



Legislative Link

A Publication for the Members of the N.C. Association of School Administrators

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Governor Orders Furloughs, Employee Pay Cut Of 0.5%

Gov. Beverly Perdue announced more steps Tuesday, including furloughs of state employees and school personnel, to address a state budget gap that she now expects to exceed \$3 billion in the current fiscal year. The widening budget shortfall has implications beyond the current fiscal year, compounding the state's financial problems for the next two years and creating more pressure for budget cutting and tax hikes into those years.

Perdue issued an Executive Order calling for all state employees and school personnel to be furloughed 10 hours, meaning their annual pay will be cut 0.5 percent, to save the state \$65 million through June 30.

For an employee making \$50,000, the salary reduction would total \$250. The amount will be chopped from May and June paychecks, except for teachers, whose full reduction in pay will come from their May paycheck. The 10 hours of time off is to occur between June 1 and Dec. 31. More guidance on how school districts are to implement the furloughs and the corresponding pay cut is expected to be issued by the Department of Public Instruction soon, and the North Carolina Association of School Administrators (NCASA) will share that information with our members when it becomes available.

Perdue said her action to order furloughs was a tough, but necessary decision.

"I believe everybody who works for the State of North Carolina understands that they need to make sacrifices too," Perdue said. That apparently includes the Governor and legislators. The Constitution won't allow Perdue to reduce the salaries of state elected officials and judges. But she asked that they voluntarily take a pay cut and instructed the Office of State Budget and Management to reduce her salary by the same amount. Senate leader Marc Basnight said legislators would do the same.

Basnight, D-Dare, and other Democratic legislative leaders weren't critical of Perdue's efforts to address the current budget shortfall, even though it will mean less money to balance next year's budget. Basnight and House Speaker Joe Hackney, D-Orange, said Perdue did the best she could under difficult circumstances. "It is a tough time for her and for all of us," Hackney said.

In addition to the combined furlough and pay cut plan, the Governor said she would use roughly \$400 million in additional federal stimulus money this fiscal year and would likely take at least \$300 million from the state's Rainy Day reserves. The Governor's press release announcing her latest emergency budget actions, the Executive Order outlining specifics of the furlough and pay cut and other information are available at: <http://www.ncasa.net/displaycommon.cfm?an=1&subarticlenbr=236>.

Judge Accepts Intervention Plan For Halifax County Schools

Rather than ordering the state to take over operating Halifax County Public Schools, Superior Court Judge Howard Manning decided Wednesday to allow a three-year experiment in salvaging local control, starting with retraining teachers and principals. The plan would use about \$1.8 million in new federal funds to hire 12 full-time education coaches before the start of the new school year in August. All 462 principals, teachers, office staff and teaching assistants in the district would have to attend August retraining courses, with all but the teaching assistants paid \$100 a day for attending the 10-day sessions.

"This is a start and I think a good start," Manning said after hearing details of a deal between Halifax County Public Schools officials and the state Department of Public Instruction. Halifax was one of five districts that in 1994 filed a lawsuit that resulted in a 2004 State Supreme Court ruling that the state is required to provide a "sound basic education" to all public school students.

Manning had called Wednesday's hearing to get a response from the state on what interventions would be taken to address the district's low proficiency rates in reading standards.

School Calendar Bill Faces Commerce Committee Hearing 5-6

House Bill 593 that would permit school districts to start classes on the second Monday in August is scheduled for a hearing in the House Commerce Committee next Wednesday, May 6.

Although the bill has already cleared the House Education Committee, the bill faces an uphill battle to gain approval in the Commerce Committee, which is likely to focus on the economic impact the proposed school calendar change could hold for tourism interests in the state.

The Commerce Committee needs to hear that aside from the many educational reasons for allowing an earlier school start for schools, there also are economic reasons to support this change as well. Some of those reasons include:

- The current school calendar forces many school districts to cut into spring break and Saturdays for making up missed days due to inclement weather. The missed days made up during spring break take family travel time and cut into tourism spending at that time of year. In addition, Saturday make-up days prevent families from taking a weekend trip or visiting local businesses for entertainment and recreation purposes.
- Since schools cannot complete first semester high school exams before the winter break now, family travel to mountain ski resorts or other parts of the state are being curtailed so that students can study for high-stakes tests they must take in January.
- The school calendar mandate was put in place to benefit the tourism industry, but the school calendar should be based first and foremost on the educational needs of students and ensuring they can take advantage of higher education courses in high school to enhance their learning experience and preparation for attending college or entering the workforce.

NCASA members are encouraged to contact all House Commerce Committee members before May 6 to share these and other reasons for supporting House Bill 593. Contact information is available at: <http://www.ncasa.net/displaycommon.cfm?an=1&subarticlenbr=241>.

Summary Of This Week's Action On Bills Affecting Public Schools

For a complete summary of this week's legislative actions on legislation affecting public schools and their personnel, please see this week's "Weekly Bill Action Summary" at: <http://www.ncasa.net/displaycommon.cfm?an=1&subarticlenbr=227>. The same site offers a status report on all bills NCASA is tracking for our members during the 2009 legislative session, and that information is arranged in categories to make it easier to locate specific legislation of interest.

*For additional information on these or other legislative issues, contact
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