



Legislative Update Week 10
March 18th, 2023



The SCEA President, Sherry East, with Representative John Richard C. King (Chester)

Three Things To Know From This Week

1. Censorship

The Senate Education Subcommittee heard public testimony on [H. 3728: "South Carolina Transparency and Integrity in Education Act,"](#) on March 14.

This is a censorship bill that could limit discussions of race, gender, and other

important issues in K-12 and higher education classrooms, making it difficult for many teachers to accurately teach their subjects and restricting educators' ability to respect, reflect, and protect all students in their classrooms.

Additionally, this bill requires schools to share curricula with parents and create a complaint form that parents, other students, and school employees can use to challenge lessons or curriculum components they believe violates this law.

The SCEA fears that many educators may become burdened with unnecessary complaints and fears for the future of accurate education in Black history and other cultural topics.

Many people showed up to address the subcommittee. The committee was not able to hear all testimony within the hour and half allotted for the meeting, so they decided to continue public testimony at a later date for everyone that signed up but did not have a chance to speak.

The SCEA will update members when the new meeting is scheduled. Footage of the hearing can be found [here](#).

Take action now to stand up for truth!

2. The State Budget

After a long and busy week for legislators, the House debated and adopted the \$13.8 billion spending budget.

The intense debates were driven by a group of republican legislators, known as the Freedom Caucus, who initiated more conservative arguments with the intent of gaining political points. Nonetheless, every amendment proposed by the Freedom Caucus was tabled.

Under the House budget, salaries for state employees and some teachers would increase by \$2,500. State employees earning a salary less than \$83,000 would receive the \$2,500 raise.

State employees, not teachers, earning more than \$83,000 would receive a 3% raise. In the budget, \$30 million would be allocated to state law enforcement officers for pay raises.

The budget also would provide \$70 million to freeze in-state tuitions for students at public colleges and universities.

The budget will now move to the Senate for debate. You can view the document [here](#).

3. Vouchers

The Senate passed a second voucher bill, [S.285](#), Providing Academic Choice in Education. This bill would strengthen a program currently in place, Academic Choice in Education (ACE), by encouraging companies or institutions to fund scholarships for students to attend private schools. Donors would receive state tax credits with a \$10,000 limit.

The current program only applies to special-education students. Supporters of the bill believe parents would have more options to send their child to private schools with a higher performance.

The bill now advances to the House for a subcommittee hearing.

[Take Action on Vouchers!](#)

Three Things To Watch For Next Week

1. Teacher Task Force Listening Session

The SCEA encourages our members to attend the final Teacher Recruitment and Retention Task Force meeting on Monday at 4:30 p.m. in the Blatt Building, Room 110.

The committee will give educators the opportunity to voice their thoughts on teacher recruitment and retention. If you do not wish to speak, the taskforce will also take written testimony that day for consideration. The SCEA strongly recommends making your voices heard on this critical issue our state is facing.

After the listening session, members are invited back to The SCEA headquarters for dinner and a debrief discussion. This will run from 6:30pm-8:00pm at 2999 Sunset Blvd., West Columbia, SC, 29169.

2. Gender Identity

The Senate introduced a new bill last week that includes a provision targeting LGBTQ+ students. Although the bill is mostly regarding medical care, [S. 627](#) includes a section that prevents employees from “knowingly withholding from a minor’s parent or legal guardian information that [their] gender is inconsistent with [their] sex.”

It also requires educators to inform parents/legal guardians if they “know or suspect that a student suffers from gender dysphoria [or] gender identity disorder.”

The SCEA fears this legislation will strip students of their privacy and prevent a safe environment for them to communicate with their educators freely.

This bill was referred to the Medical Affairs committee, which has scheduled a hearing for March 23rd at 9 a.m. for invited individuals only. The SCEA will continue to monitor this bill and keep members updated as it progresses.

3. Comptroller

State lawmakers say S.C. Comptroller General Richard Eckstrom should lose his job over a \$3.5 billion accounting error after he disclosed an unintentional exaggeration of how much money the state had.

In a Wednesday report, a Senate Finance subcommittee said Eckstrom, the state’s elected accountant, should be fired and his office’s constitutional responsibilities distributed to other agencies.

