

NO. 72

JOURNAL
OF THE
SENATE
OF THE
STATE OF SOUTH CAROLINA



EXTRAORDINARY SESSION
BEGINNING FRIDAY, MAY 15, 2026

WEDNESDAY, MAY 20, 2026

Wednesday, May 20, 2026
(Extraordinary Session)

~~Indicates Matter Stricken~~

Indicates New Matter

The Senate assembled at 11:00 A.M., the hour to which it stood adjourned, and was called to order by the ACTING PRESIDENT, Senator GROOMS. **(This is a Statewide Session day established under the provisions of Senate Rule 1B. Members not having scheduled committee or subcommittee meetings may be in their home districts without effect on their session attendance record.)**

ADDENDUM TO THE JOURNAL

The following remarks by Senator MATTHEWS were ordered printed in the Journal of April 15, 2026:

Remarks by Senator MATTHEWS

Mr. PRESIDENT and colleagues, I rise today in opposition to this Bill. Let me be clear, this is not about erasing history. No one here is trying to erase history. History is not fragile. It does not disappear because we choose not to enshrine it in bronze or stone. What this Bill asks us to do is something very different. It asks us to honor. And we need to be honest about who and what we are being asked to honor. Because what may be heritage to some is really a relic of racism and hatred to many others, especially to those whose ancestors suffered through slavery, mistreatment and generations of injustice.

That is not rhetoric. That is reality. Now, let's talk plainly. The Confederacy was not simply a "moment in history." It was terrorism against the United States of America. It was treason. And treason is not just any crime, it is the only crime specifically defined in the Constitution by our Founding Fathers. They understood the gravity of turning against your own country. And history shows us something else. After the Civil War, the federal government took the personal home of Robert E. Lee, Arlington House, and turned it into what is now Arlington National Cemetery -- burying Union soldiers in his front yard so that the legacy of that rebellion would never be honored again in that place. That was a statement. And we should be paying attention to it. So when we elevate figures who took part in that rebellion, we are not just remembering history, we are making a value judgment about what deserves honor.

And when we bring this conversation home, to our own front yard, the stakes become even clearer. Right outside this Chamber, on the grounds of the South Carolina State House, stand monuments to men like Ben

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Tillman, Wade Hampton III and Strom Thurmond. These are not abstract debates. These are the first things people see when they visit the seat of government in South Carolina -- business leaders, site selectors and corporate executives. Young professionals are deciding whether to build their lives here. They walk these grounds. They see what we have chosen to elevate. And now, with this Bill, we are not just maintaining those monuments, we are moving to increase protections around them. To lock them in place. To send a signal that this is what we prioritize. Let's be honest about what message that sends. When companies are deciding where to locate, whether it's advanced manufacturing, tech, logistics or healthcare, they are not just looking at tax rates. They are looking at culture. They are asking whether their employees, of all backgrounds, will feel welcomed and respected. And when they come here and see statues honoring individuals tied to white supremacy, voter suppression and segregation, and then see us doubling down on protecting those legacies, that does not sit kindly with economic development. It raises questions. It creates hesitation. And in many cases, it sends opportunities somewhere else.

Colleagues, we don't have to guess what the economic consequences look like. We've already lived it. When the Confederate flag flew over this State House, South Carolina faced a 15-year boycott that targeted tourism, the backbone of our economy. And the impact was real. Conventions canceled. Events pulled out. Millions of dollars were lost. In Columbia alone, we lost over \$2 million in business. Charleston lost millions more. Hilton Head lost millions. The NCAA refused to bring championship events to South Carolina. That meant empty hotel rooms. Fewer customers in restaurants. Lost wages for working people. All because of the message we were sending. And the moment that flag came down? The boycott ended. Events came back. Opportunity returned.

So when we stand here today and talk about increasing protections for these symbols, we are not operating in a vacuum. We already know the economic consequences. If we are serious about recruiting corporations, growing jobs and competing with states across this country, then we have to be serious about the message we send. Because doubling down on these symbols does not help us. It hurts us. South Carolina is a great State. But we cannot build a 21st century economy while clinging to 19th century ideas. We cannot attract the future while defending the past. And we cannot ask entire communities in this State to celebrate symbols that represent their oppression. This is not about division. This is about direction. Do we want to be a State that continues to debate and defend

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the legacy of treason, racism and exclusion? Or do we want to be a State that focuses on opportunity, growth and a future that includes everyone?

