



STATE EMPLOYEES ASSOCIATION OF NORTH CAROLINA

Governor Josh Stein
Office of the Governor
Department of Administration
116 W. Jones Street
Raleigh, NC 27603.

House Speaker Destin Hall
Senate President Pro Tempore Phil Berger
16 W. Jones Street
Raleigh, NC 27601

January 15, 2026

Dear Governor Stein, Speaker Hall and President Pro Tempore Berger,

State Auditor Dave Boliek presented his position audit under the DAVE Act as a neutral accounting of vacancies, yet it is already being used as a pretext to justify further cuts to state jobs. SEANC would be doing a disservice to our members and to the people of North Carolina if we did not point out several critical facts.

Slide after slide highlighted how long positions have remained vacant, raising questions about agency performance. What went unsaid is that for nearly seven months, almost 3,000 state positions have been frozen under G.S. 143C-5-4 solely because a new budget has not been enacted. Agencies have been unable to fill these jobs no matter how critical the public need. That reality alone skews vacancy totals and distorts the narrative.

If these frozen positions were permanently cut, North Carolina would have more than 1,000 fewer state jobs than it did in 2009—despite adding two million residents since that time. That would leave us with negative growth in state employment while surrounding states have seen increases in the number of employees available to serve their citizens.

These are not unnecessary jobs. They are positions tied to real services. When agencies cannot hire, citizens wait longer, workloads grow, and outcomes suffer. Vacancy numbers will rise when hiring is prohibited, regardless of need.

This should prompt a clear-eyed look at whether cutting state jobs has produced economic growth. According to materials published by the General Assembly, North Carolina has added less than one percent to its state workforce since 2009, even as our population surged by 2 million people. The effects of this chronic underinvestment are already evident to taxpayers and businesses frustrated by slow or inefficient services, and in infrastructure challenges that disproportionately harm rural communities. We are not investing in ourselves as a people when we fail to invest in the employees who keep this state functioning.

Fiscal Research has also shown that Virginia and Georgia exceed North Carolina in gross state product per capita by substantial margins, even though both have increased their state workforces significantly more than we have in response to population growth. The data is clear: building public capacity does not hinder growth; it supports it.



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Finally, vacancy-driven “savings” are masking structural problems. In August 2024, OSBM reported that state receipts came in \$471 million over budget, yet \$571 million of that total resulted from reverted salary funds. In effect, the state is improving its fiscal appearance by not spending money that was budgeted for employees who were supposed to be providing services to North Carolinians.

For years, state employees have been required to do the work of two people. After COVID, that burden became untenable. Yet when delays occur, when systems fail, or when services fall short, it is state employees who are blamed—publicly and loudly—while the policies that created these conditions go unexamined. Lawmakers express shock when something goes wrong, even as the workforce is thinned, underpaid, and constrained from hiring. These outcomes are not surprises; they are the predictable results of chronic neglect.

North Carolina is now at an inflection point. Continue to starve the workforce and bad outcomes will follow—more failures, more delays, and, eventually, real harm to the people these agencies exist to protect. That harm will not be accidental; it will be the foreseeable consequence of choices made today.

SEANC urges you to lift hiring constraints and invest in both the number and compensation of state employees. It's time for a serious change in the treatment of state employees by all of our elected leaders.

Respectfully,

Ardis Watkins
Executive Director
State Employees Association of North Carolina