South Carolina Farm Bureau

Legislative Report - Week 11

March 24, 2023

In This Week's Issue

- **Weekly Highlights**
- **Farmers of the Week**

The General Assembly has completed week 11 of the legislative session. This week the House was on a week-long furlough while the Senate continued to focus on issues that impact the state as the "crossover" deadline looms. The crossover date, April 10, requires bills to move from one legislative chamber to the other to have a realistic chance of passage during this session. After the crossover deadline, it is more difficult for a bill to be passed. Any legislation that has not passed the House and Senate by May will keep its place in the legislative cycle until session resumes in January.

As we take a look back at this week, SCFB is continuing to prepare for legislation by listening to our member's concerns, challenges, and ideas while bringing those issues to life for lawmakers in SC and DC. We also encourage our members and the larger community to be active participants in all areas of government – through voting, grassroots initiatives, engaging neighbors in conversation, serving on action committees, or serving as an elected official.

Weekly Highlights

DHEC Restructuring – Consolidation of Statewide Water Functions

Testimony entered its second week on **Senate Finance Chairman Harvey Peeler** (Senate District 14 - Cherokee, Spartanburg, Union and York Counties) and **Senate President Thomas Alexander's** (Senate District 1 - Oconee and Pickens County) co-sponsored bill focusing on DHEC reform and increasing government efficiency. The bill would create separate health and environmental state agencies, including moving all statewide water regulation into one division. The bill received overwhelming support last year from the Senate. SC Farm Bureau remains supportive of government efficiency and single agency water, and supports S.399 as it creates certainty, increases the focus on environmental efforts, and streamlines efficiency in a vital agency.

Alien Ownership of Real Property

Senate Majority Leader Shane Massey (Senate District 25 - Aiken, Edgefield, Lexington, McCormick and Saluda Counties) is the primary sponsor of Senate bill 576, which would eliminate land ownership by foreign-controlled adversaries. Current law limits any alien or corporation controlled by aliens from owning or controlling more than 500,000 acres of land. The amended bill includes new definitions and prohibits land ownership to foreign adversaries under specific conditions. After much debate, the bill passed the Senate and is headed to the House additional action.

Clemson Continues to Make Case for New Vet School

This week, Clemson University continued to present the school's vision for the first School of Veterinary Medicine in the state to legislative leaders. Led by SCFB member Dr. Boyd Parr, retired state veterinarian, the full Senate Ag Committee heard the tremendous benefit to our state investment in the new school could bring. Through the stalwart support of Senate Finance Committee Chairman Harvey Peeler, Clemson received $10 million in state funding last year to explore the possibility of creating the new school. Site selection, near the T. Ed Garrison Arena and Expo Center in Pendleton, was completed in October. If additional funding is approved, the first class of homegrown veterinarians could graduate in-state by 2030.

SCFB York County President Dickie Harper and SCFB member Drake Yon testified on the impending shortfall of large animal vets for our state. With recent changes related to on-farm vaccinations, this upcoming void could be catastrophic for large animal farms in South Carolina.

All three member testimonies received a welcome response from the Committee chaired by Sen. Wes Climer of York. SCFB will continue to support the need for additional vets in our state by providing education to the decision makers of our great state.

Spotlight on Ag & Forestry

The SC Chamber of Commerce hosted the 2023 "Spotlight on Agriculture and Forestry" this week with partners **SC Farm Bureau**, **PABC**, **AgSouth, ArborOne, AgFirst, the SC Forestry Association** and others. This anticipated event offered great collaboration between stalwarts of the state's agribusiness industry, in addition to excellent food and presentations. Thanks to the SC Chamber of Commerce for hosting this important annual event.

SCFB President Harry Ott speaking at Spotlight on Ag

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Farmers of the Week: SCFB Women's Committee

This week we were joined by 80 SCFB members of the Women's Leadership Committee. These outstanding women work hard to support the overall mission of the organization and spend time in their counties educating others about agriculture. This group is an exceptional representation of agriculture in South Carolina and we are proud to call them our *SCFB Farmers of the Week.*

The group was honored to have **Rep. Sylleste Davis** (Berkeley) as the keynote speaker during brunch before a personal tour of the House Chamber. Rep. Davis was a 2021 SCFB Legislator of the Year and recently became Chairwoman of the House Medical, Military, Public and Municipal (3M) Affairs Committee. She is a great advocate for agriculture, and we appreciate her time and guidance to our Women's Committee.

Rep. Davis speaking in the House Chamber.

With Governor Henry McMaster

Women's Committee with Rep. Davis in the House Chamber

With Sen. Katrina Shealy (Lexington)

With Sen. Danny Verdin (Laurens)

With Senate Agriculture Committee Chairman Wes Climer (York), Sen. Penry Gustafson (Kershaw), and Senate Judiciary Chairman Luke Rankin (Horry)