

NO. 11

JOURNAL
OF THE
SENATE
OF THE
STATE OF SOUTH CAROLINA



REGULAR SESSION BEGINNING TUESDAY, JANUARY 14, 2025

WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 29, 2025
Wednesday, January 29, 2025
(Statewide Session)

~~Indicates Matter Stricken~~
Indicates New Matter

The Senate assembled at 1:00 P.M., the hour to which it stood adjourned, and was called to order by the PRESIDENT.

A quorum being present, the proceedings were opened with a devotion by the Chaplain as follows:

Matthew 4:1

In Matthew's Gospel we read: "Then Jesus was led by the Spirit into the desert to be tempted by the devil."

Let us join our hearts as we pray: O Holy God, Your Son's temptation story out in the wilderness of old sounds so very much like a tale we might hear about or read about today. Indeed, temptations confront all of us boldly and compellingly time and again here in the year 2025. The allure of cutting corners, of catering to special interests, of taking shortcuts, of merely following the "easy way" instead of the correct one -- temptations are there right in front of each one of us daily, if not hourly. Therefore, loving God, we call upon You today to help us see any and all modern day "devils" for what they are. And especially give each of these Senators the fortitude they need to stand always for what is right and honorable. So we hopefully pray in Your strong name, O Lord. Amen.

The PRESIDENT called for Petitions, Memorials, Presentments of Grand Juries and such like papers.

Call of the Senate

Senator PEELER moved that a Call of the Senate be made. The following Senators answered the Call:

Adams	Alexander	Allen
Bennett	Campsen	Cash
Chaplin	Climer	Corbin
Cromer	Davis	Elliott
Fernandez	Gambrell	Garrett
Goldfinch	Graham	Grooms
Hembree	Jackson	Johnson
Kennedy	Kimbrell	Leber
Martin	Massey	Matthews
Ott	Peeler	Reichenbach
Rice	Sabb	Stubbs
Sutton	Turner	Verdin

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Walker
Zell

Williams

Young

A quorum being present, the Senate resumed.

MESSAGE FROM THE GOVERNOR

The following appointments were transmitted by the Honorable Henry Dargan McMaster:

Statewide Appointments

Reappointment, Department of Natural Resources Board, with the term to commence July 1, 2024, and to expire July 1, 2028

7th Congressional District:

Jerry Lee, 2611 Hanna Lake Road, Johnsonville, SC 29555-5241

Referred to the Committee on Fish, Game and Forestry.

Initial Appointment, South Carolina Board of Occupational Therapy, with the term to commence September 30, 2023, and to expire September 30, 2026

Occupational Therapist:

Megan Dubose, 21 Calhoun Street, Sumter, SC 29150 *VICE* Mr. Todd A. Laliberte

Referred to the Committee on Medical Affairs.

Initial Appointment, South Carolina Workers' Compensation Commission, with the term to commence June 30, 2020, and to expire June 30, 2026

At-Large:

John Coggiola, Esquire, 3314 Heyward Street, Columbia, SC 29205
VICE Avery B. Wilkerson, Jr. (resigned)

Referred to the Committee on Judiciary.

Doctor of the Day

Senator WALKER introduced Dr. Shelly Janssen of Columbia, S.C., Doctor of the Day.

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Leave of Absence

On motion of Senator RICE, at 1:10 P.M., Senator BLACKMON was granted a leave of absence for today.

Leave of Absence

On motion of Senator OTT, at 1:32 P.M., Senator TEDDER was granted a leave of absence until 2:29 P.M.

Leave of Absence

On motion of Senator SABB, at 3:13 P.M., Senator MATTHEWS was granted a leave of absence until 3:30 P.M.

Leave of Absence

On motion of Senator SABB, at 3:13 P.M., Senator DEVINE was granted a leave of absence until 3:30 P.M.

Leave of Absence

On motion of Senator ADAMS, at 5:11 P.M., Senator FERNANDEZ was granted a leave of absence for today.

Expression of Personal Interest

Senator DAVIS rose for an Expression of Personal Interest.

Expression of Personal Interest

Senator GROOMS rose for an Expression of Personal Interest.

CO-SPONSORS ADDED

The following co-sponsors were added to the respective Bills:

S. 51 Sen. Alexander
S. 52 Sens. Climer, Johnson and Adams
S. 156 Sen. Adams
S. 195 Sens. Cromer and Leber
S. 233 Sen. Kennedy
S. 264 Sen. Williams
S. 267 Sens. Reichenbach, Zell, Goldfinch, Leber and Jackson
S. 287 Sen. Garrett

RECALLED

S. 164 -- Senator Campsen: A BILL TO AMEND THE SOUTH CAROLINA CODE OF LAWS BY AMENDING SECTION 1-23-120, RELATING TO THE REQUIREMENTS AND PROCEDURES FOR

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REGULATIONS, SO AS TO TOLL THE PERIOD OF LEGISLATIVE REVIEW FROM THE SECOND FRIDAY IN MAY THROUGH THE SECOND MONDAY IN JANUARY; AND TO ADD A PROVISION REVISING THE PERIOD OF LEGISLATIVE REVIEW FOR REGULATIONS FILED ON JANUARY 14, 2025, TO ONE HUNDRED THIRTEEN DAYS.

Senator RANKIN asked unanimous consent to make a motion to recall the Bill from the Committee on Judiciary.

The Bill was recalled from the Committee on Judiciary and ordered placed on the Calendar for consideration tomorrow.

RECALLED AND COMMITTED

S. 233 -- Senators Leber and Kennedy: A BILL TO AMEND THE SOUTH CAROLINA CODE OF LAWS BY AMENDING SECTION 44-48-30, RELATING TO DEFINITIONS OF TERMS USED IN THE “SEXUALLY VIOLENT PREDATOR ACT,” SO AS TO REDEFINE “LIKELY TO ENGAGE IN ACTS OF SEXUAL VIOLENCE.”

On motion of Senator RANKIN, with unanimous consent, the Bill was recalled from the Committee on Medical Affairs and committed to the Committee on Judiciary.

RECALLED

S. 238 -- Senators Alexander, Peeler, Massey and Rankin: A BILL TO AMEND THE SOUTH CAROLINA CODE OF LAWS TO AMEND THE SOUTH CAROLINA CODE OF LAWS BY AMENDING SECTION 2-1-180, RELATING TO ADJOURNMENT OF GENERAL ASSEMBLY AND CONDITIONS FOR EXTENDED SESSION, SO AS TO PROVIDE THAT THE DATE FOR SINE DIE ADJOURNMENT IS AUTOMATICALLY EXTENDED IF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES DOES NOT GIVE THIRD READING TO THE ANNUAL APPROPRIATIONS ACT ON OR BEFORE MARCH TENTH, SO AS TO PROVIDE THAT THE PRESIDENT OF THE SENATE AND THE SPEAKER OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES MAY CALL THEIR RESPECTIVE BODIES INTO SESSION AFTER THE SINE DIE ADJOURNMENT DATE TO FINISH ANY UNFINISHED BUSINESS RELATING TO THE GENERAL APPROPRIATIONS BILL OR CAPITAL RESERVE FUND RESOLUTION, TO PROVIDE THE TIME PERIOD DURING WHICH THE SENATE AND THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES MAY BE CALLED BACK TO COMPLETE THE UNFINISHED

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BUSINESS RELATING TO THE GENERAL APPROPRIATIONS BILL OR CAPITAL RESERVE FUND RESOLUTION; AND TO PROVIDE FOR THE TOLLING OF THE ONE HUNDRED TWENTY-DAY PERIOD THAT THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY HAS TO REVIEW STATE REGULATIONS.

Senator RANKIN asked unanimous consent to make a motion to recall the Bill from the Committee on Judiciary.

The Bill was recalled from the Committee on Judiciary and ordered placed on the Calendar for consideration tomorrow.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS AND RESOLUTIONS

The following were introduced:

S. 284 -- Senator Campsen: A SENATE RESOLUTION TO CONGRATULATE ROBERT H. BOYLES JR. UPON THE OCCASION OF HIS RETIREMENT, TO COMMEND HIM FOR HIS MANY YEARS OF DEDICATED SERVICE TO THE PEOPLE AND THE STATE OF SOUTH CAROLINA, AND TO WISH HIM MUCH HAPPINESS AND FULFILLMENT IN THE YEARS AHEAD.

sr-0204km-vc25.docx

The Senate Resolution was adopted.

S. 285 -- Senator Walker: A SENATE RESOLUTION TO CONGRATULATE CHRISTIAN FAITH FELLOWSHIP UPON THE OCCASION OF ITS TWENTIETH ANNIVERSARY AND TO COMMEND THE CHURCH FOR ITS MANY YEARS OF DEDICATED SERVICE TO THE DENTSVILLE COMMUNITY AND THE PEOPLE AND THE STATE OF SOUTH CAROLINA.

sr-0210km-hw25.docx

The Senate Resolution was adopted.

S. 286 -- Senators Johnson, Turner and Rankin: A BILL TO AMEND THE SOUTH CAROLINA CODE OF LAWS BY AMENDING SECTION 42-15-90, RELATING TO FEES OF ATTORNEYS AND PHYSICIANS AND HOSPITAL CHARGES APPROVED BY COMMISSION, SO AS TO ALLOW THE WORKERS' COMPENSATION COMMISSION TO ESTABLISH MEDICAL FEE SCHEDULES AND RELATED SYSTEMS, AND PROVIDE THAT THE WORKERS' COMPENSATION COMMISSION SHALL REVIEW THE FEE SCHEDULES ON AN ANNUAL BASIS AND

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WHEN APPROPRIATE TO INCLUDE FACTORS SUCH AS THE MEDICAL CONSUMER PRICE INDEX AND THE FEE SCHEDULES OF OTHER STATES IN THE REGION.

sj-0004mb25.docx

Read the first time and referred to the Committee on Judiciary.

