



North Carolina Spirits Association

Legislative Report
January 15, 2021

The North Carolina General Assembly started its 2021 session on Wednesday January 13, 2021. Unlike the activities in the U.S. Capitol the week before, in the state capital of Raleigh lawmakers began their work quietly and with ceremony. No crowds gathered outside. Opening day is mostly ceremonial, with families often on the House and Senate floors. Instead, families were limited to the galleries above, and spaced out to follow the posted signs around the building about maintaining social distance. Senator Berger (R-Rockingham) was elected President Pro Tempore of the Senate. Across the hall in the House chamber, House Speaker Tim Moore (R-Cleveland) was reelected as Speaker. Leaders in the House talked about being united, agreeing to disagree and even a “kinder, gentler” General Assembly. Leadership roles and committee assignments in the House also included Sarah Stevens (R-Surry) as Speaker Pro Tempore.

The legislature has adjourned until January 27, when they will come back to take up new legislation and, later this spring, tackle the state budget. Among the priorities are education, economic development, broadband internet and more. Senate Phil Berger expects several mostly non-controversial issues will be on the agenda in the first few weeks. One will be state spending for the recent federal coronavirus relief package — lawmakers will need to determine how some of the money coming to North Carolina will be allocated. Senator Berger said he is still awaiting further guidance from the federal government. Last year’s COVID-19 relief measures from Congress left North Carolina with hundreds of millions of dollars to allocate. The latest federal package more clearly targets much of the money to specific programs. Another fight over the governor’s authority to enact COVID-19 restrictions could also be looming. Senator Berger said legislators want to take another look at the governor’s emergency powers. “It’s my belief that the governor’s exercise of emergency powers is inconsistent with what our system of government would expect,” Berger said. “I would like to see some changes, but what that bill would look like remains to be seen.”

Rules resolutions approved in the House and Senate last Wednesday lay out a portion of the timeline for the 2021 session. Key legislative deadlines are as follows:

- January 27: Start of the session after the traditional two-week January break
- March 11: Local bill filing deadline in the Senate
- March 25: Local bill filing deadline in the House
- April 6: Bill filing deadline in Senate for most bills that do not address constitutional amendments, appointments or election laws
- April 20: House filing deadline for non-budget, non-finance bills
- April 27: House filing deadline for budget and finance-related bills

- May 13: Crossover deadline for bills to have passed either the House or Senate for consideration during the remainder of session

The Chairs of the Senate Commerce and Insurance Committee are Senators Chuck Edwards (R-Henderson), Todd Johnson (R-Union) and Tom McInnis (R-Richmond). The Chair of the House ABC Committee is Representative Tim Moffitt (R-Henderson).

The legislature adjourned on Wednesday and will convene January 27, 2021.

For more information about legislation described in the legislative reports, feel free to contact me at dferrell@nexsenpruet.com or (919) 573-7421. Information is also available on the General Assembly's website: www.ncleg.gov.

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