



**“Right now, I don’t think the majority of the House has coalesced around any one plan, [but] if we could build consensus, it would benefit not only the House but our state.”**

*-Speaker Jay Lucas on the House’s multiple road plans.*

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## SC State Financial Troubles

A House subcommittee voted to move a proviso forward on Wednesday that would shut down South Carolina State University for two years in order to get the school's finances in order. Legislators have received differing accounts from the school about the its debts and how much funding it needs to stay afloat. In addition to a deep debt, SC State has low graduation rates as well as declining enrollment leading some lawmakers to question if the current leadership can lead the school out of the mess. The South Carolina Legislative Black Caucus has called for President Thomas Elzey to resign, but Elzey has said he will not do so and maintains the school has not been given enough time to correct the problems. Elzey also claims the effort to close the school is politically motivated. The proviso to shut down the school would still need to pass through the full House Ways and Means Committee on Tuesday before reaching the House floor for debate.

In addition to the proviso, two South Carolina House members, Rep. Kenny Bingham (R-Lexington) and Rep. Harold Mitchell (D-Spartanburg), introduced a bill on Thursday that would remove President Thomas Elzey and the trustees of the University immediately. According to the bill, responsibility for the school would then be placed under the South Carolina Budget and Control Board. In addition, the bill would employ an interim CEO to run the university who would be charged with correcting the current financial problems. This bill is seen by some as a compromise that would allow the University to continue to operate while working to resolve the school's issues.

## Senate Confirmations

The Senate voted 35-0, with four senators abstaining, to confirm Susan Alford as the new Director of the Department of Social Services. Governor Haley nominated Ms. Alford to replace Lillian Koller after Koller's resignation. Before joining DSS, Ms. Alford most recently worked at a Clemson nonprofit specializing in programs for at-risk girls to help them avoid abusive situations, jail, and the cycle of poverty. Although Ms. Alford's confirmation process is over, many senators have indicated they plan to continue to keep track of the changes being implemented at the embattled agency to ensure progress is being made to protect South Carolina's most vulnerable children.

In addition to confirming Ms. Alford, the Senate confirmed Richele Taylor to run the Department of Labor, Licensing and Regulation by a vote of 27-0 with 14 senators abstaining. Ms. Taylor, a Lexington attorney, is replacing Holly Pisarik who had been director since March of 2012 and left to join the leadership team at DSS.

## Drunk Driving Reforms

A group consisting of the South Carolina Sheriff's Association, prosecutors and victim advocates from across the state met at the State House on Tuesday and urged the General Assembly to reform the state's current DUI laws. The group cited difficulties in obtaining convictions as reason to strengthen laws and showed video examples of drunk drivers who were able to plead to lesser charges or have their charges tossed out for technicalities such as being unable to see the accused's feet during heel-to-toe field sobriety tests.

Both the House and Senate have introduced bills that would prevent a DUI case from being completely dismissed if a small technical problem exists in the video recording of the initial investigation, but these bills have received little movement so far in the legislative session as lawmakers have been focused on other issues such as ethics reform, infrastructure funding, and criminal domestic violence.