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Government Affairs



"If each of us took four hours, we could hold this gas tax up for infinity!"

Senator Lee Bright (R-Spartanburg) as he began the second leg of the joint filibuster of the roads bill after Senator Tom Davis (R-Beaufort) gave him the floor.

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House Ways and Means Committee Passes Appropriations and Capital Reserve Fund Bills

The House Ways and Means Committee worked diligently this week and unanimously passed the Appropriations and Capital Reserve Fund bills for Fiscal Year 2016-2017. Some of the key provisions of the bills included providing relief for costs associated with the 2015 floods, giving state employees a 1% pay raise, giving teachers a 2% salary and a step increase, forgiving \$12 million loaned to SC State University, providing \$287 million in new road funding, \$130 million for tax relief, and investing over \$400 million for public education with much of the money seeking to address the *Abbeville* decision. The budget will be debated on the House floor the week of March 21 with the hope of the bill being passed over to the Senate in time for Easter.

New Driver for the Roads Filibuster

Senator Tom Davis (R-Beaufort) went late into Wednesday night with his roads bill filibuster before giving way to Senator Lee Bright (R-Spartanburg) who believes the Senate needs some more education. Senator Davis held the floor for over 17 hours over the past week and Senator Bright will keep the filibuster going as a solution to the roads repair bill does not seem imminent. Senator Bright took to the podium around 7 pm Wednesday night before the Senate adjourned and spoke for several hours during Thursday's session. Senator Bright said he doesn't believe he will make it 17 hours like his colleague, but reassured everyone he believes there are plenty more senators willing to take his place. We will see next week as the filibuster continues.

House to Consider a Bond Bill

Numbers to Know

738,990

Number of voters in the South Carolina GOP primary which smashed the previous record. If you remove all of Trump's votes it would have still surpassed the turnout for the 2008 primary.

500,000

Projected turnout for the Democratic primary this Saturday. The modest numbers will be due to a less competitive primary with Hillary Clinton projected to easily win the state.

17

Number of hours Senator Davis filibustered over the past two weeks before stepping down to let Senator Bright take over.

Representative Jim Merrill (R-Charleston), Chairman of the Ways and Means Higher Education and Technical Colleges Subcommittee, stated his intention to present a bonds bill during the week of March 21. The announcement came late Wednesday night during the Ways and Means budget deliberations. He estimated it the proposal would likely be about \$200 million and go toward helping the state's universities and colleges upgrade their infrastructure. He said the proposal will likely include certain criteria for all upgrade requests including potentially needing to have plans to either freeze tuition or maintain a certain graduation rate. Governor Nikki Haley clashed with lawmakers in 2015 over similar efforts and has already stated she will oppose any bonds bill that is not looking to address the K-12 education.

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