

2014 End of Session Report

As per all “Short Sessions” this one primarily concentrated on budgetary negotiations. Throughout the year conflicting views and policy differences hampered budget work between the House and Senate oftentimes sparking heated debate during Conference Committees. As the House aligned itself with the Governor’s budget, the Senate Appropriations Committee produced a vastly different budget and members of both bodies went to conference to sort out the differences. During these hearings multiple proposals were sent back and forth in hopes of agreement yet, at times, the differences in policy between both chambers created a chasm that could not be crossed. Key components in contention were the amount to provide for teacher raises, retention of teacher assistants and the specific amount to cut from Medicaid. Due to Medicaid budgetary shortfalls, the House and Senate both produced separate Medicaid reform bills, in an attempt to reign in the program that has long gone over budget. As expected, differences in policy abounded between the House and Senate proposals.

Other business taken up during this past session included a proposal to clean up the Dan River coal ash spill and address the entire coal ash issue in the state, regulatory reform legislation, removing the fracking moratorium and an omnibus bill to address tax law issues created from last session's tax reform.

The session was never without its share of controversy and with ongoing budget conflict remaining at the forefront, the election year and disagreement within the GOP-led Executive and Legislative branches provided an additional political subtext. Governor McCrory remained vocal in his criticism over the Senate’s aggressive approach while Speaker Tillis’s campaign against Kay Hagan for U.S. Senate had also continued throughout the session. Tension between the Governor’s office and state Senate was an ongoing theme which reached its height with Senators threatening to subpoena McCrory’s budget director, Art Pope, to answer questions concerning the budget during a hearing. Needless to say, North Carolina’s political landscape provided an interesting backdrop during the past legislative session.

Due to the priorities of the “Short Session,” few substantive bills surfaced of CAI’s concern; however, monitoring committees, session and staying on the defensive at the Legislature was key this year as it can be difficult to predict the specific issues that come before the General Assembly.

Declarant Rights-One bill in particular which was introduced during the 2013 regular session was HB 330, Planned Community Act/Declarant Rights. This bill, which was supported by CAI, made changes to the Planned Community Act regarding the transfer of special Declarant rights and is similar to a provision on the subject in the state Condominium Act. It resurfaced at the end of June 2014 in the Senate Judiciary Committee. The bill moved through committee and floor debate in early July and was signed into law on July 7, 2014.