

1998 SHORT SESSION  
September 11, 1998

MEMORANDUM

TO: Members of SBCC  
Presidents  
NCCC System Office Employees

FROM: H. Martin Lancaster

The General Assembly is continuing this week in the longest "short" session in its history. Only North Carolina and the U.S. Congress have not completed a budget for this year.

Last week the Senate sent a bill over to the House which contained language to cut off per diem and travel allowance for members of the General Assembly. The bill defined the period of time when members do not receive subsistence as being "out of session." Although this move may have appeared to be one of initiating closure to the session, the dynamics may in reality be reflective of election time. Last session, a bill was passed limiting the solicitation or receipt of lobbyists and Political Action Committees (PAC's) donations to both incumbents and challengers to periods of time when the General Assembly is "out of session." Soon members of the General Assembly need to campaign for re-election and they will want to solicit donations from PAC's and lobbyists.

This week, the House favorably reported Senate bill 1176 out of the Rules Committee, amending the language to include the benefits package for teachers, state employees and state retirees at the levels both they and the Senate have agreed upon for weeks. However, the date for cut off of subsistence was also amended by the House to December 31, exclusive to the Senate. The effect of this is that the General Assembly remains "in session," no one can collect PAC's or lobbyists contributions and the benefits package is tied-up in the language of this measure.

While the House remains firm on its insistence in the inheritance or "death" tax, the continuing battle of "differences" between the House and Senate probably has as much to do with the balance of power as with the philosophical disparities each chamber continues to advance.

The constitution calls for dissolution of the General Assembly as of December 31. We hope that each chamber becomes more conciliatory in an effort to reach a compromise in the next few weeks. Once mutually agreeable concessions are made, the appropriations process is likely to occur quickly.

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