

NO. 44

JOURNAL
OF THE
SENATE
OF THE
STATE OF SOUTH CAROLINA



REGULAR SESSION BEGINNING TUESDAY, JANUARY 14, 2025

TUESDAY, MARCH 31, 2026

Tuesday, March 31, 2026
(Statewide Session)

~~Indicates Matter Stricken~~

Indicates New Matter

The Senate assembled at 12:00 Noon, 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:

Psalm 13:6

The Psalmist proclaims: "I will sing to the Lord, for he has been good to me."

Bow in prayer with me, please: Most blessed God, particularly here during this Holy Week, it seems almost impossible not to be aware of Your grand and glorious blessings. Indeed, the richness of Your gifts surround us: dear ones whose love we cherish, colleagues who zealously labor at our side, opportunities to serve others in meaningful ways, and so much more. Truly, it's clear that wherever we look we are reminded of the blessings that You grant to us all. So help each of us here in the Senate of South Carolina, O Lord, to never fail to use every moment to give You praise as we strive to make life better for others. And further, dear God, continue to embrace in Your care all of our women and men in uniform, wherever they are called to serve. In Your loving name we humbly pray, 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	Blackmon	Bright
Campsen	Cash	Chaplin
Climer	Corbin	Cromer
Davis	Devine	Elliott
Garrett	Goldfinch	Graham
Grooms	Hutto	Johnson
Kennedy	Leber	Martin
Massey	Matthews	Ott

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Peeler	Reichenbach	Rice
Sabb	Stubbs	Sutton
Tedder	Turner	Verdin
Walker	Williams	Young
Zell		

A quorum being present, the Senate resumed.

Recorded Presence

Senator KIMBRELL recorded his presence subsequent to the Call of the Senate.

MESSAGE FROM THE GOVERNOR

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

Local Appointments

Initial Appointment, Lexington County Magistrate, with the term to commence April 30, 2023, and to expire April 30, 2027

Lexington County:

Mr. Edward Douglas Lewis, 507 Connecticut Avenue, Chapin, SC 29063 *VICE* Rebecca L. Adams

Initial Appointment, Lexington County Probate Judge, with the term to expire December 31, 2026

Lexington County:

Hon. Julie H. Thompson, 276 McGregor Circle, Lexington, SC 29072 *VICE* Daniel R. Eckstrom (retired)

Doctor of the Day

Senator REICHENBACH introduced Dr. Joseph Hoyle of Florence, S.C., Doctor of the Day.

Leave of Absence

On motion of Senator MASSEY, at 1:06 P.M., Senator HEMBREE was granted a leave of absence for today.

Leave of Absence

On motion of Senator GOLDFINCH, at 1:06 P.M., Senator GAMBRELL was granted a leave of absence until 3:00 P.M..

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Leave of Absence

On motion of Senator CLIMER, at 1:06 P.M., Senator GOLDFINCH was granted a leave of absence until 1:35 P.M.

Expression of Personal Interest

Senator ZELL rose for an Expression of Personal Interest.

CO-SPONSORS ADDED

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

- S. 227 Sens. Grooms and Campsen
- S. 270 Sen. Goldfinch
- S. 856 Sen. Jackson
- S. 1060 Sen. Cash, Zell and Young

CO-SPONSOR REMOVED

The following co-sponsor was removed from the respective Bill:

- S. 682 Sen. Cromer

RECALLED

S. 1053 -- Senator Matthews: A CONCURRENT RESOLUTION TO REQUEST THAT THE DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION NAME THE SECTION OF SOUTH CAROLINA HIGHWAY 321 IN ESTILL FROM THE SOUTHERN TOWN LIMIT BOUNDARY TO THE NORTHERN TOWN LIMIT BOUNDARY IN HAMPTON COUNTY "LOUISE G. HOPKINS HIGHWAY" AND ERECT APPROPRIATE MARKERS OR SIGNS AT THIS LOCATION CONTAINING THE DESIGNATION

Senator GROOMS asked unanimous consent to make a motion to recall the Concurrent Resolution from the Committee on Transportation.

The Concurrent Resolution was recalled from the Committee on Transportation and ordered placed on the Calendar for consideration tomorrow.

RECALLED

S. 1055 -- Senator Matthews: A CONCURRENT RESOLUTION TO REQUEST THAT THE DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION NAME THE PORTION OF SOUTH CAROLINA HIGHWAY 3 IN ESTILL FROM US 321 TO ORANGEBURG ROAD IN HAMPTON COUNTY "THE HONORABLE ANDERSON TAYLOR HIGHWAY"

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AND ERECT APPROPRIATE MARKERS OR SIGNS AT THIS LOCATION CONTAINING THE DESIGNATION.

Senator GROOMS asked unanimous consent to make a motion to recall the Concurrent Resolution from the Committee on Transportation.

The Concurrent Resolution was recalled from the Committee on Transportation and ordered placed on the Calendar for consideration tomorrow.

RECALLED

S. 1066 -- Senator Cromer: A CONCURRENT RESOLUTION TO REQUEST THAT THE DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION NAME THE BRIDGE IN THE TOWN OF WHITMIRE THAT CROSSES THE CSX RAILROAD TRACK ALONG SOUTH CAROLINA HIGHWAY 72 "CAROL THOMAS MEMORIAL BRIDGE" AND ERECT APPROPRIATE MARKERS OR SIGNS AT THIS LOCATION CONTAINING THE DESIGNATION.

Senator GROOMS asked unanimous consent to make a motion to recall the Concurrent Resolution from the Committee on Transportation.

The Concurrent Resolution was recalled from the Committee on Transportation and ordered placed on the Calendar for consideration tomorrow.

RECALLED

H. 5043 -- Reps. Wetmore and Stavrinakis: A CONCURRENT RESOLUTION TO REQUEST THE DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION ERECT APPROPRIATE MARKERS OR SIGNS AT THE TRAFFIC CIRCLE LOCATED AT THE INTERSECTION OF CAMP ROAD AND FORT JOHNSON ROAD ON JAMES ISLAND IN CHARLESTON COUNTY THAT CONTAIN THE WORDS "IN MEMORY OF SGT. FIRST CLASS ISAAC GETHERS JR."

Senator GROOMS asked unanimous consent to make a motion to recall the Concurrent Resolution from the Committee on Transportation.

The Concurrent Resolution was recalled from the Committee on Transportation and ordered placed on the Calendar for consideration tomorrow.

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RECALLED

H. 5044 -- Reps. Wetmore, Stavrinakis and Teeple: A CONCURRENT RESOLUTION TO REQUEST THE DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION NAME THE INTERSECTION OF RIVER ROAD AND MAYBANK HIGHWAY ON JOHNS ISLAND IN CHARLESTON COUNTY "JANIE BLIGEN HUNTER '1984 NATIONAL HERITAGE FELLOW' INTERSECTION" AND ERECT APPROPRIATE SIGNS OR MARKERS AT THIS LOCATION CONTAINING THESE WORDS.

Senator GROOMS asked unanimous consent to make a motion to recall the Concurrent Resolution from the Committee on Transportation.

The Concurrent Resolution was recalled from the Committee on Transportation and ordered placed on the Calendar for consideration tomorrow.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS AND RESOLUTIONS

The following were introduced:

S. 1067 -- Senator Reichenbach: A SENATE RESOLUTION TO CONGRATULATE THE KINGS ACADEMY GIRLS VOLLEYBALL TEAM, COACHES, AND SCHOOL OFFICIALS ON AN OUTSTANDING SEASON AND TO HONOR THEM FOR WINNING THE SOUTH CAROLINA INDEPENDENT SCHOOL ASSOCIATION CLASS 2A GIRLS VOLLEYBALL STATE CHAMPIONSHIP.

sr-0608km-amb26.docx

The Senate Resolution was adopted.

S. 1068 -- Senator Walker: A CONCURRENT RESOLUTION TO HONOR AND COMMEND ALFREDA WALTERS TINDAL FOR MORE THAN FOUR DECADES OF EXEMPLARY PUBLIC SERVICE.

lc-0492vr-rm26.docx

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

S. 1069 -- Senator Alexander: A BILL TO AMEND THE SOUTH CAROLINA CODE OF LAWS SO AS TO ENACT THE "GUARANTEE BANKING ACT"; AND BY ADDING CHAPTER 47 TO TITLE 34 SO AS TO DEFINE TERMS RELATED TO GUARANTEE BANKING; TO PROHIBIT A FINANCIAL

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INSTITUTION FROM DISCRIMINATING AGAINST A PERSON;
AND TO PROVIDE FOR FAIRNESS AND TRANSPARENCY IN
BANKING.

sr-0130cem26.docx

Read the first time and referred to the Committee on Banking and Insurance.

S. 1070 -- Senator Matthews: A BILL TO PROVIDE THAT EACH MEMBER OF THE HAMPTON COUNTY TRANSPORTATION COMMITTEE SHALL RECEIVE COMPENSATION FOR EACH MEETING THE MEMBERS ATTEND, AND TO PROVIDE THAT THE PAYMENTS SHALL NOT OCCUR MORE THAN EIGHTEEN TIMES EACH FISCAL YEAR.

sr-0612km26.docx

Read the first time and ordered placed on the Local and Uncontested Calendar.

S. 1071 -- Senators Matthews, Hutto and Campsen: A BILL TO PROVIDE THAT EACH MEMBER OF THE COLLETON COUNTY TRANSPORTATION COMMITTEE SHALL RECEIVE COMPENSATION FOR EACH MEETING THE MEMBERS ATTEND, AND TO PROVIDE THAT THE PAYMENTS SHALL NOT OCCUR MORE THAN EIGHTEEN TIMES EACH FISCAL YEAR.

sr-0611km26.docx

Read the first time and ordered placed on the Local and Uncontested Calendar.

S. 1072 -- Senators Matthews and Davis: A BILL TO PROVIDE THAT EACH MEMBER OF THE JASPER COUNTY TRANSPORTATION COMMITTEE SHALL RECEIVE COMPENSATION FOR EACH MEETING THE MEMBERS ATTEND, AND TO PROVIDE THAT THE PAYMENTS SHALL NOT OCCUR MORE THAN EIGHTEEN TIMES EACH FISCAL YEAR.

sr-0613km26.docx

Read the first time and ordered placed on the Local and Uncontested Calendar.

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S. 1073 -- Labor, Commerce and Industry Committee: A JOINT RESOLUTION TO APPROVE REGULATIONS OF THE DEPARTMENT OF LABOR, LICENSING AND REGULATION - SOUTH CAROLINA REAL ESTATE COMMISSION, RELATING TO SOUTH CAROLINA REAL ESTATE COMMISSION, DESIGNATED AS REGULATION DOCUMENT NUMBER 5437, PURSUANT TO THE PROVISIONS OF ARTICLE 1, CHAPTER 23, TITLE 1 OF THE SOUTH CAROLINA CODE OF LAWS.

lc-0712wab-dbs26.docx

Read the first time and ordered placed on the Calendar without reference.

S. 1074 -- Labor, Commerce and Industry Committee: A JOINT RESOLUTION TO APPROVE REGULATIONS OF THE DEPARTMENT OF LABOR, LICENSING AND REGULATION - BUILDING CODES COUNCIL, RELATING TO INTERNATIONAL FIRE CODE, DESIGNATED AS REGULATION DOCUMENT NUMBER 5426, PURSUANT TO THE PROVISIONS OF ARTICLE 1, CHAPTER 23, TITLE 1 OF THE SOUTH CAROLINA CODE OF LAWS.

lc-0708wab-rt26.docx

Read the first time and ordered placed on the Calendar without reference.

S. 1075 -- Labor, Commerce and Industry Committee: A JOINT RESOLUTION TO APPROVE REGULATIONS OF THE DEPARTMENT OF LABOR, LICENSING AND REGULATION - BUILDING CODES COUNCIL, RELATING TO INTERNATIONAL MECHANICAL CODE, DESIGNATED AS REGULATION DOCUMENT NUMBER 5428, PURSUANT TO THE PROVISIONS OF ARTICLE 1, CHAPTER 23, TITLE 1 OF THE SOUTH CAROLINA CODE OF LAWS.

lc-0711wab-rt26.docx

Read the first time and ordered placed on the Calendar without reference.

S. 1076 -- Labor, Commerce and Industry Committee: A JOINT RESOLUTION TO APPROVE REGULATIONS OF THE DEPARTMENT OF LABOR, LICENSING AND REGULATION - BUILDING CODES COUNCIL, RELATING TO INTERNATIONAL RESIDENTIAL CODE, DESIGNATED AS REGULATION

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DOCUMENT NUMBER 5417, PURSUANT TO THE PROVISIONS OF ARTICLE 1, CHAPTER 23, TITLE 1 OF THE SOUTH CAROLINA CODE OF LAWS.

lc-0713wab-dbs26.docx

Read the first time and ordered placed on the Calendar without reference.

S. 1077 -- Labor, Commerce and Industry Committee: A JOINT RESOLUTION TO APPROVE REGULATIONS OF THE DEPARTMENT OF LABOR, LICENSING AND REGULATION - BUILDING CODES COUNCIL, RELATING TO NATIONAL ELECTRICAL CODE, DESIGNATED AS REGULATION DOCUMENT NUMBER 5418, PURSUANT TO THE PROVISIONS OF ARTICLE 1, CHAPTER 23, TITLE 1 OF THE SOUTH CAROLINA CODE OF LAWS.

lc-0714wab-dbs26.docx

Read the first time and ordered placed on the Calendar without reference.

S. 1078 -- Labor, Commerce and Industry Committee: A JOINT RESOLUTION TO APPROVE REGULATIONS OF THE DEPARTMENT OF LABOR, LICENSING AND REGULATION - BUILDING CODES COUNCIL, RELATING TO INTERNATIONAL BUILDING CODE, DESIGNATED AS REGULATION DOCUMENT NUMBER 5424, PURSUANT TO THE PROVISIONS OF ARTICLE 1, CHAPTER 23, TITLE 1 OF THE SOUTH CAROLINA CODE OF LAWS.

lc-0705wab-rt26.docx

Read the first time and ordered placed on the Calendar without reference.

S. 1079 -- Labor, Commerce and Industry Committee: A JOINT RESOLUTION TO APPROVE REGULATIONS OF THE DEPARTMENT OF LABOR, LICENSING AND REGULATION - BUILDING CODES COUNCIL, RELATING TO INTERNATIONAL FUEL GAS CODE, DESIGNATED AS REGULATION DOCUMENT NUMBER 5427, PURSUANT TO THE PROVISIONS OF ARTICLE 1, CHAPTER 23, TITLE 1 OF THE SOUTH CAROLINA CODE OF LAWS.

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Read the first time and ordered placed on the Calendar without reference.

S. 1080 -- Labor, Commerce and Industry Committee: A JOINT RESOLUTION TO APPROVE REGULATIONS OF THE DEPARTMENT OF LABOR, LICENSING AND REGULATION - MASSAGE THERAPY BOARD, RELATING TO MASSAGE THERAPY BOARD, DESIGNATED AS REGULATION DOCUMENT NUMBER 5400, PURSUANT TO THE PROVISIONS OF ARTICLE 1, CHAPTER 23, TITLE 1 OF THE SOUTH CAROLINA CODE OF LAWS.

lc-0707wab-dbs26.docx

Read the first time and ordered placed on the Calendar without reference.

S. 1081 -- Labor, Commerce and Industry Committee: A JOINT RESOLUTION TO APPROVE REGULATIONS OF THE DEPARTMENT OF LABOR, LICENSING AND REGULATION - SOUTH CAROLINA AUCTIONEERS' COMMISSION, RELATING TO SOUTH CAROLINA AUCTIONEERS' COMMISSION, DESIGNATED AS REGULATION DOCUMENT NUMBER 5423, PURSUANT TO THE PROVISIONS OF ARTICLE 1, CHAPTER 23, TITLE 1 OF THE SOUTH CAROLINA CODE OF LAWS.

lc-0710wab-dbs26.docx

Read the first time and ordered placed on the Calendar without reference.

S. 1082 -- Senator Blackmon: A SENATE RESOLUTION TO RECOGNIZE MAY 2026 AS "ALS AWARENESS MONTH" IN SOUTH CAROLINA.

sr-0594km-vc26.docx

The Senate Resolution was introduced and referred to the Committee on Medical Affairs.

S. 1083 -- Senators Grooms and Bennett: A SENATE RESOLUTION TO CONGRATULATE THE SOUTH CAROLINA ASPHALT PAVEMENT ASSOCIATION AND ITS MEMBERS UPON THE OCCASION OF ITS SIXTIETH ANNIVERSARY AND TO COMMEND THE ORGANIZATION FOR ITS MANY YEARS OF DEDICATED SERVICE TO THE PEOPLE AND THE STATE OF SOUTH CAROLINA.

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sr-0597km-vc26.docx

The Senate Resolution was adopted.

S. 1084 -- Senator Williams: A SENATE RESOLUTION TO RECOGNIZE AND HONOR THE SOUTH CAROLINA DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES LAW ENFORCEMENT DIVE TEAM FOR ITS DEDICATED SERVICE, PROFESSIONALISM, AND EXTRAORDINARY CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE SAFETY OF THE CITIZENS OF SOUTH CAROLINA.

sr-0614km-vc26.docx

The Senate Resolution was adopted.

S. 1085 -- Senators Devine, Adams, Alexander, Allen, Bennett, Blackmon, Bright, Campsen, Cash, Chaplin, Climer, Corbin, Cromer, Davis, Elliott, Fernandez, Gambrell, Garrett, Goldfinch, Graham, Grooms, Hembree, Hutto, Jackson, Johnson, Kennedy, Kimbrell, Leber, Martin, Massey, Matthews, Ott, Peeler, Rankin, Reichenbach, Rice, Sabb, Stubbs, Sutton, Tedder, Turner, Verdin, Walker, Williams, Young and Zell: A SENATE RESOLUTION TO RECOGNIZE THE COLUMBIA GARDEN CLUB UPON THE OCCASION OF ITS CENTENNIAL ANNIVERSARY AND TO WISH THE CLUB AND ITS MEMBERS MANY MORE YEARS OF CONTINUED SUCCESS.

sr-0610km-amb26.docx

The Senate Resolution was adopted.

S. 1086 -- Senators Ott, Adams, Alexander, Allen, Bennett, Blackmon, Bright, Campsen, Cash, Chaplin, Climer, Corbin, Cromer, Davis, Devine, Elliott, Fernandez, Gambrell, Garrett, Goldfinch, Graham, Grooms, Hembree, Hutto, Jackson, Johnson, Kennedy, Kimbrell, Leber, Martin, Massey, Matthews, Peeler, Rankin, Reichenbach, Rice, Sabb, Stubbs, Sutton, Tedder, Turner, Verdin, Walker, Williams, Young and Zell: A SENATE RESOLUTION TO HONOR AND RECOGNIZE THE PINEVIEW DIAMOND YOUTH COACH PITCH BASEBALL TEAM AND COACHES ON A REMARKABLE SEASON AND TO CONGRATULATE THEM ON REPRESENTING SOUTH CAROLINA AND WINNING THE 2025 DIAMOND YOUTH BASEBALL DIVISION II 8U COACH PITCH WORLD SERIES CHAMPIONSHIP.

lc-0546cm-eb26.docx

The Senate Resolution was adopted.

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S. 1087 -- Senators Ott, Adams, Alexander, Allen, Bennett, Blackmon, Bright, Campsen, Cash, Chaplin, Climer, Corbin, Cromer, Davis, Devine, Elliott, Fernandez, Gambrell, Garrett, Goldfinch, Graham, Grooms, Hembree, Hutto, Jackson, Johnson, Kennedy, Kimbrell, Leber, Martin, Massey, Matthews, Peeler, Rankin, Reichenbach, Rice, Sabb, Stubbs, Sutton, Tedder, Turner, Verdin, Walker, Williams, Young and Zell: A SENATE Resolution TO RECOGNIZE AND CELEBRATE MULTICULTURAL ENTREPRENEURSHIP IN SOUTH CAROLINA.

lc-0582sa-eb26.docx

The Senate Resolution was adopted.

S. 1088 -- Senators Ott, Adams, Alexander, Allen, Bennett, Blackmon, Bright, Campsen, Cash, Chaplin, Climer, Corbin, Cromer, Davis, Devine, Elliott, Fernandez, Gambrell, Garrett, Goldfinch, Graham, Grooms, Hembree, Hutto, Jackson, Johnson, Kennedy, Kimbrell, Leber, Martin, Massey, Matthews, Peeler, Rankin, Reichenbach, Rice, Sabb, Stubbs, Sutton, Tedder, Turner, Verdin, Walker, Williams, Young and Zell: A SENATE Resolution TO SALUTE THE PINEVIEW 6U ROOKIE BALL ALL-STAR BASEBALL TEAM AND COACHES FOR AN OUTSTANDING SEASON AND TO CONGRATULATE THEM ON CAPTURING THE 2025 DIAMOND YOUTH WORLD SERIES CHAMPIONSHIP TITLE.

lc-0254ph-rm26.docx

The Senate Resolution was adopted.

H. 4688 -- Rep. Wooten: A BILL TO AMEND THE SOUTH CAROLINA CODE OF LAWS BY AMENDING SECTION 56-2-90, RELATING TO THE OPERATION OF GOLF CARTS, SO AS TO PROVIDE THAT GOLF CART PASSENGERS UNDER TWELVE YEARS OLD ARE EXEMPT FROM WEARING SAFETY BELTS UNDER CERTAIN CIRCUMSTANCES.

lc-0377cm26.docx

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

H. 4736 -- Reps. McGinnis and Edgerton: A BILL TO AMEND THE SOUTH CAROLINA CODE OF LAWS BY ADDING SECTION 59-103-12 SO AS TO CREATE A MANDATORY ORIENTATION TRAINING PROGRAM FOR NEW MEMBERS OF THE COMMISSION ON HIGHER EDUCATION, TO PROVIDE SPECIFIC

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REQUIREMENTS FOR THE PROGRAM, TO REQUIRE THE CREATION OF CONTINUING EDUCATION OPPORTUNITIES FOR COMMISSION MEMBERS, AND TO PROVIDE RELATED DUTIES OF THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF THE COMMISSION.
lc-0563wab26.docx

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

H. 4738 -- Reps. Erickson and McGinnis: A BILL TO AMEND THE SOUTH CAROLINA CODE OF LAWS BY AMENDING SECTION 59-26-20, RELATING TO CERTAIN DUTIES OF THE STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION AND THE COMMISSION ON HIGHER EDUCATION RELATING TO PUBLIC EDUCATOR TRAINING, SO AS TO ELIMINATE THE GOVERNOR'S TEACHING SCHOLARSHIP LOAN PROGRAM; BY AMENDING SECTION 59-26-35, RELATING TO THE SOUTH CAROLINA EDUCATOR PREPARATION REPORT CARD, SO AS TO REVISE DUTIES OF THE STATE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION AND THE COMMISSION ON HIGHER EDUCATION; BY AMENDING SECTION 59-53-40, RELATING TO COLLEGE PARALLEL COURSES AND ASSOCIATE DEGREE PROGRAMS, SO AS TO REMOVE RELATED BUDGETARY REVIEW REQUIREMENTS OF THE COMMISSION; BY AMENDING SECTION 59-104-40, RELATING TO THE CONVERSION FROM THE QUARTER CALENDAR SYSTEM TO THE SEMESTER CALENDAR SYSTEM BY THE TECHNICAL EDUCATION SYSTEM, SO AS TO REMOVE OBSOLETE PROVISIONS; BY AMENDING SECTION 59-150-355, RELATING TO EDUCATION LOTTERY APPROPRIATIONS AND USES, SO AS TO REMOVE OBSOLETE PROVISIONS, AMONG OTHER THINGS; BY AMENDING SECTION 8-17-380, RELATING TO THE GRIEVANCE AND PERFORMANCE APPRAISAL PROCEDURE FOR ACADEMIC EMPLOYEES, SO AS TO REMOVE REFERENCES TO THE COMMISSION; BY REPEALING CHAPTER 51, TITLE 11 RELATING TO THE SOUTH CAROLINA RESEARCH UNIVERSITY INFRASTRUCTURE ACT; BY REPEALING SECTION 39-9-230 RELATING TO IMPLEMENTATION OF THE METRIC SYSTEM BY THE COMMISSIONER OF AGRICULTURE WITH ASSISTANCE BY AN ADVISORY COMMITTEE; BY REPEALING SECTION 59-54-20 RELATING TO THE STATE OCCUPATIONAL TRAINING ADVISORY COMMITTEE; BY REPEALING SECTION 59-101-340 RELATING TO ALLOCATION OF FUNDS APPROPRIATED FOR

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A CERTAIN INVESTMENT INITIATIVE; BY REPEALING SECTION 59-101-360 RELATING TO CERTAIN REVENUE FROM TAX ON CATALOG SALES CREDITABLE TO MAIL ORDER SALES TAX FUND; BY REPEALING SECTION 59-103-50 RELATING TO THE ADVISORY COUNCIL OF PRIVATE COLLEGE PRESIDENTS; BY REPEALING SECTION 59-103-120 RELATING TO THE ACCREDITATION AND CHARTERING OF CHIROPRACTIC COLLEGES; BY REPEALING SECTION 59-103-162 RELATING TO THE SOUTH CAROLINA MANUFACTURING EXTENSION PARTNERSHIP; BY REPEALING SECTION 59-104-210 RELATING TO THE COMPETITIVE GRANTS PROGRAM; BY REPEALING SECTION 59-104-230 RELATING TO THE ENDOWED PROFESSORSHIPS PROGRAM; BY REPEALING SECTION 59-104-410 RELATING TO THE RESEARCH INVESTMENT FUND; BY REPEALING SECTION 59-104-420 RELATING TO CRITERIA FOR RESEARCH INVESTMENT FUND USES; BY REPEALING SECTION 59-104-430 RELATING TO COMPREHENSIVE REPORTS FOR THE RESEARCH INVESTMENT FUND TO BE MADE AT THE END OF THE FISCAL YEAR; BY REPEALING SECTION 59-104-440 RELATING TO THE ALLOCATION OF FUNDS FROM THE RESEARCH INVESTMENT FUND; BY REPEALING SECTION 59-105-60 RELATING TO THE MODEL SEXUAL ASSAULT POLICY CREATED BY THE CAMPUS SEXUAL ASSAULT INFORMATION ACT; BY REPEALING SECTION 59-111-75 RELATING TO THE COLLEGE LOAN PROGRAM FOR NATIONAL GUARD MEMBERS; BY REPEALING SECTION 59-121-15 RELATING TO THE AUTHORITY OF THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES OF THE CITADEL TO CHANGE THE NAME OF THE INSTITUTION; BY REPEALING SECTION 59-127-75 RELATING TO THE FELTON-LABORATORY SCHOOL AT SOUTH CAROLINA STATE UNIVERSITY; AND BY REPEALING SECTION 59-150-380 RELATING TO THE EDUCATIONAL LOTTERY TEACHING SCHOLARSHIP GRANTS PROGRAM.

lc-0501wab26.docx

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

H. 4799 -- Reprs. Lawson, Cox, C. Mitchell, Pope, Govan, Lastinger, Caskey, M. M. Smith, Williams, Gilliard and Waters: A BILL TO AMEND THE SOUTH CAROLINA CODE OF LAWS BY AMENDING SECTION 44-7-170, RELATING TO CERTIFICATE OF

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NEED EXEMPTIONS, SO AS TO PROVIDE THAT VETERANS HOMES OWNED OR OPERATED BY THE DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS' AFFAIRS DO NOT REQUIRE A CERTIFICATE OF NEED.

lc-0348vr26.docx

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

H. 5131 -- Reprs. Hartnett, M. M. Smith and Henderson-Myers: A BILL TO AMEND THE SOUTH CAROLINA CODE OF LAWS BY AMENDING SECTION 56-3-780, RELATING TO PERMANENT LICENSE PLATES AND FEES FOR VEHICLES OF STATE POLITICAL SUBDIVISIONS, SO AS TO CREATE A PERMANENT LICENSE PLATE FOR TRIBAL GOVERNMENTS LOCATED IN THE STATE.

lc-0482cm26.docx

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

H. 5284 -- Rep. Gagnon: A BILL TO AMEND THE SOUTH CAROLINA CODE OF LAWS BY AMENDING SECTION 30-5-10, RELATING TO THE PERFORMANCE OF THE DUTIES OF A REGISTER OF DEEDS, SO AS TO INCLUDE ABBEVILLE COUNTY AMONG THE COUNTIES EXEMPT FROM THE REQUIREMENT THAT THESE DUTIES BE PERFORMED BY THE CLERK OF COURT; AND BY AMENDING SECTION 30-5-12, RELATING TO COUNTIES WHERE THE COUNTY GOVERNING BODY APPOINTS THE REGISTER OF DEEDS, SO AS TO INCLUDE ABBEVILLE COUNTY.

lc-0659wab26.docx

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

H. 5437 -- Reprs. Taylor, Clyburn, Hartz, Hixon and Oremus: A CONCURRENT RESOLUTION TO CONGRATULATE THE MEMBERS OF THE UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH CAROLINA AIKEN WOMEN'S POLO TEAM ON A STELLAR SEASON AND TO CELEBRATE THEIR WIN OF THE 2026 USPA DIVISION I NATIONAL INTERCOLLEGIATE CHAMPIONSHIP TOURNAMENT.

lc-0360ha-rm26.docx

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

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INVITATIONS ACCEPTED

The PRESIDENT ordered the following invitations placed on the Calendar:

Wednesday, April 1, 2026 – 8:00 a.m. - 10:00 a.m.

Members and Staff, Breakfast, 112 Blatt Building, hosted by **ASSOCIATION OF COSMETOLOGY SALON PROFESSIONALS**

Wednesday, April 1, 2026 – 5:00 p.m. - 7:00 p.m.

Members and Staff, Reception, 1114 College Street, hosted by **SOUTH CAROLINA BEER WHOLESALERS ASSOCIATION**

Wednesday, April 1, 2026 – 5:00 p.m. - 7:30 p.m.

Members and Staff, Reception, The Palmetto Club, hosted by **CHILDREN'S TRUST OF SOUTH CAROLINA**

Thursday, April 2, 2026 – 8:00 a.m. - 10:00 a.m.

Members, Breakfast, 112 Blatt Building, hosted by **SOUTH CAROLINA WATER UTILITIES**

Tuesday, April 7, 2026 – 5:00 p.m. - 7:00 p.m.

Members and Staff, Reception, The Palmetto Club, hosted by **SOUTH CAROLINA ASSOCIATION OF TOURISM REGIONS**

Tuesday, April 14, 2026 – 6:30 p.m. - 10:00 p.m.

Members, Reception, Goodman Building, State Fair Grounds, hosted by **THE CITADEL ALUMNI ASSOCIATION "CITADEL BBQ"**

Wednesday, April 15, 2026 – 8:00 a.m. - 10:00 a.m.

Members and Staff, Breakfast, 112 Blatt Building, hosted by **OFFICE OF THE STATE TREASURER - FUTURE SCHOLAR 529 COLLEGE SAVINGS PLAN**

Wednesday, April 15, 2026 – 11:30 a.m. - 2:00 p.m.

Members and Staff, Luncheon, State House Grounds, hosted by **SC HOSPITAL ASSOCIATION**

Wednesday, April 15, 2026 – 5:00 p.m. - 7:00 p.m.

Members, Reception, Columbia Metropolitan Convention Center, 1101 Lincoln Street, hosted by **SOUTH CAROLINA STATE HOUSING FINANCE & DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY**

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Wednesday, April 15, 2026 – 5:00 p.m. - 7:00 p.m.

Members, Reception, Parker Poe, 1221 Main Street, Suite 1100, hosted by **CONGRESSIONAL SPORTSMEN'S FOUNDATION**

Thursday, April 16, 2026 – 8:00 a.m. - 10:00 a.m.

Members and Staff, Breakfast, 112 Blatt Building, hosted by **PALMETTO CONSERVATION FOUNDATION**

Tuesday, April 21, 2026 – 6:00 p.m. - 8:00 p.m.

Members and Staff, Reception, The Palmetto Club, hosted by **SOUTH CAROLINA APARTMENT ASSOCIATION**

Wednesday, April 22, 2026 – 8:00 a.m. - 10:00 a.m.

Members, Breakfast, 112 Blatt Building, hosted by **TOGETHER SC**

Wednesday, April 22, 2026 – 11:30 a.m. - 2:00 p.m.

Members and Staff, Luncheon, State House Grounds, hosted by **SOUTH CAROLINA RESTAURANT & LODGING ASSOCIATION "TASTE OF SOUTH CAROLINA"**

Thursday, April 23, 2026 – 8:00 a.m. - 10:00 a.m.

Members and Staff, Breakfast, 112 Blatt Building, hosted by **SOUTH CAROLINA PRIMARY HEALTHCARE ASSOCIATION**

Thursday, April 23, 2026 – 6:30 p.m. - 8:00 p.m.

Members, Reception, The R.O.B., 245 South Church Street, Lake City, hosted by **DARLA MOORE FOUNDATION & ARTFIELDS**

Tuesday, April 28, 2026 – 5:00 p.m. - 7:00 p.m.

Members, Reception, Capital Center, 1201 Main Street, Suite 2500, hosted by **PALMETTO FAMILY COUNCIL**

Tuesday, April 28, 2026 – 6:00 p.m. - 8:00 p.m.

Members, Reception, Seawell's, 1125 Rosewood Drive, hosted by **HOME BUILDERS OF SOUTH CAROLINA "BIRD SUPPER"**

Wednesday, April 29, 2026 – 8:00 a.m. - 10:00 a.m.

Members and Staff, Breakfast, 112 Blatt Building, hosted by **SOUTH CAROLINA INSURANCE ASSOCIATION**

TUESDAY, MARCH 31, 2026

Wednesday, April 29, 2026 – 11:30 a.m. - 2:00 p.m.

Members and Staff, Luncheon, State House Grounds, hosted by **SC MANUFACTURERS + COMMERCE – 10TH ANNUAL SC STEM SIGNING DAY**

Wednesday, April 29, 2026 – 5:00 p.m. - 7:00 p.m.

Members and Staff, Reception, Bourbon, 1214 Main Street, hosted by **SOUTH CAROLINA ASSOCIATION FOR JUSTICE**

Thursday, April 30, 2026 – 8:00 a.m. - 10:00 a.m.

Members and Staff, Breakfast, 112 Blatt Building, hosted by **ASSOCIATIONS OF SOUTH CAROLINA MAYORS**

REPORT OF STANDING COMMITTEE

Senator DAVIS from the Committee on Labor, Commerce and Industry submitted a favorable with amendment report on:

S. 788 -- Senators Blackmon and Stubbs: A BILL TO AMEND THE SOUTH CAROLINA CODE OF LAWS BY ADDING ARTICLE 5 TO CHAPTER 1, TITLE 40, SO AS TO PROVIDE DEFINITIONS RELATED TO ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE AND THERAPY OR PSYCHOTHERAPY; TO PROVIDE THAT A LICENSED PROFESSIONAL SHALL NOT BE PERMITTED TO USE ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE TO ASSIST IN PROVIDING SUPPLEMENTARY SUPPORT IN THERAPY OR PSYCHOTHERAPY WHERE THE CLIENT'S THERAPEUTIC SESSION IS RECORDED UNLESS THE PATIENT IS INFORMED THAT ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE WILL BE USED AND FOR WHAT PURPOSE AND THE PATIENT CONSENTS TO THIS USE; TO PROVIDE THAT AN INDIVIDUAL, CORPORATION, OR ENTITY MAY NOT OFFER THERAPY OR PSYCHOTHERAPY SERVICES, INCLUDING THROUGH THE USE OF INTERNET-BASED ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE, UNLESS THE THERAPY OR PSYCHOTHERAPY SERVICES ARE CONDUCTED BY A LICENSED PROFESSIONAL; TO PROVIDE THAT A LICENSED PROFESSIONAL MAY NOT ALLOW ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE TO MAKE INDEPENDENT THERAPEUTIC DECISIONS; TO REQUIRE THAT ALL RECORDS KEPT BY A LICENSED PROFESSIONAL BE KEPT CONFIDENTIAL; TO PROVIDE EXCEPTIONS; AND TO PROVIDE PENALTIES FOR VIOLATIONS.

Ordered for consideration tomorrow.

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Message from the House

Columbia, S.C., March 31, 2026

Mr. President and Senators:

The House respectfully informs your Honorable Body that it has returned the following Bill to the Senate with amendments:

S. 146 -- Senators Nutt, Corbin, Cromer, Matthews, Martin, Zell, Alexander, Walker and Kimbrell: A BILL TO AMEND THE SOUTH CAROLINA CODE OF LAWS BY AMENDING SECTION 44-81-40, RELATING TO RIGHTS OF RESIDENTS OF LONG-TERM CARE FACILITIES, SO AS TO PROVIDE THAT RESIDENTS MAY DESIGNATE ONE PERSON WHO IS PERMITTED TO VISIT THE RESIDENT IN THE EVENT THAT ACCESS TO THE FACILITY IS LIMITED OR PROHIBITED DUE TO A DECLARED STATE OF EMERGENCY ARISING FROM A DISASTER OR PUBLIC HEALTH EMERGENCY.

Very respectfully,

Speaker of the House

Received as information.

Placed on Calendar for consideration tomorrow.

Message from the House

Columbia, S.C., March 31, 2026

Mr. President and Senators:

The House respectfully informs your Honorable Body that it has returned the following Bill to the Senate with amendments:

S. 449 -- Senators Verdin and Kimbrell: A BILL TO AMEND THE SOUTH CAROLINA CODE OF LAWS BY AMENDING SECTION 40-43-30, RELATING TO DEFINITIONS FOR THE SOUTH CAROLINA PHARMACY PRACTICE ACT, SO AS TO PROVIDE A DEFINITION FOR COLLABORATIVE PRACTICE AGREEMENTS; BY ADDING SECTION 40-43-245 SO AS TO AUTHORIZE PHARMACISTS AND PHYSICIANS TO ENTER INTO COLLABORATIVE PRACTICE AGREEMENTS; BY AMENDING SECTION 40-47-20, RELATING TO DEFINITIONS FOR PHYSICIANS AND MISCELLANEOUS HEALTHCARE PROFESSIONALS, SO AS TO PROVIDE A DEFINITION FOR COLLABORATIVE PRACTICE AGREEMENTS; BY ADDING SECTION 40-47-205 SO AS TO AUTHORIZE PHYSICIANS AND PHARMACISTS TO ENTER INTO COLLABORATIVE PRACTICE

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AGREEMENTS; AND TO REQUIRE THE STATE BOARD OF PHARMACY AND THE STATE BOARD OF MEDICAL EXAMINERS TO PROMULGATE REGULATIONS GOVERNING THE USE OF COLLABORATIVE PRACTICE AGREEMENTS AND TO PROVIDE THAT COLLABORATIVE PRACTICE AGREEMENTS MAY NOT BE IMPLEMENTED UNTIL AFTER THE REGULATIONS ARE EFFECTIVE.

Very respectfully,

Speaker of the House

Received as information.

Placed on Calendar for consideration tomorrow.

Message from the House

Columbia, S.C., March 31, 2026

Mr. President and Senators:

The House respectfully informs your Honorable Body that it has returned the following Bill to the Senate with amendments:

S. 694 -- Senator Young: A BILL TO AMEND THE SOUTH CAROLINA CODE OF LAWS BY AMENDING SECTION 7-7-40, RELATING TO DESIGNATION OF VOTING PRECINCTS IN AIKEN COUNTY, SO AS TO PROVIDE THAT IF THE BOARD OF VOTER REGISTRATION AND ELECTIONS DETERMINES THAT A PRECINCT CONTAINS NO SUITABLE LOCATION FOR A POLLING PLACE, THE BOARD, UPON APPROVAL OF A MAJORITY OF THE COUNTY LEGISLATIVE DELEGATION, MAY LOCATE THE POLLING PLACE INSIDE THE COUNTY AND WITHIN FIVE MILES OF THE PRECINCT'S BOUNDARIES.

Very respectfully,

Speaker of the House

Received as information.

Placed on Calendar for consideration tomorrow.

HOUSE CONCURRENCE

S. 1064 -- Senator Alexander: A CONCURRENT RESOLUTION TO RECOGNIZE MARCH 2026 AS "BRAIN INJURY AWARENESS MONTH" IN SOUTH CAROLINA IN ORDER TO SUPPORT BRAIN INJURY SURVIVORS AND THEIR FAMILIES, TO INCREASE PUBLIC AWARENESS ABOUT THE PREVALENCE OF BRAIN INJURY ACROSS THE STATE AND NATION, AND TO

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RECOGNIZE THE IMPORTANCE OF PREVENTION AND TREATMENT OF BRAIN INJURIES.

Returned with concurrence.

Received as information.

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

SECOND READING BILL

S. 1048 -- Senator Corbin: A BILL TO PROVIDE THAT SINGLE-FAMILY DWELLING UNITS IN THE BLUE RIDGE COMMUNITY IN GREENVILLE COUNTY MUST BE BUILT ON FIVE ACRE TRACTS, TO PROVIDE THAT MULTI-FAMILY DWELLINGS BUILT IN THE BLUE RIDGE COMMUNITY MUST BE BUILT ON A TRACT OF LAND THAT IS EQUAL TO FIVE ACRES OF LAND FOR EACH DWELLING UNIT, AND TO PROVIDE FOR AN EXCEPTION.

On motion of Senator CORBIN.

OBJECTION

S. 688 -- Senators Massey, Kimbrell and Martin: A BILL TO AMEND THE SOUTH CAROLINA CODE OF LAWS BY AMENDING SECTION 41-31-5, RELATING TO CONTRIBUTIONS AND PAYMENTS TO THE UNEMPLOYMENT TRUST FUND DEFINITIONS, SO AS TO CHANGE THE LOOKBACK PERIOD FOR THE BENEFIT RATIO; BY AMENDING SECTION 41-31-45, RELATING TO DEBT STATUS ESTIMATES, SO AS TO PROVIDE FOR A SOLVENCY TARGET FOR THE FUND; BY AMENDING SECTION 41-31-60, RELATING TO THE TAX RATE WHEN A DELINQUENT REPORT IS RECEIVED, SO AS TO CHANGE THE PENALTY FOR AN OUTSTANDING LIEN; BY AMENDING SECTION 41-31-350, RELATING TO THE PENALTY FOR FAILURE TO FILE A REPORT, SO AS TO REMOVE THE CAP ON THE PENALTY FOR FAILING TO FILE A REPORT; AND BY AMENDING SECTION 41-31-370, RELATING TO INTEREST ON UNPAID CONTRIBUTIONS, SO AS TO REMOVE THE CAP ON THE PENALTY FOR FAILURE TO PAY CONTRIBUTIONS.

Senator MARTIN objected to consideration of the Bill.

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AMENDED, READ THE THIRD TIME

S. 862 -- Senators Tedder, Elliott, Devine and Sutton: A BILL TO AMEND THE SOUTH CAROLINA CODE OF LAWS BY ADDING SECTION 44-17-412 SO AS TO ALLOW PARENTS TO MAKE CERTAIN HEALTHCARE DECISIONS FOR CHILDREN OVER THE AGE OF EIGHTEEN IF THE CHILD QUALIFIES AS A DEPENDENT ON AND IS COVERED BY THE PARENTS' HEALTH INSURANCE.

The Senate proceeded to consideration of the Bill.

Senators YOUNG, TEDDER, and GARRETT proposed the following amendment (SR-862.QG0001S), which was adopted:

Amend the bill, as and if amended, SECTION 1, by striking Section 44-17-412(A) and inserting:

(A) Notwithstanding any other provision of law, a ~~parent or legal guardian~~ person listed in priority order pursuant to subsection (C) may exercise temporary decision-making authority for a period not exceeding forty-eight hours in regards to the matter of involuntary temporary commitment on behalf of an unmarried adult-child during a verified medical or behavioral health crisis when the conditions in subsection (B) are satisfied.

Amend the bill further, SECTION 1, by striking Section 44-17-412(B)(1) and (2) and inserting:

(1) a licensed physician determines that the adult ~~individual~~ is experiencing a medical or behavioral health crisis and is temporarily unable to make informed decisions regarding his care or safety; and

(2) the ~~parent or legal guardian~~ person listed in priority order pursuant to subsection (C) is physically present with the adult ~~individual~~ during the crisis intervention or treatment.

(C) When the receiving or treatment facility selects a person to exercise temporary decision-making authority under this section, first preference shall be given to a legally appointed guardian or an appointed agent authorized to act under a durable or health care power of attorney. If the unmarried adult patient has not previously selected such an agent or the medical facility is not presented with written proof of such guardian or appointed agent, then the selection, except for good cause documented in the patient's clinical record, shall be made from the following list in the order of listing:

(1) a parent of the adult patient; or

(2) the adult child of the adult patient.

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Amend the bill further, SECTION 1, by striking Section 44-17-412(C) and (D) and inserting:

~~(C)~~(D) Authority granted pursuant to this section is limited to decisions necessary to address the immediate crisis and may not extend beyond forty-eight hours from the time of the physician's written determination unless a new determination is made by a licensed physician. If a subsequent determination is made by the original licensed physician, the determination must be reviewed and confirmed by a second licensed physician who independently reaches the same determination.

~~(D)~~(E) Nothing in this section authorizes ~~a parent or legal guardian~~ the person exercising temporary decision-making authority to exercise ongoing guardianship authority unless the person acting is the legally appointed guardian in fact or to override a valid advance directive executed by the adult individual.

(F) The procedure outlined herein for the initial forty-eight hours is an emergency alternative to that outlined in Section 44-17-410. After the initial forty-eight hours, the procedure under Section 44-17-410 must be followed.

Re-number sections to conform.

Amend title to conform.

Motion Adopted

On motion of Senator YOUNG, under Rule 26B, the Senate agreed to take up further amendments on third reading.

Senator YOUNG explained the amendment.

The amendment was adopted.

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

Ayes 40; Nays 1

AYES

Adams	Alexander	Allen
Bennett	Blackmon	Bright
Campsen	Cash	Chaplin
Corbin	Cromer	Davis
Devine	Elliott	Garrett
Goldfinch	Graham	Grooms
Hutto	Jackson	Johnson

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Kennedy	Kimbrell	Leber
Martin	Matthews	Ott
Peeler	Rankin	Reichenbach
Rice	Sabb	Sutton
Tedder	Turner	Verdin
Walker	Williams	Young
Zell		

Total--40

NAYS

Massey

Total--1

There being no further amendments, the Bill, as amended, was read the third time, passed and ordered sent to the House.

HOUSE BILL RETURNED

The following Bill was read the third time and ordered returned to the House with amendments:

H. 3856 -- Rep. Erickson: A BILL TO AMEND THE SOUTH CAROLINA CODE OF LAWS BY AMENDING SECTION 56-1-80, RELATING TO APPLICATIONS FOR LICENSES OR PERMITS, SO AS TO DELETE THE TERM "BLOOD TYPE" AND REPLACE IT WITH THE TERM "INFORMATION"; BY AMENDING SECTION 56-1-3350, RELATING TO ISSUANCE OF SPECIAL IDENTIFICATION CARDS AND VETERAN DESIGNATIONS ON DRIVERS' LICENSES, SO AS TO PROVIDE DOCUMENTATION THAT MUST BE SUBMITTED ON APPLICATIONS FOR A PERSON'S BLOOD TYPE TO APPEAR ON A SPECIAL IDENTIFICATION CARD, AND TO PROVIDE A CAUSE OF ACTION BASED ON INACCURATE INFORMATION CONTAINED ON IDENTIFICATION CARDS OR DRIVERS' RECORDS; BY AMENDING SECTION 56-3-20, RELATING TO DEFINITIONS, SO AS TO DEFINE THE TERM "RENTAL TRAILER"; BY AMENDING SECTION 56-3-785, RELATING TO ISSUANCE OF PERMANENT LICENSE PLATES TO CERTAIN OWNERS OF TRAILERS AND SEMITRAILERS, SO AS TO PROVIDE FOR THE ISSUANCE OF LICENSE PLATES TO OWNERS OF RENTAL TRAILERS, AND MAKE TECHNICAL CHANGES; BY AMENDING SECTION

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56-3-2320, RELATING TO DEALER AND WHOLESALER LICENSE PLATES, SO AS TO REVISE THE NUMBER OF MOTOR VEHICLE SALES THAT MUST BE MADE BEFORE DEALER PLATES MAY BE ISSUED; BY AMENDING SECTION 56-15-560, RELATING TO APPLICATIONS FOR WHOLESALE MOTOR VEHICLE AUCTION LICENSES AND FEES, SO AS TO REVISE EXPIRATION DATES FOR THE LICENSES AND INCREASE THE LICENSE FEES; BY AMENDING SECTION 56-19-10, RELATING TO DEFINITIONS, SO AS TO REVISE THE DEFINITION OF THE TERM "BUS"; BY AMENDING SECTION 56-23-85, RELATING TO DRIVER INSTRUCTOR PERMITS, SO AS TO REVISE THE EXPIRATION DATES FOR THE PERMITS AND PROVIDE A SCHEDULE OF FEES; BY AMENDING SECTION 56-37-30, RELATING TO ESTABLISHMENT OF THE POINTS SYSTEM FOR EVALUATING PERFORMANCE RECORDS OF DEALERS, SO AS TO ELIMINATE CERTAIN CONDUCT THAT RESULTS IN POINT VIOLATIONS AND ADD ADDITIONAL CONDUCT THAT RESULTS IN POINT VIOLATIONS; AND BY AMENDING SECTION 56-37-70, RELATING TO SUSPENSIONS OF LICENSES, SO AS TO DELETE THE TERM "CERTIFIED" AND REPLACE IT WITH THE TERM "NORMAL."

**READ THE THIRD TIME
SENT TO THE HOUSE**

The following Bills were read the third time and ordered sent to the House:

S. 894 -- Senator Alexander: A BILL TO AMEND THE SOUTH CAROLINA CODE OF LAWS BY AMENDING SECTION 44-63-74, RELATING TO THE ELECTRONIC FILING AND TRANSMISSION OF DEATH CERTIFICATES, SO AS TO ALLOW FOR A DEATH CERTIFICATE TO BE FILED ON THE NEXT BUSINESS DAY FOLLOWING THE WEEKEND OR A HOLIDAY.

S. 935 -- Senator Tedder: A BILL TO AMEND THE SOUTH CAROLINA CODE OF LAWS BY ADDING SECTION 44-1-320 SO AS TO REQUIRE THE DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH TO CREATE A PAMPHLET ON RENDERING SEIZURE FIRST AID TO INDIVIDUALS WHO HAVE SUFFERED A SEIZURE IN THE WORKPLACE AND TO REQUIRE STATE GOVERNMENTAL ENTITIES TO POST THE PAMPHLET IN A CONSPICUOUS LOCATION.

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S. 958 -- Senators Verdin and Alexander: A BILL TO AMEND THE SOUTH CAROLINA CODE OF LAWS BY ADDING SECTION 44-7-400 SO AS TO DEFINE TERMS RELATING TO THE STATE HEALTH FACILITY LICENSURE ACT; TO PROVIDE THAT PATIENT BEDS MAY BE USED IN HALLWAYS, CORRIDORS, AND OTHER MEANS OF EGRESS DURING A JUSTIFIED EMERGENCY UPON THE DISCRETION OF THE ON-SITE EMERGENCY PHYSICIAN; TO REQUIRE THAT HOSPITALS REMOVE ALL PATIENT BEDS IN HALLWAYS, CORRIDORS, AND MEANS OF EGRESS WHEN THERE IS NO JUSTIFIED EMERGENCY; AND TO PROVIDE THAT HOSPITALS MUST MAINTAIN A CLEAR PATHWAY IN HALLWAYS, CORRIDORS, AND MEANS OF EGRESS IN A JUSTIFIED EMERGENCY, REGARDLESS OF WHETHER PATIENT BEDS ARE PRESENT.

HOUSE BILL RETURNED

The following Bill was read the third time and ordered returned to the House with amendments:

H. 3931 -- Reps. Bailey, Sessions, Brewer, Robbins, M.M. Smith, Burns, Haddon, Lowe, Rutherford, Schuessler and Guffey: A BILL TO AMEND THE SOUTH CAROLINA CODE OF LAWS BY AMENDING SECTION 48-39-150, RELATING TO APPROVAL OR DENIAL OF PERMITS, SO AS TO ESTABLISH TIMELINES FOR THE DEPARTMENT TO TAKE ACTION ON A PERMIT APPLICATION.

CARRIED OVER

S. 76 -- Senators Hembree, Grooms, Young, Goldfinch, Sabb, Alexander, Kennedy, Cromer, Zell, Williams and Garrett: A BILL TO AMEND THE SOUTH CAROLINA CODE OF LAWS BY AMENDING SECTION 16-8-230, RELATING TO DEFINITIONS, SO AS TO PROVIDE APPROPRIATE DEFINITIONS; BY AMENDING SECTION 16-8-240, RELATING TO USE OF OR THREAT OF PHYSICAL VIOLENCE BY CRIMINAL GANG MEMBERS AND PENALTIES, SO AS TO ESTABLISH UNLAWFUL CRIMINAL GANG ACTIVITY; BY ADDING SECTION 16-8-245 SO AS TO PROVIDE ADMISSIBILITY OF CRIMINAL GANG AND CRIMINAL GANG ACTIVITY EVIDENCE DURING A TRIAL OR PROCEEDING; BY AMENDING SECTION 16-8-250, RELATING TO PREVENTING WITNESSES OR VICTIMS FROM TESTIFYING AND PENALTIES, SO AS TO PROVIDE A MECHANISM TO

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ABATE A PUBLIC NUISANCE OF REAL PROPERTY USED BY A CRIMINAL GANG; BY ADDING SECTION 16-8-275 SO AS TO PROVIDE ADMISSIBILITY IN A CRIMINAL PROCEEDING OF THE ACCUSED'S COMMISSION OF CRIMINAL GANG ACTIVITY; BY ADDING SECTION 16-8-520 SO AS TO PROVIDE APPROPRIATE DEFINITIONS FOR THE ANTI-RACKETEERING ACT; BY ADDING SECTION 16-8-530 SO AS TO MAKE IT UNLAWFUL FOR ANY PERSON TO ENGAGE IN RACKETEERING ACTIVITY; BY ADDING SECTION 16-8-540 SO AS TO PROVIDE CRIMINAL PENALTIES FOR ENGAGING IN RACKETEERING ACTIVITY; BY ADDING SECTION 16-8-550 SO AS TO PROVIDE THAT THE CIRCUIT COURT MAY ENJOIN VIOLATIONS OF THE ANTI-RACKETEERING ACT BY ISSUING APPROPRIATE ORDERS; BY ADDING SECTION 16-8-560 SO AS TO ESTABLISH JURISDICTION FOR RACKETEERING ACTIVITY; BY ADDING SECTION 16-8-570 SO AS TO PROVIDE PROTECTION FROM DISCLOSURE OF INFORMANTS; AND BY AMENDING SECTION 14-7-1630, RELATING TO JURISDICTION OF JURIES, NOTIFICATION TO IMPANEL JURIES, POWERS AND DUTIES OF IMPANELING AND PRESIDING JUDGES, THE TRANSFER OF INCOMPLETE INVESTIGATIONS, EFFECTIVE DATES AND NOTICE REQUIREMENTS WITH RESPECT TO ORDERS OF JUDGE, AND APPEALS, SO AS TO ADD THE CRIME OF RACKETEERING TO THE JURISDICTION OF THE STATE GRAND JURY.

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

CARRIED OVER

S. 270 -- Senators Alexander, Hembree, Adams and Goldfinch: A BILL TO AMEND THE SOUTH CAROLINA CODE OF LAWS BY AMENDING SECTION 16-3-29, RELATING TO ATTEMPTED MURDER, SO AS TO DEFINE ATTEMPTED MURDER AS COMMITTING AN UNLAWFUL ACT OF A VIOLENT NATURE THAT CAUSES INJURY TO ANOTHER WITH MALICE.

On motion of Senator HUTTO, the Bill was carried over.

CARRIED OVER

H. 3974 -- Reps. Calhoun, Bernstein, Erickson, Schuessler, Bauer, Guffey and McGinnis: A BILL TO AMEND THE SOUTH CAROLINA CODE OF LAWS BY ADDING ARTICLE 5 TO CHAPTER 10, TITLE 59 SO AS TO AUTHORIZE EVALUATORS

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TO EVALUATE PUBLIC SCHOOL STUDENTS FOR HEALTH, BEHAVIORAL HEALTH, OR THERAPEUTIC NEEDS, TO AUTHORIZE PRIVATE PROVIDERS TO PROVIDE RELATED SERVICES AT SCHOOLS DURING THE SCHOOL DAY, TO SPECIFY THESE EVALUATIONS AND SERVICES ONLY MAY OCCUR UPON REQUEST OF THE PARENT OR GUARDIAN OF THE STUDENT, TO PROVIDE SCHOOL DISTRICTS MAY NOT PROHIBIT SUCH EVALUATIONS OR SERVICES IN SCHOOLS DURING THE SCHOOL DAY, TO PROVIDE THE STATE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION SHALL ADOPT A RELATED MODEL POLICY, TO PROVIDE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE MODEL POLICY, TO PROVIDE SCHOOL DISTRICTS SHALL ADOPT RELATED POLICIES, AND TO DEFINE NECESSARY TERMS.

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

**COMMITTEE AMENDMENT WITHDRAWN
AMENDED, READ THE SECOND TIME**

H. 3557 -- Reps. B. Newton, Pedalino, Taylor, Guest, Crawford, Schuessler and Hixon: A BILL TO AMEND THE SOUTH CAROLINA CODE OF LAWS BY AMENDING SECTION 7-11-15, RELATING TO QUALIFICATIONS TO RUN AS A CANDIDATE IN GENERAL ELECTIONS, SO AS TO SHORTEN THE CANDIDATE FILING PERIOD, TO REQUIRE ALL CANDIDATES FROM EACH POLITICAL PARTY IN THIS STATE TO PAY A FILING FEE, AND TO AUTHORIZE POLITICAL PARTIES TO CHARGE A CERTIFICATION FEE TO ALL CANDIDATES; AND BY AMENDING SECTION 7-11-210, RELATING TO THE FILING OF PARTY PLEDGES BY CANDIDATES, SO AS TO CHANGE THE DATE BY WHICH A PARTY PLEDGE MUST BE FILED.

The Senate proceeded to consideration of the Bill.

The Committee on Judiciary proposed the following amendment (SJ-3557.PB0003S), which was withdrawn:

Amend the bill, as and if amended, SECTION 1, by striking Section 7-11-15(A) and inserting:

(A) In order to qualify as a candidate to run in the general election, all candidates seeking nomination by political party primary or political party convention must file a statement of intention of candidacy and party pledge and submit any filing fees between noon on March sixteenth and noon on March ~~thirtieth~~ twenty-fifth as provided in this section. If

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March sixteenth is on a Saturday or Sunday, the time for filing begins the next regular business day. If March-thirtieth twenty-fifth is on a Saturday or Sunday, the time for filing extends to the next regular business day. For purposes of this section and Section 7-13-45, "next regular business day" means a day that is not a Saturday, Sunday, or legal holiday. Notwithstanding another provision of law, beginning July 1, 2026 Except as provided in Section 7-11-12(G), beginning January 1, 2027, all candidates from each political party in this State shall pay a filing fee, including candidates from parties that choose not to conduct a primary election. In addition to the filing fee required pursuant to this subsection, political parties may also charge a certification fee not to exceed the sum of one hundred dollars to all candidates seeking nomination by political party primary or political party convention.

