



"It's been a while since I've seen you. I love you, and I've been loving you. It's just that I've had a lot of stuff to do since I first saw you."

—President Obama at his speech in Columbia this week, his first visit to SC since 2008

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SC State Update

The Senate gave S. 475 third reading on Thursday and will now send the Joint Resolution to the House. The bill would fire the South Carolina State University Board of Trustees and replace them with new members who would serve until July 2018. The bill was the subject of much debate on the Senate floor. Senator Gerald Malloy (D-Darlington) argued the bill does not do enough to address all the issues the financially troubled university faces, but other senators insisted change is necessary to bring the institution out of its current straits. Although there were disagreements about what kind of actions should be taken to correct the school's fiduciary problems, all senators agreed that keeping the school open and operating is in the best interest of the State.

Agency Confirmations

The Senate was busy last week confirming cabinet directors, including the director of a new state agency, the Department of Administration. Among those confirmed were Sylvia Murray as Department of Juvenile Justice Director; Rick Reames as Department of Revenue Director; Christian Soura as Department of Health and Human Services Director; and Marcia Adams as Department of Administration Director. Some have been awaiting confirmation since their appointment in the fall, but Director Reames had the longest wait since his appointment in July 2014.

Raffles Almost Legal in SC

On Thursday, the Legislature ratified a constitutional amendment to allow nonprofit organizations to conduct raffles in South Carolina. The ratification of the amendment will allow nonprofit organizations to conduct raffles beginning on April 4 (30 days following ratification). Under the new law, only qualified nonprofit organizations are eligible to conduct raffles and must be approved to do so by the Secretary of State. Additionally, in order to conduct a raffle, the nonprofit organization must have a religious, charitable, scientific, literary, or educational purpose, or be operated for the purpose of supporting amateur sports or the prevention of cruelty to children or animals. Palmetto State voters approved the constitutional amendment in November's general election by an overwhelming majority.

Local Government Funding

The South Carolina House of Representatives passed H. 3374 last week and sent the bill to the Senate. H. 3374, a bill introduced by Representative Jimmy Merrill (R-Berkeley), changes the formula the state uses in determining the amount local governments receive state funding. The current formula, which requires 4.5% of the previous year's general fund be distributed to local governments, has not been changed since 1991 and has not been fully funded in the past seven years due to the economic situation. Proponents of the bill argue the current formula, which is nearly 25 years old, is out of date and needs to be changed in order to come up with a solution that can work more effectively. Some local government groups have opposed the legislation saying the General Assembly has tied their hands in creating new revenue and should provide them with the money mandated by current law. The issue is sure to be a hotly contested one in the Senate as both sides make their cases as to how local governments will obtain the necessary funding to provide critical services to citizens.

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