through the budget veto override, and an override of a second, unrelated veto, too, because they were there, weren't they? Then they voted to recess, and the Rs went off to a closed caucus meeting where we imagine a little girl showed them how to hold a football and yank it away at the last moment, with hilarious results.

Butler was livid, shouting, "How dare you Mr. Speaker? [...] The trickery that is being evidenced this morning is tantamount to a criminal offense." Here's video of part of the session, with Butler demanding justice and Republicans owning the libs:

[embedded content]Rep. Deb Butler speaks out against veto override by NC House Republicans  
www.youtube.com

Moore had Butler's microphone turned off, that'll learn her! Butler also said she was threatened with arrest; other Democratic lawmakers circled around her to prevent that. (Wonkette, 9/11/19)

.....  
-- An ambush.

That's how Rep. Deb Butler, D-New Hanover, described a surprise vote Wednesday morning to override Gov. Roy Cooper's veto of the state budget.

But several Republican members of the local delegation said there was nothing illegal or deceitful about Wednesday's proceedings.

With the majority of the N.C. House's Democratic members absent, House Speaker Tim Moore, R-Cleveland, Wednesday morning allowed a vote on the budget, which has sat in limbo for weeks.

The Raleigh News & Observer (N&O) reported that just over half of the 120 members of the House were present during the vote. The vote for the budget override was 55-9.

The vote, the N&O reported, came after Rep. Jason Saine, R-Lincoln, introduced a motion to take up the budget.

In an interview Wednesday, Butler said that most Democrats were not in the chamber at the time because they had been told no vote would be held. Butler said that message was relayed to House Democratic Leader Rep. Darren Jackson, D-Wake, by House Rules Committee Chairman Rep. David Lewis, R-Harnett.

Butler said Democrats will make a motion to recall the vote, and Jackson will be meeting with Lewis on the matter.

"It is my hope that he will find one shred of moral fiber to do the honorable thing," she said. "Day in and day out, we disagree, but there are certain rules and certain honorable treatment of one another that have been the protocol, and we were told twice that there would be no votes this morning."

'A quorum is 61'

Rep. Holly Grange, R-New Hanover, who is also running for governor, was among the 55 "yes" votes Wednesday. She disputed Democrats' claims that the vote was taken in a deceptive manner.

"I don't understand how it could have been deceptive, because I'm looking at the calendar right now," Grange said. "I don't understand how there was any question. There was not an announcement that there would be no vote."

"I have always been in favor of this budget as it was written, and it was a responsible budget," Grange noted.

Rep. Frank Iler, R-Brunswick, echoed the sentiment.

He said GOP leaders made it clear Tuesday that there would be no votes that day, but never said there wouldn't be a possibility of votes on Wednesday.

Iler added that he thought everything Wednesday morning was handled above-board and within House rules -- except for the outbursts from the House floor after the vote was taken.

"We're paid to be there, so I was there and I voted," he said.

And what about only half of the 120 House members being there to vote?

”A quorum is 61,” Iler said. “Everyone knows that.”

Comments from the floor

In a video posted to Facebook by Rep. John Autry, D-Mecklenburg, Butler can be seen vocally condemning Moore’s actions.

”You shall not do this to democracy in North Carolina, Mr. Speaker,” Butler says from the floor. “You shall not usurp the process, Mr. Speaker. How dare you subject this body to trickery, deceptive practices, hijacking the process. We have been here day and night for months defending what we believe.”

Butler noted in an interview that at the time of the vote, many Democrats were at work on remedial voting maps for the state. N.C. Superior Court judges have ordered the maps redrawn after finding that maps drawn in 2017 by Republican legislators constituted illegal gerrymanders.

”This is a perfect illustration for the voters to take note of,” Butler said. “It is beneath the dignity of the institution, and every person involved in it should be ashamed of themselves. I know for one thing my conscious is clear and my legacy is intact.”

Long-stalled budget

Gov. Roy Cooper and the GOP-led General Assembly have been at loggerheads over the 2019-20 state budget for months.

The primary bone of contention has been over Cooper’s proposal to expand the state’s Medicaid program beyond just covering low-income families with children and those with disabilities.

Democrats said expanding Medicaid would benefit low-income adults, removing a major financial worry for them and creating a more healthy state population. Republicans, for their part, have said they are scared of the drag an expanded health care program would have on state finances down the road.

According to Cooper’s 2019-2020 budget proposal, expanding Medicaid would cost \$2.13 billion, with \$1.91 billion covered by federal funds.

By law, the state is supposed to have a budget in place by July 1 -- the start of the new fiscal year.

Following Wednesday’s vote, the budget now goes back to the Senate’s Rules Committee. Cooper spoke to journalists in Raleigh Wednesday about the surprise vote, calling it “a true assault on our democracy.”

When asked by a reporter whether Cooper could expect Republicans to return to the negotiating table, he said, “You tell me. Am I going to be able to trust anything they say? We have a situation here where we need to have a functioning democracy, and part of that is being able to trust someone’s word.” (Star-News, 9/11/19)

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Who is Rep. Deb Butler from the viral video?

Rep. Deb Butler is a Wilmington Democrat who started yelling in objection the override vote. Video of the Democratic Whip’s speech went viral on Twitter, and her shouts of “I will not yield” generated a trending hashtag: #Iwillnotyield. Thursday, that had turned into #WeWillNotYield.

Butler, a longtime Wilmington lawyer and advocate for the city’s downtown area, was appointed in early 2017 to the seat held by then Rep. Susi Hamilton after Cooper named Hamilton his secretary of the Department of Natural and Cultural Resources .

In 2018, Butler easily won re-election to represent a district that encompasses downtown Wilmington and parts of northern Brunswick County. During her first term in office, Butler emerged as a sometimes-fiery ally of Cooper’s administration, particularly on environmental issues.

Months after Butler’s initial appointment, the Wilmington StarNews reported Chemours was discharging industrial chemicals from its plant near Fayetteville that were making their way into Wilmington-area drinking water. Butler, who has often likened events on Jones Street to political theater, argued that Republican-led measures to address GenX and similar chemicals were insufficient and far short of what Cooper’s Department of Environmental Quality was requesting.

NowThisButlerTweet

As the House worked to chart a path forward in the wake of the GenX revelation, Butler was the only Wilmington-area member of the House not appointed by Speaker Moore to the House Select Committee on N.C. River Quality .

Displaying her growing frustration with Republican leadership, the StarNews reported in September 2017 that Butler said, “Just the unabashed partisanship of it all — there’s no other reason to exclude me from it except for the fact that I’m a Democrat. That is the only reason.”

What happens next?

The state budget still can’t pass without the Senate also overriding Cooper’s veto. However the Republican majority only needs one Democrat to vote with all of them to obtain the necessary override. The override had not been added to the Senate calendar as of late Wednesday afternoon. (RNO, 9/11/19)

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Reports quickly surfaced on social media of chaos on the House floor, as Democrats shouted at their Republican colleagues for the move. Rep. Deb Butler, a Democrat who was present for the vote, could be heard condemning the Republican House Speaker Tim Moore.

”How dare you do this, Mr. Speaker,” Butler said. “Mr. Speaker, you are making a mockery of this process, you are deceiving all of North Carolina. Your leadership is an embarrassment to the history of this great state.”

Butler later told reporters she was threatened with arrest, the NBC affiliate WRAL reported , though the House Sergeant at Arms denied any threats were made. (Business Insider, 9/11/19)

### **SEP 2019 Charges and Countercharges Over Redrawing District Maps**

Outside legal groups are accusing both Democrats and Republicans of breaking the rules as North Carolina lawmakers go about redrawing political maps that were recently ruled unconstitutional.

Lawyers for Common Cause, which won the recent lawsuit forcing this new redistricting session, say Senate Republicans violated a court order by ordering members of the media and the public to stay out of the area where senators and staff are drawing maps.

And lawyers for at least two different conservative-leaning groups say Democrats might be in violation of the same court order, pointing to a statement from a Democratic lawmaker that appeared to reference secret map-making meetings.

Both parties say the accusations against them are false.

Last week, when a three-judge panel overturned the maps used to elect members of the state legislature, the judges let the legislature remain in charge of drawing the new maps. They’re currently rushing to finish up by the court-imposed deadline next Wednesday, Sept. 18.

The judges ordered lawmakers to work under stricter rules, with more transparency than usual and no reliance on political data.

Secret Democrat maps?

Wednesday morning, Republican House lawmakers took a vote that surprised many Democrats — most of whom were not in the chamber to vote — to override Democratic Gov. Roy Cooper’s veto of the state budget.

Democrats were outraged, and one of the few who were present for the vote was Rep. Deb Butler of Wilmington. She gave a speech angrily deriding the budget vote, and at one point made an aside that some saw as an accidental admission that Democrats have been drawing maps in secret, which might violate the court order.

About five minutes into her speech, Republican Rep. Kelly Hastings interrupted Butler to ask for permission to speak about integrity. Butler had briefly stopped speaking, until Hastings mentioned integrity.

”We have been tricked, and you are trying to usurp the will of the North Carolina voter,” Butler said. “How dare you? We’re downstairs right now trying to redraw partisan-heavy maps because of your thumb



on the scale. The court has ordered that you will redraw these maps, and that's the way you feel like you're going to behave in here?"

Democratic Rep. Deb Butler: 'How dare you do this, Mr. Speaker' Rep. Deb Butler (D) and her Democratic colleagues protest an unexpected vote in the NC House to override Gov. Roy Cooper's veto of the budget.

Butler said later that she thinks it's clear she was talking about the public process, and not anything secret, since she referenced having to redraw Republicans' "partisan-heavy" maps. Many Republicans focused on her use of the word "downstairs," since there is nowhere downstairs in the legislative building where maps should be discussed or drawn. Butler said she simply misspoke and really meant "across the street," in the offices where the redistricting meetings are being held.

"That's the death rattle out of those guys, trying to figure out somehow to point the finger at us," Butler said in an interview.

Republicans didn't necessarily buy her explanation.

NC House Speaker Moore defends vote to override budget veto NC House speaker Tim Moore tells reporters that it was his decision to call for a vote on the morning of Sept. 11, 2019 overriding the Governor's veto of the House budget. The vote caught Democrats, many of whom were absent, by surprise.

The conservative Raleigh think tank Civitas Institute sent a formal request to Democratic leaders asking for those maps and anything related to them. So did a newly re-formed conservative legal group, the North Carolina Institute for Constitutional Law .

Jeanette Doran, the executive director of the NCICL, said it would be deeply concerning if records showed the Democrats had indeed been drawing their own maps in secret.

"Even if it isn't a crystal clear violation of the letter of the order, and I think it is, it is most definitely a violation of the spirit of the order," she said in an interview Wednesday.

Rep. Darren Jackson, the top Democrat in the House, said they had nothing to show since such maps do not exist. He added that Democrats couldn't draw secret maps, even if they wanted to, because they don't have access to a computer with the right software.

Republican violations?

Wednesday afternoon, as members of the Senate redistricting committee worked on new maps, members of the media and the public could walk among the various groups of lawmakers and staffers doing the work.

People could take photos, listen to conversations and get an up-close view of the redistricting process.

But a few hours later, as the committee continued working into the night, Republican Sen. Ralph Hise shut down that close-up public access.

”As a result of Sen. Hise’s order removing citizens and journalists from the map-drawing area, members of the committee were sitting at computers and amending maps without the public able to know how or why legislators were making changes to proposed districts,” Common Cause deputy director Brent Laurenz said in a press release.

The proceedings are still being live-streamed online for anyone to watch. And Hise never ordered anyone out of the room, just the central area where the action was. The complaint, however, revolves around the fact that the lawmakers frequently huddled in multiple groups at once and sometimes spoke in hushed tones — leaving the public not necessarily able to hear if lawmakers were improperly discussing partisan data while drawing the maps.

Pat Ryan, a spokesman for Republican Senate leader Phil Berger, said the decision to restrict the public to certain areas of the room does not violate the court order. He also said it was also a joint decision made by Hise and Democratic Senate leader Dan Blue.

”The computer screens are available for everybody in the world via live stream, they’re on multiple projectors in the committee room, and the public has the same access to this hearing room as for every other,” said Ryan and Blue’s spokeswoman, Leslie Rudd, in a joint statement. “We will continue to work with all sides in good faith to enact legally compliant maps and finally bring this matter to an end.” (RNO, 9/12/19)

### **SEP 2019 National Fame Over Meltdown**

The Democratic North Carolina lawmaker who got national attention Wednesday for shouting “I will not yield” at the Republican House speaker during an override vote Wednesday told supporters Thursday that she’s not backing down.

Another Democratic lawmaker called for the resignation of the speaker, the day after the House overrode the governor’s veto of the state budget in a move the governor called “an assault on our democracy.” The veto was overridden with the needed supermajority because most of the Democrats weren’t there, under the impression that the morning session would be a no-vote session.

When Rep. Deb Butler of Wilmington and other Democrats realized the override vote was being taken, they protested vehemently, with Butler’s reaction recorded by another lawmaker.

Democratic Rep. Deb Butler: ‘How dare you do this, Mr. Speaker’ Rep. Deb Butler (D) and her Democratic colleagues protest an unexpected vote in the NC House to override Gov. Roy Cooper’s veto of the budget.

On Thursday morning, Butler, who is also the House Democratic whip, spoke at a protest and news conference on the front lawn of the Legislative Building, where the General Assembly meets.

”North Carolina is better than this. ... What happened yesterday was a shameful, shameful display,” Butler told a group of other Democrats and progressives, including representatives from the N.C. NAACP and the N.C. Association of Educators .

Butler described her outburst on the floor as “a meltdown.” Someone in the crowd called out that it was a “melt up,” and she repeated that.

”What I did was remarkable only insofar that it happened in that building. We all have the capacity for that,” Butler said.

She paraphrased a message someone sent her afterward. “‘One day she realized she was fierce and brave and strong, and her passion for the issues shone brighter than her fear.’ And I think that’s what happened yesterday, but it’s in every one of us,” she said.

