

Latest Updates from the NCGA



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NC Senate District 41 Newsletter

August 9, 2024

2024 Legislative Session In Recess



The NCGA ended our official short session in June. As a result, there have been no committee meetings or votes over the last two weeks. I'll keep you posted about any special sessions that may arise.

Tropical Storm Debby Legislative Briefing

DPS Emergency Management
NC DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC SAFETY

Existing FEMA Emergency Declaration

- FEMA Issued an Emergency Declaration on August 6th for
 - Category B limited to mass care, evacuation and sheltering and Direct Federal Assistance (51)
 - Direct Federal Assistance only (15)
- FEMA Added eight Counties onto the Declaration on August 7th for
 - Category B Direct Federal Assistance and limited to mass care, evacuation and sheltering
- Not currently approved
 - Category A – Debris Management
 - Categories C through G - Permanent Work

Tropical Storm Debby – EM-3608-NC
As of August 7th

Legend
Public Assistance Designation
Category B
DFA Only

STATE: North Carolina
NUMBER: FEMA-3608-EM
INCIDENT: Tropical Storm Debby
INCIDENT PERIOD: August 5, 2024, and continuing
DATE REQUESTED BY GOVERNOR: August 6, 2024
FEDERAL COORDINATING OFFICER: Rodrigo L. McAllister
National FCO Program

*EM declaration was limited to DFA and reimbursement for mass care, including evacuation and shelter support, under the Public Assistance Program.

FEMA DPS

I attended a briefing held by the NC Department of Public Safety's Emergency Management Agency on the damages caused, future concerns, and the recovery plan regarding Tropical Storm Debby.

From August 6 to 9, North Carolina saw 10 tornadoes and four fatalities as a result of the storm. It is estimated that 500,000 North Carolinians went without power during the event. 71 counties qualified for Direct Federal Assistance between August 6 and 7, and damage assessments are ongoing this week at the request of 12 local jurisdictions. Based on the damage assessment, counties and cities may be eligible for a State Disaster Declaration. Public assistance is limited only to emergency protective measures, debris, and roads/bridges, and individual assistance requires at least 26 uninsured homes with major damage.

Jurisdictions may call the Recovery Information Line at **919-605-8105** to request assistance, and individuals may have their needs met through the [North Carolina Volunteer Organizations Active in Disaster](#) (VOADS) and **211**. VOADS are aiding impacted residents across the state, while state and local agencies connect them to necessary resources. The State Emergency Response Team has distributed essential supplies like tarps, water, and meals as well. For residents that need assistance with clean up or damage from Debby, you can contact Crisis Cleanup at **1-844-965-1386** to connect with volunteer and local relief organizations.

State Budget Update: Community Colleges to Face Large Deficits



During this year's short session, the NC Community College System made only two requests of the North Carolina General Assembly: \$100 million toward the new Propel NC funding model and \$69 million for an enrollment growth adjustment to be distributed across the state's 58 community colleges. Unfortunately, neither of these requests was granted because no compromise budget was passed before legislative leadership adjourned the session. As a result, some colleges are facing large budget deficits for Fiscal Year (FY) 2024-25. **There is an approximately \$76.4 million difference in total funding, including tuition and registration fees, between what community colleges asked for this legislative session and what they will be operating with.** This deficit is more than the NCCCS has ever encountered.

The resolution passed outlining future meetings when the NCGA adjourned in June specified that the General Assembly cannot discuss budget adjustments until the session scheduled for November 19-22, 2024. NCCCS staff has already prepared the additional funding each college would get should the enrollment increase be allocated in November, and leadership has stated that they will call a special meeting to get those funds to colleges as quickly as possible. Learn more [here](#).

ECPI University's Commencement Ceremony



I was honored to be **the keynote graduation speaker** at [ECPI University's Charlotte Campus](#) Commencement Ceremony last weekend at the Knight Theater. ECPI is an accredited private university focusing on interactive learning through industry-related experience. ECPI graduates the highest number of African American nurses nationwide and is filling the need for nurses, computer engineers, and automation engineers. Additionally, about 30% of ECPI's students are veterans.

