

The official publication of the NC Grange

January / February 2025

GRANGE NEWS



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UPCOMING EVENTS

March 6-9	Family Conference Beaufort, NC
July 6-12	Grange Camp Columbia, NC
September 11-14	State Convention Charlotte, NC
November 8-15	National Convention Carnival Cruise

STATE OFFICERS

President	Jimmy Gentry
Vice President	David Allen
Program Director	Bobbie Dellinger
Steward	Mark Hood
Assistant Steward	Jason Davis
Lady Asst. Steward	Crystal Allen
Chaplain	LaRue Tart
Treasurer	Julia Stack
Secretary	Barden Culbreth
Greeter	Joseph Beaman
Ceres	Dianne Hudson
Pomona	Sharon Ritchie
Flora	Wanda Crawford

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

	Jimmy Martin
	Tom Cash
	Vinnie Duncan
	Melanie Hudson
	John Crawford
	Raymond Hayes, II
President	Jimmy Gentry
Vice President	David Allen
Secretary	Barden Culbreth
Treasurer	Julia Stack
<i>Emeritus</i>	Carlton Barefoot
	Charles Forrester

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Insurance Programs	Mark Davis
Coordinator	
Legislative Director	Laurie Barnhart
Youth/Young Adult Director	Jennie Gentry
Admin /Junior Director	Emily Hartsell
Community Service Director	Anna Liles
Events/Publications Director	Jessica Horton
Agriculture Programs	Dewitt Hardee
Coordinator	

The Grange is a grassroots, community service, family organization with a special interest in agriculture and designed to help meet the needs of people, young and old, through a cooperative effort with government and other organizations that also seek the greatest good for the greatest number.

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FROM JIMMY

The NC General Assembly is in session for the 2025 long session. We are monitoring bills that are being introduced that may relate to our policy. Most of the introduced bills so far are concepts that we can support. Sometimes we see something introduced that gives us concern. Either way, we study the bills to be sure they are something that we can support or not. Our legislative effort on behalf of the State Grange is one of our strengths, and we are in a position to present our thoughts knowing that we will be heard.

We have always said that a benefit of being a Grange member is being represented by a legislative voice. There are many organizations that do the same. They will either hire or contract with lobbyists to represent their agenda. The theory is that there is more power behind such efforts because we all speak with one voice. As a result, it is important that the lobbyist(s) does a good job of representing our interests. This is important!

Also important is the local voice. Even though we represent our members in Raleigh and DC, the legislators want to hear from their local constituents. All of our Grange members

need to know who their legislative representatives are, both state and federal. When local voices are providing legislators with the same message that the state level is doing, it adds strength to our positions. Each week, Laurie Barnhart, our Legislative Director, sends out updates to our local Granges. Your communications from the local level have the potential to add a lot of strength to our efforts. If at any time you need assistance, let us know.

With the General Assembly in session, it would be a great time for any interested local Granges to visit. Meetings could be set up with your representatives to discuss any issues that the Grange is working on. We would be happy to assist if you decide you want to visit.

Furthermore, maybe your Grange would like to visit DC and meet with your congressional representatives. We would be happy to assist you with those preparations.



On the cover: Pam & Carl Walker with son Jason and grandchildren, Sloan and Silas, and Cheeseburger, the cow

ST. JOHNS GRANGE

by : Emily Hartsell

St. John's Grange members joined together for our annual planning meeting on January 3. The evening began with food and fellowship. President Greg Furr initiated the meeting, and discussions began to plan the year ahead. We decided to hold another Farmers Appreciation Breakfast this year, which we set for Saturday, March 22. St. John's Grange is committed to ensuring local farmers feel supported and know they are appreciated.

The group also decided to continue our annual Chicken Noodle Supper in 2025 since we had a successful year having it as a dine-in supper this past year. The committee set the "Noodle Making Days" for June 2 and June 4. The actual Chicken Noodle Supper is scheduled for Saturday, November 22. Our Grange welcomes community members and other Grange members who are interested in learning the art of noodle making to join us on June 2 and June 4 at 8:00 a.m.

Lastly, our Grange members voted on annual awards, which will be announced at our April Awards Banquet. With a full schedule planned, St. John's Grange is looking forward to another great year of fellowship and fun with our Grange family.



