
Coates' Canons Blog: The 2011-2012 Session Begins: A Refresher on the UNC School of Government's Legislative Resources

By Aimee Wall

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This post is co-authored with Christine Wunsche, the Director of the School of Government's Legislative Reporting Service and Editor of the Daily Bulletin

As today marks the opening day of the 150th session of the General Assembly, we wanted to remind our readers about some of the resources available from the UNC School of Government (SOG) to help you keep track of legislative developments. Below is a brief description of three SOG publications: the *Daily Bulletin*, the *Weekly Status Report*, and the *Index of Legislation*. We also offer a few tips for tracking legislation using the General Assembly's new and improved website.

SOG Resources

Daily Bulletin

Our most comprehensive legislative publication, the *Daily Bulletin*, is published each day that the General Assembly is in session. We send it to subscribers via email and the content is also searchable online. The *Bulletin* contains summaries of all public and local bills that are filed, summaries of each amendment, committee substitute and conference report adopted by the House or Senate, and a daily report of all legislative actions taken by either chamber. The summaries provide a description of the legislation or the changes to the legislation; they do not analyze or evaluate the proposed merits of the legislation. Click here to see an example of the *Bulletin*.

Daily Bulletin subscribers also have access to a website where they can search for all summaries written for a particular bill (click on "Online Bill Digests"). For example, if a subscriber visits the site and searches last session's summaries for "H2" or "S5" the site would generate reports that look like this: H2 or S5. The report includes not only the initial summary prepared when the bill was filed but also short summaries of any committee substitutes and amendments that were adopted. Once the session is underway, new summaries will be added to the daily publication as well as the website. If you are not a subscriber, you can access the archives for free (summaries for bills filed between 1987 and 2008).

For regular users of the *Bulletin*, you should notice a few formatting changes this year. For example, we have added a table of contents and a subject matter index and we will be including hyperlinks to the General Assembly's bill "homepage" (see below for further discussion of that page). We hope these changes and others improve your bill-tracking experience!

More information on the *Daily Bulletin* is available online. Also, feel free to contact us if you have questions or suggestions.

Weekly Status Report

We also offer subscriptions to the *Weekly Status Report*, a cumulative report of the current status of all public and local bills. The *Report* organizes local bills by county and organizes public bills by subject categories, including General Statute chapter, appropriations, constitutional amendments, studies, and joint resolutions. Within each category, the report shows the number and short title of each bill, the most recent action taken with respect to the bill, and the date of the most recent action on the bill. Finally, the report includes a cross-index by bill number. The *Report* is emailed to subscribers every Monday.

Index of Legislation

At the end of the legislative session, *Daily Bulletin* subscribers receive an electronic version of the *Index of Legislation*. The *Index* includes a cumulative report of the status of all bills with local bills organized by county and public bills by subject categories that include each chapter of the General Statutes, appropriations, constitutional amendments, studies, and joint resolutions. It also includes the number and short title of each bill, the most recent action taken with respect to the bill, and the date of the most recent action on the bill.

Legislative Summaries

Each year after the legislative session ends, SOG faculty members and professional staff produce summaries of legislation in various formats, such as blog posts, papers, teaching outlines and webinars. All of these works are collected on our Legislative Summaries website. You can review the 2010 summaries now to refresh your memory about the action from last session and stay tuned for updates to the site when the 2011 session wraps up.

NCGA Website

The General Assembly's website has become a valuable research tool in recent years. If you are a regular user of the site, you may notice that the site was redesigned this year. Don't worry – all of the same search functions are still available. At the top of the page you can search by bill number or by keyword. You can also visit the centralized legislation search page for more complex functionality. Once you find the bill you are looking for, you can visit the bill's "homepage," which allows you to view every version of the bill as well as fiscal notes, amendments, committee substitutes, and companion bill numbers. The page also includes a detailed history of all actions taken on that bill. If you are tracking a particular bill, the website allows you to subscribe to an RSS feed that will notify you via email every time action is taken on that bill (click on the "RSS" logo next to the word "History").

Another useful tool available from the NCGA website is the committee email notification system. You may, for example, want to track all of the legislation that comes before the Senate Judiciary Committee or a bill that you are particularly interested in that has been assigned to the House Transportation Committee. Once you identify a committee of interest, you can sign up online to receive direct email notification of upcoming meetings (scroll to bottom of the screen). In the past, some of these notifications have been a bit irregular and incomplete, but they can still be helpful. For the true political junkie, you can also sign up to receive an email notice when the daily legislative calendars are posted online.

We hope these reminders and tips are helpful as the new session gets underway. If you have other good ideas for tracking legislation, please post them as comments so all our readers can benefit from your experience.

Links

- www.sog.unc.edu/about/directory/wunsche.html
- www.sog.unc.edu/dailybulletin/pdfs/dbsample.pdf
- www.sog.unc.edu/dailybulletin/
- www.sog.unc.edu/dailybulletin/public/
- www.sog.unc.edu/dailybulletin/customer.html
- www.sog.unc.edu/dailybulletin/summaries10/
- ncleg.net/
- ncleg.net/Legislation/Legislation.html
- ncleg.net/gascripts/BillLookUp/BillLookUp.pl?Session=2009&BillID=h2&submitButton=Go
- ncleg.net/gascripts/Committees/Committees.asp
- ncleg.net/Calendars/Calendars.html