

They're Back: Legislators Set To Reconvene Monday Evening

By Administrator

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RALEIGH, (SGRToday.com) - The new session of the General Assembly will get underway Monday at 7 p.m. when both houses of the legislature officially reconvene for what's known as the "short" legislative session.

Their No. 1 priority is to adjust the operating budget for the fiscal year that begins July 1. They'll begin negotiations with good fiscal news. State budget officials say there is a revenue surplus of about \$200 million so far this fiscal year. But when combined with money that will go unspent, this year's budget surplus is likely to be about \$600 million.

Legislators will then determine the taxing and spending plan for the new year. Comments from Gov. Pat McCrory and key legislative leaders suggest the final document will include a pay raise for teachers and for key rank-and-file state employees.

Tax reform is likely on the negotiating table as well. There is talk of increasing the amount of income sheltered from tax to give all taxpayers a break. That provision is formally known as the standard deduction and is called the zero tax bracket by some legislators.

House Bill 2 may also play a factor in the new legislative session. New to the chamber is Chris Sgro, the head of Equality North Carolina, a pro-gay rights group that has led the opposition to the law that overturned Charlotte's controversial bathroom ordinance and requires people to use the public restroom of their biology not their identity.

Sgro was installed by state Democrats to fill the seat of the late Ralph Johnson of Guilford County. Sgro will serve until a new legislator is elected this fall and takes the oath of office in January.