

North Carolina Legislator Profile

Dennis Riddell: House District 64

Alamance County

“If there was an effect (on the number of TAs), that was not the intent of the legislation, the intent was to maintain the teacher assistant positions.” –[Rep. Dennis Riddell](#)

This installment of Real Facts NC’s legislator profile series focuses on Representative Dennis Riddell, a Republican from Snow Camp, N.C., in Alamance County. Riddell was first elected to the NC House in 2012, and is now in his third term having run unopposed in 2014 and 2016. Riddell’s bid for the House was hardly his first foray into the #ncpol scene. Riddell served as the Alamance County GOP Chair and was active with the Koch-funded NC Citizens for a Sound Economy in the early 2000s.

Riddell spends his time in the General Assembly continuing to advance the Koch’s national conservative agenda. He supported corporate tax cuts at the expense of students and teachers, even after promising ABSS Board of Education members he would stop the NCGA from cutting TA positions. Riddell supports deregulation in favor of big businesses over protecting clean soil, air, and water for North Carolinians.

Summary:

Despite claiming to support increased funding for education, Riddell voted to cut teacher pay, per pupil spending, and teaching assistant positions while also cutting taxes for the wealthy and corporations

- Riddell voted for the 2017 budget that shortchanged teachers by failing to meaningfully raise teacher salaries and prioritized tax cuts over funding public education.
- In 2016 Riddell voted to raise taxes on middle class families and cut funding for our public schools, while giving tax breaks to millionaires
- Riddell voted for the 2014 budget that cut jobs for 3,300 teacher assistants after arguing for the importance of their jobs

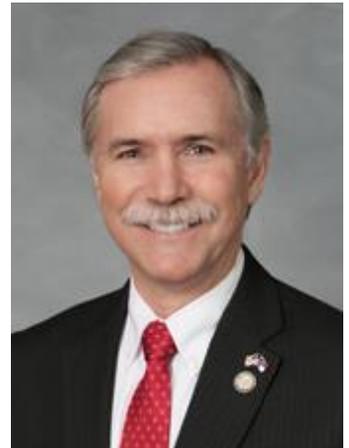
Riddell has a history of advocating for the Koch Brother’s agenda of cutting education in favor of tax breaks for the wealthy and big corporations and participating in protests at the NC General Assembly.

- Riddell’s support of the 2017 Republican budget highlights the hypocrisy of these groups. The budget cut taxes for corporations, but failed to re-establish the childcare income tax credit that would have helped over 200,000 families.
- Riddell supported the national conservative movement to call for a convention of the states, and compared the nation’s debt to drug addiction.

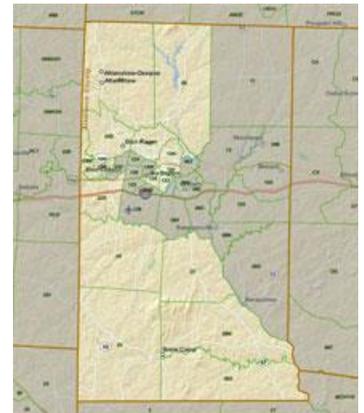
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- Riddell voted for bills that allow large-scale agriculture operations to get away with spraying animal waste on people’s homes and businesses and to allow the waste industry to do the same with “garbage juice.”
- Riddell voted to tie minimal funding to address the GenX crisis created by DuPont subsidiary Chemours to other harmful changes to environmental protections
- Riddell voted for the 2016 “Duke Bailout Bill,” that was “damning proof” families could not rely on the state to protect drinking water and would raise rates to pay for coal ash cleanup

Rep. Dennis Riddell



House District 64



Despite claiming to support increased funding for education, Riddell voted to cut teacher pay, per pupil spending, and teaching assistant positions while also cutting taxes for the wealthy and corporations

Riddell said he but would like to see an increase in state revenue that could be spent on education. “Riddell was absent from the forum but sent a statement saying the Republican-controlled General Assembly worked to preserve education funding during tough economic times while “providing (teachers) a modest 1.2 percent raise, the first in several years.” Riddell, who has worked in education, said he would like to see an increase in state revenue that could be spent in that area.” (Burlington Times-News, [9/19/12](#))

