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## Avalanche of Activity

Dear Friends:

Last week the House of Representatives focused solely on approving the state budget. For the next two weeks we are in Easter furlough, so this week deserves to be labeled the '**Avalanche of Activity Week**' – we moved forward on a lot of legislation. Here's this week's news digest.

**Ethics Reform:** House Republicans have filed a wide-ranging ethics reform bill ([H.3772](#)) that would strengthen and update ethics laws created in 1990. I am a co-sponsor of the legislation.

### **Bump-in-the-Road for Government Transparency:**

My bill to reform the SC Freedom of Information Act was set for House debate Wednesday, but instead was kicked back to committee by a vote of 72-34. The goal is to re-work the bill's language that ends a legislative exemption from FOIA. ([Post & Courier news story](#))

### **HOUSE GOP LEADERSHIP STATEMENT ON FOIA REFORM**

House Majority Leader Bruce Bannister and Assistant Majority Leader Gary Simrill issued the following joint statement about the FOIA Reform bill:

"After three subcommittee hearings and a Judiciary Committee hearing, an amendment to end the 'legislative exemption' to the Freedom of Information Act was inserted. The Caucus supports reforming the exemption. Text messages, e-mails, and even cellular phones were not considered when the Freedom of Information Act was originally written.

"However, in the weeks since the amendment was introduced, a number of issues have arisen. Constituents who write legislators about issues with the Department of Social Services or the Department of Revenue have told us they don't want their e-mail inquiries on the front page of our newspapers. The House does not currently have the full-time staff or technology available to effectively comply with a new Freedom of Information Act while preserving the privacy of our constituents.

"Because of the issues raised by our constituents, and concerns that complying with the law will become an appropriations issue, the House voted to have the Judiciary Committee strengthen the bill and address the solvable issues with the legislative exemption.

"It is not our intention to kill this bill by asking the Judiciary Committee to find solutions to these questions. Once we have resolved these issues, we look forward to moving it back to the House floor as soon as possible."

**Economic Developer:** Congratulations to John Stewart, the Plant Manager for Bridgestone, for being named a SC Economic Ambassador. The award was presented by Gov. Haley at the Governor's Mansion. Thanks John, for helping bring businesses and jobs to Aiken County!

**Appointment of SC's General:** The House overwhelmingly approved ending the statewide election of SC's highest ranking military officer. SC is the only state to elect their Adjutant General, all others are appointed. The proposed constitutional change heads to the Senate.

**Nullifying ObamaCare:** A House sub-committee advanced a measure that forbids state agencies from implementing the federal health care reform law. Those who support the bill claim the federal law is an unconstitutional overreach by the federal government. Opponents called it a modern form of nullification. The bill now heads to the full House Judiciary Committee.

**Goodbye Sweepstakes:** The House passed a bill aimed at shutting down sweepstakes cafes by specifying that sweepstakes machines are considered illegal gambling under the state's video poker law. That has been the position of state law enforcement officials, but several judges have ruled the games were allowed under a loophole in the law. The bill was signed by the Governor Friday, a day after passage.

**Hello Raffles:** A House committee approved measures aimed at legalizing raffles in SC. One bill would allow Nonprofits to hold a limited number of raffles yearly. Another measure would ask voters on 2014 ballots whether the constitution should be changed to allow general raffles.

**Honoring Jerry Guerin:** The Late Jerry Guerin, of Aiken (Cedar Creek), was remembered at the SC House of Representatives when his wife, Philomena Guerin, and his family were presented a House Resolution in his honor. Mr. Guerin most recently served as Chairman of the Aiken County Tea Party.

#### **In the State Senate...**

- A Senate committee advanced a gun bill that would allow open-carry and no longer require gun owners to get a concealed weapons permit (CWP) in order to carry a handgun, as state law currently requires.
- GOP senators are getting behind a new proposal that would require third-graders to be held back a year if they are not reading on grade level. ([Read More](#))
- The Senate Finance Committee advanced legislation that would offer credit-fraud protection to taxpayers for the next 10 years. It's part of the Senate's response to a massive hack at the state Department of Revenue last year which compromised millions of Social Security numbers. ([Read More](#))
- The Senate also spent much time debating a bill that would allow SC to disregard parts of the National Defense Authorization Act. The bill is meant as a legal challenge to parts of the federal law. Opponents call it another form of nullification.

**H.S League Controversy:** The House voted 105-1 in favor of a bill that would leave the SC High School League intact, however would require the changes that have been called for by the legislature aimed at improving the appeal process and give every part of the state better representation in the Leagues' hierarchy. The bill goes to the Senate.

**CWP Changes Proposed:** A bill was filed in the House calling for substantive changes to the current Concealable Weapons Permit (CWP) in SC. [H.3822](#) would remove the automatic prohibition on CWP holders carrying a personal protection firearm into churches and other established religious sanctuaries, as well as into medical facilities and doctor's offices. It would also allow non-residents to acquire a CWP and extends the duration of a CWP from four to five years.

**Gun Safety:** A House panel advanced a bill that tries to keep guns out of the hands of those deemed mentally ill. It would require the names of anyone ruled mentally insane by a SC court, to be placed into a federal database used for gun background checks. This is similar to the requirements in most other states.

**Vets Tuition Break:** The House unanimously approved legislation ([H.3086](#)) to allow veterans and their dependents to pay in-state college tuition rather than be treated as out-of-state students paying hefty tuition rates.

**Stemming Student Athlete Head Trauma:** The House unanimously passed a bill ([H.3061](#)) to establish guidelines in the treatment of concussions suffered by public school athletes similar to 42 other states.

**Visiting North Aiken Elementary:** My latest 'State House to the School House' visit was to North Aiken Elementary. The 3rd graders had lots of questions about state government.

**SC-DHEC Aims to Streamline Permitting Process:** A new initiative has been launched by DHEC that simplifies the process for obtaining health and environmental permits. '[Permit Central](#)' enables DHEC to work proactively with the private citizens and business owners who need permits.

**Savannah River Issues:** I'm among a group of Georgia and SC lawmakers who represent districts along the Savannah River that have joined together to voice concerns over management of the river and recreational lakes to the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, DHEC and other agencies. Our first meeting will be April 16.

**60 Years of Marriage:** It was my honor to recognize Rev. J.B. Redd and his wife, Joyce, on their 60th wedding anniversary. Scores of friends and family joined the anniversary celebration at the Shiloh Baptist Church.

**On Furlough:** The Legislature is on furlough the next two weeks, so my next newsletter is scheduled for April 13th. It's a privilege to be of service to you in YOUR House of Representatives.

As always, it is my pleasure to be of service to YOU. Thank you for allowing me to do so.

In your Service,

**Bill Taylor**

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**Photo of the Week**

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Future Governor?

Our 5 year old granddaughter, Avery, is getting an early start in political picture posing. Thanks Governor, for coaxing Avery out of a 'shy moment' for this great picture!

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