



# North Carolina Spirits Association

Legislative Report  
May 3, 2024

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The Legislature resumed their work this week, advancing a few high-profile and contentious bills. Notably, the ICE immigration bill, which mandates sheriff cooperation, and the bill to fully fund the waitlist for the Opportunity Scholarship program have both been sent back to the House for concurrence. Should the House disagree with the changes, these bills would head to a Conference Committee for resolution, though passage is anticipated for both.

The Senate Judiciary Committee took up House Bill 10 this week amid a packed audience, focusing on mandating North Carolina sheriffs to fully cooperate with U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE). Representative Destin Hall emphasized that most sheriffs had voluntarily complied with ICE until about 2018, and the bill aims to ensure universal adherence. An amendment, supported unanimously in the committee, allows any party, including federal agencies, to report non-compliance to the attorney general. The bill has been approved by the Senate and is now returning to the House for concurrence. Proponents view it as necessary for law enforcement safety and community protection, citing incidents like the recent Charlotte shooting which, while unrelated to immigration, underscored the risks law enforcement officers face.

## **North Carolina Senate Proposes Major Funding Boost for Private School Vouchers**

North Carolina Senate Republicans are advancing legislation to significantly increase funding for the Opportunity Scholarship program, which now extends private school vouchers to families of all income levels. The bill proposes an additional \$248 million for the upcoming school year to clear the existing waitlist of nearly 55,000 children and ensure every applicant can access these funds. This move comes after the elimination of income caps last year, which led to a surge in applications, especially from higher-income families.

Critics argue that these funds could be more effectively used to support underfunded public schools and raise teacher salaries. Governor Roy Cooper, a vocal opponent of the expanded voucher system, has proposed a budget that would freeze scholarship awards at current levels, redirecting approximately \$174 million to public education. His budget also emphasizes significant raises for teachers and one-time bonuses for all public school employees, contrasting sharply with the legislative push to expand private school funding.

Democrats in the Senate have criticized the voucher expansion as unfair, arguing that it diverts needed resources from public schools to subsidize private education for affluent families. They also highlight a lack of accountability for private schools receiving these funds, noting that these schools are not subject to the same academic standards as public institutions and can exclude students based on religious criteria.

The debate over this issue underscores a broader ideological clash over education funding priorities in North Carolina, with Republican lawmakers championing increased school choice through vouchers as a means to empower parents and provide alternatives to public education, while Democrats and public education advocates call for bolstered support for public schools as they struggle with resource shortages.

### **North Carolina Congressional Candidate Suspends Campaign After Trump Endorsement Shifts Runoff Dynamics**

In an unexpected turn of events in North Carolina politics, Kelly Daughtry, a Republican congressional candidate for the 13th District, has suspended her campaign during the May 14 Republican runoff, endorsing her opponent, Brad Knott. Daughtry's decision followed an endorsement of Knott by former President Donald Trump, which significantly shifted the dynamics of the race. Daughtry, who led the March primary but did not secure a majority, prompting a runoff, has stated that the endorsement made her path to victory unlikely. Despite the ballots already being printed and some votes cast, Daughtry's withdrawal aims to unify the Republican Party and support Knott's candidacy. However, if Daughtry still receives the majority of votes, she could technically be declared the winner, which would leave the decision to the GOP district executive committee to choose the nominee. Brad Knott, appreciating Daughtry's endorsement, emphasized his commitment to addressing key issues such as border security and government spending. This electoral twist highlights the unpredictability of runoffs and the significant impact of high-profile endorsements in shaping electoral outcomes. The situation remains complex as voters may still cast ballots for Daughtry, unaware of her withdrawal, potentially leading to an unexpected result despite her suspension of the campaign.

The Senate Transportation Committee cast a favorable vote to confirm the current Interim Transportation Secretary, Joey Hopkins, as the permanent Secretary. A full Senate vote on this confirmation is anticipated for next week.

State lawmakers in Raleigh have reconvened with the main priority of making budget adjustments. Appropriations Committee Chairman Representative Jason Saine, indicated that the session is expected to be straightforward with few controversial issues anticipated. He highlighted the state's economic prosperity, which has resulted in another budget surplus, presenting a challenge in deciding the optimal investment areas for these funds.

Additionally, it is bill filing season, and legislators are busy drafting and submitting their bills ahead of the deadline. It's important to note that during the short session, newly filed bills must either be local in nature or have a financial or appropriations component.

The legislature adjourned on Thursday and will reconvene on Monday May 6.

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

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