



South Carolina House of Representatives

Legislative Update

G. Murrell Smith, Speaker of the House

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**Conference Committee Reports Adopted by the
General Assembly June 26, 2024
(with a budget narrative)**

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NOTE: this budget narrative does not include gubernatorial vetoes, which are expected to be returned the first week of July, 2024.

State Government Budget

H. 5100 Fiscal Year 2024-2025

H. 5101 Capital Reserve Fund

The General Assembly has approved the conference report on **H. 5100**, the General Appropriation Bill, and **H. 5101**, the joint resolution making appropriations from the Capital Reserve Fund, which together comprise the \$14.4 billion Fiscal Year 2024-2025 State Government Budget. The grand total of *all* budget funds – state, other, federal and this year's new money totals \$42 billion.

Nearly a billion dollars (\$913 million) in recurring revenue is available for appropriation, with \$2 billion in nonrecurring revenue (which includes \$600 million in Homestead Exemption Surplus funds and \$390 million in Capital Reserve Funds).

Tax Relief

The budget delivers \$1 billion in **total direct tax relief** (\$200 million in income tax relief and \$800 million from the tax relief trust fund).

In keeping with the "Comprehensive Tax Cut Act of 2022," \$100 million in recurring funds and \$100 million in Homestead Exemption Surplus funds is used to accelerate to the *fourth* year of the **tax relief schedule**, allowing the highest income tax bracket to be lowered from 6.4 percent to **6.2 percent**.

State-wide Issues

The budget funds the enhancements to the state **financial reserve accounts** used to manage revenue shortfalls as provided for in the amendments to the South Carolina Constitution that were approved by voters in the 2022 general election and ratified by the General Assembly. South Carolina's total reserves are over \$1.1 billion.

Pensions

Per Ways and Means, both the SCRS and PORS are nine years ahead of their required maximum amortization schedule per law. Contingent upon market performance and no functional changes, both are on track to be fully funded in 16 years.

\$200 million in nonrecurring funds is allocated to accelerate the **Department of Transportation's schedule for repairing and replacing the state's bridges** (evenly divided

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between the Interstate/Primary Network and the Secondary Network). Nearly a third of the state's 8,400 bridges are approaching or past their intended lifespans. \$117 million is allocated for the **Rural Road Safety Program**. \$200 million will go toward roadwork approved by county officials via C-Funds. \$42 million goes to the Rural Infrastructure Authority for water and sewer improvement projects.

\$53.6 million is provided for capital investments to improve the state's **commercial airports**.

There are over \$400 million in **local projects**. This funding for local governments, charities, events and other community enhancements can be found grouped under various agencies based on categories: Health and Human Services, law enforcement, Aid to Subdivisions, Education, PRT, rural infrastructure, and Labor Licensing and Regulations.

\$61.5 million in recurring revenue is devoted to **state employee pay raises** with each full-time state employee who makes no more than \$50,000 a year receiving a \$1,125 increase in base pay and full-time employees making more than \$50,000 a year receiving a 2.25 percent salary increase.

\$108 million in recurring funds is included to cover the increased costs of operating the **state's health insurance plan** with no additional monthly premium costs to state employees.

K-12

The budget legislation continues to include the revised educational funding formula established in recent years that consolidates numerous budget lines into the single **State Aid to Classrooms** line. The funding formula's weightings continue to apply, including those that emphasize more funding for students in poverty and students with disabilities. After satisfying fundamental requirements, local school districts are afforded greater flexibility in spending State Aid to Classrooms. Districts are subject to accountability and transparency requirements for publishing their expenditures of federal, state, and local funds online.

An additional \$200 million is provided for **State Aid to Classrooms**. The total appropriation for State Aid to Classrooms represents an average per pupil appropriation of \$5,724.

This budget raises the **minimum pay for first-year teachers** to \$47,000, a \$4,500 increase (from a base level of \$42,500). This plan **extends state-paid yearly boosts for experience** from 23 years to 28 years in the classroom to support the state's senior veteran teachers.

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These extended salary schedules (or “**steps**”) fund an average salary increase of \$2,800 (or 5.1 percent).

The budget provides **pay raises for all teachers** under a revised salary schedule that includes increases at all levels but directs the largest increases towards the lowest paid teachers. The revised pay schedule allows the state’s minimum starting salary for teachers to increase from \$42,500 to \$47,500.

