



Food For Thought

As a general rule the most successful man in life is the man who has the best information.

~ Benjamin Disraeli (1804-81)

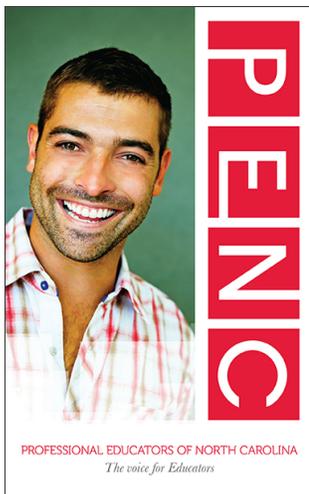
Our Mission

Our mission is to promote education reform for the benefit of all North Carolina children while ensuring the recruitment, development and retention of qualified educators.

Join or Renew

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Check out PENC's brochure:



Membership Form

Click [here](#) for a printable Membership Form.

Who We Are

To learn more about PENC, click [here](#).

Contact PENC

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PENC Legislative Update

Looming Crossover Date sets stage for Dizzying Week

May 16 is a date many legislators have had circled on their calendars for months. It is "crossover day," meaning that for bills to be eligible for consideration for the entirety of the biennium (2013 and 2014) they must have been approved by their chamber of origin and "cross over" to the other chamber by this date. In other words, a bill introduced by a House member must have cleared the committee process, been read and approved three times by the House of Representatives and reported into the Senate in order to be eligible for further consideration during the remainder of this session or next. Committee meetings and floor votes will be held almost around the clock this week as legislators try to move their bills through the process by 11:59 PM on May 16.

Many exemptions to the crossover rule exist, including bills that raise or spend money. Because many education issues fall into the "spend money" category, such bills will not be acted upon at all but will reappear as "special provisions" in the House or Senate version of the budget. Among such issues of importance to educators are the Senate's version of education reform [S361](#) (with which [PENC has concerns](#)), the House's version of education reform [H719](#) (which [PENC supports](#)) and the House's school safety initiative [H452](#), (which [PENC supports](#)). Whether or not such matters survive will be the result of the deliberations of a budget conference committee that will ultimately decide what survives and what fails.

Voucher Bill Hearing Rumored

Rumors continue to circulate about [H944, Opportunity Scholarship Act](#) appearing in an upcoming meeting of the House Education Committee. PENC sent [an alert](#) on [H944](#) last week asking PENC members to communicate their concerns about the bill to their legislators. PENC opposes vouchers for use in private schools, which [H944](#) would authorize and fund. While public notice has not yet appeared, indications via social media indicate that a hearing will happen soon and a new version of the bill will be unveiled. That version will likely lower the maximum allowable family income to qualify to around \$45,000 and require that half of the scholarships go first to children who qualify for free and reduced lunch, which is 185 percent of poverty. The current version of the bill would provide grants of up to \$4,200 per year to students who fit fairly broad criteria – up to 300 percent of the federal poverty level, which equates to an annual income of \$69,150 for a family of four.

PENC members are concerned about how [H944](#) could harm North Carolina's Public Schools, which *are constitutionally-required and in which taxpayers have invested so much money and hope*. PENC members believe that the estimated cost of \$90 million per year would be better directed to strengthening **all types** of public schools by addressing class size issues and the need for additional resources – such as enhanced technology – and professional development for the educators in whom taxpayers have invested already.

Please [click here](#) for the full text of the alert, which was distributed last week.

Please remember that just because a bill is filed or discussions occur, it does not mean that the issue or bill will necessarily make it to the point of becoming a law.
[What do you think?](#)

If you have questions or concerns, please share your thoughts and ideas with us.

Contact us at penc@pencweb.org.

Submitted by Evelyn Hawthorne

For more information about the North Carolina General Assembly, [click here](#).

To identify and contact your legislators, [click here](#).

For information about specific issues, please contact PENC government relations consultant Evelyn Hawthorne at lobbyist@pencweb.org.