PENC Legislative Update – June 10, 2015

Governor McCrory vetoed two bills last week and the effects of those vetoes on his relationship with lawmakers and initiatives he is working hard to generate support for, particularly his transportation bond proposal, are yet to be seen. President Pro Tem Phil Berger and Speaker Tim Moore both stopped short last week of saying they would override the vetoes on one or both of the bills, and all eyes will be on the chambers this week to see how this plays out. The two bills vetoed by Governor McCrory are House Bill 405: Property Protection Act, a whistle-blower protection bill, also commonly known as the Ag-Gag bill, and Senate Bill 2: Magistrates Recusal for Civil Ceremonies, a bill that would allow magistrates to recuse themselves from performing same-sex marriages for religious reasons. You can read more at WRAL: McCrory vetoes bills as he seeks infrastructure bond support.

Last Tuesday the SEPA reform bill, which intends to scale back where the State Environmental Policy Act applies, passed its third reading in the Senate chamber with the addition of three amendments. The amended version of the bill included a trigger to bring down the threshold for environmental reviews from $20 million of public money and 20 acres of disrupted land to $10 million and 10 acres. This change makes the bill more similar to what the House chamber supported previously. SEPA reform has since gone back to the House where they did not accept the Senate version of the bill and the bill has now been sent to conference committee where a small group of members appointed from each chamber will negotiate the final bill to be sent to both chambers for approval.

You can view the latest version of the SEPA bill, HB 795 here.

The Senate began their budget process last week, beginning with appropriations subcommittee meetings on Wednesday. A draft schedule was given to senators that outlined the Senate’s budget process plan. The Senate intends to work on its budget these next two weeks with final passage in the chamber expected on June 11th. In typical fashion, the House is unlikely to approve the budget as passed by the Senate and a conference committee will be appointed to negotiate the final version that will be presented to both chambers for approval. The goal is always to pass a final budget by June 30th but it is just as likely that the conference negotiations will continue through July and possibly into August.

This week, the Senate will be focused on budget writing while the House will continue consideration of non-budget bills.

In Case You Missed It...

Tech companies, Apple, Facebook, and Google who own data centers in North Carolina have sent a letter to the legislature asking them to stop their maneuvers to freeze REPS.

You can view the full letter here.

Better Buildings Challenge Saves $840 Million in Energy Costs, Adds New Water Savings Goal

You can read more of the Department of Energy’s Press Release here.