

Legislative Update

With the end of August approaching comes the exciting time of "Back to School!" As schools in both Anson and Union Counties begin their school year, I extend my best wishes to those of you who have children returning to school or college now. This year will be a lean one with the harsh cuts to education put in place by this year's budget. I was not in favor of these drastic cuts and will continue to stand up in Raleigh for our children and our educators in the hopes that a better solution can be found to our budget woes in the coming years.

The General Assembly made a number of policy and budget decisions this past session that relate to our health and the health of our loved ones. Some of these I agree with, while I oppose others. This week I wanted to concentrate on some of these changes that may be of the most interest to you.

North Carolina has established a voluntary statewide health information exchange network. The exchange will allow health care providers, health plans, health care clearinghouses to share information among themselves and result in better, more consistent care for patients. Patients have the right to opt out of the exchange, so no information will be available without your permission. (S375)

A new law will require adult care homes to develop guidelines for reporting outbreaks of communicable diseases to local health departments, and requires that the Division of Health Services Regulation review an adult care home's compliance with infection prevention requirements as part of the home's annual inspection. The law (H474) also toughens the requirements for adult care home medication aides and supervisors.

The budget eliminates the state's Health and Wellness Trust Fund. Millions of dollars in grants made through the trust fund have been widely credited for helping reduce smoking rates and encourage healthy lifestyles in the state. This money has been transferred to our general fund and only a portion of it now will be spent on wellness programs.

The proposed budget removes \$2 billion from the state's Medicaid program over the next two years. These cuts will result in the reduction and elimination of Medicaid services, as well as access to providers. There will be major reductions in critical Mental Health, Substance Abuse and Developmental Disabilities programs and services. Cuts of this magnitude in some programs may not be achievable in such a short time. The result may be deeper cuts in other program areas. Many service providers expect widespread job losses among their

ranks as services and programs are diminished.

The General Assembly strengthened Medicaid's policy of emphasizing the prescribing of generic drugs by establishing a new dispensing formula that rewards pharmacists for doing so. This action is expected to save \$15 million.

One of my primary concerns is with the mentally ill and their families. They have long been underfunded and all but ignored by our society. The majority voted on a plan to further reduce funding to local agencies that provide mental health services by nearly \$60 million over the next two years while also ordering the agencies not to reduce their levels of service. They told them to take the money out of their fund balances. This damages their long-term financial health and their abilities to plan for the future. Gov. Perdue had recommended a \$75 million increase in mental health funding with cuts in other areas to offset the increased spending. The state now finds its practices under review by the federal government, a situation that could have been avoided if the governor's recommendation had been accepted.

The courts have already stepped in twice to block health-related decisions made by the majority in their budget. In one case, a state judge has ordered North Carolina to open its preschool program for at-risk children to all eligible children. The budget cut 6,400 children out of the program and attempted to charge a fee to the parents of those who remained. Preschool is a proven strategy to help make sure children get to school healthy and ready to learn and saves the state money over the student's lifetime. The majority is now actively fighting against allowing these children to attend preschool by filing an appeal in the case.

In an unrelated case, a federal judge has issued a temporary injunction that allows Planned Parenthood to continue receiving state and federal grants for its preventative health care services. The budget barred Planned Parenthood specifically from receiving any government money, even federal money that passed through state accounts. The organization has become a target because it also offers abortion services. The organization is barred, however, from using any government money to pay for or subsidize abortions. The organization uses grant money to help pay for health care screenings, contraceptives and teen pregnancy programs. The injunction is expected to stay in place until Planned Parenthood's lawsuit against the state is resolved.

As always, if I can be of help to you, please feel free to contact me or my office at 919-715-3007. I am here to serve you and will do so in any way that I can. Frank.McGuirt@ncleg.net

4-H'er Rasheed Leak Attends NCACC Youth Summit

A 4-H'er from Anson County, Rasheed Leak, attended the second annual North Carolina Association of County Commissioners (NCACC) Youth Summit, which was held in Concord, North Carolina on August 19 and 20. North Carolina 4-H and the North Carolina Cooperative Extension Service partnered for the second year with the NCACC on a multi-year initiative to increase youth involvement in county government. This initiative aims to overcome the mindset that many youth are disengaged and lack trust in government. This initiative also aims to identify issues and solutions that are facing youth in North Carolina.

Over 85 youth and adults from over 70 counties in North Carolina attended this event. The event is sponsored and supported by the North Carolina Association of County Commissioners.

For more information on the 4-H program in Anson County, please contact Roshunda Blount, 4-H Agent at 704-694-2915.

The 4-H program is the youth education program of North Carolina Cooperative Extension, based at North Carolina State and North Carolina A&T State universities. More than 218,000 young people between the ages of 5 and 19 participate in North Carolina 4-H activities each year with the help of 21,400 adult and youth volunteers.

Small Business Center to Offer Entrepreneur Classes

In a release from South Piedmont Community College: The Entrepreneurship Class is 36 hours long. It is a six week class meeting on Tuesday and Thursday evenings. The focus is developing a business plan including an executive summary.

If the student feels more time is required, we can offer one on one counseling. There will be more in-depth seminars on specific subjects focusing on the Small Business Owner throughout the school year.

Cost for the 36 hour class is \$120 plus \$20 for materials. Tuition will be waived for displaced workers.

More information from Daniel C. Merle, 704-290-5219 or dmerle@spcc.edu.

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MORVEN'S 7TH ANNUAL FREE OUTDOOR OCTOBER FESTIVAL

Come one, come all and don't miss this exciting and thrilling event on Saturday, October 1st from 10 am to 7 pm on downtown Main Street in Morven. There will be BBQ (pork or beef) and chicken from the Morven Volunteer Fire Department, fried chicken, fried fish, Italian Sausage, hamburgers, hot dogs, homemade ice-cream, cakes, pies, collard green cornbread, fat back sandwiches, and shaved ice. "Mmm Good!"

Vendors will have jewelry, homemade crafts, toys, face painting, and a large moon bounce!

Free helpful information from Anson County Educational, Medical, and Community Assistance Programs. Motorcycle shows, karate demonstrations, as well as beautiful horses dancing in the street. Take part in the raffle and great prize giveaways donated by Anson County's finest! The fantastic Gospel Explosion will entertain you with great music from church choirs, praise and mime dancers, step and drill teams, and other talents. The grand finale is Morven's Spectacular Parade in which you can take part in. It's the best parade ever!

For more details call (704) 851-9321 or pick up an application and get information at the Morven Town Hall. Vendors, volunteers, and spectators are all welcome. Deadline for application is September 17th.

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YARD SALE

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3 family yard sale, Saturday, Sept 3 at 500 Leak Ave in Wadesboro, 8am-1pm. Something for everyone. Rain cancels.

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FOR SALE
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