0912-Butlerprotestembed

Butler said North Carolinians should demand more of their legislators and elected representatives.

”I am so proud to stand with the great citizens of the state of North Carolina to say we will not yield,” Butler said. (RNO, 9/12/19)

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Some people are hailing a North Carolina lawmaker as a “hero” after a video of her protesting a surprise vote in the House of Representatives garnered national attention.

The successful vote was to override Gov. Roy Cooper’s veto of the Republican-written budget and was called on Wednesday, when many Democrats were absent.

Democratic Rep. Deb Butler: ‘How dare you do this, Mr. Speaker’ Rep. Deb Butler (D) and her Democratic colleagues protest an unexpected vote in the NC House to override Gov. Roy Cooper’s veto of the budget.

Rep. Deb Butler, a Democrat who represents New Hanover and Brunswick counties, stood up after the vote and began shouting at Republican House leader Tim Moore.

”How dare you do this Mr. Speaker,” she shouted. “I will not yield.”

The video has spread across social media, with some people calling Butler a “hero” and a “patriot” and tweeting “#IWillNotYield.”

Butler Tweet 1

Butler Tweet 2

Butler Tweet 3

The longtime Wilmington lawyer appeared on MSNBC on Wednesday, when she pushed back again against North Carolina's Republican lawmakers.

"I am totally humiliated that North Carolina has sunk to this level," she told the network.

Butler was appointed to her seat in early 2017 and easily won re-election in 2018. Her frustration with Republican legislators is nothing new.

During her first term in office, Butler emerged as a sometimes-fiery ally of Cooper's administration, particularly on environmental issues.

Months after Butler's initial appointment, the Wilmington StarNews reported Chemours was discharging industrial chemicals from its plant near Fayetteville that were making their way into Wilmington-area drinking water.

Butler, who has often likened events on Jones Street to political theater, argued Republican-led measures to address GenX and similar chemicals were insufficient and far short of what Cooper's Department of Environmental Quality was requesting.

At one point, Butler was the only Wilmington-area representative not appointed to the General Assembly's Environmental Review Commission and the House's Select Committee on N.C. River Quality .

After Wednesday's video spread online, some social media users said they want to see more politicians like her.

Butler Tweet 4

Butler Tweet 5

Meanwhile, Republicans deny giving any indication there wouldn't be a vote Wednesday.

Moore said there was no notice sent out saying there wouldn't be a vote and confirmed he wouldn't be breaking any rules by calling it, The News & Observer reported.

Although some on social media suggest Democrats were absent attending 9/11 remembrance events, The News & Observer confirmed only two, including Cooper, were at such events.

Now that the vote has passed in the House, it will still need to pass in the Senate to override the veto. (RNO, 9/12/19)

O'DONNELL: We have an exclusive interview tonight with Deb Butler, because today, the Democratic State Representative Deb Butler finally had enough from the Republican speaker of the North Carolina House of Representatives Tim Moore, and Deb Butler went viral, today letting Tim Moore know exactly how she feels.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

STATE REP. DEB BUTLER (D), NORTH CAROLINA: Mr. Speaker, you are making a mockery of this process. You are deceiving all of North Carolina. Your leadership is an embarrassment to the history of this great state. At this moment in time, you are doing the unspeakable. Is this the legacy you want?

(END VIDEO CLIP)

O'DONNELL: "The Charlotte Observer" described what happened in the North Carolina House today as a stunning display of contempt for democracy. Here is the sequence of events as described by "The Charlotte Observer".

House Speaker Tim Moore called a surprise vote to overturn Democratic Governor Roy Cooper's veto of the state budget just after a session opened at 8:30 a.m. Wednesday. Democratic lawmakers and the media had been told by Republican leaders that there would be no vote in the morning. Enough Republicans aware of the secret plan were there. With only 64 of the House's 120 members present, the vote to override passed 55-9.

If all Democrats had been present, the vote to override could not have passed, because the veto override requires 67 percent of the vote of the members who are present. In an editorial today, "The Charlotte Observer" said, not only was the House vote dishonest. It was carried out by a Republican majority that courts have repeatedly found to have gained seats through illegal gerrymandering. It was an illegitimate majority acting in an unethical way.

When Representative Deb Butler rose to object, she was not recognized to speak by the speaker. Republicans attempted to turn off her microphone. She kept speaking, switching microphones to find one that would work while Republicans called capital police into the chamber. Democratic colleagues of Deb Butler's surrounded her.

In the video you are about to see, you will hear some of them talking about not letting anyone touch her. They were there to protect her as she spoke. The few Democrats in that room were going to make sure that Deb Butler got to speak and do what they could to make sure she would not be arrested for exercising her rights as a member of the North Carolina House of Representatives.

And luckily, one of Deb Butler's colleagues had the presence of mind to grab a cell phone camera and start recording video. Here's how it began.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

BUTLER: Process. You shall not do this to -- you shall not do this to democracy in North Carolina, Mr. Speaker. How dare you do this, Mr. Speaker? I will not yield.

UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE: We're not going to let anybody touch her.

BUTLER: I will not yield, Mr. Speaker. I will not yield.

UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE: There is no --

BUTLER: You shall not disrupt the process, Mr. Speaker. How dare you subject this body to trickery, deceptive practices, hijacking the process. We have been here day and night for months defending what we believe. And you would submit this body to trickery, deception, deceit? It is so typical of the way you conduct yourself. How dare you, Mr. Speaker.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

O'DONNELL: Joining us now for an exclusive interview is Democratic State Representative Deb Butler.

Thank you very much for joining us tonight. I hope you still have your voice left so that you can tell us what happened there.

So where were you? How did you discover what was happening on the House floor?

BUTLER: Thank you, Lawrence, for having me.

I tell you, I'm chronically punk chul in all things. So, I happened to be there early. I knew there were no votes, but because it was 9/11, I thought we'll have the pledge of allegiance, the prayer. We'll have some commemorative speakers, and so I just -- by sheer luck was there and saw it begin to unfold and was just -- aghast, and tried to intervene as best I could.

O'DONNELL: And you've all known this could happen if you didn't have enough of your members there at any given time, so you've been kind of steadfastly making sure that you always had enough people there to block any attempt to do this, to override the governor's veto of the budget.

What's at stake for you and the Democrats and the governor in the budget?

BUTLER: You know, Lawrence, North Carolina is a place that used to be revered for public education. Our teachers are paid at the very bottom of the barrel in this country. Our water is contaminated because we have not fully funded our Department of Environmental Quality. Our schools are crumbling because of a lack of infrastructure.

And so -- and we have the working poor, of course, who have not enjoyed health care because of our failure to expand Medicaid. It's a travesty, and Governor Cooper has fought very hard as have I and our colleagues. We have been steadfast.

And I'm one of the whips in our caucus. I have asked people to forego cancer treatments. I have asked them to come after surgery. I have asked them to miss anniversaries and birthday parties and first days of kindergarten.

So when I saw the speaker about to rob my colleagues of their hard work, it was more than I could bear, and I think you saw that. It was a day that I'll never forget, and I'm totally humiliated that North Carolina has sunk to this level, and, again, I will not yield, Lawrence. I will not yield.

O'DONNELL: That was very clear today, and the governor speaking earlier on MSNBC said that what they did today was a lie. They lied to you about what was going to happen there this morning. And then they got together basically to sneak this one by you all.

BUTLER: It's telling, Lawrence, that there was no media in the chamber. We have had a plethora of cameras all day every day, when we're in there. In fact, I'm informed one of the reporters has a text message from the speaker of the -- excuse me, the chairman of the rules committee saying there would be no votes, hence the absence of media.

And you're right, had my colleague, John Acott (ph), not caught it on video, it would have gone blindly (ph) by. And it would have been unknown to anyone.

And so I'm so thankful he did that because we're trying to sanitize North Carolina with the light of day, call these things into clear focus and -- do what we can.

O'DONNELL: Were you aware that the Republicans had called in the police, the police, and they were approaching you and that's why your colleagues were physically surrounding you?

BUTLER: I gathered that pretty quickly. I saw them out of the corner of my eye. I heard my other colleague Candy Smith say, we're not going to let anybody touch her. Heard someone else say, no, sir, not today.

The sergeant at arms was there. He cut my microphone off. In fact, the speaker cut my microphone off my dais. I kept turning it back on and continued to shout.

You know it's a tragic day in North Carolina politics honestly. We used to be known as shining star of the South, and now we are a place of scorched earth politics. And I am as proud as I can be to be a North Carolina Democrat.

We gain 10 seats on them in the midterms. And this has put steel in the spine of every person in my caucus. I cannot tell you the deluge of support I have received from Republicans. Not the ones on the House floor, but Republicans across North Carolina independents, people from Indiana, Tennessee across this country and they're saying to me things like, you said what we're all thinking and I'm just - I'm glad that it turned out that way and I'm thrilled that I was able to be a part of it.

O'DONNELL: You did not yield, and your voice was heard all over the country. North Carolina State Representative Deb Butler, thank you very, very much for joining us tonight on this very difficult day. We really appreciate it.

BUTLER: Thank you, Lawrence very much. (MSNBC, 9/12/19)

**SEP 2019 Letter Writer Calls Butler Hypocrite**

I am almost 72 years old and I still cannot get used to the hypocrisy of Democrats.

Reps. Deb Butler and Jean Farmer-Butterfield are “shocked and appalled” at the actions of the Republicans. We didn’t hear a peep when they used essentially the same trick to pass the law permitting perverts open access to restrooms with women and young girls present. They waited until two Republicans were out of the country or in the hospital and had an “emergency recall” to get another vote.

Ethics in politics is on a slippery slope, but they gave it the initial push. Also, I’m still waiting for the Butterfields to explain the difference between voter rights and gerrymandering. I asked once in person once in this forum and have heard nothing. Maybe someone else can give it a shot.

Braden Ussery  
Wilson (Wilson Daily Times, 9/13/19)

**SEP 2019 GOP Says What Goes Around, Comes Around**

Dishonest. Cowardly. Abuse of power. Orchestrated. Shameless. Profoundly disappointing. Lies.

Those are just some of the words used by state Democratic lawmakers, the Cooper administration and left-leaning state and national advocates in response to the House Republican leadership’s stunning decision Wednesday to conduct two veto override votes when most Democratic members were not on the chamber floor.

Properly noticed. False claims. Extremely credible. Debunked. Lies.

Those are just some of the words used by House speaker Tim Moore, R-Cleveland, in his blow-by-blow description for how the House voted 55-15 to override Democratic Gov. Roy Cooper’s veto of the GOP state budget compromise.

The no votes of six Democrats were not tabulated initially in the chaos of calling for the vote.

Many of the Democratic members not present were in a redistricting caucus meeting

They had been told by Minority leader Rep. Darren Jackson, D-Wake, that he had been informed by Rep. David Lewis, R-Harnett, that there would be no votes taken in Wednesday’s morning session.

Following Tuesday’s House floor session, Lewis texted a WRAL reporter “no votes 8:30” when asked about Wednesday’s session agenda.

Jackson told The (Raleigh) News & Observer that Republican House members “knew we had been told that there would be no votes at 8:30 in the morning, and they took advantage of that in order to pass their budget override.”



Moore and Lewis stressed there had been no official announcement of a non-voting session Wednesday morning.

"I've made it clear," Moore said. "I've said it from right here, on the floor, everywhere: If I see an opportunity to override this budget, this veto, I was gonna take that vote.

"If they didn't want it to pass, all they have to do is show up for work."

Which Democratic members did for 37 consecutive House floor sessions that had the veto override vote on the agenda. GOP House leadership did not call for a vote during any of those sessions.

There are 65 Republican and 55 Democratic House members. It would have taken seven Democrats supporting the veto override vote for it to succeed with full attendance

In many instances, there were between 108 and 120 members present during the announced sessions.

Mistrust. Microcosm. Poisoned. Unforgivable. Those are some of the words being used to try and capture the magnitude of the cracks in the trust foundation within the state House, and perhaps the entire General Assembly.

The controversial House veto override votes are just the latest flash points for a legislature already bruised from partisan sniping in the aftermath of the November 2018 ending of six years of GOP super-majority control of both chambers.

The votes also came as House and Senate redistricting committees are wrapping up drawing a series of new legislative districts in response to current Republican-generated maps being ruled as gerrymandered.

"Today, on the 18th anniversary of 9/11, while the state was honoring first responders, Republicans called a deceptive, surprise override of my budget veto," Cooper told reporters Wednesday.

What happened instead, Cooper said, is that "the Republican caucus was laying in wait, ready for this" to conduct their veto override votes.

"For two months, Republicans refused to offer a compromise or sit down at a true negotiating table with me. Democrats were told there would be no votes this morning.

"This was a bald-faced lie."

Left-leaning Progress N.C. Action held a protest Thursday at the legislature that included delivering to Moore's office a suggested resignation letter as speaker.

"I want a North Carolina that we can be proud of - strong public schools, affordable health care for everyone and clean water," Rep. Deb Butler, D-New Hanover, said at the protest. Butler took a lead role in protesting the veto override vote while it was being conducted.

”Unfortunately, Republicans have developed a scorched earth political ethic for governing. If you can’t win in the court of public opinion, and you can’t win fair and square, you resort to trickery.”

### Lottery bill

The fractured trust in the state House revived comparisons to recent votes under controversial circumstances.

The foremost example cited by lawmakers, analysts and advocates is how Senate Democrats gained enough votes to pass the state lottery bill in 2005.

For weeks, there were 24 known Senate Democrat votes in support of establishing a state lottery and 26 (five Democrats and all 21 Republicans) against it. The lottery bill passed the House in April 2005 by a 61-59 vote.

Democratic Senate legislative leaders said on Aug. 24, 2005, that its session had come to an end.

However, the next day Democratic House Speaker Jim Black said it could take until next week to adjourn its session.

”Since we’ve been here about seven months, it seems to me that a few more days to make sure we produce as good a product as we possibly can, we do,” Black said at that time.

