



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

# LEGISLATIVE *Update*

March 27, 2015

## **Lawmakers introduce bill to privatize DOT ferry services**

### ***Gas tax bill compromise reached – without DOT layoffs***

Despite a mound of evidence to the contrary, including a report last year showing how it would actually be more costly and less efficient in prison maintenance, lawmakers continue to bring up the idea of privatizing vital public services.

This time the target is the [Department of Transportation's ferry services](#).

In a bill filed this week, [lawmakers are proposing that the nation's second-largest ferry system be privately owned and operated](#).

However, for taxpaying citizens along the coast and on the Outer Banks, those ferries, carrying 2.2 million passengers and 1 million vehicles annually, are a vital public service – one that is currently provided expertly and efficiently by dedicated state employees. Not only are the ferries a lifeline for some state residents, they also are crucial to region's tourist economy. Putting such a crucial piece of infrastructure in the hands of a private, for-profit company is not in North Carolina's best interests.

With your help, SEANC lobbyists will be advocating against this bill and any attempt to privatize vital public services. As has been said before, state employees answer to the taxpayers of North Carolina and have a proven track record of doing the best job they can at the most efficient price point they can – better than those private, for-profit companies who report to shareholders.

### **Gas tax compromise saves DOT jobs**

[The bill to temporarily lower the gas tax before allowing it to rise in the future in an effort to stabilize gas tax revenues was passed out of conference committee Thursday](#) after lawmakers from each chamber reached a compromise on the different versions approved by the House and the Senate.

The new compromise bill does not include any DOT layoffs, but would eliminate 40 unfilled positions. The original proposal in the Senate called for a mandatory 500-employee reduction in DOT's workforce to pay for the loss of revenue, and for such vital public services as pavement preservation, winter weather treatments, roadside environmental activities and preconstruction work to be privatized.

The House version, [after an amendment by Rep. Paul Stam \(R-Wake\)](#), removed that language.

SEANC was and will continue to be an advocate for these positions and against any attempt to privatize DOT's vital public services as this bill now goes back to each chamber and to the governor's desk for approval.

### **SEANC supports bill for state retirees to return to work with State Health Plan benefits**

SB6, which would benefit state retirees who return to work for the state, has passed the Senate and is now in the House.

If approved in its current form, this bill would put state retirees who return to work for 30 or more hours per week on a nonpermanent basis in the active employee State Health Plan coverage, rather than coverage under the high-deductible bronze plan of the Affordable Care Act, as currently required pursuant to a provision in last year's appropriations act.

This bill would require state agencies to make the same employer contributions and would be a huge relief to retirees who seek to come back to work without having their health benefits suffer.

### **SEANC still monitoring budget discussions**

The second round in the creation of the state spending plan is still in its formative stages as House budget writers meet quietly as they await the April 15 tax revenue report.

In the meantime, SEANC lobbyists and members are urging lawmakers to improve upon Gov. Pat McCrory's proposal, which offers only targeted raises to certain employee groups – not a much-needed meaningful across-the-board increase. Lawmakers also are being urged to include a retiree cost-of-living adjustment, which the governor did not.

### **Contact your legislators**

Now it is the time for you to [contact your lawmakers](#). It is still early in the budget process. Make your voice heard on the need for all state employees to receive a pay raise and all retirees to receive a cost-of-living increase. Together, we will work to increase your pay and benefits in the General Assembly, but we need all hands on deck. Now is the time for you to sit down with your state senators and representatives and help them put a face to state employees, SEANC and their constituents.

Not sure who your legislators are? [Click here](#). Curious whether they were endorsed by EMPAC? [Click here](#). Want to make note of all of SEANC's legislative priorities before talking to them? [Click here](#).

SEANC staff can also help you schedule meetings with your lawmakers and make sure you have the most up-to-date information possible about SEANC's legislative priorities, so you can have a good and productive conversation. All you have to do is let us know you're coming. Just email [tbooe@seanc.org](mailto:tbooe@seanc.org) or call 800-222-2758 or 919-810-0272.

Can't make it to Raleigh? No problem. You can call, write or email your legislators – or even schedule your own time to meet with them in your hometown. Again, you can find your lawmakers and their contact information [here](#).