



LEGISLATIVE *Update*

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

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Lawmakers Return to Raleigh SEANC Stands Ready!

The N.C. General Assembly [returned to Raleigh on Wednesday May 16](#) for the legislative short session.

The House and Senate have been telling reporters for months that they intended to do their legislative work at a very fast pace and that this would indeed be a "short" session. The House starts the budget dance this year by releasing their budget first and sending it to the Senate. Originally, the House had declared that they would release their budget as early as next week but due to conflicts in caucus they have postponed that release by at least a week.

Nonetheless, things are moving quickly on Jones Street and they are already quite interesting.

While the state has an expected revenue [surplus](#) of roughly \$230 million, it also has a "shortfall" in Medicaid funds of almost \$250 million. This means that the legislature will have to make some tough choices as to what is a priority. The SEANC Legislative Affairs staff, joined by SEANC Executive Director Dana Cope, was spread out across the General Assembly for the first two days of session making sure SEANC and our issues remain on that priority list.

Last year, SEANC convention delegates made opposing privatization the [No. 1 policy platform objective](#) for our organization. Currently, the largest threat in terms of privatization is the plan of the new Department of Public Safety (DPS) to privatize inmate health services. In fact, DPS plans to award a contract to a private company by July 1, 2012.

The DPS plan to privatize would cost almost 2,500 state employees their jobs. It would jeopardize the safety of other correctional personnel and open up the state to liability for wrongdoing or negligence of private companies. It would use taxpayer money to enrich private companies who have a questionable track record in other states.

SEANC has been fighting this privatization effort for months, holding forums with correctional personnel across the state and talking to legislative leaders about the dangers of privatizing these jobs.

In order to illustrate the problems with privatization, SEANC has released a [scathing 68-page report explaining the pitfalls of privatizing prison health care services](#). This report is now in the hands of all 170 legislators.

With DPS planning to privatize these 2,500 jobs without legislative approval – the only way that things can grind to a halt is through intervention of the General Assembly.

SEANC is asking the legislature to stop this unilateral action on behalf of the agency. But time is of the essence with the contract set to be awarded by July 1 unless the General Assembly steps in to stop it.

Other issues that SEANC intends to concentrate on include the [protection of UNC system employees' State Personnel Act \(SPA\) rights](#). SEANC lobbied for the defeat of an attempt by the UNC system to remove their employees from the protections of the SPA last year.

The UNC system is pushing hard again this year to remove SPA employees from those protections. SEANC held events with employees at 13 of the 17 campuses in the UNC system over the last few months. At these events, employees were heard loud and clear. They oppose this measure and do not want decisions on their employment made by the UNC Board of Governors, but by the legislature.

SEANC continues to press this objective with legislative leaders and is seeking to defeat this measure once again this session. This issue affects 23,000 UNC system employees but likewise affects all state employees – if the UNC system removes its employees from the SPA, other agencies will ask for the same.

Preserving SPA rights is in the [SEANC Top Ten Policy Platform Objectives](#) and we will continue to fight for employees on this issue.

We are also fighting for a pay raise of 1.8 percent for active employees using the \$121 million set aside in last year's budget, as well as a retiree cost-of-living adjustment of 1.9 percent using the investment gains in the retirement system.

As always, SEANC is there for our members, playing defense by monitoring bills and watching for any legislation harmful to employees that we need to stop.

Stay tuned to these weekly legislative updates throughout the session for information on SEANC's work in the General Assembly.