

The **Association** report

from the **Capitol**

May 20, 2015

The halls are quiet now in the state capitol after the 2015 legislative session ended at 6:00 p.m. Friday (May 15.) In fact there wasn't much noise in the state senate after an acrimonious debate on a "right-to-work" bill (SCS HB116 & 569) that concluded with a seldom-used parliamentary maneuver. At one point in the debate, our Association was threatened by a proposed amendment (language from SB129) which would virtually eliminate public employee organizations with voluntary membership. The offensive amendment was withdrawn before a final vote was taken on the underlying bill (SCS HB116 & 569.)

Pay raises and improved benefits for state employees were discussed by legislators on a number of occasions but never enacted. I again implored legislative leaders to restore and expand funding for a state match for the deferred compensation plan. The response has become predictable; "it's an awfully good benefit for our employees - but we just don't have the revenue for it right now."

I also urged the governor's budget personnel to release funds included but withheld in the current year's appropriations for a \$25 a month deferred comp match. It seems incoming revenue is always below projections.

On the positive side of the ledger, several bills were introduced that could benefit our members.

HB1134 would have allowed certain employees to retire and pay the same health insurance premium as they paid while they were working. This passed the house but died in a senate committee.

HB750 would give specific holiday consideration to state workers who work 10-hour days and 40-hour weeks. This bill, which was initiated at the request of our Association, was delayed this session but we were given reasonable assurances that it would have "priority" status for next year. Another bill on this same subject, HB980, experienced a similar delay.

A bill which would raise the statutory ceiling for the state's deferred comp match, HB1087, moved easily through the house but died in the senate. It proposed raising the maximum state match from \$75 to \$100 a month.

We opposed HB519 which would have required state workers who are placed on administrative leave for more than 15 days to have their pay suspended or be charged any accrued annual or sick leave. This bill was amended and died in a senate committee.

Another bill we opposed would have prohibited retired state employees from collecting retirement benefits while working full time for a political subdivision. This bill, SB238, did not make it out of a senate committee.

Another disappointment was the failure of a gas tax increase that appeared to be moving in the senate. A substitute for SB540 would have raised the gas tax by 2-cents a gallon. At the end of April the bill was gaining momentum when it was given first - round approval by the full senate. The bill, however, stalled in the Senate Fiscal Oversight Committee.

**From Harry Hill, Lobbyist
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