

Under the Dome – Legislative Report March 4 | 09 – 2022

Eighth Week of Session

Unanimous Second Reading Vote Becoming a Habit on Bipartisan Initiatives

For the second week in a row, the House of Representatives voted unanimously for the passage of a bill, a feat which has left many in awe and hopeful for continued bipartisan efforts with important initiatives. [H.4919](#), the early voting bill containing additional election reforms, received second reading on Wednesday by a vote of 114 – 0 and third reading yesterday before being sent to the Senate and referred to the Judiciary Committee (updated Fiscal Impact can be [reviewed here](#)).

As passed by the House, H.4919 would establish early in-person voting for the two weeks preceding any general election on Monday through Saturday from 8:30 am to 6:00 pm with each county's population and square mileage determining the number of early voting locations. Primary elections, special elections and all municipal elections must also be allowed to cast an early in-person ballot. Absentee ballot oaths would be required to have the printed name of the witness, in addition to their signature and address, and for anyone qualified to vote by absentee ballot, a new reason would be that a voter is going to be absent from their county of residence for the duration of the early voting period and on Election Day. Being on vacation during early voting or on Election Day would no longer be a valid reason for obtaining an absentee ballot. Absentee ballot applications would include the last four digits of the voter's social security number, and ballot delivery would require an authorized returnee to produce a current and valid form of government-issued photo identification. Provisional ballots could be cast by any voter who has already voted absentee, and the provisional ballot would be counted only if that voter's absentee ballot is not received in the county voter registration and election commission offices by 7:00 p.m. on Election Day.

Candidates for office would be prohibited from filing more than one intention of candidacy statement for an election, and candidates could not be nominated by more than one political party for a single office or have their name listed on a ballot more than once.

The State Election Commission would be required to update voter registration lists within seven days of the receipt of information disqualifying a registered voter, and when registering to vote, applicants would be required to take an additional oath that, to the best of their knowledge, are not already a registered voter in any other state. Input from the public, academia, public interest organizations, local election officials, and policy makers would be received before the purchase of new voting machines in the future. Voting machines would

additionally be prohibited from carrying any type of connection to the internet to ensure security, and optical scanners (if ever in use) would be required to meet specific standards.

Senate DHEC, DAODAS and DMH Restructuring Bill 10-years in the making moves forward

Yesterday, the full Senate Medical Affairs Committee gave a favorable as amended report to S.2, a bill creating two new state agencies: the Department of Behavioral and Public Health and the Department of Environmental Services.

Department of Behavioral Health

The Department of Health and Environmental Control (DHEC), the Department of Alcohol and Other Drug Abuse Services (DAODAS) and the Department of Mental Health (DMH) would become Divisions under the newly created Department of Behavioral Health in an effort to bring the health-related functions of those agencies together while separating out DHEC's environmental services. The authority to establish, manage, and operate veterans' homes shall also be transferred from DMH to the Department of Veterans' Affairs, a better fit for the management of all veterans' services. Spearheaded by Senate Finance Committee Chairman Harvey Peeler (R, Cherokee), this effort has been years in the making, as many believe DHEC overseeing two juggernaut functions of health and environmental regulation are too much for a single agency to effectively oversee and manage. Major events such as the 2015 "thousand-year flood" which washed away countless dams throughout the state and the myriad of public safety oversight DHEC was tasked with during the COVID-19 pandemic have created a renewed effort to restructure these agencies.

Department of Environmental Services

DHEC's current functions related to the regulation and protection of the environment would become divisions, offices and programs of the Department of Environmental Services (DES) under S.2. The hydrology and aquatic nuisance species programs currently under the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) would be transferred to the DES, and DNR's flood mitigation program would become a program of the Office of Resilience. All other DNR operations and programs would continue operating within DNR. The food safety program overseen by DHEC's Division of Food and Lead Risk Assessment and the Milk and Dairy Lab would become a division of the Department of Agriculture.

In speaking with Committee members at the hearing, current DHEC Director Dr. Edward Simmer voiced his support and said the agency would be ready to implement restructuring plans as directed by the General Assembly. Dr. Simmer noted the realignment would allow public health officials to work better together to help South Carolinians with serious substance abuse issues. S.2 received a favorable as amended report and will be up for second reading consideration in the Senate next week. Before moving on to other agenda items, Senator Brad Hutto (D, Orangeburg) congratulated Senator Peeler on S.2 taking a step forward, as Senator Peeler has been working on this restructuring plan for close to ten years.

Senate Tax Relief Bill on to full Finance

The Senate Finance Special Subcommittee on [S.1087](#), the Senate tax relief bill, convened yesterday morning and gave the bill a favorable as amended report (the Fiscal Impact can be [reviewed here](#)). S.1087 would reduce the top individual state income tax rate from 7% to 5.7%, as well as eliminate any remaining income retirement income tax for military retirees, reduce the effective tax rate on manufacturing property to 6%, issue an approximately \$100 one-time rebate to state taxpayers and repeal certain outdated tax code sections.

