

Legislative Report - Week 7

February 24, 2023



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[Weekly Highlights](#)

Working Agricultural Lands Preservation Act Heard in House Ag Subcommittee

A House Agricultural subcommittee met on [House bill 3951](#) this week. The bill establishes the “South Carolina Working Farmland Protection Program” to provide permanent protection to strategically significant working farmland properties whose continued availability as productive agricultural use is essential to the long-term future of the economic sector and creates a fund for qualifying projects under this program. The bill was amended and received a favorable vote. It will now be sent to the full House Ag Committee for further action.

Senate Ag Subcommittee Hears Child Food and Nutrition Study Bill

A Senate Ag & Natural Resources subcommittee heard and passed favorably H. 3312 this week which creates the Child Food and Nutrition Services Study Committee. The bill directs the study committee to evaluate and provide recommendations to the General Assembly on transferring the South Carolina Farm to School Program, the Emergency Food Assistance Program, the Commodity Supplemental Food Program, and various food and dairy safety programs from the Department of Education to the Department of Agriculture. The bill now goes to the full Senate Ag Committee for further action.

Security from Trespass and Protecting Food Safety Act – H.3884

The Trespass and Protecting Food Safety Act was heard in a House Ag subcommittee this week and approved favorably after being amended. This bill prohibits unauthorized individuals from entering an animal protection zone without consent on a farm, facility or premises on which farm animals are kept or located. The bill also prohibits the hindrance, obstruction, interference or interaction with a farm animal on a motor vehicle for transportation and outlines penalties. H. 3884 will now be heard by the full House Ag Committee in the coming weeks.

House Budget Committee Makes Initial Decisions

The House Ways and Means Committee has published their first draft of the 2023-2024 budget bill. The budget will be deliberated on the House floor March 13-16. Once approved by the House, the bill will be sent to the Senate for separate deliberations. Below are some initial funding decisions of interest provided by the Committee:

SC Department of Agriculture

- Marketing of Agricultural Products \$500,000 recurring
- Agribusiness Infrastructure Projects \$500,000 recurring
- Greenville/Orangeburg State Farmers Market Renovations \$1,878,000 one-time funding
- Consumer Services Equipment Replacement \$1,122,000 one-time funding
- Growing Agribusiness Projects Fund \$20,000,000 one-time funding

Clemson PSA

- Employee Retention and Recruitment \$2,313,235 recurring
- Poultry Science Research Facility \$3,000,000 one-time funding
- Statewide Program Support \$1,000,000 one-time funding
- Problematic Wildlife Research \$954,400 one-time funding
- Critical PSA Research Infrastructure & Dam Maintenance \$2,120,000 one-time funding

SC State PSA

- Agriculture Innovation Research \$500,000 recurring
- Agribusiness Development & Expansion Support \$2,500,000 one-time funding
- Camp Daniels Training and Activity Center \$2,500,000 one-time funding

John de la Howe

- Campus Growth \$1,000,000 recurring
- Critical Staff Retention - Nursing Pay Plan \$33,293 recurring
- De La Howe Hall Renovation \$2,100,000 one-time funding
- Agriculture Shop \$1,300,000 one-time funding

House and Senate Officially Rename South Carolina Poultry Festival

The full House and Senate approved House bill 3960 this week that designates the annual South Carolina Poultry Festival held in Lexington as the official "State Poultry Festival". The much-loved event will celebrate its thirty-seventh anniversary at this year's festival in Batesburg-Leesville from May 11-13, 2023.

[Rural Broadband Initiative Announced During State House Press Conference](#)

Governor Henry McMaster and Congressman James Clyburn held a joint press conference this week announcing [GetConnectedSC](#), a high-speed internet access and adoption campaign to bring service to areas of the state that remain unserved and in great need of access.

Governor McMaster and Congressman Clyburn were joined by officials from the SC Office of Regulatory Staff's Broadband Office and the SC Department of Administration's Digital Equity Office to announce the needed program.

The campaign is designed to identify the areas of greatest need in the state, invest in broadband infrastructure for those areas and provide support services to make the transformation possible for the affected homes and businesses.

In addition to a new website, the campaign includes a 26-community listening tour and a Better-Internet Survey. The survey is designed to capture the barriers to internet adoption of unserved, underserved and underrepresented communities statewide. Information gathered will shape a five-year broadband plan.

[SC Cattlemen's Association Day at the State House](#)

This week, we welcomed the **SC Cattlemen's Association** to the Capitol!



Members of the Cattlemen's Association and the House Agriculture Committee

The SCCA unites the cattle producers across our state to advance the economic, political, and social interests of South Carolina's vast cattle industry. With over 1,200 members and 29 local associations functioning around the state, the SCCA is the leading advocacy group for their vital part of South Carolina's agribusiness economy and we are proud to call them our *South Carolina Farm Bureau Farmers of the Week*.



Members of the Cattlemen's Association with House Speaker Murrell Smith (Sumter) and Rep. Patrick Haddon (Greenville)



SCCA Executive Director Travis Mitchell, Thompson Smith, Jason Davison, Drake Yon, and SCCA President Timmy Benton with Rep. Doug Gilliam (Union)



Gene Crim, John Fogle, House Majority Leader Davey Hiott, Eddie Evans, and Bonnie Cann



Drake Yon, Timmy Benton, Rep. Ashley Trantham (Greenville), Gene Crim, and Travis Mitchell



Rep. Heather Bauer (Richland), Gene Crim, and Eddie Evans



Bonnie Cann, Gene Crim, Drake Yon, and Eddie Evans with House Ag Committee Chair Bill Hixon (Edgefield) and Rep. Cal Forrest (Saluda)

Looking Ahead to Next Week



The House Agriculture Committee will begin hearings next week on a number of bills that may include the Security from Trespass and Protecting Food Safety Act of 2023, Illegal Transportation of Feral Hogs and the Working Agricultural Lands Preservation Act. The SC Farm Bureau Government Relations team will continue to provide timely updates and necessary guidance to our partners at the statehouse and our members.