



LEGISLATIVE NEWSLETTER

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What's Up Politically

Hager Resigns: A top leader for House Republicans last week stepped down from the NC General Assembly weeks before the final leg of reelection campaign, saying he needs to care for his aging parents and find other work to support himself financially. House Majority Leader Mike Hager said he was resigning effective Aug. 16.

"It is with great trepidation that I announce my resignation to the North Carolina House of Representatives," Hager, R-Rutherford, said in a press release from his legislative office. "After much prayer and consideration, it is time to spend more time with my family and pursue other opportunities."

Fast Climb: Hager served three terms in the state House. He was freshman caucus leader in 2011-12, majority whip in the 2013-14 session and majority leader in 2015-16. While he led a significant portion of the House caucus, Hager at times was philosophically at odds with House Speaker Tim Moore. A friend of CTE, Hager was facing an unaffiliated candidate — no Democratic nominee — in the strongly GOP-leaning 112th District. Leaving now should enable his party to get the name of a replacement nominee on the ballot. "I haven't had time to campaign. I haven't had time to raise money," Hager said, noting his resignation was "probably the toughest decision I've ever made."

Hager said he's stepping down mostly to focus on his parents at a time when his father has health issues and that he probably will move closer to their home near Lake Norman, nearly two hours away from his home in Rutherfordton. As other lawmakers have complained, Hager said it's been tough to make a living while serving in the legislature, which pays a part-time salary plus per diem. Hager, 53, acknowledged that one of the future work options he's considering is lobbying.

Reaction, Background: Moore, the House Speaker, released a statement last week, thanking Hager for "advancing the Republican agenda for the betterment of North Carolinians." "Serving in the General Assembly requires far greater time and energy than many people ever realize, and we all make sacrifices to be in Raleigh and away from home many nights," Moore said. "Mike and I were friends long before we served in the House together, and even though we will not be colleagues in the House, our friendship will continue. I wish Mike and his family nothing but the best."

Over his six years in the House, Hager often tried to freeze or repeal the state's Renewable Energy Portfolio Standard as well as subsidies and credits for alternative energy production. Hager, a former engineer for Duke Energy, argued that the solar energy sector no longer needs state support and should have to compete in the marketplace on its own.

Related News

Successors Chosen: Local Republicans have chosen who will complete terms of Hager and former Rep. Charles Jeter. GOP activists in Rutherford and Burke counties picked Rutherfordton lawyer David Rogers to succeed Hager. The Daily Courier of Forest City reported Rogers also would become the 112th District nominee this fall against an unaffiliated candidate.

Meantime, Mecklenburg County Republicans chose lawyer Justin Moore to replace Jeter in the House but picked former Huntersville commissioner Danae Caulfield for the ballot. The Charlotte Observer reported Caulfield will compete against Democrat Chaz Beasley in the 92nd District. Jeter resigned last month.

State House Leadership: The Charlotte Observer reports that last month's resignation by Jeter, the Mecklenburg County lawmaker, has some Democrats thinking that their party might be able to break the Republican's so-called super-majority in the 120-member House. That seat would be among four. "The advantage for Democrats is striking and it's growing," said John Davis, a Republican political observer. "So I don't think there's any doubt that they have an opportunity this year, particularly if the Democratic-friendly turnout in presidential years follows course." A super-majority in the House and the Senate would allow GOP lawmakers to override vetoes by a governor.

Quote of the Week

"I think when you do that, when you stay in office for a long time, that you sometimes lose that context, that connection with the people you represent."

- Rep. Rick Catlin, R-New Hanover, on becoming a "career" politician. Catlin announced his resignation from the House last week (Wilmington Star News, 8/15/16)