



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

# LEGISLATIVE *Update*

May 1, 2015

## SEANC cleans up worker rights bill before deadline

This week was crossover week in the General Assembly, one of the more chaotic times of any legislative session. Any bill that did not involve finances that had not “crossed over” from one body to the other by Thursday would be “dead” for the session.

SEANC had just one bill to be concerned with ahead of Thursday’s deadline, but it was a big one. House Bill 495, which was discussed extensively in last week’s Legislative Update, had to pass the House this week in order to survive the session.

The bill, pushed by Rep. Jeff Collins (R-Franklin) is an attempt by Gov. Pat McCrory’s administration, particularly the Office of State Human Resources, to change key parts of the statutes that govern state employment and personnel rights. It popped up with little warning last week in the House State Personnel Committee, and were it not for the watchful eyes of the SEANC lobbying team would have likely sailed through the House with little debate.

SEANC identified six problem areas and went to work to drum up support from legislators to change them. They included provisions that would essentially give the State Personnel Commission the authority to set salaries and weaken the concept of priority in reduction-in-force situations.

With the help of Rep. Pat Hurley (R-Randolph) and Rep. Elmer Floyd (D-Cumberland), the bill was sent to the House Rules Committee for another look Wednesday before a floor vote. SEANC lobbyists were able to get Collins to compromise on two of the six points before the Rules meeting. Bills don’t often get much debate in a Rules Committee meeting, but Chairman Rep. David Lewis (R-Harnett) allowed discussion on the bill and even allowed Michael Byrne, an expert on state personnel law working with SEANC, to address the committee on SEANC’s objections. Rep. Michael Wray (D-Halifax) then brought forth an amendment to remove another item in the bill SEANC opposed, and it passed despite Collins’ objections.

Despite the hard work of lobbyists and legislators, several issues still remain. The bill kicks the door wide open to invite political hirings. Also, when a state employee applies for another state job, potential



supervisors would be allowed to access performance management documents in an employee's personnel file during the hiring process. This is a privacy rights issue which would potentially expose the state to significant liability.

Floyd ran an amendment on the House floor that would strike hugely controversial language allowing the Office of State Human Resources to set policies and rules that have the effect of law – a right currently given to legislators only. It got the support of the Democratic caucus and several Republicans, but ultimately failed.

The bill will now move to the Senate. SEANC will work with senators to remove these objectionable aspects before it is approved and sent to the governor.

### **Budget put on back burner for now**

As you can tell, with crossover week taking up most of the attention, there was no movement on the state budget debate this week. The House and Senate have yet to offer their proposals, though we suspect to see both within the next month – or sooner.

### **DOT to move forward with job cuts**

Last week we reported that Sen. Bill Rabon (R-Brunswick) had pulled his bill to force the Department of Transportation to cut 81 jobs because he struck a deal with agency officials. This week came word that [DOT would cut 70 filled positions and 11 vacant ones in technical services and right-of-way to comply with last year's budget.](#)

The cuts are part of an ongoing privatization effort in the department. SEANC needs input from members on how privatization has affected your job to share with legislators when pointing out the dangers of outsourcing jobs. [Please click here to give us your story.](#) You don't even have to leave your name, but we'd appreciate it if you did.

### **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 the Program Evaluation Division will study in the next year. This week was the deadline for legislators on the committee to fill out their surveys on the various topics up for evaluation.

SEANC's lobbyists spoke with every member on the committee this week to press 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](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](#).