S. 287 -- Senators Alexander, Hutto, Grooms, Verdin, Davis, Turner, Gambrell, Hembree, Cromer, Kimbrell, Elliott, Zell, Ott and Garrett: A BILL TO AMEND THE SOUTH CAROLINA CODE OF LAWS BY ADDING SECTION 44-95-65 SO AS TO PROVIDE REGULATIONS FOR THE SALE OF ELECTRONIC NICOTINE DELIVERY SYSTEMS AND TO PROVIDE PENALTIES FOR VIOLATIONS OF THIS SECTION; AND TO PROVIDE A TIMELINE FOR THE REQUIRED DEALER CERTIFICATION, DIRECTORY PUBLICATION, AND EFFECTIVE DATE OF CERTAIN PROVISIONS.

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Read the first time and referred to the Committee on Medical Affairs.

S. 288 -- Senator Johnson: A BILL TO AMEND THE SOUTH CAROLINA CODE OF LAWS BY ADDING SECTION 6-29-725 SO AS TO ALLOW FOR THE TRANSFER OF DEVELOPMENT RIGHTS BETWEEN DIFFERENT LANDOWNERS, TO PROVIDE FOR CONTENTS OF THE ORDINANCE NECESSARY TO REGULATE THE TRANSFER OF DEVELOPMENT RIGHTS, AND TO ALLOW TWO OR MORE LOCAL GOVERNING BODIES TO JOIN ONE ANOTHER IN SETTING UP A TRANSFER OF RIGHTS PROGRAM.

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Read the first time and referred to the Committee on Judiciary.

S. 289 -- Senators Martin and Alexander: A JOINT RESOLUTION TO PROVIDE THAT A LOCAL SCHOOL DISTRICT BOARD OF TRUSTEES MAY WAIVE THE REQUIREMENT THAT PUBLIC SCHOOLS MAKE UP FULL DAYS MISSED DUE TO INCLEMENT WEATHER FOR UP TO AN ADDITIONAL SEVEN DAYS PROVIDED THAT THE FULL DAYS OF MISSED SCHOOL WERE ASSOCIATED WITH HURRICANE HELENE.

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Senator MARTIN spoke on the Resolution.

Read the first time and referred to the Committee on Education.

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S. 290 -- Senators Turner and Elliott: A JOINT RESOLUTION TO PROVIDE THAT THE GOVERNING BODY OF A SCHOOL DISTRICT MAY WAIVE THE STATUTORY REQUIREMENT THAT PUBLIC SCHOOLS MAKE UP FULL DAYS MISSED DUE TO INCLEMENT WEATHER FOR PUBLIC SCHOOLS IN THE DISTRICTS CLOSED DUE TO INCLEMENT WEATHER ASSOCIATED WITH HURRICANE HELENE DURING THE 2024-2025 SCHOOL YEAR, AND TO EXTEND SUCH WAIVERS TO HOME SCHOOL PROGRAMS.

lc-0261wab25.docx

Read the first time and referred to the Committee on Education.

S. 291 -- Senators Peeler, Alexander and Bennett: A JOINT RESOLUTION TO PROVIDE FOR THE CONTINUING AUTHORITY TO PAY THE EXPENSES OF STATE GOVERNMENT IF THE 2025-2026 FISCAL YEAR BEGINS WITHOUT A GENERAL APPROPRIATIONS ACT FOR FISCAL YEAR 2025-2026 HAVING BEEN ENACTED, AND TO PROVIDE EXCEPTIONS.

sr-0179km25.docx

Read the first time and referred to the Committee on Finance.

S. 292 -- Senators Alexander, Peeler, Martin, Massey and Rankin: A CONCURRENT RESOLUTION TO PROVIDE THAT, PURSUANT TO SECTION 9, ARTICLE III OF THE CONSTITUTION OF THIS STATE, 1895, WHEN THE RESPECTIVE HOUSES OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY ADJOURN ON THURSDAY, MAY 8, 2025, NOT LATER THAN 5:00 P.M., EACH HOUSE SHALL STAND IN RECESS SUBJECT TO THE CALL OF THE PRESIDENT OF THE SENATE FOR THE SENATE AND THE SPEAKER OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES FOR THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES AT TIMES THEY CONSIDER APPROPRIATE FOR THEIR RESPECTIVE BODIES TO MEET FOR THE CONSIDERATION OF CERTAIN SPECIFIED MATTERS; AND TO PROVIDE THAT WHEN THE RESPECTIVE HOUSES OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY ADJOURN NOT LATER THAN MONDAY, JANUARY 12, 2026, THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY SHALL STAND ADJOURNED SINE DIE.

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On motion of Senator MASSEY, with unanimous consent, the Concurrent Resolution was introduced and ordered placed on the Calendar without reference.

S. 293 -- Senator Tedder: A SENATE RESOLUTION TO CELEBRATE THE JOYOUS OCCASION OF THE ONE HUNDRED TWENTY-FIFTH ANNIVERSARY OF THE ST. MATTHEW BAPTIST CHURCH AND TO CONGRATULATE AND HONOR REVEREND CALVERT R. BRADLEY AND THE CONGREGATION FOR THEIR YEARS OF DEDICATED SERVICE TO THE NORTH CHARLESTON COMMUNITY.

lc-0253wab-gm25.docx

The Senate Resolution was adopted.

H. 3827 -- Reps. Davis, Alexander, Anderson, Atkinson, Bailey, Ballentine, Bamberg, Bannister, Bauer, Beach, Bernstein, Bowers, Bradley, Brewer, Brittain, Burns, Bustos, Calhoun, Caskey, Chapman, Chumley, Clyburn, Cobb-Hunter, Collins, B. J. Cox, B. L. Cox, Crawford, Cromer, Dillard, Duncan, Edgerton, Erickson, Forrest, Frank, Gagnon, Garvin, Gatch, Gibson, Gilliam, Gilliard, Gilreath, Govan, Grant, Guest, Guffey, Haddon, Hager, Hardee, Harris, Hart, Hartnett, Hartz, Hayes, Henderson-Myers, Herbkersman, Hewitt, Hiott, Hixon, Holman, Hosey, Howard, Huff, J. E. Johnson, J. L. Johnson, Jones, Jordan, Kilmartin, King, Kirby, Landing, Lawson, Ligon, Long, Lowe, Luck, Magnuson, Martin, May, McCabe, McCravy, McDaniel, McGinnis, Mitchell, Montgomery, J. Moore, T. Moore, Morgan, Moss, Murphy, Neese, B. Newton, W. Newton, Oremus, Pace, Pedalino, Pope, Rankin, Reese, Rivers, Robbins, Rose, Rutherford, Sanders, Schuessler, Sessions, G. M. Smith, M. M. Smith, Spann-Wilder, Stavrinakis, Taylor, Teeple, Terrible, Vaughan, Weeks, Wetmore, White, Whitmire, Wickensimer, Williams, Willis, Wooten and Yow: A CONCURRENT RESOLUTION TO RECOGNIZE THE POSITIVE IMPACT OF SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY, ENGINEERING, AND MATHEMATICS (STEM) EDUCATION ON QUALITY OF LIFE IN SOUTH CAROLINA AND TO DECLARE APRIL 2, 2025, AS "STEM EDUCATION DAY" IN SOUTH CAROLINA.

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The Concurrent Resolution was adopted, ordered returned to the House.

REPORTS OF STANDING COMMITTEES

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Senator CAMPSSEN from the Committee on Fish, Game and Forestry submitted a favorable report on:

S. 26 -- Senator Hutto: A BILL TO AMEND THE SOUTH CAROLINA CODE OF LAWS BY ADDING SECTION 50-21-107 SO AS TO PROVIDE THAT OWNERS OF WATERCRAFT OF MORE THAN SEVENTY HORSEPOWER MUST CARRY LIABILITY INSURANCE OF AT LEAST FIFTY THOUSAND DOLLARS OF COVERAGE PER OCCURRENCE, TO PROVIDE PENALTIES, AND TO PROVIDE FOR THE COLLECTION OF FINES.

Ordered for consideration tomorrow.

Senator CAMPSSEN from the Committee on Fish, Game and Forestry submitted a favorable report on:

S. 167 -- Senator Campsen: A BILL TO AMEND THE SOUTH CAROLINA CODE OF LAWS SO AS TO ENACT THE "SOUTH CAROLINA WATERWAYS PROTECTION ACT"; BY ADDING SECTION 50-9-975 SO AS TO ESTABLISH THE SOUTH CAROLINA WATERWAYS PROTECTION FUND AND THE PURPOSES FOR WHICH REVENUES IN THE FUND MAY BE EXPENDED; AND BY ADDING SECTION 12-37-3215 SO AS TO REQUIRE THAT A TAX NOTICE FOR WATERCRAFT MUST INCLUDE A WATERWAYS PROTECTION FEE OF THREE DOLLARS.

Ordered for consideration tomorrow.

Senator PEELER from the Committee on Finance submitted a favorable with amendment report on:

S. 253 -- Senators Peeler, Grooms, Alexander and Turner: A JOINT RESOLUTION TO PROVIDE AUTHORIZATION FOR THE DEPARTMENT OF ADMINISTRATION TO EXPEND CERTAIN FUNDS TO ENGAGE AN INDEPENDENT COMPLIANCE CONSULTANT FOR REVIEW OF COMPLIANCE OF THE OFFICE OF THE STATE TREASURER, THE OFFICE OF THE COMPTROLLER GENERAL, AND THE OFFICE OF THE STATE AUDITOR WITH RECOMMENDATIONS IN THE ALIXPARTNERS FORENSIC ACCOUNTING REPORT AND OTHER RELEVANT RECOMMENDATIONS.

Ordered for consideration tomorrow.

