



LEGISLATIVE *Update*

State Employees Association of North Carolina • www.seanc.org

P.O. Drawer 27727 • Raleigh, NC 27611 • 888-732-6242/919-833-1616 (Press 1)

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Budget Moves; Personnel Files Bill Stalls

The Senate passed their version of the budget Thursday afternoon and sent it over to the House for debate. It is likely that the House will vote to accept the Senate version of the budget and expedite its passage.

Right now, the Senate budget still contains language that provides a merit-based pay increase for state employees in 2012-2013. The retirement system also remains fully funded due to a new amortization schedule that was moved from nine to 12 years. (Translation: think of this as refinancing your home mortgage for a longer period of time in order to stretch your take-home pay.)

The House is expected to debate and vote on the Senate budget today. Two floor votes are required in order to pass a budget bill – but those votes cannot be held on the same day. The House plans to recess this evening and come back after midnight tonight for a final vote.

House and Senate leadership worked through last weekend in hopes of hammering out their budget differences without having to appoint a joint House-Senate conference committee. If they were successful in resolving their differences will remain to be seen until the final vote tonight. Once the two chambers have resolved differences, the budget bill will be sent to Gov. Beverly Perdue for consideration.

Personnel Files Bill Stalls

House Bill 685, the so-called Government Transparency Act of 2011, contained provisions to completely open state employees' personnel files as public record. Last year a full-fledged war was waged by the media's trade association to open all state personnel files for public viewing. SEANC fought these changes in the General Assembly last year and won.

HB 685 was scheduled to be heard in a House Judiciary Committee this past Thursday, but SEANC was able to hold it back. SEANC lobbyists worked with the House leadership and helped committee members to understand that this legislation would violate the constitutional rights of employees.

A measure such as HB 685 would open the door to lawsuits and would strip away the rights of employees to appropriately defend themselves in grievance proceedings. SEANC thanks the House leadership for responding to our concerns and taking this bill off the calendar.