Total **state per pupil funding** will be \$8,590 (for a total \$17,980 average).

\$2.7 million in recurring Education Improvement Act funds is provided to increase the amount that each teacher is afforded for purchasing **classroom supplies** from \$350 to \$400.

\$44 million in Education Lottery Funds is appropriated for **instructional materials**.

\$24 million is provided to cover increased expenses for the Department of Education and **First Steps** full day four year old kindergarten.

\$3 million in recurring Education Improvement Act funds is provided for early **literacy** training, along with \$22 million in these EIA funds for Child Early Reading and Developmental Education Program at the SC Department of Education.

\$10 million in recurring Education Improvement Act funds is devoted to **math resources and support**.

\$30 million in recurring funds is appropriated for the **Education Scholarship Trust Fund**.

\$1 million in recurring Education Improvement Act funds is provided for the **Jobs for America’s Graduates** program.

\$20 million in nonrecurring funds is provided for **school safety upgrades**. \$5 million in nonrecurring funds is provided for **school safety mapping** to assist first responders.

\$28 million in lottery funds is allocated for purchasing and leasing **school buses**.

The State Department of Education Grants Committee is afforded \$7 million in recurring Education Improvement Act funds.

For school safety, the State Law Enforcement Division (SLED) receives \$7.1 million for the **Center for School Safety and Targeted Violence**.

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Higher Education

The **University of South Carolina** will receive \$100 million for the Health Sciences Campus Building.

\$133 million across all sources is allocated for the next and final phases of the **veterinary school** at **Clemson University**.

There is \$113.7 million to support capital needs at other university campuses.

The budget continues to include a higher education **tuition mitigation initiative** in which an additional \$69.3 million in recurring funds is distributed among the state's institutions of higher learning. In order to retain these appropriations, the institutions must comply with provisions for freezing in-state tuition and mandatory fees during the 2024-2025 academic year for all in-state undergraduate students at all public four-year and two-year University of South Carolina campuses.

Full funding (\$336 million) is provided in Education Lottery funds for the **LIFE, HOPE, and Palmetto Fellows** higher education scholarship programs.

The Commission on Higher Education is afforded \$80 million in lottery funds for **need-based grants**.

The Higher Education **Tuition Grant Commission** is allocated \$20 million in lottery funds.

Technical and Comprehensive Education

\$51 million in lottery funds is provided through CHE and the Board of Technical and Comprehensive Education for **tuition assistance**.

The Board of Technical and Comprehensive Education is afforded \$94 million for SC Workforce Industry Needs scholarships (**SC WINS**) that help provide full tuition at technical colleges for SC WINS recipients seeking degrees in industry sectors with critical workforce needs.

\$5 million in lottery funds is allocated to the **Ready SC Program** which provides worker training at the state's technical colleges that is customized to the needs of new and expanding business and industry.

\$10 million in lottery funds is provided to the Commission on Higher Education for its **Nursing Initiative**.

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The Technical and Comprehensive Education system is receiving approximately \$115 million for initiatives, maintenance, renovation and replacement needs.

Commerce

As noted above under Technical and Comprehensive Education, TEC is afforded \$78.7 million in lottery funds for SC Workforce Industry Needs scholarships (**SC WINS**) that help provide full tuition at technical colleges for SC WINS recipients seeking degrees in industry sectors with critical workforce needs. \$5 million in lottery funds is allocated to the **Ready SC** Program which provides worker training at the state's technical colleges that is customized to the needs of new and expanding business and industry. This funding works closely with the Department of Commerce's workforce needs initiatives.

\$ 20 million from the Capital Reserve Fund is provided to the Department of Commerce for **SC Nexus for Advanced Resilient Energy**.

\$5 million in nonrecurring funds is provided for the Deal Closing Fund that the Department of Commerce uses to recruit new business to the state and encourage expansions in investments.

Environment

The Department of **Environmental Services** is afforded \$4.8 million in recurring funds for workforce retention and credentialing, \$2.5 million in nonrecurring funds for the clean-up of uncontrolled hazardous waste sites, and \$2.8 million in nonrecurring funds for the implementation of State Water and River Basin Planning.

The budget includes \$28 million funding for healthcare campus relocation and IT restructuring and maintenance in keeping with restructuring initiatives that consolidate the state's public health agencies.

