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# LEGISLATIVE *Update*

July 24, 2015

## DOT workers lobby to save jobs at General Assembly

Another week came and went and we're still nowhere near a finalized state budget.

In fact, the conference committee, which now consists of 114 legislators – well over half of the 170 total House and Senate members – didn't even meet. Indications are that it will meet in the upcoming week with hopes of finishing the budget before Aug. 14, when the resolution that is allowing state government operations to continue without a budget will expire. We'll see.

The down time did give SEANC members who work in the Department of Transportation a chance to come down and speak out against a provision in the Senate's budget that would cut 56 administrative positions in the department.

DOT members from all over the state came to the legislature on Monday night to fight against the ongoing effort to downsize and privatize most of the department's operations. SEANC lobbyists facilitated productive conversations between the workers and Reps. John Torbett, William Brawley, Nelson Dollar and more.



SEANC encourages all DOT workers to come to the legislature this Monday night wearing SEANC blue to lobby against the privatization of the department. SEANC staff can 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.

Sen. Tom Apodaca told WRAL on Thursday that other than Rules, Appropriations and Finance, no other Senate committee would meet again this session. This means the likelihood of bills in the other committees passing this session are slim – unless, of course, legislators slip those provisions into an unrelated bill, which has been known to happen. SEANC will continue to keep a watchful eye over such shenanigans.

As for the budget debate, if you'll recall, the House passed a proposal that reflected a concern for the services provided by state employees, giving a 2-percent raise and 40 hours of bonus leave to active

employees and a 2-percent cost-of-living adjustment to retirees, while fully funding the retirement system.

The Senate's plan looks a lot like the Governor's proposal. Despite touting a \$400 million surplus, the plan includes no across-the-board raises for active employees and no cost-of-living adjustments for retirees, even though investment gains would pay for one without adding to the bottom line.

SEANC's lobbyists will be on the ground every day the legislature is in session to remind lawmakers that [state employees have fallen behind the price of goods and services over the last five years](#) to the point that salaries aren't worth nearly as much as they were. This has resulted in a net salary decrease for state employees in that time of almost 7 percent. Retiree cost-of-living adjustments have been even worse, resulting in a net decrease in buying power of more than 8 percent for our state's retirees over the last five years.

### **Ferry Division chief calls privatization a hard sell**

Speaking of privatization, N.C. Ferry Division Director Ed Goodwin told the House Transportation Appropriations Committee on Tuesday that he doesn't think the division should be privatized. He told the committee that costs to both passengers and the companies hired to run it would be prohibitive, calling them "astronomical" according to The Insider.

Goodwin's comments fly in the face of the Senate's budget, which orders a study of privatizing the system, stating that it "would provide a more cost-effective service model for the citizens of the State."

North Carolina's Ferry Division is the second-largest in the nation, with 22 ferries on seven routes, transporting 2.2 million passengers and 1 million vehicles annually.

### **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](#).

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](#).