

North Carolina Legislative Update, February 19, 2021

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This week, North Carolina Legislators continued to consider bills related to COVID-19 and Gov. Roy Cooper nominated a number of Cabinet Secretaries.

Opening of K-12 Schools

A bill (S 37) that could lead to in-person learning at many K-12 schools has been approved by the General Assembly and sent to Gov. Cooper. The bill, among other things, would require school districts to offer certain in-person instruction options and allow students learning remotely to continue this format.

State Budget and Taxes

As is typical at the beginning of a General Assembly session, a number of committees met this week for orientation presentations. The Finance Committees met jointly and heard details about the state tax system. The Appropriations Committees also met jointly and considered the budget outlook for the next two years and spending details by category. In addition, the Presidents of the North Carolina Community College System and North Carolina Independent Colleges and Universities presented their session priorities to the Senate Education/Higher Education Committee. Committees will continue to hear budget and tax reports from General Assembly staff in the coming weeks before hearing from state agencies about their session priorities.

ABC permits

As Legislators seek to assist businesses impacted by COVID, they unanimously approved a bill (H 4) this week that delays certain ABC permit fees and reinstates or reactivates some ABC permits. The bill has been sent to Gov. Cooper.

Other bills of note

Some other bills recently introduced are a bill (H 96) to allow pharmacists to dispense injectable drugs, a bill (H 100) to increase fines for roadside littering, and a bill (H 103) amending state law related to certain automatically renewing consumer contracts.

Governor's Cabinet Secretaries

Gov. Cooper recently nominated a number of people to head Cabinet agencies. There are 10 of these departments and his nominations are subject to confirmation by the state Senate.

New nominees

Machelle Sanders as Secretary of Commerce

Sanders has served as secretary of administration since 2017. Prior to this position, she was vice president of manufacturing and general manager of Biogen's facility in the Research Triangle Park. She has also held leadership positions overseeing manufacturing, global quality assurance, and quality control functions at Biogen and Diosynth-Akzo Nobel.

Dionne Delli-Gatti as Secretary of Environmental Quality

Delli-Gatti most recently served at the Environmental Defense Fund as the Director of Southeast Climate and Energy following six years at the Atlanta EPA Regional office as Congressional and Governmental Liaison. Her environmental experience includes government service at the Ohio EPA and the City of Dallas, as well as an environmental specialist at Turner Collie & Braden, Inc. She is an Air Force veteran.

Jim Weaver as Secretary of Information Technology

Weaver is currently the state chief information officer and director for the state of Washington Technology Solutions. His government information technology experience includes serving as the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania's chief technology officer and the Pennsylvania Departments of Human Services, Aging and Insurance chief technology officer and deputy chief information officer. Weaver is an active member of the Washington Army National Guard.

Approved nominee

Reid Wilson was recently approved by the state Senate to serve as secretary of the Department of Natural and Cultural Resources. Prior to becoming secretary, Wilson served as the Department's chief deputy secretary since 2017. He formerly served as executive director of the Conservation Trust for North Carolina, as chief of staff at the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, and as national political director of the Sierra Club.

Pending nomination

The nomination of Lieutenant General *Walter Gaskin* to be secretary of the Department of Military and Veteran Affairs is pending in the Senate. Gaskin formerly served as the deputy chairman of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) Military Committee in Brussels, Belgium, and as commanding general of the 2nd Marine Division at Camp Lejeune, North Carolina.

Vacancy

With the move by Secretary Sanders to Commerce, the Governor will nominate a new secretary of the Department of Administration.

Incumbent Secretaries

Cabinet Secretaries that are likely to remain in their positions are *Dr. Mandy Cohen* at Health and Human Services, *Eric Hooks* at Public Safety, *Ron Penny* at Revenue, and *Eric Boyette* at Transportation.

For more information, contact a member of the Brooks Pierce Government Affairs Team, linked below.