

Joint message from:

North Carolina Opticians Association (NCOA)

and the

NC State Board of Opticians

IMPORTANT LEGISLATIVE ALERT

NC Licensed Opticians

and

Apprentice- and Intern- Opticians

Heartfelt thoughts and prayers go out to all of you in eastern North Carolina who have felt, and continue to feel, the unprecedented effects of Hurricane Matthew. We anguish with you over the news reports and firsthand information of your situations: many families still without power, homes sitting in floodwaters, over 600 roads closed, businesses shut down, and those who have lost their homes and living in shelters. Please know that we stand with you during your recovery.

The reason for this LEGISLATIVE ALERT:

Both boards are very pleased with the recent success of the State Board's request for fee increases (Session Law 2016-117 was signed into law late July). This three-year effort by both boards will allow the State Board to continue operations, and rebuild depleted reserves.

However, the ***Joint Legislative Administrative Procedures Oversight Committee (JLAPOC)*** held a meeting October 4 in Raleigh, where both groups' attorneys and State Board staff confirmed that **the North Carolina State Board of Opticians is still "on the chopping block"** of the NC General Assembly. During the October 4 meeting newly-appointed JLAPOC Co-Chairman **Senator Andy Wells** reintroduced the chart prepared as a part of the 2014 Program Evaluation Division (PED) report which had the State Board of Opticians listed for **ELIMINATION** and/or **CONSOLIDATION** with another Board.

To better understand Senator Wells' position and intent, he said during the meeting (speaking in general terms about boards he personally thought prime for action), *"I'm not naming any particular board, but will note that I am wearing glasses."*

At a meeting to be scheduled in November (after the elections), State Board Chair Debra Newell will have the opportunity to briefly speak before the JLAPOC. She has previously presented comments to this Committee and eloquently represents the State Board, and the profession.

How YOU CAN HELP:

The decisions made by the JLAPO Committee will affect current *NC-licensed opticians* and the trainees advancing towards licensure. We encourage **EVERYONE** to **write letters NOW to your own/local legislators** in both the State House of Representatives and State Senate, and **mail to their local offices.** (This is not the time to be concerned about anyone's political party affiliation -- we need ALL their help.) Go to www.ncleg.net and find your legislator's contact information by using the interactive 'Who Represents Me?' tab in the top banner.

(Sending 'blanket' emails to your legislators...or to ALL legislators...isn't advisable – emails are often read/sorted by a staff person, and so aren't nearly as effective as actual correspondence.)

Letters written should be personal -- expressing why, from licensed opticians' own experience, the optical industry should remain regulated in North Carolina. (Ladies, you represent a large percentage of the optician-population in the state: how would sweeping changes and deregulation affect *you*, both professionally and economically?) Apprentices and Interns working and studying to become licensed opticians, tell them (from *your* particular perspective) why you chose this profession; will becoming an optician open employment and economic opportunities for you?

And Finally:

With the success of this year's legislation **we should ALL think about expressing appreciation to the four lawmakers who've been so helpful to work with/for opticians over the past three years...**thank them in whatever manner you choose, and encourage them to continue their support.

- 1) Sen. Bill Rabon (404 W. Brunswick Street, Southport NC 28461)
- 2) Sen. David L. Curtis (PO Box 278, Denver NC 28037) (*Note: Sen. Curtis is an Optometrist*)
- 3) Rep. Jonathan C. Jordan (PO Box 744, Jefferson NC 28640)
- 4) Rep. Sarah Stevens (2161 Margaret Drive, Mt. Airy NC 27030)

While we realize expressing yourselves in these type communications may be difficult for some, we thank each of you for any and all your efforts. Let's continue working together to save the profession of opticianry in North Carolina!

James W. McCall Jr, President

Debra Newell, Chair

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