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THURSDAY, JULY 9, 2026

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Stein signs \$34B budget



North Carolina Gov. Josh Stein signs a historic \$34 billion budget July 7. CHRISTINE ZHU/NC NEWSLINE

Long-overdue spending plan includes pay raises, lower taxes

Christine Zhu
NC Newsline

Gov. Josh Stein signed a historic \$34 billion state budget July 7, enacting North Carolina's first comprehensive spending plan since 2023.

Republican legislative leaders sent the long-overdue budget to Stein last week after more than a year of negotiations over items like income tax and teacher raises.

The delay meant state agencies were running on budget levels approved nearly three years ago.

The 634-page budget includes a 3%

raise for all state employees and lowers the personal income tax rate from 3.99% this year to 3.49% next year. It marks the largest starting teacher pay raise in nearly 50 years and the largest overall teacher pay raise in the past 15 years. The plan also fully funds Medicaid and appropriates \$700 million towards Hurricane Helene relief in western North Carolina.

"The legislature has accepted many of my big-ticket budget recommendations, and having just celebrated America 250 this weekend, we remember that our democracy has always run on compromise for the common good,"

Stein said.

However, the governor's signature did not come without criticism.

The raises for most state employees don't keep up with inflation, Stein said, and the budget's "more meaningful" raises for law enforcement and corrections workers still leave North Carolina lagging behind its neighbors.

He called out the legislature for slashing more than 1,000 state government positions and eliminating the Office of Minority Health and Health Disparities, as well as the Office of

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An Allegiant Airlines flight takes off at the Asheville Regional Airport. PROVIDED BY THE ASHEVILLE REGIONAL AIRPORT

USDOT awards \$2.5M to Asheville Airport

George Fabe Russell
Hendersonville Times-News
USA TODAY NETWORK

HENDERSONVILLE – The Asheville Regional Airport is set to receive \$2.5 million in federal funding to improve roadways, parking and entrances.

That's according to a July 7 news release from the U.S. Department of Transportation.

The airport money is part of \$17.3 billion in spending across 52 states and territories and the District of Columbia on road, rail, marine and aviation infrastructure, according to the release.

Of that, \$17.7 million is going to North Carolina, including \$9.8 million for the State Port Authority in New Hanover County.

"This Department is investing in repairing critical roads and bridges that connect Americans to job opportunities, port infrastructure that bolsters

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Trump says he considers Iran ceasefire to be 'over'

Francesca Chambers, Erin Mansfield, Zac Anderson, Bart Jansen, Chris Cann and Rachel Barber
USA TODAY

President Donald Trump said on July 8 that he considered the ceasefire between the United States and Iran to be over and could resume his bombing

campaign after the latest round of tit-for-tat strikes, casting uncertainty over efforts to end the conflict.

"To me, I think it's over. I don't want to deal with them," Trump said from Ankara, Turkey, where he was attending a NATO summit. "They're scum. They're sick people. They're led by sick people, and they're vicious, violent people."

His remarks came as a U.S. Navy commander was presumed dead following an emergency helicopter landing in the Arabian Sea, raising the number of U.S. service members killed in the Iran war to 14.

Cmdr. Gabriel Edwards, the commanding officer of Helicopter Sea

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President Donald Trump, left, attends a NATO summit on July 8 with NATO Secretary-General Mark Rutte, right. U.S. Secretary of State Marco Rubio is also pictured. YVES HERMAN/REUTERS

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