

ECNC Weekly Update, June 11, 2006

Prepared by Connie Wilson

The halls of the legislature were packed as municipal elected officials lobbied at the General Assembly for two days. They worked their issues during the day and took their senators and representatives for dinner at night. With the crowded hallways, packed appointment schedules and appropriations work, the legislators were bone tired by Thursday afternoon.

The budget is still the only focus. There are few substantial bills passing either chamber. The House plans to vote on their budget this coming Thursday, which will mean budget conferees probably will be meeting during the weekend. Sen. Marc Basnight said this week he would be willing to send the Senators home while a small group stayed behind and negotiated the budget. Translated in another way---it may be a long summer.

Action Bills

House Bill 1895 (= S1681) – Establish High Risk Pool was introduced by Representative Insko and establishes the NC Health Insurance Risk Pool to appropriate funds thereof. Every individual covered by a small business health insurance plan and some that are covered by ERISA will have their insurer assessed \$24 a year to fund the high risk health insurance pool. It is estimated that approximately 18,000 people who, because of health issues, cannot find affordable insurance will purchase through health insurance through this pool. There have been many questions raised about the actual cost of the program and the financial shortfalls that may occur. The bill passed House Finance on Thursday with a unanimous vote.