Public Health

\$28 million is provided for technology and facilities restructuring and the **Healthcare Campus relocation**. Funding also includes a nursing salary increase, a cancer prevention network and a prostate cancer awareness campaign.

The Department of **Health and Human Services** receives \$36 million in recurring funds for Medicaid program maintenance of effort, \$50.6 million in recurring funds for Medicaid medical provider rate adjustments, and \$16.5 million in recurring funds for Medicaid behavioral health provider rate adjustments.

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The Department of **Social Services** is afforded \$18 million, among that is \$5 million in funding for the Child Welfare Placement Stability Fund, \$8.8 million for the Economic Services System Modernization, \$1 million in nonrecurring funds for its Family Resource Center, \$1.1 million for Senior Hunger and Food Insecurity and \$2.5 million for the Working Families Childcare Scholarships and Support.

A provision is included in the budget that establishes within the Department of Environmental Services, a Dam Repair Assistance Fund used for issuing grants that can cover up to 75 percent of the total cost to correct deficiencies in high and significant hazard dams regulated under the Dams and Reservoir Safety Act.

Conservation

The **Conservation Bank** is provided \$13 million. \$18 million in funds for conservation grant funding and \$3 million for Working Agricultural Lands. And \$10 million goes toward Habitat Protection and Land Conservation at DNR.

Law Enforcement and Civil Protections

The **Attorney General's Office** is afforded \$1.5 million in recurring funds for its Statewide Violent Crimes Prosecution Task Force, \$6.5 million in nonrecurring funds for grants for residential and emergency housing for minor victims of human trafficking, and \$5 million for the crime victims assistance SAVS program.

The Department of **Corrections** is budgeted \$10.8 million for the cell phone interdiction program, \$10 million for operations, and \$4.5 million from the Capital Reserve Fund for security and maintenance.

The Department of **Juvenile Justice** receives nearly \$24 million to alleviate overcrowding and work towards a new juvenile detention center.

The State Law Enforcement Division (**SLED**) receives \$2.6 million for career path step increases, almost \$2 million for critical infrastructure and cybersecurity, \$1.3 million for specialized vehicles and \$7.1 million for the Center for School Safety and Targeted Violence.

The Adjutant General receives \$3.3 million in nonrecurring funds for armory revitalization.

\$30 million is provided from the Capital Reserve Fund for the **Disaster Relief and Resilience Reserve Fund**.

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The Department of Administration is appropriated \$1 million in nonrecurring funds for first responder communications modernization and \$5 million for cybersecurity and asset protection systems.

A budget provision establishes the South Carolina University **Cyber Leadership Council** to position the state as a national leader in cyber readiness through education, research, and community engagement.

The Department of **Veterans' Affairs** receives \$1 million in nonrecurring funds for the Veteran Trust Fund, \$10 million in funds for the Military Enhancement Plan Fund, and \$1.3 million in nonrecurring funds for the M.J. "Dolly" Cooper State Veterans' Cemetery. Veteran homes are afforded a total of \$77 million in recurring and nonrecurring funds.

\$5.9 million in nonrecurring funds is provided for information technology system modernization at the Department of Motor Vehicles.

The Election Commission is afforded \$11.5 million in nonrecurring funds for election operations.

The State **Ports Authority** is provided \$55 million from the Capital Reserve Fund for North Charleston Economic Development Land Acquisition.

\$13.9 million in recurring funds is included for full funding of the **Local Government Fund** that is consistent with the revised approach for sending revenue to political subdivisions established in Act 84 of 2019.

\$1.1 million in recurring funds is provided to increase state aid to county **libraries**.

The Department of **Archives and History** receives \$3.5 million in nonrecurring funds for the commemoration of the 250th anniversary of the American Revolution in South Carolina.

The Department of **Parks, Recreation and Tourism** receives \$10 million in funds for destination specific tourism marketing grants, \$1 million in funds for statewide marketing, \$1.1 million in funds for SC Association of Tourism Regions promotions, \$10 million in nonrecurring funds for film incentives, \$5 million in nonrecurring funds for its Sports Marketing Program, \$250,000 in nonrecurring funds for the Undiscovered SC Grant Program.

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A budget provision devotes Palmetto Pride Litter Control Program funds to the priority list of litter control projects identified it by the South Carolina Department of Transportation.

