

# Bill's Seat – A Report from the North Carolina Legislature - February 22, 2009

By Representative Bill Faison

The House is now organized and moving forward. New bills are introduced daily. Committees are meeting and important briefings on Education, the Lottery, the Budget, Agriculture, Broadband Connectivity and the State Health Plan have all taken place. Moreover, meetings with organizations within our district are also moving forward.

**Education:** The most important thing our State does is educate our children and grandchildren. It is important for me to stay in touch with the local Boards of Education and to be aware of their concerns and goals. In the last few weeks I have met with both the Caswell and Orange Boards of Education.

The Caswell Board of Education asked that students be relieved of the Graduation Project, feeling that it imposed a burden on the kids without enough benefit to justify the work. This past week I sponsored a bill prohibiting the State Board of Education from requiring a Graduation Project to get a high school diploma.

The Orange Board of Education wants sidewalks near Orange High and Cedar Ridge High. I am working with the Board and Speaker Hackney in an effort to get the sidewalks they want.

Not only do I stay in touch with the School Boards but also with the Community College leadership. This week Dr. Jim Owens, President of Piedmont Community College in Caswell County, asked that I sponsor legislation for Community College Technical Education Funds, and I did.

**Jobs:** We need more and better jobs. I want to understand how we can do this in the current economy. As Chairman of the House Democrats' Business Caucus, I have invited the new Secretary of Commerce, Keith Crisco, to meet and speak with House Democrats and committee chairs. He will meet with us Wednesday morning.

**High Speed Broadband:** The Obama Stimulus package contains \$7.2 billion for national broadband connectivity. We need to be sure that North Carolina receives its portion and uses the money to provide you with better internet service. I chair the Ways and Means // Broadband Connectivity Committee which is working to put North Carolina in the best possible position to receive as much of that money as we can. This week I am meeting with North Carolina's Stimulus Czar, Dempsey Benton, to be sure that what we do at the Legislature and what is being done in the Governor's office works together to our greatest advantage.

**Minimum Wage:** I have been successful sponsoring legislation to increase the minimum wage. We increased the minimum wage two years ago. This past week I sponsored a bill to increase the minimum wage automatically to adjust for inflation.

**See the Bills and Contact Me:** You can see the bills discussed here by going to [www.ncleg.net](http://www.ncleg.net) and using the "Find Bills by Number" tool. The bills are H 223, H 217 and H 175. I would really like to know what you think. Please contact me at [billf@ncleg.net](mailto:billf@ncleg.net) to share your thoughts.