(1) Except as otherwise provided in this section, candidates seeking nomination for a statewide, congressional, or district office that includes more than one county must file their statements of intention of candidacy and party pledge and submit any filing fees with the State Election Commission.

(2) Candidates seeking nomination for the State Senate or House of Representatives must file their statements of intention of candidacy and party pledge and submit any filing fees with the State Election Commission or county board of voter registration and elections in the county of their residence. The state executive committees must certify candidates pursuant to Section 7-13-40.

(3) Candidates seeking nomination for a countywide or less than countywide office shall file their statements of intention of candidacy and party pledge and submit any filing fees with the county board of voter registration and elections in the county of their residence.

Amend the bill further, by striking SECTION 3 and inserting:
SECTION 3. This act takes effect ~~upon approval by the Governor~~ January 1, 2027.

Renumber sections to conform.

Amend title to conform.

On motion of Senator CAMPSER, with unanimous consent, the amendment was withdrawn.

Senator JOHNSON proposed the following amendment (SJ-3557.PB0004S), which was withdrawn:

Amend the bill, as and if amended, by adding an appropriately numbered SECTION to read:

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SECTION X. Section 7-11-15(F) of the S.C. Code is amended to read:

(F) If, after the closing of the time for filing the documents required pursuant to this section, there are not more than two candidates for any one office and one or more of the candidates dies, or withdraws, the state or county committee, as the case may be, if the nomination is by political party primary or political party convention only may, in its discretion, afford opportunity for the entry of other candidates for the office involved; however, for the office of State House of Representatives or State Senator, the discretion must be exercised by the state committee.

(1) In order for a state or county committee to allow entry of other candidates for the office, the committee must:

(a) hold a public hearing within forty-eight hours of the death or withdrawal of the candidate or candidates; and

(b) publicly vote to allow reopening of the time to file for the office.

(2) The additional filing period for the office shall consist of three business days following the vote authorizing reopening of the time to file.

(3) Any withdrawal must be in writing to the Director of the County Board of Voter Registration and Elections in which the candidate filed.

Renumber sections to conform.

Amend title to conform.

On motion of Senator JOHNSON, with unanimous consent, the amendment was withdrawn.

Senator CAMPSSEN proposed the following amendment (SFGF-3557.BC0005S), which was adopted:

Amend the bill, as and if amended, by striking SECTIONS 1 and 2 and inserting:

SECTION X.A. Section 7-11-15 of the S.C. Code is amended to read:

Section 7-11-15. (A) In order to qualify as a candidate to run in the general election, all candidates seeking nomination by political party primary or political party convention must file a statement of intention of candidacy and party pledge and submit any filing fees between noon on March sixteenth and noon on March ~~thirtieth~~ twenty-fifth as provided in this section. If March sixteenth is on a Saturday or Sunday, then the time for filing begins at noon on the next business day. ~~If March thirtieth~~ twenty-fifth is on a Saturday or Sunday, then the time for filing extends to noon on the next regular business day. For purposes of this section and

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Section 7-13-45, “~~next regular~~ business day” means a day that is not a Saturday, Sunday, or legal holiday.

(1) Except as otherwise provided in this section, candidates seeking nomination for a statewide, congressional, or district office that includes more than one county must file their statements of intention of candidacy, and party pledge and submit any filing fees with the State Election Commission.

(2) Candidates seeking nomination for the State Senate or House of Representatives must file their statements of intention of candidacy and party pledge and submit any filing fees with the State Election Commission or county board of voter registration and elections in the county of their residence. The state executive committees must certify candidates pursuant to Section 7-13-40.

(3) Candidates seeking nomination for a countywide or less than countywide office shall file their statements of intention of candidacy and party pledge and submit any filing fees with the county board of voter registration and elections in the county of their residence.

(B) All candidates seeking nomination by political party primary or political party convention for a general election or special election must pay a filing fee equal to one percent of the total salary for the term of the applicable office, or one hundred dollars, whichever is greater. The filing fees for the candidates, except filing fees for candidates for municipal office, must be transmitted by the respective political parties to the State Election Commission and placed by its executive director in an account designated for use in conducting elections. A lieutenant governor candidate is not required to pay a filing fee.

(C) Political parties may charge a certification fee of up to one hundred dollars to candidates seeking nomination for a general election. To implement a certification fee, a political party’s state executive committee must notify the executive director of the State Election Commission of its decision to charge the fee, and the amount of the fee, no later than December first of the year preceding a general election. A certification fee must be submitted with the filing fee and retained by the applicable political party. A lieutenant governor candidate is not required to pay a certification fee.

~~(B)~~(D) Except as provided in this section, the State Election Commission and county board boards of voter registration and elections ~~with whom the documents in subsection (A) are filed~~ must provide a copy of all statements of intention of candidacy, the party pledge, receipt, and filing fees, to the appropriate political party executive committee within two days following the deadline for filing. If the second day falls

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on Saturday, Sunday, or a legal holiday, the statement of intention of candidacy, party pledge, and filing fee must be filed by noon the following day that is not a Saturday, Sunday, or legal holiday. A candidate's name may not appear on a primary election ballot, convention slate of candidates, general election ballot, or special election ballot, except as otherwise provided by law, if (1) the candidate's statement of intention of candidacy and party pledge has not been filed with the county board of voter registration and elections or State Election Commission, as the case may be, as well as any filing fee, by the deadline and (2) the candidate has not been certified by the appropriate political party as required by Sections 7-13-40 and 7-13-350, as applicable. The candidate's name must appear if the candidate produces the signed and dated copy of his timely filed statement of intention of candidacy. An error or omission by a person seeking to qualify as a candidate pursuant to this section who is not directly related to a constitutional or statutory qualification for that office must be construed in a manner that favors the person's access to the ballot.

~~(C)~~(E) The statement of intention of candidacy required in this section and in Section 7-13-190(B) must be on a form designed and provided by the State Election Commission. This form, in addition to all other information, must contain an affirmation that the candidate meets, or will meet by the time of the general election, or as otherwise required by law, the qualifications for the office sought. The candidate or his agent must file a signed statement of intention of candidacy and the election commission with whom it is filed must stamp the statement with the date and time received, keep the original statement, provide a copy to the candidate, and provide a copy to the appropriate political party executive committee.

~~(D)~~(F) The candidate or his agent must file a signed party pledge, as required pursuant to Section 7-11-210, and the election commission with which it is filed must stamp the party pledge with the date and time received, provide a copy to the candidate, and provide a copy to the appropriate political party executive committee.

~~(E)~~(G) The election commission with which the filing fee is filed must issue a receipt for the filing fee, stamp the receipt with the date and time the filing fee was received, provide a copy to the candidate or his agent, and provide a copy to the appropriate political executive party. The filing fee must be made payable to the appropriate political party.

~~(F)~~(H) If, after the closing of the time for filing the documents required pursuant to this section, there are not more than two candidates for any one office and one or more of the candidates dies, or withdraws, then the

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state or county committee, as ~~the case may be~~ applicable, ~~if the nomination is by political party primary or political party convention only may, in its discretion,~~ afford an opportunity for the entry of other candidates for the office involved, provided the executive director of the State Election Commission confirms there is sufficient time for other candidates to be placed on the ballot; ~~however, for the office of State House of Representatives or State Senator, the discretion must be exercised by the state committee.~~

(1) In order for a state or county committee to allow entry of other candidates for the office, the committee must:

(a) hold a public hearing within forty-eight hours of the death or withdrawal of the candidate or candidates;

(b) publicly vote to allow reopening of the time to file for the office; and

(2) The additional filing period for the office shall consist of three business days following the vote authorizing reopening of the time to file.

(3) Any withdrawal must be in writing to the director of the county board of voter registration and elections in which the candidate filed, or to the executive director of the State Election Commission if the candidate filed with the State Election Commission.

~~(G)~~(I) The county chairman of a political party and the chairman of the state executive committee of a political party may designate a person to observe the filings made at the election commission pursuant to this section.

~~(H)~~(J) The provisions of this section do not apply to nonpartisan school trustee elections in a school district where local law provisions provide for other dates and procedures for filing statements of candidacy or petitions, and to the extent the provisions of this section and the local law provisions conflict, the local law provisions control.

B. This SECTION takes effect on January 1, 2027.

SECTION X.A. Section 7-11-210 of the S.C. Code is amended to read:

Section 7-11-210. (A) Every candidate for selection as a nominee of any political party for any state office, United States Senator, member of Congress, or solicitor, to be voted for in any party primary election or political party convention; shall file with and place in the possession of ~~the appropriate election commission,~~ pursuant to Section 7-11-15, ~~by twelve o'clock noon on March thirtieth~~ a party pledge in the following form, the blanks being properly filled in and the party pledge signed by the candidate: "I hereby file my notice as a candidate for the nomination

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as _____ in the primary election or convention to be held on _____ . I affiliate with the _____ Party, and I hereby pledge myself to abide by the results of the primary or convention. I shall not authorize my name to be placed on the general election ballot by petition and will not offer or campaign as a write-in candidate for this office or any other office for which the party has a nominee. I authorize the issuance of an injunction upon ex parte application by the party chairman, as provided by law, should I violate this pledge by offering or campaigning in the ensuing general election for election to this office or any other office for which a nominee has been elected in the party primary election, unless the nominee for the office has become deceased or otherwise disqualified for election in the ensuing general election. I hereby affirm that I meet, or will meet by the time of the general or special election, or as otherwise required by law, the qualifications for this office”.

(B) Every candidate for selection in a primary election as the nominee of any political party for member of the Senate, member of the House of Representatives, and all county and township offices shall file, pursuant to Section 7-11-15, ~~with and place in the possession of the county board of voter registration and elections of the county in which they reside by twelve o'clock noon on March thirtieth~~ a like party pledge.

(C) The party pledge required by this section to be filed by a candidate in a primary must be signed personally by the candidate, and the signature of the candidate must be signed in the presence of an individual authorized by the election commission director. Any party pledge of any candidate signed by an agent on behalf of a candidate shall not be valid.

(D) In the event that a person who was defeated as a candidate for nomination to an office in a party's primary election shall thereafter offer or campaign as a candidate against any nominee for election to any office in the ensuing general election, the state chairman of the party which held the primary (if the office involved is one voted for in the general election by the electors of more than one county), or the county chairman of the party which held the primary (in the case of all other offices), shall forthwith institute an action in a court of competent jurisdiction for an order enjoining the person from so offering or campaigning in the general election, and the court is hereby empowered upon proof of these facts to issue an order.

B. This SECTION takes effect on January 1, 2027.

SECTION X.A. Section 7-13-15 of the S.C. Code is amended to read:

Section 7-13-15.(A) This section does not apply to municipal primaries.

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(B) Except as provided in subsection (A) or unless otherwise specifically provided for by statute or ordinance, the following primaries must be conducted by the State Election Commission and the county boards of voter registration and elections on the second Tuesday in June of each general election year:

(1) primaries for federal offices, excluding a presidential preference primary for the Office of President of the United States as provided pursuant to Section 7-11-20(B); and

(2) primaries for:

(a) state offices;

(b) offices including more than one county;

(c) countywide and less than countywide offices, specifically including, but not limited to, all school boards and school trustees; and

(d) special purpose district offices, which include, but are not limited to, water, sewer, fire, soil conservation, and other similar district offices.

~~—(C) Filing fees received from candidates filing to run in primary elections may be retained and expended by the State Election Commission to pay for the conduct of primary elections. Any balance in the filing fee accounts or in the primary and general election accounts as of each June thirtieth may be carried forward in these accounts to the succeeding fiscal year and must be expended for the same purposes.~~

B. This SECTION takes effect on January 1, 2027.

SECTION X.A. Section 7-13-40 of the S.C. Code is amended to read:

Section 7-13-40. In the event that a party nominates candidates by party primary, a party primary must be held by the party and conducted by the State Election Commission and the respective county boards of voter registration and elections on the second Tuesday in June of each general election year, and a second and third primary each two weeks successively thereafter, if necessary. Written certification of the names of all candidates to be placed on primary ballots must be made by the political party chairman, vice chairman, or secretary to the State Election Commission or the county board of voter registration and elections whichever is responsible under law for preparing the ballot, not later than twelve o'clock noon on April fifth, or if April fifth falls on a Saturday or Sunday, not later than twelve o'clock noon on the following Monday. Political parties nominating candidates by party primary must verify the qualifications of those candidates prior to certification to the appropriate election commission of the names of candidates to be placed on primary ballots. The written verification required by this section must contain a statement that each candidate certified meets, or will meet by the time of

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the general election, or as otherwise required by law, the qualifications for office for which he has filed. A political party must not certify any candidate who does not or will not by the time of the general election, or as otherwise required by law, meet the qualifications for the office for which the candidate has filed, and such candidate's name shall not be placed on a primary ballot. ~~The filing fees for all candidates filing to run in all primaries, except municipal primaries, must be transmitted by the respective political parties to the State Election Commission and placed by the executive director of the commission in a special account designated for use in conducting primary elections and must be used for that purpose. The filing fee for each office is one percent of the total salary for the term of that office or one hundred dollars, whichever amount is greater.~~

B. This SECTION takes effect on January 1, 2027.

SECTION X.A. Section 7-13-190 of the S.C. Code is amended to read:

Section 7-13-190. (A) Except as otherwise provided in this code as to specific offices, whenever a vacancy occurs in office by reason of death, resignation, or removal and the vacancy in office is one which is filled by a special election to complete the term of office, this section applies.

(B)(1) In partisan elections, whether seeking nomination by political party primary or political party convention, filing by these candidates shall open for the office at twelve o'clock noon on the third Friday after the vacancy occurs for a period to close ~~eight~~ seven days later at twelve o'clock noon. If the filing period closes on a legal holiday, then the filing period is extended until noon on the next weekday that is not a legal holiday. If seeking nomination by petition, the petitions must be submitted not later than twelve o'clock noon, sixty days prior to the election. Verification of these petitions must be made not later than twelve o'clock noon forty-five days prior to the election. If seeking nomination by political party primary or political party convention, filing with the appropriate official is the same as provided in Section 7-11-15 and if seeking nomination by petition, filing with the appropriate official is the same as provided in Section 7-11-70.

(2) A primary must be held on the first eligible date provided in subsection (D) that is on or following the eleventh Tuesday after the vacancy occurs. A runoff primary, if necessary, must be held ~~on the thirteenth Tuesday after the vacancy occurs~~ two weeks after the primary. ~~The~~ A special election must be held on the ~~twentieth Tuesday after the vacancy occurs~~ first eligible date provided in subsection (D) that is

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~~following the date of the primary. If the twentieth Tuesday after the vacancy occurs is no more than sixty days prior to the general election, the special election must be held on the same day as the general election. If the filing period closes on a state holiday, then filing must be held open through the succeeding weekday. If the date for an election falls on a state holiday, the election must be set for the next succeeding Tuesday. For purposes of this section, state holiday does not mean the general election day.~~

(3) If there are more than twenty Tuesdays after a vacancy occurs in the office of House of Representatives of the Congress of the United States to the date provided for an eligible special election in subsection (D), or if there are more than thirty-five days from the eleventh Tuesday after a vacancy occurs in the office of State Senate or State House of Representatives to the date provided for an eligible primary in subsection (D), then the schedule to fill a vacancy in one of those offices must be in accordance with the following:

(a) a primary must be held on the eleventh Tuesday after the vacancy occurs;

(b) a runoff primary, if necessary, must be held two weeks after the primary;

(c) a special election must be held on the twentieth Tuesday after the vacancy occurs; and

(d) if the date for a primary, runoff primary, or special election conflicts with the holding of a statewide primary, statewide general election, or presidential preference primary then the Governor, President of the Senate, or Speaker of the House of Representatives, as applicable, may establish a schedule to fill a vacancy in a manner that does not conflict with the holding of a statewide primary, statewide general election, or presidential preference primary.

(C) If the office is not one for which there are partisan elections, then the filing must be opened at noon on the third Friday after the vacancy occurs for a period to close ~~ten~~ seven days later at noon. If the filing period closes on a legal holiday, then the filing period is extended until noon on the next weekday that is not a legal holiday. The filing must be made to the same entity to which the nonpartisan officeholders would normally file for office in a general election year. The election must be set for the first eligible date provided in subsection (D) that is on or following the ~~thirteenth~~ eleventh Tuesday after the vacancy occurs. ~~Both the filing date and the election date are subject to the provisions in subsection (B) of this section regarding holidays.~~

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(D) Provided, however, if a vacancy occurs in more than one office in the same county requiring separate special elections to be held within a period of twenty eight days under the provisions of this section, the county board of voter registration and elections or other authority responsible for the conduct of the elections shall conduct all of the elections on the same date. The special elections must be held on the latest date required for an election during the twenty eight day period. A special election for any office, a primary for a special election, or for any matter for which a special election is called, unless otherwise provided in this section, must only be held on one of the following dates:

(1) the fourth Tuesday in January;

(2) the first Tuesday after the first Monday in April;

(3) the second Tuesday in June in even-numbered years only and for only primaries for special elections;

(4) the fourth Tuesday in August; and

(5) the first Tuesday after the first Monday in November for only elections other than primaries for special elections.

(E) If the date for a primary for a special election, runoff primary, or special election falls on a legal holiday, then the primary, runoff primary, or special election, as applicable, must be set for the next succeeding Tuesday that is not a legal holiday.

(F) If the date for a special election to fill an unexpired term of office is one hundred days or less from the date a general election is to be held for the office, then no special election or primary must be held for the office. The provision of this subsection is not applicable to unexpired terms in the office of House of Representatives of the Congress of the United States.

B. This SECTION takes effect on July 1, 2026, and is applicable to vacancies created on and after July 1, 2026.

Amend the bill further, by adding an appropriately numbered SECTION to read:

SECTION X. If any section, subsection, paragraph, subparagraph, sentence, clause, phrase, or word of this act is for any reason held to be unconstitutional or invalid, such holding shall not affect the constitutionality or validity of the remaining portions of this act, the General Assembly hereby declaring that it would have passed this act, and each and every section, subsection, paragraph, subparagraph, sentence, clause, phrase, and word thereof, irrespective of the fact that any one or more other sections, subsections, paragraphs, subparagraphs, sentences, clauses, phrases, or words hereof may be declared to be unconstitutional, invalid, or otherwise ineffective.

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Amend the bill further, by striking SECTION 3 and inserting:
SECTION 3. Except as otherwise provided in this act, This act takes effect upon approval by the Governor.

Renumber sections to conform.
Amend title to conform.

Senator CAMPSSEN explained the amendment.

The amendment was adopted.

Senator CAMPSSEN proposed the following amendment (SFGF-3557.BC0006S), which was adopted:

Amend the bill, as and if amended, by adding an appropriately numbered SECTION to read:

SECTION X. Notwithstanding another provision of law, a special election required to fill a vacancy created on March 17, 2026, must be held on June 9, 2026.

Renumber sections to conform.
Amend title to conform.

Senator CAMPSSEN explained the amendment.

The amendment was adopted.

The question being the second reading of the Bill.

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

Ayes 40; Nays 1

AYES

Adams	Alexander	Allen
Bennett	Blackmon	Campsen
Cash	Chaplin	Corbin
Cromer	Davis	Devine
Elliott	Garrett	Goldfinch
Graham	Grooms	Hutto
Jackson	Johnson	Kennedy
Kimbrell	Leber	Martin
Massey	Matthews	Ott
Peeler	Rankin	Reichenbach
Rice	Sabb	Sutton

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Tedder	Turner	Verdin
Walker	Williams	Young
Zell		

Total--40

NAYS

Bright

Total--1

There being no further amendments, the Bill, as amended, was read the second time, passed and ordered to a third reading.

CARRIED OVER

S. 227 -- Senators Davis, Kimbrell, Matthews, Turner, Young, Grooms and Campsen: A BILL TO AMEND THE SOUTH CAROLINA CODE OF LAWS BY AMENDING SECTION 6-29-720, RELATING TO ZONING ORDINANCES, SO AS TO DEFINE "CONCURRENCY PROGRAMS"; AND BY AMENDING SECTION 6-29-1130, RELATING TO REGULATIONS, SO AS TO INCLUDE A REFERENCE TO AN ADOPTED CONCURRENCY PROGRAM.

On motion of Senator Davis, the Bill was carried over.

AMENDED, READ THE SECOND TIME

S. 97 -- Senator Matthews: A BILL TO AMEND THE SOUTH CAROLINA CODE OF LAWS BY ADDING SECTION 12-45-25 SO AS TO PROVIDE QUALIFICATIONS TO BE ELIGIBLE TO HOLD THE OFFICE OF COUNTY TREASURER.

The Senate proceeded to consideration of the Bill.

Senator VERDIN proposed the following amendment (LC-97.DG0004S), which was adopted:

Amend the bill, as and if amended, SECTION 2, by striking Section 12-45-18(A) and inserting:

(A) Any person first elected or first appointed to serve as the county treasurer after November 1, 2026, shall complete a one-time forty-hour training program that the department establishes or causes to be established. Failure to complete satisfactorily this course ~~in any year~~ results in the treasurer forfeiting five thousand dollars of his state salary

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supplement each year until the course is completed. The content, cost, and dates of the courses must be determined by the department.

Re-number sections to conform.

Amend title to conform.

Senator VERDIN explained the amendment.

The amendment was adopted.

The question being the second reading of the Bill.

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

Ayes 38; Nays 3

AYES

Adams	Alexander	Allen
Bennett	Blackmon	Campsen
Cash	Chaplin	Corbin
Cromer	Davis	Devine
Elliott	Garrett	Goldfinch
Graham	Grooms	Hutto
Jackson	Johnson	Kennedy
Kimbrell	Leber	Martin
Matthews	Ott	Peeler
Rankin	Reichenbach	Rice
Sabb	Sutton	Tedder
Turner	Verdin	Walker
Williams	Zell	

Total--38

NAYS

Bright	Massey	Young
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Total--3

There being no further amendments, the Bill, as amended, was read the second time, passed and ordered to a third reading.

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**COMMITTEE AMENDMENT ADOPTED
AMENDED, READ THE SECOND TIME**

S. 98 -- Senator Matthews: A BILL TO AMEND THE SOUTH CAROLINA CODE OF LAWS BY ADDING SECTION 12-39-25 SO AS TO PROVIDE QUALIFICATIONS TO BE ELIGIBLE TO HOLD THE OFFICE OF COUNTY AUDITOR.

The Senate proceeded to consideration of the Bill.

The Committee on Finance proposed the following amendment (LC-98.DG0001S), which was adopted:

Amend the bill, as and if amended, SECTION 1, by striking Section 12-39-25 and inserting:

Section 12-39-25. ~~It~~ For persons first elected or first appointed to serve as the county auditor after November 1, 2026, in order to be eligible to serve or continue to serve as the county auditor, a person must:

- (1) be a citizen of the United States and of this State;
- (2) be a qualified elector of the applicable county;
- (3) have:

(a) a four-year bachelor's degree in accounting, finance, or economics from an accredited post-secondary institution; or

(b) at least four years' experience:

- (i) in the field of accounting or auditing;
- (ii) as an employee in an auditor office in this state; or
- (iii) as an auditor in this state; ~~and~~

~~— (c) for an appointed auditor, a person must comply with any county requirements not conflicting with the qualifications in this section and the Constitution of South Carolina.~~

Amend the bill further, by adding an appropriately numbered SECTION to read:

SECTION X. Chapter 39, Title 12 of the S.C. Code is amended by adding:

Section 12-39-18. (A) Any person first elected or first appointed to serve as the county auditor after November 1, 2026, shall complete a forty-hour training program that the department establishes or causes to be established. Failure to complete satisfactorily this course in any year results in the auditor forfeiting five thousand dollars of his state salary supplement each year until the course is completed. The content, cost, and dates of the courses must be determined by the department.

(B)(1) The department, for reasonable cause, may excuse a county auditor from attending this course for no more than one year. If excused,

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the auditor does not forfeit five thousand dollars of his state salary supplement for that year.

(2) The department may credit some or all of the training program hours towards the continuing education courses required by Section 12-39-15 in the year in which the training program is completed.

Re-number sections to conform.

Amend title to conform.

Senator VERDIN explained the amendment.

The amendment was adopted.

Senator VERDIN proposed the following amendment (LC-98.DG0003S), which was adopted:

Amend the bill, as and if amended, SECTION 2, by striking Section 12-39-18(A) and inserting:

(A) Any person first elected or first appointed to serve as the county auditor after November 1, 2026, shall complete a one-time forty-hour training program that the department establishes or causes to be established. Failure to complete satisfactorily this course ~~in any year~~ results in the auditor forfeiting five thousand dollars of his state salary supplement each year until the course is completed. The content, cost, and dates of the courses must be determined by the department.

Re-number sections to conform.

Amend title to conform.

Senator VERDIN explained the amendment.

The amendment was adopted.

The question being the second reading of the Bill.

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

Ayes 34; Nays 8

AYES

Adams	Alexander	Allen
Bennett	Blackmon	Campsen
Cash	Chaplin	Climer
Cromer	Davis	Devine
Elliott	Graham	Grooms

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Hutto	Jackson	Johnson
Kimbrell	Leber	Matthews
Ott	Peeler	Rankin
Reichenbach	Rice	Sabb
Stubbs	Sutton	Tedder
Turner	Verdin	Williams
Zell		

Total--34

NAYS

Bright	Corbin	Garrett
Kennedy	Martin	Massey
Walker	Young	

Total--8

There being no further amendments, the Bill, as amended, was read the second time, passed and ordered to a third reading.

READ THE SECOND TIME

S. 682 -- Senators Young, Kimbrell, Corbin, Gambrell, Massey, Rice, Verdin, Campsen, Kennedy, Garrett, Elliott, Stubbs, Ott, Nutt and Alexander: A BILL TO AMEND THE SOUTH CAROLINA CODE OF LAWS BY ADDING SECTION 12-6-3830 SO AS TO ALLOW AN INCOME TAX CREDIT FOR A TIMBER CASUALTY LOSS IN A FEDERALLY DECLARED DISASTER AREA RESULTING FROM HURRICANE HELENE; AND BY AMENDING SECTION 12-6-1140, RELATING TO DEDUCTIONS FROM INDIVIDUAL TAXABLE INCOME, SO AS TO ALLOW A DEDUCTION FOR PAYMENTS RECEIVED FROM CERTAIN DISASTER RELIEF AGENCIES RESULTING FROM HURRICANE HELENE.

The Senate proceeded to consideration of the Bill.

Senator TURNER explained the amendment.

Senator HUTTO spoke on the amendment.

The question being the second reading of the Bill.

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

Ayes 38; Nays 5

AYES

Adams	Alexander	Allen
Blackmon	Bright	Campsen
Cash	Chaplin	Climer
Corbin	Cromer	Davis
Elliott	Garrett	Goldfinch
Graham	Grooms	Hutto
Jackson	Johnson	Kennedy
Kimbrell	Leber	Martin
Massey	Matthews	Ott
Peeler	Rankin	Reichenbach
Rice	Stubbs	Turner
Verdin	Walker	Williams
Young	Zell	

Total--38

NAYS

Bennett	Devine	Sabb
Sutton	Tedder	

Total--5

The Bill was read the second time, passed and ordered to a third reading.

CARRIED OVER

S. 866 -- Senators Elliott and Turner: A BILL TO AMEND THE SOUTH CAROLINA CODE OF LAWS BY ENACTING THE "MUNICIPAL TAX RELIEF ACT" BY ADDING CHAPTER 41 TO TITLE 5 SO AS TO AUTHORIZE CERTAIN MUNICIPALITIES TO IMPOSE UP TO A ONE PERCENT SALES TAX TO PROVIDE PROPERTY TAX RELIEF TO OWNER-OCCUPIED HOMES AND TO FINANCE CERTAIN PROJECTS, TO SPECIFY THE MANNER IN WHICH THE TAX MUST BE IMPOSED AND ADMINISTERED AND THE MANNER IN WHICH THE PROPERTY TAX CREDIT IS CALCULATED.

On motion of Senator TURNER, the Bill was carried over.

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AMENDED, SECOND READING FAILED

H. 3368 -- Reps. Long, Forrest, Yow, C. Mitchell, Magnuson, Calhoon, J.E. Johnson, Crawford, Erickson, Davis, Bradley, Hager, Hartz, McCravy, Ballentine, Bowers, Bailey, Hardee, Guest, Hewitt, Jordan, Lowe, McGinnis, Sessions, Caskey, B. Newton, Hiott, Gilliam, Bannister, G.M. Smith, Ligon, Bustos, Hartnett, W. Newton, Wooten, Oremus, Pedalino, M.M. Smith, B.L. Cox, Landing, Robbins, Martin, Brewer, Ford, Teeple, Vaughan, Pope, Chapman, Gagnon, Gibson, Whitmire, Rankin, Sanders, Duncan, Wickensimer, Haddon, Herbkersman, Lawson, T. Moore, Taylor, Holman and Schuessler: A BILL TO AMEND THE SOUTH CAROLINA CODE OF LAWS BY AMENDING SECTION 12-6-1120, RELATING TO MODIFICATIONS TO GROSS INCOME FOR INDIVIDUAL INCOME TAX PURPOSES, SO AS TO EXCLUDE OVERTIME PAY AND CERTAIN BONUS PAY FROM GROSS INCOME.

The Senate proceeded to consideration of the Bill.

Senator PEELER explained the Bill.

Senator MASSEY spoke on the Bill.

Senator CLIMER proposed the following amendment (SR-3368.CEM0001S), which was adopted:

Amend the bill, as and if amended, by adding an appropriately numbered SECTION to read:

SECTION X. Title 12 of the S.C. Code is amended by adding:

 CHAPTER 5

Section 12-5-3830. In any tax year when legislation is subsequently enacted affecting a prior tax year, and a taxpayer has already filed an individual income tax return for that year, a taxpayer may elect, in lieu of filing an amended return, to claim a refundable tax credit on their individual income tax return for the next following tax year in the amount of any decrease in tax liability between their originally reported tax liability and what that liability would have been had the legislation been enacted at the time of filing.

Re-number sections to conform.

Amend title to conform.

Senator CLIMER explained the amendment.

The amendment was adopted.

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Senator BENNETT spoke on the Bill.

The question being the second reading of the Bill.

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

Ayes 16; Nays 27

AYES

Alexander	Blackmon	Bright
Cash	Climer	Cromer
Gambrell	Goldfinch	Kennedy
Kimbrell	Peeler	Rankin
Reichenbach	Rice	Verdin
Young		

Total--16

NAYS

Adams	Allen	Bennett
Campsen	Chaplin	Corbin
Davis	Devine	Garrett
Graham	Grooms	Hutto
Jackson	Johnson	Leber
Martin	Massey	Matthews
Ott	Sabb	Stubbs
Sutton	Tedder	Turner
Walker	Williams	Zell

Total--27

Having failed to receive the necessary vote, second reading of the Bill failed.

OBJECTION

H. 3768 -- Reps. Brewer, Gatch, Robbins, Schuessler and Sessions: A BILL TO AMEND THE SOUTH CAROLINA CODE OF LAWS BY AMENDING ACT 36 OF 2019, RELATING TO HIGHWAY SYSTEM CONSTRUCTION, SO AS TO CHANGE THE SUNSET EXPIRATION PROVISION TO JULY 1, 2031.

Senator MASSEY objected to consideration of the Bill.

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OBJECTION

S. 893 -- Senator Verdin: A BILL TO AMEND THE SOUTH CAROLINA CODE OF LAWS BY AMENDING SECTION 44-2-20, RELATING TO DEFINITIONS PERTAINING TO THE STATE UNDERGROUND PETROLEUM ENVIRONMENTAL RESPONSE BANK ACT OF 1988, SO AS TO DEFINE A PIPELINE FACILITY IN ACCORDANCE WITH 49 U.S.C. CHAPTER 601; BY AMENDING SECTION 44-2-40, RELATING TO THE SUPERB ACCOUNT AND SUPERB FINANCIAL RESPONSIBILITY FUND, SO AS TO ADJUST THE ALLOWABLE COSTS FOR SITE REHABILITATION BY THE FUND AND MAKE OTHER CONFORMING CHANGES; BY AMENDING SECTION 44-2-60, RELATING TO THE REGISTRATION OF UNDERGROUND STORAGE TANKS AND THE ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT FEE, SO AS TO SET CERTAIN YEARS FOR THE RENEWAL FEE TO BE ADJUSTED; BY AMENDING SECTION 44-2-130, RELATING TO COMPENSATION FROM THE SUPERB ACCOUNT, SO AS TO MAKE CONFORMING CHANGES; AND BY AMENDING SECTION 44-2-150, RELATING TO THE SUPERB ADVISORY COMMITTEE, SO AS TO DEFINE THE MEMBERSHIP OF THE SUPERB ADVISORY COMMITTEE.

Senator MASSEY objected to consideration of the Bill.

OBJECTION

S. 812 -- Senator Rankin: A BILL TO AMEND THE SOUTH CAROLINA CODE OF LAWS BY AMENDING SECTION 56-5-970, RELATING TO THE TRAFFIC-CONTROL SIGNAL LEGEND, SO AS TO REQUIRE A PERSON RIDING A BICYCLE TO STOP FULLY AT A RED LIGHT BUT TO ALLOW THE PERSON TO PROCEED WHEN IT IS SAFE TO DO SO; AND BY ADDING SECTION 56-5-3530 SO AS TO ALLOW A PERSON RIDING A BICYCLE TO YIELD AT STOP SIGNS WHEN IT IS SAFE TO DO SO.

Senator MASSEY objected to consideration of the Bill.

OBJECTION

S. 863 -- Senators Grooms, Cromer, Martin, Bennett, Rankin, Tedder and Sutton: A BILL TO AMEND THE SOUTH CAROLINA CODE OF LAWS BY AMENDING SECTION 59-103-15, RELATING TO THE STATE'S MISSION AND GOALS FOR HIGHER EDUCATION, SO AS TO PROVIDE FOR AN APPLIED BACCALAUREATE IN CULINARY ARTS MANAGEMENT DEGREE FROM

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INSTITUTIONS THAT ARE PART OF THE STATE TECHNICAL AND COMPREHENSIVE EDUCATION SYSTEM; AND BY AMENDING SECTION 59-103-15, RELATING TO FUNDING FOR CERTAIN DEGREES, SO AS TO PROVIDE THAT APPLIED BACCALAUREATE IN CULINARY ARTS MANAGEMENT DEGREE PROGRAMS ARE ONLY ALLOWED IF STATE FUNDS ARE NOT APPROPRIATED TO FUND THE PROGRAMS.

Senator MASSEY objected to consideration of the Bill.

OBJECTION

H. 3258 -- Reps. Pope, Gilliam, Martin, Grant, M.M. Smith, Schuessler and Henderson-Myers: A BILL TO AMEND THE SOUTH CAROLINA CODE OF LAWS BY ADDING SECTION 59-66-35 SO AS TO REQUIRE THE ACQUISITION AND IMPLEMENTATION OF MOBILE PANIC ALERT SYSTEMS IN EACH PUBLIC SCHOOL IN THE STATE, TO PROVIDE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE SYSTEMS, AND TO PROVIDE PROCUREMENT AND TRAINING REQUIREMENTS.

Senator TURNER objected to consideration of the Bill.

OBJECTION

H. 3453 -- Reps. Rose, Pope, Spann-Wilder and J. Moore: A BILL TO AMEND THE SOUTH CAROLINA CODE OF LAWS BY AMENDING SECTION 59-111-20, RELATING TO FREE TUITION FOR CERTAIN VETERANS' CHILDREN, SO AS TO PROVIDE THAT A VETERAN'S CHILD QUALIFIES FOR FREE TUITION IF THAT CHILD HAS BEEN A RESIDENT OF SOUTH CAROLINA SINCE BIRTH.

Senator TURNER objected to consideration of the Bill.

OBJECTION

H. 5064 -- Reps. Yow, Hayes, C. Mitchell, Luck and Williams: A BILL TO AMEND THE SOUTH CAROLINA CODE OF LAWS BY AMENDING SECTION 59-53-510, RELATING TO THE CREATION OF THE NORTHEASTERN TECHNICAL COLLEGE AREA COMMISSION, SO AS TO PROVIDE THAT THE REPRESENTATION FROM LOCAL INDUSTRY MAY INCLUDE CERTAIN EX OFFICIO MEMBERS.

Senator TURNER objected to consideration of the Bill.

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POINT OF ORDER

S. 1061 -- Education Committee: A JOINT RESOLUTION TO APPROVE REGULATIONS OF THE STATE COMMISSION ON HIGHER EDUCATION, RELATING TO PALMETTO FELLOWS SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM, DESIGNATED AS REGULATION DOCUMENT NUMBER 5405, PURSUANT TO THE PROVISIONS OF ARTICLE 1, CHAPTER 23, TITLE 1 OF THE SOUTH CAROLINA CODE OF LAWS.

Point of Order

Senator MARTIN raised a Point of Order under Rule 39 that the Resolution 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. 1062 -- Education Committee: A JOINT RESOLUTION TO APPROVE REGULATIONS OF THE STATE COMMISSION ON HIGHER EDUCATION, RELATING TO DETERMINATION OF RATES OF TUITION AND FEES, DESIGNATED AS REGULATION DOCUMENT NUMBER 5443, PURSUANT TO THE PROVISIONS OF ARTICLE 1, CHAPTER 23, TITLE 1 OF THE SOUTH CAROLINA CODE OF LAWS.

Point of Order

Senator MARTIN raised a Point of Order under Rule 39 that the Resolution 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. 4730 -- Reps. Herbkersman, Erickson, Wooten, Ligon, Williams and Anderson: A BILL TO AMEND THE SOUTH CAROLINA CODE OF LAWS BY AMENDING SECTION 40-11-360, RELATING TO EXEMPTIONS OF SIGN AND BILLBOARD INSTALLATION, REPAIR, OR MAINTENANCE FROM CONTRACTOR LICENSURE, SO AS TO INCLUDE BILLBOARD STRUCTURES.

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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. 943 -- Senator Chaplin: A CONCURRENT RESOLUTION TO REQUEST THAT THE DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION NAME THE SECTION OF HIGHWAY 151 IN FRONT OF THE SHERIFF'S OFFICE IN DARLINGTON COUNTY THE "DEPUTY FRANK DEVIN MASON MEMORIAL HIGHWAY" AND ERECT APPROPRIATE MARKERS OR SIGNS AT THIS LOCATION CONTAINING THE DESIGNATION.

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.

MADE SPECIAL ORDER

S. 508 -- Senators Verdin, Goldfinch, Martin, Peeler, Bennett, Young, Blackmon, Kimbrell, Zell, Nutt, Fernandez, Alexander, Turner, Adams, Leber, Corbin, Grooms, Hembree, Rice, Massey, Garrett, Chaplin, Cromer, Johnson, Gambrell, Kennedy, Davis, Climer, Campsen, Reichenbach, Bright and Cash: A BILL TO AMEND THE SOUTH CAROLINA CODE OF LAWS BY AMENDING SECTION 10-1-165, RELATING TO THE PROTECTION OF CERTAIN MONUMENTS AND MEMORIALS, SO AS TO EXPAND THE TYPE OF MONUMENTS OR MEMORIALS THAT MAY NOT BE RELOCATED, REMOVED, OR DISTURBED, TO WITHHOLD DISBURSEMENTS FROM THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT FUND FOR ANY COUNTY OR MUNICIPALITY THAT VIOLATES THIS SECTION, TO PROVIDE FOR THE CARE AND PRESERVATION OF MONUMENTS AND MEMORIALS BY CERTAIN PEOPLE OR ORGANIZATIONS, TO PROVIDE STANDING TO CERTAIN PEOPLE OR ORGANIZATIONS TO BRING A CIVIL ACTION IN RESPONSE TO A VIOLATION OF THIS SECTION OR TO PREVENT SUCH VIOLATION, AND TO PROVIDE FOR LIMITATIONS ON THE TRANSFER OF REAL PROPERTY UNDERNEATH A MONUMENT OR MEMORIAL OR THE

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TRANSFER OF REAL PROPERTY NECESSARY TO MAINTAIN,
ACCESS, OR VIEW A MONUMENT OR MEMORIAL.

Senator MASSEY moved that the Bill be made a Special Order.

The Bill was made a Special Order.

MOTION ADOPTED

At 3:30 P.M., on motion of Senator MASSEY, the Senate agreed to dispense with the balance of the Motion Period.

Motion Adopted

On motion of Senator MASSEY, the Senate agreed that when the Senate stands adjourned on Thursday, April 2, that it will adjourn to meet Monday, April 6, under the provisions of Rule 1 for the purpose of taking up local matters and uncontested matters which have previously received unanimous consent to be taken up; and, further, that when the Senate stands adjourned on Monday, April 6, the Senate would stand adjourned subject to the times and limitations set forth under the provisions of Rule 1B to meet on Tuesday, April 7, Wednesday, April 8 and Thursday, April 9; and, further, that when the Senate stands adjourned on April 9 that it will adjourn to meet Friday, April 10, under the provisions of Rule 1 for the purpose of taking up local matters and uncontested matters which have previously received unanimous consent to be taken up. The Senate would meet again in regular statewide session Tuesday, April 14, at 12:00 P.M.

LOCAL APPOINTMENTS

Confirmations

Having received a favorable report from the Senate, the following appointments were confirmed in open session:

Initial Appointment, Lexington County Magistrate, with the term to commence April 30, 2023, and to expire April 30, 2027

Lexington County:

Mr. Edward Douglas Lewis, 507 Connecticut Avenue, Chapin, SC 29063 *VICE* Rebecca L. Adams

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Initial Appointment, Lexington County Probate Judge, with the term to expire December 31, 2026

Lexington County:

Hon. Julie H. Thompson, 276 McGregor Circle, Lexington, SC 29072
VICE Daniel R. Eckstrom (retired)

REPORT

**College and University Trustee Screening Commission
Report to the General Assembly
March 31, 2026**

The College and University Trustee Screening Commission found the following individuals qualified and nominated for the Trustee seats to which they applied. These individuals will be released to receive commitments on Wednesday, April 1, 2026, at 12:00 p.m. (noon). The Joint Assembly to elect the Trustees will be set by Concurrent Resolution on a future date. A complete transcript of the hearings for these candidates will be printed in today's House and Senate Journals.

THE CITADEL

CANDIDATES FOUND QUALIFIED AND NOMINATED

One (1) At-Large Seat – expired June 2023 (remainder of new term expires 2029)

Kenneth Scott Bland – Lexington

Kristofer Daniel Clark – Marietta

James E. Nicholson, Jr.* – Charleston

COASTAL CAROLINA UNIVERSITY

CANDIDATES FOUND QUALIFIED AND NOMINATED

*1st Congressional District – Seat 1 – expired June 2023
(remainder of new term expires 2027)*

George Edward Mullen*, Hilton Head Island

*3rd Congressional District – Seat 3 – expired June 2023
(remainder of new term expires 2027)*

William S. Biggs*, Salem

*4th Congressional District – Seat 4 – expired June 2025
(remainder of new term expires 2029)*

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William E. Turner III*, *Simpsonville*

*5th Congressional District – Seat 5 – expired June 2023 (remainder of
new term expires 2027)*

Lisa Mabry Davis*, *Gaffney*

*7th Congressional District Seat 7 – expired June 2023 (remainder of
new term expires 2027)*

Natasha Mabry Hanna*, *Conway*

*At-Large- Seat 8 – expired June 2025 (remainder of new term
expires 2029)*

Jason Michael Repak*, *Murrells Inlet*

*At-Large- Seat 9 – expired June 2023 (remainder of new term
expires 2027)*

Eugene C. Spivey*, *Myrtle Beach*

*At-Large- Seat 10 – expired June 2025 (remainder of new term
expires 2029)*

Mark S. Kelley*, *Conway*

*At-Large- Seat 11 – expired June 2023 (remainder of new term
expires 2027)*

Brian J. Argo, *Myrtle Beach*

Richard Blake Kline, *Myrtle Beach*

Edward Robert Tkacz, *Myrtle Beach*

*At-Large- Seat 12 – expired June 2025 (remainder of new term
expires 2029)*

Hal Delan Stevens*, *Conway*

*At-Large- Seat 13 – expired June 2023 (remainder of new term
expires 2027)*

Lee A. Belcher*, *Conway*

*At-Large- Seat 14 – expired June 2025 (remainder of new term
expires 2029)*

Joe N. Jarrett, Jr.*, *Myrtle Beach*

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At-Large- Seat 15 – expired June 2023 (remainder of new term expires 2027)

Patrick Steven Sparks*, Myrtle Beach

LANDER UNIVERSITY

CANDIDATES FOUND QUALIFIED AND NOMINATED

5th Congressional District – Seat 5 – expired June 2024 (remainder of new term expires 2028)

~~**Thomas Balek**, Union (withdrew 3/5/26)~~

Christopher Shawn Foxworth, Inman

At- Large Seat 12 – expires June 2026

Sabrina Anne Walker**, Sumter

At-Large Seat 15 - expires June 2026

Kathy R. Taylor**, Union

MEDICAL UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH CAROLINA

CANDIDATE FOUND QUALIFIED AND NOMINATED

2nd Congressional District – Lay Member – expired June 2024 (remainder of new term expires 2028)

William Delleney Wiseman, Blythewood

SOUTH CAROLINA STATE UNIVERSITY

CANDIDATES FOUND QUALIFIED AND NOMINATED

At-Large – Seat 12 - expired June 2024 (remainder of new term expires 2028)

Donald Beatty, Spartanburg

Johnny Myron Sellers, Easley

Douglas M. Twitty, Fort Mill

UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH CAROLINA

CANDIDATES FOUND QUALIFIED AND NOMINATED

2nd Judicial Circuit – expires June 2028

James Strom Thurmond, Jr.**, Aiken

Bernie Lee Sims, Jr., Aiken

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4th Judicial Circuit – expired June 2024 (remainder of new term expires 2028)

Richard Mark Bonnoitt, *Florence*
J. Colin Hungerpiller, *Hartsville*
Caroline W. Streater, *Cheraw*

12th Judicial Circuit – expires June 2026
Coleman Floyd Buckhouse**, *Florence*

15th Judicial Circuit – expired June 2024 (remainder of new term expires 2028)

Frederick Schipman Johnston, *Murrells Inlet*
Michelle Kerscher Plyler, *Myrtle Beach*
Anthony Holland Pope, *Georgetown*
Kellah Fortson Webster, *Conway*

WINTHROP UNIVERSITY

CANDIDATES FOUND QUALIFIED AND NOMINATED

7th Congressional District – Seat 7 – expired June 2024 (remainder of new term expires 2030)

Alison Jean Hamilton, *North Myrtle Beach*

At-Large Seat 10 – expires June 2027

Jean Haubert, *Fort Mill*
Timothy O’Riley, *Rock Hill*

WIL LOU GRAY OPPORTUNITY SCHOOL

CANDIDATES FOUND QUALIFIED AND NOMINATED

Three (3) At-Large Seats – expired June 2023 (remainder of new term expires 2027)

Dan Austin Dobson*, *Myrtle Beach*
Jackie Chitty Drake, *Gaffney*

**Indicates that a candidate is an incumbent. **Indicates that a candidate is an interim Governor Appointee.*

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COLLEGE AND UNIVERSITY TRUSTEE
SCREENING COMMISSION

SCREENINGS HEARINGS

TRANSCRIPT OF PUBLIC HEARINGS

Date: MARCH 2, 2026
Time: 11:12 a.m.
Location: Blatt Building
1101 Pendleton Street
Columbia, South Carolina 29201

Committee Members Present:
Representative William R. Whitmire, Chairman
Senator Sean M. Bennett, Vice-chairman
Senator A. Shane Massey
Senator Tameika Issac Devine
Senator Michael Johnson
Representative John King
Representative Seth Rose
Representative Timothy A. "Tim" McGinnis

Also Present:
Macey Webb, Staff Counsel
Ellie Carrigan, Research Analyst

CALL TO ORDER:

REPRESENTATIVE WHITMIRE: We're going to get started today. I'm going to say a short prayer to try to get us through the day. Heavenly Father, thank you for letting us have the opportunity to serve the people of South Carolina. Please watch over us as we make decisions that will affect our colleges and universities and their trustees for years to come. Thank you, in your name, Amen. First, I'd like to introduce all the members. We've got four new senators we'd like to welcome onto the Commission. Senator Massey, Senator Bennett, Senator Johnson, and Senator Isaac Devine. Welcome to the Commission. On the representative side, we have my good friend Representative King, who we've served together quite a few years, Representative McGinnis, and Representative Seth Rose. We also have our Chief Counsel, Macey Webb, and Research Analyst, Ellie Carrigan. Macey will be asking some

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standard questions of each candidate today, and Ellie will be taking the roll for us. Before we begin with the screening of candidates, we have a few housekeeping items, the first being the election of the chairman. Do I have someone making that motion? I recognize Representative McGinnis.

REPRESENTATIVE MCGINNIS: I would like to nominate you, Representative Bill Whitmire, to be chairman, and I move that nominations be closed, and that, by unanimous consent, Representative Whitmire be elected chairman by acclamation.

REPRESENTATIVE WHITMIRE: All those in favor, say -- oh, I need a second.

SENATOR BENNETT: Second.

REPRESENTATIVE WHITMIRE: All those in favor signify by saying aye.

(Ayes are heard.)

REPRESENTATIVE WHITMIRE: Opposed?

(No replies are heard.)

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you, Representative McGinnis. Second being the election of the vice chairman. Senator Massey.

SENATOR MASSEY: Mr. Chairman, I nominate Senator Bennett to serve as vice chair, and do the nominations be closed, and that he be elected vice chair by unanimous consent, with acclamation.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you, sir. Is there a second?

REPRESENTATIVE KING: Second, sir.

MR. CHAIRMAN: All those in favor signify by saying aye.

(Ayes are heard.)

MR. CHAIRMAN: Opposed, no.

(No replies are heard.)

MR. CHAIRMAN: So, Senator Bennett, you will be our vice chairman. Congratulations. Sorry, no extra money. All right. As you know, we have not had a trustee screening in quite some time. However, today is our first step in resuming our trustee screening and getting back on track with consistent yearly screening, hopefully. We have two days today and this Thursday to conduct screenings. Today, we will be screening seats on the Citadel Board, Coastal Carolina University Board, Landry University Board, Medical University of South Carolina Board, Winthrop University Board, and Wil Lou Gray Opportunity School Board. Thursday, we will screen seats on the Citadel Board, Lander University Board, South Carolina State University Board, and University of South Carolina Board. The purpose of the screening today is to give each candidate the opportunity to explain to us why they want to be on the

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board of trustees for a university and give Commission members the opportunity to ask these candidates any questions they may have. Ultimately, at the end of each candidate testifying, we as a Commission will vote on whether to find an individual candidate qualified and nominated and send them to the floor for the Joint Assembly. Today's screening is being broadcast live and also recorded. You can find today's screening on the State House website. In addition, we have a court reporter here who will be transcribing everything we get on the record today. Since it has been quite a while since we have conducted our last screening, I want to take a moment to remind all current candidates and any future candidates that it is the job of this Screening Commission to consider all the qualifications of the candidates that appear before us and make nominations to the General Assembly. Therefore, we conduct thorough investigations of all candidates that appear before us. During our investigation, we look at many factors that are laid out in statute. We look at candidates' knowledge of the institution, their ethical fitness, their professional and academic ability, their character, reputation, physical health, mental stability, experience, and demonstrated support of and involvement with the institution to which they have applied. In addition, we must determine the residency of each candidate to the seat to which they are applying. When determining residency, we look at various factors such as the address of your driver's license, the location of your voter registration. And for candidates who own their homes, your residency is determined by the location of where you pay your 4% tax assessment during the year when you apply. The 4% property tax assessment must be paid at this location for the term of office. It's come to my attention that there has been some confusion around the above requirements and therefore I wanted to ensure everyone could hear the same message today. We take your residency requirements very seriously as a Screening Commission. With that in mind, I want to remind you all, and any future candidates that might be screening, that you as a candidate have an ongoing obligation and duty to notify the Screening Commission when any changes might occur that would affect your application and overall eligibility for serving on a board. Please contact our staff immediately if there are any substantial and significant changes that occur during your application period, screening period, or period serving as a trustee on a college board. It is paramount that you understand that as a candidate, and even as a seating board member, you have an ongoing obligation and duty to report to the Commission any and all changes that would affect your overall eligibility to serve in the seat in which you have applied. Since this is our first meeting and since

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we have several new Commission members, I would ask that we go into executive session to start this screening day. There are a few orders of business that we need to address and have the opportunity to hear from our chief counsel on. I would make a motion to go into executive session at this time. Is there a second?

SENATOR BENNETT: Second.

MR. CHAIRMAN: All those in favor signify by saying aye.

(Ayes are heard.) MR. CHAIRMAN: Opposed, no.

(No replies are heard.)

MR. CHAIRMAN: All right. If you would please leave and close the door, we'll get started on this.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

MR. CHAIRMAN: I need a motion to go back into regular session. All in favor say aye.

(Ayes are heard.)

MR. CHAIRMAN: Opposed, no.

(No replies are heard.)

MR. CHAIRMAN: Back in regular session and we will let the candidates come back in and we will start.

OFF THE RECORD

MR. CHAIRMAN: I'd like to welcome all of you to our Screening Commission today.

THE CITADEL:

KRISTOPHER DANIEL CLARK:

MR. CHAIRMAN: First person up will be from the Citadel, running for one at-large seat. Term will expire in June 2023. That's not quite right, is it? Yes, it expired then. All right, first up is Kristopher Daniel Clark. Come on up, sir, if you'll just stand right here. And if you'll raise your right hand and let me swear you in. You swear to tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, so help you God?

MR. CLARK: I do.

MR. CHAIRMAN: If you'd state your name and -- yeah, is your mic on? Is it on?

MR. CLARK: It's on.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay, good. If you would just state your name and the board seat that you're running for, and then if you'd like to make a brief opening statement.

MR. CLARK: Sure. My name is Kristopher Clark, and I'm currently running for the at-large seat that expired.

REPRESENTATIVE KING: Could you talk up?

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MR. CHAIRMAN: Yeah, just a little bit louder, please. Just pull that toward you.

MR. CLARK: Mr. Chairman, members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to be here today. I know I'm the first of many, and you'll have a full agenda, so my comments will be brief. Outside of my faith, the Citadel experience has had the greatest impact in my life. It changed my trajectory in my life, gave me self-confidence, gave others confidence, allowed them to invest in me over the years, which opened doors that I would not have been able to open myself. The discipline I gained there became the foundation for raising my four boys, my career and certainly my marriage. The Citadel teaches people to overcome adversity, and with a world of all the modern conveniences, I think that's what we need today. And I like to use my gifts to make sure that men and women from all different backgrounds have the opportunity that I had if they choose that path. It's a demanding place, but it's a place where people thrive, so I'm honored to be here today and look forward to answering questions.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Macey, questions from you?

MR. CLARK - EXAMINATION BY MS. WEBB:

Q. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. All right, and Mr. Clark, can you please state your current address?

A. 228 Dalton Road, Marietta, South Carolina 29661.

Q. Thank you. And is this the address that you pay your 4% property tax?

A. That's correct.

Q. Thank you. All right. And then, do you currently serve on any local or state board, commission, committee, or elected office?

A. I do, Santee Cooper.

Q. Okay. And can you explain your role with them?

A. Absolutely. So I serve as a board member on the Santee Cooper Board. I'm in holdover status, so if I get elected to this board, I will resign from Santee Cooper.

Q. Okay. Thank you. And I just want to let you know that we do have an Attorney General's office precedent on this issue, and that if you are elected to the institution's board of trustees to which you have applied, you, at the time of being officially elected to the board, will no longer be eligible to serve in your initial position with the other entity, in this case, Santee Cooper. And based on prior Attorney General opinions, the public office you currently hold will be vacated upon you being elected to a new public office. Do you understand that?

A.I do.

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Q. Thank you. All right. And do you understand the obligations and responsibilities of serving on a public institution's board of trustees?

A. I do.

Q. And are you aware that you cannot contact any member of the General Assembly and formally ask for a vote commitment or pledge until 48 hours after the Commission's report has been released?

A. I do.

Q. And have you currently asked any third parties to contact members of the General Assembly on your behalf, or are you aware of anyone attempting to intervene in this process on your behalf?

A. I am not.

Q. Thank you. And are you aware that you have an ongoing obligation and duty to report to the Commission any changes that might occur that would affect your application and overall eligibility for serving on a college board?

A. Yes.

Q. Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Clark and Mr. Chairman. I have no further questions.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Any questions from members of the Commission? Senator Bennett.

MR. CLARK - EXAMINATION BY SENATOR BENNET:

Q. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you, Mr. Clark. Thank you for being here. I appreciate your willingness to serve on the board. I'm just curious with respect to Santee Cooper. Santee Cooper is probably one of the more important boards that we have in South Carolina that affect a lot of people. And not to minimize the importance of the Citadel, I'm just curious as your decision to seek an appointment to a college trustee as opposed to continuing to serve, or potentially serve, Santee Cooper.

A. Sure. So my term has expired at Santee Cooper. I've served on the Santee Cooper Board since 2011. So I've served a few terms there, actually two, and then been in holdover status. It became obvious -- well, I should say I thought it was obvious this time last year that there would be someone appointed to my seat, so I was committed to stay in that seat until someone had been appointed. The person that was appointed before they went through the process withdrew, so there's not currently someone who's appointed to that seat. But I do understand the difference, and I do understand the importance of Santee Cooper to the state. And I could probably be here all day talking about that for sure.

Q. Sure, sure. Thank you.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Any others?

SENATOR MASSEY: Mr. Chairman.

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MR. CHAIRMAN: Senator Massey.

MR. CLARK - EXAMINATION BY SENATOR MASSEY:

Q. So under the reorganization legislation that we passed for Santee Cooper, you're going to be out.

A. Absolutely.

Q. Right. You have to be replaced.

A. That's correct.

Q. Yeah. Okay, I understand. You thought that was going to happen last year, and all right, I'm with you. Talk to me a little bit about the Citadel and about why -- why do you want to be on the Citadel Board?

A. So I think higher education in America is at an inflection point with the cost of tuition increasing, with parents figuring out if college is worth the investment, and then also employers really figuring out and demanding work-ready graduates. I think the Citadel is a unique place because it's always produced and been a leader ahead of its time in producing leaders of character. But I do think there's changes that need to be made. I think there's a lot of opportunities with AI technology. The current Board has done a great job with their plan to improve a lot of facilities. But I think along with that, there needs to be a lot of technology changes. I think that you can't teach a class on technology and AI. I think everything we do, technology has to be the foundation of it. And I think as we deploy graduates into the workforce, they'll be faced with that opportunity, and we have to prepare them for that. So I want to be sure that the institution that's done great things in the past, that's one example of a way it needs to change to move it forward, sir.

