**A** **BILL**

TO AMEND THE CODE OF LAWS OF SOUTH CAROLINA, 1976, BY ADDING SECTION 4‑1‑180 SO AS TO PROVIDE FOR THE MANNER IN WHICH A COUNTY GOVERNING BODY MAY INSTITUTE AN EMPLOYEE FURLOUGH PROGRAM, AND TO PROVIDE THAT THE PROVISIONS OF THIS SECTION DO NOT PRECLUDE A COUNTY FROM IMPLEMENTING OTHER FURLOUGH PROGRAMS NOT IN CONFORMITY WITH THE REQUIREMENTS OF THIS SECTION.

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

SECTION 1. Chapter 1, Title 4 of the 1976 Code is amended by adding:

“Section 4‑1‑180. (A) In a fiscal year in which the governing body of a county determines that an employee furlough is necessary, the governing body may institute employee furlough programs of not more than ten working days in the fiscal year pursuant to this section. The furlough must be inclusive of all employees of the county or within a designated department, agency or program of the county regardless of source of funds or place of work, including all employees in the designated area. If the county will incur costs for overtime under the federal Fair Labor Standards Act, law enforcement employees and correctional employees may be exempted from a mandatory furlough. Employees who provide direct patient or client care and front‑line employees who deliver direct customer services also may be exempted from the mandatory furlough. During this furlough, affected employees shall be entitled to participate in the same benefits as otherwise available to them except for receiving their salaries. As to those benefits that require employer and employee contributions, including, but not limited to, contributions to the South Carolina retirement systems or the optional retirement program, the county is responsible for making both employer and employee contributions if coverage would otherwise be interrupted; and as to those benefits which require only employee contributions, the employee remains solely responsible for making those contributions.

(B) A governing body of a county may implement an employee furlough in any other manner authorized by law without participating in the mandatory furlough program authorized by this section and without being subject to the provisions set forth in this section including the provisions related to the South Carolina retirement systems.

(C) A county governing body which implemented a furlough program on or after January 1, 2009, the terms of which were consistent with the requirements of the mandatory furlough program established pursuant to this section, may, during the fiscal year in which the provisions of this section take effect, make any employee and employer contributions necessary to ensure that a furloughed employee’s benefits were not interrupted as a result of the furlough.”

SECTION 2. This act takes effect upon approval by the Governor.

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