Risa Jarman, Arcadia Grange member, gave a presentation about bluebirds for our Grange on January 26. This event was open to the public, and we had 38 members in attendance. Risa is a member of the North Carolina Bluebird Society. She has been an advocate for bluebirds and promotes bluebird awareness. Risa has perfected keeping bluebirds safe while in their home, and she gave a demonstration and placed a bluebird house in front of the community building. As the Davidson County representative for the society, Risa continues to place bluebird houses across our community. For more information, check out the North Carolina Bluebird Society.

Arcadia Grange invited residents of The Arc of Davidson County to the community building for its annual Valentine's Day Party on February 10. We served pizza and ice cream sundaes. We also played Bingo, and each guest received a small prize. After playing a few games, we ended the evening with a dance party. The residents look forward to spending time with us twice a year. The Arc is a national organization who serves individuals with intellectual and developmental challenges.



FERGUSON GRANGE by : Sharon Underwood

Ferguson Grange honored local military veterans on Veterans Day, November 11, at Whippoorwill Academy and Village. Loretta Washington of the National Grange made 29 National Grange Patriot Certificates for the event, which were presented to attending veterans by Allan Freeman, Ferguson's Vice President, and Sharon Underwood, Community Service Director. Allan shared the background of the Grange and invited folks to visit our organization. Sponsored by Whippoorwill Village, it was a very large and successful event which also included Quilts of Valor presentations, excellent speakers, music and door prizes.

At its November meeting, Ferguson Grange members made microwavable rice bags as a community service project for senior citizens, led by Cyndee VanSweden. The bags can be heated and used to relieve any aches and pains that our seniors might experience.

On November 14, Ferguson Grange celebrated our state's first Farmers Appreciation Day by participating in a variety of activities to honor our hardworking farmers. Working with the Ferguson Community Organization and the Whippoorwill Academy and Village, our Grange helped sponsor a meal for local farmers at our local Grocery Basket Grill. Students at Boomer Ferguson Elementary School made thank you cards for each farmer. Signs thanking our farmers were hung at the grill, the Post Office and a local store. Two local farmers, Tim Jones and Randy Hicks, also won door prize baskets with goods provided by local businesses. We are very thankful for all organizations, businesses and individuals who helped make it possible for us to show appreciation to our community's farmers.

Top: Members receiving National Grange Patriot Certificates, Members working on rice bags

Bottom: Members working on rice bags, Tim Walsh & Sharon Underwood



VILLEWORTH GRANGE by : Jessica Horton

Members of VilleWorth Grange in Huntersville met in mid January to discuss the 2025 garden plans and to work on their own individual gardens. Seeds were collected from 2024 inventoried pods (okra and zinnias), and we discussed which varieties of seeds were appropriate to go ahead and plant this early. The group selected three varieties of peppers (jalepeno, ceyenne and bell), three varieties of tomatoes (cherokee purple, roma and san marizano), and three varieties of flowers (two different celosias and zinnias) to get started.



Seeds were sewn mostly two per cell in opposite corners to aid in easy separation once time comes to move them into larger containers. They are currently in self-watering trays for ease. In the following weeks other vegetables and flowers will be started.

CORRIHER GRANGE by: Vinnie Duncan

Corriher Grange members received a “wish list” for donations from the Corriher Veterans’ Gift Christmas Tree to support the Salisbury VA at their November meeting. VA patients and long-term residents are always in need of personal hygiene items, tissues, lotion, and word puzzle books. These items were brought in gift bags to Corriher’s December 6 Christmas Party. Members Vinnie Duncan, Bobbie Dellinger and Kathy Irvin delivered over 80 bags to the VA on December 18. Franklin McCombs and Jim Martin, VA employees in the Civic Engagement Division, were surprised with so many items collected!

David Allen, President, welcomed everyone to our Grange’s annual Christmas Party on December 6. Children and adults alike heard the story of Jesus’ birth from the Gospel of Luke, read by Vinnie Duncan, ending with “Away in a Manger” sung by all. The stage portrayed the manger scene, with Mary, Joseph, shepherds and many angels. Following the Nativity scene, the group sang familiar Christmas carols, patiently waiting for the arrival of Santa Claus. Bobbie Dellinger read “Twas the Night Before Christmas” to the crowd. Santa then entered the hall with a cheerful, “Ho, Ho, Ho, Merry Christmas,” and distributed gifts to children and adults. Chaplain Bob Williams offered the blessing and everyone enjoyed refreshments.