Appointment Reported

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Senator CAMPSSEN from the Committee on Fish, Game and Forestry submitted a favorable report on:

Statewide Appointment

Initial Appointment, Director, South Carolina Department of Natural Resources

Thomas S. Mullikin, 1308 Broad Street, Camden, SC 29020 *VICE*
Robert H. Boyles, Jr.

Received as information.

HOUSE CONCURRENCE

S. 237 -- Senators Rankin, Sabb and Garrett: A CONCURRENT RESOLUTION TO FIX NOON ON WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 5, 2025, AS THE TIME TO ELECT CERTAIN JUDGES TO THE COURT OF APPEALS, CIRCUIT COURT, FAMILY COURT, AND THE ADMINISTRATIVE LAW COURT.

Returned with concurrence.

Received as information.

THE SENATE PROCEEDED TO A CALL OF THE UNCONTESTED LOCAL AND STATEWIDE CALENDAR.

SECOND READING BILL

S. 282 -- Senator Zell: A BILL TO PROVIDE THAT THE MEMBERS OF THE CLARENDON COUNTY AERONAUTICS COMMISSION SHALL BE APPOINTED BY THE GOVERNOR UPON THE RECOMMENDATION OF THE CLARENDON COUNTY LEGISLATIVE DELEGATION.

On motion of Senator ZELL.

POINT OF ORDER

S. 89 -- Senator Young: A BILL TO AMEND THE SOUTH CAROLINA CODE OF LAWS BY AMENDING SECTION 25-11-100, RELATING TO SOUTH CAROLINA MILITARY BASE TASK FORCE, SO AS TO RENAME THE TASK FORCE THE SOUTH CAROLINA MILITARY AFFAIRS ADVISORY COUNCIL, TO REVISE THE COUNCIL'S MISSION, TO INCREASE THE MEMBERSHIP ON THE COUNCIL, TO MANDATE THAT THE COUNCIL MEETS AT LEAST ONE TIME EACH CALENDAR YEAR, AND TO MAKE CONFORMING CHANGES.

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The Senate proceeded to the consideration of the Bill.

Senator GAMBRELL explained the Bill.

Point of Order

Senator MARTIN raised a Point of Order under Rule 39 that the Bill had not been on the desks of the members at least one day prior to second reading.

The PRESIDENT sustained the Point of Order.

POINT OF ORDER

S. 103 -- Senators Climer, Kimbrell, Verdin, Leber, Zell and Stubbs: A BILL TO AMEND THE SOUTH CAROLINA CODE OF LAWS BY AMENDING SECTION 47-17-510, RELATING TO THE PROHIBITION AGAINST MISLEADING OR DECEPTIVE PRACTICES, LABELING, OR MISREPRESENTING PRODUCT THAT IS CELL-CULTURED MEAT, SO AS TO DEFINE CELL-CULTIVATED FOOD PRODUCT AND REQUIRE THE ACCURATE LABELING OF CELL-CULTIVATED FOOD PRODUCT.

Point of Order

Senator MARTIN raised a Point of Order under Rule 39 that the Bill had not been on the desks of the members at least one day prior to second reading.

The PRESIDENT sustained the Point of Order.

POINT OF ORDER

S. 218 -- Senator Young: A BILL TO AMEND THE SOUTH CAROLINA CODE OF LAWS BY ADDING SECTION 25-11-730 SO AS TO PROVIDE THAT THE DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS' AFFAIRS SHALL ADOPT CRITERIA FOR ADMISSIONS TO AND DISCHARGES FROM SOUTH CAROLINA VETERANS' HOMES.

Point of Order

Senator MARTIN raised a Point of Order under Rule 39 that the Bill had not been on the desks of the members at least one day prior to second reading.

The PRESIDENT sustained the Point of Order.

POINT OF ORDER

H. 3727 -- Rep. W. Newton: A BILL TO ADOPT REVISED CODE VOLUME 9 OF THE SOUTH CAROLINA CODE OF LAWS, TO THE

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EXTENT OF ITS CONTENTS, AS THE ONLY GENERAL PERMANENT STATUTORY LAW OF THE STATE AS OF JANUARY 1, 2025.

Point of Order

Senator MARTIN raised a Point of Order under Rule 39 that the Bill had not been on the desks of the members at least one day prior to second reading.

The PRESIDENT sustained the Point of Order.

ADOPTED

S. 195 -- Senators Campsen, Davis Matthews, Cromer and Leber: A SENATE RESOLUTION TO DECLARE THE MONTH OF MARCH 2025 AS “THE CELEBRATION OF THE BICENTENNIAL OF THE MARQUIS DE LAFAYETTE’S VISIT DURING HIS FAREWELL TOUR OF THE NATION IN 1825” IN SOUTH CAROLINA.

The Resolution was adopted.

S. 193 -- Senators Reichenbach, Sabb and Williams: A CONCURRENT RESOLUTION TO REQUEST THE DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION NAME THE PORTION OF CASHUA DRIVE IN THE CITY OF FLORENCE IN FLORENCE COUNTY FROM ITS INTERSECTION WITH SECOND LOOP ROAD TO ITS INTERSECTION WITH UNITED STATES HIGHWAY 76 “CURTIS KERSHAW SUMMERFORD MEMORIAL HIGHWAY” AND ERECT APPROPRIATE SIGNS OR MARKERS ALONG THIS PORTION OF HIGHWAY CONTAINING THESE WORDS.

The Resolution was adopted, ordered sent to the House.

S. 224 -- Senator Tedder: A CONCURRENT RESOLUTION TO RECOGNIZE JANUARY 2025 AS “MENTORING MONTH” IN SOUTH CAROLINA.

The Resolution was adopted, ordered sent to the House.

THE CALL OF THE UNCONTESTED CALENDAR HAVING BEEN COMPLETED, THE SENATE PROCEEDED TO THE MOTION PERIOD.

MOTION ADOPTED

At 2:04 P.M., on motion of Senator MASSEY, the Senate agreed to dispense with the balance of the Motion Period.

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THE SENATE PROCEEDED TO THE INTERRUPTED DEBATE.

AMENDED, DEBATE INTERRUPTED

S. 62 -- Senators Hembree, Rice and Grooms: A BILL TO AMEND THE SOUTH CAROLINA CODE OF LAWS BY AMENDING SECTION 59-8-110, RELATING TO DEFINITIONS, SO AS TO DEFINE NECESSARY TERMS; BY AMENDING SECTION 59-8-115, RELATING TO THE STANDARD APPLICATION PROCESS, SO AS TO PROVIDE REQUIREMENTS FOR STUDENTS AND SCHOOLS SEEKING TO PARTICIPATE IN THE PROGRAM; BY AMENDING SECTION 59-8-120, RELATING TO ADMINISTRATION OF FUND, SO AS TO PROVIDE FOR THE ADMINISTRATION OF THE K-12 EDUCATION LOTTERY SCHOLARSHIP; BY AMENDING SECTION 59-8-125, RELATING TO FUNDS TO CREATE, OVERSEE, AND THE ADMINISTER PROGRAM, SUSPENSION OF ACCOUNTS, UNUSED FUNDS, AND TERMINATION OF SCHOLARSHIPS, SO AS TO APPROPRIATE FUNDS FOR THE SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM FROM THE SOUTH CAROLINA EDUCATION LOTTERY ACCOUNT; BY AMENDING SECTION 59-8-130, RELATING TO TERMINATION OF SCHOLARSHIP STUDENT'S PROGRAM; NOTIFICATION, SO AS TO MAKE CONFORMING CHANGES; BY AMENDING SECTION 59-8-135, RELATING TO LIMITATIONS ON SCHOLARSHIPS, SO AS TO PROVIDE LIMITATIONS ON THE NUMBER OF SCHOLARSHIPS THAT MAY BE AWARDED; BY AMENDING SECTION 59-8-140, RELATING TO THE APPLICATION APPROVAL PROCESS FOR EDUCATION SERVICE PROVIDERS, SO AS TO PROVIDE THAT AN EDUCATION SERVICE PROVIDER MUST CERTIFY ANNUALLY TO THE DEPARTMENT THAT IT MEETS ALL PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS; BY AMENDING SECTION 59-8-145, RELATING TO PROCEDURES TO INFORM STUDENTS AND THEIR PARENTS OF ELIGIBILITY AND APPROVED EDUCATION SERVICE PROVIDERS, SO AS TO MAKE CONFORMING CHANGES; BY AMENDING SECTION 59-8-150, RELATING TO REQUIREMENTS FOR EDUCATION SERVICE PROVIDERS, DEPARTMENT, AND EDUCATION OVERSIGHT COMMITTEE, SO AS TO PROVIDE THAT THE SURETY BOND IS REQUIRED OF EDUCATION SERVICE PROVIDERS WHO EXCEED FIFTY THOUSAND DOLLARS IN QUALIFYING

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EXPENSES AND TO MAKE CONFORMING CHANGES; BY AMENDING SECTION 59-8-160, RELATING TO THE K-12 EDUCATION LOTTERY SCHOLARSHIP REVIEW PANEL, SO AS TO PROVIDE FOR ITS COMPOSITION AND PURPOSES; BY AMENDING SECTION 59-8-165, RELATING TO STUDENT TRANSFER POLICY, SO AS TO CLARIFY STUDENT TRANSFER REQUIREMENTS; BY AMENDING SECTION 59-8-170, RELATING TO IMMEDIATE PARTICIPATION IN A SPORT BY A TRANSFER SCHOLARSHIP STUDENT, SO AS TO MAKE CONFORMING CHANGES ; AND BY AMENDING SECTION 59-150-350, RELATING TO THE EDUCATION LOTTERY ACCOUNT MANAGEMENT, SO AS TO MAKE CONFORMING CHANGES.

The Senate proceeded to a consideration of the Bill, the question being the second reading of the Bill.

