

2026 State Legislative Outlook

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January 12, 2026

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Three Prong Approach to Legislative Priorities

General Guidance

- Policy guidance to CMO and contracted lobbyists to:
 - 1) reflect ongoing Board interests, and
 - 2) allow discretion to react quickly to legislative actions

Top Three Asks

- To speak with a single, clear voice, Board will set a short list of top priorities

Opportunity List

- We can't predict what issues will be "hot" each session. The Board will approve a list of issues that, if an opportunity arises, CMO has discretion to pursue.

Top 3 - State

Housing Affordability

- Advocate for new State policy and programs
- Changes to existing programs

Foster Care

- Clarify roles and responsibilities for placement of youth with acute needs
- State supported facilities
- Kinship care supports
- Supports for foster families

SNAP and Medicaid

- Continue State participation in SNAP and Medicaid Expansion
- Cover unfunded mandates from HR1
- Use State funds to cover SNAP admin and benefit cost shares

The Biennium Cycle

Year 1 - 2025

Bonkers!!!



Break

Lots of bills introduced

Finish budget?
Veto overrides?
Other bills?



Year 2 - 2026

Short Session

Budget tweaks

Selected topics



Break

Unfinished
Business?
Veto overrides?

End of
Session



Election

You are
here

Unfinished Business

State Budget

- Chambers must work together to resolve budget
- Must decide to what extent State will “make up” for federal SNAP & Medicaid cost shifting and new requirements

Other bills?

- Homebuilders bill?
- Repeal the “No downzoning” law?
- Property taxes
- Election year issues?

Veto Overrides

- Governor has vetoed over a dozen bills
- Legislature has overridden eight

Questions

Supplemental Slides

Defining “Advocacy”

- **Sharing information with our County team, legislators and other stakeholders**
- **Leveraging partnerships**
 - NCACC
 - Other counties and municipalities
 - Professional groups, interest groups
- **Lobbying**

Wake's Advocacy Model

Manager's Office Role

- “Air traffic control”
- Identify legislation needing attention
- Coordinate staff analysis
- Share information and advise Board on policy
- Facilitate Board priority-setting

Lobbyist Role

- Advocate to legislators and legislative staff
- Identify legislation needing attention
- Advise Board on political and legislative matters
- Liaison to State, Federal agencies

1. General Guidance

- **The Board of Commissioners will pursue legislative advocacy that**
 - Preserves the Board's statutory authorities and discretion to set policy priorities for Wake County government.
 - Preserves the County's financial resources and tax base.
 - Maintains and enhances State funding for government services
 - Advances the Board's Strategic Plan initiatives.
 - Facilitates policy improvements that benefit Wake County government and residents
- **County Manager's Office staff have the Board's permission to advocate in support of this general guidance**
- **Applies to state and federal advocacy**

1. General Guidance

Staff and lobbyist assume this covers the following:

- **Oppose bills that would shrink tax base or present financial challenges**
- **Oppose bills that reduce the Board's options to regulate growth and development**
- **Sustain or increase funding for public schools and community colleges**
- **Sustain or increase funding for State-funded services in HHS and other departments**

2. Top Three Asks

- **Propose setting a Top 3 list for State asks, and a Top 3 list for Federal asks**
- **There is one bucket of political “capital” for Wake County**
- **Prioritizing...**
 - Concentrates the Board’s limited “capital” on highest needs
 - Gives our lobbyists a clear message to deliver
 - Allows CMO and lobbyist to reserve capacity for unforeseen needs
 - Easier for you and staff to explain
- **Staff recommend focusing on County government needs**

3. Opportunity List

- **Approve a list of policy issues that gives CMO and lobbyists discretion to act quickly when opportunity knocks.**
- **Capture policy items that did not make Top 3**
- **No advocacy is guaranteed, depends on what issues come up next year**
- **Board doesn't need to specify the outcome desired**

Recommended Top 3 - State

Housing Affordability

- Advocate for new State policy and programs
- Changes to existing programs

Foster Care

- Clarify roles and responsibilities for placement of youth with acute needs
- State supported facilities
- Kinship care supports
- Supports for foster families

Tax Lien Signage

- Repeal provision requiring physical signage at lien properties
- Not helpful or safe

Done!

Opportunity List - State

Advocacy work not guaranteed, but CMO staff have discretion to pursue if opportunity

- Support for public schools
 - Instructional Assistants
 - Teaching Fellows Program
 - Social and emotional resources
 - Universal meals
- Property tax relief
- Continuing Medicaid coverage for incarcerated individuals
- More funding for:
 - Veterans services
 - Orphan roads
 - Broadband access and affordability, digital literacy
 - JCPC programs
 - Clerks of Court
 - SmartStart / Childcare programs



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