

Subject: News Release: Senate Long, Short Sessions Drive Positive Change for Education, Economy



PRESS RELEASE
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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
August 20, 2014

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**Senate Long, Short Sessions Drive Positive Change for
Education, Economy**

Raleigh, N.C. – The North Carolina Senate adjourned “sine die” Wednesday evening, completing a two-year legislative biennium focused on passing long-overdue reforms to improve North Carolina’s public schools, strengthen the economy and restore the state as a leader in job growth.

Below is a statement from Senate Leader Phil Berger (R-Rockingham):

“Roughly three and a half years ago, Republicans assumed leadership of the General Assembly and immediately tackled a record \$2.5 billion budget deficit we inherited. We focused our first two years on repairing the problems we found and then began a course correction this biennium to put our state on a path to prosperity. Because of the difficult decisions we’ve made, more than 200,000 new jobs have been created, our children are receiving a better education and their teachers will soon be the highest compensated in state history.”

Among other actions, the Senate:

- **Implemented comprehensive tax reform that is providing major tax relief to all North Carolina families and making our state more attractive to job-creating businesses.** Following decades of Democratic control, North Carolina had the highest taxes in the Southeast. The legislature passed a tax reform plan that simplified the state’s 1930s Depression-era tax code, cut personal and corporate income tax rates, eliminated the death tax and ended dozens of loopholes for special interests, moving North Carolina from the bottom of national rankings to the 17th best business tax climate in America.
- **Effected major education reforms** to strengthen student literacy, improve graduation

rates, reward effective teachers and give parents tools to make better informed decisions about their children's education.

- **Passed the largest teacher pay raise in state history, with an average 7 percent increase.** The \$282 million investment will propel North Carolina from near the bottom to 32nd in national rankings.
- **Adopted a balanced, fiscally responsible state budget** that invests in core services, streamlines state government, strengthens public education and grows North Carolina's economy.
- **Passed an aggressive plan for coal ash mitigation that would give North Carolina the strictest regulations on coal ash in the entire country** and make it the first state to force the closure of all coal ash ponds.
- **Reformed our state's broken unemployment insurance program**, setting a pathway for repaying North Carolina's \$2.5 billion debt to the federal government that was brought about by years of mismanagement by previous Democratic leaders. Under our plan, we'll be out of debt by 2016 – freeing up capital and providing certainty for businesses to create jobs. Our changes are making North Carolina's unemployment system solvent and removing one of the biggest impediments to job creation and economic growth.
- **Passed sweeping changes to the state's burdensome regulatory environment.** The Senate passed two major regulatory reform bills to get rid of red tape that chokes off economic growth and make our state a more attractive place to do business.
- **Approved bipartisan legislation to spur our economy by tapping into North Carolina's abundant energy resources.** The Domestic Energy Jobs Act is a comprehensive energy law that paved the way for a flourishing onshore and offshore energy sector.
- **Passed bipartisan legislation to move North Carolina further ahead in achieving energy independence and creating a robust energy sector.** The Energy Modernization Act moves North Carolina ahead with natural gas exploration and development, a step expected to help the state jumpstart a thriving new industry, attract thousands of well-paying jobs and push toward long-term energy independence.
- **Passed major election reforms including a hugely popular, common-sense provision that requires North Carolinians to show a photo ID when they vote.** Polls show that nearly three-quarters of North Carolina residents support requiring voters to show photo ID before voting. Our action brought North Carolina in line with the majority of other states that already require voter ID.
- **Improved our investment in North Carolina's transportation infrastructure.** Changes to the North Carolina Highway Trust Fund will allow us to accelerate transportation

projects across the state, in every region and in our local communities – a move that is expected to create at least 260 projects and more than 240,000 jobs over the next 10 years, according to the state Department of Transportation.

- **Improved medical billing fairness and transparency** to help consumers make better-informed decisions about their treatment.
- **Invested in our state’s rural communities** by launching a new, accountable Rural Economic Development Division within the state Department of Commerce. And we upheld our commitment to ensuring accountability in state government by ending the blatant misuse of tax dollars at the N.C. Rural Center.
- **Expanded job recruitment and grant programs** while giving local communities significantly more flexibility to invest in public education and other priorities.
- **Protected the Second Amendment rights of North Carolinians.** The Senate passed legislation to expand the number of places that people with a concealed carry permit can carry firearms to protect themselves and their families – while also strengthening safety measures for the public and penalties for criminals who violate our gun laws.
- **Prevented gamesmanship of the state retirement fund** by highly-compensated state and local employees seeking to inflate their pension benefits near the end of their careers at the expense of taxpayers and rank-and-file state workers.
- **Ensured justice for more than 100 North Carolina families** whose loved ones’ lives were brutally taken by passing a bill to end the de-facto moratorium on the death penalty in North Carolina.
- **Strengthened transparency and accountability in the use of tax dollars and required greater private investment** in legislation authorizing the state Department of Commerce to partner with a newly-formed private non-profit organization.

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