Amendment No. 12B

Senator OTT proposed the following amendment (LC-62.WAB0007S), which was tabled:

Amend the bill, SECTION 9, by striking Section 59-8-150(C)(1)(a), ~~(b)~~, and (c) and inserting:

(a) ensure that each scholarship student in grades three through eight takes the SC Ready summative assessment in English language arts, math, science or social studies as required of students in public schools in this State;

~~— (b) ensure that each scholarship student in grades four and six takes the SC Pass or SC Pass alternative summative assessment required of students in public schools in this State;~~

(c) ensure that each scholarship student in grades nine through twelve takes a nationally norm referenced or formative assessment approved by the department the same department-approved nationally norm-referenced assessment, formative assessment, or assessment that demonstrates the student's college, career, or military readiness as used in public schools. Students with disabilities for whom standardized testing is not appropriate are exempt from this requirement;

Renumber sections to conform.

Amend title to conform.

Senator OTT explained the amendment.

Senator HEMBREE spoke on the amendment.

Senator HEMBREE moved to lay the amendment on the table.

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The amendment was laid on the table.

Amendment No. 13

Senator HEMBREE proposed the following amendment (SEDU-62.DB0006S), which was adopted:

Amend the bill, as and if amended, SECTION 1, Section 59-8-110, by striking the undesignated paragraph and inserting:

“Eligible student” does not include students participating in the Educational Credit for Exceptional Needs Children's Fund program, as provided in Section 12-6-3790 or a student who is not subject to the compulsory attendance requirements of Section 59-65-10.

Renumber sections to conform.

Amend title to conform.

Senator HEMBREE explained the amendment.

The amendment was adopted.

Amendment No. 14A

Senator MASSEY proposed the following amendment (SR-62.CEM0030S), which was adopted:

Amend the bill, as and if amended, SECTION 1, by deleting Section 59-8-110(2)(b)(iii) from the bill.

Renumber sections to conform.

Amend title to conform.

Senator MASSEY explained the amendment.

Senator CLIMER spoke on the amendment.

Senator JACKSON spoke on the amendment.

Senator CLIMER moved to lay the amendment on the table.

The Senate refused to lay the amendment on the table.

The question then was the adoption of the amendment.

The "ayes" and "nays" were demanded and taken, resulting as follows:

Ayes 30; Nays 11

AYES

Alexander

Allen

Bennett

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Campsen	Chaplin	Corbin
Cromer	Gambrell	Garrett
Graham	Hembree	Jackson
Johnson	Kennedy	Massey
Nutt	Ott	Peeler
Rankin	Reichenbach	Rice
Sabb	Stubbs	Sutton
Tedder	Turner	Verdin
Williams	Young	Zell

Total--30

NAYS

Adams	Cash	Climer
Elliott	Fernandez	Goldfinch
Grooms	Kimbrell	Leber
Martin	Walker	

Total--11

The amendment was adopted.

Amendment No. 16

Senator MASSEY proposed the following amendment (SR-62.CEM0022S), which was carried over:

Amend the bill, as and if amended, SECTION 3, by striking Section 59-8-120(C) and inserting:

(C) Upon request of the parent and approval of an eligible student's application by the department, the State Treasurer shall transfer the annual scholarship amount, as defined below, six thousand dollars per scholarship student from the South Carolina Education Lottery Account to the K-12 Education Lottery Scholarship Fund.

(1) In the first year of the program, the scholarship amount shall be six thousand five hundred dollars.

(2) Each subsequent year, the scholarship amount shall increase in an amount equal to the percentage increase in the average per pupil funding from state sources for the prior academic year as provided by the Office of Revenue and Fiscal Affairs to the Education Scholarship Trust Fund as directed by the General Assembly, unless an increased or decreased limit is authorized in the annual general appropriations act.

Renumber sections to conform.

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Amend title to conform.

Senator MASSEY explained the amendment.

On motion of Senator MASSEY, the amendment was carried over.

Amendment No. 17

Senator MASSEY proposed the following amendment (SR-62.CEM0024S), which was adopted:

Amend the bill, as and if amended, SECTION 9, by striking Section 59-8-150(A)(4) and inserting:

(4) conduct and maintain records of completed criminal background checks on employees. An education service provider that is not an accredited or licensed school must submit documentation of completed background checks to the department as part of their initial application. All education service providers must ~~and~~ exclude from employment anyone who:

- (a) is not permitted by state law to work in a school;
- (b) reasonably might pose a threat to the safety of students; or
- (c) is listed on federal, state, or other central child abuse registries.

Renumber sections to conform.

Amend title to conform.

Senator MASSEY explained the amendment.

The amendment was adopted.

Amendment No. 18

Senator MASSEY proposed the following amendment (SR-62.CEM0023S), which was adopted:

Amend the bill, as and if amended, SECTION 7, by striking Section 59-8-140(A)(3) and inserting:

(3) An education service provider that participated in the program in the previous school year and desires to participate in the program in the current school year shall reapply to the department ~~must certify annually to the department that it meets all program requirements.~~ The education service provider reapplying shall certify to the department that it continues to meet all program requirements. An education service provider required to administer academic testing shall provide to the department test score data from the previous school year. If individual

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student test score data is not submitted, then the department shall remove the education service provider from the program.

Renumber sections to conform.

Amend title to conform.

Senator MASSEY explained the amendment.

The amendment was adopted.

Amendment No. 19

Senator MASSEY proposed the following amendment (SR-62.CEM0025S), which was adopted:

Amend the bill further, SECTION 9, by striking Section 59-8-150(C)(1)(b) and (c) and inserting:

~~(e)(b)~~ in lieu of the assessments required by subitems (a) ~~and (b)~~, ensure that each scholarship recipient in grades three through eight takes a nationally norm-referenced ~~summative assessment annually or a~~ formative assessment at the beginning of the school year, at the end of the first semester, and at the end of the school year. The assessment must be approved by the department, aligned with state standards, and include a linking study;

~~(d)(c)~~ ensure that each scholarship student in grades nine through twelve takes ~~a~~ nationally norm-referenced or formative assessment approved by the department ~~approved nationally norm-referenced assessment, formative assessment, or assessment that demonstrates the student's college, career, or military readiness.~~ Students with disabilities for whom standardized testing is not appropriate are exempt from this requirement;

Renumber sections to conform.

Amend title to conform.

Senator MASSEY explained the amendment.

The amendment was adopted.

Amendment No. 20

Senator MASSEY proposed the following amendment (SR-62.CEM0029S), which was carried over:

Amend the bill, as and if amended, by deleting SECTIONS 11 and 12.

Renumber sections to conform.

Amend title to conform.

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Senator MASSEY explained the amendment.

On motion of Senator MASSEY, the amendment was carried over.

Amendment No. 23

Senator TEDDER proposed the following amendment (SMIN-62.MW0007S), which was tabled:

Amend the bill, as and if amended, SECTION 2, by striking Section 59-8-115(D)(4)(d), (e), (f), and (g) and inserting:

~~(e)(d)~~ not to enroll their scholarship student in a public school as a full-time student in the resident school ~~district~~, as defined in this chapter;

~~(f) not to participate in a home instruction program under Sections 59-65-40, 59-65-45, or 59-65-47;~~

~~(g)(f)(e)~~ that includes documentation of the consultation process between the parent, the resident school district, the education service provider, and any school district that the education service provider contracts with under an IEP or services plan, for each scholarship student with a disability regarding the special education and related services, and the manner by which these services as listed in the student's IEP or services plan, will be provided to a scholarship student with a disability; and

~~(h)(g)(f)~~ to confirm that, if the parent's child is a student with disabilities, the parent has received notice from the department that participation in the ~~ESTF~~ scholarship program is a parental placement of the scholarship student under IDEA, along with an explanation of the rights that parentally placed students possess under IDEA and any applicable state laws and regulations, including the consultation process provided for in 20 U.S.C. Section 1412(a)(10) and the Individual Education Program requirements described in Section 1414(d) of IDEA.

Renumber sections to conform.

Amend title to conform.

Senator TEDDER explained the amendment.

Senator HEMBREE spoke on the amendment.

Senator HEMBREE moved to lay the amendment on the table.

The amendment was laid on the table.

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Amendment No. 24A

Senator DEVINE proposed the following amendment (SMIN-62.MW0021S), which was adopted:

Amend the bill, as and if amended, SECTION 9, by striking Section 59-8-150(A)(3) and (4) and inserting:

(3) not unlawfully discriminate on the basis of race, color, or national origin. This item shall not be interpreted to preclude any independent or religious educational provider from exercising an exemption allowed under federal law; and

(4) maintain a working publicly accessible website that provides information on the educational services available to families; and

(5) conduct criminal background checks on employees and exclude from employment anyone who:

(a) is not permitted by state law to work in a school;

(b) reasonably might pose a threat to the safety of students; or

(c) is listed on federal, state, or other central child abuse registries.

Renumber sections to conform.

Amend title to conform.

Senator DEVINE explained the amendment.

The amendment was adopted.

Amendment No. 25

Senator HEMBREE proposed the following amendment (SEDU-62.DB0007S), which was carried over:

Amend the bill, as and if amended, SECTION 12, by striking Section 59-8-170 and inserting:

Section 59-8-170. A scholarship student transferring from one public school to another public school pursuant to this program is not subject to any prohibition by the South Carolina High School League on a transfer student from participating in ~~a sport~~ an interscholastic sport immediately upon transfer. After the initial transfer, any subsequent transfer by a scholarship student to another public school shall be subject to the South Carolina High School League eligibility rules.

Renumber sections to conform.

Amend title to conform.

Senator HEMBREE explained the amendment.

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On motion of Senator HEMBREE, the amendment was carried over.

