



North Carolina Spirits Association

Legislative Report
May 25, 2018

Based on the latest comments from the House and Senate leadership, the 2018 version of the State Budget Bill could be passed by June 1, well ahead of the state fiscal year's end of June 30. The House and Senate chief budget writers have said that they anticipate the conference report that will serve as the budget bill will be released sometime over the Memorial Day weekend, possibly on Monday. The House and Senate Appropriations committees have scheduled a joint meeting for Tuesday morning to review and discuss the conference report. Because the budget bill is being presented as a conference committee report of a pending bill, Senate Bill 99, no amendments will be taken to the state budget bill. Votes in the House and Senate on the budget bill could be held as early as Thursday.

As the budget got finalized this week, there was not much action in committees or on the House and Senate floor. That will change once the budget is done. President Pro Tem Phil Berger (R-Rockingham) said: "Normally once the budget's done, the main activity is trying to tie up loose ends and that sort of thing. This year we're kind of doing it the other way around, where we've not been in the position to do much of any other substantive policy work. I think we'll spend a couple of weeks trying to make sure we take care of things that members have in the line." So once the budget is adopted, which could be as early as the end of next week, we expect to see much more action in committee and on the floor of the House and Senate.

Legislators want to create a \$10 million grant program to help internet providers expand service to rural communities that lack access to broadband. Senator Harry Brown (R-Onslow) and Representative Dean Arp (R-Union) announced the plan as part of the budget deal currently being finalized at the legislature. The program, called Growing Rural Economies with Access to Technology (GREAT), would offer grants to internet providers and utility cooperatives to help make it economically feasible to offer high-speed internet in sparsely populated parts of the state. The grants would cover 30 percent to 55 percent of the project cost, with the provider agreeing to cover the rest of the price. According to a news release, grants would be awarded using "a points system that takes into account the number of households and businesses being served, the cost per household and the minimum download and upload speeds, as well as whether multiple entities are partnering together on the project."

The legislature adjourned Thursday, will hold a "no vote" session on Monday, and return to work on Tuesday.

BILLS STATUS

Senate Bill 714, ABC Regulation and Reform (identical to House Bill 944). Various interest groups in addition the NC Spirits Association have expressed concern and opposition to these bills. We will continue to monitor these bills, and we expect a decision to be made in the next week or so as to whether these bills will be considered this session in their current form.

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.ncga.state.nc.us.

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