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*Legislative Update Week 1
January 14, 2023*

Welcome Back!

This week marks the first year of a two-year session. On Tuesday, legislators returned to Columbia for the 125th session of the South Carolina General Assembly.

Legislators have announced their intention to prioritize abortion restrictions, education, telehealth, repealing or reforming certificate of need in the healthcare realm, and continuing to tackle the opioid crisis.

After the 2022 House elections, there are 27 freshmen representatives and eight new committee chairs. As a result, much of this first week was spent organizing and getting acclimated to the processes and for some, learning where the bathrooms are.



The exception was Wednesday, when Governor Henry McMaster celebrated his second inauguration. During his inauguration speech, McMaster highlighted a list of top priorities for the next four years. Upon completing this four-year term, McMaster will be the oldest and longest serving South Carolina governor in history. He has an added boost due to finishing the unexpired term of Governor Haley when she resigned in 2017 to become the UN Ambassador.

This week, the Senate Education Committee heard proposed Education Scholarship Account (Voucher) language on Thursday. The proposed legislation ([Grooms](#)) is contained in [S.39](#).

At the end of the short debate, and without public input, the committee voted to adopt an amendment to revert the senate version of the bill from last session. The amendment will take the bill back to the March 31, 2022, version of S.935:

https://www.scstatehouse.gov/sess124_2021-2022/prever/935_20220331.htm

- Other topics that circulated amongst the committee included [Chair Greg Hembree's](#) position to offer an amendment on the testing piece, although he was not specific.
- [Senator Nikki Setzler](#) opposed the idea of having an "education service provider" as this would allow
- a management company that is not directly affiliated with a school board to manage the funds.
- [Senator Brad Hutto](#) is not in favor of funding students to attend virtual school. He stressed that students should be taught in classrooms. He also stressed accountability.

Debate is expected on this bill on the Senate floor next week.

Your Senator needs to hear from you now! Tell them to vote NO on S.39 and to allow the public to be heard on any voucher bills considered this legislative session!

S.39 and [private school voucher bills](#) would send public money to private schools that can pick, choose, and discriminate against some of South Carolina's most vulnerable students — all without doing anything to support or improve the public schools that proudly welcome, accept, and educate ALL students.

Write to your Senator: Tell them to keep public tax dollars in public schools! Stand up for Public Schools!

Earlier in the week, [Governor Henry McMaster](#) released his Executive Budget. While this is just a starting point, it includes the following:

- \$254 million for State Aid to Classrooms.
- \$2,500 teacher salary increase at every step of the state salary schedule.
- Raises the minimum starting teacher salary to \$42,500, with the stated goal of getting to a minimum starting salary of at least \$50,000 by 2026.
- \$2,500 retention supplement for every eligible public-school teacher for school year 2023-2024 with a half in December and the other half in May. This is expected to cost \$132.5 million.
- Consolidated K-12 Funding formula that follows the child and supports a state average student-teacher ratio of 11.2 students per teacher with an average teacher salary including fringe benefits of \$72,991.
- \$27.3 million for School Resource Officers (SROs), which would add an officer in 188 schools currently without an assigned SRO.
- \$3.5 million for New SRO Training Center at SLED. The funds will create the Center for School Safety and Targeted Violence. Located at the old Gilbert Elementary School, this partnership with Lexington School District One will provide a state-of-the-art training center for law enforcement and school personnel from around the state.
- \$25 million for Education Scholarship Accounts geared towards low-income parents.

Numbers to Know

- **125** - Session of SC General Assembly
- **27** - New 2023-2024 House Members
- **\$40,000** - Minimum starting salary for South Carolina teachers
- **\$50,000** - Governor McMaster's goal for a minimum starting salary for South Carolina teachers by 2026
- **8** - New House Committee Chairs
- **2** - Governor McMasters inaugurations

The SCEA Bills of Interest

SB22 FIREARMS AND WEAPONS ON SCHOOL PROPERTY (JACKSON D)

Current Status: 1/10/2023 - Referred to Committee Senate

State Bill Page: Judiciary [SB22](#)

SB39 EDUCATIONAL SCHOLARSHIP TRUST FUND (GROOMS L)

Current Status: 1/12/2023 - Senate Committee recommends passage, as amended Education

