

Governor Cooper Vetos State Budget

By Administrator

Monday, 26 June 2017 10:14 - Last Updated Tuesday, 27 June 2017 09:48

Governor Roy Cooper has vetoed the \$23 billion state budget forwarded to him the the General Assembly.

The governor said more money was needed for education. He added that with a few changes, he would sign the budget. However, he issued his veto Monday evening.

The budget passed the House on an 80-31 vote. The Senate passed the spending plan by a 39-10 vote. Both of those tallies are enough to override Governor Cooper's veto.

Here are the governor's prepared remarks:

North Carolina – our great state – means everything to me. I was born, raised, and educated here. I started and raised my family here. Serving as Governor of the state I love is not a responsibility I take lightly. Other than being a husband and father, it is the most important job I've had.

So when I think about the future of our state, it has great personal meaning to me. Our state is growing. We are adding 110,000 people a year – that's roughly the equivalent of adding a city the size of High Point every year. People want to live here, work here, and raise families here.

In every corner of the state, North Carolinians are ready to turn big ideas into businesses. To aim for more through higher education. To turn struggling small towns into models of 21st century technology.

We need a budget that enables the big dreams of our people. That budget should ensure that a kid from Nash County can get the same great education as a kid from Wake County. That a budding entrepreneur in Jackson County can get the high speed internet her business needs to thrive. That our cities and towns can develop the job-ready sites with infrastructure for new and better paying jobs. We need a budget that helps us meet our potential as a state.

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Unfortunately, what the legislature passed and sent to me is not that budget. It does have some provisions I wanted and pushed for – the renewal of the teaching fellows scholarships, more Pre-K slots filled, (but still not all of them), better pay for school principals, incentive provisions that could bring thousands of good paying jobs to our megasites to name a few. But on balance, it is not the direction I envision for our state. Simply put, this budget shortchanges our state at a time when we don't have to. It prioritizes tax breaks for the wealthy and corporations and comes up short for education and our economy.

Rather than matching the dreams and aspirations of our people, this budget is shortsighted and smallminded. It lacks the vision that our state demands at this pivotal time of growth and change.

I'm troubled by many proposals in this budget, but chief among my concerns is education. Education is the fuel that fills the tank of our economy. If we don't get serious about doing more for our students, our economy will suffer.

That's why I'm joined here today by North Carolina teachers. Men and women who often sacrifice jobs in better paying fields to help mold and shape our children for the better.

Republican legislators say they did what I asked and that their teacher pay plan matches my proposal. That is false. It doesn't come close. I laid out a multi-year plan to get North Carolina to the national average in teacher pay. The Republican budget funds only half of what's needed next year to meet that goal. It leaves out starting and veteran teachers. Tell me how the \$810 million I proposed for teacher pay matches the \$470 million they proposed. It doesn't. Teachers see though dishonest budget gimmicks.

This budget also takes away retirement benefits from future teachers. It provides nothing to help teachers pay school supplies, which they do out of their own pockets. And there's no meaningful help for students who need more teaching assistants, nurses and counselors.

The budget on my desk siphons taxpayer dollars away from public schools and into private school vouchers with little accountability. It's a steady erosion of public education.

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And while public education falls by the wayside, it's the wealthy and corporations who get more and more through a tax plan so irresponsible it blows a \$600 million hole in our budget just a few years down the line.

Because this budget shortchanges the needs of our growing state and has the wrong priorities, I will veto it.

However, the legislative leaders have said they want me to sign the budget and I want to sign one, but I want to sign one that's good for our state. If, after my veto, if the legislature would make a handful of simple but important changes, I would sign this budget even though there are many other provisions I don't like. What are those changes?

- First, this budget spends \$1.1 billion on a tax plan that mostly benefits the wealthy and corporations. Millionaires get a tax cut 85 times what a working family receives. So for my signature, they should eliminate the corporate tax cut, include the child care tax credits set out in my budget and cap the income tax cut to those making less than \$150,000 per year. This means the benefits go to those individuals and families who truly need the help, so I'm willing to compromise on that measure.

- Second, our state's budget must invest more in education. For my signature, they should fully fund teacher pay raises – including starting and veteran teachers – so that we can be on a path to reach at least the national average. They need to set aside money for additional school support personnel – people like nurses, teaching assistants and counselors who help make sure kids have what they need to learn. They need to include a classroom supply stipend as my budget did. It's a small amount compared to the overall budget, but it means we can give teachers an annual bonus to help them afford the school supplies that they and parents pay out of pocket. They need to invest in expanding broadband internet access – a critical tool for our economy and our students who need to be connected to compete. And finally, they should phase out the private school voucher program that drains money from public education to spend it in private schools with little accountability. This list doesn't come close to covering all my concerns with this budget, particularly those I believe are unconstitutional. But the changes I propose today would reflect more of the vision our state demands. Those changes could be made in minutes, but they would have lasting positive effects for years.

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I urge them to consider these changes after I veto and return this budget. And if they make these changes, I will sign the budget.

We can do better than this budget, and I'm offering an opportunity for the legislature to do that.