

## State Budget Process Presents Opportunity for Retirees

By now I'm sure all of you have read or heard plenty about the plight of our State Budget. North Carolina appears to be 'short' about \$3.7 billion needed to run the state. That's close to 20% of the entire state budget!

Think about what you would do if your household budget had to be reduced by one-fifth. You'd have to figure out a way to get **more income** *or* **cut back on spending**, or **both**. That's the challenge facing our Governor and our General Assembly. Governor Perdue will present her proposed budget to the legislature in mid February.

The General Assembly will convene on January 26, 2011 for their 'long session' and over the next five or six months they will decide whether to go along with the Governor's ideas or develop their own plan. Once their final budget bill is in place and approved by the entire body, it must then go to the Governor to sign or reject. Remember, the NC governor has had veto power since 1997. Should Perdue veto the budget, the veto could be overridden by 3/5 of the present and voting members of each house of the General Assembly.

All this simply means is--- *there is time and opportunity for our members to let the Governor and legislators know how we feel about issues important to us.* NCRSP legislative priorities are basically focused on the preservation of our State Health Plan (SHP) and our Teachers and State Employees Retirement Fund (TSERS).

There are close to 180,000 retired members covered in the SHP and a similar number of retirees or beneficiaries receiving monthly benefits from TSERS. These hundreds of thousands of retirees all need to unite and seize this OPPORTUNITY to ask elected officials to recognize the importance of maintaining these programs with the level of funding needed to prevent erosion of benefits, for retirees now and for those in the future. That's a lot to ask in these tough economic times, but as we all know, if you **don't ask**, chances are it surely won't happen!

What you can do: Read the Legislative article in *Panorama*. Arm yourself with as much information as possible and then decide if you can afford not to take the time to contact your Senator or Representative or Governor and let them know how you feel. Check out the General Assembly website [www.ncleg.net](http://www.ncleg.net) to find the name, address, telephone number or email address of your representatives. You may also call the Legislative Building at 919-733-4111, give the name of your legislator, and the operator will connect you. Leave a brief message stating your position with the legislative assistant if the elected official is not in. Send an email. Send a short handwritten letter.

Just communicate with these ELECTED leaders to let them know the importance of protecting your retiree benefits. Remember, they are going to have to make extremely tough decisions in the next few months and we don't want them to be able to say later that they never heard from their retired constituents! Take advantage of this unique opportunity to make a difference.