Riddell voted for the 2017 budget that shortchanged teachers by failing to meaningfully raise teacher salaries and prioritized tax cuts over funding public education

- **NOTE:** Riddell voted for the 2017 Republican budget and voted to override the governor’s veto. (S257, House Veto Override, [6/28/17](#))

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](#))

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](#))

2017 Republican budget lowered the corporate tax rate to 2.5 percent from 3 percent

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](#))

In 2016 Riddell voted to raise taxes on middle class families and cut funding for our public schools, while giving tax breaks to millionaires

➤ **NOTE:** Riddell voted for 2016 budget (H1030, signed [7/14/16](#))

“Billions of dollars in tax revenue that could have lifted North Carolina’s schools to new heights instead has been diverted into tax cuts that have produced no tangible results.” “This Election Day should be a day of reckoning for North Carolina’s Republican legislative leaders who have shirked their responsibility and broken a long state tradition of strong support for public schools. Instead of investing in the state’s children, instead of improving education as a way for poor children to escape poverty and all children to achieve goals, the Republican-led General Assembly has chosen to reduce state taxes, mostly to the benefit of the wealthy and big corporations. Billions of dollars in tax revenue that could have lifted North Carolina’s schools to new heights instead has been diverted into tax cuts that have produced no tangible results. Republican lawmakers are acutely aware of their culpability in this choice, but instead of defending it or apologizing for it, they’re denying it. Even worse, they’re claiming credit for *increasing* spending on public education. This is duplicity joined with sophistry, and it should stir the smoldering anger over the neglect of public schools into outrage.” (News & Observer, Editorial, [8/20/16](#))

“The wealthy and big corporations are paying less and middle- and low-income earners are paying more” with low-income families and individuals being hit “particularly hard.” “Growing tax revenue doesn’t mean happy days are here again for most North Carolinians. It means the wealthy and big corporations are paying less and middle- and low-income earners are paying more. Johnson notes, “The regressive sales tax hits low-income families and individuals particularly hard, as they spend a larger share of their income on goods and services subject to the sales tax. Thus, to point to increased revenue as evidence that low- and middle-income North Carolinians are better off is an inaccurate assessment of reality.” The revenue numbers are not only about a shift in the tax burden. They are also about what’s missing. Had the General Assembly’s tax changes been revenue neutral – as McCrory originally requested – the state would be seeing a much larger revenue increase as the economy recovers.” (News & Observer, Editorial, [1/16/16](#))

“The tax revenue that could have helped the state restore funding cut during the recession is instead being given back disproportionately to the wealthy and large corporations in the form of tax cuts.” “A bigger rise in state revenue would have supported salary increases for teachers and state employees, reduced pressure on tuition at UNC campuses and allowed for overdue investments in roads, water and sewer systems and other forms of infrastructure. The tax revenue that could have helped the state restore funding cut during the recession is instead being given back disproportionately to the wealthy and large corporations in the form of tax cuts. Arthur Laffer’s trickle-down theory has been proven a fairy tale of riches from nothing since the Reagan administration first sold it as fact. But that won’t stop the tax cutters from telling it as true once more.” (News & Observer, Editorial, [1/16/16](#))

Republican tax reform eliminated tax breaks “that benefited working class taxpayers.” The Associated Press reported the Republican Tax Reform plan, “eliminates several exemptions and deductions that benefited working class taxpayers.” While the News & Observer reported, “But still on the books is a \$1,500 cap on the sales tax for a yacht or a jet, a provision that costs the state \$10 million a year in lost revenue... Country clubs and other recreational nonprofits keep their exemption from the corporate income tax, a tax break worth a combined \$600,000 a year.” (AP, [12/30/13](#); News & Observer, [7/18/13](#); H998, adopted, [7/23/13](#))

Riddell celebrated legislators’ choice of tax cuts for businesses over increasing funding for child care and early childhood education

