

ALERTS

South Carolina Legislative Update - May 27, 2015

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The Senate last week approved an amendment to the South Carolina Pain Capable Unborn Child Protection Act and gave the bill second reading. The Senate also returned the proposed body camera legislation to the House with amendments, and continued debate on the Capital Reserve Fund. The House approved amendments to criminal domestic violence legislation, driving under the influence legislation, mopeds/bicycle safety legislation, and legislation regarding the statewide grand jury system.

Introductions

To view this week's introductions in the Senate, please click [here](#), and here for the House.

In The News

Fight looms on gas tax hike, income tax cut

If senators use the last six days of this year's legislative session to debate a road funding proposal that is on deck in the Senate, there will be big fights.

One fight will be over proposed tax increases, including a 12-cent-a-gallon gas tax hike.

While some Democrats and Republican senators are OK with the roughly \$800 million-a-year proposal to pay for road repairs, others, including libertarian-leaning GOP senators, vehemently oppose the tax increases.

For example, state Sen. Tom Davis, R-Beaufort, is filibustering a proposal to spend \$85 million from a state savings account because it does not send any of that money to roads. Davis' filibuster is blocking debate on the roads bill, which also would double fees for 10-year driver's licenses to \$50, levy a \$60 fee on hybrid vehicles every two years and a \$120 fee on electric vehicles, and double the cap on the state's sales tax on vehicles to \$600. Davis has said those increases are unnecessary when the state has \$400 million in additional revenues that are expected to be added formally to its \$7 billion general fund budget Friday.

A likely equally large fight will come on the income tax cut that a group of Republican state senators plan to add to the road repair plan.

GOP senators will propose a 1 percentage point cut across the state's income tax rates, the highest of which is 7 percent. [Read more here.](#)

Senator: No tax hike needed for roads

After four months of debating how to raise money to repair South Carolina's crumbling roads, state senators now are debating whether higher taxes are needed at all. Sen. Tom Davis, R-Beaufort, held the floor of the

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state Senate last week, filibustering a proposal to spend \$85 million from a state savings account. Davis argued that money and most of the roughly \$400 million in new state revenues, expected to be added to the state's general fund budget next week, should be spent on roads, eliminating the need for a gas-tax hike. That proposed 12-cent-a-gallon increase is unnecessary, Davis argued, threatening to continue his filibuster until the session ends June 4. However, other legislators argued Davis' plan — to spend most of the added revenues that the state collects from the improving economy on roads — would continue to starve other state agencies. Those agency budgets were cut during the Great Recession and have never been restored, leading to a host of other problems — from understaffing at the state's child-care agency to underfunding of schools to higher college tuitions. With only six days left in the regular session, those lawmakers say a gas-tax increase is essential to provide stable, long-term revenues to the state Department of Transportation and address other needs. [Read more here.](#)

Senators to continue talks on spending reserve money

With few days left in the regular session, Senators left the State House last week with state Sen. Tom Davis, R-Beaufort, filibustering an \$85 million reserve account spending proposal. When the Senate returns this week, Davis will still be blocking that bill. Davis argued the reserve money should be spent on road-repairs instead of toward state college and technical college buildings. Davis opposes a gas-tax increase proposal that is set to be debated behind the reserve spending plan. He has said that instead additional revenues expected to be recognized by the Board of Economic Advisers, should pay to fix roads. [Read more here.](#)

Road repair debate to begin this week

State Sen. Larry Grooms, R-Berkeley expects the earliest the Senate could get to roads will be Thursday. Republicans, who make up a majority of the Senate, offered a fourth major road-repair plan two weeks ago. It would raise \$800 million a year for roads through higher gas taxes and cut state income tax rates by 1 percentage point, or \$700 million. The Senate plan also would give control of the Transportation Department to the governor. The proposal is an effort to meet Gov. Nikki Haley's three requirements for a roads bill. [Read more here.](#)

