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**Six “Issues Committees” Distill Challenges into Legislative Proposals for the NC Senior Tar Heel Legislature**

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*This article is the first of six features describing the current focus of the NC Senior Tar Heel Legislature leading up to the 2023 legislative session of the NC General Assembly.*

The NC Senior Tar Heel Legislature (NCSTHL) operates within a two-year legislative cycle, mirroring the work of the NC General Assembly. Currently, it’s the summer of an even-numbered year and NCSTHL members are focused on a complex but choreographed process. The goal of the process is to recommend to the NC General Assembly enactment of legislative measures that will ensure the quality of life available to NC’s older adults across the state when it convenes in the 2023 long session.

For NCSTHL members, the winter and spring were spent studying the most pressing challenges facing older adults, considering information and data from the state’s aging experts, and deliberating impacts and solutions. In June and July, NCSTHL members submitted their ideas for legislation that could serve to enhance the lives of older adults. The NCSTHL’s Resolutions Standing Committee has received the ideas and is working to sort them into one of the six categories of the Issues Committees. Between now and October, each Issues Committee will convene to discuss, debate, and distill the ideas assigned to them into three proposals, for a total of 18 possible proposals. Then each member of the NCSTHL will deliberate the merits and impact of the proposals. At the October General Session, the NCSTHL will vote as a body to approve the top three to five proposals as its legislative priorities for consideration by the NCGA in 2023.

The Issues Committees are tasked with the important work of distilling the many ideas from the NCSTHL members into proposals that protect and empower the seniors of North Carolina.

- Rosalyn Pettyford (Durham County) is the chair of the Crime/Safety/Security Issues Committee, which focuses on physical, emotional, and financial threats faced by older adults.
- Former Speaker Rev. Dwight Cartner (Davidson County) is the chair of the Enrichment Opportunities Issues Committee, which addresses gaps faced by older adults who seek local enrichment activities such as education, exercise, well-being, and socialization outlets.
- Kaye White (Dare County) chairs the General Legislation Issues Committee, which pinpoints issues that do not fall into the other Issues Committee categories, but which are critically important. Topics might include livable communities, work skills development, financial education, veterans, and technology, among others.
- Currently under selection, the chair of the Health Issues Committee guides the team to identify challenges faced by older adults with respect to all aspects of healthcare, ranging from Medicaid expansion to the need for doctors and nurses specializing in geriatric fields, and programs that advance

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coverage for social determinants of health, such as Home and Community-Based Block Grant services, among others.

- Bill Lamb (Wake County) chairs the Long-Term Care Issues Committee, which addresses shortcomings in both the institutional and private setting of long-term care, including resident-to-staff ratios in assisted living and skilled nursing facilities and upholding resident’s rights.
- Gayla Woody (Gaston County) is assigned to chair the Service Access Issues Committee, which detects obstacles that stand in the way of older adults who need to access supportive services such as broadband, telehealth, and addressing the digital divide.

NCSTHL’s Speaker, Norma Duncan (Mitchell County), shared, “We are facing many challenges as we strive to meet the needs and demands of a rapidly growing aging population. North Carolina ranks ninth in the nation of age 60+ population and unfortunately, we have gaps in our safety nets. There are 11,000 older adults currently on waiting lists for home-based services that would help them remain active, independent and healthy. The chairs of our Issues Committees are strong advocates and eager to establish legislative priorities that ensure North Carolina’s older adults can age with dignity and respect.”

About the NCSTHL: The North Carolina Senior Tar Heel Legislature was created as a nonpartisan, unicameral body by the North Carolina General Assembly with the passage of Senate Bill 479 in July of 1993. Its purpose is to identify the most pressing issues facing older adults across the state and propose new legislation that will improve their quality of life to the NC General Assembly. The NCSTHL is comprised of volunteer delegates and alternates representing each of North Carolina’s 100 counties, supported by the area agencies on aging serving the state’s sixteen service areas.

For more information about NCSTHL, visit [www.ncseniortarheellegislature.org](http://www.ncseniortarheellegislature.org).

To contact your local NCSTHL member, send an email request to media contact Allison Brown at [katbrown1029@gmail.com](mailto:katbrown1029@gmail.com), stating the originating county. Or visit the North Carolina Association of Area Agencies on Aging (NC4A) to locate the correct region and county, at <https://www.nc4a.org/membership> , and request NCSTHL member contact information from the local Area Agency on Aging.

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