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# This Week @ the Capital

January 28, 2011

## **Capital News Update**

*A weekly collection of news briefs covering hot topics in the state legislature and public policy arena. These news items do not necessarily reflect the North Carolina Chamber's priorities, but will feature news about the Chamber's advocacy efforts when timely.*

## **New Leaders Taking Helm as GA Returns to Raleigh**

The North Carolina Chamber's Governmental Affairs team greeted legislators during the historic reconvening of the General Assembly on Wednesday. This was a largely ceremonial week, as incumbents and first-time legislators resumed work under the first Republican-dominated legislature in the state since 1870. However, this celebration is sure to be short-lived as GOP leaders plan to [hit the ground running](#) and fulfill their campaign promises of bringing North Carolina back to economic prosperity.

The North Carolina Senate officially elected Phil Berger (R-Rockingham), former minority leader, to serve as President Pro Tempore, while the North Carolina House of Representatives elected Thom Tillis (R-Mecklenburg) to serve as the House Speaker. The new leadership has made it clear that the NC General Assembly will focus on reducing state spending, redistricting and getting North Carolinians back to work. Republicans' first initiative is to tackle the \$3.7 billion budget gap without raising taxes or extending the temporary taxes that were approved in 2009. Despite the fact that the state's legislature and Governor come from different political parties, it is clear that both are fully aware of the pressing need to secure the financial position of North Carolina in a time where we still have a weak economy and high unemployment.

## **Committee Chairs**

Most committee chairs and full committee assignments have been made in both the Senate and the House. Chairs of key committees for the business community are listed below. These appointments have been made earlier than in previous sessions – a sign that the new leadership intends to get to work quickly. You can also find permanent [room and telephone assignments](#) on the General Assembly website.

### House Appropriations

- Rep. Harold Brubaker (R-Randolph)
- Rep. Jeff Barnhart (R-Cabarrus)
- Rep. Mitch Gillespie (R- Burke, McDowell)
- Rep. Linda Johnson (R- Cabarrus)

### House Commerce

- Rep. Daniel McComas (R-New Hanover)

### House Environment

- Rep. Pat McElraft (R- Carteret, Jones)
- Rep. Ruth Samuelson (R-Mecklenburg)
- Rep. Roger West (R- Cherokee, Clay, Graham, Macon)

### House Finance

- Rep. Julia Howard (R- Davie, Iredell)
- Rep. Dale Folwell (R-Forsyth)
- Rep. Edgar Starnes (R-Caldwell)

- Rep. Mitchell Setzer (R- Catawba, Iredell)

#### House Judiciary

- Rep. Leo Daughtry (R-Johnston)

#### Senate Appropriations

- Sen. Peter Brunstetter (R-Forsyth)
- Sen. Neal Hunt (R-Wake)
- Sen. Richard Stevens (R-Wake)

#### Senate Commerce

- Sen. Harry Brown (R-Jones, Onslow)

#### Senate Finance

- Sen. Fletcher Hartsell (R- Cabarrus, Iredell)
- Sen. Bob Rucho (R-Mecklenburg)

#### Senate Judiciary I

- Sen. Peter Brunstetter (R-Forsyth)

#### Senate Judiciary II

- Sen. Austin Allran (R-Catawba, Iredell)
- Sen. Warren Daniel (R- Burke, Caldwell)
- Sen. E.S. (Buck) Newton (R- Nash, Wilson)

#### **Perdue's Position on Temporary Taxes?**

Gov. Beverly Perdue has agreed to work diligently with the new legislature to cut spending and improve the financial standing of North Carolina as 2011 takes off. However, the Governor's position on extending the temporary taxes that were implemented in 2009 remains unclear. Republicans urge that continuing tax extensions will stunt the economic growth that North Carolina so desperately needs, while Democrats fear that the decrease in revenue that would result from the expiring taxes would result in further losses for the state's public education system. House Speaker Thom Tillis indicated that House Republicans intended to let the taxes expire saying, "We're staking ourselves out on the tax issue."

#### **GA to Consider Board and Commission Cutbacks**

In an effort to eliminate unnecessary state spending, Gov. Perdue has asked the General Assembly to review 345 state boards and commissions that could possibly be restructured or eliminated. "After reviewing the list, I look forward to working with the General Assembly as we efficiently and systematically streamline the way North Carolina does business," Perdue said. "We need to consolidate and eliminate wherever possible." This request comes after Perdue's review of 406 boards and commissions.

#### **Gov Opposes It: What Will GA do with ABC Privatization?**

After reviewing a study produced by consultants on the privatization of the state's liquor sales, Gov. Perdue announced to a group of County Commissioners in Research Triangle Park that she does not support the measure. Currently, North Carolina is the only state in which liquor is controlled at a local level, a process that has been deemed inefficient by the state's conservatives. The General Assembly plans to review the study and determine whether or not they want to move in the direction of privatization.

#### **Repeal on Federal Health Care Individual Mandate Passes in Committee**

Republicans got to work this week on a [vote to repeal](#) the individual mandate in the federal health care bill. [H2: Protect Health Care Freedom](#) passed in a House Judiciary Committee vote on Thursday; it could head before the full House as early as next week.

#### **Contact Our Government Affairs Team**

Do you have questions or input about the Chamber's work at the legislature? Contact our Government Affairs team.

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