LITTLE MOUNTAIN GRANGE by : Nina Hayes

In November 2024, Little Mountain Grange held its annual Harvest Festival, an annual fundraiser that included live bluegrass music by Sassafras. The Grange sold Pork BBQ plates and held its annual raffle where popular gifts were won by attendees. Our patchwork, hand-quilted Blue Chandelier queen-sized quilt, which received a third-place ribbon at the State Convention in September, was won by Flora Wiles. The winner of our Canik 9mm handgun was Todd Tilley, who picked this up at Stone Mountain Outdoors in State Road, NC. It was an enjoyable evening for everyone.

Also in November, our Grange members donated items to assist the Wilkes County School System for their HOPE Program to provide a small care package for every student and staff member in Ashe County Schools, nearly all of whom were affected by Hurricane Helene.

In December, our members enjoyed a Christmas dinner together at Mazzini's Restaurant in Elkin and were pleasantly surprised by a visit from Santa! We had so much fun, and we thank the staff of Mazzini's for hosting a great evening for our members.

Due to a generous grant from the NC State Grange's Local Grange Grant Program for Building Renovations, our Grange Hall is now sporting new lighting and a new drop-in ceiling in our main foyer and kitchen areas. After decades of 8-foot florescent tube lighting and a sagging ceiling, this project was completed in January. We now have a beautiful drop-in ceiling with hidden LED lights as well as a new ceiling over the basement steps. Thank you, NC State Grange! Due to construction, we were unable to host our annual food drive, so a donation of \$400 was given to Tri-C Food Pantry in Elkin, NC.



CHAPLAINS CORNER by : LaRue Tart

ABIDING IN WINTER

"I am the true vine, and my Father is the gardener...Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in me," *John 15:1, 4 ESV*

Winter is here, and I already miss going out and getting fresh vegetables from the market. Looking outside, it seems so quiet and cold not seeing the tractors cultivating the soil or gathering their fruitful harvest.

Although things look quiet on the outside, there is much life and growth brewing under the surface. Just because we don't see life budding up from the ground, it does not mean that no growth is happening. It's just hidden from our eyes. Many trees and plants that will pop up in the spring will be able to do so because the seeds are germinating now in the cold winter months. I've learned that scientists have found that some seeds do better with a layer of snow on top of the soil. Interesting!

This is true of us as well. There are seasons we may feel like we are not cultivating internally enough in growth with the Lord. We know He knows when to plant, water and prune. We need to grow internally during the quiet times. That work starts in us to place in His hands. We have only to abide.

May our prayer be to ask God to give us the courage to believe He is still at work even when we cannot see it. Lord, help us to trust in your love for us to abide in you, the Vine. You will complete that which you began.

As a line from a children's song says, "He's still working on me." "I am sure of this, that He who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Christ Jesus," *Phil 1:6 ESV*.



Story: Laurie Barnhart
Photos: Jessica Horton

FARM OF THE YEAR

Walker Farm
Concord, NC



Last fall at the State Grange Convention, I had the pleasure of meeting and talking with Pam and Carl Walker who were the proud recipients of the 2024 State Grange Farm of the Year Award. The Walkers are active members of St. John's Grange. Walker Farm is located on Irish Potato Road (applicably named) in Concord. After my conversation with the Walkers last September, I was impressed with their passion and love for their farm. Walker Farm is a Century Farm that has been in their

family for over five generations. The Walkers farm 40 acres of alfalfa, 50 acres of fescue, 15 acres of corn and 20 acres of small grain. In addition, they have a brood cow/calf operation of 60 head of Angus cattle. Pam and Carl have two sons. Cody Walker is a Game Warden for the NC Wildlife Commission. Jason Walker farms with his parents on the family farm. His wife, Jennifer, is a Probation Officer with Cabarrus County. They have two children, Silas and Sloan.