ECPI Charlotte's campus is located in SD41. This graduating class was comprised of 150 students who obtained degrees in nursing, medical assisting, computer information systems, and electronics engineering technology. Approximately 2/3 of the graduating class received a degree in a medical-related field. Many of these students are the first in their families to receive a college degree, and over 90% had been placed in a career in their field prior to graduation. **Congratulations to the Class of 2024 and their families!**



Four Years Since the Huntersville Pipeline Leak



Last week marked four years since discovery of the gasoline pipeline leak in Huntersville, which became the biggest leak of its kind in U.S. history. As of 2024, the area is still an active cleanup site, and much of the property around it is now owned by Colonial Pipeline. **When the pipeline was discovered, approximately 2,000,000 gallons of gas had already leaked out from the pipeline through a crack. As of August 8, 2024, 1,841,141 gallons of gasoline and 20,173,596 gals. of petroleum contact water (PCW) have been recovered.** Benzene, a carcinogenic component of gasoline, is still at dangerously high levels around the site, and there are worries about potential PFAS at the site as well. Clean up has slowed because the free product that remains is mixed with the groundwater. Colonial is building a water treatment plant on site, which will speed up the process, but clean up is expected to last several more years. See my interview with Queen City News [here](#).

SMART Week

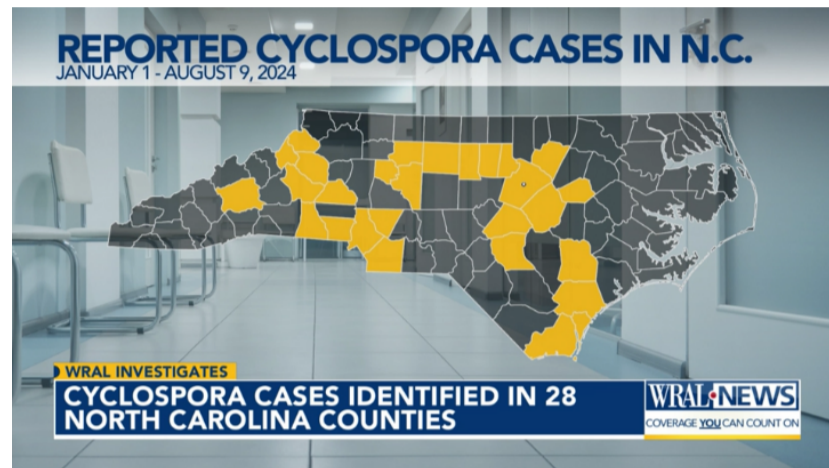


Everytown is marking the first annual SMART Week, August 26 - 30, 2024, as part of their campaign to prevent gun violence through the use of secure gun storage. **Firearms are the leading cause of death for children and teens in the United States as a result of unintentional shootings, youth suicides, and gunfire on school grounds.** This is partially the consequence of children having access to unsecured firearms. I encourage you all to “Be SMART” and take steps to protect your communities by:

- Securing all guns in homes and vehicles
- Modeling responsible behavior around guns
- Asking about the presence of unsecured firearms in other homes your child visits
- Recognizing the role of guns in suicide
- Telling your peers to **Be SMART.**

Learn more [here](#).

Cyclospora Parasite Illnesses Have Affected 28 Counties and More Than 200 North Carolinians



Twenty-eight counties in the state have reported cases of cyclospora, a food-borne parasite illness that has sickened at least 206 people across the state. **Mecklenburg County, along with Brunswick County, has the third highest number of cases, with 14 of these cases being reported in each county.** The illness could be coming from one widely distributed source or from more than one source, and the state is using tools such as grocery store membership cards and credit card receipts to track down the source. It can take anywhere from a few days to weeks for someone to get sick after consuming infected produce, which presents a challenge to tracking down the source.

Previous cases in the U.S. have been linked to raspberries, basil, cilantro, snow peas, and mesclun lettuce, commonly found in salad mixes. Consumers are advised to thoroughly wash their hands and produce and cut away bruised or damaged areas. The FDA notes that washing produce may not always be enough to kill the parasite, but **cooking produce will kill the parasite.**

Diarrhea, nausea, body aches, fever, and other flu-like symptoms usually characterize cyclosporiasis infections. If you believe you may be suffering from a cyclosporiasis infection, you should seek medical care through your primary doctor and request that the parasite be specifically tested through a stool sample. Learn more [here](#).

