

Dear President Ross,

In Late spring parts of North Carolina were devastated by tornadoes and thunderstorms. Among those effected were some of our own employees. While struggling to come to terms with the devastation that faced them they were forced to endure an inflexible and dispassionate leave system that may have placed dedicated employees in the position of choosing between being paid and caring for their family and homes.

In the aftermath of this disaster, the NCSU Staff Senate discussed the plight of UNC employees whose homes were damaged or destroyed in the recent tornadoes. Of particular concern is the unfortunate situation in which many such staff find themselves when they must miss work to deal with the innumerable tasks of recovering and rebuilding their lives and homes after this catastrophe. Employees enduring such crises are not allowed to take sick leave to clean up their property, meet with contractors or insurance adjusters, or even repair their damaged homes, but rather are forced to take vacation leave or, if they have used all of their vacation leave, to take leave without pay. Supervisorssharedtheir grief and distress that they were forbidden by state law to grant sick leave to such employees, nor were these employees allowed to apply for shared leave even though their co-workers were eager to contribute.

A message from State Personnel Director Linda Coleman, of the Office of State Personnel, explaining the restrictions the State Personnel Act imposes on the kind of leave supervisors may grant to employees in such circumstances was sent to NCSU Staff Senate (see below). Her explanation demonstrates the limitations placed by state law on the flexibility of supervisors in such matters.

The UNC Staff Assembly requests that President Ross and the UNC General Administration convey for all UNC system institutions our shared dissatisfaction with this unacceptable situation. We urge the Governor, if she has the legal authority, to declare that such disasters constitute a compassionate exemption to the State Personnel Act. If the Governor is unable or unwilling to do this, we hope that UNC General Administration will make our feelings known to the leadership of the NC General Assembly and request legislative action to allow humane leave policies in such dire circumstances.

Thanks for your consideration.

Kelley Eaves Boykin, Chair, UNC Staff Assembly

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>From State Personnel Director Linda Coleman, Office of State Personnel

"Our office has received many calls this morning from employees and agencies with questions related to leave provisions to be used during the aftermath of the tornados and severe storms that roared through our State on Saturday. We have several State agency work sites that received structural damage and/or are still out of power/water. These agencies should follow the Emergency Closing leave provisions and allow the employees to use Other Management Approved Leave (9540-OMAL) until it is safe to return to the work site or until an alternate work site is designated. All emergency closings should be reported to my office on the attached form (Notification of Emergency Closing Form) within five days of the closing.

"Governor Perdue toured the state Sunday for six hours viewing the devastation created by the tornadoes. We realize that employees may need time off to clean up their personal property or to assist family members with clean up. Employees should be allowed to use Approved Leave (9000-Compensatory time, vacation leave or bonus leave) or leave without pay (9400-LWOP) if they do not have enough approved leave to cover the absence. Your agency/or university personnel director can assist you with coding the options above in BEACON and other approved time management system.

"We are strongly discouraging individual volunteer disaster relief efforts. While we appreciate the spirit of generosity, it can be extremely dangerous for volunteers and those they are attempting to aid if the volunteers have not been trained in disaster recovery. The Emergency Management Services Office has asked for all volunteers to go through local community service organizations such as the American Red Cross in order to ensure everyone's safety and to ensure an organized disaster relief effort. Employees who volunteer through a community service organization (501c3) can use Community Service Leave (9560). If an employee chooses to pursue individual disaster relief efforts, then they should use Approved Leave (9000-Compensatory, vacation or bonus leave) to cover the absence.

"Join me by keeping those affected by the storms in your thoughts and prayers."

Linda D. Coleman, State Personnel Director