

GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF NORTH CAROLINA
SESSION 2021

H.B. 678
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HOUSE PRINCIPAL CLERK

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HOUSE BILL DRH30322-MMa-59

Short Title: Legislative Transparency Act. (Public)

Sponsors: Representative Ager.

Referred to:

1 A BILL TO BE ENTITLED
2 AN ACT TO ENACT THE LEGISLATIVE TRANSPARENCY ACT AND TO
3 APPROPRIATE FUNDS.

4 The General Assembly of North Carolina enacts:

5 SECTION 1. Chapter 120 of the General Statutes is amended by adding a new
6 Article to read:

7 "Article 37.

8 "General Assembly Transparency Act.

9 **§ 120-315. Legislative findings.**

10 The General Assembly finds that a well-educated electorate is a prerequisite to democracy
11 and the people's business is best done with due notice and adequate transparency.

12 **§ 120-316. Definitions.**

13 The following definitions apply in this Article:

14 (1) Committee. – Any standing committee, permanent subcommittee, or select
15 committee of either house created or authorized by the law or the rules of
16 either house or created by a joint resolution adopted by both houses and to
17 which bills are referred for consideration and report back to the house.

18 (2) Official meeting. – Defined in G.S. 143-318.10(d).

19 **§ 120-317. Broadcasting of legislative sessions and committee meetings.**

20 (a) All sessions of the Senate and the House of Representatives shall be broadcast live by
21 streaming video (contemporaneous audio and video content) over the internet, shall be recorded,
22 and shall be archived in a manner that makes the video broadcast available for replay by the
23 public.

24 (b) Unless specifically exempted from Article 33C of Chapter 143 of the General Statutes
25 by G.S. 143-318.18, all official meetings of committees shall be broadcast live by streaming
26 video (contemporaneous audio and video content) over the internet, shall be recorded, and shall
27 be archived in a manner that makes the video broadcast available for replay by the public.

28 **§ 120-318. Publication of calendars; meeting agendas; proposed committee substitutes.**

29 (a) No bill may receive either a second or third reading in either chamber unless the bill
30 appeared on the calendar published by that chamber's principal clerk's office at least 24 hours in
31 advance of the reading. This requirement may be waived by a two-thirds vote of the members of
32 the house present and voting. For purposes of this subsection, the calendar is published when the
33 Principal Clerk distributes it electronically to all members of the General Assembly and it is
34 posted on the General Assembly's website.

35 (b) No bill may be taken up for consideration in any committee unless the bill appeared
36 on the committee's agenda published by the clerk of the committee at least 48 hours in advance



1 of the committee's scheduled meeting. This requirement may be waived by a two-thirds vote of
2 the members of the committee present and voting. A vote to waive this requirement shall be by
3 a show of hands and may not be pursuant to a voice vote. For purposes of this subsection, a
4 committee agenda is published when the clerk to the committee distributes it electronically to all
5 members of the committee and it is posted on the committee page of the General Assembly's
6 website.

7 (c) No proposed committee substitute may be taken up for consideration in any
8 committee unless the proposed committee substitute has been distributed to all committee
9 members and made available to the public at least 24 hours in advance of the committee's
10 scheduled meeting. This requirement may be waived by a two-thirds vote of the members of the
11 committee present and voting. A vote to waive this requirement shall be by a show of hands and
12 may not be pursuant to a voice vote.

13 **"§ 120-319. Limitation on meeting times.**

14 Neither the Senate nor the House of Representatives, nor both meeting in joint session, may
15 hold session before 7:00 A.M. or after 9:00 P.M. This requirement may be waived by a two-thirds
16 vote of the members of the house present and voting and does not apply to first reading of bills.

17 **"§ 120-320. Use of voice votes; pending amendments.**

18 (a) All votes on amendments offered on the floor of either chamber shall be taken using
19 the electronic voting apparatus or by calling the roll of the house. No amendment may be adopted
20 by voice vote. This requirement may be waived by a two-thirds vote of the members of the
21 committee present and voting.

22 (b) No motion to adjourn shall be in order if any amendment is pending before the
23 chamber. This requirement may be waived by a two-thirds vote of the members of the committee
24 present and voting. If this requirement is waived, then the amendments shall be taken up as the
25 first item on the calendar for the next legislative day and the bill may not have a second or third
26 reading until the amendments have been voted on or withdrawn from consideration.

27 **"§ 120-321. Composition of Committee on Rules.**

28 (a) Each chamber's Committee on Rules shall be composed as follows:

29 (1) One member who resides in each of the State's congressional districts.

30 (2) The Majority Leader and the Minority Leader who shall be in addition to the
31 members appointed pursuant to subdivision (1) of this subsection.

