HOUSE overrides Perdue veto

By GARY D. ROBERTSON
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The vote Wednesday just after midnight was 73-46. That's just enough to meet the three-fifths majority required to override a veto.

House Speaker Thom Tillis called for the vote in a rare early-morning session. Perdue vetoed the plan Sunday, saying it would deliver "generational damage" to public education and other services that residents rely upon and make the state attractive for private job creation. Republicans have said their budget will create jobs, let temporary taxes expire and preserve funds for teacher and teacher assistant positions.

The Republican-led House needed support from at least four Democrats for a successful override. Five Democrats who supported the final budget earlier this month stuck with the GOP and voted for the override.

Today was the earliest day the House could hold an override vote. Waiting any longer than is necessary is a distraction, Tillis said.

"People know where they are on the issue," Tillis told reporters. "We've made very clear to the governor that we had the votes and we respectfully requested that she let it go into law and she chose not to."

Senate leader Phil Berger, R-Rockingham, said on Tuesday his chamber would consider an override later today if the House vote is successful. The Senate Republican majority is already veto-proof. Enacting the budget, which would spend $19.7 billion next year, would set the stage for the General Assembly — the first under Republican control in 140 years — to end its annual session this weekend.

The budget vote against Perdue handed the governor a short-term political defeat following her veto, the first of a state budget by a North Carolina chief executive in state history. Only one of the previous 15 vetoes since the governor received the power in 1997 have been canceled. But Perdue's fortunes could turn if her warnings of thousands of job losses in the public schools come true this fall.

The Democrat defectors said the deal avoided a potential government shutdown when the new fiscal year begins July 1 and was the best deal that could be reached with Republicans resolute on letting temporary taxes expire.
“It's the right thing to do,” said Rep. Bill Brisson, D-Bladen, one of the five. “You've got to be willing to work with people to end up on the working side.”

Longtime state Democratic consultant Gary Pearce said the override was a win for the General Assembly's new Republican majority, regardless of whether Perdue's predictions about the effects of the plan come true.

“There are no moral victories in politics,” Pearce said Tuesday. “A win is a win and a loss is a loss, and I think it potentially hurts her that she lost five Democrats.”

Republicans say their plan cuts taxes, reduces spending and retains state funds for public school classroom instructors — items that appeal either to hard-line conservatives and swing voters concerned about their children's schools.

Republican leaders also can argue they shifted $400 million to the public schools and University of North Carolina system combined in an attempt to assuage Perdue into signing the bill.

“We have re-established that classroom funding,” Tillis said.

Most Democrats counter that the proposal passes along $124 million in additional cuts to local school districts. When combined with decreased funds for salaries for administrators and janitors, more than 9,000 jobs in the public schools will be lost. Another 3,200 positions will be eliminated in the University of North Carolina system.

Republicans argue the job losses are overstated and don't take into account private sector positions that will be created by the extra money residents and businesses will have because of lower rates and a small business tax break in the plan.

It's hard to evaluate how many jobs will be lost in the coming year because districts will decide where to cut.

And the districts combined have as much as $258 million in special federal funds that must be used by September 2012 to preserve education jobs.

“Right now, I think the public just hears a lot of noise and doesn't know whether both sides are exaggerating,” Pearce said.

Perdue's veto endeared her to fellow Democrats and groups historically allied with their candidates, such as the North Carolina Association of Educators, as she begins her re-election bid next year. She's been traveling around the state criticizing the budget and listening to local educators' woes.

Democrats hope voters will remember she sounded the warning about the budget and that the Republicans are to blame.

“This budget belongs to the Republican Party,” Senate Minority Leader Martin Nesbitt, D-Buncombe, said Tuesday. “If it goes into effect, they'll bear the consequences of it.”
The state House voted 73-46 shortly after midnight today to override Gov. Bev Perdue's budget veto.

The vote to approve the GOP-authored, $19.7 billion budget handed the Democratic executive the biggest policy loss of her term. The Senate is expected to follow with an override vote later today or Thursday.

House Speaker Thom Tillis said late Tuesday night that he wanted the early morning vote to get past the issue and to concentrate on other matters as the legislature moves toward adjournment.

"Every day that we wait is another day that the agencies of state are wondering what they're going to do to plan for July 1," he said in an interview. "This is a bill we already made clear to the governor that we had the votes to override a couple of weeks ago."

Perdue responded in a statement immediately after the override:

"Tonight, the Republican-controlled legislature turned its back on North Carolina's long-standing commitment to our people to provide quality schools, community colleges and universities - all to save a penny."