Riddell said legislators chose tax cuts for businesses over increasing funding for child care and early childhood education because it makes NC more attractive to employers. “The state did not cut funding to the program, but the Legislature changed income requirements and the portion parents had to pay to shift more of the \$348 million the state contributes to the program to child care for children zero to five years of age. Riddell said the Legislature was putting more money into early childhood

education because that is when it does the most good. “The biggest effect is from the zero-to-5 education,” Riddell said. He said the state could not afford to increase funding in a tight economy and needed the tax cut that, Riddell said, makes North Carolina more attractive to employers. There are 400 families on the waiting list to get child-care subsidies, said Susan Osborn, director of Alamance County DSS, with children of different ages. They will be considered for subsidies on a first-come-first-served basis.” (Burlington Times-News, [10/10/14](#))

Riddell voted for the 2014 budget that cut jobs for 3,300 teacher assistants after arguing for the importance of their jobs

- **NOTE:** Riddell voted for 2014 Budget, S744. (S744, signed by Gov. [8/7/14](#))

Teacher pay raise achieved through “budgetary smoke and mirrors” and cuts to teacher assistants that left 3,330 without a job. “Against that background, the overriding goal of the \$21 billion state budget approved Saturday (more than a month late) was to give the state’s teachers a pay raise, with a compromise figure of 7 percent settled on. The good news: That was accomplished. The bad news: It was done largely through budgetary smoke and mirrors — or, to mix metaphors, by robbing Peter to pay Paul. Teacher assistant jobs would still be cut, this time to the tune of 3,300.” (Southern Pines Pilot, editorial, [8/5/14](#))

Riddell argued for the importance of teacher assistants. “While few argue with smaller classes, Riddell said TAs stretch education dollars calling them a “force multiplier.” “For what they are paid they (teacher assistants) are one of the best values you have in a classroom,” Riddell said. “I think some of my colleagues misunderstand what teacher assistants do — they think of them as babysitters.” Jackie Cole, a member of the Alamance-Burlington Board of Education, said districts would be better served by a long-term plan to reduce class sizes saying ABSS would have a hard time finding more classrooms for more teachers.” (Burlington Times-News, [7/7/15](#))

- **Riddell claimed that the legislature did not intend to cut TA positions in 2014.** “The potential cuts are surprising considering the wrangling between the state House and Senate over keeping teacher assistants while raising teacher pay and giving those TAs a \$500 raise. Other state employees are getting a \$1,000 raise, and teachers are getting substantial raises depending on years of service. “If there was an effect (on the number of TAs), that was not the intent of the legislation,” said state Rep. Dennis Riddell, R-Alamance. “The intent was to maintain the teacher assistant positions.” Locally, ABSS expects to have about \$5.4 million for teacher assistants in the upcoming 2014-15 school year, compared to \$6.7 million last school year and nearly \$8 million in 2012-13.” (Burlington Times-News, [8/9/14](#))

Riddell has a history of advocating for the Koch brother’s agenda of cutting education in favor of tax breaks for the wealthy and big corporations and participated in Koch-funded protests at the NC General Assembly.

Riddell was a member of NC Citizens for a Sound Economy. “But Dennis Riddell, a member of the anti-tax group, said that the state has yet to get serious about curbing spending in tough times. Riddell, 46, a father of eight from Alamance County, said he has had to cut his expenses to get by, and the state should too. “If that’s proper for a family, I don’t think it’s foolish for the state,” Riddell said.” (News & Observer, 6/10/03)

Citizens for a Sound Economy is run by a tobacco heir and two Koch family members. “Take Citizens for a Sound Economy, whose influential North Carolina chapter recently helped stymie an effort to get 12,850 acres of forest in Avery County designated as wilderness. CSE has also been helping spearhead opposition to stream buffers (which it maintains violate property rights). In addition, this self-proclaimed “grassroots” group pushed for North Carolina to withdraw from the multi-state lawsuit against Microsoft Corporation and lobbies Congress to approve President Bush’s judicial appointees. CSE is run

by Reynolds tobacco-fortune heir C. Boyden Gray and two members of the Koch family (one of the wealthiest in the U.S.)." (Mountain Xpress, 11/19/02)

