

NO. 35

JOURNAL
OF THE
SENATE
OF THE
STATE OF SOUTH CAROLINA



REGULAR SESSION BEGINNING TUESDAY, JANUARY 14, 2025

FRIDAY, MARCH 13, 2026

Friday, March 13, 2026
(Local Session)

~~Indicates Matter Stricken~~

Indicates New Matter

The Senate assembled at 11:00 A.M., the hour to which it stood adjourned, and was called to order by the ACTING PRESIDENT, Senator CROMER.

ADDENDUM TO THE JOURNAL

The following remarks by Senator CHAPLIN were ordered printed in the Journal of January 22, 2026:

Remarks by Senator CASH

Today, January 22, 2026, marks the 53rd anniversary of Roe v. Wade, the Supreme Court decision that struck down state laws about abortion -- a decision that will live in infamy. You've heard the numbers -- over 65 million unborn babies -- staggering, absolutely mind-numbing. What a lot of people fail to grasp is that each generation since 1973, has been missing 25 percent or more of its members. That means that for every three members of the millennial generation, Gen Z, or the current generation -- for every three members, there is one person missing, one person willfully and intentionally killed in the sanctuary of the womb.

Genesis 1 tells us that of all creation, mankind alone is created in the image of God. The Bible teaches that men and women are situated somewhere above the animal kingdom and a little lower than the angels. The psalmist says this, "When I consider Thy heavens, the work of Thy fingers, the moon and the stars which Thou hast ordained, what is man that Thou dost take thought of him, and the son of man that Thou dost care for him? Yet Thou have made him a little lower than the angels and crowned him with glory and majesty." So, in a way, what a grave offense against the Creator -- such confusion and deception, and yes, evil -- to destroy the innocent unborn boy or girl, each one created in the image of God.

So here we are, a General Assembly of state government, tasked with making laws for a good and just civil order -- laws which must certainly begin by protecting the most fundamental, inalienable, God-given right of all -- the right to life, the right without which no other right matters. With the overturning of Roe v. Wade in June 2022, the responsibility -- and even the duty -- for protecting human life in the womb now resides with us at the state level. And you would think that the Republican Party,

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which for over 40 years has been strongly allied with the pro-life movement, would do everything in its power to bring an end to the killing of unborn children in South Carolina. And yet, in 2025, neither the House nor the Senate brought a Bill to the floor with the intention of ending abortion. I can remember saying in the fall of 2022 that if we didn't pass the Human Life Protection Act, it would be the spring of 2025 before we would have another good opportunity to pass such a Bill, because the makeup of the Senate would remain the same until after the 2024 elections. Unfortunately -- and to our shame -- the Human Life Protection Act failed in the Senate. So, we passed a revised Heartbeat Bill in 2023, and that's where we have been ever since. When we passed the Heartbeat Law, we were hopeful that several thousand unborn babies would be saved yearly as a result. And certainly, the statistics from the Department of Public Health show a decline in reported abortions. Unfortunately, those statistics are not the whole story. They simply do not account for the explosion of unreported abortions resulting from mail order abortion pills coming into the State. Perhaps you've seen pictures on social media of billboard trucks in South Carolina advertising the abortion pill. And in case you didn't know, there are now organizations that track how many people in each state are ordering abortion pills.

In South Carolina, that number is in the thousands per year. Thousands of individuals per year are ordering mail order abortion pills in our State. So here is the thing to understand -- abortions have moved from brick-and-mortar abortion clinics into the home. In 2024, statistics from the Department of Public Health show that 84 percent of all reported abortions were done using abortion pills. Now that does not include probably at least that many abortions that were unreported and also done using abortion pills. In the reported cases, the women got the pills from a brick-and-mortar abortion clinic, but took the pills at home, causing a miscarriage.