Amendment No. 26

Senator DEVINE proposed the following amendment (SMIN-62.MW0002S), which was carried over:

Amend the bill, as and if amended, SECTION 7, by striking Section 59-8-140(A)(3) and inserting:

(3) An education service provider ~~that participated in the program in the previous school year and desires to participate in the program in the current school year shall reapply to the department~~must certify annually to the department that it meets all program requirements. The education service provider reapplying shall certify to the department that it continues to meet all program requirements and that it has not raised the cost of attendance for a K-12 scholarship student enrolled during the previous school year by an amount greater than any increase in the ratio of the Consumer Price Index as calculated annually by the Revenue and Fiscal Affairs Office pursuant to Sections 15-32-220(F) and 15-32-530(D). An education service provider required to administer academic testing shall provide to the department test score data from the previous school year. If individual student test score data is not submitted, then the department shall remove the education service provider from the program.

Renumber sections to conform.

Amend title to conform.

Senator DEVINE explained the amendment.

On motion of Senator DEVINE, the amendment was carried over.

Amendment No. 27

Senator MASSEY proposed the following amendment (SR-62.CEM0031S), which was tabled:

Amend the bill, as and if amended, SECTION 1, by striking Section 59-8-110(2) and inserting:

~~—(2) “Education Scholarship Trust Fund”, “ESTF”, or “fund” means the individual account that is administered by the department to which funds are allocated to the parent of an eligible student to pay for qualifying expenses.~~

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~~Amend~~ the bill further, SECTION 1, by striking Section 59-8-110 and inserting:

~~(4)-(2)~~ “Eligible student” means a student who:

(a) is a resident of this State; ~~and~~

~~(b)(i) attended a public school in this State during the previous school year; attended a public school in this State for at least ninety days during the previous school year;~~

(ii) had not yet attained the age of five on or before September first of the previous school year but who has attained the age of five on or before September of the current school year; or

(iii) received a scholarship pursuant to this chapter for the previous school year; and

Renumber sections to conform.

Amend title to conform.

Senator MASSEY explained the amendment.

Senator CLIMER spoke on the amendment.

Senator CLIMER moved to lay the amendment on the table.

The "ayes" and "nays" were demanded and taken, resulting as follows:

Ayes 30; Nays 11

AYES

Adams	Alexander	Bennett
Campsen	Cash	Chaplin
Climer	Corbin	Cromer
Davis	Elliott	Gambrell
Garrett	Goldfinch	Grooms
Hembree	Johnson	Kennedy
Kimbrell	Leber	Martin
Nutt	Peeler	Reichenbach
Rice	Stubbs	Turner
Verdin	Walker	Young

Total--30

NAYS

Allen	Devine	Graham
Jackson	Massey	Ott
Rankin	Sabb	Sutton

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Tedder

Williams

Total--11

The amendment was laid on the table.

Amendment No. 28

Senator MASSEY proposed the following amendment (SR-62.CEM0032S), which was adopted:

Amend the bill, as and if amended, SECTION 3, by striking Section 59-8-120(C) and inserting:

(C) Upon request of the parent and approval of an eligible student's application by the department, the State Treasurer shall transfer ~~six thousand dollars per scholarship student~~ from the South Carolina Education Lottery Account to the K-12 Education Lottery Scholarship Fund an amount equal to ninety percent of the average per pupil funding from state sources for the prior academic year as provided by the Office of Revenue and Fiscal Affairs to the Education Scholarship Trust Fund as directed by the General Assembly, unless an increased or decreased limit is authorized in the annual general appropriations act.

Renumber sections to conform.

Amend title to conform.

Senator MASSEY explained the amendment.

The amendment was adopted.

Amendment No. 2

Senators GOLDFINCH and RANKIN proposed the following amendment (SEDU-62.DB0002S), which was adopted:

Amend the bill, as and if amended, SECTION 1, Section 59-8-110(2), by adding an item to read:

(c) Notwithstanding any other provision of this Chapter, a student attending his resident school may be an eligible student if he meets all other eligibility criteria and the Department of Education has certified the district in which the resident school is located can not adequately provide for an essential service to the student

Renumber sections to conform.

Amend title to conform.

Senator GOLDFINCH explained the amendment.

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The amendment was adopted.

Amendment No. 8

Senator OTT proposed the following amendment (LC-62.WAB0003S), which was withdrawn:

Amend the bill, as and if amended, SECTION 9, by striking Section 59-8-150(C)(1)(a) and (b) and inserting:

(a) ensure that each scholarship student in grades three through eight takes the SC Ready or SC Ready alternative summative assessment in English language arts, math, science or social studies as required of students in public schools in this State;

~~— (b) ensure that each scholarship student in grades four and six takes the SC Pass or SC Pass alternative summative assessment required of students in public schools in this State;~~

~~(c) in lieu of the assessments required by subitems (a) and (b), ensure that each scholarship recipient in grades three through eight takes a nationally norm-referenced formative assessment at the beginning of the school year, at the end of the first semester, and at the end of the school year. The assessment must be approved by the department, aligned with state standards, and include a linking study;~~

Renumber sections to conform.

Amend title to conform.

Motion Adopted

On motion of Senator OTT, with unanimous consent, Amendment No. 8 was withdrawn.

Amendment No. 15

Senator MASSEY proposed the following amendment (SR-62.CEM0020S), which was withdrawn:

Amend the bill, as and if amended, SECTION 2, by striking Section 59-8-115(D) and inserting:

~~(E)(D)~~ The department shall approve an ~~initial~~ application for scholarship if:

(1) the parent submits an annual application for a scholarship in accordance with the application and procedures established by the department;

(2) the student on whose behalf the parent is applying is an eligible student;

(3) funds are available for the ~~ESTF~~scholarship; and

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(4) the parent signs an annual agreement with the department ~~annually attests to the following:~~

(a) to provide, at a minimum, a program of academic instruction for the eligible student in at least the subjects of English/language arts to include writing, mathematics, social studies, and science;

~~— (b) to acknowledge and agree to comply with the education service provider's prescribed curriculum, dress code, and other requirements of enrolled students;~~

~~(e)~~(b) to ensure the scholarship student takes assessments as referenced in Section 59-8-150 or provides assessments in a similar manner through other means if the scholarship student does not receive full-time instruction from an education service provider;

~~(d)~~(c) to use ~~program funds~~ the scholarship for qualifying expenses only for an approved provider to educate the scholarship student, subject to penalty;

~~(e)~~(d) not to enroll their scholarship student in a public school as a full-time student in the resident school ~~district~~, as defined in this chapter;

~~(f)~~(e) not to participate in a home instruction program under Sections 59-65-40, 59-65-45, or 59-65-47;

~~(g)~~(f) that includes documentation of the consultation process between the parent, the resident school district, the education service provider, and any school district that the education service provider contracts with under an IEP or services plan, for each scholarship student with a disability regarding the special education and related services, and the manner by which these services as listed in the student's IEP or services plan, will be provided to a scholarship student with a disability; and

~~(h)~~(g) to confirm that, if the parent's child is a student with disabilities, the parent has received notice from the department that participation in the ~~ESTF~~ scholarship program is a parental placement of the scholarship student under IDEA, along with an explanation of the rights that parentally placed students possess under IDEA and any applicable state laws and regulations, including the consultation process provided for in 20 U.S.C. Section 1412(a)(10) and the Individual Education Program requirements described in Section 1414(d) of IDEA.

(F)

Renumber sections to conform.

Amend title to conform.

Motion adopted

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On motion of Senator MASSEY, with unanimous consent, Amendment No. 15 was withdrawn.

Amendment No. 16

Senator MASSEY proposed the following amendment (SR-62.CEM0022S), which was withdrawn:

Amend the bill, as and if amended, SECTION 3, by striking Section 59-8-120(C) and inserting:

(C) Upon request of the parent and approval of an eligible student's application by the department, the State Treasurer shall transfer the annual scholarship amount, as defined below, six thousand dollars per scholarship student from the South Carolina Education Lottery Account to the K-12 Education Lottery Scholarship Fund.

(1) In the first year of the program, the scholarship amount shall be six thousand five hundred dollars.

(2) Each subsequent year, the scholarship amount shall increase in an amount equal to the percentage increase in the average per pupil funding from state sources for the prior academic year as provided by the Office of Revenue and Fiscal Affairs to the Education Scholarship Trust Fund as directed by the General Assembly, unless an increased or decreased limit is authorized in the annual general appropriations act.

Renumber sections to conform.

Amend title to conform.

Motion adopted

On motion of Senator MASSEY, with unanimous consent, Amendment No. 16 was withdrawn.

Amendment No. 20

Senator MASSEY proposed the following amendment (SR-62.CEM0029S), which was withdrawn:

Amend the bill, as and if amended, by deleting SECTIONS 11 and 12.

Renumber sections to conform.

Amend title to conform.

Senator MASSEY explained the amendment.

Senator HEMBREE spoke on the amendment.

Motion adopted

On motion of Senator MASSEY, with unanimous consent, Amendment No. 20 was withdrawn.

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Amendment No. 33

Senator MASSEY proposed the following amendment (SR-62.CEM0035S), which was carried over:

Amend the bill, as and if amended, by deleting SECTION 11.

Renumber sections to conform.

Amend title to conform.

Senator MASSEY explained the amendment.

Senator HEMBREE spoke on the amendment.

On motion of Senator HEMBREE, the amendment was carried over.

Motion Adopted

On motion of Senator MASSEY, the Senate agreed that, when the Senate completed its business today, it would stand in recess until 6:45 P.M. for the purpose of attending the Joint Assembly and at the conclusion of the Joint Assembly, it would stand adjourned to meet at 11:00 A.M. tomorrow.

RECESS

At 5:53 P.M., on motion of Senator MASSEY, the Senate recessed from business until 6:45 P.M.

At 6:45 P.M., the Senate resumed.

NIGHT SESSION

The Senate assembled at 6:45 P.M. and was called to order by the PRESIDENT.

Committee to Escort

The PRESIDENT appointed Senators PEELER, GROOMS, SABB, DEVINE and LEBER to escort the Honorable Henry D. McMaster, Governor of South Carolina, and members of his party to the House Chamber for the Joint Assembly.

