



## Legislative Update - Week 14

### **South Carolina State Legislative Weekly Update – April 16, 2021**

The General Assembly returned to the Capitol this week for their fourteenth week of the legislative session to continue their work for the state. There are four weeks remaining in this annual session.

### **Illegal Transportation of Feral Hogs**

The **Feral Hog Transportation Bill, House Bill 3539**, is on the Senate floor for debate this upcoming week. SC Farm Bureau Government Relations team is deeply engaged with the Senate, working to push this crucial legislation.

Feral hogs are responsible for \$115 million in damage statewide each year and have been a growing problem for farmers. The Feral Hog Transport Bill gives law enforcement the tools needed to identify and prosecute individuals illegally transporting feral hogs. While it is currently illegal in South Carolina to transport feral hogs, it is very difficult to prove hogs are wild. This legislation would require individuals to obtain proper identification of the animals to prove their origin. An

amendment was adopted that created additional documents that can be used for identification of hogs during transportation. More information on this priority issue can be found [here](#).

## **South Carolina COVID-19 Liability Immunity Act**

**Senate Bill 147**, the South Carolina COVID-19 Liability Immunity Act, is currently in the House Judiciary committee awaiting debate. The bill provides necessary, targeted, and temporary liability relief for businesses, healthcare providers, educational institutions, and other entities who have followed and continue to follow public health guidance during the pandemic.

## **Voting, Absentee and Early Voting Heard in House Judiciary Subcommittee**

Multiple election bills were debated in the House Judiciary Subcommittee this week. **House Bill 3822**, Voting and Absentee Voting, that allows an individual who is qualified to register to vote may register in person and then immediately vote at an in-person absentee voting location in the person's county of residence during the period for in-person absentee voting.

**House Bill 4150** allows for a fourteen-day period preceding a general election conducted pursuant to Section 7-13-10, excluding Saturdays and Sundays, except as provided in subsection (B), and ending at 5:00 p.m. on the Saturday immediately prior to the general election, all qualified electors of this State must be allowed to cast an early in-person ballot. Each county board of voter registration and elections must establish early in-person voting locations based on the number of registered voters residing in the county.

### **Other News**

## **Ports Authority Reports Highest Month in History**

South Carolina Ports handled the most cargo in its history in March, with the Port of Charleston handling record volumes as the Hugh K. Leatherman Terminal begins operations. **Agricultural products make up approximately 35 percent of the Port of Charleston's total container volume.**

SC Ports reported an all-time container record for March, moving 248,796 twenty-foot equivalent units (TEUs) across the Port of Charleston's Wando Welch and North Charleston container terminals. This is up 34% year-over-year - a significant increase from last March.

The previous container record was set in August 2019, with 233,110 TEUs handled at the port. Fiscal-year-to-date, SC Ports has handled 1.86 million TEUs from July through March.

## Utility Rates

### **SC Office of Regulatory Staff Update Website on the Process on How Utilities File for Rate Increases**

The ORS has posted new content to the website in order to help inform consumers on the basics of [How the Rate Case Process Works](#). Below are the new pages of the website that can provide more insight in and background on the rate case process:

- [Who is Involved and What are their Roles?](#)
  - [Definitions](#)
  - [The Process](#)
    - [FAQs](#)
- [Tips for Participating in a Public Hearing](#)
  - [How to Participate in Utility Cases](#)

## National News

### **Taxes, taxes and more taxes:**

**SCFB supports keeping the ag-valuation of land for estate tax purposes (H.R. 2370).** Farm and ranch families who want to continue farming and ranching when a member of their family dies should be able to pay estate taxes on the value of their current business, not what their land would be worth if they sold out to a developer. This is important because we want to keep production agricultural land in production agriculture. We would like to thank Congressman Norman for joining as a sponsor on this bill! Please reach out to the rest of the SC House delegation and ask them to sponsor this important piece of legislation.

**SCFB opposes ending the stepped up basis for capital gains taxes as it relates to agricultural property (H.R.2286 in the House and the STEP Act in the Senate).** Eliminating the stepped-up basis would make continuing on the family farm extremely costly. The next generation could be forced to sell their farms just to pay the taxes. Please contact our federal delegation and ask them to protect agricultural land and oppose ending the stepped up basis for capital gains taxes.

**USDA has re-opened CFAP sign-up:** Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack announced on March 24 the U.S. Department of Agriculture will begin providing additional financial assistance to farmers, ranchers, and producers impacted by COVID-19 market disruptions. USDA reopened CFAP 2 signup for all eligible producers beginning April 5, 2021. Commodities eligible for the current Coronavirus Food Assistance Program signup period include those that were originally eligible for CFAP 2 and commodities included in CFAP Additional Assistance. Cattle producers who applied for CFAP 1 will automatically receive additional payments.

You can find forms and more information about applying for CFAP 2 at [farmers.gov/cfap/apply](https://farmers.gov/cfap/apply).

Please call the FSA office at your [local USDA Service Center](#) if you'd like assistance or have questions about applying for CFAP 2. A call center is available for producers who would like additional one-on-one support with the CFAP 2 application process. Please call 877-508-8364 to speak directly with a USDA employee ready to offer assistance. The call center can provide service to non-English speaking customers. Customers will select 1 for English and 2 for Spanish. For other languages, customers will select 1 and indicate their language to the call center staff.

**Federal Budget:** President Biden released a fiscal 2022 budget outline last week. The budget document is basically a very broad outline of the president's priorities and is limited to discretionary spending programs, which are subject to annual appropriations bills. The 2022 budget year starts Oct. 1.

The proposed budget includes a \$3.8 billion increase to USDA's discretionary spending programs - which include research, rural development, meat inspection and animal and plant health services - and would be an increase of 16% to \$27.8 billion, up from \$24 billion allocated for fiscal 2021.

Biden also proposed the Environmental Protection Agency get an increase of 21.3% to \$11.2 billion. That increased funding includes \$110 million to "restore critical staff capacity" and \$1.8 billion for "programs that would help reduce greenhouse gas emissions, while also delivering environmental justice and creating good-paying jobs."

The budget will ultimately be decided by Congress.