"I vetoed the Republican General Assembly's budget because I believe it will cause generational damage to this state," she added. "We must have a highly trained workforce for our state to be globally competitive, and that education begins in preschool classrooms and continues all the way through our community colleges and universities. They are all equally important."

As expected, five Democrats broke with their party to help the GOP override the veto. The Democrats said they wanted to prevent a prolonged budget battle between Perdue and the legislature that could lead to a government shutdown. "Sure it would have
happened," said Rep. Jim Crawford, an Oxford Democrat. "Where would we have gone from here?"

Gary Pearce, a veteran political consultant, said the vote was a clear win for Republicans.

"They have imposed their will on her and they beat her," said Pearce, who worked for former Gov. Jim Hunt.

"The budget is the biggest issue of all," he said. "This is the biggest loss. There might be other fights."

Republican leaders were determined not to extend a temporary one-cent sales tax increase. Perdue wanted to keep at least part of the temporary tax.

House Minority Leader Joe Hackney, who backed Perdue's veto, was critical of the budget and the wee-hours override.

"If I had the worst budget in modern North Carolina history for education, the environment, for courts, for human services, I'd want to do it at midnight, too," he said.

The N.C. Association of Educators planned to hold its lobby day and rally at the legislature today.

House members did not want "to look teachers in the eye" and vote for a budget that takes per-pupil spending below Mississippi, Brian Lewis, lobbyist for the NCAE, said.

Tillis indicated the teachers' expected rally did not influence the vote's timing.

Security was stepped up Tuesday night, with officers at the doors to the House chamber and others on the third floor. Two Raleigh police cars were parked outside the front door.

The House has been the scene of several disruptions that led to arrests, including one Tuesday night when three people were arrested in a protest over an environmental bill. About 100 people were in the gallery for the vote, but there were no disturbances.

Budget supporters have been targeted, Tillis said.

"They've gotten thousands of emails, I'm told, and a number of other things," Tillis said. "My ultimate goal is to protect the safety of every member, and I've asked for increased (security)."

General Assembly Police Chief Jeff Weaver said there were no direct threats against any of the five Democrats. Internet traffic Tuesday indicated budget opponents were attempting to organize a late-night flash mob. No budget protests had occurred by 11 p.m. Tuesday. lynn.bonner@newsobserver.com or 919-829-4821.
Ceremony marks start of hospital addition
By K.j. Williams
The Daily Reflector
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Scooping up symbolic shovelfuls of marine-blue sand in keeping with the Children's Hospital's aquatic décor, some young patients on Tuesday helped mark the groundbreaking for a $48 million addition.

Several hundred people, including Pitt County Memorial Hospital employees, attended the event to listen to speeches honoring the major project donors and hear officials stress the importance of expanding eastern North Carolina's only children's hospital into a full-service facility. The J.H. Rose High School Jazz Band performed, and as shovels were lifted a drum roll was heard.

The Children's Hospital is located at PCMH, one of the hospitals owned by not-for-profit University Health Systems. The addition is expected to open in 2013.

Once it's completed, the hospital will be named the James and Connie Maynard Children's Hospital, in honor of the Raleigh couple who donated $9 million toward construction of the addition, and another $1.5 million to East Carolina University's Brody School of Medicine for a distinguished professorship in the pediatrics department.

“I just want to say thank you for being part of our family and for being a leader in giving back to our community,” Steve Lawler, president of PCMH told the Maynards, who both grew up in eastern North Carolina and graduated from ECU.

“You have helped us do something special: to fulfill a lifelong dream for some of us,” Dave McRae, chief executive officer of UHS, said.
James Maynard, the chairman of a corporation that owns the Golden Corral restaurant chain, said his family supported the donation and his visit to the facility convinced him.

“We feel privileged. It's a joy to us,” he said of the gift that he hopes will make a lasting difference in children's lives. The Maynards' adult daughter and son attended the event, as did their grandchildren.

Officials said one of the benefits for the 29-county region served by the children's hospital will be the convenience for youth and their families once they no longer have to travel long distances for certain procedures.

“We will be able to help each and every child,” Dr. Ronald Perkin, co-medical director, said. “Our expansion allows patient-focused, child-centered care” that will give children the emotional boost of being treated closer to home.

After the event, Erin Lucas, a pediatric intensive care nurse, said she believes that having family nearby will help speed the healing process for the children.

“I just feel very blessed that eastern North Carolina is going to have a place where children can be taken care of right outside their front door,” she said. “And, the fact that we're going to have all these services under one roof.”

Dr. Paul Cunningham, dean of ECU’s Brody School of Medicine, said the new addition will “open the opportunity for long and productive lives for a multitude of children in our region.”

