

## County Commissioners Association Legislative Goals For Short Session

By Administrator

Wednesday, 30 March 2016 06:10 -

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RALEIGH, (SGRToday.com) - The North Carolina Association of County Commissioners has set its legislative agenda for the 2016 short session that begins in late April.

According to the website of the organization, the goals are:

\*\* Seek legislation to repeal the statutory authority under NCGS 115C-431(c) that allows local school boards to file suit against a county board of commissioners over county appropriations for education. The current version of H561

includes a five-year moratorium on such lawsuits. The bill is in conference and is eligible for short session consideration. With more counties experiencing threats of lawsuits, more legislators are interested in the issue. Those from counties that have experienced more extreme conflict between commissioner and school boards have grown more adamant that the issue be addressed.

\*\* Seek legislation to authorize local option revenue sources already given to any other jurisdiction. The current version of S605, the annual revenue laws changes bill, expands the Article 43 transit tax to educational purposes and increases the Article 46 tax from  $\frac{1}{4}$  to  $\frac{1}{2}$  cent, giving counties two more options for additional revenue. The bill has passed the House and is eligible for consideration in the short session. As negotiations on this bill resume, the potential exists to expand Article 43 to general purpose.

\*\* Support legislation, regulations and funding that would preserve local option and authority where needed to deploy community broadband systems and ensure community access to critical broadband services. H432 would have authorized counties to install high-speed Internet infrastructure and lease it to providers in a public-private partnership. The bill did not move because of industry concern; however, this concern has softened as the conversation has shifted due to disparate education and economic outcomes in areas without high-speed Internet access.

The state budget directs the state CIO to conduct a broadband study, including access, and report to the legislative IT committee. Bills coming out of legislative interim committees are eligible for short session.