Week 2 Legislative Report - January 20, 2023

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House Ways & Means Budget Subcommittees Meet

State agencies testified in front of their respective House Ways and Means Budget Subcommittees this week. During these testimonies, the agencies provided a glimpse into their priorities and needs for the coming year. Once subcommittees have completed their work, the full Committee, led by new chairman Bruce Bannister (Greenville), will begin meeting to formulate this year's official budget bill.

Below are a few examples of the budget requests related to agriculture:

South Carolina Department of Agriculture

- $75 million non-recurring funds to expand existing state agribusiness via an economic development matching grant program;
- $2.375 million non-recurring funds to renovate the Greenville State Farmers Market facilities;
- $1.122 million non-recurring funds to provide more advanced and efficient tools for fueling location inspectors, thereby reducing inspection times while providing a less labor-intensive inspection that reduces the likelihood of workplace injury and workers' compensation claims;
- $1 million non-recurring funds to support the strategic marketing initiative of the "Certified SC" brand;
- $1 million in recurring funds to support and assist economic development projects which create capital investment and jobs in rural South Carolina; specifically, food processing, packaging, manufacturing, distribution, and transportation of agricultural products, providing more markets for producers in South Carolina.

Clemson University – Public Service & Agriculture (PSA)

- $15.5 million non-recurring funds for animal farms infrastructure;
- $4.6 million non-recurring funds to support Poultry Science Research Facility;
- $2.3 million recurring to support employee retention and recruitment;
- $954,440 for problematic wildlife that impact agriculture.

South Carolina State University – Public Service & Agriculture (PSA)

- $2.5 million non-recurring funds to support small agribusiness expansion and reach new markets;
- $500,00 Agriculture Innovation Research;
- $500,000 for new farmer assistance;
- $350,000 for future farm planning by providing education and training to the small farm community.

Clemson University Requests Funding For a New College of Veterinary Medicine

Clemson University is continuing to take steps toward creating a new College of Veterinary Medicine in South Carolina. In doing so, Clemson would provide the only in-state option for students in search of veterinary education. This opportunity would improve veterinary care for the state's livestock and agricultural industry immensely. Clemson President Jim Clements presented the request at Ways & Means subcommittee hearing this week where current South Carolina Farm Bureau member and retired State Veterinarian Dr. Boyd Parr testified on the tremendous need for additional veterinarians in South Carolina. Below is the budget request:

- $30 million in capital funds to support the new College of Veterinary Medicine. The requested funds would provide the resources for site preparation and construction documents for bidding purposes, important steps in obtaining a "letter of reasonable assurance," the first step towards accreditation with the American Veterinary Medical Association Council on Education;
- $2.5 million in recurring funds to support the new college. The requested recurring funds would allow the next step of hiring a founding Dean along with other essential staff to begin development of a detailed academic program and assist in facilities' design completion.

New Bill Introductions

Government Restructuring – S.399

Senate Finance **Chairman Harvey Peeler** (Senate District 14 - Cherokee, Spartanburg, Union and York) and **Senate President Thomas Alexander** (Senate District 1 - Oconee and Pickens) introduced Senate bill 399 this week. The bill focuses on DHEC reform, restructuring and increasing government efficiency while creating separate health and environmental state agencies, moving all statewide water into one agency. The bill received overwhelming support last year from the Senate. South Carolina Farm Bureau remains strongly engaged and supportive of government efficiency and single agency water authority in the state. We will keep you apprised of all action regarding S.399 as the bill progresses.

Commercial Peach Processing Exemption – H.3724

House Agricultural Committee member and **Subcommittee Chairman Cal Forrest** (House District 39 - Lexington and Saluda) introduced House bill 3724 this week. The bill exempts electricity used exclusively in the commercial processing of peaches for sale from sales tax. South Carolina Farm Bureau will continue to monitor and supports this legislation as currently drafted.

SCFB Farmers of the Week

Angel Brabham and **Matthew Connelly** from Connelly Farms in Allendale joined us this week as our first *SCFB Farmers of the Week* for 2023. Mrs. Brabham and Mr. Connelly are first cousins from a long-standing South Carolina farm family who continue to work on their family's property in Ulmer. Their grandfather, Robert Connelly Sr., established Connelly Farms in 1947 and later went into partnership with his children Robert Jr., Baynard and Nancy.

Today, the family continues to farm approximately 10,000 acres of corn, soybeans, peanuts and wheat. Matthew assists in providing labor and making business decisions, and Angel handles finances and office operations.

They are both very involved in the community and state through public service: Matthew is a member of the Allendale County Council and Angel serves as the SC Farm Bureau Women's Committee Chair in Allendale.

Thank you, Angel and Matthew, for your commitment to South Carolina agriculture.