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Bills to Re-Open High-Risk Activities Fail

North Carolina's cases and hospitalizations continue to hit record-highs. We have now been over 1,000 hospitalizations for several days.

Legislators have repeatedly tried to override Governor Cooper's orders and the recommendations of state and national public health experts to re-open the riskiest activities. Last week it was arcades, amusement parks, large public gatherings for fireworks, gyms, bowling alleys, and skating rinks.

COVID-19 continues to spread in North Carolina. Its spread threatens the public health, school re-openings in the fall, and our economy. How do we fight the virus?

1. Wear masks.
2. Continue to keep the riskiest activities closed, such as bars.
3. Socially distance and Stay at Home as much as possible.



I feel tremendously for businesses that are closed and for businesses that are open, but are failing. Until the public health situation improves, consumers will not resume normal spending patterns and our businesses will suffer. We have to control the spread of COVID-19.

[NC reports third straight day of record hospitalizations as US tops 3M cases](#)
WSOC

[Legislature fails to override Cooper vetoes, as Reopen NC protests continue](#)
The News & Observer

[5 veto override attempts at NC legislature fail, including 4 about reopening](#)
Associated Press

[Editorial: Help North Carolina get back to work](#)
Capitol Broadcasting Company

Controversial Bill Language on Death Record Secrecy Defeated

During a recent late-night legislative session, a bill passed that included a provision that may have made death records confidential. The language attracted widespread opposition from advocates for heightened scrutiny of death cases involving law enforcement and from advocates for more openness and transparency in government. Others argued that the language did not make the records private.

Governor Cooper vetoed the controversial bill, blocking it from becoming law. Additionally, I supported a new bill that made it crystal clear that death records need to be public.

[Cooper Vetoes Bill With Death Investigation Records Change](#)
Public Radio East

Bill Defeated to Allow Guns on School Property in Some Circumstances

[HB 652](#) contained a number of changes to our current gun safety laws. It expanded the number of people who can conceal carry handguns to include EMS personnel and certain law enforcement personnel. Additionally, it allowed guns to be on the premises of churches that are also used for school purposes.

[HB 652](#) passed the General Assembly, but was vetoed by Governor Cooper and that veto was sustained this week.

I opposed HB 652 because we need to keep our bright-line rule about guns and schools: guns are NEVER allowed on school property. When you start making exceptions, it becomes harder to enforce the law.

Guns remain legal to be carried on church property. Unfortunately, guns are sometimes left behind by careless owners. That is a dangerous situation, but particularly so when it is left behind a church also used as a school.

North Carolina Pauses in Safer At Home Phase 2, Adds Statewide Requirement for Face Coverings

Governor Roy Cooper and North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services Secretary Dr. Mandy Cohen announced at the end of June that North Carolina will remain in Safer at Home Phase 2 for three more weeks. Cooper also announced that face coverings must be worn when people are in public places as officials seek to stabilize concerning trends of increasing viral spread.

Growing evidence shows that cloth face coverings, when worn consistently, can decrease the spread of COVID-19, especially among people who are not yet showing symptoms of the virus.

Based on the metrics laid out in April, North Carolina is evaluating a combination of the data from the following categories that shows the indicators moving in the wrong direction, causing officials to pause in Phase 2.

- North Carolina's syndromic surveillance trend for COVID-like illness is increasing.
- North Carolina's trajectory of lab-confirmed cases starting to level, but is still increasing.
- North Carolina's trajectory in percent of tests returning positive remains elevated.

- North Carolina's trajectory of hospitalizations are increasing, though we have capacity in our healthcare system.

Businesses can download templates for signs on face coverings [here](#).

Read [Frequently Asked Questions](#) about the executive Order and mandatory face coverings.

[NC's percentage of positive coronavirus cases stays high, hospitalizations rise again](#)

The News & Observer

[ENC: rising cases in younger population/expected rise in death rate](#)

Jacksonville Daily News

Legislators, Advocates Push for Needed Changes to NC's Unemployment System

Long before the COVID-19 crisis, North Carolina had the worst unemployment system in the country for unemployed workers. Our system provided too little in compensation, for too short a period of time, to too few unemployed workers.

