

Legislative Report - Week 10

March 17, 2023



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This week the House completed their debate on this year's state appropriation bill, while the Senate continued meeting in committees to get as much legislation as possible discussed before their turn at the budget bill in a few weeks.

SCFB GR staff will continue to listen to our member's concerns, challenges, and ideas, and bring those issues to life for lawmakers in SC and DC. We also encourage our members and the larger community to be active participants in all areas of government – through voting, grassroots initiatives, engaging neighbors in conversation, serving on action committees, or serving as an elected official.

[Weekly Highlights](#)

House Budget Appropriations

The House fiercely debated the Fiscal Year 2023-2024 statewide appropriations bill this week, with much of the spirited discussion centering on proposed amendments to non-ag related funding. Not many substantive changes were made to the Committee version of the bill and after a few days of long debate, the House adopted their version of the spending plan by Wednesday.

Below are a few excerpts of note from the House plan:

South Carolina Department of Agriculture

Growing Agribusiness Fund - \$20,000,000 non-recurring funds

SC Agricultural Marketing - \$500,000 recurring funds

Orangeburg/Greenville State Farmers Market Renovations - \$1,878,000 non-recurring

Clemson PSA

Poultry Science Research Facility - \$3,000,000 non-recurring

Statewide Program Support - \$1,000,000 non-recurring

Problematic Wildlife Research - \$954,400 non-recurring

SC State PSA

Agribusiness Development & Expansion Support - \$2,500,000 non-recurring

Agriculture Innovation Research - \$500,000 recurring

Forestry Commission

Emergency Operations and Equipment - \$2,250,000 non-recurring

Law Enforcement Retention - \$415,000 recurring

Governor's School for Agriculture at John de la Howe

De La Howe Hall Renovation - \$2,100,000 non-recurring

Agriculture Shop - \$1,300,000 non-recurring

Campus Growth - \$1,000,000 recurring

DHEC Restructuring – Consolidation of Statewide Water Functions - Heard by Senate Subcommittee

Testimony began in earnest this week on **Senate Finance Chairman Harvey Peeler** (Senate District 14 - Cherokee, Spartanburg, Union and York Counties counties) and **Senate President Thomas Alexander's** (Senate District 1 -Oconee and Pickens County) co-sponsored bill, S. 399, focusing on DHEC reform. This bill aims to increase government efficiency while creating separate health and environmental state agencies, including moving all statewide water regulation into one entity. The bill received overwhelming support last year from the Senate. SCFB is strongly supportive of government efficiency and single agency water.

SCFB President Harry Ott testified on the importance of the bill and why we support the increased efficiency and focus on environmental efforts that would be streamlined if passed.



Alien Ownership of Real Property Legislation

Senate Majority Leader Shane Massey (Senate District 25 - Aiken, Edgefield, Lexington, McCormick and Saluda Counties) presided over multiple subcommittee hearings on Senate bills 392 and 576, which would change existing law related to land ownership by foreign-controlled adversaries. Current law limits any alien or corporation controlled by aliens from owning or controlling more than 500,000 acres of land.

The working bill, **S.576**, was amended to include new definitions and limits ownership by foreign adversaries to less than 500 acres. It was passed by the full Senate Judiciary Committee and placed on the Senate calendar for further discussion.

Statewide Agriculture Agencies Present Budget Requests to Senate Finance

Two agricultural agencies provided their budget requests to Senate Finance subcommittees this week. **Commissioner Hugh Weathers** and **State Forester Scott Phillips** provided excellent and informative presentations to their respective subcommittees while requesting ag-focused funding. SCFB GR staff will continue to work with these and other agricultural entities to secure the funding appropriate to support our industry.

GetConnectedSC Holding First Town Hall Sessions - More Meetings to Come

The SC Office of Regulatory Staff's Broadband Office in collaboration with the SC Department of Administration's Digital Equity Office (SCDEO) have launched the *GetConnectedSC* campaign. This statewide effort is designed to identify the areas of greatest need across the state without adequate internet service, invest in broadband infrastructure to those areas and provide support services to make a transformation possible for every home, business and community organization lacking necessary connection.

See information below from the Office of Regulatory Staff:

These events will begin a series of stops in a tour of 26 cities and towns that have been identified as priority areas through our advanced mapping system. At these stops, we'll gather with people in these communities to listen and gain an understanding of exactly how and where improved internet service can impact lives. We'll talk about all the ways using the internet can improve lives from education and healthcare to running a business. We'll also invite participants to complete the *Better-Internet Survey* that is designed to pinpoint internet access availability, barriers to use and other concerns around internet use, down to specific household level.

Everyone in South Carolina – especially those with no or slow internet - is encouraged to complete the survey. **Take the [Better-Internet Survey](#) now.**

Upcoming Meetings:

- **Tuesday, March 21, 2023 at 10:30 am at Belton Library located at 91 Breazeale St, Belton, SC**

[RSVP to the event here: https://www.eventbrite.com/e/577392475437](https://www.eventbrite.com/e/577392475437)

- **Thursday, March 23, 2023 at 10:30 am at Williamsburg Technical College, Room 444 located at 601 MLK Jr. Ave, Kingstree, SC**

[RSVP to the event here: https://www.eventbrite.com/e/574541698687](https://www.eventbrite.com/e/574541698687)

National Update

SC Farm Bureau joined 400 national, regional, and state organizations to send a letter to U.S. House and Senate Budget Committees and Agriculture Committees asking for appropriate resources to be allocated in an effort to lay the foundation for a successful farm bill reauthorization this year.

To read a copy of the letter to House and Senate leadership, click [here](#).

Farmers of the Week: SCFB Young Farmers & Ranchers



Joining us this week in Columbia were 18 members of the SCFB Young Farmers and Ranchers Program! These individuals represent the rising generation of farmers, ranchers and agricultural leaders across our state. They accompanied our GR team as part of a leadership development program to learn more about the legislative process as well as to begin developing relationships with their legislators.

We had representation from Anderson, Bamberg, Calhoun, Horry, Kershaw, Lexington, Saluda and Williamsburg counties! Thank you to all of these amazing young farmers for devoting time to learn more about our state government and how it affects South Carolina agriculture, and for serving as our *SCFB Farmers of the Week*!



With Rep. Roger Kirby (Florence)



With Rep. Ben Connell (Kershaw)



With Rep. Case Britton (Horry)



With Rep. Russell Ott (Calhoun)



With Senate Ag Committee Chairman Wes Climer (York), Sen. Ronnie Sabb (Williamsburg), and Sen. Katrina Shealy (Lexington)



With Rep. Anne Thayer (Anderson)



With Rep. Bill Taylor (Aiken)

Looking Ahead to Next Week



After completing their work on the budget bill, the House of Representatives will be on furlough next week. The Senate will be tackling a full calendar which includes clarifications on the Grain and Cotton Producers Guaranty Fund, potential tort reform discussion, and other topics of agricultural business interest. Be on the lookout for updates next week as the 2023 General Session continues to roll along.