

LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

Dick Carlton, Lobbyist

The 2011 Session of the North Carolina General Assembly adjourned on Saturday, June 18, 2011. This represented the fastest adjournment date since 1973. Of course, this was a historic session for other reasons also. First, the Republicans were in charge of the House and the Senate for the first time since the late 1800's. Secondly, the large budget deficit of over \$2 Billion was the largest in the state's history.

The Republican leadership was adamant in not raising taxes, and they stuck to their promise not to do so. This included letting the temporary sales tax expire. All state agencies were forced to cut back, and that included the N. C. National Guard. At the end of the day, it is hopeful that all critical services can be delivered. Brighter days should be ahead for North Carolina's economy.

Our Association was very mindful of the historic economic crisis that was gripping not only our county, but also our state. With that in mind, the N. C. National Guard Association's Legislative Committee did not promote legislation that would increase the pension for retirees or seek a limited income tax exemption for Guard members.

The Association did work with Rep. Ric Killian (R) Mecklenburg to introduce HB 285-Active National Guard Special Plate at No Cost. Providing one free special license plate would cost the state money, but there was a lot of interest in the General Assembly to do this as a thank you gesture to the Guard for the extraordinary sacrifice its members make to protect our state and nation. HB 285 passed the House Transportation Committee unanimously and was sent to Finance. Representative Julia Howard is the Senior Chair of the Finance Committee. She worked very hard for the Guard to see if this bill could move out of Finance and onto the House floor. The problem was that with the historic level of cuts being made to all state agencies, the Leadership of the Majority Party did not think it was responsible to spend any new money no matter how worthy. While the Association has great support in the General Assembly, the bill did not move forward. Representative Howard wants to help the N. C. National Guard and our Association, and desires to meet with us soon to talk about our agenda moving forward.

The Legislative Committee has done a good job in building up its grass roots network around the state. More in this area must be done before the General Assembly reconvenes in May, 2012. This proves invaluable as issues develop or bills are being considered by the General Assembly. With continued work by our Association, the General Assembly will pass favorable legislation to the members of the Guard as the economic picture in this state improves. Any member interested in helping the Association's Legislative Committee with their local representatives should give Legislative Committee Chairman John Thompson a call. His

telephone number is 704-477-9353. John enjoys the legislative process and has done a great job in helping to promote the N. C. National Guard Association to the state office holders.