I am a strong supporter of [House Bill 1075](#) to fix the unemployment system now so jobless workers can weather the current crisis and the next one. Federal pandemic assistance programs are set to expire at the end of July and December, leaving workers and businesses across our state with an inadequate system to stabilize the state's economy through to a full recovery, particularly given the potential for a second wave of the virus in the fall.

[House Bill 1075](#) would:

- Lengthen the amount of time an unemployed worker could potentially receive compensation to 26 weeks (up from 13);
- Increase the maximum potential weekly benefit to \$450/week (up from a max of \$350/week); and
- Expand when a worker could receive unemployment such as when a spouse relocates for a job.

[Democratic lawmakers: NC unemployment insurance system 'underfunded' and 'unprepared'](#)

[Lawmakers unlikely to boost unemployment benefits for NC's jobless before they leave town](#)

WRAL

Democrats Propose Small Business Relief Grants to Businesses Closed Due to COVID-19

Last week House Democrats proposed a \$50 million grant program to help small businesses like gyms forced to close due to COVID-19. Priority for the grants would be given to businesses with less than 100 employees and those who are not receiving federal small business assistance.

Republican leaders blocked consideration of the amendment, instead, putting in their own, similar amendment in a bill that is currently sitting in a legislative graveyard.

All of our businesses will continue to suffer until the public health situation improves and consumers grow confident enough to resume normal spending. Until then, we should stop partisan political games and provide our closed businesses with funding to help them survive.

Democrats Propose Requiring Agricultural Production Facilities to Better Protect Factor Workers as a Condition of Receiving COVID-19 Funding

North Carolina has more COVID-19 outbreaks at meat and poultry processing facilities than any other state. Despite voluntary guidance from the Centers for Disease Control and NC DHHS, more than 2,000 processing plant workers had tested positive for the virus by the end of May. These workers are disproportionately African-American and Hispanic, a major contributing factor as to the growing spread of the virus in these communities.

[HB 1201](#) spends nearly \$18 million to help small, independent meat processors to increase production. House Democrats put forward an amendment to require the processing plants to comply with safety guidance from federal and state health

officials as a condition to receive funding. The amendment died on a tied vote with some Republicans joining Democrats in voting Yes.

After the amendment failed, a compromise amendment was adopted to require the grant recipients to submit to public health officials a plan detailing how they will protect employees from viral spread.

Federal Pandemic Unemployment Compensation to End July 25

Unless the federal government acts to extend the program, the last week for which claimants will be eligible for Federal Pandemic Unemployment Compensation (FPUC) is the benefit week ending July 25, 2020. FPUC is the federal program of the CARES Act that provides an extra \$600 in weekly assistance to people receiving state or federal unemployment benefits.