The first phase of the addition will add 78,000 square feet. The first floor will contain a nine-bed unit for outpatient services, a radiology department, an onsite Ronald McDonald suite for families and a yard where children can play.

The second floor will contain a Kids Immunosuppressed Special Unit, a controlled six-bed unit for children with illnesses that compromise their immune systems. It also will house a 21-bed unit for infants.

In addition to the Maynards, other donors who made large donations were named. According to one of the capital campaign's chairmen, the campaign surpassed its fundraising goal of $17 million by raising $23 million, and plans are under way to start fundraising for phase 2.

UHS will fund about $31 million of the cost of phase 1, according to a spokeswoman.

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Players showcase talent at ECU
By Jordan Anders
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It isn't very often that athletic success in Chapel Hill translates to something good for Greenville.

But that's exactly the situation that East Carolina was put into when it hosted the IMPACT Baseball Summer Showcase at Clark-LeClair Stadium on Monday and Tuesday.

The event was slated to be held at Boshamer Stadium on the campus of UNC-Chapel Hill. But with the Tar Heels hosting an NCAA Super Regional this past weekend, and the possibility of Monday serving as a rain date, the showcase was left without a venue.

That's where ECU came in.

“We have a good relationship with (ECU head baseball coach Billy) Godwin and these guys,” said Lee Land of IMPACT Baseball. “This is a great venue to bring kids to and allow them to showcase their talents.”

According to Land, the decision to move the showcase from Chapel Hill was made during the middle part of last week. But he said that the relocation went smoothly given the circumstances.
“It was (difficult) just because you have people expecting to be at one location,” Land said. “It's just something that we had to do, and (ECU) helped us out tremendously by letting us come in on such short notice.”

Land said that the heavy rain on Sunday night threatened to change plans, but the event has gone off without a hitch. He credits great weather Monday and Tuesday for helping the showcase go smoothly.

The summer showcase is an opportunity for 2012, '13 and '14 high school graduates from Virginia and the Carolinas to impress college scouts and further their opportunities to play baseball at the collegiate level.

ECU baseball coach Billy Godwin was present to take in some of the action, while UNC sent a coach to evaluate talent as well.

“For the coaches, you bring in over 100 kids to play in front of them at one time,” Land said. “They're able to see a whole bunch of talent in a short period of time and evaluate them and start locking in on who they want to follow for the next couple of years.

“College recruiting is going on at a younger and younger age now, and (the showcase) gives these guys the opportunity to get in front of those schools that they're interested in playing for and showcase their abilities and hopefully get them a college scholarship and the opportunity to play at the collegiate level.”

In addition to helping out IMPACT Baseball this week, ECU had already agreed to host an IMPACT 16U and 18U Team Showcase June 24-26. That event remains unchanged.
N.C. teachers will lobby senators today

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RALEIGH North Carolina senators are about to hear from public school workers as lawmakers decide whether to back up their nearly $20 billion budget by overriding Gov. Beverly Perdue's veto.

The North Carolina Association of Educators will lobby the Senate today to get more funding for public schools. The Senate is expected to vote to overturn Perdue's veto, which she said she used to protect the state's education network.

The House overrode Perdue's veto early Wednesday.

Members of the Democrat-friendly education group have warned that the Republican-written budget would lead to thousands of schoolhouse layoffs statewide. The association has also urged lawmakers to continue a one-cent sales tax.

The teachers' group is collecting pennies and personal stories to give lawmakers in hopes some can be swayed to increase school spending.
RALEIGH A study by researchers at N.C. State University could pave the way for new treatments for Parkinson's disease, a degenerative disorder whose patients suffer from tremors and loss of muscle function.

The work, published Tuesday in Nature Scientific Reports, may one day allow researchers to develop targeted drugs to fight the disease.

The study was led by doctoral candidate Frisco Rose. He worked closely with Dr. Miroslav Hodak, a research associate in physics, and Dr. Jerzy Bernholc, director of NCSU's Center for High Performance Simulation. Using advanced computational tools, the researchers unlocked the details of a key process in the early stages of Parkinson's disease.

The team focused on a certain protein associated with the disease and other degenerative illnesses. In its usual form, this protein is long and straight, like a spaghetti noodle.

Sometimes, though, the protein can get tangled and stick to itself. When this happens, other protein strands start sticking, forming clumps, as in a big pot of stuck-together spaghetti. These protein clumps, called Lewy bodies, are almost always found in the brains of patients with Parkinson's disease.

