

From Sen. Gene McLaurin: The NC General Assembly reconvened Wednesday, May 14 for the Short Session. Senator Valerie Foushee from Chatham County (Kinnard seat), Senator Joyce Krawiec from Forsyth County (Brunstetter seat), Senator Terry Van Duyn (Nesbitt seat) from Buncombe County, and Senator Jeff Jackson (Clodfelter seat) of Mecklenburg County were introduced since all had been appointed since our 2013 adjournment. As our first order of business, the Senate and House honored NASCAR for the contribution that stock car racing has made to our state, and honored two of the new inductees into the NASCAR Hall of Fame: Dale Jarrett and Jack Ingram. Accompanying the new inductees were current Hall of Fame members- Junior Johnson, Rusty Wallace, Bobby Allison, and Ned Jarrett. I sincerely hope next year's class of inductees will include the late Benny Parsons, who won the 1973 Winston Cup championship and for many years lived in our district. Recently, I had the privilege of playing in a benefit golf tournament with Benny's 2 sons, Keith and Kevin Parsons. The tournament, which Benny played in until his untimely death in 2007, was held at Piney Point Golf Club in Stanly County and is organized each year by one of Benny's closest friends, Randall Epps. This wonderful event raises funds for various charities.

I attended the first Appropriations Committee meeting of the session to hear Art Pope, Budget Director for Governor McCrory, who presented an overview of the Governor's proposed budget. As we are faced with a \$445 million shortfall due to last year's tax plan, we must find a way to balance our state budget – first and foremost. We must find ways to operate state government more efficiently in order to reward teachers and state employees for their hard work and commitment.

There was early controversy regarding a committee formed suddenly and without notice to update legislative building rules this past week-rovers specifically dealing with how to treat protesters and members of the public. Many are concerned that the newly adopted building rules may not reflect that this is a public building, paid for and owned by you. The Legislative Building has always been a place of learning and gathering – not only for lawmakers, but also for our students, teachers, constituents, advocates, lobbyists, state employees, and even protesters, who are simply exercising their constitutional right to assemble in the people's house. The people elected us to represent them and we need to have an open environment, certainly where safety is observed but also where citizens can gather and express their views.

I had the great pleasure of attending the following recent meetings with citizens in our district:
 1) Stanly County Chamber of Commerce Legislative Breakfast – I participated in a legislative delegation panel discussion where we had a healthy discussion about a variety of issues facing our state and nation.
 2) Scotland County Chamber of Commerce Government Affairs Visit – A delegation from Scotland County traveled to Raleigh to meet with Rep. Ken Goodman, Rep. Garland Pierce, and myself to gain some perspective on the upcoming legislative session. We arranged for them to also meet with Rachel Beaulieu- Department of Public Instruction, Chuck Dumas-Department of Transportation, and Richard Lindemuth of the newly created NC Economic Development Partnership.
 3) Hitchcock Creek Canoe Trail and Greenway – The city of Rockingham and American Rivers representatives joined other local and state officials to dedicate this wonderful resource our community now has to bring in visitors and offer recreational opportunities. I was pleased to have worked with many community partners on this successful project in Richmont County.
 4) GHA Autism Visit – I was pleased to join Allen, Executive Director of GHA Autism Support, Janet Breeding, GHA Chief of Quality Management, DHHS Assistant Secretary Dave Richard, and others in Raleigh to discuss the Medicaid budget and various policy proposals that could affect the lives of those living in group homes across our state. On a recent visit to Stanly County, I toured Carolina Farms, an innovative program that enables individuals with Autism an opportunity to live and work in a farming environment. It's an amazing program.
 5) Monarch – Another outstanding organization based in Stanly County is Monarch, a successful organization that provides services and support for individuals living with intellectual and developmental disabilities, mental health challenges, and substance abuse. I met with Dr. Peggy Terhune, CEO of Monarch and Blake Martin, Development Director to learn how I can better advocate for them and how we can enhance and improve services, put patients first, and secure budget predictability as we reform Medicaid.
 6) If you haven't heard about the Anson High School Parent University, then you're missing out. I was the keynote speaker at graduation for Anson's Parent University, which is an innovative program tasked with helping parents communicate with their children and grandchildren about the importance of getting a good education. Mrs. Dannie Montgomery is the coordinator of the program. There were 13 graduates who were joined by family and friends to honor their accomplishment.
 7) Finally, Donna and I attended the South Rowan High School FFA Banquet in Rowan County. These students have made great strides in their community by growing and harvesting almost 4,000 pounds of produce this past year. Mrs. Laura Allen's students then donated this food to several organizations in the community to feed the hungry and those in need. It was great to be with these young people who have a desire to help others and learn about the importance of agriculture in our state. I serve on the Senate Agriculture Committee and was honored to hear about their work and join them for their end of year banquet.

In a few days we will celebrate Memorial Day. Please take the time to reflect on those who have sacrificed their lives in the line of duty to provide freedom for our country and for all of us. I am still thinking about my friend, Command Sgt Major Ed O'Neal, who passed away on May 6. Ed served 4 tours in Vietnam and was awarded 3 Purple Hearts during his military career. A former commander of NC VFW, he was a champion for veterans and led the effort to help establish an outpatient clinic in Hamlet. Ed was an advisor to me on veterans' issues. His wife, Mary O'Neal is the current President of the NC AMVETS Auxiliary Department and is continuing his legacy. I am truly grateful for Ed and Mary and the many others who are serving our veteran communities. (919) 733-5953, Gene.Mclaurin@ncleg.net

Original Play Trapped in a Slave's House at the Ansonia

Shanton Smith has written an original play entitled *Trapped in a Slave's House* that she will present on Saturday, June 14 at the Ansonia Theatre. The play is directed by Smith and April Ratliff, and the Overseer is Pastor T. J. Horne. Smith said in this play, "This story is to remind us that you put in our minds will come out of our mouths and manifest itself in our lives. We are limited by our own mindsets."

Doors open at 7 p.m., the play begins at 7:30. Advance tickets are \$15. For more information contact Smith at 704-294-6719.

Chamber of Commerce Anson County Maps are Available

The Anson County Chamber of Commerce invites everyone to stop by and pick up their new maps of Anson County. The maps are free, and they feature very valuable information.

The Chamber is located in uptown Wadesboro in the Scarborough Building at the corner of Greene and Wade Streets.

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