



## **Representative McLawhorn's News from Raleigh**

**April 20, 2007**

Residents of Greenville and Pitt County suffered a great loss over the weekend with the accident resulting in the death of Officer Jason Campbell and Mr. Billy Ray Greene. I extend my prayers to their families and friends. Many of you know my youngest son is a New Your City policeman. I can't help but feel a deep gratitude for the men and women who put their lives at risk every day as they work to protect us.

House Members began this week with the same shock and disbelief that our entire country felt after Monday morning's tragic events at Virginia Tech. North Carolina used this unfortunate event as a learning experience and immediately began discussions to increase security at our own state universities. Attorney General Roy Cooper and the state's higher education leaders announced Wednesday that they will review campus safety as a result of the shooting deaths Virginia Tech suffered earlier this week. Erskine Bowles, president of the 16-campus University of North Carolina system, said the system had already planned to limit access to dorms and to install more cameras on its campuses. Cooper's task force will study lock-down procedures, how to improve communication with students and ways to better identify potential lawbreakers.

### **Education**

House education leaders moved quickly this week to start work on an initiative to improve the state's graduation rate, holding an information session with educators, business people, and leaders of community groups. Howard Lee, chairman of the State Board of Education, State Superintendent of Public Instruction June Atkinson, as well as members of Communities in Schools and the North Carolina Association of Educators, and others attended the hearing. Each presenter agreed that the state needed to use a multi-faceted approach and increase community involvement if it wanted to address the needs of students at risk of dropping out of school. The next step in the initiative is to hold two public hearings – one in Raleigh and one in Durham, where local community leaders, administrators, teachers, parents, and students are expected to share their concerns and ideas about how to reduce the dropout rate. I will let you know when these hearings will be if you would like to attend. The House is expected to approve legislation this session, possibly to create pilot programs using some of the ideas gathered at the hearings and from educators.

Nearly 100 undergraduate students from North Carolina universities visited the General Assembly on Tuesday as part of a research symposium. The research ranged from bee behavior to a study of access for the disabled to how racial bias influences jurors. A large number of students from East Carolina University were among those who participated in the symposium. I had the opportunity to talk with many of them, and I was very proud of their research activities.

My two education co-chairs and I continued to work on finalizing the education budget this week. The House budget chairmen have targeted the week of April 30 to vote to send our budget package to the Senate, with the intent of having the complete budget presented to the Governor for his signature by June 30.

### **Military**

Service members and small businesses would benefit from a proposal recently introduced in the House. The bill (H1499) would offer small businesses – those with 25 or fewer employees – tax credits for employing reservists or National Guardsmen who are called to active duty. The credits would help pay the cost of training people to replace the deployed service members and also the cost of reintegrating returning soldiers into the company's work force.

### **Health**

The House unanimously approved a bill (HB267) Monday that would outlaw the use or possession of alcohol inhalers. Violating the proposed law would be a Class 1 misdemeanor. The devices vaporize distilled alcohol and mix it with oxygen, allowing it to be breathed rather than drunk. The process allows alcohol to enter the bloodstream quicker. Seventeen other states have banned the devices. The Senate has also passed a version of the bill, and the chambers will negotiate a compromise.

The house will be back in session on Monday at 7 pm.