news

House to vote on budget amendment

From staff and wire reports

The N.C. House of Representatives was scheduled to vote Wednesday on a \$358 million amendment to the state's budget. This supplemental budget proposal was approved Monday in the Senate by a 42-4

Rep. Trish Hunt, D-Orange County, said in a telephone interview Wednesday morning that she expected the bill to pass with little opposition.

The budget, proposed by Gov. James B. Hunt, includes provisions for a 10 percent pay raise for state employees and teachers. It recommends a new pay scale for teachers that could give them additional raises of approximately 4 percent.

Kennis Grogan, UNC system assistant vice president for finance, said that approval of the measure could mean an additional 5 percent salary increase for some UNC faculty members. This increase would be along with the 10 percent pay raise the bill provides.

"There is a fund equivalent to 5 percent

appropriated to the (UNC) Board of Governors for distribution to the institutions," Grogan said. "More than likely, it will not be across the board."

Some faculty members may get more than a 15 percent pay raise while others may get only the 10 percent salary increase,

The Board of Governors will meet later this week or early next week to discuss policy guidelines for the fund's distribution, Grogan said.

The supplement to the \$5.4 billion budget passed last year also includes plans for a 10 percent increase in retirement benefits, an increase in the state's contribution to the state retirement system and an early retirement provision for state employees.

The Senate passed the bill Monday despite seven attempts by I. Beverly Lake, R-Raleigh, to amend it. Lake forced the Democratic majority to record votes on several controversial items in the measure, including the pay and expense allowance increases for state legislators.

Tuesday the House voted to delete a controversial cash-flow accounting system from the surplus budget measure. The 58-57 vote was a surprise to many legislators since the system was a key part of the surplus recommended by the governor and the Advisory Budget Commission. The change would have provided a one-time windfall of \$57 million next year.

The change was the first in recent years that either chamber of the General Assembly has made in a budget approved by the appropriations committees.

The cash-flow proposal would allow the state to begin road construction projects before appropriating the money to complete the projects. By freeing alreadyappropriated immediate-use cash balances not spent for other road projects, the state would obtain \$57 million with which to

begin new projects.

Opponents argued that the plan would allow highway projects to begin, and that the projects would be left unfinished when the money ran out.

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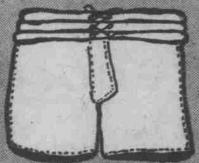
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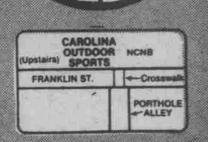


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