

'Flexibility' with workers sought

McCrorry wants firing and rewarding state employees to be easier

By ROB CHRISTENSEN
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Gov. Pat McCrorry said Tuesday that he would seek the most sweeping overhaul of the State Personnel Act since the 1950s, making it easier to both fire and reward state em-

ployees.

McCrorry said he would ask for changes in the law that protects about 120,000 state workers from arbitrary and political firings. He said his top administration officials were seeking more flexibility in managing state workers and would unveil new legislation in a House committee on Wednesday.

Speaking at a Council of State meeting, the governor said he



McCrorry

dealing with employees are not doing a good job."

"I will give you a couple of examples quickly," McCrorry said. "We

wants "legislation that would give us more flexibility to help promote and give incentives to good employees who are doing a good job and at the same time

have one employee who has not come to work in three months, which is not good. They appealed the firing."

The governor said the average appeal of a firing of a state employee is now more than 400 days.

The proposal drew immediate fire from the State Employees Association of North Carolina, which said the bill was designed to give

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McCrorry more power to fire state employees.

"We think this is a pretty blatant power grab by the administration which will harm public servants doing their everyday jobs that the public want," said Dana Cope, executive director of SEANC.

"This is a bill that will greatly expand the political patronage of the governor's office, and we are just in disagreement with that."

The legislature last year already moved to enlarge the list of positions exempt from the civil service protections of the State Personnel Act from the 400 under the administration of Democratic Gov. Bev Perdue to 1,000 under McCrorry, a Republican.

Kim Genardo, McCrorry's communications director, said the governor wanted to bring personnel practices into the 21st century.

"A lot of the reasons are for efficiency," she said. "A lot of the changes are favorable to state employees."

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KIM GENARDO

MCCRORY COMMUNICATIONS DIRECTOR

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She said the grievance process is being streamlined, and the probationary period to career status would be reduced from two years to one year.

Representatives of SEANC had worked with the McCrorry administration on the bill, and several of their suggestions had been incorporated, Cope said. But overall, he said, the bill is still bad, and cited as an example a proposal to keep negative comments in an employees personnel file even when they have been proven false.

Cope said the governor's plan would take away the ability of state employees to appeal their firings to the Office of Administrative Hearings and instead have them appeal to the State Personnel Commission, made up of political appointees of the governor and legislative leaders.

He said that will lead to fired state employees taking their cases directly to the court system, which will be a far more costly process to taxpayers.

Cope voiced skepticism about the governor's example of a fired worker drawing three months salary, saying that it would be very unusual because most fired workers don't draw salaries during their appeals.

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