Colleagues, we can remember our history without revering it. We can acknowledge the past without being bound by it. And we can choose, right now, to move South Carolina forward. For our economy. For our people. For our future. I urge you to vote no.

ADDENDUM TO THE JOURNAL

The following remarks by Senator SUTTON were ordered printed in the Journal of April 29, 2026:

Remarks by Senator SUTTON

Thank you, Mr. PRESIDENT. I don't know if you guys heard last week, but the Trump administration has taken significant steps toward moving certain marijuana products and state regulated medical marijuana products out of schedule one and into schedule three. Now, to be clear this is not full legalization. Schedule three is still a control category, but it is a major, major move in the right direction. And, I'll say this plainly, I've never once voted for President Trump. I do not often rise to praise his administration, but I will give credit where credit is due. And this move is long overdue.

For way too long, our laws have treated every cannabis product as it belongs in the same conversation as fentanyl and heroin. And we know they are very, very different products. The federal government has now finally acknowledged what patients, doctors, veterans, seniors, farmers and small businesses have known for years; these products are not the same and do not belong in schedule one. This matters for South Carolina -- here in the Senate debating hemp, CBD, THC beverages, gummies, synthetics, age restrictions, testing, labeling and where these products can be sold. Reasonable people can disagree with the details, but after federal action -- one thing should be clear -- our response should not be ruled by fear, confusion and prohibition.

South Carolina needs a serious framework. One that protects children, one that respects law enforcement, one that supports legitimate farmers and local businesses and one that gives adults access to products that are tested, labeled and sold responsibly. And, I keep saying it and I'll keep saying it again. Allow adults to make adult decisions with these products. If a product is intoxicating then let's regulate it, let's put an age 21 restriction on it. I think we're unanimous about putting the 21 age restriction in place. And let's be required that they be sold in appropriate

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places. Let's require clear labeling, let's require child resistant packaging, keep the stuff away from kids, crack down on the synthetic junk, and go after the bad actors. But do not pretend that CBD products used by seniors dealing with pain, or veterans dealing with anxiety, or small business owners trying to follow the law is the same thing as a street drug. They are not.

The Trump Administration has also said it wants Congress to protect access to appropriate full spectrum CBD products under restrict rules or that pose serious health risk. That's a reasonable position and that's the balance that we should be looking to make here in South Carolina as we finish out this session and hopefully come to conclusion on this Hemp Bill that we've been working on. But I do have concerns we may be moving in the opposite direction -- that we may be moving toward a framework that is so restrictive we punish responsible people and take choices away from adults. We've seen this move before when a government moves too restrictively and just pushes the market underground. It is still going to happen; it just is going to be out of sight and not with safety controls in place. That's not pro-business. That's not pro-farmer. That's not a serious public health strategy. We should not have an unregulated market, but we should also not destroy an entire lawful 1.5 billion hemp economy because some people are uncomfortable with the product or have bad information -- like this product somehow makes you hallucinate.

The right answer is reasonable regulation and age controls, not reaction driven by fear. So, as this Body continues to work on hemp, I think we should take these federal actions seriously. Washington is beginning to move away from an outdated assumption, and taking steps toward science, appropriate medical use, consumer safety and regulation, and I believe South Carolina should do the same.

ADDENDUM TO THE JOURNAL

The following remarks by Senator MATTHEWS were ordered printed in the Journal of May 6, 2026:

Remarks by Senator MATTHEWS

As we begin celebrating America's 250th anniversary, we are reminded that the story of our nation's founding was not written only in Philadelphia, Boston or Yorktown. It was also written right here in South Carolina -- in our swamps -- along our rivers, in our small towns and by ordinary people who made extraordinary sacrifices for freedom.

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Tonight, I want to recognize two important moments in South Carolina Revolutionary history that are deeply connected to the Lowcountry and to the districts many of us proudly call home. The first is the May 11, 1779, skirmish at Coosawhatchie in present-day Jasper County. While it may not be one of the largest battles of the Revolutionary War, it represents something just as important -- the determination and resilience of the people of South Carolina during one of the most uncertain periods in American history.

