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The House returned Monday and adjourned Wednesday after a burst of activity, sending several contentious bills to Governor Stein and marking the nation's 250th anniversary in the historic State Capitol. With both chambers now out until mid-November, the focus shifts to expected vetoes, the override math that awaits, and a reshuffled congressional race in the west.

SESSION SCHEDULE

Gone until November

BOTH CHAMBERS ADJOURN UNTIL NOVEMBER

The House adjourned Wednesday after two days of votes, following the Senate's departure last week. Leaders say no voting sessions will be held until after the election, with the next voting sessions planned for the week of November 16 and again November 30. Only procedural monthly check-in sessions are expected in the interim, though Speaker Hall or President Pro Tem Berger could call a voting session (Speaker Hall cited hurricanes or emergencies as possible reasons, with advance notice).

Waiting for November: veto override votes on bills Governor Stein has rejected or is expected to reject. With all 170 legislative seats on the fall ballot and Republicans holding a near-supermajority, the post-election sessions could carry added weight depending on the results.

VETO WATCH

Elections bills head to the Governor

VETO	House Bill 958 - Elections Omnibus: Passed the House Tuesday night on party lines. Governor Stein has said he will veto it, arguing it makes voting harder and makes it easier for losing candidates to overturn elections. Key provisions: reduce early voting in primaries and runoffs from 17 to 10 days (general elections unchanged), require the State Auditor to conduct randomly selected post-election county audits, and reduce disclosure for smaller campaign donations (no itemizing under \$100; 48-hour report threshold raised from \$1,000 to \$2,000). An override would wait until November, since leaders do not anticipate returning before the election.
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PENDING **Second Elections Bill (SBE Appeals):** Passed the House 74-35 with 11 Democrats in support. It would let a person appealing a State Board of Elections decision file in their home county rather than only Wake County Superior Court, and extend the voter-registration cure window from three to five days after the election. Governor Stein has not said whether he will sign or veto.

LEGISLATIVE HIGHLIGHTS

Other bills sent to Governor Stein

COURTS **House Bill 377 - Judicial Suspensions:** Passed the House 62-45 on party lines (Senate approved last week). The bill would let Supreme Court Chief Justice Paul Newby unilaterally suspend other judges without pay and block them from hearing cases. Republicans say the court system requested it; Democrats (House Leader Reives) called it a power grab that could pressure elected judges to weigh politics in their rulings. Now before Governor Stein, who can sign, veto, or let it become law without his signature.

HEMP **Houser Bill 328 - Hemp / THC Limits:** Speaker Hall says the broad conference version banning products over 0.4mg THC per container is “probably dead” within the House Republican caucus, with members wary of unintended consequences for legitimate retailers (including grocery chains and craft breweries). Speaker Hall favors targeting “low-hanging fruit” like an age restriction; a standalone age-limit bill (Senate Bill 328) passed the House 106-1 in 2025 but has languished in Senate Rules Committee. At the federal level, the November hemp restriction is the subject of a fight involving U.S. Sen. Ted Budd and the White House.

250TH **America 250th Ceremony:** The House met in the historic State Capitol chamber Wednesday and adopted HR 1245, recognizing the nation's founding and North Carolina's role in the Revolution. The resolution highlighted the Halifax Resolves (April 12, 1776) and acknowledged the Mecklenburg Resolves as among the earliest expressions of support for independence.

POLITICAL OUTLOOK

Congressional shake-up in the west (NC-11)

NC-11 **Rep. Chuck Edwards drops reelection bid:** Congressman Edwards announced early Wednesday he will not seek a third term in congress, but

will finish serving his current term. The decision was announced two days after the House Ethics Committee recommended he be censured over conduct toward two female aides. He did not connect the withdrawal to the report. The move reshapes a race that had grown competitive: Democratic nominee Jamie Ager (a Fairview farmer) had out-raised Edwards \$3.05M to \$940K through June 30, and forecasters had shifted the district toward toss-up / lean Republican. The 11th District Republican Executive Committee will choose a ballot replacement, expected to be discussed next week.