Carl Walker is a lifelong member of St. John's Grange, and Pam has been a member for 44 years. Their commitment to the community that they live and work in is evident in everything they do. Walker farm is a "family affair." Their son, Jason, is involved in the day-to-day aspect of the farm. They take turns feeding the cows, checking and mending fences as needed, and work together to tend crops of alfalfa, fescue, corn and small grains. They maintain and repair equipment as the need arises. Jason schedules the hay pick-ups and deliveries. He also manages the vaccinations and medication records, the vaccination schedules, and the weight-gain recordation for the stocker calf cow operation. Pam keeps records of expenses, sales, hay count per field, spraying records, equipment maintenance records, organizes tax records, daily weather records as well as the schedule of each day's work.

On the Walker Farm, they have two main barns for alfalfa storage, a house barn housing 60 round bales of fescue, cow feed, a cow/calf working station and multiple equipment sheds for tractors, balers and other equipment. The oldest barn on the farm is log hewn that was built in the 1860's and has been expanded for hay storage. What was once the old milk parlor has been converted to a workshop.

The equipment used in their farming operation consists of several John Deere tractors; a 7230 New Holland mover, a BC5070 New Holland square baler and a round baler; a John Deere skid steer; a 963 Caterpillar; a Kubota double rotary rake; a Kuhn tedder; a H&H pull-behind sprayer; a F-2 gleaner and a 1033 New Holland stack wagon and round-bale wrapper.

As Grangers, we know and understand how important community is to farmers that add so much vitality to the area where they live and farm. Not only do the Walkers have an extremely busy farm life, but they also are very active in their community. Carl is on the Board of Directors for the Cabarrus County Farm Bureau as well as the Cold Water Volunteer Fire Department where he also served as President. At St. John's Lutheran Church, he is

a councilman and President of "Men in Mission." Pam is currently the President of Cabarrus County Extension & Community Association (ECA) as well as President of the ECA Culinary Adventurers Club. She is a member of the Cabarrus County Farm Bureau Women's Leadership Committee and Chair of the Cold Water Volunteer Fire Department (CWVFD) Board of Directors. Pam is also a past Junior Grange Leader for St. Johns Grange and serves as a counselor at Grange Camp. Jason has served as a Church Council Chairman for two years. He is head of the church social committee that plans all major community outreach events. He has served 8 years on the CWVFD Board of Directors as well as Assistant Chief, serving as a volunteer for a total of 23 years. In addition, Jason was promoted five times during his tenure at the Harrisburg Fire Department where he is currently the Battalion Chief serving as the B-Shift Commander.





A tremendously important facet of the Walkers' farming operation is their dedication to conservation practices, environmental protection and new innovations. Following is an excerpt by Dustin Adcock, CCA Agronomy Sales Manager with Southern States Cooperative, part of the Farm of the Year application submitted by St. John's Grange.

"Carl Walker and Walker Farms is an extraordinary example of conservation and stewardship. As I have been working with Carl and Jason, I've seen them embrace innovative practices, technology and planning to prove the long-standing future of their farm and community.

To reduce impact of fertilizer runoff and leaching, the Walkers quickly adapted their application methods and timing to be proactive, all while maintaining excellent plant vigor and crop production. The use of Nitrogen-fixing bacteria to the crop to capture atmospheric Nitrogen and foliar feed has allowed them to reduce the overall addition of fertilizer. Treating fertilizers with stability agents and slow-release polymers provides for reduced runoff and leaching, making sure nutrients are available when the crop needs them. Rotating a perennial legume crop of alfalfa has also built humic matter, provided capture of nutrients, and stabilized soil structure in their cropping system. Carl and Jason know that every farm crop starts with good health.

Making decisions based on data, research and careful planning is what really stands the Walker Farm out amongst the many farms of North Carolina. Carl regularly has us scout, tissue, forage and soil sample the fields to better inform their decisions. This data has called for midseason fertility adjustments and crop protection applications. With this Integrated Pest Management approach, there is a reduction in use of pesticides and excessive nutrient use.



I'm proud to say that Walker Farms understands the value of their land, operation and stewardship. Working with them gives meaning to my job as an agronomist, and I get to celebrate their successes alongside them. This family is conservation-minded and really exemplifies the meaning of leaving the land in better shape than when we received it."

