



LEGISLATIVE *Update*

State Employees Association of North Carolina • www.seanc.org
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Still waiting: General Assembly goes quiet on budget

After weeks of work, budget conferees negotiating behind closed doors

State budget writers do not appear to be any closer to an agreement than they were when the week began, despite closed-door meetings between the governor and lead senators and a new offer from the House.

[The latest offer from the House, made privately to the Senate](#), offers a 7-percent raise to teachers – up from the original 5 percent and then 6 percent offers. It would still keep other state employees at a \$1,000 base salary pay raise and five days bonus leave. The House offer also has remained steady at a 1.44-percent cost-of-living adjustment for retirees.

SEANC supports the House position on retirees, but believes that ALL state employees, teachers as well as others, deserve an equal percentage pay raise.

The Senate version, though, would give teachers an 8-percent raise, while still only proposing an \$809 base salary increase for employees and a 0.8% COLA for retirees.

House Speaker Thom Tillis (R-Mecklenburg) made several comments about possibly adjourning the session this week even without any budget adjustments being made, but Senate President Pro Tem Phil Berger (R-Rockingham) indicated that was not going to happen.

However, while much of the public's attention has been on teachers and teacher assistants and the fact that in many districts they're already back at work despite their uncertain future, SEANC is the only organization paying attention to other state employees who also have been hard at work every day despite not knowing what kind of raise to expect or whether they will still have jobs once a budget is approved.

That's why SEANC lobbyists and members are urging lawmakers to do what's right and bring this session to a close with equal percentage pay raises for teacher and ALL other state employees, and a 1.44% COLA for retirees.

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 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.](#)

Good news & bad news on other legislation

The news on other legislation that SEANC is watching is mixed.

First, the good news.

The two bills, [HB1209](#) and [SB878](#), that would enshrine the current secrecy over the pension system's management contracts, have not moved out of their respective committees in the House and Senate. This is good news for state employees, retirees and taxpayers as SEANC will continue to work to make the retirement more transparent.

SEANC also successfully worked with Rep. Tim Moore (R-Cleveland) and House Speaker Thom Tillis' Chief of Staff Ray Starling to take out an entire section of a House Rules Committee technical corrections bill that would have adversely impacted state employee due process under the State Human Resources Act.

The removed section would have made what appeared to be substantive changes to legislation regarding the State Human Resources System approved in 2013. Among changes were ones affecting the powers of the State Human Resources Commission, rules about how exempt employees may be transferred, demoted or separated from his or her position and rules about how employees may challenge material in their files.

While technical corrections bills are not supposed to make substantive changes to legislation – rather just



SEANC Lobbyist Suzanne Beasley speaks with Rep. Tim Moore (R-Cleveland) about the need to protect state employee due process from a technical changes bill.



SEANC Legislative Affairs Director Ardis Watkins, right, SEANC Lobbyist Mitch Leonard, second from right, and House Speaker Thom Tillis' General Counsel Ray Starling speak on the phone with SEANC's General Counsel about proposed language that would have harmed state employee due process rights.

fixing language to clarify intentions – the concern was that without an appropriate amount of time to review the changes, state employees could have been harmed.

The one piece of bad news, this week, however, was the Senate’s Medicaid reform bill, [HB1181](#), which passed out of the chamber’s Rules and Operations Committee despite the opposition of SEANC and other groups. Among the concerns are that the bill would allow private insurance companies to put Medicaid profits ahead of patient care, particularly those most vulnerable patients with mental illness or developmental disabilities. One of SEANC’s primary concerns, too, is the impact on state employees. Under the legislation, the staff of a newly created state department to oversee Medicaid would be exempted from the protections of the State Human Resources Act. It was on that issue that SEANC’s Legislative Affairs Director Ardis Watkins spoke last week.

[“Removing SHRA protections would have a chilling effect on employees reporting waste, fraud and abuse that costs taxpayers money,” she said.](#)

On Wednesday, though, the committee passed the bill without any public comment.



SEANC Legislative Affairs Director Ardis Watkins, center, and SEANC Lobbyist Chuck Stone, right, share a laugh with Sen. Tom Apodaca (R-Henderson) after a committee meeting this week.

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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