



## House Republican Caucus *SCHRC 2022 - Week 15*

Another week in Columbia has come to an end and we only have 3 legislative days left until Sine Die, or the end of the 2021-2022 regular Legislative Session. Next week will be marked by long days on the Floor and a plethora of bills trying to make their way through the legislative process before the end of session.

In the coming weeks and into the summer, we have the finalization of the budget process to look forward to. Weeks ago, we passed our House version of the budget which focused on the 4 R's: Reserves, Raises, Relief, and Roads. The Senate has come up with its own version of the budget which is drastically different from ours. These differences will be reconciled over the summer to ensure that we have an appropriate budget that properly serves the people of South Carolina by our deadline of July 1.

### **Medical Marijuana & Constitutionality**

If you haven't seen the news headlines, this week was marked by the Compassionate Care Act legislation, otherwise known as the medical marijuana bill, on the House Floor. A point of order was raised by Representative McCravy based on House Rule and the State Constitution. Our Constitution requires any measure that raises or creates a tax to originate in the chamber closest to the people - the House. Since this was a Senate bill and contained a tax, the Presiding Officer was obligated to rule it out of order as he did. [We hope that this legislation will be reintroduced in the House next year, where we plan to enthusiastically support it. We side with our law enforcement community and many others on this issue, and glad to see this bill not pass the House].

### **Restructuring DHEC**

As your Representatives, one of our goals is to make government and its agencies run more efficiently. House Ways and Means met on Thursday to discuss a bill that, done right, will do just that by breaking up the South Carolina Department of Health and Environmental Control. S. 2 is a bill that will (as of July 1, 2024) break DHEC into:

1. the Department of Behavioral and Public Health (which will be the public health arm of the current DHEC) and,

2. the Department of Environmental Services (which will be the environmental side of current DHEC)

The Department of Mental Health and the Department of Alcohol and Other Drug Abuse Services will be operating as usual until the Department of Administration reaches their conclusion on how to incorporate these departments, and the General Assembly votes on it. This legislation passed out of House Ways and Means and will likely make its way to the Floor next week.

### **Cutting Taxes in SC**

During this year's session, the House already passed an impressive state income tax overhaul that restructured our state's convoluted and outdated tax bracket system. It provides significant relief to almost all taxpayers with a focus on relief for the working middle-class people. Once fully phased in, this plan will cut over \$1 billion in taxes for South Carolina taxpayers and exempts all military retirement from taxable income.

S. 1087 was the Senate's response to our tax plan. When comparing the House and Senate plans, our plan saves more money for more South Carolinians - period. We are not focused on just bringing down the top tax rate, but rather, we are focused on collapsing the middle rates to help hard-working middle-class people - where most South Carolinians find themselves. This is why during a meeting of the full House Ways and Means Committee on Thursday, the committee voted to strike the Senate language and insert our tax plan, sending it to the Floor for a vote.

We look forward to getting the chance to support this legislation, which will significantly lower state income taxes for the majority of South Carolinians.

### **Save Women's Sports**

The House recently passed legislation that bans biological men, despite sexual identity, from participating in women's sports. Upon passage in the House, it was sent to the Senate for approval. The Senate passed the bill with some tweaks, which will soon be back in the House for review. We look forward to supporting this legislation *once again* to outlaw these dangerous situations in our daughters' locker rooms and sports teams from taking place.

### **Teacher Appreciation Week and S. 946**

This week is Teacher Appreciation Week! Our teachers keep our State moving. Oftentimes, teachers are so much more than educators: they are role models, a listening ear, a shoulder to cry on, and they truly shape the lives of our children. This week, along with our colleagues, we voted to unanimously pass a bill that entitles elementary school teachers to 'unencumbered' time. Essentially, this is duty-free time to eat lunch, and have some downtime to regroup before returning to educate our children.

### **Supporting our Veterans**

Giving back to those who sacrificed it all to protect us is one of our top priorities as an elected representative. This week, we were proud to support a bill (S. 968) that establishes the Veterans Service Organization Burial Honor Guard Support Fund. This fund offsets the cost of South Carolina veterans service organizations that help provide honor guard detail at veteran burials. We were glad to see this bill pass the House without opposition.

### **South Carolina: an Agriculture State!**

According to the South Carolina Department of Agriculture, agribusiness, agriculture, and forestry drives our economy - creating over 212,500 jobs with a \$41.7 billion yearly impact. It's important that, as elected officials, we support our farmers. This week, we supported a bill that expands the South Carolina grain producers guaranty fund (existing self-assessment commodity program paid for by SC Farmers) to cotton farmers. Additionally, it establishes the SC Agriculture Commodities Commission, which will advise the Department of Agriculture on how to administer the fund. We are always happy to support and encourage our South Carolina agriculture industry and farmers. This legislation was passed by a vote of 103-1 and was sent back to the Senate.