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Subject: Flooding, North Augusta Republican Party, Latest News- Bill Hixon Legislative Update

Representative Bill Hixon, District 83 - Newsletter

Legislative Update - August 8, 2013

Dear Friends,

I apologize for the delay in getting this newsletter out to you. I have been helping to resolve some of the flooding problems in our area. There are roads washed out, flooded homes, bridges with severe problems, and many more problems. Also, I am back in my office trying to sell some insurance and real estate.

Today I met with some constituents and we discussed increasing membership with the North Augusta Republican Party and having more community meetings and involvement. Also, our American Legion is starting a new squadron, Sons of the American Legion, and we need new members. If either of these are something you would be interested in please email your name, address and phone number to me at bill@billhixon.com.

In order for me to have a strong voice in Columbia, I have to communicate with my constituents. And that is you! My website, newsletters, mailers and Facebook are the communication tools that I use. It takes extra time, staff and campaign funds to maintain these tools.

If you would like to contribute, please mail a check to Hixon For House, P.O. Box 7927, North Augusta, SC 29861 or contribute online by going [HERE](#).

I hope you find this email informative about some of the bills we passed in 2013. We still have a lot more business to take care of when we go back in January 2014. I will try to update you more before we return.

This newsletter has a lot of information about the 2013 End of Session. Though some of this information may seem repetitive, it is important to note that a great deal of this information changed when we went back for special session.

State Budget

Approved by the House and Senate and on June 26 and 27, Governor Haley's Vetoes were considered. The Highlights of the 2013/2014 State Budget, [H.3710](#), are:

- Fully funds the required health insurance increases for employees
- K-4 Education- New funds for K4 programs allocated for districts that have a poverty index of 75% or greater and are not named in the Abbeville School District vs. the State of South Carolina lawsuit.
- School Choice-- A scholarship granting organization may offer scholarships to special needs children for up to \$10,000 per year. The credit is capped at 60% of their tax liability. The tax credits are capped at \$8 million. An additional part of the compromise was a commitment from the Senate conferees to allow the stand alone school choice bill to be given consideration by the full Senate early next year.
- Data Security- Directs \$10 million to be used to begin information security structural improvements. The remaining \$15 million will provide an additional year(s) of consumer protection services free of charge. The budget also adds a proviso that strengthens the reporting requirements when a public entity experiences a breach of personal data. Effected persons must be notified within 72 hours, with only the Attorney General approving any delay requested by law enforcement. The budget also allows a \$300 - \$1000 tax deduction for the purchase of consumer protection services and identity theft resolution services.
- Transportation- \$150 million is allocated towards transportation/infrastructure improvements - \$100 million recurring and \$50 million nonrecurring. House conferees eliminated all of the fee/tax increases (both at the state and local level) proposed by the Senate Finance Committee.
 - DOT will use \$50 million in recurring General Fund dollars to replace funds that can instead be directed to the Infrastructure Bank (SIB) to bond \$500 million for bridge and mainline interstate projects.
 - 50% of the sales tax on cars will be permanently redirected to be used for secondary roads.
 - \$50 million for the bridge replacement/repair program; this will address about 80 bridges statewide.
- Adds a proviso to allow private school teachers to claim up to \$275 in tax credits for classroom supplies.
- Allocated \$36 million for special needs students to "backfill" a loss in federal funding. Federal Courts have ruled that the Federal Government cannot continue to withhold those funds, and the state no longer has to backfill the program.
- Obamacare's Medicaid expansion is not funded.
- The General Assembly allocated \$15 million for the purchase of school buses.

Department of Administration

For the fifth time, the House approved sweeping government reforms that eliminate the Budget and Control Board, cut the size of state government, and makes the state's executive offices more accountable to the Governor.

The highlights of bill [S.22](#) include:

- Completely eliminating the Budget and Control Board,
- Giving the Governor's Office more executive authority by transferring 88% of the

- current Board budget and 75% of the staff into the new Department of Administration,
- Protecting the state's AAA credit rating by creating two independent agencies with broader decision making structures to ensure secure management of the state's fiduciary responsibilities.

Last year's legislation included a large reduction in the FTEs appropriated to the Budget and Control Board. This is not included in this year's package because the House rolled those reductions into this year's budget.

Fiscal Impact Statements

The House approved legislation, [H.3484](#), requiring fiscal impact statements on proposed government regulations. This bill is in the Senate Judiciary Committee for review.

Raffles/Gambling

Governor Haley signed legislation, [S.3](#) which allows charitable organizations to hold and advertise special events such as bingo, raffles, or other similar activities intended to raise money for charitable purposes. They do not have the authority to make use of video poker machines, slot machines, or other coin-operated gambling machines.