Citizens for a Sound Economy and the John Locke Foundation teamed up for a tea party protest at the NCGA. "Determined to stop a tax hike, protesters gathered outside the Legislature on Tuesday to criticize a Democratic proposal to increase sales taxes and create a new upper income tax bracket. About 700 people showed up at the "Tar Heel Tea Party," some wearing tea bags attached to their lapel buttons. The event was organized by talk radio hosts in several cities across the state along with the conservative groups that included the John Locke Foundation and Citizens for a Sound Economy. Inside the Legislature, one protester was removed from the House gallery after he stood and attempted to address House Speaker Jim Black, D-Mecklenburg." (AP, 8/1/01)

Riddell joined a group of activists from Citizens for a Sound Economy in anti-tax, anti-lottery protests at the NC legislature. "But 70 activists from Citizens for a Sound Economy, a statewide anti-tax group, told the Senate members that they oppose any new taxes and a state lottery. Members of the group wore stickers that said "Kids Yes, Lottery No" and "Don't Raise My Taxes." "My budget was cut last year, too," said Jonathan Hill, the group's state director. "When you raised taxes, my budget was cut." "If you don't have it, don't spend it," said Lynnelle Alsup, a member from Surry County. "And stop asking the citizens of North Carolina for more and more and more." Members of the group voiced their opposition to a lottery as well. "I smell the lottery rat around here somewhere," said Dennis Riddell of Alamance County. "A lottery sends the wrong signal to the children of North Carolina... It would be a disservice for the state of North Carolina to resort to a numbers racket." (Winston-Salem Journal, 6/10/03)

- **Riddell: "If that's [cutting expenses] is proper for a family, I don't think it's foolish for the state."** (News & Observer, 6/10/03)

Riddell's support of the 2017 Republican budget highlights the hypocrisy of these groups. The budget cut taxes for corporations, but failed to re-establish the childcare income tax credit that would have helped over 200,000 families.

2017 budget favored tax cuts for the wealthy, lowering the corporate income tax rate to 2.5 percent from 3 percent. 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)

As of January 2017, NC's corporate income tax was the lowest in the nation according to the Tax Foundation. "The state's corporate income tax has dropped from 6.9 percent to 3 percent over the past four years, giving North Carolina the lowest corporate income tax rate of any state that levies the tax, according to the foundation." (Economic Development Partnership of NC, 1/4/17)

Governor Cooper's budget called for the reinstatement of the Child and Dependent Care Tax Credit, which could help more than 200,000 families pay for child care. (Governor's Office Press Release, 6/1/17)

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

Riddell supported the national conservative movement to call for a convention of the states, and compared the nation's debt to drug addiction

Riddell sponsored a resolution to call for a convention of the states, said "we are putting the next generation in a form of involuntary servitude." "A committee of state House lawmakers approved a bill Wednesday that would make North Carolina the 13th state to call for a constitutional convention in

order to add a balanced budget amendment to the U.S. Constitution. Under Article V of the Constitution, the country needs 34 state applications before Congress must call for the convention. Bill sponsor and Alamance County Republican Dennis Riddell said a constitutional convention of states is needed so that the states can correct the federal deficit. "We are putting the next generation in a form of involuntary servitude," Riddell said." (WUNC, [6/28/17](#))

Riddell said a convention of the states was an “intervention of the states” into nation’s problems, “just as if you have a drug-addled family member.” “Jones' bill would call for a convention to review constitutional amendments involving term limits for Congress, fiscal restraints and limits on "the power and jurisdiction of the federal government." "This is a constitutional remedy for the problems we currently face," said Rep. Dennis Riddell, an Alamance County Republican and a co-sponsor of the bill. "I look at this as an intervention of the states, just as if you have a drug-addled family member." But Rep. Jonathan Jordan, a Jefferson Republican, says a constitutional convention could go too far. "It could do anything it wants, it could completely uproot our entire form of government," he said. Jordan sponsored House Joint Resolution 132, which drops earlier calls for a convention. "There's a lot of housekeeping to be done, and that's what this resolution does," he said." (News & Observer, 4/1/15)

