

Jun 10, 2009

Circuit breaker vote is put off until September

At the request of the governor's office, a state agency delayed action Tuesday on a change to building codes that could roll back the use of a type of circuit breaker that could help prevent fires.

The chairman of the state Building Code Council said he received a call from the governor's office before the meeting Tuesday telling the council not to vote on the change. The council will take up the issue when it meets in September.

"This is their chance to understand what appears to be a controversial issue," said Dan Tingen, a Wake County homebuilder and the council's chairman.



Perdue - Staff photo by Jason Arthurs

The breakers, known as arc fault circuit interrupters, detect fluctuations in current that could indicate a hazardous condition that can cause fires. Changes to the code made last year require the breakers in most rooms of a house. The vote scheduled for Tuesday was on whether to limit the requirement to bedrooms.

Committee members said they were unsure of how the vote would have gone.

"I think at best the result was a toss-up," Tingen said.

Opponents of the change said the breakers help prevent fires and are not as expensive as proponents make them out to be.

Homebuilders and other proponents of the change have said the breakers can cause "nuisance trips" -- when the breaker shuts off from household appliances and not because of a dangerous electrical surge. They said that opponents are using the minimum standards to establish cost and that the amount of money the breakers save are not worth the cost.

Perdue seeks bridge money

Gov. Beverly Perdue is scheduled to meet today with U.S. Secretary of Transportation Ray LaHood to tell him how much North Carolina needs a new bridge over the Yadkin River.

The Interstate 85 bridge, a few miles northeast of Salisbury, is an aging four-lane bridge built in the 1950s. It would cost an estimated \$335 million to replace.

The U.S. Department of Transportation has a \$1.5 billion pot of discretionary money to go to special, big-ticket items around the country. States have to apply for funding, and no state could receive more than \$300 million under the program's rules.

Perdue's push continues work already begun by state transportation leaders. State Secretary of Transportation Gene Conti visited the White House this spring to talk with federal officials about the state's needs.

Perdue also has meetings planned today with Sens. Richard Burr and Kay Hagan and with most of the House delegation.

McCrory blasts tax proposal

Charlotte Mayor Pat McCrory on Tuesday ripped a tax proposal by state House Democrats that would raise some income taxes to help close a \$4billion budget shortfall.

"It's the last thing you need to do during a recession," he said. "The income tax is the most harmful tax to raise because you're only punishing those who are actually working. ... This hurts our economic development efforts here in Charlotte, North Carolina ... when there's a cheaper place to live."

McCrory, last year's GOP gubernatorial nominee, said he worries that raising income taxes on the affluent could drive businesses from North Carolina.

Asked how he would deal with the record shortfall, McCrory offered no specifics but referred back to his 2008 campaign.

Dogs don't hold up bag ban

The Outer Banks plastic bag ban cleared another hurdle Tuesday when a House committee approved it.

But committee members raised a critical question: How will dog owners pick up poop?

The House environment and natural resources committee overwhelmingly passed the bill, which would affect large retailers in Dare, Currituck and Hyde counties.

Since it passed the Senate last month, the bill has been modified to include only the barrier island portions of those counties.

Advocates reiterated the need to keep the tourism-dependent seashore clear of the eyesores of wafting bags.

But plastic bag manufacturers cautioned that their products require less energy to produce than paper and are reused by consumers for a host of purposes. As noted by Rep. Pat McElraft, a Carteret County Republican, one important purpose is cleaning up after dogs.

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