In addition, the Walkers purchased a cattle working station that allows more efficient and safe conditions for the cows and calves. They have begun strip grazing and

added temporary fencing to keep cattle out of the creeks for management and environmental protection.

I don't think anyone could top Dustin's narrative on the Walker Farm. Interestingly, Walker Farms received the Grange Family of the Year Award in the 1980s, which included Carl's parents, his sister, and Carl and Pam. The Walker Farm is an exemplary model for the 2025 State Grange Farm of the Year. Congratulations, Walker family!



Spreading Love at Winter Youth Conference



Every February, NC Grange holds its annual Winter Youth Conference to bring students from across the state together to enjoy a weekend of fellowship. The retreat also offers youth, grades 9th and up, an educational experience to grow as leaders, to gain confidence through public speaking, to serve the community, and to engage in team building activities. This event has always been a favorite for our young members, especially since they get to build meaningful friendships which is a huge part of their Grange experience.

This year's conference was held February 14-16 at the beautiful Camp Caraway near Asheboro. Youth participated in workshops and activities that focused on goal setting and

the importance of recognizing their own values when setting goals for their future. They also learned how to communicate effectively when working as a group during a workshop led by State FFA Officers Walt Moore and Carson Park. It was amazing to watch our youth work together to make decisions, overcome challenges, and encourage each other during teambuilding activities.

State Contests were held on Saturday afternoon. Taylor Rogers won first place in the Public Speaking Contest and will advance to the national competition this fall. Isabelle Welborn placed second in the competition. Many youth also competed in our Impromptu Speech Contest, which is always a fun event.



We love how this contest boosts confidence by getting youth to speak in front of a group. No matter how they place in the contest, simply participating is a win. Taylor Rogers won first place this year with Kayla Laws placing second and Caroline Barber placing third. Missy Mueller placed first for young adults with Dylan Grissom placing second. All participants did an incredible job.



Elections for State Youth Officers were also held during the afternoons contests. Taylor Rogers of Camp Grange was elected the 2025 State Grange Youth President, and Caroline Barber of Bushy Fork Grange was elected the State Vice President. A full list of officers can be found in this edition of Grange News. Later in the afternoon, youth took part in a service project by making Valentine's Cards for nursing home residents, led by our State Community Service Director, Anna Liles who delivered the cards after the conference.



Joining us for the weekend was Shae Smith who traveled down from Pennsylvania. Shae is currently serving with Taylor Rogers as this year's National Grange Youth Ambassadors. We were very excited that she could join us, and both of these ladies did a great job representing the National Grange.

Each year at this conference, a special committee interviews youth who have applied to serve on the State Youth Leadership Team. This committee selects the team, which is always a difficult decision due to the amazing candidates that try out. In a special ceremony on Saturday evening, the new Youth Leadership Team was announced. As their names were called, these young leaders accepted their positions with much enthusiasm, ready to serve the Grange. Those members are Caroline Barber, Bushy Fork Grange; Nick Cameron, Juniper Grange; Ryleigh Hartsell, St. John's Grange; Cade Howerton, Bushy Fork Grange; Kayla Laws, Bushy Fork Grange; and Taylor Rogers, Camp Grange. Caroline

Barber will also serve this year as our State Youth Ambassador.

Saturday evening's festivities included a Valentine's Party to celebrate the holiday. Youth took part in square dancing, games and other festivities while dressing up in clothes and costumes representing Valentine's Day. Best Costume awards went to Jaiden McDougald, Carter Settle, Shae Smith, and Taylor Rogers. Youth also exchanged Valentine's cards and played games that earned them prizes. The evening also brought a special activity to inspire our youth. Every person had a sheet of paper with their picture on it, all of which were set out in a circle. Everyone signed personal messages and positive affirmations on every sheet for youth to take home with them as a reminder of how amazing and loved they are. Youth have often stated that on a rough day, they will look at their sheets and smile, remembering how loved they are by their Grange friends.

Three of our young leaders gave a special vespers at the end of the evening. Karly Denning, Jaiden McDougald and Carter Settle spoke about their time in the Grange as they age out of the youth program. They gave uplifting messages and presented special gifts of love and encouragement to several of their younger peers. This has become a very moving tradition at the conference, and we are grateful for these young leaders and the time they have spent growing up in our youth program. All three will be moving into the Young Adult Program this year. It was an incredible night to close an awesome weekend together.

