



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

# LEGISLATIVE *Update*

Sept. 18, 2015

## **Budget deal passed on to governor with bonuses, no COLAs**

House members followed the Senate in the wee hours of Friday morning, [passing a state budget](#) on to Gov. Pat McCrory that once again fails to make public services a priority, meaning state employees will continue to fall further and further behind.

[The budget](#) calls for a \$750 bonus for state employees – a one-time payment that will have no lasting effect on salaries. SEANC pushes for salary increases rather than bonuses because increases have positive effects on not only pay in the future but also retirement benefits. The 40 hours of bonus leave that were included in the House's budget were also cut from the deal.

The legislature also decided not to call for a cost-of-living adjustment for retirees even though investment gains would fund a one-percent increase.

The budget includes:

- A \$750 one-time bonus for state employees and teachers.
- No bonus leave, which was a part of the House's original proposal.
- Funds salary increases for community college employees at the discretion of the system.
- Funds step increase and market based salary increase for state troopers, magistrates and court personnel.
- Custody-level pay adjustment for some correctional officers.
- Funds retirement system, but gives no cost-of-living adjustment for retirees.
- Doubles wellness premium surcharges on State Health Plan.
- Maintains State Health Plan benefits for 2016, but will likely lead to cuts in 2017.
- Teacher starting salary moved up to \$35,000.
- Funding of teaching assistant positions at 2014-15 levels.
- No prison closures.
- Start up funding for Samarcaand Training Academy.
- Funds community corrections safety equipment and electronic monitoring.
- Moves the N.C. Zoo, N.C. Aquariums, state parks and other state attractions to the Department of Cultural Resources, which will now be called the Department of Natural and Cultural Resources. The Department of Environment and Natural Resources will now be called the Department of Environmental Quality.
- Creates cabinet-level agencies to oversee Information Technology and Veterans' Affairs.

[Gov. McCrory is expected to sign the budget](#) by Saturday to avoid a government shutdown.

### **Silly season begins at General Assembly**

With budget talks out of the way, the only questions that remain are how long legislators will hang around in Raleigh, and what oddball bills they will consider before they adjourn. House members say they are targeting Oct. 2 for adjournment, but the Senate says it would like to leave even sooner.

In the meantime, we are watching rumored plans to attach language to legislation still to come through the General Assembly to take away state employees' right to have SEANC dues and insurance premiums taken out of their paychecks. If you'll recall, one of the first bills filed this session was Senate Bill 3, filed by Sen. Ralph Hise (R-McDowell) that would do just that.

We are also watching the Medicaid reform bill, the transportation bond referendum and several other items that could have affect state employees. Even though the budget is done, we must remain vigilant.

### **Contact your legislators**

Even though the budget has passed, we still encourage members to [contact your lawmakers to make sure your voice is heard](#). 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.