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Legislative Update

From Rep. Frank McGuirt: The past few weeks have remained busy as I prepare for the short session that will follow the primary elections in May. I am developing ideas and working with my colleagues to prepare legislation that will help improve the education of our children and the economy. We will also introduce legislation to help working class people and the vulnerable. We also want to continue efforts to be inclusive and respectful of the diversity in our state. This includes efforts to protect voting rights and women's rights.

School superintendents finally have a chance to talk about what happened to education funding over the last year. Instead of waiting on our Republican leadership to hold their public hearings, the N.C. State Board of Education plans on holding their own forum on April 3 for K-12 educators to air their grievances about last year's state budget cuts. The forum, which is open to the public, will be held from 12:30 to 5 p.m. on Tuesday, April 3 at Sheraton Imperial Hotel in Durham's Research Triangle Park, before the scheduled state board meeting on Tuesday, April 4 and 5.

All 115 of the state's superintendents are invited to come and talk about the cuts to education funding in their districts, and what measures they took in individual school districts, said Lynda Fuller, a spokeswoman for the N.C. Department of Public Instruction. Cuts in education funding led to job losses for more than 500 teachers and closed to 1,200 teacher's assistants, according to DPI data. N.C. House Speaker Thom Tillis told reporters shortly after the state budget was passed last year that he would invite superintendents to Raleigh to talk about how local school districts weathered the budget. Months later, that's still not happened.

Those job loss numbers are under attack by conservative groups, seen in a polished spin campaigns like "NC Real Solutions" that's attempting to paint last year's budget battle in a better light by implying that teaching jobs were added last year. That's been shown to be just a tad ingenious - state funding for teaching jobs increased as federal stimulus money (as scheduled) has dried up, which shifted the funding responsibility back to the state. But more than 500 teachers still got pink slips, and 1,000s of other positions went unfilled as school administrators asked school personnel to do more with less as a result of cuts in funding.

This next year is expected to be worse on classrooms, with the rest of the federal recovery dollars for teachers going away. But if Speaker Tillis and Senate leader Phil Berger or any other legislators really want to hear what's happening in the state's public schools, they should attend the April 3 forum.

One particular issue of concern to me is the pay schedule of our public school teachers. A bill was passed this past summer that has resulted in teachers' paychecks being delayed one month this summer. This glitch has the potential to cause teachers' scheduled house payments, car payments and other necessary personal business transactions to be delayed. We must not allow our professional educators and support personnel to suffer this consequence. I am working with other legislators to correct this. Our state's educators have suffered enough with this further humiliation. At this time, when public education is so important for our young people to enable them to compete in the global market, we must step up and support our teachers!

Nothing is more important to me than the safety of our citizens in Anson and Union. We must make certain that our law enforcement officers are adequately trained and equipped and our courts can work efficiently. We must continue to make sure that people are treated fairly by our criminal justice system. Sometimes this means protecting the process used by law enforcement or the courts. Other times, it may mean increasing the punishment for a particular crime. This week, I wanted to share with you some of the criminal justice legislation sponsored by my Democratic colleagues that was passed into law during our last session. I hope you will find it helpful.

• The standards for the use of forensic evidence in our courts are now more stringent. Legislation (HB 27, SB 684) passed last year raises the bar for the testing, examination, and admissibility of forensic evidence. It also provides measures for the certification and oversight of forensic science professionals and creates an advisory board to review crime lab operations.

• The state has enhanced its protection of victims and witnesses in the court system. The penalty for intimidating or interfering with a person who is summoned or acting as a witness in any court in the state has been increased from a Class H felony to a Class G felony. (SB 268)

• A defendant's juvenile record can now be considered when bond is set for a subsequent violation. The law (SB 135) applies if the defendant in a criminal proceeding involving a Class A1 misdemeanor or a felony was less than 21 years of age at the time of the offense.

• Attorneys appointed by or under contract with the Department of Indigent Services can have the cost of certifying a court document as a true and accurate copy waived. Under the law (HB 243), the requesting attorney must be representing an indigent person at state expense.

• Jails in urban counties can now hold more inmates. A new law (SB 143) provides that each jail dormitory may house up to 64 inmates so long as the dormitory meets specific statutory requirements. The act will not affect Anson and Union Counties as it applies only to counties with populations in excess of 300,000 people, which make the law applicable in Wake, Mecklenburg, Cumberland, Guilford, and Forsyth counties.

Thank you as always for your interest in state government and your work in our community. Please contact me if you have questions or if I can be of assistance to you.
919-715-3007, Frank.McGuirt@ncleg.net

2 DAY ESTATE AUCTION

Sat, March 31 at 9AM Sun, April 1 at 1PM

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Wild Hog Round-Up is this Weekend

Anson County's Inaugural Wild Hog Round-Up will be held on Friday and Saturday, March 30 and 31. This event, sponsored by Allen's General Store, will be offering \$1,500 in total prize money. Hunters are invited to enter and try to win in four categories: 1st \$500 for largest hog; 2nd \$250 for largest hog; 1st \$500 for most hogs; 2nd \$250 for most hogs.

A Saturday evening BBQ will be provided, and awards will be presented at that event.

Allen's General Store will serve as the official weigh station and is the host of the event.

The registration/entry fee is \$25 per hunter, and the deadline to enter is noon on Thursday, March 29. All hunters must be licensed in North or South Carolina to participate.

Event rules and entry details are available at Allen's General Store, 11389 Highway 74 West in Peachland, 704-272-7207, and the Anson County Chamber of Commerce, 217 East Wade Street in Wadesboro, 704-694-4181.

CLASSIFIEDS

FUNDRAISER

Woodmen of the World Spaghetti Supper Fundraiser at Lodge Hall 4, Hwy 74 W in Wadesboro. Thurs, March 29, 5-8pm. Menu: spaghetti, salad, toast, dessert & drink.
3-21

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