Read more [here](#).

[Visit The SCEA Action Center!](#)

Numbers to Know

- **\$45,000:** The City of Columbia's starting salary for employees
 - **1,081:** Number of South Carolinians who died due to motor vehicle crashes in 2022
 - **9:** Number of states that elect a Comptroller General
 - **3.2%:** Unemployment rate in South Carolina
 - **10:** Number of states that do not license tobacco sellers, including South Carolina
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Education Bills That Moved This Week

[To follow all Education bills that moved this week click here.](#)

SB285: PROVIDING ACADEMIC CHOICE IN EDUCATION (PACE) (DAVIS T)

- Current Status: 3/16/2023 - Read third time and sent to House
- State Bill Page: [SB285](#)
- News Stories: 2/22/2023 - [Bill helping parents pay for private tuition through tax credits advances in SC Senate](#)

SB418: READ TO SUCCEED ENDORSEMENTS (HEMBREE G)

- Current Status: 3/15/2023 - Referred to House Education and Public Works Committee
- State Bill Page: [SB418](#)

HJR3312: CHILD FOOD AND NUTRITION SERVICES STUDY COMMITTEE (HADDON P)

- Current Status: 3/15/2023 - Committee report Senate Agriculture and Natural Resources: Favorable
- State Bill Page: [HJR3312](#)

HB4300: FY2023-2024 APPROPRIATIONS (BANNISTER B)

- Current Status: 3/15/2023 - Referred to Committee Senate Finance
- State Bill Page: [HB4300](#)
- News Stories: 3/15/2023 - [SC House's \\$13.8B budget debate slowed by Republican battle](#)
- 3/15/2023 - [Lawmakers push for comptroller general's salary reduced to \\$1 after \\$3.5 billion mistake](#)
- 3/14/2023 - [SC House votes to reduce Comptroller General's salary to \\$1](#)
- 3/14/2023 - [Editorial: SC budget plan finally delivers \\$50K starting pay, but not for teachers](#)
- 3/13/2023 - [SC House to start budget debate. Here's what's being considered and why it may take a while](#)
- 3/8/2023 - [SC law enforcement, nurses, mental health professionals in line for pay raises in House budget](#)
- 2/28/2023 - [SC House budget pushes economic development, investments in people; includes tuition freeze](#)
- 2/27/2023 - [SC House budget pushes economic development, investments in people; includes tuition freeze](#)

HB3360: CENTER FOR SCHOOL SAFETY AND TARGETED VIOLENCE (POPE T)

- Current Status: 3/14/2023 - Referred to Committee Senate Judiciary
 - State Bill Page: [HB3360](#)
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Upcoming Meetings of Interest

Below are meetings scheduled for next week on bills of interest to you. You can click on the date link to view the agenda and the bill number to see the legislation.

[Wed 3/22 10:00 AM in Gressette Room 207](#)
[S 126](#) (Charter School Accountability Act)

[Thu 3/23 10:00 AM in Gressette Room 209](#)
[S 305](#) (Work Experience Credit for New Teachers);
[H 3797](#) (Military Temporary Remote School Enrollment Act)

Introductions of Interest

Below are bills that were introduced in the House and Senate this week that may be of interest to you. We have provided a brief description as well as a link to the full text of each bill. Please review and let us know if you have any comments or concerns.

[S. 622: Shared-Risk Defined Benefit Retirement Plan](#) **Bennett**

Senator Sean Bennett (R-Dorchester), Senator Greg Hembree (R-Horry), Senator Shane Massey (R-Edgefield) and others introduced a bill to establish the "South Carolina Shared-Risk Defined Benefit Plan" that would provide eligible employees with retirement allowances and other benefits. The system would begin operation on July 1, 2026.

A separate fund, to be known as the Death Benefit Plan Reserve Fund, is established within the South Carolina Shared-Risk Defined Benefit Plan. The fund would consist of all contributions paid by the employers and other monies received and paid into the fund for death benefit purposes, and of the investment earnings on these monies, and must be used only to pay the death benefits.

The bill was referred to the Senate Finance Committee.
