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Subject: State Budget and Ethics -- Update from Sen. Tom Young -- May 6 to May 12, 2014

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The State Senate is in regular session with session ending on Thursday, June 5. One of my goals as your state senator is that you find this update helpful and informative. Your feedback is meaningful and appreciated. If I can help you with an issue, please let me know. Thank you for reading and for allowing me to serve our District!

State Budget

State Budget: The Senate budget will resume at 10:00 am today and continue daily until the Senate passes a budget to send back to the House. The summary of the budget in its current form as passed by the Senate Finance Committee two weeks ago can be accessed [here](#). Last week, the Senate debated several aspects of the budget with some of the highlights as follows:

Local Government Fund – The Local Government Fund (LGF) is intended to help offset the cost of state mandates by providing local governments at the county, city, and town levels with a certain amount of funding which is apportioned based on population. In this year's budget, the Senate Finance Committee funded the LGF at last year's level of \$229 Million. However, that includes \$25 Million in non-recurring funds of which a little more than \$16 Million are considered "below the line." This means that those funds are projected to be available for use by September but they also may not if the projection does not materialize. Last week, the Senate debated two separate amendments to make sure that all of the Local Government Funds were "above the line" and available as of the July 1 start of the fiscal year. Both amendments failed. I expect more amendments to be offered this week.

Funds for Controversial Mandated College Reading for Incoming Freshmen : One budget amendment debated for several hours on Wednesday would remove approximately \$52,000 from the College of Charleston and \$19,000 from USC

Upstate as a result of the schools' choice of mandated college reading for all incoming Freshmen students last Fall. I was provided excerpts from one of the books. It had explicit illustrations of and written detailed descriptions of various sexual acts. (The Charleston paper editorial reprinted in today's *Aiken Standard* does not mention this.) In addition, the books were required reading for all incoming students, and as I understand it, the students were not given any other reading alternatives. This is a sensitive issue because it involves academic freedom. Nevertheless, because I do not believe the vast majority of constituents in our district would approve of the content regardless of whether it depicted heterosexual or homosexual relationships; state tax money paid for the books; and the books were mandatory reading with no alternatives for the students, I voted not to table the proposed amendment. Further debate may occur this week as the amendment is pending.

School Bus Funding : In 2007, the General Assembly voted to replace school buses on a 15 year cycle. To do this, the state should be spending \$34 Million per year to replace 7% of the school bus fleet each year. Currently, of the state's 5,505 buses in use statewide, at least 3,331 of them are 16 years old or older. The Department of Education requested \$34 Million in funding to buy new buses. The House budget appropriated \$12 Million and the Senate Finance budget added some to that. There will be some amendments offered this week to increase appropriations for new school buses. (Privatization of the school bus system is still something that the State needs to do if it will save money. My understanding is that it will. Legislation to do this did not pass two years ago. I have talked with staff from the Governor's office and the Department of Education about this again over the past several months.)

Pay Raise for Lawmakers: One budget proviso raises the monthly in district expense compensation for lawmakers from \$1,000.00 to \$2,000.00. I am co-sponsoring an amendment with Senator Paul Thurmond that will remove this provision from the state budget. We expect the amendment to come up this week.

Additional Budget Thoughts : The budget process will continue after this week into June as the budget goes back to the House; to a conference committee from the two chambers; then to the Governor where she may veto certain items; and then to the House and Senate where the Governor's vetoes will be considered. Thus, there are a number of uncertainties between now and mid June as to what the final budget will look like. If you would like to provide input to me on a particular budget item, please do so as soon as possible by emailing me at tom@senatortomyoung.com.

Other State Government News

Ethics and Speaker of the House : Yesterday, Circuit Judge Casey Manning ruled that state law only allows the House Ethics Committee to consider alleged ethics violations by one of its members. The judge ruled that the Attorney General cannot prosecute the case against the Speaker of the House unless the House Ethics Committee referred the case to the Attorney General for further investigation. An appeal to the State Supreme Court is expected. To learn more, go [here](#).

Ethics Perspective : It is critical for the General Assembly to pass meaningful ethics reform this year. While the case against the Speaker is not directly related to most of the pending ethics reform legislation, the case does keep the media's attention on the ethics reform bill. We will read and hear more on this subject in the coming weeks. I will do what I can to make sure that the General Assembly enacts meaningful ethics reform this session.

DSS Director to Resume Testimony : On Wednesday, May 21 at 9:00 am, DSS Director Lillian Koller will resume her testimony before the DSS Oversight Subcommittee that I chair. The subcommittee is expected to continue work on DSS child welfare issues into the Fall.

Public Input Hearings - Charleston School of Law : The Commission on Higher Education will have two public hearings for public input on the proposed sale of the school. For more information, go [here](#).

Other News of Local Interest

Passing of Former Congressman Butler Derrick: Congressman Butler Derrick from Edgefield represented Aiken County in Congress for 20 years from 1974 to 1994. He passed away last week at the age of 77. His funeral was yesterday. To learn more, go [here](#).

