

# Mental Health, Bridge, Absentee Law Takes Attention Legislature

Mental health, the Guantanamo naval base, a high bridge at Wilmington, and Northampton county peanuts competed for attention in the General Assembly Thursday. The high bridges from nine southeastern counties appeared before the State Highway Commission to urge quick approval of a high-level bridge across the Cape Fear at Wilmington. The delegation, some 800 strong, then moved over to the Legislative Building, but any plan that they might parade convention-style through the House galleries was foiled by the fact that Dr. Roy Menninger of Topeka, Kansas, was in the midst of an hour-long speech on mental health.

**Public Utilities**  
SB 116 (HB 203) the General Statutes Commission's bill re-codifying the public utilities laws was introduced Friday. The 143-page single-spaced document combines Chapters 56 (Electric, Telegraph and Power Companies), 60 (Railroads and other Carriers), and 62 (Utilities Commission) into a single Chapter 62 (Public Utilities). The recodification makes the same principles and policies apply to all public utilities except where the nature of a particular utility requires individual treatment. Terms of the five utilities commissioners are increased from six to eight years, and salaries are increased to equal salaries of superior court judges (superior court judges now receive \$14,500 plus an expense allowance, but would become \$18,000 if SB 113, introduced Thursday, is enacted). The administrative authority of the chairman is increased. The bill makes clear that the Utilities Commission is primarily an administrative agency with a duty to take the initiative to protect the public interest. Numerous changes in details of

the present law are made.

**Elections**  
The present absentee ballot law is not among friend in this General Assembly. The Democrats have offered HB 3 (SB 10) to substantially tighten the absentee laws. HB 32, a Republican bill, would repeal the absentee ballot law as it relates to civilians. The Joint Elections Committees heard Rep. Simpson of Burke present the case for the Republican bill Wednesday; he suggested that Democratic inaction on absentee ballot abuses would be a useful issue for his party in the 1964 elections.

**Motor Vehicles**  
HB 9, the bill to require new automobiles registered in North Carolina to be equipped with front seat belts was amended Wednesday to make it clear that the belts must be on cars at the time of registration. The bill then passed second reading, but third reading was deferred after objection was raised by Rep. Kiser, who suggested that the bill was a sales promotion rather than a safety matter.

**Capital Punishment**  
SB 27, the Republican-sponsored bill to abolish capital punishment and to provide that persons convicted of first-degree murder may never be considered for parole, had the distinction of being the first bill of the session to be killed by committee. It was reported unfavorably Thursday by Senate Judiciary 1. Rep. Taylor, chairman of the House Judiciary 1, has announced that his committee will vote either next Tuesday or Thursday on HB 35, which abolishes capital punishment and denies parole to persons twice convicted of capital crimes.

**Miscellaneous**  
SB 96, by Clark and Morgan of Cleveland, would increase the minimum wage to \$1.  
HB 181 repeals the per head tax of \$3 on horses and mules purchased for resale.  
SB 105, by Senator Midgett amends the laws governing loans to business development corporations by the members of the corporations.  
HB 187 provides that permission by a landowner to another to use land for recreational purposes creates no duty to see that the premises are safe and constitutes no assurance that they are safe.  
SB 109, by Senator Jordan, prohibits the business of debt adjusting for a consideration. The preamble to the bill recites various abuses which are alleged to have occurred in the debt adjusting business.

## Cancer Clinic In Avery Co.

A free Cancer Detection Clinic at Avery County Health Department in Newland will be held on the third Tuesday of each month, March through November. Anyone interested in attending contact the health department in Boone at GO 7-2711. If there is a transportation problem, call CO 7-2711 and arrangements will be made.

SB 111 will be of interest to lawyers. The bill, by Sen. Hamilton, provides that when a tort or contract action is instituted in a recorder's court having civil jurisdiction, and when a cross-action or counter-claim in excess of the court's jurisdiction is filed, both the original and cross action shall upon motion be transferred to the superior court for trial.

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