Q. I noticed one of the responses in your PDQ addressed the in-state tuition. Do you have a child that attends the Citadel now?

A. I do.

Q. So you know those figures intimately?

A. Very well, sir.

Q. Right. I don't think I appreciated, until reading this, that the in-state tuition for a freshman is nearly \$35,000. And then for upperclassmen, just over \$28,000, the information that you provided. How do you think the Board should look at that?

A. Well, I think there's different opportunities. The Citadel does a pretty good job with scholarships, so I think there's scholarship opportunities. But I also think that there's a cost of service, so obviously you have to accommodate and you have to pay for the budget, the cost associated with that. So it has to cover that. I know that the state supports the school on a small level. So I think there's different opportunities. But the main thing is that the Citadel stay competitive as it looks at what it's providing

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as far as graduates, their What does equal opportunity in higher education mean to you in practice?

A. So my son obviously had a lot of experience with The Citadel, having been raised by me and visited the college at least once a year. And when he was recruited locally in the high school, he was recruited by a minority gentleman that he, frankly, looked up to. It drew him to the college, because I didn't make an assertive effort to push him in that direction. As Senator Massey said, you know, it takes a certain kind of person to go, and I certainly didn't want to be involved in that. What The Citadel has done is made an effort to get different minorities represented and doing their recruiting efforts. I think that is one step. I think another step is a broad net, you know, getting exposure out to a lot of different demographics, and then ultimately, you know, offering something that will improve the quality of life for those folks.

Q. You may be aware that the State has taken a position opposing diversity, equity, and inclusion initiatives. What lawful strategies would you use to ensure campus remains welcoming and accessible to students from historically unrepresented communities?

A. Again, I think the key is exposing what The Citadel offers to a lot of different groups, under-represented groups, different diverse backgrounds. The key is getting it out there, attracting them, and through scholarships and other opportunities, I think you can still attract a large group of folks, sir.

Q. Thank you.

SENATOR JOHNSON: Mr. Chairman.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Senator Johnson.

MR. CLARK - EXAMINATION BY SENATOR JOHNSON:

Q. Thank you. And it's not a gotcha question, but you all know what I'm saying. Do you know what the four-year graduation rate is at The Citadel?

A. I believe it's 64%.

Q. I've got it at 56, based on the research that I've been given, and a 66% six-year graduation rate. When I think that a state school, after six years, is still only graduating about two-thirds of its incoming class, it concerns me. I'm curious, as a board member, what are your thoughts about how to get the graduation rate up higher? Because it's \$35,000 a year to go. You ought to have a return on that investment.

A. Absolutely. I'll have to check those numbers.

Q. And your number may be right, but even at 64%, it's not right.

A. It's not 100, right?

Q. No.

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A. I think one major thing is for people to understand what the Citadel experience is. I know, again, back to my experience, I, as well as my son, visited The Citadel, did an inside-the-gates experience, so he could understand what the Citadel offered. And the staff there does an incredible job articulating what that is. I think the percentage of dropout for freshmen that did not have that experience is significantly higher than the ones that did. They were able to visit the college before. So I think that's the major thing, helping people understand what The Citadel has to offer and getting them exposed to it so they can make an educated decision.

Q. Well, The Citadel's not for everybody. I'll agree with that. But you're talking about AI and getting the next generation ready for the workforce. But if they can't matriculate in four or five years, especially at the tuition levels that we're charging, it becomes very difficult to move on and get that job, right?

A. Absolutely. I think that's a great example. AI, you can use a lot of predictive analytics with students to see if they're prone to fail. And I think if we incorporate that as well, I hope that will give us early signs so that they can be offered assistance.

Q. Thank you, sir.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Any other others? Mr. Clark, this term ends in 2029, so we're talking three years. I see you're from Marietta, which is kind of near where I live. Do you think you'll have any problems attending all of the trustee meetings over that three-year period?

MR. CLARK: No, sir.

MR. CHAIRMAN: I always ask that of everyone. All right. If there are no more questions, is there a motion to move for approval?

SENATOR MASSEY: So moved.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Second?

REPRESENTATIVE MCGINNIS: Second.

MR. CHAIRMAN: All those in favor, please signify by raising your right hand so we can get a count.

(All hands are raised.)

MR. CHAIRMAN: Opposed, obviously none. All right. Congratulations, and make sure you pay close attention to when you are asked for any commitments and stuff like that.

MR. CLARK: Yes, sir.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay. Thank you, sir. Thank you for your willingness to serve. Next up, we have James E. Nicholson, Jr. of Charleston, also running for the Citadel at large seat.

JAMES E. NICHOLSON, JR.:

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MR. CHAIRMAN: If you would, just raise your right hand, please, sir. All right. You swear to tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, so help you God?

MR. NICHOLSON: Yes, sir, I do.

MR. CHAIRMAN: All right. If you would just give us your name and also your brief opening statement.

MR. NICHOLSON: Yes, sir.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Why you want to run for the board.

MR. NICHOLSON: Yes, sir. My name is James E. Nicholson, Jr. I go by Jimmy, and I reside at 2 Wharfside Street, Unit 2B in Charleston, South Carolina. In 2018, late 2018, a classmate of mine who graduated in 1985, Gene Hogan. You all probably know Gene Hogan. Works for Senator -- mentioned to me about considering running for the Board of Visitors. And over a couple, three months, I thought about it, and my initial reaction was no. I never had a goal. Never one time had a goal of being on The Citadel Board of Visitors. So I say that to say that when I was appointed, and when I did stay in the race and stuck it out and was appointed by the legislature, I was doing it for the right reasons. My heart was in the right place. My heart's still in the right place. Sure, there's opportunities we've got at The Citadel. Some of the things have already been discussed. I can elaborate on those and talk about them, and glad to do so. But again, I'm three years into this term. I just as soon stay around. You all pass me through and see if I can get appointed again. But I appreciate the opportunity to be on The Citadel Board. I've had the pleasure. We have four committees on the Board, and I've served as the Operations and Risk Management Committee Chair under Chairman Dellaney and Chairman Goff. Chairman Dellaney also let us set up another committee, the Athletic Committee, and I'm chairing that as well. So I'm in Charleston. I'm on campus a lot. I know what's going on. And again, I'm doing it for the right reasons.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Macey?

MR. NICHOLSON - EXAMINATION BY MS. WEBB:

Q. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. And Mr. Nicholson, can you please state your current address?

A. Yes, 2 Wharfside Street, Unit 2-D, Charleston 129401.

Q. Thank you. And is this where you pay your 4% property tax?

A. Yes.

Q. Thank you. And do you currently serve on any local or state board, commission, committee, or elected office other than The Citadel?

A. I do not.

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Q. Thank you. And do you understand the obligations and responsibilities of serving on a public institution's Board of Trustees?

A. Yes.

Q. And are you aware that you cannot contact any member of the General Assembly and formally ask for a vote commitment or pledge until 48 hours after the Commission's report has been released?

A. Yes, I do.

Q. And have you currently asked any third parties to contact members of the General Assembly on your behalf, or are you aware of anyone attempting to intervene in this process on your behalf?

A. No.

Q. And are you aware that you have an ongoing obligation and duty to report to the Commission any changes that might occur that would affect for your willingness to serve. I just have a question for you. How would you balance protecting academic freedom with responding to political or public backlash?

A. Well, I think that's a tough balancing act, but we are certainly committed to academic freedom with our faculty and administration. And we certainly will follow the law and do the things we need to in order to ensure that that's done.

Q. Should trustees ever discipline a faculty member for speech that is lawful but politically unpopular?

A. No.

Q. Thank you.

MR. CHAIRMAN: That it? Senator Massey.

MR. NICHOLSON - EXAMINATION BY SENATOR MASSEY: Citadel Board of Visitors website, all the board members are given the title of colonel. Do you something from Governor McMaster, a plaque, saying I'm in. So I guess I could be called if needed.

Q. Okay. All right. That's interesting. I -- I'll leave the questions about the graduation rate to Senator Johnson, because I know he has some questions about that. And I noticed you made a response about that in your PDQ responses. But I am curious, how does -- during your time there, tell me how does the Board evaluate decisions on tuition and fees as well?

A. Okay. So as chair of operations and risk management committee, tuition, budget, risk management, HR things come up through the committee, so I'm pretty well versed on what's going on with that. But we continually have meetings on campus, on Zoom. I actually go, and the vice chairman of that committee, actually go and spend time with the vice president of finance prior to our monthly and quarterly calls to try

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to understand what's going on. Tuition is certainly higher than we wanted. I can tell you that General Walters, in his tenure, he's gone through the entire school in four or five different big groups, like the administration, the commandant's office, things like that, and we have actually given back FTE positions to the State. We have asked for a few along the way, but net-net, we are way down on employees. Every year, he's trying to do everything he can to not fill open positions and pick up the work from others. But tuition is obviously, and the finances of the school are obviously of very big concern to The Citadel and to the Board.

Q. So, you know, we've -- the General Assembly has, for the last several years, provided sufficient funding for the universities across the state to hold tuition flat. But in so doing, the universities have, while they've done that, they've also significantly increased mandatory cost of attendance fees, particularly housing costs. And then if you stay on campus, in many cases, you're required to have a dining plan, and they've increased those fees as well. And from the information provided in your responses, it looks like that the fees, the room and board fees, are substantially more than tuition itself. And so I'm curious. I mean, is this something you all talk about? Because I'm curious how you would get to an in-state total cost of attendance at around \$35,000 if people are actually paying attention to this.

A. It's tough, sir, and we do pay attention to it. As you well know, if you're at The Citadel, you're staying in the barracks. So we provide room and board. You eat in the mess hall, so we provide, obviously, food. We wear uniforms, which is a cost to our cadets, and it's not minimal. But there are some other things that go along with this, but we certainly, on a regular basis, are talking about how to mitigate tuition. And thanks to the study and what you all have done in the last five years to help us mitigate tuition increases, that has certainly helped. But we're concerned.

Q. Does The Citadel make a profit off of its dining plans?

A. No, sir.

Q. All right, so the fact that the costs have been increasing over the last several years, there's not a profit made on that?

A. I don't believe so, sir. No, sir.

Q. All right, how about the housing costs?

A. No, sir.

Q. Okay, so the money that the students pay, the cadets pay for dining plans, the money that they pay for the meals, that's going in only to support the meals?

A. Yes, sir, and in fact, I think if we have a surplus, we're using that for renovations in the mess hall, like we currently are. Like with room and

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board, we've got a fund that if we need renovations in the barracks, which we do on a regular basis, that money is being used to renovate the barracks.

Q. What kind of -- how engaged is the Board in the oversight of the administration?

A. I'd say significant, particularly in the last two years under Chairman Dellaney the Board has become -- as you all probably know, has become very engaged. When I first got on the Board, I'm like, what am I doing on the Board? I mean, I'm like really trying to figure out what the Board's role is. And there's a balance between being very strategic in governing and then getting down too far in the details. And I think depending on what's going on, you've got to be able to moderate in that space. So I feel really good that the Board is very engaged. We're accountable to the State, and this body, and I feel like we are much better than we were.

Q. What kind of training is provided to new Board members?

A. We had -- there is training. I went off-site a couple times when I first got on the Board.

Q. What were you all doing?

A. It was one of the associations, I can't recall the name of it now, but it's one of the higher education associations. When we go, we've had them come in at off-site meetings before and give us up-to-date training, that sort of thing. So we're continually looking to understand what's going on in higher education.

Q. Is that the Commission on Higher Education, or is it a private entity?

A. That is a private entity. Yes, sir.

Q. Okay. Is there ongoing training beyond your initial appointment service?

A. Yes, sir. It probably could be more, but we do have people come in and talk to us from time to time.

Q. When they come in, what do they talk about?

A. Risk management is one of the things that we are very concerned about. We've learned a lot from our current provost, particularly, and I think one of the biggest things is addressing the issue of higher education and what it costs, not just at The Citadel, but everywhere. The other issue that we've been educated on is in 2025, as you all probably well know, the cohort of 18-year-olds starts going like this (gesturing). So there's less people to come to all these schools, and we feel like at The Citadel we're well-positioned to accept these people because we're unique. Our degree does mean something. It's hard. People relish getting Citadel graduates, and I think that helps us attract people.

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Q. So has the Board discussed a plan for how to deal with tuition and fees in the face of a decline in student enrollment?

A. Well, yes, sir. I mean, we're continually looking at it. I can tell you that the barracks hold 2,364 rooms, and we started off full this year, which is a pretty amazing feat. Right now I think we've only got about 2,200 cadets, which you all probably know is first year is not very easy, and we tend to have 10 to 12% of freshmen that will leave in the first semester. But we're probably higher than we've been. I know we're higher than we've been, and applications for this year look good. Again, I think The Citadel's offering something special, and there's kids out there that will come do this. And I think we have an opportunity to bring them in and educate them when they leave school.

Q. Sure, The Citadel is unique. It does have a different type of draw than what we see in some General Walters kept campus open during COVID. We went to class during COVID, did online on COVID. But we are positioned, I think, because of what we offer and the value we bring, to hold our own. That's what we intend to do.

Q. Thank you.

SENATOR JOHNSON: Mr. Chairman.

MR. CHAIRMAN: First, let me welcome Senator Isaac Devine. Welcome. Nothing like having another attorney on this Board. Who had a question?

SENATOR JOHNSON: Mr. Chairman.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Senator Johnson.

MR. NICHOLSON - EXAMINATION BY SENATOR JOHNSON:

Q. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Your question 10, you said The Citadel can improve by continuing to focus on your four-year graduation rate. What specific things do you think need to be done to improve that rate?

A. Well, you know, I know the numbers were mentioned a while ago. I'm actually looking at one of our brochures that we published. It says we're at 74.4%. I'm going to have to square that up with what you guys got. I'll do that. I'd be glad to follow up. You know I think we've got to -- the picture we've got to paint to these students is, and a lot of them are buying into it, is when you leave The Citadel, you're going to have a job. About 90% of all the senior class that graduates here are going to have a job. They're going to go into the military, they're going to medical or law school. The other thing is about, I think we are the highest salary of any South Carolina state college 10 years after graduation, \$72,085. Which, again, tuition's an issue, but we do seem to be producing graduates that are finding jobs that are lucrative jobs that are putting them in good spots.

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Q. Do you think because of the uniqueness -- I mean, obviously you're losing, I think you just hit 10% to 11% right off the top in that first semester. You're never going to be at 100% because you've lost X amount right off the top.

A. Financial group budgets for that every year, so we account for that and know when that's going to happen.

Q. So if you have a 75% graduation rate, then that's significantly better than the 60% that I was looking at. Does it -- how do you drive that, though? Mesh that up with what Senator Massey was saying. You have a declining student population. You have high tuition, bottom line. And you potentially have a two-thirds graduation rate. I mean, at some point, those lines all merge in something, and the result isn't what you want at The Citadel. So I guess what's the plan to make sure that those three things don't all interact at the exact same time?

A. Yes, sir. I'm certainly not minimizing 100% of graduates graduating, I think the --

Q. I'm not expecting 100%.

A. I'm with you. I was just looking here. The national average is 37%. So, you know, we feel like we want to do better, and that's our intention to do that. I would suggest that one-third of our cadet corps is in engineering, which is astounding. Just as a side note, 50% of the engineering students come from out of state. But upon graduation, 70% of the engineers that are graduating from The Citadel are staying in the state of South Carolina. So to get back to your question, sir, I think I guarantee you there's not a whole lot of cadets graduating in four years at The Citadel in engineering. So -- and I can find that out and let you know. But I know when I was there, you were lucky to get out in five years in engineering.

Q. Are there -- I went to an engineering school. I'm a liberal arts major, but I went to an engineering school. Parents are paying that tuition. The State is, through scholarship, subsidizing tuition. Graduation rates and moving through the system not as quickly as you can but in an efficient, expeditious manner, do you believe that five years is an appropriate -- again, it's not a gotcha question. I'm just asking. Is five years an appropriate time frame to graduate from The Citadel?

A. In some cases, I think so, yes, sir. I will say, too, that this is probably no secret to you all, but all the kids that are coming into The Citadel now have got college classes. We have a lot of kids that are leaving in three years. In fact, the Board had to take some action because we would get people to come in, take two years at tech, and then come in to be a knob and to be a senior and graduate. We did not feel like that somebody could

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come in and do two years like that and get the benefit and gain what The Citadel does without being there for three years. We have a number of people, a percentage, and I'm not sure what it is, sir, that are out much sooner than four years.

Q.I get that the biggest question -- I know there are a lot of schools now, dual credit, AP courses. You can walk in as a sophomore. In light of that, that's one of my issues with what I consider low graduation rates. I walk in as a sophomore. I should get out in a minimum of four years, if not sooner. And so that begs my question of what is The Citadel doing, what is the Board doing to ensure that these students are graduating in a timely manner and that the money invested in The Citadel, and especially in those students is well spent? Because it's return on investment, right? I get that you think that The Citadel believes you need to be there three years in order to get The Citadel experience. I get that. But I wonder, do I need to really be there six years before I can get to a certain graduation?

A. Yeah, we certainly do not want anybody to be there six years, five years either. But there are cases when you're going to have some cadets that are five years or four and a half years. Certainly, I understand, and it's a challenge. We understand your concern.

MR. CHAIRMAN: There we go. I share my Senate colleagues' concerns about the high cost of not only The Citadel, but we've talked about this for years, about the high cost of higher ed throughout our entire state. And maybe it's not so much true in The Citadel, but, you know, a lot of these students graduate with, you know, they may owe \$200,000 in loans and stuff. That makes it very difficult. So I'm sure we'll be asking other schools the same questions and stuff. But I do want to first ask for a motion for a favorable report.

SENATOR MASSEY: Motion.

SENATOR JOHNSON: Second.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Motion and second. All those in favor, please raise your right hand.

(All hands are raised.)

MR. CHAIRMAN: All right. Opposed?

(No hands are raised.)

MR. CHAIRMAN: So that's unanimous. Thank you, sir, for your willingness to serve. And that will do it for The Citadel. And we will now go to Coastal Carolina, and we've got at least, what, 13 or 14 of these.

COASTAL CAROLINA UNIVERSITY: So the 1st Congressional District Seat 1, expires in 2027. And that is George Edward Mullen of Hilton Head.

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GEORGE EDWARD MULLEN:

MR. CHAIRMAN: Come on up, George. Okay. We'll hold off for just a second. Mr. Mullen, just come right on up here, sir.

MR. MULLEN: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

MR. CHAIRMAN: If you'd just raise your right hand, let me swear you in. You swear to tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, so help you God.

MR. MULLEN: I do.

MR. CHAIRMAN: If you will just give us your name and the board seat you were running for, and then a brief reason, statement, why you were running for the seat.

MR. MULLEN: Well, thank you. I'm George Mullen. I'm from Hilton Head. I served on this Board for the last 13 years. I guess my term really was up two years ago, but we didn't have this proceeding at that time, so I'm sort of held over for the last two years. I got on this Board when my son had just started at Coastal. He was in a very special program that we had, the Coastal Life Program. There are similar programs at South Carolina and Clemson y'all may have heard of. My son has Down syndrome, and I really didn't know what to expect when I sent him off to college. He lived in the dorm, took some regular classes, some special classes. And I was just so impressed with the way the university handled the group of kids they had in just in general. We'll get to the tuition part. Just the fact that you've got a 60% out-of-state tuition -- I'm sorry, out-of-state student body, are there discussions at the board level on how do you get more in-state students as opposed to out-of-state?

A. We've had those discussions frequently. And I think your question as you first framed it was, is it good, is it bad? There's both positive and negatives to it. First thing I'd say is that we have a policy. It has been there way before I was ever on this Board that every qualified South Carolinian will be admitted. There will never be a place that is a person who is displaced because of our acceptance of out-of-state students. So we start from that proposition. And then you have to look at what is the basic mission of this university. We are a state university, primarily a regional in the Pee Dee coastal area. And our obligations are to serve those people first and foremost, and then the rest of the students in the state of South Carolina. To the extent that we have excess capacity, the benefits of out-of-state students are pretty overwhelming. And it goes back to the tuition question, which we've not talked about yet. But our tuition for out-of-state students is \$30,000 a year. In-state students, it's \$11,600. So we're charging basically three times tuition. If we did not have that 60% out-of-state revenues coming in, it would skew our

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numbers so badly for in-state students that the people from New Jersey and New York and Maryland are, to a great extent, subsidizing the students that we do have from South Carolina. So to that extent, it is a real advantage. But we have not had an area where we have to be turning people away. We do have academic requirements that need to be met, but out of our South Carolina applicants that we have, either through the bridge program that we have at Horry Georgetown Technical College or through the university, we're able to place 93% of those applicants. They don't all choose to come, but the opportunities for South Carolinians is definitely there. Probably better than any other school you'll see in the state.

Q. So what you're telling me is that the 40% of in-state students right now is, at this point in time, the most that you can attract to the university?

A. Unfortunately, that is true. There are -- and I'm just going to speak from a dad who has an 18-year-old daughter getting ready to go off to college. And she wants big football, big sorority, big fraternity. It's almost an entertainment type that they're looking for. And she is pretty typical of the incoming students at USC. We don't compete with South Carolina and with the Clemson and all that. We attract a different clientele, quite frankly.

Q. I notice in your questions that you talk a lot about virtual classes being the preferred method of delivery, or for growing population. You state that they're particularly non-traditional students. It's the most available and cost-efficient mode to a degree. The university should continue to develop online offerings to serve those students. There is more and more evidence, I think, in studies that are showing, while it may be cost-effective and it may be something that people desire, that it's not necessarily the most effective way to provide education or engage students. Does the Board -- I guess, one, would you agree with me on that? And two, is it something that the Board discusses about how best to deliver education to your student population?

A. Well we certainly had talks about to the extent that you're doing online or non-traditional methods of delivery. We've had discussions with that. Our provost often talks on that sort of situation. Do I agree with you that -- personally, I don't believe that the best method is on a remote or online. I agree. I do not believe that. I think face-to-face is the best way to learn. It's certainly what I would prefer. But if you're dealing with a non-traditional student, the student who perhaps cannot afford to live on campus and leave his home to come to Conway, or you're dealing with the military student who has a full-time job that wants to participate, you

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need to come up with a way of servicing the non-traditional. And one of the key ways to look at that would be through the virtual. As a matter of fact, one of the programs that we have at Coastal, we will allow a South Carolina resident to take up to five virtual courses at \$100 a class. Talk about cost-effective, and being able to service someone who otherwise perhaps could not have afforded to live here. I think it's been -- I was going to say it's been effective. We hope for it to be effective. It's all sort of new ground right now for us.

Q. You talk about the five classes. Are you talking about those that are for on-campus students or off-campus?

A. No, for off-campus virtual classes.

Q. Thank you Mr. Chairman.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Representative King.

MR. MULLEN - EXAMINATION BY REPRESENTATIVE KING:

Q. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. What are your thoughts on -- I'm hearing a lot about the accreditation, SACS and universities and colleges and universities are now looking at other accrediting bodies. Have you heard about that?

A. Oh, yeah, I've heard, certainly.

Q. And can you tell me your thoughts on that?

A. An awful lot of that, I think, is coming out of the current administration and the education department of this president. And they're looking at it from the differing ways of accrediting bodies that qualify for federal assistance. There's also been talk of some of our larger universities, I think that Clemson and Carolina are perhaps the two of them that have looked at it, of establishing their own accreditation bodies outside of SACS. We deal with SACS. SACS does a very intensive review every five years of our school. We have to do extensive reporting to them. We have never run into problems where we have had any sort of warnings or probation from them. SACS has worked fine for us.

Q. Do you see any potential risk with going to another accrediting body?

A. Oh, I think there's always the risk of any time you're going to something new that goes to the unknown. How would a body that is being formed for -- and I'm going on tip now because I'm not one of them, but if you're a Power Four and they're looking at big athletics, how's that accreditation body going to be judging athletes, for instance? Are they going to approach it from a different way because Power Four has a different concern there? They might. Don't know, that's speculation. But yes, there would be concern of anything that is new and changing to what has been established. I sort of have a theory if it's not

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broke, why do you want to fix it? And as I said, SACS has worked quite well for us.

Q. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Senator Issac Devine.

MR. MULLEN - EXAMINATION BY SENATOR DEVINE:

Q. Thank you so much, Mr. Mullen, for your service and your willingness to continue to serve. Just a couple of questions. In your questionnaire, you talked about not needing more students because you are growing, but you talked about the construction of needed facilities. Can you tell us what the Board's current plan is on the facilities and making sure that you are balancing, not spending overly on facilities, but making sure that we've got the right facilities?

A. Absolutely, and a couple of different things that we look at from there. First, this has probably been one of my primary roles that I've had on the Board, is that I sit on virtually all the design and programming committees for new buildings. In that role, I take a position that usually one or two board members sit on the committee with probably four or five other administration officials. We select the architect, we select the contractor, and then we work throughout the process as the buildings get built. So I've been very proud of the position I've taken on that. I think that if you come onto our campus, you'll see a gorgeous campus, very attractive buildings, very functional buildings. We are right now in the design phase for our new Health and Human Performance building. This is an 85,000 square foot, 58 million dollar project that we're building today. As you notice, we didn't come and ask the legislature to give us a special allocation of money for this building, although it'll probably be one of the largest projects that we've built. We are very fortunate in Horry County has a 1% local sales tax for education, of which we get what amounts to right at \$17 million a year to use on new construction, so that we've had the funds there and we're able to do this. We just completed the Thompson Library. This month, we will open up the total renovated Kimball Library, which was our old building. They're very functional, modern facilities to service what the current modern students demand. The technology-wise, the space programming layout is all very effective. One of the discussions we had at our board meeting that we had just last week, we had it here in Columbia so that we could meet with the legislature during our Coastal at the Capital Day is what we're doing for housing. We have a need for more housing right now. Right now, we're having to lease from an apartment project that is near University Place, which is one of our larger housing sections. We were having discussions on where this new project will be going. The positive on

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building new dormitories is that it's revenue-generating. We are able to charge the Board rates for that to pay off the bond indebtedness we get through the revenue bonds for the new dormitories. Plus, we're still allowed to allocate funds from our special penny tax to academic and residential buildings.

Q. Thank you.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Oh, it's working. Senator Massey.

MR. MULLEN - EXAMINATION BY SENATOR MASSEY:

Q. Mr. Mullen, thank you for being here. Thank you for your service. What's the total student population at Coastal?

A. Today, it is right at a little over 11,000. If you were to ask me that in August, the number was 12,006. That 12,006 was total headcount, not equivalent student body. The reason that it has gone from 12,006 to 11,086 is that December graduation, we had 700 people graduating. Then, we also have a loss of right at 8% between the freshman fall semester and spring semester.

Q. Is that normal?

A. Yes. And I think a lot of that has to do with the fact that we got 60% out of state. You get kids from New York, New Jersey. They may get more homesick. They may have also thought that, quite frankly, they thought they were coming down the beach going to have fun. And we're a real college. You've got to work. You've got to put in the work. That may account for some of that.

Q. So then, your in-state population is around 4,500 kids?

A. It's 40% of 12, 48. We'd like more.

Q. What is your out-of-state acceptance rate?

A. I don't know the exact number. Overall, acceptance rate is right at 72%. And as I told you, the in-state is much higher. I don't have that exact figure for you.

Q. Okay.

A. I can get it.

Q. I think you told us earlier that if you have a South Carolina student who is qualified, they're coming in.

A. They're coming in. And the -- you know, if they meet our academic qualifications, which are established by our faculty senate. The Board doesn't set that. The administration has a faculty senate that establishes what the minimum qualifications are. Primarily, it's looking at the rigor of their high school, their grade-point averages in high school. We no longer require SATs or ACTs. If they don't qualify, we then have an alternative program that they can come to in the summer. If they take two classes and pass that, then they are admitted into the August

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freshman class. And if they don't qualify at that level but still have potential, good potential to be a college student, we have an enrollment with the Horry Georgetown Technical College to enter into our bridge program. After a year, they then become a full-fledged student at Coastal. There's only a handful, 7% of our South Carolina applicants who academically don't qualify at that level.

Q. It sounds like if you're a South Carolina high school graduate, it's hard not to get in.

A. We want you, and we will work to make it successful.

Q. Do you know what the retention rate of in-state students is?

A. The total retention rate this year is 79%. I don't have the breakdown between in-state and out-of-state, although in-state is higher. I do know that. During my 13 years on the Board, I'll tell you that that retention number has gone from 68% when I got on the Board to 79.1% today. It is an area that I still believe is too low. It's something that we need to work on. I think one of the ways, as far as attracting new students, I said we really don't have to attract new students, we just need to keep the ones that we have. I would love to see our retention numbers get up into a 90% level. That gets into what typically private schools will strive to get. Get over 80%, we're not doing bad as an in-state school. I think the national average is more in the 70% range. So we've gotten much better, we can still do better than that.

Q. Does Coastal market out-of-state?

A. Yes, we do.

Q. Does Coastal market in the Northeast?

A. We do. They are the primary draw of the out-of-state students are Maryland, New Jersey, New York.

Q. Does Coastal market in Edgefield?

A. I certainly hope we do.

Q. I've not seen it.

A. We should -- I'll have a talk with our admissions officers as to why they don't take the road and go there.

Q. Saluda, Pickens, Anderson. Does Coastal market the South Carolina students? Really, it's kind of what I'm getting at.

A. We do. Our admissions committee goes on the road. They go on the road to various high schools. I don't know how they select which high schools they go to. They will go to all of the regional college fairs that take place in the state. We have, and I don't know how effective it is, I don't personally think it's very effective, but we have billboards. We have the local Horry County, Georgetown County, of going into the schools. We have special programs for 8th graders, for instance, to have a day on

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campus at Coastal. It's more of a heavy marketing to the region than that we're set up there to primarily serve the Pee Dee, the Coastal regions. Should we do a better job throughout the state? I think so.

Q. Well, it's hard to get the in-state students if they don't know you're there.

A. I hope that people have now heard about us. I can tell you that probably when I got on that Board 13 years ago, we may not have. Winning a national championship in baseball or going back and being the runner-up the second year helps.

Q. Absolutely.

A. Our football program has gotten much improved during those 13 years, and that gets the name out there. Athletics probably shouldn't be the front door of the university, but in reality, you're dealing with 18-year-old kids, it is.

Q. Well, you told us about your daughter. That's something to appeal to. Does -- has the Board talked about -- you told us that right now you're at about 60-40 out-of-state, in-state. Has the Board talked about -- what's an acceptable number? If you're marketing heavily in the northeast, you're going to get more of those people coming. Is the Board okay with 65-35? Is the Board okay with 70-30?

A. I think as long as we're servicing every South Carolinian that is qualified. What those out-of-state students do for us, it holds down the cost for all of our South Carolinians. While we -- you know, before the legislature came forward with the tuition mitigation and encouraging us to freeze our tuition, we had frozen our tuition the two years prior to that. I think we were the only institution in South Carolina that had done that. We've now gone over six years without an in-state tuition increase. Out-of-state, we do continue to increase. We use the student price index to increase our costs for out-of-state tuition. But as long as, quite frankly, they're willing to come and pay three times what our in-state students will pay, it allows us to provide services to our South Carolinians without us having to come to you and ask for more. It seems to work.

Q. Well I mean there is considerable state taxpayer support going into the university there, right?

A. We get about 10% of our budget, roughly \$36 million, I believe.

Q. Well, that could mean that the state's not contributing enough or it could mean that the budget's too high.

A. Well, we would always like for you to contribute more.

Q. I'm sure. We would probably like for you to spend less.

A. We -- actually, I think we actually do a pretty good job of it. I think if you look at our overall budget, it's 356 million dollars, I believe. We

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tend to take a very, very conservative approach. Our Board, and you'll get to meet us today because everybody is up for re-election. You'll find us a very conservative bunch of people. And fiscally, we look hard at our numbers.

Q. What's the university's debt?

A. I think our capacity is like 120 million. We may be at 80 million, I think.

Q. We had Mr. Miller, the AD, was here last week and I was looking at debt numbers at Clemson and Carolina, but I don't remember looking at Coastal's.

A. I know that we still have capacity, which I think a lot of other universities don't. And there is a difference in the revenue debt, the dormitories. We built five new dormitories in the past, I guess it's eight years, seven years. And we still have debt that was refinanced on that. But I think it was in the 80 million dollars that we refinanced that.

Q. Well, I will say, I do think there's a consideration that the General Assembly should make whether 36 million dollars for 4,500 kids is a good return on investment.

A. I hope you think it's excellent.

Q. That seems like a lot of money for that number of students. Now, I appreciate what you're saying about the numbers and about the budget with out-of-state tuition supporting in-state tuition. Sixty percent of the student body sounds high to me for a --

A. I don't argue with you at all. I agree with you. I agree. It's a -- when I first walked onto the campus, I was surprised. Quite frankly, I was surprised that a little regional school would draw out-of-state students like that. I will tell you this, 60% of our graduates stay in South Carolina. So while it's only 40% that are South Carolina residents when they come, 60% are staying.

Q. Is that a good thing?

A. That's an excellent, maybe it helps with that analysis you were just doing a moment ago. They weren't South Carolina residents when they came to our school, but they are when they leave.

Q. Is that a good thing?

A. I think so.

Q. Depends on where they come from.

A. I haven't always lived in South Carolina. I was born in Richmond, Virginia, but I've lived here since I was 2 years old. So I've lived here for questionnaire you said that the weakness is our graduate programs, which are not well-received and are shrinking in size. Talk to me about your graduate programs.

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A. Well, we've got an excellent program in marine science. That is what our flagship program would be. As far as doctorate programs, we have recently started a Ph.D. in education. We will soon have a doctorate of physical therapy. As a matter of fact, that's going through the approval process right now, and hopefully we'll start that in 2029. The master's degree programs that we've had, other than servicing teachers who are trying to get their master's in education to step up their credentials, we don't have a very strong response. If you look at our total graduate program, it has about 500 people in it. I can tell you during my time there that we've had as many as 700 people in our graduate program. I think we need to do a better job of, particularly on the graduate school, of servicing the needs of our region. You know, an awful lot of people in graduate school have full-time jobs. So a lot of those who would be coming are people from the Horry, Georgetown, Florence, Marion areas. I don't know why or what happened. I've talked to administration. I've talked to our previous administration. We have a brand new president now. I don't know if you've met Jamie Winebrake. Very impressive. He understands that, and he is going to do something about it. We were going to -- we were recently classified as an R3 school by the Carnegie Foundation as a research institution. We are virtually close to being an R2, and that is one of our goals that we have in the next coming years. With that, though, you primarily -- of your graduate program students, how many did their undergraduate work at Coastal versus somewhere else?

A. I don't have the exact number. I know that we have a crossover from it. I think into the PhD program, there are a handful. I don't know the exact numbers. We could get those for you, Senator.

Q. I'm very interested in graduation numbers. And as I looked at yours, you've got about a 37% four-year graduation rate and about a 48% six-year graduation rate.

A. Fortunately, those numbers have changed. Because I don't know how old those are.

Q. That's based on the 2018, 2024 six-year cohort.

A. The -- well, the six-year cohort, you'd have to be a little bit changed every year. We are now on the six-year at 56% is the numbers that our administration just gave us.

Q. And what's your four-year?

A. Four-year, it was at 48%.

Q. You have a lot of -- so it's under half. So do you have a lot of kids who show up at Coastal who have dual enrollment credit, AP credit, and they don't come in as a freshman, they come in as a sophomore?

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A. I don't think the number is as large as you would think. And I'm almost going back to my own kids. I had one daughter who had 36 hours, another had 32 hours. They spent a whole four years in college. They could have used these, but when you start applying to your core requirements, it limits how much you get to use those when you get into your majors. I'll say this on the graduation numbers. If you also read my statement that I gave to you, I thought our greatest weakness was our retention and our graduation numbers. We start off in the hole, particularly when you're dealing with the six-year number there. If you recall, I told you that we had a retention number back then of in the 73%, 74%. So we're losing 26% of our students off the bat. These people who come here their first year and never repeat back for the second, those count against you in your graduation numbers, even though they transfer to Clemson, transfer to Carolina and they ultimately get their degrees. As far as when you're calculating our six-year graduation rate, that 26% that we lost that first year, we're in the hole that much. We could never have using those old numbers. Now I said we got up to 79% this year, but that means the best we'll ever do in six years, if we never lose another student, is have a 79% graduation rate. If you look at a lot of institutions, they have that now. We could never get there because of that hole you start in. So if you start -- if you focus on changing your retention, as I said, during my 13 years on this Board, we've gone from 68% to 79%, up to 11%. That means our graduation rates should increase proportionally.

Q. Let me ask this. Most of the students who leave, you said earlier, leave because they moved from out of state, they came down here. If you lowered your in-state numbers, your retention numbers would go up and your graduation rate would go up, correct?

A. You would certainly hope they would. You lose students to transfer in South Carolina. I can tell you that if we did a study on this, and I will say it may have been six or seven years ago, of where were those kids going? And we had a significant number, and I hate to be touting what is somewhat of a competitor of ours, a lot of kids who didn't get into Clemson or got bridged at Clemson, rather than doing the bridge at Clemson, they came to Coastal for a unit then transferred. We had a substantial number of those that showed up. We run into the people wanting to go to what Clemson and Carolina have to offer, that Coastal never will. We will never be a Power Four school, and we know that. We're never going to be on that type of level. We don't have fraternity and sorority houses. So if you're looking at that aspect of college, you're not going to get that. I think we've improved athletics dramatically, so

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we've got to give kids what they want. At the same time, we've got to give them what the parents want, which is first-class education. Hopefully half the students want that too.

Q. Last question. You said something earlier about you're involved in buildings and leasing and things. Does the Board vote on leases?

A. Yes, every lease.

Q. Every lease for every building, the Board would vote?

A. The Board approves every lease that we have. And we do -- they're an annual lease, so yes.

Q. Thank you, sir.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Representative King.

MR. MULLEN - EXAMINATION BY REPRESENTATIVE KING:

Q. I just have one question for you. How can you realistically -- and let me say this. I've been on the Committee for a while now, and every year we ask the same questions about in-state, out-of-state students. How do you realistically have more in-state students and keep the costs where you have it?

A. One of the things we'd probably be asking you for more money, in all seriousness. Our tuition is, as I said, \$11,600. Our room and Board is about \$14,000. I think you'll see both of those numbers are on the way low end of what other universities in the state charge. We are fortunate to be able to take advantage of that other source of income. We're fortunate to be able to take advantage of the penny sales tax that we get \$17 million a year from Horry County. All those go to help hold down costs. The only other way to address costs, if we were to eliminate our out-of-state students, and that revenue they bring in, is to reduce services.

Q. My last question. Do you all still have the partnership with South Carolina State in their speech pathology program?

A. We do not.

Q. Okay.

A. I'll tell you what new programs that we do have, is that we have now gone and entered into articulation agreements with all 16 technical schools in the state. I think we'll be the first university in the state to do that.

MR. CHAIRMAN: No other questions? Do I have a motion for approval from the Commission?

SENATOR MASSEY: So moved.

MR. CHAIRMAN: All those in favor signify this by raising your right hand --

REPRESENTATIVE KING: Second.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Got it.

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(All hands are raised.)

MR. CHAIRMAN: All those opposed?

(No hands are raised.)

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you, sir.

MR. MULLEN: Thank you very much. I appreciate it.

MR. CHAIRMAN: You're welcome, sir.

MR. MULLEN: I look forward to serving for the next two years. I'll probably have to be back up here again, I guess.

MR. CHAIRMAN: I bet you're looking forward to that again.

MR. MULLEN: Hopefully I'll have some answers to some questions I didn't have for you today. I hope you'll ask those again, Senator.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Yeah, we're going to pause for a second. She's going to hand out some copies.

MS. WEBB: And what Ellie is passing out is just simply to help Commission members aid you all knowing who is coming.

OFF THE RECORD

MR. CHAIRMAN: All right, we'll go ahead and get back on track here. And next up is the 3rd Congressional District Seat 3 that expires in 2027, it's William S. Biggs of Salem, my favorite county.

WILLIAM S. BIGGS:

MR. BIGGS: It's a great county to be from.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Oh boy, you got it. Welcome, sir.

MR. BIGGS: Thank you.

MR. CHAIRMAN: If you would just raise your right hand, let me swear you in. Do you swear to tell the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth, so help you God?

MR. BIGGS: I do.

MR. CHAIRMAN: All right. Just tell me your name and the Board seat you're running for and just a brief opening statement.

MR. BIGGS: Thank you, sir. William Biggs. I'm running for the third congressional district of South Carolina. I have served on this Board since, hard to believe, 2006. I've had the pleasure of being chair of the Athletics Committee, the Finance and Audit Committee, and four years as chairman of the Board of the university. During that time, I've seen our enrollment grow from right at 6,000 to almost 12,000, or a little over 12, as we started this school year. I've seen the university grow with the new buildings that we've been able to add, and also had the privilege of a daughter attending Coastal Carolina, where she received her undergraduate in business and her MBA from Coastal Carolina before she decided to go to law school. Very proud of the education she received. But also, during that time as chair, I took a lot of time going

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out and talking to families before graduation to find out what they were happy with. Did their son or daughter enjoy their experience at Coastal Carolina? And I was able to learn so much more from those families and what Coastal Carolina meant to them. It's been an honor to serve. I look forward to having that opportunity, if this Committee chooses, to allow me to serve again. Coastal Carolina is an important part of our higher education in this community because it's offering things that are different. You know institution's board of trustees?

A. I do.

Q. Are you aware that you cannot contact any member of the General Assembly and formally ask for a vote commitment or pledge until 48 hours after the Commission's report has been released?

A. I do.

Q. Have you currently asked any third parties to contact members of the General Assembly on your behalf, or are you aware of anyone attempting to intervene in this process on your behalf?

A. I do not.

Q. And are you aware that you have an ongoing obligation and duty to report to the Commission any changes that might occur that would affect your application and overall eligibility for serving on a college Board?

A. I do.

Q. Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Biggs, Mr. Chairman. I have no further questions.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Any questions from Commission members? Senator, I'm sorry. I apologize.

MR. BIGGS - EXAMINATION BY SENATOR BENNETT:

Q. That's all right. Thank you for the raise. Two quick questions. Hopefully they're quick. I'll deviate from what we've been talking about because you've heard some of the concerns.

A. Yes, sir.

Q. One question specific to you, but in general. Nineteen years on the Board. Thank you. Appreciate your service. God bless you. What's too long for a Board member to serve?

A. That's really a hard question. It's -- I think as long as your passion for that university is still there. You still want to see, you know, the university continue to grow, to do great things, to make sure that our young men and women are getting an education that can be productive in the communities that they live in. You know, I'm not sure. Would term limits be a good thing for college Boards? Maybe. I'm looking at this probably being the last time I run. One, I'm getting a little bit older. Two, my daughter who graduated is on the CAF Board. She loves the

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university. And maybe she'll want to run to replace that seat. Maybe there will stay a Biggs on the seat. Maybe there'll be somebody in the 3rd district that can serve better. But as of right now, I'm looking at this probably being my last term. But I think that's really up to you, and the members of the General Assembly.

Q. Question about your deliberations. This is what I'm always interested in. Tell me about Coastal in your experience. Is there -- describe for me, to the extent that you can, the Board experience. Is your Board engaged? Do they challenge your leadership? Or are they just a receiver of information?

A. No, sir. This Board likes to challenge. I found that out during four years as the chair. Luckily, most of our discussions are held in executive session when there's something that's controversial. Because we like to come out and be united, if at all possible, to make sure what we're doing is best for the university. But this Board's very engaged. We have lively discussions about different areas and different thoughts. And I think every chairman that we've had encourages that. If we're just a Board going there and say yes to everything that the president or the administration wants, we're not doing our job. We need to challenge them. And in challenging our administration to do their job, I feel we're doing what we should do. And the university will benefit from that.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Representative Rose.

MR. BIGGS - EXAMINATION BY REPRESENTATIVE ROSE:

Q. Yes, sir. You're chairman of the athletics?

A. I was the first chairman. Now, when I step down as chairman of the Board, I chose not to ask to chair any committee. I feel others should get those opportunities. And I serve on committees. But I think everyone should get an opportunity to chair a committee or be the chairman, if that's what they want.

Q. I got you. I was just curious how you guys got that baseball coach. That was a heck of a run last year.

A. Well, he had been with us. He had been with Coach Gilmore. It was a great run. The run we had in 16-17 was unbelievable. That World Series ring sits on my desk. I'm very proud of it. To see Coastal go. And that year we went to LSU and let them stay at home. This year we just happened to run into the best pitcher in college baseball and some umpires that seemed to be a little unfairly looking at things, at our coaches. But it was a great run. And it gave us so much national publicity for kids that are reaching out from all over the country about Coastal. The website went nuts with the number of people that researched us and looked at us. The same thing when, you know, our basketball team

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almost beat Virginia, the number one seed, the publicity we got. The first bowl win we received. Athletics opened so many doors to people seeing the university. And that baseball run last year, we all were sitting on the edge of

A. It was over 50% in state at that time.

Q. Okay. And so since your time there, the total population has effectively doubled. Is that fair?

A. Yes, sir.

Q. So certainly the Board has noticed the increase in percentages from out of state as compared to in state. Has the Board had conversations about a target number as far as total students but also what the percentage breakdown between out of state and in state would be?

A. We have talked about, you know, what could, with the landlocked abilities we have, where we could add additional facilities. You know, what could Coastal be? Is it 15,000 max, maybe? We've been growing at about 3% a year.

Q. Total?

A. Total student population. Even in years when they were predicting that all schools are going to drop off, COVID hit, all this happened, we still continued to grow. And I would like to see that grow more in state. We are a state university. And while it's 60-40 now, I wish that was opposite. I wish we were 60% in state students and 40, and we had to come ask you for more money to support the university. For me, with a dollar going there, I was very excited we were getting in state tuition. And I'm happy that we've been able to hold that tuition rate steady, you know, since 2019 for our in-state students. We had another child that went out of state. Of course, rodeo scholarships are not offered everywhere. I'm not sure he's all together all the time. Why would you want to tackle a full-grown bull? I don't know. But I paid out-of-state tuition for that. So --

Q. It seems like that's what your wife does every day is try to tackle a full-grown bull.

A. She does, and the other night she might have went a little far -- no, just -- but I see the difference.

Q. Well and I'm curious, and I apologize for interrupting you, but I'm curious here. I mean at what point -- so just from your tenure.

A. Yes, sir.

Q. And I don't think 19 years is too long. You have another year, I guess, under this term.

A. That's why I said I'm thinking.

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Q. That's fine. And I'm not holding you to anything. If the -- so you've seen the total student enrollment double. You've seen the percentages from in-state versus out-of-state go from approximately 50% when your service began to now it's at about 40%. And the reason I ask the question about whether there are Board conversations about this is, how much is enough? How much is too much? And not just from a student population. Whether the student population increases to 15 or whether it's 50, it's too much. But whether it does increase to 15. When is it for the Board that the out-of-state population is too much compared to the in-state? Is 60% too much? Are we okay at 63, 65? At what point is the Board going to say, we're not accepting any more out-of-state students in comparison to our in-state numbers?

A. Well, sir, I think as long as we're focusing on in-state and we're accepting those students, as you've heard many times before, we need to keep that population growing to keep the school, you know, financially liable. But you brought up a question earlier. You know, are we going to Edgefield County? Are we going to Saluda County? Are we going to McCormick and Abbeville, the smaller counties? We're not but we need to. We need to put more of a focus on getting every county in our state to let them know what Coastal Carolina is, what Coastal Carolina has to offer for them. And, yes, the 3rd Congressional District is about as far away from Coastal as anyone else in our state. But we offer things that I believe a lot of our high school students would be interested in. And, yes, they do go into Anderson and hit the bigger high schools and into Greenville. But, you know, make it a week's trip when you come up. Hit that 3rd district. Hit Seneca. Hit West Union. Hit Edgefield. Those should be hit. We need to make the students and their parents in every county of this state know what we have to offer and try to grow that in-state student population.

Q. You referenced tuition. And you indicated in your responses that you believe tuition is reasonable at \$11,600. I don't know that I disagree with that. But I guess my question here is if the tuition for in-state students is \$11,600, what's the total cost of attendance?

A. Total cost of attendance when you play room and Board and everything is closer to \$30,000 a year.

Q. Is that reasonable?

A. That's hard for a lot of families. You know, we try to make sure that any scholarship availabilities that are out there are offered to our students. And we encourage that. There's a lot of work programs that our students can get into working on the university to help offset their costs. But higher education has gotten out of control. I think we can all agree

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to that. The cost to go to college hurts. Our technical schools are offering great programs, and they're offering great careers. We need to make sure that when you're graduating from a four-year institution, you're coming out with a degree that offers you ability to get a good job and contribute to your community.

Q. Agreed. So I guess the question then is if the cost of higher education is getting or has gotten out of control, and I think you and I agree on that, whose responsibility is it to get a hold of that?

A. It's all of us, every one of us. From a Board standpoint, we need to make sure that we're passing down to our administration, you know, let's look at the budget. You know, where are we overspending? Where can we make cuts? We've done a very good job of that at Coastal over the past few years. And, you know, during the time that I was chair, I will have to say our current chair, Ms. Hanna, was a big proponent of looking into everything and bringing it up. And you talk about those discussions behind the scenes when they'd get heated, they would get heated. But we were able to go in and tell everyone, you need to reduce your cost 10%.

Q. But to Senator Bennett's point, some of those conversations need to be heated, right?

A. They do.

Q. Otherwise you're just -- I mean, we don't need people who are just going to go and just sign off on whatever the administration wants to do. I'm not saying that the administration is saying anything wrong, but that's not the role of the Board.

A. It isn't.

Q. Right? I mean, it seems to me somewhat disingenuous to argue that an \$11,600 tuition is reasonable when at the same time increasing mandatory fees every year. Because ultimately, as a parent, I don't care whether it's tuition or room and Board or whatever, it's coming out of the same pocket.

A. It's the total cost.

Q. And so if the cost of attendance is increasing significantly every year. And it has because the room and board costs are increasing, the meal costs are increasing. And most of the time when somebody's living on campus, the university requires them to have a meal plan. When all those fees increase additionally, you get the total cost of attendance. Thirty thousand dollars is -- I mean, the average salary in South Carolina is in the low 50s. And I am concerned that we don't do enough to check university spending. We talk about what's coming in. We don't always talk about how it goes out. And so I appreciate that there has been some heated conversations about that. I would hope that there would be more.

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Because what the university is spending directly relates to how much it has to collect. And what I don't want to have is we're going to keep spending so that we'll just increase out-of-state population because they're going to subsidize it. Because if you get to, I'll tell you, Shane's opinion is that 60-40 is already too high. But if you start increasing that spread, just for financial reasons, to subsidize additional things, that suggests to me deeper problems. And so I would hope that the Board would take a look at those things, consider that scenario as well.

A. I cannot disagree with you in any sense.

Q. Thank you, thank you Mr. Chairman.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Representative McGinnis.

MR. BIGGS - EXAMINATION BY REPRESENTATIVE MCGINNIS:

Q. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. And I met you on the elevator on the way up.

A. Thank you for letting me in the door.

Q. Again, I will say, though, the questions about out-of-state, representing that area down there, we can't keep our northern neighbors out. We've considered bills to maybe put a wall along the Mason-Dixon line and have the north pay for it. But it's not working. So we're getting plenty of out-of-state, whether we like it or not. But I think we do a good job accommodating the people who we are getting. But I do agree that a stronger push may need to be needed -- may need to be taken to get people from the other areas. My question for you is, speaking of this growth, and my daughter will be attending as a freshman next year. My question is, with all the building that's happening, and we're talking about the need for more dormitories and things like that, I know you all have been approached by people talking about public-private partnerships. But how do you feel about public-private partnerships, and do you think it could be a solution to maybe take some of the burden off of the school and share it with the community?

A. And this -- everyone looks at this differently. Personally, I feel if the university can do it and we can bring that in and afford it, it's better if we're operating the buildings, if we're making sure it's done. When you get into the public-private, then you start getting into how much profitability they're wanting to make, and then it becomes to them, you know, well, we've got to be more profitable. We've invested this much money, and then can we control the cost the way that we can if it's owned by the university?

Q. It probably goes by a deal-to-deal. I imagine you could negotiate the terms of some of those deals where it wouldn't be so egregiously in favor of the private. I don't know which is best. I'm just kind of trying to get a

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sense for what else. You're throwing all the spaghetti up against the wall, I guess, is what I'm trying to ask.

A. Everything should be looked at. And then what best serves the university and the students that are coming there is the decisions we should go with.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Representative King.

MR. BIGGS - EXAMINATION BY REPRESENTATIVE KING:

Q. Thank you, Mr. Chair. I have a question in reference to the 36 million dollars that the state funds the institution. What percentage of that actually goes towards in-state students' tuition mitigation?

A. I do not have those numbers, sir, but I would say that the majority of that money that comes in from the state is what allows us to keep our tuition to in-state students low. While we'd love it to be lower, I think if you look at the cost of other state institutes, what they're charging for in-state, Coastal is one of the best deals you can get. But the funding that comes from the General Assembly to Coastal is what is used, and it is less than 11% of our total operating budget. But without that, we would have to increase in-state tuition. And with that, and the increases you've given us has helped us keep that tuition at the same cost it was since 2019.

Q. The scholarships that the college gives, what percentage of the scholarships that you all give are given to out-of-state students?

A. I do not know the answer to that, sir. I can get it for you.

Q. Please, I would like to know that. And if so, do you believe that as we try to get more South Carolinians at the institution, making sure that the scholarships are given to South Carolina students versus trying to entice out-of-state students to come to South Carolina?

A. Yes, sir, I do agree with you on that, that as a state university that is supported by the taxpayers of this state, we should put our focus on our in-state students.

Q. My last question, do you believe that faculty and staff retain full First Amendment protections when expressing views outside of the classroom, outside of the college?

A. Yes, sir, I think so. As long as the law is being followed, they have that right.

Q. Elaborate when you say as long as the law is, when you're talking about free speech.

A. When you're talking about free speech, if you're not, you know, enticing problems or if you're not trying to get, you know, to hurt a person. Those, you know -- if free speech is free speech in the First Amendment, there's a reason it is the First Amendment and free speech

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should be there and every American should have the right to state their opinions.

Q. Thank you.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Any other questions? Is there a motion

MR. CHAIRMAN: All right. Thanks. Okay, we're now up to the 4th Congressional District Seat 4, which expires in 2029. Mr. William E. Turner, III from Simpsonville. If you just raise your right hand and repeat after me, do you swear to tell the truth and nothing but the truth so help you God?

WILLIAM E. TURNER, III:

MR. TURNER: I do.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Just state your name and just a little bit about why you're running for the Board and then tell us a little bit about yourself.

MR. TURNER: Yes. Thank you, Mr. Chairman and members of the Committee. Thank you for the opportunity to speak today. My name is Will Turner, and I've had the privilege of serving on the Board at Coastal Carolina University since 2011. Over the past 14 years, I've watched Coastal Carolina grow from a young, rising institution into a nationally recognized university with strong academic programs and expanding research footprint and championship-caliber athletics that have elevated our visibility across the country. I'm a 1997 graduate of Coastal. In addition are my wife, my brother, my brother-in-law, and most recently my oldest daughter graduated in 2022. I first sought a seat on this Board because I believed Coastal Carolina had tremendous potential and because I felt called to support and strengthen a relatively young public institution serving South Carolina families. That commitment has only deepened over time. My focus continues to be on responsible governance, strengthening academic quality, expanding in-state recruitment, and building a more connected and engaged alumni community. I remain actively involved on campus as well as off through regular visits. I have strong ties to the Conway community, having grown up there, as well as Myrtle Beach. I'm on campus very frequently, even though I live in the upstate. I'm running for re-election because I believe my long-term perspective, steady leadership, and deep commitment to Coastal's mission position me to continue contributing meaningfully during the next chapter of growth and opportunity for Coastal Carolina. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Macey.

MR. TURNER - EXAMINATION BY MS. WEBB:

Q. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Turner, can you please state your current address?

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A. 6 McRae Place, Simpsonville, South Carolina.

Q. Thank you. And is this the address that you pay your 4% property tax?

A. It is.

Q. Thank you. And is this the address within the congressional district to which you have applied?

A. Yes, it is.

Q. Thank you. And do you currently serve on any local or state board, commission, committee, or elected office other than Coastal Carolina University?

A. I do not.

Q. Thank you. And do you understand the obligations and responsibilities of serving on a public institution's board of trustees?

A. I do.

Q. And are you aware that you cannot contact any member of the General Assembly and formally ask for a vote commitment or pledge until 48 hours after the Commission's report has been released?

A. I understand.

Q. And have you currently asked any third parties to contact members of the General Assembly on your behalf, or are you aware of anyone attempting to intervene in this process on your behalf?

A. I have not.

Q. And are you aware that you have an ongoing obligation and duty to report to the Commission any changes that might occur that would affect your application and overall eligibility for serving on a college Board?

A. I'm sorry. I apologize. I missed the very first part of that.

Q. Are you aware that you have an ongoing obligation and duty to report to us any changes that would affect your eligibility?

A. Yes.

Q. All right. Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Turner and Mr. Chairman. I have no further questions.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Questions from Commission members? Senator Issac Devine.

MR. TURNER - EXAMINATION BY SENATOR DEVINE:

Q. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thank you so much, Mr. Turner, for serving and your willingness to continue to serve. When I was reading your questions, it stuck out to me the intent to strengthen alumni base. And now hearing your opening statement, the breadth of your connections with alumni intrigued me. So I just wanted to ask about what is Coastal doing as far as encouraging alumni giving, and what are you

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doing with the alumni giving dollars as far as maybe in-state scholarships or recruiting or enticing in-state students to come to Coastal?

A. Great question. Thank you very much, Senator Devine. We have a robust alumni engagement team at Coastal. They spend a lot of time getting out on the road and spending time with alumni that have moved all over the country. In fact, I kind of call it the alumni roadshow a little bit. There are probably eight to ten trips annually where our alumni team goes out to various pockets around the country, and they put together events that allow alumni from different parts of the world that are there to get together and talk about their Coastal experience. And obviously the goal is to continue to bolster this, and one day, whether they're donors today or not, one day they may want to give back to Coastal. And from that, we are able to continue building on scholarship dollars that are available to students.

Q. Do you know about what is that amount that we have at alumni giving, and as a Board, have you all set some targets or some goals as far as increasing that alumni giving?

A. Yes, ma'am. In fact, we are currently in the silent phase of a rather sizable campaign with sizable goals. We are several years into this campaign, but our goal is to raise 100 million of three daughters, and two of those daughters are finished with school, but I still have one more daughter to put through school, so I give what I can. I'm happy to say, though, in our most recent Giving to You Tuesday, which is an athletic giving program, we have another one that's academic-related later in the year, but we did have 100% representation from the Board toward that event.

Q. In reference to student loans that students may take out to go to Coastal, do you know what the percentage is of repayment? Because I understand that it does affect the accreditation sometime that students are not paying their loans back. So what is the percentage of the students that graduate that pay their student loans back?