”There are still some issues that remain unresolved. The lottery hasn’t been voted on in the Senate. I keep hoping they’ll do that.”

Two Republican senators were known to be absent on Aug. 30, 2005. Sen. Harry Brown, R-Onslow, was on his honeymoon, while Sen. John Garwood, R-Wilkes, was in the hospital with a fever caused by an infection.

For years, Garwood opposed a lottery, largely for religious reasons.

But he also became the target of radio ads run by lottery supporters at the N.C. Association of Educators in recent weeks. Garwood said he struggled with his opposition because of the money it would raise for schools.

”I want this thing behind me and behind everybody,” Garwood told the Journal.

”I just feel like, ‘Let it do what it’ll do.’ If it passes, that’s fine with me. And if it doesn’t, that’s fine, too.”

The vote was held Aug. 30, with then-Lt. Gov. Bev. Perdue casting a tie-breaking vote after a 24-24 deadlock.

”Those with long memories will recall that Senate Democratic leaders generated a similar level of distrust in 2005 when they conducted the vote to create a state lottery after telling every member of the Senate -

during the open, public conduct of Senate business - that the chamber's work had been concluded for the year," said Mitch Kokai, senior policy analyst with Libertarian think tank John Locke Foundation.

"Current Senate Republican leaders Phil Berger and Harry Brown certainly remember that incident, since they were on the losing end of that fight."

Last week, lottery opponent the Rev. Mark Creech, executive director of the Christian Action League, responded to the veto override votes in a what-goes-around-comes-around manner.

"The Democrats' outrage over the alleged surprise vote overriding Governor Roy Cooper's veto on the budget doesn't ring with any moral authority," Creech said.

"I remember quite well the deceit, the shenanigans employed by Democrats when they were in control of both chambers of the General Assembly and passed a state-operated lottery. The negative impact of that vote, the damage it's done to the poor and the weakest among us, lives onto this very day.

"The impact of the current budget bill will be fleeting in comparison," Creech said. "No political party has the moral high-ground here. It's the way the process often works, and it's always worse when your side is somehow the victim." (Winston-Salem Journal, 9/16/19)

### **SEP 2019 Fawning RNO Columnist Praises Her**

State Rep. Deb Butler is drawing national attention after a video went viral of her repeatedly declaring on the N.C. House floor: "I will not yield."

Butler was protesting Republican Speaker Tim Moore's sudden unannounced call last week for a vote to override Democratic Gov. Roy Cooper's veto of the state budget while only a handful of Democrats were in the chamber.

Butler wouldn't yield the floor, but the Democrats got run over anyway. The veto override passed 55-9 and now goes to the Senate, where a slight swing in votes could make the Republicans' budget law.

But in losing, Butler achieved a moral — and a political — victory. The response to her tirade — "If this is the way you think democracy works, shame on you!" — brought approval far beyond her Democratic caucus and the state.

Along with the video, Butler appeared on MSNBC's political show "The Last Word with Lawrence O'Donnell." Sen. Elizabeth Warren tweeted her approval, as did actor and liberal activist Alyssa Milano and comedian Sarah Silverman. She received emails and calls from backers in many states and even Canada and Ireland. Her Twitter followers ballooned from 1,200 to 23,000 almost overnight.

"The response has just been staggering from every corner of the country. I've only received five negative responses compared to thousands of positives. So I'm going to take that as a victory," said Butler, a Wilmington Democrat who was appointed to the legislature in 2017. She replaced Rep. Susi Hamilton,

who resigned to head the department of Natural and Cultural Resources. Butler was elected in her own right in 2018.

Butler said the positive comments ran along the lines of: “ ‘Thank you for defending democracy.’ ‘You’re my hero.’ ‘You said all the things I wanted to say.’ ‘I made sure my little girls have watched this video.’ “

Why such a national outpouring over an uproar in the North Carolina legislature? Butler thinks her outrage connected with a wider political frustration.

”People feel so powerless right now,” she said. “They feel like they are not being listened to. And they’re not, and it’s frustrating to them. We are starting to understand the fragility of this democracy. They saw someone fighting back in ways that they can’t and that’s why it resonated, I think.”

There’s irony in Butler becoming the face and voice of outrage over Republican abuse of the democratic process. She joined the legislature thinking she could find a way to bridge partisan divides. She quickly learned otherwise. Republican legislative leaders promptly shunted her out of Hamilton’s former corner office and into a windowless room she compared to a broom closet. They denied her committee requests. “It was a real knock in the head right out of the gate,” she said then.

Now Butler is a House whip and a firebrand fighting what she sees as the Republicans’ high-handed tactics. She said the result of her viral protest is that “the entire country is now aware of the corruption we see in this House. The best way to drive the cockroaches back under the refrigerator is to shine a light on them. People would say that is strong language. I don’t care. Strength is required at his point. Any niceties have long since evaporated.”

Butler is on the House redistricting committee, which has drawn new legislative districts after a court ruled the previous districts were illegally gerrymandered by excessive partisanship. The House and Senate must now reconcile their maps and submit them for court approval. Butler thinks the ultimate cure for the tension that now divides the legislature is to have districts drawn by an independent commission.

Computer-assisted map drawing, she said, has made gerrymandering more precise and the legislature more partisan: “It has pushed the right further right and the left further left and that is what it is so critically important to fix this.”

And in pursuing that fix, it now seems clear, the representative from Wilmington will not yield. (RNO, Ned Barnett, 9/17/19)

### **DEC 2019    Doesn’t Want More Natural Gas**

Plans to expand drilling off the coast of North Carolina could have significant negative impacts onshore, according to a new report released today by Environment North Carolina Research & Policy Center. From pipelines running through sensitive coastal habitats to air pollution released by oil refineries, “Offshore Drilling, Onshore Damage: Broken Pipelines, Dirty Refineries and the Pollution Impacts of Energy Infrastructure” highlights how onshore industrial infrastructure created for offshore drilling damages our environment in a variety of ways.

”We want to visit clean beaches, smell the ocean breeze, and admire the marine life off our coast -- not avoid pipelines, choke on pollution from oil refineries, and contend with oil barges,” said Jean-Luc Duvall, campaign director for Environment North Carolina. ”Drilling off our coast may seem far removed from our homes and businesses, but the onshore infrastructure necessary for drilling creates a pressing threat to the health of our ecosystems and our citizens.”

According to the report, pipelines running from offshore rigs to inland processing facilities can degrade estuaries’ water quality and risk spilling oil across our beloved beaches. In addition, toxic waste brought onshore from drilling operations can pollute drinking water and tracts of land. Beyond those issues, air pollution from oil refineries can threaten local residents’ health.

The study shows that these problems could only get worse. Expanding offshore drilling, as the Department of the Interior proposed last year, could lead to additional infrastructure pollution in previously pristine coastal areas, where communities have long been able to avoid this type of industrialization.

”We want to reduce our dependence on any type of fossil fuel, and it would be a fool’s errand to explore natural gas when we haven’t fully exhausted our solar and wind options,” said State Representative Deb Butler, “Secondarily, insofar as tourism is a huge economic driver for Eastern North Carolina, I would never risk one drop of oil on our shores, because that would upend our tourism industry as well as our way of life.” (Press Release, 12/4/19)

### **DEC 2019 Endorses Warren**

Elizabeth Warren’s campaign is opening offices in North Carolina and announcing multiple endorsements ahead of the latest Democratic presidential candidate debate on Thursday.

The Massachusetts senator drew thousands to her first North Carolina campaign rally held in November at Broughton High School in Raleigh. She also held events with a Latino group in Raleigh and at N.C. A&T State University in Greensboro.

The Warren campaign opened its state headquarters in downtown Raleigh earlier this month.

This week her campaign is opening field offices in Durham, Charlotte and Asheville.

North Carolina’s primaries for president and other offices are March 3.

One of the elected officials on stage at Warren’s Raleigh rally was state Rep. Deb Butler, the Wilmington Democrat who gained national attention by shouting “I will not yield” to House Speaker Tim Moore when Democrats were caught off guard by a surprise vote to override the state budget, which was vetoed by Democratic Gov. Roy Cooper and the subject of a months-long standoff.

Following Butler’s viral video moment, Warren tweeted a video of support to the North Carolina legislator. At Warren’s rally Butler led the crowd in shouting “We will not yield” and “We will persist.”

The second was a reference to Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell silencing Warren during the confirmation hearings of Jeff Sessions to attorney general, an incident that led to McConnell saying, “Nevertheless, she persisted.”

Butler said at the rally that moment led to Warren being a “role model for every woman, every little girl and every middle-aged legislator in this country.”

Butler’s endorsement is now joined by those of Democratic state lawmakers Rep. Marcia Morey of Durham, Rep. Pricey Harrison of Greensboro and Rep. Susan Fisher of Asheville. (RNO, 12/18/19)

### **DEC 2019 Guest Column on The Year Ahead**

This essay is one of a series written by Triangle leaders and experts about their visions for a new decade.

My fervent hope for this New Year and the dawning of a new decade is different than any other year of my life. I would never have imagined that my greatest wish would be for the return of our civil society. A society where we all recommit to intellectual integrity. One where we agree on the facts even when we don’t like them. One where leaders search their souls and in so doing are reminded that their allegiance mustn’t be to themselves, rather to their friends and their neighbors who are trusting them with their futures. Absent that, I’m not sure how we debate our issues or negotiate compromises to some very, very tough issues like climate change, free and fair elections, and health care.

The single most significant accomplishment that our legislature could achieve by year’s end would be to agree to extend health care to over 600,000 of North Carolina’s working poor. Many of our neighboring Southern states have done so despite rancorous political divides of their own because they understand that doing otherwise is immoral. In North Carolina, people are literally dying in the coverage gap. They are rationing insulin, taking medicines less frequently than prescribed, and suffering unnecessarily because they cannot access adequate mental health care. Expanding Medicaid now will create thousands of jobs, will benefit our foundering rural hospitals, and will save our neighbors lives. We simply must find the courage to put politics aside on this issue. Let’s start rebuilding that civil society, shall we?

Rep. Deb Butler is a Wilmington Democrat and an attorney. (RNO, 12/26/19)

## 2020

### JAN 2020 Attends “Women’s March”

--Clad in pink pussy hats and toting signs -- including one that read, “This is what democracy looks like” -- hundreds of people took to the streets of downtown Wilmington Saturday afternoon for the fourth annual Women’s Rally and March.

One after the other, more than a dozen speakers called for fighting climate change, protecting public education and combating gun violence, among other hot-button issues.

Coordinated by Women Organizing for Wilmington, or WoW!, the march and rally at Innes Park next to Thalian Hall was held in conjunction with dozens of other protests held across the country and the world -- including in Washington, D.C., where numbers were reportedly a fraction of the 500,000 who rallied in 2017, the event’s first year.

The numbers in Wilmington seemed strong, though, and it was a lively crowd, building through the early part of the rally to a peak of perhaps 500 or so people by 1 p.m., before dwindling back down as protesters prepared to march to North Fourth Street at 3 p.m. There, female musicians were scheduled to perform during an open mic event at the Bottega bar and music venue, and Jessica Holmes, chairwoman of the Wake County Board of Commissioners and a candidate for North Carolina Commissioner of Labor, was to hold a fundraiser at the Foxes Boxes restaurant.

The rally was led and the speakers introduced by N.C. Rep. Deb Butler, D-District 18. Butler got a big round of applause from the crowd as she delivered her catchphrase, “I will not yield,” a reference to her shout of protest to the Republican House speaker during an override vote decried by many as unfair last September.

Female empowerment was the theme Saturday, with speaker after speaker -- many of whom are in or running for office -- demanding equal rights and equal pay for women. It was a diverse crowd, with a significant number of young people in attendance, not counting the young children who were there with their parents.

Though President Donald J. Trump was referenced many times -- Butler quipped that every time the president was referred to, a shakily secured American flag near the podium seemed to topple over -- Trump's name was not often spoken from the stage, if at all. (Star-News, 1/18/20)

## **FEB 2020    Agenda**

State Rep. Deb Butler, a Wilmington Democrat and House whip, said the Democrats' to-do list would start with Medicaid expansion and big raises for teachers. There would also be a bond issue for school buildings and a restoration of funding cuts to the Department of Environmental Quality . She said Democrats would also tighten restrictions on guns, make it easier to vote and raise the state's minimum wage, which remains tied to the federal minimum of \$7.25 an hour. "We need to start taking strides forward," she said. (RNO, 2/7/20)

## **JUN 2020    Supports Removal of Confederate Monuments**

It is a question that has been asked countless times during the past few years: what, if anything, should be done about Confederate monuments across the country, including those in downtown Wilmington?

Downtown has two prominent monuments to figures from the Confederacy -- the memorial monument to Confederate soldiers who fought in the war at Third and Dock streets, and the statue to politician George Davis at Market and Third streets.

Those who would like to see them removed say they act as a public reminder that the Southern states entered into the Civil War, in part, to retain the right to own slaves. Defenders of the statues say they don't celebrate the institution of slavery, but rather honor the area's history and those who lost their lives.

As protests denouncing violence against black citizens and demanding police reform continue to organize in Wilmington and across the country, the conversation about Confederate statues has been reignited.

On Wednesday, Virginia Gov. Ralph Northam announced the six-story-tall statue of Confederate Gen. Robert E. Lee will be removed from state property in Richmond, which was the capital of the Confederacy.

The move to take down a highly visible monument has inspired others in communities with Confederate statues to demand similar measures be taken. Homemade signs at local protests have specifically called for them to be removed, as does an online petition circulated this week addressed to local officials.

The petition, which asks they be placed in museums, had garnered more than 2,700 signatures as of Thursday afternoon.

It specifically mentions the two public downtown monuments and a third, the Confederate Soldiers Monument at Oakdale Cemetery.

However, the cemetery's monument would not be addressed the same as the others. Oakdale is a private cemetery and, therefore, the monument, which was erected by private donations in 1872, is not in a public



space. It is also considered a grave marker, as it sits atop a mound that contains the remains of more than 300 Confederate soldiers.

