



ABC &-NEWS

A weekly newsletter on North Carolina policy and political news relevant to the North Carolina's ABC Boards

Tastings Hearing Date Postponed

The NC ABC Commission announced it was delaying the public hearing on the ABC Store Tasting Rules from June 10 to July 8. The public comment period has also been extended to July 8.

The NC ABC Commission informed NC Association of ABC Boards attorney Skye David that the postponement was due to the proposed changes submitted on behalf of the Association and its members.

Any Association member with a question or concern about the proposed rule, contact David at skye@new-frame.com.

Adjourn by July 4? Speaker Says Maybe

General Assembly leaders say they feel like they are in a holding pattern without further instruction from the federal government on what they can and cannot do with federal CARES Act money.

Combined with a bleak tax revenues forecast and Speaker Tim Moore (R-Cleveland) told reporters this week that General Assembly budget writers may run piecemeal spending legislation instead of one large budget and could be eyeing an adjournment by July 4.

General Assembly Sends Bar Bill to Governor

The House and Senate voted this week to pass House Bill 536 (Temp Outdoor Restaurants for Outdoor Seating), which allows bars (private clubs) to open with outdoor seating that is less than 50% of the indoor seating capacity of the bar or 100 patrons, whichever is less.



The bill would also allow restaurants to set up temporary outdoor spaces to serve customers in the same way.

In the Senate, the bill passed 42-5, but in the House the vote and debate was almost down party lines, 65-53. The bill arrived at Governor Cooper's office on Thursday and he has 10 days to either sign it into law, not sign it but allow it to become law, or veto it. A two-thirds vote of legislators present in both chambers is necessary to override a veto.

Republicans argued that Governor Roy Cooper is choosing winners and losers through executive orders while Democrats argued the bill is flawed in its application and takes emergency powers away from Governor Cooper and future governors.

Governor Cooper indicated on Thursday in a regularly scheduled COVID-19 media update/press conference that he would veto the bill once it got to his desk. "I believe there will be a time when we can reopen bars, but that time is not now," he said. "We've got to keep the health and safety of North Carolinians as the No. 1 priority."

Governor Cooper went on to criticize the provision in the bill that would limit the gubernatorial power to shut down private clubs and bars under any circumstances, including a state of emergency.

The NC Association of ABC Boards has taken no position on this legislation but is monitoring it closely as it affects North Carolina ABC Boards. The bill was initially an ABC Omnibus Reform Bill sponsored by Representatives Chuck McGrady (R-Henderson), Jamie Boles (R-Moore), and Jon Hardister (R-Guilford). The bill passed the House in July 2019. The bill was gutted weeks ago in the Senate and replaced with the new language regarding outdoor seating.