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Legislative Update Week 3
January 28, 2023



The Voucher Debate Continues!

After the third week of debate, education continued to dominate legislative conversations. The Senate continued to consider [S.39](#), the Education Savings Account bill (vouchers), which would give parents \$6,000

Over the weekend, Senate Education Committee Chairman [Greg Hembree \(R-Horry\)](#), and Senate Minority Leader [Brad Hutto \(D-Orangeburg\)](#) will choose up to eight amendments to be debated on the floor next week as they attempt to bring debate to a close.

Essentially S.39 and other 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.

S.285 - "Providing Academic Choice in Education"

This PACE (Providing Academic Choice in Education) legislation is designed to skirt the unconstitutionality of Education Savings Accounts by creating scholarship funding organizations that would provide grants for eligible students to attend certain private schools or for homeschooling expenses.

Entities that donate to the scholarship providers would receive income tax credits. The cost of the PACE program is steep, as these tax credits would effectively draw up to \$100 million from the state coffers in the first year, increasing by 25% in each subsequent year.

The SCEA opposes S.285 not only because of the cost, but because of concerns that the extensive oversight required by the program creates yet another bureaucracy our educational system doesn't need when we should focus on making our existing public schools better.

[Take Action to Stop Voucher Schemes!](#)

Censorship

On Tuesday, The SCEA President, Sherry East spoke to House K-12 Subcommittee members against [H.3728](#), a censorship bill aimed at tackling critical race theory. This bill was approved and expected to be considered by the full House Education & Public Works Committee next week.

The bill was approved by subcommittee with a vote of 4-2 and is expected to be considered by the full House Education & Public Works Committee next week.

All students deserve access to high-quality education that includes an accurate accounting of American History and present-day inequalities, as well as diverse perspectives on educational topics. Truthful and comprehensive discussions about United States and South Carolina history are critical to understanding the vast racial and gender inequalities that persist in society.

Teachers need an array of curricula content and pedagogical tools to facilitate discussions about past and current-day inequalities and the importance of diversity and inclusion in our everyday lives.

When we speak up for an honest and accurate curriculum, we ensure that our South Carolina's Public Schools help all children, move forward to a better future, regardless of where they live or the color of their skin.

[Take action now!](#)

State of the State Address

On Wednesday, Governor McMaster delivered his State of the State address to the General Assembly expressing his priorities for 2023 which include:

- Teacher pay
- Mental health
- Economic development
- Supreme Court election process
- Abortion ban

Governor McMaster focused on infrastructure investments, proposing the state use funds to speed up road

projects and repair highways and interstates. During the speech, McMaster credited the electric vehicle industry with a large part of the billions in outside economic development investment in 2022.

He also proposed \$45 million to be appropriated to the Department of Mental Health to increase care and access to crisis services with the aim to retain mental health professionals as he noted the concerning rise in the number of mental health patients statewide.

In line with the governor's priorities, Republican legislators pushed a new abortion ban forward this week and spent long hours on the Senate floor discussing how our judges and justices are elected. Which may be even more difficult after the disputes over Supreme Court judicial appointments.

View the speech [here](#).

Numbers to Know

- 51.4%: Percentage of South Carolina's population who are women
- 45: Number people who have died on South Carolina roads in 2023
- 6th: Number of Governor Henry McMaster's State of State address
- 1,078: Daily average of Covid-19 cases in the state
- \$2.89: Lowest reported gas price in SC
- 100,000: Current number of jobs unfilled in the state

Education Bills That Moved This Week

To follow all bills that The SCEA is tracking click [here](#):

SB39 EDUCATIONAL SCHOLARSHIP TRUST FUND (GROOMS L)

- Current Status: 1/26/2023 - Debate interrupted
- State Bill Page: [SB39](#)
- News Stories
 - 1/26/2023 - [SC governor renews push for abortion ban in State of State](#)
 - 1/23/2023 - [SC lawmakers, superintendent push for school vouchers, but do they help students succeed?](#)
 - 1/17/2023 - [Tax money for students for private school on SC Senate floor](#)
 - 1/17/2023 - [Editorial: If private schools get SC tax money, they need to be accountable to taxpayers](#)
 - 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](#)

