

## John Sauls: House District 51

Harnett, Lee Counties

**“I will continue to fight for more resources for our public schools and to ensure these resources are being used in the classrooms not wasted by bureaucrats.” - John Sauls (<http://www.votejohnsauls.com>)**

In this legislator profile, we focus on Rep. John Sauls, a Republican representative from District 51 in Harnett and Lee Counties. Sauls served in the General Assembly as a Republican from 2003 until 2007, when he left both the party and public office. In 2016 Sauls rejoined the party and was re-elected. He serves on the appropriations committee and as the chairman of the Education-Community College committee.

Sauls consistently supported policies that shortchange education at every level in N.C. He repeatedly voted for environmental policies that jeopardize access to clean water and clean air while also threatening rural economic development. Sauls supported a budget that prioritized tax cuts over policies that benefit working people, including teachers, families, and the elderly.

### Summary:

- **Rep. Sauls has consistently voted for policies that shortchange education at every level.**
  - Sauls voted for House Bill 13, which reduced class size at a cost of \$388 million per year
  - Sauls voted for the 2017 Republican Budget, which kept teacher pay below \$35,000 a year
  - Sauls supported a 2017 budget, that while unable to find money to subsidize out of pocket expenses for teachers, allocated \$45 million to the controversial voucher program
- **Sauls has voted for bills that weaken environmental protections and hurt rural, poor communitiets**
  - Sauls voted for a bill that would allow companies to dispose of “garbage juices” by spraying them into the air on communities that are predominately rural, poor, and African American
  - Sauls voted for a bill that tied funding to monitor GenX to the removal of the costal ban on plastic bags
- **Sauls has prioritized tax cuts over policies that help the middle class.**
  - He supported a budget that cut individual and corporate tax rates but did not increase per pupil spending
  - He supported a budget that did not contain child care subsidies
  - He supported a budget that eliminates the ability to access health insurance after retirement for state employees hired after 2021

Rep. John Sauls



House District 51



**Rep. Sauls has consistently voted for policies that shortchange education at every level**

**Sauls voted for House Bill 13, which reduced class size at a cost of \$388 million per year, creating an unfunded mandate for N.C. schools.**

**Under House Bill 13 maximum average class sizes would range from 19 to 21 students.** “House Bill 13, sponsored by Republican Rep. Chuck McGrady of Hendersonville, would cap individual K-3 class sizes at 22 to 24 students, depending on grade level. Maximum average class sizes would range from 19 to 21 students.” (News & Observer, [1/25/2017](#); House Bill 13, signed by Gov. Cooper on [4/27/2017](#))

**The mandate for smaller class sizes will cost North Carolina school districts as much as \$388 million more per year.** “New state-mandated smaller class sizes in elementary schools will cost North Carolina school districts as much as \$388 million more per year in operating costs as well as significant capital costs, according to a new report. Districts will need to find between 3,000 and 5,400 teachers to comply with smaller kindergarten through third-grade class sizes, which the liberal N.C. Justice Center’s Education & Law Project says is the equivalent of an unfunded mandate of between \$188 million to \$388 million.” (News & Observer, [4/17/2017](#); House Bill 13, signed by Gov. Cooper on [4/27/2017](#))

**Sauls voted for the 2017 Republican Budget, which kept teacher pay below \$35,000 a year.**

**Note: Gov. Cooper vetoed S257 [6/27/17](#). The Senate voted to override [6/27/17](#). The House voted to override the veto [06/28/17](#). Sauls voted for the veto override.**

**Starting teacher pay remained 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](#))

**Many educators, including veterans of 25 years, only saw 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](#))

**While unable to find the money to subsidize out of pocket expenses for teachers, Sauls supported the 2017 budget that allocated \$45 million to the controversial voucher program.**

**Teachers across the country spent \$500 to \$1000 out-of-pocket for classroom supplies and job-related expenses last year.** “According to a recent report from “Time,” the Education Market Association says most teachers across the country spent \$500 to \$1,000 annually out of their own pockets for classroom supplies and job-related expenses last year. The report said that \$1.6 billion in school supply costs are shifted from parents or cash-strapped school districts onto teachers themselves.” (Gaston Gazette, [5/6/17](#))

