

From: Shane Massey <shanemassey=scsenate.gov@cmail2.com>
To: Veldran, KatherineKatherineVeldran@gov.sc.gov
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Subject: Legislative Update for the Week of 3/4/14-3/7/14

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Legislative Update for Week of 2/24-2/27

Here are the highlights from the 5th week of the 2014 session in the Senate –

TEXTING WHILE DRIVING – As expected, the legislation that would ban texting while driving hit a roadblock on the Senate floor. A few senators – some arguing a ban would lead to more accidents and some saying we should go further by outlawing all use of cell phones while driving – have teamed up to stop the bill.

We did make progress, though, on a bill that would prohibit novice drivers – those with a learner's permit or a restricted license – from using a cell phone while driving. That bill cleared a big hurdle on Thursday but still must survive one more vote before passing the Senate. I'll keep you updated.

Although I think the bill could have been much stronger, I voted for it in the end because it gives us better ethics laws than we currently have. Nevertheless, we can and should do better. The bill now goes back to the House.

SCHOOLS TO MAKE UP SNOW DAYS? – Last week the House of Representatives agreed with the Senate version of a resolution to allow districts to forgive some days schools missed because of bad weather. The resolution requires school districts to use any remaining make-up days on the calendar. After those make-up days have passed, districts would be allowed to forgive up to 5 missed days. The resolution will now go to Governor Haley for approval.

RESISTANCE TO OBAMACARE – The Senate began debate last week on H.3101, a bill designed to fight Obamacare in South Carolina. Having passed Congress, signed by the President, and mostly upheld by the Supreme Court, Obamacare is the law of the land. However, the Supreme Court has ruled that the states are not obligated to use state resources to enforce federal law. And that will be the focus of the discussion in the Senate. Should state employees and resources be used to help implement Obamacare, or should the federal government be solely responsible for implementing and enforcing federal law? I expect the debate to last a few weeks.

STATE BUDGET – The House of Representatives will debate the state budget this week. After passing the House, the budget will go through the committee process in the Senate. I expect the full Senate will debate the budget in late April or early May

SOUTH CAROLINA STATE UNIVERSITY BUDGET DEFICIT – Last week SCSU President Thomas Elzey appeared before the Budget & Control Board and made his pitch for an additional \$13.6 million in cash to pay the university's bills this year. President Elzey also appeared before a Senate Finance subcommittee to discuss the university's budget for next year.

I think President Elzey is a competent leader who understands the challenges SCSU faces. I think he has a legitimate plan to move the university forward during the 2014-2015 year and beyond, and I think he should be given the opportunity to succeed. I still have significant concerns about how SC State makes it through the end of the current budget year (June 30), though. As I have said before, I am willing to help the university be successful, but I am not willing to just hand over \$13 million. I expect a serious discussion about SC State's financial situation in the coming weeks.

Last Week's Meetings

On Wednesday, I attended a breakfast for the 2013-2014 class of Leadership South Carolina. I was privileged to be a member of the 2012-2013 class of leaders from across our great state!

On Thursday morning, I visited Pleasant Hill Middle School in Lexington. I enjoyed meeting Principal Dr. Thomas Rivers and many of the teachers, staff, and students.

On Saturday afternoon, I was in North Augusta for Sweetwater Baptist Church's annual wild game supper. More than 1,300 people came out for a great night of fun and fellowship.

On Sunday I attended an Uncasing of the Colors and Freedom Salute Ceremony to honor SC National Guard's 122nd Engineer Battalion. The 122nd recently returned from a tour of duty in Afghanistan. Seven soldiers received the Purple Heart, but everyone came home!

Constituent Interests

LANCE CPL. KYLE CARPENTER TO RECEIVE CONGRESSIONAL MEDAL OF HONOR – Last week we learned that Lance Cpl. Kyle Carpenter of Gilbert has been designated to receive the Congressional Medal of Honor. LCpl. Carpenter was severely injured in Afghanistan in 2010 when he jumped onto a grenade to save a fellow Marine. He will be the first South Carolinian to receive the award since the Vietnam War. You can read a story about LCpl. Carpenter [here](#).

REP. BILL HIXON RECEIVES AWARD – Last week the National Commander of the American Legion addressed a joint assembly of the legislature. At the conclusion of his speech, the Commander recognized Rep. Bill Hixon of Edgefield County for his work on behalf of veterans. Congratulations, Bill, and thanks for your hard work!

MOX BUDGET AT SAVANNAH RIVER SITE – Last week President Obama released his proposed budget for fiscal year 2015. The President's budget would freeze funding for the program that is designed to turn weapons-grade plutonium into nuclear reactor fuel, part of a nonproliferation agreement between the United States and Russia. If the President's proposal were to become law, it would have a devastating effect on the local economy. The Aiken County legislative delegation has been working with our federal delegation and the Governor's office to respond to yet another broken promise by the federal government.

HIGH SCHOOL MOCK TRIAL – The South Carolina high school state mock trial competition was held last Saturday. Two schools from our district did remarkably well. Strom Thurmond High School finished 2nd in the state while Lexington High School came in 4th. Great Job!

CREDIT MONITORING –The State has contracted with CSIdentify Corporation (CSID) for the purpose of continuing credit monitoring/ID protection services to South Carolinians and businesses affected by the October 2012 security breach at the Department of Revenue. CSID's services provided under the contract are available to eligible individual taxpayers (including minors and adult dependents) and eligible business taxpayers through October 31, 2014 (although it will almost certainly be extended).

You can sign up with CSID for the offered service by doing one of the following:

1. Go to www.scidprotection.com and follow the steps to enroll

or

2. Call (855)-880-2743 to enroll.

The State will pay \$8.5 Million for the first year of the CSID contract with the option to renew for four additional one year periods at the state's sole discretion. You do not have to pay anything to sign up. The Experian contract for the past year was a \$12 Million contract.

If you choose to purchase your own protection service, you can deduct a portion of that cost from your state income taxes. Talk with your accountant/tax preparer for more information.

OUR SENATE DISTRICT – Senate district 25 consists of all of Edgefield County and parts of Aiken, Lexington, McCormick, and Saluda Counties. If you'd like to see the district map, go [here](#)

VOTING RECORD – If you'd like to see how I voted last week, go [here](#). You can always check to see how I vote by going to my website, www.senatormassey.com, and clicking on the "Voting Record" tab.

SPEAKING WITH GROUPS – Several groups, clubs, and classes around our Senate district have invited me to attend their meetings and provide legislative updates. If you would like for me to come speak with your group, please let me know.

EMAIL UPDATES – If you know of people in or around District 25 who do not receive my updates but would like to get them, please email their names and email addresses to me. You can also forward this email to them and encourage them to sign up for the updates at www.senatormassey.com.

Sincerely,

Shane Massey
P.O. Box 551
Edgefield, SC 29824
Email – shanemassey@scsenate.gov
Cell Phone – (803) 480-0419

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