



LEGISLATIVE *Update*

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

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General Assembly hears SEANC's voice on pay raises

But we need to be louder to secure pay equity and a fair COLA!

The budget negotiators in the House and Senate continued to work toward a compromise this week, and while some progress was made and only about \$300 million actually separate the two sides, the chambers are far apart on how to bridge that final gap.

The primary points of contention, as have been the case, are teacher pay and Medicaid. However, thanks to the efforts of SEANC members over the last two weeks, state employee pay has also become a key focal point.

In its latest proposal on Tuesday, the Senate offered to come closer to the House budget, including agreeing to the \$1,000 base salary raise for state employees. Unfortunately, the Senate chose to not include the five bonus days of leave proposed by the House and did not increase its 0.8-percent cost-of-living adjustment proposal for retirees. The House plan, which is being backed now by Gov. Pat McCrory, includes a 1.44-percent COLA.

The biggest concern for SEANC members, though, is the inequity in proposed pay increases for teachers and other state employees. The Senate is offering an 8-percent pay raise to teachers (down from 11 percent), while the House is offering a 6-percent raise (up from 5 percent). SEANC believes ALL state employees, whether they work in a classroom, in a prison, in a mental health institution, on the highways or wherever, should receive the same 6 to 8-percent raise. We also believe ALL state retirees, including retired teachers, should receive at least a 1.44-percent COLA.



SEANC Executive Director Dana Cope discusses pay raises and other issues important to state employees with Rep. Tim Moore (R-Cleveland) at the General Assembly.

So far, your calls have been effective, but now's not the time to let lawmakers off the hook! Call lead budget negotiators Sen. Harry Brown at 919-715-3034, Sen. Tom Apodaca at 919-733-5745, Rep. Nelson Dollar at 919-715-0795, Rep. Linda Johnson at 919-733-5861, House Speaker Thom Tillis at 919-733-3451 and Senate President Pro Tem Phil Berger at 919-733-5708.

Tell them it's time for the rising salary tide to lift all boats and for All state employees and retirees to receive an equal, and long-overdue and much-deserved, raise. [Then, call each of the other budget conferees and give them the same message.](#)

Medicaid reforms threaten state employee rights

As the General Assembly attempts to finish a budget, lawmakers also are attempting to wrap up other items on their agenda – including competing reforms to the state's Medicaid system.

The plan backed by the House and McCrory focuses on Accountable Care Organizations that are run by doctors and health care providers to manage Medicaid claims, while leaving oversight in the hands of the Department of Health and Human Services. The plan backed by the Senate focuses on Managed Care Organizations that are run by private insurance companies to manage Medicaid claims, and would create a new state department specifically to oversee Medicaid.

SEANC's Legislative Affairs Director Ardis Watkins spoke out against the Senate's plan in the Senate Rules and Operations Committee on Thursday.

The Senate's plan moves closer to a privatized system that would put patients at risk of being denied care in favor of insurance company profits. Of particular concern to state employees, though, is a provision in the plan to remove the staff of this new department from State Human Resources Act protections – a move that would harm state employees and set a bad precedent for future actions.

"Removing SHRA protections would have a chilling effect on employees reporting waste, fraud and abuse that costs taxpayers money," Watkins said.

Autism insurance coverage

SEANC lobbyist Chuck Stone stood with members of Autism Speaks, a leading autism science and advocacy organization, as it urged the Senate on Tuesday to take up legislation to require insurance companies in North Carolina to cover Applied Behavioral Analysis therapy for people with Autism Spectrum Disorder.

In May, the State Health Plan Board of Trustees voted to begin the coverage in the 2015 insurance year at the urging of SEANC and Autism Speaks. As currently designed, this coverage is for members age 26 and younger who have an ASD diagnosis by a licensed physician or doctoral level clinical psychologist, and for



SEANC lobbyist Chuck Stone stands with Autism Speaks National President Liz Feld.

whom a mental health care manager determines the treatment to be medically necessary. It is available only in-network, is limited to a maximum of \$36,000 per benefit year and is subject to co-pays, deductibles and co-insurance as applicable.

Similar steps are being sought for the rest of North Carolina's population.

Other legislation of interest

Otherwise, SEANC lobbyists are continuing to monitor the flurry of bills now being heard in the Senate Rules Committee to make sure the rights and priorities of state employees are protected, with a particularly keen eye out for any movement on the state Treasurer backed bills that would enshrine pension secrecy.

Members! Make Your Action Plan Now!

Are you interested in securing a meaningful pay raise and a retiree COLA, as well as advocating for public services? Then make your voice heard by emailing or calling your legislators. Not sure who your legislators are? [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.](#)

You can also sign up for special Member Action Alert text messages. Just type the word **SEANC** into the body of a text and send it to the number **787753**.

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