

# Bill's Seat – A Report from the North Carolina Legislature - May 16, 2010 (Caswell County)

By Representative Bill Faison

This is the second week of the Legislative Short Session. The focus is on promoting jobs, protecting education, streamlining government, and avoiding new taxes.

**Community Colleges Play a Vital Role in Preparing Folks for New Jobs:** We are very lucky to have two community colleges in our District, Piedmont Community College (PCC) in Caswell and Durham Technical Community College (DTCC) in Orange. Both are very important for helping people learn new skills to help them get better jobs. The current Budget spends over \$14.5 million at PCC and \$24.1 million at DTCC. Special allocations were made to each for equipment and Technical Education Programs. Enrollments in community colleges are up as more people turn to them for help qualifying for new and better jobs. During the Short Session we need to continue making these programs available to people who need them.

**Protecting Education:** The most important thing our State does is help educate our children. Approximately 55% of the State's Budget is spent on Education. It is approximately the same percentage of State's revenue collected from personal income taxes. Based on percentages, you could say that almost all personal income taxes are spent on education. Last Session we raised additional funds for education without raising income taxes on folks making less than two hundred thousand dollars a year. Those funds saved thirty four (34) teacher jobs in Orange County and fifteen (15) in Caswell County. This Session we are again facing how to protect education without raising taxes.

**Medicaid:** Many folks in our District depend on Medicaid for their health care. Several years ago Medicaid costs were going up so fast that counties were having a hard time paying the benefits. Some counties were raising property taxes so fast that folks were getting hurt. The Legislature and the Counties struck a deal. The State took over paying for Medicaid and the counties turned over a small percentage of sales tax. This deal for the past year benefits Caswell \$843,348 and Orange \$500,000.

**Reducing Prison Population:** The big three expenses in the State's Budget are Education (appx. 55%), Medicaid (appx. 25%) and Prisons (appx. 10%). These total 90% of the Budget. There are some people who need to be in prison for the safety and protection of the rest of us. However, some people are in prison because they cannot handle alcohol or fail at probation. A little money wisely spent could help save a lot of money, without turning hardened criminals loose on the rest of us. Last Session the Legislature made Justice and Public Safety Awards to Caswell for \$58,013 and to Orange/Chatham for \$173,467 in an effort to help. We need to continue looking for common sense ways to save money and cut government costs.

**Contact Me:** I hope you will contact me and let me know what you think as new issues come up. Please contact me at [Bill.Faison@ncleg.net](mailto:Bill.Faison@ncleg.net) to share your thoughts.