

North Carolina Legislative Update, February 26, 2021

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Activity at the General Assembly increased with the filing of new bills and movement on others from committees to floor votes this week. Staff began to brief Legislators on agency budgets and provided committee orientations. In addition, Gov. Roy Cooper issued a new executive order revising earlier COVID restrictions.

Opening of K-12 Schools

A bill (S 37) that could lead to in-person learning at many K-12 schools has been approved by the General Assembly and is pending on the Governor's desk. The bill, among other things, requires school districts to offer certain in-person instruction options and allow students learning remotely to continue this format. The bill was presented to the Governor on Feb. 17 and he has 10 days to sign, veto, or allow it to become law without his signature. Cooper earlier indicated that he will support a school reopening bill mandating that schools follow NC Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) safety guidelines and contain provisions allowing schools to react to changed conditions.

State Budget

Appropriations Committees began to meet jointly this week to gain a better understanding of the state's budget process, existing agency budgets, and receive updates from agencies. These joint committee meetings will run through March 25 and then the Senate appropriators will begin meeting separately at that time to draft a budget bill, since the Senate considers the budget first this year.

Other bills of note

Some noteworthy bills recently introduced include:

- Improving Access to Care Through Telehealth (H 149), which requires health insurance coverage of telehealth, and
- Let Them Play and Let Us Watch (S 116), which increases the number of spectators at public and private sporting events. This bill will be on the Senate floor early next week.

Governor's New COVID Executive Order

This week, Gov. Roy Cooper issued a new Executive Order 195([link is external](#)) lifting his modified “Stay at Home” Order and loosening various restrictions imposed due to COVID-19. Among other things, the Order increases the number of people that may gather indoors from 10 to 25, changes the curfew on the sale of alcohol for onsite consumption from 9 p.m. to 11 p.m., opens businesses such as bars and amusement parks with occupancy restrictions, and increases indoor and outdoor occupancy for certain businesses, venues, and arenas.

The new Order is effective on Feb. 26, 2021 at 5 p.m. and extends through March 26, 2021. Additional information about the Order is available at [this link](#).

For more information, contact a member of the Brooks Pierce Government Affairs Team.

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