At Coosawhatchie, Patriot and Loyalist forces clashed in a region that became strategically important during the Southern Campaign of the Revolution. The Lowcountry was not simply watching history unfold, it was helping shape it. Men from this region risked their lives, their livelihoods and their futures because they believed the promise of liberty was worth fighting for.

And what makes South Carolina's Revolutionary story unique is that this war was often fought neighbor against neighbor and family against family. Communities were divided. Loyalties were tested. The cost of freedom here was deeply personal. But through that struggle, South Carolinians endured. And just a few years later, after Charleston had fallen to the British and much of the State was consumed by war, South Carolina demonstrated once again its determination to survive and govern itself. On January 8, 1782, the South Carolina General Assembly established Jacksonborough in Colleton County as the wartime capital of South Carolina. Think about what that moment represented. Our state government had been displaced by war. British forces occupied Charleston. The future of the Revolution was still uncertain. Yet leaders gathered in Jacksonborough because they believed democracy and representative government must continue, even during conflict, uncertainty and hardship. Jacksonborough became more than a temporary capital. It became a symbol of perseverance. It was there that South Carolina leaders began rebuilding the State after years of violence and occupation. It was there that lawmakers took steps to restore civil government and reaffirm the ideals of liberty and self-governance that helped give birth to this Nation.

And it is important that we remember this history because too often the contributions of rural communities and Lowcountry South Carolinians are overlooked in the larger American story. But the truth is this: South Carolina was central to the American Revolution. More Revolutionary War battles and skirmishes were fought in South Carolina than in almost any other colony. The people of this State helped carry the Revolution through some of its darkest days. As we celebrate 250

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years of American independence, we should also reflect honestly on the full complexity of our history.

The ideals of liberty and freedom proclaimed during the Revolution were not fully extended to everyone. Enslaved Africans, Native Americans, women and many others were denied the very freedoms this Nation claimed to champion. Yet generation after generation of Americans have continued working to bring this country closer to its founding promise. That, too, is part of the American story.

So tonight, as we honor the skirmish at Coosawhatchie and the wartime capital at Jacksonborough, let us remember that history is not only about famous names and major battles. It is also about communities that persevered. It is about ordinary people who believed future generations deserved something better.

And 250 years later, it is now our responsibility to continue building a Nation worthy of their sacrifice. May we preserve this history. May we teach it. And may we continue striving toward the ideals of freedom, democracy and opportunity for all. Thank you, and God bless South Carolina and the United States of America.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS AND RESOLUTIONS

The following was introduced:

H. 5683 -- Reps. Rankin, Pace, C. Mitchell, Cromer, Gilreath, Bustos, Magnuson, Edgerton, Burns, Oremus, Bailey, Guest, Brittain, Chumley, J. E. Johnson, Haddon, Jordan, Lawson, Lowe, McGinnis, B. Newton, W. Newton, G. M. Smith, White, Willis and McCravy: A BILL TO AMEND THE SOUTH CAROLINA CODE OF LAWS BY ADDING SECTION 7-19-35 SO AS TO ESTABLISH THE ELECTION DISTRICTS FROM WHICH MEMBERS OF THE U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES ARE ELECTED; AND BY REPEALING SECTION 7-19-45 RELATING TO ELECTION DISTRICTS FROM WHICH MEMBERS OF THE U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES WERE FORMERLY ELECTED.

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

RATIFICATION OF ACTS

Pursuant to an invitation the Honorable Speaker and House of Representatives appeared in the Senate Chamber on May 20, 2026, at 1:00 P.M. and the following Act and Joint Resolution were ratified:

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(R264, S. 688) -- Senators Massey and Kimbrell: AN ACT 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; 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; BY AMENDING SECTION 12-37-220, RELATING TO PROPERTY TAX EXEMPTIONS, SO AS TO EXEMPT THE FIRST TEN THOUSAND DOLLARS OF NET DEPRECIATED VALUE OF BUSINESS PERSONAL PROPERTY OWNED BY A SMALL BUSINESS; BY AMENDING SECTION 12-37-900, RELATING TO PROPERTY TAX RETURNS, SO AS TO PROVIDE THAT A TAXPAYER IS NOT REQUIRED TO RETURN BUSINESS PERSONAL PROPERTY FOR TAXATION IF THE TAXPAYER HAS LESS THAN TEN THOUSAND DOLLARS OF NET DEPRECIATED VALUE OF BUSINESS PERSONAL PROPERTY; BY ADDING SECTION 12-37-980 SO AS TO REQUIRE THAT ALL BUSINESS PERSONAL PROPERTY REQUIRED TO BE RETURNED FOR TAXATION BE RETURNED TO THE DEPARTMENT OF REVENUE; AND BY AMENDING SECTION 12-20-50, RELATING TO THE LICENSE TAX ON CORPORATIONS, SO AS TO PROVIDE THAT, UNDER CERTAIN CIRCUMSTANCES, THE FEE DOES NOT APPLY TO ANY PORTION OF THE FIRST FIFTY MILLION DOLLARS OF CERTAIN CAPITAL STOCK AND PAID-IN OR CAPITAL SURPLUS.

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(R265, H. 3768) -- Reps. Brewer, Gatch, Robbins, Schuessler, Sessions and Kirby: AN ACT TO AMEND THE SOUTH CAROLINA CODE OF LAWS BY AMENDING ACT 36 OF 2019, RELATING TO

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HIGHWAY SYSTEM CONSTRUCTION, SO AS TO CHANGE THE SUNSET EXPIRATION PROVISION TO JULY 1, 2032; AND BY ADDING SECTION 57-3-790 SO AS TO PROVIDE THE STATE WAIVES IMMUNITY AND CONSENTS TO SUIT IN FEDERAL COURT FOR CERTAIN LAWSUITS RELATING TO THE NATIONAL ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY ACT ASSIGNMENT PROGRAM, AND TO PROVIDE FOR THE ISSUANCE OF AN ANNUAL REPORT.

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REPORT OF STANDING COMMITTEE

Senator RANKIN from the Committee on Judiciary submitted a favorable report on:

H. 5683 -- Reps. Rankin, Pace, C. Mitchell, Cromer, Gilreath, Bustos, Magnuson, Edgerton, Burns, Oremus, Bailey, Guest, Brittain, Chumley, J.E. Johnson, Haddon, Jordan, Lawson, Lowe, McGinnis, B. Newton, W. Newton, G.M. Smith, White, Willis and McCravy: A BILL TO AMEND THE SOUTH CAROLINA CODE OF LAWS BY ADDING SECTION 7-19-35 SO AS TO ESTABLISH THE ELECTION DISTRICTS FROM WHICH MEMBERS OF THE U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES ARE ELECTED; AND BY REPEALING SECTION 7-19-45 RELATING TO ELECTION DISTRICTS FROM WHICH MEMBERS OF THE U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES WERE FORMERLY ELECTED.

Ordered for consideration tomorrow.

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MOTION ADOPTED

On motion of Senator CROMER, with unanimous consent, the Senate stood adjourned out of respect to the memory the Honorable Judge Ronald C. Halfacre of Newberry, S.C. Judge Halfacre graduated from Newberry College and later continued his education at the National Judicial College in Nevada. He began his business career with Oxford Industries and later joined Quality Stitching as plant engineer. He later became plant manager for both the Newberry and Saluda plants before becoming Operations Manager for Seal King Corporation. In 2005, Ron was appointed a magistrate judge for Newberry County and for the past nine years he served as Chief Magistrate. He also served on the Legislative Committee of the Summary Court Judges Association of South Carolina and on the Magistrate Court Interpreter's Committee. Judge Halfacre had a passion for golf, genealogy, history and was a gifted handyman. He was a member of St. Luke's Episcopal Church where he served on the Vestry. Judge Halfacre volunteered with the Muscular Dystrophy Association, the Newberry Humane Society and other nonprofits. Judge Halfacre was a loving husband who will be dearly missed.

ADJOURNMENT

At 9:55 P.M., on motion of Senator OTT, the Senate adjourned to meet tomorrow at 12:00 Noon.

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