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Subject: First Thoughts - Rural Items

Here are a few reasons why the "anti-rural" argument is nonsense:

- Obviously, far and away, the biggest thing she did in her budget for the rural areas is fund Medicaid. It's another \$156 million for Medicaid in her proposal, much of which goes to rural health.
- Related – her announcement in the State of the State that we'll full compensate Medicaid-designated hospitals through the DSH program for their uncompensated care costs.
- She proposed a transportation package that – if projected revenues materialize – would direct more than \$90 million in additional funds to roads and bridges. She specifically targeted some of these funds to load-restricted bridges, many of which are in rural areas.
- The increases she proposed in countless other areas will have a statewide effect, much of which will be felt in rural areas. Millions and millions for regional facilities for the Department of Mental Health, Department of Disabilities and Special Needs, etc. For instance, the additional \$11.4 million for the Department of Mental Health would help to sustain the telepsychiatry program, which heavily serves rural areas. That figure doesn't include additional proposed capital assistance.
- She proposed \$2 million last year and another \$1 million in FY 2013-14 for Teach for America, which primarily serves rural areas.
- The budget endorses USC's Palmetto College proposal, which would increase support for the system's two-year (predominantly rural) campuses.
- The budget includes another \$350,000 for the Area Health Education Consortium, to continue the efforts of the Office for Healthcare Workforce Analysis and Planning. The efforts of this office are largely focused on studying provider coverage in rural areas and figuring out how to improve it...fill gaps, etc. Last year, she approved the restoration of the \$500,000 Rural Physicians Program.
- She proposed \$252,000 for 6 more firefighters at the Forestry Commission, plus another \$180,000 for aerial detection and communications...and an extra \$1 million to replace open-cab firefighting equipment (above and beyond the several million they'll already get automatically, through a bill passed last year).
- Money for food safety and inspections (Dept of Agriculture), livestock and poultry health (Clemson PSA), 10 new law enforcement officers at DNR, a half-million dollars for DNR's hydrology/water policy group... Another \$2 million for the state river basin study, plus \$250,000 for groundwater monitoring well clusters.
- \$1.8 million this year for capital support for PRT's parks – to address their infrastructure needs.
- We were the ones who originally proposed 3 new Family Court judges, and we did it to reduce the backlogs in those areas...much of it was the rural caseload.
- We proposed millions for corrections, public safety, probation and parole, DUI enforcement (big rural problem), criminal prosecutions and defense...
- That's the 15-minute list.

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