**Republican lawmakers did not include Gov. Cooper’s recommendation of a stipend to aid teachers with out-of-pocket expenses in the final budget proposal.** “He also criticized lawmakers’ decision to omit his proposed stipend for teachers to help buy classroom supplies, a lack of funding for teaching assistants, school nurses and school counselors and shifting more money into the Opportunity Scholarships private school voucher program. “Teachers see through dishonest budget gimmicks,” Cooper said as he was surrounded by a group of teachers at the Executive Mansion.” (WRAL, [6/26/17](#))

**The 2017 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, Vetoes [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](#))

**Sauls supported a budget that increased tuition for community colleges by 7 percent.**

*Note: The House and the Senate voted on H397 [06/30/03](#). H297 was signed into law [06/30/03](#)*

**Sauls, in 2004, voted for a budget that increased community college tuition.** John Sauls, in 2004, voted for a budget that gave teachers a pay raise, increased pre-K funding, included funding to reduce third-grade class size, and did not raise taxes, but it did “hit community college students with a 7 percent tuition increase.” (The News & Observer, 06/08/04)

**Rep. Sauls supported bills that weaken environmental protections and hurt rural, poor communities**

**Sauls voted for a bill that would allow companies to dispose of “garbage juices” by spraying them into the air on communities that are predominantly rural, poor, and African-American.**

**H576 would allow landfill operators to use aerosolization to dispose of leachate by “spraying it into the air over their property” without a permit.** “House leaders are pushing ahead with a proposal to require state environmental regulators to allow the disposal of landfill wastewater and fluids that leak out by spraying it into the air over their property without a permit. The process, called aerosolization, is favored by the waste industry and by other industries that deal with large quantities of wastewater. As amended Thursday, however, it would not apply to dewatering coal ash.” (WRAL, [4/20/17](#); HB576, vetoed by Gov., [6/30/17](#))

**Leachate refers to the “garbage juices” that percolate and react beneath waste that typically contain dangerous materials such as lead, mercury, and other toxic materials.** “Beneath the 5.5 million cubic yards of “airspace” — the amount of trash mounded above ground — garbage juices percolate inside the landfill liner. That liquid then drains into a giant holding tank, where it mixes and percolates and chemically reacts. Although the landfill is permitted to accept only “non-hazardous” waste, no one is opening every bag and checking for pesticide containers or cleaning solvents. The leachate — or landfill juice, to be inelegant for a moment — often contains lead from electronics, mercury from batteries, bacteria and viruses from dirty diapers; antibiotics, hormones and other toxics from routine prescription and specialized chemotherapy drugs; volatile organic compounds from plastics, toner cartridges, glues and cleansers.” (NC Policy Watch, [5/2/17](#))

**The aeration of leachate drives the harmful chemicals into the air, creating a hazard for workers at the landfill and citizens downwind.** “A scientist at USEPA responded to our request for comment with several studies showing that landfill leachates and wastewater treatment plant effluents contain large amounts of volatile perfluoroalkyl sulfonic acids (PFAs), and other harmful chemicals. The aeration of these liquid streams drives the volatiles into the air, which then presents an exposure hazard to workers at these plants and citizens downwind. The scientist stated ‘I wouldn’t want to be anywhere near a leachate aeration basin. The downwind emissions would very likely contain a very wide range of toxic materials.’” (Southern Environmental Law Center, Retrieved [5/5/2017](#))

**Communities where over half the residents are people of color are 2.8 more likely to be near a solid waste facility, according to research published in Environmental Health Perspectives.** “The adjusted prevalence odds of a solid waste facility was 2.8 times greater in block groups with ≥50% people of color compared with block groups with < 10% people of color, and 1.5 times greater in block groups with median house values < \$60,000 compared with block groups with median house values ≥\$100,000. Among block groups that did not have a previously permitted solid waste facility, the adjusted hazard of a new permitted facility was 2.7 times higher in block groups with ≥50% people of color compared with block groups with < 10% people of color.” (Environmental Health Perspectives, [07/09/2007](#))