During Subcommittee discussion, Senator Sean Bennett (R, Dorchester – likely Senate lead on major tax reform in the future) said it is not just about the rate but who pays it. He agreed with Senator Kevin Johnson (D, Clarendon) that South Carolina currently does not have one of the highest effective tax rates in the country, so the General Assembly should not be so focused on rates. Senator Bennett later stated that while he is in favor of lowering income tax rates and providing a rebate to the people of South Carolina, 5.7% is not enough, and he does not want the Senate to accept this as comprehensive tax reform. “Our tax policy is intricate and has tentacles everywhere because of our piecemeal approach to tax policy over the past 50 years,” said Senator Bennett. “Let’s not kid ourselves that this bill lives up to its name – it’s an important piece of the Code, but it’s not enough.”

South Carolina Chamber of Commerce CEO Bob Morgan said the Chamber supports S.1087 as a mechanism to “get us closer to the vision of making our economy the most vibrant in the nation.” Senator Tom Davis (R, Beaufort – Senate floor leader on S.1087 when debate is taken up) said the most commendable parts of S.1087 are that it takes a massive amount of revenue and returns it to the taxpayers instead of spending it. “Economists talk about scarcity, and from my standpoint the most effective yield from this money comes from the private sector. If money is spent there, it has to be efficient, but when money is spent by the state, we only think to throw more money at problems. I think the one-time money and the change of tax basis could return us back to a more productive South Carolina. We exempt more sales tax than we collect, and I want to move this bill as a practical matter so we can get it moved to a joint committee.”

Full House Education and Public Works holds second hearing on CRT Bills

Tuesday afternoon, the full House Education and Public Works Committee held its [second public hearing on the five bills addressing Critical Race Theory](#). Committee Chairlady Rita Allison (R, Spartanburg) noted 50 people were signed up ready to testify and each would be allowed three minutes to speak. Throughout the hearing, Committee members asked questions of some of those testifying and made comments which led to debate, and Chairlady Allison reminded members that this was a listening session only and not time to debate. A third and likely final public hearing to receive testimony will be held next Tuesday, March 8th an hour after the House adjourns.

Senate sets Convention of States bill for Special Order

Just before adjourning for the week yesterday, Senate Majority Leader and Rules Committee Chairman Shane Massey (R, Edgefield) moved to make [H.3205](#) a Special Order bill pursuant to Senate Rule 33B. The Rule allows

a bill to be polled out of the Committee on Rules via vote by Committee members only, which was agreed to by a 14-member vote comprised of nine ayes, five nays and three members not voting.

As amended by the Senate Judiciary Committee, the Joint Resolution would allow the General Assembly to apply to Congress under the provisions of Article V of the Constitution of the United States for the calling of a convention of the states limited to proposing amendments to the Constitution of the United States that impose fiscal restraints on the federal government, limit the power and jurisdiction of the federal government and limit the terms of office for its officials and for members of Congress. At least 34 states must make a similar request before action will be taken.

The Senate will convene at 2:00 pm next Tuesday, March 8th instead of its standard meeting time of 12:00 noon to begin debate of the bill.

2022 – Legislative Meetings and Events

[Scheduled Live Broadcasts link](#)

Click this link for all notations of Live Broadcast

[Bill Number Search](#)

Click this link to enter bill numbers and review full text

Tuesday, March 8th

Senate Convenes at 2:00 pm	Live Broadcast
House Convenes at 12:00 noon	Live Broadcast
FULL Senate Finance Committee <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Large AGENDA, please review - S.1087, Comprehensive Tax Cut of 2022 - S.1106, Reserve Funds – Revise Formula Constitutional Amendment - H.3346, Reserve Funds – Revise Formula 	12:00 noon 105 Gressette
Senate Judiciary Subcommittee <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Large AGENDA, please review - H.3050, Police Command Betterment - S.124, SC Leads Act - S.1032, Move Illegal Immigration Unite from DPS to SLED - S.1092, Allow 18-year-old Corrections Officers 	12:00 noon 308 Gressette – Live Broadcast