Youth departed Sunday morning after our traditional friendship circle. It was a wonderful, uplifting weekend, and much appreciation is given to the adult chaperones that helped make the conference possible. They volunteer their time to not only assist with the event, but to encourage and mentor our youth, which is greatly appreciated. Our organization is proud to have such a wonderful, unique program for young people.



2025 NC Grange Youth Officers

President:	Taylor Rogers	Camp Grange
Vice President:	Caroline Barber	Bushy Fork Grange
Program Director:	Kayla Laws	Bushy Fork Grange
Steward:	Cade Howerton	Bushy Fork Grange
Assistant Steward:	Nick Cameron	Juniper Grange
Lady Assistant Steward:	Anna Hahn	St. John's Grange
Chaplain:	Ryleigh Hartsell	St. John's Grange
Treasurer:	Clayton Cameron	Juniper Grange
Secretary:	Zoe Riddering	Camp Grange
Gatekeeper:	Zeke Simmons	Camp Grange
Ceres:	Anna Keeter	Bushy Fork Grange
Pomona:	Isabelle Welborn	Camp Grange
Flora:	Lucy Anderson	Villeworth Grange
Executive Committee:	Brayden Eudy	St. John's Grange

COMMUNITY

by : Anna Liles



Hello, Grangers! As we begin 2025, I want to encourage you to continue to come up with community service projects to help those in need in your local area. There are people in every community that need our help, and I know that our Grangers are doing great things. I would also like to encourage you to remember those in the western part of our state. They are still recovering from Hurricane Helene and many are still struggling. There will be a need for help in that area for a long time, and I know that our Grangers will step up!

I am so excited that Family Conference is coming up, and I look forward to seeing everyone there. At the conference, we will be collecting items for the Carteret County Domestic Violence Program. This amazing program helps support happy, healthy, safe, and strong families by helping women, men, and children rebuild their lives that have been affected by violence. Domestic Violence affects people from all walks of life, and you can help stop the cycle. To assist this program and serve the community we are visiting, we will be collecting the following items:

- *Non-perishable food items
- *Toilet paper
- *Paper towels
- *Hand soap
- *Disposable gloves
- *Medium and tall kitchen trash bags
- *Large black trash bags
- *Bottled water

Please bring items to the conference so that we can make a difference. Thank you for all you do.

REGISTER NOW!

Grange Camp

July 6-12

ncgrange.com/events



Be sure to check out The Grange Hall Podcast on Spotify, Apple Music, etc.

CAPITOL NEWS

by : Laurie Barnhart



The 157th North Carolina General Assembly Long Session began on January 8 with the traditional swearing in ceremony on a very cold, wintry day. It was only 22 degrees as North Carolina Senators and Representatives began arriving at the Legislature accompanied by family and friends. All 170 members of the House of Representatives were sworn in with an opening prayer by William Franklin Graham, IV, grandson of the late Rev. Billy Graham. Opening day is traditionally ceremonial with the swearing in ceremony and also the election of new leadership.

Destin Hall was elected Speaker of the House following in the footsteps of Speaker Tim Moore who served for the past eleven years. Also in key leadership roles are Representative Mitchell Setzer, Speaker Pro Tem; Rep. John Bell, Rules Chair; and Rep. Brenden Jones, Majority Leader.

The Senate Session was opened by newly elected Lieutenant Governor Rachel Hunt. In the Senate, Senator Phil Berger was elected by its members to continue his tenure as President Pro Tem. Senator Ralph Hise will also keep his position as deputy President Pro Tem. There were several new changes in Senate leadership with the election of Senator Amy Galey as the Republican Majority Whip, and Senator Sydney Batch who will replace Senator Dan Blue as Minority Whip. Senator Blue served as Minority Whip in the North Carolina Senate for over a decade.

The House of Representatives did lose their supermajority when Republican Frank Sossaman lost his race. He represented Vance and Granville counties. This left the House one seat short of having the three-fifths “supermajority” that is required to have veto override power. The Senate was able to retain their “supermajority” with 30 Republican seats. The Democrats have 20. With this loss of power, the Republicans lose their ability of a “rubberstamp” veto override without the support of Democratic members in the House. This of course will afford Governor Stein more power in the legislation.

