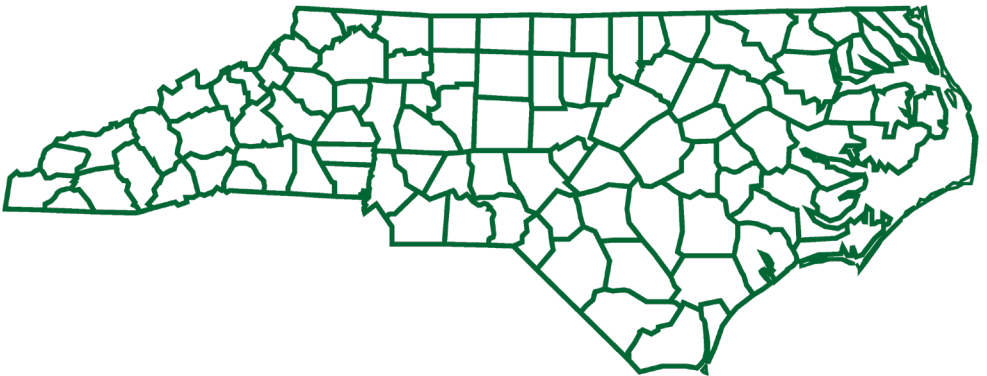


North Carolina Association  
of County Commissioners

# Legislative Goals 2019-2020

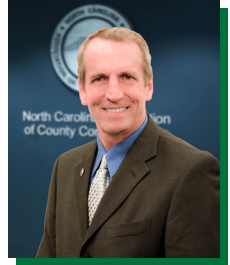




# Message From the President-Elect

Dear County Officials:

The NCACC membership met on January 10-11, 2019 to adopt legislative goals for the 2019-2020 legislative biennium. After robust discussion and participation from nearly 90 of our counties, the membership adopted 26 legislative goals for this session, and identified five priority goals.



These goals will be the focus of the Association's advocacy efforts on behalf of counties for the next two years. There are already many discussions underway about how to forward these priorities to make an impact for counties.

As the legislature begins this new session, I encourage you to continue to be actively engaged in the legislative process. As elected officials, we are the best advocates for our counties and legislators need to hear from us. You bring invaluable insight into what your community is facing and what you need from state leaders.

Your Government Relations Team advocates on behalf of counties every day at the General Assembly, and the effort is strongest when we communicate with our local delegation about these goals. Legislators are lobbied by many different groups, but there is no voice like that of another elected official advocating on behalf of their community. Arrange a meeting with your delegation either in Raleigh or back at their home office and share ways they can positively impact your county.

As always, the Association is right beside you to help with your education and advocacy efforts. Please let us know what we can do to help with these meetings. The relationships you build and strengthen with your legislators are foundational to making progress on county legislative goals. As always, thank you for all you do for counties.

Kevin Austin  
NCACC President-Elect  
Yadkin County Commissioner & Board Chair

# Vision and Mission Statements

## **Vision Statement**

Empowering 100 counties to work together for the betterment of one state.

## **Mission Statement**

Our Association supports and promotes the well-being of all North Carolina counties through advocacy, education, research, and member services.

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# Core Values

The Association recognizes counties' critical partnership with the state of North Carolina and promotes strategies that enhance state and county collaboration, communication and cooperation.

Counties are an integral part of a strong intergovernmental system, along with municipalities, school boards, the state and the federal government. Cooperation and communication between all levels of government are essential in order to provide the best and most efficient services to citizens. Counties are the level of government closest to the people. The Association promotes strengthening of local decision-making to respond to local needs. Counties should be free to organize as appropriate for efficient and effective delivery of services. Flexibility of form, function and finance is critical. A proper balance of service responsibility and revenue generating authority is imperative. Essential services should be financed through state or federal revenues to ensure statewide availability and consistency. State-mandated services should be funded from state revenue sources; federally mandated services should be financed from federal revenue sources. Policy changes affecting counties should be preceded by fair and equitable negotiations. New initiatives should allow adequate lead time for implementation within the county budget schedule. The state should consider the resource limitations of counties when implementing new state and federal programs.

The Association will be proactive in providing information to the NC General Assembly, US Congress, and the public to assist in the passage of sound legislation beneficial to the administration of county government affairs and will oppose legislation injurious thereto.



# NCACC Priority Goals

- 1 Seek legislation, funding, and other efforts to expand digital infrastructure/broadband capability to the unserved and underserved areas and residents of the state.
- 2 Seek additional revenue sources, including a statewide bond and lottery proceeds, to equitably address statewide public school and community college capital challenges.
- 3 Support efforts to preserve and expand the existing local revenue base of counties and authorize local option revenue sources already given to any other jurisdiction to all counties. Oppose efforts to divert to the state, fees or taxes currently allocated to the counties or to erode existing county revenue streams.
- 4 Support provision of state resources to ensure county ability to provide essential public health, behavioral health and social services, with specific consideration to the challenges of incarcerated persons, the continued county role in behavioral health governance, and programs addressing substance use disorder, throughout Medicaid transformation.
- 5 Seek legislation to repeal the statutory authority under N.C. Gen. Stat. 115C-431(c) that allows a local school board to file suit against a county board of commissioners over appropriations to the local board of education's capital outlay fund.



