

2007 Regional Legislative Agenda

Triangle J Council of Governments

In the North Carolina General Assembly
Priority Legislative Issues for the Triangle J Council of Governments

Each year the Triangle J Council of Governments revises and updates its Regional Legislative Agenda setting forth the priority legislative issues of its member local governments from across the seven-county area of Region J. This agenda has been compiled for the purpose of conveying vitally important information to the General Assembly for its review, consideration, and use as the legislature conducts its legislative session. After taking into consideration the various challenges that will be confronting the State of North Carolina during its 2007 Session, it is the intent of Triangle J that this Regional Legislative Agenda serve as an aid to the legislative delegations serving Lee, Chatham, Orange, Durham, Wake, Johnston and Moore Counties in assisting our cities, towns and counties with their legislative needs. The following information has been set forth in priority form for this purpose:

VERY HIGH PRIORITIES

Provide Revenue Options for Local Government: Triangle J seeks legislation that authorizes a variety of revenue options for local governments to fund municipal and county services that confront the significant growth issues of Region J. An overarching principle is that any local government revenue source that is presently available to one or more local governments in the state should be available to all local governments uniformly throughout the state. Triangle J seeks authority for local government, on a reasonable basis, to levy local option sales taxes, apply impact fees and/or taxes, utilize land transfer fees, allow a tax exemption method to recover municipal and county sales tax expenditures rather than a system of reimbursements, etc.

Medicaid Relief: Triangle J seeks permanent Medicaid relief for county government to cover the full cost of Medicaid expenses to be paid by state government.

Mental Health: Triangle J supports Mental Health Reform and seeks legislation that assures local capacity to serve the needs of these citizens. The state must support local government, both financially and statutorily, to equip itself with adequate tools for crisis intervention and appropriate housing for the mentally ill to allow their integration into local communities.

HIGH PRIORITIES

School Funding Needs: Triangle J supports legislation that establishes adequate and reliable funding of public schools in North Carolina that matches needs, resources, and mandates, along with efforts to restore the ability of school districts to receive state sales tax refunds or exemptions. The region will support legislation that reverses the existing and continuing trend of insufficient operational and capital funding for public schools, and will oppose the substitution of lottery funds for the School Capital Construction Fund (ADM). Triangle J will further seek legislation to establish a Legislative Study Commission on a phased increase in the mandatory school age limit from 16 to 18.

Triangle J Council of Governments Mission Statement

To serve as an intergovernmental organization for local elected officials that works proactively on regional issues in order to sustain and improve the quality of life for our citizens.

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Growth Management Strategy: Triangle J supports legislation that expands local land use tools, protects local land use authority and encourages state/regional/local cooperation to achieve sound growth rather than state mandates. The region will support the addition of local government appointees to the Legislative Oversight Committee established as a follow up to the state's Legislative Study Commission on Smart Growth, and will support the use of pilot projects as a means to demonstrate the effectiveness of incentive based planning. The local land use tools supported under such legislation would include inducements such as transfer of development rights, inclusionary zoning and housing programs, and expanded local revenue sources for community and regional infrastructure. State funding would be supported for mixed income housing, environmental programs, open space/farm land, rural economic development, downtown/main street development, and other economic development incentives.

Transportation Planning and Funding: Triangle J seeks legislation and funding of the myriad transportation needs within the region that are now in crisis. The region seeks the funding of planning and infrastructure needs associated with the Transportation Improvements Plan (TIP), Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPO's), Rural Planning Organizations (RPO's), Powell Bill Funds, local transit authorities, and the Triangle Transit Authority. The region also supports legislation to revisit and update the state's Equity Formula to recognize growth, congestion and other factors bearing on the distribution of transportation dollars. Triangle J also supports legislation to provide for the funding of regional multi-modal planning of Region J's transportation needs, while further supporting adequate appropriations for road and bridge maintenance to maintain existing infrastructure. The region opposes the transfer of funds from the Highway Trust Fund to the General Fund and supports recovery of funds that were previously transferred.

Air Quality: Triangle J supports legislation to promote financial strategies for efforts that will reduce greenhouse gases, promotes clean air, and assist state and local government to meet attainment of EPA standards. The region supports linkage of air quality to growth management, transportation, and public health strategies to promote the use of alternative fuels and technology, avoid the adverse economic effects of pollution, and secure energy independence. Triangle J supports legislation that implements the "Air Quality Policy" recommended by the N.C. Joint Regional Forum, and the establishment of an Air Quality Trust Fund.