Election Reform

Governor Haley signed the Election Reform bill, [H.3298](#). This legislation addresses the filing conflicts that spawned last year's ballot controversies. This bill removes the filing of a statement of economic interests from election law requirements and makes such filings an ethics law matter, exclusively, for both new candidates and incumbents. The procedures for becoming a candidate were also completely revised by the legislation so that the involvement of political party officials is no longer required, and all necessary filings, attestations, and payment of fees are conducted through governmental offices. It also revises the rules parties follow to nominate candidates by convention.

Early Voting

Legislation [H.3176](#) creates the state's first official early voting period for nine days before the election, excluding Sundays. Each county must establish one early voting center which must be supervised by election commission employees and located in a public building within the county seat or another location that is as centrally located for the entire county as possible. This legislation requires elections only be conducted on one of the four following days: (1) the second Tuesday in March; (2) the second Tuesday in June; (3) the second Tuesday in September; or (4) the Tuesday after the first Monday in November. Also, this legislation ends the practice of fusion voting. Fusion voting is where two or more political parties on a ballot list the same candidate, pooling the votes for that candidate. This legislation was passed by the House and is awaiting action in the Senate Judiciary.

Ethics Reform

Legislation [H.3945](#), Ethics reform, was passed by the House and is on the Senate calendar. The legislation:

- Abolishes the House and Senate ethics committees and replaces them with a new, bi-partisan committee that includes public officials and members of the general public.
- Creates a "Public Integrity Unit" to investigate criminal complaints.
- Prohibits contributions to public officials from "Leadership PACs".
- Requires all lawmakers to disclose all sources of income -- public and private.
- Requires lobbyists to register if they lobby local governments or school districts, but keeps all exemptions for members of the public and local organizations such as PTA's, homeowner's associations, or churches.
- Strengthens criminal penalties for violations of the Ethics Act.
- Eliminates the "blackout period" right before an election when candidates do not

- have to disclose donors.
- Expands when a public official must recuse himself from a vote to include all levels of the legislative process down to the subcommittee level.

Obamacare Nullification

Passed by the House, [H.3101](#), Affordable Care Act nullification, was placed on the Senate calendar. This legislation prohibits enforcement of Obamacare in South Carolina and declares that the General Assembly has the sovereign authority to refuse to enforce the provisions this federal health care legislation because its scope exceeds the powers delegated to the federal government under the United States Constitution.

State Health Care Freedom Act

This bill, [H.3096](#), provides that the state of South Carolina must not elect to establish or operate Obamacare health insurance exchanges, but must not establish a governmental agency or nonprofit entity to operate an American Health Benefit Exchange, and must not participate in a regional exchange as provided for in Obamacare. This legislation was passed by the House and is in the Senate Banking Committee.

Automobile Sales Tax Directed to Roads

Passed by the House and added to the Budget and to [H.3360](#), legislation [H.3412](#) is awaiting action from the full Senate. This legislation redirects the sales tax on automobiles to the Department of Transportation to fund highway maintenance, representing \$82.8 million each year. Motor vehicle sales tax revenues that fund the Education Improvement Act are not redirected.

Boeing Expansion

The House legislation, [S.578](#), authorizing the issuance of up to \$120 million in economic development bonds to assist infrastructure improvements to aid an expansion of the Boeing plan in North Charleston was signed by Governor Haley. This bill authorizes up to \$120 million in bonds for the expansion, bringing an additional investment of at least \$400 million and at least 400 new jobs, and for an enhanced economic project with an investment of at least \$1.1 billion and creating at least 2000

new jobs.

Small Business Access to Growth Act

Both the House and Senate approved and Governor Haley signed, bill [H.3505](#), legislation formerly known as the "Bill Wylie Angel Investment Act". This legislation establishes nonrefundable income tax credits to encourage "angel investors: providing early stage capital for emerging high-growth enterprises in such areas as manufacturing, processing, warehousing, wholesaling, software development, and information technology services.

Electronic Automobile Insurance Verification

Passed by the House, [H.3623](#) is in the Senate Transportation Committee. This legislation allows drivers to show proof of insurance on a mobile device. If an insurer chooses to provide verification in an electronic format, the insured may display this electronic proof of automobile insurance coverage on a smartphone or other mobile electronic device in order to provide a law enforcement officer with evidence that satisfies the financial responsibility requirements established for drivers under state law.

Session Shortening

For the 10th time since 1994, the House approved a constitutional amendment shortening the legislation session. This amendment, [H.3340](#), requires the legislation session to begin one month later each year and end one month earlier -- beginning on the second Tuesday in February and ending on the first Thursday in May. The amendment also authorizes the House and Senate to hold committee meetings and

conduct hearings in January. This amendment is awaiting action in the Senate Judiciary Committee.

