



Legislative Update

#0019 for July 10, 2007

Budget Meetings. The House-Senate budget conferees continue to meet in Room 612 of the Legislative Office Building in Raleigh. Some of these gatherings are open door. Others are private. Word is that the Health & Human Services conferees are done with their work, and all phases of their budget are in the hands of the “Big Chairs” of the House and Senate appropriations committees. Rumors persist that they intend to finish the budget by Friday, but to pull that off, they’ll have to settle disputes on the sales tax and income tax reductions and on the big issue of Medicaid relief to counties. There’s no news to that effect as of this hour. The N.C. Association of Realtors has mounted a vigorous and lavishly-funded campaign against the proposed land transfer tax, and that has slowed and complicated things.

Child Daycare Subsidy. Nothing that the General Assembly does to the budget is certain until the Governor’s signature dries, but it seems highly likely that the solons will approve an increased child daycare subsidy that will take an additional 1,520 children off the waiting list and provide a rate increase. That’s the very latest word on what the House-Senate budget conferees have done. A sum of \$3.6 million in 2006-2007 “roll over” money will be put with the \$8.4 million expansion that originally appeared in Governor Easley’s budget plan, and \$5.7 million of that is to be set aside for rate adjustment. The seven Region One counties (Wake, Mecklenburg, Orange, Iredell, Guilford, Durham and Cabarrus) get their own – read that proportionately higher – allocation, apparently based on the argument that daycare is more expensive in those counties. All the rest of the counties get a larger total share, but it’s proportionately lower because it’s spread over ninety-seven counties. There’s also an allocation for “Homes.”

A Provisional Roundup. So, how’s the legislative session going from the perspective of the Social Services Consortium? We have some disappointments and uncertainties, but we also have good news too.

<u>Item</u>	<u>Our Position</u>	<u>Outcome</u>
Medicaid Relief for Counties	Support	Pending
NC FAST	N/A	No bill pending
Child Daycare Subsidy Increase	Support	Pending, good prospects
Child Welfare Coll. Increase	Support	Not this session
Medicaid for Foster Care Youths To age 21	Support	Likely to pass.
Increased Funding for MRS Child & Family Team Facilitators	Support	Not this session
Increased Funding for Public Guardianships	Support	Not this session

House Study Committee on Local DSS Service Crisis	Support	Pending, good prospects
SB 821 Juvenile Nonsecure Custody Criteria	Oppose	Defeated
SB 824 Juvenile Notice of Appeal	Oppose	Defeated
SB 1077 Juvenile Discover Orders	Oppose	Defeated
SB 1538 County Boards Authority	Oppose	Defeated

This short and incomplete list confirms certain legislative truisms. It's easier to defeat bills than to get bills passed. Funding bills are always tough sledding.

Pride Goeth Before A Fall. I met a for-profit lobbyist yesterday who boasted about his close contacts with key legislators. The inference was that he was a real insider who could make anything happen over at the General Assembly. He should heed the following story: A group of amateur hikers decide that they want to take a backpacking trip through a great evergreen wilderness in the Northwest, and they choose a professional guide based on his claim that he's "the best guide in the United States." They begin their adventure, and things start out well enough, but after a few days, even the dimmest and most trusting of the hikers realizes that they are going around in circles. They elect a spokesman to confront their guide.

Spokesman: "We're lost! We've been tramping around in circles for days! You said you were 'the best guide in the United States!'"

Guide: "That's true, but I think we've wondered into Canada."



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