On Thursday, Sen. Harper Peterson and Rep. Deb Butler both said in response to the petition that they support the removal of the public monuments.

”Personally, I think they should be removed from public space,” Peterson said. “They don’t represent our culture, society or constitution today. This is not only an educational moment, but an emotional one too.”

Other local officials Rep. Ted Davis Jr. and Rep. Holly Grange did not return requests for comment. (Star-News, 6/5/20)

### **JUN 2020    Advisor to BLM Allied Group**

--Protests work, as the saying goes.

That certainly seems to be the case in Wilmington after a whirlwind 24 hours that saw the firing of three Wilmington Police officers for violent, racist language while on duty and the removal -- temporarily, at least -- of two long-standing, prominent monuments to the Confederacy downtown.

It’s impossible not to see a link between these events and the daily protests that started May 31 at Wilmington City Hall, protests that spawned a youth-driven group called “the lowercase leaders,” who’ve been leading those protests while also meeting with and trying to influence local officials. Regular protests by Wilmington’s arm of the Black Lives Matter movement at the Northside’s 1898 memorial have been influential as well.

On Wednesday morning, activist Lily Nicole, who co-founded and chairs the board of the lowercase leaders -- the name is a bit of a dig at people with “uppercase” titles, some of whom refused to meet with the group -- said “we’re definitely frustrated” at the pace of change locally. “There’s no good reason for things to be moving as slowly as they’re moving.”

Hours later, she exclaimed “Finally!!!” via text after being asked for a reaction to the firing of the three officers, an issue that quickly became national news. “We are thankful for (Wilmington Police Chief Donny Williams’) immediate reaction to an existing issue.”

In fact, Williams -- a Black Wilmington native who grew up in a local housing project -- being installed as police chief on Tuesday met one of the leaders’ “7 Demands for The Wilmington Police Department” issued earlier this month. Williams had been the interim chief since longtime chief Ralph Evangelous retired Feb. 1.

”That was the easy one,” said the lowercase leaders’ Brandon Cagle, adding it’s likely Williams would’ve become police chief anyway.

”They were always going to give it to him,” Nicole acknowledged.

Still, a remark Cagle made Wednesday morning, before the firing of the officers or the removal of the monuments, proved prophetic.

”What we get from our politicians is that things change slowly,” he said. “But things move quickly when they want them to move quickly.”

#### Demands on deck

The protests in Wilmington, and the changes they’ve spurred, mirror those happening nationwide following the killing of George Floyd, a Black man, in Minneapolis by a white police officer who has since been charged with second-degree murder. In Raleigh and in Charleston, S.C., monuments to the Confederacy came down earlier this week. Minneapolis is rethinking how its entire police force is structured. In other cities, changes to how police departments are funded, and how they are held accountable, are taking shape.

Locally, the firing of the three officers -- technically by Wilmington City Council -- less than 24 hours after Williams became chief points directly at why local activists wanted him in the top job.

During a press conference Wednesday afternoon, Williams said “the times that we are in” played a part in the firings, adding that it was also “the right thing to do.”

During the press conference, Williams expressed support for exploring another demand that’s been made by protesters: the formation of a citizens’ review board of police actions, specifically a board with subpoena and budget-approval power.

In addition, New Hanover County District Attorney Ben David, as well as members of Wilmington City Council, have expressed a willingness to explore what such a board might look like. According to a video shown by Wilmington Police spokeswoman Linda Thompson, during an online “conversation on race” Monday organized by Wilmington City Councilman Kevin Spears and Wilmington Mayor Bill Saffo, a former citizens’ review board in the 1990s dissolved due to “internal conflicts.”

Devon Scott, a Wilmington activist with the local Black Lives Matter movement and a former mayoral candidate, said the energy the lowercase leaders have brought to the protests, as well as their willingness to call out officials who resist change, has been vital.

”Being able to stoke outrage and direct it is absolutely necessary,” Scott said. “Having that freedom and energy and fervor, that righteous indignation,” invigorates the movement, he said.

Nicole said she and other members of the lowercase leaders have met with a number of local officials since protests began, including a positive interaction with New Hanover County Commissioner Jonathan Barfield.

Discussions with others, including D.A. Ben David, who spoke with the lowercase leaders Tuesday on the steps of Wilmington City Hall -- Nicole and other lowercase leaders had met with David privately during a three-hour meeting days earlier -- have been more fraught.

Speaking with protesters Tuesday, David said, “Black lives matter, and police violence of any kind is wrong.” He added that “the first amendment not only gives you the right to say ‘F the police,’ but it also gives me the right to say, ‘I don’t agree with the statement.’”

When David said police “are not warriors, they’re guardians,” Nicole replied with, “If they’re not warriors, then stop supplying them with warrior gear.”

The two sides appeared to find some common ground, however, with David saying he agrees with the Historic Wilmington Foundation that the Confederate statues should be moved and that their existence near the courthouse is at odds with the principles of fairness prosecutors try to operate under.

David said Nicole told him the protesters would allow the statues to come down by lawful means. A little over 48 hours later, they were, if only temporarily.

### Caring and confrontation

It’s been a messy process at times, perhaps necessarily. During a Wilmington City Council meeting last week, Nicole said she was not allowed to speak and that the lowercase leaders felt like “we were disrespected.” Nicole said she was threatened with a misdemeanor and later kicked out of the meeting. She admits “I blew my top” but added that being led out of the room by five officers “felt excessive.”

But while the lowercase leaders can be combative and confrontational -- a necessity, they say, as long as unarmed Black people are regularly killed by police and other whites -- they’re also much more.

Last weekend, Cagle led a group of around two dozen lowercase leaders in what he called the group’s first “community service day” on its home turf of Wilmington’s Northside, assisting local residents with yard clean-up and helping them prep for the upcoming hurricane season.

”It was a shot in the dark,” Cagle said. “I was worried taking large groups of people into the community. I know it can be a little imposing.”

Still, with a chainsaw, rakes and wheelbarrows, the group quickly made friends with some of their neighbors. This coming weekend they’ll add a leaf blower into the mix, and Cagle said meeting with area residents gave him new ideas on how to help, like making grocery store runs for people without transportation.

”We plan on going (to a new) block each week,” he said, adding that community outreach is part of the group’s long-term plan.

”Our platform is building community,” Nicole said.

A number of officials have reached out to the lowercase leaders, including democratic N.C. State Rep. Deb Butler, who doesn’t have a local purview but who lives in downtown Wilmington and has been a sort of unofficial adviser to the group.

"I've taken pains to look out for them," Butler said, adding that she texts them once or twice a week.

Butler, who said she's nearly 60, joked that she usually responds to 1 a.m. texts she receives from the twentysomethings when she gets up at 5 a.m.

"I'm excited that we finally have young people engaged," Butler said. "Usually when I give a speech, I look out and see all the gray hairs and wonder where all the young people are."

Butler said she's urged the lowercase leaders to "be methodical (and) stay the course."

She's been impressed with their organization, she said, adding, that "they've got some pretty well-defined objectives for a new organization," including taking \$5 million from the city's police budget "for restorative justice and community-led interventions" as well as required "cultural competency" and local history training for police officers.

Butler said she worries "about their frustration level, that it can manifest into something that's not positive." She added that "youth is impatient, but that's also why they are the genesis of great movements."

Obviously, the lowercase leaders aren't the only group in the Wilmington area pushing for change. New Hanover for All is another group on the front lines, along with Wilmington's Black Lives Matter movement. And, of course, there's a local chapter of the NAACP, which has been pushing for racial justice for decades.

But the lowercase leaders have youth, passion and, for the time being, momentum on their side, and they seem determined to take advantage of it.

Black Lives Matter of Wilmington activist Devon Scott said the lowercase leaders are helping to infuse energy into the local youth community, some of whom have never been politically active before. That, he said, might pay big dividends come election time.

"That is amazing," Scott said. "It doesn't happen every decade."

All the more amazing when one considers that, a month ago, there was no such thing as the lowercase leaders.

"I'm proud, but I find it hard to be proud," Cagle said. "We've accomplished a lot, but it also feels like we've thrown a pebble in a really big lake. We've made some ripples, but we need to keep it going." (Star-News, 6/25/20)

### **SEP 2020    Calls Trump "Draft Dodger"**

Democratic Rep. Deb Butler, who represents parts of Wilmington in the North Carolina General Assembly, tweeted her displeasure with Trump's visit Tuesday evening.

"I feel sick that the draft dodging bone spur President will disgrace our beloved USS North Carolina tomorrow," Butler wrote, adding a hashtag: "#WeWillNotYield."

President Trump praises his administration while attacking Joe Biden in RNC speech  
In a speech delivered on the South lawn of the White House, President Trump reminisced on the last three years in office. Trump attacked Democratic presidential nominee Joe Biden, claiming he would be unable to lead as a president. (RNO, 9/2/18)

### **OCT 2020 Safe District**

Dist. 18--Deb Butler(incumbent Democrat), one of the most famous progressive warriors in the General Assembly, challenged by Republican Warren Kennedy. Bitzer rates the district "Safe Democratic." (Watauga Watch, 10/7/20)

### **OCT 2020 Medicaid Expansion**

Rep. Deb Butler, who is running for reelection, said she has brought up expansion every day since she joined the state House in 2017.

"It is foremost on the legislative agenda for Democrats, because we recognize how critical it is for working families who are caught in the coverage gap. Particularly in this pandemic, we see just how many families don't have access to the health care they desperately need," said Butler, a Democrat. "If you see Democrats take charge in the Senate or in the House and maybe even just one or the other, I think you'll see Medicaid expansion is certainly our topline initiative."

The North Carolina Healthcare Association, which represents hospitals and health systems, has a political action committee that looks to support candidates in favor of Medicaid expansion, although it is not the only criteria, said Cody Hand, senior vice president of government relations.

"A lot more legislative races in suburban areas are also now adding Medicaid expansion as one of their points for their campaign," said Hand, noting polls showing the public's support of Medicaid expansion.

He said the House Republican health committee leaders have endorsed some version of expansion, but the Senate has proved more difficult.

"We haven't seen as much from the Republican side, but obviously every Democrat is a supporter of Medicaid expansion," he said. (CQ News, 10/29/20)

### **NOV 2020 Wins Re-Election**

Democratic incumbent Deb Butler has won the race for N.C. House of Representatives District 18, with all precincts reporting.

Butler won 59.8% of the vote while Republican challenger Warren Kennedy had 40.3%. Vote totals are 25,352 votes for Butler and 17,078 for Kennedy.

[Click here for vote totals in New Hanover, Brunswick and Pender counties.](#)

Reached by phone Tuesday night, Butler said that in her next term she will continue fighting for issues like affordable health care, teacher pay and clean air and water.

"The issues that I care about dearly and that New Hanover cares about will continue to be forefront in my effort," she said. Butler added that she welcomes input from constituents as she begins her term.

Kennedy could not immediately be reached for comment.

House District 18 covers parts of New Hanover and Brunswick counties.

All of the district's 17 precincts have reported their early voting and Election Day voting data to the North Carolina State Board of Elections.

Butler was appointed by North Carolina Gov. Roy Cooper in 2017 to fill former Rep. Susi Hamilton's vacated seat. Butler won a 2018 election for the seat with 62.4% of the vote.

For Kennedy, this is his first time running for public office.

Butler, of Wilmington, is a lawyer. Kennedy, also of Wilmington, is a retired law enforcement officer.

In response to questions posed by the StarNews, both candidates expressed support for addressing issues of systemic racism and the gerrymandering of N.C. House districts.

Tuesday's election results are unofficial until the vote canvass on Nov. 13. (Star-News, 11/4/20)

## 2021

### **JAN 2021 Democrat Whip**

Deb Butler, a Democrat from coastal North Carolina who represents the greater Wilmington community, has been re-elected as a member of the leadership team of the Democratic caucus of the North Carolina House of Representatives.

Butler, re-elected by her fellow caucus members, will serve a second term as Democratic Whip to the caucus. Butler has served House District 18 since her appointment by N.C. Gov. Roy Cooper in February, 2017 and has was re-elected both in 2018 and in 2020.

”There is no greater endorsement or compliment than being selected by your peers to a position of leadership. My colleagues are the finest North Carolina has to offer and I am privileged to work alongside them.”

Butler is an attorney living and working in the Historic District of downtown Wilmington. (Star-News, 1/13/21)

### **FEB 2021 HB 107 Not Strong Enough**

A state House bill advanced Thursday would restart the work search requirement for individuals whose job loss is not related to COVID-19.

Republican-sponsored House Bill 107 also would restore the one-week waiting period for benefits to begin for non-COVID-19 job losses.

HB107 was recommended by the House Finance committee to the Rules and Operations committee.

There is companion legislation in Senate Bill 114 that has yet to be heard in committee. Both bills would go into effect when signed into law.

Among the first pandemic steps taken by Gov. Roy Cooper in March was issuing an executive order that he said would “take down some barriers to unemployment benefits.”

Among the key elements of Executive Order No. 118:

Removing the requirement that recipients have to look for work during the benefits period.

Waiving the one-week waiting period to receive benefits.

Allowing applicants to file for benefits if they are subject to reduced hours as well as being laid off.

The executive order remains in effect until either being rescinded by Cooper, amended by another executive order or the state of emergency declaration ends.

However, the state Division of Employment Security has the authority to reactivate the work search requirements.

Antoine Keith, the state Department of Employment Security's senior deputy of programs, told the committee that the state economy has improved enough in recent months, including a significant decline in initial state unemployment claims, to warrant the restart of the two requirements.

Daily initial state and federal UI claims have ranged between 2,000 and 7,000 most of February.

Keith said DES hasn't taken that restart step yet because it is working to assure that the resumption of the two requirements would not affect COVID-19 related job losses and furloughs.

"It's going to take some time" to adjust the UI benefit system "so that those (COVID-19 related) individuals don't get caught up" in the changes, Keith said.

