

# Bill's Seat – A Report from the North Carolina Legislature - August 9, 2009

By Representative Bill Faison

Last week a Budget passed. This week the Legislature will adjourn. Some of the Budget Highlights appear below:

**Overview:** State revenue collections are way down. It is the same story all across America. Every state has the same problems, and most have it a lot worse than we do. To deal with this problem we have used Stimulus money, cut some government programs, streamlined others, and raised new taxes and fees. This year's Budget has been cut by \$2.4 billion. Some of the cuts have been to government waste, little used outdated programs, and unfilled jobs. The cuts made government smaller and more efficient. Some of the shortfall has been made up by 40% cuts, 30% Stimulus money, 22% taxes, and 8% fees.

**Education:** We cut unnecessary tests saving over \$3 million. This is a change a lot of people have been saying needed to be done for a long time.

Smaller class sizes are preserved for kids K-3. Younger kids clearly benefit from smaller class sizes. We streamlined Smart Start and More at Four programs to continue making a serious investment in preschool education.

We gave local school boards flexibility to reach Budget targets. Every school district is different. The folks who are getting the job done best know what is needed, and how to wisely spend their money. More flexibility is better.

We avoided massive teacher layoffs that have happened in other states and avoided teacher pay cuts.

We protected the vocational/technical programs in our community colleges. Community college enrollment is up. People who are out of work are turning to our community colleges to retrain for different and better jobs. We need to keep these programs strong.

Education is still the way for folks to do better in life. We actually increased scholarships for kids wanting college education.

**Saving Jobs in Our District:** We have two prison units in our District, one in Yanceyville, the other in Hillsborough. They provide good jobs to a

number of people and help support our local economy. As part of the budget process a number of prison units were closed across the State. We managed to save the prisons in our District. Additionally we saved 400 prison jobs Statewide, including some in our District.

**New Taxes:** To keep all of this in place requires \$990 million in new taxes and fees. 87% of tax payers will not have income taxes increased, while 13% of folks' taxes will go up a little (\$20 for every \$1,000 of taxes owed). Sales taxes go up by one cent (\$1 on a \$100 purchase).

The Governor wanted to increase tobacco taxes by a dollar. Several of us resisted because of the number of families in our districts who still make a part of their living from tobacco. In the end the tobacco tax only went up by ten cents.

**To Contact me:** You can contact me at [Bill.Faison@ncleg.net](mailto:Bill.Faison@ncleg.net) to share your thoughts.