Scientists already had a few ideas about what causes the proteins to tangle, but they didn't know how it happened or where it started. Experiments couldn't easily provide details, and computer simulations weren't fast enough to run through all the possibilities. Proteins are very complex, so it would simply take too long.

The team at N.C. State developed a way to speed up the computer simulation. They focused closely on the parts of the protein that other researchers suspected were involved, but still simulated the rest of the protein in less detail.

Their simulation lets them track the protein step-by-step as it tangles, something researchers had never achieved before.

"The coolest thing for me is just to be able to see what's happening," Rose said. Now, "we can look at it and say, 'Right here, this is where something begins.'"
Knowing how something begins is crucial to figuring out how to stop it. Now that scientists understand the way these proteins clump together, drug research can focus on developing treatments to prevent or even reverse the process once it starts.

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Vandy familiar to UNC's Stallings

BY ROBBI PICKERAL - Staff Writer

CHAPEL HILL -- When the NCAA baseball championship bracket was revealed last month, North Carolina catcher Jacob Stallings immediately noticed that he could be facing a familiar foe if his third-seeded team advanced to the College World Series.

Two weeks later, during a rain delay Saturday in UNC's super regional-deciding game against Stanford, the junior from Brentwood, Tenn., could not resist tuning in to the super regional in Nashville, Tenn., to root for Vanderbilt in its game against Oregon State.

Stallings' father, Kevin Stallings, is the coach of Vanderbilt's basketball team, and the sixth-seeded Commodores' win over Oregon State on Saturday night advanced them to Omaha, Neb., shortly after the Heels finished off the Cardinal for their own College World Series bid.

Now that Stallings and UNC are scheduled to face Vanderbilt on Saturday in the College World Series' opening game (2 p.m., ESPN), any cheering for the Commodores has been muted.

"There were some mixed feelings there," Jacob Stallings said. "But I'm certainly just excited - excited for them, and excited for us, too."
Although the Tar Heels (50-14) will be making their fifth trip to Omaha in the past six years, this is the first for the Commodores (52-10) - a team for which Stallings once thought he would play.

Stallings' father was an assistant under current UNC basketball coach Roy Williams when both were at Kansas.

Kevin Stallings has coached in Nashville since 1999, and one of Jacob's earliest memories of the Commodores baseball program was taking batting practice as a middle schooler at McGugin Field, Vanderbilt's former stadium.

When Vanderbilt hired baseball coach Tim Corbin before the 2003 season, he and the elder Stallings hit it off, and the families grew close. Jacob Stallings, an all-state high school baseball and basketball player who said he knew he wasn't fast enough to play basketball at the collegiate level, set his sights on playing for Corbin.

That was his plan until Corbin leveled with him: Vanderbilt was deep at catcher already, so the timing wasn't right.

"Coach Corbin actually told me that this [UNC] was a better situation for me," said Stallings, whose decision came down to Vandy or UNC.

In his three seasons at UNC, Stallings has grown from a part-time catcher and DH on the 2009 team that went 1-2 in the College World Series to a full-time starter who was drafted in the 42nd round by the Cincinnati Reds last week.

His receiving and blocking have gotten better, Tar Heels coach Mike Fox said, but his batting has improved even more. He went 3-for-5 with three RBIs in UNC's 7-5 win over Stanford on Saturday, including a two-out RBI hit in the ninth to clinch a return to Omaha. In all, he is 8-for-20 (.400) with seven RBIs, two doubles and a home run in five NCAA games this season.

Not bad for a player who hit a modest 14-for-57 (.246) his freshman season.

"As a coach's son, it didn't take me long to be around him to realize that Jacob had 'it' - that it factor that he gets it, he's going to realize that I'm not very good offensively and I need to get bigger and stronger," Fox said. "You have to be honest with yourself, and most of the time, coaches' sons are that way.

"... He's been a big part of the season, a big part of our last three years here."

And now, Stallings wants to be a big part of the College World Series - which means trying to beat the school that employs his father. For his part, Kevin Stallings, who has been a fixture at UNC baseball games since the end of the basketball season, said there is no dilemma as to who he will root for Saturday. When UNC played Vanderbilt in basketball this season, his son rooted for him - and he'll do the same.
"It's a little awkward," Kevin Stallings told The Tennessean. "But my two favorite baseball teams have made it to Omaha. It's the best kind of dilemma ... if you want to call it a dilemma."

Meanwhile, Jacob Stallings said he'll try to tune out the fact that he'll be playing a team that features at least a half-dozen friends.

"Espo [Vandy third baseman Jason Esposito] texted me on Sunday," Stallings said, "Just saying, 'Congrats. Why do we have to play each other in the first round? Why can't we wait until the championship?""

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