

# North Carolina Sheriffs' Association

Proudly Serving the Sheriffs and Citizens of North Carolina since 1922



Weekly Legislative Report

October 25, 2019

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This week has seen a good bit of activity at the legislature. Several “mini-budget” bills have gotten consideration and support as they progress through the legislative process towards Governor Roy Cooper’s desk for his consideration.

Law enforcement and prosecutorial concerns with two bills have been addressed by the legislature tentatively agreeing to make various changes to the bills to address the public safety concerns. Most notably are House Bill 511, North Carolina First Step Act and Senate Bill 315, North Carolina Farm Act of 2019. While the legislative process is very complex, slow and lengthy, we are grateful to legislative leaders working on these issues in both the House and Senate for listening to, considering and responding to the public safety concerns of law-enforcement and prosecutors.

The legislature seems to be on track for finishing up current business sometime next week, with a more lengthy break expected thereafter. The vendors in Raleigh this week at the NC State Fair who guess your weight or your birth month are likely to be more accurate than anyone who is guessing about the date on which the legislature will actually adjourn or guessing on how long the adjournment will last.

The House and Senate both adjourned on Thursday and will reconvene Monday evening.

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## BILL STATUS

[HOUSE BILL 100](#), DOT Budget for 2019-2021 Biennium, which is summarized in the October 4, 2019 Weekly Legislative Report, has been approved by the General Assembly and has been signed into law by Governor Roy Cooper with an effective date of July 1, 2019, unless noted otherwise in the bill.

[HOUSE BILL 511](#), North Carolina First Step Act, which is summarized in the October 11, 2019 Weekly Legislative Report, has passed the House, passed the Senate with amendment and has been sent back to the House for consideration of the Senate amendment. **The North Carolina Sheriffs' Association is OPPOSED – HIGH PRIORITY to the original version of this bill. However, the bill has been significantly rewritten at the request of the North Carolina Sheriffs' Association and the North Carolina Conference of District Attorneys, and the North Carolina Sheriffs' Association therefore SUPPORTS the current version of the bill.**

[HOUSE BILL 1001](#), Raise the Age Funding, which is summarized in the October 11, 2019 Weekly Legislative Report, has been approved by the General Assembly and has been signed into law by Governor Roy Cooper with an effective date of July 1, 2019, unless noted otherwise in the bill.

[SENATE BILL 61](#), Handicapped & Various Other License Plates, has been amended to change the entire content of the bill and to rename the bill "Community Colleges Budget/2019-2021 Biennium." The bill has been approved by the General Assembly and sent to Governor Roy Cooper for his signature.

The bill, as amended, would enact a budget for the North Carolina Community College System and would make various other changes that impact the Community College System. Of interest to the criminal justice community, the bill as amended would add survivors of correctional officers killed in the line of duty, and the spouses and children of correctional officers who are disabled due to a traumatic injury sustained in the line of duty, to the list of individuals eligible to attend classes through the various institutions of The University of North Carolina and the North Carolina Community Colleges tuition free. A correctional officer would be defined as a person who is certified as a State correctional officer under the North Carolina Criminal Justice Education and Training Standards Commission.

Currently, these tuition waiver benefits are provided to the survivors, spouses, and children of law enforcement officers, firefighters, volunteer firefighters, and rescue squad workers killed or who have received traumatic injuries in the line of duty.

The bill, as amended, would also authorize the North Carolina State Board of Community Colleges to provide waiver of tuition and registration fees for students who are employed by campus police agencies at private colleges and universities. Currently, the Board of Community Colleges is authorized to provide waiver of tuition and registration fees for students employed by municipal, county, or State law enforcement agencies.

[SENATE BILL 315](#), North Carolina Farm Act of 2019, which was last summarized in the August 23, 2019 Weekly Legislative Report, has passed the Senate, passed the House with amendment and was sent back to the Senate for consideration of the House amendment. A Conference Committee consisting of both House and Senate members was appointed to resolve the differences between the House and Senate versions of the bill.

This week, the Conference Committee unanimously voted to amend the bill to make smokable hemp, which is indistinguishable from illegal marijuana without the aid of scientific testing, unlawful in North Carolina beginning June 1, 2020. The bill would make it a Class 1 misdemeanor to possess smokable hemp on or after that date. Previous versions of this bill made smokable hemp unlawful beginning December 1, 2019 and May 1, 2020.

The bill is scheduled for House and Senate consideration on Monday, October 28. **The North Carolina Sheriffs' Association SUPPORTS – HIGH PRIORITY enactment of this legislation to clearly make smokable hemp unlawful effective June 1, 2020.**

[SENATE BILL 579](#), Prison Reform Act of 2019, which is summarized in the October 11, 2019 Weekly Legislative Report, has been approved by the General Assembly and sent to Governor Roy Cooper for his signature.

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The **Weekly Legislative Report** is provided at no charge as a service to the sheriffs, criminal justice community and citizens of North Carolina.

North Carolina Sheriffs' Association, Inc.

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