'Half the equation'

Rep. Deb Butler, D-New Hanover, said "that while the bill is well-intentioned, it does feel like half of the equation."

Butler said that along with restarting the two requirements, legislators ought to make additional unemployment benefit changes that include adding additional benefit weeks.

A sliding scale for weekly unemployment benefits was put into place by the Republican super-majority in July 2013.

The scale goes from a maximum of 12 weeks to a maximum of 20 weeks, depending on the state unemployment rate as measured twice a year.

On Jan. 1, the sliding scale went from 12 to 16 weeks for new claimants. The 16-week period remains in effect through July 1, when a new measurement takes effect.

Butler said that with the state unemployment insurance trust fund being solvent since 2015, legislators' focus should be on providing adequate benefits for the unemployed.



”In North Carolina, we pay too little for too short of a duration for too few people,” Butler said. “That’s nothing to be proud of.”

Rep. John Szoka, R-Cumberland, responded by saying N.C. unemployment benefits are competitive with other states in the Southeast.

Butler said Louisiana and Mississippi should not be factored in to measuring the state’s UI competitiveness, but rather just N.C.’s neighboring states. (Winston Salem Journal, 2/26/21)

### **APR 2021 Fears Transparency Bill Too Broad**

Current North Carolina law skews too much toward the interests of public workers and too little toward the interests of the public.

A Republican-sponsored bill in the state Senate would change that.

The Government Transparency Act of 2021 would allow public access to the records of public employees who are disciplined, suspended, demoted or fired from their jobs. In the case of dismissal, the bill calls on department heads to say why.

The law would apply to all public employees, state, county and city, including teachers and law enforcement officers.

Sponsored by Sen. Joyce Krawiec of Forsyth County and two Republican colleagues, this legislation is both necessary and long overdue.

As it stands now, general information about promotions within government agencies - the date and general description - is freely available to the public. Likewise, general but non-specific information about dismissals can be obtained.

Not so regarding information about demotions, transfers and suspensions.

North Carolina is one of only 10 states that don’t allow access to disciplinary files, even in the event that an employee has been convicted of a crime - such as a teacher who is convicted of sexually abusing a student, or a police officer convicted of using excessive force. Even after dismissal for such crimes, such people could be hired in localities where no one has knowledge of their misdeeds because their records are considered classified.

And that has happened. A Henderson County teacher, convicted of abusing 17 students, was allowed to teach at six different schools before being caught. More recently an officer fired by the Greensboro Police Department for violation of the department’s use-of-force policy was hired by the Graham Police Department.

Other records might not be as dramatic; the information in personnel files may be more embarrassing rather than disqualifying.

But transparency should come with the territory.

Whatever the cause of a reprimand or dismissal, this bill would allow the public to know and, thus, hold government employees accountable for their actions - as well as to discourage those unwilling to be held to such account from applying for government positions to start with.

This knowledge would also reduce the possibility of problem employees being passed from one agency to agency.

In some cases, applicants may prefer for the specifics to be known rather than a terse and mysterious “fired for cause” notification.

Of course, news agencies would like access to personnel records. The News & Record joins several other newspapers in the state and the North Carolina Press Association in supporting the bill.

Right now, information about dismissals is often hidden behind vague statements about “privacy” and “policy.”

But it’s even more important for the public to have access to this information.

Some government agencies and officials may think that hiding such information is a good way to avoid the stain of scandal in their departments. They may want to limit access to such records out of a misguided sense of loyalty, or perhaps while thinking that complete transparency would discourage good candidates.

But shielding employment information creates suspicion and erodes public trust.

As with police body camera footage - which also is overly restricted from public view in North Carolina - access to employment records could, in some case, clear workers from claims of improprieties.

Not everyone is on board with the bill in its current form. Democratic Rep. Deb Butler says the bill is “extremely broad” and could have unintended consequences. Notes in personnel files are someone’s subjective opinion and may or may not be accurate, she told the Wilmington Star News.

Those objections are worthy of some discussion and may merit some changes to the bill.

But ultimately, this information belongs to the public and should be open to the public. This bill should pass. (Greensboro News and Record, 4/7/21)

### **APR 2021 Criticizes HB 228**

A House bill advanced Wednesday that would make more property owners exempt from some trespassing liabilities involving bodies of water.

House Bill 228, however, drew opposition from a House Judiciary 3 committee member, who cited concerns about removing liability from property owners who knew about trespassers and chose not to take preventive steps.

Meanwhile, House Bill 46, which would strengthen state Human Resource Whistleblower protections, was recommended out of the House Rules and Operations committee.

HB228 was filed by Rep. Lee Zachary, R-Yadkin. His district contains a portion of western Forsyth County.

The bill is titled “Attractive Nuisances,” as did Zachary’s House Bill 447 during the 2019 session. HB447 cleared the House by a 74-41 vote in May 2019, only to not be heard in a Senate committee.

The 2021 version has been sent to the Rules and Operations committee for consideration.

Property owners would be subject to liability for a death or injury involving a body of water only if they had enhanced the property, such as adding a sandy beach, a pier or other manmade element.

The bill defines a body of water as a “pool of water, pond, stream, creek, river, lake, reservoir ... having a primary use as a wildlife habitat, a wildlife conservation source, a wildlife water source, irrigation source or water place for livestock and farm animals.”

Zachary said HB228 has been tweaked “to apply now to farm ponds and wildlife type ponds that have not been made ‘attractive’ by improvements.”

The current law is focused foremost on children who trespass because they are attracted by something artificially created on the property, such as a man-made pond or lake.

The current law makes the property owner subject to liability if they knew children were likely to trespass; there was an “unreasonable risk” of injury or death; the child did not know they were at risk by trespassing; and the property owner “failed to exercise reasonable care to eliminate the danger or otherwise protect the injured child.”

”This bill just says that if you have a pond used for farm purposes or wildlife and you have made no improvements to attract trespassers, then you just aren’t liable for injury to trespassers,” Zachary said.

However, Rep. Deb Butler, D-New Hanover, said during the Judiciary 3 meeting that she believes HB228 “is a terrible policy move.”

”A watering hole is going to attract children, and in the summer months, you can’t watch children 24 hours a day. I don’t think that’s realistic.

”If a property owner has knowledge that children are swimming in their pond, the fact that he didn’t put a grain of sand out there, or a diving board, shouldn’t make any difference.

”If (there) is knowledge, they’ve got a duty, in my opinion, to abate that situation,” Butler said. “When children drown because of this, we’re going to be very sorely sad about it.”

Rep. Sarah Stevens, R-Surry, said the bill “is a clarification of something that is a natural condition that a child is coming to.”

”If the child is not smart enough to avoid the dangerous conditions, then the parent should be closer.”  
(Winston Salem Journal, 4/1/21)

### **APR 2021 Reaction to Chauvin Verdict**

N.C. State House Democratic Whip Deb Butler, who represents New Hanover County, posted “I can breathe” on Facebook following the verdict. (Star-News, 4/21/21)

### **MAY 2021 Criticizes Exempting Lawmakers from Concealed Gun Limits**

Elected politicians in North Carolina who hold concealed weapons permits — including General Assembly members — would be allowed to bring their guns into places that are currently prohibited, under legislation a House judiciary committee approved Monday.

Local prosecutors, judges and court workers already receive special exemptions to state rules that prohibit concealed permit holders from bringing guns to schools, parades and funerals; to any state and federal government buildings, or to any establishments where alcohol is served. Local sheriffs issue permits that last five years. Recipients have to receive special training.

If the measure becomes law, those officials already exempt would be joined by “any person who is an elected official or person appointed to fill an elective office” in North Carolina when “acting in the discharge of their official duties.

That includes all municipal, county and state elected officials, including the 10 members of the Council of State, which includes the governor and lieutenant governor. It would allow General Assembly members to lawfully carry their concealed handguns while conducting business inside the Legislative Building and the adjoining Legislative Office Building, which otherwise prohibit guns except for law enforcement.

But the bill would also apply to lawmakers back in their districts while they are conducting government business, such as holding meetings with constituents in an area that otherwise prohibits concealed weapons.

Three unidentified Council members and “many” House members requested the permit exemptions, according to the chief bill sponsor, Republican Rep. Keith Kidwell of Beaufort County. Kidwell said he’s received death threats in the past, and expects other colleagues have as well. Another co-sponsor, GOP Rep. Mike Clampitt of Swain County, said he wore a bulletproof vest on the campaign trail last fall.

”I would simply say that while I believe in a much kinder, gentler society, we don’t appear to be headed down that road right now,” said Rep. Dean Arp, a Union County Republican. “It’s simple common sense. And my question is, why in the world would you deny that (right) to someone who has a concealed carry permit and otherwise legally qualifies?”

Bill opponents focused on the portion of the measure that would allow for armed legislators in their offices, committee rooms and on the House and Senate chamber floors. The legislative complex has undergone significant security upgrades in the past three years, with the installation of metal detectors at the main entrances and ID badges for legislators, staff and news media.

”We just spent untold dollars protecting our means of ingress and egress. And we have a robust police force,” said Rep. Deb Butler, a New Hanover County Democrat. “I just think that this is just a terrible idea.” (AP, 5/10/21)

### **JUN 2021    Wants to Keep COVID Unemployment Benefits Going**

State House members agreed Thursday to help North Carolinians, who are heading back to work, with their child care costs.

The House voted to use \$250 million in American Rescue Plan Act money to subsidize child care for qualifying children.

”I can think of nothing that signals more the commitment of this House to ensuring that everyone who is able to work is able to do so — the child care is dealt with,” House Speaker Tim Moore said, before asking for a unanimous vote on the entirety of the bill that included the child care money.

But that didn’t happen.

The child care subsidies were in a larger bill introduced less than 24 hours earlier that would remove North Carolina from a federal program that pays \$300 per week to people who lost their jobs because of the COVID-19 pandemic.

House Democrats pushed back on the bill but didn’t have enough votes to stop it from moving forward. It will now go back to the Senate and, if approved there, will be sent to the governor.

”Right now we have a system in place that is essentially incentivizing not working,” Moore said. “That is not right. That is not good for people; that is not good for this state.”

The House Republicans have the support of U.S. Sens. Thom Tillis and Richard Burr who last week called on Gov. Roy Cooper to pull the state out of the federal program.

But Cooper said workers are facing high child care costs and low wages, and those out of work are dealing with some of the worst unemployment benefits in the country.

Bill put on fast track

Rep. Jason Saine, a Lumberton Republican, first introduced the bill Wednesday night in a finance committee meeting. The bill was fast-tracked, moving from committee to the floor in less than 24 hours.

Senate Bill 116 started out and was sent to the House as a bill to increase the number of people who could attend events at public and private schools during Cooper's emergency order that limited that number.

With that order now lifted, Senate Bill 116 became a moot point.

Until House Republicans got hold of it.

"The thing I have heard repeatedly, wherever I am, is businesses saying we can't find people to work," Moore said Thursday. "You can leave this building and drive within a quarter mile and you can find Help Wanted signs everywhere."

The bill now titled, "Putting North Carolina Back to Work" drew ire from House Democrats on Thursday. They worried about the economic impact to both businesses and the more than 240,000 unemployed residents in the state.

Rep. Brandon Loftin, a Mecklenburg Democrat, said North Carolina's unemployment rate has been on a steady decline, proving to him that people are going back to work and others are still looking for work.

"This is precisely the wrong time to cut this benefit," he said.

Minimum wage

Rep. Deb Butler, a Wilmington Democrat, also spoke against the bill.

She reminded her colleagues about constituents who were upset, frustrated and angry when they lost their jobs at the start of the pandemic and how hard lawmakers worked to pass legislation to help them.

She, and other Democrats said the House needs to talk about the state's minimum wage, a statement that repeatedly had Republicans calling on their colleagues to stick to the topic. (RNO, 6/3/21)

## **JUN 2021 Rips SB 116**

The Senate's version of return-to-work legislation, placed into House Bill 128, cleared the Senate by a 34-11 vote Tuesday.

The headline piece of HB128 is offering a \$1,500 bonus as an incentive to unemployed claimants going back to work.

The latest version makes the bonus available within 30 days of HB128 becoming law.

There's also a bonus of \$800 for unemployed claimants returning to work between 31 days and 60 days of HB128 becoming law.

HB128 requires House approval of the Senate changes, which could lead to the House and Senate to combine legislation from SB116 and HB128 into a compromise bill.

The state House approved Thursday a Republican-led effort that would compel North Carolina's withdraw from a federal extended unemployment-benefit program with a \$300 weekly payment.

Senate Bill 116 passed by a 71-36 vote.

The renamed "Putting North Carolina Back to Work Act" has been subjected to the gut-and-replace strategy by House sponsors.

The bill now returns to the Senate, where members can accept the changes or reject them, which likely would lead to a concurrence conference.

The latest version of the federal Pandemic Unemployment Compensation program provides a \$300 weekly benefit to eligible unemployed and furloughed North Carolinians. The program is scheduled to expire Sept. 6.

Rep. Jason Saine, R-Lincoln, added language to SB116 that would bar the N.C. Division of Employment Security from authorizing or administering the \$300 payments. The legislation would not go into effect until 30 days after it becomes law.

The perceived worker shortage "is probably one of the more critical issues that we are now dealing with," said House speaker Tim Moore, R-Cleveland, who took a rare speaking role on the House floor in support of SB116.

"This bill is the way to restore strength in our economy, and finally move forward, to put this pandemic in the rear-view mirror."

Democratic opponents of SB116 said that ending North Carolina's participation would cost the state about \$500 million in federal UI benefits.

People eligible to draw up to 16 weeks of regular state UI benefits are getting on average about \$235 a week along with the \$300 federal benefit.

For most claimants who have exhausted their regular state UI benefits, the federal benefit may be their only source of income.

"The bottom line is if we want to truly get our economy back on track and thriving again, we cannot continue punishing businesses in the name of helping individuals," Moore said. "We need a more holistic approach."

Democratic Gov. Roy Cooper has signaled he has no plans to end participation in the federal program.

