

Bill's Seat – A Report from the North Carolina Legislature – August 7, 2011

By Representative Bill Faison

The Legislature is in recess, but not done for the year. The Legislature shut down in June without finishing its business. The Adjournment Resolution set reconvening for July 13 to take up Redistricting and Gubernatorial Vetoes. When we reconvened the Leadership was not organized and ready to go. All votes were put off until July 25. Redistricting and some Vetoes were taken up and they recessed again to reconvene September 12 to take up Constitutional Amendments.

Vetoes: The Governor vetoed 15 bills this Session. Some vetoes were overridden and some were not. The Governor vetoed the Budget because of the unnecessary damage it did to education and because it killed over 34,000 jobs. They overrode that veto before recessing in June.

When the Session finally got going in July they took up the veto of a bill to protect doctors, hospitals and their insurance companies from responsibility for negligently hurting patients. The Senate had passed a bill insulating them from responsibility. The House changed it to cap recoveries for pain & suffering and scars & disfigurement, but left in place the ability to recover for lost wages, loss of body parts, permanent injuries and death. When it went to conference, the Senate view prevailed effectively putting an end to injured patients', or their survivors', ability to hold doctors, hospitals and their insurance companies accountable. The Governor vetoed the bill because it hurt people in favor of wealthy doctors and insurance companies. The veto was overridden. Anyone hurt on or after October of this year will be on their own and out of luck.

A bill was passed legislating what doctors must say and do, and what women must go through to terminate a pregnancy. Many women strongly opposed this bill because it treats women like they have no sense and cannot decide what is best for their own bodies. Others opposed it because the Legislature was getting between doctors and their patients. Some folks supported it on religious grounds, imposing their religious views on others through legislation, a thing not generally done in America. The Governor vetoed the bill and the veto was overridden.

Constitutional Amendments: In September we will take up constitutional amendments. We already have a law saying marriage is between a man and a woman. It has never been challenged and there is no

basis under our State Constitution for a challenge. None-the-less an Amendment to make this a part of the constitution will be proposed.

There is also a proposed amendment to change how the Department of Public Instruction is run. Currently the Governor, not the Superintendent of Public Instruction, appoints the Chair of the State School Board and many of its members. The appointed board, not the elected Superintendent, runs education. The Amendment would give the Superintendent a greater role.

Contact Me: I would really like to know what you think. Please contact me at Bill.Faison@ncleg.net to share your thoughts.