32 (b) The Majority Leader of each chamber shall call the first meeting of the committee
33 within seven calendar days after it is constituted. The Deputy President Pro Tempore shall preside
34 at the first meeting of the Senate Committee on Rules, and the Speaker Pro Tempore shall preside
35 at the first meeting of the House Committee on Rules. At the first meeting, the members of each
36 committee shall elect a chair. Neither the Majority nor the Minority Leader of either chamber is
37 eligible to become the chair of the committee.

38 **"§ 120-322. Applicability.**

39 This Article applies to regular sessions and extra sessions on legislative call as provided in
40 Section 11 of Article II of the North Carolina Constitution as well as extra sessions and
41 reconvened sessions convened by the Governor as provided in Section 5 of Article III of the
42 North Carolina Constitution."

43 **SECTION 2.** G.S. 120-32 reads as rewritten:

44 **"§ 120-32. Commission duties.**

45 The Legislative Services Commission is authorized to:

46 (1) Determine the number, titles, classification, functions, ~~compensation, and~~
47 ~~other conditions of employment and compensation~~ of the joint legislative
48 service employees of the General Assembly, including ~~but not limited to~~ the
49 following ~~departments, divisions, offices, and functions~~:

50 a. Legislative Services ~~Officer and personnel~~ Office and Administrative
51 Services.

- 1 b. ~~Electronic document writing system.~~Information Services Division.
- 2 e. ~~Proofreaders.~~
- 3 d. ~~Legislative printing.~~
- 4 e. ~~Enrolling clerk and personnel.~~Clerk.
- 5 f. ~~Legislative Analysis Division and Legislative Library.~~
- 6 g. ~~Research and bill drafting.~~Legislative Drafting Division.
- 7 h. ~~Printed bills.~~
- 8 i. ~~Disbursing and supply.~~
- 9 j. ~~Program evaluation.~~Evaluation Division.
- 10 k. ~~Fiscal Research Division.~~
- 11 (1a) ~~Temporary employees of the General Assembly are exempt from the~~
12 provisions of G.S. 135-3(8)c., as to compensation earned in that status.
- 13 (2) Determine the classification and compensation of employees of the respective
14 houses other than staff elected officers; however, the hiring of employees of
15 each house and their duties shall be prescribed by ~~the rules and administrative~~
16 ~~regulations of the respective house;~~the member in whose office the employee
17 serves.
- 18 (2a) Obtain a criminal history record check of a prospective employee, volunteer,
19 or contractor of the General Assembly. The criminal history record check shall
20 be conducted by the State Bureau of Investigation as provided in
21 G.S. 143B-972. The criminal history report shall be provided to the
22 Legislative Services Officer and is not a public record under Chapter 132 of
23 the General Statutes.
- 24 (3) Acquire and dispose of furnishings, furniture, equipment, and supplies
25 required by the General Assembly, its agencies and commissions and maintain
26 custody of same between sessions. It shall be a Class 1 misdemeanor for any
27 person(s) to remove any state-owned furniture, fixtures, or equipment from
28 the State Legislative Building for any purpose whatsoever, except as approved
29 by the Legislative Services ~~Commission;~~Commission.
- 30 (4) Contract for services required for the operation of the General Assembly, its
31 agencies, and commissions; however, any departure from established
32 operating procedures, requiring a substantial expenditure of funds, shall be
33 approved by appropriate resolution of the General ~~Assembly;~~Assembly.
- 34 (5) a. Provide for engrossing and enrolling of bills, and
35 b. ~~Appoint~~ appoint an ~~enrolling clerk~~ Enrolling Clerk to act under its
36 supervision in the enrollment and ratification of ~~acts;~~acts.
- 37 (6) a. Provide for the duplication and limited distribution of copies of ratified
38 laws and joint resolutions of the General Assembly and forward ~~such~~ the
39 copies to the persons authorized to receive ~~same;~~the copies.
- 40 b. Maintain ~~such~~ records of legislative activities and publish ~~such~~ documents
41 as it may deem appropriate for the operation of the General
42 ~~Assembly;~~Assembly.
- 43 (7) a. Provide for the indexing and printing of the session laws of each regular,
44 ~~extra or special~~ extra, or reconvened session of the General Assembly and
45 provide for the printing of the journal of each house of the General
46 ~~Assembly;~~Assembly.
- 47 b. Provide and supply to the Secretary of State ~~such~~ bound volumes of the
48 journals and session laws and of these publications in electronic format as
49 may be required by the Secretary of State to be distributed under the
50 provisions of G.S. 147-45, 147-46.1 and 147-48.
- 51 (8) Repealed by Session Laws 1985 (Regular Session, 1986), c. 1014, s. 40(c).

