

**House Democratic Leader Larry Hall**  
**State of the State Democratic Response**  
**Prepared Remarks**  
**2/18/2013**

Good evening North Carolina, I am House Democratic Minority Leader Larry Hall and I want to speak with you tonight about our ideas to move North Carolina forward.

In our political system we campaign for the positions of leadership, but after the elections are over we have to work for the greater good of all North Carolinians. Once elected that is the sworn duty of us all, to put Party aside and work together.

Our number one priority is getting people back to work so that they can support themselves and their families. The key to building a sustainable economy is growing a healthy and vibrant middle class in North Carolina.

Democrats believe we must create jobs by building a robust and diverse economy throughout our state. To do that we must find new and innovative ways to support small businesses. We need to expand worker training programs to help workers who have lost their jobs retrain and find employment in the new economy.

Governor McCrory continues to push for tax reform. We cannot support any tax reform plan that doesn't pass a simple fairness test. Governor McCrory's plan would expand the sales tax to include more services like hair cuts, home maintenance and doctors visits while cutting income taxes for the wealthiest individuals and big corporations. This means that hardworking taxpayers will have to pay more in taxes overall, while millionaires and big corporations pay less. I will not support any tax reform plan that balances huge cuts for billion dollar corporations on the backs of middle class families.

Governor McCrory campaigned on the need to reform public education. We agree it is vital that we retool and improve our public education system. We must, however, make sure that reform is not just a code word for continuing to cut more and more from our schools. Cutting funding for public education is wrong because it hurts our children's ability to succeed and compete for the jobs of the future.

In recent years Republicans have slashed teachers and increased class sizes. They have continually asked our teachers to do more with less. It's time to end this cycle, it's time to invest in our schools and our future by giving teachers the tools and resources they need to help our students succeed. We should treat our teachers like professionals and our students like our future.

Governor McCrory supports bringing online charter schools to North Carolina. His plan lacks accountability and would allow out-of-state corporations to create online, for-profit virtual charter schools. These schools wouldn't have to provide school buildings, buses, lunches or face to face meetings between parents and teachers. Yet at the end of the day, they would receive the same amount of our tax dollars as our public schools. This is wrong. Democrats believe we must have more accountability and that we should keep North Carolina's education in the hands of North Carolinians.

For decades, North Carolina has been a leader in higher education. We built a world-class University System and a Community College system that is second to none. Today's students, however, are faced with rising tuition costs and decreased financial aid. This current trend threatens middle class access to our colleges and universities. We call on Governor McCrory to reverse this trend and make increasing middle class access to higher education a priority in his first budget.

We believe our state must give North Carolinians the government they deserve - An open and honest government that is accountable and respects the rights of all its citizens. We need to increase oversight and promote accountability in state government to ensure tax payer money is spent wisely and efficiently. We need to reform ethics laws to ensure our government is accountable to the people and not to special interests. And we need to protect the right of all North Carolinians to participate in electing their leaders.

Our Democratic philosophy is this - everyone who pays their fair share, works hard and plays by the rules should have a fair shot at success. In the coming weeks and months, my Democratic colleagues and I will introduce legislation to accomplish the goals and uphold the values I have outlined tonight.

We stand ready to work with the Republican leadership to move North Carolina forward.

Thank you and may God Bless you and all North Carolinians.