AMENDED

April 30, 2009

**S. 12**

Introduced by Senators Leatherman, Alexander, Ford, Rankin, O’Dell, Cleary, Leventis, Elliott, Lourie, Malloy and Setzler

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Read the first time February 26, 2009.

**A** **BILL**

TO ESTABLISH THE SOUTH CAROLINA TAXATION REALIGNMENT COMMISSION, TO PROVIDE FOR THE COMMISSION’S MEMBERSHIP, POWERS, DUTIES, AND RESPONSIBILITIES, TO PROVIDE THAT THE COMMISSION MUST CONDUCT A COMPREHENSIVE STUDY OF THE STATE’S TAX SYSTEM AND SUBMIT A REPORT OF ITS RECOMMENDED CHANGES TO FURTHER THE GOAL OF MAINTAINING AND ENHANCING THE STATE AS AN OPTIMUM COMPETITOR IN THE EFFORT TO ATTRACT BUSINESSES AND INDIVIDUALS TO LOCATE, LIVE, WORK, AND INVEST IN THE STATE, AND TO PROVIDE FOR PROCEDURES GOVERNING THE CONSIDERATION OF LEGISLATION RESULTING FROM THE COMMISSION’S RECOMMENDATIONS.

Amend Title To Conform

Be it enacted by the General Assembly of the State of South Carolina:

SECTION 1. (A) There is created the South Carolina Taxation Realignment Commission to be comprised of seventeen members appointed as follows:

(1) two members appointed by the Governor;

(2) two members appointed by the President Pro Tempore of the Senate;

(3) two members appointed by the Speaker of the House of Representatives;

(4) two members appointed by the Chairman of the Senate Finance Committee;

(5) two members appointed by the Chairman of the House Ways and Means Committee;

(6) three members of the Senate to serve ex officio, to be appointed by the President Pro Tempore of the Senate;

(7) three members of the House to serve ex officio, to be appointed by the Speaker of the House of Representatives;

(8) the Director of the Department of Revenue to serve ex officio.

The members appointed pursuant to items (1) through (5) above must not be members of the General Assembly and must have substantial academic or professional experience or specialization in one or more areas of public finance, government budgeting and administration, tax administration, economics, accounting, or tax law.

The members appointed pursuant to items (1) through (7) above shall serve at the pleasure of their appointing authority.

All vacancies must be filled in the manner of original appointment.

(B) The members of the commission:

(1) must meet as soon as practicable after appointment and organize itself by electing one of its members as chairman and such other officers as the commission may consider necessary. Thereafter, the commission must meet as necessary to fulfill the duties required by this act at the call of the chairman or by a majority of the members. A quorum consists of a majority of its members;

(2) shall serve without compensation and are ineligible for the usual mileage, subsistence, and per diem allowed by law for member’s of boards, committees, and commissions. Staffs of the Senate Finance Committee and the House Ways and Means Committee shall be available to assist the commission in its work. Any expenses incurred by the commission shall be paid equally from each respective house’s approved accounts subject to the prior approval of the President Pro Tempore of the Senate and Speaker of the House of Representatives;

(3) unless authorized by a further or subsequent enactment, conclude the commission’s business by January 1, 2011, at which time the commission is dissolved. The General Assembly may extend the dates by which the commission shall submit reports required by this act.

(C) The duties of the commission shall be to:

(1) develop criteria for assessing the effectiveness of the current tax system structure, as well as the likely systemic impact of any proposed changes affecting tax revenues and report the criteria to the General Assembly within three months of the effective date of this joint resolution, provided that all such criteria must be designed with an emphasis on the systemic balance of the state’s revenue structure from the standpoint of adequacy, equity, and efficiency and with the goal of maintaining and enhancing the State as an optimum competitor in efforts to attract businesses and individuals to locate, live, work, and invest in the State; and

(2) no later than March 15, 2010, prepare and deliver a report and recommendation to the Chairman of the Senate Finance Committee and the Chairman of the House Ways and Means Committee, including the text of an amendment that effectuates the recommendations. The commission’s report must be a detailed, comprehensive, and careful evaluation of the state’s tax system structure. The commission’s report shall consider:

(a) sales and use tax exemptions or limitations to be retained, modified, or repealed;

(b) the assessment of state and local taxes levied and other provisions affecting state and local revenue to fund the operation and responsibilities of state and local government, respectively; and

(c) any fee, fine, license, forfeiture, or other Funds.

