

**Guest Column by Representative Bill Faison:
As unemployment increases, the length of time to
find a new job has more than doubled in the past four years.**

We have another special session of the NC General Assembly scheduled for November 7. The agenda needs to be jobs.

At the present time, North Carolina's unemployment is worse than 43 other States. According to the latest (August) report of the Employment Security Commission, 468,504 people are out of work; 13,515 more people than were out of work the previous month.

When the recession began in December 2007, it took 16 weeks to find a job after losing one. At the end of the recession in June 2009, it took 24 weeks. It now takes 40 weeks to find a new job, the longest period of time to find a job in the last 60 years. Worse, when a new job is found, it pays 17.5 percent less. Moreover, household income has declined by almost 10 percent during the decade 2000 to 2009.

The Republican-led Legislature made our unemployment worse with their 2011-2013 Budget. They fired 6,455 State employees and made political cuts that resulted in the loss of another 27,707 private sector jobs.

We can fix this using practical common sense. It is time to call on the GOP Leadership to focus on what is needed now – jobs.

First, we can cut the penny sales tax by 30 percent and put it back in the Budget. This will fully fund the rehiring the fired State employees, fully fund MEDICAID and SCHIP rehiring all of the private sector employees. Additionally, the revenues generated will fully clothe our Highway Patrol, which has been out of shoes and pants since last spring. We can help our friends and neighbors keep their jobs, and everyone pays.

Next, we can make smart changes to the tax code. Wealthy corporations have lobbied and molded the tax code. In 2005, a State Revenue Department study found \$5 billion in tax loopholes. In 2009, the loopholes swelled to \$5.8 billion and the Revenue Department found that 65 percent of C Corps filed returns with NO TAX DUE.

The 155,784 small businesses with less than twenty employees make up 87 percent of our employers. A meaningful tax break of \$35,000 for each of these businesses could result in 155,784 new jobs. We could close 40 percent of the tax loopholes and fully fund the costs.

Combining these two simple changes could put 189,946 people back to work. This would lower our unemployment rate from 10.4 percent to 6.1 percent, putting us in line with 20 percent of the States, including our neighbor to the north, Virginia.

We can do more. Governments create jobs. Governments set policies that promote business and job creation. Only entrepreneurs and businesses create wealth. To get out of the economic crisis

and downward spiral we need to help people to create wealth. We have Small Business Technology Development Centers and technology transfer programs through our Consolidated University System. The same University System is number seven nationally in patents owned. A single patent can be the basis for a new business. We need smart common sense policies using our resources to promote business development.

Our Community College System's 58 campuses support our Small Business Centers. We need to educate, support and encourage entrepreneurial development within our communities. We already have Business and Community Programs through the Rural Center. Smart use of State funds promoting rural products will also help folks build and expand operations leading to more jobs.

We need think of our education process as an escalator to work, better jobs and higher compensation, and we need a focus on jobs as a motivator for education. We can fix this working together, helping each other and being smart about using the resources we already have. We can fix this now.

Representative Bill Faison represents NC House District 50, Northern Orange and Caswell Counties, and was first elected to the Legislature in 2005.