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Adopted Conference Reports

H. 4248 Conditional Discharge Orders for Offenders Serving Underage Drinkers Alcohol [R. 212, Act number pending]

The House overrode the Governor's veto of **H. 4248 [R. 212, Act number pending]**. It would allow **servers charged with delivering underage patrons beer, ale, porter, or wine** to participate in conditional discharge orders, after paying appropriate fees set out under this bill. Compliance with these orders would dispose of their pending criminal charges. While the State Law Enforcement Division [SLED] would receive a nonpublic record of these offenses, these could be expunged once violators successfully meet all of these orders' conditions and pay an appropriate fee. If these steps are completed, then no convictions would appear on their records as a result.

S. 1046 South Carolina Judicial Merit Selection Commission Reforms [R. 244]

The House adopted the conference committee on **S. 1046 (R. 244)**, a bill that would enact several **South Carolina Judicial Merit Selection Commission Reforms**. A revised South Carolina Judicial Merit Selection Commission [JMSC] would be composed of twelve members.

The Speaker of the House of Representatives would appoint four members, consisting of three House members and a lawyer with at least ten years' experience practicing law. The President of the Senate would appoint two members with one being a Senator, and the other a lawyer with at least ten years' experience practicing law. The Senate Judiciary Committee chair will appoint two additional members, both being members of the Senate. The Governor would appoint four members, with each of them being lawyers with at least ten years of experience practicing law in South Carolina.

Members of the commission would serve two-year terms and would not serve more than two consecutive terms. A person would not be eligible for appointment if they contributed to any campaign of an appointing authority who ran for office in the most recent election. Nonlegislative members could not be public employees, or anyone serving in some other elected office besides the House or Senate. Members who are currently serving on the commission, who have served more than for years, would not be eligible for reappointment to this revamped commission.

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Appointees would not be eligible for nomination or appointment as a judge, a justice, or as an administrative law court judge while serving on this commission. That will remain the case for one year after commissioners complete their terms of service. A Bar and Citizens' Judicial Qualifications Committee would replace the existing, separate SC Bar and Citizens Committee.

JMSC would forward to this qualifications committee the names of justices and judges who are at the midpoint of their terms for midterm reviews to be done. This review would utilize electronic ballot box surveying, or other forms of electronic surveys. Review results would then be forwarded to the Chief Justice and the JMSC at the next public screening of each candidate. All public hearings would be live streamed, except for any executive sessions which may be held.

Candidates would be able to withdraw prior to their public hearing or after any commission *draft* report has been issued to the General Assembly. Their information will remain on file, but kept confidential.

The commission will now be able to release up to six names of qualified candidates for each judicial seat. Their reports will include the reasons why any candidate was found to be unqualified. At least twenty-two days would have to elapse between JMSC nominations and qualified candidate designations being sent to the General Assembly and judicial elections being held. No candidates would be allowed to seek pledges until a formal JMSC report has been released.

If a judicial candidate is a family member of a JMSC commissioner, that commissioner would have to resign. A family member will include a spouse, parent, brother, sister, child, step-child, mother-in-law, father-in-law, son-in-law, daughter-in-law, brother-in-law, sister-in-law, grandparent, or grandchild.

S. 142 Sex Trafficking, Sexually Exploiting, and Luring Children [R. 238]

The House adopted the conference committee report on **S. 142 (R. 238)**, a bill that would **expand the existing definition of sex trafficking to include sexual exploitation of minors** as well as promoting --or participating in-- prostitution of a minor.

Sex trafficking survivors would be given the right to raise duress and coercion as affirmative defenses to nonviolent offenses they committed as a direct result of, or incident to, their being so trafficked. They also could not be convicted of any nonviolent offenses when law enforcement investigations show these offenses were committed as a direct result, or incident to, these children being so trafficked.

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Additionally, these trafficking survivors could file for expungements. They also could not be subjected to delinquency adjudications, if they show their conduct was a direct result of their being so trafficked.

When these sex trafficking survivors are under the age of 18, they would have to be referred to the Department of Social Services for it to complete its statutorily-mandated investigation of these cases. It also would allow these survivors, their parents, legal counsel, and guardians to apply to the Attorney General to participate in his address confidentiality program. Survivors of domestic violence, or other designated contacts, would also be entitled to have their receipt of any services and contact information kept confidential as well. In addition, non-profit organizations with advocates who provide services to these survivors could not be compelled to provide evidence of how they helped these survivors.