I could go on, but I will close by saying that there is much work that remains to bring an end to the devilish idea of killing our own offspring. The Heartbeat Law is not a good resting place. If you serve in this Body and you believe that human life begins at conception, then the task remains to pass a stronger and more comprehensive law aimed at ending the killing of unborn babies.

ADDENDUM TO THE JOURNAL

The following remarks by Senator CHAPLIN were ordered printed in the Journal of February 19, 2026:

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Remarks by Senator CHAPLIN

Mr. PRESIDENT, please allow me to tell you of an incident that took place in Darlington County over the summer. On July 1, 2025, at 2:00 a.m., my phone rang -- blurry eyed I looked at it and when I saw the name on my caller ID my heart hit the floor. It was Todd Hardy. When the coroner of your county is calling you at 2:00 a.m. you know there is only bad news at the other end of that line.

I answered the phone and for the rest of my life I will never forget what he told me. He said, "Young man, about two hours ago deputies serving a warrant in the Oats area were ambushed. One of them was shot dead. The suspect was also shot dead. Another deputy was shot and in route to McCloud Hospital, conditions unknown. Chief Keel is in your county right now conducting an investigation. I wanted to make you aware of this so that when you woke up in the morning you would know what was going on in your county." Needless to say, I did not sleep anymore that night. When morning rolled around, we got a clearer picture of what happened. At about midnight on July 1, a call came into the Darlington County dispatch stating that two individuals wanted for financial and computer crimes were hiding out in the Oats community of Darlington County. Three deputies responded. Deputy Devon Mason and Deputy Jacob Heatherling arrested one suspect and learned that the other individual was inside of the house. They entered the home lawfully and began to conduct a search. Deputy Devon Mason went into the back room where he found the grandmother in her hospice bed. She claimed the individual they were searching for was not in her house. While speaking to the grandmother, the suspect emerged from a hidden room in the closet and opened fire on both deputies in the back. Deputy Lynch then responded, pulled both officers out of the harm's way, and immediately began to render aid. Deputy Heatherling was shot in his Kevlar vest with a bullet in the back. Deputy Mason was shot, most likely dead well before Deputy Lynch got to him. Deputy Mason was twenty-seven years old. That December he had gotten engaged to his longtime girlfriend, Matty Church. Two months before, they had given birth to their first child, Brooks Mason. I pray to our Lord above that no other families have to endure this type of circumstance. Thank you, Mr. PRESIDENT.

ADDENDUM TO THE JOURNAL

The following remarks by Senator BLACKMON were ordered printed in the Journal of February 24, 2026:

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Remarks by Senator BLACKMON

Thank you, Mr. PRESIDENT and members of the Senate. This is not a political endorsement -- it is not intended to be. This is a rebuttal of points made last week that quite frankly bothered me. It came as a surprise to me last week that we were lectured on how not to select a candidate for the Supreme Court. These are some of my recollections of last week as well as my thoughts.

I believe it was said that some will vote due to geographical reasons and personal loyalties. It was said that this is not the way someone should be elected. Because of geographical reasons, my constituents support a particular candidate. I was elected by these constituents to represent them on issues and also on situations such as these. Did the JMSC qualify all four candidates? If someone was unqualified, I would think that they would have said so. And let's talk about personal loyalties. I've only met the candidate referred to last week one time in my life. I never served with him in the General Assembly, and I really hope that no one accuses me of taking care of one of my own. As a matter of fact, there's quite a few Senators here right now, that if you were up for vote, I would support you one hundred ten percent because I think we have some very qualified members in this Body. Another point that was made was that this person was the least qualified because he had no judicial experience. If that is such an important issue to consider, why was it not a factor in the JMSC's decision? Why have we not proposed Bills that would require judicial experience for Supreme Court candidates? Some voters believe we should have term limits. Is having a career judge on the Supreme Court a really good idea; or maybe there should be term limits there?

