The House formally voted last Wednesday to reject the Senate’s sweeping changes to House Bill 765, which became a 54 page regulatory reform bill. On Tuesday of last week the House held a 2 hour committee and allowed the public to comment on the bill. PENC member Jeff Thompson of Withers & Ravenel spoke on behalf of PENC. Upon voting not to concur with the Senate changes, the House appointed eight conferees to negotiate with the Senate, including Representative Arp. Once the Senate appoints its conferees, negotiations may begin. PENC is heavily engaged in the progress of this bill.

Negotiations continue for the budget. The House and Senate must agree on Medicaid reform and a tax plan before they can really dig into negotiations. All eyes are watching the conversations surrounding those issues. The goal is for the new budget to be finalized by the August 14th deadline, however, negotiations could continue beyond then.

Governor McCrory issued a veto threat of the entire budget last week if it included Senator Harry Brown’s sales tax revenue plan. Brown’s plan would allocate much of the state’s sales tax money based on population, instead of keeping the money where sales occur. This plan would offer a boost to small, rural counties, while some urban counties could lose millions.

The House Transportation Appropriations Committee met on Tuesday to hear a presentation from Paul Cozza, Executive Director of the North Carolina State Ports Authority on its Strategic Plan, economic contribution and comments on the House and Senate budget proposals relating to the Ports. Documents presented to the committee can be found here.

Finally, Senator Trudy Wade introduced legislation last week to block state agencies from expected Environmental Protection Agency rules to cut carbon emissions on power plants until the rules complete a legal challenge. The EPA rules would be to cut carbon emission by 30 percent of 2005 legislation. The House has already passed a bill calling on the Department of Environment and Natural Resources to develop a state plan in consultation with state agencies, power companies, researchers and environmental activists. DENR Secretary van der Vaart said the state is on track to cut emissions along levels proposed by the president and that the EPA rules would increase electricity costs and hurt manufacturing.

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