

South Carolina Farm Bureau State Legislative Weekly Update January 28, 2022



House Budget Subcommittees March On

House Ways & Means Subcommittee's continued hearings with numerous state agencies related to their budget requests throughout the week. These subcommittee meetings provide members the framework to design and create the state's budget, which begins in the House. Commissioner Hugh Weathers presented the **South Carolina Department of Agriculture (SCDA)** budget request and answered questions surrounding the presentation. SCDA has requested \$4,450,000 in state funding which includes enhancements for the State Farmers' Market and continued support for market news report services. Commissioner Weathers also presented the department's funding request of over \$90 million of American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 (ARPA) funds. This request was developed in concert with South Carolina Farm Bureau. The funds identified would assist the agriculture industry in responding to the challenges that have been highlighted by the pandemic. Identified priorities include local food supply chain infrastructure grants, Farmers' Market infrastructure, Farmers-to-Food banks, commodity producer mitigation fund and funding the South Carolina Farm Aid Program. Commissioner Weathers was asked about the continued impact of feral hogs in South Carolina and confirmed that the invasive species persists to wreak havoc on agriculture, livestock and timber in our state in excess of \$100 million annually. Subcommittee member [Representative Lee Hewitt](#), who represents House District 108 and includes Charleston and Georgetown counties, reiterated the impacts of invasive species including feral hogs throughout his district and our state.

New DHEC Chair Candidate Closer to Confirmation

Senate Medical Affairs Committee held a confirmation hearing for SC DHEC Board Chairman nominee **Robert Bolchoz** on Thursday. [Chairman Danny Verdin](#) (Senate District 9 representing Laurens and Greenville counties) presided over the hearing this week where Mr. Bolchoz, an attorney in Columbia SC, answered a wide array of questions related to health and environmental topics. [Senator Brad Hutto](#) (Senate District 40 representing Allendale, Bamberg,

Barnwell, Colleton, Hampton and Orangeburg), along with [Senate Finance Committee Chairman Harvey Peeler](#) (Senate District 14 including Cherokee, Spartanburg, Union and York counties) asked Mr. Bolchoz several questions about splitting DHEC into two agencies. Mr. Bolchoz responded that he would favor splitting the agency. The committee voted favorably to present Mr. Bolchoz to the full Senate for confirmation consideration soon.

South Carolina FFA Recognized During National FFA Week

A [concurrent resolution](#) sponsored by House Agriculture, Natural Resources and Environment committee [Chairman Davey Hiott](#), who represents House District 4 including Pickens county, passed the House and recognizes and commends South Carolina FFA, formerly known as Future Farmers of America, and all who support, promote, and encourage these outstanding students of agricultural education and join them in observance of National FFA Week, February 19 - 26, 2022. The resolution now heads to the Senate for approval.

Sale of Honey

[Senator Josh Kimbrell](#) (Senate District 11 including Spartanburg County) chaired a subcommittee hearing this week on [Senate Bill 961](#), introduced by [Senator Sandy Senn](#) of Charleston, that would exempt beekeepers who file for and obtain an exemption certificate from the Department of Agriculture to sell their products directly to inspected food processing establishments. The subcommittee received testimony from beekeepers, the Beekeepers' Association, and multiple state agencies before passing the bill out of subcommittee unanimously. It will now head to the full Senate Agriculture and Natural Resources Committee for action.