# Health & Human Services Guiding Principles

- The Association supports county, regional and state collaboration to improve agency automation and simplify programs, to streamline administration and to improve client interaction.
- The Association opposes earmarking of block grant funds, and supports increased funding for mandated services, provided the increases do not require additional county expenditures.
- As partners with the state in funding and delivering services, counties must be actively engaged in setting health and human services policy and program requirements
- Health and human services programs should encourage responsible behavior and should be targeted to those citizens least able to care for themselves.
- Health and human services programs should encourage equitable opportunity for health, social, and economic prosperity. Programs should provide intergenerational success and address long term social impacts on health to help individuals thrive.
- The State should take the lead in financing, implementing, maintaining, and supporting statewide automated systems; automation efforts undertaken by the State should connect and integrate with county automation initiatives.
- Members of county human service agency boards should be appointed by the boards of county commissioners.



# Health & Human Services Goals

- 1** Seek funding to increase access to high quality childcare and early childhood education.
- 2** Support legislation and state resources for social service reform efforts as identified by the Social Services Working Group to improve outcomes for individuals, families, and children and to continue the NCACC's opposition to mandated regionalization.
- 3** Support provision of state resources to ensure county ability to provide essential public health, behavioral health and social services, with specific consideration to the challenges of incarcerated persons, the continued county role in behavioral health governance, and programs addressing substance use disorder, throughout Medicaid transformation.
- 4** Support continued state funding of Medicaid and support legislation and state funding to close the Medicaid coverage gap.
- 5** Seek to revise the provision in G.S. 108A-74 requiring counties to enter into annual written agreements for all social services programs other than medical assistance.

# Public Education Guiding Principles

- The Association supports efforts to clarify State and county responsibility through legislation that recognizes the following:
  - the impact of changing technologies on basic educational needs and the job market of the future;
  - the impact of any changes on the facility needs of local school systems;
  - the need for county commissioners to have the authority to make sure funds appropriated for school facility needs are used accordingly; and
  - the challenges faced by counties in balancing changes in school populations with insufficient county revenues
- Taxing authority for local public education should be vested exclusively with boards of county commissioners.
- The State should define and support an adequate sound basic education in all local school systems and should appropriate adequate operating revenue to fully fund its education initiatives.
- Effective classroom technologies and innovations provide greater choice, improve education, and should be available to all public schools and community colleges.
- North Carolina's community colleges are critical components of the state's integrated efforts to prepare youth and adults for constructive participation in a constantly changing economy.

# Public Education Goals

- 1** Seek additional revenue sources, including a statewide bond and lottery proceeds, to equitably address statewide public school and community college capital challenges.
- 2** Support legislation to provide exceptions to the K-3 class size mandate including but not limited to lack of school facility space and availability of qualified teachers.
- 3** Support legislation providing flexibility to align K-12 and community college calendars.
- 4** Seek legislation to repeal the statutory authority under N.C. Gen. Stat. 115C-431(c) that allows a local school board to file suit against a county board of commissioners over appropriations to the local board of education's capital outlay fund.

# General Government Guiding Principles

- The Association recognizes the importance of the State-County partnership and its unique role in providing services to all citizens
- The State should actively seek input from counties while developing rules and regulations that impact counties, particularly concerning property rights.
- Local general purpose governments are the building blocks for solving regional problems; regional approaches should be based on the need to strengthen and support local governments.
- Intergovernmental agreements should be used where appropriate to attain efficient performance, as determined by local elected officials.
- Encourage public-private partnerships when in the best interest of the citizens.
- Reserve federal action for those areas where state and local governments are not adequate and where continuing national involvement is necessary, e.g. national defense, provided resources are made available by the national government.
- All local government institutions should be engaged in developing and coordinating services to meet the needs of citizens. Counties will strive to maintain and enhance these partnerships.

# General Government Goals

- 1** Seek legislation, funding, and other efforts to expand digital infrastructure/broadband capability to the unserved and under-served areas and residents of the state.
- 2** Support increased state funding for transportation construction and maintenance needs, and support legislation to ensure that the Strategic Transportation Investments (STI) funding formula recognizes that one size does not fit all and that projects in both rural and urban areas are prioritized and funded.
- 3** Seek legislation to authorize counties to require developers to post maintenance bonds on new construction for subdivision roads.
- 4** Support maintaining county authority and revenue streams associated with the current ABC system, including the flexibility to determine locations of sales and number of outlets.