Central Piedmont Community College's Dental Clinic

PROFESSIONAL DENTAL CLEANINGS

CENTRAL PIEDMONT COMMUNITY COLLEGE DENTAL CLINIC



ALL PATIENTS WELCOME - EVEN IF YOU
HAVEN'T HAD A CLEANING IN 10+ YEARS!

Our Certified Dental Hygiene Instructors &
Dentists Check Over Everything We Do

**CALL OR TEXT TAYLOR
704-879-5742**

THIS IS AN EDUCATIONAL FACILITY -
CLEANINGS ARE COMPLETED IN MULTIPLE
APPOINTMENTS
MUST COMMIT TO COMING UNTIL YOUR
CLEANING IS COMPLETE

Located at Central Piedmont Community College's main campus (**1201 Elizabeth Ave, Charlotte, NC 28204**), CPCC's dental clinic allows customers to receive dental x-rays, plaque and tatar removal, non-surgical periodontal therapy, coronal polishing, fluoride treatment, and sealant procedures. **Patients will only be required to pay \$35 per appointment; insurance is not required.**

To become a patient, you must complete a free screening. This includes an oral assessment, which is completed to figure out how difficult treatment is needed. **Screenings are held on a walk-in basis Monday–Friday, at 8:30 AM or 12:30 PM in the summer or Monday, Wednesday, and Friday at 8:30 AM or 12:30 PM in the fall and spring.** Please call ahead to confirm hours before traveling to the clinic.

Following the screening, the clinic will assign one of their students based on what the students need for their program requirements. You may not be assigned immediately. Once assigned to a student, you will be scheduled for an appointment based on student requirements. **Appointments typically last up to three hours, and you may need multiple appointments. You must pay the \$35 fee when you arrive for your appointment.** Call **704-879-5742** for more information. Learn more [here](#).

September 24: State Health Plan Transition to Aetna - Information Event in Charlotte



For state employees and retirees with questions about the impending switch from BCBS to Aetna - mark your calendar! In 2025, Aetna will be the new Third-Party Administrator for the North Carolina State Health Plan Network. To aid in the transition, Aetna is hosting 20 information events across the state.

On **Tuesday, September 24**, the Open Enrollment Aetna Outreach Bus will be at Central Piedmont Community College (**1201 Elizabeth Avenue Charlotte NC 28204**) from **11:00 AM - 3:00 PM**, and Aetna representatives will be available to answer questions about the transition, including the ability to look up your providers. **Attendees will have the opportunity to receive a flu shot on a first-come, first-served basis.** No registration is required, and attendance is free. Learn more [here](#).

Mecklenburg County Homes Program Now Available for Homeowners in Charlotte and Davidson



The Helping Out Mecklenburg Homeowners with Economic Support (HOMES) Program has returned for another season. From **July 1 – Nov. 22, 2024**, Mecklenburg County is partnering with the City of Charlotte and the Town of Davidson to provide **grant funding to qualifying residential homeowners to help address the rising costs of retaining their homes.** Program recipients must apply for consideration annually.

Grant funds will be paid to the Mecklenburg County Tax Collector, **who will reduce the total amount of taxes due for qualifying recipients' primary residence.** The amount granted will equal 35% of the Mecklenburg County tax amount on the last available tax bill, rounded to the nearest dollar, not to exceed \$648.

Applicants must not be participants in any of the following programs:

- North Carolina Homestead Exclusion
- North Carolina Property Tax Homestead Circuit Breaker
- North Carolina Disabled Veterans Exclusion
- North Carolina Present Use Value (PUV) Program

To be eligible:

- The property must be located within Mecklenburg County, NC.
- The property must be the owner's legal primary residence at the time of application and consistently for the past three consecutive years, as verified by recorded legal documents.
- The resident grant recipient's name(s) must be on the recorded deed, title, or life estate.

