

North Carolina Legislator Profile

Holly Grange: House District 20

New Hanover County

“We’re not going to just throw money at the problem [...] The idea of shutting down Chemours might make some folks feel better, but we hope the Dupont spinoff stays open as long as it’s no longer tainting the water.”

– Holly Grange (Wilmington Star-News, Editorial, 7/29/17)

In this Real Facts Legislator Profile, we focus on Representative Holly Grange, the first-term Republican from District 20. She was elected in 2016 after a contentious Republican primary decided the seat as there was no Democratic challenger.

Grange currently chairs the House Select Committee on North Carolina River Quality, a committee created in the aftermath of the GenX crisis in her district. She also sits on the Appropriations on Education Committee.

Grange’s priority as a lawmaker are clear, instead of looking out for middle class families in her district she’s protecting the wealthy and well connected. Grange’s district is suffering from the aftermath of the GenX spill, and her solution is to get rid of environmental protections for big business. She altered the language of the budget to fund a state aquarium to be built on a prominent Wilmington developer’s “mega-development.” She ran on teacher pay, but voted for a budget that failed to raise their salaries to the national average while per pupil spending has actually gone down over the last school year.

Rep. Holly Grange



NC House District 20



Summary:

- **Grange talks about her district’s environmental concerns over GenX, but has voted to reduce funding for the department that handles water permits and is a proponent of regulatory reform that protects polluters.**
 - Grange said of people in southeastern North Carolina in response to the Gen X crisis, “They are afraid for themselves, for their family, for their pets.”
 - Despite Grange’s posturing on GenX, she voted for regulatory reform, protecting polluters and supports offshore drilling
- **Grange altered the 2017 Republican budget to fund an aquarium on private land owned by a prominent Wilmington developer.**
 - Grange was accused of an ethics violation along with a Wilmington land developer over this budget provision.
 - The ethics complaint alleged “bid-rigging, undocumented lobbying and antitrust violations” in the planning of a satellite NC aquarium on private land.
- **Grange voted for the 2017 Republican budget that prioritizes tax cuts over funding public education.**
 - She ran on teacher pay, but voted for a budget that shortchanges teacher salaries.
 - SB257 failed to raise teacher pay and allocated \$45 million to the controversial vouchers program while taking tax credits away from families and teachers and gives a tax break to corporations.

Grange talks about her district's environmental concerns over GenX, but has voted to reduce funding for the department that handles water permits and is a proponent of regulatory reform that protects polluters.

Grange: "climate change does exist." "Climate change does exist. Personally, and from my research, I'm not sure that that is all manmade climate change, but climate change definitely does exist. And if scientific studies have determined that sea levels are rising, that's something that we need to deal with, for whatever reason they may be rising. Especially with our defense and especially with our delicate natural resources that we have here in southeastern North Carolina." (WHQR, [10/9/16](#))

Grange said of people in southeastern North Carolina in response to the Gen X crisis, "They are afraid for themselves, for their family, for their pets." State Rep. Holly Grange, a Republican from Wilmington, said Thursday that people in southeastern North Carolina need help immediately. 'They are afraid,' she said. 'They are afraid for themselves, for their family, for their pets.'" (News & Observer, 9/15/17)

Grange defended the paring down of the Department of Environmental Quality budget, noting that when the budget was larger it still missed pollution. Republican legislators have defended the paring down of DEQ, as well as the decision in August not to give DEQ more money to specifically look into GenX. "DEQ has long been caught between environmentalists calling for tougher action against polluters and business interests complaining that regulation drives up their costs [...] During the August GenX funding debate, Republican Rep. Holly Grange of Wilmington said that even decades ago, when the agency's budget was much larger, it still missed pollution coming out of the plant that dumped the GenX. "She said the plant's water permits have "been rubber-stamped for the last 30 years." (News & Observer, 9/22/2017)