In the House and the Senate, the leadership made it abundantly clear that the first priority would be passing a mini-budget bill for Hurricane Helene relief. Newly elected Speaker Pro Tem Setzer said, “The recent trauma experienced in the west by Hurricane Helene showed the world that we can take a hit, but

we will come back swinging, and that we will also look after our own,” Setzer said. “We are North Carolina, and we are proud and strong, and together we are unstoppable.”

The Senate Agriculture, Energy and Environment Committee leadership is the same as last term with Senators Jackson, Sanderson and Barnes serving as Chairs. In the House, the Agriculture Committee is made up of Senior Chair Representative Jimmy Dixon and Chairs Balkcom, Gillespie and Goodwin. The Agriculture Committees in both chambers are of upmost importance to the North Carolina Grange due to the impact of decisions made in regards to the farms and rural communities that are affected by laws, appropriations and decisions made by the General Assembly. The Full Appropriations Committee in the Senate is responsible for the passing of appropriation bills and of course the budget. This committee, as well as the House Appropriations Committee controls the expenditures of money by State government. This daunting task of course makes the Chairs the most powerful and influential in the Senate as and in the House. This session’s Senate Chairs are Senators Brent Jackson, Ralph Hise and Michael Lee; and in the House, Representatives Arp, Lambeth, K. Hall and Strickland are serving as Senior Chairs.

For the next term, the Council of State members will be made up of seven new members. The three incumbents returning are Commissioner of Agriculture, Steve Troxler (R); Secretary of State, Elaine Marshall (D); and Mike Causey (R), Commissioner of Insurance. Of course Josh Stein (D) is our new Governor; Rachel Hunt (D) Lieutenant Governor; Jeff Jackson (D) Attorney General; Dave Boliek (R) Auditor; Luke Farley (R) Commissioner of Labor; Mo Green (D) Superintendent of Public Instruction; and Brad Briner (R) Treasurer. This will give the Council of State an evenly matched political voice of five Republicans and five Democrats.

On the Hill

The 119th Congress officially began the 2025 session on January 3, 2025. On Inauguration Day, which was January 20, President Elect Trump and Vice-President Elect Vance took the oath and officially took office. It was a busy, festive day in DC. Thousands of people attended.



Welcome to our newest
Grange members! We are
delighted to have you join us.

Cape Fear

Nick Fowler

Kathy Fowler

Corriher Grange

Gina Seaford

Raymond Seaford

Brenda McAlister

Melvin McAlister

Larry Smith

Candace Smith

Grantham Grange

Tina Hinson

Leonard Luttrell

JoCo Grange

Dale Ryals

D.M. Lee

Juniper Grange

Maegan McKenzie

Emily McKenzie-Holland

St. John's Grange

Cindy Knight

WCC Grange

Andrew Fulk

James Kemp

Tammy Belvins

Meanwhile, President-Elect Trump's Cabinet member nominees began their hearing process by the Senate on January 14th.

Republicans definitely dominate the political landscape in Congress with a Republican President as well as a Republican majority in both chambers. The Senate is made up of 53 Republicans and 47 Democrats; and in the House the Republicans have 219 seats and the Democrats have 215 seats.

After a lot of arguing and bargaining, 2024 ended in Washington with the passage of a spending package to avoid a Government shutdown on Dec. 20. In the wee hours of Dec. 21 the Senate passed the bill the House had previously passed that kept the Government open for three months to avoid the shutdown that could have happened during the holidays. A shutdown would have affectively forced U.S. troops, Border Patrol agents, air traffic controllers and millions of other federal workers to work without pay. The stopgap provision did include an extension of the farm bill that included \$10 billion in economic aid for farmers. Only time will tell in the months to come what changes a new slate of leadership will bring to the US Congress.

SAVE THE DATE

September 11-14, 2025

State Convention

Charlotte, NC

In Memoriam

Claude Woolard

Pete Rudder

Dorothy Whitfield

Carlton Barefoot

Beverly Perry

Ronnie Fish

Douglas Sellers

Beaufort Co. Grange

Bushy Fork Grange

Bushy Fork Grange

Westbrook Grange

Westbrook Grange

JoCo Grange

Associate Member

You light a lamp for me. The Lord, my God, lights up my darkness.

