



Insights: Perspectives

North Carolina General Assembly Update | July 16, 2021

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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.

Legislature Returns

The legislature returned Monday after a week-long break for the July 4th holiday. Committee and floor work remained relatively light. The House considered an omnibus criminal justice reform bill and energy bill (detailed below) while the Senate considered [proposed legislation](#) to address anti-discrimination in the school curriculum. The House Appropriations Chairs continued to work on their proposed version of the budget behind the scenes. We believe the House is still several weeks away from unveiling their spending plan.

Energy Bill

This week, the House moved a massive energy bill that would speed up North Carolina's transition away from coal power plants. [H951](#), Modernize Energy Generation, would retire five of the state's subcritical coal fired generating facilities by December 31, 2030. The bill is nearly 50 pages long and seeks to utilize natural gas, nuclear, and solar alternatives to replace coal. It also includes regulatory changes such as authorization of "performance based regulation" of the electric public utilities operating in the State. The complex legislation was negotiated for months behind closed doors with Duke Energy, numerous stakeholders from the renewable energy industry, and major electricity customers.

The bill moved quickly this week, passing the House Energy and Public Utilities and House Rules Committees on Tuesday and Wednesday, respectively. It was added to Wednesday's House calendar and received lengthy debate on the floor. After receiving an initial vote, House Democrats objected to a third reading. Following the objection, House Speaker Tim Moore scheduled a midnight session to hold the final vote. Ultimately, the bill passed 57-49 with 2 Democrats voting in favor and 5 Republicans voting in opposition. It will now head to the Senate for consideration. Governor Cooper has already expressed his [opposition](#) to the measure in its current form.

Criminal Justice Reform

On Wednesday, the House Judiciary 2 Committee considered [S300](#), Criminal Justice Reform. This is a large omnibus bill that makes various changes to the Criminal Code and increases law enforcement standardization and oversight. The House Proposed Committee Substitute (PCS) made changes to a body camera provision that had received unanimous support in the Senate. House Democrats and several members of the public spoke out against this change and the committee voted to remove the body camera portion of the bill entirely. Additional provisions in the bill include:

- Increasing hiring standards for criminal justice officers by means of required background checks and psychological screening examinations;
- Creating an early warning system that would keep track of any instances that included use of force, the discharge of a firearm, a vehicle collision, and a citizen complaint;
- Creating and requiring the state to implement a statewide database for law enforcement discipline data; and
- Requiring a first appearance for a defendant in custody for a misdemeanor.

The bill received a favorable report and has been referred to the House Rules Committee.