

Legislative "Crossover" Report



2019-2020 Legislative Session

May 9 was the "crossover" deadline for the 2019-20 legislative session. This deadline means that most bills must have passed out of either the House or the Senate in order to be considered further and that no new bills can now be introduced. There are exceptions to this rule, such as bills that have revenue or budget elements, and recent history has shown that if the leadership wants something heard later in the session, they will find a way to make it happen.

Well over 1500 bills were introduced before May 9, about 400 bills passed at least one chamber by the deadline, and we kept an eye on more than 150 that related to work or election law in some way.

Because the leadership in each chamber is controlled by an anti-worker majority, many bills that we supported did not even receive discussion in committee; indeed most legislation introduced by Democrats did not. These included bills to raise the minimum wage and to repeal the ban on public sector collective bargaining, both the subject of well-attended and well-publicized press conferences. Some examples of other legislation we hoped to advance included bills to reinstate the Earned Income Tax Credit; to restore Unemployment Insurance benefits that were so drastically cut a few sessions ago; to further address the problem of wage theft; to fully repeal HB2; to establish a retail workers' bill of rights; to protect the employees of contractors; to provide more safety for railroad employees; to prohibit the outsourcing of call centers; to reenact film credits; to provide parental leave for state employees; to provide for paid sick leave; to protect day laborers; and to increase the minimum wage for noncertified school employees.

Bills in two other areas in which we have an interest—reform of gerrymandered districts and the expansion of Medicaid—did not pass by May 9, but they almost certainly will be discussed in the months ahead.

A couple of areas warrant particular note in this brief report: 1.) our legislative priority to address the need for a law establishing work breaks for employees and 2.) workers compensation and related health and safety issues.

PAID WORK REST BREAKS

Our state law, unlike that of many other states, does not require work breaks for most employees. While many employers do allow breaks, others do not. We began a discussion about this issue at our legislative meetings around the state and at our legislative conference.

A number of legislators stepped up to introduce modest legislation that we helped draft that provided for a 20-minute paid break for every six hours of work. As noted above, many such bills went nowhere in the current political climate. But in this case the proposed legislation was turned into a study commission, with the Legislative Research Commission to assess the merits of the proposed law, consider many of the issues surrounding the proposed law and report back their research findings to the 2020 session upon its convening. The study bill passed the House by a vote of 90-25, with all Democrats and many Republicans voting for the study.

Thanks go to Reps. Dahle, Hawkins and others for their support and also to Reps. Torbett and Szoka, who engaged with us about the issue at our legislative meetings and without whose assistance the study commission would not have been possible. The bill will now go to the Senate for consideration.

WORKERS' COMPENSATION, HEALTH, & SAFETY

An area of concern every session is workers' health and safety, including workers' compensation. First,

this session, the N.C. Department of Labor drafted a bill intended to protect employers by severely limiting the ability of injured workers to have access to information obtained in DOL investigations. We jumped in, as did a couple of other groups, and with the help of several legislators, the bill was amended in a manner that was satisfactory.

Second, as in the past few sessions, a workers' compensation truck drivers bill was introduced that would be unfair to drivers and to employers of Teamster-represented drivers. Although the bill had powerful supporters, we were able to work with others to kill the bill in committee. Also, at the beginning of this session we declined to sign an agreement with the plaintiff workers' compensation lawyers and the employer community about new legislation because the employer group refused to allow a carve-out for a firefighter disease presumption bill that the firefighters had long sought. That bill then passed the House before cross over. Still requiring attention, among other things, is a provision put into the budget that could leave workers who come to our state to help in emergencies without workers' compensation coverage.

This brief report obviously is not intended to be complete. If you have any questions about the bills discussed here or about any legislation, do not hesitate to call us.

We want to thank the many legislators who stood with us right up to "crossover." We want to thank our allies who worked on bills of concern to us. We want to thank the locals that sent people to lobby on their particular issues or on our general issues.

Most of all we want to thank our members who attended our legislative meetings or conference, who participated in our political work, or have contributed in so many other ways. Whatever success we have enjoyed in protecting workers and their families is the result of those efforts. There is much, much more to do this session and beyond, and we look forward to and count on your continued involvement.

Contacting the NC State AFL-CIO

By Phone: 919-833-6678 (Office)
919-523-2835 (President MaryBe McMillan)

By Fax: 919-828-2102

By Email: info@aflicionc.org

On the Web: aflicionc.org

Facebook: [facebook.com/ncstateaflcio](https://www.facebook.com/ncstateaflcio)

Twitter: [@ncstateaflcio](https://twitter.com/ncstateaflcio)

By Mail: P.O. Box 10805
Raleigh, NC 27605

In Person: 1408 Hillsborough St
Raleigh, NC 27605