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Subject: Crunch Time

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Crunch Time!

Dear Friends:

It's called 'Crossover Week', but it feels more like 'Crunch Time'. After months of committee work and debate, this past week was the deadline for bills to pass from the House to the Senate and vice versa or they die for the session. That results in a flurry of activity. I'll summarize the top items briefly, but first, a story of significance to Aiken County and South Carolina.

MOX Reprieve

The state of South Carolina is dismissing its lawsuit filed against the federal government over the Obama administration's threats to shut down the MOX program at the Savannah River Site. The dismissal follows an announcement made earlier in the week that the Obama administration will continue to fund MOX construction through the end of the fiscal year (this September). The MOX program is part of an agreement with Russia to dispose of 34 metric tons of weapons-grade plutonium. It employs nearly 1800

people. During the just-concluded legislative furlough, Aiken County legislators joined Gov. Nikki Haley during her visit to SRS and a helicopter tour of the site.

House Actions This Week...

Faking Military Service: The House concurred in Senate amendments to [H.4259](#) establishing criminal penalties for someone who falsely represents himself as having served in the military or been awarded military decorations.

Protecting Your Electronic Privacy: The House approved, and sent the Senate [H.4791](#) establishing requirements for law enforcement officers to obtain a valid court order or search warrant in order to conduct a search of an electronic device, such as a smart phone or laptop computer.

Sex Education in Schools: After nearly two years of debate, the House narrowly approved and sent the Senate [H.3435](#), a bill updating SC's sex education curriculum in public schools and requiring students to be taught medically accurate instruction.

Child Abuse Education: The House approved and sent the Senate [H.4061](#), a bill to provide for age-

appropriate instruction in sexual abuse and assault awareness and prevention.

Childcare Facilities: In the wake of deaths of children in SC childcare facilities, the House approved, and sent the Senate [H.4665](#) enhancing the oversight authority that the Department of Social Services the regulation of the smaller home childcare facilities including unannounced inspections by DHEC.

Student Seizures: The House approved and sent the Senate [H.4914](#) a bill authorizing school personnel to administer Midazolam intra-nasally to a student who is having a seizure.

The Merry Christmas Bill: The House passed [H.4458](#) on a vote of 97-2. This legislation protects school districts from nuisance law suits from those who oppose kids celebrating Christmas and other religious holidays. The bill moves to the Senate.

HS Equivalency Diploma: The House approved [H.4840](#), which calls for high school equivalency testing that is widely accessible by offering it not only in a computer format but also in a paper and pen or pencil format.

Helping Start-Up Biz: The House concurred in Senate amendments to [H.3125](#), legislation that provides for the Department of Commerce to establish the Micro-Enterprise Partnership Program to promote and facilitate the development of new or existing start-up businesses with five or fewer employees.

Relief for Builders: The House approved [H.4944](#), a bill providing for the extension of tax discounts on multiple lots that have been provided for homebuilders and property developers during recent years of recession.

Solar Tax Credits for Biz: The House approved [H.3834](#), a bill providing 25% credit against state income taxes for the cost of installing a non-residential solar energy system. These state tax credits are set to expire at the end of 2016.

Fairness for Boaters: The House and Senate have now passed [H.4561](#) authorizing the SC Department of Natural Resources to enter into an Interstate Boating Violator Compact. Hats off to Rep. Bill Hixon, of North Augusta, who was the primary sponsor of this bill. The boater compact is the first of its kind in the nation and eases penalties for boaters if they are cited for violations in the other states' waters. Rep. Hixon and I stood with Georgia Governor Nathan Deal when he signed the identical bill at Lake Hartwell two weeks ago.

Trespasser Responsibility Act: The House amended, approved, and sent the Senate [H.4607](#), which codifies common law provisions relating to trespassers under which a land owners has no duty to a trespasser except to refrain from causing a willful or wanton injury. A troublesome amendment, that triggered many phone calls and emails from constituents, was removed.

Another Research University: The House approved [H.4632](#), a bill designating the University of Charleston as a research institution. The legislation does not alter the designation of the College of Charleston as a four year liberal arts college. The bill goes to the Senate.

Avoiding Election Messes: The House passed [H.4805](#) which charges the State Election Commission with supervising the conduct of county boards of elections and voter registration, ensuring that those boards and all who are involved in the elections process comply with state voting law requirements and applicable federal law.

Honoring 'Mayor Frank' : It was a privilege to honor Mayor Frank Mizell, of Windsor, with a Resolution from the House of Representatives. Sen. Tom Young also presented him with a Senate Resolution. 'Mayor Frank' is retiring from public service this November after serving 34 years as Windsor's mayor. He is an outstanding, dedicated public servant!

In the State Senate...

Dumping Common Core: The Senate unanimously approved a bill that replaces Common Core education standards with those developed in South Carolina by the 2015-16 school year. The House passed similar legislation last month. The state School Boards Association supported the legislation which ends uncertainty caused by years of controversy and debate.

Funding Restored: The Senate Finance Committee rejected cutting \$69 thousand from the College of Charleston and USC-Upstate for forcing students to read controversial LGBT-themed books. The House had cut the money from the budget. The House could still vote to restore the cuts when it reviews Senate changes later this month, sending the debate to a conference committee.

Other State News...

Bailout for SC State: The Budget and Control Board voted to give \$6 million to SC State University, on the condition that the school give the Governor's Office and legislators more of a controlling hand in its finances. The college is seeking help with a shortfall of \$13.6 million.

I-20 Improvements: Hooray! The resurfacing project of I-20 through a portion of Aiken County is underway. The pavement has deteriorated with rocks damaging many vehicles. By July we will have a smoother ride on the westbound lanes. Want to know more about SC's roads? Check out their report on the "[State of the SCDOT](#)" recently provided to the legislature.

Firing On All Cylinders: South Carolina's economy is charging forward. There are plenty of examples. The unemployment rate has plunged to 5.5%. The S.C. leading index of economic indicators has notched its strongest one-month gain in three years. The residential real estate market continues to show improvement and foreclosure activity fell 13% compared with the same month last year. One economist said, "After a bumpy series of stops and starts, the SC economy has clawed its way back to a broad-based recovery."

Thank you for the privilege of serving you in Columbia. If I can ever be of assistance to you, or if you have ideas on issues you want me to share with the rest of the General Assembly, please don't hesitate to contact me.

In your Service,

Bill Taylor

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Photos of the Week

MAP MAKERS! Members of the Rotary Club of Aiken, with the help of a few students, painted a U.S. map of the playground at East Aiken Elementary School for the Arts this morning. Helping us was Principal Lisa Fallaw. We had a great time and left behind an brightly painted educational map.

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