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Subject: Fast & Furious!

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Fast & Furious

Dear Friends:

In each of our lives deadlines are often dreaded, but admittedly force results. Without deadlines much less would get done in our personal and business lives - and in the legislature. This past Thursday was the ultimate deadline for the SC legislature; the day the State Constitution calls for adjournment of the regular session. Any bill that didn't get passed by both chambers and sent to the governor died and will have to be refiled in 2017.

Fast & Furious Week

That action movie title aptly describes the final week of any legislative session. It is 'do or die' before sine die with legislators maneuvering to find success for their bills. Fortunately, there was success on a number of fronts. Since your time is precious and the legislative list is long, I will strive to be brief and let the following serve as your top-line report on key legislative action.

CWP Reciprocity with GA

Thanks to Gov. Haley it took only one day for her to sign legislation allowing reciprocity for Concealed Weapon Permit (CWP) holders between SC & GA. With a stroke of her pen [H.3799](#) took effect immediately. Georgia automatically recognizes CWP permit holders from states that recognize GA. The legislation was initiated by the Aiken legislative delegation with Rep. Bill Hixon as the primary sponsor. While the bill won easy passage in the House, Democrat senators nearly buried it with 80 amendments. Once those objections were withdrawn, the bill won Senate approval.

We Have a ROADS Bill!

While my House colleagues and I passed many significant pieces of legislation this week, the most anticipated was a bill to begin funding the needed repairs to our dangerous roads and bridges. On Tuesday afternoon, Speaker Jay Lucas took the floor to call out the Senate for their lack of action and the governor for her lack of leadership. Late that evening the Senate passed a roads bill, and Wednesday afternoon my House colleagues and I took swift action to give it final passage. After two years and hundreds of hours, the bill was sent to Governor Haley. Three key components of Road Funding Bill:

- Significantly reformed the Department of Transportation. Before allocating any additional dollars to the broken agency, I joined my conservative colleagues in demanding these reforms.
- Allocated \$4 billion in state dollars which must be used to repair our dangerous roadways

- including 399 dilapidated bridges.
- Does not raise taxes.

Victory for Vets!

The roadblock by one senator ended just in the nick of time allowing the Senate to pass legislation giving retired veterans an income tax break in SC. The House unanimously agreed with the Senate amendments to [H.3147](#) that insisted on a five year phase in. It provides for a tax deduction of up to thirty thousand dollars each year for those who are at least 65 years old and up to \$1750 each year for younger taxpayers. Overall, this is good business for SC. We'll be viewed as far more 'vet friendly' and be able to compete with neighboring states in attracting retiring vets. Most retiring vets establish second careers and contribute greatly to our economy.

Get 'Er Done Quicker

For 20 years the SC House put forth bills calling for the shortening of the legislative session (we have one of the longest in the nation - Jan-June every year). Those bills always died in the Senate. This time they passed their own bill ([S.267](#)) to shorten the session by three weeks and the House unanimously agreed. The governor has already signed the bill.

State Budget Approved The General Assembly sent a \$7.5 billion state general fund budget to the governor. Major items included:

- \$84 million in DMV fees and fines and \$131 million in motor vehicle sales tax revenue is transferred to the State Highway Fund for road improvements.
- \$50 million is distributed among the County Transportation Committees to use for resurfacing and repairing roads in each county.
- \$49 million is allocated to SCDOT to address road repair costs from the October 2015 flood damage.
- \$40 million for the SC Farm Aid Fund created to assist flooded farmers.
- 3.25% state employee pay increase totaling \$54.3 million.
- \$26 million to cover increased costs of operating the state's health and dental insurance plans with no increases in the premiums paid by employees and no reductions in coverage.
- \$218 million to increase the base student cost by \$130 for K-12 public school students.
- 2% salary increase for public school teachers.
- \$23 million for new school busses.
- \$28 million in increases for the state's colleges and universities, a 5.5% increase on average.
- \$23 million increase in the Local Government Fund.