The governor's office has said there are more than 245,000 North Carolinians listed as unemployed or furloughed.

Cooper spokesman Ford Porter said May 26 that "North Carolina has among the stingiest and shortest unemployment benefits in the country, and many families are dealing with issues, such as lack of affordable child care and finding jobs with livable wages."

Republican bill sponsors countered that NCWorks currently lists more than 200,000 job openings.

#### Democratic support

Pivotaly, SB116 received the support of seven Democrats, none from the Triad or Northwest North Carolina.

There also were five House Republicans with excused absences who did not vote.

Cooper can afford only two of those House Democrats sticking with the bill, given it takes 72 votes to override a veto.

Republican bill supporters cited there are 25 states - all with Republican governors - who have withdrawn their participation in an effort to encourage and/or push the unemployed back into the workforce.

On May 26, North Carolina's two GOP senators - Richard Burr and Thom Tillis - sent a joint statement to Cooper in which they said that "the employment shortage caused by exorbitant federal unemployment benefits is a real and serious threat to North Carolina's recovery."

On the other side of the political spectrum are Democratic legislators and liberal advocates who say the best potential solution to the perceived worker shortage is to raise the state's minimum wage from \$7.25 an hour to a living wage of between \$13 and \$15 an hour.

"A false narrative is being pushed that North Carolinians are lazy and don't want to work. That's simply not true," Sen. Wiley Nickel, D-Wake, said Tuesday.

Burr and Tillis say employers have offered higher wages without success. They also charge that even \$15 an hour wouldn't be enough to lure back unwilling workers.

#### Child care funding

Democratic supporters may have been persuaded by two sweeteners added to SB116.

The second was submitted during Thursday's debate by Moore.

Moore agreed to transfer \$250 million in federal American Rescue Plan Act child-care block grant funding to the N.C. Division of Child Development and Early Education "to be used for subsidized child care for eligible children."



Moore said the transfer is designed to address concerns that some individuals, in particular single parents, are not working because they can't afford child care on the minimum- to low-wage salaries offered by some retail, hospitality and restaurant employers.

"If someone needs child care, they can have it," Moore said.

"That appropriation eliminates the wait list entirely in one swoop," Moore said while waving his left hand in horizontal dismissal motion.

Moore said the inclusion of the child care support funding should have gained a unanimous show of support.

Some Democrats, however, chided Moore on the child-care sweetener, saying he is redirecting the federal child-care funds from other needs.

Other Democrats pointed out that every Republican member of the N.C. congressional delegation voted against the American Rescue Plan Act, but now state GOP legislators want to take credit for the funding.

"It's not clear that this addition will help surmount all objections to ending the extra federal unemployment benefits," said Mitch Kokai, senior policy analyst with Libertarian think tank John Locke Foundation.

"It does show that House leaders are willing to respond to concerns about their initial proposal."

#### Other sweeteners

Another potential sweetener to SB116 is legislation that would exclude unemployment compensation payments from state taxable income, similar to how the federal American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 excluded payments as federal taxable income.

Individuals who paid federal taxes on their federal unemployment benefits have or will receive a refund from the IRS.

SB116 would allow for an income exclusion of up to \$10,200 per person in unemployment compensation received during tax year 2020. The provision applies to those taxpayers whose federal adjusted gross income is less than \$150,000.

According to a legislative fiscal staff note, excluding those state taxes would cost about \$250 million to the state's General Fund.

DES estimates that 950,000 claimants received 1099-G's for tax year 2020 with an average benefit of \$9,600.

SB116 also would keep N.C. businesses that received a federal Payroll Protection Program loan from paying state income taxes on expenses funded from the loan if they also received an income exclusion.

That state income tax exclusion would reduce state tax revenue by about \$600 million.

Rep. Deb Butler, D-New Hanover, said the exclusion of the state income tax on expenses represented what she called a “double dipping” for employers while employees would get “no dip at all” from SB116.

”It’s patently unfair,” Butler said. (Winston-Salem Journal, 6/4/21)

### **OCT 2021 Condemning Lt. Governor Robinson**

“He is clearly a very ignorant and petty fellow,” said Rep. Deb Butler, a Wilmington Democrat and member of the LGBTQ community, “He is just a very small-minded, little man in a big, gruff body, which makes him a bully. And nobody likes a bully, particularly an ignorant one.” (RNO, 10/8/21)

### **DEC 2021 Praising Biden Infrastructure**

The North Carolina Democratic Party issued the following news on Dec. 7, 2021:

This morning, Wilmington Mayor Bill Saffo, Representative Deb Butler (HD-18), North Carolina Democratic Party (NCDP) Chair Bobbie Richardson, and Kemp Burdette from Cape Fear River Watch held a press conference to discuss the \$10 billion allocated nationwide in President Biden and Democrats’ Bipartisan Infrastructure Law to help clean up the dangerous Per- and Polyfluoroalkyl Substances (PFAS) toxins known as “forever chemicals.” President Biden and Democrats successfully passed legislation that would aid the 300,000 residents of Cape Fear communities who have been exposed for more than 40 years to PFAS-contaminated drinking water.

”The Bipartisan Infrastructure Law and money we are already seeing flowing to North Carolina is a testament to what can get done when Democrats and Republicans come together to put people first. We need more of that, not less. The field of U.S. Senate candidates have proven that if they had their way, North Carolina would not see a dime of this funding. These issues are simply too urgent to not act,” said NCDP Chair Bobbie Richardson

”The Bipartisan Infrastructure Law’s funding of \$10 billion in grants nationwide, which is the single largest investment in water that the federal government has ever made, to address emerging contaminants like PFAS through the State Revolving Funds and small and disadvantaged community programs is critically important for cities like Wilmington. While there’s more work to be done, this historic legislation is taking a significant step towards cleaning up our drinking water,” said Wilmington Mayor Bill Saffo.

”For me, The Bipartisan Infrastructure Bill perfectly illustrates the values of the Democratic Party. Here in North Carolina, as a member of the democratic minority, I have put forward legislation time and again seeking to assist in this clean-up, but the Republican leadership would not even allow my bills a hearing. Sadly, today’s political climate in Raleigh is as toxic as PFAS. Thankfully for us, the Biden

Administration and Congressional Democrats know something that many of their Republican counterparts do not, and that is we have been entrusted as stewards of our live-giving natural resources. Directing resources that will be spent for the people and their well-being, instead of shareholders profit and corporate bigwigs,” said Representative Deb Butler. (Press Release, 12/8/21)

## Part V Leg Alert

2017

### **FEB 2017 HB 54 (Protect the Hardworking Taxpayers Act) (Died)**

Sponsor: Julia C. Howard, Mitchell S. Setzer, Marvin W. Lucas, Linda P. Johnson, Susan C. Fisher, Michael H. Wray, Nelson Dollar, Pat B. Hurley, Pat McElraft, Justin P. Burr, Darren G. Jackson, Rosa U. Gill, John Faircloth, John A. Torbett, William Brawley, Jimmy Dixon, Ken Goodman, Kelly E. Hastings, Bert Jones, Jonathan C. Jordan, Rodney W. Moore, Phil Shepard, Jason Saine, Larry G. Pittman, Allen McNeill, Carla D. Cunningham, Carl Ford, Jon Hardister, Donny Lambeth, Chris Malone, Dana Bumgardner, John R. Bell, IV, Stephen M. Ross, Michele D. Presnell, George Graham, Edward Hanes, Jr., Duane Hall, Bobbie Richardson, Josh Dobson, Graig R. Meyer, Robert T. Reives, II, John A. Fraley, Sam Watford, Gale Adcock, John Ager, John R. Bradford, III, Cecil Brockman, Brian Turner, William O. Richardson, Kyle Hall, Scott Stone, Holly Grange, Beverly G. Boswell, Mike Clampitt, Andy Dulin, Destin Hall, Cody Henson, Linda Hunt Williams, Joe John, Brenden H. Jones, Larry C. Strickland, Donna McDowell White, Deb Butler

SUMMARY: AN ACT to remove the limitation on the income tax deduction for mortgage expense and property tax.

### **FEB 2017 HB 49 (GLOW Charter School in State Health Plan) (Died)**

Bill Id: 2017 NC H.B. 49 (NS)

Sponsor: Frank Iler, Holly Grange, Deb Butler

SUMMARY: AN ACT to authorize GIRLS LEADERSHIP ACADEMY OF WILMINGTON to elect to participate in the state health plan for teachers and state employees

### **FEB 2017 Adopt ERA (Died)**

Bill Id: 2017 NC H.B. 102 (NS)

Sponsor: John Faircloth,Bert Jones,Allen McNeill,Ted Davis, Jr.,Stephen M. Ross

Summary Line

02/16/2017 HOUSE PASSED 1ST READING

02/16/2017 HOUSE REFERRED TO COMMITTEE ON RULES, CALENDAR, AND OPERATIONS OF THE HOUSE

**FEB 2017 Increase Scope and Penalty of Hate Crimes (Died)**

Bill Id: 2017 NC H.B. 152 (NS)

Sponsor: Marvin W. Lucas,Jean Farmer-Butterfield,Susan C. Fisher,Pricey Harrison,Kelly M. Alexander, Jr.,Rosa U. Gill,Rodney W. Moore,Yvonne Lewis Holley,George Graham,Edward Hanes, Jr.,Evelyn Terry,Bobbie Richardson,Graig R. Meyer,Robert T. Reives, II,Cecil Brockman,William O. Richardson,John Autry,Philip A. Lehman,Deb Butler

SUMMARY: AN ACT to create the criminal offense of felonious assault as a hate crime, to expand the population protected by current misdemeanor hate crimes, and to amend the aggravating factor regarding hate crimes to include persons targeted due to gender, sexual orientation, gender identity, or disability.\

**FEB 2017 Prohibit Hunting From ROW in Buncombe County (Passed House; Died Senate)**

Bill Id: 2017 NC H.B. 218 (NS)

Sponsor: Verla Insko,Susan C. Fisher,Pricey Harrison,John Ager,Brian Turner,Deb Butler

SUMMARY: AN ACT TO PROHIBIT HUNTING FROM THE RIGHT-OF-WAYS OF PUBLIC ROADS IN Buncombe COUNTY.

**MAR 2017 Main Street Funding For Poorest Counties (Died)**

Bill Id: 2017 NC H.B. 232 (NS)

Sponsor: Marvin W. Lucas,Jean Farmer-Butterfield,Susan C. Fisher,Michael H. Wray,Garland E. Pierce,Pricey Harrison,Elmer Floyd,Charles Graham,George Graham,Edward Hanes, Jr.,Bobbie Richardson,Robert T. Reives, II,Cecil Brockman,Howard J. Hunter, III,Shelly Willingham,Deb Butler

SUMMARY: AN ACT to provide additional main street solutionS fund moneys for the most economically distressed counties in the State.

**MAR 2017 Attempted Robbery With Dangerous Weapon is Lesser Offense (Signed)**

Bill Id: 2017 NC H.B. 225 (NS)

Sponsor: Marvin W. Lucas,Pricey Harrison,Rosa U. Gill,John Faircloth,Yvonne Lewis Holley,Duane Hall,David Rogers,Destin Hall,Joe John,Deb Butler

SUMMARY: AN ACT to clarify that attempted robbery with a dangerous weapon is a lesser included offense of robbery with a dangerous weapon.

06/08/2017 HOUSE SIGNED BY GOVERNOR 6/8/2017

06/08/2017 HOUSE CHAPTERED SESSION LAW 2017-31

**MAR 2017 Enhanced Requirements Composting Facilities (Passed House/Died Senate)**

Bill Id: 2017 NC H.B. 244 (NS)

Sponsor: Verla Insko,Julia C. Howard,Mitchell S. Setzer,Jean Farmer-Butterfield,Susan C. Fisher,Pricey Harrison,Pat McElraft,Hugh Blackwell,Elmer Floyd,Chuck McGrady,Bob Steinburg,George Graham,Evelyn Terry,Bobbie Richardson,Shelly Willingham,Amos L. Quick, III,Deb Butler

SUMMARY: AN ACT to (1) require a five-hundred-foot buffer between solid waste management facilities and schools, athletic fields, and community facilities hosting outdoor activities; (2) require the adoption of rules to reduce odor emissions from composting facilities; and (3) provide for public notice of permits for such facilities.

**MAR 2017 "Living Wage By 2022" (Died)**

Bill Id: 2017 NC H.B. 289 (NS)

Sponsor: Verla Insko,Marvin W. Lucas,Larry M. Bell,Becky Carney,Jean Farmer-Butterfield,Susan C. Fisher,Pricey Harrison,Darren G. Jackson,Carla D. Cunningham,Yvonne Lewis Holley,George Graham,Edward Hanes, Jr.,Evelyn Terry,Bobbie Richardson,Graig R. Meyer,John Ager,Cecil Brockman,Howard J. Hunter, III,William O. Richardson,John Autry,Amos L. Quick, III,Philip A. Lehman,Deb Butler,MaryAnn Black

**MAR 2017 Brunswick County Meals Tax (Died)**

Bill Id: 2017 NC H.B. 398 (NS)

Sponsor: Frank Iler,Deb Butler

SUMMARY: AN ACT to authorize Brunswick County or THE municipalities located therein to levy a prepared food and beverages tax.

**MAR 2017 Clean Energy By 2050 (Died)**

Bill Id: 2017 NC H.R. 401 (NS)

Sponsor: Verla Insko, Jean Farmer-Butterfield, Susan C. Fisher, Garland E. Pierce, Pricey Harrison, Rosa U. Gill, Charles Graham, Evelyn Terry, Duane Hall, Bobbie Richardson, Cecil Brockman, Shelly Willingham, John Autry, Amos L. Quick, III, Philip A. Lehman, Deb Butler

SUMMARY: A HOUSE RESOLUTION Supporting A STATE GOAL OF ONE HUNDRED PERCENT CLEAN ENERGY BY 2050 AND THE CREATION OF GREEN JOBS.

