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## *Legislative Update Week 1*

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Legislative Session for the 124th South Carolina General Assembly resumed this week. Session began with education issues! Check out key details and how The SCEA members can take action to influence legislators.

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## **Unencumbered Time & Voucher Legislation**

On Wednesday, the Senate Education Committee held two simultaneous hearings of the Senate Education Subcommittee with each meeting containing important legislation of interest to The SCEA members and our students.

**Cheers - Unencumbered Time:** On the first day of session, [Senator Goldfinch](#) introduced [S.946](#), a bill for unencumbered time for teachers. The SCEA has played a critical role in advocating for this legislation to be introduced, and Unencumbered Time is a key part of [our Legislative Agenda](#).

On Wednesday, President Sherry East testified in support of the bill and to recommend ways to strengthen the bill, including recommending the bill be expanded to apply to all educators and to include additional time beyond the 30 minutes currently written into the bill. **The members of the Senate Education Subcommittee discussing Unencumbered Time voted to advance the bill to the full committee.**

**Jeers - Education Scholarship Account Vouchers:** The Voucher Attack on South Carolina's Public Schools continues. Twenty-two out of 29 Republican Senators are sponsoring [S.935](#) a bill to create "Education Scholarship Accounts" (ESAs). ESAs are simply vouchers by another name, and they pose a dangerous threat to the already strained funding for South Carolina's Public Schools. Vouchers take public tax dollars from local public schools to give to private schools, unfairly draining public schools that must accept and serve **all** students. The SCEA stands strongly in opposition to **S.935** and any voucher legislation.

Testimony on **S.935** lasted two hours. Out of two hours of testimony, only two speakers supported the legislation. The majority of speakers resoundingly urged members of the Senate Education Subcommittee to vote no on **S.935**, including many active and retired members of The SCEA. In fact, some members who came to testify were not able to testify

due to the large number of speakers. **The Subcommittee, however, carried over the discussion to this coming Wednesday at 10:30 a.m.** Members wishing to speak to oppose **S.935** will have another opportunity to make the collective voice of educators heard.

Testimony is not the only way to make your voice heard on this important issue.

**You can help** get the word out about this harmful legislation and the severe consequences it could have for public schools by [sharing on social media](#) and, most importantly, [writing to the members of the Senate Education Subcommittee now](#).

**Click below to send your email to all five Senators on the Subcommittee!**

Email the Senate Education Subcommittee Now!



**Above:** A group of members who testified against S.935 on Wednesday stop to take a picture with The SCEA President Sherry East and Senator Mike Fanning.

## Governor's Budget Proposal

The House Legislators returned to Columbia this week for the start of the second year of the two-year session. Upon their return, Governor Henry McMaster released his [2022-23 budget proposal](#). In addition to state dollars, the Governor has also released recommendations for allocating funds from the federal American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA).

While the Governor's proposal has no legislative effect, it signals to legislators what his priorities are and the initiatives he supports.

Here are some of the Executive Budget highlights:

- Rainy Day Fund \$500 million
- K-12 Funding Reform \$120 million
- School Bus Drivers \$12 million
- Education Savings Accounts \$20 million
- Nursing Shortage \$20 million
- Law Enforcement Raises \$31 million
- Merit Raise State Employees \$46 million
- Tuition Freeze \$20 million
- Income Tax Cut \$177 million
- Higher Ed Def. Maintenance \$183 million
- EV Buses \$24 million .

## House Approves New Congressional Map

The House adopted a congressional map this week by a vote of 74-35, along party lines. The bill now goes to the Senate, which is still in the process of finalizing its version of the redistricting map. The House map closely resembles current boundaries, but critics say the map was drawn based on political motivations. The House Redistricting Ad Hoc Committee Chairman Jay Jordan (R-Florence) denies such claims and says such criticism isn't supported by the data. The Senate is expected to vote on its version in the coming weeks.



Do you believe every South Carolina student deserves a great public school? [Take the Education Voter Pledge!](#)

Make sure your state Senator & Representative know that Public Education issues will have most impact your decision as a voter. [Take the pledge now!](#)

