

LEGISLATIVE UPDATE FROM  
**REP. DENNIS RIDDELL**



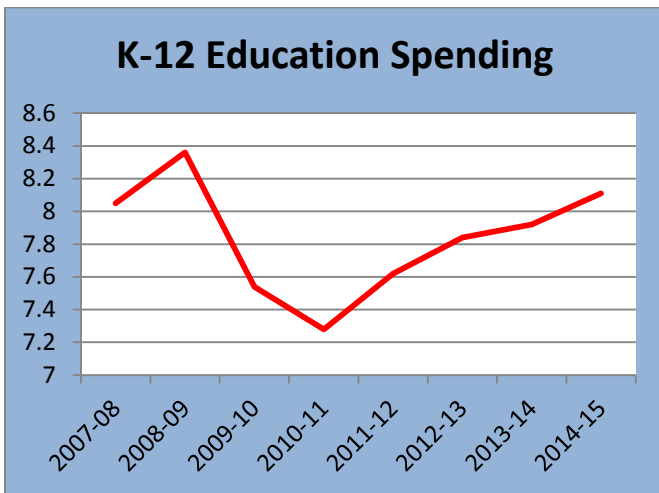
**NC House**

**District 64 – Alamance County**

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Rm 533, Legislative Office Building  
Raleigh, NC 27603-5925

919.733.5905  
Dennis.Riddell@ncleg.net



**From the Mailbag**

**Question:** What about those terrible cuts to Education....how could you???

**Answer:** We didn't! You are correct however to point out that there were terrible cuts to education spending.....it just happened to occur when the Democrats last controlled Raleigh in 2008-2010. Since Republicans have been in charge (2011) K-12 Education Spending has increased **every** year. A total of nearly \$1 Billion in increases. If that is a **cut** than I am a kumquat.

**A Look Back at the Short Session**

The North Carolina General Assembly concluded it's not so Short Session on Wednesday August 20<sup>th</sup>. The NCGA will reconvene on January 14, 2015. This was an interesting session that ran at a hyper-pace from beginning to end. Here is a brief summary of substantial legislation that was enacted:

1. **Another Balanced Budget** - we passed a \$21.25 Billion balanced budget for the 2014-15 fiscal year. This budget funds the necessary functions of state government **without raising taxes.**

2. **State Employees & Teacher Compensation** - we delivered on our February promise to improve the salary of our beginning teachers. We also were able to expand that promise to include all teachers who on average received a 5.5% increase. State employees received either a \$1,000 or \$500 increase along with 5 bonus vacation days. One issue of particular importance to me was the extension of the Masters Supplement pay for all teachers who had taken a class prior to July of 2013.



Lt. Gov. Dan Forrest on his recent road trip announcing the new I Support Teachers license plate [www.ISupportTeachers.com](http://www.ISupportTeachers.com)

3. **Coal Ash Ponds** - our decades old coal ash issue, that came screaming to our attention with the Dan River spill, was

addressed during the short session. I believe we are the first state to pass any substantive legislation to address this issue. SB 729 was our very important first step in dealing with this long standing issue passed in the final days of this Session. Among other things It sets a 15 year time table for dewatering and closing all of our unlined coal ash ponds here in NC. It also eliminates the practice of wet ash disposal. This is a good beginning - think of SB 729 as Coal Ash 1.0. As the problem is tackled and progress is made you will likely see Coal Ash 2.0.... then 3.0 as needed.

**4. Regulatory Reform** - for good reason this has become one of the signature issues for the Republican led NCGA. SB734 was hammered out in committees and floor action. It nearly derailed towards the end but stayed alive and finally passed both the House and Senate. This third edition of regulatory reform continues the important task of getting rid of redundant, archaic or just plain senseless red tape. Government regulations that create obstacles to business growth and job creation is wrong for North Carolina. **We need jobs and job creators here in our state** - reg reform has proven to be a vital part of our economic growth.



With Rep. Steve Ross at a recent Rotary Meeting where our Congressman Howard Coble was duly honored.

**5. Common Core** - was partially addressed by SB 812 which puts NC in better control of our own education standards. There will be a review commission established which will make recommendations to the State Board of Education regarding the future adoption of academic standards. While the bill did not go

as far as I had hoped it would, it did require the State Legislature to finally take a serious look at the flawed CCSS and who controls the recommendation and adoption of standards in our public schools. Will it be large monied corporations and consortiums of 'experts' or will it be the people of NC? I vote for **We the People!**

**6. Medicaid Reform** - this was an issue that received a great deal of attention and discussion but on which the House - the Senate - and the Governor - were unable to reach consensus. Cost overruns, bureaucracy, lack of accountability etc. are just a few of the big problems that we are trying to control. Should we follow an Accountable Care plan? HMO makeover plan? Some hybrid plan? Most of the proposals that came our way seemed to favor large medical care delivery systems like existing hospitals or large healthcare insurances groups. While these two systems do provide a large amount of vital Medicaid services, we must remember the smaller practices too. We must not disadvantage those healthcare practices that fill a need but do not have the resources of larger groups. So while the discussion, hearings and debate were helpful we will be back in 2015 still trying to get the right answer that best fits our Medicaid system here in NC. Any suggestions?

**7. Constitutional Amendment** - this fall you will see the following on the ballot: "Constitutional amendment providing that a person accused of any criminal offense for which the State is not seeking a sentence of death in superior court may, in writing or on the record in court and with the consent of the trial judge, waive the person's right to a trial by jury."

You decide "**For**" or "**Against**" on Nov. 4<sup>th</sup>.



**Thank You** for the privilege to serve you in the NCGA these past two years