Budget Impact for Aiken County

- USC Aiken - \$400,000 increase in recurring dollars (+5.5%)
- Aiken Tech - \$784,216 in training equipment
- Aiken Tech - \$7 million for the Life Science Building
- \$126,000 in additional Parks & Recreation funding
- \$1.8 million in additional funds for road repaving
- \$305,500 additional from the non-recurring Local Government Fund

Eminent Domain :

This is a big win for residents of Aiken County and elsewhere in the state who have been fighting a pipeline company from using the powers of eminent domain to acquire private property. [S. 868](#) disallows eminent domain powers by pipeline companies for the next 3 years. The governor has already signed the bill into law.

Ethics Legislation :

A House-Senate Conference Committee is working to find agreement on [H.3186](#), revisions to the Ethics Act for all elected officials in SC. It's reported the Senators on the committee are resisting independent investigations of wrong-doing. House members have voted repeatedly in favor of

independent investigations of legislators.

FOIA on Life Support :

I've been appointed to a House-Senate Conference Committee to iron out differences on two bills to the Freedom of Information Act to enhance government transparency. The prospects for passage are very dim because of the objections of one "rookie" senator who has worked to kill [H.3191](#) this year. ([Sunday's Aiken Editorial explains](#))

Saying Good Bye

On the last day of the regular session of the legislature we said farewell to many representatives who are retiring from the House. One of those was Rep. Don Wells (R-Aiken) who is leaving office after two terms. We honored Don for his dedication to public service, his family and his caring constituent service.

Quick List of Other Bills Passed

[H.4554](#) - SOUTH CAROLINA ANTI-MONEY LAUNDERING ACT

Rectifies SC's status as the only state lacking comprehensive regulatory authority over money transfers which has made the state a center for money laundering activities that facilitate organized criminal enterprises and terrorist activities.

[H.4521](#) - TUCKER HIPPIE'S TRANSPARENCY ACT

Mandates SC's public colleges and universities report student misconduct investigations related to fraternity and sorority organizations.

[S.1166](#) - SC STATE DEBT FORGIVENESS

The legislation makes provisions for the forgiveness of \$12 million in state loans disbursed to SC State University over the course of three years if the university meets specified benchmarks such as maintaining academic accreditation, achieving progress towards a balanced budget and meeting student enrollment growth goals.

[H.4387](#) - PROHIBITING TRAFFIC TICKET QUOTAS

This legislation provides that law enforcement agencies may not require their law enforcement officers to issue a specific amount or meet a quota for the number of citations issued during a designated period of time.

[H.4542](#) - THE RIGHT TO TRY ACT

This legislation authorizes physicians to prescribe certain promising experimental treatments to terminally ill patients who have considered and exhausted all other treatment options currently approved by the FDA. The governor has already signed the bill into law.

[S.233](#) - SOUTH CAROLINA PUBLIC PRAYER AND INVOCATION ACT

This legislation makes revisions in keeping with particular court rulings governing the way in which a deliberative public body may invite religious leaders to offer voluntary public invocations at its meetings.

[H.3440](#) - MOPED BILL

This legislation replaces the multiple, sometimes conflicting, definitions for mopeds currently found in statutes with a single new definition for mopeds. Henceforth, mopeds are designated 'motor vehicles'. Mopeds will, for the first time, have to be registered and moped operators will be licensed by the DMV. However, the bill does not require a moped to be titled or insured. There are a host of new requirements. Riders must wear reflective vests at night, operate a moped on the public road with a speed limit of not greater than fifty-five miles per hour and they must ride in the farthest right lane on a multi-lane highway.

Looking Ahead

While the legislative session officially ended Thursday, we'll be back at the Statehouse next week to take up vetoes sent back from Gov. Haley and to vote on any conference reports returned to us.

It is an honor to serve you and your family in the General Assembly. If you ever find yourself in need of assistance navigating state government, or if you have ideas on issues to improve our state, don't hesitate to contact me. I am committed to being your "Strong Voice and Effective Leader" in my service to you at the Statehouse.

[Click Here](#)

In your Service,

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Photo of the Week

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newsletter is not a
solicitation for contributions
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Wedding Bells! Rep. Bill Hixon introduced his fiancée, Elaine Weston, to the SC House of Representatives during the final day of session. The two were recently engaged.

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