Psalm 138:28

** 50 Year Member*



2025 - THE YEAR OF CHANGE

As we start this new year, we have already experienced some significant changes. There is a significant change in our national leadership with a new US President and a Republican majority in both chambers of Congress. In a very short time, these changes have caused reverberations, not only in Washington DC, but all across the nation. There is much discussion, both positive and negative, of the actions already set in motion from a national standpoint.

On our state level, we also have a new Governor and his executive team. While the Council of State is a mixed bag of old and new faces, so far, this change in leadership has not caused the amount of discussion as we see on the national level. Our State House and Senate pretty much retained the same balance as the previous session, so we will see how the new Governor attempts to build a working relationship with our legislators to move our state forward.

These changes in leadership will likely influence our health insurance programs with changes on national and state levels that these legislative bodies would like to enact.

Starting with our BCBSNC Medicare products, one of the biggest changes occurs in the prescription drug benefits. For 2025, the “donut hole” is gone. Clients participating in either a stand-alone drug product or a Medicare Advantage plan, which includes a drug plan, will spend a maximum of \$2,000 in copayments before the plan will pick up 100% of the cost thereafter. Also a major change, if an insured person has prescriptions with copayments that are expected to meet that \$2,000 maximum, then the insured has the option to contact the carrier and spread that cost out over the remaining months in the year. This option is similar to the plan that the utility companies use for their customers for level utility payments throughout the year.

More changes in BSBSNC Medicare products are as follows:

- Copayments for certain medical services have seen a slight increase from 2024 on the Medicare Advantage



plans, however, most of the Maximum Out of Pocket Expense (MOP) has remained stable. The MOP is essentially a stop loss feature in every Medicare Advantage plan that limits the maximum an individual will spend on health care related services.

- In 2025, BCBSNC introduced the Blue Flex Card for some of its extra benefits in Medicare. A major change, this card houses the OTC quarterly allowance, vision benefit, and the home safety device allowance. It can also act as either a credit card or debit card, depending on where and what it is used for.
- Lastly, due to Governor Cooper’s State of Emergency order, if a Medicare eligible individual did not make a change to their plan during the Medicare Open Enrollment period, October 15 – December 7, 2024, then that individual has a one-time opportunity to make a change in their insurance program through March 31, 2025.

The Under65 Individual Market changed for 2025 with the continued consolidation of hospital providers. Due to CMS regulations, there was also a reduction in the number of plans offered by BCBSNC as well as plan name changes to better reflect the benefits of those plans. With many individuals receiving health insurance premium subsidies, most clients did not see a significant, if any, increase in the premium amount they were responsible for.

Speaking of the premium subsidies, the Affordable Care Act's (ACA) Enhanced Subsidies will become a major political football this year as they will expire at the end of 2025. Currently the overwhelming majority, which the government reporting office is saying to be in excess of 90% of those with a marketplace health insurance plan, are receiving a premium subsidy to some degree. Should Congress allow these subsidies to just expire, many individuals will find a significant increase in their health insurance cost.

The ACA currently has a clause in the law that requires carriers to spend at least 80% of each premium dollar on direct patient care. Should the carrier fail to meet this Medical Loss Ratio, the carrier is required to "rebate" back to the insureds a portion of the premiums paid to meet that minimum loss ratio. Looking at the Congressional Budget Office projections, without an extension of the subsidy enhancements, 2026 health insurance enrollments could

easily drop by over three million enrollees. Of the remaining covered individuals, they will be looking for less rich coverage options where they can continue to afford to purchase health insurance.

So, when will we see this football moving? Sooner rather than later as carriers must submit their proposed 2026 rates to the state and federal regulators in the spring of 2025. This means that Congress will need to act soon to avoid the scenario where the insurance carriers are basing the 2026 rates on lower enrollments and a sicker population based on the expiration of these subsidy enhancements.

As we have just started 2025, we already see many changes, and we can expect more to come. Stay tuned and keep your eyes on the horizon to give yourself time to position yourself to ride out the waves of change that 2025 brings.

2025 NATIONAL CONVENTION ITEMS



Insulated Cups \$20

Bags \$50

Beach Towels \$35

Shirts \$15



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