It was also said that it looked like we had backroom deals being made. For the record and for my constituents, I can say that I have not made any backroom deals. As a matter of fact, there's been very little discussion about this race. I am sure discussions will pick up as we get closer to the election date. So far, I do not know of any backdoor deals being made. During my career, I have had the opportunity to interview and hire employees. I looked at education. I looked at experience, I looked at references, and I looked at traits displayed through the interview process. The decision was always made to find the person that was the best fit. I have served on juries and I have been in jury pools. I remember one time, vividly, how a judge came late every day. He took breaks every day. He knocked off early every day. He had no respect for the plaintiffs, the defendants, the jurors or staff that worked in the courthouse. And I would call that arrogance and I am here to tell you, I

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will never support any candidate that I think would act or behave like that.

It was said people think we are corrupt and I submit there is a strong perception of this. Just look at the makeup of our JMISC -- of its twelve members, six were lawyer legislators, the other six were lawyers -- and we wonder why people think the judges and judicial system are corrupt. I'm not making that allegation, I don't believe it is corrupt. I believe overall we have a pretty good system. I do believe change is needed. I have not seen any reforms that will change this. I am going to have a hard time supporting anyone's proposal thus far that I have heard. The reforms I see appear to be a shell game. It appears we are trying to put more lipstick on the pig and at end of the day, it is still a pig.

I hope everyone knows I'm not fussing at you -- I'm not fussing at anyone. I appreciate each and every one of you and what you contribute to this Body. Thank you for the opportunity to speak and I want you to know that every speaking opportunity that I have, I always mention what a great forty-five other Senators I serve with. I also mention our great leadership with the PRESIDENT, our Majority Leader, our Minority Leader, and our committee chairmen. I am honored to serve with you and especially honored to represent the citizens of South Carolina and Senate District 27. Thank you.

ADDENDUM TO THE JOURNAL

The following remarks by Senator SUTTON were ordered printed in the Journal of March 4, 2026:

Remarks by Senator SUTTON

Thank you. I wanted to recognize a friend of mine that unfortunately we lost last week, and that's Christopher Hollings. He went by Chris and if you recognize that last name, his grandfather was Senator Fritz Hollings.

Chris was a great guy -- about the same age -- good buddies. He worked on my first campaign and was involved in a lot of campaigns as he obviously came from a political family. I'll say one of the things that we enjoyed doing was once a year I lead a kayak trip down Penny's Creek in the Edisto in the east basin right next to the Fritz Hollings, W Mays, and the Ace Basin. It was just a cool generational moment knowing that was set up a while ago before we were not even born and we get to enjoy that great outdoors place.

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Chris was an avid guitarist. He didn't know a stranger and could talk to anybody. He was a very active guy. I would say probably the crown of achievement of his life was leading an effort to find a kidney for his father a couple of years ago when he needed a kidney transplant.

Chris, a gentleman with a big heart, and I want to say on behalf of the Tecklenburg, Mieres, Aslanidis and my family, we are going to miss Chris greatly and we are thankful for the time that we were able to spend together with him.

ADDENDUM TO THE JOURNAL

The following remarks by Senator GOLDFINCH were ordered printed in the Journal of March 4, 2026:

Remarks by Senator GOLDFINCH

Thank you, PRESIDENT ALEXANDER. Ladies and gentlemen, each one of you represents a National Guard soldier in your district. I want you to know that most of us probably have a constituent that is in harm's way in the Middle East right now. We have National Guard soldiers on the ground over there as we speak.

I have been in touch with several soldiers who tell me that they have been in and out of bunkers for the last forty-eight to seventy-two hours. I think it is appropriate for us as a Body to keep our constituents, our friends and our neighbors in our prayers as they put themselves in harm's way for the next few weeks -- or possibly even months -- as they serve our country in Iran. Thank you.

ADJOURNMENT

At 11:06 A.M., on motion of Senator DEVINE, the Senate adjourned to meet next Tuesday, March 17, 2026, at 12:00 P.M.

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