A. I don't have that number. However, I think things have changed dramatically since COVID, and the fact that the repayment basically was put on hold for a while. So I don't know that we've seen those numbers in recent years, especially given the fact that students are just now, or former students, graduates, are just now starting to start paying those back again. We can certainly get those numbers for you.

Q. Thank you.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Senator Massey, question?

MR. TURNER - EXAMINATION BY SENATOR MASSEY:

Q. Yes. Thanks for being here. When did you first start on the Board?

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A. 2011, July 2011. Mr. Biggs told us earlier that he began his service in 2006, and over that period of time that the student population had effectively doubled.

Q. Do you remember what the student population was when you first began your service?

A. It was not much bigger than that. We had some slow growth from his beginning to mine. I want to say it was approximately 7,500, maybe, when I started.

Q. The growth that has taken place since that time during your service on the Board, has that been strategic? Or has it -- how has that happened? How have we gone from 7,500 to 12,000?

A. It's actually been very strategic, Senator Massey. We -- I can remember back in late 2018, we sort of established a goal. We were looking at 12,500 by 2020. Obviously, COVID stopped that. But prior to that, we were growing very strategically because we didn't want to outgrow our ability to serve the students that we did attract. Infrastructure is expensive. Technology is expensive. Faculty are expensive. So we knew that we had to manage that growth very strategically so that we could provide the service and the safety of the students that we did attract.

Q. So the goal -- the Board's goal was to go to 12,500 by 2020?

A. And we shut that down.

Q. Sure. So from -- so that would be from 2011 at approximately 7,500 to 2020 at 12,500. That's like an 80% growth over a period of nine years.

A. It's --

Q. What was the -- I'm curious, what was the Board's thinking in making that type of enrollment increase?

A. The demand. The demand was there. And it still is. We're seeing record numbers of applications. In fact, our current academic year, I think we had over 27,000 applications to Coastal.

Q. The demand -- based on what I've heard from your fellow Board members who have appeared already, it sounds like that demand is coming from out of state. Is that fair?

A. That is fair, absolutely.

Q. All right. I noticed in an addendum that you provided to your personal data questionnaire, you indicated that you would like to attract more in-state students by ensuring academic offerings align with statewide workforce needs.

A. Yes, sir.

Q. Do you agree with that?

A. I do.

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Q. Do you think the university provides major options or graduate options that do align with state workforce needs?

A. We have, and we continue to. In fact, we are responding to the massive health care need in the community, the region, and the state, and that's largely what's driven us to develop the Doctor of Physical Therapy program that's going to launch in two years.

Q. I noticed the university does not offer engineering degrees. So is the pursuit toward the statewide workforce needs, it's more on the health care side, right?

A. Largely in the health care, but engineering is literally on the horizon. It's coming.

Q. Okay. What's your time frame on that, do you expect?

A. Knowing that the College of Science is soon to be renamed to include the College of Science and Engineering, it's right around the corner. I don't have a specific time frame on the curriculum and the passage through CHE, but it's well underway.

Q. Which engineering majors does the Board propose that CHE accept?

A. That I have not seen yet, sir.

Q. Okay. Because that's certainly, you know, if you start offering engineering degrees, that certainly lines up with some of our workforce needs because we've become a manufacturing state.

A. Yes, sir.

Q. There are lots of engineering demands.

A. I live in it.

Q. Yeah, sure. You live right in the middle up there.

A. Yes, sir.

Q. I agree. You also indicated that you want to ensure options make higher education an affordable option. Do you believe that's the case now at Coastal?

A. I think we're well on our way to doing that, and I attribute that largely to the programs that have been created between the universities, and not just Coastal, but between the universities, the technical system, technical college system, and the local county school districts. My youngest daughter is a junior in high school at J.L. Mann High School in Greenville. She's barely setting foot on the high school campus. Her entire curriculum for her junior year and senior year are college-based. She's in a program that's called Expressway to Tiger Town. It's for future teachers that can start classes as juniors. In fact, she started as a sophomore taking college-level courses. What this is doing, even though she could have graduated this past December from high school, I'm like, why would you do that? You're getting two years of free education, thus

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making it easier on me to put her through school when she does finish high school. But should she want to go to grad school after that? I'm literally still investing four years of college and getting six. So I think we're creating pathways, especially at Coastal, to make it easily accessible and much more affordable.

Q. Has the Board received any information as to how students who come in with significant college credits by dual enrollment, how those students perform in the college classes?

A. I think it's still a little early to see that, but I see what's happening at my home. I watch how she's rising to a level that her two sisters didn't do early in their academic careers. She's stepping forward, taking the initiative, knowing the impact that it's having on our family economics. She understands that even at 16, almost 17 years old. So the impact is there. I think given another two, three years, as we start to see these students matriculate from the high school slash tech school programs into the university systems and beyond, I think we're going to see some really significant, successful numbers coming out of these.

Q. I ask that question because I, too, am a father of a junior who's been taking a significant number of dual enrollment college classes. And I'll tell you that this is not a university issue as much as it is a technical college issue, I guess, because they're the ones who did the dual enrollment programs. That my experience is that the dual enrollment classes that she's taking are nowhere near the rigor of the college-level courses that I took when I was an undergraduate student. And so I wonder, and I don't think that's isolated to my household, because I hear that from other people, too. So I do wonder how, you're right, it's making it much more financially available for those children. I'm just wondering what they're getting out of it. And if they're learning -- if the rigor of that coursework is sufficient to prepare them for the coursework that they're going to get at the university level. And does it then require remedial courses once those children come into the university setting? Or are we dumbing down university settings, university coursework, and therefore the majors and how they are produced in the end, are we dumbing down that because of what's going on? Because I can tell you, we've had a number of dual enrollment courses. I haven't seen any of them that match what I had as a freshman when I went to university. So I'm curious if you -- maybe it's as a parent, if you see that, but beyond that, whether the Board, it receives information about that. And whether the Board asks questions about that. Because I feel like that we're creating this pipeline and we're making it cheaper, but we're making it cheaper to get an

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education that does not prepare them as well for what they're going to get hit with at some point.

A. I totally understand your comments. Personally, I've not seen that. I watch how hard my child works every day. She's going to class with students that are twice her age. She's earning their respect. She's participating. She's standing up, leading.

Q. Are those online or are they in person?

A. No, they're in person.

Q. Okay.

A. She's on Greenville Tech's campus every day.

Q. Great.

A. So she's taking part. She's jumping in with both feet, and she's creating success for herself. The rigor that I see her at home taking on, in addition to working part-time, she has a job as well. She's also in the classroom as a student teacher, if you will, even as what you would consider still a freshman, maybe early sophomore student. But she's being immersed in this program so that when she does matriculate out into the teaching workforce, she's absolutely prepared. I've not seen anything being dumbed down, not at least at my house. It could be that way other places. I can't speak to that. But so far, I haven't seen that.

Q. One final point. And that is you also indicated in your answers that you think that Coastal faces challenges due to its age and rapid growth. And I'm curious how does -- It seems to me that the rapid growth is by design that the Board has instituted this plan for the rapid growth. How does the Board -- what are the plans that the Board has to respond to that rapid growth? How do you propose to deal with it?

A. Our biggest challenge right now, as you've already heard, is housing. We have a large demand. We also have some housing requirements for freshman students and sophomore students. So with the influx of applications, acceptances, and record enrollment year over year over year, we have to provide a place for them to live. And we have to provide safe places for them to live and resources that they can tap into so that their success is, for lack of a better term, guaranteed. So again, it's very strategic. It's very deliberate. We recognize the challenges when they're facing us. And we work hard as a Board and as an administration to head those challenges off.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Anybody else? I entertain a motion for approval from the Commission.

REPRESENTATIVE McGINNIS: So moved.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Second?

SENATOR BENNETT: Second.

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MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you. All those in favor signify by raising your right hand. Or left, either one.

(All hands are raised.)

MR. CHAIRMAN: All right, we got them all. Thank you, sir.

MR. TURNER: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

MR. CHAIRMAN: We're going to take about a five or six-minute break. I know our reporter sure needs it, and probably we do, too. So we'll come back in about 2:10, if that's all right.

OFF THE RECORD

MR. CHAIRMAN: All right, we're going to get started again. We'll now hear testimony from the 5th Congressional District Seat 5, which expires in 2027, Lisa Mabry Davis. Okay, come on up. If you would just raise your right hand, I'll swear you, you swear to tell the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth so help you God.

LISA MABRY DAVIS:

MS. DAVIS: I do.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Welcome and just state your name and what position you're in. What position you're going to play again and then tell us a little bit about yourself and why you're running.

MS. DAVIS: Okay. As Chairman Whitmire has said, my name is Lisa Davis and I'm from Gaffney, South Carolina, and I represent the 5th Congressional District on the Coastal Carolina University Board of Trustees. I was elected in 2020 to fill the remaining portion of a term of a trustee who had resigned. I have enjoyed every minute of my service as a trustee. During my brief tenure, Coastal Carolina has become the state's third largest university, hitting 12,000 students in enrollment, and has achieved national recognition for our academic and athletic programs. From hosting College Game Day to preparing to launch our own satellite, the entire country, except Edgefield County, has recently discovered teal nation. I would like to say that my road to trusteeship is not conventional at all. I don't have a background in banking, construction, public affairs, I'm not an attorney, and I had absolutely no experience in higher education when I was elected to this Board. My expertise has been in the founding and running of a small business and rearing four children. As far as my educational background, I'm a graduate of Clemson University and the University of South Carolina, so I expected my children to follow me to the orange or the garnet. But when two of my three oldest children chose teal, I quickly became aware of just how fabulous Coastal Carolina University was. It was during their time as students that I heard from my friend and fellow Gaffneyite that a Board seat had become open, and she encouraged me to run. I've been a

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Chanticleer ever since. In addition to my Board service, where I serve as vice chairman of the Academic and Student Affairs Committee, I've endowed a scholarship, supported the athletics program, and become an internship site and hired a number of Coastal Carolina graduates in my business. As far as my role on the Board, my expertise, if you could call it that, has been just a common sense voice of a parent whose children went to Coastal. And every decision our Board makes, at the front of my mind, is what will be the real world impact on this decision to our students and their parents. I serve as a trustee in that spirit. Again, thank you so much for this opportunity, and I'm going to attempt to answer your questions, and I hope you're all about worn out. But you know what, honestly, in case you all don't ask me the right questions, I just want to brag. Just a few minutes, is that okay? Coastal, you know, when my son first said, I'm going to go to Coastal, I thought, oh Lord, why not Clemson? You got in there. Why not USC? You got in there. Why in the world are you going to go to Coastal? Because honestly, I didn't realize how wonderful Coastal was. And he was going in the National Intelligence and Security Program, and he said, Mom, I can't get that degree anywhere else, you know, in the state. This is just up and coming. This is my passion. This is what I want to do. So I thought, okay, we'll definitely give that a chance. And in case y'all don't ask me the right questions, I'm going to brag to you now about Coastal. We have recently received the Carnegie Classification for Community Involvement. We have 60 community partnerships addressing real-world needs through workplace demands. At Coastal, we don't sit around in ivory towers pondering intellectual questions. We just think, what can we do for the residents of South Carolina? Since my son is part of the U.S. military and a graduate of Intel National Security Program, I'm really proud that CCU achieved the silver status by the organization Military Friendly and made the best visit, made the best for vets list in 2025. We have Fulbright Fellowship students. We have a Goldwater Scholarship recipient. And in CHE, we received the first place in academic review of our programs, ensuring adequate enrollment and graduation rates in specific programs. We really are good, y'all. And we can't help that all these out of state students want to come. They come on vacation, and Lord have mercy, they just want to stay there. I mean, who would not want to come to the beach? So I think that's just why we have so many out-of-state students. And I know that we're not supposed to get in the weeds of university management, but if they would let me go to Edgefield and some of these smaller counties, I would personally go and recruit students myself. Because Coastal Carolina is a great place, and I'm so thankful that I've

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been a trustee. And I hope you all will let me stay, even though I might not know all these answers. Okay, go ahead.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you. Macey.

MS. DAVIS - EXAMINATION BY MS. WEBB:

Q. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. And thank you, Ms. Davis. Ms. Davis, can you please state your current address?

A. I can. 738 North Green River Road, Gaffney, South Carolina.

Q. Thank you. And is this the address that you pay your 4% property tax?

A. It is.

Q. Thank you. And is this the address within the congressional district to which you have applied?

A. It is.

Q. And do you currently serve on any local or state board, commission, committee, or elected office other than Coastal Carolina?

A. I do not.

Q. Thank you. And do you understand the obligations and responsibilities of serving on a public institution's Board of trustees?

A. I do.

Q. And are you aware that you cannot contact any member of the General Assembly and formally ask for a vote commitment or pledge until 48 hours after the Commission's report has been released?

A. I am.

Q. And have you currently asked any third parties to contact members of the General Assembly on your behalf, or are you aware of anyone attempting to intervene in this process on your behalf?

A. No.

Q. And are you aware that you have an ongoing obligation and duty to report to the Commission any changes that might occur that would affect your application and overall eligibility for serving on a college Board?

A. Yes.

Q. Thank you, Ms. Davis.

A. Thank you.

Q. Mr. Chairman, I have no further questions.

MR. CHAIRMAN: My only suggestion is you better do something with Edgefield County. That's the home of governors, by the way. What do you have, about 10, Senator Massey?

SENATOR MASSEY: About ten, yes.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Quite a place. Well, you might be the next. You never know. All right. Anybody have questions? Representative King.

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REPRESENTATIVE KING: I don't really have a question. I just want to say thank you for your service. And we actually need people like you on boards to have that balance. So thank you for your service.

MS. DAVIS: Thank you.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Senator Massey. Oh, who was it? Senator Devine. Sorry.

MS. DAVIS - EXAMINATION BY SENATOR DEVINE:

Q. No problem. Thank you. Thank you so much for your service, and thank you for your enthusiasm. I mean, especially at 2:00 o'clock, and I'm eating candy to kind of stay focused. I love your presentation. But I want to be quick. Two things that stood out to me in your personal data questionnaire. One, I wanted to ask, you talked about your perspectives and that you've been able to communicate openly, which has brought the Board together. And that intrigued me. Has there been some issues on the board, or do you just feel like you've been able to bring the diverse natures together? What made you make that statement?

A. Well, let's see. Lots of times when you get really, really smart people and you have these really, really powerful people, sometimes we get lost in the sauce just a little bit. We sit and debate and debate and debate issues, and that's wonderful. That's what we should do, and that's what we're charged with. But I've kind of appointed myself as kind of the informal social chairman, if you will, so that we can fight like cats and dogs, maybe in closed session, and then come out and be able to share a meal together, go have a drink together, whatever the need may be. And that really helps us all understand where we're all coming from, because we do come from a diverse background, understand where we're all coming from and where we want to go. And thankfully, this Board, I mean, they are phenomenal people, and their best interest is the child. Everyone's student is their best interest. And the taxpayer's dollar, and the families, and our hearts are really in the right place.

Q. Thank you. And then my last question is, you also talked about prioritizing diversity by attracting first-generation college students or attendees. Are you all already have first-gen programs? And if so, what does that look like?

A. Yes. There are several programs on campus for first-generation college students, and those are like led by the students, and they are funded by the students. And we also have -- I don't think anybody's told you about the Chauncey's South Carolina Promise. And that's not just for first-gen students. It's really for -- it attracts a lot of first-gen students. And that is the program that provides free tuition to South Carolina residents who graduate in the top 10% of their class whose income level,

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whose household income level is below 80,000. And that does track along with the first-gen college student.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Any other questions?

SENATOR MASSEY: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Senator.

MS. DAVIS - EXAMINATION BY SENATOR MASSEY:

Q. I, too, appreciate your enthusiasm. They ought to send you out on the recruiting trips.

A. I'm going to Edgeville, honey. Just as soon as we can get out there.

Q. Come on, come on. I hear you. I appreciate that. So you indicated in the answers that you provided to the Committee that you believe that the university is on the right path with attracting students and continuing to grow. What we have heard so far from other Board members is that the university is up to about a little over 12,000, at least at the beginning of the academic year, with about a 60-40 split out-of-state to in-state. Is that the right path?

A. I'm not sure if it's the right path. It just kind of is the path. If we had more qualified South Carolina students to fill our empty seats, we would take them all. And believe me, we would love to have more South Carolina students. But the fact is, we have those seats available. Might as well fill them with somebody.

Q. Sure. And I understand that. But those seats are available because the Board has decided to create the seats, right? And I understand that you're limited in getting the other South Carolina students. We have other universities, many of whom we're going to hear trustee candidates for from today. There are others that are competing with you in that respect, and I understand that. But I'm curious, why is it that the Board has decided that because we can't attract more South Carolina students, we must necessarily increase the number of out-of-state students? Why create more seats if you don't have the South Carolina students to do it? Because what's happened is those seats have been created such that now we are at a 60-40 split. We heard from Mr. Biggs, when he started 19 years ago, it was a majority of South Carolina residents. So there's clearly been a strategic move by the Board of Trustees not only to increase the population, but to increase the non-resident component of that population. And I'm curious as to why. And I've got a theory, but I don't want my theory to be right. And I realize that so far, of all the people we've heard from Coastal, you're the newest as far as board service.

A. Right, right.

Q. So some of these -- a lot of these decisions, especially these strategic decisions, were made before the Board had the pleasure of your

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company. So I'm curious about that, though. I mean, are there conversations that go on at the Board level about this?

A. Sometimes we have sat in a Board meeting before and just said, what is our magic number? Does anybody know what the magic number is? And we're all saying, well, we don't really know. You know, it just depends on our infrastructure and our housing and what are we able to do. But I really can't answer that question.

Q. So the Board has had conversations about it, but the Board has not come to a conclusion about what that magic number is?

A. Right, what a magic number is. Right, what a magic number is.

Q. And when you say magic number, we're talking about a magic number of total students enrolled?

A. Yeah, yes.

Q. And also what the breakdown should be between non-residents and residents. Is the Board talking about that?

A. We are very concerned about our South Carolina numbers.

Q. Is the Board concerned about your non-South Carolina numbers? Are there conversations about that? I think you answered the question. That's fine. You also indicated in your written responses that you believe that the cost of tuition should be based on infrastructure costs. I'm just looking at an addendum to the PDQ. Maybe this is a summary. But I read that you believe that the university can continue improving by building an alumni base and ensuring workforce needs are met by the programs offered. Do you agree with that?

A. Yes.

Q. And then I also have down here that you feel that the virtual offerings are important and that the cost of tuition should be based on infrastructure costs.

A. Let's see. I think that was in regard to the question about, let's see, how was it? About online. What should the cost of online classes be or should it be a whole lot less? And it was kind of a guess as to should those classes cost a whole lot less than in-person classes? And I said since we don't really know the infrastructure costs, we don't know how much it's going to cost, you know, to have those systems in place as far as computer technology and such to fund those classes. Those classes, the cost of that should be based on after we find out how much it even costs to have the classes. That didn't sound right.

Q. But I understand better what you meant by that now. That makes sense to me too. I don't disagree with that. One of your fellow Board members -- I just forgot where I was going with that.

A. Good. Good, sir.

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REPRESENTATIVE MCGINNIS: She speaks for all of us.

Q. Thank you. I'll end it here.

A. Thank you, Senator Massey.

Q. You did very well.

MR. CHAIRMAN: You came out lucky on him. Any other people with questions? All right, I'll entertain a motion for a favorable from the Commission?

REPRESENTATIVE MCGINNIS: So moved.

REPRESENTATIVE KING: Second.

MR. CHAIRMAN: All those in favor, please signify by raising your right hand.

(All hands are raised.)

MR. CHAIRMAN: Got it. Okay. Thank you. It was nice talking to you.

MS. DAVIS: Thank you.

(OFF THE RECORD)

NATASHA MABRY HANNA:

MR. CHAIRMAN: You can just come on up, because I think you're next. Okay. If you would, just raise your hand and repeat after me. I swear to tell the truth, whole the truth, and nothing but the truth, so help me God.

MS. HANNA: I do.

MR. CHAIRMAN: And if you'll just tell me your name and your position on the Board, and then a little short bio of why you want to run.

MS. HANNA: Certainly, thank you. Good afternoon, my name is Natasha Hanna, and I am seeking re-election for the 7th Congressional District seat. I live in Conway, and I currently serve as the chair of the Board of Trustees. My connection to Coastal Carolina University is very personal. I came -- I'm one of those out-of-state students that you all talked about today. I came here in 1990 to go to Coastal. I planted my feet in the sand and never left. I met a local boy who was born and raised in Myrtle Beach and also a graduate of Coastal. I graduated in 1994. I left there and went to Horry Georgetown Technical College, where I got my paralegal degree. And then I returned to the University of South Carolina, where I obtained my law degree, my juris doctorate in 2002. I have been married for 28 years. I live right across the street from campus. I have two boys who attended college here in South Carolina. And truly, Coastal Carolina University, I tell you all these things. I have my own law firm. I have several businesses my husband and I own. And I tell you all these things, not to pat myself on the back, but to tell you what is possible at Coastal Carolina University.

A small-town girl from a small town in Virginia accomplished that. And I'm standing here before you today just super grateful for the way it gave

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me. I'm also very proud to appear before you today, along with all of my trustees, our entire Board is up for re-election. And I can tell you without any hesitation that this Board is more unified, more engaged, and more effective than at any point during my many years of service on this Board. And that cohesion is not an accident. It is the product of our two past Board chairs, both Bill Biggs and Delan Stevens. You heard from Bill Biggs earlier, and you'll hear from Delan Stevens later. They have created a transparent Board of trustees who respect one another, who debate vigorously in the board room, and who leave that room speaking with one voice on behalf of the university. And those results speak for themselves. And if I can take just a moment to get some points about what has happened at Coastal in the last, let's just say, 10 years. We've appointed two university presidents, most recently Dr. Jamie Winebrake, whom I'm hopeful that you've all met. He's got an amazing vision. He's exceeded expectations on every level. We've hit record-breaking enrollment with 12,006 students last fall. We've approved transformative new academic programs, which complement the workforce needs in South Carolina, such as nursing, a doctor of physical therapy, a master of science in finance. We've established the Conway Medical Center College of Human and Health Performance to train health care professionals that our community desperately needs. We've maintained a multi-year tuition increase, in part thanks to tuition mitigation by this legislature. We've guided capital improvements, both on the athletics and the academic side. We've championed free expression and institutional neutrality by opting the Chicago Statement and the Calvin Principles. And most importantly, we think, we've established training for our trustees, implemented ambassador requirements, and our Board members have attended conferences that help us to grow as trustees. And while all these accomplishments are given to the leadership and the university as a whole, I just want to share with you our Board functions in the way that a governing board should, with shared purpose, with rigorous oversight, and a genuine commitment to the institution. And so, you know, at Coastal, I love this university, and that's why I'm here, that's why I continue to serve. But our enrollment is surging, our academic profile is strengthening, and our new president is bringing fresh energy and vision like we've never seen before. Our Board is full of experience, we all bring certain things to the table, and I've just never been more excited to appear before you today, and I'm grateful for the opportunity to continue to serve. Thank you.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you. Macey.

MS. HANNA - EXAMINATION BY MS. WEBB:

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Q. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Ms. Hanna, can you please state your current address?

A. 874 Denali Drive, Conway, South Carolina.

Q. Thank you. And is this the address that you pay your 4% property tax?

A. Yes.

Q. And is this address within the congressional district to which you have applied?

A. Yes.

Q. Thank you. And do you currently serve on any local or state board, commission, committee, or elected office other than the Coastal Carolina Board?

A. No.

Q. Thank you. And do you understand the obligations and responsibilities of serving on a public institution's board of trustees?

A. Yes.

Q. And are you aware that you cannot contact any member of the General Assembly and formally ask for a vote commitment or pledge until 48 hours after the Commission's report has been released?

A. Yes.

Q. And have you currently asked any third parties to contact members of the General Assembly on your behalf, or are you aware of anyone attempting to intervene in the process on your behalf?

A. No.

Q. And are you aware that you have an ongoing obligation and duty to report to the Commission any changes that might occur that would affect your application and overall eligibility for serving on a college Board?

A. Yes.

Q. Thank you, Ms. Hanna. Mr. Chairman, I have no further questions.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Any questions from Commission members? Senator Bennett.

MS. HANNA - EXAMINATION BY SENATOR BENNETT:

Q. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you, Ms. Hanna. I appreciate you being here and for your service to the Board. I just want to cover one question that I asked a previous candidate about your Board deliberations. They said that your Board is engaged. I heard you say your Board is engaged. Does that go beyond just that simple phrase where you challenge your leadership, where you actually debate where the university is going, or is it more of an information-gathering session?

A. Our Board has evolved greatly, and I would say in years past it may have been a rubber stamp. Lots of times people get on Boards to eat cake,

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and that is not what we have. We have very good debate, and it's not high-level where we just set policy, come to five meetings a year, and walk away. We have engagement, you know, whether it's in the Board meetings. We do a lot of the heavy lifting and committee work. We've got great committee members, great committee leaders who do the heavy lifting and share with the rest of the Board, and we have built a pretty strong trust with our Board members. So, yes, we do debate. We do ask a lot of tough questions of the administration, and we toe the line on that. Yes, sir.

Q. I want to go back to the comment made by Ms. Davis. I think she was talking about her son going to Coastal because the program there, I think it was a security program there, was the only program in the state offered, and that's why he went there, which I kind of love to hear. Because one of the things -- I was looking at a sheet that went around. We talked about graduation rates, almost ad nauseum with the previous so I'm not going to go there. However, the sheet that I have that shows those graduation rates, the other thing that strikes me on the sheet is that we have 32 colleges and universities operating in South Carolina, 32. Personally, I think that's way too many for a state our size. But what's probably more disturbing to me is the amount of duplication that we see. Ms. Davis mentioned the program that her son used. It's the only one. But at the same time, you're talking about expanding into engineering, and probably at least eight or nine of these universities on this already have engineering programs. What's the conversation like in your Boardroom when a new program is presented for potential inclusion or approval? Do you look at what's available in other universities across the state and defer sometimes, or do you get in a silo and just kind of think what's best for the university?

A. Great question. I'm glad you asked. So what our Board did, it's been about 18 months ago. We actually requested the administration to report back to us on an intensive program review, and the administration did that. Dr. Winebrake actually brought that back to us in February of this year, where we have three pages of information on the programs and the course offerings that we have. And if we're bringing a new program in, we want to know are there programs that we can close out, that we can replace, so that we're making sure that we're offering the right programs for the students based on supply and demand. So that's one thing that we do. Another thing is that we look at what institutions across the state are doing. And the Commission on Higher Education, they make sure that we're doing that as well, that we're not duplicating efforts. So from our

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standpoint, from the Board's standpoint, we have asked those things, and we do look at that. Yes, sir.

Q. Have there been situations where you've said no?

A. There have not. I think our administration has made a pretty good argument each time. What we have asked is if you're going to bring this program in, we want you to go back and review what we can eliminate or what's no longer there. Like, for example, we have some classes that are only we have ten students in it, others where we're not classes but programs where we have ten students, other there's 758. So we look at that and we say, look, why are we putting money and resources for something that only ten people are taking versus this where it's absolutely flourishing? You know, and a good example of that is our nursing programs that we are in desperate need of in our community.

Q. Which kind of gets back to the same question. I understand that every community has those needs, but it seems like every community in these states has a nursing school. Do we need to have those conversations of do we need to have a nursing school in every community or do we need to have good opportunities for students across the state to access nursing school?

A. Based on my understanding is, first of all, yes, you should ask those questions. And we as a Board should ask those questions. But if the need is there and we've been told by the medical professionals that the need is there. I mean, just in our own community we have tons of people that are moving into our state. Horry County is one of the fastest growing areas in the entire country. We know the need is there. So as long as there is a shortage of those nursing, then I think we should continue to fulfill it but continue to ask the questions.

Q. Sure. And I guess I've just used nursing as an example, but it could be any program.

A. Yes, sir. Right.

Q. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Senator Devine.

MS. HANNA - EXAMINATION BY SENATOR DEVINE:

Q. Thank you. Thank you so much, Ms. Hanna. Just -- I don't want to belabor the point, but as chair, I kind of held this question for you, not ask the other Board members. But kind of similar to Senator Bennett's questions about programming, but mine is I think earlier Mr. Turner or someone, Mr. Biggs, talked about the facilities. But right now there's a lot nationally that universities are having to look at regarding safety and security. So just wondering, has the Board had those conversations? And are there things that you all are seeing that as you move forward? You

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talked about, you know, Horry County being the fastest growing. There's a lot of people. Your landlocked, so there's a lot as far as growth for the university. I'm just kind of wondering, what are your conversations around safety and security for the campus and the students? And what plans are you all putting that into the overall program for the university?

A. Well, number one, we absolutely lead as far as safety goes. That is always the number one question around our Board. And I can't help but mention one of our Board members who's not running for re-election, Johnny Bartell. He is the champion of our police force and all the safety requirements that we have on campus. And so that is a conversation that is constant around our board room as safety first. We've taken campus polls with both our faculty, our students, and our staff to see if there's issues. I mean, it could be something as simple as lighting around campus and as far as, you know, campus dorms. And truly we have not seen an issue at Coastal. We feel like we're a very safe campus and we provide that for our students. And did you have a question about facilities expanding as well?

Q. No, this is wondering if y'all were constantly putting that as part of your plan. And so it sounds like you are.

A. Yes.

Q. I just wanted to make sure that that is top of mind as well.

A. Yes.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Anyone else? All right. Do I have a motion to require a favorable by the Commission?

REPRESENTATIVE MCGINNIS: Motion.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Second?

REPRESENTATIVE KING: Second.

MR. CHAIRMAN: All those in favor, please signify by raising your hand.

(All hands are raised.)

MR. CHAIRMAN: You got it. Opposed?

(No hands are raised.)

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay.

SENATOR BENNETT: Mr. Chairman.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Yes?

SENATOR BENNETT: I'd like the record to reflect that I have recused myself, as Hanna has donated to my campaign, in the year 2020. The form only asked for the last four years. That was six years ago. But I am recusing myself because of that.

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MR. CHAIRMAN: So noted. Thank you. I'm sorry. I didn't hear you say that much. Thank you, sir. Thank you for your service. What part of Virginia are you from?

MS. HANNA: Rafford. A little small town.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Oh, yeah. I know where that is. Pretty up that way.

MS. HANNA: It is beautiful.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you again.

MS. HANNA: Thank you.

JASON MICHAEL REPAK:

MR. CHAIRMAN: All right. Moving right along. Well, not right along, but we're moving along. We are now at- large seat eight, which expires in 2029. And it is Jason Michael Repak from Murrells Inlet. Come on up, sir. If you'll raise your right hand, I'll swear you in. Do you swear to tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, so help you God?

MR. REPAK: Yes, sir.

MR. CHAIRMAN: If you'll just state your name and your position on the Board, and then a little bio about why you want to continue serving.

MR. REPAK: Absolutely. So I'm Jason Repak, and I serve in seat eight, which is the first at-large seat on the Coastal Carolina Board of Trustees. I first joined this Board five years ago, excuse me, six years ago. Now my very first meeting was our special meeting over COVID-19. So what an exciting time to join the Board. But it has been my passion to give back to causes that continue to develop opportunities for young people. From my time in Civil Air Patrol, where I have 50 cadets that I've mentored through our program, and to the time I spend at Coastal Carolina University, it's to give others opportunity and to grow them and their future in South Carolina. So Coastal Carolina provided a transformative experience for myself growing up in Horry County, and then graduating, going off to find work in the corporate world before I realized that home is where I really wanted to be, and to start my business. And this is just the place that I'm truly passionate about and want to continue serving and giving back to.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Macey.

MR. REPAK - EXAMINATION BY MS. WEBB:

Q. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. And Mr. Repak, can you please state your current address?

A. 4859 Elm Road, Murrells Inlet, South Carolina.

Q. Thank you. And is this the address that you pay your 4% property tax?

A. Yes, it is.

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Q. Thank you. And do you currently serve on any local or state Board, Commission, committee, or elected office other than the Coastal Carolina Board?

A. No, I do not.

Q. Thank you. And do you understand the obligations and responsibilities of serving on a public institution's board of trustees?

A. Yes.

Q. And are you aware that you cannot contact any member of the General Assembly and formally ask for a vote commitment or pledge until 48 hours after the Commission's report has been released?

A. I'm aware.

Q. And have you currently asked any third parties to contact members of the General Assembly on your behalf, or are you aware of anyone attempting to intervene in this process on your behalf?

A. No.

Q. And are you aware that you have an ongoing obligation and duty to report to the Commission any changes that might occur that would affect your application and overall eligibility for serving on a college Board?

A. Yes.

Q. Thank you, Mr. Repak. And, Mr. Chairman, I have no further questions.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Any questions by Commission members? Senator Massey.

MR. REPAK - EXAMINATION BY SENATOR MASSEY:

Q. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Repak, thank you for being here.

A. Yes, sir.

Q. Mr. Repack, in the summary of your personal data questionnaire that we have, there is a statement, and I don't believe this is your statement. I believe this is a summary of information that you provided, but I want to read this to you, okay?

A. Uh-huh.

Q. It says, he believes the student body must continue to grow and help qualified graduates enter various workforce fields, such continued growth can help to offset the administrative costs of the university. I'm curious, is that your position?

A. That's not my exact wording, but yes, I believe that growth of the university, while it needs to be sustainable and reasonable growth, I believe growth of the university continues to grow opportunities for our students, and therefore the economic opportunity for our state.

Q. What would be your target number for student enrollment?

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A. There is no target number of student enrollment, in my opinion. It has to be sustainable growth, though. If you said, let's grow 10% next year, or let's have 15,000 students next year, that's just not a sustainable number. But any responsible, sustainable growth inside the university that creates those opportunities for our students and our state, I believe is reasonable to plan for.

Q. Does the university have a responsibility to create opportunities for non-resident students?

A. I believe as a state institution, it's our responsibility to create those opportunities for our citizens. But those opportunities that are created for our in-state students and our out-of-state students create economic opportunities for our entire state. And so, if you'll allow me to expand, so my time in the corporate world before I came back home and started my own business was with Rolls-Royce. At Rolls-Royce, part of the project I was working on was what we call a state beauty contest. We were across Virginia and Indianapolis, and South Carolina was one of the final two states in the running for a very large manufacturing site that was going to be over \$500 million in investment and over 500 employees in the workforce. And this would be an advanced manufacturing workforce. And the reason that site chose Virginia instead of South Carolina was availability of the educated workforce and the training opportunities for that workforce. So in Virginia, they created over 35 million dollars worth of funding split across Virginia State University, Virginia Tech, and University of Virginia to develop the workforce to prepare those that would enter that employment with Rolls-Royce. And so I believe that while, yes, we have a first and foremost responsibility to our in-state students, the opportunities that we create for out-of-state students still creates economic opportunity for South Carolina in general.

Q. So, one of the -- to that point, one of the more frustrating things that I see is that too often we give up on our in-state students and start recruiting out-of-state. And that happens a lot with industry that I see. Is that we, well, I mean, I'll tell you, we had the debate, the most recent big debate on this was with Scout. And part of that conversation was about - I'll tell you what we heard from the Department of Commerce, was that they thought there was an untapped pool of manufacturing talent in the Midlands that could support, you know, Scouts looking to like 4,000 employees. Which was a real surprise to many of us because, as I said at the time, no matter where you go from Bojangles to Boeing, they're looking for employees. And it was a real surprise to Boeing and BMW as well that there was an untapped pool of manufacturing talent anywhere in the state because they were having trouble finding those

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people. But it seems to me that what happens lots of times is we have a lot of young South Carolinians who really are not as exposed to opportunities, and so they don't know what's out there. These are smart kids, and they think they can do anything. They think they can be doctors and engineers and astronauts and build cars and whatever else. But if they don't know that those opportunities exist in South Carolina, it's a problem. And then when you have South Carolinians providing significant funding, in the case of Scout, over a billion dollars. And then Scout cannibalizing other manufacturers in the state or recruiting employees from elsewhere as opposed to focusing on developing the talent that is within, that's troubling to me. And so I get a little bit concerned about how quickly do we give up on South Carolina students before we just start developing programs for non-residents and try to use those programs to recruit non-residents to come in. Do you have, with your thought process of the necessity for continued growth, because I understand you don't have a target on what that total student enrollment should be, what should the breakdown be between non-resident and resident?

A. Thank you for your question. I think it's a multifaceted question and statement. First and foremost, I would find it very surprising that anywhere would have untapped workforce available for advanced manufacturing to the tune of 4,000 jobs. I think that highlights the need to continue to invest in the educational opportunities to create that workforce, as that is one of the top things that employers are looking for is a ready and willing workforce, the ability to train them, and the infrastructure to support their manufacturing facility. For us, for our own in-state versus out-of-state, ultimately, right, we would love to see more in-state students because those are the ones that will continue to stay in South Carolina, even though 60% of our graduates already do stay in the state. We also have a lot of education majors that stay in the state and become teachers in Horry County, which is fantastic. But for me, right, I look at it and say, if we are willing to accept every qualified applicant from South Carolina, and we do, we have almost 95% of South Carolina students that apply have a pathway into Coastal Carolina University. And on top of that, if they're in that top 10% of their class, and if their household income is below, I think it's either \$80,000 or \$85,000, they have no tuition at Coastal Carolina. And so we create those opportunities for them, but ultimately they've got to want to come to Coastal Carolina. And we want them to come to us, and so we create those opportunities for them. But, you know, one of my mentors, when I was coming up, said, sometimes your treasure's not at home. And so I think for a lot of

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those students, they look at it, and if they believe their treasure's at home, they may be staying at their local in-state institution. And so we have to continue to provide those opportunities for others.

Q. Yeah, I mean, I think, well, as you talked about, just from your personal experience, I mean, people, there's an attraction. I mean, you knew about Coastal, right?

A. The only place I applied to.

Q. Yeah, and so I think for folks who grow up in that area, that's what they know, and there's an attraction there. I understand that. Now, for some people, for some children, the attraction is not to be anywhere near where you grow up. I understand that, too. I guess what I struggle with is what is the obligation of South Carolina taxpayers to provide educational opportunities for non-residents? I mean, if Coastal -- and this isn't really specific to Coastal, right? We could be talking about Francis Marion, or we could talk about Lander, or we could talk about a number of other places around the state. If there are places that are having a hard time recruiting South Carolina's high school graduates to attend there, then what is our obligation to increase the seats such that we provide? What's the obligation to increase seats that we're going to give off to non-residents?

A. Well, I would debate whether or not it would be an obligation, but more so an opportunity. So we talk about the upcoming enrollment cliff, which is supposed to start next year, and it's a 10% reduction in high school graduates between now and 2041. And so if we continue to want to compete for workforce, and we continue to want to compete for employers to come to this state, we are going to have to have a workforce to fill those jobs. And so I don't look at educational

MR. REPAK - EXAMINATION BY REPRESENTATIVE KING:

Q. Thank you so very much.

A. Yes, sir.

Q. A couple of questions for you. As a Board member, after hearing the discussion of the Committee today, what would you do different once elected as a Board member to increase the number of South Carolina residents? That's one question. The second one is, can you give me the figures of how much out-of-state students are actually paying to go to South Carolina, go to Coastal Carolina? Also, I would like to have a breakdown as to what how much scholarships the out-of-state students are getting, that could be going to South Carolina students. And you may have that information, but if not, could you get it to us?

A. Yes, sir. I'd be happy to. I have -- so our out-of-state tuition is -- it just went above \$30,000 per year for our out-of-state tuition rate. Our overall

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room and Board fees, I actually have it on hand, but I would have to dig through this packet to get it to you, and I wouldn't want to misquote the numbers, so I'd be happy to come back to you with that number. As people, but you wrote in your data questionnaire that the greatest weakness is historically below average graduation rates.

A. Yes, sir.

Q. We chart below 50% even at the six-year mark, just in the numbers that we're given. What is being done, what can be done going forward, to bring those numbers higher?

A. Yes, sir. And thank you for your question. So our most recent data is 55% on a six-year graduation rate, and that number will continue to improve as the numbers matriculate through, because our retention rates have gone up over 10% in just the last 10 years. And so we expect that graduation rate to continue to climb closer and closer to the national average, which is 61% on a six-year graduation rate. Even the top public institution in the country loses about 25% of their class after the second year. And so getting to 100%, while it would be a laudable goal and one we would love to achieve, a mid-60% graduation rate would be fantastic. And so we have taken robust efforts to get more students on campus, to create new clubs and organizations for them to be a part of, to continue to attract that talent that is capable and ready for college after they graduate high school. And we continue to look for ways to keep them engaged on campus. Because if they feel like Coastal and are performing at Coastal in a way that they feel like they're being successful, they will stay through and matriculate to graduation. And that program and those offerings that we've done has shown results, getting our graduation rate up from the 40s into the 55% range.

Q. Is it the Board's position that college should take six years and not four?

A. Well, I would love it to only take four. I personally took four and a half years to graduate and did it through a double major, but I never changed my major. Over 50% of college students will change their major at least once. Over 10% of college students will change their major more than once. And every time you change your major, it then changes the core coursework that you have to complete, so it draws out your graduation rate. And that's also neglecting the fact that these are young adults, so life happens along the way. And some are like myself, and I took a semester off to do a six-month internship while I was studying at Coastal. So I believe that a six-month graduation rate, like you, I look at it and go, that doesn't always make the most sense. But I understand why that is used as the standard metric.

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Q. And I guess my concern is that we're, I mean, you go in at 18, and six years later you're 24. You just have an undergraduate degree. Or just, that's a goal. It's a laudable goal. But I worry about, we're investing millions of dollars in higher education, and that higher education at some point has to graduate students quickly and efficiently. While it's only ten, eleven thousand dollars a year to go to Coastal, and that's a fantastic number. That's 44,000 versus 66,000. And that's debt that that student may have to pay back over the next 10, 15 years. And so that's really my concern is that we, are we getting, one, are we getting a return on our investment, and two, is the student getting a return on their investment when they have to pay probably 22,000 more just to graduate from college? Not sure there's an answer to that question, but I throw it out there as something that I would like you all, and all universities in this state, I'm not picking on you all, all universities to start thinking about.

A. Yes, sir.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Anybody else?

REPRESENTATIVE MCGINNIS: Can I make a motion?

MR. CHAIRMAN: There's a motion. Second?

REPRESENTATIVE KING: Second.

MR. CHAIRMAN: All those in favor, signify for a favorable report raise your right hand.

(All hands are raised.)

MR. CHAIRMAN: We got everybody. All opposed?

(No hands are raised.)

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you very much.

MR. REPAK: Thank you very much.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Very informative. I enjoyed that. We're on page two, believe it or not. Okay. We're at at-large seat, number nine. This is Eugene C. Spivey of Myrtle Beach, and it expires in 2027. Welcome, sir, if you would just raise your right hand and let me swear you in. You swear to tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, so help you God?

EUGENE C. SPIVEY:

MR. SPIVEY: I do.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Just state your name and your position and a little bit about why you'd like to serve on the Board.

MR. SPIVEY: My name is Gene Spivey. I'm from Myrtle Beach. I've served on the Board 24, 25 years now. I will start by saying there's probably not a whole lot you haven't heard from this crowd yet. I would like to apologize. I'm not wearing a tie, and if you can see my feet, I'm

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not wearing socks. I have lost the ability for now to do certain things. I'm having a little health issue. We'll be straight soon enough, but.

MR. CHAIRMAN: No problem.

MR. SPIVEY: With that, that's all I got, sir.

SENATOR BENNETT: Mr. Chairman.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Senator Bennett.

SENATOR BENNETT: I didn't think anybody from the beach wore socks.

MR. SPIVEY: It would be rare. Typically, my rule is if I'm wearing a tie, I'm wearing socks. But I can't right now, I can't get socks from my feet.

MR. CHAIRMAN: You better check to see if there's any sand in the shoes.

MR. SPIVEY: They are loafers, so yes.

MR. SPIVEY - EXAMINATION BY MS. WEBB:

Q. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Spivey, can you please state your current address?

A. 3990 Lark Hill Drive, Myrtle Beach.

Q. Thank you. And is this the address that you pay your 4% property tax?

A. Yes, ma'am.

Q. And do you currently serve on any local or state Board, Commission, committee, or elected office other than the Coastal Carolina Board?

A. No.

Q. And do you understand the obligations and responsibilities of serving on a public institution's board of trustees?

A. I do.

Q. And are you aware that you cannot contact any member of the General Assembly and formally ask for a vote commitment or pledge until 48 hours after the Commission's report has been released?

A. I do.

Q. And have you currently asked any third parties to contact members of the General Assembly on your behalf, or are you aware of anyone attempting to intervene in this process on your behalf?

A. I'm not aware.

Q. Are you aware that you have an ongoing obligation and duty to report to the Commission any changes that might occur that would affect your application and overall eligibility for serving on a college board?

A. I do.

Q. Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Spivey. Mr. Chairman, I have no further questions.

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MR. CHAIRMAN: Any questions for Mr. Spivey from the Commission members?

SENATOR JOHNSON: Mr. Chairman.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Yes, sir. Go right there.

MR. SPIVEY - EXAMINATION BY SENATOR JOHNSON:

Q. Mr. Spivey, I'm looking at your data questionnaire, and it says affordability is important for attracting out-of-state students. Explain that to me, because I think you've heard a lot. You've been sitting in the crowd, so you've heard our views on the 60-40 split. So I read that, and I'm curious.

A. That was probably more of a general question. Affordability is important for all students, but it's important for that demographic, too. I also have a -- it's not going to be what you want to hear as having to do with the out-of-state, but one of my goals over the last couple of years, and this is more of a—not a coastal issue, but I think it's a South Carolina issue that needs to be addressed, and it needs to be probably addressed at y'all's level, is when Senator Massey is talking about, are we bringing the right students. You know, a large number of our students are in that New Jersey, Ohio, Maryland corridor. I understand what you're saying, but one of the issues that I see is -- and where that statement is going is I would love to see South Carolina institutions, us, Clemson, South Carolina attract more students when we can from closer states. North Carolina, Georgia, Tennessee, Alabama. Because those are the states we can't attract. So that's probably where I was going with that. We need to figure out how to make it more affordable to neighboring states. When you're a Northeastern student, if you're in state at their school up there, it's not too terribly far from what we're charging out-of-state, but trying to attract students from, let's say, North Carolina or Georgia, we can't do that because their tuition is so much lower. They're not going to come to us out-of-state because their in-state tuition is so much lower. So that's probably where I was going with that statement, is we need to figure out how to attract more regional southeastern students. Not have in-state rates for North Carolina students or Georgia students, but have something closer to that rate. We as a university can only mitigate down to a certain level. We had a number of -- a year or so ago, a number of North Carolina students and Georgia students who have in-state school at Coastal was very low. It's surprisingly low when you look at that compared to some of the other Northeast corridors. That's probably where I was going with that. I mean -- and, too, I would probably make the argument, too, that out-of-state students, while we do allow and take any South Carolina student that will qualify and is qualified, a lot of those

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out-of-state students do help pay for a lot of what's going on in-state, too. I mean we make -- It used to be that we could say that out-of-state tuition was the true cost of education. The in-state rate is pretty much what they paid minus what help we get from the state. That's no longer the case. The true cost of tuition is more than what an out -- is less than what an out-of-state student is paid. So, to a certain level, they're helping to carry South Carolina students into Coastal.

Q. Would you agree with me that one of the drivers of costs, new building costs, growth costs, is your large out-of-state population?

A. I don't know if I'd agree with that. I mean, we've talked about growth and the number, they put their number on us. You know, what's the old line? If you're not growing, you're dying. I mean, we're trying to maintain a pretty steady, solid growth. We could -- I mean, at any point, I've been on the Board 24, 25 years now, I forget. We could have blown this thing up way bigger years ago, but we haven't. We've tried to maintain that 2, 3% over the years to keep growing. And like I said, as long as we're taking every in-state student that qualifies, I mean, we're going to have to keep doing what we're doing.

Q. So there was testimony earlier that maybe as short as 10, 12 years ago, the university was over 50% in-state. It is now 60/40. Would you agree with me that your growth is in out-of-state students, far surpassing in-state students? For it to go from 50 to 40 and from -- or above 50 and then all the way to 60, that's where your growth is. Your growth is out-of-state students.

A. Well, it's both. I mean, you can't go from 3,800 to almost 12,000.

Q. Yeah, but you're at about 4,800 from what we heard earlier, right? They're right now at the in-state, 40%.

A. Well, I'll say when I first got on the Board, we were at 3,800 students. I mean, we can't go from 3,800 to 12,000 just on the 60% out of state. It's grown slowly from 50/50 to 60/40. I mean, it's got to be growing on both numbers. And we know it is, but you can't grow, whatever that is, the number of students a year at 3% or 400 students a year with just the out-of-state students.

Q. I mean, to Senator Johnson's point, there's clearly been an appeal, a marketing effort, to non-resident students that has led to a larger -- The vast majority of students who are coming in, it's taking you a while to get to 60/40, right? To get to 60/40 from 50/50, you're growing at more than a 60/40 rate. You're bringing in more non-resident students compared to resident students. I mean, it seems to me like that that has been a strategic decision that the Board has made over the last 20 years.

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A. I'm not going to argue the point, no. I mean, it's part of the financial model we've had to follow. If we're going to grow 2%, 3%, I mean, that's probably 1.5% in-state, 2% out-of-state. I mean, it's growing on both levels, as long as we control the growth and have the growth and have the room to do it and a place to put them.

Q. And is that the reason for the strategic decision to grow and to grow more from out-of-state students is a financial basis?

A. I don't know if it's purely financial. I think it's both. It's all of the above. If you stop growing, you're dying.

Q. So says the glutton. Gluttony will kill you, too. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Anybody? Anyone else? Can I entertain a motion to report favorably on this trustee by the Commission.

REPRESENTATIVE KING: Motion.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Is there a second? Please.

SENATOR DEVINE: Second.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you. All those in favor signify by saying aye. I mean, you know, whatever. Raise your right hand. Man, this has been a long day.

(All hands are raised.)

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay, got it. All those opposed, no. All right. Thank you, sir.

MR. SPIVEY: Thank you.

MR. CHAIRMAN: All right, we're going to move to at-large seat 10, which expires in 2029. Mark S. Kelley from Conway. I recognize Representative McGinnis at this time.

MARK S. KELLEY:

REPRESENTATIVE MCGINNIS: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'd like to make a motion that, pursuant to SC Code 2-20-360, we find that a public hearing is unnecessary for Mr. Kelley due to the exigent circumstances he finds himself in currently. Due to Mr. Kelley being hospitalized or recently hospitalized, he is unable to attend either of our public hearings scheduled for this week. Mr. Kelley has served on the CCU Board of Trustees since 2021. He's a former member of the South Carolina House of Representatives. I personally know Mr. Kelley, and he has served the Coastal Board well and has been a fantastic Board member. Correct me if I'm wrong out there, anybody. He's an asset to CCU. Therefore, I make the motion that, pursuant to SC Code 2-20-360, we find that the public hearing is unnecessary for him since, pursuant to the statute, there is no known opposition to his candidacy. And, therefore, I move to find him

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qualified and nominated based on the materials found in his submitted application packet to our Commission.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Is there a second?

REPRESENTATIVE KING: Second.

MR. CHAIRMAN: All those in favor, please signify by raising your right hand. Oh, wait a minute. Hold off a minute. I need to do the whole thing. Got you. All right. I need to authorize this according to our attorney here. Pursuant to SC Code 2-20-360, I find that a public hearing is unnecessary for Mr. Kelley due to these extenuating circumstances and due to him having no known opposition. This is something that we usually do not do as a Screening Commission. However, due to these extenuating circumstances and due to Mr. Kelley being a sitting Board member on the Coastal Carolina Board, I find that in this very limited situation, a public hearing is not necessary. Okay. I've got the second already. All those in favor, signify by raising your right hand, please. Okay.

(All hands are raised.)

MR. CHAIRMAN: All right. Opposed?

(No hands are raised.)

MR. CHAIRMAN: No? All right. Mr. Kelley is reported out favorable. We are now at At-Large Seat 11, which expires in 2027. Okay. We have four people running for this trustee position, so the first one is Brian J. Argo of Myrtle Beach. You'll just come on up. Raise your right hand and let me swear you in. You swear to tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, so help you God?

BRAIN J. ARGO:

MR. ARGO: Yes, sir.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you. State your name and a little bit about yourself and why you're serving on the Board.

MR. ARGO: Hi. My name is Brian Argo. I am from Horry County, and I am interested in serving on the Coastal Carolina Board of Trustees because I have such great pride in that institution. I relocated in 2017 with my wife and three daughters, and I can tell you -- yeah, and I've had the opportunity to witness that pride both personally and professionally about Coastal Carolina and what it means for our community, and so from a personal perspective, I've had the opportunity to serve on the Coastal Education Foundation Board of Trustees, which helps with the Coastal Carolina University endowment, and I've also served on the Conway Medical Center College of Health and Human Performance Board of Visitors, and I've seen firsthand the good that this organization can do for our community. From a professional perspective, I'm the

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president and CEO at Conway Medical Center, and I've had the opportunity to hire many Coastal Carolina University grads and have seen the work-ready product that has come out of that institution. So with that --

MR. ARGO - EXAMINATION BY MS. WEBB:

Q. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Argo, can you please state your current address?

A. Yes, ma'am. It's 1022 Johnston Drive, Myrtle Beach, South Carolina.

Q. Thank you. And is this the address that you pay your 4% property tax?

A. Yes, ma'am.

Q. And do you currently serve on any local or state Board, Commission, committee, or elected office?

A. No, ma'am.

Q. And do you understand the obligations and responsibilities of serving on a public institution's Board of trustees?

A. Yes, ma'am.

Q. And are you aware that you cannot contact any member of the General Assembly and formally ask for a vote commitment or pledge until 48 hours after the Commission's report has been released?

A. Yes, ma'am.

Q. And have you currently asked any third parties to contact members of the General Assembly on your behalf, or are you aware of anyone attempting to intervene in this process on your behalf?

A. No, ma'am.

Q. Are you aware that you have an ongoing obligation and duty to report to the Commission any changes that might occur that would affect your application and overall eligibility for serving on a college board?

A. No, ma'am. I'm not aware.

Q. You are not aware?

A. No. Go ahead. I'm sorry. Argo, Mr. Chairman, I have no further questions.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Question for Mr. Argo? Representative King.

MR. ARGO - EXAMINATION BY REPRESENTATIVE KING:

Q. Thank you, Mr. Chair. Thank you for your willingness to serve. Can you tell me what is your present relationship with the college?

A. Yeah, absolutely. So, currently, I am the president and CEO at Conway Medical Center. We are located approximately one mile from Coastal Carolina University, thankfully. My relationship with the college right now from that aspect is Conway Medical Center does hold a couple of contracts with the university to provide services. And then, personally,

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as I said, I also serve on the Coastal Education Foundation Board and also on the Board of Visitors for the Conway Medical Center College of Health and Human Performance.

Q. That relationship with Conway Medical, do you think that there will be any type of conflict?

A. I'm sure that from time to time there will be services that the university is seeking that would be in conflict with things that Conway Medical Center is doing. I'm aware that that can arise. And I think from my perspective, it's just making sure that being a good Board member, recusing yourself from those conversations, and abstaining from any type of voter action that would occur from those.

Q. You've seen this committee today speak on ensuring that South Carolina residents have a clear opportunity to go on to Coastal. As a Board member, what would you do to ensure that most of your students are coming from South Carolina?

A. Yeah, I think when you look at Horry County -- and I'll stay at home for a little bit, but when you look at Horry County and Horry County Schools, I think one of the things that I'm really proud of that Horry County Schools has is Horry County Early Schools Early College partnership with Horry Georgetown Technical College. That's for first-generation college students that have access to join that program through Horry County Schools. I think as Coastal Carolina looks for opportunity to keep South Carolina students at home, and specifically first-generation South Carolina students at home, I think that promotes an opportunity to work with local school districts to get in there to promote similar programs so that we can make sure that we're driving in-state enrollment and garnering interest from those folks for in-state enrollment.

Q. Thank you.

A. Yes, sir.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Senator Massey.

MR. ARGO - EXAMINATION BY SENATOR MASSEY:

Q. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Argo, how long have you been CEO of the hospital?

A. Yes, sir. I joined Conway Medical Center in 2017 as the chief financial officer. In 2022, I was the COO, and in 2023, I took over as CEO.

Q. Is any part of your compensation package in that CEO role dependent upon -- I mean, do you get any benefit if you secure additional contracts? Do you have any bonuses tied to securing additional work for the medical center? And specifically, what I'm getting at here is -- I mean, very

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candidly, is if the university decides to contract more with the medical center than it has, is there any type of personal financial benefit to you in that?

A. Directly, the answer is no. There is a portion of my bonus that is compensation off of EBITDA. So, off of EBITDA -- earnings before interest, depreciation taxes, and amortization, so there is an income component to a bonus, but directly tied to any of these contracts, no, sir, there's not. And frankly, there's not a lot of money in student health or other programs within the university. For us, it's really about workforce development, partnering with Coastal Carolina to really help drive workforce development in healthcare, and so that's been an important component of our relationship with them.

Q. Do you anticipate arguing for additional healthcare-related majors or courses of study?

A. I think arguing for them, I think educating the Board and educating administration on those needs, just like any other business does, I think that's obviously a particularly important component. I think we know that healthcare specialties in this state are particularly underserved when you look from a workforce development, as there have been funds that have come out of many of your committees to really help support that growth. I think we have a great technical college system here as well, which provides a nice foundation for that. But then having four-year institutions that can help those students that want to go further and obtain those degrees, I think is particularly important. And it's not just healthcare. We hire accountants, we hire human resource professionals. I think there's a lot of opportunity to service the needs of hospitals in this state.

Q. How does the nursing program at Coastal impact your medical center? You get a lot of students who are graduates of Coastal who work in the nursing program at your hospital?

A. Yeah, we do. We are the largest clinical rotation site in the county for both Coastal Carolina University and Horry Georgetown Technical College. So we do get quite a bit of new grads that are coming out of those programs. Part of it is we want to help educate those folks, and we want them in our hospitals. We want them understanding what it's like to work in our hospitals, so when they finally do come out of school that they understand what the job really means. It's not necessarily uncommon for nurses or other clinicians to come out of college and hit the floor and start taking care of patients and be like, this might not be for me. And so I think for us, it's opening our doors to be that education partner. It's also why we help educate medical students. We have medical students through our hospital. We have residency programs as well. So

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that is in our DNA as a nonprofit and Conway Medical Center. I think it's extremely important.

Q. Well, I think you provide a valuable expertise and experience that can be beneficial to the Board. I would just encourage you to be careful about some of the conversations that may come up, not just recusing yourself from votes. But I would also caution you about soliciting business from a university that could benefit the medical center, because any type of thing like that that could be argued by someone that you're receiving a personal benefit from, I would just encourage you to stay away from it.

A. Yeah, fair enough. Yes, sir.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Anybody else? Entertain a motion for a favorable report by the Commission.

SENATOR BENNETT: Motion.

