

Cooper's Budget Will Increase Spending

By Administrator

Wednesday, 08 March 2017 14:57 -

Governor Roy Cooper recommended budget for 2017-2019 will increase spending by 5 percent to invest in education, health care, economic development and public safety without raising taxes or fees. Cooper's budget maintains North Carolina's Triple A bond rating with responsible fiscal management including an investment of \$300 million in the state's Rainy Day Fund. It offers relief to middle class families by restoring the state's Child and Dependent Care tax credit. "These goals don't come with party labels," Governor Cooper said. "They're universal and bipartisan, and I'm ready to work with legislative leaders to accomplish them."

Raise Teacher Pay

Governor Cooper's budget puts North Carolina on a path to lead all southeastern states in teacher pay in three years and reach the national average in five years. His budget calls for an additional \$271 million each of the next two years to raise teacher salaries, the largest investment in teacher pay in a decade. That equates to a more than 5% average increase for teachers in 2017-18 and 2018-19. For more about teacher pay, [click here](#).

Governor Cooper also wants to invest \$20 million for 6.5% salary increases for principals and assistant principals, and provide all classroom teachers with an annual stipend of \$150 for school supplies. The budget would draw talented North Carolina students into teaching by establishing the Best and Brightest Scholarship, providing \$10,000 per year for four years to students who commit to teach in a North Carolina public school after graduation.

Make North Carolina a Top 10 Educated State

Becoming a more educated state is necessary for North Carolina to compete for good-paying jobs. Governor Cooper's forward-thinking plan aims to have North Carolina rank in the top 10 in these categories by 2025:

Early Childhood: Increase pre-kindergarten enrollment from 22% to 55%.

K-12: Improve high school graduation rate from 85.6% to 91%.

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Higher Education: Increase percentage of adults with higher education degrees from 38.7% to 55%.

For a fact sheet on Governor Cooper's plan to make North Carolina a Top 10 Educated State, [click here](#).

Governor Cooper proposes key budget investments in early childhood education including nearly 4,700 more slots for children to attend NC Pre-K to eliminate the current waitlist, \$15 million more for Smart Start so students begin school ready to learn, and restoring the Child Care Tax Credit so working families can afford quality child care.

To improve K-12 schools, the budget invests \$30 million of lottery funds in more classroom support staff, new textbooks and digital learning materials. It also includes \$15 million to help transform low-performing schools.

To make higher education more attainable, Governor Cooper proposes free community college through NC GROW (Getting Ready for Opportunities in the Workforce) Scholarships. Starting in 2018, these scholarships would cover last-dollar tuition and fees for recent high school graduates to attend a North Carolina Community College. In addition, the budget invests \$18 million in workforce training for the jobs of tomorrow, with up to \$1,000 in financial assistance available per student to pursue non-credit, short-term workforce credentials.

"Reaching the Top 10 in these three categories is critical to our economic competitiveness and to the wellbeing of our citizens," Governor Cooper said.

A Healthier, Safer North Carolina

Governor Cooper's budget aims to help North Carolina and its people grow healthier by expanding Medicaid to cover an additional 624,000 individuals and inject more than \$4 billion into our economy annually, without additional state costs. The budget also redirects \$12 million to combat the opioid crisis with community services for approximately 2,500 individuals statewide, along with \$2 million for local law enforcement efforts to fight opioid abuse.

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To boost community safety, the budget includes \$7 million in Justice Reinvestment activities such as hiring 56 new probation officers. It also provides \$10 million to help people getting out of prison transition back to society through behavioral treatment, local re-entry councils and transitional housing support.

For a healthier environment, Governor Cooper's budget invests \$2 million for better sediment and erosion control, dam safety, mining and water resources and boosts recurring funding for the Clean Water Management Trust Fund and Parks and Recreation Trust Fund.

"All of these investments in education, health, safety, and the environment contribute to a robust economy that's better for working people," Governor Cooper said.

More Money in People's Pockets

Governor Cooper's budget puts more money in people's pockets with investments in economic development, innovation, infrastructure, and public employees.

Governor Cooper's proposed budget includes the largest pay raise for state employees in nearly a decade. State employees not on the state teacher salary schedule would see recurring pay raises of 2% or \$800, whichever is greater, along with a one-time bonus of \$500. It provides \$16 million to bring state salaries up to market rates, and improves pay for critical public safety positions like State Troopers, Magistrates, and SBI and ALE agents. It also includes a 1.5% one-time cost of living adjustment for state retirees and shores up the State Health Plan and Retirement System.

In addition, it invests \$7 million to allow state law enforcement officers to retire with full benefits at 25 years of service, a long-time goal of Governor Cooper's.

Programs to boost North Carolina's economy include \$30 million to develop sites for

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employers to locate in North Carolina counties where good jobs are needed the most and \$20 million to acquire sites for major manufacturing centers. Another \$20 million would increase broadband access in under-served communities, and \$22 million is slated to develop safe, affordable housing for people with low and moderate incomes.

North Carolina's creative economy would benefit from converting the current Film and Entertainment Grant Program to a Film Tax Incentive to encourage the production of motion pictures, television shows, and commercials that pump millions of dollars into local economies. To encourage research and innovation, Governor Cooper's budget invests \$10 million to help universities identify promising technologies and get them to market.

To modernize North Carolina's infrastructure, Governor Cooper's budget invests \$150 million in additional funding for strategic transportation needs and \$83 million for road maintenance. The budget also recommends a \$351 million bond package for to renovate key buildings in state government and universities.

"This budget is about coming together to find common ground to help all North Carolinians become better educated, healthier, and putting more money in their pockets," Governor Cooper said.

Disaster Recovery

To help North Carolina rebuild from Hurricane Matthew, the western wildfires and other natural disasters, Governor Cooper's budget includes investments so the state can be flexible and continue to assess unmet needs. North Carolina continues to work with its Congressional delegation to secure more assistance for rebuilding. Governor Cooper's priorities include helping families transition from temporary housing to more stable homes and rebuilding roads, bridges and dams.

"This help can make sure that affected families get back into permanent housing, children are able to focus on school again, and repairs are made to damaged roads and bridges," Governor Cooper said.

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