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Carolina
State Senate
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This week in the Senate

March 27 - March 31, 2017

The Senate Finance Committee approved its version of the state budget on Tuesday after months of subcommittee budget hearings. Areas of interest in the approximately \$8 billion budget include K-12 education funding, higher education funding, improving the health of the state's pension system and cleanup costs for Hurricane Matthew. Copies of the Committee's budget will be distributed to all Senate members in anticipation of debate on the floor on Tuesday. The Senate is expected to finalize its priorities in the state budget this week as the process works toward a final conference committee with the House before the close of session in May.

Also this past week, a vote by to set [H. 3516](#) on special order failed in the Senate, which would have given the bill priority status on the calendar. By not reaching a threshold of 28 votes to receive special order, the bill will remain in contested status on the calendar. The legislation is aimed at addressing infrastructure needs in the state by increasing the motor fuel user fee two cents per year over six years. When fully implemented, it's estimated to generate about \$792 million for road repairs.

Bills approved by the Senate this week include:

The following bills were read the third time -

S. 261 - Senator Alexander: Provides owners of qualified commercial properties with a financing tool for the purchase and installation of energy and water efficiency improvements to their buildings.

S. 444 - Senator Grooms: Changes “automotive three-wheel vehicle” to “autocycle” and provides for the definition and to update references in state law.

S. 9 - Senator Hutto: Removes an exclusion for injuries related to intoxication or narcotic use that health insurers have been permitted to include in individual health and accident insurance policies. These change would only apply to policies issued or renewed after December 31, 2017.

S. 28 - Senator Campsen: Allows a local public school board to award elective units for released time classes in religious instruction when an accredited private school performs the evaluation and assessment of the quality or subject matter of the class.

S. 334 - Senators Senn and Kimpson: Permits a baseball complex to apply for a permit to purchase and sell beer and wine for on-premises consumption, as well as apply for a biennial license to purchase and sell alcoholic liquors by the drink.

S. 531 - Senator Young: Changes the in-state tuition eligibility requirements for certain veterans receiving educational assistance to specify those receiving assistance must be enrolled within three years of the veteran’s discharge. This bill applies only to those utilizing specific types of GI Benefits. This bill also adds two additional categories of individuals who don’t have to abide by the three year requirement.

S. 488 - Senators Grooms, Johnson, Campbell, Climer, Campsen, Peeler, Reese and Shealy: Allows a person whose vehicle is being serviced by a car dealer to drive a dealer-owned loaner vehicle displaying a dealer tag. The vehicle displaying the tag must be part of a manufacturer program.

S. 447 - Senators Young, Sabb, Shealy, M.B. Matthews, Johnson, Climer, Talley and McElveen: Requires the Department of Social Services to receive reports from physicians, nurses or any other medical or allied health professionals when children up to one-year-old are diagnosed with neonatal abstinence syndrome or fetal alcohol spectrum disorder.

The following bills were read the second time -

H. 3793 - Authorizes the creation of certain applied, non-research doctoral degree programs at various four-year colleges and universities in the state. Approval by the Commission on Higher Education is required for the programs.

S. 170 - Senators Shealy and Hutto: Adds requirements for county coroners in regards to establishing Child Fatality Review Teams when a child under 18-years-old has died. The bill requires coroners to schedule a review team within seven working days to perform a case review when a child has died and sets rules for who must be on the review team.

S. 3 - Senators Rankin and Hembree: Allows anyone having custody of an animal due to the animal's owner being accused of a crime against the animal to petition the magistrate's court requesting that the accused deposit funds into an account to pay for the animal's care.

S. 289 - Senators Shealy, Rankin, McElveen, Sheheen, Hutto and McLeod: Attempts to consolidate victim services by creating the South Carolina Crime Victim Services Division within the Office of the Attorney General. The goal of the division would be to ensure victims throughout the state have access to the same services regardless of where they reside.

S. 462 - Senator Hembree: Requires school districts to provide students with personalized pathways to earn a diploma, based on their individual plans after graduation.

Look ahead to next week and beyond:

H. 3516, commonly called the roads bill, is expected to continue to receive significant attention in the coming weeks.

The General Assembly's crossover deadline, which is the last day for a bill to pass out of one chamber and then receive consideration from the other, occurs April 10.

Discussions of the state budget will also be a significant focus of the Senate's work as the end of session approaches. Sine Die, the last day of the legislative session, is May 11.