Paper applications can also be obtained from:

- Department of Community Resources (**3205 Freedom Drive, Suite 1000, Charlotte, NC 28208**)
- County Assessor's Office (**3205 Freedom Drive, Suite 3500, Charlotte NC 28208**)
- Ella B. Scarborough Community Resource Center (**430 Stitt Road, Charlotte, NC 28213**)

Learn more about the program and complete the application [here](#). Contact the HOMES Program at **980-314-4663** or 4homes@mecknc.gov for help with the application process.

Sun Bucks Final Update



Your SUN Bucks benefits can now be used on Amazon. From now until September 30, you can get \$15 off one eligible \$50 or more purchase of groceries using promo code **15SEBT**. You do not need a Prime membership to get the savings! Scan the QR code below or visit [Amazon.com/SNAP](https://www.amazon.com/SNAP) and follow the instructions to get started. To scan, please use a separate mobile device.

Reminder: SUN Bucks benefits expire 120 days after they are issued. If you received the first SUN Bucks issuance in mid-June, you have less than a month left to spend your benefits. To check your SUN Bucks balance, you can: visit [ebtEdge.com](https://www.ebtEdge.com), download the ebtEDGE mobile app, or call **1-888-622-7328** and follow the automated instructions. **Please have your card number readily available.**

The USDA has launched a permanent program to provide food assistance to children and families during the summer. SUN Bucks will provide grocery-buying benefits to qualifying families with school-aged children during the summer months when schools are on summer break. SUN Bucks will be issued to EBT cards that families can use to purchase nutritious food. Beginning in summer 2024, families will receive \$120 per eligible child for the summer period. Some families will have to apply for the program, but many students will automatically qualify. Children will automatically qualify if they already participate in any of the following programs:

- Free or Reduced-Price (FRP) meals at school because they have an approved FRP application at school, or
- Food and Nutrition Services (FNS, food stamps), or
- Work First (Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), cash assistance), or
- Medicaid with household income below 185% of the federal poverty level, or
- Foster care.

Families will be able to use their EBT cards to buy food at grocery stores, farmers' markets, and [some online retailers](#). Find out if your child automatically qualifies or if you will need to apply for the program [here](#). View the Sun Bucks FAQ [here](#). Learn more [here](#), and receive information on the program as it becomes available [here](#).

amazon access

**Have an EBT card?
Save \$15 off one \$50 SNAP-eligible
grocery purchase on Amazon.
Free delivery.**



Scan Me

Registering or using your EBT card on Amazon.com is easy as 1, 2, 3.

1. Visit [Amazon.com/SNAP](https://www.amazon.com/SNAP) or take a picture of the QR code.
2. Sign up or sign in to Amazon.com to register your EBT card.
3. Shop for SNAP-eligible groceries, and use the promo code below at checkout.

Promo Code: 15SEBT

Terms and conditions apply. Promotion ends September 30, 2024.