**Scientists: “Solid waste facilities are disproportionately located in communities of color and low wealth”** “Solid waste facilities present numerous public health concerns. In North Carolina solid waste facilities are disproportionately located in communities of color and low wealth. In the absence of action to promote environmental justice, the continued need for new facilities could exacerbate this environmental injustice.” (Environmental Health Perspectives, [07/09/2007](#))

**Sauls voted for House Bill 56, which only allocated \$435,000 to monitor GenX and tied funding to the removal of the coastal ban on plastic bags.**

**Republican legislators tied funding to monitor GenX to a repeal of the coastal ban on plastic bags.** “Republican legislators tied new funding Wednesday to monitor GenX in the Cape Fear River to a long-discussed repeal of North Carolina’s coastal ban on plastic bags. [...] 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](#))

**Lawmakers 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](#))

**The bill split \$435K between UNCW and the Cape Fear Public Utility Authority to monitor and study GenX.** “The bill includes \$435,000 in new funding to monitor and study GenX, an unregulated chemical used to make Teflon and other products that has been found in the Cape Fear River. [...] The bill directs \$185,000 to the Cape Fear Public Utility Authority to monitor drinking water and to try to remove the chemical from the water. Another \$250,000 is earmarked for the University of North Carolina at Wilmington to measure the concentration of the chemical in river sediments and to otherwise study the chemical.” (WRAL, [8/31/17](#); H56, veto overridden, [10/14/17](#))

**After requesting \$2.6 million for DEQ and DHHS to handle monitor and study GenX, Gov. Cooper vetoed H56 which appropriated just \$435K.** “Lawmakers approved \$435,000 to be split between the Wilmington-area water utility and UNC Wilmington for studies. Cooper had requested \$2.6 million for the

N.C. Department of Environmental Quality and Department of Health and Human Services to monitor GenX and study the health effects of long-term exposure.” (Outer Banks Voice, [9/21/17](#); H56, veto overridden, [10/14/17](#))

**Rep. Sauls prioritized tax cuts over policies that help the middle class**

**Instead of increasing per pupil spending, the Republican budget cut individual and corporate tax rates.**

**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](#))

**The 2017 Republican budget continued to reduce accessibility of healthcare, by eliminating health insurance eligibility for state employees hired after 2021 after they retire.**

**Under the Republican budget, state employees hired after 2021 will not be eligible for health insurance after they retire.** “People who go to work for the state beginning January 2021 will no longer qualify for state health insurance when they retire, a provision in the budget that caught critics by surprise. Republican state senators want limits on future retiree benefits to control costs and get the state more in line with perks private-sector employees get. The state employee health plan has a \$42.2 billion unfunded liability, estimated future costs that are outpacing revenue. The retiree health care provision is in the budget the legislature passed this week. Republican senators filed a bill limiting future state employees’ retirement benefits that received a committee hearing earlier this year. That bill never went to a vote. The change will not affect current employees or retirees, or anyone hired before 2021.” (News & Observer, [6/23/17](#); S257, Vetoed [6/27/17](#), Senate Veto Override [6/27/17](#), House Veto Override [6/28/17](#))

**Eliminating retirement health benefits could hurt recruitment and retention of state employees, including teachers.** “Representatives from state employee, retiree and teacher organizations said eliminating the retirement benefit will hurt recruitment and retention. State salaries don’t compete with private-sector wages, they said, so retiree benefits are an important lure. Mark Jewell, executive director of the North Carolina Association of Educators, said everyone thought the proposal to end retiree benefits was dead. “Then, it sneaks up buried in the budget,” he said. Ending state health coverage for retirees is going to make it harder to hire teachers, he said. New teachers won’t want to stay in the profession for 30 years. “We have a statewide teacher shortage crisis,” Jewell said. “This is going to exacerbate it.” (News & Observer, [6/23/17](#), S257, Vetoed [6/27/17](#), Senate Veto Override [6/27/17](#), House Veto Override [6/28/17](#))

**Sauls supported a budget that does not provide a child care tax credit.**

**The 2017 Republican House & Senate budgets do not provide a child care tax credit.** (Governor’s Office Press Release, [6/1/17](#))

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