

# ALERTS

## South Carolina Legislative Update - May 22, 2014

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### ***Introductions***

H. 5282 - Sine Die Resolution

### ***General Assembly***

**House votes to OK solar; energy supporters call vote historic, S. 1189**

South Carolina took what is considered a historic step this week to change the state's longtime resistance to solar power. The state House of Representatives voted 105-0 for a solar energy bill that is forecast to make sun-generated electricity more abundant in the Palmetto State. The compromise bill has support from South Carolina's influential utilities and conservation groups, and a similar version of the measure has passed the Senate. Solar energy supporters said the legislation will move the state out of the dark ages in its stance toward renewable power after years of dependence almost entirely on coal, nuclear and natural gas. Read more here.

**SC Passes Ethics Reform Bill, H. 3945**

The S.C. House easily passed its first attempt at sweeping ethics reform in decades, establishing a new body to investigate members of all three branches of government and requiring all lawmakers to disclose their sources of income. Questions on ethics have consumed the Statehouse as Gov. Nikki Haley and other leaders have pushed for comprehensive reform, arguing the current system doesn't instill public confidence. The bill passed 110-0 and requires another House vote to officially move forward. The bill was also changed to keep legislators off of a new committee that would investigate ethics-related allegations against members of the General Assembly. Instead, the General Assembly would appoint four members, with the judiciary and executive branches also appointing four members each. That body would investigate ethics-related allegations in all three branches, but disciplinary decisions would be left up to the current bodies that decide those matters. The bill places restrictions on appointing campaign donors and family members to that committee. Read more here.

**SC adjutant general step closer to becoming appointed job, H. 3540**

S.C. lawmakers took a big step this week to allowing voters the chance to decide whether to stop electing the state's adjutant general. The S.C. Senate gave unanimous key approval to a bill that would allow voters to change the state constitution to allow the governor to appoint the adjutant general with approval by the Senate. The House already passed that bill and another that lists the qualifications for a leader of the state National Guard. South Carolina is the last state to elect the leader of its state National Guard. Read more here.

## *In the News*

### **SC local governments could get more state money**

The Board of Economic Advisors officially added almost \$86 million in revenue for the state budget that takes effect July 1, a move that could mean local governments will get additional money from the state. The board said there will be about \$61 million in additional money for the 2014-15 fiscal year. About \$41.6 million will be carried over from the current fiscal year and can be spent only once. Another \$19.3 million is recurring money for the state's \$7 billion general fund. The extra money gives legislators flexibility to put more money toward both state Senate and S.C. House budget priorities. [Read more here.](#)

### **New federal water bill good news for both SC ports**

The multimillion-dollar deepening of Charleston Harbor as well projects at smaller ports like Georgetown will be helped by a federal water resources bill that is next up for a vote in the Senate, according to U.S. Rep. Tom Rice. The freshman lawmaker from South Carolina's 7th District served on the conference committee on the Water Resources Reform and Development Act and spoke with The Associated Press from his Washington office minutes after the U.S. House, by a 412-4 vote, approved the legislation. The bill is expected to be approved by the Senate later this week and then head to the president. For the next seven fiscal years, it allocates 10 percent of Harbor Maintenance Trust Fund expenditures for improvements at smaller ports handling less than 1 million tons of cargo annually. The original House version allocated such money for only two years.

### **SC law criminalizes lying about military service**

A new South Carolina law makes it a crime for someone to falsely claim military service for personal profit. The law signed by Gov. Nikki Haley makes the lie a misdemeanor, with the punishment depending on the lie. In a conviction, anyone pretending to be decorated war veteran could be sentenced to up to a year in jail and a \$5,000 fine.