# Tax & Finance

## Guiding Principles

- The county revenue base should be broad and balanced, with authority to raise revenues from various sources, rather than being overly reliant on any single revenue source or overly burdensome on any one group of taxpayers.
- The Association opposes the redistribution of existing local revenues; distribution of new tax sources should assess local needs, local funding efforts, and local funding capability.
- Any restructuring of county responsibilities should include restructuring of local revenue sources to meet those responsibilities.
- Counties should have the authority to generate optional revenues to meet public service needs, while being responsive to economic change.
- If statewide policy objectives result in reductions in local tax bases, the Legislature should reimburse county and municipal losses from State sources.
- Existing local revenue base exemptions and exclusions should be evaluated to see whether they have achieved the intended tax policy objectives. New or extended exemptions and exclusions should include a "sunset" date in their authorizing legislation.
- The Association opposes unfunded mandates and shifts of state responsibilities to counties.

# Tax & Finance Goals

- 1** Support efforts to preserve and expand the existing local revenue base of counties and authorize local option revenue sources already given to any other jurisdiction to all counties. Oppose efforts to divert to the state, fees or taxes currently allocated to the counties or to erode existing county revenue streams.
- 2** Support legislation to remove inequities and inconsistencies in the current state economic tier system.
- 3** Support reinstatement of affordable housing tax credits.
- 4** Seek legislation to maximize remote sales tax collection for counties, including sales tax collection from third-party online sellers.
- 5** Seek legislation to increase funding for the state's current film grant program and review existing legislation to allow tax incentives and other measures that would encourage expansion of the statewide film industry.



# Justice & Public Safety

## Guiding Principles

- The statewide judicial system and public safety services, including effective ancillary services and programs, should be adequately funded and staffed in order to provide an efficient environment for judicial and public safety processes, to instill public confidence and to protect our communities.
- Adjudication should be swift, in order to minimize overcrowding in county jails.
- Bonds should be reasonable, and effective pre-trial screening and population management efforts should be encouraged.
- Offenders should be held accountable to society and required to pay a proportionate share of the debt resulting from their offenses, including debt to counties, either through fees based on ability to pay and/or through community service.
- Effective prevention programs, alternatives to incarcerations and other related services should be supported in an effort to help reduce recidivism rates and lower county jail costs.

# Justice & Public Safety Goals

- 1** Seek legislation to reinstate funding for Drug Treatment and Mental Health Courts.
- 2** Support legislation and state funding to provide early intervention services for juveniles and fully fund the Juvenile Justice Reinvestment Act.
- 3** Support efforts to provide greater flexibility to local governments in expenditure of 911 surcharge funds and ensure adequate funding for next-gen technology.

# Environment

## Guiding Principles

- Public policy on environmental protection must recognize that all physical human activities have an impact on the environment, and provide recognition that there must be a balance between those activities and the environment.
- Enhancements to the environment laws of North Carolina should be justified by sound science and information and based on a clear rationale and purpose for regulatory change.
- State agencies responsible for developing administrative rules to implement federal and state policies should involve local governments in the process at the earliest stages of development and should proceed only after thorough analyses of health, environmental and fiscal risks and impacts.
- State agencies issuing permits for activities that affect the environment should give local governments ample opportunity to comment on proposed permits for consistency with local plans and policies.
- If state law delegates responsibility to local governments for implementing, monitoring and enforcing environmental policy, the state should provide optimum flexibility and discretion in setting fees at the local level to carry out these responsibilities.

# Environment Goals

- 1** Seek legislation to restore county authority over solid waste management and oppose any further shift of authority away from local governments.
- 2** Support legislation to help improve water quality in the state, including increased funding and resources for state agencies to develop health advisory levels for emerging contaminants, and increased funding for water and wastewater expansion as well as capital projects.
- 3** Support additional funding to assist local governments in managing electronics recycling.

# Agriculture Guiding Principles

- The Association supports local control over land-use decision-making and its impact on the agricultural community.
- The Association supports state policies providing local options and tools for the preservation of farmland if they serve the best interest of all counties.
- The Association supports research, education and outreach with various public and private partnerships that result in agricultural development opportunities, sustainable initiatives producing low-cost food and energy that will, in turn, create healthy local economies.
- Agricultural issues related to the environment transcend governmental boundaries and require close coordination of policy and action by federal, state and local governments.
- Powers delegated to the counties for the protection of the public health are important for protecting the land and water resources that are vital for agricultural endeavors.
- The General Assembly should provide funds for any increased county responsibility related to animal control operations and/or facilities.

# Agriculture Goals

- 1** Support state funding and staffing for agricultural research, Cooperative Extension services and other agriculture-related efforts, including Community Conservation Assistance Program, to support the largest economic driver in North Carolina.
- 2** Support legislation to protect farming operations from nuisance lawsuits including those as defined by the state and small farms in rural counties.

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# NCACC Executive Committee



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**Brenda Howerton**  
Past President  
Durham County



**Kevin Leonard**  
Executive Director  
NCACC



# North Carolina Association of County Commissioners

[www.ncacc.org/legislativegoals](http://www.ncacc.org/legislativegoals)