

Mid-Year Update on State Legislation

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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

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.

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**

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!

The Biennium Cycle

You are here

Year 1 - 2025

Bonkers!!!
Lots of bills introduced




Break

Finish budget?
Veto overrides?
Other bills?

J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
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Year 2 - 2026

Short Session
Budget tweaks
Selected topics



Break

Unfinished Business?
Veto overrides?

End of Session

J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
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Election

Current Environment

- **State legislatures following national lead**
 - Lowering tax rates
 - Spending reductions
 - Eliminating selected programs
- **State House and Senate have significant disagreements**
- **And...**

...Legislature Continues to Take Critical View of Local Government Roles

- **Development Regulation**
- **Housing shortage**
- **Property taxes**
- **Other issues**

Offense



Defense





Themes and Bills

Development Regulation

S205 - the “Homebuilders bill”

- **Mandated densities, review timelines, penalties for local governments, easier to sue localities**
- **Significant local government opposition**
- **Currently in House committees**
- **Opinion - Statewide focus on this bill allowed other adverse legislation to advance uncontested**

Development Regulation

H173 - Wake County ETJ

- Prohibits any municipal ETJ extension through 2028
- We assessed low impact, took no position
- Enacted law

H376 - Well and Septic Regulations

- Impairs local ability to regulate new wells, water quality
- Uniquely harmful for Wake - radionuclides
- Passed House

Development Regulation

S587 – Repeal the “No Downzoning” law

- **Bill to fix the “no downzoning” law passed with Helene relief in December 2024**
- **Downzoning now prohibited, impairing local control over development and public health**
- **Passed Senate**

Taxes and Finance

S349 – Property Tax Modifications

- **Marcus has contributed to working group**
- **Raises thresholds for Homestead and Circuit Breaker programs,**
- **Under circuit breaker, taxes cancelled instead of deferred**
- **BOC Opportunity List**
- **Would add 16,000 to 20,000 households to tax relief**
- **Estimated revenue loss of \$13M to \$17M**
- **Introduced, not advanced**

Taxes and Finance

H659 – Local Government Transparency

- **Requires localities to publish all invoices**
- **In House committees**

H593 – Annual Audits

- **New regulatory requirements for accounting firms working with local governments**
- **Introduced, not advanced**

State Budget Appropriations

- ???
- Potential “re-direction” of local sales tax for SHP 800 mhz (VIPER)
- Chambers have significant disagreements
- Now, Legislature may consider how to address Congress’ shifting of Medicaid and SNAP costs and additional administrative requirements
- Appropriations bills sometimes contain surprise policy provisions

Other Policy Bills

H171 – DEI Bill

- **Prohibits local governments from using any public funds for DEI initiatives**
- **Opponents argue that prohibited activities not clearly defined**
- **Unclear if this supersedes existing nondiscrimination laws?**
- **Easier to sue local governments; penalties for officials**
- **If it becomes law, may prompt years of lawsuits**
- **Passed Legislature, Vetoed by Governor, awaiting override vote**

Other Policy Bills

H612 – Foster Care

- New law brings DSS reporting requirements
- Lots of process changes
- No new resources

H781 – Homeless Encampments

- Authorizes designated camp sites
- May encourage litigation
- Passed House

H219 – EMS franchises

- Impair counties' abilities to regulate EMS franchises
- In House committees

S153 – Immigration bill

- Prohibits services to non-citizens
- Could present operational challenges, depending on implementation
- Vetoed by Governor



What's Next

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
- 8-digit problem

Other bills?

- Homebuilders bill?
- Repeal the “No downzoning” law?
- Something new?
- Legislative tactics

Veto Overrides

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

Recommend Adjusting 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
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- 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**



Questions



Supplemental Slides

1. General Guidance

- **The Board of Commissioners will pursue legislative advocacy that**
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- **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**

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*

Recommended Top 3 - Federal

Earmark Requests

- Criteria-based requests
- Adapt to new 2025 congressional map

Housing Affordability

- Preserve block grants
- Expand LIHTC
- Permanently fund pilot programs

EMS Medication and Supply Challenges

- National shortage of EMS medications
- Need federal leadership to address market failures

Opportunity List – Federal

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

- Policy and programs that complement Wake Transit plans
- Fire sprinkler incentives
- “Benefits cliffs”
- Admin and reporting relief
- Nationwide public health data tracking
- Well and septic regulation
- Water source long-term planning
- Early childhood education
- WIOA flexibility and upward mobility
- Veterans services
- *Broadband access and affordability, digital literacy*
- *Rights for persons with disabilities*



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