At 6:55 P.M., the Senate recessed for the purpose of attending the Joint Assembly.

JOINT ASSEMBLY

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Address by the Governor

At 7:00 o'clock P.M., the Senate appeared in the Hall of the House.

The PRESIDENT of the Senate called the Joint Assembly to order and announced that it had convened under the terms of a Concurrent Resolution adopted by both Houses.

H. 3660 -- Rep. G.M. Smith: A CONCURRENT RESOLUTION INVITING HIS EXCELLENCY, HENRY DARGAN MCMASTER, GOVERNOR OF THE STATE OF SOUTH CAROLINA, TO ADDRESS THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY IN JOINT SESSION AT 7:00 P.M. ON WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 29, 2025, IN THE CHAMBER OF THE SOUTH CAROLINA HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES.

The Honorable Henry D. McMaster, and members of his party, were escorted to the rostrum by Senators PEELER, GROOMS, SABB, DEVINE and LEBER and Representatives Crawford, Govan, Grant, Hiott and Teeple.

The PRESIDENT of the Senate introduced the Honorable Henry D. McMaster, Governor of the State of South Carolina.

The Governor addressed the Joint Assembly as follows:

State of the State Address

Mr. Speaker, Mr. PRESIDENT, ladies and gentlemen of the General Assembly, my fellow South Carolinians: We are here tonight to address successes, challenges, and opportunities. But first, as in prior years, I'd like to recognize those in uniform whom we lost in the line of duty in 2024.

Firefighter Michael Douglas Vinson of the Laurens County Fire Department and the Clinton Fire Department, Officer First Class Mark Reynolds of the South Carolina State Transport Police, Chief Chad Satcher of the Circle Fire Department, Firefighter Landon Cale Bodie of the Circle Fire Department, K-9 Agent Coba with the State Law Enforcement Division, K-9 Deputy Mikka with the Lee County Sheriff's Office, K-9 Deputy Bumi with the Richland County Sheriff's Department, K-9 Deputy Kodak with the Richland County Sheriff's Department, and K-9 Deputy Wick with the Richland County Sheriff's Department.

To the families and loved ones of these brave South Carolinians, we offer our condolences. We are eternally grateful for their service.

I am delighted to have with us once again tonight our First Lady, my bride Peggy, our son Henry Jr., and his wife Virginia and our two-year old granddaughter, Margot Gray. Our daughter Mary Rogers, her

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husband Sam Herskovitz, and our two-and-a-half-year-old grandson, James Dargan and four month old granddaughter Lucille DuBose, could not be with us tonight but are watching on TV. Please stand and be recognized.

Also, our Lieutenant Governor Pamela Evette and her husband David are here tonight and our state constitutional officeholders. Please stand and be recognized.

Finally, will the members of the best cabinet in the Nation please stand and be recognized. Thank you all.

Being selected by the people who know you best to serve as Governor is among the highest of honors. I thank you.

South Carolina consists of about 20 million acres, with a half a million covered by water – today. About 2.3 million acres are “developed,” and about 3.1 million are “protected.” We have over 22,000 farms, over 8 million acres of forest land and over 5.3 million people – of which over almost 860,000 are K-12 students – over 188,000 businesses, a major port, a temperate climate, mostly nuclear power, and occasional hurricanes. How are we doing? We have some decisions to make.

South Carolina’s booming economy has once again created a large budget surplus, this year totaling over \$1.8 billion in unexpected revenue. So, it was no surprise that 2024 was once again a successful year for economic growth and investment.

In fact, 2024 was the third best in state history with \$8.2 billion in capital investment and 5,500 new jobs announced. This followed the second best year in 2023, and the best year in 2022.

Because of our unmatched workforce and business friendly policies, companies already located in South Carolina reinvested in our State with over \$5.3 billion in announced capital investment through expansion projects in 2024.

The top three leading industries by capital investment in 2024 were information technology with \$4.1 billion, automotive with \$1.3 billion and aerospace and aviation with \$1 billion. Domestic companies made up 67% of 2024 capital investment, while international companies made up 33%.

Since 2017, we have announced over \$44.7 billion in new capital investment and over 92,000 new jobs.

I would like to recognize several of the businesses which announced their confidence in our people by their substantial capital investment in 2024. If the leaders will stand as I name your company, we will respond when all are standing.

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In Spartanburg County, AFL – which has called South Carolina home for 40 years – will expand its existing fiber optic facilities to create an additional 150 jobs with a \$155 million investment. Welcome Mr. Jaxon Lang, Chief Executive Officer.

In Charleston County, Boeing is investing \$1 billion in infrastructure upgrades and will create 500 new jobs. Welcome Ms. Erin Fisher, Head of Global Engagement.

In Greenville County, EnerSys is growing its presence in the State by investing \$500 million for a lithium-ion cell gigafactory that will create 500 new jobs. Welcome Mr. Sam Shiroff, Senior Director of Global Sustainability.

In the Lowcountry, Google will grow its South Carolina footprint by establishing two new data center campuses in Dorchester County and expanding its existing data center campus in Berkeley County. This combined investment of \$3.3 billion will create 200 new jobs. Welcome Mr. Eddie Walters, Data Center Operations Manager.

In Spartanburg County, Keurig Dr. Pepper, a leading producer of hot and cold beverages, will continue to grow its operations with a \$141 million investment and 84 new jobs. Welcome Mr. Chuck Hollingsworth, Director of Engineering and Operations.

In Greenville County, Magna, one of the largest suppliers in the automotive space, is establishing a new satellite operation and expanding its existing operation with a combined \$200 million investment and 200 new jobs. Welcome Mr. David Meier, Vice President of Operations.

In Oconee County, Meyn America is expanding with a \$50 million investment, creating 172 new jobs for a state-of-the-art manufacturing equipment facility for the poultry industry and the corporate headquarters. Welcome Mr. Michael Otterbach, Vice President of Operations.

And also, our Secretary of Commerce, Harry Lightsey, and his remarkable team which worked around the clock to produce these successes. Please stand. Thank you. We boomed in 2024 and will boom again in 2025.

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Every day, employers are creating new jobs, entrepreneurs are opening new businesses, and companies are deciding to locate in South Carolina. However, the competition between states, especially in the Southeast, is fierce.

Whether it is lower taxes, less regulation, plentiful power, quality education, our natural and cultural resources, a trained and healthy workforce, or unmatched livability – South Carolina's future prosperity requires that we constantly work to maintain or develop competitive advantages in the ever-accelerating race for new jobs and capital investment.

This includes our reputation of high military appreciation, solid law enforcement, low "big" labor union participation, and the friendliest people on earth.

Our state government is in superior fiscal shape. We continue to maintain our largest rainy day reserve fund balance and low amounts of general obligation debt. Again, saving money instead of spending it has served our State well – and ensures that we will always be prepared for future economic uncertainties.

Until a few years ago, South Carolina had the highest personal income tax rate in the Southeast, the 12th highest in the Nation. No more. Three years ago, I signed into law the largest income tax cut in state history, to drop the personal income tax rate from 7% to 6% over a period of five years. Our booming economy has created annual budget surpluses that have allowed us to accelerate these tax cuts faster than anticipated.

This year, I am proposing that we cut the state's personal income tax rate again, from 6.2% to 6% – allowing taxpayers to keep an additional \$193.5 million of their hard-earned money instead of sending it to state government.

However, we should not stop at 6%. We should keep cutting as much and as fast as we can until we can eliminate the personal income tax altogether.

Mr. Speaker, Mr. PRESIDENT, this is what the people want.

Our economic prosperity requires us to maintain consistency and certainty in our permitting processes. They must be thorough, reasonable, and prompt. Uncertainty is the enemy of prosperity.

Our state's booming economy has dramatically increased the demand for permits: permits required to expand a business, construct a new facility, or deliver additional power and infrastructure -- like water and sewer.

One of my first goals for the newly created cabinet agency, the Department of Environmental Services, was to eliminate any backlog of

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permit decisions and to establish a hard 90-day deadline for the decisions to be made.

I am recommending an appropriation of \$13.7 million so the department can hire and train the employees they need to get this done.

I believe you should be able to mark your calendar – to circle that date with a bright red marker – and know when a decision will be made.

Our state's laws and regulations are designed to protect the public, and also ensure that individuals have the freedom to pursue their chosen careers without undue interference.

Over the years, the General Assembly has created over 42 different professional and occupational licensing boards, run by 350 appointed board members, who license and regulate over 500,000 South Carolinians in the workplace.

They oversee accountants, architects, barbers, builders, cosmetologists, chiropractors, contractors, doctors, dentists, engineers, morticians, nurses, optometrists, pharmacists, realtors, and social workers, just to name a few.

Each year, the licensing of these professions seems to become more complicated and burdensome.

I agree with my colleagues that it's time we pause, review the laws that created these boards along with their statutory requirements and determine whether they are necessary, effective, and balanced.

Future economic prosperity requires that our state's civil justice system allows fair and prompt enforcement of our laws and proper redress of injury. This should not stifle job creation and economic growth.

Yet the application of our current legal framework and rules are increasingly making South Carolina less competitive. The rules on joint and several liability have introduced an element of uncertainty. And uncertainty is the enemy of prosperity.

Individuals and businesses, both large and small, are becoming unduly penalized for the actions of others – too often through crippling financial judgments and skyrocketing insurance premiums.

I ask the General Assembly to find a commonsense solution. One that will provide accountability, certainty, and just compensation -- without damaging our economy. And one that I can sign into law the minute it reaches my desk.

Two years ago it became clear that we had a mental health crisis in South Carolina. What wasn't clear was how bad it was.

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As a result – I proposed that we initiate and fund an immediate review of our state’s behavioral health funding and delivery system. The analysis confirmed what many of us had feared – and much worse.