Governor Appointment of Adjutant General

The House approved a joint resolution making the Adjutant General appointed by the Governor. The Senate approved the legislation but constitutional amendments are still on the Senate calendar. [H.3540/H.3541](#) also establishes provisions relating to: the duties of the office; the minimum command experience, South Carolina National Guard service requirements, and other qualifications for the office; the procedures by which the appointment is made; and, the procedures by which the Adjutant General may be removed from office by the Governor only for certain reasons constituting cause. This will now be on the ballot for approval in November 2014.

Handgun-Background Check for Mental Health Issues

The House overwhelmingly approved a bi-partisan measure to add people who have been deemed mentally unstable by a judge to the federal gun background check registry. This follows the incident in February where a woman who had been indicted of a threat to kill President George W. Bush went to Charleston's Ashley Hall school and attempted to shoot people. The gun did not fire because it was not properly loaded. Our state narrowly avoided a terrible tragedy. Legislation [H.3560](#) was signed by Governor Haley.

Legal Tender/Coins

The House approved [H.3504](#), legislation providing that gold and silver coins minted foreign or domestic shall be legal tender in South Carolina. The legislation further provides that no person or entity may compel another person or other entity to tender or accept gold or silver coin unless agreed upon by the parties. This legislation is awaiting action in the Senate Finance Committee.

Samples and Sales of Beer at Breweries

The House approved legislation [H.3554](#) that will allow breweries to offer on-premises consumption in conjunction with tours. It sets limits of the alcohol content of the beer and the amount a single consumer can consume in 24 hours. This legislation was signed by Governor Haley.

Property Tax Classification for Active Duty Military

Legislation [H.3027](#) provides that an active duty member of the Armed Forces of the United States who receives the special assessment ratio for owner-occupied residential property retains this four percent assessment ratio as long as the owner remains active duty, regardless of the owner's change of duty station and regardless of any rental income attributable to the property. This legislation was passed by the House and is awaiting action in the Senate Finance Committee.

Conversion of Private School to Public School

This legislation [H.3472](#), was signed by Governor Haley and allows private schools to convert to public charter schools without having to dissolve and close for a period of twelve months, as long as the private school's student population reflects the racial composition of the local school district. Private schools that successfully convert to charter schools will be held to the same requirements as all other charter schools.

Accountability-based Funding for Colleges and Universities

The House approved a joint resolution requiring performance-based funding recommendations for public colleges and universities. This legislation [H.3518](#) directs the CHE, in collaboration with the college presidents, to make recommendations on a funding method featuring specified evaluation criteria emphasizing accountability, performance, and outcomes to ensure that public institutions of higher learning receive financial support from the state based upon the quality and effectiveness of the services they provide. This legislation is in the Senate Education Committee.

In-State Tuition for Military Dependents

The House expanded in-state tuition eligibility for veterans and their dependents with [H.3086](#). Veterans and their dependents would be entitled to receive in-state tuition rates and fees at state institutions without the requirement of one year of physical presence in this state. This legislation passed by the House and is in the Senate Education Committee.

Exit Exams

The House approved a bill, [H.3919](#) that provides for the elimination of the high school exit exam as a requirement for graduation. Additionally, the legislation creates a study committee to consider whether the exit exam should remain the accountability assessment used by the state and to recommend an alternative, if necessary. The committee is to make a report to the General Assembly no later than January 31, 2014. This bill is currently in the Senate Education Committee.

Please be sure to stay up to date with all that is going on in Columbia. If you have any questions, comments or concerns, I am always available.

As a reminder, you can go to my [website](#) for links to my voting record and bills that I have sponsored or co-sponsored.

Also, you can view Live Broadcasts of the South Carolina House of Representatives daily legislative sessions by clicking [Here](#).

As always you can go to my [FACEBOOK](#) page and hit the like button or visit my [Website](#) for the latest information.

Go to the new [House Roll Call Votes Page](#) to see how all the representatives have voted on all the important bills.

Congressman Joe Wilson now represents all of Aiken County. He has staff in Aiken County with office hours in Aiken and in North Augusta. His office number is (803) 608-9747.

Senator Tom Young can be reached at: www.senatortomyoung.com or by phone at (803) 649-0000. Senator Young also does weekly newsletters and you can subscribe by visiting his website.

Thank you for the privilege of serving you in Columbia. If I can ever be of assistance to you, or if you have ideas on issues you want me to share with the rest of the General Assembly, please don't hesitate to contact me at Home at 803-278-0892 or at work 803-279-8855.

Sincerely,
Bill Hixon

For more information, please visit my website...

www.billhixon.com

Check out my FACEBOOK page...

[Bill on FACEBOOK](#)

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