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One of the first uses of extraterritorial jurisdiction in North Carolina was in Greensboro, which was granted authority to prevent hog farms within a quarter mile of the city. State courts upheld that authority in 1912.

Incumbent Losses in Primary Elections Set Stage for Exciting General Election and New General Assembly in 2027

The March 3 primary elections were widely expected to portend the mood of the electorate at the start of the 2026 election season. And based on the results, they didn't disappoint. While at least one election's results are still to be decided, let's break down how things fell by the numbers below.

In one of the most-watched races in the state, Senate President Pro Tempore Phil Berger faced Rockingham County Sheriff Sam Page. This race saw a lot of attention from state and national media outlets, as well as from outside political groups. As of today (Friday, March 6), the race has yet to be called with Page currently leading Berger by just TWO votes. The counting of provisional and absentee ballots is underway, and it is likely we will not know the final results of this election for at least a couple of weeks.

With the retirement of US Senator Thom Tillis, open primaries in the Democratic and Republican parties presented voters with options on the state's next Senator. On the Democratic side, voters chose former Governor Roy Cooper by significant margins, with Cooper receiving more than 90% of the votes cast, beating five other candidates. On the Republican side, former NCGOP and RNC Chairman Michael Whatley beat six challengers, gaining 64% of the votes cast. Overall, almost 200,000 more votes were cast in the Democratic primary than in the Republican primary, indicating potentially higher voter enthusiasm.

In the North Carolina House of Representatives, seven incumbents were defeated, including 3 Democrats and 4 Republicans. On the list are Shelly Willingham (D), Nasif Majeed (D), Carla D. Cunningham (D), Reece Pyrtle (R), Keith Kidwell (R), Kelly Hastings (R), and Mark Pless (R). House races also saw two former members, Mike Hager and Michael Wray, fall short in their campaigns to return to Raleigh.

The North Carolina Senate also saw the loss of one incumbent, Chris Measmer (R), as well as the potential intrigue presented by the Berger-Page race outlined previously.

Coupled with 10 retirements across both chambers, this means that 1 in 10 legislators for the 2027-2028 General Assembly will be new to Jones Street.

House Property Tax Panel Meets a Third Time

A [NC House panel](#) considering property tax issues met for a third time Feb. 18 and continued its work to educate committee members on the state's property taxation system and existing exemptions.

Legislators heard from presenters focused on three key topic areas that can, and in many cases do, implicate local property taxes and the services they fund: recent federal mandates impacting local revenues and future obligations, nonprofit hospital tax exemptions, and recommendations from a [Tax Foundation report](#) recently

completed in partnership with the NC Chamber. You can view the presentations from the meeting on this [committee webpage](#).

Media outlets, including [WRAL](#) and [WUNC News](#), also compiled additional reports summarizing the meeting's activities. Legislators held discussions following each presentation, posing questions to legislative staff and the presenters.

At the conclusion of the meeting, the committee chairs asked members to provide any recommendations they would like considered as the committee completes its work prior to the start of the legislative short session in April. The chairs did not indicate if they intended to present a formal report or legislative recommendation, recognizing that this topic requires significant discussion and research.

The committee's next meeting is on Wednesday, March 18, at 10:00 AM.

Over the coming weeks, please take time to reach out to your legislators to share your insights on the importance of property tax-funded services in your community as this committee considers future recommendations. Your advocacy is important! The talking points below provide a starting point for these conversations, but please include examples from your community.

- Public safety spending among North Carolina cities and towns generally exceeds 40% of their general fund budgets. Any significant cuts to property taxes will damage the ability to keep North Carolina communities and their residents safe.
 - That spending level on public safety is even higher among the state's largest nine cities, home to roughly 3 million residents, with an average of 47% of general fund expenditures going to police, fire, and other public safety services. In those cities, spending on public safety has risen by an average of more than 6% annually since 2022
 - Since 2020, cities and towns – just like families and private businesses – have faced substantial increases in costs due to rising inflation. Those costs include higher salaries for workers like police officers, firefighters, sanitation workers, and building inspectors who are on the ground in communities every day, as well as increased costs for roads and bridges.
 - Property taxes are the only substantial sources of funding over which municipalities have direct control. Reductions in this revenue source leave city officials with limited options to fund critical services.
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Downzoning Law Draws Media Attention

The detrimental “downzoning” prohibition that became law in late 2024 has continued to draw media attention in recent weeks as local governments struggle with the provision. The law prohibits local governments from enacting an expansive range of zoning changes without first obtaining the written consent of all property owners in the new zone. Effectively, the law has stalled zoning changes and the development they would otherwise have allowed.

The News & Observer noted challenges faced by multiple local governments in this Feb. 18 report, while The Pilot reported on a similar example in [“Southern Pines Shelves Projects as State Law Remains.”](#) Yet [another article](#) discussed a legal threat that prompted Durham leaders to indefinitely postpone a public hearing on their proposed zoning updates.

The NC Senate [took action](#) last session to address this issue and allow local governments to initiate rezoning actions while still protecting existing private property rights. The bill, [SB 587 Clarify Nonconforming Uses](#), is eligible for further consideration in the upcoming Short Session by the NC House.

As the April 21 Short Session start date approaches, you should continue sharing stories of the real-life impact this downzoning provision has on your communities. It is imperative that legislators, particularly those in the NC House of Representatives, understand how this provision is hindering the ability of municipalities to address growth and economic development in their communities.

General Assembly Gets Closer to Short Session While Local Bill Filing Deadlines Loom

With the General Assembly’s short session just a little more than a month away, lawmakers still have two interim check-in sessions over the next 45 days, both of which are not expected to lead to any votes. Legislators are scheduled to return to Raleigh on Monday, March 9, and on Monday, April 6. Under a schedule of monthly “check-in” meetings, the General Assembly had reserved time to take up a limited scope of bills that are eligible under the legislature’s self-imposed limits. Those limits allow

consideration of matters that have passed either the House or the Senate, affect the state budget, or were vetoed by the Governor.

In advance of the short session, which will convene on April 21, NOW is the time to reach out to them to discuss issues affecting your local community that may require legislative fixes. Local bills must be requested by your NC House or Senate member. For 2026, local bills must meet the following deadlines: the bill must be submitted to the bill drafting office by Monday, April 13, and filed in their chamber by Tuesday, May 5.

Town and State Dinners Come to Wilmington and Concord; Greensboro, Hickory, and Raleigh Event Registrations Open

During the even-numbered years, NCLM hosts regional Town & State Dinners in locations across the state to provide local officials with the opportunity to engage directly with members of the General Assembly, discuss shared priorities and strengthen the partnerships that help move communities forward.

On February 25, we kicked off this year's series in Wilmington and traveled to Concord this Wednesday (March 4). Photos from both events are provided below. Through mid-April, we will travel to Greensboro, Hickory, and Raleigh, and registration for these is still open.

Not able to attend any of these regional dinners? Don't worry! In 2027, we will host our biennial Town & State Dinner in Raleigh. More details coming later this year.



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GREENSBORO
REGISTRATION

HICKORY
REGISTRATION

RALEIGH
REGISTRATION

Mayors Association Sees Record Turnout for Pinehurst Meeting

The North Carolina Mayors Association drew a record crowd of almost 100 mayors at its winter meeting in Pinehurst, February 19-20. Over the meeting's two days, attendees networked with mayors from across the state and heard from guest speakers and panelists, including State Auditor Dave Boliek, Sen. Tom McInnis, House Minority Leader Robert Reives, and Rep. Garland Pierce.



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