State Bill Page: [SB39](#)

News Stories: 1/10/2023 - [Abortion, taxes, school choice: What to watch in 2023](#)

[as SC lawmakers return to the State House](#)

[12/28/2022 - Funding of religious schools, abortion access: SC legislation to watch for in 2023 session](#)

SB63 WIFI AND SCHOOL BUSES (MALLOY G)

Current Status: 1/10/2023 - Referred to Committee Senate Education
([Senate Journal-page 41](#))

State Bill Page: [SB63](#)

SB64 TEACHER RETENTION PAY (MALLOY G)

Current Status: 1/10/2023 - Referred to Committee Senate Education
([Senate Journal-page 42](#))

State Bill Page: [SB64](#)

SB65 STATUTORY SCHOOL YEAR (MALLOY G)

Current Status: 1/10/2023 - Referred to Committee Senate Education
([Senate Journal-page 42](#))

State Bill Page: [SB65](#)

SB69 EARLY READING DEVELOPMENT AND EDUCATION PROGRAM (MALLOY G)

Current Status: 1/10/2023 - Referred to Committee Senate Education
([Senate Journal-page 44](#))

State Bill Page: [SB69](#)

SB114 ENHANCED PENALTIES (HEMBREE G)

Current Status: 1/10/2023 - Referred to Committee Senate

State Bill Page: Judiciary [SB114](#)

SJR123 FIRST STEPS (HEMBREE G)

Current Status: 1/10/2023 - Referred to Committee Senate

State Bill Page: Education [SJR123](#)

SB124 NONCERTIFIED TEACHER PILOT PROGRAM (HEMBREE G)

Current Status: 1/10/2023 - Referred to Committee Senate

State Bill Page: Education [SB124](#)

SB125 SCHOLARSHIP STIPEND (HEMBREE G)

Current Status: 1/10/2023 - Referred to Committee Senate

State Bill Page: Education [SB125](#)

SB126 CHARTER SCHOOL ACCOUNTABILITY ACT (HEMBREE G)

Current Status: 1/10/2023 - Referred to Committee Senate Education

State Bill Page: [SB126](#)

SB128 EARLY LITERACY AND NUMERACY SCREENING (HEMBREE G)

Current Status: 1/10/2023 - Referred to Committee Senate Education

State Bill Page: [SB128](#)

SB134 SCHOOL BOARD MEETING (HEMBREE G)

Current Status: 1/10/2023 - Referred to Committee Senate Education

State Bill Page: [SB134](#)

SB148 FREE SCHOOL MEALS (SHEALY K)

Current Status: 1/10/2023 - Referred to Committee Senate Education

State Bill Page: [SB148](#)

News Stories: 12/13/2022 -

[Why a Lexington Republican senator wants SC to provide free lunches for all K-12 students](#)

SB150 PRIVATE SCHOOL SPORTS PARTICIPATION (TURNER R)

Current Status: 1/10/2023 - Referred to Committee Senate

State Bill Page: Education [SB150](#)

SB161 PRIVATE SCHOOL STUDENTS IN PUBLIC SCHOOL SPORTS (YOUNG, JR. T)

Current Status: 1/10/2023 - Referred to Committee Senate Education

State Bill Page: [SB161](#)

- Stay up to date on all bills of education issues by clicking [here](#).

In the News: Week in Review

The Post & Courier

[Democrats ask DOJ and AG Wilson to probe schools chief Ellen Weaver's speedy Master's Degree](#)

The S.C. Democratic Party is calling for state and federal investigations into Education Superintendent Ellen Weaver, alleging the new schools chief not only conspired to commit fraud but also received special treatment to obtain a master's degree in time for the 2022 election.

The Post & Courier

[McMaster touts SC's economy and beauty in his 2nd inaugural, calls for more preservation](#)

Gov. Henry McMaster touted South Carolina's booming economy during his second inaugural address as he urged lawmakers to make investments necessary to increase prosperity while preserving the state's unique beauty.

The Post & Courier

[Abortion a surprise focus of the South Carolina Legislature](#)

The South Carolina General Assembly opened its 2023 legislative session Tuesday with a surprising priority: abortion.