The adopted conference committee report added in a new statutory criminal offense of adults luring, enticing, or attempting to lure or entice, children with an intent to harm these children, or for doing so for any other unlawful purpose.

Offenders would face fines of up to \$10,000, and/or imprisonment for up to 10 years. Mistake of age would not normally be a defense to luring or attempting to lure a child; however, it could be used as an affirmative defense when the alleged luring or attempt to lure the child turns out to have been done for a lawful purpose. Another affirmative defense would be that an alleged offender's actions were reasonable under the circumstances, and no intent to harm the child existed.

H. 3865 Extending the Expiration Date of 2023 Act 56, the Law Enforcement and Personal Primary Act as well as the Judicial Privacy Protection Act [R. 245]

The House adopted the conference committee report on **H. 3865 (R. 245)**, a bill which would extend the sunset date of 2023 Act 56, the **Law Enforcement and Personal Primary Act** as well as the **Judicial Privacy Protection Act**, from July 1, 2024 to July 1, 2025.

S. 577 Tax Rates, Background Checks, Federal Defense Facilities Redevelopment [R. 240]

S. 577 (R. 240) would update references to the top marginal income tax rate under provisions relating to the withholding of income taxes to bring them into conformity with income tax relief initiatives. The legislation amends the language so that it always con

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forms to the top marginal tax regardless of the actual top income tax, easing continuing work to lower the income tax rates. The legislation revises state provisions to bring them into compliance with **federal requirements for criminal history background checks for those with access to federal tax information.**

H. 4087 Tax Incentives for Economic Development [R. 247]

H. 4087 (R. 247) would enhance **tax incentives for economic development.** The legislation expands the income tax credit provisions for establishing a corporate headquarters in South Carolina.

The legislation lowers the minimum investment threshold from \$300 million to \$100 million for a qualified recycling facility to be eligible for tax credits. Batteries, solar panels, turbines and related structures are included in the definition of “postconsumer waste material” for recycling facilities.

Provisions in the Enterprise Zone Act of 1995 are revised to allow remote employees working in South Carolina, North Carolina and Georgia to be included in certain job creation requirements and adds incentives for certain investments. The legislation revises provisions relating to the Enterprise Zone Act credit against withholding for re-training employees to provide who is eligible for the credit and the amount of the credit allowed.

H. 4386 Robust Redhorse and Limited Commercial Blue Crab License [R. 249]

Robust Redhorse (*Moxostoma robustum*)

H. 4386 (R. 249) would make it unlawful to take, harm, or kill robust redhorse from public waters. The **robust redhorse** is a large, long-lived member of the redhorse sucker family. The fish is nearly extinct and is being considered for the national endangered species list. If it is taken it must be returned immediately to the water. A person who violates the provisions of this section is guilty of a misdemeanor and, upon conviction, must be fined not more than \$500 for a first offense and not more than \$1,000 for each subsequent offense.

Blue Crab (*Callinectes sapidus*)

Beginning July 2025, this legislation would establish requirements for obtaining licenses for the taking of **blue crab** by trap for a commercial purpose. South Carolina is the last Atlantic state that does not regulate blue crab harvests. An individual must obtain a limited commercial blue crab license, a commercial saltwater fishing license, and a commercial equipment license for traps. The cost of a limited commercial blue crab license

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is \$100 for residents and \$500 for nonresidents which must be renewed annually. The following are persons eligible to obtain a limited commercial blue crab license: 1) an individual who possessed a valid commercial equipment license for traps during the 2023-2024 license year and who has verifiable documentation of at least 500 pounds of commercial blue crab landings during the first six months of the 2023-2024 license year or the last three years; 2) an individual who is selected by applicant lottery and 3) an individual who receives a valid limited commercial blue crab license via transfer. A limited commercial blue crab license may be transferred by the licensee to another individual after providing information relating to the transfer as required by the Department. An individual is limited to one commercial blue crab license and a licensee must not receive a transfer of another limited commercial blue crab license. The legislation also outlines the maximum number of traps to be used for taking blue crab. To use traps for taking blue crab, and the cost is \$2 for each trap for residents and \$10 for each trap for nonresidents. Prior to every fourth license year, there must be verifiable documentation of at least 4,000 pounds of commercial blue crab landings in at least one of the three previous license years. If a licensee does not meet the documented landings threshold, then the licensee's limited commercial blue crab license must not be renewed by the Department.

