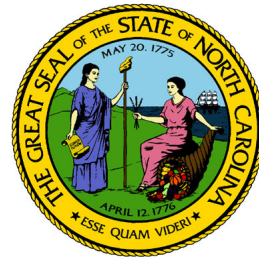




Rep. Ruth Samuelson

Online with Ruth

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February 13, 2009

LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

Raleigh, NC

Hello from Raleigh!

What a privilege to begin my second term as the Representative for North Carolina's 104th District.

You are well aware of the real challenges facing the legislature this Session. There is no time to waste on name calling, selfish delays and pet projects. To be true to our oath of office we must work together as never before, making sure that this state government is as lean and cost efficient as possible while focusing on the things that make a truly positive impact on our economy. Fortunately, I believe that this Legislature does have the determination to work on issues together. This makes me optimistic despite the difficulties we must overcome.

Committee assignments were made this week. I am honored to serve as Vice Chair on both the Aging and Energy and Energy Efficiency Committees. My other assignments are as a Committee Member of the Appropriations and its Natural and Economic Resources sub-committee; Commerce, Small Business and Entrepreneurship; Education and its sub-committee on Universities; Environment and Natural Resources; Local Government II; and a newly formed Water Resources and Infrastructure Committee. Each of these assignments will give me the opportunity to press for innovation that will yield better long-term benefits at less expense. (They will also keep me very busy!)

The budget is everyone's priority. As a member of the Appropriations Committee, I'll do all I can to see that spending is kept within our means by adopting best business practices and advances gleaned from other states or industries. If you know of good options that we should consider, please share them with me.

As I mentioned above, Speaker Hackney has created a new committee to specifically deal with water issues. I am encouraged that he clearly sees this as a priority issue for our entire state which can't be delayed until the economy improves. As I work on water and other environmental issues, I will continue to advocate for smart options like performance contracting that are efficient and cost-effective.

I had hoped to be appointed to a Judiciary committee in order to influence criminal justice concerns. That didn't work out, but I do have a break at that meeting time and I will do my best to sit in on those sessions whenever possible. All of us need to be alert to resolving the problems of our criminal justice system, especially those that impact the safety of our communities.

Returning to the Education Committee will be positive. I have already signed on to education bills that would support the expansion of charter schools where they are requested and qualified. It is counter-intuitive to limit these community-supported public schools while education funds are tight. Also, out of fairness to the teachers who were impacted, I signed on to a bill that would restore the promised ABC funding for 2008 qualifying teachers which was cut in the last session.

I encourage you to take an active interest in your state government. Committee meetings and floor debates are open to the public and you may follow individual bills at www.ncleg.net. Your personal calls and letters are always welcome, too. Legislators do take notice when an individual has taken the time to think through an issue and explain why they do or do not support it.

Please let me know whenever I can be of help to you in Raleigh. My assistant, Susan, and I will do our best to answer questions, address concerns, or point you in the right direction if it is beyond our expertise.

Finally, may I ask you to remember to pray for all of our elected officials? From the President to our town councils, all of us need wisdom and courage as we navigate the current economy. Pray that we will focus on what is needed and do what is best for our future. Pray, too, for all the citizens of our state and nation, that once again we will be strengthened by adversity and discover new paths to progress.

Please feel free to contact us with any concerns or comments you may have. We look forward to hearing from you. You can reach us at our Raleigh number at (919) 715-3009 or you can email us at ruths@ncleg.net or samuelsonla@ncleg.net

Best wishes,
Representative Ruth Samuelson
District 104, Mecklenburg County

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Susan Phillips Legislative Assistant