



## **Extremely slow start to 2017 legislative session**

Although the General Assembly's 2017 "long" session began in late January, activity in the House and Senate – both in terms of committee meetings and bill introductions – has been more measured and slow-paced compared to past legislative sessions.

Some larger bills on top-of-mind issues such as regulatory reform are being drafted and will be introduced strategically. It is anticipated that companion bills will again be filed by Sen. Bill Cook and Rep. Chris Millis on property insurance reform. Each chamber has different deadlines for bills to be filed. In the House, local bills must be submitted to Bill Drafting by 4pm March 15, and introduced by 3pm March 29. Local bills in the Senate must be submitted to Drafting by 4pm March 7, and filed by 4pm March 15. Public bill deadlines are slightly later in each chamber. April 27<sup>th</sup> is the crossover deadline, the date by which a bill must be passed by one chamber or the other in order to remain eligible for consideration as the session continues.

Lawmakers have begun to receive briefings on the state budget and revenue forecast. Last week they learned that North Carolina will end this fiscal year \$522 million ahead of what was projected last summer. A key part of this year's budget work is for to agree on how to put that surplus to the best use.

Joint Appropriations committees have started meeting in earnest this week which means that conversations will be starting among leadership on budget target amounts and provisions. The Shallow Draft Inlet Fund language and funding has come through these budget provisions. The Senate will release its budget proposal first this session – the estimated timeline for that to occur is later this spring, after final revenue numbers come in April – and the House will follow with its own proposal.

In the meantime, the Senate is expected to try to re-start its proceedings to confirm Governor Cooper's Cabinet appointees. Last week, a three-judge panel rejected the Governor's request to continue to block the Senate's plans to confirm his Cabinet appointees. A hearing on the constitutionality of the confirmation process is scheduled for March 7. The Senate has adopted a schedule to review Cabinet appointees, including two secretaries of interest:

- Feb.16 - Nominee for Secretary of the N.C. Department of Natural and Cultural Resources, Susi Hamilton (Senate Committee on Agricultural, Economic and Natural Resources)
- March 8 - Nominee for Secretary of the N.C. Department of Environmental Quality, Michael Regan (Senate Committee on Agricultural, Economic and Natural Resources)

Another key date is March 9<sup>th</sup>, when the N.C. Beach, Inlet & Waterway Association will have it Legislative Breakfast at 7:30 am in the Legislative Cafeteria to explain the 2016 Update to the NC Beach and Inlet Management Plan (BIMP) and share the NCBIWA legislative agenda.