



## **NCRGEA Statement on the North Carolina Senate Budget**

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RALEIGH, NC—Senate budget writers released their 2021 biennium budget this afternoon, with a humble but anticipated increase in spending of 7 percent over the next two years.

Typical to the senate's principles, local and state government retirees are not included in today's budget draft. Once again, we are disappointed at the disconnect between the senate and the retirees who helped build North Carolina to what it is today, making our state a national economic, educational, and cultural leader.

While disappointed, we invite and encourage senate leadership to have an open and honest conversation about the plight of government retirees. Allowing inflation to swallow the value of public pensions and ignoring the needs of government retirees is not fiscally conservative governing. It is, particularly among those earning the lowest pensions, a full proof way to create a larger class of underserved residents in North Carolina.

Let us not be confused about the responsibility of our state's legislature. Fully funding the state's public pension and the State Health Plan is not a gift for retirees: it is a constitutionally mandated responsibility of the North Carolina General Assembly. Both case law as well as the state Constitution require the state to fulfill its requirement to pay pensioners what they rightfully earned.

Also, providing inflation relief through cost-of-living adjustments is not a gift: it is a requirement for lawmakers to responsibly care for their constituents. Allowing inflation to drown pension values, pushing an already vulnerable demographic into even more helpless situations, is not a partisan issue. It is an assault on the values our state holds most dear: fiscal responsibility, compassion, fulfilling our obligations, taking care of our communities.

Statesmanship is much more than merely managing public affairs. Statesmanship is the ability to understand those whom you are charged to govern—the student, the employee, the retiree—and be able to address their needs within fiscally responsible contours. We encourage our senate leadership to return to statecraft.

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