

# Bill's Seat – A Report from the North Carolina Legislature - July 4, 2010

By Representative Bill Faison

This is the last week of the Legislature for this Session. The last week is always very busy with long days, and very late nights. House committees continue considering new bills and the House continues voting on new legislation. I continue spending a lot of time talking with folks in our District. I need to know what folks want and what they think to help me decide how to vote. This past week I visited with folks and rode in the Caldwell 4<sup>th</sup> of July Parade, and attended the Schley VFW Post Fish Fry. In addition I talked with folks from our District with an interest in both the Budget and legislation.

**Budget:** The compromise Budget growing out of negotiations between the House, Senate and the Governor was as good a deal as we could get at this time. It cut approximately \$641 million out of last year's Budget because receipts were down by almost \$750 million. Our constitution requires a balanced budget, so the State cannot spend more than it collects. Part of the shortfall was made up by taking money from the Lottery which was designated for buildings and using it to save teacher jobs. 57% of the Budget is spent on Education. Although overall spending on Education is down 3.74%, as a percentage of the total Budget, spending on Education is up .67%. Importantly, this Budget puts an additional \$42+ million into the Community College system to help folks train for new and better jobs. In addition 20% is spent on Health and Human Services of which almost two thirds is spent on Medicaid. Moreover, 11% is spent on Justice and Public Safety of which more than half is spent on prisons. These three, Education, Health and Human Services, and Justice and Public Safety, are 88% of the Budget. All of the rest of State Government runs on 12% of the Budget. This includes the Departments of Agriculture, Commerce, Labor, Environment and Natural Resources, Insurance, and Revenue, as well as Biotechnology Center, Rural Center, Auditor, Secretary of State, Treasurer, Board of Elections, Cultural Resources, Governor and Lieutenant Governor.

**Education:** Education is the key to our future and to jobs. The Budget spends almost \$35 million on Needs-Based-Scholarships.

**Issues Still Before Legislature:** This week issues may include whether to tax and regulate internet cafes that provide sweepstakes. This could generate almost as much education revenue as the Lottery. The industry wants the State to do exactly this. The alternative is to ban the business all together. Some folks in our District work in these facilities and want them regulated and taxed, not banned. What do you think?

**See the Bills and Contact Me:** You can see the bill discussed here by going to [www.ncleg.net](http://www.ncleg.net) and using the “Find Bills by Number” tool. The bill is S897. I would really like to know what you think. Please contact me at [Bill.Faison@ncleg.net](mailto:Bill.Faison@ncleg.net) to share your thoughts.