

NC Legislative Update December 18, 2020

Related Professionals

David P. Ferrell
919.573.7421
dferrell@nexsenpruet.com

Michelle L. Frazier
919.573.7433
mfrazier@nexsenpruet.com

George T. Smith III
919.653.7836
gtsmith@nexsenpruet.com

Practices

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The long-awaited COVID-19 vaccine reached North Carolina this week, and medical personal at several hospitals received the shot. North Carolina currently has the Pfizer brand vaccine, with hopes of receiving the Moderna vaccine once the Food and Drug administration approves it.

The State has submitted its COVID-19 Vaccination Plan to the federal government, and North Carolina will be administering the vaccine in five phases; Phase 1a, Phase 1b, Phase 2, Phase 3, and Phase 4. The phases are designed to vaccinate the most vulnerable and at risk first.

Phase 1a includes health care workers who are at high risk of COVID-19 exposure and those in long term care facilities. Workers who are not affiliated with a hospital need to contact their local health department to receive their vaccine. Link to local health department numbers: <https://www.ncdhhs.gov/divisions/public-health/county-health-departments>

Phase 1b includes adults with two or more chronic conditions.

Phase 2 includes essential frontline workers (all health care workers). Phase 2 also includes all adults over age 65, as well as adults under age 65 with at least one chronic condition.

Phase 3 includes students and those working in critical industries.

Phase 4 includes everyone else who wants a vaccine.

Governor Cooper has indicated that the state has no plan to mandate that individuals get vaccinated, but some employers may do so. The vaccine is free, and will require individuals to receive two shots, several weeks apart.

NC DHHS Vaccine Infographic

Newby Wins North Carolina Supreme Court Chief Justice Race

The race for the North Carolina Supreme Court Chief Justice position was one of the closest state-wide elections in North Carolina history, with Associate Justice Paul Newby narrowly defeating Chief Justice Cheri Beasley. Newby only led Beasley by a few hundred votes out of 5,391,501 ballots cast in the race. Beasley requested several recounts, which failed to change the results, and conceded the race last weekend. Beasley was appointed by Governor Roy Cooper in 2019 when former Chief Justice Mark Martin resigned. She was elected to the Court in 2012. She is also the state's first female African American Chief Justice. Newby is the longest serving member of the court, being elected in 2004, and will be the 30th Chief Justice. With Newby's win, Republicans won all state-wide judicial seats on the ballot this year. Democrats will still hold a one seat advantage on the high court.

WRAL: <https://www.wral.com/nc-gop-wins-all-8-statewide-judicial-races-as-chief-justice-cheri-beasley-concedes-election-to-paul-newby/19426222/>

Secretary Regan Tapped to Head EPA

President-elect Joe Biden has named NC Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) Secretary Michael Regan to head the federal Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). Regan served as DEQ Secretary for Cooper's first term, starting in 2017. He previously worked for the EPA, and was also Director of the Environmental Defense Fund. Regan is a native of North Carolina, and this is certainly a proud achievement for our state.

Regan is not the only departure from Cooper's administration. Secretary Larry Hall is leaving the Department of Military and Veterans Affairs, Secretary Tony Copeland is leaving the Department of Commerce, and Secretary Susi Hamilton is leaving the Department of Natural and Cultural Resources.

WRAL: Biden picks North Carolina environmental chief to lead EPA

COVID-19 Curfew

With the state continuing to break records of daily new COVID cases and hospitalizations increasing, Governor Cooper has instituted a 10 p.m. curfew. Executive Order 181 went into effect on December 11, and specifies non-essential businesses must be closed between the hours of 10 p.m. and 5 a.m., and all on premise alcohol sales must stop at 9 p.m. and cannot resume until 7 a.m. The mass gathering limit is 10 people inside and 50 people outside. The face mask mandate for public places is still in place.

WRAL: North Carolina sets 10 p.m. curfew amid surge in virus

2020 Summary of Substantive Legislation

The Legislative Analysis Division has published the 2020 Summary of Substantive Legislation, which breaks down new laws by subject matter. Below is a link to the document: <https://www.ncleg.gov/Legislation/SummariesPublication/Subjects/2020/>

The General Assembly is set to reconvene on January 13 for the official start of the 2021 long session.