NC-11

State Senator Moffitt weighs a run; state Senator Corbin passes: State Senator Tim Moffitt (R-Henderson) said he is considering seeking the nomination, citing “overwhelming encouragement” and spending a few days talking with district leaders. Senator Kevin Corbin (R-Macon), also considered the possibility, but decided against a run and will continue his state Senate reelection campaign. Note: Senator Moffitt chaired the Senate side of the ABC bill conference, so a departure could impact that legislation for the remainder of the 2026 legislative session.

With the legislature out until November, we will monitor Gov. Stein's action on the bills now on his desk, the override math awaiting the post-election sessions, and the NC-11 replacement process.

Bill Status

House Bill 268: 2026 Budget Technical Corrections – II.

Sponsor: Rep. Hastings

The House Bill 268 Conference Report was taken up by the House on the floor on August 4th and was passed by a vote of 79-31-2. It passed third reading on the 5th by a vote of 79-28-3. The bill was presented to the Governor for signature or veto on the August 7th.

Summary:

- Collaboratory Shellfish Study Extension – Extends the due date for the final report from the Collaboratory study on shellfish regulation authorized in the 2026 Farm Act to December 1, 2027 (was, May 1, 2027). The Collaboratory is still required to submit its interim report with preliminary findings to the Joint Legislative Oversight Committee on Agriculture and Natural and Economic Resources no later than December 1, 2026. Given the delay in the passage of the Farm Act, the extension to provide a final report was necessary to give the Collaboratory time to complete their study.

- Modifies disaster relief funding and programs, including expanded allowable uses for state disaster match funds, changes to grant eligibility and reporting, and updates to specific disaster recovery allocations and deadlines.
- Transfers and restores funding for agriculture, natural resources, and economic development programs, including the Farm to School program, Forest Service equipment, sports event incentives, and film grants.
- Updates finance and tax provisions, including clarifications to the vapor products registry, changes to local sales tax effective dates, and procedures for unexpended bond proceeds.

Senate Bill 445: Regulatory Reform Act of 2026

Sponsor: Rep. Jarvis

The conference report for Senate Bill 445 was taken up by the House on August 4th and adopted by a vote of 84-26-2. The bill was presented to the Governor for his signature or veto on August 6th.

Summary:

- Expands and clarifies statutory vested rights for site-specific development plans, extending vesting periods from two to five years, tolling discontinuance periods during emergency declarations, and strengthening protections against regulatory changes.
- Requires large cities to allow by-right residential and mixed-use redevelopment in commercial districts and mandates at least one accessory dwelling unit (ADU) per single-family lot, with limits on local regulation and implementation deadlines.
- Increases civil penalties for water theft (especially unauthorized water pipe connections) and raises fines for intentional or reckless littering, with higher penalties for repeat and large-scale offenses.
- Allows private swim lessons in private pools, even if accessed via sharing platforms or for a fee, and preempts local health boards from regulating such pools.
- Clarifies and aligns the definition of "manufactured home" with federal law across multiple statutes, and exempts certain water/sewer connections for manufactured homes from plumbing licensure.
- Permits emergency liquefied petroleum gas refills by alternate suppliers during qualifying emergencies, with new liability protections and notification requirements.
- Requires reciprocal recognition of combined wastewater treatment and disposal capacity between DEQ and DHHS, and mandates compliance reviews for large on-site wastewater systems.
- Recodifies and reforms guaranteed energy savings contract statutes, revising procurement, review, and contract requirements for public entities.
- Modifies mining permit procedures, including timelines, application completeness, and automatic approval provisions, and exempts certain timber activities from mining regulation.

- Limits local government glazing/transparency requirements for commercial/mixed-use buildings, with exceptions for historic and safety contexts.
- Expands alternate inspection methods to include home power installations certified by licensed professionals.
- Removes restrictions on property owners' right to display American and North Carolina flags, regardless of prior covenants.
- Modifies at-risk building permit options to include associated trade permits for foundations.
- Requires local governments to provide transparent, itemized fee schedules and estimates to development applicants, with enforcement provisions.
- Authorizes landlords of mobile home parks sited before 1989 to bill tenants for master-metered water service using hot water allocation.