



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

LEGISLATIVE *Update*

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SEANC stands up for workers in attempt to change SHRA

Bill opens disciplinary action files to future employers, broadens OSHR authority

SEANC Government Relations Director Ardis Watkins spoke out Wednesday at the House State Personnel Committee's meeting over an attempt by the Office of State Human Resources to rewrite several portions of the State Human Resources Act by sneaking the changes into an amendment of what they said was largely a technical corrections bill.

Watkins pointed out that despite a promise of cooperation from the Office of State Human Resources, SEANC was not allowed to see the changes until just before Wednesday's meeting.

Once SEANC had time to study the changes, Watkins said, several objections were found:

- The changes would give OSHR broad policymaking authority over priority and salary rights of state employees.
- It weakens the concept of priority in reduction-in-force situations because applicants who are RIF'd would need to be "greater" than outside applicants. Not just equal. Superior.
- It increases the risk of political hirings and abuse by allowing management to hire outsiders who may be less qualified than current state employees.
- It allows potential state or local government supervisors access to performance management documents and disciplinary actions in an employee's personnel file. This would open the state up to liability issues and privacy rights lawsuits.

Several legislators voiced concerns over these issues as well, but the bill received a favorable report from the committee and was placed on the calendar for a floor vote. SEANC has asked House leadership to send it to another committee to both adhere to its own two-committee rule and to allow SEANC to work with lawmakers and OSHR on our differences before a vote takes place.

Bill to cut DOT jobs pulled

It was quite a strange week for a controversial and mostly unnecessary [bill](#) Sen. Bill Rabon was pushing to force the Department of Transportation to cut 81 jobs that were slated to be privatized in last year's budget. Senate Bill 539 called for DOT to follow a mandate in the current budget year to make 81 job cuts by May by eliminating filled, full-time jobs that it can outsource, primarily those in planning and acquiring land and environmental permits for road and bridge construction.

In a Senate Transportation Committee meeting Wednesday, EMPAC-endorsed Sen. Erica Smith-Ingram spoke out and asked why, at a time when Gov. Pat McCrory is asking for a \$2 billion bond referendum for transportation projects, the state is cutting DOT jobs. Sen. Rabon responded, "We could probably find a few more DOT workers we could live without."

Even Sen. Ralph Hise questioned the need for the bill in committee, saying "Why do you have to pass a law to tell a state agency to follow a law that's already law?" Nevertheless, the committee gave a favorable report to the bill and it seemed destined for a floor vote.

But later in the day, Rabon pulled the bill at the request of Transportation Secretary Tony Tata after an "agreement" was reached over the positions.

Now, that's not to say those jobs are safe. SEANC lobbyists will continue to monitor the situation and will keep you informed on possible changes down the road.

Ferry privatization bill passes committee

Another DOT bill sponsored by Sen. Bill Rabon made news this week. The Senate bill to direct the Department of Transportation to seek bids to privatize the DOT's ferry services received a favorable report from Senate Transportation Committee.

The bill would require the DOT to report back to the legislators by Feb. 1, 2016, on whether it is cost-effective to privatize the ferry system. Smith-Ingram again stood up for state employees, pointing out that a private company would likely close routes that are not profitable, but still vital to the residents who depend on it to get to work.

The ferry services are a vital public service for those living, working and visiting along the coast and Outer Banks that carries 2.2 million passengers and 1 million vehicles every year.

SEANC lobbyists are working to prevent the privatization of DOT jobs, but we need your help. Now is the time for members – especially those working for DOT – to [contact their legislators](#) and explain to them that these vital public services are best performed by state employees.

SEANC pressing Program Evaluation Committee to consider investments, privatization dangers

The Joint Legislative Program Evaluation Oversight Committee is in the process of narrowing down what it will study, and is considering the effectiveness of [many different programs](#) in education, general government, health & human services, justice and public safety, natural and economic resources and transportation.

Every two years, legislators submit programs they think should be studied to the committee, which then narrows the list to 15. From there, the committee will approve its work plan for the year.

SEANC's lobbyists are pressing committee members including Sen. Shirley Randleman, who was EMPAC's 2014 Legislator of the Year and is a longtime SEANC member, to put two items, "Performance

of Privatized State Government Functions” and “Management of State Pension Funds,” at the top of the committee’s list of priorities.

We are pressing the committee to consider privatization because we know the truth – that state employees who aren’t concerned with profit margins and are more concerned with the betterment of the state and its citizens will always deliver better public services at a more efficient cost.

Management of the state pension fund’s investments must be evaluated to shine light on the hidden fees our pension dollars are giving to Wall Street. It’s imperative for the future of the fund and the retirement security of the state employees who pay 6 percent of their paychecks into the system.

The committee will decide the final list of projects to consider on May 11.

Contact your legislators

Now is the time for you to [contact your lawmakers](#). 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. We need all hands on deck. Help your legislators 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 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](#).