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Subject: Heading Toward the Finish Line

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Heading Toward the Finish Line

Dear Friends:

South Carolina has one of the longest legislative sessions of any state; we start in January and conclude in June. Twelve days remain in the first half of the 121st session and the scorecard for completed legislation is grim. The House has been productive passing legislation both large and small (50+ bills last week). However, the Senate logjam has halted progress in nearly every area.

The Road Fix

After months of work, last month the House sent the Senate a plan to fund statewide road improvements. As soon as it arrived in the Senate it was shredded and replaced with their plan to raise nearly \$800 million in taxes each year by increasing the state gas tax more than 70%. Conservative senators balked at the huge tax hike. This week Senate Republicans floated a proposal they said would raise more money for road work, but also provide some income tax relief and change how the state's transportation agency is governed. That plan is more aligned with the House plan. Prospects are dim to pass a road plan this year.

Protecting Our Rivers

A House agricultural subcommittee took nearly four hours of testimony this week listening to those for and against a proposal that would require mega-farms get a permit to withdraw large amounts of water from rivers and streams. Many worry such large withdrawals will cause environmental damage to our rivers. House District 86, which I serve, is the focus of the issue because of the creation of a large potato farm and potentially, more farms to follow. Most importantly, everyone had their say in helping set the foundation of understanding for any alterations of the River Act. Consideration of this issue has been described as a "milestone in agriculture". Therefore, we must take our time, listen to all comments and base legislation decisions on science not emotion. The earliest any action will come is 2016. [\(Read more in Aiken Standard\)](#)

River Waters Hearing

Senate Panel Hears Government Transparency Bill

Aiken Standard Executive Editor Tim O'Briant was one of several people to testify before a SC Senate Judiciary panel supporting improvements in the state's Freedom of Information Act. I've been championing this issue for five years. The House has already passed the legislation. The committee ran out of time to hear from everyone and will convene another hearing before voting. [\(Read more Aiken Standard Editorial: Senate Needs to Hop on Open Government Push\)](#)

Tim O'Briant

SC State Fix

House and Senate negotiators reached agreement on a plan to fire the South Carolina State University Board of Trustees. The issue centered on who would appoint an interim board to lead the financially-struggling school for the next three years. The governor immediately signed the legislation.

Required History

The House passed legislation [\(H.3151\)](#) that updates the 91-year-old state law that requires SC high school and college students to study the U.S. Constitution, the Declaration of Independence and the Federalist Papers. There's ample proof the more students study U.S. government, the more engaged they are in the important issues we confront.

Think CWP Holders Aren't Our First Line of Defense?

There was an incident in Aiken County this week that provides one more example of how the 'Good Guys' who carry concealed weapons potentially saved lives by keeping a dangerous situation from being fatal. It happened at the New Holland Volunteer Fire Department. Columbia's WIS-TV provides a first-person account of the tense moments. [\(WIS-TV story\)](#)

National Day of Prayer

In Aiken last evening we celebrated the National Day of Prayer with a crowded service at the Odell Weeks Community Center. We prayed for America which one minister described as "A nation in spiritual exile." Ministers and other special guests led in many prayers. The choir and instrumentalists from South Aiken Church of God provided inspiring music.

Need Your Input to Improve State Government

I serve on the new House Legislative Oversight Committee. We were formed to determine if agency laws and programs are being implemented and carried out in accordance with the intent of the General Assembly and whether they should be continued, curtailed or eliminated. The committee doesn't do policy; we're investigators. We're starting with five agencies including SCDOT and DSS. I encourage you to participate in this online survey if you have any insights into these agencies. ([Survey Link](#))

Happy Mother's Day

In my view, Mother's Day should be every day! However, this Sunday we pay special attention to moms. To all mothers, grandmothers, acting mothers I wish you the happiest of days and hope you are able to celebrate it surrounded by your loved ones.

I'm Available

It is an honor and a privilege to serve you in Columbia. If you need help navigating state government, or have any thoughts or concerns about what we are doing, please do not hesitate to contact me.

- Want to check my voting record? ([Click here](#))
- More information on my positions can be found on [my website](#).

In your Service,

Bill Taylor

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Photo of the Week !

A fun moment with former Texas Gov. Rick Perry at the annual SCGOP Silver Elephant Dinner in Columbia last weekend. Several potential presidential candidates were on hand.

South Carolina GOP welcomes all of them.

Photo was posted on
'gettyimages'.

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