- **Grange did not support allocating resources for DEQ.** Holly Grange did not support allocating necessary financial resources for state agencies, including the already short-changed to enforce regulations for pollution, a sore spot as communities in the greater Wilmington area struggle to comprehend the potential health impacts of the recently-discovered GenX contaminant in multiple drinking water sources. (North Carolina League of Conservation Voters, [11/2/17](#))
- **"We're not just going to throw money at the problem," Grange said on GenX.** Grange said, "We're not going to just throw money at the problem... Every public action taken on GenX, and every tax dollar spent should be measured by one standard: Is it the quickest and best way to make our water safe? The idea of shutting down Chemours might make some folks feel better, but we hope the Dupont spinoff stays open as long as it's no longer tainting the water." (Wilmington Star-News, Editorial, 7/29/17)

Grange voted for the "junk drawer of environmental bills," tying GenX funding to OBX plastic bag ban repeal in a move pushed by a committee she chairs

Grange chairs the House Select Committee on NC River Water Quality. (NCGA, retrieved [12/12/17](#))

Grange voted for H56, a bill that would give money to Wilmington-area groups to study GenX, but would repeal other environmental regulations. "Democrats opposed the proposal, calling it a "contradictory" bill that didn't give enough money for the problem, allocated money to the wrong agencies and lifted other environmental protections. In addition to the bag-ban repeal, it gives trash companies more leeway on how they dispose of solid waste. But Rep. Holly Grange, a Republican who also represents parts of Wilmington, backed the bill and defended the utility, saying: 'They have a plan to get the GenX out of the water. That is what my constituents want. They are afraid. They are afraid for themselves, for their family, for their pets.'" (News & Observer, 8/30/2017)

- **H56 repealed an eight-year ban on plastic bags in the Outer Banks despite opposition from Outer Banks Chamber of Commerce.** “North Carolina lawmakers repealed an 8-year-old ban on plastic bags on the Outer Banks. House Bill 56 was ratified Thursday, led by Republicans and presented to Democratic Gov. Roy Cooper to sign, according to the General Assembly website. The Outer Banks Chamber of Commerce and many local governments supported the ban on plastic bags and opposed the repeal. The chamber surveyed its 1,100 members earlier this year and all but two of about 500 responses opposed the repeal.” (Virginian-Pilot, [9/1/17](#); H56, veto overridden, [10/14/17](#))
- **H56 took away some county authority to regulate landfills.** “House Bill 56 also includes provisions to create a new storm damage mitigation fund for the coast, as well as language that takes away some county authority to dictate that garbage collected within county borders also be dumped there.” (WRAL, [8/31/17](#); H56, veto overridden, [10/14/17](#))

Despite Grange’s posturing on GenX, she voted for regulatory reform, protecting polluters at the expense of clean water and natural resources and supports offshore drilling.

Grange favored regulatory reform. “We need to make sure that the state is attractive for small business to be in business. As we know, most of our jobs come from small business. It’s not our big industries that we have in Wilmington or in the Wilmington area. So we need to make it attractive for small business to be in business. North Carolina tends to be a very regulatory climate. You know, there are a lot of regulations that people need to abide by. That is one of the committees that I’ve asked to be put on, the Regulatory Reform Committee.” (WHQR, [10/9/16](#))

Grange voted for SB131, legislation that repealed policies meant to protect stream beds, beaches, and air quality.

Senate Bill 131 would ask the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to double the amount of development near streams that can be displaced without requiring offsetting improvements. “Some of the more contentious environmental provisions would: Ask the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to permit the state to double the amount of development near streams that can be displaced without requiring offsetting improvements elsewhere. Allow sand dredged from shoals offshore from the capes to be used in beach nourishment even if it doesn’t meet state requirements making sure it is compatible. The bill also deals with the regulation of general contractor’s licenses, eliminating some counties from vehicle emission standards because they have improved, and the disposal of dead reptiles.” (News & Record, 4/5/2017, SB 131; passed its second reading in the Senate on 4/11/2017)

Senate Bill 131 would allow developers to destroy up to 300 feet of stream bed without having to offset the loss. “Legislation proposed by state Senate could further erode protections for North Carolina waterways. Senate Bill 131 would make it possible for developers to destroy up to 300 feet of stream bed without having to offset the loss elsewhere. The current regulation allows for loss of 150 feet without mitigation.” (The Washington Daily News, 3/31/2017; SB 131, passed its second reading in the Senate on 4/11/2017)

Grange voted for SB16, a regulatory reform bill that, among other things, would loosen water quality and let pipeline companies use eminent domain.