Riddell sponsored HR1206 to establish a committee to study whether NC should apply for a Convention of the States. “An Alamance County legislator wants a study committee to determine whether North Carolina should join other states calling for an amendment to the U.S. Constitution that would “limit the power and jurisdiction of the federal government,” among other items. N.C. Rep. Dennis Riddell, R-Alamance, was a primary sponsor of H.R. 1206, which would establish a House select committee to study whether North Carolina should apply to Congress for a Convention of the States under Article V of the Constitution. The proposed resolution was filed Tuesday. A former government teacher, Riddell said he’s seen a growing federal government that is overreaching its power and authority along with “improper and imprudent spending.” This, he said, is in contradiction of what the original constitutional founders intended.” (Burlington Times-News, [5/28/14](#))

Riddell supported deregulation in favor of big businesses over protecting clean soil, air, and water for North Carolinians

Riddell voted for bills that allow large-scale agriculture operations to get away with spraying animal waste on people’s homes and businesses and to allow the waste industry to do the same with “garbage juice.”

- **NOTE:** Riddell voted for H467 and to override the governor’s veto of the bill. (H467, veto overridden, [5/11/17](#))
- **NOTE:** Riddell voted for H576. (House passed 3rd reading, [4/25/17](#))

H467 would limit the amount of money people could receive in lawsuits filed against agricultural operations for disturbances. “The bill would limit the amount of money people could collect in lawsuits filed against agricultural operations for disturbances such as odors and pollution. Under the bill, the person suing could be compensated only for the decrease in rental income the property could generate because of the smells and gases coming from hog farms, as opposed to being compensated more generously for the loss of quality of life as a jury sees fit.” (News & Observer, [4/5/2017](#); H467, Senate overrode the veto on [5/11/2017](#))

About 500 rural neighbors of massive hog farms say that clouds of flies and intense smells remain a problem, causing headaches and infusing households. “The 2014 lawsuits by about 500 rural neighbors of massive hog farms allege that clouds of flies and intense smells remain a problem nearly a quarter-century since industrial-scale hog farming took off. The smells can spark headaches and infuse households, they complain. Wind-driven spray has been known to coat a home’s exterior in liquefied excrement, some said. The smell clings to clothes.” (WRAL, [4/9/2017](#))

- **Resident says hog lagoons and spray fields are located primarily near communities of color, “they should have a right to live without inundation by animal waste.”** “Elsie Herring’s family has owned land that’s now near hog farms since the 1890s [...] Herring said she is attached to the family land and has no intention of moving. Instead, she wants the farmers to adopt more effective methods of controlling pig waste, which are available but would be more expensive. “These facilities are located primarily on people of color’s communities,” Herring said. “They should have a right to live without inundation by animal waste.” (News & Observer, [3/29/2017](#))

House Bill 467 passed in response to 26 lawsuits pending against Chinese-owned Smithfield Foods. “The legislature passed House Bill 467 last month in response to 26 lawsuits pending in federal court against the state’s largest hog producer, Murphy-Brown, a subsidiary of Smithfield Foods. In the suits, nearly 500 residents say hog farms have made their lives unbearable from odors, flies, buzzards, pigs carcasses and other problems.” (News & Observer, [5/5/2017](#); H467, Senate overrode the veto on [5/11/2017](#))

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](#))

Aerosolization is favored by the waste industry. “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](#))

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](#))

Riddell voted to tie minimal funding to address the GenX crisis created by DuPont subsidiary Chemours to other harmful changes to environmental protections

- **NOTE:** Riddell voted for H56 (House adopted conference report on [8/31/17](#), House overrode the Governor’s veto on [10/4/17](#))

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. The two issues got sewn together in legislation that emerged in the early evening. 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. 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 chemical, which the Chemours plant said it stopped discharging in June, is not fully understood but is part of a family of toxic chemicals.” (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. Lawmakers put the ban in place in 2009 with the support of Marc Basnight, a Democrat who was the former leader of the state Senate. 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](#))

