

ROB SCHOFIELD: Lobbyists for North Carolina's billboard industry are attempting to push through a bill in the waning days of the 2019 legislative session that could significantly increase the visual pollution in our state. At present, there are already 8,200 billboards in North Carolina that are currently permitted or that are in the process of being permitted, and House bill 645 would allow more and possibly much brighter billboards in places they don't currently exist. The bill would also limit the ability of local governments to determine how to control billboards, and would allow more cutting of the public's trees along highways to increase billboard visibility. The measure may also allow converting existing billboards to digital signs. In a statement, the North Carolina Sierra Club offered this on-the-money assessment: 'North Carolinians and visitors appreciate scenic roadways and the natural beauty of our state. It's disappointing that the Senate has chosen to subsidize an increasingly obsolete industry with unwarranted giveaways. This bill basically says that billboards are forever, regardless of the wishes of local residents and their governing bodies. The measure should be rejected.' For NC Policy Watch, I'm Rob Schofield.