Silver Bluff High School Culinary Team at State House: Silver Bluff High teacher Susan Keller, her husband Andy, and her students from Silver Bluff High's Culinary Arts Class were at the State House on Wednesday cooking as part of the annual "Taste of South Carolina" event sponsored by the State Department of Parks, Recreation, and Tourism ("PRT"). The Silver Bluff High team was the only cooking team from any traditional high school in South Carolina invited to participate in the event. They were able to attend with the assistance of a grant from PRT. They did a great job!

Prestigious Award in the Arts -- North Augusta Resident Honored : Last Thursday, North Augusta resident Edward Rice was honored by receiving the prestigious Individual Artist Award from the Elizabeth O'Neill Verner Governor's Award for the Arts.

Visitors at State House : A group of Aiken County residents from Curtis Baptist Church in Augusta toured the State House on Thursday. I was able to see them for a few minutes and enjoyed their visit.

North Augusta High School -- Veterans' Memorial : Last Thursday, North Augusta High School students and staff dedicated a Veterans' Memorial at the school's flag pole. While I was not able to attend because of the Senate budget debate, I sent some prepared remarks which one of the students shared with attendees. To learn more about the project, go [here](#).

South Carolina Traveler : The latest information about tourism events in our state can be seen by going [here](#).

American Red Cross : The Red Cross has several free telephone apps for your smart phone. One of them is a first aid app and another is an app for tornado warning from your phone. To learn more, go to your app store on your smart phone or call the local American Red Cross at [641-4152](tel:641-4152).

Constituent Information

Legislative Email Updates : Locally, three members of the House of Representatives, who represent portions of Aiken County within Senate District 24, send regular email updates. Their respective contact information to get on their email lists to receive their email updates are as follows:

- Rep. Bill Hixon (Dist. 83): bill@billhixon.com
- Rep. Bill Taylor (Dist. 86): bill@taylorscheuse.com
- Rep. Don Wells (Dist. 81): dwells29801@gmail.com

Congressman Joe Wilson Contact Information : Congressman Wilson represents all of Aiken County. He has staff in Aiken County with office hours in Aiken and in North Augusta. His office number is [608-9747](tel:608-9747).

Speaking with Groups Around the District : If you are involved with a local group that would like for me to attend a meeting to provide a legislative update, please let me know.

Report Waste, Fraud and Abuse in State Government : To report waste, fraud and abuse in state government, you can call: [1-855-SC-FRAUD](tel:1-855-SC-FRAUD).

Facebook : I have a Facebook page for Senator Tom Young. Please “like” the page to receive updates during the week from me on Facebook.

Tom Young’s Website : My website can be reached at <http://www.senatortomyoung.com>. There are links to a variety of constituent services; the status of sponsored bills; and roll call votes. Please add my web site as a bookmark on your computer.

Small Business Help – SC Dept. of Commerce : The South Carolina Department of Commerce has helpful information for small business owners and employees. To learn more, go to <http://sccommerce.com/south-carolina-business-network>.

Save for College - Future Scholar 529 College Savings Plan : South Carolina’s 529 College Savings Plan Future Scholar offers special tax benefits for South Carolina residents. To learn more or to enroll, go to <http://www.FutureScholar.com/parents>.

Donate Life : You can register as an organ, eye, and tissue donor through the South Carolina Department of Motor Vehicles or at DonateLifeSC.org.

Child Passenger Safety : To learn more about ways to keep your children or

grandchildren safe in your car, go to <http://www.bucklebuddiessc.org/>. The information at this link is provided in part by the South Carolina Department of Public Safety.

Request a Flag : If you would like to request a state or U.S. flag flown over the State Capitol in Columbia, please let me know at tom@senatortomyoung.com. Flags vary in cost according to their size and their material from which they are made.

State House Tours : Tours are available for the S.C. State House by calling (803) 734-2430. If you set a tour between January and June and it is on a Tuesday, Wednesday, or Thursday, please let me know so I can do my best to see you.

Thoroughbred Country-- South Carolina Regional Tourism Organization : To learn more about tourism in the four county region of Aiken, Allendale, Bamberg, and Barnwell, visit <http://www.tbredcountry.org>.

Email Updates : If you know of people in or around District 24 who do not receive my updates but they would like to get them, please email their names and email addresses to me.

Road Issues : If you see a road problem such as a pothole needing repair, call the SCDOT at 641-7665 or Aiken County at 642-1532 to report the problem. If you do not get a prompt response, please let me know at tom@senatortomyoung.com or call me. Generally, most paved roads in the County are maintained by SCDOT and are identified on the road sign poles by a small black and white sign listing the road number, such as S-2-1669. Most unpaved roads in the County are maintained by the County.

Thank you for the opportunity and the honor to represent you. Please let me know if I can help you in any way or if you have questions about these or other issues. Your feedback is meaningful and appreciated.

Sincerely,

Tom Young
649-0000 (o)
215-3631 (cell)

Paid for by Tom Young for Senate

This message was sent to katherineveldran@gov.sc.gov from:

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