Water Quality/Supply and Infrastructure: Triangle J supports legislation for the following water resource initiatives:

- Provide for dedicated funding of long-term water quality/supply planning and wastewater treatment needs for the region's cities, towns and counties to improve infrastructure and enable local governments to meet increasingly stringent water quality and stormwater requirements
- Continued funding for the Clean Water Management Trust Fund
- The Water 20/30 Initiative and its proposal for a state water bond
- Regional councils to develop and implement multi-jurisdictional water resource management planning and programs in every region of the state through the cooperation of local governments, water users, and other stakeholders. (Regional Councils will seek an appropriation of \$1.4 million in 2007 and will work with DENR and other agencies to secure this funding and will support other legislation that fosters regional planning for water infrastructure.)

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Homeland Security and Regional Emergency Preparedness: Triangle J supports legislation for the following Homeland Security and Regional Emergency Preparedness initiatives:

- Provide planning services for homeland security on a regional basis, and the funding of city and county needs for regional emergency preparedness
- Leadership and affirmative action from the Governor's Office, the N.C. Division of Emergency Management, and the Department of Crime Control and Public Safety for the resources necessary to assure adequate "threat assessment", sufficient communications capabilities, evacuation planning, the necessary training associated with Homeland Security, and implementation of the Criminal Justice Information Network (CJIN)
- Stronger regulatory control requiring disclosure of hazardous and toxic waste at all sites, both temporary and permanent

Indigent and Uninsured Health Care Delivery Costs: Triangle J seeks legislation to establish a legislative study commission to develop recommendations on the state's health care delivery system and the needs of the uninsured population.

Immigration: Triangle J supports legislation to establish a legislative study commission to develop recommendation on the effects of documented and undocumented immigration upon municipal and county services and how to address the many challenges these demands on local government services create.

OTHER PRIORITIES

Aging and Long Term Care Needs for the Older Population: Triangle J supports efforts to recognize the right of every North Carolina resident to have access to health care, and the restoration of Area Agency on Aging funding to the level available in 2001. Triangle J further supports legislation that:

- Provides support to address workforce shortages of direct care workers trained and paid to assist those in need of long term care
- Allow consumers to make informed decisions about nursing home placement
- Provides for improved access of older adults to dental care services, including support for the special care dental delivery model using mobile care units to serve long-term care facilities and senior centers

Mixed Income Housing: Mixed Income housing, as an element of land use planning and growth management, is key to quality of life in the region. Triangle J supports legislation that appropriates recurring funds for the North Carolina Housing Trust Fund to provide new home ownership opportunities, along with affordable rental homes for the disadvantaged.

Economic Development: Triangle J supports legislation providing for state cooperation with the region's Foreign Trade Zone activities as a link to the global trade market to assure continued economic vitality. Triangle J also supports regional transit as an important part of the region's economic development strategy.

Open Space: Triangle J supports funding of the state's One North Carolina Naturally Initiative, along with other open space and green space concerns, inclusive of increased funding for farm land preservation and other similar economic development activities. Triangle J supports the Land for Tomorrow Initiative and its proposal for a state conservation bond.

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State LRO Funding: Triangle J supports legislation to increase annual funding for North Carolina's seventeen regional councils from @ \$50,000 per region to \$100,000 per region to carry out regional planning and economic development activities for local government.

Public Duty Doctrine: Triangle J supports legislation to restore application of the "Public Duty Doctrine" to local governments.

Defensive Goals and Priorities

Franchising Authority: Triangle J opposes legislation to further weaken or eliminate the ability of local government to exercise franchise authority and/or interfere with the ability of local government to protect its public rights-of-way and property.

Tax Assessment Authority: Triangle J supports current statutory authority allowing local governments to assess property for purposes of ad valorem taxation at full market value, therefore, negating any need for legislation that would exempt builders "inventory".

Solid Waste: Triangle J opposes any legislation to further weaken the authority and/or ability of local government to operate and administer Solid Waste services.

Aging: Triangle J opposes legislation to consolidate Area Agencies on Aging as proposed by the federal government.

Approved by Triangle J Board of Delegates – November 15, 2006