REPRESENTATIVE KING: Second.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Second. All those in favor, please signify by raising your right hand.

(All hands are raised.)

MR. CHAIRMAN: Got it. Opposed, no. Thank you so much.

MR. ARGO: Thank you, sir.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Congratulations. Thank you for your service. Next, we have Richard Blake Kline of Myrtle Beach. If you could raise your right hand, let me swear you in. You swear to tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, so help you God?

RICHARD BLAKE KLINE:

MR. KLINE: I do.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Just state your name, tell us a little bit about yourself.

MR. KLINE: Okay. My name is Richard Blake Klein, but I go by Blake. And I was kind of inspired by Natasha Hanna's presentation about her journey to get to Coastal and what Coastal means to her. So I've got a few notes, if you'll allow me to. I actually grew up in Clemson, South Carolina. I've been a South Carolina boy most of my life. I had a West Point dad, very regimented growing up, and so I wasn't quite ready for college. Ended up moving down to Myrtle Beach in 1982 and waited a lot of tables and tried a few businesses, sold some real estate, didn't do very well. Finally decided that it was time for me to go to college. And so I enrolled in Coastal Carolina, and I studied biology and chemistry. I thought I wanted to be a physical therapist, and then I thought I wanted to be a pharmacist, and ultimately I decided I wanted to be a doctor. So I graduated in three and a half years. Coastal gave me a great education. I went to Medical University, South Carolina, and graduated in 1994. Went on to Medical College, Georgia, and studied anesthesiology, where

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I finished that program in 1998. I went on to become chief of anesthesiology at two different hospitals, one in Aiken, South Carolina, and then also Florence, South Carolina. And then I transitioned my career into interventional pain management, and I joined Florence Neurosurgery and Spine about 13, 14 years ago. And then after a few years there, I was actually living in Myrtle Beach and coming back and forth, and I decided that I wanted to move my whole practice to Conway. So I opened up Atlantic Coast Spine and Pain Center 11 years ago. And so I basically built that from the ground up, and I'm now the doctor and CEO of that. I currently train the anesthesiology residents from Grand Strand Anesthesiology, so they're all under my care. They do rotations with me to learn interventional pain management, so I think I have a unique educational experience there. I also train doctors from across the country, as well as mostly in South Carolina, on minimally invasive interventional spine procedures like Spinal Simplicity and Boston Scientific. I'm actually on faculty for both of those companies. So I think, like I said, I have a unique experience in health care, education, administration, and business, having served all those roles. This could not have been accomplished without my attending CCU. I wasn't the greatest student coming out of high school, but CCU gave me that opportunity. So I truly behalf, or are you aware of anyone attempting to intervene in this process on your behalf?

A. No, I'm not.

Q. And are you aware that you have an ongoing obligation and duty to report to the Commission any changes that might occur that would affect your application and overall eligibility for serving on a college Board?

A. I'm aware.

Q. Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Kline, Mr. Chairman. I have no further questions.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Any questions by the Commission? No questions? Okay, entertain a motion for a favorable report and a second.

REPRESENTATIVE ROSE: Second.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you. All those in favor signify by raising your right hand.

(All hands are raised.)

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay, I got that in before you were paying attention. No questions. Thanks. Any opposed? No. All right. Thank you, sir.

MR. KLINE: Thank you.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you, doctor. All right. We've got one more candidate for seat 11. His name is Edward Robert Tkacz. I believe that's correct. Welcome, sir. If you'll let me swear you in. You solemnly swear

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to tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, so help you God?

EDWARD ROBERT TKACZ:

MR. TKACZ: I do.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you. Just state your name, and why you're interested in running for the seat, and a little bit about yourself.

MR. TKACZ: Good afternoon. My name is Edward Tkacz. I am a hybrid in-state, out-of-state student that went to Coastal. I moved to South Carolina when I was 17, 16. I finished high school and got the in-state tuition to go to Koch School in 97, graduated in 2001 with a degree in computer science. I then went on to work in the defense industry, worked in various places, started in Maryland, worked in Germany after that, went to Iraq for about a year, went back to Germany, went to Qatar for two years, was in Afghanistan for two years, bounced around the world on my Coastal Carolina degree. I started a company in 2011, which I sold about two years ago, working in defense. We were doing all the software contracts across the world with the Department of Defense. Some stuff on the East Coast here in North Carolina, Florida. We had a contract here at Fort Jackson at one point as well. We also did work out in Germany with my company. We did work in parts of Africa, interesting things. But all because of my Coastal degree, I would say. Since selling the company, I have been working on myself. I've been continuing my services to Coastal. I've spent six years on the alumni board, supporting the alumni board. I revamped their process for screening new members coming onto that board and the actual process for electing these members. I've been on the Board of Visitors for the Science -- the Gupta College of Science for the past seven years as well. I'm pretty proud of some of the work I've been doing there. I've actually worked with the Navy's Information Warfare Center. A couple guys there, they run this hack-a-thon for all the local universities in South Carolina. And I finally got Coastal to commit to it. I brought them into the fold last year and let them see the cyber defense challenge firsthand. So they could -- now that I'm trying to get them to actually commit to going to it -- they've seen it now that I'm trying to get them to commit to going to it. These are some of the accomplishments I've led as a board member for two of the boards at Coastal.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Macey.

MR. TKACZ - EXAMINATION BY MS. WEBB:

Q. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. And Mr. Tkacz, can you please state your current address?

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A. 1805-F, Low Country Place, Myrtle Beach, South would affect your application and overall eligibility for serving on a college Board?

A. Yes, I am.

Q. Thank you, Mr. Tkacz. And, Mr. Chairman, I have no further questions.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Questions for Mr. Tkacz? Senator Devine.

MR. TKACZ - EXAMINATION BY SENATOR DEVINE:

Q. Just very quickly, thank you so much for your application and your interest. In looking at your addendum, you mentioned that the university should prioritize investments that directly strengthen the academic mission and student outcomes rather than focusing on enrollment and growth. Can you give us a couple of examples of those investments you think that the university needs to be made, and if elected to the board, how would you influence that?

A. I'm going to speak on my experience as a computer scientist that often talks with computer science departments. I noticed that the computer science department in general, as part of the group that's called science, has had some minor issues retaining professors. And I think part of that is maybe some of the salaries are a little low in that department. I feel like as we continue to grow in the AI space and technology is moving as fast as it is, I think we need to be more prepared in that regard and focus a little bit more on that. Right now, I believe computer science may only get anywhere from 200 to 300 enrollees right now, while some of the other colleges are getting 2,000, 3,000 people. I feel like we need to focus more on technology, and that's because -- you know, I'm probably some bias. I'm a computer scientist, so I'm going to be focused on that. So that's one of the things that I see. Let's get some good professors in there, get some good doctors that are going to stick around, not have this revolving door of professors coming in and using it as a stepping stone for their next job. Thank you for the question.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Senator Johnson.

MR. TKACZ - EXAMINATION BY SENATOR JOHNSON:

Q. I'm going to also ask you a question based off your questionnaire. As I read it, it says university needs to grow in a way that is sustainable and remains aligned with its mission, especially with increased enrollment demand from out-of-state students. How do you do that?

A. That's a good question. I would love to see the data as to what we are doing now. I don't have all the data, but I know the statistics because I've talked with many of the personnel that they're dealing with enrollment, and I understand the issue itself. I just don't understand why it's happening and how do we go about fixing that. I feel like my experience

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as a computer scientist and an aspiring data scientist right now, I can maybe help in that regard and look at data and kind of come up with some answers.

Q. You also wrote that you believe the university should adapt to the emergence of AI and intelligence systems. What types of -- what would you recommend the university do?

A. Once again, it's kind of one of those things I have to see what's going on myself. I just know that I'm looking at it from the perspective of the Department of War right now. The industry is changing completely. I don't know if you've been reading the news lately regarding Anthropic and what's been going on with the Department of War, how they -- there's definitely some tension right there between a big industry partner and now the Department of War. Because the Department of War is having a hard time keeping up with technology and trying to manage contracts that deliver these capabilities at a sustainable rate, I guess you could say. I would love to see what Coastal is doing right now in terms of how are students using AI? What are they using it for? Are we putting policies in place, guardrails, to make sure that people aren't plagiarizing or using AI in a way to give themselves the best, you know, lecture or, you know, using it in a way that's detrimental to their education.

Q. Thank you, sir.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Any other questions? Entertaining a motion and a second for a favorable report.

REPRESENTATIVE MCGINNIS: Motion.

REPRESENTATIVE KING: Second.

MR. CHAIRMAN: All those in favor, signify by raising your right hand. (All hands are raised.)

MR. CHAIRMAN: That everybody? Okay, opposed, no. All right, thank you, sir.

MR. TKACZ: Thank you very much.

MR. CHAIRMAN: We did have one other candidate, James Brandon Sessions from Myrtle Beach, but he withdrew. Ms. Hanna, you've got three excellent candidates.

MS. HANNA: Yes, sir.

MR. CHAIRMAN: I'm sure whoever comes out ahead, you'll do well. Now we're going to Seat 12 At-Large, which expires in 2029. Hal Delan Stevens from Conway. Come on up. Sorry about that. Raise your right hand and I'll swear you in. Do you swear to tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, so help you God?

HAL DELAN STEVENS:

MR. STEVENS: Yes, I do.

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MR. CHAIRMAN: State your name and tell us why you want to be on the Board.

MR. STEVENS: Hal Delan Stevens, and I go by Delan. I was born and raised in Conway. I've been there all my life. I grew up on a family farm. I was thinking that as I got older, farming was not going to be for me because I didn't like working from daylight to dark every summer and never having a vacation. So I thought I'd be the first generation to go to college, and I ended up going to Coastal Carolina, graduated in 1979, and then returned home to the farm. So it didn't work out exactly like I thought, but I really did enjoy farming, so it was part of my life. I've served on several committees at Coastal, from the Higher Education Commission to the Coastal Athletic Foundation, and I've just always been a part of the community, and Coastal's always been a part of the community, even when it was small. It was still a big part. It was a big deal when we got it for people like me who could just drive to college, and get a good degree. And get something to help you later on in life, even in farming it helped me. But it really helped me when I got into the banking business and had my own business. So just being born and raised there and having roots there and seeing Coastal grow, I've just always enjoyed being around it, and it's always intrigued me.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Macey.

MR. STEVENS - EXAMINATION BY MS. WEBB:

Q. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. And Mr. Stevens, can you please state your address?

A. 1343 Riverside Drive, Conway, South Carolina.

Q. Thank you. And is this the address where you pay your 4% property tax?

A. Yes, ma'am.

Q. Great. And do you currently serve on any local or state board, commission, committee, or elected office other than the Coastal Board?

A. No, ma'am.

Q. Thank you. And do you understand the obligations and responsibilities of serving on a public institution's board of trustees?

A. Yes, ma'am.

Q. And are you aware that you cannot contact any member of the General Assembly and formally ask for a vote commitment or pledge until 48 hours after the Commission's report has been released?

A. Yes, ma'am.

Q. And have you currently asked any third parties to contact members of the General Assembly on your behalf, or are you aware of anyone attempting to intervene in this process on your behalf?

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A. No, ma'am.

Q. And are you aware that you have an ongoing obligation and duty to report to the Commission any changes that might occur that would affect your application and overall eligibility for serving on a college Board?

A. Yes, ma'am.

Q. Thank you, Mr. Stevens. Mr. Chairman, I have no further questions.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Any questions by the Commission? Representative King.

MR. STEVENS - EXAMINATION BY REPRESENTATIVE KING:

Q. Thank you, Mr. Chair. I was reading your statement here in reference to the population of international students. Do you know what that population is?

A. I think it's about maybe 3 or 4% of what our overall is.

Q. Okay. The other thing is, I see where you have the 30% of students of color. What groups are that? What groups are considered color?

A. Any -- I mean, I would consider any group or nationality other than white. That was my, on that, yes.

Q. All right, thank you.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Anyone else? I'm sorry, Senator Bennett. I apologize, sir.

MR. STEVENS - EXAMINATION BY SENATOR BENNETT:

Q. Thank you, Mr. Stevens. I appreciate you being here.

A. Thank you.

Q. I'm curious in your questionnaire here in the supplement. You mentioned several times in the questions about believing that Coastal Carolina should move to a R1 institution, research one level institution.

A. I would like to see it, yes, sir.

Q. That would be quite a jump.

A. Yes, sir, it would be.

Q. How do you propose or how do you think they get there and how long do you think that takes?

A. I think we're almost to the -- I don't think it would think it would take many years. I won't be on the Board when it occurs. But I think the thing you would have to do is really concentrate a little bit more on your academics. Make sure that the programs we offer are sustainable and are things people want to do. For instance, like our marine science, to me, is nationally. People know it. So I think there are certain things with that, our law business school, that we can focus on from an educational standpoint and get more people involved and more people to come and get the academics at a higher level than we currently, you know, do. So

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I would think that would be the same. How many years? I think it would take 10, maybe 15 years. Who knows?

Q. I don't know if you were in the room when I asked the question earlier of another candidate about the duplication of programs across the state with our 32-some-odd colleges and universities across the state where we've got duplication in efforts. Multiple engineering schools, multiple business schools, multiple accounting, multiple nursing, multiple this and that. Do you think by moving to even an R2, certainly an R1, feeds into those challenges of duplication of efforts?

A. No, sir. I would think if the programs, if I understand it correctly in what I've read and researched and talked with our presidents, both now and past, I think what we need to do is concentrate on what we're good at. And like I say, marine science is something. I don't think you need a program for everything because you're right. I mean, Clemson has one of the best engineering programs around, definitely in the state.

Q. Never heard of Clemson.

A. It's a small school upstate. But I think what you have to focus on, what you can really draw students with and what you're really good at and make top students want to come because that's a top program, not just in the state, but within the nation.

Q. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you, Senator. Any other? Entertain a motion and a second for a favorable report.

REPRESENTATIVE MCGINNIS: Motion.

SENATOR BENNETT: Second.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you. All those in favor signify by raising your right hand.

(All hands are raised.)

MR. CHAIRMAN: And those no. Thank you, sir. One question.

MR. STEVENS: Yes, sir.

MR. CHAIRMAN: That's a unique color for a Coastal. I know it's, is it blue or is it green? Is it blue-green?

MR. STEVENS: It's supposed to be teal.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Teal, okay. There you go. It's pretty.

MR. STEVENS: Thanks, sir. Thank you.

MR. CHAIRMAN: All right, thank you, sir. Next up is At-Large seat 13. This expires in 2027. And Lee A. Belcher from Conway is up. Welcome, sir. If you could raise your right hand, I'll swear you in. You swear to tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, so help you God?

LEE A. BELCHER:

MR. BELCHER: I do.

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MR. CHAIRMAN: Welcome. State your name and tell us a little bit about why you want to be on the Coastal Board.

MR. BELCHER: All right, thank you. And thank you to this committee for having us here today. My name is Lee Belcher, of course. You all know that. I was born and raised in Columbia. I might be one of the few people that left Columbia and went to the beach other than going on vacation. But went to Coastal Carolina University. Had the opportunity there to meet my wife, Tanika, who played basketball there as well for the university. We both graduated there, stayed, and we have three young kids that we raised in that area. I started my career in the finance industry at Coastal Carolina University. Unique story. I was able to start working at a financial institution my senior year. So I structured my classes for Tuesday, Thursday, 8:00 to 5:00, and then worked at the bank Monday, Wednesday, Friday, Saturday. So that was my introduction into banking. A unique time as well. I graduated in 2008. We all know what happened that time period. So I decided I had a job, and the bank did not downsize in my position so much as well stay in the finance industry. And this led me to a career where I've been able to help financial institutions across the state, understanding those higher education institutions across the state and help them, which led me to saying, hey, I think there's something I can do to add value to my institution. So I am currently going for At-Large seat. Not going for, currently in the At-Large seat, 13, and been on the board since 2019. Really simply, if I can just put it in one thing, I think I would like to continue serving because I believe we're making a difference at the university. I think I have an background. As a current member of the Board in understanding the finances of Coastal Carolina and strategic planning, where are some of the things that you think the Board can focus a little bit on to strengthen up the university's finances and certainly not necessarily want the state to give more?

A. Absolutely. And I think this is at any institution, this is any corporate organization, always discuss this and have this topic. When things are going well, people kind of have their blinders on and things are going good. We keep moving along and keep continuing to go along. But I think the focus for us and what we've done and tried to do is watch and manage expenses. And so for this committee to understand, too, we take a deep dive in our expenses. We have those conversations with our CFO, with our Board, with our president that we discuss, do we actually need this expense? How can we mitigate it? How can we lower expenses? How can we not focus on raising tuition? And part of the conversations that we recently had, we had to go in and talk about tuition, fees, meal plans, housing. And those were part of those conversations. Like we do

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not need to, this year we didn't raise housing, and that was specific and intentional. We don't look to do those things if we don't have to. And so where are avenues that we can reduce and we can cut and we can reallocate funds? And that's a big portion of it. It comes down to focusing on budgeting and focus on need, especially not when things are going bad, but when things are going good as well.

SENATOR JOHNSON: Mr. Chairman.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Senator Johnson.

MR. BELCHER - EXAMINATION BY SENATOR JOHNSON:

Q. Thank you, sir. What's the number one driver to the university's expenses, in your opinion?

A. It's the people. So about almost 60% are people in managing costs associated with having professors there. One of the things that I'm proud of, and I talk about a lot, is we've come in and we've asked our administration, we've asked our faculty and staff to do more with less. And so I'll give a prime example, and I usually pull these numbers here. In 2019, we had 490 full-time faculty and staff. In 2025, we have 509. Those requests come in all the time that say, we're growing, we're growing, we need more full-time faculty and staff. And the questions go back to us as, how do we manage that? What are we doing with our case load? How many courses are we teaching? Those are the things that we push and ask them. And I'm grateful for the administration and the faculty and staff for bearing with us as we try to make sure that we have that right mix and that we don't get too overloaded with faculty and staff and expenditures for that.

Q. Now you've brought up something that I'm very interested in. On average, how many classes does a professor teach, or do you have any idea?

A. I will -- I'm going to -- I don't want to misquote, so I'm going to say I'm going to ask to get back that one to you. I believe it's in the neighborhood of closer to four case loads, I think.

Q. Four case loads. So as opposed to, say, one hour a week and I'm writing a book, professor, you've got professors in the classroom doing things.

A. Yeah. And now we are looking at, from a research aspect that we do, and we discussed this here. I think from a research standpoint, we do want to explore that a little bit more. We think that's a big component, but we don't want to leave it as the instructional piece of it. So we are going to try to play that balancing act where we do have some of that research, but we have teachers in the classroom teaching and giving the students an opportunity to have small aspects from a research standpoint.

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Q. When you say regions that are experiencing demographic declines, do you remember writing that?

A. I do.

Q. What do you mean by that?

A. So what I mean by that is we have to start taking a closer look at where our students are coming to Coastal in those areas or those northern areas. And they're opposed to having a demographic decline in students, student populations. So the enrollment cliff will hit those areas or is expected to hit those areas significantly harder than other regions. And so we have to prepare ourselves. And I think that's some of the things that we're doing. And not to say light of it, just speak a little bit about the in-state students and what we're doing there. We may have, in years past, had a strong focus on the northern student base and population. They love coming down here. They come on vacation to travel. Their grandparents have moved down to Myrtle Beach, the fastest growing county in the United States. But we are now starting that trend of going into -- and I'll speak to a Board member who passed away, Dalton Floyd, who created a program to allow us to go into middle schools in Horry County. And the president put the focus in now that we're going to those middle schools, high schools, and bringing those students on campus early. That is going to help us with our in-state population is that -- as our academic profiles continue to grow and we're on a national stage and we're having things come from every direction and people want to come to the beach that we're intentionally focused on, all right, this isn't a short-term solution. We have got to buckle in and start reaching out to these students while they're in middle school. And the responses that we're getting from those students that come to our campus from middle school, come on the football teal turf and come out of the tunnel and then learn more about Coastal is what's going to drive us to be able to support South Carolina a little bit better down in years.

Q. Well, I'd certainly encourage you to take that middle school show on the road throughout the state of South Carolina.

A. That's what I think.

Q. And encourage the students throughout our state to do that. Thank you, sir.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you, Senator. Any other questions? Entertain a motion and a second for our favorable report.

REPRESENTATIVE KING: Motion.

SENATOR JOHNSON: Second.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you. All those in favor, please signify by raising your right hand. Opposed, no. Thank you, Mr. Belcher.

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MR. BELCHER: Thank you.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Good to see you again.

MR. BELCHER: Good to see you.

MR. CHAIRMAN: We're going to do two more on Coastal. Then we'll take a break so our reporter can -- she looks like she can use a break now.

But you can hold on for two more. COURT REPORTER: Good to go.

MR. CHAIRMAN: All right. Up next is at-large seat 14, Joe N. Jarrett, Jr. of Myrtle Beach. This seat is up in 2029. Welcome, sir. If you'll just raise your right hand and let me swear you in. You swear to tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, so help you God?

JOE N. JARRETT, JR.:

MR. JARRETT: I do.

MR. CHAIRMAN: State your name and tell us why you want to be on this Board.

MR. JARRETT: My name is Joe Jarrett. I moved here from Pittsburgh with Nancy, my wife, who is here today, and our three children who live in Myrtle Beach. I had been a fairly decent athlete in college. And when we came here, we didn't have football. We did have a basketball team. And so I came over to watch basketball, met the president of the college at that time. He was the chancellor of the college, and offered my services as a sports medicine physician because they did not have a sports medicine physician at that time. Although I didn't really want to be a sports medicine physician, I called my good pal Dr. Dick Ward from The Ohio State University. He was a sports medicine trained physician, and he moved down to Myrtle Beach. And from that point on, we had established an office in Myrtle Beach where we had a number of physicians over time. We were the team physicians for Coastal for many years. And I was very happy to be able to go on trips with the team and, you know, just be a general team physician. But in 2016, I retired. And at that point, I wasn't too interested in doing anything else, but after a couple of years of being not employed of any sort, I thought it might be nice to be on the Board at Coastal. Especially when we had our new president, Mike Benson, and he had a whole new approach to the college experience for both the faculty, the staff, and the students. So that's how I got to be involved. Now, I know that we've been talking about all kinds of different things, the enrollment cliff and the out-of-state candidates, and I just wanted to go over a few things. Pardon me one second. I have a little bit of a spring pollen effect. There's a few things that I would like to go over. And again, it does relate somewhat to the out-of-state student population and student athletes. But I wanted to go over and let you guys hear this. We have a couple of -- well, there's four promises right now.

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Chauncey, South Carolina, promise. And the tuition promise is that, and you've heard this, this is a 10% of their, if a student is in the top 10% of class whose family earns less than \$80,000, they will come to college free. The top 10 promise, since 2014, Coastal Carolina University has guaranteed admission to any South Carolina resident who graduates in the top 10% of their high school class. High school seniors interested in enrolling as freshmen via CCU's top 10 promise program must complete an application and submit an official high school transcript showing class rank. This has been a very successful program, although I think it could be a lot better. But again, maybe that's because most of those students are from Horry County and some of them want to go out and be in the wider world in a different place than Horry County. We also have the LIFE program, which is really good. I think we talked about that earlier. And this is an interesting one. We have a transfer promise. Eligible transfer students who have earned the Associate of Arts, Associate of Science, or Associate of Applied Science degree from a South Carolina technical college are guaranteed admission. Ninety-three percent of in-state completed applications are accepted to CCU directly or through our bridge program partnership with Horry Georgetown Technical College. Students who earn one of the above-mentioned degrees from SCTC receive a minimum of 60 transfer credits in junior status when they enroll at the college. So you can see that we have a great link with our sister institution, the Horry Georgetown Technical College. And furthermore, we have started to make inroads in associations with the remaining 15 South Carolina technical colleges. Additionally, I don't think it was mentioned that the school also has veteran programs for veterans. In the fall

A. Yes.

Q. And are you aware that you cannot contact any member of the General Assembly and formally ask for a vote commitment or pledge until 48 hours after the Commission's report has been released?

A. Yes.

Q. Yes, you do -- you understand the 48-hour rule?

A. Yes, ma'am.

Q. Thank you. And have you currently asked any third parties to contact members of the General Assembly on your behalf, or are you aware of anyone attempting to intervene in this process on your behalf?

A. No.

Q. All right. And are you aware that you have an ongoing obligation and duty to report to the Commission any changes that might occur that

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would affect your application and overall eligibility for serving on a college Board?

A. No.

Q. Well, you are aware that you have an ongoing obligation and duty to report to us?

A. Yes, ma'am.

Q. Okay. Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Jarrett. Mr. Chairman, I have no further questions.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Any questions for Dr. Jarrett? Senator Devine.

MR. JARRETT - EXAMINATION BY SENATOR DEVINE:

Q. Thank you, Mr. Chair. Thank you, Mr. Jarrett, for your service and your willingness to continue to serve. I just have a couple of questions regarding the addendum to your personal data questionnaire. On number nine, you say that the university's DEI initiative was divisive and has been disbanded, and that you say that the focus now is to provide a sense of belonging for all students, regardless of race, religion, gender, and political viewpoints. So I wanted to ask a couple of questions about that. Can you tell us what was the university's specific DEI initiative and how did it get divisive and how did the Board step into that?

A. Well, actually, you know, the Supreme Court, as well as the United States, as well as in South Carolina, had made the initiative. It was not -

Q. Let me help. I guess I'm asking specifically. Like I know there were general -- I guess what I find is that people use DEI and they don't necessarily talk about specific programs. So although there wasn't a universal, like there interests.

Q. And has the Board taken, I guess, a position regarding supporting that program or any other program? Or how is the Board playing a role in, number one, ensuring that all students do feel belonging, but also making sure that your faculty and staff recognize that that is a goal of the school?

A. Right. Absolutely.

Q. All right. Does the Board -- I guess that's my question. Has the Board done anything, issued a statement, encouraged it through the president? How is the Board, I guess, making sure that the university keeps that as a priority?

A. Well, actually, it's more of a job for the administration than it would be for Board. And the administration relays this to the Board, relays the things that are going on with this very nice way of trying to get people to be comfortable on their campus and safe and to enjoy each other and not have a lot of conflict, political issues, and that kind of thing.

Q. And have you all seen a difference?

A. Yes.

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Q. Thank you. I appreciate you answering my questions.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Anybody else? Entertain a motion and a second for our favorable report. Do you have a motion? Yeah. Thank you. Entertain a motion and a second for a favorable report?

REPRESENTATIVE MCGINNIS: Motion.

SENATOR DEVINE: Second.

MR. CHAIRMAN: All those in favor, please signify by raising your right hand.

(All hands are raised.)

MR. CHAIRMAN: Opposed, no. Dr. Jarrett, thank you, sir.

MR. JARRETT: Thank you all very much.

MR. CHAIRMAN: This is our last Coastal. These guys just had six members. All right. The last one is At-Large Seat 15, Patrick Steven Sparks from Myrtle Beach, and this expires in 2029. Raise your right hand, please, sir. Do you swear to tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, so help you God?

PATRICK STEVEN SPARKS:

MR. SPARKS: I do.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you, sir. Just state your name and why you're interested in the Coastal position.

MR. SPARKS: My name is Patrick Steven Sparks, and I appreciate your time today. I know you mentioned that you appreciate our service. I appreciate yours as well. And I know your court reporter has had a long day, so I will be brief, as you will allow me to be. I graduated Coastal in 1995. Been in the North Myrtle Beach area since I was in seventh grade. I grew up where you didn't want to go to Coastal. Coastal was considered 13th grade when I grew up, right? So you graduated high school, and Coastal was next door. So I've heard folks talk a little bit about there might be some sort of a bias about why local kids may not want to go there. I have that same bias. But Coastal is the reason why I'm reasonably successful today. Married, 23 years, got two daughters. I used our marketing degree that I got from Coastal to run our family business. And the reasons why I wanted to be associated with Coastal, some of them quite selfish. I started out on the Educational Foundation Board, and then selfishly I'm looking at aligning my business with Coastal Carolina in terms of the growth and how can I advertise with Coastal and be seen as to be a part of Coastal and that is a rising star in our area. You know, when we're sitting there in the Horry County South Carolina Fest, Horry County, right, we've got a lot of people coming in, but Coastal is by far the gem of what we have in Horry County. It's responsible for a tremendous amount of our arts. It's responsible for a tremendous amount

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of our sports. And those two things, as our new university president says, make up the front porch of our university, right? So they're getting us national attention, and we're able to do some really great things there. But I do appreciate your time today and allowing me to speak to you.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Macey.

MR. SPARKS - EXAMINATION BY MS. WEBB:

Q. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. And Mr. Sparks, can you please state your current address?

A. 8926 North Ocean Boulevard, Myrtle Beach, South Carolina, 29572.

Q. Thank you. And is this the address that you pay your 4% property tax?

A. It is.

Q. Thank you. And do you currently serve on any local or state board, commission, committee, or elected office other than the Coastal Carolina Board?

A. I do not.

Q. And do you understand the obligations and responsibilities of serving on a public institution's Board of trustees?

A. I do.

Q. And are you aware that you cannot contact any member of the General Assembly and formally ask

A. It is.

Q. All right. So at the risk of stereotyping here and also at the risk of opening up a door that we could probably talk for hours on, I'm curious how you see not only your board, but all of our college university boards. What is your role in the entire NIL discussion across the country? And the constant, I say constant, or let's say annual renewal of state law to assist in allowing our colleges and universities to stay competitive? Do you have any thoughts on that?

A. I do. I do, and I appreciate the question. I think you, when I say you, as in Columbia, have taken this up, what, the last four years in a row?

Q. In a row.

A. Yeah, and it seems like it never ends, and nor does it seem like it has any sort of a path to a conclusion. My personal opinion is we've gone down a rabbit hole in the list. There's some sort of federal thoughts about it that intervene as to whether a student athlete is technically an employee, and that may not be a path that they would like to understand. Employees get hired. They get fired. They get suspended. They may not get paid everything because they didn't potentially play a certain way. I think that's a slippery slope, but I think all of this is pretty slippery as well. You know, the thing that I like to remind people when they ask me

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about NIL, and specifically at our university, and we played a much, much lower number than obviously the city we're in right now and then obviously Clemson, but we still pay. You know, we have a baseball team that finished runner-up in Omaha last year. We are paying players. There is no doubt, and we have to do that. The thing that a lot of folks don't get is that seems to get a tremendous amount of attention other than the 95% of the other students who aren't in any way, shape, or form affected by that, right? You know, 5%, 6% of our student athletes are at that level, and the rest of them are just kids. I've got two of them. One of my daughters is going to play sports, and I'm paying full freight at universities for them to attend or will be for my youngest this coming year. So as a parent, NIL doesn't necessarily affect me. However, it is the overriding issue that most folks see when they talk about college athletes. Q.As a Board member, however, it kind of goes back to the question I've been asking throughout the day about how much pushback is there from a Board to leadership. Not pushback, challenge, questioning. I think challenge is the better word to make sure that the university is doing the right things and not just rubber stamping decisions. It seems to me, from an athletic department standpoint, that tail has been wagging the dog, at least for the last four years, right? Are there serious discussions within your Boardrooms of when is enough? I mean, recognize it's a difficult challenge, right, when you're always trying to compete and you don't want to have somebody else get a better opportunity. But is there a discussion about is there enough where we just say this is all we're going to do?

A. We have lively debates about that, and I think we have some on our Board that will look at you and tell you that at our level, is this sustainable? And do we want it to be sustainable, quite frankly? You know, when we're paying players, we're on such a slippery slope to begin with. And I'm not certain that anybody knows where it's going to end up. But we're looking at it and trying to control the things we can control. We can't control NIL legislation, you know, people are being sued left and right, NCAA and various other entities. And then suing your own student-athletes, which I thought I'd never see the day where a college would physically sue -- or a university would sue a student-athlete who's no longer there. But we're there, right? I think that we're trying to control the things that we can control. We're looking at it from a contractual standpoint with our football coaches and carving out COLA races and things like that. You know, previous to this, if you didn't specify that, a university football coach would get a COLA race, right, as a state employee. So we've looked at it and really tried to clean up a lot of our

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contracts, especially with the football program we just started under stat. Our athletic director, Chance Miller, is doing an amazing job there, just making sure that we're trying to insulate ourselves and be smart about the revenue dollars we have. And then, additionally, some of the opportunities to market the university, we're looking at trying to find funds in different areas, areas that Coastal had not participated in before. Now, larger universities knew about this, but, you know, putting logos on the fields and doing some things like that, we had never done. More sponsorships with either Myrtle Beach and the City of Conway to try and help come in and partner in some of these games that we're doing, the home games. You may have seen the opportunity to give away free concessions. That got us a lot of views and a lot of clicks. And, you know, we're trying to put the math together on that and say, hey, listen, we went out and got a lot of information from customers. How can we market back to them and sell Coastal to those folks? So we're looking at it, I think, to your point, very strategically, on our end, on the things we can control. The NIL space is outside of anything that we have.

Q. Well, you got that right. Just be ready for the mid-season trade request, because I think that's what's coming next.

A. I'm scared.

Q. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you, Mr. Senator. Any other questions? I entertain a motion and a second for a favorable report.

SENATOR BENNETT: Motion.

REPRESENTATIVE ROSE: Second.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you. All those in favor, signify by raising your right hand.

(All hands are raised.)

MR. CHAIRMAN: Got it. Okay, opposed, no. Thank you, sir.

MR. SPARKS: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

MR. CHAIRMAN: We're going to take a short break. I know our reporter is looking forward to that break. I think we are, too.

OFF THE RECORD

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay, we're back in session, or back in whatever. Back on the record, there you go. Welcome. This is -- let me find my spot here. This is Lander University At-Large, Seat 12. It expires in 20-- anyway, it expires sometime. This is Sabrina Ann Walker from Sumter. If you'll raise your right hand, I'll swear you in, please, ma'am. Do you swear to tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, so help you God?

SABRINA ANNE WALKER:

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MS. WALKER: I do.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Macey. Oh, yeah, I'm sorry.

MS. WALKER: I understand you're wanting to get home. It's been a long day for you.

MR. CHAIRMAN: All right. Yeah, if you'd just state your name and then why you're interested in the Lander Board.

MS. WALKER: So my name is Sabrina Anne Walker. I go by Anne. And I am the longest-serving Lander Board member. I'm only 50, but some people say I'm 76. But anyway, my daughter's 52, so you can figure it out. I have -- I'm a Lander grad. And I have a long line of family members, mother, sister-in-law, daughter, niece, a crowd of us that have gone to Lander. And so I have to say that I love Lander. I've heard others say that they bleed teal or they bleed orange or whatever it might be, but I love Lander. And so -- and my vocation is in the criminal justice business, but my avocation is higher ed. I've always had a real interest in higher ed and actually did all the coursework for a doctorate in higher education. Shame on me. I didn't write the dissertation, but I learned a lot. And so I just have a real interest in it and have for many years actually worked in higher ed for a while back in the 80s. And so, and I'm going to make this short because I have also at one time was in the speaking and training business, so I could talk forever so I won't, but thank you.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you, ma'am. Macey.

MS. WALKER - EXAMINATION BY MS. WEBB:

Q. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. And Ms. Walker, can you please state your current address?

A. Sure. 43 Mason Croft Drive, Sumter, South Carolina.

Q. Thank you. And is this the address where you pay your 4% property tax?

A. Yes, ma'am.

Q. All right. And do you currently serve on any local or state board, commission, committee or elected office other than the Lander Board?

A. No, ma'am.

Q. All right. And do you understand the obligations and responsibilities of serving on a public institutions Board of trustees?

A. I do.

Q. And are you aware that you cannot contact any member of the General Assembly and formally ask for a vote commitment or pledge until 48 hours after the Commission's report has been released?

A. Yes.

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Q. And have you currently asked any third parties to contact members of the General Assembly on your behalf, or are you aware of anyone attempting to intervene in this process on your behalf?

A. No, ma'am.

Q. All right. And are you aware that you have an ongoing obligation and duty to report to the Commission any changes that might occur that would affect your application and overall eligibility for serving on a college board?

A. Yes.

Q. Thank you, Ms. Walker. And, Mr. Chairman, I have no further questions.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you, Macey. Questions for Ms. Walker?

SENATOR JOHNSON: Mr. Chairman.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Yes, sir. Senator Johnson.

MS. WALKER - EXAMINATION BY SENATOR JOHNSON:

Q. I'll try to move along here. Ms. Walker, enrollment's increased 72% since 2015. What's enrollment now?

A. We're right at about 4,700 students.

Q. About 4,700 students.

A. Yes, sir.

Q. And what's the number one major at Lander?

A. The number one what?

Q. Major.

A. Major.

Q. What classes are they taking?

A. They're taking business, nursing, education. Those are the top three.

Q. Business, nursing, education.

A. Uh-huh.

Q. I noticed in the graduation rates and the sheet that I have has about a 36% four-year rate and about right at 50% six-year graduation rate. That sound about right?

A. Yes, sir. Yes, sir.

Q. Are you concerned about a 50% graduation rate over a six-year period?

A. Absolutely. We talk about it all the time. We get a lot of first-time college students. And, you know, as we all know, we're influenced usually by our family, by our parents. I was fortunate enough. My mom's an Lander graduate, my dad was a Citadel graduate. There was never any discussion about whether or not I was going to college, and there was no discussion about whether or not I was going to get out in four years. I got in at three and a half, not because I was so smart. It was just the opposite.

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I thought everybody was taking 18 hours a semester, and I found out at the end of my junior year that was not the case. And so I did an internship and I was able to get out in three and a half years. So, yes, we talk about graduation rates on a regular basis, and we continue to keep that in the forefront because, as you well know, you can fill up these institutions to the best of your ability, but we want people who are graduating. And our big focus at Lander is that when you leave Lander, when you do graduate from Lander, that you are job-ready. You do one of two things. You either go on to graduate school or you go to work, and so it's just not -- our emphasis is not on just get a college education. It's get a college education so that you can either go on to graduate school or that you can go to work.

Q. What policies has the Board or the university enacted to improve your graduation rate?

A. Specific policies -- I mean, we literally, at every Board meeting, have X number of policies that are brought before us that we deal with, approve, question, talk about, so that's an automatic thing on our agenda all the time. So far as specific ones, it's everything from -- I mean, we've had discussions about who to be let in, to be very candid with you. And what's their preparation so far as, you know, when they're success to the staff, to the president, to the staff. We have a president who, when you're hired, you're hired to get the job done. And if you can't get the job done, you don't get a whole lot of opportunity to hang around and not make it happen. And so we've just had a number of creative ways, you know, that first-year experience. And, of course, that goes back to what you asked. That first-year experience is so important because we want to influence them to stay and to continue and to graduate. And so we've done a variety of things with that. But as you all know, we're dealing with a totally different group of young people with totally different experiences than what any of us had in college. We weren't there or high school when COVID was going on. We weren't, you know, all those things. And I'm not blaming that. I'm just simply saying with social media, with everything else, we're just living in a whole different world. And it's -- you know, I was taught to be independent before I ever went to college. So it wasn't any of this calling up mom and mama coming up to talk to a professor. And that's happening in college and universities now. And it's just incredible that that happens. But it does. And so it's an ongoing challenge, no doubt about it. But we will continue to strive to hit it with our best shot because it's important. But our president, he's a man of his word. He wants to make things happen. One of the things, I know you didn't ask this question. You all hear a lot about building and

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about getting new buildings and that kind of thing. We've made a real effort at Lander. We've had some new buildings. But to rehab what's been there, I mean, for a while, and to make it -- bring it up to date, which is a whole lot cheaper than or less expensive than just building brand new buildings. So that's something that we've done.

Q. That actually was my last question you went to. You said universities should stay on top of building needs regarding dorms and other facilities. I think you were in here when I asked Coastal Carolina about the safety and security as part of their facility needs. So are you all doing that assessment as well? And is that part of conversations that the Board is having, how to keep the young people safe?

A. Yes, ma'am. As long as I've been on this Board, we have always taken a hard look at safety to the point of college presidents going on a regular basis with certain members of the staff at nighttime and walking the campus to say, we need more lights here, we need this here, we need that there, to make sure that we're providing a safe environment. We have an incredible police chief, and he just does a wonderful job for us on campus. And he's very personable. The students like him, but they also know he means business. And so that's a good thing. But yes, ma'am, we're very safety conscious. And not only the things like I said, like lighting and stuff, but just are your sidewalks, can somebody like me go from one corner of the campus to the other? I'm on this because a guy tried to rob me about 20 years ago. Right ankle got messed up really badly. So I'm on it because the doctor said get on the scooter, and I said okay. But the bottom line is that there's so many aspects to safety. And it's not just did we provide a well-lighted campus, or did we provide security, did we have the boxes where they can push them all around the campus to get help or to get transportation, whatever it might be. I hope that answers your question.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Senator Bennett.

MS. WALKER - EXAMINATION BY SENATOR BENNET:

Q. One and a half questions, I promise. Thank you, ma'am, for being here.

A. Yes, sir.

Q. I heard that voice, and I said, where have I heard that voice before? I had to flip back through, and I looked through, and I see where you're a Rotary District Governor.

A. In 08-09, and you became president of the Summerville Club in 2010.

Q. That's right.

A. Yeah. Yes, yes.

Q. So good to see you again.

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A. Good to thank you, same here.

Q. Just quickly, how much of your -- how much of your student -- delivering education to student is online versus on campus?

A. The majority of it is on campus. I mean, we have online learning that's going on, and I can't give you those percentages. I don't have that. But I know that the majority of it is in person.

Q. Do you see the online work that's going on, is that -- I mean, there's so much data out there now that's telling us why this all sounds wonderful. It just doesn't work, and it's not good. Do you see online being a response to a need, or do you see it more of a, for lack of a better term, a money grab?

A. Well, my personal experience with it is that if you'd have to shoot a gun to my head and tell me to get a degree online, I'd tell you to go ahead and shoot, because I just don't have those computer skills. I'm surrounded by people who do. I have some, but not to the extent. But I have personal experience. I have a daughter who's 52 who did an undergraduate degree at Lander in psychology, and then got very interested at Lander, in the technical aspects of things and technology, and attempted to go to the University of South Carolina and get her master's. And she was at the time working with federal probation, and they said, we'd love to have you. And they said, but you can't work and do it. You'd have to come full time. Now, this was some years ago. And so she ended up getting her degree in technology, computer information systems, completely online from, I can't remember right now, anyway, a legitimate accredited institution. And she's been very successful in her career working with United Healthcare in the technology aspect of things. She's kind of the backroom of health care. Anyway, it goes on and on. So I know that that meant a lot to her to be able to have that opportunity, because otherwise she would have had to literally quit work. And that was not an option for her to do, because we paid for the undergraduate degree. It was her responsibility to take it from there.

Q. Great. Thank you.

A. Thank you.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Anyone else? Entertain a motion and a second for a favorable report.

SENATOR DEVINE: Motion.

REPRESENTATIVE MCGINNIS: Second.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Everyone please raise your right hand.

(All hands are raised.)

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MR. CHAIRMAN: Looks unanimous to me. Okay, thank you. Opposed, no. Ms. Walker, thank you so much. As a fellow Rotarian, Rotarian up here, I guess we're all Harris fellows.

MS. WALKER: Of course.

MR. CHAIRMAN: That cost me a lot of money.

MS. WALKER: Excuse me for this personal, but my daughter was just elected district governor for our district, so exactly 20 years after I was district governor, she'll be in that 28, 29.

MR. CHAIRMAN: It's a wonderful service.

MS. WALKER: Isn't Shane also a Rotarian, I believe? I'm not sure. Shane Massey?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Is he? Okay. I used to be a member of Lions and so kind of hollows, and my little town just gone away. Rotary is still there. So thank you so much.

MS. WALKER: Thank all of you, I appreciate your service.

MEDICAL UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH CAROLINA:

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay. Up next is the Medical University of South Carolina, 2nd Congressional District. Lay member expires in 2028. William Delleny Wiseman of Blythewood. Welcome, sir. If you'll raise your right hand. Do you swear to tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, so help you God?

WILLIAM DELLENY WISEMAN:

MR. WISEMAN: I do.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Just give us your name again and why you want to serve on the MUSC.

MR. WISEMAN: Thank you very much. I'm Bill Wiseman. I reside in Blythewood, South Carolina. I'm a graduate of the University of South Carolina, 1982, in Mechanical Engineering. I spent my career in construction, design, and planning, and building buildings all throughout the country. And I'm excited about maybe bringing some of that experience to the Board at MUSC. We've got four children, two of which still live in South Carolina, and three grandchildren over in Sumter, so I'm glad they're close by as well. My career experience is over 40 years, as I said, design and planning and construction of buildings, from very small renovation projects up to multi-hundreds of million-dollar projects. And my predecessor, hopefully, on this Board, Mr. Bill Bingham, was an engineer from West Columbia and spent a lot of time helping with the facilities down there, and I would like to continue that legacy with the medical university. And frankly, at my stage of life, I want to help other people and give back to my community and my state and be a part of some good things that happen in MUSC. I'm the beneficiary of some of

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the excellent care that they promote down there, and so now I want to give back to them. And I'll answer any questions you might have.

MR. CHAIRMAN: All right. Macey.

MR. WISEMAN - EXAMINATION BY MS. WEBB:

Q. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. And Mr. Wiseman, can you please state your current address?

Q. All right. And are you aware that you have an ongoing obligation and duty to report to the Commission any changes that might occur that would affect your application and overall eligibility for serving on a college Board?

A. Yes.

Q. Thank you, Mr. Wiseman. And, Mr. Chairman, I have no further questions.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you, Macey. Questions for Mr. Wiseman? Senator Bennett?

MR. WISEMAN - EXAMINATION BY SENATOR BENNETT:

Q. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you, Mr. Wiseman, for being here and for your willingness to serve on this committee. What's your familiarity with the MUSC Board versus the hospital and the hospital Board and how they interact?

A. I frankly don't have a whole lot. I'm familiar with that, but unfortunately any answers I would give specific to the operations of the university would be anecdotal. I don't have any firsthand knowledge of it. My company was part of a joint venture that built buildings at the university, the College of Dental Medicine a few years back, the Ashley River Tower, and most recently the Children's Hospital. And so I was exposed to MUHA as well as MUSC, but that's the extent of my knowledge.

Q. Are you familiar with MUSC, the Hospital Association, and probably by default the university itself, their expansion across the state over the last decade, decade and a half?

A. Yes.

Q. Do you think that MUSC gets outside of its mission by engaging in those expansions?

A. I don't have an opinion on that yet.

Q. Would that be something that you would be concerned about if you were on the Board or would question?

A. I would. I would be active in that discussion. I think the medical university's mission as being the flagship university to teach those subjects in South Carolina is a noble one. I also think that competition is good, so I would certainly be part of that discussion.

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Q. Sure. I think the thing that I would ask is, as you move forward, the lines are somewhat blurred oftentimes, at least to the public, on exactly where the university starts and stops and where the hospital association starts and stops. And concerns about the expansion of the hospital, while I think it's noble and it probably does follow through the mission of the university to reach some of the rural areas that don't have access to health care. Those are good things. But a lot of those expansions are also in the non-rural areas where there's a lot of private sector and even non-profit engagement that somehow is sometimes seen as a little unfair competition. There's competition and there's unfair competition. I don't think there's anybody up on this dais that doesn't want MUSC to be successful and put out the best doctors that they possibly can or other allied health care professionals. But I think there's some concern about whether or not they expand that mission inappropriately at times.

A. I understand.

Q. Thank you, sir.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Representative King.

MR. WISEMAN - EXAMINATION BY REPRESENTATIVE KING:

Q. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'm not sure if you are familiar with the Rena Grant Sickle Cell Center that's at MUSC, the hospital. The state of South Carolina has taken an interest in sickle cell. But what we have found is that the actual school is not teaching it. And how could we or what do you think could be done to facilitate that type of relationship?

A. Frankly, not to dodge the question, but I don't think I know enough to speak to that. I apologize. But hopefully when I come back in a couple of years, I hope to come back before you all have some discussion about that.

Q. Well, I would love to. You don't have to answer it now, but I would love before you come back for us to have some discussion because that has been Rena was one of our employees here in the House who passed away from sickle cell. And the state has funded some sickle cell programs around the state. It has become an interest. But as a person like myself who has family members that live with sickle cell, there is not enough doctors in South Carolina that can facilitate the sickle cell patients. And so one of the things that we were hoping for is that MUSC would at least offer courses that dealt with sickle cell. Thank you.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Senator Devine.

MR. WISEMAN - EXAMINATION BY SENATOR DEVINE:

Q. Thank you. Just quickly. Good to see you, Mr. Wiseman. Thank you so much for applying. Just a question on your questionnaire. When you were talking about the weaknesses of the university, you mentioned the

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management of changing federal reimbursement and grant funding. Can you elaborate as to what you mean on that? And as a Board member, how would you address that?

A. Well, again, my knowledge of that issue is somewhat antiquated. But I would assume that the reimbursement of federal funds. You know, we deal with health insurance reimbursements every day. Personally, I would think on a hospital level, it's very complex and very difficult. And it's something that needs to be dealt with and anticipated as they move forward in terms of their budgets and everything else. So I don't know if that answers your question or not.

Q. Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Anybody else? Okay. Entertain a motion.

SENATOR BENNETT: Motion.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Second?

REPRESENTATIVE ROSE: Second.

MR. CHAIRMAN: For approval. Okay. All those in favor, signify by raising your right hand.

(All hands are raised.)

MR. CHAIRMAN: Opposed? Thank you, sir, for your willingness to serve on a very important university in our state.

MR. WISEMAN: Have a good night.

MR. CHAIRMAN: All right. We are now down to Winthrop University. The first one is the 7th Congressional District seat, Alison Jean Hamilton of North Myrtle Beach. Welcome. If you would just raise your right hand. You promise to tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, so help you God?

WINTHROP UNIVERSITY:

ALISON JEAN HAMILTON:

MS. HAMILTON: I do.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you. And if you'll just give your name again and why you want to continue serving.

MS. HAMILTON: All right. I'm Allison Jean Hamilton, and I'm seeking election on the 7th Congressional District seat. I have a lot of family members that attended Winthrop, my paternal grandmother, my mother, two aunts, and three cousins. I decided at a very young age that I wanted to study at Winthrop. I graduated in 1992, undergraduate with a degree in business with an option in economics, and in 1995 with my MBA. I'm here today to ask you for the honor and the privilege to serve my alma mater. I want to serve. Winthrop is on the rise. I want to help Winthrop become the best version of itself. And I recognize that Winthrop's prosperity and success is crucial for alumni, employees, the City of Rock

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Hill, York County, and the entire state of South Carolina. If I'm allowed to serve on the Winthrop University Board of Trustees like yourselves, I'll be obligated to the taxpayers of South Carolina. Working together with the General Assembly, we need to be sure that Winthrop, as a state-supported school, provides a positive return for the taxpayers' investment, that our students with degrees that are in demand by industry in our state, and that we provide our state with the workforce we need to attract the best business opportunities for our people.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Macey.

MS. HAMILTON - EXAMINATION BY MS. WEBB:

Q. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. And Ms. Hamilton, can you please state your current address?

A. 6100 North Ocean Boulevard, Unit 502, North Myrtle Beach.

Q. Thank you. And is this address where you pay

A. It is.

Q. Thank you. And do you currently serve on any local or state board, commission, committee, or elected office?

A. I do. I serve on the Winthrop Alumni Executive Board, and I serve on the Rotary Myrtle Beach Sun Fun Committee.

Q. Thank you. And I just note that those are not public offices for purposes of us having to determine the dual office holding, but I appreciate you disclosing those to the Commission.

A. Okay.

Q. Thank you. And do you understand the obligations and responsibilities of serving on a public institution's board of trustees?

A. Yes.

Q. And are you aware that you cannot contact any member of the General Assembly and formally ask for a vote commitment or pledge until 48 hours after the Commission's report has been released?

A. Yes.

Q. And have you currently asked any third parties to contact members of the General Assembly on your behalf, or are you aware of anyone attempting to intervene in this process on your behalf?

A. No, I have not.

Q. Thank you. And are you aware that you have an ongoing obligation and duty to report to the Commission any changes that might occur that would affect your application and overall eligibility for serving on a college Board?

A. Yes, I do.

Q. Thank you. Thank you, Ms. Hamilton. Mr. Chairman, I have no further questions.

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MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you, Macey. Any questions for Ms. Hamilton? Representative Rose.

MS. HAMILTON - EXAMINATION BY REPRESENTATIVE ROSE:

Q. Ms. Hamilton, thank you for your willingness to serve. I guess -- you said you went to Winthrop? Did you attend Winthrop?

A. I did, yes.

Q. What years did you attend Winthrop?

A. I graduated in '92 and '95. Undergraduate '92 and '95.

Q. Okay, thank you. You know what? That's all I need. I don't have any more questions.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Senator Johnson.

MS. HAMILTON - EXAMINATION BY SENATOR JOHNSON:

Q. Thank you, Ms. Hamilton. Are you related to Joel Hamilton?

A. I have to talk to Joel. I don't -- not that I know of, but I want to find out.

Q. You're not --

A. Not close.

Q. You're not related by marriage or anything that you are aware of?

A. No, if it is, it's distant. Yes, sir.

Q. Okay, and for those of you who aren't -- Joel Hamilton is the current chair of the Winthrop Board. You said that you don't -- and I understand why you said that you don't believe Winthrop has any weaknesses.

But I am curious. Winthrop was a teacher school for years and years, and has a very low male alumni base. Do you agree with that?

A. That is true.

Q. And because it was a teacher school, it has had difficulty raising money for any type of endowment or just for the university in general over the past, oh, say, 50 years.

A. Very true.

Q. My district is up in Fort Mill. So I'm not in the Rock Hill area. But when I go to Rock Hill and I see it, a lot of the dorms, especially on Cherry Road, are not in the best of shape at this point. And we see some of that. As a Board member, what plans do you see going forward to kind of revitalizing some of that and also increasing the academic choices for students to try to increase the overall enrollment at the university?

A. On the dorms along Cherry Road, a couple of those, Richardson and Wofford, have been torn down. They were dilapidated. And Lee Wicker, you can see there, too, and they've recently redone the roof on there and have done some work. They've got a plan in place, my understanding is, to put some more housing where those two buildings were torn down. Some student housing. I think the first phase is like 400 students, and the

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second phase is another 400. My understanding is they're pods. So that is what they're looking at as far as the building. I know also our current provost, van Delden, he's been, I think, a really good hire from President Serna. And we have added in our School of Business a real interesting program where students are going to be actually able to graduate with a degree in business and also a pilot's license. And there's a good demand there for that with the airport in Charlotte. So we're following demand. And I know we're working at, from what I understand, talking to the provost, that that is the first step. They're going to add some other airline pilot, like a management program for an airport management to that degree. And that's the kind of things that I know about at this time.

Q. Thank you.

MR. CHAIRMAN: That it? I entertain a motion and a second for approval.

REPRESENTATIVE MCGINNIS: Motion.

REPRESENTATIVE ROSE: Second.

MR. CHAIRMAN: All those in favor, raise your right hand.

(All hands are raised.)

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay. Thank you, ma'am, my mother, and my daughter went to Winthrop. Excellent school.

MS. HAMILTON: Well thank you, and thank you all for your service.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you. Okay.

OFF THE RECORD

MR. CHAIRMAN: All right we're back live. We're now at the At-Large seat 10 for Winthrop. There are two candidates. The first one is Jean Haubert. Is that correct? Jean Haubert of Fort Mill. Come on up.

JEAN HAUBERT:

MS. HAUBERT: Hey, sorry about that. The monitors in there are frozen.

MS. WEBB: We're frozen, too.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Sorry about that.

MS. HAUBERT: No, it's okay.

MR. CHAIRMAN: All right, if you'd just raise your right hand and I'll swear you in. Swear to tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, so help you God?

MS. HAUBERT: I do.

MR. CHAIRMAN: If you'll just name your, you know, your name for the record and tell us why you want to serve on the Winthrop Board.

MS. HAUBERT: Yeah, thank you. So, my name is Jean Haubert. I go by Jeannie. I am running for the Winthrop at-large seat 10. I want to be on the Winthrop Board because I worked at Winthrop for nearly 20 years, and it still holds a really special place in my heart, and I continue

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to kind of look for ways that I can serve that institution. I'm really very proud of the education that students receive at Winthrop. I feel like I have a deep familiarity with this institution, and it builds a lot of skills that will be useful in guiding it over the next couple of years. And so, just to tell you a little bit about who I am, I started in Winthrop in 2006. I was hired as an instructor, ascended through the ranks, became eventually a full professor, served as department chair for about seven years. As department chair, some of my accomplishments were to increase our freshman to sophomore retention rates within the department, to decrease departmental spending, so I became known as having a good reputation for lean budgeting. I created some career-focused course work that became a model for other departments. I expanded internships and community service learning courses within our department, and increased alumni giving, creating new scholarships for students. We also had, amongst the departments in the college, some of the best on-time graduation rates due to flexible scheduling. So those are some of the things that I accomplished while at Winthrop that I'm really proud of. In 2022, I left to advance my career working as a research director for a national association of about 10,000 members, an all-profit scholarly association. So I stayed kind of education-adjacent, even though working outside of the academy. And now I am executive director of an education research nonprofit. So when I left Winthrop, they threw me a big party, which was really nice. And one of the things that one of my colleagues said to me really stood out, which was, well, now that you've given up your position, you do have to leave the building, but you don't have to leave the people. And so I haven't left the people. Those students still have my heart. And I think that as a trustee member, I can ensure kind of the long-term value of their degree. And that's important to me.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay. Macey.

MS. HAUBERT - EXAMINATION BY MS. WEBB:

Q. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. And Ms. Haubert, can you please state your current address?

A. Sure. I'm at 1060 Kings Bottom Drive, Fort Mill, South Carolina, 29715.

Q. Thank you. And is this the address that you pay

Q. Thank you. And are you aware that you cannot contact any member of the General Assembly and formally ask for a vote commitment or pledge until 48 hours after the Commission's report has been released?

A. I'm aware.

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Q. Thank you. And have you currently asked any third parties to contact members of the General Assembly on your behalf, or are you aware of anyone attempting to intervene in this process on your behalf?

A. I have not.

Q. And are you aware that you have an ongoing obligation and duty to report to the Commission any changes that might occur that would affect your application and overall eligibility for serving on a college Board?

A. Yes.

Q. Thank you, Ms. Haubert. And, Mr. Chairman, I have no further questions.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Questions? Senator Bennett. the last decade?

A. Yeah, no, I'm -- that's a great question. And so, the tuition piece of that is about \$14,000 right now. So, that's according to their latest numbers on their website. I have a high school senior right now, so we're paying very close attention to total cost of attendance as well. I went to Furman University, and when I attended there, it was \$25,000 a year. And now it is \$82,000 a year. So, this is an issue across higher education. Right, it is not a Winthrop specific issue. And as a faculty member, I had folks ask me all the time, what are you all doing over at Winthrop? You got lobsters on every table? What's happening? Honestly, it's quite the opposite. I think that we started tightening belts at Winthrop in 2008, from what I remember. I mean, I came in in 2006. In 2008, we started tightening belts and never loosened those belts. It's only gotten tighter. So, I think that what is happening is a kind of rising cost across the board, keeping up with other schools. If you look at Winthrop's total cost of tuition, that total attendance number, it's consistent with the cost of attendance at other state institutions as well. But it's just kind of a rising cost of business, I think.