Senate Bill 16 is a “16-page grab bag of deregulation provisions. It loosens water quality rules and imposes limitations on local governments power over landfill permits, changes that the Democratic governor called dangerous in his veto message.” “SB 16, titled "Business Regulatory Reform Act of 2017," is a 16-page grab bag of deregulation provisions. It loosens water quality rules and imposes limitations on local governments power over landfill permits, changes that the Democratic governor called dangerous in his veto message.” (News & Observer, 9/29/17)

Senate Bill 16 was the regulatory omnibus bill of the 2017 session that addressed “an array of regulations that lawmakers want to change, from vehicle safety inspections to staffing levels at so-called "doggie day cares." “In what's become an annual hallmark of the approaching end of session, House lawmakers rolled out this year's regulatory reform omnibus in committee Wednesday. Senate Bill 16, as most omnibus bills do, addresses an array of regulations that lawmakers want to change, from vehicle safety inspections to staffing levels at so-called "doggie day cares.” (WRAL, 6/14/17)

Other measures reflected in Senate Bill 16 included proposals “to allow private pipeline companies to use eminent domain to condemn land for their right-of-way, but only for public use, and another provision requiring companies that offer automatically renewing contracts to notify consumers in advance of the renewal date.” “That includes a proposal to allow private pipeline companies to use eminent domain to condemn land for their right-of-way, but only for public use, and another provision requiring companies that offer automatically renewing contracts to notify consumers in advance of the renewal date.” (WRAL, 6/14/17)

Matthew Starr of the Upper Neuse Riverkeeper said, "If SB16 became law, it would open the door for oil companies using eminent domain to build dangerous pipelines through the back yards of families across the state, and it would make it more difficult for communities to hold local landfills accountable for poor practices." "Gov. Cooper's veto of Senate Bill 16 is a victory for clean water and property rights," Matthew Starr, the Upper Neuse Riverkeeper, said in a statement. "If SB16 became law, it would open the door for oil companies using eminent domain to build dangerous pipelines through the back yards of families across the state, and it would make it more difficult for communities to hold local landfills accountable for poor practices." (WRAL, 8/14/17)

- **Senate Bill 16 was overridden by the Republican-dominated General Assembly in October of 2017, which made it the ninth override of a Cooper Veto.** “The Republican-dominated legislature has completed its ninth override from among Democratic Gov. Roy Cooper's 12 vetoes so far this year, this one on a wide-ranging regulatory bill. The House voted late Thursday to make the measure state law despite Cooper's objections that it rolled back water quality protections, particularly on stormwater restrictions for building projects. The Senate's override vote that occurred several hours before also exceeded the three-fifths threshold required. The override vote was the House's last action before members wrapped up a special session that began Wednesday.” (Associated Press, [10/6/17](#))

Grange on offshore drilling: “I think we can safely explore offshore.” “I think we can safely explore offshore. From what I understand, though, there's a moratorium on any type of progress in that direction off of our coast. I understand their concern. It's not anything we need to deal with at this moment, but exploration can be done safely. I'm not saying we need to go beyond that, but we can't even do that right now.” (WHQR, [10/9/16](#))

Grange altered the 2017 Republican budget to fund an aquarium on private land owned by a prominent Wilmington developer.