After reviewing the adequacy, equity, and efficiency of the state’s revenue structure, the commission’s report may recommend that no changes are necessary if it determines that such findings are warranted. Following the report and recommendation required by subsection (C)(2), the commission shall continue studying the subjects identified in subsection (C)(2). The commission may make further legislative recommendations by January 1, 2011, at which time it shall be dissolved as provided in subsection (B)(3). For purposes of the scope of the commission’s study, local taxes are defined as local levies related to ad valorem taxation, including, but not limited to, assessment ratios, classification and valuation of property, assessable transfers of interest, valuation limitation, local millages, and fee in lieu of taxes agreements; however, local taxes do not include the exemption of owner-occupied residential property as provided in Section 12-37-220(B)(47).

The commission’s report may not recommend any action that would nullify any existing agreement entered into by a local government.

The commission must forward its recommendation to the Board of Economic Advisors that must prepare a revenue impact detailing the sources of revenue at the state and local levels the commission recommends should be increased or decreased, the projected amount of increase or decrease to each source of revenue, and the net gain or loss of total revenue at both the state and local levels that would result from the recommendation. The report must be attached to any legislative recommendation made by the commission prior to it being submitted to any member of the General Assembly.

(D) The text of any amending language pursuant to subsection (C)(2) must be delivered to the Chairman of the Senate Finance Committee, the Chairman of the House Ways and Means Committee, and upon request, to any member of the General Assembly.

(E) Further legislative recommendations made by the commission must be delivered to the Chairman of the Senate Finance Committee, the Chairman of the House Ways and Means Committee, and upon request, to any member of the General Assembly.

(F) Commission members shall not receive information regarding the business of the commission from a lobbyist except through formal presentation to the commission at a meeting called in compliance with the Freedom of Information Act. Any lobbyist violating the provisions of this subsection is deemed guilty of a misdemeanor and, upon conviction, must be punished as provided in Section 2‑17‑130 of the 1976 Code.

(G) In addition to those duties of the commission provided pursuant to subsection (C) of this section, the commission shall study and make recommendations to the General Assembly of the advantages and drawbacks of a revenue neutral replacement of the state individual and corporate income tax, state imposed sales and use tax, estate tax, bank tax, savings and loan association tax, and taxes on beer, wine, and alcoholic beverages with a broadly based consumption tax modeled on the proposed federal Fair Tax as that form of tax would have to be adapted to apply on the state level. In its study, the commission shall specifically consider how such a tax swap would affect jobs creation, savings and investment, and tax compliance costs for South Carolina taxpayers. The result of the study and recommendations required pursuant to this subsection must be made on the schedule provided in subsection (C)(3) of this section.

SECTION 2. Act 388 of 2006 is amended by repealing SECTION 1 of Part V, which reads:

“SECTION 1. (A) The sales tax exemptions in Section 12‑36‑2120 of the 1976 Code shall be reviewed by the General Assembly not later than its 2010 Session and thereafter as the General Assembly deems appropriate but not later than its session every ten years after the first review.

(B)(1) There is established the Joint Sales Tax Exemptions Review Committee composed of seven members; three of whom must be members of the Senate appointed by the Chairman of the Senate Finance Committee, one of whom must be a member of the minority party; three of whom must be members of the House of Representatives appointed by the Chairman of the House Ways and Means Committee, one of whom must be a member of the minority party; and one of whom must be the Governor or the Governor’s appointee who shall serve at the Governor’s pleasure. The committee shall elect a chairman and vice chairman from among its members. All legislative members shall serve ex officio. The committee shall assist the General Assembly in performing its duties under the provisions of subsection (A) in addition to its duties required by this subsection.

(2) In carrying out its responsibilities under this act, the committee shall:

(a) make a detailed and careful study of the state’s sales tax exemptions, comparing South Carolina laws to other states;

(b) publish a comparison of the state’s sales tax exemptions to other states’ laws;

(c) recommend changes, and recommend introduction of legislation when appropriate;

(d) submit reports and recommendations annually to the Governor and the General Assembly regarding sales tax exemptions.

(3) In carrying out its responsibilities under this act, the committee may:

(a) hold public hearings;

(b) receive testimony of any employee of the State or any other witness who may assist the committee in its duties;

(c) call for assistance in the performance of its duties from any employee or agency of the State.

(4) The committee may adopt by majority vote rules not inconsistent with this act that it considers proper with respect to matters relating to the discharge of its duties under this section. Professional and clerical services for the committee must be made available from the staffs of the General Assembly, the State Budget and Control Board, and the Department of Revenue. The members of the committee may not receive mileage, per diem, subsistence, or any form of compensation for their service on the committee.”

SECTION 3. This act takes effect upon approval by the Governor.

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