The Department must establish criteria for the designation of closed seasons and closed or partially closed areas for the taking of blue crabs by trap. With at least a 45-day notice, the Department may designate closed seasons and closed or partially closed areas for the taking of blue crabs by trap. The legislation also states that it is unlawful for a person to take or possess for recreational purposes more than one bushel of blue crabs in any one day, not to exceed two bushels in any one day on any boat. A person who violates this section is guilty of a misdemeanor.

The legislation adds, upon the Governor's approval, to engage in shedding peeler crabs, a person or entity's business premises must be capable of peeler shedding operations. The department may inspect the business premises of a person or entity applying for a peeler crab license.

Upon approval by the Governor, there is a moratorium on the issuance of new commercial equipment licenses. As a result, the department must not issue any new commercial equipment licenses to use traps for the taking of blue crab. This moratorium expires on June 15, 2025. Current 2023-2024 commercial equipment licenses to use traps for the taking of blue crab are extended and do not expire until June 30, 2025.

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H. 4820 Statewide Turkey Hunting Season and Flounder Catch Limit [Ratified R. 250]

In an effort to address the decline of **wild turkeys**, **H. 4820** would create a statewide turkey hunting season for hunting and taking of male wild turkey from April 3 through May 3. The season bag limit is reduced from three to two for statewide residents; however, from April 3 to April 10 the total bag limit is one. "Youth Turkey Weekend" is the Saturday and Sunday preceding April 3 and the Saturday and Sunday following May 3. A youth turkey hunter who has reached the season bag limit on or prior to May 3 must not harvest or attempt to harvest a turkey during the "Youth Turkey Hunting Weekend" following May 3 but is permitted to call turkeys for another youth turkey hunter. These provisions take effect upon approval by the Governor and expire May 11, 2028; after which, these provisions revert back to the language before July 1, 2024.

The legislation increases the cost of tags for residents from \$5 to \$25 for two tags and for nonresidents from \$100 to \$125 for two tags. The legislation states that it is unlawful to hunt, kill, or possess a male wild turkey with a beard less than six inches long and a tail fan that is not fully developed (known as "jakes"). Also, the legislation would prohibit a person stalking a wild turkey while behind a decoy or tail fan. (Tail fans include those made of real or synthetic feathers or an image or likeness of a tail fan applied to any material.)

The Department of Natural Resources must provide an annual report on the health of the turkey population and to include an itemized list of expenditures from the revenues generated from the sale of wild turkey tags.

The legislation also repeals Section 5, of Act 91 of 2021 which takes the sunset clause off of the catch and size limit of flounder, with limits remaining at 10 per day or 20 per boat.

S. 314 Higher Education Permanent Improvement Projects [R. 239]

S. 314 (R. 239) would streamline the approval process for major **higher education improvement projects** by revising review provisions. It removes the Commission on Higher Education's submission requirements, defines project cost, raises the athletic debt cap to \$500 million and institutional cap parameters, and changes threshold amounts for capital improvements, increasing research institution exemptions from \$5 million to \$10 million. The bill also establishes responsibilities for bonded indebtedness.

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H. 4116 Funeral Directors [R. 248]

H. 4116 (R. 248) would revise the licensure and regulation of **funeral directors and other licensed funeral service providers**. Changes include enhanced continuing education requirements, including a requirement for one credit hour to be an ethics in funeral service course. The legislation would provide that it is unlawful to aid and abet those who are unlicensed to engage in the practice of funeral service. Provisions are included to target the unlawful division of funeral service fees and other payments. The legislation enhances penalties for violations. The legislation would require that a licensed funeral director or embalmer who commits a violation must be reported to the State Board of Funeral Services for immediate investigation and disciplinary proceedings. The legislation provides a more detailed definition of cremation. A funeral home manager must live within a radius of 75 miles, rather than 25 miles, of the funeral home. The legislation makes revisions that allow requirements for displaying options to consumers to be satisfied with showing photographs or other representations of available caskets and other necessary funeral supplies.

H. 4843 Use of Marinas and Commercial Decks Located in Critical Coastal Areas [R. 251]

H. 4843 (R. 251) a bill addressing the **authority for businesses to use their marinas and commercial decks located in coastal critical areas** for purposes of providing food and beverage services for consumption by patrons of the business.