Grange altered language in the budget to use the funding for a feasibility study on the aquarium to build the aquarium. “That budget line spurred controversy of its own, as it originally was written by former Rep. Chris Millis, R-Pender, to include the funds only for a feasibility study. Grange said earlier this month that the amended language "makes it clearer" that the facility is ultimately going to be built. The amended language prompted a floor speech by Davis in which he opposed the idea and its transformation from a simple study to a full plan for schematics and permitting. ‘For me, the \$64,000 question is why the change from a feasibility study to money toward something being built,’ he said. ‘I am perplexed as to how we've gotten to where this thing is not a feasibility study and is moving forward.’” (Jacksonville Daily News, 11/13/17)

Grange was accused of an ethics violation along with a Wilmington land developer over this budget provision. “Poole accused Raiford Trask III, founder and president of Trask Land Co. of Wilmington, of seeking to have language included in North Carolina's 2017-18 budget bill for funding to plan and permit an aquarium on a Trask-managed, 1,300-acre, multi-use development called Blake Farm. ‘The combined efforts of Trask, Millis, Grange and Rabon resulted in the addition of the following provision to the Budget bill on (Oct.) 1, 2017. This provision appears to mandate sole-source collaboration on a new aquarium to be located on Blake Farm,” Poole's complaint states. The provision Poole cites, Section 14.19 of the budget bill, appropriates \$300,000 in non-recurring funds for the 2017-18 fiscal year to be allocated for planning a Blake Farms satellite aquarium in Scotts Hill in Pender County.’ The provision would authorize expending funds for architects and consultants to collaborate with Blake Farms to design and permit building the satellite aquarium. ‘This action by Sen. Rabon and Reps. Millis and Grange directly benefits a favored real estate developer with budget tax dollars, and raises numerous questions under North Carolina law,’ the complaint states.” (The Brunswick Beacon, 11/7/2017)

- **The ethics complaint alleged “bid-rigging, undocumented lobbying and antitrust violations” in the planning of a satellite NC aquarium on private land.** The complaint, filed today by New Hanover County Democratic Party Chair Richard Poole, names North Carolina Senator Bill Rabon, Representative Holly Grange, former Representative Chris Millis, and Wilmington-based developer Raiford Trask III, president of the Trask Land Company. Poole also filed a similar complaint with the North Carolina Secretary of State.” (Port City Daily, [10/31/17](#))

The complaint alleged that language in the bill “favored a real estate developer.” “The ethics complaint alleges that both the initial language and the stronger modified version “favored a real estate developer (Trask) with budgeted tax dollars,” in essence providing Trask with an anchor tenant for his project at taxpayer expense. [...] The ethics complaint also questions the unusual way the satellite aquarium plan came about, in that the process skipped several key steps including requests for bids (from different developers) and studies on the needs for and feasibility of such a project.” (Port City Daily, [10/31/17](#))

Grange voted for the 2017 Republican budget that prioritizes tax cuts over funding public education.

The Republican budget continues the trend of cutting taxes rather than raising per pupil spending. “This budget will cut individual income tax rates to 5.25 percent from 5.499 percent and the corporate rate to 2.5 percent from 3 percent in the second year, costing the state \$900 million annually when fully implemented. This means that the legislature will eventually have cut \$3.5 billion annually in all its tax cuts –money that could have gone for services. North Carolina, for example, ranks 41st nationally in per pupil spending for public education. Here is a question for lawmakers: Which is most likely hindering industrial recruitment and economic development in small-town North Carolina –high taxes or poor schools?” (News & Observer Editorial, [6/24/17](#), S257, Vetoed [6/27/17](#), Senate Veto Override [6/27/17](#), House Veto Override [6/28/17](#))

Grange said, “we need to pay teachers what they deserve,” then voted for a budget that shortchanges teachers by failing to raise teacher salaries. (YouTube, [2/29/16](#))

Many educators, including veterans of 25 years, will only see an increase of \$30 a month, merely a tank of gas. “The newly unveiled North Carolina state budget does include increases in teacher pay, but they are neither big nor dramatic. Many educators – including veterans who have devoted 25 years or more to our state’s children – will see an increase of \$30 a month. That amounts to little more than a tank of gas, which will hardly be enough to allow teachers to quit their second or third jobs.” (Charlotte

