



North Carolina House Democrats *News Release*



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GENERAL ASSEMBLY CUTS OUT-OF-STATE TRAVEL BUDGET BY 92 PERCENT Stricter rules save State more than \$70,000

RALEIGH_ Spending on out-of-state travel for North Carolina legislators dropped 92 percent in 2009 when compared to the same time period in 2007, according to the latest figures from the General Assembly's Financial Services office.

House Speaker Joe Hackney and Senate President Pro Tem Marc Basnight issued travel restrictions this year for legislators in response to the downturn in the state's economy. Lawmakers typically travel out of state to legislative meetings to learn more about particular issues facing the elected leaders or to study ways to improve their effectiveness. The state normally reimburses them for travel and registration and gives them a flat daily rate of \$104 to cover lodging and food costs.

In 2007, the 170 lawmakers in the General Assembly spent a total of \$78,000 on out-of-state travel, an average of about \$460 each. Lawmakers in 2009 have spent a total of about \$6,500, an average of \$38 each.

"Legislators realize that as important as it is for them to receive continuing education, it is more important right now for the state to save every dime it can find," Speaker Hackney said. "Some of them have sought opportunities to learn on their own and offset the costs with their own money. We appreciate their dedication to serving our state during this difficult time."

"Just as businesses across North Carolina and America are cutting back, it is my belief that government should be cutting back as well," President Pro Tem Basnight said. "Cutting travel costs is just one of the ways we've saved taxpayers money by tightening our own belts at the General Assembly."

The General Assembly has agreed to pay registration fees for out-of-state conferences, but has greatly restricted travel and expense money. Most of the money for out-of-state travel - \$5,260 - was spent on registration fees.

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