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**Date:** 3/2/2014 8:52:59 PM  
**Subject:** Dying to Text!

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## Dying to Text

Dear Friends:

Most people recognize the dangers of distracted driving; you only need look ahead and see a vehicle weaving dangerously. In the past, we thought the driver was drunk, but the reality is most of those careening around our streets and highways are using their phones to text, twitter or Facebook.

### Top Story: Dying to Text

*"Driving a vehicle while texting is six times more dangerous than driving while intoxicated."*

The National Highway Traffic Safety Commission

*"Drivers are 23 times more likely to be in an accident if they are texting while driving."*

Virginia Tech Transportation Institute

In testimony before a House sub-committee on which I serve, we heard from many people. Among them was Miss South Carolina, Brooke Mosteller, who is campaigning for a statewide ban on texting while driving; she cited dreadful statistics. It's estimated that nationally each year in America more than 3,000 teenagers die and 300,000 are injured from texting while driving. That makes it the leading cause of teen deaths, surpassing drinking and driving.

SC is one of only two states that does not have some sort of ban on texting while driving. Because of the failure of the legislature to take action on texting legislation in recent years, nearly 100 cities and counties across the state have enacted their own bans causing a hodge-podge of confusing laws for all of us.

Our committee advanced amended legislation ([H.4386](#)) calling for a ban on texting while driving. It would include graduated penalties for fines and points (first offense: \$100 + 2 points). A Senate Committee approved a separate texting bill this week, but one Senator quickly moved to block it.

South Carolina needs a state-wide distracted driver law.

### **River Water Moratorium**

While a successful agreement was reached over the withdrawal of water from the Edisto River by Walther Farms here in Aiken County, concerns continue that other large farming operations could still legally register and pull millions of gallons of surface water from our rivers. Let's have a 'timeout' to reevaluate state laws to insure our rivers are adequately protected for the use and enjoyment of everyone. Rep. James Smith (D-Columbia) and I filed legislation that would impose a moratorium on DHEC's granting of additional registrations to pull surface water from our rivers through December 2015.

### **Reporting School Bullies**

Our House Education Committee advanced legislation calling for the creation of websites by school districts to allow for students to report harassment, intimidation and bullying. Bullying continues to be a major problem and other states have found this system useful.

### **Sex Education**

For more than a year a House committee on which I serve has considered legislation to rewrite the state's 25 year old sex education curriculum administered to public school students. It would be an understatement to say this proposed rewrite was controversial. The bill failed to get out of committee last year so compromise legislation was considered this past week. In the end, that effort failed to move forward on a 4 to 4 vote.

### **Protecting the Fetus**

This week the House will likely debate a bill ([H.4223](#)) banning abortions at 20 weeks of pregnancy. The House Judiciary Committee advanced the bill this week. The bill's sponsors say the abortion restriction is necessary because science shows fetuses can feel pain at 20 weeks. The bill also would require physicians to determine the age of the fetus before performing an abortion.

### **Faking Military Service**

A bill has been filed in the House that would make it a misdemeanor crime for a person to lie about his or her military service. Veterans groups support the bill.

### **Shortening Time for Divorce**

The House Judiciary Committee advanced a bill ([H.3169](#)) that would allow couples to divorce after 150 days of separation, rather than one year. Proponents believe forcing couples to remain married for an extended time adds contention and can make it more difficult on children.

### **Money Woes at SC State**

Facing a \$13 million cash shortfall, the Orangeburg school will run out of money soon. The state's only historically black public college is looking to the legislature for a bail out of some sort. SC State's finances are being investigated. This is going to be a hot topic in the coming weeks!

### **Student Shadows**

It's always a joy for the Aiken delegation to host our legislative shadows representing all Aiken County high schools. These seniors have the opportunity to get a behind-the-scenes tour and come onto the House floor and experience debate and voting

### **In the State Senate**

#### **Less than 'Reform' for Ethics**

The SC Senate has been debating state government ethics reform for six weeks. Thursday the Senate finally passed a bill after weakening key provisions. It contains minimal reform. The sponsor of the legislation, Sen. Vince Sheheen, told reporters the bill "is pretty close to nothing." Last year the House passed ethics reform calling for an independent body to investigate allegations against lawmakers, the Senate removed that provision. It's now up to the House to vote on the Senate changes.

### **Common Core Compromise**

A Senate panel advanced a compromise bill allowing the Common Core education standards to continue in SC. Senators dropped the original intent of the bill that would have voided Common Core, which would have effectively stopped public schools from teaching to the new Common Core standards in the classroom. A bill now goes to the full Senate Education Committee for consideration.

### **Senate Defers on Easing DHEC Regulations**

The Senate blocked a plan to eliminate scores of public health, safety and environmental rules by sending the measure back to committee for further study. Among other things, the measure could have killed more than 100 Department of Health and Environmental Control (DHEC) regulations. There are other measures pending in the legislature to reduce regulations.

## **In Aiken County**

### **Jobs for Vets**

Veterans who are discouraged with their job hunt will have a chance to discuss job opportunities in the CSRA at a Job Fair sponsored by Congressman Joe Wilson. The fair will be held **Monday, March 3 from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m.** at the Aiken County Shrine Club on Columbia Highway N.

### **Storm Debris Pick Up Continues**

Aiken County Government reports that county residents may begin placing storm-related debris at the street for curbside pickup. You may expedite the cleanup process by keeping debris away from fire hydrants, valves, and utility poles. The contractor picking up storm-related debris from the curbside is Southern Disaster Recovery (SDR) and the company's trucks are clearly marked with their logo. Their initial pass for debris pickup on County roads began on Monday, February 24. SDR will be concentrating their efforts on County-maintained roads.

The S.C. Department of Transportation will be contracting for debris removal from State roads. We anticipate an additional and final pass of the area to begin approximately 3 to 4 weeks later. Keep these dates in mind as you complete clean up from the recent ice storm event. In an effort to make storm-related debris clean up easier for Aiken County residents, there is no size limitation placed on curbside debris. Debris should be placed at the curbside or at the edge of the right-of-way as large as is manageable for residents.

### **Reminder**

News doesn't wait and social media is instant. Please stay in touch by joining my two Facebook pages:

[RepBillTaylor](#)  
[TaylorSCHouse](#)

Keep track of [my votes](#).

As always, **thank you** for the privilege of serving you. Should you have any questions or comments, please don't hesitate to call or write.

In your Service,

**Photo of the Week**

**Bill Taylor**

**803-270-2012**

Representative  
South Carolina General  
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This year's Aiken County Leadership Class made its pilgrimage to the Statehouse to view the inner workings of the General Assembly and tour the State Capitol.

Each year the current class journeys to Columbia as part of the program.

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