



# Capitol Consultants

Government Affairs



## “I think you picked the worst year to become Chairman of Medicaid.”

*Representative Murrell Smith (R-Sumter) to South Carolina Department of Health & Human Services Director Christian Soura during a budget hearing this week regarding Soura's recently named post as Chairman of the National Association of Medicaid Directors.*

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### **Automatic Stay Stings Environmentalists**

Two proposed bills (S.105 and S.112) that could limit landowners' ability to indefinitely delay construction projects that impact land or air near their property, advanced through a Senate subcommittee Thursday with a 2-1 vote.

Right now, landowners can pay \$600 for DHEC to issue an automatic stay on any permit it approves. The automatic stay prevents a company or individual granted the permit from acting on it, until a judge rules on the appeal.

Many private citizens attended the meeting and testified against the bill. Representatives from the Sierra Club and Coastal Conservation League also testified in opposition.

In the end however, Senator Thomas McElveen (D-Sumter) could not stop his two fellow subcommittee members from sending both bills to full committee for consideration.

### **Numbers to Know**

**5**

SC is one of only five states left in the US with no restrictions on people owning dangerous animals, such as apes and large cats as pets.

**1.9 million**

Number of brain cells lost for every 1 minute delay when suffering from a stroke.

**145 Million**

Dollars the state has been fined since the late 1990's for failing to complete a federally mandated child-support enforcement system.

**500**

Number of feet around a state prison a drone would not be permitted to fly around without consent, if a proposed law passes.

## DOT on the Spot

Christy Hall, Department of Transportation (DOT) Secretary, told senators Wednesday it would take \$11 billion to fix all pavements to a satisfactory condition. The roads have deteriorated past the point of simple resurfacing. She explained to members of the Senate Transportation Committee that the state is in crisis when it comes to roads.

Secretary Hall estimated that 81% of the state's pavements are in fair or poor condition, up from 74% in 2008. For \$600 million more a year, she said, 58% of state primary routes could be improved to good condition, while 95% of interstates would move to good status. This would still leave 30% to 40% of secondary roads in average condition. She noted that only 17% of the state's roads are rated good and most are in need of reconstruction.

Both the House and Senate have road-funding bills pending that would increase the state's gas tax over time and raise other fees.

## DSS Digs for Funding

Susan Alford, Director of the South Carolina Department of Social Services (DSS) told a Senate panel on Thursday she needs an additional \$18 million to improve the state's child-safety net.

Most of that money would pay for more than 250 new workers in the child-welfare division, including 163 caseworkers to lower caseloads.

Some DSS attorneys are handling more than 200 cases, the agency said in its budget request. The American Bar Association recommends child-welfare attorneys carry no more than 60 cases at a time.

Caseloads and turnover reached staggeringly high rates in 2013,

**600**

Estimated number of people who gathered Tuesday at the South Carolina State House to protest President Trump's executive order that temporarily bans immigration from seven countries.

prompting outcry from child advocates and a leadership change at DSS. Those numbers have fallen but the agency has more work to do, leaders and lawmakers said Thursday.

The new caseworkers should reduce caseloads to no more than 24 per caseworker handling family preservation and child-abuse assessment cases, and no more than 20 per foster-care caseworker, according to Director Alford.

### **Senate Sends Superintendent Bill to House**

A bill that would ask voters to decide if the South Carolina education superintendent should be appointed by the governor rather than elected to statewide office received key support in the Senate Wednesday.

The bill will head to the House for further consideration. If approved by the full General Assembly, the question would be put to a referendum for voters to decide next year. If voters pass the referendum, the change would not take effect until after the 2022 election.

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