



SENATOR REX RICE

LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

WEEK OF APRIL 15 - APRIL 19, 2019

GREETINGS! As the South Carolina Senator of District 2, who has the great privilege of representing Pickens County, I would like to thank you for reaching out to me. I gladly welcome and encourage feedback from my constituents, and if you are receiving this, I have received an email or phone call from you concerning various legislative matters. As a way of communicating updated information during this 123rd Session of the General Assembly, I will periodically send out informational emails, such as this. I hope you find it helpful.

Please feel free to contact my Senate office with questions or if I can be of service to you. My assistant's email is deanahage@scsenate.gov or you can call 803-212-6116. If you need immediate assistance, you can reach me on my cell phone at 864-884-0408.

WEEK IN REVIEW: April 15-19, 2019

Third Reading and Sent to the House

The South Carolina Senate this week passed H.4000 the General Appropriations Bill, the State Budget for FY 19-20. The \$8.9 billion state budget addresses a number of the state's most critical needs including substantial new investments in state education, providing for state employees, law enforcement, mental health services, capital improvements and giving back to the taxpayer in the form of an income tax rebate, and more.

FY19-20 Budget Inclusions

Education:

- Increase the starting salary of teachers in South Carolina from \$32,000 to \$35,000.

- Providing a 4% pay increase to all teachers in South Carolina with no local match required from the districts; starting teachers receive additional increase.
- Added \$15 million to the Base Student Cost.
- Allocation of \$65 million for school district capital improvements.
- \$10 million to provide 120 more School Resource Officers (SROs) to districts that can least afford them.
- Direction to the Law Enforcement Training Council to develop a training plan for SROs that focuses on how to provide frontline defense of school children. The plan shall include, but not be limited to, student vs. student, student vs. teacher conflicts and the evolving active killer risks, as well as the de-escalation and defensive tactics.
- Lottery expenditures of \$19.3 million for school bus purchases and \$20 million for needed instructional materials.
- \$42 million in new recurring dollars for colleges, universities and technical schools to mitigate tuition increases for In-State students, making receiving a college degree more obtainable.
- \$119 million of the Capital Reserve Fund for colleges and universities to address much needed deferred maintenance and renovations to existing buildings across college campuses.
- A total \$317 million to fully fund our state's "Merit Scholarship" — Palmetto, LIFE, and HOPE.
- The State Tech Board received \$19.2 million for Ready SC to support recruitment and training for industries investing in South Carolina including Boeing, BMW, Mercedes Benz, Samsung and Volvo.
- Directive that no funds appropriated to the public colleges or universities may be used to purchase fetal remains from an option for research or experimentation, or the acceptance of donated fetal remains.

- From the funds appropriated to the State Department of Education, the Department shall develop a one-half credit virtual course in personal finance. The course must be fully developed by June 30, 2020.

Health and Human Services:

- Continued commitment to current level of services for Medicaid Maintenance of Effort
- Funds to cover the decrease in the federal match rate for the Children's Health Insurance Program; eligibility limit also increased to make South Carolina level with Southeastern average, providing 22,000 more children with access to coverage.
- 2% across-the-board pay increase for state employees; a \$41 million raise.
- 100% fund coverage of state funded employees and school district employees' share of health and dental insurance increases, resulting in no increase in monthly premium costs.
- \$32 million in General Funds and \$4 million in EIA to fund employer cost of increase of contribution rates for retirement systems that is a multi-year phase-in to reduce unfunded liability.
- Recurring funding to establish 12 respite/triage beds at regional centers for individuals at home who are in need of intense respite intervention.
- Increased funding for school based mental health services with the intent of having mental health professionals in every school by 2020.
- Additional funds for rental assistance in supported apartments and for transitioning parties into independent living.
- Covered the balance of decreased Federal Funds for the Prescription Monitoring Program which provides healthcare providers a decision-making tool for controlled substance prescriptions and use of the Program tied to a reduction in opioid prescriptions.
- Additional staff to further assist small water and sewer systems as handled by the successful Office of Rural Water program.

- Strong investments in children welfare and support by providing funding for implementation of the Child Support Enforcement System, Child Welfare Information Systems to upgrade technology for in-the-field caseworkers, increase in foster care monthly rate payments including kinship care, and fully funding the request for Opioid Response and Addition Efforts for Infrastructure Improvements for the local 301 Provider System.
- Directed the prohibition of state funds, directly or indirectly, from being utilized by Planned Parenthood for abortions, abortion services or procedures, or administrative functions related to abortions.
- Provision allows the Department of Social Services to allow pro bono coverage for DSS volunteer attorneys.

