

Budget Reinvests in NCTIA Foundation

The \$30 billion state budget approved on Friday includes \$50,000 for the Tourism Education Foundation of NC, the philanthropic arm of NCTIA.

The appropriation by the General Assembly will be used to extend TEFNC's work on workforce development in counties adjacent to Mecklenburg County.

"We appreciate Rep. Jason Saine for his leadership on this issue over the last three years," said NCTIA Executive Director Vince Chelena. "More North Carolina high school students will find upwardly mobile careers in the tourism profession because of this line-item."

Nash Co Legislator Talks Casino Drama



The Do Politics Better podcast talks to Rep. Allen Chesser (R-Nash) about the NC Rural Tourism

Incentive Program and the moment he was told the deal was dead for his rural county.

The insightful conversation with Rep. Chesser is hosted by NCTIA Lobbyists Brian Lewis and Skye David. NCTIA is a sponsor of the podcast.

State Budget Passes Without Casinos

Kenny Rogers' 1978 hit song *The Gambler* gives sage advice for anyone making a wager, and the tune also applies to NC politics:

You've got to know when to hold 'em; know when to fold 'em; know when to walk away; and know when to run.



Senate President Pro Tem Phil Berger (R-Rockingham/Guilford) informed Speaker Tim Moore (R-Cleveland/Rutherford) on Tuesday afternoon that he was walking away from the NC Rural Tourism Incentive Program and would make way for final votes on a state budget.

"It was just pretty clear that the facts were almost beside the point, as to what those proposals will do for rural areas," Berger said at a joint press conference on Tuesday night with Speaker Moore. "And the emotion that was actually permeating every bit of discussion about that had sort of overtaken – I've learned that in an environment like that, you're unlikely to make any progress."

NCTIA Lobbyists Brian Lewis and Skye David said the announcement by the top General Assembly leaders was a surprise to them and all of NC politics.

"We heard reports that House Republicans caucused behind closed doors early Tuesday afternoon and the conversation was at best described as 'unproductive,'" said Lewis. "While Senator Berger is not one for losing many political fights in the General Assembly, he is a realist and it was apparent he did not see a path to victory this session on this issue."

David added that Sen. Berger did not close the door to casino authorizing legislation in the short session scheduled for next spring.

NCTIA Executive Director Vince Chelena read the casino creating provision this past weekend and said he sees why Sen. Berger is so enthusiastic to support the NC Rural Tourism Incentive Program.

"The bill requires a \$500 million investment in each of the three rural communities in Rockingham, Anson, and Nash Counties," Chelena said. "The bill also guarantees over 5,250 new jobs in these counties. While the debate on both sides have merit, there is no debating these projects would have been an economic game-changer for rural North Carolina."

The budget passed the House and Senate on final votes early Friday morning. Governor Roy Cooper announced after the final votes that he will allow the budget to become law without his signature.