SB134 SCHOOL BOARD MEETING (HEMBREE G)

- Current Status: 1/24/2023 - Senate Subcommittee recommends passage Senate Education: Subcommittee on SB 134 and SB 418
- State Bill Page: [SB134](#)

HB3728 TRANSPARENCY AND INTEGRITY IN EDUCATION ACT (FELDER R)

- Current Status: 1/24/2023 - House Subcommittee recommends passage EPW: K-12 Education
- State Bill Page: [HB3728](#)
- News Stories:
 - 1/25/2023 - [S.C. committee advances limits to classroom teaching on race](#)

In the News:

DHEC breakup bill resurfaces as critics push for better environmental protection

The S.C. Department of Health and Environmental Control, criticized for failing to react quickly enough to environmental problems, is again on the chopping block as critics push for improvements in how South Carolina protects the landscape and oversees public health.
The State

[McMaster cites SC's economic strengths, criticizes abortion ruling in 6th State of State](#)

Gov. Henry McMaster used his sixth annual State of the State address to continue trumpeting South Carolina's thriving economy and ask legislators to keep investing record surpluses in ways that re-build prosperity for generations to come, while also saving more for a potential downturn.
The Post & Courier

[Amid angst over SC Supreme Court, Statehouse lawmakers move to delay judicial elections one week](#)

The South Carolina Senate took the unusual step of voting to delay next week's state judicial elections as lawmakers across the political spectrum voiced frustrations over the race to replace retiring Supreme Court Justice Kaye Hearn.
The Post & Courier

[Reforming bail for accused criminals gets rolling. "Catch and release" threat, advocates say.](#)

Momentum is growing on both sides of the Statehouse aisle to reform the bail system, with reform advocates saying the current "catch and release" option keeps repeat offenders dangerous as they commit more crimes while out on bond.
The Post & Courier

[SC fails tobacco prevention analysis, lacks measures to protect kids from smoking](#)

South Carolina flunked the latest report card on its efforts to control tobacco use and prevent children from starting smoking or vaping, a national advocacy group said.
The Post & Courier

[S.C. committee advances limits to classroom teaching on race](#)

A bill that would limit certain teachings on race in public schools and allow parents to challenge educational materials is moving through the Republican-controlled South Carolina House of Representatives.
The State

[Pee Dee senator to give SC Democrats' response to Gov. McMaster 2023 State of the State](#)

South Carolina state Sen. Ronnie Sabb, a legislator from the Pee Dee, will deliver the Democrats' response Wednesday night to Gov. Henry McMaster's State of the State address.
The State

[Lowcountry lawmaker Tom Hartnett hospitalized](#)

Tom Hartnett is recovering after he was hospitalized Thursday for a perforated colon, said family members Saturday morning.
WTHR

[DJJ asks for \\$30M for new detention center, saying current facility overcrowded and "not safe"](#)

Last year, Department of Juvenile Justice Executive Director Eden Hendrick caught some state lawmakers by surprise when she didn't ask them for much from the budget outside of normal operating costs, saying in her first year leading the beleaguered department, she wanted to focus on figuring out what it needed most.
WISTV

[During abortion debate, GOP pledged focus on kids. Do SC speaker's adoption bills deliver?](#)

Decades after South Carolina's lax adoption rules became a national scandal, the state's ruling Republicans "looking to fulfill pledges to increase support for children and mothers as they fought to ban abortions" say the reaction went too far, and they want to make the option easier.

The Post & Courier

[SC senators advance bill to resume executions by “Shielding” drug suppliers](#)

Legislation that would enable executions to resume by lethal injection is advancing in the S.C. Senate as lawmakers await a ruling on whether death by firing squad or electrocution is constitutional.

The Post & Courier