South Carolina has the most fragmented and siloed health and human service delivery system in the Nation, with the lowest ranking, causing unnecessary suffering.

Our people with physical disabilities, special needs, and mental health issues seeking assistance must navigate through a confusing landscape of offices, agencies, and officials as they seek help for a loved one or dependent.

We learned that 77% of our state’s young people with major depressive episodes do not receive mental health treatment. Suicides have become the routine and not the exception.

Our communities have a growing number of homeless people, many of whom have untreated mental, physical, or substance addiction problems. They fall through the cracks of a system that does not coordinate, communicate, or collaborate. We must fix this.

Immediate changes are needed at the Department of Mental Health and the Department of Disabilities and Special Needs. They are run by a board of commissioners who are accountable to no one – and it’s virtually impossible for a Governor to remove them. “If everyone is in charge – then no one is in charge.”

South Carolinians should be able to hold one person – their Governor – accountable for the actions of the Department of Mental Health and the Department of Disabilities and Special Needs. That was the notion that fueled Governor Carroll Campbell’s successful effort to begin the restructuring of state government agencies in the early 1990s.

This year – let’s finish this job with a stroke of a pen by making the Department of Mental Health and the Department of Disabilities and Special Needs cabinet agencies that are directly and immediately accountable to the Governor.

And let this legislative session be remembered as the year we finally moved into the future.

South Carolina has been identified as part of the “stroke belt” with high stroke and dementia mortality rates. Current neurological care options in the State are limited, forcing our people to seek care outside the State. This delays early diagnosis and treatment, may extend hospital stays, and creates significant financial burdens.

Today, we have a once-in-a-generation opportunity to create a world-class neurological facility for critical care procedures, rehabilitation services, and leading-edge research in the field of neurology.

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I propose that the General Assembly provide funding to the Department of Health and Human Services for the construction of this new neurological hospital – which will house an 80-bed critical care unit and a 32-bed neurological rehabilitation unit, both operated by the University of South Carolina.

The State Health Plan provides medical, vision, dental, and pharmacy insurance coverage for over 543,000 South Carolinians. School district teachers and employees make up 41%, government retirees 37%, state agency employees (including higher education) 21%, and local boards 1%.

This year will mark the fourth year in a row that the State Health Plan, administered by the Public Employee Benefit Authority, known as PEBA, has requested an additional \$112 million to offset healthcare provider cost increases and to simply maintain existing insurance benefits.

That's almost a half-a-billion dollars in four years. That's not fiscally sustainable.

If the General Assembly chooses to continue appropriating these funds, I recommend they come with a new cost containment requirement. PEBA should be required to identify and propose cost savings measures for the State Health Plan in order to slow cost increases to a manageable level.

We know that future economic prosperity requires us to have abundant and affordable energy. We know that we will need more. The questions are: how much and how will it be produced and transmitted?

Our electric generation, distribution, and transmission capacity and capabilities must be able to handle enhanced future economic development, anticipated technological advances, and population growth.

We must vigorously explore the feasibility of technological advances related to energy production. Limitations and obstacles on the State's ability to receive and utilize natural gas must be removed. We must prepare now for a future driven by nuclear power generation on scales both large and small. And we must identify any modifications or additions to existing laws, regulations, policies, or procedures that may be necessary to meet these needs.

Two years ago, we created the PowerSC working group. They began leading the effort to coordinate the state's energy stakeholders.

Next came the SC Nexus for Advanced Resilient Energy consortium developed by our Department of Commerce. This is a collaboration with our research universities, technical colleges, state agencies, the Savannah

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River National Laboratory, economic development non-profits, and private businesses.

Then we won the U.S. Department of Commerce's Economic Development Administration's coveted designation as one of 12 Regional Technology and Innovation Hubs in the country, qualifying for federal research grant funding valued between \$40-\$70 million annually.

Our focus: power.

Last week Santee Cooper began the process of gauging the feasibility of and the interest in restarting the construction of two abandoned nuclear reactors at the V.C. Summer Nuclear Station.

I believe that restarting these two reactors will not only help fuel our state's future power needs, but will also usher in a nuclear power renaissance across the country, one that will spur nationwide investment and construction of new nuclear power generation. This will provide America with ample, clean, resilient energy for the future and deter challenges to our national security.

Last year, the General Assembly was unable to reach consensus on legislation that would have addressed many of our future energy needs. We need this legislation. We are running out of time. I ask that you send this legislation to my desk so that I may sign it into law.

Again, our state's roads, bridges, highways, and interstates are the arteries of our prosperity. They need continued investment. The Department of Transportation has made tremendous progress in repairing and improving our transportation system. They have delivered a valuable return on our investments – with the strong help of the executive and legislative branches.

For instance, in 2017, there were just \$2.7 billion in road construction projects underway across the State. Today, we have \$6.5 billion in projects happening in all 46 counties, with more to be done.

Our bridges are aging. The Department of Transportation reports that around 2,400 of the state's 8,400 bridges are at the point of replacement or major repair. Without continued acceleration of investment, that number will swell to 3,900 in ten years.

To that end, I am recommending an additional \$100 million be appropriated to the Department of Transportation to continue accelerating bridge construction across the State.

Before sunrise on Friday, September 27, 2024, Hurricane Helene struck South Carolina.

It is the deadliest storm to ever hit our State with 49 confirmed deaths, surpassing Hurricane Hugo, which had 35 confirmed deaths.

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The damage from Helene was devastating. At least 6,300 homes were damaged. It spawned 21 tornadoes. Our agribusiness industry suffered at least \$621 million in damages, 912 roads and bridges were closed, and 10 bridges must be rebuilt. All due to Helene.

At its peak, nearly 1.36 million customers were without electricity. More than Florida and Georgia combined. Trees and utility lines were snarled together, blocking roads and bridges, creating dangerous and deadly entanglements, making it impossible to quickly clear roads, repair damage to property, and get the power back on.

But we responded magnificently. Joining us here tonight are a few of the men and women who worked day and night – some for weeks – at dangerous heights – and around deadly high voltage electricity – to get the power back on. Linemen from Duke Energy, Dominion Energy, and Santee Cooper. And from the local electric cooperatives, Aiken, Broad River, Blue Ridge, Coastal, Fairfield, Laurens, Little River, Mid-Carolina, Newberry, and York. I ask that you please stand and be recognized.

Team South Carolina moved quickly to provide access to disaster relief and assistance from the Federal Emergency Management Agency.

We held seven “County Day” events, providing over 3,700 residents in 17 counties with a daylong “one-stop shop” location to apply for federal and state financial assistance, receive critical information and services, and donated goods. Volunteers distributed over 3,500 cases of bottled water, over 3,300 boxes of food, 900 bags of charcoal, 758 grills, 616 cases of diapers, and 300 tarps.

In addition, three daylong Farm and Forest Recovery Resource Days were held for hundreds of farmers, foresters, and agribusiness owners impacted by Helene, providing them with access to federal and state financial relief and resources.

Over \$5 million in Helene relief contributions were made to the One SC Fund at Central Carolina Community Foundation, the most that has ever been donated to the fund for a single storm, since it was created in 2015.

For some perspective on the damage from Helene consider this:

To date, South Carolinians have submitted over 441,000 applications for individual financial assistance to FEMA for Hurricane Helene damage. Compare that with the combined number of 164,000 applications submitted for the Flood of 2015, Hurricane Matthew in 2016, and Hurricane Florence in 2018.

So far, only \$150 million in community disaster recovery block grants from the Department of Housing and Urban Development have been

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awarded to South Carolina from the \$110 billion relief package approved by Congress in December. We know that there will be additional federal funds designated for our State, but we don't know if it will be enough.

And while we got FEMA to reimburse 100% of South Carolina's clean-up costs for 120 days, significant state funds will be necessary to pay for costs above and beyond federal assistance.

For example, the Department of Transportation needs an additional \$50 million in this year's state budget to cover costs related to debris removal and repairs to roads and bridges – costs that were not reimbursed by the federal government.

The Office of Resilience needs an additional \$40 million to replenish the two Disaster Relief and Resilience Reserve funds. Both the grant fund and revolving loan fund were utilized to provide immediate relief and resources on the ground to people impacted by Helene.

I am also recommending that \$150 million be appropriated to create the South Carolina Public Assistance program to be administered by the South Carolina Emergency Management Division.

This state grant program will mirror the federal program at FEMA. It will allow local governments, public utilities, nonprofits, and charitable aid organizations to apply for state disaster recovery funds – funds that were either denied by the federal government or did not meet federal FEMA thresholds for damage reimbursement.

Educating our children is the most important thing we do. Our future prosperity requires that we continue the remarkable progress we have made in raising teacher pay.

Eight years ago, the minimum starting salary of a teacher in South Carolina was \$30,113; and the average teacher salary was below the Southeastern average. I proposed that we begin raising the minimum starting teacher salary as much as possible each year, with the goal of raising it to at least \$50,000 by 2026.

Today, the minimum starting salary in South Carolina is \$47,000, and the average teacher salary now exceeds the Southeastern average. This represents an increase of 56.1% in eight years.

South Carolina's minimum starting teacher salary is now higher than both Georgia and North Carolina. But will that keep and attract the best and brightest teachers?

That's why I ask you to raise our minimum starting teacher salary to \$50,000 this year, not next year. In this race for the future, we must be the fastest.

With us tonight is Jessica Owens, a kindergarten teacher at Rocky Creek Elementary School in Lexington County School District One.

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Ms. Owens began her career in education as a classroom assistant to a wonderful kindergarten teacher who encouraged her to pursue education as a career. In 2021, she returned to Columbia College where she completed her degree in Early Childhood Education and began her career as a teacher.

Over the past several years, Ms. Owens has witnessed the impact of our state's commitment in raising the minimum starting salary for teachers.