- 1 (9) To establish a bill drafting division to draft bills at the request of members or
2 committees of the General Assembly.
- 3 (10) To select the locations for buildings occupied by the General Assembly, and
4 to name any building occupied by the General Assembly.
- 5 (11) To specify the operating and capital uses within the General Assembly budget
6 of funds appropriated to the General Assembly which remain available for
7 expenditure after the end of the biennial fiscal period, and to revert funds
8 under G.S. 143C-1-2.
- 9 (12) Provide insurance to provide excess indemnity for any occurrence which
10 results in a claim against any member of the General Assembly, as provided
11 in G.S. 143-300.2 through G.S. 143-300.6. That insurance may not provide
12 for any indemnity to be payable for any claim not covered by the above cited
13 statutes, nor for any criminal act by a member, nor for any act committed by
14 a member or former member prior to the inception of insurance.
- 15 (13) Provide insurance to provide excess indemnity for any occurrence that results
16 in a claim against any employee, officer, or committee, subcommittee, or
17 commission member in the legislative branch other than a member of the
18 General Assembly, as provided in G.S. 143-300.2 through G.S. 143-300.6.
19 That insurance may not provide for any indemnity to be payable for any claim
20 not covered by the above cited statutes, nor for any criminal act, nor for any
21 act committed prior to the inception of insurance."

22 **SECTION 3.** G.S. 120-36.1 reads as rewritten:

23 **"§ 120-36.1. Fiscal Research Division of Legislative Services Commission established.**

24 There is hereby established the Fiscal Research Division of the Legislative Services
25 Commission, which shall be solely a staff agency of the General Assembly, shall be responsible
26 to the General Assembly through the Commission, and shall be independent of all other officers,
27 agencies, boards, commissions, divisions, and other instrumentalities of State government. ~~The~~
28 ~~Division shall not be subject to the Executive Budget Act or the North Carolina Human~~
29 ~~Resources Act."~~

30 **SECTION 4.** Article 7B of Chapter 120 of the General Statutes is amended by adding
31 a new section to read:

32 **"§ 120-36.7A. Legislative Analysis Division established; duties.**

33 The Legislative Analysis Division (LAD) of the Legislative Services Commission is
34 established as a staff agency of the General Assembly. The purpose of the Division is to:

- 35 (1) Provide committee counsel and other professional staff to legislative
36 committees during the legislative session and as assigned during the interim
37 between legislative sessions. LAD staff shall assist committee chairs and
38 committee members by analyzing bills before the committees, preparing
39 amendments and committee substitutes, and assisting with parliamentary
40 inquiries.
- 41 (2) Prepare amendments for bills debated on the floor of either chamber.
- 42 (3) Operate a legislative library.
- 43 (4) Respond to information requests from members related to State and federal
44 laws and rules.
- 45 (5) Draft bills for introduction to the extent such drafts are not prepared by the
46 Legislative Drafting Division.
- 47 (6) Assist with any other assignments designated by the Legislative Services
48 Commission or the Legislative Services Officer."

49 **SECTION 5.(a)** G.S. 120-36.16 reads as rewritten:

50 **"§ 120-36.16. Powers and duties of Joint Legislative Program Evaluation Oversight**
51 **Committee.**

(a) The Committee has the following powers and duties:

- (1) Repealed by Session Laws 2018-101, s. 1, effective June 26, 2018.
- (2) To establish and adopt a biennial work plan for the Division that describes the evaluations to be performed by the Division and the measurability assessments to be administered by the Division pursuant to Chapter 143E of the General Statutes. The Committee shall consult with the Director in performing this duty.
- (2a) To receive status updates on the activities of the Division.
- (3) To review evaluation reports submitted by the Division and measurability assessments administered by the Division.
- (3a) To determine if any legislation or other action of the General Assembly is needed to implement the Division's recommendations.
- (4) To consult as necessary with an oversight committee or another committee established in this Chapter about an evaluation report concerning a program or an activity of a State agency, or a program or an activity of a non-State entity, that is within that committee's scope of study.
- (5) To recommend to the General Assembly any changes needed to implement a recommendation that is included in an evaluation report of the Division or any changes needed to implement a recommendation of the Committee.

(b) Notwithstanding any rule to the contrary adopted by either the Senate or the House of Representatives, if the Committee recommends legislative action by a vote of two-thirds of the membership of the Committee, the proposed legislation shall be eligible to be introduced in the House of Representatives and shall be eligible for consideration by both chambers. The vote required by this subsection shall be by roll call with the ayes and noes being recorded in the Committee's minutes."

