

Bill's Seat – A Report from the North Carolina Legislature - April 19, 2009

By Representative Bill Faison

This past week began with a Resolution honoring the memory of State basketball coach and North Carolina native, Kay Yow. We then got down to working on some tough bills.

Health Insurance for Teachers, Prison Guards, Social Workers and other State Workers: The Legislature provides free health insurance to State employees and retirees. Although State employees and retirees have co-pays for healthcare services, the actual Plan is provided without any contribution toward the cost of the Plan. This is a very valuable employment benefit. Some private employers provide health insurance but certainly not all. Moreover, many private employers that do provide health insurance require employees to pay a portion of the health insurance policy costs in addition to co-pays.

The State Health Plan is in trouble. Like most programs that get in trouble there is more than one reason. Among the reasons are the rising costs of medical care and the aging of the participants. Many younger healthier families who are less likely to use health insurance can buy insurance on the open market at lower overall costs and they do. Without younger families in the Plan, the overall costs continue to climb.

The Plan requires an injection of over \$250 million dollars to continue paying healthcare costs through the end of June. In an effort to keep the Plan both solvent and available I amended it in committee to make it more attractive to younger families. Although the Plan has been modified in other ways and will now require bigger co-pays we have managed to keep the Plan both solvent and available without a contribution to the cost of the Plan from State employees or retirees. The Plan as amended passed the House and has gone back to the Senate.

Sex Education: We considered a bill to both expand and constrict the current school abstinence only sex education program. The bill allows parents to decide whether their child is taught abstinence only, given a comprehensive sex education program, or no sex education at all. Parents

will be able to inspect all of the materials used in the programs 60 days before the programs start. If the parent does not select a program, then the child will not be taught sex education.

I thought this bill had several good ideas. First, parents decide what their child will be taught. Second, parents can choose more education over less. And finally, if a parent does not like either program, or fails to choose a program, then the child will not be exposed to either program. I voted for the bill and it passed the House and went to the Senate.

See the Bills and Contact Me: You can see the bills discussed here by going to www.ncleg.net and using the “Find Bills by Number” tool. The bills are S287 and H88. I would really like to know what you think. Please contact me at billf@ncleg.net to share your thoughts.