

Legislative Summary

NOTE: This is the thirteenth 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 1967. It is confined to discussions of matters of general interest and major importance.

The Assembly has now moved into the interval between the local bill deadline and budget action when much of the important floor work of the session occurs. This week was a fair sample of the heavy going that makes for long days in Raleigh in the merie month of May.

On Monday the Senate concurred in the House amendments to SB 104, thereby completing enactment of the State's new abortion law. Monday night also saw House approval of the hike in usury rates to 7% for home loans.

Highlight of Tuesday in the Senate was the unexpectedly early committee report of a Congressional redistricting proposal, a substitute version of the Mills-Griffin bill, SB 68. This plan reportedly involves a topside population deviation of 3.33% above perfect equality and a downside deviation of 1.94%. Its contours mirror a major facelifting for the tortured visage of the present Congressional map. Under this plan two sets of incumbent Congressmen might be thrown into the election ring together (barring changes of residence). Gardner-Fountain and Whitener-Jonas. After its emergence from committee the bill was placed on the Senate calendar for next Tuesday's consideration, the 18th. The Senate also completed, this Tuesday, its passage of the remaining segments of the Governor's law and order program, which now return to the House for concurrence in amendments. In addition the Senate gave final approval to a House bill proposing a Constitutional amendment removing restrictions on legislator pay—a measure heralded as paving the way for eventual transition to annual legislative sessions.

The House devoted most of its Tuesday session to debate on a proposed Constitutional amendment to lower the voting age to 18 (HB 11), after rejecting an alternative proposal to give the Assembly discretion to lower the voting age. This debate occasioned the first vote of 1967 by Speaker Britt, who departed the Chair long enough to contribute his ballot to a two-vote margin above the required three-fifths approval for a Constitutional amendment. By Wednesday, however, the wind had shifted and this bare majority had evaporated. On third reading—amid a welter of vote shifts and abstentions—backers of 18-year old voting could only muster 63 votes, nine shy of the necessary 72.

The latter half of the week brought final passage and ratification of the much-amended

Bowles bill calling for highway beautification (and industrial promotion) with funds from a premium-priced prestige license plate. By Friday the House had passed the Administration-backed industrial development revenue bonds bill, and the Senate had approved the companion bill on second reading. Several major proposals were reported out of committee on Friday for floor action next week, including the Uniform Commercial Code amendments and the election law recodification (in the House), and the local jail law revision (in the Senate).

A TWO-THIRDS TALLY
On Wednesday the General Assembly finished its 66th week-day session of 1967—probably about two-thirds of the way to completion of this legislature. Through Wednesday 1410 bills and resolutions had been introduced, of which 391 bills and 46 resolutions had been ratified and 38 bills had been killed by formal action in committee or on the floor. 734 bills were in committee—392 in the House and 342 in the Senate. The Appropriations and Finance Committees and the two Judiciary Committees of each House remain the major repositories for bills, accounting for 361 or almost one-half of the bills in committee. (Of these 361, 219 were in the money committees alone.) About 150 of the bills remaining in committee were local bills awaiting their turn in the committees that deal with the bulk of all local bills—Local Government, Salaries and Fees, Education, and Counties, Cities and Towns.

The volume of introductions is now running well ahead of any legislature in modern times at this stage of the session—15% ahead of 1965, 12% ahead of 1963 (which produced a modern record high in introductions), and 22% above the average for the last three regular sessions. Comparisons with years before 1965 are likely to be somewhat misleading, because the May 1st local bill deadline was instituted that year, which tends to inflate the 1965 and 1967 totals. Nonetheless, if current trends continue, the 1967 session promises to produce 2000-plus bills and may well set an all-time record for introductions.

It remains too early to predict with any hope of accuracy the adjournment date for this session. The first big obstacle to be cleared is action upon the general appropriations bills, a step which will be more cumbersome and time consuming than usual because of the necessity of meshing both taxing and spending proposals this year. Another high hurdle is the subject of Congressional redistricting, though the probability of Senate action on the Senate Committee's proposal next week offers hope for a decision this month or in early June. A general notion of the amount of heavy work remaining ahead can be gleaned by examining the pumber of public bills awaiting consideration. About 350 public bills, other than "money bills", are now lodged in committee. Add to this additional public bills likely to be introduced during the remainder of the session, probably upwards of 300 or more bills, judging from recent years' experience. Thus, chances are that 600 to 700 public bills are yet to receive floor consideration and, in most cases, committee review as well.

Some incentive for early adjournment is offered, of course, by the fact that legislators' per diem of \$15 per day is limited by law to 120 days, or June 7th this session. Payment of expenses at \$20 per day continues, however, as long as the Assembly remains in Raleigh, and the passing of the last per diem pay day has never signalled an automatic exodus from the Statehouse.

The average legislative leave-taking date for the past decade is June 18th, and the record stay (in 1963) was through June 26th. With the amount of major legislation still on the docket, chances

for adjournment by June 18 are fast glimmering and the June 26th record is within easy reach.

NEW BILLS
Although the volume of new bills shrank from the previous week's staggering total of 197 to a modest haul of 78, quite a few substantial new offerings were floated this week. Three new entries in the UNC-Trustee derby topped the list—SB 429 (HB 940) sponsored in the Senate by Sen. McLendon and in the House by Reps. McFadyen and Tate; SB 426 (HB 941) sponsored in the House by Rep. Ragsdale and in the Senate by Sens. Griffin and Harrington; and SB 430, introduced by Sens. Wood and Henley. The McLendon bill embodies the Hodges Commission proposal for a 24-member board of trustees, while the Ragsdale bill seeks a 42-member board with nine of

them appointed by the Governor and the remainder by the Assembly, standing three each from the State's 11 Congressional Districts. The Wood bill would keep the present 100-member contingent, but apportion it on the basis of enrollment at each of the four campuses. It would parcel out the trustee functions in part to an executive committee and in part to separate subcommittees of the board for each campus. Still pending in committee is the earliest trustee reorganization proposal of the session, SB 324 introduced by Republican Sen. Bagal and calling for separate 9-man boards for each campus.

Other new bills of the week include a consumer finance package offered by Repp. Clark of Union, to regulate auto installment purchasing, retail installment financing and small loans;

Synod Meeting Set June 6-7

Approximately 700 ministers and ruling elders from all parts of North Carolina will attend the 1967 meeting of the Presbyterian (U. S.) Synod of North Carolina on June 6-7 at Montreat, N. C.

This will be the 154th annual meeting of the Synod of North Carolina, which was formed in 1813 near Greensboro, N. C.

The Synod of North Carolina will be called to order and opened with prayer at 2:00 P.M. on June 6 by the Retiring Moderator, the Rev. Mack C. MacQueen of Clinton, N. C. Mr. MacQueen is pastor of the Graves Memorial Presbyterian Church.

One of the first orders of business will be the election of a new Moderator, who will preside at the 1967 sessions and hold office for the ensuing year.

The Moderator-Nominee, who was elected at the 1966 Synod meeting, is Mr. J. Harold McKeithen of Winston-Salem. If elected, Mr. McKeithen will be the first layman to hold the post since 1960.

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