

The pace of things is beginning to quicken a bit at the North Carolina General Assembly. Matters relating to health, auto and property insurance are coming front and center. The State budget, or course, is a huge topic of discussion and debate. Here's what's happening:

HB 2 – Prohibit Smoking in Public and Work Places is making its way through the House. It will be heard in the J-I Committee on Tuesday, March 24, at 10:00.

HB 535 – Insurance Coverage/Lymphedema is on the agenda of House Health for Tuesday, March 24, at noon.

HB 212 – Pilot Association Health Plan Program for Buncombe County is set for a hearing in House Commerce on Wednesday, March 25, at 1:00.

HB 102 – Budget Code Technical Correction, the bill that will permit the State budget office to transfer \$5 million from the Health and Wellness Trust Fund to the Health Insurance Risk Pool, passed the House this week by a vote of 113 to 0. It now goes to the Senate, and has been referred to Appropriations/Base Budget.

On the property insurance side of things, note that **HB 426 – Stay on Homeowners Insurance Actions** was heard in House Insurance yesterday. It will again be considered next Tuesday, March 24, at 11:00. The bill's concept is to stay the deductible and surcharge increases approved by Commissioner Long last November as well as the Consent Order recently worked out between the NC Rate Bureau and the Department of Insurance.

Sen. Tony Rand, on Monday evening, March 23, will introduce **SB 696-Beach Plan Surplus**, which would require the retention of accumulated surplus by the Beach Plan.

There is a lot in the legislative hopper. Stay tuned. I hope March Madness goes according to your bracket selections.

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