

Title: **SC tax burden considered low**
 Author: CASSIE COPE THE STATE
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SC tax burden considered low

But lawmakers want to do more

CASSIE COPE

THE STATE

South Carolina had the 10th lowest effective income tax rate of the 41 states with an income tax in 2012, state legislators reviewing the state's tax code were told Tuesday.

South Carolina's high standard deductions and exemptions allow taxpayers to shield a higher portion of their income from state income taxes, reducing their effective tax rate compared with most other

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The perception is S.C. residents are taxed at the 7 percent rate, when reality is – after deductions and exemptions – the effective rate is 2.99 percent.

Taxes

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cent tax bracket hurt efforts to recruit businesses to the state, said Gordon Shuford, an economic researcher for the state.

South Carolina's effective tax rate is 2.99 percent, based on 2012 figures, the most recent studied. That effective rate is far lower than the state's 7 percent top income tax rate.

In 2015, Republican Gov. Nikki Haley, called for a 2 percentage point cut to that rate, saying the 7 per-

cent tax bracket hurt efforts to recruit businesses to the state.

State Rep. Bill Taylor, R-Aiken, said Tuesday the perception that South Carolina has high income taxes hurts when marketing the state to outsiders.

The perception is S.C. residents are taxed at the 7 percent rate, when reality is – after deductions and exemptions – the effective rate is 2.99 percent. But that lower rate is not taken into account, legislators

said.

Speaker Pro Tempore Tommy Pope, R-York, agreed, saying when people search for places to live or do business and compare

South Carolina's income tax with other states, the 7 percent rate appears high. However, the state's effective tax rate is significantly lower than surrounding states, Pope said.

Still, Pope suggested lowering the top rate to help with the

perception issue.

In their presentation to legislators, state budget staffers also noted South Carolina is a comparatively poor state. In 2012, 81.5 percent of S.C. taxpayers reported federal adjusted income of less than \$50,000.

Legislators also reviewed the state's 6 percent sales tax rate. Local governments can tack on additional sales taxes for special purposes, including building projects or tourism-related activ-

ities. However, the state misses out on about \$3 billion a year in revenues because some goods and services are exempt from the sales tax.

In 2012-13, the largest sales tax exemption – \$722 million – was on motor fuel, which has its own excise tax. The second largest exemption – \$449 million – was on sales of prescription medicines. The third was groceries – \$435 million.

Title: **Kaepernick, photo IDs and Donald Trump**
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Kaepernick, photo IDs and Donald Trump

Just four quick points:

1. Does Colin Kaepernick even know what “oppress” means? If he had said what he did about oppressed people in the United States maybe in the 1950s or even before 1965, that would have been understandable. He needs to Google the Sudan and some other African countries.

2. Do writers and pundits really know the meaning of “xenophobic,” “racism,” and “misogynistic?” They constantly use the words incorrectly, to wit, calling Trump a misogynist. Seriously? He has been married to three beautiful women and clearly adores his daughter Ivanka.

3. Why is there still a flap about voters having to show a photo ID? Progressives spin and lie about those poor citizens who were born in perhaps a rural area and don’t have valid birth certificates. Really? In 2016 in America? And those individuals don’t have siblings, relatives, children, or friends who can vouch for them or provide reasonable proof of birth to state authorities? I remember Governor Haley saying she would drive a person to the DMV to get a photo ID.

4. Love or hate Donald Trump, if Americans elect Hillary Clinton there will be even more of the dark web of corruption and greed in the federal government. Trump is far from perfect, but for right now he is not owned by the lobbyists.

Pat Kirk
Aiken

Title: **Senators provide legislative review at club's meeting**
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Senators provide legislative review at club's meeting

BY CHRISTINA
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S.C. Senate Majority Leader Shane Massey said at the Aiken Republican Club luncheon Wednesday that state lawmakers left the Statehouse this year without completely solving the problem regarding the state's crumbling infrastructure.

"We did not solve the problem. We made a big step, right?" Massey said at the luncheon, where he and state Sen. Tom Young provided a legislative presentation about the most recent session.

"I don't want to discount what we've done, because I think we were able to do some very important things and we moved it in the right direction, but we have not solved the problem," Massey, an Edgefield Republican, said. "This issue is not going away."

In the presentation involving a review of the last session, Young and Massey also talked about issues that could come up again in 2017, one of which includes the state's roads and bridges.

Young said the roads bill that passed in June consumed the Senate from probably late February or early March of 2015

through the end of last year's session and then into this year's session.

The senator mentioned how there is no gas tax increase in the bill, but the bill does include a reform package of the S.C. Department of Transportation.

The bill that was passed said the governor will appoint all eight (DOT) commissioners with confirmation by the legislature and that those commissioners will select the S.C. DOT secretary, he said. A funding package also passed allocates \$4 billion state dollars for road and bridge repairs over the next 10 years. The two components of that, Young said, is that there is existing revenue, which is leveraged into bonds for about half of that money and then, the other half is additional money that's freed up after existing money from the S.C. DOT is redirected to the road and bridge improvements.

Young said he was not in favor of raising the gas tax and said he didn't vote for the bill that passed at the very end of session and was one of 10 that

voted against "for the very reason that I didn't think the (DOT) reform went far enough and, frankly, I was somewhat surprised that the governor signed it," adding Gov. Nikki Haley did sign it with her own reservations about the agency reform.

Massey, who did vote for the measure, said it is a conversation that needs to be had because \$4 billion is a lot of money for South Carolina state government; however, it is being paid for primarily with growth in the budget.

"If you look at the numbers, most of the growth that we've had in South Carolina, has been in income tax collections," Massey said. "We've had some growth in sales tax collections, as well. The sales tax money, though, is primarily obligated already by state law, so most of the growth that we have had in budget revenue has come from income tax collections; and we've used a good bit of that growth to fund roads over three of the past four or five past sessions."

Massey said philosophically,

he has a problem with putting the burden of funding on income tax payers and said if "we're going to do something on the gas tax, in my prospective, there's going to have to be some offset somewhere else."

He said he is not in favor of having a "straight up tax increase" or giving DOT more money, regardless of the source, without reform.

Young said the problem with the governor's previous proposal to support a gas tax increase with an offset in the income tax is there are people who are not

paying income taxes, but | would have to pay the higher gas tax at the pump on fixed income.

Other legislation discussed included the passing of a bill that allows gun reciprocity between Georgia and South Carolina and ethics legislation for state lawmakers that requires complaints to be investigated by an independent ethics commission.

Christina Cleveland is the county government reporter at the *Aiken Standard*.

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STAFF PHOTO BY CHRISTINA CLEVELAND

S.C. Senate Majority Leader Shane Massey, left, and state Sen. Tom Young provide a legislative update to the Aiken Republican Club on Wednesday.