SECTION 5.(b) Notwithstanding any other provision of law, the Legislative Services Commission (LSC) shall reestablish and fully staff the Program Evaluation Division at the same level and to the same extent as it was staffed as of January 1, 2021. The LSC shall complete this task no later than July 1, 2021.

SECTION 5.(c) Notwithstanding any other provision of law, the Speaker of the House of Representatives and the President Pro Tempore of the Senate shall appoint members to the Joint Program Evaluation Oversight Committee and shall designate cochairs no later than July 1, 2021.

SECTION 6. Article 7D of Chapter 120 of the General Statutes reads as rewritten:
"Article 7D.

"Legislative Drafting Division; Codification of Statutes.

"§ 120-36.20. Legislative Drafting Division established; duties.

The Legislative Drafting Division (LDD) of the Legislative Services Commission is established as a staff agency of the General Assembly. The purpose of the Division is to:

- (1) Draft bills at the request of members or committees of the General Assembly.
- (2) Provide committee counsel to the House and Senate Appropriations Committees. LDD staff shall assist the appropriations committee chairs and committee members by analyzing bills before the committees, preparing amendments and committee substitutes, and assisting with parliamentary inquiries.
- (3) In coordination with the Fiscal Research Division, assist the House and Senate Appropriations Committees, develop the Current Operations Appropriations bill and other bills appropriating funds, and prepare amendments for those bills when they are debated on the floor of either chamber.
- (4) Proofread and electronically format all bill drafts and committee substitutes and engross all floor amendments.

- 1 (5) Provide staff to the General Statutes Commission and for the codification of
2 statutes pursuant to G.S. 120-36.21.
3 (6) Assist with any other assignments designated by the Legislative Services
4 Commission or the Legislative Services Officer.

5 **"§ 120-36.21. Codification of Statutes.**

6 The Legislative Services Officer shall assign to staff of the ~~General Assembly~~ Legislative
7 Drafting Division the following duties:

- 8 (1) To supervise the recodification of all the statute law of North Carolina and
9 supervise the keeping of such recodifications current by including therein all
10 laws hereafter enacted by supplements thereto issued periodically, all of which
11 recodifications and supplements shall be appropriately annotated.
12 (2) In order that the laws of North Carolina, as set out in the General Statutes of
13 North Carolina, may be made and kept as simple, as clear, as concise and as
14 complete as possible, and in order that the amount of construction and
15 interpretation of the statutes required of the courts may be reduced to a
16 minimum, to establish and maintain a system of continuous statute research
17 and correction. To that end the staff shall:
18 a. Make a systematic study of the general statutes of the State, as set out
19 in the General Statutes and as hereafter enacted by the General
20 Assembly, for the purpose of ascertaining what ambiguities, conflicts,
21 duplications and other imperfections of form and expression exist
22 therein and how these defects may be corrected.
23 b. Consider such suggestions as may be submitted with respect to the
24 existence of such defects and the proper correction thereof.
25 c. Prepare for submission to the General Assembly from time to time
26 bills to correct such defects in the statutes as its research discloses.

27 **"§ 120-36.22. Revisor of Statutes.**

28 The member of the staff of the ~~General Assembly~~ Legislative Drafting Division who is
29 assigned to perform the duties prescribed by G.S. 120-36.21(2) shall be known as the Revisor of
30 Statutes."

31 **SECTION 7.** G.S. 126-5(c1) reads as rewritten:

32 "(c1) Except as to the provisions of Articles 6 and 7 of this Chapter, the provisions of this
33 Chapter shall not apply to:

- 34 ...
35 (3) Officers of the General Assembly and employees of the respective houses of
36 the General Assembly-Assembly as referenced in G.S. 120-32(2).

37 "

38 **SECTION 8.** G.S. 143-318.18(4b) is repealed.

39 **SECTION 9.(a)** There is appropriated from the General Fund to the General
40 Assembly the sum of three million seven hundred ninety-five thousand twenty-two dollars
41 (\$3,795,022) for the 2021-2022 fiscal year to be allocated as follows:

- 42 (1) \$2,440,022 in recurring funds for 19 full-time equivalent positions as provided
43 in Section 5(b) of this act.
44 (2) \$65,000 in recurring funds for ongoing audio and video streaming of all
45 legislative sessions and legislative committee meetings.
46 (3) \$1,290,000 in nonrecurring funds to be used for the purchase of audio and
47 video equipment.

48 **SECTION 9.(b)** There is appropriated from the General Fund to the General
49 Assembly the sum of two million five hundred five thousand twenty-two dollars (\$2,505,022) in
50 recurring funds for the 2022-2023 fiscal year to be allocated for the purposes set out in
51 subdivisions (1) and (2) of subsection (a) of this section.

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SECTION 10. This act becomes effective July 1, 2021.