

Weekly Legislative Summary

NOTE: This is the fourth of a series of weekly summaries prepared by the legislative staff of the Institute of Government on the work of the North Carolina General Assembly of 1955. It is confined to discussions of matters of general interest and major importance.

Still moving along slightly faster than its 1955 predecessor, the General Assembly spent most of its fourth full week on clearing local

calendars — climaxed by a shooting match in the House Friday which saw 33 local bills go winging through. So far, this session only two bills have been brought down, both with unfavorable committee reports. Meanwhile, the spotlight of public interest swung from budget hearings to proposals to reorganize the State Highway and Public Works Commission and to return unmarked State Highway Patrol cars to the state's highways.

State Government Reorganization

Proposals to reorganize the State Highway and Public Works Commission (described in our second weekly summary) created the major legislative storm of the week, but only muted thunders were heard publicly. The bill passed the Senate with little overt opposition, after an amendment deleting the prohibition against political activity by Commission employees and several changes designed to insure that the switch from district-oriented to state-oriented commissioners would not deny citizens an opportunity to be heard on local road problems. These changes include requirements that (1) commissioners be appointed from different areas of the state, (2) individual commissioners be assigned to handle relations with the public in particular areas, (3) at least one annual meeting of the Commission (at which the public will be heard) be held in each of three general geographic areas of the state, and (4) final responsibility for decisions as to secondary roads be in the Commission rather than in the Director of Highways (a career official) in the House. The Commission on State Government recommended identical amendments.

through not by employees' and would require that standards for secondary roads be a matter of public record. The House did not vote on the bill or amendments, but referred them to a second committee, where they are expected to lie until the Senate version is placed before the House.

Two more bills of the Commission on Reorganization of State Government (these designed to revamp the state's building laws and agencies enforcing them) were introduced on Monday night. Its earlier recommendations have not yet come to a vote.

Motor Vehicles and Highway Safety. The most extensive floor debate of the week took place in the Senate where most of two legislative days was devoted to consideration of Senator Moore's bill to restore Highway Patrol authority to use unmarked cars. After beating down three efforts to limit the authority in various ways, proponents finally accepted an amendment forbidding use of such cars by commission officers of the Patrol and passed the bill. Their most telling argument appeared to be the possibility of using unmarked cars as a weapon against the spread of drag-racing on the highways.

Two more installments of the Department of Motor Vehicles' legislative program were submitted.

One would make the commission of two speeding offenses within a year rather than two convictions within a year, the basis of a driver's license suspension, and would let the Department pick up a license when a judge suspends sentence on condition that the defendant not drive for a given period. The second would make a plea of nolo contendere the equivalent of a conviction for the purpose of suspension of a license, thus plugging a hole opened by a recent Supreme Court decision.

Special treatment for speeding physicians bumped to a halt, when HB 125 received an unfavorable committee report. After lengthy committee debate on the merits of abolishing the mandatory one-year license revocation for drivers convicted of drunken driving (and substitution of a discretionary suspension period of from 60 days to one year), SB 16 was referred to a subcommittee for further study.

Budget Matters. While agency heads were submitting requests for increased appropriations during the next biennium, the central budgetary issue continued to be the questions of how large a pay raise will be granted to teachers and state employees and where the money is coming

from. Teachers were heartened this week when Governor Hodges bowed to demands that they receive greater pay hikes than the 31 percent recommended in the budget. The Governor said that he recognized that the recommended raises were inadequate and that he would lead in helping to find the necessary money to do the job. Most legislators appeared relieved by the change in the Governor's position. Meanwhile, members of the State Board of Education received an 'urgent request' from their chairman to appear before the Joint Appropriations Committees on March 19. At that time the State Board is expected to go to bat for a 19.3 percent raise for the teachers.

Schools. Despite widespread editorial opposition in past years to the election of county school boards by the General Assembly rather than by the folks back home, the practice currently required by law continues unchanged. This week the biennial measure (appointing such members for all counties except Forsyth, Gates, Iredell, Lincoln, and Madison) reached the legislative hopper.

Apparently designed to prevent a city administrative school unit from 'raiding' adjoining county school areas, a bill sent forward by Senator Currie would make it necessary that a petition for annexation have the endorsement of both the city and the county school board before an election would be called.

School teachers with money to save will be enabled to participate in a payroll deduction plan for buying U.S. savings bonds, under a measure submitted by Representative Uzzell.