Q. There seems to have been a, for lack of a better term, a kind of a revolving door in leadership at Winthrop over the past 10, 12 years. Do you think that is stabilized now? Do you think Winthrop, from a leadership standpoint, is in a good place? Sort of good place?

A. I'm glad you asked. I've been asking that question, too. I've been watching that for a long time and talking to a lot of faculty, a lot of alumni. From what I understand, faculty and staff are quite pleased with the new leadership and do feel like it's stabilized quite a bit. That was a concern for me, has been a concern for me in the past, and it has been -- it does seem to be improving.

Q. Are you familiar with Winthrop's graduation rate, six-year graduation rate, four-year graduation rate?

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A. That's a good question. I don't know it off the top of my head, do you have it in front of you?

Q. I do. Do you think it's good or bad?

A. I think it's good. Am I wrong? I would love to know. I could tell you, you know, where we were for my department, but I'm going to guess it's in the 70s.

Q. According to these figures, which are the most recent numbers that we have from CHE, Winthrop's four-year graduation rate is 56%.

A. Okay.

Q. And their six-year graduation rate is only 45%.

A. And that's not good, that's not good.

Q. What do you attribute that? I mean, how do we - 10-

A. Ours in my department, we're 86%.

Q. What was your department?

A. Sociology, anthropology, and criminology, 86%. I would love to see the entire institution a lot closer to that number.

Q. You've been inside the walls. You've been outside the walls. What do you think it takes to improve these graduation rates?

A. So --

Q. If yours was in the 80s.

A. Yeah. I think -- I mean, for us, I would say what was really helpful in on-time graduation was really flexible scheduling and course scaffolding. Right, so that when we were looking through what courses are required before you can take other courses, eliminating a lot of those barriers, is it really necessary that they took in this particular order, or is it necessary that they have these three prerequisites before taking another course? To the extent that you can minimize some of that bureaucratic red tape and just make it easier for students to take courses when it comes up.

Q. I'm ready for course A. Course A now isn't being offered until next fall, so therefore I can't take the other.

A. Right. And I have to take three other ones before I can get to that course. If you can eliminate a lot of those barriers, that creates a lot of flexible scheduling for students, and they can progress a lot faster. The other thing, particularly for post-traditional students, having a blend of offerings in terms of night courses or some hybrid offerings, a couple of online courses, or at least rotating offerings, to create a lot more flexibility for students who work.

Q. Is that what you mean in your personal data questionnaire where you say that the university has -- this might not be exactly your words, but

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university has shifted to an innovative mode to keep enrollment up? Is that what you're referring to?

A. Well, they are -- no, not necessarily. I do think that we did a decent job at Winthrop of doing that, and adding in some remote courses, some hybrid courses, to flex a little more. I was thinking more programmatically, that they're really working to innovate with some of the FinTech degrees, the aviation degree, there's a degree in AI, right now. Gaming degree, right. So really trying to identify what the gaps are and what the workforce needs, and put out some programs that are not - - that are unique within South Carolina, that are not duplicating other programs.

Q. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

MS. HAUBERT - EXAMINATION BY SENATOR JOHNSON:

Q. Thank you, Chairman. Really, very quickly. Ms. Haubert, thank you for coming today.

A. Sure.

Q. Your comments struck a nerve with me, because I can remember trying to push my children out of college in four years, and which passed and failed in that order on that. But what I while back. And Winthrop was on our schedule. They would come play at the University of South Carolina, and the one thing about Winthrop was that they had a very good tennis team. And I played number one singles at South Carolina, and I played a guy that was from Brazil who was an excellent tennis player, all conference at Winthrop, and we would have a battle. And so we got to know each other, and knowing that I was now serving the legislature, Winthrop in 2020 got rid of their tennis program, which was arguably the most prestigious program in terms of conference championships, all these different things. The tennis players contacted me. And so one of the things that I was kind of appalled by was that because they had recruited a lot of players from Brazil and England, there was a lot of individuals that were wanting to speak at the Board meetings, and there's articles about what transpired, but there was a guy that was a very decorated student athlete on the tennis team. He's from England, and this is an example. He wanted to call in or be virtual for the hearing, and at that time, the Board actually declined him the ability to call in or be present when he's in England. And other members, they would go into executive session, no one would know what was transpiring about the program. And so it evolved from, I understand there has to be difficult financial decisions that are made, but the way that these student athletes who love Winthrop, love this program, were treated was quite honestly appalling. And I understand that there's been turnover and things of that

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nature, but these student athletes were also in the process of raising money privately to try to do different things to save the program, and were just basically shut down. And so I share that to say we want good people to run and serve, and I hope that if you are successful, that you don't let a process like that take place if somebody's an international student and wants to log on for a meeting or we want to be as open and transparent as possible. And selfishly, I do hope that at some point, Winthrop can bring back their very decorated tennis programs, and not at a club level, but a varsity level.

A. I remember when that happened, and I also was appalled, A, at the cuts, the cut of that team, and B, at the lack of transparency on the Board. With not allowing people to speak. There was also, around that same time, a lot of people given inequitable time for speaking to the Board, and so all of those things need correcting.

Q. Well, that's the answer that I wanted to hear, and so, thank you, and I appreciate you running.

A. Absolutely

MR. CHAIRMAN: Any other questions? All right, and Entertain a motion for a favorable report. I need a --

REPRESENTATIVE MCGINNIS: Motion.

REPRESENTATIVE ROSE: Second.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you. All those in favor, please signify by raising your right hand.

(All hands are raised.)

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay, opposed? Thank you, ma'am.

MS. HAUBERT: Thank you, sir. Appreciate your time.

MR. CHAIRMAN: And the last Winthrop candidate is Timothy O'Riley of Rock Hill. If you'd come up, please, sir. If you'd just raise your right hand, let me swear you in. Promise to tell the truth, the whole truth, nothing but the truth, so help you God. TIMOTHY O'RILEY:

MR. O'RILEY: I do.

MR. CHAIRMAN: If you would just give us your name and tell us a little bit about why you'd like to serve on the Winthrop Board.

MR. O'RILEY: Yes, sir. Distinguished Board, thank you for having me. My name is Timothy O'Riley, but I go by Tim. That's fine. The reason I would like to throw my hat into the ring, so to speak, is just out of community pride. I have been a resident of Rock Hill for 10 years, over a decade, been in the Carolinas for 12 or 13 years. This is the longest place I have lived since I was a child. When I heard about this opportunity while I was out and about in my community and involved, I thought about what it took to add value to the Board and to be part of

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that team. I was already familiar with the Winthrop campus. I've been immersed in it, as you can see in my questions. I've done a lot of activities there. I've been involved. Winthrop has great community involvement. They care about the community. They care about Rock Hill. And when I stopped and looked at my own background, my educational background, my professional background, what I bring with my master's in business administration with a focus in strategic management and how I've been able to apply that to my career professionally in different sectors and different industries, my educational history as far as the college experience, being a resident assistant and things like that, being a student legal services assistant, being involved even in undergraduate admissions, the process of being a tour guide and things like that. I thought about that, and in my history of community involvement, I realized I had something to offer. And I felt a responsibility to come forward and say, hey, I can help with this. Winthrop is doing a good job of addressing what these needs are. And you can go back 10 years as far as what they've done to try to improve things, and I think it's a great time because the current president is an alumni, so you know he cares and you know he's on top of things. And his Elevate program started a year ago. It's a good time to come in. So it's not like I need to bring in all these suggestions and say you need to do this, you need to do that. What I am bringing is my unique background. Obviously, I don't have a history inside the university going back 20 years, but that could be an advantage if I'm someone with just a fresh, unbiased perspective, bringing in emotional intelligence, coming in with that consultant approach that I've done, being a strategic partnership partner and saying, okay, how about this? We have this need here. How's that? I'm happy to elaborate more on those questions. I can tell you that when I look at the strengths and weaknesses, I think a lot of it just basically comes down to that financial income diversity piece. I think it's great that we're having partnerships with Schwab. How about Alpine Financial up the road, one after the Commission's report has been released?

A. I'm aware.

Q. And have you currently asked any third parties to contact members of the General Assembly on your behalf, or are you aware of anyone attempting to intervene in this process on your behalf?

A. I have not.

Q. And are you aware that you have an ongoing obligation and duty to report to the Commission any changes that might occur that would affect your application and overall eligibility for serving on a college Board?

A. I do.

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Q. Thank you, Mr. O'Riley. And, Mr. Chairman, I have no further questions.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Questions? No questions? All right.

REPRESENTATIVE ROSE: I move to approve.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you. Second?

REPRESENTATIVE MCGINNIS: Second.

MR. CHAIRMAN: All those in favor, raise your right hand.

(All hands are raised.)

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you. Thank you, sir, for your willingness to serve.

MR. O'RILEY: Thank you for your time.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Time to turn to page 3, or 2 or whatever. I'll tell you what, I appreciate you senators a lot more now. Couple of these long days you spend. All right. Wil Lou Gray. As soon as we get those in, we'll adjourn. Okay. Welcome, sir. I assume you're Dan Austin Dobson.

WIL LOU GRAY OPPORTUNITY SCHOOL:

DAN AUSTIN DOBSON:

MR. DOBSON: I am Dan Austin Dobson.

MR. CHAIRMAN: And you're the incumbent, and you're from Myrtle Beach.

MR. DOBSON: Yes, sir. Originally from Spartanburg County. Grew up in Spartanburg County many years ago.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay. That's great. If you would just tell us a little bit why you want to continue to serve on - - oh, yeah. You swear to tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth to help you God?

MR. DOBSON: I do.

MR. CHAIRMAN: It's been a long day.

MR. DOBSON: I understand that.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you for your service. All of you, and your patience. It's been a long day, I know. Make a brief statement on why you want to serve on the Wil Lou Gray. Please.

MR. DOBSON: Okay. Do you need anything about my

MR. DOBSON: All right. Thank you, gentlemen.

MR. CHAIRMAN: The last person up is Jackie Chitty Drake from Gaffney. Come on up. You're the last one today.

JACKIE CHITTY DRAKE:

MS. DRAKE: I'm it. Thank you.

MR. CHAIRMAN: If you would just -- yeah, I remembered? Raise your hand. Do you swear to tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, so help you God?

MS. DRAKE: Yes.

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MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you. If you'll just, for the record, state your name again and why you want to serve on the Wil Lou Gray Board.

MS. DRAKE: I'm Jackie Drake. I am a retiree from Cherokee County School District. I retired as the system information management database coordinator for the entire district. After retiring, I still am working with kids at our church. I work with them at the Sunday school level. Also, we provide at our church as well, where we bring in Miracle Hill, the people that are there that are sheltered, and we provide a meal for them. And we do ministry work there as well in helping them, any educational needs that they may -- that we can help them with. So that's a little bit about me. I have three grandchildren, 11, 10, and one. And I would like to have the opportunity to serve at Wil behalf, or are you aware of anyone attempting to intervene in this process on your behalf?

A. No.

Q. And are you aware that you have an ongoing obligation and duty to report to the Commission any changes that might occur that would affect your application and overall eligibility for serving on the Wil Lou Gray Board?

A. Yes.

Q. Thank you. Ms. Drake, I have no further questions, and Mr. Chairman, I have no further questions at this time.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Any questions? Seeing none, is there a motion?

REPRESENTATIVE McGINNIS: Motion.

MR. CHAIRMAN: And a second?

REPRESENTATIVE ROSE: Second.

MR. CHAIRMAN: All those in favor signify by raising your right hand. Okay. Thank you so much.

MS. DRAKE: Thank you.

MR. CHAIRMAN: And I might say, Wil Lou Gray does an outstanding job.

MS. DRAKE: I'm looking forward to it.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you so much.

MS. DRAKE: Thank you.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Do you senators have any idea what time you will be adjourned? It's not a week away, is it? Probably every three or four in the afternoon. Yeah, we'll be done by 5 p.m. We've got you all for your service and your time. Thank you.

MR. CHAIRMAN: We're meeting on Thursday. Is there a motion to adjourn?

SENATOR BENNETT: Motion.

REPRESENTATIVE ROSE: Second.

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MR. CHAIRMAN: We are adjourned.

(There being nothing further, the proceeding concluded at 7:08 p.m.)

**COLLEGE AND UNIVERSITY TRUSTEE
SCREENING COMMISSION**

SCREENINGS HEARINGS

TRANSCRIPT OF PUBLIC HEARINGS

Date: MARCH 5, 2026
Time: 12:45 p.m.
Location: Blatt Building
1101 Pendleton Street
Columbia, South Carolina 29201

Committee Members Present:

Representative William R. Whitmire, Chairman
Senator Sean M. Bennett, Vice-chairman
Senator A. Shane Massey
Senator Tameika Issac Devine
Senator Michael Johnson
Representative Seth Rose
Representative Timothy A. "Tim" McGinnis

Also Present:

Macey Webb, Staff Counsel
Ellie Carrigan, Research Analyst

MR. CHAIRMAN: All right, tell them come on in. All right, we'll have to read some stuff here first. All right, make a motion to call to order the public hearing for trustee screening. Do I have a second on that?

REPRESENTATIVE MCGINNIS: Second.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you. All right, all those in favor signify by saying aye.

(Ayes are heard.)

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you. All right, I'm going to have to read the same thing. Oh, yeah. I hate to ask this, but would one of you senators like to pray? I didn't think so. I guess it's me again. All right, thank you. Thank you, Senator Massey.

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SENATOR MASSEY: Sure. Let's pray. Heavenly Father, we thank you for this opportunity. Lord, we thank you for the weather and the opportunity that we have to serve South Carolina. We ask that you be with us during this meeting. Lord, bless this meeting and help us to ask the right decisions, ask the right questions, and make the right decisions, Lord, as we screen these candidates. In the precious name of Jesus, I pray. Amen.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you, Senator. Okay, I'll go ahead and read the explanation of today's meeting. Today we will resume and finish our trustee screening for this round of candidates. After completing today's screening, we at the same point in the near future will publish our report in the House and Senate journals along with the transcript from today's screening and Monday's screening.

A joint assembly of the House and Senate will eventually be set by concurrent resolution setting an election date and time. The election date may be sooner than two weeks after the Screening Commission has issued its final report of candidates. No candidate for a seat on the Board of any institution or any other person may seek, directly or indirectly, the pledge of a member of the General Assembly's vote or directly or indirectly contact a member of the General Assembly regarding screening for the seat until the qualifications of all candidates for the office have been determined by the Commission, and the Commission has formally released its report as to the qualifications of all candidates. Today we will be screening seats on the Citadel Board, Lander University Board, South Carolina State University Board, and University of South Carolina Board. The purpose of the screenings today is to give each candidate the opportunity to explain to us why they want to be on the board of trustees for a university and give commission members the opportunity to ask these candidates any questions that they might have. Ultimately, at the end of each candidate's testifying, we as a commission will vote on whether to find the individual candidate qualified and nominated and send them to the floor for the Joint Assembly. Today's screening is being broadcast live and recorded. You can find today's screening on the State House website. In addition, we have a court reporter here who will be transcribing everything we get on the record today. I want to take a moment to remind all current candidates and any future candidates that it is the job of the Screening Commission to consider all the qualifications of the candidates that appear before us and make nominations to the General Assembly. Therefore, we conduct thorough investigation of all candidates that appear before us. During our investigation, we look at the many factors that are laid out in statute. We

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look at the candidate's knowledge of the institution, their ethical fitness, their professional and academic ability, their character, reputation, physical health, mental stability, experience, and demonstrated support of and involvement with the institution which they have applied. In addition, we must determine the residency of each candidate to the seat to which they are applying. When determining residency, we look at various factors such as the address on your driver's license, the location of your voter registration, and for candidates who own their home, your residency determined by the location of where you paid your 4% tax assessment during the year you applied. The 4% property tax assessment must be paid at this location for the term of office. It has come to my attention that there has been some confusion around the above requirements and therefore I wanted to ensure everyone could hear the same message today. We take your residency requirements very seriously as a Screening Commission. With that in mind, I want to remind you all and any future candidates that might be listening that you as a candidate have an ongoing obligation and duty to notify the Screening Commission where any change might occur that would affect your application and overall eligibility for serving on a board. Please contact our staff immediately if there are any substantial and significant changes that occur during your application period, screening period, or period serving as a trustee on a college board. It is paramount that you understand that as a candidate, and even as a sitting board member, you have an ongoing obligation and duty to report to the commission any and all changes that would affect your overall eligibility to serve in the seat to which you have applied. I will now ask that we go into executive session to start this screening day. There are a few orders of business that we need to address and have the opportunity to hear from our chief counsel. I need that. Does someone make a motion to go?

SENATOR BENNETT: Motion.

REPRESENTATIVE MCGINNIS: Second.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you, sir. There's a second. All those in favor say aye. We are now in executive session.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

SENATOR MASSEY: I move that we come out of executive session.

SENATOR BENNETT: Second.

MR. CHAIRMAN: All in favor signify by saying aye.

(Ayes are heard.)

MR. CHAIRMAN: We are back in regular session. As soon as he gets ready, we'll start. If you'd come on in, please.

THE CITADEL:

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KENNETH SCOTT BLAND:

MR. BLAND: Okay.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Just stand right there. And let me swear you in. You'll raise your right hand. Swear to tell the truth, the whole truth, but nothing but the truth, so help you God.

MR. BLAND: I do.

MR. CHAIRMAN: If you will state your full name for the record, and then why you're interested in serving on the Board, please.

MR. BLAND: Sure. My name is Kenneth Scott Bland. I actually go by Scott. I'm here today running for the at-large trustee position for The Citadel. I'm a 1991 graduate of The Citadel and also a 2001 graduate of the MBA program at The Citadel's College of Graduate and Professional Studies. As a note, I have an identical twin brother, Jeff Bland, who also attended The Citadel and graduated in '91. He's a U.S. Marine. He served at Desert Storm. We both have sons that currently attend The Citadel. My son's a senior. His son is a junior. And then we have a younger brother who attended Furman. However, his son also attended The Citadel and graduated in 2025. And I say this to bring to your attention the fact that the Blands are committed to The Citadel. We've been passionate about The Citadel for a long time. I think the core values of The Citadel since 1842 have been honor, duty, respect. Those things have been instilled in what I have done and led me on the pathway that I'm fixed upon. I think I may be doing a little more intro here at the beginning than I was supposed to, but I'll go ahead and finish and state it by saying that my past history as an enlisted soldier, as a commissioned officer, as a business leader. I got these foundational core values from The Citadel. It's made me successful, and I think I bring some of these core values to The Citadel Trustee Board of Visitors position to offer them guidance in the things that I've learned and hopefully preserve them in the future. Not just as a college that has an ROTC program, but as the senior military college that they are recognized as the premier institution in America. So on that, I'll close and answer any questions you guys may have.

MR. BLAND - EXAMINATION BY MS. WEBB:

Q. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. And Mr. Bland, can you please state your current address?

A. 120 Rustic Manor Court, Lexington, South Carolina 1029072.

Q. Thank you. And is this the address that you pay your 4% property tax?

A. Yes.

Q. And do you currently serve on any local or state board, commission, committee, or elected office?

A. I do not.

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Q. Thank you. And do you understand the obligations and responsibilities of serving on a public institution's board of trustees?

A. I do.

Q. And are you aware that you cannot contact any member of the General Assembly and formally ask for a vote commitment or pledge until 48 hours after the Commission's report has been released?

A. I'm aware.

Q. And have you currently asked any third parties to contact members of the General Assembly on your behalf, or are you aware of anyone attempting to intervene in this process on your behalf?

A. I'm not.

Q. And are you aware that you have an ongoing obligation and duty to report to the Commission any changes that might occur that would affect your application and overall eligibility for serving on a college Board?

A. Yes.

Q. Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Bland. Mr. Chairman, I have no further questions.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Does any member of the Commission have questions for Mr. Bland? Yes, ma'am. Senator Devine.

MR. BLAND - EXAMINATION BY SENATOR DEVINE:

Q. Thank you, Mr. Bland, for offering yourself to service, and thank you so much to you and your family for your service to our country. Just a little bit, I'm looking at your questionnaire. One of the questions you talked about, The Citadel does not need to attract more students, and that they currently have a 98 percent acceptance rate. Can you tell us a little bit about, I guess, the criteria, and as a board member, what are some of your suggestions regarding admissions at The Citadel?

A. I mean, I can just give it from personal experience. Again, this is a long time ago, but I recall many of my friends -- I went to Irmo high school, not everybody got accepted. But it's pretty easy right now. I have a kid around, my kids make fun of me on the Google machine. You can just look it up. I mean, the acceptance rate is upwards of 98 percent at The Citadel. To me, that seems somewhat shocking that an institution such as The Citadel that is very selective, not only in physical fitness, academics, all these things, would have a 100% acceptance rate. And so for me, that's a little bit concerning. I'd love to better understand the facts, as a board member, as to why we've come to that. I think, not to over-answer this question, most of you are probably aware, The Citadel freshman year has a higher attrition rate than most colleges. But even at 10 plus percent, it seems -- it doesn't really jive, and I'll go back to my business background with the supply and demand economic curves of if

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you have a 100 percent acceptance rate, are you getting the best quality students and are you producing the best quality?

Q. Do you have any reason to believe that the graduates right now that are coming out are not quality, or are you just thinking that it needs to be a little bit more selective?

A. No, again, just logic. I don't have any reason factually to believe that. I would like, as I've said, to contribute long-term to preserving the fact that I know -- you know, there are other colleges you can choose to go to in South Carolina or other states that are extremely good academic colleges, but it's a different type of person that chooses to go to The Citadel and persevere with that challenging environment. And I want to make sure that's maintained because I think that does back to the supply and demand. The demand for The Citadel is because -- I know when I was growing up, and still the case, if you have a Citadel degree, you are given pretty much leeway that you're disciplined, you have honor and integrity, you're going to work hard. Is it always the case? Of course it's not. There are exceptions to every rule, but I want to maintain that. And I think in maintaining that high demand, we'll be able to choose people that can perform the best and preserve The Citadel product. Maybe that's the best answer.

Q. My last question for you, what is your opinion regarding in-state versus out-of-state and the mix of the student body at The Citadel?

A. I think my opinion on that would be we've always had a diverse in and out-of-state class at The Citadel. Many of my classmates -- I can think of three off the top of my head that I talk to every day. One's from Connecticut, one's from Pennsylvania. The current Commandant was from Boston. So, I know him and I know him very well. So I'm all for out-of-state. I think, dependent upon why, I think it is critical. Is it a finance thing? Because clearly out-of-state tuition is more money, I'm not saying that's the case. But I would like to preserve The Citadel as South Carolina's military college. As I said before, one of the premier senior military colleges in America. There are only six of those, by the way, and we proudly are one of those. That tradition I'd love to be upheld, and for South Carolinians to be able to participate in that.

Q. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. No further questions.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Any other questions? Senator Massey.

MR. BLAND - EXAMINATION BY SENATOR MASSEY:

Q. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Bland, welcome.

A. Yes, sir.

Q. Do you know what the current breakdown is in student body population from resident and non-resident at The Citadel?

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A. You know I don't, off the top of my head. I'd be scared to guess at it. So no, I don't.

Q. Okay. I noted in some of your responses that you identified state tuition at \$28,000 for residents and \$53,000 for non-residents. You determined that to be reasonable based on the economy and compared to other institutions. Do you know what the total cost of attendance is at The Citadel for an in-state student?

A. It goes down significantly after the first year. In fact, roughly \$8,000 because you have to buy the uniforms and everything. So, I mean, if you do the math on that, you know, \$100,000. When I looked up other state public institutions, we were a little bit higher. I think what I saw was around \$1,000 to \$1,500 higher. I don't know if that's because of uniforms. I'd love for our tuition to be lower, but at the same time, I think there are other things that go into The Citadel that maybe aren't in a traditional public institution that cause a higher price.

Q. Well, it is more expensive than the other public institutions, and I think we would all recognize that there's probably a reason that The Citadel costs a little bit more than what some of our other schools cost. It's my opinion that when the total cost of attendance at any university gets up into the 30s or approaching 40, it becomes a real cost inhibitor for most South Carolinians. And so I would encourage you, that if you're successful in this appointment, that that be something that you look at and that you focus on that and that we consider as opposed to not only how much money is necessary for students, but also what are we spending. And are we spending more than we need to spend, which is going to then drive up that cost of attendance.

A. And to comment, Senator Massey, on that -- as I said, I have two brothers. My younger brother went to Furman. I think we all know how much Furman costs. My twin brother and I were at The Citadel at the same time. My dad was a sales guy, and the only way we could have attended is because of the vast scholarships that were available at The Citadel. And we both enlisted in the military to pay for that. Now, I'm not saying that's for everybody.

Q. It didn't cost in the mid-30s when you were there.

A. No, I mean, relatively speaking, it was nine. I mean, I don't know in 1989, relatively speaking, what that is. Again, I'm not trying to debate what you're saying. I think the cost should come down. I think fiscally we need to look at that. I think, again, with my background, my opinion is that I can add to that governance. I don't -- I'm not sure that -- I don't know for a fact, so who am I to judge? I'm not able to look at the inner

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workings of The Citadel on this side of it, but I would like to take a look at that.

Q. All right. In the responses that you provided in your written information, you disclosed being a defendant in two lawsuits?

A. Yes.

Q. I would like to ask you some questions about that. Are you comfortable doing that in open session, or would you prefer to do that in

A. No, I'm comfortable in open.

Q. All right. Are there two lawsuits? That's all I've seen. Is that right? Two lawsuits where you were a defendant?

A. No, one I was a --

Q. The one you were a plaintiff.

A. One I was a plaintiff, and one I was a defendant. Now, ironically, they were in a similar business situation, but go ahead.

Q. All right. The summary that I read was that there was a default on a promissory note. Is that right?

A. It was.

Q. Was the allegation that the other person defaulted on the promissory note?

A. Yes.

Q. Okay. The second suit that I see was that there was a lien filed against you. Is that right?

A. It was.

Q. Can you tell me about that?

A. Yeah, it was -- we had owned a building. We had a manufacturing facility. And we had contracted with this particular person to consult us on that. The -- in our opinion, he filed a frivolous lawsuit, so we defended it. We went to court. We settled it. It's over.

Q. Outside of lawsuits, have you had any other defaults on financial obligations or liens instituted against you?

A. None. I'm happy to say I actually have the perfect credit score because I just had that looked at. So I'm trying to teach my kids that. That's really important down the road.

Q. Very good. Thank you very much.

A. Sure.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you, Senator. Any other questions? All right, I'll entertain a motion and a second for a favorable report.

REPRESENTATIVE ROSE: So moved.

REPRESENTATIVE MCGINNIS: Second.

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MR. CHAIRMAN: All right, all those in favor, please signify by raising your right hand.

(All hands are raised.)

MR. CHAIRMAN: Got it. Any opposed? Thank you. Well, Mr. Bland, thank you for your willingness to serve on the Senate Board, and particularly thank you for your military service for our country.

MR. BLAND: Thank you. Thanks for having me back.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Good luck, sir. Up next, we have Lander University. I'm glad to see my former House colleague that we served together for many years sitting back there. So up first is Thomas Balek of Union for the 3rd Congressional District seat 5, or is that seat 3? Is that 5? If you would just give us your name and the reason you'd like to serve on the Lander Board.

LANDER UNIVERSITY:

THOMAS BALEK:

MR. BALEK: Yes, sir. My name is Thomas Balek. Please call me Tom. And I'm from the 5th Congressional District. And the reason that I have applied for the position at Lander is I have a lifetime commitment to public service. I'm retired now. I have the time and the ability and the interest to take on a position like this. I have a deep background in financial and operational corporate executive management. So I understand the numbers, and that's of interest to me. I also have a background in education as a former instructor and coach and continue to be involved with education as a mentor for a group of junior high boys. I also continue to do coaching. And I think I'm an excellent fit for the position at Lander. I'm very interested in it.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Macey.

MR. BALEK - EXAMINATION BY MS. WEBB:

Q. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Balek, can you please state your current address?

A. Yes, 897 Mt. Tabor Church Road, Union, South Carolina.

Q. Thank you. And is this the address where you pay your 4%?

A. Yes.

Q. Thank you. And is this address within the Congressional District to which you have applied?

A. Yes.

Q. Thank you. And do you currently serve on any local or state board, commission, committee, or elected office?

A. I do. I'm on the Union County Planning Commission.

Q. Okay. So there is some AG precedent, as I have shared with you, that that is a dual office holding conflict. If we do have a dual office holding

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conflict, according to prior AG opinion, if you are selected to the institution's board of trustees to which you have applied, you, at the time of being officially elected to the Board, will no longer be eligible to serve in your initial position with the other entity. Based on prior Attorney General opinions, the public office you currently hold will be vacated upon you being elected to the new public office. Do you understand that?

A. Yes.

Q. Thank you. And do you understand the obligations and responsibilities of serving on a public institution's Board of trustees?

A. Yes.

Q. And are you aware that you cannot contact any member of the General Assembly and formally ask for a vote commitment or pledge until 48 hours after the Commission's report has been released?

A. Yes.

Q. And have you currently asked any third parties to contact members of the General Assembly on your behalf, or are you aware of anyone attempting to intervene in this process on your behalf?

A. No.

Q. And are you aware that you have an ongoing obligation and duty to report to the commission any changes that might occur that would affect your application and overall eligibility for serving on a college Board?

A. No.

Q. Well, are you aware?

A. Did I understand that correctly? Please repeat the question.

Q. Yes. Are you aware that you have an ongoing obligation and duty to report to the commission any changes that might affect your eligibility for serving on a college Board?

A. Yes.

Q. Thank you. Mr. Chairman, I have no further questions.

MR. CHAIRMAN: All right. Any commission questions? Senator Massey.

MR. BALEK - EXAMINATION BY SENATOR MASSEY:

Q. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Balek, thank you for being here. I noticed in the information you provided that you've lived at your current address for four years.

A. Yes.

Q. Is that right? How long have you lived in South Carolina?

A. About 12 years.

Q. The information that I have indicates that you believe that Lander should attract more students. Can you give me your thoughts on that?

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A. I believe my observation was that Lander has quite a history of enrollment growth, and I don't see any reason why that would not continue. My visits there with students and with faculty impressed me very much, and I expect nothing but continued success for Lander.

Q. Do you know what the total student enrollment is at Lander right now?

A. Yeah, I think it's about 4,000.

Q. Okay. I noted that when you submitted the written information that you weren't aware of what the tuition was at Lander. Have you been able to look at that?

A. It's about 11,000. And they've maintained that tuition level for, I believe, 11 years in a row.

Q. I think Lander is one of the lowest cost attendances in the state. How many times have you been to the campus?

A. Two.

Q. You said you met with students and faculty while you were there?

A. I met with students and faculty, yes.

Q. Tell me about those meetings.

A. I went to the Student Union building and met with a couple of groups of students there and asked them questions about their pros and cons of going to school at Lander. I heard nothing but great things.

Q. How did those meetings come about? Did you walk in and start talking to people?

A. Yes.

Q. How about faculty? Have you had conversations with them?

A. I did have conversations with one faculty, a department head, as it was.

Q. How did that meeting come about?

A. Very enlightening. I learned an awful lot about the institution. And again, it was very favorable to Lander. There are some issues from the faculty, nothing really earth-shaking. As any large organization, there's always room to evaluate opportunities, change directions in some ways. That's in order there.

Q. Why Lander?

A. Why Lander? I was encouraged by my congressman, Ralph Norman, to fill an empty position at Lander. The trusteeship has been vacant for some time. But in addition to that, it's my commitment to public service, and specifically education, that interests me.

Q. Sure, I understand. It just seemed to me that Lander was an odd choice for someone who had not been there.

A. And it seems odd to me, too, but I'm more enthused about it by the day.

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Q. Okay. All right, thank you.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Anyone else? All right, entertain a motion and a second for a favorable report.

REPRESENTATIVE McGINNIS: Motion.

REPRESENTATIVE ROSE: Second.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you. All those in favor, please signify by raising your right hand.

(All hands are raised, except Senator Massey and Senator Bennet, who abstained from voting.)

MR. CHAIRMAN: Anyone against? Thank you, sir, thank you for your willingness to serve. Up next, we have Christopher Sean Foxworth of Inman. Just come up here and raise your right hand, please, sir, and I'll swear you in. Do you swear to tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, so help you God?

CHRISTOPHER SHAWN FOXWORTH:

MR. FOXWORTH: I do.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you. Just tell us your name for the record and why you want to serve on the Lander Board.

MR. FOXWORTH: My name is Christopher Sean Foxworth. I go by Sean. I want to serve in this position because I'm passionate about Lander. I'm a graduate of Lander, 1997. My experience there and time there really molded me into who I am today, and it really set me up to have a great career. And I've had a really great life since graduating from Lander. So I'm very thankful for that time, and I want to serve my university. My wife is also a graduate of Lander. I met her there. We married soon after graduating, and we also have a daughter who is a graduate of Lander, and I'm very proud of that, and I want to continue that tradition. I want my grandchildren and my great-grandchildren to graduate from Lander. So Lander is very personal to me. I've also spent a lot of time since graduating going back to campus. I've been involved in many different ways. I've given back to the university the best I can, whether through donations or just through time. I've served on the alumni Board, and I've also served -- currently serve on the Lander Foundation Board. So I've really been involved, and this opportunity to me is serving at a new level because I can help continue what's going on at Lander for a long period of time. I really am impressed by Dr. Constantino, the president there, and his energy and his vision for the school. I'm very impressed by the faculty and staff, and I want to support them.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Macey.

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MR. FOXWORTH: Let me say one other thing, please. One of the things I think I bring to the table that's a little different from the current trustees is my manufacturing background. I've spent time since graduating

Q. Is it strong?

A. Yes.

Q. You said that Lander has experienced significant growth over the past.

A. Absolutely.

Q. How long has that growth been occurring?

A. I feel like over the last 10 or 11 years, it's grown 72 percent.

Q. Is that on campus? Is it remote? Is it --

A. I don't know the exact breakdown. I do know that there are opportunities to improve, parking at Lander, for example. Which tells me -- which is a sign that on campus it's growing as well. But I don't know the exact breakdown.

Q. The candidate before you indicated that it was about 4,000 students. Does that sound right to you?

A. 4,600. 4,600.

Q. 4,600. How do you feel -- are you aware of Lander's position and embracement on remote or online course work as opposed to in-person course work? I mean, are there more programs that are offered online than there are, or maybe not more, but is that part of the growth?

A. I'm not sure what the breakdown is. I do know they offer online options.

Q. What's your feeling on online options?

A. Personally, I'm a face-to-face person throughout my career. I've more preferred face-to-face over remote work and that type of thing, so I think it's the same for students. However, I think it's a good option to have because not every student has the opportunity to go live on a college campus.

Q. Sure. It's good to hear that Lander is growing like that. I'll be honest with you, I was not aware of that growth trajectory. Do you know how many public colleges and universities operate within the state of South Carolina?

A. I do not.

Q. Would it surprise you if I said it was over 32?

A. I don't think it would surprise me to know.

Q. You know, when we talk about educating our kids here, what do you believe? Do you believe that there is a higher concentration of in-state or out-of-state students at Lander?

A. There's definitely a higher concentration of in-state, mostly in-state.

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Q. Do you know if that growth rate has been mostly in-state or has there been an influx of out-of-state?

A. I don't know.

Q. That's all I have.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you, Senator. I think over the years we've realized that Lander does have one of the largest number of in-state students among all our colleges.

MR. FOXWORTH: The statistic that I love is 82% of the Lander graduates stay in South Carolina, work in South Carolina, pay taxes in South Carolina.

MR. CHAIRMAN: I wish we had the rest of the schools doing the same, so thank you on that. Anyone else have a quick -- Senator Devine.

MR. FOXWORTH - EXAMINATION BY SENATOR DEVINE:

Q. Thank you, Mr. Chair. Thank you so much for applying. Just a couple questions, and you mentioned about the parking spaces, but in your questionnaire you talked about additional buildings and dorms are areas where the school can improve. Tell us what you mean by that and what are some of your ideas.

A. Well, that there are not enough beds at Lander, and I know that from personal experience because my daughter was there from 2020 to 2023. And Lander's done a great job with incoming freshmen in providing them a really good place to stay. They've got two newer dorms that really supports that group very well. But as the students become upperclassmen, there's not as many options, unfortunately. And I think the challenge is Lander does not have a lot of room. It's landlocked. So we're going to have to get creative with how we add dorms and add beds, but it can be done.

Q. And then you mentioned your activities with the alumni, you and your wife. Tell us, do you know currently what's the percentage of alumni giving at Lander, and is there opportunities for growth there?

A. I don't know the percentage exactly, but I know it's a large topic of conversation within the alumni group as well as the foundation Board. But there's a lot of energy behind it, and we just had Giving Day a few weeks ago, and Lander set a new record on Giving Day. So it's starting to turn in the right direction. So I don't know the exact percentage, but at the same time, there's a lot of really good energy and strategy behind improving that.

Q. Do you know of the current Board, are the Board members more alumni of Lander, or is there?

A. From what I can tell, it's a mix. I don't think it's majority alumni of Lander by any means.

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Q. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, no further questions.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you, Senator. Any others? Let's entertain a motion and a second for a favorable report.

REPRESENTATIVE ROSE: Motion.

REPRESENTATIVE MCGINNIS: Second.

MR. CHAIRMAN: All those in favor, please signify by raising your right hand.

(All hands are raised.)

MR. CHAIRMAN: Any against? Mr. Foxworth, thank you so much.

MR. FOXWORTH: Thank you.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Now we will turn to the At-Large Seat 15. This is Kathy R. Taylor from Union. She's the incumbent and the governor appointee. If you just raise your right hand, repeat after me, you swear to tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, so help you God.

KATHY R. TAYLOR:

MS. TAYLOR: I do.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Just, for the record, state your name and why you want to serve on the Lander Board.

MS. TAYLOR: Thank you. My name is Kathy Taylor, and I am a resident of Union County. I was not born in South Carolina, but we relocated here when I was three, and so I'm a proud product of Union County Schools. In '91, I graduated and had the opportunity to be the first in my family to attend a four-year university, and that was Lander University. In '95, I graduated with an elementary education degree. From there, I returned back home and became an employee with Union County Schools, and I'm proud to say I'm completing my 31st year with Union County Schools. During that time, I've been teacher, administrator in all aspects from elementary, middle, and high school. And I attribute that strong path that I had from my opportunity at Lander. I feel like my professional journey has given me a good knowledge base for K-12 education. and I feel like that would bring a thoughtful, well-rounded perspective to the Lander Board. Currently, for the past almost 11 years, I've been principal at Jonesville Elementary Middle School, where we serve students in 4K through 8th grade. As stated already, Lander, by others, Lander holds a special place in my heart. I remember it being a university where the importance for building relationships, feeling supported and safe. I feel like it's a mission that I have gathered since I've been back. I've only been at two Board meetings, so I'm a very fresh incumbent. But I do feel like my K-12 experience will bring to the board a perspective and understanding in what students need and the supports they need to be successful at the higher education level.

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MR. CHAIRMAN: Macey.

MS. TAYLOR - EXAMINATION BY MS. WEBB:

Q. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. And Ms. Taylor, can you please state your current address?

A. 229 Christopher Lane Union, South Carolina.

Q. Thank you. And is this the address where you pay your 4% property tax?

A. It is.

Q. And do you currently serve on any local or state board, commission, committee, or elected office other than the Lander Board?

A. I do not.

Q. Thank you. And do you understand the obligations and responsibilities of serving on a public institution's Board of trustees?

A. I do.

Q. And are you aware that you cannot contact any member of the General Assembly and formally ask for a vote commitment or pledge until 48 hours after the Commission's report has been released?

A. I am.

Q. And have you currently asked any third parties to contact members of the General Assembly on your behalf, or are you aware of anyone attempting to intervene in this process on your behalf?

A. No, I am not.

Q. And are you aware that you have an ongoing obligation and duty to report to the Commission any changes that might occur that would affect your application and overall eligibility for serving on a college Board?

A. I do.

Q. Thank you, Ms. Taylor. And, Mr. Chairman, I have no further questions.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Commission, questions? Senator Massey.

MS. TAYLOR - EXAMINATION BY SENATOR MASSEY:

Q. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Ms. Taylor, thanks for being here. You indicated in your written responses, and this, I think, is consistent with what we just heard from Mr. Foxworth, that since 2015, that Lander has grown by nearly 72 percent. Does that sound right?

A. It does.

Q. And you indicated, and I think he did too, that that makes it the fastest-growing state university. Is that right?

A. Yes.

Q. Do you know, I mean, what was -- I understand that the student count is around 4,600. Does that sound right to you? Which means that it's grown by probably about 2,000 students in the

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A. Close there.

Q. Is there a target number that the university is going after? A total number? A total number -- where does the university want to go, with students?

A. Well, according to Dr. Constantino, 5,000 is the immediate goal.

Q. All right. And as a current Board member, do you support that?

A. I do.

Q. Does the university have the residential space for a student enrollment of that territory?

A. I believe so.

Q. Do you know what the university could accommodate right now with its current capital?

A. I do not.

Q. Its current infrastructure, how many students could it support now? Does the university have more land that's available?

A. Potentially.

Q. Okay. And there's been a lot of construction that's gone on across the street in the last 10, 12 years. And I don't know how much land that the university has on that side of the road. Do you know, is there more land available that's just not been developed yet? Are you aware of that?

A. Potentially, I think.

Q. Okay.

A. I'm not sure.

Q. I mean, the primary campus sits right in the middle of a residential area, right?

A. Right, right.

Q. And so I know there's been the growth, and I know there have been some new buildings that have been built on that campus. But from my observations, I mean, the most significant growth has been on the other side of the road. Is that right? Do you agree with that?

A. I do. I do feel like there's beginning stages of plans for that.

Q. Okay. Have there been any conversations about where, I mean, you said you've attended two meetings so far?

A. Yes.

Q. All right. During those two meetings, or even in private conversations that you've had with university leadership or other Board members, have there been any conversations about what's the strategic plan about where do we want to go with total student enrollment? Have you heard any conversations along those lines?

A. Again, I think the immediate goal is 5,000.

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Q. But beyond the next academic year, you've not been part of any conversations on that?

A. Not yet.

Q. Okay. Do you know -- do you know what Lander's graduation rate is for four or six years?

A. Currently, around 51%.

Q. Do you -- is that acceptable?

A. No. Obviously, we'd like to see that higher. I believe it's more like 65 when you look at Lander and some other institutions, a combination. But obviously, we'd already like to have --

Q. Which other institutions would we combine with?

A. Just like if they did part-time at Lander and then left and went to another institution, just graduation rate of those students.

Q. Okay.

A. I do know that that's a focus coming up is the whole recruit, retain, and graduate. So graduation is a focus of the Board.

Q. Yeah, I would hope that the Board would continue working on that.

A. Absolutely.

Q. I think a graduation rate in around 50% is below what we need it to be. Even though Lander is probably the most cost-effective for students at a very good rate, and I appreciate the fact that Lander held tuition flat even before the legislature started imposing conditions, and I think that's commendable. I've been impressed with the president and his work over there. I got one other question for you, and that is you are on the Board by virtue of an interim appointment from the Governor. Is that right?

A. Yes.

Q. Tell me how that came about. Did you solicit an appointment, or did they come to you?

A. I had kind of crossed paths with Adam Taylor, and we've been having conversations about the Board and potentially maybe down the road becoming a part of that. And when it came open, we did have a conversation about the open, the vacancy.

Q. Do you know how long that position was vacant before you received the interim appointment?

A. I am not exactly sure. I don't feel like it was long, but I could be mistaken.

Q. Were there any conversations that you had with the Governor's office about whether to receive an that go on in those Board meetings?

A. Yes, I feel like there are.

Q. The latter? The latter?

A. Yes.

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Q. Thank you.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Any other questions? Motion and a second for a favorable report.

REPRESENTATIVE ROSE: Motion.

REPRESENTATIVE MCGINNIS: Second.

MR. CHAIRMAN: All those in favor, please raise your right hand. Okay. Any opposed? Thank you, Ms. Taylor, and thank you for your service as an educator. All right, that finishes up Lander. So now we will go to South Carolina State University. And we have three candidates for the At-Large Seat 12, and the first is Donald Beatty of Spartanburg. Welcome, Judge.

SOUTH CAROLINA STATE UNIVERSITY:

DONALD BEATTY: CHIEF JUSTICE BEATTY: Thank you for having me. I was down in the hall that I thought I'd be gotten to last here.

MR. CHAIRMAN: No, sir, you're first. CHIEF JUSTICE BEATTY: Well, let me say good afternoon to each of you and thank you for taking the opportunity to give me an opportunity.

MR. CHAIRMAN: All right, if you would, let me swear again. CHIEF JUSTICE BEATTY: Yes, sir.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Swear to tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, so help you God? CHIEF JUSTICE BEATTY: I do. Thank you very much. Get an opportunity to ask me all the questions.

MR. CHAIRMAN: You're in trouble. I'm sorry. Yeah, if you would, just for the record, state your name and the reason you're running for the SC State Board. CHIEF JUSTICE BEATTY: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. My name is Donald W. Beatty. I reside at 733 Glen Ridge Road in Spartanburg County. I pay taxes at that location at 4%. And the reason that I'm running for SC State Board is, quite frankly, it's a long -- I won't say a long story, but it's an important story to me. My roots run deep at SC State. I, as well as three of my siblings, are graduates of that institution. I have 15 other family members who are graduates of that institution. I've spent probably more time on that institution campus than most folk over the years. When time came for me to apply to a university, after graduating from high school, I only applied to one, SC State. And there was a reason for that. I have a deep and passionate love for that institution. And I have to give it credit for making me, excuse me, the person that I am today. I want to lend whatever talents that I might have for the future and continued growth of that institution. During the time that I attended SC State, it was in this heyday. Wonderful institution, well regarded nationwide. Things kind of changed over the years. But I am happy to say, at this point in time, we're on the upswing. And I want to

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be a part of that continued growth, a part of that continued progress of that institution. And I want to lend whatever talents that I have to that institution. I notice our Board, at this point in time, does not have a lawyer on Board. Although the institution has a lawyer, I am, quite frankly, of the opinion that it needs a lawyer in the Board. The institution now has, over the years, been engaged in quite a bit of litigation that was completely avoidable, in my opinion. And without a lawyer on that Board, giving it some instructions, some opinions, if you will, that might be beneficial in some of the decisions that the Board has made. Thank you, sir.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Macey.

CHIEF JUSTICE BEATTY - EXAMINATION BY MS. WEBB:

Q. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. And thank you, Chief Justice Beatty. And can you please state your current address for the record?

A. 733 Glen Ridge Road, Spartanburg.

Q. Thank you. And is this the address where you pay your 4% property tax?

A. It is.

Q. And do you currently serve on any local or state board, commission, committee, or elected office?

A. No, I do not.

Q. And do you understand the obligations and responsibilities of serving on a public institution's board of trustees?

A. I do. I've served on quite a few boards over the years, and I've not served on the board of trustees of any university or institution. But, yes, I understand what a board member's duties and responsibilities are.

Q. Thank you. And are you aware that you cannot contact any member of the General Assembly and formally ask for a vote commitment or pledge until 48 hours after the Commission's report has been released?

A. I do.

Q. And have you currently asked any third parties to contact members of the General Assembly on your behalf, or are you aware of anyone attempting to intervene in this process on your behalf?

A. I have not, and I am not aware of anyone who has done so. However, I have introduced myself to quite a few legislators that I don't know and those that I'm reacquainting myself with.

Q. Yes, sir. And please just note for the record that candidates are free to introduce themselves to members. It's specifically the vote commitment pledging provision.

A. Yes.

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Q. All right. And then are you aware that you have an ongoing obligation and duty to report to the Commission any changes that might occur that would affect your application and overall eligibility for serving on a college Board?

A. I do.

Q. Thank you, Mr. Beatty. Mr. Chairman, I have no further questions.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Commission questions? Senator Massey.

CHIEF JUSTICE BEATTY - EXAMINATION BY SENATOR MASSEY:

Q. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Chief Justice, good to see you.

A. Senator.

Q. Chief, are you aware -- and I know you're not on the Board now, but it's a good thing you're not up here or somebody would be going to jail.

A. Oh, it's not my fault.

Q. There would be some irony there if that were you. Are you familiar with the university's financial position today?

A. Totally no, quite frankly. Although I'm told and what I've read that it's in pretty good financial shape at this point in time. It's my understanding we got a clean audit, that last audit that was conducted on campus. As to the particulars of the financial situation of the institution, I am not aware of. And to be quite frank with you, from my discussion with some Board members, they are not aware of the financial status of the university either, if we're going to get into the financial.

Q. That concerns me. But I do think that it's, I think the university's financial position is much better than where it was, say, 10 years ago.

A. Without a doubt. Without a doubt.

Q. No question. I ask you that question because, not just because of the history there, but also because I noticed in the summary that we have of the written information that you provided, it indicates that you don't believe that the university needs to attract more students. Do you agree with that?

A. That's a good question, good point. I'd like to qualify that a little bit, if I might.

Q. Sure.

A. Tuition is the lifeblood of any institution. The more students you have, the more tuition you're going to collect. But it's my firm belief that an institution should not accept students that it's not prepared to provide for. We have a history at SC State of admitting students that we don't have dormitory rooms for, bed space for. We have a history of other things not being prepared for our students. And quite frankly, if you notice over the last three or four months, we've not had a secure campus. So I don't think

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we ought to bring additional students onto that campus until we can take care of the students that we do have.

Q. Do you know -- Chief, do you know what the student enrollment count is now?

A. It's about 3,000.

Q. Okay. That number, and I can't remember what it was 10 years ago, but the number had dropped pretty significantly at one point, hadn't it?

A. Oh, yeah. Almost 1,000 below that.

Q. Yeah. And I'm wondering what does the -- as you said, tuition is the lifeblood to some extent. So I'm curious as to what the number needs to be for the university to thrive. Because there is a minimum number, right, that you're going to have to have in order to operate. You can go too many, but there's a number that you need to have just in order to be able to make ends meet.

A. Yes, you do need a baseline, and to be quite frank with you, our sheer admitting more students that we could really provide for tells you right there that we've not been meeting that. And what that number is that it's going to take to manage an institution successfully, quite frankly, I don't think we've had the sufficient revenue to reach that guess yet.

Q. One of the other areas that I wanted to ask you about, and you brought this up, but if, I have a daughter who is a junior in high school. So we've been in the college looking business recently, and that's only going to intensify, I think. If I were a parent and SC State was one of my child's targets, I would be concerned about the safety of my child there based on -- and you mentioned this, but based on some of the things that have happened recently, do you have, other than that being a problem, do you have thoughts on that and how the Board should be involved in that issue?

A. The Board is required, in my opinion, to be involved in that issue. I mean, that's the Board's responsibility to oversee the management of the institution. So now, the Board is not getting to the minutiae of the actual day-to-day of running the institution, but issues like safety for students and the campus, that's a priority, in my opinion, of the Board. Now, do I have ideas about that? I'm not in the security business, but I'll tell you what, the first thing I would have done was consult a consultant that has that experience, that knowledge, and do something about it. Now, our current president, thankful for us, I think, has a military police background. Now, unfortunately, I don't think we've had the resources to provide for that institution and its safety. We've had safety issues at the institution for quite some time. But the good thing about it is that we

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have always had good students, good people there, and our troubles have generally come from outside.

Q. That's right.

A. Not inside the institution. But we should be in a position where we can provide for those who are there, hire sufficient and competent staff to provide security for the institution. We've not done that to this day.

Q. And that's a great point, Mr. Chief Justice. From my impression that the safety issues have not come from the student body itself, it's come from outside influences.

A. That is correct.

Q. Who then come onto the campus and cause problems for the students.

A. That is correct.

Q. I've not heard about any issues with the students causing problems, more than being the victims.

A. Yes, and again, I sent my daughter there who's graduated not long ago. And fortunately she's moved on and got a master's and a PhD, not from that institution, but outside in Boston, to be quite frank with you. But I thought well enough about the institution to send my daughter there, my youngest. It's a good institution, good people, good staffing, but we've never had sufficient resources to do what we need to do at that institution.

Q. Do you believe that is the legislature not funding appropriately?

A. Of course. And I mean there's no doubt about it, of course. But I must say the legislature is doing better now and I hope you continue.

Q. And part of that's got to be the university providing a space where parents are comfortable sending their children to, such that students will come and then provide the tuition, right? It's a combination, isn't it?

A. One feeds off the other.

Q. That's right. The other area I wanted to explore with you is are you familiar with State's graduation rates?

A. Yes, sir. Well, a four-year graduation rate is less than 15%, and that's unfortunate.

Q. Isn't it worse than unfortunate? I mean 15% is not acceptable.

A. And the Board has not put sufficient emphasis on that point.

Q. Is that something that the Board should do?

A. Of course. I mean that's what they're there for. Now as far as I understand, the institution has made strides recently in hiring someone in retention and, I think, student assistance, and hopefully we can do better with that. But we lose a lot of students because of financial reasons as well. So you just can't take that out of the picture and say, well, we're bringing in bad students who cannot make the grade. Quite a bit of it is financial. They can't afford to be there.

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Q. Sure. Well, and Chief, I know you've been -- you've made your point about the legislature needs to consider the funding situation there, and I think that's a fair point to make. You understand, don't you, that with a 15% graduation rate, that makes some of the legislature say, eh.

A. But you have to dig into those numbers. It's not -- like I said, it's not because you're admitting students who cannot make the grade.

Q. Well, for whatever reason it is, 15% completing - - I mean, obtaining a degree after four years, or maybe it's a little bit higher, 25% after six years. For whatever the reason is, the university's got to do better in that respect, doesn't it?

A. And it takes leadership to do that.

Q. It does.

A. And that's one of the -- I'll tell you to be quite frank with you, Senator, that's one of my pet peeves. Why is that situation the way it is? And I've looked into it. I've not gotten into it probably deep enough to understand the full panoply, if you will, of reasons why that exists. But it's a problem, and it is the Board's duty to do something about it.

Q. Well, yes, sir, and I appreciate your comments. I'll just say that I think if any university -- not just State, but any university, is bringing children in, young adults in, they're charging that kind of money for tuition, and we're graduating less than a quarter of the population in six years, I think it's almost criminal what we're doing to the kids.

A. Well, that's why when you asked me that initial question about not needing additional students, raising them, when I said I had to qualify, that is the reason. We need to be prepared to deal with the students that we bring into that campus and be prepared to graduate those students and do those kinds of things that it takes to get a kid from first year through the fourth.

Q. And frankly, if we're not prepared -- and I say we, because we're all in this part together. And I understand the Board has an important role there. But if we're not prepared to provide the course work and the opportunities to earn a degree --

A. Why are we there?

Q. Within four or six years, then we've got to be -- It's not fair to those kids, to do that to them.

A. Yeah.

Q. Mr. Chief Justice, thank you.

A. Thank you very much.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Senator Devine.

CHIEF JUSTICE BEATTY - EXAMINATION BY SENATOR DEVINE:

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Q. Thank you, Mr. Chair, and thank you, Mr. Chief Justice, for being here. I've known you for many, many years, and I've learned something reading this. I did not realize that you had a military background, so thank you for your service.

A. Thank you. SC State did that for me.

Q. A lot of my questions, I had actually written down the Senator from Edgefield addressed, but I want to dig deeper on a couple of things. It sounded like to me, and I don't want to put words in your mouth, so tell me if this is what you're saying, is that, of course, ideally, more students brings in more income, and you'd want that. However, before you're ready to do that, you need to deal with the challenges right now with the current student body and the current students that are coming in.

A. That is correct.

Q. If you, as a Board member, had three things that you believe the Board needs to be focusing on as far as to do that, what would those things be?

A. Student retention and preparation, number one. Of course, you've got to have a secure campus and an environment where students can learn. And you have to be engaging and accepting. Over the years, SC State has had an issue with misleadership, of not discussing issues, not being transparent about problems, not collaborating, if you will, with those that could assist with certain things, certain issues, and we need to get past that. But my number one, if I had to do anything -- if I had to choose two, campus security, so students, parents, folks in the public will feel comfortable coming to the institution. And two, I should say they're probably on the same plane, student preparation and retention.

Q. And then let me ask you this, I asked the Lander candidates, you are alumni, you talked about the strength of alumni. South Carolina State has huge, very rich alumni, passionate alumni here in the state of South Carolina. My predecessor, Senator John Scott, Congressman Clyburn, I mean, the list goes on and on, Chief Justice Finney, who now has his portrait at the law school, so it goes on and on. Where do you believe that state is, I know that the alumni is very passionate, showing up, but where is the state with alumni giving, and as a Board member, do you believe that the Board plays a role in encouraging the increase of alumni giving?

A. Of course. You know, most folks don't want to give unless they see you give it. You can't ask someone to give if you've not given yourself. And fortunately, I think we are fortunate in that our Board of Trustees now has what we call a middle society member or two on that Board of Trustees. And if I'm fortunate enough to succeed in this election, I'll be one of those as well.

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A middle society member is one who has given at least \$100,000 to the school over time. And this year, I believe we have inducted our largest class of those middle society members. I believe we might have added 20-some odd people this year. And so, yes, our giving has increased significantly over past years when we talk about alumni giving, and it's only going to do better. We have a situation now where alumni now have renewed interest in the institution. And they're showing that renewed interest in the institution by their giving. If you attend any of our functions now, sometimes in the past they've not been well attended, but you attend any of them now, and there's students everywhere. I should say students, but alumni everywhere. So, yes, ma'am, we're on a good trajectory right now, I think, and I think we should stay there, and if I can help the institution in continuing that upward trajectory, I want to do that. But yes, giving is a big deal, and we need it.

Q. My last question will be for you is, I think the conversation that you and the senator from Edgefield was very good. I think that that is part of what we need is to have open dialogue and understand needs, challenges, and where we can work together as partners. What is your view regarding the Board's participation in that on an ongoing basis, not just South Carolina State Day or when you're in front of budget?

A. Well, I think if you look out here today, I think you might see a couple of members of our Board here, a few of them here, maybe four. They're interested in the institution. They participate. And if there's anything that the institution is doing, I think you'll find a Board member or two there. Even at sporting events, you'll find them there. They support the institution. They believe in the institution, I think.

Q. Thank you. Mr. Chairman, no further questions.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you, Senator. Any other questions? Senator Massey. CHIEF JUSTICE BEATTY - RE-EXAMINATION BY SENATOR MASSEY:

Q. Just one other point, Mr. Chief Justice. I appreciate your willingness to engage in the dialogue.

A. Oh, without -- any time. Not only here, but ---

Q. You've always been open and willing to talk, and I appreciate that about whatever issue. I appreciate that. I would just -- you know, it's -- you surprised me a little while ago when you reported that in some conversations with other Board members, and we don't need to name anybody, that you're not sure how much the other Board members are familiar with the financial position of the university.