Criminal Justice:

- \$7.8 million in recurring funding for pay increases for judges, solicitors and public defenders.
- \$814,413 recurring increase to support a law enforcement rank change for Class I and Class II Law Enforcement Personnel eligible for rank change in FY19-20.
- Recurring and nonrecurring investment to implement the SC Critical Infrastructure Cybersecurity Program which creates a task force to help protect infrastructure in the state from cyber events.
- \$711,200 in recurring funds for master trooper/officer rank. Creates a reclassification career path for those officers and troopers who have served ten years or more but are not going into supervisory ranks.
- \$2.3 million for purchase of new vehicles and support a vehicle rotation system and \$1 million for radio rotation.
- \$2 million moved from other funds to general funds to reduce agency's reliance on fines and fees for critical infrastructure needs
- \$1.25 million in support of pay raise for mental health and medical positions applicable to nurses, doctors, dentists and other key medical personnel who serve the inmate population.

- \$10 million for critical detention services and equipment upgrades needed at institutions such as cell door locks, fire alarm system, and elevated control rooms.
- \$1 million for Correctional Officer and Community Specialist pay increases to increase the salaries for front-line institutional correctional officers in an effort to reduce overall shortages due to outside competition and nature of the dangerous work in a correctional setting; additionally \$2.3 million in earned overtime pay for officers.

Natural Resources and Economic Development:

- Designated funding for the Forestry Commission for employee recruitment and retention, and the conversion of open-cab dozers for safer enclosed-cab dozers.
- Department of Agriculture funds for the Food and Consumer Safety Program and monies for laboratory equipment upgrades.
- New funding to allow Department of Natural Resources to hire 10 new Law Enforcement Officers, meet Officer Step increases and conduct important activities for State Water Planning.
- \$12 million in non-recurring funds for capital improvements and deferred maintenance at state parks.
- \$8 million in new money to allow continued economic development efforts with closing funds and locate SC money. Commerce appropriated \$50 million to allow them to focus efforts to improve the economy in those areas of the state with poorest school districts.
- \$8 million to the Ports Authority for the Jasper Ocean Terminal Port.
- \$25 million set-aside for grant program to assist famers who suffered devastating crop loses as a result of the flooding associated with Hurricanes Michael and Florence.
- From the funds appropriated to the Department of Commerce, the Department must conduct a report on the accessibility of broadband and Internet services taking into georgic area of the state.

- Directive that DHEC, local government entities and special purpose districts, may not approve a plan, permit, license application for the constitution of infrastructure or other activities for which the principal purpose is to facilitate the exploration, development or production of oil or gas from the territorial waters or South Carolina or in the Atlantic Ocean.

Constitutional:

- Support for the Office of the Adjutant General including funding for the SC Post Challenge and SC Youth Challenge.
- Additional funding for our state armories.
- \$1.5 million for Adjutant General for improved facilities and one time funding of \$4 million as state match.
- \$1.5 million for the Office of the Attorney General to continue its work; also provided resources for Crime Victim Services and State Grand Jury.
- Commitment to safe and secure elections with a \$40 million allocation to a statewide voting system to be ready for implementation in the 2020 election cycle.
- \$5 million recurring and \$23 million nonrecurring to the Department of Administration for capital improvements of the buildings in our state with desperate need.
- \$50 give back to every South Carolinian with an income tax liability.

Transportation Regulatory:

- \$8 million for rest areas of the state to begin the process of improving what visitors and residents of the state alike see when they travel South Carolina highways.
- Crucial funding for our smaller airports in the state. \$1 million for federal grants for infrastructure and improvements of the smaller airports.

- New funding for a bilingual position at the Human Affairs Commission. This investigator will allow them to continue to assist businesses and individuals in the state and keep the federal government out of our affairs.
- \$3 million increase for the operating budget of the Department of Motor Vehicles to provide efficient and excellent customer service in the state and continued implementation of REAL ID.

Given Second Reading

H.4001 – Capital Reserve Fund: To appropriate monies from the Capital Reserve Fund for Fiscal Year 2018-2019 and allow unexpended funds appropriated to be carried forward to succeeding fiscal years and expended for the same purposes. Ordered for third reading on the next legislative day.

Enrolled for Ratification

H.3398 – Tucker Hipps Transparency Act: A bill to remove the sunset provision of the Tucker Hipps Transparency Act as established by Act 265 of 2016 to required public institutions of higher learning to maintain a report of factual findings of violations of the institution's Conduct of Student Organizations by fraternity and sorority organizations formally affiliated with the institution.