



LEGISLATIVE *Update*

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

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Historic General Assembly Convenes for 2011 Session

By Ardis Watkins, Legislative Affairs Director

The N.C. General Assembly convened on January 26 and the first order of business was electing leadership of both chambers. There were no big surprises in either chamber with the election of Sen. Phil Berger (R-Guilford, Rockingham) as President Pro Tem and Rep. Thom Tillis (R-Mecklenburg) as the Speaker of the House.

With the historic Republican majorities in both chambers, committees have also changed. In the Senate, President Pro Tem Berger appointed Pete Brunstetter (R-Forsyth), Neal Hunt (R-Wake) and Richard Stevens (R-Wake) as chairmen of the Senate Appropriations Committee. On the House side, Speaker Tillis appointed Jeff Barnhart (R-Cabarrus), Harold Brubaker (R-Randolph), Mitch Gillespie (R-Burke, McDowell) and Linda Johnson (R-Cabarrus) as chairmen of the House Appropriations Committee.



Legislative Affairs Director Ardis Watkins and Senate leader Phil Berger.

Over the next few months, Gov. Bev Perdue and state legislators will tackle an estimated budget shortfall of approximately \$3.7 billion. As usual, state employees and retirees are targets when there are budget problems. This year will be no exception. Already, political pundits are trying to claim that our retirement system is bankrupting the state. This is ludicrous, but especially offensive in light of the fact that we, the state employees, have funded the system almost entirely by ourselves for the last decade – with little contribution from the General Assembly.

The quality public services that state employees provide will be under attack as well. Many programs will be on the chopping block. The governor has already announced her intention to privatize state ITS (Information Technology Services), a move which has proven to be costly, ineffective and a burden to citizens in other states. SEANC will fight this move to privatize ITS and will oppose privatization of other state services as well. We will also fight to protect the vital services our members provide to North Carolina's citizens, but we cannot do it without you.

Join us on Jones Street as a SEANC Warrior! Warriors attend legislative sessions wearing their SEANC blue to remind legislators that state employees and retirees are not a burden on the system. Warriors are there to remind leaders that state employees are the people who protect citizens from dangerous prisoners, administer health care, clear the roads after a snowstorm and provide the quality services that North Carolinians deserve and expect.

Also, we need you, the experts, to "Save Our State" from reductions to services that our citizens depend upon. State employees can take the lead! You know your department/agency better than anyone; what innovations, efficiencies and changes would you make to save money? We must be a part of the solution to this budget crisis if we do not want to be victims of it. We did not create these problems, but we will have to help solve them. Do not sit on good ideas. Your idea may be the one that saves a valuable state program!

If you would like to become a SEANC Warrior or submit your ideas to "Save Our State", please email Tony Booe at tbooe@seanc.org or call 800-222-2758.

PLEASE POST AND SHARE IN YOUR WORKPLACE!