



LEGISLATIVE *Update*

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Senate Budget Scoffs at Public Services, Cuts 1,600 Jobs

Most of this week's action at the General Assembly revolved around the state budget debate. The N.C. Senate released its budget proposal late Sunday night, and it's safe to say it was more than a little unkind to public services and the people who provide them.

The Senate budget would wipe out nearly 1,600 state jobs, with the Departments of Public Safety and Health and Human Services bearing the brunt of the cuts. In advance of Gov. Pat McCrory's scheme to privatize administration of Medicaid, the Senate decided to withhold funds for the department that equates to job losses for state employees.

These job cuts to rank-and-file state employees come on the heels of an effort by the Senate to reform the state's tax structure to directly benefit millionaires. The Senate's budget also did not include a pay raise for active employees or a cost-of-living adjustment for retirees.

"This shows where the Senate's concerns truly are," said SEANC Executive Director Dana Cope. "Instead of helping the middle class, the Senate has decided to help the rich get richer while cutting the public services that this state needs to thrive."

The proposal also eliminates 50 positions from the DHHS Oral Health section, which protects the dental health of this state's most vulnerable citizens – poor and impoverished children.

Gov. McCrory's budget proposal in April closed five prisons. The Senate decided to one-up him, proposing the closure of six prisons – Bladen, Duplin, Robeson, Wayne, Buncombe and Orange. The budget also would close Lenoir, Buncombe and Richmond Youth Development Centers.

Sen. Pete Brunstetter (R-Forsyth) did get an amendment passed that will move 55 of the jobs slated for the cutting room floor at Western Youth to Foothills Correctional Institute. The amendment also establishes a substance abuse treatment center at Foothills.

Other than that amendment, despite strong objections from SEANC and many other groups on both sides of the aisle, the Senate passed its budget on Thursday with little debate.

The plan [now moves to the N.C. House](#) for consideration, and there has already been quite a few objections raised by both representatives and the governor about parts of it. SEANC's legislative affairs team will work diligently to make sure House members realize how detrimental this budget is to public services and to the state.

The SEANC Legislative Update is published when the N.C. General Assembly is in session by SEANC's Legislative Affairs Department. For more information, contact Legislative Affairs Director Ardis Watkins at awatkins@seanc.org.