

# Bill's Seat – A Report from the North Carolina Legislature - August 2, 2009

By Representative Bill Faison

At the end of last week the House and Senate Budget/Finance Negotiators announced they had a new deal on the Budget/Finance. Further they believed the Governor was on Board. They rolled out part of the Finance piece last week. This week they will present the Budget.

**The Finance Package:** The Budget will spend \$994 million more than current taxes raise. Having determined to spend the money, the House and Senate negotiators now must convince 61 House members vote for a new tax package. There are problems with the new proposed tax package. First it raises income taxes on too many people. Second, it takes money away from the counties. Caswell and Yanceyville combined lose a approximately \$70,000, and Orange and Hillsborough lose approximately \$161,000, at a time when their budgets are already overly strained. Third, it adds additional tax on tobacco products that have already been loaded up at a State and Federal level. We still have many families that make a living from raising tobacco. We do not need to make it harder on them. Fourth, it raises taxes on beer which puts at risk jobs at the Miller plant in Eden where some of our folks work.

**The Budget:** The Budget will be rolled out this week. I am concerned that the cuts are still too deep and will have an adverse impact on too many people and too many programs that folks need, including education.

**Homestead Exemption:** In these troubled times folks need as much help as they can get. When people get into financial trouble, they are allowed to keep a "Homestead Exemption" even if creditors take the rest. To help folks I voted for and the House passed a bill that almost doubles the individual's Homestead Exemption to \$35,000 and a couple's to \$60,000.

**Protecting Children:** What happens to children when they are with an adult who is arrested? This is an important question. To protect and provide for children, a bill was passed requiring law enforcement officers to leave children with an adult approved by the parent or guardian or if one is not available in a reasonable time, then with the department of social services.

This bill is not perfect. It does not draw a distinction between children and 16-17 years old. If an approved adult is not available, these kids are sent to social services even if they are fully capable of looking after themselves and their brothers or sisters. I voted for amendments to deal with this problem in the bill but by a very narrow margin (3 votes) the amendments failed.

**See the Bill and Contact Me:** You can see the bill discussed here by going to [www.ncleg.net](http://www.ncleg.net) and using the “Find Bills by Number” tool. The bills are H1058 and S464. I really need to know what you think about the Budget and the Finance package. Please contact me at [Bill.Faison@ncleg.net](mailto:Bill.Faison@ncleg.net) to share your thoughts.