Observer, Op-Ed, [6/21/17](#), S257, Vetoed [6/27/17](#), Senate Veto Override [6/27/17](#), House Veto Override [6/28/17](#))

Starting teacher pay remains at \$35,000 under the Republican budget. “Under the teacher pay plan, teachers with 17 to 24 years of experience would see some of the biggest raises. Starting teacher pay would remain at \$35,000, but teachers at most experience levels would get a raise.” (News & Observer, [7/1/17](#), S257, Vetoed [6/27/17](#), Senate Veto Override [6/27/17](#), House Veto Override [6/28/17](#))

Grange voted for a budget that keeps resources from children in public schools.

Grange sits on the Appropriations on Education Standing Committee. (NCGA, retrieved [12/12/17](#))

Grange was endorsed by the North Carolina Coalition of Home Educators (NCCHE), a school choice organization. “North Carolina Coalition of Home Educators (NCCHE) proudly announces the endorsements of Holly Grange for NC House district 20. Holly is a West Point grad and law school grad who strongly believes in parental choice and back to basics educational philosophy. Holly believes “We need to get away from the business of education and get to the business of educating children.” (NCCHE, [3/1/16](#))

Budget allocated \$45 million to the controversial voucher program and stipulates that the state will add \$10 million more to the program annually. “The budget gives \$45 million this year for the controversial voucher program which allows parents to send their children to private schools using taxpayer-funded scholarships. Cooper has strongly criticized the program, saying those schools lack accountability. The budget says the state will add \$10 million more to the voucher program annually, until it hits \$145 million in the 2027-28 school year.” (News & Observer, [8/8/17](#), S257, Vetoed [6/27/17](#), Senate Veto Override [6/27/17](#), House Veto Override [6/28/17](#))

Vouchers “siphon funds away from the underfunded public school system and sends those tax dollars to private schools without accountability and transparency measures.” “Proponents of school vouchers say that the program enables low-income families to opt out of failing public schools to attend private institutions that offer better educational environments. But critics of the program say that the vouchers siphon funds away from the underfunded public school system and sends those tax dollars to private schools without accountability and transparency measures that ensure students are indeed getting a better education. The Opportunity Scholarships law also fails to ensure that private schools receiving tax dollars do not discriminate against students on the basis of religion or sexual identity.” (WRAL, [1/27/17](#))

Grange voted for a budget that takes tax credits away from families and teachers and gives a tax break to corporations.

Budget favors tax cuts for the wealthy, lowering the corporate income tax rate to 2.5 percent from 3 percent. “The budget will make a series of tax cuts in 2019, a delay from earlier House and Senate tax cut proposals that would have taken effect in 2018. It will reduce the personal income tax rate from 5.499 percent to 5.25 percent and raise the standard deduction – the amount on which people pay no income taxes unless they itemize – to \$20,000 for married couples filing jointly from \$17,500. It will also lower the corporate income tax rate to 2.5 percent from 3 percent. “We are providing tax relief for middle class working families and businesses, and we’re doing it in a prudent way,” Dollar said.” (News & Observer, [6/28/17](#))

“Cooper wants to restore a child-care tax credit. Republicans say no.” (News & Observer Editorial, [6/3/17](#))

- **Cooper: “Good child care is expensive, and this credit will help bring down the costs that working families face.”** “Governor Roy Cooper has proposed creating a child and

dependent care tax credit he said in a news release will help working families afford the cost of child care. “Good child care is expensive, and this credit will help bring down the costs that working families face,” said Cooper. “This tax break will help ensure that children all across the state will show up at kindergarten ready to learn. As the General Assembly begins their budget process, I urge them to include this child and dependent care tax credit that would benefit over 200,000 North Carolina families.” (WNCT, [5/3/17](#))

- **The Republican House & Senate budgets do not provide a child care tax credit.**
(Governor’s Office Press Release, 6/1/17)

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