



# LEGISLATIVE *Update*

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## **General Assembly preparing to convene short session *Pay Raise, Retiree COLA are Members' Top Priorities***

On Wednesday, May 14, the N.C. General Assembly will begin its short session with a number of issues on its plate, the most important of which for state employees and retired members is an increase in salary and cost-of-living adjustment (COLA). The short session promises to be an interesting time at the legislature and some lawmakers have said they only plan to be in Raleigh for a few weeks this year.

### **Pay raises**

As always, the hottest topic for state employees and retirees will continue to be whether or not legislators will value public services and the people who provide them by adding more to their paychecks.

Gov. Pat McCrory has not yet released his full budget proposal, but gave a glimpse of his intentions at a press conference on Wednesday. He proposed giving every state employee a flat \$1,000 recurring raise this year, which for most state workers equates to a 2.7 percent increase. For employees lower on the state pay scale, the raise could equate to more than a 3 percent increase.

"I know that's not as much as you want or need, but it is a beginning," McCrory said. "We're fulfilling that commitment to all state employees because they deserve that money. They work hard. They're under a lot of work stress. They're putting in incredible hours. And we're trying to do everything we can in tough budget circumstances to put more money in their pockets, and it starts with this budget right now."

McCrory's call for a raise comes despite predictions from the Office of State Budget and Management that the state is expecting a revenue shortfall of at least \$445 million this year, and also will have to cover an additional \$140 million in Medicaid expenses.

However, state Rep. Nelson Dollar (R-Wake), senior co-chairman of the House Appropriations Committee, told The Associated Press in early May, "I anticipate that we will be able to follow through on having a general increase for teachers and state employees."

SEANC continues to strongly advocate for a full 3-percent across-the-board increase for state employees and retirees, which we understand is likely to be in the form of a flat, recurring dollar amount. Executive Director Dana Cope commended McCrory's proposal as a "fantastic" first step in the right direction as the session starts, but said SEANC will look to the General Assembly to increase this number.

### **Pension reform, other issues**

Among other issues on SEANC's Legislative Affairs team agenda as the session starts is reform and transparency for the \$87 billion Teachers' and State Employees' Retirement System.

SEANC has investigated Treasurer Janet Cowell's management of this system and found hundreds of millions of dollars in fees paid to fund managers, yet not reported to the General Assembly – [the details of which can be found here](#).

SEANC will be pursuing legislation to force the Treasurer to disclose those fees to the General Assembly, the employees and taxpayers.

SEANC also will be watching for any bills that include the privatization of public services, and our lobbyists carefully monitor each bill to ensure that our jobs and taxpayers' money are safe.

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, be sure to [subscribe to the SEANC Scoop](#) and read our weekly [Legislative Update](#), which is posted each Friday. [Also, be sure to sign up for our Email Alerts](#).

### **What is a short session?**

In many ways, the legislature's "short session" is simply a continuation of the prior year's "long session." Short sessions occur on even-numbered years and are the last planned legislative sessions before an election.

However, because it is considered a continuation of the previous session, there are certain rules that determine what bills can be debated – rules that do not exist during long sessions.

Bills must fall into one of 15 different categories in order to be debated. The categories that most directly affect state employment include:

- Budget bills — Any bill directly affecting the state budget, including all appropriation and finance matters. This is usually the most important for state employees, as it is where pay raises and job cuts are debated.
- Pension or retirement bills — Any bill pertaining to state or local retirement systems. This will be especially important this session as reform of the governance and reporting of the state retirement system is likely to come up.

- Crossover bills — Any bill that passed third reading of either chamber in the prior session.
- Study committee bills — Any bill that implements recommendations from study commissions authorized in the prior session.
- Joint resolutions authorizing introduction of a bill — A new bill can be brought forth with support from two-thirds of both houses of the legislature.

### **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.

*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 pins with us on [Pinterest](#).*

