



July 12, 2024 | [nclm.org](https://nclm.org)

## Governor Vetoes Building Code Reform Bill

[SB 166 Building Code Regulatory Reform](#) was among five bills that Gov. Roy Cooper vetoed over the last week. The vetoes followed a frenetic final week of legislating before the Fourth of July week, with members of the General Assembly headed back to their districts afterward. The governor and his advisers then sorted through legislation to determine what would be signed into law, vetoed or allowed to become law without his signature.

SB 166 contained several provisions impacting municipal operations, including regulations on backflow preventers, impervious surfaces, performance guarantees and utility agreements. In the governor's veto message, he objected to SB 166 based on its reorganization of the Commercial Building Code Council. During this biennium, Governor Cooper has vetoed a record setting 27 bills. The Republican majorities in the House and Senate have successfully overridden his veto 22 times, and this latest set of vetoed bills may follow a similar path.

Separately, the governor allowed [SB 607 Regulatory Reform Act of 2024](#) to become law without his signature. The bill passed after the addition of a last-minute House amendment that will require cities and towns to pay business owners for the cost of an on-premise sign and its replacement cost when a new sign ordinance forces the removal of a sign. SB 607 also includes provisions increasing the criminal penalties for anyone damaging critical infrastructure. A separate provision, identical to one contained in SB 166, puts new limits on municipal requirements that can be included in utility agreements.

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## Firefighters Cancer Benefit Made Permanent

Among the late-session pieces of legislation passed and then signed into law last week by Gov. Roy Cooper is a measure that will make permanent the pilot program to provide a supplemental insurance benefit to firefighters diagnosed with cancer. The state-funded benefit, providing an immediate lump-sum payment upon a diagnosis of cancer, is intended to pay for any out-of-pocket medical costs and other costs not covered by health insurance or sick leave. It came about due to concerns about firefighter-related cancer exposure.

[SB 319 Insurance Rev/Online Auctions/Firefighters](#) requires that the Office of State Fire Marshall oversee the program as a self-funded (state) program through a third-party administrator, rather than through the purchase of a private insurance product. The new law also increases the maximum lump-sum benefit for each diagnosis. The program is being made permanent after the NC Firefighters Association and NCLM worked to put together [a legislative proposal](#), approved as a pilot program in 2021, that would address firefighters' needs regarding cancer costs without changes to larger workers compensation benefits. Changes to the larger workers compensation system would have brought financial uncertainty for cities and towns, still led to litigation and benefit delays for those with cancer, and were opposed by private business interests.

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## North Carolina Leads on ARPA Infrastructure Spending

A new report from the Pew Charitable Trust shows that North Carolina is among national leaders when it comes to spending federal American Rescue Plan Act dollars on drinking water, wastewater and stormwater infrastructure. The report shows North Carolina fifth among all states in ARPA funding directed to water-related infrastructure, with 37 percent going toward those projects. When looked at on a per-capita basis, the spending on water-related infrastructure remained among the highest in the country. The spending is a reflection of a commitment by state and local leaders to address one of the most pressing public needs with the infusion of these dollars. You can read more about the report [here](#).

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## Metro Mayors Coalition Meets in Raleigh

The N.C. Metropolitan Mayors Coalition (MMC) met with Gov. Roy Cooper at the Executive Mansion late last month as part of the group's [summer meeting in Raleigh](#). Founded in 2001, MMC is a non-partisan, mayor-driven organization that focuses on issues of special interest to our larger cities and metro regions in a fast-growing and urbanizing state. An affiliate of the League, MMC and its members work with each other and federal and state officials to promote policies that encourage high quality of life, job creation, protect local revenues, invest in public infrastructure, and keep our cities safe. During Wednesday's gathering in downtown Raleigh, MMC mayors updated one another on the happenings in their communities and heard a presentation from Raleigh Chief of Police Estella Patterson before a lunch hosted by Gov. Cooper at his residence, where MMC Chair Bill Saffo, the longtime mayor of Wilmington, presented the governor with an award for his support. Afterward, the mayors regrouped for additional discussion, which included a legislative update and a visit with Sen. Mike Woodard of Durham.

PHOTO GALLERY

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## Supreme Court Ruling Preserves Local Authority on Homelessness

Among its many significant rulings this summer, the US Supreme Court has rejected arguments that enforcement of a local government no-camping ban on public property amounted to cruel and unusual punishment under the 8th Amendment. [The decision](#) stemmed from a case in which Grant Pass, Oregon, passed a local ordinance that imposed fines, and for repeat offenders, even the possibility of jail time, for camping in city parks and other public areas. In response, two homeless individuals in Grants Pass filed a class action lawsuit on behalf of those who are similarly situated in the city, and both a lower court and the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals ruled in their favor.

The Supreme Court ruling represents a win for local governments in their efforts to address homelessness at the local level. It is worth noting that the Oregon city of 38,000 that approved the contested ordinance operated four homeless shelters. In overturning the Ninth Circuit decision, the Court acknowledged that different policymakers across varying jurisdictions need access to all available tools and resources to address homelessness as they see fit. The National League of Cities, which filed an amicus brief siding with Grant Pass, stated “this case returns the hard task of solving the homeless crisis to state and local policymakers, where it belongs, with resource support from the federal government.” [Read more about the case here.](#)

## Publications Note

The Legislative Bulletin will be returning to its monthly publication schedule with the sending of the next edition. With most legislative business concluded for the year, look for the next Bulletin on Friday, Aug. 2, and on the first Fridays of subsequent months thereafter. As always, we will continue to keep you up to date on policy-related news and as state lawmakers return to Raleigh for a handful of brief sessions to finish up business for the year.



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