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Stein Address Focuses on Disaster Recovery Cooperation

In his first State of the State address, Gov. Josh Stein focused heavily on recovery from Hurricane Helene in western North Carolina and the cooperative approach required to achieve that goal, a message well-received by legislative leaders. Governor Stein's address on Wednesday before a joint session of the state House and Senate came as the House and Senate continue working to resolve differences regarding a \$500 million recovery package for western North Carolina, which would become the fourth Helene disaster assistance package approved by the legislature.

Governor Stein noted the work already achieved by government at all levels, nonprofits and the private sector in rebuilding roads, reconstructing water and sewer lines, and getting help to small businesses. Regarding the latest assistance package, he said, "I am ready to sign it." In his response, House Speaker Destin Hall called Helene recovery the legislature's "top priority" and said it was critical to set aside partisan differences to achieve that goal.

Both the House and Senate have approved separate versions of [HB 47 Disaster Recovery Act of 2025 – Part I.](#), and are now negotiating to work through those differences to send a final bill to be signed into law by Governor Stein. Among the differences are funding for crop losses, rental assistance and small business grants. Read more about the State of the State address [here](#) and [here](#).

Transportation Projects Face Delays, Uncertainty

Hundreds of transportation projects across North Carolina may face delays under the latest State Transportation Improvement Plan, or STIP, recently released by the state Department of Transportation. Those delays come on top of the potential for road maintenance project delays as the state DOT may be forced to shift dollars to address road repair needs caused by Hurricane Helene. [WNCN reports](#) that state transportation officials say inflation creating cost increases and other factors could lead to as many as 200 projects being bumped back under the STIP. The state DOT updates the 10-year plan every two years, outlining statewide road projects and their projected timelines for start and completion.

Meanwhile, [The News & Observer of Raleigh reports](#) that state officials have asked the federal government to cover all road and bridge repair costs needed due to Hurricane Helene, rather than the roughly 80 percent that it is expected to pay. Without that additional federal assistance, the state will have put around \$900 million into those repairs, with some money expected to be shifted from road maintenance elsewhere in the state. Read about the transportation challenges [here](#) and [here](#).

House Bill Halting Garner's ETJ Expansion Advances Amid Local Opposition

A [measure](#) to pause the expansion of Garner's Extraterritorial Jurisdiction (ETJ) passed the [House State and Local Government](#) committee this week. Though the bill seems to be aimed at Garner, [HB 173 Wake County ETJ](#), prevents all Wake County municipalities from extending ETJ authority beyond their current boundaries until December 31, 2028.

The legislation has drawn opposition from Garner officials, who argue that it undermines local planning efforts and economic development. [A WRAL report](#) references comments made by Garner Assistant Town Manager John Hodges at the committee meeting, "We have been working for years with the Turnpike Authority to plan for what things would look like in south Wake County once 540 was opened," Hodges said. "We've worked for years to ensure that there was infrastructure built into 540 so that utilities could be extended. And we're trying to meet the goals of 540 by creating job centers along the 540 corridor." The grassroots opposition underscores the importance of municipal decision-making in shaping responsible growth and preserving long-term community interests.

The bill heads to the [House Judiciary 1 committee](#), where it awaits its next hearing.

NC Municipal Leaders Take Concerns to DC

This week, more than 150 municipal leaders from across North Carolina joined their counterparts from across the country at the National League of Cities Congressional City Conference in Washington, D.C. Attendees participated in numerous sessions with nationally recognized speakers and met with members of the North Carolina congressional delegation on Capitol Hill. Also, on Tuesday night, attendees gathered for the North Carolina Reception at Hotel Zena, overlooking the famous Lafayette Square.

On Capitol Hill, bipartisan support for those still dealing with Hurricane Helene's impact in western North Carolina resonated throughout the delegation. Attendees also heard bipartisan support for protecting the tax exemption on municipal bonds, a theme

echoed in [a joint letter](#) from NCLM Executive Director Rose Vaughn Williams and NCACC Executive Director Kevin Leonard to the delegation in late January.



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