



Insights: Perspectives

North Carolina General Assembly Update | November 19, 2021

November 19, 2021

Kilpatrick Townsend's Government Relations Team represents a variety of clients across many industries and in all levels of government, with a focus on the North Carolina General Assembly. Below is an update on the activity at the NC General Assembly this week. Please feel free to contact a member of the [team](#) with any questions or visit our website to learn more about our [Government Relations](#) practice.

**Due to the Thanksgiving holiday and legislative break, there will be no newsletter next Friday, November 26th. We hope you and yours have a happy Thanksgiving!*

Budget Finalized

On Monday, the legislature released their final budget [proposal](#). Governor Cooper held a press conference on Tuesday announcing he would sign the legislative budget when it reached his desk. The Governor said he will “sign this budget because, on balance, the good outweighs the bad. It moves North Carolina forward in important ways, many that are critical to our state's progress as we are emerging from this pandemic.” His full remarks can be found [here](#). Some of the highlights of the spending plan include:

- A 5 percent pay increase for most state employees and an average 5 percent pay increase for teachers over the biennium;
- An additional \$1.5 billion above the base budget in recurring funds over the biennium for K-12 education;
- \$1 billion for broadband expansion;
- A decrease in the personal income tax rate from 5.25 percent to 3.99 percent by 2027, starting with 4.99 percent in 2022; and
- Revision of the Emergency Management Act to require a vote of the Council of State to extend a statewide emergency beyond 30 days (effective Jan. 1, 2023).

The budget received bipartisan support in both chambers. It passed the Senate with a vote of 41-7 and the House 104-10. Governor Cooper signed the bill on Thursday afternoon. This is the first comprehensive budget the state has enacted since 2018.

Legislative Schedule

The legislature will take next week off for the Thanksgiving holiday. House Speaker Moore (R-Cleveland) told members the plan is to come back on Monday, November 29 to conclude business for the 2021 legislative session. However, this could be pushed back to December 6 depending on whether or not the budget technical

corrections bill is finalized. The legislature will then likely go into a multi-week adjournment instead of adjourning sine die in case they need to respond to any litigation regarding redistricting.

Elections Bills

In addition to the budget, the House voted on the following three bills dealing with elections.

- [H259](#), Election Integrity Act, would require all voting systems purchased for use in North Carolina be manufactured in the United States by a company organized and doing business in the United States. It would also require that jurors be citizens of the United States, create a process for voter list maintenance removal of non-citizens reported as disqualified from jury duty, and specify requirements for post-election audits.
- [S326](#), Election Day Integrity Act, would make Election Day the election deadline. All completed applications and marked absentee ballots would have to be returned to the county board of elections by 7:30 p.m. on the day of the election or by the time the polls close in the county if extended by the State Board of Elections, regardless of postmark. Currently, a mail-in absentee ballot is still counted if it is postmarked by Election Day and received by 5:00 p.m. on the third day following the election. Additionally, the bill would require county boards of elections to submit reports on the number of spoiled absentee ballots, outstanding absentee ballots, counted absentee ballots, and voted provisional ballots to the State Board, and require the State Board to publish the reports on its website.
- [S725](#), Prohibit Private Money in Elections Administration, would prohibit the acceptance of private money for conducting elections or hiring temporary elections workers.

All three passed the House along party lines. We anticipate the Governor to veto the bills.