

Average Teacher Pay Exceeds \$50,000 In New State Budget

By Administrator

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Governor Pat McCrory signed the \$22.5 billion state budget Thursday at a Union County elementary school. The budget includes an average 4.7 percent pay increase for teachers across the state, meaning that for the first time in state history, average pay will be more than \$50,000 a year including local supplements by counties.

Public-school teachers will receive raises that vary based on experience and are targeted at mid-career teachers after a recent round of raises focused on entry-level teachers.

McCrory touted tax cuts for the middle class that he said will save them \$132 million, tuition reductions at three N.C. colleges and investments in mental health and substance abuse programs. The budget provides an income tax cut by raising the standard deduction from \$15,500 to \$17,500 over two years for a married couple. The standard deduction is the amount on which taxpayers owe no taxes if they don't itemize their returns.

Tuition will drop to \$500 per semester for North Carolina residents at Elizabeth City State and Western Carolina universities and UNC Pembroke, with the price set at \$2,500 for nonresidents. A new policy across all UNC system schools will guarantee that students pay the same tuition price over at least four years.

The state has a projected surplus of \$425 million, McCrory noted. He went on to discuss the advantages of building up a rainy day fund, which he called the "fiscally responsible thing to do." The budget adds \$475 million to that fund.

"Sooner or later, the economy is going to take a hit, and we better be ready for it. We're building up a rainy day fund to 7-8 percent of the budget, and I'm proud of that. You don't get political points for that,"

McCrory said.