



NCRGEA Government Relations Update

NCRGEA Government Relations Update #21-07 March 9, 2021

The General Assembly appears to be coming to life. Having focused its efforts on passing several major pieces of legislation for COVID-19 relief and recovery and school reopening, during the first weeks of session. The legislature is beginning to get into a more normal routine with substantive committees meeting regularly and the budget committees hearing agency proposals.

Your lobby team has been working with the Governor, budget writers, and other legislators on a recurring adjustment to retirees' pensions. The Governor's budget should come out this week or next week giving us our first view of his priorities for the next two years.

COVID-19 Update

The General Assembly unanimously passed [H 196 – 2021 COVID-19 Response & Relief](#) which allocates \$1.7 billion of federal assistance. The bill includes \$100 million for K-12 schools and \$290 million for higher education and nearly \$550 million for the emergency rental assistance program, which provides relief to residents who cannot pay their rent and utility bills due to the pandemic. There are some concerns that this measure in H-196 may slow down the ability for residents to gain access to the emergency rental assistance funds. The bill also expands pharmacy access to vaccines and provides funds to expand broadband to rural areas of NC.

Expanding Broadband in NC

The Governor's office announced that some of the most isolated counties in the state could benefit from a new state program that will offer high-speed internet through low-orbit satellites. The pilot program using COVID-19 relief funds will target Swain and Hyde counties to bring internet service through Starlink, an internet service that uses low-orbit satellites. The program will use \$264,000 to research how this technology can improve rural healthcare and rural economic development as well as education.

Click here to watch today's update by video <https://youtu.be/L3QHheuuKW4>

Stay Tuned!!

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