

GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF NORTH CAROLINA
SESSION 2005

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HOUSE DRH80104-LG-98* (02/24)

Short Title: Southern Appalachian Science & Tech. Funds. (Public)

Sponsors: Representative Walend.

Referred to:

A BILL TO BE ENTITLED

1
2 AN ACT TO APPROPRIATE FUNDS TO THE SOUTHERN APPALACHIAN
3 SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY CENTER (SASTC) LOCATED IN POLK
4 COUNTY.

5 Whereas, North Carolina's mountain counties have undergone significant
6 economic upheaval due to the decline of the region's traditional manufacturing
7 industries; and

8 Whereas, Polk County is among the many counties in North Carolina that
9 have lost jobs as a result of textile mill closings; and

10 Whereas, the region's future economic vitality relies on its ability to spawn,
11 foster, and attract entrepreneurial ventures in emerging technologies and scientific
12 disciplines; and

13 Whereas, the ability of North Carolina's academic institutions west of the
14 Research Triangle to conduct effective and successful technology maturation and
15 commercialization remains limited by lack of resources and barriers to collaboration;
16 and

17 Whereas, North Carolina's Rural Internet Access Authority provided e-Polk a
18 grant in the amount of \$375,000 for the installation of OC12-capacity Internet
19 infrastructure access critical to the economic development of the area; and

20 Whereas, now that Polk County has world-class Internet capacity in place, a
21 local group of visionaries has created The Southern Appalachian Science & Technology
22 Center (SASTC) to build upon the foresight of the State and bring new jobs to the area;
23 and

24 Whereas, SASTC has a multipurpose vision for supporting innovation, the
25 management of intellectual property, and commercialization of technology in a variety
26 of cutting-edge fields including nanotechnology, bioscience, and materials science; and

1 Whereas, SASTC was incorporated as a nonprofit on October 24, 2003, with
2 bylaws specifying that a plan be developed for financial self-sufficiency through
3 membership support and the commercialization of intellectual property; and

4 Whereas, Polk County, the Town of Tryon, and Advantage West have all
5 provided support in the form of financial assistance or in-kind services for SASTC's
6 initial strategic planning efforts; and

7 Whereas, SASTC is uniquely positioned to coordinate interagency
8 cooperation, and the geography of Polk County is very advantageous relative to
9 universities in the eight State regions already conducting technology research, many of
10 which already have a relationship with SASTC; and

11 Whereas, through its collaboration with Western Carolina University, the
12 University of North Carolina at Asheville, the University of North Carolina at Charlotte,
13 and other institutions from the Piedmont and Triad areas, Western North Carolina will
14 benefit economically from SASTC's efforts; and

15 Whereas, SASTC has emerged as a leading scientific visualization entity in
16 the southeast and through its efforts has created the premier applied visualization
17 conference (AppliedVis 2005) in the southeast; and

18 Whereas, SASTC intends to establish a strategic alliance with the National
19 High Performance Computing Center and work closely with participating community
20 colleges and universities to create a Scientific Visualization High Performance
21 Computing Center within the SASTC facility; and

22 Whereas, SASTC proposes to join with the Visualization Grid Initiative of
23 the University of North Carolina at Asheville and the University of North Carolina at
24 Charlotte research centers; and

25 Whereas, the special benefits of visualization are not currently available to
26 small- and medium-size companies because of cost and system complexities; and

27 Whereas, SASTC plans to provide the expertise of visualization to small- and
28 medium-size companies in the area to give these businesses the edge in a very
29 competitive environment; and

30 Whereas, SASTC holds substantial and compelling promise for the economic
31 reinvention and growth of North Carolina's mountain region; Now, therefore,
32 The General Assembly of North Carolina enacts:

33 **SECTION 1.** There is appropriated from the General Fund to The Southern
34 Appalachian Science & Technology Center, Inc., a nonprofit organization located in
35 Polk County, the sum of two hundred fifty thousand dollars (\$250,000) for the
36 2005-2006 fiscal year for operating expenses. These funds shall serve as matching funds
37 and leverage to secure targeted additional support from federal agencies and private
38 foundations to advance the SASTC vision.

39 **SECTION 2.** This act becomes effective July 1, 2005.