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Subject: We've Got Your Back!

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We've Got Your Back!

Dear Friends:

The past legislative week began with THUD! Gov. Nikki Haley kept her promise and vetoed the 'South Carolina Farm Aid' legislation aimed at helping our family farmers by getting them back on their feet in the aftermath of the so-called 1,000 year flood last October.

We've Got Your Back, Farmers!

The veto came on Monday. The next day the House of Representatives answered her THUD with a BOOM overriding her veto 112-2. The Senate followed with an override vote of 39-3. Thank goodness we live in a Democratic Republic with checks and balances. The Governor is entitled to be wrong, but fortunately, 97% of the legislators voting stood with our SC family farmers knowing that some desperately need help.

In issuing her veto, Gov. Haley said, "I will not support any bailout of any industry over any other industry that has suffered from this thousand year flood." The governor said the new Farm Aid Board would offer taxpayer-backed grants not available to any other businesses damaged in the floods.

Legislators don't live in the Governor's Mansion; we live among the people we serve. In my case, that's a large rural district. The \$40 million grant program isn't a "bailout" as described by the governor, it is an essential helping hand for farmers across the state and right here in Aiken County.

When the governor chose to turn her back on farmers and agriculture, we legislators knew we had to have their backs. Many legislators have built and run businesses, like me. Many others are farmers or their ancestral roots run deep in farming. Agriculture is SC's #1 business and family farms aren't like other businesses; they are at the mercy of the vagaries of weather. They can't insure their businesses like retail stores or manufacturing. \$125 million in federal crop insurance payouts are not nearly enough to cover a more than \$375 million statewide loss from the October rainfall. Many left their fall crops drowning in the fields. They couldn't harvest and sell, so they didn't have the money to purchase and plant winter or spring crops.

That's a double whammy!

The day after the floods, the governor stood with her Cabinet and said we're going to help every citizen

in South Carolina. This past week your legislature honored that commitment.

Protecting the Unborn

A bill that would ban abortions in SC after 19 weeks has been sent to the governor and she has indicated she will sign it. The [Pain-Capable Unborn Child Protection Act](#) shortens the current state limit on abortions from 23 weeks. The final version allows exceptions if the mother's life is in jeopardy or if there is a "fetal anomaly." SC joins 17 other states that have also passed similar measures.

FOIA Progress

In my last newsletter, I wrote you concerning a state senator who has made it her personal mission to block improved government transparency. Many of you responded by writing and emailing Sen. Bright-Mathews. She double-downed last week making a speech on the Senate floor saying she won't be bullied. Regardless, we're doing a work-around. The House Judiciary Committee employed a legislative maneuver to give the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) legislation new life. The House votes to send it back to the Senate this coming week. Sunday's [Greenwood Index-Journal](#) lauds the move in its editorial.

House Approves Ethics Bill Calling for Independent Investigations

My House colleagues and I continue our commitment to passing strong ethics reform legislation. This week we strengthened and improved legislation providing for independent ethics oversight of all public officials. This legislation ([H.3184](#)) discontinues the current practices of the legislative and executive branches each exclusively investigating alleged ethics violations of their own members. Instead, this bill calls for allegations of public misconduct to be investigated independently by a reconstituted State Ethics Commission. If investigators find probable cause that a legislator has committed an ethics violation the findings would be made public and relayed to the appropriate legislative ethics committee to pursue the matter.

SC Founding Principles Act

The House concurred in Senate amendments to legislation ([H.3848](#)) requiring the founding principles that shaped the United States into the required study of the United States Constitution and the South Carolina Social Studies Standards. This required instruction must at least include the Federalist Papers, the structure of government and the role of the separation of powers and the freedoms guaranteed by the Bill of Rights to the United States Constitution.

Aiken County News

Aiken County Storm Funds in Budget

The House amended the state budget legislation and returned it to the Senate setting up the annual conference committee to hammer out differences. At the last moment, financial help was inserted in the budget for Aiken and 21 other counties. The House voted to fund the remaining reimbursement to counties for monies they spent in clean-up from the 2014 ice storm. The total is nearly \$12 million. Aiken County would receive about \$4.5 million for the non-federal covered portion of the ice storm costs.

Peach Farm Tour

I spent last Monday 'On the Ridge' touring Peach Farm operations around Ridge Spring, Monetta, Johnston and Ward. The legislative tour was arranged by SC Agriculture Commissioner Hugh Weathers. We were hosted by Wastonia Farms, Dixie Belle, Big Smile/Yonce & Sons and Titan Farms. Four legislators toured the fields and production facilities. ([Aiken Standard story](#))

Closing the Lower Savannah Pre-Release Facility

You may have read news stories or the [Aiken Standard editorial](#) about the closing of the Lower Savannah Pre-Release Center. The Wire Road facility will close this week as a cost-savings measure for state government. However, that will cost local governments more money because they rely on the cheap labor of inmates. What hasn't been reported is the work by the Aiken Legislative Delegation to find solutions. Working with legislators, the SC Department of Corrections has agreed to make inmates available locally from the Trenton facility through August 2. The Corrections Department further agreed to send to Aiken as many Level 1 inmates as needed to be housed if the County can provide a place to house and guard them. Since the County owns the property at Lower Savannah, Aiken County is looking at what it will cost to house and guard inmates there going forward.

Commencement Address

It was an honor to deliver the commencement address to this year's Aiken County Home School Graduates. I saluted these remarkable "ACHIEVERS" and we all thanked their parents for going above and beyond in delivering their children a superior education. Many head to college on full scholarships.

Hometown Fun

This weekend we saw thousands of folks flock to eastern Aiken County for the 36th 'Wagons to Wagener Festival'. A parade, music, dancing, crafts, rides and fireworks, we just a few of the events. To the organizers who worked tirelessly, congratulations on a successful event.

Aiken Coop's Annual Gathering

It's always a pleasure to attend the Aiken Electric Coop's Annual Meeting. Thousands of Coop members attend the Saturday event. Prior to the annual meeting, Aiken legislators stood with the Coop Trustees and Executives.

AT YOUR SERVICE

I am committed to being your "Strong Voice and Effective Leader" in my service to you at the Statehouse. I am deeply honored to service and appreciate your support.

[Click Here](#)

In your Service,
Bill Taylor
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Photo of the Week

Happy 80th anniversary to J.D. Lever Elementary School! I marked the occasion by presenting recognition from the S.C. House of Representatives. Accepting the recognition was Principal Cathy Ellis and Assistant Principal Michael Truitt accompanied by first and second graders.

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