



The General Assembly returned to Raleigh at the end of January to begin the 2019 long session. Although Republicans lost the super majority, they maintained the overall majority in the legislature. Nevertheless, the loss of a veto-proof Republican majority will result in a different dynamic than last year's session. As expected, many Republican legislators disagree with Democrat Governor Cooper's agenda – especially on items relating to labor laws (minimum wage) and health care (Medicaid expansion), and vice versa. Some legislators have highlighted the importance for collaborative, bipartisan efforts this session in order to get anything accomplished. One shared expectation throughout the legislature is that this long session will be a very long one, indeed.

As communities across the state continue to face funding challenges in their recovery efforts following recent hurricanes, legislators have demonstrated their commitment to help.

The Eastern N.C. Disaster Recovery and Resiliency Alliance met this week at the NC Legislative Building. Representative Holly Grange (R-New Hanover) led the event, which highlighted efforts to “accelerate financial help and to take steps to prevent debilitating flooding in the next major storm,” according to [this](#) *News & Observer* article. The article outlines the alliance's priorities as:

- Expediting resources for roads and other forms of transportation to make sure there is adequate evacuation and access for emergency personnel.
- Improve public roads and buildings to lower the risk of collapses during hurricanes.
- Increase state funding for stream, tributary and river management to prevent flooding.
- Dedicate a "significant" amount of money to building affordable housing, and make better use of tax credits available in counties declared as being in a state of disaster.

Senator Harry Brown (R-Onslow), Co-Chair of Senate Appropriations Committee, continues to be an advocate for the coastal region. He conveyed interest in pursuing efforts to support coastal areas with funding until they receive approved FEMA funds. We have been helping his office gather information from various stakeholders to assist Sen. Brown in determining the best plan of action.

LEGISLATION OF INTEREST – ACTION THIS MONTH

[SB 77 / HB 127](#): Ag Disaster Fund/Certain Counties were filed this week (2/18 and 20/19, respectively). These are companion bills that would extend the deadline to apply for the Hurricane Florence Agricultural Disaster Program of 2018 for certain counties that received a Presidential or Secretarial Disaster Declaration as a result of Hurricane Michael after the original deadline. The legislation would require the NC Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services to accept completed applications from people eligible for financial assistance for no more than 10 consecutive business days on which the federal government is not partially or fully shut down, beginning on the effective date of this bill. It would expire on the date the Department has processed all applications validly received during the given period.