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The Recap

The November battlefield is set.

With the state Board of Elections unanimous vote in the final week of March, the election primary results from March 5 have been certified. Three Republican primaries head to a May 14 runoff, including the races for the 13th Congressional District, Lt. Governor, and State Auditor. That means the primary election season will continue for another six weeks, but the general election contests for all 170 North Carolina House and Senate races are set.

A lot of advertising ink and TV time will be spent over the next seven months on the battle for North Carolina's 16 electoral votes for president and what is likely to be a knock-down fight for governor. Further down the ballot, the big question will be whether Republicans in the legislature will be able to keep their supermajorities. Following another round of redistricting, many incumbents are running in districts that have different geography or partisan leans than they faced just two years ago.

In the Senate, the closest five districts based on partisan lean will determine whether Republicans can get to the 30 seats needed for a supermajority. Incumbent Senators Lisa Stone Barnes, R-Franklin, and Danny Britt, R-Robeson, are running in familiar territory but are in districts with tight partisan makeups. Rep. Terence Everitt, D-Wake, decided to run for 18th Senate District, which includes sections of northern Wake County and Vance County, which is a swingly suburban and exurban district with a very slight Republican advantage. The final two Senate districts to watch are the 13th in southern Wake County, where Democratic Senator Lisa Grafstein moved following redistricting, and the open 42nd Senate District in eastern Mecklenburg County. Both districts have very slight Democratic advantages and will be key battlegrounds in November.

House Republicans start with an advantage in keeping their majority, however, the road to a supermajority is more challenging. To prevent a supermajority, Democrats will need to succeed in suburban districts where Republicans hold a partisan advantage of between 1 and 5 percent, without losing any of their own seats. Two Cabarrus County-based seats are indicative of what both parties will face in the fall. The 73rd and 82nd Districts are centered around Concord and the growing suburban region around Charlotte and the I-85 corridor. These districts have a Republican lean following redistricting, unlike the slight Democratic advantage incumbent Rep. Diamond Staton-Williams (D-Cabarrus) had when she won her seat in 2022.

With turnout expected to be high in November, the battle for NC House and Senate seats in competitive districts will be fierce. Both Republican and Democratic leaders are optimistic in their prospects, but as always only time will tell.

John McDonald



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Interim Oversight Committee Discusses Workforce Housing

Local land-use regulation was again a key focus for state legislators as the interim [Joint Legislative Economic Development and Global Engagement Oversight Committee](#) met last week to discuss workforce housing. In a [presentation](#) given by officials from the Charlotte-area Real Estate and Building Industry Coalition (REBIC), legislators were told that they “need to put a tighter leash on local governments if they want to address the increased costs and shortages of housing.”

REBIC officials blamed conditional zoning processes, water and sewer negotiations, and stormwater regulations for the lack of available and affordable housing, citing examples from their members in and around Mecklenburg County. They also repeated a National Association of Homebuilders statistic, based on national member surveys and not hard data, that 24 percent of home costs are attributable to regulation. The presentation failed to acknowledge that the NHBA’s own data cites building code requirements (determined by the State, not local governments, in North Carolina) as overwhelmingly the largest single regulatory cost.

In response to the presentation, NCLM Director of Political Communication and Coordination Scott Mooneyham told the NC Tribune, a political newsletter produced by Business North Carolina: “National figures looking at housing starts and regulatory environments, including those from the Federal Reserve Bank of St. Louis, comparing North Carolina’s major metropolitan areas to others around the country, consistently show North Carolina cities to have the fewest regulatory burdens and some of the highest rates of housing starts relative to other areas of the country.”

NCLM urges members to continue to educate legislators about ways in which cities are responding with local policy changes designed to encourage builders to build more affordable housing rather than focusing only on higher-end home construction. This report issued last year, [Local Governments Responding: The Housing Crisis in North Carolina](#), details those efforts. In addition to the report, you can find associated documents [here](#).

Legislative Leaders Offer Insight on Legislative Priorities

The short session is set to begin on April 24, and Tim Moore, Speaker of the North Carolina House of Representatives, [confirmed](#) that the budget will be the main point of

business. Both Speaker Moore and staff for Senate leader Phil Berger recently spoke to members of the media ahead of the session regarding what their agendas might entail. Speaker Moore addressed the possibility of additional raises for teachers and state employees, while also mentioning proposals to address inflation, immigration, and antisemitism, including potentially taking up a Senate bill introduced last year that sought to define antisemitism as a hate crime.

Like Moore, Berger's office also mentioned illegal immigration as a topic that may be the subject of legislation. They too discussed [budget priorities](#).

With Moore's Congressional District race on the horizon, as well as all 170 state legislative races, leaders in both the House and Senate appear to be pushing for a truly short session, by and large avoiding controversial legislation. The effects of those sentiments on any municipal-related issues remains to be seen.

NLC Congressional Cities Conference

The extension of the obligation deadline for American Rescue Plan funds was a key topic in meetings between N.C. city officials and members of the state's congressional delegation as a part of the National League of Cities Congressional Cities Conference held in Washington in March. NCLM President William Harris of Fuquay-Varina, First Vice President Mark-Anthony Middleton of Durham, Second Vice President Martha Sue Hall of Albemarle and Immediate Past President Karen Alexander of Salisbury met with members of Congress and/or their staff, including Sen. Thom Tillis, Sen. Ted Budd, Rep. Dan Bishop, Rep. Wiley Nickel and Rep. Valerie Foushee.

In addition to the ARPA deadline, other topics discussed included modernization of the federal Highway Trust Fund, PFAS regulation, and the extension of the Affordable Connectivity Program to provide broadband payment assistance. The League's Legislative Policy Committee, a 65-member internal committee of city officials appointed by the NCLM President, developed the list of priorities for these discussions. You can find a full look at the federal policy issues discussed [here](#).

Local Bill Request Deadline is April 15

The reconvening of the North Carolina General Assembly is just around the corner, and a key bill filing deadline will come even sooner. Local bills, important to cities and towns to address certain key local concerns, must be submitted to the Bill Drafting Division of the Legislative Services Office by April 15 at 4 pm. They then must be introduced in either the state House or Senate by May 7. If you have a need for a local bill, that means it is critical to have conversations with you local legislators now. Legislators themselves must make these requests and meet the April 15 deadline. The General Assembly will reconvene for its Short Session on April 24.



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