A letter from Our Senator

Dear Friends and Neighbors,

Although the General Assembly has only been out of session for 6 months, we are already starting to see the effects of legislation passed during the 2013 Long Session. For example, the North Carolina unemployment rate has dropped from a whopping 10.4% to 6.9%. We are making tremendous progress when it comes to unemployment and we should see more improvement in the economy in the coming months.

There is other exciting news for North Carolina and the 12th District. Rooms-To-Go is moving to Dunn and staying! They plan to add over 220 new jobs to the area, and in addition, will build a new warehouse, distribution center, retail showroom, and invest more than $40 million over the next three years. I pray this is only the beginning of businesses entering the 12th District seeking all the area has to offer.

Another big economic boom for our District is happening in Lee County. I've spoken before about Hydraulic Fracturing (HF), also known as fracking. It is the process of extracting natural gas from shale rock layers thousands of feet below the surface of the earth, well below the water table and as deep as one mile. Dealing with issues related to HF will be one of the "elephants in the room" during future NCGA sessions.

Exploration for shale gas deposits is allowed by current legislation and can begin in 2015. I am a member of the Joint Legislative Commission on Energy Policy which is currently gathering data necessary to resolve natural gas drilling and recovery policy issues. These policies will pull together the "best practices" developed nation-wide by a wide variety of interest groups over the past 60 years. The interest groups represented include state and local government, oil and gas industry, environmentalist, scientists and economists. This "best practices" approach will make North Carolina's hydraulic fracturing policies and regulations practical and as proactive as possible. The more I learn about the technology, the more I believe that we can mine this natural resource safely and responsibly.

The Governor's Mining and Energy Commission (MEC) is a major support group of the Joint Legislative Commission. The MEC is composed of experts in all disciplines involved in safely mining shale deposits for natural gas. The principal objective of the MEC is to ensure that drilling for shale gas deposits will be done in ways to protect the people, our water supply and our environment. Using MEC findings and other information, the Legislative Commission will make every effort to ensure that all the lessons - positive and negative - of the last 60 years are taken into account as we develop North Carolina's Hydraulic Fracturing policies. In reality, there is no such thing as a 100% fail-safe system or process. Taking well-calculated risks has made our nation great. You can be sure that we will proceed with caution to reduce fracking risks to an absolute minimum.

The potential economic benefits of HF to the 12th District and to North Carolina are huge. Available information suggests that between 2012 and 2015 the shale gas industry will create 800,000 jobs in the U.S. Just think, if we capture only one percent (1%) of those jobs it would mean 8,000 good paying jobs, mostly in Lee County and in the 12th District. In addition it will create jobs in the supporting infrastructure. Based on the Arkansas experience, 96% of these jobs are held by state residents. These are people who will live in North Carolina and support our economic growth. You can be sure that this potential will not cause the NCGA or MEC to

tolerate shortcuts to environmental protection and/or personal safety.
Special interest groups (especially those tied to renewable energy advocacy) are opposed to “fracking”. In fact, they are opposed to any initiative that is not a renewable energy initiative. Some of these groups are environmental extremists and some are simply big business entities wanting to take advantage of the government subsidies and stimuli – paid for by your tax dollars. It is true that at some point in the future we will need alternative energy sources. Industry should be developing alternatives (like renewable energy technology) for future use. However, they should be doing it as part of a natural evolution to meet our energy needs. Despite billions of our tax dollars being invested in renewable energy by the current administration, it remains the most expensive source of energy. This makes our energy bill higher and subsidizes the technology development with our tax dollars. The reality is that for the next century the most cost-effective form of energy is nuclear and natural gas - including natural gas mined using hydraulic fracturing.
In my opinion, these groups pushing the renewable energy and environmentalist causes have been conducting a massive anti-fracking propaganda campaign for several years. The messages from these groups, including the Obama administration, are a large dose of misinformation. They not only create negative attitudes about “fracking” but also slow North Carolina’s and the U.S. economic recovery. Each month I will share fast facts about HC that prove the emotional misinformation out there is false. Your comments concerning fracking will be helpful to me as the Senate makes its decision in the near future.
In the coming month, I and other members of the Johnston County Delegation will host 3 Town Hall meetings:
Kenly Town Hall February 13th 6:30 PM Tobacco Farm Life Museum 709 N Church St, Benson Cleveland Town Hall February 18th 6:30 PM JCC Cleveland Campus 9046 Cleveland Road, Clayton Benson Town Hall February 25th 6:30 PM Town Hall, Main Conference Room 303 East Church Street, Benson In addition to these meetings, I will conduct Telephone Town Hall Meetings in Lee and Harnett County with Representatives Lewis and Stone. We believe this is a better way to reach more of you from the convenience of your own living room!
Lastly, I am pleased to announce that I have been appointed to the Joint Study Committee on the Affordable Care Act and Implementation Issues. I look forward to working with all of my colleagues, on both sides of the aisle, to study the impact the Affordable Care Act will have on North Carolina and how we can best prepare.
As always, call or stop by anytime.

With kindest regards, I am

Sincerely,

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