The State

[Richland Sen. Mia McLeod says she's leaving the SC Democratic Party](#)

South Carolina Sen. Mia McLeod, who ran unsuccessfully for governor in 2022, announced in an email to supporters Tuesday that she's leaving the S.C. Democratic Party, saying, in part, the party no longer espouses the values she and her constituents care about.

The State

[Abortion, taxes, school choice: What to watch in 2023 as SC lawmakers return to the State House](#)

South Carolina lawmakers on Tuesday start a new two-year session with millions of dollars to spend and a bevy of policy priorities they hope to pass.

The Post & Courier

[Gov. McMaster renews call for \\$300M to go toward building I-73 to Myrtle Beach](#)

Gov. Henry McMaster has proposed the state set aside \$300 million toward developing the long-awaited Interstate 73, which he believes is crucial for the state's economic growth.

The Post & Courier

[Backers again will seek approval of home delivery and curbside pickup of beer, wine in SC](#)

Backers of allowing South Carolinians to have beer and wine delivered to their homes or picked up curbside at the store say they will try again in 2023 to get their bill out of the tap.

The State

[SC Supreme Court makeup may face GOP scrutiny after 6-week abortion ban struck down](#)

The South Carolina Supreme Court's ruling on Thursday that struck down the state's six-week abortion ban has shifted many Republicans focus to the makeup of the high court itself.

The State

[As more EVs hit the road, what will SC need to accommodate growth in the industry?](#)

South Carolina leaders want to get more electric vehicles on the road and even manufactured in the state but say a greater network of charging stations across the state, particularly in rural areas, is needed first.

The Post & Courier

[Run it up the flagpole: Advocates try again to standardize SC's palmetto tree flag](#)

Another push to standardize South Carolina's iconic and beloved state flag is in the offing as a new session of the state Legislature begins next week after the last effort stalled out last year over the opposition of a single senator.

The Post & Courier

[The SC Legislature is flush with lawyers. Could a pay raise bring new voices?](#)

For 27 years Rob Harris has awakened every morning, donned his scrubs, and headed to work as a registered nurse, sometimes in the operating room, other times in the ICU.

Key Connections

As we enter another legislative session, it will be more imperative than ever to contact your legislators. Key contact information can be found below:

- House Education & Public Works Committee
 - [Erickson, Shannon S., Chairman](#)
 - [Alexander, Terry](#)
 - [Bradley, Jeffrey A. "Jeff"](#)
 - [Calhoon, Paula Rawl](#)
 - [Cromer, April](#)
 - [Garvin, Kambrell H.](#)
 - [Gilliam, Leon D. "Doug"](#)
 - [Hager, William Winston "Bill"](#)
 - [Hartnett, Thomas F. "Tom", Jr.](#)
 - [Johnson, Jermaine L., Sr. Jones,](#)
 - [Stewart O.](#)
 - [Kilmartin, John Gregory "Jay"](#)
 - [Landing, Kathy](#)
 - [McGinnis, Timothy A. "Tim"](#)
 - [Morgan, Adam M.](#)
 - [Rivers, Michael F., Sr.](#)
 - [Tedder, Deon T.](#)
 - [Vaughan, David](#)

Senate Education Committee Members

- [Hembree, Greg, Chairman](#)
 - [Setzler, Nikki G.](#)
 - [Rankin, Luke A.](#)
 - [Peeler, Harvey S., Jr.](#)
 - [Jackson, Darrell](#)
 - [Grooms, Lawrence K. "Larry"](#)
 - [Malloy, Gerald](#)
 - [Hutto, Brad](#)
 - [Young, Tom, Jr.](#)
 - [Turner, Ross](#)
 - [Rice, Rex F.](#)
 - [Talley, Scott](#)
 - [Massey, A. Shane](#)
 - [Cash, Richard J.](#)
 - [Scott, John L., Jr.](#)
 - [Allen, Karl B.](#)
 - [Loftis, Dwight A.](#)
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- State School Board Members: <https://ed.sc.gov/state-board/state-board-of-education/about-state-board/state-board-members-information-and-biographies/>
 - Please remember that January is School Board Appreciation month. Attend a meeting and/or reach out to your school board members to show appreciation!
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- The SCEA Action Center: [Action Center | The SCEA](#)
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