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## **Healthcare, Ethics and Sales Tax.....**

(There's lots of 'good stuff' in this one!)

Dear Friends:

With a couple of months left in the General Assembly's 120th session, the pace of legislation is picking up as deadlines for passage grow closer.

### **Blocking Obamacare**

I teamed with Rep. Bill Chumley this week to be the primary sponsors of the 'ACA Anti-Commandeering Act'. Our bill ([H.4979](#)) would prohibit state and local governments from enabling the implementation of the so-called Affordable Care Act (ACA). Anti-commandeering prohibits the federal government from compelling States to implement federal law using their own treasury and resources. It has a long running precedent of being upheld by the U.S. Supreme Court. This bill is identical to Sen. Tom Davis' amendment that was derailed last week in the state Senate on a technicality while Senators were debating the 'Obamacare Nullification' bill. There are a total of 28 sponsors on this newly introduced House bill. An identical bill (S.1146) was also filed in the Senate this week by Sen. Davis.

### **Fixing the Ethics Reform Act**

The work to achieve a much improved ethics bill for all elected officials in SC seems endless. House Republicans have led the fight on strong ethics reforms when we first approved the bill last year. The Senate long-debated ethics in recent months, and added 12 new sections while doubling the length of the bill. They also watered down several key components while adding a few good changes. We received it back from the Senate this week and promptly sent it to a specially expanded House Judiciary Subcommittee tasked with rewriting the bill so the House can enter into a conference committee on the strongest possible footing. Here's what we want:

- Abolish the House and Senate ethics committees and replace them with a new, bi-partisan commission that includes public officials and members of the general public.
- Abolish "Leadership PAC" contributions to elected officials.
- Require all lawmakers to disclose all sources of income - public and private - in an attempt to root out conflicts of interest.
- Strengthen criminal penalties for violations of the Ethics Act.
- Eliminate the "blackout period" right before an election when candidates do not have to disclose

- donors.

## Statehouse News in Brief

### School Option Sales Tax

The Senate approved legislation ([S.940](#)) that would give the Aiken County School District the authority to call for a referendum in the November General Election allowing voters to decide whether they will accept an additional 1-cent sales tax to fund construction of new schools. The bill, sponsored by Senators Young, Massey and Setzler, requires that at least 10% of the revenue collected from a penny sales tax be applied annually to reduce the debt millage for property tax that goes to Aiken County School District for capital and maintenance needs (not operations). That will reduce the property tax on both 4% (owner occupied) and 6% (commercial) properties. The bill was sent to the House where it will be vetted in committees before going to the House floor for a vote.

### Emma's Law

This bill has passed out of the House Judiciary Committee and will likely go to the House floor for a vote next week. The Senate has already passed the legislation. The bill received its name from Emma Longstreet, a 6-year-old girl from Lexington County who was killed by a repeat offender drunk driver two years ago. It expands the mandatory use of ignition interlock devices on an offenders vehicle for a year. Interlock devices prohibit a driver from starting a car when he or she has been drinking.

### Tougher Bonds for Violent Criminals

The House unanimously passed a bill seeking to keep repeat violent offenders from being released on bond. The proposed law heads to the governor.

### Helping Those with Seizures

The state Senate gave its okay to legislation that would allow epilepsy patients to have access to a marijuana extract ([CBD](#)). Despite the national debate over marijuana legalization, the measure passed unanimously, as [CBD](#) oil does not include a chemical which gives a user the sensation of being "high."

### State to Pay for Future Presidential Primaries

The House approved a bill that would officially put the state in charge of SC's future presidential primaries. The state ran the past two presidential primaries. There's agreement among both major political parties that this process offers the best and most complete access to the ballot in presidential primary elections. The bill now heads to the state Senate.

## Aiken County News

**The FIX is in for I-20 in Aiken County!** The SCDOT Commission has approved the resurfacing of the westbound lanes from mile marker 23 to mile marker 13. The \$1.7 million contract was approved in record time. Work will begin April 21 with completion set for late July.

**MOX Update:** SC-DHEC is taking on the U.S. Department of Energy. DHEC wants to know if the plutonium at SRS should be reclassified as "mixed waste" since MOX is being shutdown. MOX was intended to recycle nuclear material into fuel. Basically, if the feds close the recycling plant, the 'fuel' becomes 'waste' again and the law says you have to dispose of it within a year.

**Ribbon Cutting:** To a chorus of barking dogs, the ribbon was cut on the new Aiken County Animal Shelter. The facility is a huge upgrade and has been much anticipated. Funds to construct the new shelter came from a private/public initiative. Without the determination of FOTAS, this new building might still be a dream.

**Edisto River Update:** No hearing is yet set on the legislation I co-filed

with Rep. James Smith (D-Columbia) that calls for a moratorium on additional withdrawals of water from all our rivers for 18 months. That would give the legislature time to revisit the Rivers Act to determine how it can be revised to best protect our precious waterways.

**Honoring Fire Fighters:** We honored SC fire fighters at the Statehouse this week. Aiken legislators gathered with Aiken Fire/Public Safety Captain Brian Brazier and North Augusta's David Griffin. We appreciate our dedicated fire fighters and always look forward to their annual visit to Columbia.

#### **Hooray Pacers!**

Our USCA Pacers were recognized on the national stage in the Final Four playoffs last night. It was a heartbreaking loss to West Liberty 86-83. CONGRATULATIONS to the Pacers for the "deepest run" in program history.

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As always, it is a privilege to serve you in the South Carolina House. If you ever need help with state government, or have any thoughts or concerns about what we are doing, please do not hesitate to contact me. Thank you for your continued support.

In your Service,

**Photo of the Week**

***Bill Taylor***

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I'm one of many boosters who supplied a Twitter picture supporting the Lady Gamecocks who have made it to the NCAA Sweet 16 basketball tourney. They take on North Carolina this Sunday evening in their bid to the Final Four Championship.

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