Municipal Streets. In 1955 mountain legislators submitted a bill authorizing the State Highway and Public Works Commission to pay the entire cost of rights-of-way for highways through municipalities, where the only feasible route is through town. This week a 'down-Easter,' Representative Etheridge of Dare County, put in a bill which would extend the same benefit to any town under 5,000 population when the Commission finds that the town cannot assume its normal burden of one-third of the right of way cost. Another modification of existing law would authorize expenditure of well Bill funds for sheltering and building equipment.

Miscellaneous. The oft-discussed proposal to lower the voting to 18 years came again this week. It would submit a Constitutional amendment to the voters at the 1958 general election. Widows whose annual income does not exceed \$4,000 would get a \$2,000 state income tax exemption under HB 145, introduced by Representative Yarborough of Cumberland. A similar measure which he introduced in 1955 died in committee.

Members of the armed forces and of the merchant marine, who received exemption from city and county poll taxes during the war and for a year thereafter, would receive continuing exemption under HB 138.

SB 87, introduced by Senator Copeland, would permit banks to operate on a shortened week, but at the expense of 'bankers' hours.' At the request of all banks in a city or town, the Commissioner of

Children Like To Garden; So Why Don't Parents Give Them A Hand As Beginners

Banks could authorize them to operate on a 5-day week, but they would have to remain open at least seven hours on the day preceding the closed day, and special facilities such as safe deposit vaults would have to be open for an hour on the morning of closed days.

Catfish in the lower Cape Fear River are in for a shock if a bill introduced by Representative Britt is enacted. The bill (characterized by the Charlotte Observer as 'assault with batteries') would permit the use of electrical devices to take the fish. 'Telephoning' for a fish is a well-known technique; how to get only catfish to answer may pose a problem.

DUPLIN COUNTY. HB 78 — Introduced by Johnson, Feb. 21 (Listing automobiles) March 4, passed House; March 5, received in Senate, sent to Finance.

HB 89 — Introduced by Johnson, February 25 (Deputy sheriff's salary) March 8, passed Senate.

HB 121 — Introduced by Johnson, February 23 (Register fees) March 8, passed House.

Just ask them! Watch their eyes light up at the thought of a garden of their very own... where they can dig to their heart's content; where they can pick flowers if they feel so inclined; where they can grab a snack in the form of a nice, crisp radish or tomato which they have grown by their own efforts. Let the children make their own choice as to what they will plant, guiding them only in giving advice on arrangement and selection. See that they select plants that are easy to grow — ones that are not apt to result in disappointment for the young gardening enthusiast. Marigolds, nasturtiums, cornflowers, zinnias, cosmos and snapdragons are a few good flowering plants for the youngster's garden. In the vegetable division, lettuce, radishes, squash, corn and a couple of tree tomatoes, or perhaps some small red and yellow novelty varieties are 'sure hits.'

Planting a garden with a youngster present; an excellent time to teach him some fundamental knowledge — the relation of living things to their surroundings and the care and food they receive.

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IN THE 1956 FINER CAROLINA CONTEST!

Every citizen in each of the 137 towns entered is a winner in the Finer Carolina program. Through community cooperative effort much has been done to make these towns better places in which to live.

If you will look deep into the "heart" of your town, whether or not there is tangible evidence of your efforts, you will find a tremendous spirit of progress awakening. That same spirit is prevalent throughout the Finer Carolinas, manifesting itself in hard working citizens with a genuine interest in the future of their home town.

Our message is a tribute to these fine people who made things happen in 1956 and who will continue to make things happen in the years ahead.

In the opinion of the judges, the following towns and organizations deserve prize money and special recognition for outstanding civic improvements in 1956.

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<p>\$1000 ASHEBORO, N. C. \$500 ROXBORO, N. C. \$250 SANFORD, N. C.</p> <p>\$1000 RAMSEUR, N. C. \$500 SPRUCE PINE, N. C. \$250 WALLACE, N. C.</p> <p>\$1000 HOT SPRINGS, N. C. \$500 HARRELLS, N. C. \$250 NORLINA, N. C.</p>	<p>\$250 CLINTON, N. C. \$150 WADESBORO, N. C. \$100 DILLON, S. C.</p> <p>\$250 BLACK MOUNTAIN, N. C. \$150 ROWLAND, N. C. \$100 PAGELAND, S. C.</p> <p>\$250 SWANNANOVA, N. C. \$150 FARMER, N. C. \$100 WRIGHTSVILLE BEACH, N. C.</p>

HONORABLE MENTION


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