



# LEGISLATIVE *Update*

State Employees Association of North Carolina • [www.seanc.org](http://www.seanc.org)

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## **McCrory releases 2014-15 budget proposal as General Assembly reconvenes** ***Pay raise smaller than originally announced, contains other concerns***

As the North Carolina General Assembly returned to work on Wednesday to begin its short session, Gov. Pat McCrory introduced his 2014-15 budget proposal, which upon examination has not only fallen short of the promised pay raises for state employees, but also includes several other red flags.

### **McCrory introduces \$21 billion spending plan**

The highlight of McCrory's \$20.9 billion spending plan for SEANC members is his proposal to give state employees a base salary increase of \$809, and a 1.9 percent cost-of-living adjustment for retirees.

However, that raise is less than the \$1,000 increase that was originally reported by the Office of State Budget and Management. When questioned, the OSBM admitted that the base salary increase is only \$809, and SEANC is awaiting more details on where the other \$191 will go.

And the concerns continued to mount up for state employees as SEANC examined the proposed spending plan.

Buried in the Office of Administrative Hearings (OAH) section is a proposal to undermine employees' due process rights and make for an unfair grievance process by moving two administrative law judges from the Office of Administrative Hearings to the Office of State Human Resources, where they would be the sole hearing officers for state employee appeals. Such a move would end the impartial forum required by due process, and SEANC will continue to vigorously oppose this proposal.

Additionally, McCrory's proposal would cut 356 positions from the Department of Public Safety. This would be accomplished by:

- Consolidating ALE offices
- Closing Fountain Correctional Center for Women and North Piedmont Correctional Center for Women
- Consolidating the management of Tillery and Caledonia adult male correctional facilities
- Converting Eastern Correctional Center from male to female inmates
- Consolidating Adult Correction regional offices and eliminating female command

SEANC will strongly advocate against any proposal to eliminate vital public services and the state employees who provide them, and recognizes that McCrory's budget is only the beginning of the budget process and that nothing is final.

McCrory's spending plan is now in the hands of the legislature where leaders in both chambers called it a good starting point for their own appropriations processes. The Joint Committee on Appropriations received an overview of the budget from Deputy Budget Director Art Pope on Thursday morning. SEANC lobbyists were on hand to answer any questions from lawmakers about the budget proposal.

[Click here to review The Governor's Recommended Budget Adjustments.](#)

### **Legislative action**

In the meantime, SEANC lobbyists were on hand as the General Assembly opened its doors Wednesday morning, greeting members and urging them to support public services and the people who provide them.

Priority No. 1 for SEANC lobbyists when working with state legislators this year will be securing the pay raise for all state employees and the cost-of-living adjustment for all state retirees. SEANC expects the General Assembly to improve upon the governor's recommendation.

While there Wednesday, lobbyists also took the opportunity to hand out copies of the forensic investigation the association commissioned into the state treasurer's management of the state pension fund.

Copies of the report have been given to every legislator and SEANC is taking an active role in advocating for more transparency in the management of the retirement system as reform legislation is expected to be introduced this session.

[Click here to review the report and the rest of SEANC's pension investigation.](#)

Now, with the governor's budget in hand, bills beginning to be filed and committee meetings scheduled, the pace of activity is expected to pick up dramatically, beginning Monday, as more than one lawmaker has said they hope to be out no later than early July.



***SEANC Legislative Affairs Director Ardis Watkins, left, greets state Rep. Tim Moore (R-Cleveland) on Opening Day of the General Assembly on Wednesday morning.***

## Meet your lobbyists

With the session beginning, now is a good time to meet the lobbyists working every day on behalf of all state employees and retirees.

### [Executive Director Dana Cope](#)

Dana Cope began his government relations career in Washington, D.C., starting his own firm, Cope & Associates. He moved to North Carolina in 1992 and joined the N.C. Department of Labor as the Government Relations Director. Today, he serves as SEANC's CEO, a position he has held since 2001. He is the association's chief legislative strategist and spokesman, as well as a Vice President of the Service Employees International Union.



### [Legislative Affairs Director Ardis Watkins](#)

Ardis Watkins is SEANC's lead lobbyist in all state agencies, representing the association's 55,000 members in all 100 counties for the last 12 years. She is a fixture in the General Assembly, leading a team of five legislative veterans who meet with lawmakers, provide legislative and policy research and speak at committees on behalf of state employees and retirees.



### [Lobbyist Suzanne Beasley](#)

Suzanne Beasley is a lobbyist that works on all member priorities, from pay to worker safety. She came to SEANC in 2001.



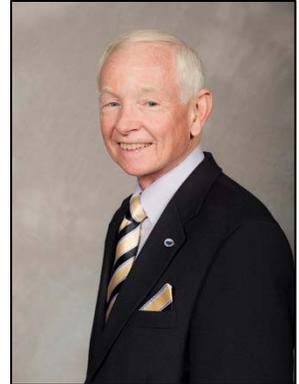
### [Lobbyist Mitch Leonard](#)

Mitch Leonard is SEANC's longest-tenured employee, beginning in 1977 with the North Carolina State Government Employees Association – SEANC's predecessor. Since leaving the state Department of Transportation, he has held almost every job within the association and focuses largely on retirement security and public safety.



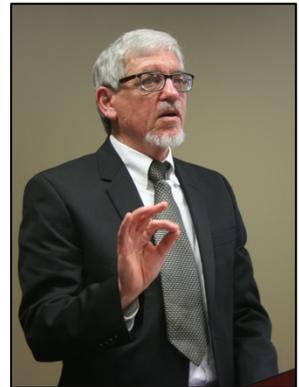
[Lobbyist Chuck Stone](#)

Chuck Stone is a 31-veteran of state service, having retired in 2004 from the O’Berry Neuro-Medical Treatment Center in Goldsboro. He is SEANC’s resident health care expert.



[General Counsel Tom Harris](#)

Tom Harris, SEANC’s general counsel and chief of staff, came to the association from the state Department of Labor where he was director of the Wage and Hour Division. With his background, he uses his expert knowledge of labor and employment law to protect state employee rights and due process.



## Members! Make Your Action Plan Now!

- Members interested in securing a meaningful pay raise and a retiree COLA, as well as advocating for public services are invited and encouraged to [sign up for a Monday-night lobbying session](#) with SEANC's professional lobbyists, who will guide you through the halls of the General Assembly and work with you to make sure that your message is heard.
- If you cannot personally advocate for yourself at the General Assembly, please make your voice heard by emailing or calling your legislator. Not sure who your legislator is? [Find out here.](#)
- Please know if legislators do not hear directly from state employees and retirees, they will believe you are satisfied with whatever the current legislative proposal is regarding your pay raise and retiree COLA. This is a team effort!
- Finally, if you hear that your job is in jeopardy due to potential legislative action, please contact [SEANC's Legislative Affairs team](#) as soon as possible. The earlier we know of potential concerns in your workplace, the quicker we can help you.
- To follow what's happening in the General Assembly this year and what SEANC is doing to protect state employees and retirees and taxpayer dollars, [subscribe to the SEANC Scoop](#) and read our weekly [Legislative Update](#). [Also, be sure to sign up for our email alerts.](#)

*The SEANC Legislative Update is published when the N.C. General Assembly is in session by SEANC's Legislative Affairs Department. You can follow along as news happens by liking SEANC on [Facebook](#), following SEANC on [Twitter](#), watch us on [YouTube](#) or pin with us on [Pinterest](#).*

