

## **Cooper Proposes \$27 Billion Budget**

By Administrator

Wednesday, 24 March 2021 16:46 -

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Governor Roy Cooper released a recommended budget for FY 2021-2023 that will strengthen North Carolina to emerge from the COVID-19 pandemic and ignite recovery for all North Carolinians. The Governor's plan recommends significant investments in schools and increased pay for teachers, action to strengthen health care access, and expanded economic opportunities and infrastructure investments. "With the right priorities, we will not only beat this pandemic, but build lasting success for North Carolina," said Governor Cooper. "The most important recommendations today will invest in North Carolina's people so they can learn, get healthier, and get the right kind of training for great jobs."

The Governor's budget is a blueprint to help North Carolina build a stronger, more resilient future by investing \$27.4 billion in 2021-2022 and \$28.5 billion in 2022-2023 in areas including education, economic development, and health care. These vital investments are made without raising taxes.

Federal funds from the American Rescue Plan can be used on important state priorities including broadband expansion, water and sewer infrastructure, assistance for businesses recovering from the pandemic, and education and workforce training.

The Governor will soon make recommendations on how these federal funds complement today's budget proposal to respond to immediate needs, promote a shared recovery, and transform North Carolina's future.

"Thanks to the American Rescue Plan, some of our most pressing needs to lift communities in rural and other areas can be covered by federal funds," said Governor Cooper.

### **Investing in our Schools and Teachers**

The pandemic has underscored the vital work educators do to help children learn and thrive, and this budget recommends pay increases to reflect their essential roles in building our state. Further, this budget makes long overdue investments to demonstrate the State's commitment to upholding its constitutional duty to provide every student with access to a sound, basic education.

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The Governor's budget would provide K-12 teacher raises of 10% on average over the biennium and ensure that all non-certified school personnel receive a minimum of \$15 an hour, on par with other state employees. The budget also invests more than \$78 million in early education and child development so that more children can attend Pre-K, receive high-quality care, and access early intervention services.

This budget also invests in efforts to improve recruitment, preparation, support, and retention of diverse educators. Additionally, the plan provides \$80 million to help school districts hire more nurses, counselors, psychologists, and social workers to support student physical and mental health.

"This budget also works to make good on our state's Constitutional duty to make sure every child has access to a sound basic education," said Governor Cooper. "We know how to do that: Attract and keep good teachers with competitive pay and recruit young people to make teaching a career. Make sure students and adults are ready for careers in high demand fields of employment. Provide the right resources for students with the greatest needs."

Read more about the Governor's plan for stronger schools [HERE](#).

### **Supporting State Employees**

Governor Cooper's budget proposal supports hardworking state employees by improving pay, providing bonuses, strengthening benefits, and providing the most substantial cost-of-living adjustment for state government retirees in more than a decade.

Read more about the Governor's investment in teachers and state employees [HERE](#).

### **Rebuilding Critical Infrastructure**

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This budget recommends cash capital investments totaling over \$1.1 billion, including \$675 million for UNC System projects, \$360 for state agency projects, and \$100 million toward energy efficiency improvements.

North Carolina's strong balance sheet presents a generational opportunity to address critical long-term infrastructure needs. The Governor's budget takes advantage of the state's low debt and historically low interest rates and recommends placing a \$4.7 billion General Obligation Bond on the November 2021 ballot to ask voters to address key infrastructure needs across North Carolina, including:

\$2.5 billion for public schools to address the over \$8 billion in documented needs

\$783 million for the UNC System, including \$295 million for health and safety projects

\$500 million for the Community College System

\$430 million for Health and Safety projects across State Government

\$460 million for Parks, Zoos, Museums, and Historic Sites

Ensuring North Carolina's Economic Recovery

The pandemic has left many people and local governments struggling financially, and this budget bolsters economic development and strengthens businesses. The Governor's plan released today appropriates available state funds, and a future budget will recommend the state's share of funds from the federal American Rescue Plan Act, which will provide North Carolina tens of billions in aid.

The Governor recommends \$45.4 million in economic investments, including support for One NC Small Business Fund and Carolina Small Business Fund. The Governor's proposed budget invests to help small businesses thrive and provides funding to prepare rural and economically distressed communities for an innovation-based economy. It also proposes funding to address the disproportionate economic impact of COVID-19 on communities of color through increased support for minority-owned businesses.

This budget proposes additional funding to market the state as a business destination as well

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as to identify new markets for North Carolina products.

Read more about the Governor's plan for a more prosperous economy [HERE](#).

### **Increasing Access to Quality Healthcare**

Gov. Cooper's budget provides access to health care for more than 600,000 working North Carolinians, keeps rural hospitals open and strong, reduces the number of uninsured veterans, helps fight the opioid epidemic, and injects over \$5 billion in direct investment into the state by expanding Medicaid. No taxes would be increased to achieve this major expansion of health care access, and the American Rescue Plan provides an additional \$1.7 billion in federal funds to support Medicaid expansion without the state covering any cost share for up to six years.

"We must get health care to more working people and the best way to do that is to expand Medicaid," said Governor Cooper. "I am ready to work with legislative leadership and members of both political parties here in North Carolina to find a way forward."

### **Investments for a Clean, Healthy North Carolina**

The Governor's budget builds on the state's progress toward ensuring cleaner energy, air and water and attracting clean energy jobs. It also provides funding to help North Carolina become stronger and more resilient in the face of increasingly frequent natural disasters.

The budget invests over \$100 million in expanding access to clean energy technologies, investing in clean energy economic development and building the clean energy workforce pipeline to catalyze North Carolina's economy. The budget invests \$10 million for clean energy economic development and \$4.5 million in clean energy grants for homegrown start-ups and small businesses.

Clean, safe water and air are essential for the health and well-being of North Carolinians.

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Governor Cooper recommends over \$300 million in spending on environmental stewardship, increasing access to parks, and enhancing the state's resiliency to future floods. The budget also recommends nearly \$8 million for emerging compounds mitigation.

Read more about the Governor's plan to fight climate change and increase economic development in clean energy [HERE](#).

### A Safer, More Equitable North Carolina

The COVID-19 pandemic continues to shine a light on long-standing inequities. The Governor's budget proposal advances equity in our healthcare, economic, criminal justice and education systems through strategic investments, including funds to:

Recruit and retain a diverse educator workforce;

Ensure access to a sound, basic education for all students;

Emphasize equity in government decision making;

Support minority-owned businesses; and

Prioritize fairness in the criminal justice system