



LEGISLATIVE *Update*

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Budget Compromise Passes Both Houses of GA with Raises, COLAs Plan Sent to Governor for Approval

The Senate budget came out last week and as we reported showed a willingness to keep promises of a 1.2-percent pay raise for active state employees and a 1-percent cost-of-living adjustment for retirees. Among other differences, the House budget contained only a \$250 one-time bonus and five vacation days for active employees – and no COLA at all for retirees – so the two chambers had to go to conference to iron out a compromise.

The conferees met late last week and talked over the weekend as well. SEANC lobbyists sat outside the various rooms where meetings were happening and made the case for state employees and retirees. Late Tuesday night, the two chambers came to an agreement on the final budget deal, which included the Senate's recommendations for pay raises and a COLA for retirees.

The compromise went to the floor Thursday in the House and Senate, and passed by what appear to be veto-proof margins. It is now off to the governor for her signature.

The governor can choose to veto the budget, but if she does so she risks having the House and Senate leave without a budget. This would leave last year's budget in place and would take state employee raises and retiree COLAs away, as well as additional money to fund public schools.

Here are the highlights of the budget for state employees:

- 1.2% Pay raise for active employees
- 1.0% COLA for retirees

SEANC Executive Director Dana Cope commented on the budget, stating "1.2 percent for actives and 1 percent for retirees is not enough to make up for four years without a raise, but is certainly an improvement from the original House budget. We appreciate the step in the right direction".

The General Assembly will stay in town through the end of this month to finish their business. With the budget done, this is historically a time when SEANC has to be particularly vigilant defending state employee and retiree rights from harmful bills that change overnight to ones that take away employee rights or benefits.

SEANC will stay busy in the halls of the legislature to advocate for our members and to defend against any last-minute legislation that could negatively impact public services and the people who provide them.