

South Carolina State Legislative Weekly Update - April 30, 2021

Time Ticking Down on Annual Session; Meetings Will Continue in the Off-Session

The General Assembly returned to the Capitol this week for their sixteenth week of the legislative session to continue their work for the state. There are two weeks remaining in this annual session. Speaker of the House Jay Lucas (District 65 - Darlington) informed the body that work will continue throughout the summer to include budget work, potential vetoes and redistricting.

Illegal Transportation of Feral Hogs Receives Third Reading in Senate; Returned to the House

The **Feral Hog Transportation Bill**, [House Bill 3539](#), received third reading from the SC Senate. The bill will now be sent back to the House for consideration. If the House agrees with the amendments, the bill will head to Governor McMaster's desk for signature. SC Farm Bureau Government Relations team is deeply engaged and 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](#).

Governor McMaster Signs South Carolina COVID-19 Liability Immunity Act Into Law

Governor Henry McMaster signed [Senate Bill 147](#), the South Carolina COVID-19 Liability Immunity Act, into law this week. Act 39 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.

SC Senate Focuses Approves \$10.6B Budget

The South Carolina Senate spent the week in full budget debate mode. Working late into the evenings daily, the Senate grappled with allocations and provisos. Earlier this month the SC Board of Economic Advisors provided updated revenue projections that exceeded anticipated figures by 8.5%. Now the Senate has developed their version of the budget, it will be sent back to the House for consideration. Due to the increased economic projections, the House is expected to work on the appropriations process that ultimately may end up having the budget bill heading to a conference committee to negotiate the final language. SC Farm Bureau Government Relations team is closely monitoring the budget developments as they unfold.

Left-Lane Driving

Conference committee members from the House and Senate worked diligently to come to an amicable solution on the differing of [House Bill 3011](#), passed by each respective body. The underlying language provides for restrictions for left-lane drivers to move slower vehicles to the right-hand lane and directs the SC Department of Transportation to erect signage reminding drivers of this protocol.

National News

Climate Policy: On January 27, President Biden signed the Executive Order on Tackling the Climate Crisis at Home and Abroad, which directed agencies across the administration to take various actions. Section 216, Conserving Our Nation's Lands and Waters, includes a goal of conserving at least 30% of our lands and waters by 2030. The EO directs the Secretary of the Interior, in consultation with the Secretary of Agriculture and other agencies, to submit to the newly-created National Climate Task Force a report within 90 days on steps the government can take to achieve this goal. The agencies are also directed to solicit input from a variety of stakeholders. President Duvall and AFBF have participated in several calls with the White House, USDA, and DOI to express that farmers and ranchers are the original conservationists. They have been good stewards of both private and public land for generations. Additionally, the administration has heard from AFBF that farmers and ranchers have significant concerns about what the goal means, what metrics the administration intends to use to meet it, and how it impacts the multiple-use mandate on public lands used for grazing. In addition to this letter, AFBF will be submitting comments in response to USDA's request for information on climate-smart agriculture and forestry strategy.

Biden's proposal to cut Greenhouse Emissions by 50% by 2030: President Biden says the U.S. will aim to reduce its greenhouse gas emissions by between 50-52% by 2030, based on 2005 levels. His ultimate goal is to hit net zero emissions by 2050. AFBF does not support government mandates and arbitrary goals, but we do believe government has a role to play advancing voluntary, market-based solutions. America's farmers and ranchers have already made great climate advances through voluntary programs. What we need now is investment in agricultural research to keep advancing innovation and new technologies that can move us forward faster.

Some Facts:

- American agriculture represents just 10% of the country's emissions, far lower than transportation and energy, and much lower than agriculture around the world. Livestock emissions continue to make up less than 4% of overall GHGs by economic sector. Meanwhile, U.S. farmers have increased production while decreasing per-unit emissions.

Over the last 70 years, U.S. farms have nearly tripled in production while the amount of resources used (including land, energy and fertilizer) has remained rather stable. Compared to 1990, farmers would have needed almost 100 million additional acres to harvest the same amount of corn, cotton, rice, soybeans and wheat they produced in 2018.

So far, 43 senators have cosponsored the Growing Climate Solutions Act, demonstrating that a growing number of lawmakers understand a voluntary, market-based approach is the best way to address climate needs. Senator Graham was an original co-sponsor of this bill and Senator Scott signed on this week after hearing from that agriculture needs this legislation. We thank both of our Senators for sponsoring this legislation!

Livestock Emissions: This week, Sens. John Thune (R-S.D.) and Kyrsten Sinema (D-Ariz.) introduced the bipartisan Livestock Regulatory Protection Act that would prohibit the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) from issuing permits related to livestock emissions. This restriction has been included in annual appropriations legislation since 2009. The Livestock Regulatory Protection Act would provide long-term certainty for producers that their livestock's biological emissions will not be subject to costly regulation. Farm Bureau supports the bill.

Cover Crops: Sens. John Thune (R-S.D.) and Debbie Stabenow (D-Mich.), chairwoman of the Senate Agriculture Committee, reintroduced the Cover Crop Flexibility Act, legislation to remove the prohibition on harvesting or grazing cover crops on prevented plant acres prior to November 1. This legislation is a result of an effort by Sens. Thune

and Stabenow in 2019 that ultimately led to the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) making an administrative change that allowed for penalty-free haying and grazing. In 2020, Thune and Stabenow again requested that USDA move up the November 1 date to September 1, but the department only provided flexibility in certain counties in South Dakota and North Dakota. This bill would provide a permanent solution to this issue and create greater certainty for U.S. producers. Farm Bureau supports the bill.