

Bill's Seat – A Report from the North Carolina Legislature -

By Representative Bill Faison

The Legislature has adjourned. The next Session of the Legislature is January 26, 2011. You would think that once the Legislature adjourns there would be really very little to do until it reconvenes. However, much of the important work of the Legislature takes place in study committees that meet between Sessions.

New legislation that has broad support will likely pass. New legislation with significant opposition seldom gets through the committee process, with even less chance of surviving a floor vote. One way to build support and remove opposition is through a study committee. Usually members that both favor and oppose the particular legislation are appointed so that all views will be represented at hearings. If everyone can agree on a new bill that meets the goals of the supporters and satisfies the objections of the opponents then it is likely to pass.

The study committees meet between Sessions. After the 2009 Long Session and before the beginning of the 2010 Short Session I served on and chaired the House Study Committee on Broadband Access in Rural and Urban Areas, and I served on the Finance, Use of 911 Funds, and Coyote Nuisance Study Committees. New Legislation grew out of three of the four study committees. All three new bills passed the House. One got caught up in the cable providers' political maneuverings in the Senate to shut towns and counties out of the internet business, and the other two passed the Senate and became law. Some of the studies this fall include the following:

Jobs: There is a study focusing on using wood and crop biomass for energy production. This could result in new markets for farmers and in addition factory, sales and distribution jobs.

Education: Community colleges are playing a very important role in our economic recovery. There is a study focusing on the new student population and their goals as a way of improving community college classes and providing more help to the folks who turn to community colleges for help.

Protecting Our Older Population: We need to protect our older population. Many of our older folks are in long term care facilities. There is a study focusing on ways was to protect our folks in these facilities.

Minority Students: Some minority students suffer from a graduation disparity. There is a study focusing on how to best help those students facing special challenges at school and teaching approaches that get the best results.

Saving Money and Consolidating Government: Consolidating some government agencies could help save money. There is a study focusing on ways to consolidate State Agencies and Departments to eliminate duplication of effort and save money.

See the Bill and Contact Me: You can see the bill discussed here by going to www.ncleg.net and using the “Find Bills by Number” tool. The bill is S900. I would really like to know what you think. Please contact me at Bill.Faison@ncleg.net to share your thoughts.