Financial Update on the State's General Fund

| | |
|--|--------------------------|
| Beginning Cash, Friday, August 09 | 12,791,262,771.54 |
| Add Receipts: | |
| Tax and Non-Tax Receipts | 195,293,043.48 |
| Coronavirus Relief Receipts | 0.00 |
| Other Receipts | 476,594,405.19 |
| Less Disbursements: | |
| Payroll | 317,566,684.39 |
| State Aid | 123,016,388.22 |
| Medicaid/Other Provider Payments | 153,868,559.90 |
| Tax Refunds/Distributions | 499,074,195.75 |
| Debt Service | 0.00 |
| Coronavirus Relief Transfers Out | 0.00 |
| General Operating | 320,644,706.60 |
| Ending Cash, Friday, August 16 | 12,048,979,685.35 |
| Less Reserved Cash: | |
| Due to Local Governments – Sales and Use Tax Payable | 543,167,233.50 |
| Other Reserves | 12,801,565.46 |
| American Recovery Plan Act Reserve | 38,860,806.99 |
| Carry Forward Reserve | 669,658,947.90 |
| Clean Water Drinking Water Reserve | 0.00 |
| Coronavirus Capital Projects Reserve | 0.00 |
| Coronavirus Relief Reserve | 0.00 |
| Earthquake Disaster Recovery Reserve | 0.00 |
| Economic Development Project Reserve | 735,832,000.00 |
| Federal Infrastructure Match Reserve | 121,758,723.00 |
| Housing Reserve | 0.00 |
| Hurricane Florence Disaster Recovery Reserve | 27,623,240.47 |
| Information Technology Reserve | 410,307,521.00 |
| Local Fiscal Recovery Reserve-ARPA | 0.00 |
| Local Govt Coronavirus Relief Reserve | 0.00 |
| Local Project Reserve | 0.00 |
| Medicaid Contingency Reserve | 726,512,736.00 |
| Medicaid Transformation Reserve | 60,642,170.00 |
| NC GREAT Reserve | 0.00 |
| NC Innovation Reserve | 0.00 |
| Opioid Abatement Reserve | 48,571,688.89 |
| Public School Contingency Reserve | 0.00 |
| Public School Need Based Capital Reserve | 0.00 |
| Reg Economic Dev Reserve | 0.00 |
| Repairs and Renovations Reserve | 0.00 |
| Retiree Supplement Reserve | 0.00 |
| SCIF General Fund Reserve | 0.00 |
| Savings Reserve | 4,750,001,113.98 |
| Stabilization and Inflation Reserve | 1,000,000,000.00 |
| State Emergency Response/Disaster Reserve | 732,874,062.95 |
| Transportation Reserve | 100,000,000.00 |
| Unfunded Liability Solvency Reserve | 0.00 |
| Wilmington Harbor Enhancements Reserve | 283,800,000.00 |
| World University Games Reserve | 0.00 |
| Unreserved Cash Balance, Friday, August 16 | 1,786,567,875.21 |

The Office of the State Controller (OSC) released the General Fund Cash Watch numbers for the week ending Friday, August 16. OSC provides a weekly update on the State's General Fund cash position, which can be found at osc.nc.gov. **The current unreserved cash balance in state coffers is \$1.786 billion.**

The State Controller is North Carolina's chief fiscal officer and serves as an independent resource to ensure the financial integrity of the State.

Links to Helpful Information

Domestic Violence Hotline: If you or someone you know is experiencing domestic violence or partner abuse, please call [Safe Alliance](#) at **704-332-2513** and they can help you.

Free Property Tax Assistance Services: Do you need help with your property taxes? The [Charlotte Center for Legal Advocacy](#) is providing free assistance to help homeowners prepare their NC property tax relief applications. Call **980-256-7952** or visit their website to learn more [here](#).

Mecklenburg's County Bar website provides a list of pro bono resources for those unable to afford legal counsel.

Mecklenburg's Department of Community Resources provides individuals and families with [immediate access](#) to a diverse range of Mecklenburg County Health and Human Services programs and community partner services in Community Resources Centers throughout the County.

Mecklenburg's Energy Assistance Programs: Do you need help paying your heating or cooling bills? Mecklenburg offers [two different programs](#) to help eligible low-income households with their energy needs.

Property Tax values and histories in Mecklenburg County can be searched on [this site](#) that includes links to Polaris and information about past assessments. You can find more detailed information on real estate values on the [Mecklenburg](#) site.

Suicide Prevention: If you have thoughts of harming yourself, **please call or text 988**, the Suicide Prevention Hotline for help.

Unclaimed Cash! Visit [NCCash.com](#) today to see if you have unclaimed property under the supervision of the NC Treasurer's office. More info [here](#).

Voter Information: You can find your current information on the [NC Voter Lookup page](#).

Contact Our Office

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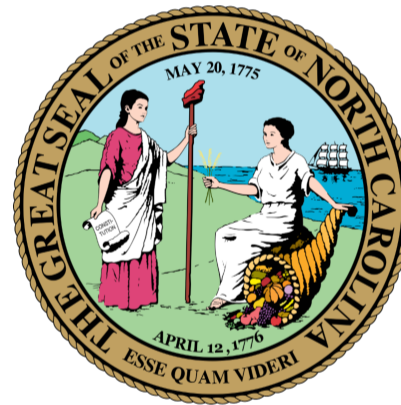
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How can we help you? Let us know and [reach out](#) to our office! We want to hear from you.

Senator Natasha Marcus | [Website](#)



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