



Legislative Update

July 10, 2006

Please read and forward to your colleagues and networks!

General Assembly Buildings NOW 100% Smoke-Free

- Governor Signs HB 1133 into Law at 3 p.m.
- Ashtrays Removed from Buildings at 6 p.m.
- Senate Approves Community Colleges Bill at 8 p.m.

It's been a BIG day for tobacco cessation and prevention efforts in North Carolina.

At 3 p.m. today Governor Mike Easley signed HB 1133 into law officially making the General Assembly buildings 100% smoke-free. Ironically, as the members and partners of the NC Alliance for Health met for the monthly membership meeting, Governor Easley was taking the final step needed to fulfill the Alliance's 2006 goal of making the General Assembly buildings smoke-free. The Governor's signature today was an unexpected surprise as many observers thought the signature might come after the General Assembly had adjourned for the year (widely expected to conclude by the end of the week).

By 6 p.m. this evening several health advocates reported seeing staff carting off ashtrays from the Legislative Building and Legislative Office Building in large gray rolling bins. Shortly thereafter, when the House went into session, Speaker Jim Black (D-Mecklenburg) announced on the floor of the House that smoking is no longer allowed in the buildings. The historic announcement was met by cheers from both legislators and visitors in the gallery!!!!

Finally, just before 8 p.m. the full Senate took up HB 448, titled Community Colleges Exempt from Smoking Laws. Senator Bill Purcell (D-Scotland) explained that the bill would exempt the community colleges from the current state law requiring at least 20 percent of interior space be set aside for smoking. Exemption from this law will allow any community college that desires to designate its campus as smoke-free. The authority will rest with the board of directors of each community college.

Senator Purcell reported that there was wide-spread support for the bill within the community colleges system. And, WITH NO FURTHER DISCUSSION, the Senate approved the bill by a vote of 47 to 2. With no objections, the bill was immediately approved on third reading by voice vote and will be sent to the House for concurrence.

Next Steps for the Community Colleges Bill (HB 448)

Now that HB 448 has passed the Senate, it will be sent to the House. Because this is a bill that has already been passed by the House (just as with HB 1133, HB 448 was originally passed by the House in a different form on a different subject), the House can do one of several things with the bill:

- 1) the House could concur with the Senate version of the bill, and the bill would become law upon signature of the Governor;
- 2) the House could not concur and send the bill to a conference committee with the Senate to work out the differences between the House and Senate versions of HB 448; or,
- 3) the bill could be sent to a House committee (mostly likely the House Health Committee) for review and recommendation. The committee could either recommend or not recommend that the bill be approved by the full House, and then a vote by the full House would take place to concur or not concur.

Because the legislative session is expected to conclude by the end of the week, it is widely expected that HB 448 will be sent directly to the House floor for a concurrence vote, instead of being sent to the Health Committee as HB 1133 had been. If the House does not concur, a conference committee will need to be convened quickly to resolve differences and so that the bill can still be considered again by both houses before adjournment. We will keep you posted on the progress of HB 448 throughout the week.

Please Thank Governor Easley

Health advocates owe a great deal of thanks to Rep. Rick Glazier (D-Cumberland) and Senator Bill Purcell (D-Scotland) who have led the way on both making the General Assembly buildings smoke-free and the community colleges bill. Once HB 448, Community Colleges Exempt from Smoking Laws, winds its way through the House, we will ask that advocates express their thanks to Rep. Glazier and Senator Purcell for their efforts on both bills.

In the meantime, please thank Governor Easley for his quick signature of HB 1133 that made the smoke-free General Assembly buildings a reality – his actions will protect the health of all North Carolinians for years to come who visit or do business at the General Assembly.

How to Contact Governor Easley:

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To e-mail, go to: <http://www.governor.state.nc.us/email.asp?to=1>

Thank you to all the Alliance members and partners as well as their members, staff, volunteers and board members who worked to make these policy changes happen this legislative session. It is a testament to what can happen when you work together in coalition. Our efforts, along with those of our elected officials, will protect the health of the thousands of visiting schoolchildren, members of the public, legislators, and lobbyists – all of whom can now breathe freely while contemplating the public's business at the General Assembly.

For additional information about secondhand smoke issues or NC's cigarette tax, access the Alliance website at www.ncallianceforhealth.org for talking points and other resources.

Call 919-463-8328
or e-mail ncalliance@heart.org for more information