S. 969 Tax Deductions for First Responders [R. 242]

S. 969 (R. 242) would enhance **tax deductions for law enforcement officers, firefighters, and emergency medical service personnel**. The legislation revises deductions from individual taxable income to increase the subsistence deduction amount for certain paid public servants such as law enforcement officers, firefighters, and emergency medical service personnel. The legislation increases the volunteer exemption amount for unpaid public servants in these positions.

The legislation includes provisions revising the **clinical preceptor income tax credit** afforded physicians, advanced practice nurse practitioners, and physician assistants who provide supervision and instruction during student clinical training experiences for a public teaching institution or independent institution of higher learning. Eligibility is expanded to include training in such specialty care as dermatology, hematology, neurology, and oncology. Under the legislation, the credit is equal to \$1,000 for each rotation served, not to exceed \$4,000 a year. The provider must be a Medicaid participating provider and have a minimum of at least 100 Medicaid and Medicare patients combined or be a free clinic. The credit is available through 2029.

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The legislation includes provisions addressing the **exemption of groceries from Local Option Sales Taxes for transportation facilities**. County governing bodies are afforded the option of exempting unprepared food items eligible for purchase with United States Department of Agriculture food coupons from Local Option Sales Taxes for transportation facilities authorized through a referendum held on or after November 5, 2024.

H. 3988 Pharmacist and Pharmacist Technicians [R. 246]

H. 3988 (R. 246) would address the responsibilities of pharmacist and pharmacist technicians by making permanent some of the 2020 pharmacy provisions allowed during the pandemic under the **"Pharmacy Practice Act."** The bill allows for flu and COVID-19 testing in the pharmacy. A pharmacist can order test and must be the one to interpret the results but can delegate the swabbing to trained pharmacy technicians or pharmacy interns. A pharmacist administering vaccinations without an order or prescription of a practitioner shall obtain informed written consent of the person being vaccinated or that person's guardian. Those individuals less than 16 years of age must be accompanied by a parent, legal guardian, or a caretaker with written parental consent. If the person receiving a vaccine is under the age of 18 years, a pharmacist must inform the patient and their caregiver of the importance of mental health and routine well care visits with a pediatrician.

The legislation outlines that if an individual is incapacitated or without sufficient mental capacity an explanation of the vaccine or treatment must be written in language that clearly indicates that the individual agrees and has time to thoughtfully and voluntarily accept or decline the administration of the vaccine or treatment. The legislation further states that if the vaccine or treatment is an investigational medical product or is made available through an Emergency Use Authorization by the Federal Food and Drug Administration, a statement acknowledging its investigational nature and the civil liability protections afforded it by law.

The legislation also authorizes pharmacy technicians who have the required certifications and training program approved by the Accreditation Council for Pharmacy Education (ACPE), which includes a minimum, hands on injection technique and the recognition and treatment of emergency reactions to vaccines to administer vaccinations under the direct supervision of a pharmacist. The pharmacy technician must be state-certified or nonstate-certified but administered vaccinations and received training accord-

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ing to the PREP Act and register with the Board of Pharmacy as an authorized vaccination provider. The legislation also increases the Board of Pharmacy by adding an at-large member who is a state-certified pharmacy technician.

S. 1031 Uniform Money Services Act [R. 243]

S. 1031 (R. 243) would establish the Uniform Money Services Act, adopting key provisions from the Conference of State Bank Supervisors' model legislation. The bill revises anti-money laundering measures to protect the public, standardize licensable activities, and modernize safety and soundness requirements, ensuring fund protection while fostering innovative and competitive business practices.

S. 862 Caregiver Requirements [R. 241]

S. 862 (R. 241) relates to caregiver requirements and would provide for educational and pre-service training requirements. New childcare workers would have 30 days to complete their training instead of just 5. In an effort to address labor needs and accommodate otherwise qualified workers, the bill removes the requirement that an individual must have at least six months experience as a caregiver or be directly supervised. GED and other high school equivalency credentials, along with Certificates of Completion, would be accepted as acceptable credentials for caregivers. The bill also provides that childcare facility licenses are valid for three years instead of two.

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Sources

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- 2) a Webpage (the Bill Summary Index) with hypertext links to the bills (by bill number, date, and the different stages in the legislative process).
- 3) the end of session summaries (with index).

Style

The House Research Office uses the 17th edition of the Chicago Manual of Style (with in-house style modifications, esp. regarding numbers/numerals).

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