A. And I'll stick to that, firmly.

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Q. And I would hope that -- well, I suspect there are probably some Board members, whether they're here or not, or watching, or they may be listening. I would hope that when those Board members come back for a re-screening, or when you come back, if you're successful here, that if a commission member asks about the financial institution of the university, that a Board member is able to talk about that. It would be disappointing for people who have served on the Board not to be able to have a conversation -- at least high level, a conversation about the financial condition of the university. So I just want to make the statement, I appreciate your interest in that, and I would hope that when other Board members come before us. It's understandable, I think, for someone who's not served on the Board to not be familiar. But if we get people who come up and they're seeking reappointment, and they're unable to have a real conversation about, and not just for this university, but for any, if they can't have a real conversation about the financial condition of the university, I would think that would affect their qualifications to continue to serve. So, Mr. Chief Justice, thank you for your interest.

A. Thank you.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Any other questions? I have a motion and a second for a favorable report.

SENATOR DEVINE: I make a motion.

SENATOR MASSEY: Second.

MR. CHAIRMAN: All those in favor, please signify by raising your right hand.

(All hands are raised.)

MR. CHAIRMAN: You got them all. I'm sure there are no negatives. Chief Justice, thank you for your willingness to serve, and good luck to you, sir. CHIEF JUSTICE BEATTY: Thank you very much. Good afternoon.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Court reporter, do you need a break? COURT REPORTER: I'm good right this second, but if you all want to.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Well, I'm getting ready to say adios. COURT REPORTER: Okay.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Let's take a break so we can do that now.

OFF THE RECORD

(Senator Bennett assumes Chair at 2:35 p.m.)

MR. CHAIRMAN: All right, we are back in session. We will continue on with South Carolina State Board of Trustees election. Our next candidate is Johnny Sellers. Oh, there you are. Mr. Sellers, good afternoon. If you would please allow me to swear you in, if you'll raise

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your right hand and repeat after me. Say your name. Do you swear to tell the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth to help you God?

JOHNNY MYRON SELLERS:

MR. SELLERS: I do.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Great, thank you sir. If you'll please for the for the boards -- or for the Commission rather state your name, position you're running for, and if you have a brief opening statement we'd be glad to hear that.

MR. SELLERS: Great, my name is Reverend Johnny Sellers and I'm running for the Board of Trustees Seat At Large 12 for South Carolina State University. I'm running for this Board seat because I am a proud graduate, 2000 graduate, of South Carolina State University as well as my beautiful wife is sitting in the audience, a proud graduate, so we have a long history also at South Carolina State University, whether it's our cousins, our family

Q. And are you aware that you cannot contact any member of the General Assembly and formally ask for a vote commitment or pledge until 48 hours after the Commission's report has been released?

A. I do.

Q. And have you currently asked any third parties to contact members of the General Assembly on your behalf or are you aware of anyone attempting to intervene in this process on your behalf?

A. I do not.

Q. And are you aware that you have an ongoing obligation and duty to report to the Commission any changes that might occur that would affect your application and overall eligibility for serving on a college Board?

A. I do.

Q. Thank you, Mr. Sellers. And Mr. Chairman, I have no further questions.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you, Macey. Before we get started, let me just say thank you for your service the United States military and it's very nice, I might add, that the last two folks not only had military service but were United States Army. Hooah.

MR. SELLERS: Hooah.

MR. CHAIRMAN: All right, are there any questions? Senator.

MR. SELLERS - EXAMINATION BY SENATOR MASSEY:

Q. Mr. Chairman, Reverend Sellers, thanks for being here.

A. Thank you, Senator.

Q. One of the questions that Ms. Webb just asked you was if you're familiar with the duties and obligations of a person who serves on a board, and you answered yes. What does that mean to you?

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A. What it means is that a board provides governance whether it's for this year, whether it's putting a strategy in place, a strategic plan in place for a president and CEO to follow and that we are active participants in policymaking for an organization.

Q. What does that mean to be an active participant in policymaking?

A. That you have to be present. You have to have an understanding of what's happening throughout the organization itself.

Q. Okay, are you -- and I realize you're not an incumbent, you're seeking the position that's vacant. Are you familiar with the university's financial position?

A. I think the university personally is in a good financial position because Moody says, one of the highest ratings. Moody says that we're in a good financial position right now.

Q. Okay, you know what the cash flow is?

A. I think if I'm gonna try to answer this, I'm not particularly sure, but if it was 200 and something unrestricted funds.

Q. Okay. And look, I'm not expecting you to be familiar with all the details because you're not there.

A. Right.

Q. But I do think that's an important part of the, as a board member, being somewhat familiar with those numbers and asking questions about those things. The Chief Justice and I just had a conversation about graduation rates. Are you familiar with the graduation rates at the university?

A. Somewhat I am.

Q. I think the Chief indicated a four-year graduation rate of around 15 percent. I think the six-year graduation rates tell you about 10 percentage points higher than that. Does that sound about accurate to you?

A. It sounds about accurate. You know, from my understanding, I think a six-year rate is about 29 percent. Four-year rate ranges from, I think, 16 to 20 percent.

Q. Okay. Is that adequate?

A. Is that adequate? I personally feel that we can do better. I personally feel we should do better. As a graduate of South Carolina State, we want our kids, a good graduation rate and high graduation rate is attractive to people coming to our universities, good quality students coming to our university. And I think when we show that we have a great graduation rate, right, it shows that what we say in our values for South Carolina State University, if you look at our strategic plan, it says that we value accountability and we want to show accountability.

Q. You think that's happening now at the university?

A. I do think that's happening in our university. I do think --

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Q. You think 15 percent to 30 percent graduation rate suggests accountability?

A. When I think it's happening. I think it's moving towards that that we're trying to do better. And I think we can do better. But we can't -- we can do better with everybody playing their part. Of course, the university, of course, our president, of course, our Board of Trustees, and of course, you all the legislators, right?

Q. No question there's a role here. Absolutely. What do you think the Board's role is -- as a board member, what would be your role in trying to improve graduation rates?

A. You know, retention is important to me. You know retention is important to me, right. I have a thing that says retention before expansion sometimes, right? We continue to work on our expansion, we continue to work on our infrastructure, especially housing. Housing plays a big deal in kids coming to your university. When you see all housing, our laboratories, the things that other universities 18may have that's attractive to those -- to those young people when they come to visit our university and our families. Like, hey, you got great dorms, you got a great basketball, football stadium. That's attractive to people that want to come and stay.

Q. Yeah. Well, from my perspective, I hope if you're successful in your pursuit of this position. My hope is that you will focus on that as a Board member, on ensuring that the young men and women who come to that university and expend a significant amount of money in order to pursue an education there, that they do have the experience that you had, and that they are -- that they do have the opportunities to pursue the course work for the majors that are meaningful. And that they can do it in a reasonable amount of time. Otherwise, I think we're doing a real disservice to those young men and women if we're only graduating 25%, 30% in a period of six years. So I would hope that if you're successful in this effort, that you will think about that as a board member and try to pursue policies that will help improve that, because it's going to help the children, young men and women.

A. Right.

Q. The last question I wanted to ask you about is safety. What do you think the Board's role is in ensuring that the young men and women who come there are safe, that the campus is safe from outside events that have impacted the university's campus?

A. Well, safety is important. If you lived in Orangeburg for a long time, I was a student there at South Carolina State. I came there a lot. And you know, some of that was happening way back then, right. But we've been

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able to maintain that over the years. A little bit more now that's happening across South Carolina State. Again, you heard earlier that it's not us, you know. It's not South Carolina State University students, it's from outside.

Q. Parents aren't going to want to send their kids there if you have people getting shot.

A. Right. What's important is that we make sure that we answer the call to what's happening. Without a shadow of a doubt that we have to probably put that as some of our top priorities - - our top priority to when people come in and security-wise. I'm not a security person, to say the least, right? But however, I do understand when I come through that gate, and when we come through the gate, we want to ensure that when the proper checks are happening, all at the same time, still believing that we still are an open public institution.

Q. Thank you, sir.

A. You're welcome.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Senator.

MR. SELLERS - EXAMINATION BY SENATOR DEVINE:

Q. Thank you, Mr. Chair. And thank you, Pastor Sellers, for being here and offering yourself. Just, I'm not going to reiterate, I think the Senator from Edgefield covered a lot of what I wanted to talk about. But let me ask you, South Carolina State has a great president and first lady. I'm very impressed, and of course, they're both State grads as well, so I think that goes to the strength of the alumni coming in and really trying to make sure that the school addresses the concerns and move forward. Tell me about, I guess, your alumni participation and the thoughts of having the alumni maybe being able to be a part of the addressing the needs of the university and moving forward.

A. Yes, so I'm a life member of Alumni Association. I'm a member of the Greenville chapter, as well as my wife, a member of the Charlotte chapter. We've always participated ever since we graduated from college. I think it's highly important because a lot of our alumni have the talents and the skills, right, to give back to our university, help our university become even better than what it is now. And we have to think that we are ambassadors. Each one of us who graduated from South Carolina State University, we are the first ambassadors of our university, of who we are.

Q. So as a board member, do you believe that it would be, if you were successful, is that part of the role of the Board to try and increase that alumni giving, alumni support?

A. Yes, yes, wholeheartedly. You know, I just turned 50, right. And you know, younger alumni - - I probably align more with more young alumni across generations because I can look and hang out with 65-year-old

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givers, but then we need those 24, 25, 23, 30-year-old givers too. Where we can be able to have those conversations and align ourselves generationally with each other. So I think it's important that the Board have folks who, generationally, that can talk to other alumni to be able to support.

Q. And although I think Dr. Conyers is doing an amazing job as a board member, how do you see your role in interacting with the president? Is it there to challenge him? How would you address situations where you might not, you might have a different perspective than the president?

A. Right, because I've served on other Boards, you know, I see myself as a compass and a clarity and direction. So you provide the plan to the president and he drives the plan and put it in, implements it in place. And we like it, we're advisors, right. Because if something goes wrong, we can't say and -- you know, honestly pat him on the back and we have to address it straight up. I deal with conflict resolution. I like to think I'm good at it because I pastor the church, right? And so I don't hesitate to address conflict.

Q. Thank you so much.

A. You're welcome.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Sorry about that. Is there a motion for a favorable report?

SENATOR DEVINE: Motion.

SENATOR MASSEY: Second.

MR. CHAIRMAN: There's a motion and a second. All those in favor, raise your right hand.

(All hands are raised.)

MR. CHAIRMAN: Anyone opposed? Thank you, sir. Mr. SELLERS: Thank you very much.

MR. CHAIRMAN: All right, next up we have Douglas Twitty. Make the acknowledgment here, another army man. Lead the way. Good afternoon, sir.

DOUGLAS M. TWITTY:

MR. TWITTY: Good afternoon.

MR. CHAIRMAN: If you please raise your right hand and let us swear you in, please. Do you swear to tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, so help you God?

MR. TWITTY: I do.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you, sir. Mr. Twitty, we're going to hand that over. If you'd like to make a brief opening statement and then we'll hand it over to Ms. Webb for a few opening questions as well.

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MR. TWITTY: Yes, sir. My name is Douglas Twitty. I'm running for South Carolina State At-Large Seat 12. And first of all, I'll just give you a little bit of background about myself. I am a 1995 graduate from South Carolina State. I'm also a 2006 MBA graduate from Webster University. I'm a retired lieutenant colonel. I have been deployed multiple times to Iraq and Afghanistan, where I was awarded the Bronze Star. I was selected by the army to participate in training with industry program, where I worked with Coca-Cola for a year, where I took their best business practice and brought it back to the military. I'm currently a business owner. I have multiple businesses. I have a home health care agency, where I have over 20 employees. I also have a general construction company, where I have up-fitted over 500 apartment units within the last six years. I'm married with three kids. My wife, she's been working with CVS for over 30 years. She's a pharmacist supervisor. My kids, my two oldest kids, they are students at the University of South Carolina. And my youngest daughter, she graduated this year, and she will be a student at University of South Carolina in June. And all three of my kids are followed in my wife's footsteps. She is an alumni of USC. So saying that out loud, you probably know who runs my household. But the reason that I want to be on the board for South Carolina State is because all my accomplishments are owed to South Carolina State. I was raised by a single mom, first generation to ever go to college, and I had no aspiration to go to college. But my ROTC instructor, my freshman, my senior year, asked me a question that no one ever asked me in my life. Doug, what are you going to do with your life? And at that time, I didn't know. I was good with just being a manager and working in Lancaster. But at that day, he called South Carolina State because he was alumni, and he saw something in me that I didn't see in myself. The -- I took the SAT the last day it was given, and I got accepted to South Carolina State. And when I got to South Carolina State, I had to take all remedial classes because I didn't prepare myself when I was in high school. And so South Carolina State invested the time and resources in me. And now that I'm retired and I have successful business, now I want to give back my time and resources to South Carolina State and invest in the students the way South Carolina State invested in me.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you, sir. Ms. Webb.

MR. TWITTY - EXAMINATION BY MS. WEBB:

Q. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. And Mr. Twitty, can you please state your current address?

A. Yeah, 3011 Dream Catcher Circle, Fort Mill, South Carolina 29715.

Q. Thank you. And is this where you pay your 4% property tax?

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A. I do not pay four percent. I'm exempt.

Q. This would be your primary residence, that address that you just stated on the record, you would be able to show proof of -- if the Commission were to ask for a water bill or voter registration, that would show that that would be your primary residence?

A. That's correct.

Q. Okay, thank you. And do you currently serve on any local or state board, commission, committee or elected office?

A. No.

Q. And do you understand the obligations and responsibilities of serving on a public institution's board of trustees?

A. Yes.

Q. And are you aware that you cannot contact any member of the General Assembly and formally ask for a vote commitment or pledge until 48 hours after the Commission's report has been released?

A. Yes.

Q. And have you currently asked any third parties to contact members of the General Assembly on your behalf or are you aware of anyone attempting to intervene in this process on your behalf?

A. No, no.

Q. And are you aware that you have an ongoing obligation and duty to report to the Commission any changes that might occur that would affect your application and overall eligibility for serving on a college Board?

A. Yes.

Q. Thank you, Mr. Twitty. And Mr. Chairman. I have no further questions.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Any questions for Mr. Twitty?

SENATOR MASSEY: Mr. Chairman.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Senator Massey.

MR. TWITTY - EXAMINATION BY SENATOR MASSEY:

Q. Mr. Twitty, thanks for being here. Similar to questions I've asked the candidates who preceded you, what are your thoughts on the Board's role in trying to improve graduation rates for the students?

A. So I think it's actually a double-edged sword because South Carolina State's strength is first-generation students, but first-generation students that stays in South Carolina tends to live in rural areas, which is very, very poor. And then those are the same individuals that are not prepared for college. So those are the individuals that we're focusing on. And those are the reason that our graduation rate and retention is somewhat pretty low.

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Q. Well, if that's the case, if those are the people that the university is trying to attract, and I think that's noble. If that's the target audience, shouldn't the university be making even more of an effort to ensure that those people are graduates so then they could break the cycle?

A. Yes, sir.

Q. We can't just bring those kids into the university, take thousands of dollars from them, and then have them not get a degree, right?

A. Well, I think the intent is to graduate these students.

Q. I understand the intent, but the results are 15%, 25%. How can the Board help to improve that?

A. Well, the -- and I know it's been mentioned several times. There's things that we've got to get in place, the infrastructure. Because if we're not going to target those students, we got to target the A and B students. And that's kind of hard for South Carolina State because the -- where's South Carolina State at? It's in Orangeburg, South Carolina. The biggest thing going on is South Carolina State. And so you don't have too much to attract the A and B students, except for if you got the -- if the institution, the university, going to be the sole source of attracting those A and B students. So housing, definitely, adequate housing, making sure that you have the resources on campus that are going to attract different types of students. And just -- and then you got to make sure you got the faculty to support that.

Q. Well, I -- Harry Truman once said that the C students run the world. And I would hope that the university would not just assume that just because you come in with a C average that you're going to be a failure in life. And then I would hope that we would put the -- put whatever resources we need into ensuring that those children are getting the college education to help them. You indicated that when you came in, you needed some remedial course work. I hope that's still available to children if they -- and I keep saying children, and I recognize these are probably -- that's probably not an appropriate term. We're probably talking about young men and women at this point. But I would hope that there would be those same types of opportunities available to the young men and women who come to state, regardless of what their class rank was or whatever. If they're eligible to be admitted, if they are admitted, I would hope that the university provides them with the opportunities to be successful there. And I would hope that they keep that as a focus. Can you give me your thoughts on what can be done to help make the campus a more secure environment for the students?

A. Yes, sir. And the incident that happened about two, three weeks ago, the university took action. They put some security perimeter in place, but

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those are operational. It needs to be a kind of a deep dive into actually root cause. And I think the policy and procedures need to be looked at within the security department. Because over time, you know, like any organization, if you run an organization and year to year, you do the same things and you don't go back and refine your policy and procedures. They get outdated. And so I think that the Board or a third party needs to come and look at policy and procedures and hold the leadership accountable.

Q. That's fair. And you know, the incident that happened just a few weeks ago was not isolated. There was an incident last year, I believe.

A. Yes, sir.

Q. Where there was some fatalities on the campus from a shooting. And I think it was an athletic event.

A. It was homecoming.

Q. But there have been other incidents as well. And I think we have an obligation, especially to the students, but to anyone who comes onto the campus to make sure that they are arriving at a safe environment. And I would hope that the Board of Trustees would take that seriously as well and ensure some accountability with there so that parents feel comfortable sending their children there. And that other members of South Carolina, or the alumni base, feel comfortable coming back to the football game, that they're going to be safe. Thank you, sir.

MR. TWITTY - EXAMINATION BY SENATOR DEVINE:

Q. Hey, Mr. Twitty, good to see you. Just same as I have the other two candidates. As far as alumni, just can you just tell us your perspective on the alumni's role, not just as an ambassador of the organization, but to really be part of a partner with the school on success?

A. Yeah, I'm also a lifetime alumni member as well. And I think that the alumni need to be more engaged with donation. And I know that some alumni chapters, they are putting together a plan to donate towards scholarships. But I think with any alumni, it needs to be some type of incentive program for the alumni to give back. If I'm just giving back and there's no recognition, I'm going to stop donating. Because I want to feel appreciated that if I'm giving \$5, \$20, whatever the amount is, I want to feel appreciated that my contribution means something. So one initiative could be that you set up something like a subscription program, just like a gym membership, where alumni pays \$100 a month. And based off that \$100 a month, there's an incentive where the alumni may get free parking, or free game pass, or season pass, or whatever it may be based off the amount of the donation. So I think there can be a lot from the university that we can do to kind of edge that on. But we just got to make it happen. Because we have over 30,000 alumni. And I really believe that

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we can get at least 10,000 alumni to donate at a minimum of 50 to \$100 a month.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Mr. Twitty, let me just say a couple of things here. And I'm not sure that there's a question that's going to arise here, but there may. But I do want to take the opportunity. Your story is a fantastic one about how you got to South Carolina State, what you found yourself ill-prepared for, the assistance that you received there, the education that you got, and the life that you built afterwards. I think the concern that we have, and that we want to continue to express -- and I also think it's wonderful that other members of your Board are here also to hear this, and not just the folks that are being screened to join the Board. I think the concern is to put it differently, when you were at South Carolina State, my guess is, at the end of your tenure there, you didn't look around and see where 8 out of every 10 of your fellow students around you weren't graduating with you. And that's what's happening right now at South Carolina State. And I understand that there are a myriad of reasons why people struggle and don't graduate. But we want this university to succeed, and we want it to produce quality students that are going to come back and join the ranks of -- of folks contributing every day in South Carolina, making it the great state that it is. You know, I was here when I first joined the General Assembly in 2012-2013. South Carolina State was in rough shape, very rough shape. And if you probably remember, there were real discussions over in both of these buildings about whether or not South Carolina State should be kept open. And to the alumni's credit and to the supporters' credit, things turned around at South Carolina State. And they did -- you all did a great job of righting the ship. We just don't want to see it go back in the other direction. That's why I think you hear a lot of concerns from all the folks being questioned today about that graduation rate, particularly. So, again, no question at the end. Just wanted to make sure that you were aware that we appreciate your pathway to get here and what the university is doing. And we hope it will continue to do great things.

MR. TWITTY: Yes, sir. And I look at my story, not a South Carolina State story, America's story.

MR. CHAIRMAN: That's right. Luckily, your story is repeated a lot. And you need to tell that story. And other folks need to tell their stories. So, thank you. Any other questions? Hearing none, is there a motion?

SENATOR DEVINE: So moved.

SENATOR MASSEY: Second.

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MR. CHAIRMAN: There's a motion and a second. Any further discussion? Hearing none, all those in favor, raise your right hand. Anybody opposed? Thank you, sir.

MR. TWITTY: All right, thank you.

MR. CHAIRMAN: All right, I think that wraps up South Carolina State University. We move now to the University of South Carolina, James Strom Thurmond. Good afternoon, sir.

UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH CAROLINA:

JAMES STROM THURMOND, JR.:

MR. THURMOND: Good afternoon.

MR. CHAIRMAN: If you don't mind, we'll swear you in
A.I do.

Q. Thank you, Mr. Thurmond. And Mr. Chairman, I have no further questions.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you, Macey. Questions for Mr. Thurmond?

SENATOR JOHNSON: Mr. Chairman.

MR. THURMOND - EXAMINATION BY SENATOR JOHNSON:

Q. Mr. Thurmond, thank you for being here today. I want to have somewhat of a just philosophical question with you about universities in general, but specifically the University of South Carolina. There are two growing trends that I've seen for universities. Either universities have decided to stay small, intentionally, and small being 22,000 to maybe 30,000 students, or grow very large, 55,000, 65,000, 75,000 students. They're two totally different methods, and both of them work depending on what university you're at. What do you believe is the -- of those two, and USC is showing a propensity to go one way, is that the way to do it? Is it to grow, and continue to grow, and get larger and larger, and bring in more students? Or would the university be better off by perhaps raising academic standards and bringing in less students, and keeping the school smaller? I'm just curious your thoughts on that.

A.I think we touch more South Carolinians with the current model. We are currently approaching 60,000 students at eight campuses and 20 locations, and there's some new sloganeering that we're just not the University of South Carolina, that we're the university for South Carolina, because we have such a statewide footprint. I think that we can be bigger and better, but I think we need to make sure that we are remaining student-centered, student-focused, and that the decisions for this really large organization are all being made through that lens.

Q. Well, I noted in your questionnaire, you said one of the biggest potential weaknesses for USC is its sheer size. What types of things, you've been on the Board six months now. And what kind of

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conversations do you all have internally about how to manage that size, and how to make sure that you are student-oriented, and that the students always come in first?

A. Sure, those conversations take place regularly, both in the board room and with staff. It's a large organization. It's 60,000 students, 12-15,000 employees, eight campuses and 20 locations, a \$2 billion annual budget. And we just need to be ever mindful that this is about the student and about the student experience. I want kids to graduate -- young adults to graduate in four years at a reasonable price, reasonable, and get the best job they can possibly get in South Carolina. And I also want them to leave USC as a good citizen. I do think that the Carolinian Creed means something, and I want students to leave the university treating other people how they would like to be treated.

Q. Just curious, in the six months that you've served on the Board, how often have you visited one of the campuses?

A. Senator, I'm glad you asked that question. I was appointed September 4th of 2025. So I've been here right at six months. And in that time, I have either attended or participated in 31 events at the university. In my official capacity as a trustee, that is excluding athletic events. And just to give you a sampling of them, I attended the State of the University Address, Veterans Day Breakfast, USC Aiken Commencement, USC Commencement, Impacted Leadership Awards at USC the minutiae of the day-to-day, but I do think that that's a major challenge for universities, especially a university of your size. So is that a conversation that the Board has and how the university is responding to the students' needs all over, but especially in mental health?

A. Yes, Senator. In our most recent Board meeting, we had some materials prepared by staff at the university specifically relating to mental health counseling services available at the university and the frequency that those services were being used. I've spent much of my career as a state and federal prosecutor, and as good as our law is, it really is not well equipped to deal with mental health problems or children for that matter, but I think it's a challenge here. I think the university is aware of it. I think there are different stresses on young people than there were when I was coming along. And I think mental health issues and mental health crises are real, and that we need to have the resources to offer that to those students when they need it.

Q. Do you feel like y'all are addressing those resources now? I guess that's my question.

A. I'm sorry, what was the question?

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Q. Do you feel like that, I know you said you had a recent conversation or presentation, but do you feel like you all are addressing those resources, or are there things that the State needs to be aware of regarding your ability to address the needs of the students?

A. Well, everything that is done at the university can be done better. I mean, everything from top to bottom. But I think the current level of service is being provided, but I think it's just something that needs to continue, continuously be monitored for any changes or trends with the student body.

Q. And then my last focus, I guess, for questioning is, the university is growing, continues to grow. It was always a challenge with me on the city level as the university continues to grow into neighborhoods and expand the footprint. And so what is your perspective as far as the Board on the growth of the university and the need to continue to expand the footprint, or looking at ways to be more efficient in making sure that you're not growing too much and taking over areas that traditionally are more residential or even could be commercial, but not taking off the tax rolls?

A. Right, so, yes, ma'am, I think there are unique challenges in having a university this size in the middle of a large city without kind of defined campus boundaries, like other places in the state. I think housing is an issue. I think there's several housing projects in the works right now. But the university is growing and more students are coming. More students from out of state are coming, and it's an issue and a challenge that is certainly on the radar and being addressed by the Board.

Q. Thank you.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Representative Rose.

MR. THURMOND - EXAMINATION BY REPRESENTATIVE ROSE:

Q. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Thurmond, I had a question. What is the Board doing, what Higher Education Subcommittee, and he was asked the exact question. And, you know, perception is reality, but I think the perception is that out-of-state students are getting seats for the sons and daughters of South Carolinians. And, Representative Rose, I don't think that's exactly accurate. If you look at the snapshot from the 2025, fall of 2025, there are 60,000 applications. 15,000 of those were South Carolina residents. 75 percent of those, or 11,250, were directly admitted. Another 15 percent, or 2,250, entered the bridge program. So that was basically a 90 percent opportunity rate to attend the University of South Carolina. And that was -- so 13,500 South Carolinians were admitted to the University of South Carolina, and of that, 4,120 of them

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matriculated. So, I mean, if a South Carolina student meets the academic requirements, I mean, there is a place for them here. Absolutely.

Q. Well, I can tell you South Carolina is a very hot institution right now because it seems to be, as I talked to constituents and friends, a very difficult place to get into. I had a constituent reach out to me, and their child had been admitted to Wofford, admitted to Clemson, and had been wait-listed at Carolina. And so, I mean, obviously, that's a good thing that we're hot. I just want to make sure that we're educating South Carolinians. We want South Carolinians to be Gamecocks and, you know, representing the campus at USC. I must say a lot of times driving around Columbia I do see a lot of out-of-state parking, you know, cars, license tags, and you see a lot of different states. And so -- but I appreciate your answer. I have one other question. Driving around Columbia, and Senator Devine talked about this, the footprint of the university seems to be growing. And living essentially on the campus of USC, being a double alumnus myself, I always cringe, particularly when I get to Assembly Street. There's kids that are constantly, especially when classes seem to be letting out, walking across that major thoroughfare. And what discussions, if any, is the university having with pedestrian safety? We're talking about the safety of children or these kids that are going to different classes as the campus grows into the city.

A. So, thank you. I'll say an issue that's very personal to me.

Q. Yes, sir.

A. My sister was killed by a drunk driver crossing the street while student at the University of South Carolina. It is an issue. The Board is aware of it. The administration is aware of it. They are always looking at ways to safely get students across the street. I know that the pedestrian bridge that was built several years ago over by fraternity row, has taken a lot of pressure off of students crossing the street. I think when new housing is coming along, that's a concern as well, as far as foot traffic flow. It's just a public safety reality of being in the middle of a big city, an old city, that it's all laid out on the grid.

Q. Well, I appreciate your answer on that. I'd love for there to continue to be discussions on pedestrian safety. I am proud to say that this legislature has put a lot of money, millions of dollars in the last few years, into the pedestrian safety projects here in Columbia. The Harden Street project, in five points, this legislature and the DOT helped make happen. It was \$12,000,000. Obviously, we have the South Main project, which was completed, it was \$27,000,000. And there's going to be a project coming forth that's going to put a 10-foot-wide sidewalk around the fairgrounds. I'm always amazed as I'm leaving Williams-Brice Stadium,

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there's no sidewalks and things of that nature. We're oftentimes looking at DOT. And I know money doesn't grow on trees, but certainly, if we can make projects work and partner with the university at some level for the safety of the kids, because I know you guys can't -- I don't believe you can put money towards state projects or state roads, but you do have some discretion if it's for safety. But there's a lot of good things happening, and I do want to commend you and the current Board as well, because the university seems to be able to up and up in a very desirable place, and so great things are happening. So that's all I want to say.

A. Thank you. It's a very, very exciting time.

SENATOR MASSEY: Mr. Chairman.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Senator.

MR. THURMOND - EXAMINATION BY SENATOR MASSEY:

Q. Solicitor, good to see you. To follow up on Representative Rose's questions, I heard you say that there were 13,500 South Carolina students that were admitted for the 2025 fall class. What was the breakdown of non-resident versus residents in that class?

A. So in that class, 52.7 percent South Carolina residents.

Q. Okay. So it's 47.3 percent non-resident?

A. Yes, sir.

Q. Because what, just a few years ago, five or six years ago, it seemed like there was a freshman class that was a majority non-resident class. I don't know if you remember that.

A. I don't, sir.

Q. It got a lot of attention up here when that happened. Are there conversations at the Board level about that? And I understand what you're saying, that we're going to admit any qualified South Carolina student, but how many non-residents are enough? What should that be? Do you have a thought on that? Is 52 percent -- is 52 percent sufficient? I mean, is that okay?

A. Yeah, I always thought just as a general principle, for some reason, like 60/40 felt right. But I don't think there's a set percentage every year. It could be different next year based on the needs of the university. I know we need the out-of-state tuition revenue to continue to put downward pressure on in-state tuition. But I don't know that there is a sweet spot, so to speak. But, you know, again, Senator, I think this is largely optics. Because if you are a South Carolina student and you meet the admission requirements, there's going to be a seat for you at the University of South Carolina.

Q. And I appreciate that. However, and look, I don't think that the state contributions for operations are where they should be. And I say that, and

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I'm cheap. But having said that, there's a lot of state money, state taxpayer money, that goes to the University of South Carolina and its satellite campuses. If half the student body is non-resident, I think there's got to be questions, concerns here in this body about whether or how much state taxpayer dollars do we put into something that is benefitting half of it is for non-residents, right? I mean, I understand the point that we're going to accept any qualified South Carolina student. I get that. But it does seem to me, especially for the flagship. I mean, you know, we had on Monday, we were here, and we had nearly the entire Board from Coastal Carolina. And we got on them pretty good, because they're 60/40 non-resident. I view USC a little bit differently, because it's the flagship. And so I want to -- I get the point of accepting all the South Carolina qualified students. But I also wonder, you know, at some point, it seems like the non-resident focus becomes too much, considering the amount of investment that taxpayers make to the university. And it's not just to the undergraduate campus, but what we've done for the medical school, and what we've done for other things. I mean, I do have concerns about that. And I would hope that the Board would talk about that as well, that not just we're going to admit every South Carolinian who's qualified, but also, like, how many non-residents is enough? And I understand the financial pressures. And that's, you know, you could always give that back right back to me and say, well, if the legislature wants to invest more money in it, we don't have to accept as many non-resident students. And I -- fair point. But that is a concern that I have, especially if the new moniker is the University for South Carolina. I think it ought to be for South Carolina, you know. And I mean, you're -- I would be okay with the -- just the general thought that you've put out there, 60/40. You know, North Carolina and Georgia, I mean, they're in the 80s by state law. And, and maybe their state contributions are higher than what South Carolina state contributions are. But they're doing pretty well with, with a higher in-state -- in-state percentage.

A. Senator, I would add that system-wide, 61.4% South Carolina residents. And then with some of our sister campuses, South Carolina residents represent as much as 94% of the student body. But I understand your point and position.

Q. And that's what you expect, right? I mean, the, the sister campuses are going to be more South Carolina-based, I would expect. Aiken probably gets a little bit more out of Georgia because of tuition agreements with the state of Georgia. I don't know if Lancaster has that same kind of thing with North Carolina. But I -- I take that point. Do you have any thoughts on the university system-wide, its ability to graduate students in a timely

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manner on a four-year or a six-year scale? Do you have any thoughts on that?

A. Well, I want students to graduate in four years. And again, there is always --

Q. Especially as a parent, right?

A. Especially as a parent. I've got one graduating senior from college now and a graduating senior from high school who is actually, will be attending the University of South Carolina in the fall, which I'm very happy about. So yes, you know, the --

Q. You're having flashbacks to your father here, aren't you?

A. Sir?

Q. You said you're having flashbacks to the conversations that your father had with you.

A. Exactly.

Q. It's a fun story, but yeah, another time.

A. So, yes, sir. So, you know, the four-year graduation rate at the Columbia campus right now is right at 70% and 79% for six years. I think that's one of the reasons for this exploration to the Commission for Higher Public Education is a model that's a little more focused on student outcomes and some pressure to graduate students in four years.

Q. Okay. I mean, it looks like, you know, from the numbers that we have, the Columbia campus's graduation numbers over six years are among the highest in the state. Some of the satellites are much lower than that, but I assume you have a lot of transfers.

A. A lot of transfers, and if you took, you know, Aiken, for example, at 23.2%, you know, one could think, well, that's a, you know, a 77% fail rate, but I think it's a little more nuanced than that. I think the students generally at the sister campuses, it's just fundamentally different than Columbia. A lot of these folks, if they're not working part-time, they're working full-time. They're not there to get their degree in four years. They're there to get it when they can. We have a number of students there will get their core requirements and then transfer to another school that has the major that they want. A number of them will transfer -- just transfer to other schools. Some of them will leave college to go to the military. So I think there are a number of reasons for that number being that low. You know, some of them are raising children, some are taking care of an elderly parent, but again, absolutely room for improvement.

Q. Yeah, especially at the satellites. I think it's important that we offer higher educational opportunities that are going to keep our best and brightest here. And USC has to be at the top of that list because it is the flagship. It has the state's name in there. You know, you're a little bit

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ahead of me as far as where your children's ages are, but I have been, I mentioned this earlier, you may have been in here, but I have a daughter who's a junior in high school and has great opportunities where she is. We're very fortunate with that, with the high school that she attends. A public school, as you know, but you know, she's looking at some in-state options and some out-of-state options. And to have her choose an in-state option would surely make me feel better. But like you, I -- for my first year, I went out of state and I've told you this story before. But when I -- I was admonished by your father for that because we have some fine institutions in South Carolina and I think that's important. And I hope that continues so that we will continue to provide opportunities, higher education opportunities, for our South Carolina students. But you know, as we were talking about with the South Carolina state representatives for the C students, but also for the A's and B's, we want to keep them all and provide them with opportunities to be successful in life. I just think that USC has got to be at the top of that list, right? USC has to set that example to ensure that it really is a place where South Carolina students can pursue quality higher education at a good cost and that they can get out in a reasonable time and they can be successful with that, but it is, it is South Carolina's institution, so I appreciate that. One other question I've got to ask you about this. You're serving in an interim -- in a position of an interim appointment, is that right?

A. Yes, sir.

Q. Can you tell me about what, what led to that? Was that something where you approached the Governor's office or you approached somebody university or somebody approached you? How did that come about?

A. So in May or June of 2023, the predecessor for this seat, who was about 80 years old at the time and had served for decades, contacted me and told me that he was not going to run again and he knew that I had long wanted to serve on this Board. And I decided in the summer of 2023 that I was going to run for this Board seat, not knowing that it would be two and a half years later that I would be going for screening. I called a number of folks in the summer of 2023, to include yourself, to let you know that I was interested in running for the seat. And I called Governor McMaster at the time, too, to let him know of my interest and in my interest. And in -- my interesting in running. And in -- on September 1st or 2nd of 2025, he contacted me and asked if I would be willing to serve. And I, of course, was honored.

Q. Because your predecessor passed away?

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A. He passed away in April of 2024. His term would have ended June 30th, 2024, so that seat has been vacant for 17 months, I guess, since his death in April of 2024.

MR. THURMOND - EXAMINATION BY SENATOR JOHNSON:

Q. Mr. Thurmond, I want to follow up somewhat off of that line of questioning. It goes back to my conversation about getting very large versus staying small, and I see this throughout the south. The University of Alabama has decided to grow very large. Auburn University is staying smaller. Clemson is somewhat staying smaller. University of South Carolina is growing. University of Georgia has decided to grow very large. I understand the whys of getting large. There's a there's a sweet point. You either got to get real big or you got to stay kind of compact where you are. But how many in-state students were accepted again? You said about 11,000 and then you bridged a couple two or three thousand after that?

A. Yes, Senator. Of the 15,000 South Carolina residents who applied, 13,500 of them fell into what is called this, you know, what I call a 90% opportunity rate. That's the 75% who were directly admitted, and then the 15% who were offered to bridge.

Q. And then out of that amount, how many accepted and enrolled in the fall?

A. Of the -- let's say of the 11,250 who were directly admitted, 4,121 matriculated.

Q. Would you agree with me in order -- and this is why I'm asking this, in order for USC to grow, in order for South Carolina to get bigger and increase their numbers, you're letting in -- I'm not -- you're letting in about every South Carolinian who wants to attend the University of South Carolina is getting that opportunity. I'm not saying you're not. But what you're having to do though in order to grow is you have to let out-of-state kids in. You don't have a choice. If you want to get big, if you want to get to 55, 60, 65, 70,000 students, you have to have those out-of-state students. Not only do they pay larger tuition, but you can't, you just don't have the numbers. Because at 4,121, you have a much smaller student body than not. I mean, do you see that correlation?

A. Yes, sir. The total enrollment for that class 18 was 7,818.

Q. And that's what I'm trying to -- I'm not criticizing any university for making the decision to get larger. I've read lots of articles on why it's important to get above about 50, 55,000 students or stay below about 28, 30. I mean, they're two totally different models. But by making the internal decision to get that large, you really can't go 60/40. Because if you try to get to 60/40 at the main campus at least, you're going to have

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to get significantly smaller. Would you agree? Either that or you're going to have to take a whole lot of kids who are going to Clemson or some other school and convince them to show up here.

A. Yes, sir. That's a fair question.

Q. Then does the Board have conversations about what it would take to get that 4,121 number to 5,500 or to 5,000 to increase -- to somehow convince more young adults in South Carolina just to attend the University of South Carolina versus another school?

A. Senator, in the three Board meetings that I have attended, I don't recall that coming up as a topic.

Q. Well, no. And that's fair. That's a fair answer. Mr. Thurmond, I appreciate your service. Thank you for answering my questions.

A. Thank you, sir.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Any other questions?

REPRESENTATIVE MCGINNIS: Make a motion.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Motion for a favorable report.

REPRESENTATIVE ROSE: Second.

MR. CHAIRMAN: And a second. All those in favor, raise your right hand.

(All hands are raised.)

MR. CHAIRMAN: Anyone opposed? Thank you, Mr. Thurmond.

MR. THURMOND: Thank you, sir. Appreciate your time.

MR. CHAIRMAN: All right, next up we have Bernie Lee Sims, Jr.

BERNIE LEE SIMS, JR.:

MR. SIMS: Good afternoon.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Good afternoon, sir. If you'll please raise your right hand. Do you swear to tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, so help you God?

MR. SIMS: I do.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you, sir. If you would like, you may give an opening statement, and then we'll hand it over to Ms. Webb for a few questions.

MR. SIMS: Yeah, so a little bit about me. I'm a proud Aikenite, born and raised in Aiken. Third generation Savannah River Site employee. So my grandfather moved down from the upstate and helped with the construction of Savannah River Site. My dad worked out there for 40 years. I didn't think I would ever work out there. I thought I'd move off and do something different. And my fate brought me back to Aiken. And I've been working at Savannah River Site for a little over 20 years. Currently the senior vice president over plutonium operations and programs at Savannah River Site. Proud alumni. I grew up a South

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Carolina fan. My father went there for his master's. Both my sisters went there. I went there in the late 90s, early 2000s. And it wasn't an easy road. I came in with a chip on my shoulder. I went through high school without any problems. Went into college and realized that I didn't have the foundational study skills that I needed. And I had some roadblocks along the way that I really had to mature quickly in my junior year or so, sophomore, junior year of college. And I think I'm a testament to what you can overcome. I was on conduct probation at the university. I was on academic probation at the university. And from that I matured, grew up, got out into the workforce. And to use Senator Massey's quote, I'm that C person that has got out into the field and been successful and built my career. So that's me in a nutshell.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Great. Thank you, sir. Ms. Webb.

MR. SIMS - EXAMINATION BY MS. WEBB:

Q. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. And Mr. Sims, can you please state your current address?

A. Yes, 196 Cubs Hamlet Court, Aiken, South Carolina.

Q. Thank you. And is this the address where you pay gosh, I want more Carolina guys and gals that are taking the seat behind me as we look at progressing the site.

Q. Is there something -- so kind of building a bridge with jobs or with the university, something of that nature? I'm looking kind of for like a platform, if you will.

A. Yeah. So I would say, you don't have to look far. I look at the executive orders of the president as it pertains to investment into nuclear energy, AI, data centers, small modular reactors. You look at the technology sector and the growth that's going to occur. And a lot of that is going to happen in the South. I feel like there's a big opportunity for the university to get ahead of that. And I think there's a lot of opportunity for the graduates coming out to get into that arena and really get on the forefront of the nuclear renaissance, if you want to call it.

Q. I'm going to preempt this question from Senator Massey. Is 52% in-state students, is that enough in your opinion? Is there a number that you have?

A. Yeah. You know, I hate to paraphrase the same number. 60/40 feels right. You know, when I graduated in 2002, I don't know what the percentage was, but it felt very heavy from folks from New Jersey, New York that were attending college with me. If I look at the overall attendance or enrollment when I graduated, it was about 25,000 students or so at the Columbia campus. And I didn't know how you would squeeze one more student into the university at that time. I mean, it felt very

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crunched at that time. But there was still a sense of community, a sense of identity, I guess, with the university. So when I look at the expansion of the university, back to Senator Johnson's question to Thurmond, I think you can grow too much to where you lose that identity and really that community type feel of a university. And I worry about that as an alumni.

Q. All right, thank you. No further questions.

SENATOR JOHNSON: Mr. Chairman.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Senator Johnson.

MR. SIMS - EXAMINATION BY SENATOR JOHNSON:

Q. Mr. Simms, thank you for being here today. You referenced that. Again, this is more of a philosophical question. I'm not sure there's a wrong answer either way. Growth versus trying to stay smaller. Do you believe that the University of South Carolina should not attempt to grow the student population and instead should condense and be smaller?

A. Yeah, I'm not going to tell you I know all the financials for the university. So, you know, the cost benefit of growth versus staying where we are is something I don't know those details. But what I'll tell you is South Carolina, the feeling of being a South Carolinian is that community aspect. And it just feels like our university, every time I drive in it, I don't recognize where I'm going. You know, I spent a lot of time here and I turn a corner and there's a new building or a new structure as part of what's going on in Columbia. And so my gut answer would be we've grown enough. It feels like the university is the right size.

Q. And what would -- as a board member, what are your thoughts about increasing the amount of in-state students? We know that about 11,250 were accepted. 4,121 showed up. What do you think the university should be doing more to bring that 4,121 number higher?

A. Yeah, you know, I think the university does a fairly good job of outreach, but I've got a junior in high school. And so I'm getting into that. Where is she going to go and what university? Hopefully an in-state university. I've gotten brochures to my daughter from a variety of in-state universities, but not yet from the University of South Carolina. So I'm not saying that those aren't coming in the mail. But, you know, it surprises me a little bit in terms of that outreach. You know, I do think that the advancement in the software and the tools we use for recruiting trips and all that, I'm at the age where my daughter's getting ready to go to the university and all my friends have kids that are attending the university. And those that make it on campus and go through like the tours and looking at the maps and going through all that, I've heard nothing but positive things through that. So I think the university has

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done good things to try to attract the talent if they get on campus and see what's available.

Q. Thank you, sir.

MR. SIMS - EXAMINATION BY MR. CHAIRMAN

Q. Mr. Sims, are you familiar with the organization, the Foundation for Individual Rights and Expression? FIRE?

A. I am not.

Q. They are a group that deals a lot with free speech free speech issues and they give ratings to universities. One of the things they do is they give ratings to universities. Would it surprise you to hear that the University of South Carolina, which is also my alma mater, was ranked next to last in their ratings just a few years ago for free speech? That would be surprising to you?

A. Yeah, it would surprise me. You know, when I was at the university, I'm just going back in time here, you know, there was a presidential election and there were plenty of people that were, you know, chalking up sidewalks and making their opinions heard, both students and student body. So when I was at the university, I felt like it was a pretty open environment to voice, you know, your thoughts and where your political standing was, right, wrong or indifferent in anyone's eyes. So it does surprise me.

Q. So the good news of that, the rest of the story, as Paul Harvey once said, would be that after the university was made aware of that, that they contacted this group and provided them with some additional information that the group evidently did not have. Their rankings went up significantly. But at the time they were ranked below Harvard and Yale and those sorts of institutions. And now they rank, they rank in kind of red, yellow, green. And South Carolina is in green now. But my bigger question is, the world that we live in today, how, how does -- how do you as a board member, ensure that the university ensures free speech, and the difficulty of free speech, which means that you have to, unfortunately, listen to people that you disagree with as well. But how do we, how do we balance that with South Carolina's own culture and our views, our cultural views? How do you balance the two? And is it important for the Board to get involved in that?

A. Yeah, it's a very complex question. I would say, you know, this is not specific to institutions here in South Carolina, but I think across the U.S., you see a lot of guiding people down one path or another, whether it's from faculty or physicians in general. That concerns me a little bit, holistically. I think, you know, the state is very Republican. You know, and the thoughts and processes of a Republican and the thoughts and

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process of a Democrat both matter. And, you know, I, you know, I tend to go Republican. But my daughter is a lot more towards the liberal side. And so, I personally, as a father, have tried to make sure that I do not try to influence her free thought and decision making, but make sure that I am allowing her or affording her the truth and understanding of why things are the way they are in the world. So, I think it's a balance, as a father, a balance as a university, to make sure that we allow people to speak and we educate them on fact and let them make decisions on how they want to move forward. And if the numbers truly are, you know, in the bottom, that we're not truly doing a good thing from a free speech perspective, then I do think the Board should be involved in making changes to that.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Favorable report, is there a motion for a favorable report?

SENATOR MASSEY: So moved.

REPRESENTATIVE ROSE: Second.

MR. CHAIRMAN: All those in favor, say aye. Or raise your hand. Or do both.

(All hands were raised.)

MR. CHAIRMAN: All those opposed. Thank you very much. Next up, we have Richard Mark Bonnoitt.

RICHARD MARK BONNOITT:

MR. BONNOITT: Good afternoon.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Good afternoon, sir. If you will raise your right hand. Do you swear to tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, so help you God?

MR. BONNOITT: I do.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you, sir. Would you like to provide us with an opening statement? And then we'll turn it over to Ms. Webb for a few questions.

MR. BONNOITT: Okay, the University of South Carolina, Fourth Judicial Circuit. As a 1979 graduate, I took the skills and education gained at USC to start my own business with my wife in the waste industry, creating jobs and opportunities for my surrounding community. I sold my company in 2022, and now I have the time to take my talents and common sense learned from over 40 years in business to help guide the university for South Carolina into the future. Proud to say both my daughter and son are graduates of USC. And my main focal points has been discussed over here today, is to keep tuition affordable, ensure that all South Carolina students have an opportunity institution's Board of trustees?

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A. Yes.

Q. And are you aware that you cannot contact any member of the General Assembly and formally ask for a vote commitment or pledge until 48 hours after the Commission's report has been released?

A. Yes.

Q. And have you currently asked any third parties to contact members of the General Assembly on your behalf, or are you aware of anyone attempting to intervene in this process on your behalf?

A. No.

Q. And are you aware that you have an ongoing obligation and duty to report to the Commission any changes that might occur that would affect your application and overall eligibility for serving on a college Board?

A. Yes.

Q. Thank you, Mr. Bonnoitt, and Mr. Chairman, I have no further questions.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you, Ms. Webb. Mr. Bonnoitt, thank you again for being here today. Before we get into the questions from the Commission, you indicated on your personal disclosure questionnaire that you have a relationship with the Garnet Trust, which is the NIL arm for the University of South Carolina. There are likely going to be some questions about that from the Commission members wanting to know if you would prefer, because of, I know there's a lot going on with NIL these days, would you prefer to do that in executive session, or are you okay to do that in open session?

MR. BONNOITT: My answer to that is, if elected, I would, you know, whatever I had to do to diverse the interest or whatever that was satisfying.

MR. CHAIRMAN: So you're okay answering any questions that come up in open session?

MR. BONNOITT: Oh, yeah.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay, great. With that, are there any questions from the Commission? Senator.

MR. BONNOITT - EXAMINATION BY SENATOR MASSEY:

Q. Mr. Bonnoitt, good afternoon. Thank you for being here. Let me just follow up on what the chairman just talked about. The information that we have from your written packet indicates that you own 40% of the Garnet Trust. Is that accurate?

A. That's correct.

Q. Tell me what that means.

A. That means that Shane Beamer calls friends in Florence and says he needs to raise some money.

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Q. All right. Do you receive any benefit for the amount of money that you raised?

A. None, zero, other than if there was some correlation between your Garnet Trust contribution and the Gamecock Club, they tried to do that. I think that might have been an incentive at one time. But I'm not even sure now that, you know, if that's the case.

Q. Do you receive any other benefit from the contributions that you make to the Garnet Trust or for money that you raise for the Garnet Trust?

A. None.

Q. Okay. If you're successful in your effort to be a trustee and you divest from the Garnet Trust, are you going to get your money back or is it gone?

A. I gave it as a contribution, and so, no, I don't think I'll get that money back.

Q. Okay. All right. Okay, that's all I've got on that, Mr. Chairman.

SENATOR JOHNSON: Mr. Chairman.

MR. BONNOITT - EXAMINATION BY SENATOR JOHNSON:

Q. Thank you, Mr. Bonnoitt. So you really, I'll follow back up on this Garnet Trust, you really don't have an ownership of 40%. You put 40% of the initial funds. You have no equity in this organization?

A. No. That's correct.

Q. So if you divest, you get nothing back because you have no true ownership. You're a board member. You may help direct fundraising, but you don't make any money. No money ever moves from that trust back to you. It moves from you to the trust but not the other way.

A. That's right.

Q. All right. All right. I've asked this question to everybody who's come up for the University of South Carolina because it's a much larger question. It's growth versus staying smaller. I've seen you out in the crowd, so you've heard me ask the question a couple times. Do you have an opinion as to whether the university should continue to grow or should it instead make a decision to be smaller?

A. Well, my personal opinion is I think where we are now is okay. I just think that's probably where we need to be.

Q. All right. Knowing that and knowing the amount of South Carolina residents who make a decision to attend the University of South Carolina, what are your thoughts and how would you go about it as a board member to increase the amount of South Carolina students who want to attend the university? It's not getting in. Getting in is not the problem. The problem is making you choose the University of South Carolina over another school.

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A. Yeah, and I was really impressed with the numbers as far as the 11,000 acceptance rate. And then I said, well, no, then you had admission rate. But, yeah, that's the issue, and that would take some deeper thought. But I see exactly where you're coming from, and maybe, you know, we might not be promoting as much within the state as we think we are. Obviously, there's a 3,000 or 4,000 student difference there that's getting accepted, but usually not to come.

Q. Well, there's about 45,000. If 60,000 students applied and 45,000 were from out-of-state, there's a whole lot of out-of-state interest in the University of South Carolina.

A. And, you know, in my thought process earlier, you were talking, you know -- I mean this state is growing unbelievably. And, you know, in the whole state, and we're getting a lot of influx in -- and, you know, that might cause us to have to grow a little bit. But I'm just thinking that with the new people moving into the state, that that number that we're talking about would possibly increase some.

Q. Well, I guess one of the concerns that I think this group we've had all week when we've met with candidates is that our concern of the amount of out-of-state students. And as I look at it, the University of South Carolina is going to grow, and it's going to keep its numbers as large as they are today, the only way you're going to do that is either drastically increase the amount of in-state students who want to attend the University of South Carolina, or continue to draw a large out-of-state pool. So I'm extremely interested in the university coming up with ways to attract more of that in-state -- of the children who are admitted in-state getting a larger percentage of those to make a decision to attend the university.

A. And I agree totally. And, I mean, that's -- you know. But one of the thoughts I did have in reading my notes and stuff is, yeah, we're getting a lot of -- and I did, I had 60 percent, and that's been in my notes for a while. But with the influx of out-of-state applications, we might can go up on their price a little bit.

SENATOR JOHNSON: Motion for a favorable report.

SENATOR MASSEY: Second.

MR. CHAIRMAN:: All those in favor, raise your right hand.

(All hands are raised.)

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thanks, sir.

MR. BONNOITT: Thank you very much.

MR. CHAIRMAN: All right. J. Colin Hungerpiller -- Hungerpiller?

J. COLIN HUNGERPILLER:

MR. HUNGERPILLER: Yes.

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MR. CHAIRMAN: Or just J. Colin, I'm not sure.

MR. HUNGERPILLER: Colin Hungerpiller.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Sorry about that.

MR. HUNGERPILLER: What a beautiful afternoon in South Carolina.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Glad you're here. If you'll do me a favor, please, sir, raise your right hand. Let me swear you in. Do you promise to tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, so help you God?

MR. HUNGERPILLER: I do.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you, sir. If you'd like to give serving on a college board?

A. Yes.

Q. All right. Thank you, Mr. Hungerpiller. Mr. Chairman, I have no further questions.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you, Macey. Any questions? Senator from York.

MR. HUNGERPILLER - EXAMINATION BY SENATOR JOHNSON:

Q. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Hungerpiller, thank you for being here today and thank you for your willingness to serve. I've asked the same question to every member they've come up for USC. I'm going to ask you, basically, give your opinion. Is the University of South Carolina, from an enrollment standpoint, do you believe that they should continue to attempt to stay as large as they are or potentially grow or do you think they should be smaller? And if you believe they should stay where they are, what can be done to get the percentage of in-state students to accept and enroll at the University of South Carolina?

A. Thank you for that question, sir. That's a rather difficult question. I have my opinions. I would like to know what the opinion of the Board of Trustees of the University of South Carolina is. What are their one-year plans? What is their three-year plan? What is their five-year plan? Now, personally, once I know their plan, then I know where we need to be. We need to grow or we need to stay small. I think we have to grow. We have a problem there. We're the University of South Carolina. We're in the state of South Carolina. We're at the bottom most of the time. We have to incentivize our students to come to the University of South Carolina. That's going to take money, whether it's USC scholarships, whatever it may be. To get more, we have a limited customer base. So we have to incentivize them to come to the University of South Carolina. I think that's going to be through scholarships, financial aid, and what we offer in academia. What we offer in mentoring. That's my answer, sir.

Q. Thank you, sir.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Representative Rose?

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MR. HUNGERPILLER - EXAMINATION BY REPRESENTATIVE ROSE:

Q. I'm really struggling with that answer. Because South Carolina, I mean, it's extremely difficult to get into the University of South Carolina because there is such a high demand. I mean, I said this earlier. I had someone reach out to me, a constituent who's a friend, and he was saying that his neighbor's daughter, who is a very accomplished student and a tennis player at a very nice high school around here, had been crying for a couple weeks because she had been accepted to Wofford and accepted to Clemson, but wait-listed at the University of South Carolina. So, I mean, I don't know about incentivizing. I would like to look at admitting more students, but the University of South Carolina is extremely in high demand right now, and there is a lot of people that are wanting to go there. And so I just wanted to say that.

A. Representative Rose, I understand your position. However, of that number that is applying and those that are coming, we need to get the difference between those that are coming and those that are applying. We need more students from the state of South Carolina to help us build this state.

Q. But I would just say that, as I understand it, with the numbers of the amount of people that are admitted at the university, we have an extremely high number that end up accepting, much farther than an Alabama or other likewise or similar situated universities. I mean, but I digress from the point.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Any questions? Hearing none, there is a motion for a favorable report.

REPRESENTATIVE MCGINNIS: So moved.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Is there a second?

SENATOR DEVINE: Second.

MR. CHAIRMAN: And a second, all those in favor raise your right hand. (All hands are raised.)

MR. CHAIRMAN: All those opposed. Thank you, sir.

MR. HUNGERPILLER: Thank you for your time.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Caroline Streater. Is Ms. Streater here? Good afternoon.

CAROLINE W. STREATER:

MS. STREATER: Good afternoon.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you for being here.

MS. STREATER: Thank you for having me.

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MR. CHAIRMAN: If you will, we'll get you sworn in here, if you'll raise your right hand. Do you swear to tell the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth, so help you God?

MS. STREATER: I do.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Great, thank you. If you'd like to give us an opening statement, you're welcome to, and then we'll move into some initial questions from Ms. Webb.

MS. STREATER: Thank you, Mr. Chairman and members of the committee. I'm Caroline Streater. I'm honored to be here today to answer any questions that the committee may have for me regarding my candidacy for the Fourth Judicial Circuit seat on the University of South Carolina Board of Trustees. I am a resident, along with my husband, in Cheraw, South Carolina, which is in the Fourth Circuit. I'm a graduate of the Joseph F. Rice Law School right here in Columbia and the mother of a soon-to-be graduate from the Arnold School of Public Health. These experiences, along with my varied professional experiences, have led me to seek this seat. I believe this is a pivotal time for the university, whether we are discussing the integration of AI or the navigation of the NIL agreements. Board members are required to be diligent in reviewing materials and understanding the issues presented to the Board, as well as their ramifications. This is much like the work that you do here in the General Assembly on behalf of your constituents. Excuse me I am so cold, in the state of South Carolina. And I believe that my professional training and my experiences have placed me in a position to do this in such a way that I can serve our state's flagship university. discussed --

A. That's fine.

Q. -- based on prior AG opinions. Yes. Thank you. The public office to which you currently hold will be vacated upon you being elected to the new public office. Do you understand that?

A. Yes, ma'am.

Q. Thank you. And do you understand the obligations and responsibilities of serving on a public institution's board of trustees?

A. Yes, ma'am.

Q. And are you aware that you cannot contact any member of the General Assembly and formally ask for a vote commitment or pledge until 48 hours after the Commission's report has been released?

A. Yes.

Q. And have you currently asked any third parties to contact members of the General Assembly on your behalf, or are you aware of anyone attempting to intervene in this process on your behalf?

A. I have not, and I am not.

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Q. Thank you. And are you aware that you have an ongoing obligation and duty to report to the Commission any changes that might occur, that would affect your application and overall eligibility for serving on a college Board?

A. Yes.

Q. Yes. All right. Thank you. Thank you, Ms. Streater. Mr. Chairman, I have no further questions.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you, Ms. Webb. All right. Any questions for Ms. Streater?