Senator urges colleagues to consider ending filibusters

With only a few legislative workdays left before adjournment, the chairman of the Senate Judiciary Committee says the Senate needs to rethink its reluctance to end filibusters. The Senate found itself in a stalemate last week over abortion, with Sen. Lee Bright, a Spartanburg County senator, filibustering an amendment that would grant exceptions to an abortion bill. The Senate voted twice on motions to sit Bright down but failed. It also failed to adopt a motion to carry over the legislation. Unless the bill is disposed of, the Senate cannot finish its work on a Capital Reserve Fund bill or begin debate on a road-funding bill. [Read more here.](#)

Legalizing medical marijuana will be an issue in 2016, SC senators say

Because she has seizures every day and slams into the ground, 18-year-old Dixie Pace has worn a helmet since November. Pace uses cannabidiol oil, an oil derived from marijuana that was legalized in South Carolina last year for certain forms of epilepsy, to reduce her seizures to an average of less than 10 a day, down from 50. "That's just one oil," Pace's mother, April Pace, said last week during a State House rally Wednesday, urging the Legislature to legalize medical marijuana. April Pace says access to a different oil extracted from marijuana or the plant itself could control further — or possibly stop — Dixie Pace's seizures. [Read more here.](#)

Meeting Schedule

Wednesday, May 27

- **8:30 am** -- Blatt Room 511 -- Charleston County Legislative Delegation
- **9:00 am** -- Blatt Room 433 -- Higher Education Governance Ad Hoc Committee
- **9:00 am** -- Gressette Room 207 -- Joint Pinewood Subcommittee
- **9:30 am** -- Blatt Room 403 -- Labor, Commerce and Industry Committee
- **10:00 am** -- Gressette Room 308 -- Education Committee
 1. H.3353 - GED Camps
 2. H.3882 - School bus drivers
 3. S.574 - Comprehensive Health Education
- **11:00 am** -- Gressette Room 308 -- Banking and Insurance Committee on S.652, S.653, S.693 and H.3772
 1. H. 3772 - SC Medical Malpractice Insurance Joint Underwriting Association
 2. S. 652 - Savings Promotion Contests
 3. S. 653 - Individual Life Insurance Policy Lump Sum Payments
 4. S. 693 - Insurers' Rehabilitation and Liquidation Act
- **11:00 am** -- Blatt Room 112 -- South Carolina Democratic Women's Council
- **11:00 am** -- State House, 3rd Floor Conference Room -- Conference Committee on S.11
 1. S. 11 - Notice of Meetings for Public Bodies
- **12:00 noon** -- State House, House Chamber -- Joint Assembly - Judicial Elections
- **12:00 noon - 2:00 pm** -- State House Grounds -- Legislative Luncheon--South Carolina Tire Manufacturers Council (SCMPC) (Members Only)

Thursday, May 28

- **8:00 am - 10:00 am** -- Blatt Room 112 -- Legislative Breakfast--South Carolina Office of the State Treasurer
- **9:00 am** -- Blatt Room 433 -- Education and Public Works Committee
 1. H. 3440 - Mopeds
- **9:00 am** -- Gressette Room 308 -- Labor, Commerce and Industry Committee
 1. H. 3430 - Tires

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- **9:30 am** -- Gressette Room 209 -- Agriculture and Natural Resources Committee
 1. Appointments to State Board of Veterinary Examiners
 2. Report from Clemson University Livestock-Poultry Health
 3. Report from DHEC / DNR -- Surface Water Availability Assessment
- **9:30 am** -- Gressette Room 307 -- Medical Affairs Subcommittee on H.3250
 1. H. 3250 - Certificate of Need Program
- **10:00 am** -- Gressette Room 207 -- Judiciary Subcommittee on H.3025 and H.3799
 1. H. 3025 - Concealed Weapons Permit
 2. H. 3799 - Concealed Weapons Permit
- **10:00 am** -- Gressette Room 407 -- Judiciary Subcommittee on H.3852
 1. H. 3852 - Escheatment of Savings Bonds
- **2:00 pm** -- Gressette Room 209 -- South Carolina Joint Citizens and Legislative Committee on Children

Friday, May 29

No Meetings Scheduled.