She told me, "By having competitive pay, school districts can attract more candidates to the field, ensuring that schools are staffed with the best possible teachers, which ultimately benefits the students."

Ms. Owens joins us tonight along with her classroom assistant Britany Edrada. Please stand and be recognized.

Since the statewide expansion of the full-day four-year-old kindergarten program in School Year 2021-2022, enrollment in the program in public schools, private childcare centers, and private schools has increased significantly.

Today, over 18,000 students are enrolled in the program. The Office of First Steps anticipates a 7% increase in the number of children from low-income households that will enroll in the program in the next school year.

I am proposing that we continue making additional investments in our successful 4K programs. The data has shown that a child from a low-income household enrolled in a state-funded, full-day 4K program, is more likely to possess the skills to learn than their peers who do not participate.

This week is National School Choice Week.

I ask that the General Assembly send to my desk, as soon as possible, a new Education Scholarship Trust Fund Bill, one that addresses last year's State Supreme Court decision.

Parents, not school attendance lines, should determine the education that best suits their child's unique needs.

In anticipation of success, I am proposing \$30 million be appropriated to the trust fund. These funds will allow low-income parents to continue choosing the type of education environment and instruction that best suits their child's unique needs.

In addition, I ask that the General Assembly consider allowing education lottery tickets to be purchased using debit cards. Only three states require cash-only purchases: South Carolina, Tennessee, and Wyoming. Many businesses no longer accept cash – and many people don't carry it.

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Education lottery proceeds are down \$31.9 million and expected to continue dropping. The Lottery Commission estimates debit card purchases – not credit cards – would generate an additional \$52 million that could be used for the Education Scholarship Trust Fund or for LIFE, HOPE, and Palmetto Fellow college scholarships.

Placing an armed, certified full-time school resource officer in each of our state's 1,284 public schools has been one of my top priorities.

At my request, the General Assembly began funding an SRO grant program administered by the Department of Public Safety. It provides school districts with funds to hire full-time SROs for schools without one.

The program has been enormously successful. In 2018, only 406 schools had an SRO. In 2024, it grew to 1,106. Today, there are only 177 schools without an SRO.

I ask the General Assembly: Let's finish this job. Fully fund this grant program, so that every public school student in South Carolina will have an officer on campus providing safety for students and teachers and comfort for the parents.

Our future prosperity requires that our colleges, universities, and technical colleges be accessible and affordable for all; that our institutions of higher education produce a trained and skilled workforce – one that allows us to win jobs and investment in the future.

This is the sixth consecutive year that I call for a freeze in college tuition for in-state students in exchange for a metric based appropriation to our public colleges and universities.

For the fourth straight year, I seek \$80 million so that every South Carolinian who qualifies for federal need-based financial aid – as measured by Pell Grants – has sufficient state financial assistance to attend any in-state public college, university, or technical college. Students at private, independent, and historically black institutions will receive an additional \$20 million for tuition grants and assistance.

I request \$95 million in lottery funds for Workforce Industry Needs Scholarships through the South Carolina Technical College System. In the last five years, this very successful program has paid the full tuition and fees for over 40,000 South Carolinians at our technical colleges – where they earned post-secondary or industry credentials in high-demand careers like manufacturing, nursing, computer science, information technology, transportation, logistics, or construction.

Because of our state's high demand for workforce skills, training, and knowledge, I renew my call for the General Assembly to fund and authorize a systemic review of our state's 33 public institutions of higher

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education. This review will be conducted by the Department of Employment and Workforce. The goal: to make sure we are preparing to meet our state's future workforce needs in two respects: 1) sustainability, accessibility, and affordability and 2) the alignment of our programs, certificates, and degrees with the jobs, skills, and innovations likely coming our way.

Our future prosperity requires that we keep our communities safe. This means "funding the police" and giving them the tools they need.

Last year, I told you that law enforcement needed help. They needed a stronger law to keep illegal guns out of the hands of criminals and juveniles, which would help "close the revolving door."

You acted and, on March 7, 2024, I signed into law graduated criminal penalties for illegal gun possession. I am pleased to report that in less than a year, according to SLED, there has been an 86% increase in the number of arrests made using the new law: 2,412 arrests up from 1,295. A few years ago, we tasked our Department of Administration with conducting a comprehensive analysis of state law enforcement pay to ensure that salaries were competitive to attract and retain top-tier talent. It worked. As a result, South Carolina's law enforcement officers have received substantial pay raises – some as high as 52% in the last three years. I propose that we continue investing in our safety by providing an additional \$14.5 million for pay raises and the hiring of new law enforcement officers.

I am also again proposing a \$2,000 state income tax credit for every active-duty law enforcement officer, firefighter, first responder, and emergency medical technician employed by a public entity. This represents \$43.3 million in tax relief for those who put their lives on the line each day to protect our lives and property.

In addition, my Executive Budget recommends providing the Department of Corrections with a total of \$43.2 million in new appropriations to expand cell phone and contraband interdiction, hire new corrections officers, increase medical and mental health services, and pay for deferred maintenance at our 21 prisons.

Animal fighting, especially dog fighting, is one of the cruelest criminal activities in our society. Law officers estimate that most of the people participating in this barbaric activity have long criminal records. My Executive Budget seeks additional funding to SLED to end this unforgivable savagery.

South Carolina's future prosperity requires us to enhance our efforts to respect and protect our land, our history, our culture, and our environment. I do not think that it's a coincidence that previous years of

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economic growth have followed our efforts to conserve, preserve, and display our unique gifts of nature's abundance.

So we should ask: What will South Carolina look like in 100 years? Which begs the question: What do we want it to look like? In recent years, we have provided funds, time, and attention for identifying significant properties for preservation and conservation and for flood mitigation. We now have a veritable army of people, public, and private organizations dedicated to these endeavors, including the Conservation Land Bank, the Department of Natural Resources, the Office of Resilience, the Forestry Commission, the Department of Parks, Recreation and Tourism, the Nature Conservancy, the Open Space Institute, the Darla Moore Foundation, the Audubon Society, and Francis Marion University.

In 2024, this collaborative effort has permanently protected 96 thousand acres of environmentally or culturally significant properties, investing and leveraging \$143.5M in state, federal, and private conservation funds.

A few notable successes:

Snow's Island is the largest conservation project in Florence County history. Its 7,600 acres and more than 60 miles of river frontage at the confluence of the Lynches and Great Pee Dee rivers will forever safeguard the legendary headquarters of Revolutionary War General Francis Marion from which he and his militia launched numerous raids on the British and Loyalist troops.

Waties Island, the only remaining pristine barrier island on the South Carolina coast without protection from future development, has 1,100 acres at the confluence of Little River and the Atlantic Ocean. Its inlet, salt marshes, and estuaries make it a vital natural buffer against ocean waves and storm surge for our rapidly growing Grand Strand region.

Tyger Oaks, called the "Central Park of Spartanburg," has approximately 942 acres located just outside Spartanburg. Its 1.2 miles of riverfront connects to land already protected, creating a nearly 1,200-acre Upstate conservation corridor.

Saluda Bluffs has 1,000 acres located in the bullseye of decades of conservation work where visitors have a birds' eye view of more than 10,000 acres of protected surrounding properties in the Upstate. Table Rock State Park, Caesars Head State Park, and Jones Gap State Park are located close by.

Once again, my Executive Budget recommends that significant funds – \$15.5 million – be appropriated to continue these important and significant preservation and conservation efforts.

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Finally, next year, we will celebrate the Sestercentennial – the 250th anniversary of the American Revolutionary War.

South Carolinians have a unique opportunity to celebrate the decisive role we played in the fight for American Independence. There were more than 200 battles and skirmishes fought in South Carolina, more than any other colony. Many scholars say the war was won here. So did General Cornwallis, with the defeat of Great Britain's Southern campaign.

Our state's history and culture are unsurpassed in the creation of this Nation. It is well-documented in books and by the hundreds of historical markers, monuments, buildings, and homes preserved and dedicated to telling our state's story. The names of our towns, streets, institutions, rivers, and families carry that history forward to this day.

We must protect and preserve our history and heritage. It is why we are who we are and why we are here. It is why we stay here and why others come here. It informs our strengths, purpose, and duty.

The next hundred years? We've answered that question. For years we've invested billions of dollars in time and talent in education to prepare our children to build their lives and economy. And we've invested billions in our lands and waters to protect our health, expand our economy, preserve life in all its forms for its beauty and wonder, our education and joy, and the fulfillment of our duty to nourish the Lord's Garden.

The only difference is that today we have more opportunity than ever before, and our competition is fiercer and faster than ever before. But we know exactly where we are going, and we are perfectly positioned to succeed.

Let us continue to embrace civility and comity through our thoughts, words, and deeds – and urge our people, especially our young ones, to be proud of their State.

And let us set our State on a course that will provide the opportunity for prosperity, success, and happiness for generations of South Carolinians.

The best is yet to come. May God continue to bless America, and our great State of South Carolina.

The purpose of the Joint Assembly having been accomplished, the PRESIDENT declared it adjourned, whereupon the Senate returned to its Chamber and was called to order by the PRESIDENT.

Motion Adopted

On motion of Senator MASSEY, the Senate agreed to stand adjourned.

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MOTION ADOPTED

On motion of Senator SUTTON, with unanimous consent, the Senate stood adjourned out of respect to the memory of Master Sergeant Michael James O'Brian, Jr. of Jacksonville, Florida. Michael graduated from Ed White High School before beginning a career in the military. He served in the United States Air Force for over thirty-two years as a loadmaster on a C-17 Globemaster III. Michael served in the Air Force, Air National Guard and Air Force Reserve. He enjoyed Nascar, baseball, football and playing the drums. Michael was a loving husband, devoted father and doting grandfather who will be dearly missed.

ADJOURNMENT

At 8:11 P.M., on motion of Senator MASSEY, the Senate adjourned to meet tomorrow at 11:00 A.M.

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