

ALERTS

South Carolina Legislative Update - June 10, 2014

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General Assembly

In the final regular week of work for the 120th legislative session, the General Assembly set to work through a statewide ban on texting while driving and ethics reforms - in addition to agreeing to a \$24 billion budget for next year. They will return the week of June 17th, in accordance with the sine die resolution (H. 5282), to take up vetoes, conference reports and other enumerated matters.

Budget deal includes 2% pay hike for SC state workers, 4K expansion (H. 4701)

State employees will get a 2 percent pay raise, 4-year-old kindergarten will expand and local governments will get more state money as part of a \$7 billion budget deal that the S.C. House and state Senate passed last week. The deal came just before legislators go home for the year. However, the compromise killed the Senate's one-time \$300 bonus for state employees. "We say we want to run government like a business," said House Ways and Means Chairman Brian White, R-Anderson, defending the pay raises. "A vital part of every business is its employees." [Read more here.](#)

SC lawmakers agree on ethics reform (H. 3945)

After nearly two years of wrangling, SC lawmakers are on their way to reforming the state's ethics laws. The S. C. House approved the conference report and the Senate will continue debate the conference report when they reconvene on June 17. [Read more here.](#)

Statewide texting ban passes (H. 4386)

S.C. lawmakers overwhelmingly have passed a statewide ban on texting while driving. Under the ban approved by the state House and Senate on Wednesday, drivers still can text on a handheld device if stopped at a red light or stop sign. Drivers would not receive penalty points, but would face fines starting at \$25. However, GPS navigators and texting to contact emergency services would be permitted. [Read more here.](#)

In the News

Courson resigns SC Senate leadership post in spat with Lt. Gov. McConnell

Faced with the possibility of losing the seat he has held for 30 years representing part of Richland County, Senate President Pro Tempore John Courson took the unusual step Wednesday of resigning his Senate leadership position. [Read more here.](#)

SC congressmen, with \$3 million, well-heeled for midterm elections

South Carolina's seven congressmen have more than \$3 million combined in their campaign accounts heading into this year's midterm elections. Their opponents have only a fraction of that. Filings with the Federal Election Commission last week show challengers combined have just over \$20,000 in their campaign accounts, and ten did not file spending reports for the period ending March 31. Candidates are only required to file with the FEC if they have raised or spent at least \$5,000. Two of the state's congressmen face opposition in the June 10 primary. [Read more here.](#)

SC not looking at raising campaign contribution limits

Since the U.S. Supreme Court paved the way for unlimited spending by unions, corporations and other associations, 13 states have raised their limits on what people may contribute to candidates. South Carolina is not among them. And this state isn't expected to join them any time soon, possibly because its current limits are about in the middle of the pack nationally, though its limits on contributions to state Senate candidates are lower than average, ranking 38th, according to the Center for Competitive Politics. [Read more here.](#)

Ethics Commission won't punish 2010 candidates for quirk

The South Carolina Ethics Commission is cautioning candidates in next week's primary not to accept donations that put them over the per-cycle state limit. The commission released an advisory opinion Monday about a quirk in state law regarding when a donation can be applied to a primary runoff. Runoffs are held two weeks after the primary. But when it comes to donations, the runoff cycle doesn't begin until a week after the primary. Donors who already gave the maximum \$3,500 toward a primary can't contribute again until the week before the runoff.