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Subject: Ice Storm, Economic News, Right to Life, Budget--Bill Hixon Legislative Update

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## Representative Bill Hixon, District 83 - Newsletter

Legislative Update March 7, 2014

Dear Friends,

I hope you and your loved ones had a great Valentine's Day! I also want to extend a special thank you to our municipal, county, and state workers, first responders and volunteers who worked around the clock to clear our roads and keep us safe. I would also like to thank all of the electric utility workers from across the state and Southeast who worked hard to restore power to our more than 300,000 friends and neighbors who lost power in the ice storm. Our work is not finished yet. Please be patient. I have been working with the SC Department of Transportation and the Department of Corrections on I-20 to get the trash cleaned up. It is a mess but they are making some headway.

### Legislative Update - March 7, 2014

#### **Toray Industries**

On Tuesday, February 18, 2014, it was announced that a \$1 Billion Investment and 500 jobs were created by Toray Industries outside of Spartanburg. Toray produces high-quality carbon fiber materials for the aeronautics and energy industries. The company said it liked our proximity to emerging markets in Latin America.

Local officials told the media that they hope Toray's impact will be similar to BMW's initial announcement in the Upstate -- \$420 million and 1,000 jobs. BMW's footprint in our state has expanded radically since then with more than 4,000 people working at the plant in Greer. One official expected Toray to "under-promise and over-deliver". I think we all share that sentiment.

Toray is simply the latest in a long line of major manufacturing announcements that

validate our efforts to create a strong business climate in our state. We must compete not only with Georgia and North Carolina, but Toray's announcement shows that we are competing for jobs against sites all across the world. I think our state is a pretty good place to live, work, and play.

### **Economic News**

The economic news announced during the winter storm was also significant. The International Trade Administration announced that South Carolina merchandise exports increased four percent in 2013 to a record of \$26.1 billion in goods sold to 202 countries. We helped the United States reach an all-time high for exports of our goods and services.

"This data shows that more and more SC companies are growing their businesses and strengthening our economy by selling their to-quality goods to consumers around the globe," said U.S. Secretary of Commerce Penny Pritzker in an article posted with the business newspaper *GSA Business*.

Some interesting notes from the report, our exports were up 116 percent to Turkey, up 66 percent to the Dominican Republic, up 53 percent to Chile, and up 50 percent to China. Our biggest export categories were transportation equipment, machinery, chemicals, plastics, and paper.

The exports report came immediately after the announcement that we had a record year in new investment by companies locating or expanding in our state. In 2013, we recruited \$5.4 billion in capital investment. That translates directly into jobs, higher salaries, and economic growth for our state.

### **Winthrop Poll Results**

I am not sure how many people delved into the Winthrop poll last week - the media mostly reported the Lindsey Graham poll numbers, but there was a lot of very interesting information for our Caucus. The Winthrop Poll interviewed 901 "Likely Republican Primary Voters" and after weights (for sex, age, and race) have been applied, the results which all respondents have a margin of error of approximately +/-3.2% at the 95% confidence level. Results that use less than the full sample will naturally have a higher margin of error. The survey was in the field from February 16 to February 23, 2014. The poll was likely GOP primary voters, so it was of great interest to us at this particular moment.

#### **Approval/Disapproval**

Barack Obama: 4.8% approval, 92.9% disapproval

Congress: 5.4% approval, 89.6% disapproval

SC General Assembly: 52.6% approval, 27% disapproval

#### **Right Track/Wrong Track**

Nation: 3.2% right track, 95% wrong track

SC: 67.4% right track, 19.9% wrong track

### **Patent Trolls**

A House Judiciary subcommittee approved legislation this week that would provide entrepreneurs and inventors tools to combat so-called "patent trolls". If you are unfamiliar with the term, patent trolls are people or corporations who buy patents, usually for pennies on the dollar in bankruptcy or other liquidation sales. Or, they acquire a patent on everyday objects, such as a stick characterized as a "dog toy". Armed with an arsenal of patents, the trolls sue folks who are allegedly violating these patents. The trolls do this

despite the fact they do not engage in any other business other than holding the patents. As the sponsor of the bills, Rep. Kirkman Finlay of Columbia, said, it is essentially legalized extortion. These trolls are stifling innovation and hurting our up-and-coming companies. Patents are predominately governed by federal law, but these bills are carefully tailored to give SC tools in its arsenal to protect entrepreneurs and combat the patent trolls.

### **Right to Life**

Legislation that would ban abortions at 20 weeks of pregnancy was approved Tuesday, February 25, by the House Judiciary Committee and should be on the House floor this week. Rep. Wendy Nanney of Greenville sponsored the new restrictions because new science shows that fetuses can feel pain beginning at 20 weeks. The very liberal Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals in San Francisco struck down a similar piece of legislation in Arizona. Ninth Circuit decisions are not controlling in SC; however, and the Richmond-based Fourth Circuit Court of Appeals has not yet addressed the issue. I am a co-sponsor of this bill.

### **Ethics**

As the Senate finished debate on the omnibus Ethics Reform legislation that the House approved last year, a House Judiciary subcommittee began approving smaller ethics bills as a backup just in case the full ethics reform package dies. The House Republicans state with our Governor in support of this legislation, and we hope to have the Senate amendments back in the House very soon.

### **Budget**

The House Ways and Means Committee have put the final touches on the 2014-2015 state budget at the end of last week and we will take it up March 10. I will write more about the budget in my next newsletter, but a few highlights include: a small raise for some state employees --only their second raise since 2009; funds for 17 new SLED agents and 10 new Highway Patrol troopers; money for new school buses; and money to allow students to use lottery funds for summer semesters.

**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: [tom@senatortomyoung.com](mailto:tom@senatortomyoung.com) or by phone at (803) 649-0000 (o) or (803) 215-3631 (cell). Senator Young also does weekly newsletters and you can subscribe by emailing him.

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

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For more information, please visit my website...

[www.billhixon.com](http://www.billhixon.com)

Check out my FACEBOOK page...

[Bill on FACEBOOK](#)

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