FULL House Education and Public Works Committee – AGENDA <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Third public hearing receiving testimony on five bills related to Critical Race Theory and other measures 	1 hour after House adjourns 110 Blatt – Live Broadcast
FULL House Judiciary Committee <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Large AGENDA, please review - H.4601, Designate Ambulance Service as an Essential Service - H.4776, Medical Ethics and Diversity Act --- HOUSE VERSION --- S.811 was amended and resides in the full Senate Medical Affairs Committee 	1 hour after House adjourns 516 Blatt
House Labor, Commerce and Industry Business and Commerce Subcommittee <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - S.1090, Unemployment Benefits / Adjusted for Inflation - H.4837, Mobile Optometry Units 	1 hour after House adjourns 403 Blatt – Live Broadcast
FULL House Labor, Commerce and Industry Committee <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Large AGENDA, please review - S.1090, Unemployment Benefits / Adjusted for Inflation - H.4889, Alarm Systems - H.5036, Buildings Unfit for Occupation - Additional bill 	Upon adjournment of House LCI Subcommittee noted above 403 Blatt – Live Broadcast
FULL House Medical, Military, Public and Municipal Affairs (3M) Committee <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Large AGENDA, please review - H.3682, Certified Registered Nurse Anesthetist (CRNA) – remove supervision requirement from Written Guidelines - H.3775, Right to Try --- no health benefit plan may require an insured to fail to successfully respond to a drug or drugs for Stage Four Advanced Metastatic Cancer prior to the approval of a drug prescribed - Additional bills 	2:30 pm or 1.5 hrs after House adjourns 427 Blatt – Live Broadcast
Wednesday, March 9th	
Senate Convenes at 11:45 am --- JOINT ASSEMBLY at noon --- National Commander of the American Legion, Paul E. Dillard	Live Broadcast
House Convenes at 10:00 --- JOINT ASSEMBLY at noon	Live Broadcast
Joint Electricity Market Reform Measures Study Committee <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Presentation from Brattle 	9:00 am 105 Gressette – Live Broadcast
House Medical, Military, Public and Municipal Affairs (3M) Health and Environmental Affairs Subcommittee I <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Large AGENDA, please review - S.379, Birthing Centers and Licensed Midwives (second hearing) - H.4567, Investigational drugs used during an epidemic/pandemic - Additional bills 	9:00 am 427 Blatt – Live Broadcast
FULL Senate Education Committee – AGENDA – 3 Meetings Scheduled <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - S.935, Education Savings Accounts - Additional Bills 	10:00 am 105 Gressette

Senate Finance Health and Human Services Budget Subcommittee Agency budget requests from: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Department of Health and Environmental Control (DHEC) - MUSC – Hospital Authority 	10:00 am 408 Gressette
BUDGET BRIEFING for House Members by House Ways and Means Committee Chairman Murrell Smith <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - House will begin floor debate of the FY 2022-23 State Budget on Monday, March 14th at a time TBA 	Immediately upon adjournment of the House 110 Blatt – Live Broadcast
FULL Senate Education Committee – AGENDA – 3 Meetings Scheduled <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - S.935, Education Savings Accounts - Additional Bills 	Upon adjournment of the Senate 105 Gressette – Live Broadcast
Thursday, March 10th	
Senate Convenes at 11:00am	Live Broadcast
House Convenes at 10:00am	Live Broadcast
FULL Senate Labor, Commerce and Industry Committee <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Large AGENDA, please review - Several Proposed LLR Regulations which were resubmitted in February 	9:00 am 308 Gressette – Live Broadcast
FULL Senate Education Committee – AGENDA – 3 Meetings Scheduled <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - S.935, Education Savings Accounts - Additional Bills 	Upon adjournment of the Senate <i>(if necessary)</i> 105 Gressette – Live Broadcast
House Ways and Means 2022 Budget Schedule	
March 8 – 10 Appropriations bills placed on member desks March 14 – 17* HOUSE FLOOR budget deliberations	*Subject to change at the discretion of the Chairman
March	
Wednesday, March 16th – Candidate Filing Opens Wednesday, March 30th – Candidate Filing Closes at 12:00 noon	
April	
Thursday, April 7th – Crossover Deadline for legislation to pass from one chamber to the other <i>(technically April 10th which falls on Sunday this year)</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - After this date, a 2/3 vote of the receiving chamber is required to consider a bill 	
May	
Thursday, May 12th – Statutory Sine Die Date <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Legislation not enacted by 5:00 pm or specified in the Sine Die Resolution is null and void 	

June

Tuesday, June 14th – **Primary Election**
 Tuesday, June 28th – Primary Runoff

2022 – State Agency Meetings of Interest

South Carolina Revenue and Fiscal Affairs Office
State Board of Economic Advisors

- Thursday, March 17th

[Monthly General Fund Revenue Reports](#) ---- [Forecast Data](#)

[Local Government Finance Reports](#)

[Legislative Fiscal Impact Statements](#)

1:00pm unless otherwise noted
 417 Rembert Dennis Building –
 Bowers Conference Room
 Columbia, SC 29201
 - Meeting Agenda and Materials
 posted on [Board meeting
 information page](#)

South Carolina Department of Health and Environmental Control
DHEC Board Meetings

- Thursday, March 10th
- Thursday, April 7th
- Thursday, May 12th

11:00am unless otherwise noted
 DHEC – 2600 Bull Street
 Columbia, SC 29201
 - [Meeting Agendas](#)
 - [Meeting Live Broadcast](#)

South Carolina Department of Health and Human Services
Medical Care Advisory Committee (MCAC)

- Tuesday, May 3rd
- Tuesday, August 9th
- Tuesday, November 8th

10:00am unless otherwise noted
 DHHS – 1801 Main Street
 Columbia, SC 29201



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Please call, text or email us if we can be of assistance to you and your team. We will be monitoring the media and sharing updates as they are available.

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