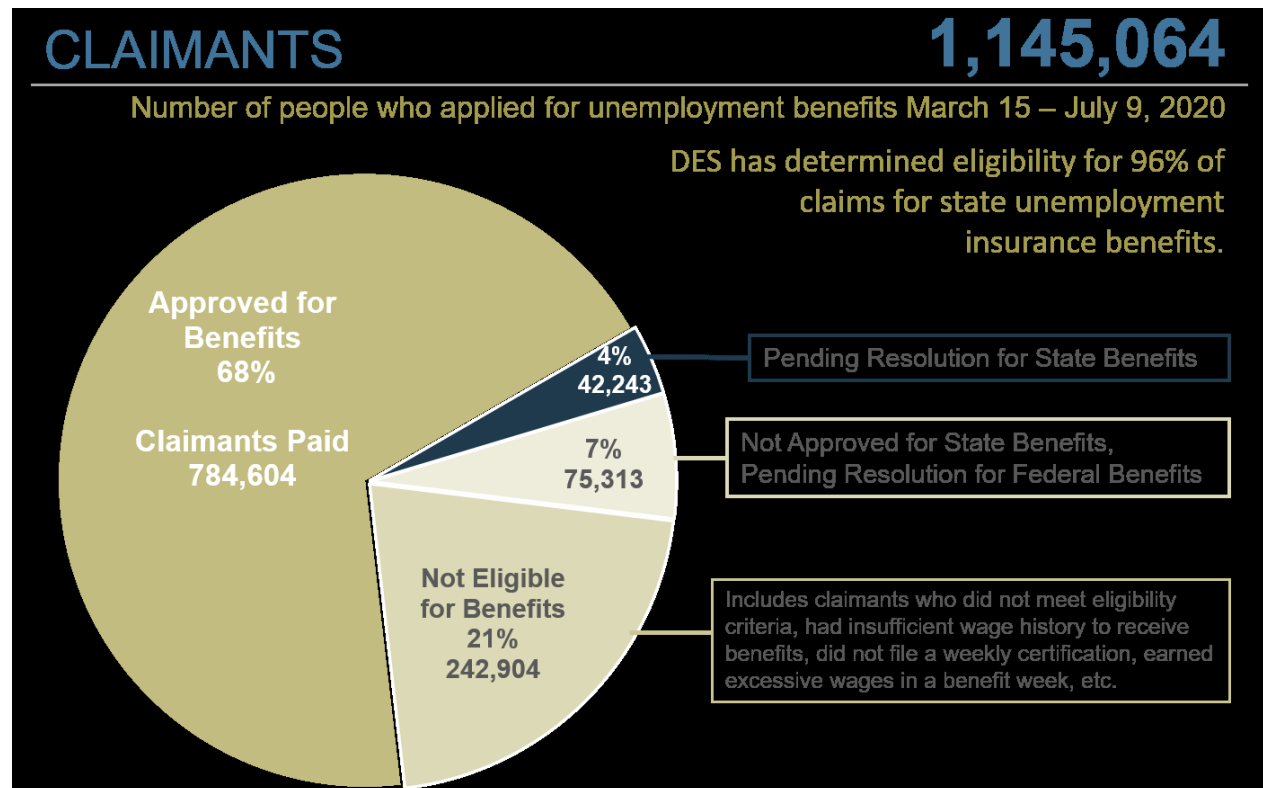
Under the federal CARES Act, FPUC is not payable for any week of unemployment ending after July 31.

- For states, including North Carolina, where the unemployment week ends on a Saturday, the last week for which FPUC can be paid is the week ending Saturday, July 25. (U.S. Department of Labor guidance on FPUC)
- People who are owed FPUC for weeks ending April 4 through July 25 will be paid those benefits retroactively.
- Since the program was implemented in April, the Division of Employment Security has issued more than \$2.8 billion in FPUC benefits. That is more than half of the total unemployment benefits the state has paid North Carolinians during the COVID-19 pandemic.

PAYMENTS	
\$5,362,216,314 Total Paid For claims effective as of March 15, 2020	\$1,130,872,087 State Unemployment Insurance
	\$94,501,815 Pandemic Emergency Unemployment Compensation
	\$231,989 Extended Benefits
	\$1,259,665,774 Pandemic Unemployment Assistance
	\$2,876,944,649 Federal Pandemic Unemployment Compensation
PEUC, PUA and FPUC are federal unemployment programs made available through the federal CARES Act.	

Resolving Claims

DES continues to make progress on resolving all claims through its focused efforts to address those filed earliest in the pandemic. A team of experts is dedicated to determining eligibility for aging claims and claims with complex issues. DES has determined eligibility for 96 percent of all claims for state unemployment insurance.



Other News

[Sanitation workers soldier on during COVID crisis despite risks](#)

North Carolina Health News

[N.C. Residents Won't Need a Doctor's Order for a COVID Test](#)

Associated Press

[State officials keep executive order in place delaying utility shutoffs](#)

WRAL

[Duke, Dominion cancel \\$8 billion Atlantic Coast Pipeline](#)

NC Policy Watch

[Pandemic leaving potholes in city budgets](#)

WRAL

[2020 Mountain State Fair Called Off Because Of COVID-19](#)

WFAE

Contact Me

My office is Room 506 of the Legislative Office Building and my office phone number is 733-5974. ***DUE TO THE STAY AT HOME ORDER, WE ARE NOT CURRENTLY IN THE OFFICE. PLEASE FEEL FREE TO STILL CALL OR EMAIL. Angela and I are working to answer your every question.*** My email address is darren.jackson@ncleg.net. I look forward to hearing from and working with you. I am grateful for the opportunity to serve. As always, please feel free to contact my office if you have any questions or concerns.

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