SENATOR JOHNSON: Mr. Chairman.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Senator from York.

MS. STREATER - EXAMINATION BY SENATOR JOHNSON

Q. Ms. Streater, I feel bad that I keep asking the same question. I'm banging away on this. And my purpose is this. The University of South Carolina has made a conscious decision to grow and to maintain enrollment north of 55,000, 60,000 students. I am concerned that that decision has created a situation in which the university, unless it can drastically increase the amount of students who accept the offer to attend the university, that the university must now always hover in this 52, 48, 51, 49 area. That it's going to be extremely difficult to branch out of that, because you just can't get the sheer numbers of students that are necessary to make the university run. So my question to you, what are your thoughts and how would you go about increasing the amount of students that the University of South Carolina is able to enroll in the university, who are from our state?

A. Well, I've got a couple of ideas on that. Number one, it's certainly always a nice opportunity to talk about the Palmetto Scholars and the Life Scholars opportunities for our students and how they stand with the relationship to tuition and their encouragement of our in-state students to attend in-state colleges. So that's always something that can be looked at. Secondly, I don't know if you're aware, but USC runs a great program in the summer called the USC Summer Scholars Program, which I teach in, and love teaching in it. And it reaches out to the high flyers in the high schools throughout the state of South Carolina and outside of the state of South Carolina and offers them a one-week camp experience where they are exposed to the college of their interests. So there is a nursing program, there's a forensic science program, there's an engineering program. I teach at the law program and love it. I take them to look at our law school, I take them to watch preliminary hearings in Richland County. Last year I took them to watch a one-day trial that Judge Newman was able to organize with me so that the students could watch

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it from start to finish. They loved it. I know for a fact at least three of those students became full-time students at the University of South Carolina, in part because of that program and their participation. So those kinds of things can be grown. I also know USC additionally is the top 10% of every high school, regardless rural or urban. And then there are some more targeted approaches to high school based on colleges, specifically the STEM colleges, that are reaching out to the high schools. And I think those personal connections, if you know somebody that's going there, if you know a professor. The head of the exercise science program reached out to my son when he was a junior in high school and had a FaceTime video with him to discuss that program. Sold him from the beginning, and that's not why I'm driving to -- and that's why I'm not driving to Alabama in May. I'm very happy to be just coming to Columbia. So there are things that we can do that are low cost, no cost, and then some that are associated with cost that I think we can do to grab our South Carolina students and keep them here.

Q. I appreciate that answer. I'll also say I've been practicing law a long time now, I guess 30 years this year. And you're more excited about the law than I am at this point, so I'm excited for that.

A. You go teach that class and you'll get excited all over again because they are so excited.

MR. CHAIRMAN: I thought you were going to say, Senator, that you've been practicing law for 30 years and you've still not seen a trial from start to finish. Senator from Richland.

MS. STREATER - EXAMINATION BY SENATOR DEVINE:

Q. Thank you, Mr. Chair. Thank you, Ms. Streater, for your application. I was looking at your questionnaire and you talked about the biggest strength being student success and the nationally recognized programs. I'm thinking you're talking about the student enrollment. The infrastructure might be the challenge, but I wasn't clear. So what do you identify as the biggest challenge for the university and what are some solutions that you think a board member could add?

A. Well, I think the board members can always add by asking questions. How are you handling this situation? How are you dealing with this? For example, South Carolina University, South Carolina now has a majority-minority population. There are 60% women in our student body, and that is a different dynamic. A female student, there are needs that have to be taken care of differently, safety concerns that are out there. So I think that it is always something you want to look at. When you have those numbers of students moving through a university, you want to have the infrastructure. Parking is an issue. Anybody that has

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ever lived in Columbia knows 15that's an issue. Safety is an issue. I heard 16someone talking about crossing the assembly 17street. That's a huge issue. I navigated that 18just this morning when I took my son to 19breakfast. So I think there are all things that 20have to stay top of mind to make sure the 21infrastructure is in place to support those kids. The dorms, the teachers, the classrooms, all of 23 those things. You want the student first because 24the money comes with the student, but you've got 25to have the infrastructure around to support the student.

Q. So to that extent of the infrastructure, and you were in the other room listening, a huge thing with Columbia, and I know you lived in Columbia for a while, so you see the university and the growth. What are your thoughts regarding the expansion of the university's footprint, particularly as it tends to encroach upon other areas that make it sometimes challenging to be livable and pedestrian and biker-friendly?

A. I think that we have to be friendly neighbors. We have to have relationships and discussions with our neighbors and our communities. I am a trained mediator, and there are not many disagreements that cannot come to some resolution if you put everybody down and you're able to identify their interest. The neighbors have very valid concerns. The university has to grow in certain aspects. And so I was very pleased to see that the nursing school is going to be out in Lexington and that the neuroscience center is going to be out in Orangeburg County, so I'm sure that's a much-needed relief for the Columbia campus.

Q. Thank you.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Representative Rose.

MS. STREATER - EXAMINATION BY REPRESENTATIVE ROSE:

Q. Hey, good afternoon, Ms. Streater. Question, what are the platforms, if you will? What are some things that you think the Board is doing well, what are some things you think the Board is going to improve upon, and what is something that you'd like to focus on if you were elected?

A. I think coming from the Fourth Circuit and actually born into the First Circuit -- I'm from Holly Hill, many of you may not have even heard of it, but I think it's really important not to forget our rural kids. When I went, my undergrad experience started at the College of Charleston, and my roommate came from Jacksonville. She had all the AP classes. I didn't even know what an AP class was. I can remember the English professor asking me to write a four-page paper on a three-page short story. I didn't understand how you did that, so I had to learn that in college. So I think there are things that we can do to advocate for our rural students to make sure that they have the opportunities to get the things like the greater than 4.0 GPA that our kids who grew up in Columbia, for example, know that

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they need to have. And they have the AP teachers and the guidance counselors there to support them. So making those connections and making sure those opportunities are clear in our smaller rural schools, make sure there's a pathway there for them.

MS. STREATER - EXAMINATION BY SENATOR MASSEY:

Q. Hi, Ms. Streater. How long have you lived in Chesterfield County?

A. Since '21. We sold our house in Forest Acres in 2021. And my husband is originally from Cheraw, and he had come back and started working, and we waited until our youngest of three graduated from high school, and I moved.

Q. Okay, I noticed that you served as a magistrate for Richland County.

A. I did.

Q. 2005 to 2019. You were a Richland County resident when you served in that position?

A. I was, and I handled many USC MIPP cases, and landlord/tenant issues, and ---

Q. Okay. So your husband is originally from Chesterfield County?

A. He is.

Q. Right, and I was looking through the information. Do I understand he is currently serving as the sheriff?

A. He is.

Q. All right.

A. He hasn't arrested me.

Q. Well, the day isn't over yet.

A. That is true.

Q. I'm curious about your thoughts of what is the university's obligation to provide courses of study or majors that are responsive to industry demands in South Carolina?

A. I think it's paramount. I think that's a huge issue. It's interesting that I was trying to think of majors that were there when I first went to college that are no longer viable, but it's easier for me to think of things that are there now that weren't there. My son is exercise science. Athletic training now requires a graduate degree. That's a whole school. It's a whole program now. And I can tell you all about how South Carolina stands in comparison to many other colleges in the southeastern United States. So I think it's important. We have a higher pass rate for the certification exam, I think, than any of the ones. He interviewed and was accepted at Alabama, LSU, Miami, and TCU and ultimately chose to go to LSU. So I will be traveling now. But we had a great -- we had the highest pass rate.

Q. That's good to hear.

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A. Yeah.

Q. How familiar are you with the satellite campuses?

A. I know that we have them, and I know that they serve, generally speaking, a little bit different population. It's not -- with some exceptions, it's not the typical college experience going off, you know, going out of town. Although USC Aiken, for example, has a great residency program there, so.

Q. Yeah, that's true. It's interesting to me, and I think this is a good thing, that the university kind of has its fingerprints, its tentacles, all over the state in different areas. You just identified in earlier comments about how the nursing school is going to go to Lexington and then a neuroscience program in Orangeburg. Is that beneficial, or should everything be more centralized with the main campus?

A. I think it presents challenges. Because you have students that come from away and then want to go into those programs. And it's an infrastructure challenge, as I mentioned earlier, with the growth. We'll have to address it, you have to address that issue.

Q. It seems to me like you can live in Columbia and get to the nursing school in Lexington pretty easily.

A. That depends on the time of day.

Q. That's where I was going with that. It's a little bit of a longer drive to Orangeburg, however. Do you see that presenting challenges?

A. I do. But I think, I would hope, and I would have the strong thought that the Board has already considered those issues and how they're planning on handling that.

Q. I noticed in one of your written responses in response to a question about tuition and the cost of attendance, you indicated a concern, I believe, about the cost of attendance, or at least the tuition, as a percentage of the average family income in South Carolina.

A. Yes.

Q. Is that right? And that concern, it seemed to me in your response, was focusing on the tuition. Of course, the cost of attendance, as you know, as a parent, the cost of attendance is higher than just the tuition itself. In fact, the tuition is probably a minority share of the total cost of attendance, isn't it?

A. It depends on where they live.

Q. Sure. All right. Do you have any thoughts on that, and whether the board of trustees needs to be concerned about that, or are we where we ought to be with cost of attendance for in-state students? And I don't really care about the non-residents, but for the in-state students, is the

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university where it needs to be? Is it too low? Is it too high? What are your thoughts there?

A. I think we're around the bubble, and you and I both know the cost will not go down. So the revenue of the families, hopefully, will go up in South Carolina. But that division, that basic division, I think, needs to stay where it's doable for these kids and their families. So I think it's something that has to stay top of mind for the Board.

Q. And I would just say that if you are successful in this pursuit, I would hope that as a board member that you would also really question and scrutinize a number of the spending decisions that are made. There is -- you know, we heard from one candidate earlier that coming onto the campus, if you haven't been there in a couple years, you might need some directions because there's a lot of new construction going on. Now, that's not unique just to Carolina. That's going on in some other places, too. But I do hope that the Board would consider whether its construction efforts are sufficient or maybe too much because those things are factoring into what the cost of attendance is as well.

A. I agree, and I think that you have to ask the questions. I think it's a fiduciary responsibility of each and every board member to be well-versed on whatever is being presented to them by the experts from the different departments and to ask those questions. I attended a hearing over the Senate last week where you discussed the FOIA exception for the NIL. And I was so impressed with the homework that the members did, the senators did, and the questions that were asked on that. And I think that the athletic directors did an excellent job responding to the questions, and so I would hope and expect that every department would have someone like that that can answer those questions.

Q. Yes, ma'am. Thank you very much.

SENATOR DEVINE: I'd make a motion.

SENATOR JOHNSON: Second.

MR. CHAIRMAN: All those in favor raise your right hand.

(All hands are raised.)

MR. CHAIRMAN: Anybody opposed? Thank you, ma'am. We'll move you on. Good luck. All right.

SENATOR DEVINE: I wanted to just apologize to the rest of the candidates. I have to be in Manning by 7:00 o'clock, so I'm going to have to step out, but please don't take my not being here as lack of interest in your screening, but I have to go. But thank you. Thank you all so much.

MR. CHAIRMAN: And, folks, that wraps up the candidates for the Second Judicial Circuit. I think that's probably a good place for a quick break.

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OFF THE RECORD

MR. CHAIRMAN: All right, we're back at it. Moving to the 12th Judicial Circuit, Coleman Floyd Buckhouse.

COLEMAN FLOYD BUCKHOUSE:

MS. BUCKHOUSE: Good afternoon.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Good afternoon, Ms. Buckhouse. If you'll please raise your right hand. Do you swear to tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, so help you God?

MS. BUCKHOUSE: I do.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Great, thank you. We'll allow you to make an opening statement and then we'll move into some initial questions.

MS. BUCKHOUSE: As you know, I'm Coleman Buckhouse from Florence. I am a 1981 graduate of the University of South Carolina. My husband is a University of South Carolina graduate, as well as both of my parents, my grandfather, my great-grandfather, and all three of my children. So to say that Gamecock doesn't run in my blood, it runs in my blood. Didn't have much of a choice, I guess. I am currently a current board member on the University of South Carolina Board. I was appointed by Governor McMaster in October of 2024, when my father became ill and he appointed me to replace him, to finish his term. I have spent the last 15 months learning a lot about the university and learning that I love it even more than what it does for the state of South Carolina. There's a lot going on at the university. It's growing, as all of you all were talking about earlier, and I think we're doing good things for the state to educate the students of South member of the General Assembly and formally ask for a vote commitment or pledge until 48 hours after the Commission's report has been released?

A. I do.

Q. And have you currently asked any third parties to contact members of the General Assembly on your behalf, or are you aware of anyone attempting to intervene in this process on your behalf?

A. I have not.

Q. And are you aware that you have an ongoing obligation and duty to report to the Commission any changes that might occur that would affect your application and overall eligibility for serving on a college board?

A. I do.

Q. Thank you, Ms. Buckhouse. Mr. Chairman, I have no further questions.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Great, thank you. Any questions?

SENATOR JOHNSON: Mr. Chairman.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Senator from York.

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MS. BUCKHOUSE - EXAMINATION BY SENATOR JOHNSON:

Q. I know this question is going to surprise you, but I continue to be interested in -- the goal is to have as many in-state students attend the flagship of our state, flagship university. By growing larger, we've said well that's more difficult. We either have to get more in-state students who apply and are accepted to attend, and that's hard, right? Because there are, as we've talked about, there are 32 universities in this state, and there's a whole lot of options for these young adults to go to. So I'm curious, your PDQ, you said that you believe that the biggest weakness is the number of students due to problems like parking, housing, and space, but you also see size as a strength. So I'm interested in your thoughts on the current policy of remaining large and how you would better attract our in-state students to attend the University of South Carolina.

A. Well, we make it better attract the in-state students if we win more football games, but you know. Other than that.

Q. I've never heard anything.

A. No. I think that as a Board member, part of that is recruiting and promoting our own university and tooting our own horn, for that matter. The jobs that it brings to our communities and how we reach out to our communities as board members, as alumni, and those kind of issues as far as bringing more of those accepted students to actually attend the University of South Carolina. I think that there's also a point about our out-of-state students is that, yes, where our numbers may be 48, it does help the tuition for our in-state students, and a large number of those students actually end up becoming residents of South Carolina and staying. I think we saw the number somewhere about 20% end up becoming long-term residents, including my husband, who's from Chicago, who came from here and has lived here since he was in college. So I'm not sure that there's one particular thing to increase those numbers that want to stay. I think there's lots of different ways we can approach that. The opportunity for the majors that we offer, where they can get a job, the education in nursing and engineering and offering those educational opportunities where they'll want to stay here and get their education here.

Q. Thank you, ma'am.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Representative McGinnis:

MS. BUCKHOUSE - EXAMINATION BY REPRESENTATIVE MCGINNIS:

Q. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thank you for your willingness to serve.

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A. Thank you.

Q. I haven't been asking a lot of questions because these guys are doing a good job of asking all the questions. But because you're an incumbent, one thing that we talked about earlier was graduation rates. Well, I understand here in the Columbia campus, it's not a problem, but the satellite campuses, it may be. I guess this is for any of the other trustees, too, just to be aware of them putting this out there. I know, and I can't remember the number, but Macey, maybe you were in one of those meetings with me when we were talking about the number of students who have some college but no degree. To me, that's low-hanging fruit when you're trying to improve graduation rates, is reaching out to those students and trying to get them back in. In your time as a trustee, have there been much discussion on re-engaging people who had dropped out of college?

A. I think that it has been mentioned about those that drop out for reasons that other people have mentioned, finances, personal, and keeping that door open that, yes, come back or come talk to us. You know, let's work this out when you get ready -- when you do leave. I know that they have talked a lot about, in some of these campuses where those issues happen, that they almost have exit interviews. Why are you leaving? What is the issues? How can we help you with those kind of things in the future when you're ready to come back? So I know that that is being done.

Q. Yeah, I know. Keeping them in until they graduate is goal number one, but I think goal number two should be those who had to leave for reasons that were not nefarious should have a relatively easy pathway back. I do remember the number now. I think it's around a half million. A half million South Carolinians have a lot of college but don't have that degree. To me, that's low-hanging fruit out there. Again, thank you for your willingness to serve.

MS. BUCKHOUSE - EXAMINATION BY CHAIRMAN BENNETT:

Q. Thank you, ma'am. I'd like to shift a little bit just to internal board discussions. So I think you may have been in the audience earlier when I talked about it. Do you know how many -- do you know how many state colleges and universities we operate in South Carolina?

A. Thirty-two.

Q. Thirty-two. That's just the state ones. It doesn't talk about the private ones. One of the challenges that I have a lot of times is South Carolina State earlier today kind of took it on the chin for their graduation rates. I understand that the satellites have their own issues and challenges. I think Mr. Thurmond was pretty articulate in saying the different challenges of student types. We can't let everybody off the hook. I mean

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USC Beaufort is at 37% graduation rate. Aiken was 41%. That's a six-year rate. I have this issue that we duplicate many programs across the state. It seems like, I'm speaking inside the family here, USC never met a building they didn't like, right? Clemson never met a building they didn't like. A lot of universities, colleges are growing programs. The overlap seems to be there. Have you been, in your 15 months on the Board, have you had any conversations, have you witnessed any conversations, discussing propping up new programs, new buildings? I mean, obviously you were probably there for the Brain Center. What kind of discussions go on at the Board level to really kind of question and make sure that any expansion of programs is legitimate and viable?

A. On the 15 months I've been there, I've sat where they talked about some of the programs that they actually eliminated because there were no -- degrees weren't being awarded. They didn't have people in these programs. The programs that they have added, of course, are the newer ones. The AI, I think we've just recently added an AI degree. The things that keep growing, like nursing. Even though there's overlapping over all of the state, there's such a need that those keep trying to grow those programs where there are needs, meet the needs of the state for those. So I think those are always looked at continually by the provost and then brought to the Board as far as with the recommendation of the deans of the colleges, this is no longer a program that is useful or we have any interest in. So they do eliminate programs.

Q. Well, that's good to hear. Have you been in any discussions when there are expansions? I mean, I know you used nursing as an example. I mean, do we need three medical schools in a state of five and a half million people?

A. Yes.

Q. Do we need whatever, four or five engineering programs in a state of five and a half million people? I mean, are those conversations that are ever talked about?

A. I haven't really heard about comparing to the other engineering programs, but having three -- I think our degrees, if they're getting jobs, if they're getting out and getting work with those, are we filling the needs? Then there is enough. As far as your questions in medical school, yes, I'm a health care provider, and we do need more physicians. We do need more nurses. I mean, the health -- our aging population is growing, and therefore the medical needs are more. This brain health hospital and the clinics that the university is opening across the state, Orangeburg was mentioned, and there are other ones in the state, meeting those needs. So those programs are servicing needs that we see in the state.

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Q. I was -- The reason for the questions for you is that you're the only incumbent left that we have, so I'm trying to get a feel for somebody that might have had some of these conversations. So I was talking with a parent just last week of what will be an incoming freshman in the fall, and they were voicing some frustration. Of course, everybody thinks their kid's the greatest, so we'll give them a little bit of grace on that.

A. Everybody's top of their class.

Q. Right. From what they described, this student was in the top tier of their class of what they described as a competitive high school and was denied entry, or at least hasn't won entry in the honors college. And they kind of felt as though it was one of those, well, if somebody that is in the top -- I don't know what the requirement is because I wasn't even allowed to walk by the honors college, much less take classes in the honors college. But I don't know what the qualifications or what the qualifications are, top 10% of your graduate class or something. Their argument was, you know, do the schools evaluate the high schools, right? If I'm in the top 10 of a underperforming high school or a lower-performing high school versus I'm in the top 15 of a very high-performing high school, do you know if the university takes those things into consideration?

A. I'm not -- that would be probably more directed towards admissions, but I will tell you I hear a lot of the same things. And now that SATs are not required, it's very hard, I think, for anyone to say, well, you know, especially in the state of South Carolina, well, this is a good high school and this is not a bad -- this is not a good high school. I think that comes very hard to compare those things within the state from an admissions department. That's me, that's not so much the board. I think that it's very hard from a very small rural community and be the top 10 of your class and be the top 10 of a big, big competitive high school and yet say, well, they don't -- they can't get the education. So how do you compare those? And so, and as far as the Honors College goes, there is a limited number, and those qualifications, I think, change every year depending upon the applicants they have. So it's certainly very high. It's hard to get into our Honors College. It's hard to stay in it. I couldn't get in it either at the time, but it is every year those qualifications, I think, change depending on the application pool.

Q. Same parent shared a little frustration with the fact that the university -- and I don't know if the University of South Carolina is any different than any other larger university, but it's the first I've heard of it, is that there's no guarantee of housing in the second year, right? Just pretty much figure it out. And their argument was that's a hard thing to do. It's

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almost like you have to start on day one of your freshman year, starting to find somebody that you can, you know, build a relationship with and maybe find a place to live together. What kind of conversations are held at the Board level at those types of facilities?

A. I'll tell you, last spring we had a wonderful Board meeting with students, with a group of students, and from kind of all different directions of students. They were student leaders. They were just plain old students. And one of the things, the number one issue came up was housing. And the board is very well aware of it. We don't have the space as everybody was, -- you know, it's been mentioned numerous times. We would love to have housing. Every one of those students in that room, and there were probably 20, 25 of them, said that if they had the opportunity to stay on campus all four years, they would. We don't have it. When I was at Carolina, you know, in your senior year, you opted to move off campus. But we were there all -- and it was a great community. It's just not there. I know that they're looking for answers, public/private partnerships to try to build dorm rooms and things like that close. The other thing that we heard was that students are sometimes being taken advantage of for the very same thing you said, that they've got to sign a lease right now or you can't do that, some predatory things that go on. So they're well aware of those things and try to address those as much as we can at this point.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you. Senator.

MS. BUCKHOUSE - EXAMINATION BY SENATOR MASSEY:

Q. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I know you've been listening to a number of our questions already, but I'll tell you that the housing issue seems to me to be somewhat of a consequence of so much of a focus on non-resident students, that if we didn't have that many non-resident students, if the population were down some, then there would be housing availability for the residents. I know you've been on there a little bit longer. This is kind of weird, but you're our longest-tenured incumbent at any of the universities. I would hope that that is something that the Board would consider in looking at what the total population should be, and what the breakdown of resident versus non-residents should be, especially at the flagship. I think you've got a higher responsibility than what we might see from some other universities. I would hope that you all would think about that, because I would like to see those numbers move. I would like to see a bigger delta between residents and non-residents. I understand from listening to Senator Johnson's questions that that may be difficult for the university to achieve. But I do think that's a concern, and I would hope that would be part of the considerations that

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the Board would think about as well. Also, because I've asked some of the others this, do I understand correctly that you're serving on the Board by virtue of an interim appointment from the Governor? Can you tell me how that came about? How was it that you received an interim appointment?

A. I was asked by the Governor. My father served on the University of South Carolina Board of Trustees for a very long time, and he became ill. I had always mentioned to him and to anybody else that when he decided to retire that I wanted to run for it, probably for the last 10 or 15 years. I told him that's what I wanted to do.

Q. He wouldn't give it up.

A. He wouldn't give it up. But I think, no, that's -- you know, but he did, when he became ill, and like I said, I had made it known to the Governor in the past that, you know. I don't think my father asked him. I don't think anybody asked him. I think I had made it known that I was going to run for that seat, for this seat when the time came.

Q. Okay. Thank you.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Representative Rose.

MS. BUCKHOUSE - EXAMINATION BY REPRESENTATIVE ROSE:

Q. Hello.

A. Hello.

Q. Good afternoon. Just a comment. I hope that -- let me ask you this. How important do you think it is that the university continue to look at pedestrian safety? For me, living in downtown Columbia, having the campus at USC, and I know there's a study that's probably taking place, but I really hope that you use your voice on the Board to look at that. When I look at Assembly Street, for example, and I know this is something you're -- this is not earth-shattering like you guys are aware, but Assembly Street, I'm always walking there. We have the Greek Village, which is nice. You've got Lincoln 650 for the athletics at the Columbia Center. There's so many kids that are walking across Assembly Street, and they're not using the pedestrian bridge. I know it's there, but for whatever reason, they're not there. And so going across this major thoroughfare. There has been terrible things that have occurred. And I'm always just cringing as I see these kids walking, and then you see them late at night. I guess, obviously, and it's also a win/win for Columbia. If the university is going to be pedestrian-friendly and enhance that, it's going to be good for our capital city. But I just encourage for there really to continue to be conversations about that for our students.

A. Totally agree. When I was at Carolina, Greene Street was open.

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Q. And also, the General Assembly has given close to \$50,000,000 for the Assembly Street Railroad Project. And Congressman Clyburn was able to get an earmark of \$200,000,000. So we're on the cusp of being able to fulfill that project, and one of the three things that could be done with it would be able to get rid of the rail line that runs when you're on Rosewood, turning left onto Assembly Street to do that wraparound. I guess the fairgrounds is on your right. That rail line right there, one of the things that's proposed is to take that away because it wouldn't be needed anymore if we were able to do the fix. And being able to connect that, maybe in a greenway capacity to the university to kind of help draw. A lot of universities have their football stadium on campus. Ours isn't, but we've done a good job. We've kind of grown towards it, but also with the DOT and other things, the engineers did a good job of making the stadium feel like it's there. But a greenway connecting the stadium, we already have a lot of students that like to walk around the football stadium when it's not under construction, of course. But there's so much opportunity there to transform our university for safety, pedestrian-friendly, and help our capital city in the process. So I hope the Board continues to really look at that. That's all I want to say. It's not a question. Just a comment.

A. Right, I understand, and I know that those things have been discussed, even on the short time I've been there. The passageway to Williams-Brice, downtown, all those kind of things.

Q. Thank you.

MR. CHAIRMAN: All right. If there are no more questions, I'll entertain a motion.

REPRESENTATIVE ROSE: Motion. Motion from Representative Rose.

REPRESENTATIVE MCGINNIS: Second.

MR. CHAIRMAN: All those in favor, raise your right hand.

(All hands are raised.)

MR. CHAIRMAN: Anyone opposed? Thank you, ma'am.

MS. BUCKHOUSE: Thank you.

MR. CHAIRMAN: All right, next is Frederick Schipman Johnston.

FREDERICK SCHIPMAN JOHNSTON:

MR. JOHNSTON: Thank you, sir.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay, Mr. Johnston, if you'll raise your right hand. Do you swear to tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, so help you God?

MR. JOHNSTON: Yes, sir.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay, if you'd like to make an opening statement, and then we can go into a few questions.

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MR. JOHNSTON: Sure. My name is Frederick Schipman Johnston. I go by Schipp Johnston, originally from Florence. Came to the university in '82, finished in '86. Moved to Charlotte and worked for a company called Coopers & Liebrand, which is now Price Waterhouse Coopers. Got my CPA certificate. Worked on their audit team for five and a half years, then moved back to Florence. Went to work for a gentleman who gave me an opportunity. 2006, was able to buy his company. Merged with another guy in my same industry in 2018. And since then, we've acquired other businesses that are similar to ours, and we now have ten branches, six in South Carolina, Myrtle Beach, Florence, Charleston, Orangeburg, Columbia, and Greenville, and then four in Georgia, right at 1,000 employees. And I feel like that my accounting and financial background, as well as my business background, would be a benefit to the Board, and this being a vacant seat, I'm not replacing anyone. So, that's me. Thank you.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Ms. Webb.

MR. JOHNSTON - EXAMINATION BY MS. WEBB:

Q. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. And Mr. Johnston, can you please state your current address?

A. 2447 Sailfish Drive, Murrells Inlet 29576.

Q. Okay, thank you. And is this the address that you pay your 4% property tax?

A. Yes, ma'am.

Q. And is this address within the judicial circuit to which you have applied?

A. Yes, ma'am.

Q. And do you currently serve on any local or state board, commission, committee, or elected office?

A. Nothing elected. Two local long-term board services in Florence. One is Synovus Bank. It's not elected. And the other one is a small board at the MUSC. It used to be Carolinas Hospital Systems. When MUSC bought that, they kept those local Boards in place, and so that's just my involvement as a community person. But you and I have spoke about that, and if those are conflicts, it's not an issue to -- I don't live there anymore, so it's not an issue to resign from those.

Q. Yes, and please note for the record that upon doing research, there is no conflict that I could find for you continuing in those positions.

A. Thank you.

Q. All right. And then, do you understand the obligations and responsibilities of serving on a public institution's board of trustees?

A. Yes, ma'am.

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Q. And are you aware that you cannot contact any member of the General Assembly and formally ask for a vote commitment or pledge until 48 hours after the Commission's report has been released?

A. Yes, ma'am.

Q. And have you currently asked any third parties to contact members of the General Assembly on your behalf, or are you aware of anyone attempting to intervene in this process on your behalf?

A. No, ma'am.

Q. And are you aware that you have an ongoing obligation and duty to report to the Commission any changes that might occur that would affect your application and overall eligibility for serving on a college board?

A. Yes.

Q. All right. Thank you, Mr. Johnston. And, Mr. Chairman, I have no further questions.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you, Ms. Webb. Thank you, Mr. Johnston. Same issue. There will likely be some questions, but those are under the Garnet Trust. Would you prefer to do that in open session or executive session?

MR. JOHNSTON: No, I mean, my answer is going to be similar to Mr. Bonnoitt's. I mean, so --

MR. CHAIRMAN: Very good, very good.

MR. JOHNSTON: I just have less to give away.

MR. CHAIRMAN: All right. Any questions? Go ahead.

MR. JOHNSTON - EXAMINATION BY SENATOR MASSEY:

Q. Okay. Mr. Johnston, let me ask you some questions about that then, about the Garnet Trust. Can you tell me what has been your involvement with Garnet Trust?

A. I participate, or I listen, to a quarterly call, but nothing on day-to-day, nothing involved in any individual contracts or anything like that.

Q. Your Statement of Economic Interest indicates that you receive ordinary business income from the Garnet Trust.

A. Yes.

Q. And what do you receive?

A. A K-1. There's no cash. And it's my understanding -- you're going to say you're a CPA so you should understand that. When that entity was started, it was deemed an LLC for some reason. I'm not sure who made that decision as to what it is. It's now reverted to a C-Corp. So there's no longer going to be K-1s delivered to the people who donated money to that. And that income, my understanding is the remaining cash as of 12/31. It's not an income per se. It is -- if they raised \$300,000 and they only gave away \$200,000, well, at the end of that year, there's going to

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be \$100,000 revenue left, which in the IRS's world is going to be deemed as income to those people. And so --

Q. Is any of that money distributed to the people?

A. No. No, sir.

Q. All right. So you don't receive any income yourself, personally, from the Garnet Trust?

A. That is correct.

Q. Do you receive any non-income benefit from the Garnet Trust?

A. No, sir.

Q. All right. Do you receive any type of income or non-income benefit from raising money for the university or the Garnet Trust?

A. No, sir.

Q. Okay.

A. And as Mr. Bonnoitt said, I mean, if I were successful, there's zero issue with me divesting of that. And I said, you know, sarcastically, I have less to give up than he did. I only gave \$5,000.

Q. I also understand that from your private employer perspective, that your employer is a distributor of alcohol and beverages to the university.

A. Correct.

Q. Is that right?

A. Yes.

Q. It does. And just so we're clear on this process, is that because -- does the university have a choice in the entity that distributes the alcohol to it? Can they pick another distributor?

A. Not to buy Anheuser-Busch products.

Q. Right. Correct. There is a territorial --

A. Yeah, not to be, you know, vague in any of my responses, full disclosure. Myself and a gentleman named Will Dorminy own Southern Crown Partners. And our branch in Columbia, which is the KW branch, right across from the stadium, we sell beer products to the venues inside the university. Now, most of those are done through a third-party agency. The university doesn't normally handle the concessions.

Q. Yeah, you don't sell to the university directly.

A. That's correct.

Q. They hire somebody to do their services, and they have to purchase.

A. That's correct.

Q. If they're going to sell alcohol. But they are—by virtue of state law, they're going to be - - because of where they are geographically, they're going to have to buy that from a -- not just from a distributor, but it's got to be from you. Is that right?

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A. This Columbia location? Yes, sir. And, you know, as you well know in state law, they can't go buy that from a retailer.

Q. That's right.

A. Because they are deemed a retailer.

Q. Right.

A. In the three-tier system, we are the middle wholesaler from manufacturer, wholesaler to retailer.

Q. So what I really wanted to get at is this is not a situation where, as a member of the Board, you could solicit business through your private company because there's no choice from where they have --

A. That is correct. And in the state of South Carolina, as it relates to beer, every account has to have the opportunity to buy it at the same price.

Q. Right.

A. So now, yes, we can do quantity discounts for a Walmart. But we can't give a Walmart a \$10 price and the mom-and-pop store down the street a \$15 price. That's illegal.

Q. As a member of the Board of Trustees, you wouldn't have the ability to give the university or whoever it hires -- you couldn't give them a lower price.

A. Correct.

Q. You couldn't give them a higher price.

A. It would have to be what the convenience store down the street bought it for.

Q. Okay.

MR. JOHNSTON - EXAMINATION BY CHAIRMAN BENNETT:

Q. For the record, I think it should be made clear that it was the Clemson graduate that's been probing on the Carolina Garnet Trust NIL consortium.

A. I watched a little bit of its hearing the other day. I expected it.

MR. JOHNSTON - EXAMINATION BY REPRESENTATIVE ROSE:

Q. I don't know the answer to this question, but I'm going to ask it for this race, since we have four people that are running the Board. And I hope the answer is yes, but I'm curious. Are you a member of the Gamecock Club?

A. Yes, 34 years.

Q. Very good. Thank you.

SENATOR JOHNSON: Mr. Chairman.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Senator from York.

MR. JOHNSTON - EXAMINATION BY SENATOR JOHNSON:

Q. To follow up on Senator Edgefield's question, you've received a K-1 every year for how many years?

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A. From the Garnet Trust?

Q. From the Garnet Trust.

A. Two.

Q. Two years.

A. There's '23 and '24 are the two that I've received. I sent you the '24 one yesterday. Yes, sir.

Q. So you received this K-1. Does the Garnet -- or did the Garnet Trust in the past ever do a -- since this was an LLC, a member tax distribution to cover the taxes? Because you're paying taxes off of that K-1.

A. That is correct.

Q. So that's just another donation you're giving to the cause?

A. Correct.

Q. That's fair enough. I wanted to make sure I understood that. In your PDQ, your answer, one of your answers is, the Board needs to attract new students and expand enrollment. My question -- so you've been sitting here, you've heard my whole, if you're going to be big -- how do you expand, how do you make the university bigger without keeping a very large amount of actually probably going over the 50% mark of out-of-state students?

A. Yes, sir. I've heard that question numerous times. I think, first of all, we need to understand why in-state students are not choosing to come here. And I'm not aware of what that package, when they get their acceptance letter back, if they opt not to go to the university, what are those steps? What do they, is it a reason? Is it the housing issue? Because you only have a housing guarantee for one year? Well, some parents don't want to deal with that. You know, I know that the \$12,000 of tuition is relatively in line. The room and board's another \$15,000, so you're getting really close to that \$30,000 number. The life scholarships and all the other opportunities for scholarship help offset the \$12,000. But I think we clearly need to understand why the people who are accepted South Carolina residents choose not to go here, especially if they choose to go to one of the other 32 schools. If we know that, then I think we can figure out a solution to at least navigate a path to get those kids to come here. If we don't know that, we're always guessing as to how can we get them here.

Q. Certainly. You also wrote that you believe the university should align its plans with the migration of people moving into the state. What do you mean by that? I was curious.

A. All of y'all have done a tremendous job to make the state a very business-friendly state. Cutting taxes, making it easy -- not easy per se, but making it a really good place for people to come and live. So we're

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having Myrtle Beach, one of the fastest-growing counties in the state. We have a tremendous thing in South Carolina that people want to be here. There's a lot of stuff going on up north that people are probably going to choose to leave from. We're probably one of the states that they're going to navigate to. So I think we're going to have an influx of people. And while they're coming down, it gets back to the pedestrian issue. It gets back to the building issue. Everything you've got going on, you need to have a plan to be able to attract more students because I do believe our 5.5 million residents will continue to grow. And the university, the flagship, should be the number-one choice of anyone in this state. Now, how do we get there? I'm not exactly sure what the other ones are offering and/or why these students may or may not choose to come to the university and go to another one. But that would be my number-one thing to dig into is we have to know why they're making that choice. Once we understand that, then we start navigating how do we build the proper buildings? Because I had -- I graduated here. Both my parents graduated here, my brother and my sister. My wife attended here, finished at Francis Marion. My oldest started at Wofford, finished here, got her MBA at The Citadel. My youngest is at Midlands Tech. And so I've experienced a lot of issues in schools and stuff. And this one, it blows my mind that it's not the choice. This is such a cool place. I mean, no disrespect to the Clemson guys, but it's such a cool spot. And we got to make sure we understand why they're choosing not to be here.

Q. One last question, and this is just a clarification question. If you were appointed to the Board at Winthrop, your company could never get the contract to sell Budweiser products at Winthrop because Winthrop is in Big Bridges, right? At B&B. And he's the exclusive supplier of Budweiser products.

A. That is correct.

Q. So the only -- and so I want to make sure that's very clear to anyone who ever asked about it that the reason that University of South Carolina buys these products from your company is because you are the exclusive wholesaler of that product.

A. Yes. I mean, Anheuser-Busch has what we refer to as an equity agreement. And it has to be two approved individuals. Will and myself are those two approved individuals for our equity agreement. We have one equity agreement for all 10 of our branches. And our branch in Columbia and our branch in Greenville will provide all of Clemson's. But the Miller Coors Network here is going to -- Bev South is going to be selling it to the stadium. They don't only buy our beer. They buy everything else. And then same thing in Clemson. I mean, it's just the

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way the franchise agreements were written, the repeal of prohibition, the setup of the three-tier system. It's just how it has evolved over time. And Will and I started out in -- I started in Florence. He started in Georgia, but he bought Mr. Perlstein's business in Charleston. Then when we merged, we did acquisitions that allowed us to have the branches we have today in the state. But every acquisition does not change the existing footprint that Anheuser-Busch issued to it many, many years ago. We can't co-mingle lines even inside our own company.

Q. Thank you.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay, we'll close with a motion.

SENATOR JOHNSON: So moved.

SENATOR MASSEY: Second.

MR. CHAIRMAN: And a second. All those in favor, raise your right hand. And the proxy for Devine.

(All hands are raised.)

MR. CHAIRMAN: We've got a unanimous affirmative vote and the Devine vote as well. Thank you, sir.

MR. JOHNSTON: Yes, sir. Thank you.

MR. CHAIRMAN: All right. Next up is Michelle Kerscher Plyler.

MICHELLE KERSCHER PLYLER:

MS. PLYLER: Good afternoon.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Good afternoon. How are you? If you would raise your right hand for me. Do you swear to tell the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth, so help you God?

MS. PLYLER: I do.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Great, thank you. Please feel free to give us an opening statement, and we'll move into some initial questions.

MS. PLYLER: I am Michelle Kerscher Plyler. I do use my maiden name because there is another Michelle Plyler in the Myrtle Beach area, so there's some confusion sometimes. I'm originally from West Columbia. Grew up about four miles from the university in Springdale, South Carolina and I've been a fan my entire life. I enrolled in the fall of 1998. It was the best experience of my life. Have loved the university. And we have been a Gamecock Club member, my uncle and my husband and I, for as long as I can remember. So we have supported the university in multiple ways through financial giving and showing up. I was a student when we were one and 21, so there's dedication. I was at every game. I moved to Myrtle Beach permanently in 2012. Where I, with my husband, manage and operate his historic retail gift shop, Downtown Myrtle Beach, as well as 40 rental properties and a small hotel we bought for staff housing as a necessity for the area. I've been on the Board of Visitors

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for the University of South Carolina since 2020. My term expires in May of 2026, this year. But it has allowed me an education about the university to renew my interest. We are basically a marketing arm. We don't get financial information, but we do hear from heads of departments, deans, and are able to know more about the direction the university is going. It has renewed my interest in that, and I believe that my 24 years of finance and accounting and being able to really drill down into businesses and streamline sources of revenue, as well as expenses, is what would be valuable to the Board of Trustees of the university.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Ms. Webb.

MS. PLYLER - EXAMINATION BY MS. WEBB:

Q. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Ms. Plyler, can you please state your current address?

A. 916 North Ocean Boulevard, Myrtle Beach, South Carolina 29577.

Q. Thank you. And is this the address where you pay your 4% property tax?

A. So it's in a business, so we are not allowed to pay 4% property tax. But we do own another home in Murrells Inlet where we do pay 4% property tax.

Q. Yes. Thank you. And is this address, as well as your other address where you do pay your 4% property tax, are both of those addresses within the judicial circuit to which you have applied?

A. Yes. One is in Horry County. One is in Georgetown County.

Q. Thank you. And do you currently serve on any local or state board, commission, committee, or elected office?

A. Not that it's elected. I am on the local Board of the American Red Cross, as well as the Myrtle Beach Downtown Alliance, which is a local Board of business owners, but nothing is elected.

Q. Yes. And just please note for the record that there are no conflicts with those. And do you understand the obligations and responsibilities of serving on a public institution's board of trustees?

A. I do.

Q. And are you aware that you cannot contact any member of the General Assembly and formally ask for a vote commitment or pledge until 48 hours after the Commission's report has been released?

A. I am.

Q. And have you currently asked any third parties to contact members of the General Assembly on your behalf, or are you aware of anyone attempting to intervene in this process on your behalf?

A. I am not.

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Q. And are you aware that you have an ongoing obligation and duty to report to the Commission any changes that might occur, though it would affect your application and overall eligibility for serving on a college board?

A. Yes.

Q. Thank you, Ms. Plyler. Mr. Chairman, I have no further questions.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you, Ms. Webb. Any questions to start off with? Senator from York.

MS. PLYLER - EXAMINATION BY SENATOR JOHNSON:

Q. Thank you, Ms. Plyler, for being here today. In your PDQ, you state that in the upcoming years, increasing admissions will be critical due to the lack of population of future generations coming in. And I understand that there is a decreasing pool of applicants. Therefore, in order to do it, you're going to need more students to come in. That gets back to kind of the question that I keep asking. How are you going to do that? If we know that out of the eleven odd thousand students who are admitted, in-state students who are admitted to the University of South Carolina, only about 40% choose the University of South Carolina. How are you going to do what you're saying, increase admissions, without actually drastically increasing the amount of out-of-state students who want to come in?

A. By increasing admissions, I mean it's going to be more difficult to fight for that admissions pool because of the declining birth rate across the U.S. South Carolina is uniquely positioned because we are a quickly fast-growing state. Myrtle Beach was the fastest-growing DMA for years until last year. Pigeon Forge is another one. So we are uniquely positioned to have more people in this state to pull from instead of fighting for the declining birth rates across the U.S. However, I think that this current administration, I was -- since 2020, I've been on the Board of Visitors. So I was here for the previous president and as the new administration came in. And I would say that there is a dedication to prioritizing South Carolina students, not only in undergraduate schools, but grad schools. Especially, we've heard from every dean and it's part of their interview process to see if their plan on staying in the South Carolina area after they graduate, which I think is important. But I think that we need to get back out into the high schools as we did prior to COVID. You know, it's been six years, but we're still recovering in a lot of areas because we need to educate the students. Now that we have the 10% of high schools that are automatically guaranteed admission, as well as the USC Commitment Grant, that if their parents make under \$80,000, their tuition and fees would be covered. So I think we need to educate,

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especially the rural communities, about that ability. And that will help us be better positioned to fight for those South Carolina ensure, and to what extent does the Board engage to ensure that there's free speech on the campus and that students are challenged, but yet maintain the culture of South Carolina and not the culture of some other part of the country?

A. Absolutely. I think that, you know, cancel culture was such a huge thing for so long and people were afraid to speak out on either side because you never knew what the effect of that was going to be. I think the important thing to go back to is the Carolinian Creed. It says that we need to respect all people. That needs to be focused on the University 101 classes, that this is a university. I think the Board is responsible at the end of the day for creating an environment that allows people to grow, hear different perspectives. You don't know what you don't know. And you need to be able to listen to other people respectfully, and so I think that we need to focus more on that. It's easy to say, just as they do in Myrtle Beach, we want to go back to the days of the 80s where, you know, everything was fabulous, but we didn't have social media. We didn't have the changing society that we have today. So I think we need to refocus on that creed of respect to others and make sure that this university fosters that and find a way to deal with situations where we had a speaker that was coming to the university that was very controversial a few years ago, and I think the university handled it admirably at the end. But they needed a better plan in the beginning. Handling the public relations fallout of that, because bad news travels fast. The good news that follows is much less viral, so I think that we need to create a public relations strategy also to deal with when those situations happen because we need to be a community that fosters all ideas.

Q. Should parents be concerned that if they send their children to the University of South Carolina -- any of the campuses should be worried that their child will be indoctrinated, whichever side you think the indoctrination may occur? Do you think they should worry about that?

A. I don't think they should, and I think that we should definitely educate parents that the university doesn't need to feed into that. We shouldn't have professors that are teaching sides. We need to be sure that we are auditing classes, that we are making sure that we are fairly presenting the evidence, and every political side, and make sure that those students can hear all sides and decide for themselves. We need more individuals and less mob mentality in some universities across the country.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you.

SENATOR MASSEY: I'd make a motion.

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SENATOR JOHNSON: Second.

MR. CHAIRMAN: There's a motion for favorable report, and a second.
All those in favor, raise your right hand.

(All hands are raised.)

MR. CHAIRMAN: Anyone opposed? Thank you, ma'am.

MS. PLYLER: Thank you.

MR. CHAIRMAN: All right. Anthony Holland Pope. Good afternoon,
Mr. Pope.

ANTHONY HOLLAND POPE:

MR. POPE: Good afternoon, and thank you for the opportunity, and
thank you all for your service to our state as well. I'm jumping ahead.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Let me swear you in real quick, and then you can get
into that. If you'll raise your right hand. Do you swear to tell the truth,
the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, so help you God?

MR. POPE: I do.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Great. Now feel free to provide us with an opening
statement, and then we'll move into some initial comments.

MR. POPE: As you said, I'm Anthony Holland Pope. I go by Tony Pope,
and I grew up in Georgetown. I attended the University of South
Carolina, graduated in 1986. I was the first member of my family to have
the opportunity to go to college, and obviously the first to graduate. Since
then my sister, her brother -- I'm sorry, her husband, her daughter, her
son have all graduated from the university. Lifelong fan, to address
Representative Rose's question earlier, 42-year member of the
Gamecock Club, 25 years at a higher level, 42 combined. I'm a member
of the Garnet Society, Horseshoe Society, higher level at the Legends
level of Garnet Society. So I've given back to the university financially
over time, and I want to utilize the skills I've learned in my work life to
help the university. I've been really involved in boards, chambers of
commerce boards, economic development, things like that, nonprofit
boards. I've held leadership positions in those boards. So I think I've got
a well-rounded background from that perspective. I've also got
knowledge from the business owner perspective of starting a State Farm
agency when I was 26 years old, now building it to one of the largest in
South Carolina and serves South Carolina, Georgia, and North Carolina.
And we have three locations. The only agent that has three locations in
our state. So I've had success there. I've had some success in commercial
real estate, 30-some tenants there that we handle property management
for. I've got infrastructure-type experience in renovating buildings,
bringing older buildings back to life, re-purposing those things. So I

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think there's a lot of things that I could bring to the table as a board member.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Great. Ms. Webb.

MR. POPE - EXAMINATION BY MS. WEBB:

Q. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. And Mr. Pope, can you please state your current address?

A. Yes, 224 Cannon Street, Georgetown 29440.

Q. Thank you. And is this the address where you pay your 4% property tax?

A. Yes.

Q. And is this address within the judicial circuit to which you have applied?

A. Yes.

Q. And do you currently serve on any local or state board, commission, committee, or other elected office?

A. Yes. And we've disclosed those and had conversations with you that there shouldn't be a conflict, but I'm happy to list those if you'd like me to.

Q. No, you don't have to. Just for the record, I will note that you do serve on the Dorchester County Economic Development Board. Is that correct?

A. That's correct.

Q. And according to research that I have conducted, according to previous AG's opinions, that is actually not a public office, just for the record.

A. Thank you.

Q. All right. And do you understand the obligations and responsibilities of serving on a public institution's board of trustees?

A. Yes, I do.

Q. And are you aware that you cannot contact any member of the General Assembly and formally ask for a vote commitment or pledge until 48 hours after the Commission's report has been released?

A. Yes.

Q. And have you currently asked any third parties to contact members of the General Assembly on your behalf, or are you aware of anyone attempting to intervene in this process on your behalf?

A. I don't know yet. We'll figure that out. But my hope would be that I could bring some perspective to the board. If it's increasing awareness of the university, marketing it to more high school students, opportunities that we have, I think we can't -- I've always said in business, you have to grow. If you can't stay still, you've got to go backwards. So I think we do

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need to look for ways to be aggressive and grow the student population, primarily from within the state as much as we can. And whether I have all those answers right now or not, I don't know. I'm brand new to the board, but I certainly feel my experience would be helpful. I didn't just really get into the chamber of commerce things I've done. I've been a Board chairman twice, and I've learned a good bit about workforce development, things like that, and the economic development Board that I'm on as well. So I know there's a problem just finishing high school, not necessarily keeping our kids here to go to college. There's a significant amount of children that start high school and never finish. It was staggering when I heard the number. I'm all for doing all that we can to make the ownership has been in the Summerville area. My job has changed. My responsibilities are different with different locations. So it allows the flexibility to stay in Georgetown, drive to Mount Pleasant, not be caught up in all the I-26 congestion every day trying to get there, so.

Q. Do you still maintain the home in Summerville?

A. Yes.

Q. Okay. That's all I've got, Mr. Chairman.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Any other questions? Is there a motion to approve the report?

SENATOR JOHNSON: Move to approve the report.

SENATOR MASSEY: Second.

MR. CHAIRMAN: All those in favor say aye, or raise your right hand.

(All hands are raised except Senator Bennett who abstained.)

MR. CHAIRMAN: Any opposed? No. Devine votes aye. For the record, I will abstain for this. Mr. Pope has actually donated to me in the past, and I think it's appropriate that I abstain. Very good. Thank you. All right. Kellah Fortson Webster.

KELLAH FORTSON WEBSTER:

MS. WEBSTER: The very last one.

MR. CHAIRMAN: All right. Good afternoon.

MS. WEBSTER: Good afternoon.

MR. CHAIRMAN: If you'll raise your right hand and let me swear you in. Do you promise to tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, so help you God?

MS. WEBSTER: I do.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Great. You're welcome to give us an opening statement, and then we'll get into some initial questions.

MS. WEBSTER: Thank you very much. I'm Kellah Fortson Webster. I am from Conway, South Carolina. I've lived in Conway since I was about five years old. I still can't say that you're from Conway. In Conway,

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unless you were born in Conway, you can't be from Conway. But I have been in Conway for about 50 years. I come from a long line of Carolina graduates. My grandfather played football at Carolina from '31 to '34. He was one of the founders of the Bam Club, which became the Gamecock Club. He and my grandmother met at Carolina. My parents met at Carolina. My whole entire family graduated from Carolina. I'm a third-generation graduate. My son was a fourth-generation graduate, and he met his wife, who was a Sparty. They met at Darla Moore, and she was doing her graduate work. She did the dual international JVIMBA program at Carolina. So we have a rich history. I currently serve on the Board of Governors for the Alumni Association. I've done that since 2017. I currently serve as the secretary of the Board. I am very proud to say that we, when I got on the Board, we were \$21,000,000 in debt for the Pastides Alumni Center. We had a building to pay for. And last year, we burned the mortgage. We were able to pay off the debt, and I was able to secure the last million-dollar donation. We got a donor who wrote us a check for a million dollars, and we were able to pay it off. So I've done a lot of work for the university. I was -- I have been the president of the Horry County Gamecock Club since -- well, it's been about 12 years that I've been president. I have been on the Board since 1998, which is kind of sad. I don't want to say that I've been doing anything that long. I shouldn't be that old, but I am. We have, in Conway, we have a family business, Environmental Systems Testing Services. It's been around since 1980. My mom started it, and my brother and I took it over in 1998. And we run it now. So we've been in Horry County. We've been established there for a while. So I'm really excited about the prospect of serving on Board of trustees. I have a lot of blood, sweat, and equity that I have already invested into the university, and I want to see her around for a long time to come. We are really invested in the university. I was raised by a family that taught us at a very early age that we owe her a debt of gratitude, and it's our responsibility to give back to her. And we take that responsibility really seriously around our house. And I look forward to answering your questions.

MR. CHAIRMAN: All right. Ms. Webb.

MS. WEBSTER - EXAMINATION BY MS. WEBB:

Q. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. And Ms. Webster, can local or state board, commission, committee, or elected office?

A. Not that would conflict, just what we've talked about.

Q. Yes. Thank you. And do you understand the obligations and responsibilities of serving on a public institution's board of trustees?

A. I do.

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Q. And are you aware that you cannot contact any member of the General Assembly and formally ask for a vote commitment or pledge until 48 hours after the Commission's report has been released?

A. Yes.

Q. And have you currently asked any third parties to contact members of the General Assembly on your behalf, or are you aware of anyone attempting to intervene in this process on your behalf?

A. No.

Q. And are you aware that you have an ongoing obligation and duty to report to the Commission any changes that might occur that would affect your application and overall eligibility for serving on a college board?

A. Yes.

Q. All right. Thank you, Ms. Webster. And, Mr. Chairman, I have no further questions.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you, Ms. Webb. Are there any questions for Ms. Webster?

MS. WEBSTER - EXAMINATION BY SENATOR JOHNSON:

Q. Ms. Webster, I don't want to leave you out. I've asked everybody else, so I might as well ask you. You know the question. If you want to just go ahead and answer it, I won't phrase it even.

A. Well, I truly think that as far as out-of-state students go and growth, it's one of those things where we're going to have to embrace it because I don't think we really have a choice in that with the new brain hospital and all the things that are coming our way with, as people have mentioned before, the matriculation from the north, people coming our way, people, they want to come. And so it's an issue that we're going to have to address. I don't know that we really have a choice. We had over 40,000 students this year for the first time ever. We finally broke that 40,000 mark, and it's an issue that we're going to have to deal with. I have been one of those people, Representative Rose, when you were talking about earlier your friend with a child at Wofford. I have a friend with a child that was going to Wofford, that got a call about Wofford. Her child got wait-listed. She ended up at Wofford. She had a scholarship offer from Wofford and got wait-listed at South Carolina. I think one of the reasons that those kids are getting wait-listed is a direct effect from the 10 percent deal that we've done, allowing the top 10 percent of the kids in high school, those kids that are graduating in the top 10 percent of their classes, we've given them an automatic opportunity to come should they choose to take it. One of the problems that we're seeing, A, we don't have to take SAT scores anymore. That came from COVID. It was a direct result of kids not taking the SAT during COVID. There's not

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that line of matriculation anymore. There's a lot of kids that have a 3.9 or a 4.0, so you don't have that to separate them. And so a lot of these kids are getting wait-listed. And then we have a problem that South Carolina is sending the kids. We're about two weeks behind with our acceptance letters. A lot of the other colleges send their acceptance letters about two weeks, three weeks before we do. And these kids kind of panic. They're like, you know, I've got to go somewhere. It just happened to my niece. And so she went ahead and accepted at Ole Miss instead of waiting around for South Carolina because she got wait-listed. A lot of these kids are going to end up getting accepted, but they hold these spots open to see if these kids that were going to be given, that were offered these spots, to see if they're going to take them or not. It's something we've got to look at. I think that once we kind of work out and see how -- we've only done this program with a 10% for two years, and we're you've got to be the bad guy. Sometimes you have to be the support system. You know, it depends on what's called for in the situation. There's going to be decisions that are going to be made that are not going to be popular. Sometimes what the popular thing to do is not what needs to be done. Sometimes it's going to be a difficult call, but it's going to be the right thing. I think that you have to do what is the best thing for the university all the time, the best thing for the students. It's not always going to be necessarily politically popular. It may not be what everybody, you know, wants to see done. But you have to do what's the best thing for the university.

Q. How do you challenge -- how do you -- What's the best way to ask this question? This university sits just yards away from this campus. Politics are always in the middle of the activities of the university. There are plenty of people in this building and buildings across the way that would love to govern from here what the university does and does not do. How do you handle those pressures?

A. Well, I'll tell you. When all of the backlash was happening a couple years ago with all the discussion of restructuring the board, one of the options on the table was taking away the seat for the Alumni Association. My stance at the time was, why would you take away the one seat that wasn't a political position? Every other seat, you have to get all of you to support it, except for the Alumni Association. Which is the sole thing that the Alumni Association seat does, you are literally working for the graduates, and you're not beholden to anybody. I don't know why you would want to take that one away, because it's hard. You're encouraging people to do quid pro quo, to me, the way that this process works.

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Q. There are at least 32 public colleges and universities in South Carolina, each with their own board. Other states use a board of regents system, where there is one board to deal with the affairs of all public universities in that state. North Carolina does that. There's a great deal of overlap in programs amongst a lot of our universities. We've talked a lot about building costs, and the fact that USC never met a building it didn't like. But they're not the only ones. If there were significant discussions, you thought, that were going on in these buildings, to switch our governance style from individual boards and trustees to a regent system, how would you envision engagement in that process?

A. Me, personally?

Q. If you were a board member.

A. That would be something that you would have to take a really hard look at. It's difficult for me to speak on it when I don't have any experience with it. I would have to find out a whole lot more about the system. But, it would definitely be something that I would be interested in learning about. I mean, that's the most honest answer I can give you.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Any other questions? Senator from Edgefield.

SENATOR MASSEY: Mr. Chairman, I would ask that we go into an executive session first.

MR. CHAIRMAN: There's a motion to move into executive session.

SENATOR JOHNSON: Second.

MR. CHAIRMAN: All those in favor say aye.

(Ayes are heard.)

EXECUTIVE SESSION

MR. CHAIRMAN: All right, is there a motion to exit executive session?

SENATOR MASSEY: Yes, sir.

SENATOR JOHNSON: Second.

MR. CHAIRMAN: All those in favor say aye.

(Ayes are heard.)

MR. CHAIRMAN: All right, we are back in public session. Good, all right.

SENATOR MASSEY: Mr. Chairman, I move for a favorable report.

MR. CHAIRMAN: There's motion for a favorable report. Is there a second?

SENATOR JOHNSON: Second.

MR. CHAIRMAN: And a second. All those in favor, raise your right hand.

(All hands are raised.)

MR. CHAIRMAN: Anyone opposed? And Devine is in favor. Thank you very much.

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MS. WEBSTER: Thank you.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Folks, I appreciate your time. And Macey, thank you for all of your work. We are adjourned.

(There being nothing further, the proceeding concluded at 6:13 p.m.)

Motion Adopted

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

ADJOURNMENT

At 3:41P.M., on motion of Senator MASSEY, the Senate adjourned to meet tomorrow at 1:00 P.M.

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