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To:
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IN CASE YOU MISSED IT

Charleston Post and Courier (Editorial): Big day for S.C. reform

Friday, February 17, 2012

<http://www.postandcourier.com/news/2012/feb/17/big-day-for-sc-reform/>

After stalling on state government reform at the end of the last legislative year, the state Senate has redeemed itself by adopting a major restructuring plan that gives greater authority to the governor where it should.

Approval by the House of Representatives would provide for the most significant improvement in the state's governing structure in nearly 20 years.

The Senate plan, which passed 40-0 on Thursday, would create a new major Cabinet agency, the Department of Administration, that would handle personnel, purchasing, property and fleet management, and information technology.

The bill recognizes that those areas should be the responsibility of the governor, who is elected to serve as the state's chief executive. Indeed, in virtually all states, those duties already are carried out by their governors.

The shift would mean greater accountability and more opportunity to streamline state operations for efficiency and reduced costs.

And it would bring an overdue end to the State Budget and Control Board. The five-member board gives two legislators as much authority as the governor over a wide range of executive matters.

The House already has approved a bill to create a Department of Administration and should have no difficulty in giving its endorsement to a plan that does everything the House bill does and more.

It would represent the largest shift in power to the executive branch since Gov. Carroll Campbell convinced the Legislature to approve his plan for a Cabinet form of government in 1993.

Even so, it wouldn't devolve all of the sprawling responsibilities of the Budget and Control Board to the new Department of Administration. The bill also provides for expanded legislative oversight of executive operations.

In recent years, the House of Representatives has approved major reform bills only to see them die in the Senate. This year, government reform has unexpectedly gained momentum in the Senate.

Gov. Nikki Haley described the Senate action as "a historic step toward restructuring," and particularly credited the efforts of Sens. Tom Davis, R-Beaufort, Shane Massey, R-Edgefield, and Vincent Sheheen, D-Camden.

"We've taken a crucial step in modernizing and transforming state government today," said Sen. Sheheen.

Earlier this year, the Legislature completed work on a notable reform measure to expand the authority of the state's inspector general to ferret out waste, abuse and fraud in state government.

This could be the year that legislators finally give South Carolinians a more coherent, accountable system of governance.

The state and its taxpayers deserve it.

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