**MAR 2017 Increase Minimum Wage (Died)**

Bill Id: 2017 NC H.B. 474 (NS)

Sponsor: Beverly M. Earle, Verla Insko, Marvin W. Lucas, Larry M. Bell, Becky Carney, Susan C. Fisher, Pricey Harrison, Rosa U. Gill, Carla D. Cunningham, Yvonne Lewis Holley, George Graham, Evelyn Terry, Bobbie Richardson, Graig R. Meyer, John Ager, Cecil Brockman, William O. Richardson, Mary Belk, Philip A. Lehman, Deb Butler

SUMMARY: AN ACT to increase the state minimum wage, to set wage rates based upon the size of the employer, and to provide for automatic adjustments to reflect increases in the cost of living.

**MAR 2017 Teachers and State Employee Pay Raise**

Bill Id: 2017 NC H.B. 540 (NS)

Sponsor: Mitchell S. Setzer, Marvin W. Lucas, Becky Carney, Jean Farmer-Butterfield, John Sauls, Susan C. Fisher, Michael H. Wray, Garland E. Pierce, Pricey Harrison, Pat B. Hurley, Pat McElraft, Darren G. Jackson, Rosa U. Gill, Jonathan C. Jordan, Phil Shepard, Carla D. Cunningham, Jon Hardister, Chris Malone, Yvonne Lewis Holley, Rena W. Turner, John R. Bell, IV, Bob Steinburg, George Graham, Bobbie Richardson, Robert T. Reives, II, John Ager, John R. Bradford, III, Cecil Brockman, Larry Yarborough, Lee Zachary, Brian Turner, Shelly Willingham, Holly Grange, Cynthia Ball, Mary Belk, Mike Clampitt, Kevin

Corbin,Andy Dulin,Cody Henson,Linda Hunt Williams,Brenden H. Jones,Amos L. Quick, III,Larry C. Strickland,Donna McDowell White,Deb Butler

SUMMARY: AN ACT awarding a two-thousand-four-hundred-dollar pay increase to teachers and to state employees earning less than one hundred thousand dollars AND APPROPRIATING FUNDS FOR THOSE PURPOSES.

**APR 2017 Medicaid Expansion (Died)**

Bill Id: 2017 NC H.B. 858 (NS)

Sponsor: Beverly M. Earle,Verla Insko,Marvin W. Lucas,Jean Farmer-Butterfield,Susan C. Fisher,Pricey Harrison,Elmer Floyd,Rosa U. Gill,Rodney W. Moore,Yvonne Lewis Holley,George Graham,Evelyn Terry,Bobbie Richardson,John Ager,Cecil Brockman,Howard J. Hunter, III,John Autry,Amos L. Quick, III,Deb Butler

**APR 2017 Automatic Voter Registration (Died)**

Bill Id: 2017 NC H.B. 881 (NS)

Sponsor: Verla Insko,Marvin W. Lucas,Jean Farmer-Butterfield,Susan C. Fisher,Pricey Harrison,Rosa U. Gill,Charles Graham,Rodney W. Moore,Yvonne Lewis Holley,George Graham,Evelyn Terry,Duane Hall,Bobbie Richardson,Graig R. Meyer,Robert T. Reives, II,Cecil Brockman,Howard J. Hunter, III,Chaz Beasley,Amos L. Quick, III,Deb Butler,Marcia Morey

SUMMARY: AN ACT to provide for automatic voter registration at drivers license offices and public agencies.

**APR 2017 Year Round School Pilot (Died)**

Bill Id: 2017 NC H.B. 874 (NS)

Sponsor: Marvin W. Lucas,Larry M. Bell,Jean Farmer-Butterfield,Sarah Stevens,Donny Lambeth,Edward Hanes, Jr.,Evelyn Terry,Bobbie Richardson,Robert T. Reives, II,Cecil Brockman,Larry Yarborough,Amos L. Quick, III,**Deb Butler**

SUMMARY: AN ACT to appropriate funds to establish an elementary year-round school pilot program.

**APR 2017 Free School Breakfast and Lunch (Died)**

Bill Id: 2017 NC H.B. 891 (NS)

Sponsor: Verla Insko, Larry M. Bell, Susan C. Fisher, Garland E. Pierce, Pricey Harrison, Rosa U. Gill, Charles Graham, Yvonne Lewis Holley, George Graham, Duane Hall, Bobbie Richardson, Robert T. Reives, II, Cecil Brockman, John Autry, Amos L. Quick, III, Deb Butler, Marcia Morey

SUMMARY: AN ACT TO APPROPRIATE FUNDS TO PROVIDE FREE BREAKFAST AND LUNCH TO STUDENTS attending k-12 public schools.

**2018****MAY 2018 “Extreme Risk Protection Order” (Died)**

Bill Id: 2017 NC H.B. 976 (NS)

Sponsor: Jean Farmer-Butterfield, Susan C. Fisher, Grier Martin, Pricey Harrison, Darren G. Jackson, Rodney W. Moore, Yvonne Lewis Holley, Evelyn Terry, Graig R. Meyer, Gale Adcock, Cecil Brockman, Shelly Willingham, William O. Richardson, John Autry, Mary Belk, Deb Butler, Marcia Morey

SUMMARY: AN ACT to authorize the issuance of an extreme risk protection order to restrict temporarily a person’s access to firearms if there is evidence that the person poses a danger of physical harm to self or others.

**MAY 2018 Restore Master’s Supplements For Teachers (Died)**

Bill Id: 2017 NC H.B. 1051 (NS)

Sponsor: Beverly M. Earle, Verla Insko, Marvin W. Lucas, Becky Carney, Jean Farmer-Butterfield, Susan C. Fisher, Grier Martin, Garland E. Pierce, Pricey Harrison, Kelly M. Alexander, Jr., Elmer Floyd, Rosa U. Gill, Charles Graham, Carla D. Cunningham, Yvonne Lewis Holley, George Graham, Edward Hanes, Jr., Bobbie Richardson, Graig R. Meyer, Gale Adcock, John Ager, Howard J. Hunter, III, Shelly Willingham, Cynthia Ball, Terry E. Garrison, Joe John, Amos L. Quick, III, Deb Butler, MaryAnn Black

SUMMARY: AN ACT to appropriate funds to reinstate education-based salary supplements for certain school employees.

**MAY 2018 Adopt ERA (Died)**

Bill Id: 2017 NC H.B. 1072 (NS)



Sponsor: Verla Insko, Jean Farmer-Butterfield, Susan C. Fisher, Grier Martin, Kelly M. Alexander, Jr., Elmer Floyd, Carla D. Cunningham, Yvonne Lewis Holley, Evelyn Terry, Bobbie Richardson, Shelly Willingham, John Autry, Joe John, Deb Butler, Marcia Morey

SUMMARY: AN ACT to RATIFY THE EQUAL RIGHTS AMENDMENT TO THE CONSTITUTION OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA RELATING TO EQUAL RIGHTS FOR MEN AND WOMEN and to appropriate funds to educate the public about the provisions of this act.

**MAY 2018 Polluter Pay Legislation (Died)**

Bill Id: 2017 NC H.B. 1067 (NS)

Sponsor: Verla Insko, Jean Farmer-Butterfield, Pricey Harrison, Bobbie Richardson, John Ager, Cecil Brockman, Shelly Willingham, Deb Butler, MaryAnn Black

SUMMARY: AN ACT to make persons causing or contributing to contamination responsible for costs of cleanup and provision of alternative water supplies to persons with water supplies affected by such contamination and to PROHIBIT AN ELECTRIC PUBLIC UTILITY FROM RECOVERING COSTS RELATED TO THE MANAGEMENT OF COAL COMBUSTION ASH AND UNLAWFUL DISCHARGES FROM COAL ASH PONDS.

**DEC 2018 "Let North Carolina Vote" (Died)**

Bill Id: 2017 NC H.B. 1115 (NS)

Sponsor: Verla Insko, Jean Farmer-Butterfield, Grier Martin, Garland E. Pierce, Bobbie Richardson, Graig R. Meyer, Robert T. Reives, II, Gale Adcock, Cecil Brockman, Brian Turner, Shelly Willingham, William O. Richardson, John Autry, Cynthia Ball, Joe John, Amos L. Quick, III, Deb Butler, Marcia Morey

SUMMARY: AN ACT providing for automatic voter registration at drivers license offices, public agencies, community colleges, and colleges and universities of the university of north carolina SYSTEM; requiring the bipartisan state board of elections and ethics enforcement to implement an outreach campaign informing citizens about automatic voter registration; allowing individuals who meet the criteria to register to vote or change voter registration online; reestablishing same day registration, including on election day; reestablishing the program to preregister 16 and 17 year olds; and implementing the constitutional requirement of photographic identification to vote in person.

**2019****JAN 2019 Repeal Law Protecting Confederate Monuments (Died)**

Bill Id: 2019 NC H.B. 10 (NS)

Sponsor: Verla Insko,Marvin W. Lucas,Susan C. Fisher,Grier Martin,Pricey Harrison,Kelly M. Alexander, Jr.,Evelyn Terry,Graig R. Meyer,Robert T. Reives, II,Cecil Brockman,John Autry,Chaz Beasley,Amos L. Quick, III,Deb Butler,Marcia Morey,Derwin L. Montgomery,Ashton Wheeler Clemmons,Allison A. Dahle,Nasif Majeed

SUMMARY: AN ACT to repeal the 2015 law relating to the protection of monuments and memorials.

**JAN 2019 “Close Medicaid Coverage Gap” (Died)**

Bill Id: 2019 NC H.B. 5 (NS)

Sponsor: Verla Insko,Marvin W. Lucas,Becky Carney,Jean Farmer-Butterfield,Susan C. Fisher,Michael H. Wray,Grier Martin,Garland E. Pierce,Pricey Harrison,Kelly M. Alexander, Jr.,Elmer Floyd,Darren G. Jackson,Rosa U. Gill,Ken Goodman,Charles Graham,Carla D. Cunningham,Yvonne Lewis Holley,Joe Sam Queen,Evelyn Terry,Graig R. Meyer,Robert T. Reives, II,Gale Adcock,John Ager,Cecil Brockman,Howard J. Hunter, III,Brian Turner,Shelly Willingham,William O. Richardson,John Autry,Cynthia Ball,Chaz Beasley,Mary Belk,Terry E. Garrison,Joe John,Amos L. Quick, III,Deb Butler,MaryAnn Black,Marcia Morey,Derwin L. Montgomery,Sydney Batch,Christy Clark,Ashton Wheeler Clemmons,Allison A. Dahle,Terence Everitt,Zack Hawkins,James D. Gailliard,Wesley Harris, PhD,Carolyn G. Logan,Brandon Lofton,Nasif Majeed,C. Ray Russell,Kandie D. Smith,Raymond E. Smith, Jr.,Julie von Haefen,Rachel Hunt

SUMMARY: AN ACT to close the medicaid coverage gap for families and individuals in north carolina.

**JAN 2019 Brunswick County Meals Tax (Died)**

Bill Id: 2019 NC H.B. 17 (NS)

Sponsor: Frank Iler, Deb Butler

SUMMARY: AN ACT to authorize THE municipalities located in brunswick county to levy by referendum a prepared food and beverages tax.

**FEB 2019 NC Folk Festival Funds (Died)**

Bill Id: 2019 NC H.B. 40 (NS)

Sponsor: Pricey Harrison, John Faircloth, Jon Hardister, Joe Sam Queen, Graig R. Meyer, Cecil Brockman, Howard J. Hunter, III, David Rogers, Kevin Corbin, Amos L. Quick, III, Deb Butler, Ashton Wheeler Clemmons

SUMMARY: AN ACT to appropriate funds for the north carolina folk festival.

**FEB 2019 Fort Fisher Funds (Died)**

Sponsor: Ted Davis, Jr., Donny Lambeth, Deb Butler

SUMMARY: AN ACT to appropriate funds to the department of natural and cultural resources for projects at the fort fisher state historic site.

**FEB 2019 "Gun Violence Prevention Act" (Died)**

Bill Id: 2019 NC H.B. 86 (NS)

Sponsor: Verla Insko, Susan C. Fisher, Grier Martin, Pricey Harrison, Rosa U. Gill, Carla D. Cunningham, Evelyn Terry, Cecil Brockman, Shelly Willingham, John Autry, Amos L. Quick, III, Deb Butler, Marcia Morey, Christy Clark, Allison A. Dahle, Zack Hawkins, Nasif Majeed, Kandie D. Smith

SUMMARY: AN ACT to require a permit for the purchase of an assault weapon or long gun; to require a 72-hour waiting period before a purchased firearm may be delivered or otherwise possessed; to prohibit the sale of an assault weapon or long gun to persons under a certain age; to prohibit the sale or possession of a bump stock or trigger crank; to require the safe storage of a firearm; to REVISE RECIPROCITY LAW FOR a CONCEALED HANDGUN PERMIT; to REQUIRE THE REPORTING OF a LOST or STOLEN FIREARM; to REQUIRE ANY PERSON WHO OWNS A FIREARM TO CARRY FIREARM LIABILITY INSURANCE; to LIMIT THE SIZE OF AMMUNITION MAGAZINES; to repeal the preemption of local regulation of firearms; and to allow the destruction of a seized firearm.

**FEB 2019 Pay Increases State Highway Patrol (Signed)**

Bill Id: 2019 NC H.B. 126 (NS)

Sponsor: Verla Insko,Julia C. Howard,Becky Carney,Michael H. Wray,Pricey Harrison,William D. Brisson,Pat B. Hurley,Pat McElraft,James L. Boles, Jr.,John Faircloth,D. Craig Horn,Jimmy Dixon,Jon Hardister,Yvonne Lewis Holley,Stephen M. Ross,Joe Sam Queen,Evelyn Terry,Josh Dobson,Robert T. Reives, II,Gale Adcock,Cecil Brockman,Gregory F. Murphy, MD,Holly Grange,Joe John,Larry W. Potts,Donna McDowell White,Deb Butler,MaryAnn Black,Lisa Stone Barnes,Ashton Wheeler Clemmons,Allison A. Dahle,Edward C. Goodwin,Keith Kidwell,Wayne Sasser,Julie von Haefen

SUMMARY: AN ACT awarding legislatively mandated salary increases and special annual leave to the law enforcement officers of the state highway patrol.