NC Policy Watch called H56 “the junk drawer of environmental laws” and Rep. Deb Butler said it “suffers from an identity crisis.” “The final day of the legislative session felt like the end of high season at the beach. The Senate had already adjourned for the next month, so by 9:30 a.m., the halls were largely empty, with even a light footstep creating an echo. The sergeants-at-arms, their faces placid, looked more bored than usual. Most of the lobbyists had gone home, perhaps exhausted by the spectacle or comfortable in the knowledge their work was done. Thirteen House members had also checked out early. That left 107 to vote on a key piece of legislation that, if allowed to become law by Gov. Cooper, not only has far-reaching environmental implications, but also represents the most cynical of political maneuvers. House Bill 56 is the junk drawer of environmental laws. Buried beneath the assorted mundane provisions are three that harm the environment and one that pretends to protect the public health. •repealing the plastic bag ban on the Outer Banks; •allowing law enforcement to cut back riparian buffers to supposedly root out crime; •relaxing regulations on landfills; •and, in a late and controversial addition, appropriating \$185,000 to the Cape Fear River public utility and \$250,000 to UNC Wilmington to address the GenX contamination in the river and drinking water supplies downstream. It also requires DEQ to issue a notice of violation to Chemours, the company responsible for discharging GenX and other contaminants into the river, by Sept. 8 or provide a report to lawmakers explaining why it hasn’t. “This bill is a contradiction and suffers from an identity crisis,” said Rep. Deb Butler, a Democrat who represents part of New Hanover County.” (NC Policy Watch, [9/1/17](#))

Riddell voted for the 2016 “Duke Bailout Bill,” that was “damning proof” families could not rely on the state to protect drinking water and would raise rates to pay for coal ash cleanup

➤ **NOTE:** Riddell voted for H630. (H630, House concurred, [6/30/16](#))

SELC attorney said “Duke Bailout Bill” is “damning proof” that families cannot rely on state to protect drinking water from Duke Energy’s pollution. “Environmental groups quickly chastised the legislation. ‘This coal ash bill is damning proof that the families and communities of North Carolina can’t

rely on state politicians to protect their drinking water supplies from Duke Energy's coal ash pollution,' said Frank Holleman, senior attorney at the Southern Environmental Law Center, in a statement. Added Holleman: 'This Duke Bailout Bill is a betrayal of the North Carolina people who participated in good faith in the process and followed the rules established by the legislature in 2014. Public participation led to the conclusion that the law and science require Duke Energy to excavate its coal ash from its leaking, unlined pits. Duke Energy didn't like the results and so today the North Carolina Senate turned its back on the people and clean water and threw into the trash can public process, facts, science, and the law.'" (WUNC, [6/29/16](#))

Passing along the cost of Coal Ash cleanup to consumers would raise power rates for average NC household by \$18 annually for 25 years. "Duke Energy in 2014 floated a potential cost to excavate coal ash from 14 of its coal-burning power plants at \$10 billion. The company has said it expected to ask state utilities regulators to allow it to pass along its coal-ash bill to electricity customers. The company last year estimated the likely costs at about \$4 billion, which could raise power rates for the average North Carolina household by about \$18 a year over 25 years." (AP, [5/18/16](#))

Riddell voted down an amendment that would have protected ratepayers from paying for Coal Ash cleanup

- **NOTE:** Riddell voted to table S729, A16. (S729, A16, amendment tabled, [7/2/14](#))

Riddell voted for a regulatory bill with Duke's pet provision to avoid coal ash cleanup after they gave money to Republicans

- **NOTE:** Riddell voted for H74. (H74, conference report adopted, [7/26/13](#))

Duke lobbyists successfully got pet provision in a 2013 regulatory bill allowing them to avoid coal ash cleanup, after giving \$95,000 to Republican legislators. "Still, regulators alone could not protect the company from its huge liability if the environmental groups persevered in court. So Duke officials lobbied — successfully — to change state law, itself... Data collected from Duke's own monitoring wells showed contamination beyond that 500-foot limit at several of its properties, with high levels of arsenic, selenium, lead and other poisonous contaminants found in coal ash...Duke Energy and its executives have donated millions in recent years to both Republicans and Democrats. Though 2013 was not an election year, records show the company continued to give generously as its lobbyists sought to protect its ash pits. A political action committee underwritten by Duke employees sent another \$95,000 to Republican legislators and groups that support their campaigns — nearly five times the amount provided to North Carolina's Democratic legislators over the same time period." (*Associated Press*, [3/17/14](#); H74, adopted [8/23/13](#))

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