08/30/2019 HOUSE SIGNED BY GOVERNOR 8/30/2019

08/30/2019 HOUSE CHAPTERED SESSION LAW 2019-210

**FEB 2019 Youth Gun Violence Commission (Died)**

Bill Id: 2019 NC H.B. 139 (NS)

Sponsor: Verla Insko,Marvin W. Lucas,Garland E. Pierce,Pricey Harrison,Kelly M. Alexander, Jr.,Charles Graham,Yvonne Lewis Holley,Evelyn Terry,Robert T. Reives, II,Cynthia Ball,Joe John,Amos L. Quick, III,Deb Butler,MaryAnn Black,Christy Clark,Ashton Wheeler Clemmons,Allison A. Dahle,Nasif Majeed

SUMMARY: AN ACT to ESTABLISH the joint legislative study Commission on youth gun violence.

**FEB 2019 Extend Deadline For Voter ID Approval (Died)**

Bill Id: 2019 NC H.B. 167 (NS)

Sponsor: Jean Farmer-Butterfield,Susan C. Fisher,Pricey Harrison,Graig R. Meyer,Robert T. Reives, II,John Ager,John Autry,Deb Butler,MaryAnn Black,Marcia Morey,Derwin L. Montgomery,Ashton Wheeler Clemmons,Allison A. Dahle,Zack Hawkins,Carolyn G. Logan,Nasif Majeed,C. Ray Russell

SUMMARY: AN ACT to extend the deadline by which the state board of elections is required to approve the use of certain forms of identification for voting.

**MAR 2019 “In State Tuition Equity”**

Bill Id: 2019 NC H.B. 319 (NS)

Sponsor: Verla Insko,Marvin W. Lucas,Jean Farmer-Butterfield,Susan C. Fisher,Pricey Harrison,Elmer Floyd,Rosa U. Gill,Yvonne Lewis Holley,Graig R. Meyer,Robert T. Reives, II,Cecil Brockman,John Autry,Chaz Beasley,Mary Belk,Amos L. Quick, III,Deb Butler,MaryAnn Black,Marcia Morey,Christy Clark,Ashton Wheeler Clemmons,Allison A. Dahle,Zack Hawkins,Nasif Majeed

SUMMARY: AN ACT to authorize certain immigrant youth to receive in-state tuition at the UNIVERSITY of north carolina and community colleges in this state.

**MAR 2019 “Hate Crimes Prevention Act” (Died)**

Bill Id: 2019 NC H.B. 312 (NS)

Sponsor: Marvin W. Lucas,Jean Farmer-Butterfield,Susan C. Fisher,Grier Martin,Pricey Harrison,Rosa U. Gill,Evelyn Terry,Graig R. Meyer,John Ager,Brian Turner,John Autry,Mary Belk,Amos L. Quick, III,Deb Butler,MaryAnn Black,Derwin L. Montgomery,Christy Clark,Ashton Wheeler Clemmons,Allison A. Dahle,Zack Hawkins,Nasif Majeed,Kandie D. Smith

SUMMARY: AN ACT to increase the scope and punishment of hate crimes; to require the state bureau of investigation to create and maintain a hate crimes statistics database; to require the north carolina justice academy to develop and provide law enforcement officers with training on identifying, responding to, and reporting hate crimes; and to require the conference of district attorneys of north carolina to develop and provide training to prosecutors on how to prosecute hate crimes.

**MAR 2019 Increase Jury Duty Pay (Died)**

Bill Id: 2019 NC H.B. 332 (NS)

Sponsor: Marvin W. Lucas,Becky Carney,Susan C. Fisher,Michael H. Wray,Pricey Harrison,Kelly M. Alexander, Jr.,Elmer Floyd,Charles Graham,Yvonne Lewis Holley,Cecil Brockman,Terry E. Garrison,Amos L. Quick, III,Deb Butler,Marcia Morey,Allison A. Dahle,Carolyn G. Logan,Nasif Majeed,Raymond E. Smith, Jr.

SUMMARY: AN ACT to increase the rate of pay for north carolina jurors.

**MAR 2019 15 Point Scale For School Performance Grades (Signed)**

Bill Id: 2019 NC H.B. 362 (NS)

Sponsor: Verla Insko,Marvin W. Lucas,Jean Farmer-Butterfield,Susan C. Fisher,Michael H. Wray,Pricey Harrison,Pat B. Hurley,Elmer Floyd,Rosa U. Gill,D. Craig Horn,Jeffrey Elmore,Yvonne Lewis Holley,Dennis Riddell,Graig R. Meyer,John Ager,John Autry,Deb Butler,Ashton Wheeler Clemmons,Wesley Harris, PhD,Julie von Haefen

SUMMARY: AN ACT to adopt a fifteen-point scale in the determination of school performance grades, TO REQUIRE THE STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION TO ADOPT EMERGENCY RULES IN PREPARATION FOR PERMANENT RULE MAKING, AND TO DIRECT THE STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION TO STUDY THE REPORTING METHODS USED FOR SCHOOL ACCOUNTABILITY PURPOSES ON THE NORTH CAROLINA ANNUAL SCHOOL REPORT CARDS.

07/22/2019 HOUSE SIGNED BY GOVERNOR 7/22/2019  
07/22/2019 HOUSE CHAPTERED SESSION LAW 2019-154

**MAR 2019 \$15 Minimum Wage For Non-Certified School Employees (Died)**

Bill Id: 2019 NC H.B. 359 (NS)

Sponsor: Verla Insko,Marvin W. Lucas,Jean Farmer-Butterfield,Susan C. Fisher,Garland E. Pierce,Pricey Harrison,William D. Brisson,Elmer Floyd,Darren G. Jackson,Rosa U. Gill,Charles Graham,Phil Shepard,Carla D. Cunningham,Jon Hardister,Yvonne Lewis Holley,Rena W. Turner,Evelyn Terry,Graig R. Meyer,Cecil Brockman,William O. Richardson,John Autry,Cynthia Ball,Mary Belk,Kevin Corbin,Joe John,Amos L. Quick, III,Larry C. Strickland,Donna McDowell White,Deb Butler,Marcia Morey,Christy Clark,Ashton Wheeler Clemmons,Allison A. Dahle,Terence Everitt,Zack Hawkins,Nasif Majeed,C. Ray Russell,Raymond E. Smith, Jr.,Julie von Haefen

SUMMARY: AN ACT TO require the hourly rate of the minimum salary for NONCERTIFIED PUBLIC SCHOOL EMPLOYEES to be at least FIFTEEN DOLLARS per hour.

**MAR 2019 \$15 Minimum Wage (Died)**

Bill Id: 2019 NC H.B. 366 (NS)

Sponsor: Jean Farmer-Butterfield,Susan C. Fisher,Pricey Harrison,Rosa U. Gill,Carla D. Cunningham,Evelyn Terry,William O. Richardson,Mary Belk,Deb Butler,MaryAnn Black,Marcia Morey,Allison A. Dahle,Zack Hawkins

SUMMARY: AN ACT increasing the minimum wage to fifteen dollars per hour over five years and then adjusting the minimum wage automatically each year by increases in the cost of living; ending the subminimum wage for persons with disabilities; phasing out the subminimum wage for tipped employees over eight years; ending the exemption for agricultural and domestic workers.

**MAR 2019 Assault Weapon Permit (Died)**

Bill Id: 2019 NC H.B. 456 (NS)

Sponsor: Susan C. Fisher,Pricey Harrison,Kelly M. Alexander, Jr.,Rosa U. Gill,John Ager,Cecil Brockman,William O. Richardson,Mary Belk,Deb Butler,Marcia Morey,Christy Clark,Nasif Majeed

SUMMARY: AN ACT TO REQUIRE A PERMIT FOR THE PURCHASE OF AN ASSAULT WEAPON OR LONG GUN.

**MAR 2019 Firearm Safe Storage (Died)**

Bill Id: 2019 NC H.B. 508 (NS)

Sponsor: Verla Insko,Marvin W. Lucas,John Sauls,Susan C. Fisher,Garland E. Pierce,Pricey Harrison,Allen McNeill,Carla D. Cunningham,Robert T. Reives, II,Cecil Brockman,Howard J. Hunter, III,Mary Belk,Joe John,Donna McDowell White,Deb Butler,MaryAnn Black,Christy Clark,Ashton Wheeler Clemmons,Allison A. Dahle,Zack Hawkins,Carolyn G. Logan,Nasif Majeed,Wayne Sasser,Carson Smith

SUMMARY: AN ACT to launch a statewide firearm safe storage awareness initiative to educate the public about the importance of the safe storage of firearms and to facilitate the distribution of gun locks.

**MAR 2019 Nonpartisan Judicial Elections (Died)**

Bill Id: 2019 NC H.B. 510 (NS)

Sponsor: Verla Insko,Marvin W. Lucas,Susan C. Fisher,Garland E. Pierce,Pricey Harrison,Yvonne Lewis Holley,Robert T. Reives, II,Gale Adcock,John Ager,John Autry,Cynthia Ball,Chaz Beasley,Mary Belk,Joe John,Amos L. Quick, III,Deb Butler,MaryAnn Black,Marcia Morey,Ashton Wheeler Clemmons,Allison A. Dahle,Terence Everitt,Zack Hawkins,Wesley Harris, PhD,Brandon Lofton,Nasif Majeed

SUMMARY: AN ACT to reenact nonpartisan judicial elections, make conforming statutory changes relating to reenactment of nonpartisan judicial elections, and reestablish public financing for judicial campaigns.

**MAR 2019 “Full” Repeal of HB 2 (Died)**

Bill Id: 2019 NC H.B. 515 (NS)

Sponsor: Verla Insko,Becky Carney,Susan C. Fisher,Grier Martin,Pricey Harrison,Rosa U. Gill,Yvonne Lewis Holley,Graig R. Meyer,Robert T. Reives, II,John Autry,Cynthia Ball,Chaz Beasley,Mary Belk,Joe John,Deb Butler,Marcia Morey,Ashton Wheeler Clemmons,Allison A. Dahle,Zack Hawkins

SUMMARY: AN ACT amending S.L. 2017-4 to REPEAL HOUSE BILL 2 in its entirety.

**APR 2019 Paid Work Breaks**

Bill Id: 2019 NC H.B. 551 (NS)

Sponsor: Verla Insko,Becky Carney,Susan C. Fisher,Pricey Harrison,Kelly M. Alexander, Jr.,Rosa U. Gill,Yvonne Lewis Holley,Cecil Brockman,Chaz Beasley,Mary Belk,Terry E. Garrison,Deb Butler,MaryAnn Black,Marcia Morey,Allison A. Dahle,Zack Hawkins,Carolyn G. Logan,Nasif Majeed

SUMMARY: AN ACT amending the wage and hour act to require employers to provide a twenty-minute paid break to any employee working a shift of six hours or more.

**APR 2019 "Let NC Vote" Act (Died)**

Bill Id: 2019 NC H.B. 563 (NS)

Sponsor: Jean Farmer-Butterfield,Susan C. Fisher,Michael H. Wray,Pricey Harrison,Elmer Floyd,Rosa U. Gill,John A. Torbett,Charles Graham,Cecil Brockman,Howard J. Hunter, III,Shelly Willingham,John Autry,Cynthia Ball,Mary Belk,Joe John,Amos L. Quick, III,Deb Butler,Zack Hawkins,Carolyn G. Logan,Nasif Majeed,C. Ray Russell,Raymond E. Smith, Jr.

SUMMARY: AN ACT TO PROVIDE A MINIMUM OF THIRTY MINUTES of duty-free lunch time FOR TEACHERS to the extent possible.

**APR 2019 Paid Parental Leave (Die)**

Bill Id: 2019 NC H.B. 669 (NS)

Sponsor: Verla Insko,Susan C. Fisher,Pricey Harrison,Cynthia Ball,Deb Butler,Derwin L. Montgomery,Allison A. Dahle,Zack Hawkins

SUMMARY: AN ACT enacting the state employees' paid parental leave act.

**APR 2019 Disposition of Seized Firearms**

Bill Id: 2019 NC H.B. 712 (NS)

Sponsor: Verla Insko,Susan C. Fisher,Pricey Harrison,John Faircloth,Charles Graham,Allen McNeill,Carla D. Cunningham,Yvonne Lewis Holley,Rena W. Turner,John Szoka,Stephen M. Ross,Evelyn Terry,Cecil Brockman,Shelly Willingham,John Autry,Mary Belk,Joe John,Amos L. Quick, III,Deb Butler,Marcia Morey,Allison A. Dahle,Terence Everitt



SUMMARY: AN ACT to authorize the court to order the destruction of a firearm if the court determines it is in the best interest of public safety and to authorize a law enforcement agency to consign a seized or unclaimed firearm to a federally licensed firearm dealer for sale or to allow destruction of the firearm if it is unable to be sold.

**APR 2019 Reenact Film Credit**

Bill Id: 2019 NC H.B. 751 (NS)

Sponsor: Verla Insko,Marvin W. Lucas,Becky Carney,Susan C. Fisher,Kelly M. Alexander, Jr.,Elmer Floyd,Jason Saine,Yvonne Lewis Holley,Graig R. Meyer,Robert T. Reives, II,Gale Adcock,Howard J. Hunter, III,Brian Turner,John Autry,Chaz Beasley,Mary Belk,Joe John,Amos L. Quick, III,Donna McDowell White,Deb Butler,Marcia Morey,Christy Clark,Allison A. Dahle,Zack Hawkins,Wesley Harris, PhD,Chris Humphrey,Brandon Lofton,Nasif Majeed,Rachel Hunt

SUMMARY: AN ACT to reenact the credit for qualifying expenses of a production company.