

POLICY POSITIONS

Adopted by the
Legislative Committee



2025



2024 SCAC Legislative Committee

*Mary D. Anderson, Chesterfield County Council Vice Chairwoman
Chairwoman, SCAC Legislative Committee*

ABBEVILLE COUNTY

Robert B. McClain, Council Chairman

AIKEN COUNTY

Julie P. Stutts, Register of Deeds

ALLENDALE COUNTY

Matthew Connelly, Council Chairman
William E. Robinson, County Council
Vice Chairman

ANDERSON COUNTY

Robert T. Dunn, Council Chairman
Jason P. Phillips, County Treasurer

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Evert Comer Jr., Council Chairman
Larry Haynes, County Council

BARNWELL COUNTY

Jerry R. Creech, Council Chairman
Daniel Alexander, County Council

BEAUFORT COUNTY

Joseph F. Passiment Jr., Council Chairman
Alice G. Howard, County Council

BERKELEY COUNTY

Johnny Cribb, County Supervisor/
Chairman

CALHOUN COUNTY

James E. Haigler, Council Chairman
Cecil M. Thornton Jr., County Council

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Marvin Bishop Jr., County Administrator

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Joseph R. Branham, Council Chairman
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Mary D. Anderson, Council Vice
Chairwoman
Hattie Burns, County Council

CLARENDON COUNTY

Dwight L. Stewart Jr., Council Chairman

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Steven D. Murdaugh, Council Chairman
Phillip M. Taylor Sr., Council Vice
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Bobby C. Hudson, Council Chairman

DILLON COUNTY

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Tim Harper, County Administrator

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S. Todd Friddle, Council Chairman
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Louis R. Morant, Council Chairman

GREENVILLE COUNTY

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Herman G. "Butch" Kirven Jr.
County Council

GREENWOOD COUNTY

Chuck Moates, Council Chairman

HAMPTON COUNTY

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HORRY COUNTY

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LANCASTER COUNTY

Steven R. Harper, Council Chairman
W. Brian Carnes, Council Vice Chairman

LAURENS COUNTY

Brown Patterson, Council Chairman
Jeff Carroll, Council Vice Chairman

LEE COUNTY

Travis Windham, Council Chairman

LEXINGTON COUNTY

Beth A. Carrigg, Council Chairwoman
Debra B. Summers, County Council

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John Q. Atkinson Jr., Council Chairman

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Anthony Woods, Council Chairman

McCORMICK COUNTY

Charles T. Jennings, Council Chairman
Columbus Stephens, County
Administrator

NEWBERRY COUNTY

Todd Johnson, Council Chairman

OCONEE COUNTY

Matthew Durham, Council Chairman

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Chris Bowers, Council Chairman
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Jesica Mackey, Council Chairwoman

SALUDA COUNTY

James Moore, Council Chairman

SPARTANBURG COUNTY

A. Manning Lynch, Council Chairman

SUMTER COUNTY

James T. McCain Jr., Council Chairman
Charles T. Edens, County Council

UNION COUNTY

Phillip G. Russell II, County Supervisor/
Chairman

WILLIAMSBURG COUNTY

Kelvin C. Washington, County Supervisor/
Chairman

YORK COUNTY

Christi Cox, Council Chairwoman

Policy Positions for the 2025 Session of the South Carolina General Assembly

Adopted by the 2024 Legislative Committee
of the South Carolina Association of Counties



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Policy Positions for the 2025 Session of the South Carolina General Assembly

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Legislative Policy Development Process

General Statement

The South Carolina Association of Counties (SCAC) has adopted a systematic consensus building legislative policy development process. The central goal in the process is to solicit and develop the expertise of county officials from all 46 counties on legislative issues affecting county government. Through participation in four legislative policy steering committees, county officials meet, discuss, and identify issues to be considered by the Legislative Committee.

Legislative Committee and Steering Committee System

SCAC has four legislative policy committees: 1) County Government and Intergovernmental Relations Steering Committee; 2) Land Use, Natural Resources and Transportation Steering Committee; 3) Public Safety, Corrections and Judicial Steering Committee; and 4) Revenue, Finance and Economic Development Steering Committee. It is the responsibility of each committee to study the issues and analyze information that is pertinent to its designated policy area. Each committee will develop recommendations in the form of policy statements. Each committee chairman will present the committee's draft policy statements to the Legislative Committee during the Legislative Conference in December.

The Legislative Committee is composed of the 29 members of the SCAC Board of Directors and the chairman of the governing body of the county or his/her designee from each of the 46 counties. The total membership of the Legislative Committee is 75 members. It is the responsibility of the Legislative Committee to review each legislative policy steering committee's recommendations, resolve any conflicts, and adopt the legislative policy positions for the Association. The Legislative Committee is chaired by the Association's First Vice President. The Legislative Committee meets at the SCAC Legislative Conference in December. Once the formal policy statement has been approved by the Legislative Committee, it is the responsibility of the membership of the Association and the Association staff to advocate for its implementation.

During the course of a legislative session, the SCAC Board of Directors is responsible for any revision, modification, deletion, or addition to the legislative policy positions adopted by the Legislative Committee.

Timeline for Development of Legislative Policy

Late August – The membership is notified of the date of the meeting of the four policy steering committees. County officials receive a list of the steering committees and a description of their areas of responsibility. County officials are encouraged to provide their thoughts and ideas on legislative issues for inclusion on a steering committee's agenda. Staff collects this input and prepares it for the steering committee meeting.

Mid-September – Each steering committee meets to discuss and analyze legislative policy issues and draft an initial report of proposed legislative policy recommendations.

Mid-September to Mid-November – The County Council Coalition meets in October to review and discuss the initial draft of proposed legislative policy recommendations. Each steering committee chairman presents the steering committee report to the Coalition. During the Fall, various groups of county official organizations

meet and determine their group's legislative agenda for the coming session of the General Assembly. This information is collected and assigned to the particular steering committee responsible for that legislative area.

Mid-November – Each steering committee meets for the second time to incorporate additional issues into their proposed legislative policy recommendations. Each steering committee adopts a final proposed legislative policy recommendation.

Early December – The SCAC Legislative Committee meets at the Legislative Conference to receive the reports of the four legislative policy steering committees. Each steering committee chairman presents his/her committee report at a general session meeting of the Legislative Committee. The members of the Legislative Committee discuss each proposed legislative policy position, and then either amend, adopt, or reject the recommendation. If adopted by the Legislative Committee, those policy positions are incorporated with the other steering committees' reports into an SCAC consensus legislative report. Once the SCAC consensus legislative report has been adopted by the Legislative Committee, it is the responsibility of the membership and the SCAC staff to advocate for its implementation.

Rules and Operating Procedures

A. Legislative Committee

- 1. Committee Membership:** The Legislative Committee shall be composed of the members of the SCAC Board of Directors and the chairman of the governing body or his/her designee from each of the 46 counties. The chairman of the Legislative Committee shall be the First Vice President of the Association.
- 2. Voting Procedures:** At a Legislative Committee meeting, the Chairman shall call the meeting to order and carry out the committee meeting agenda. Each committee member has one vote. All matters coming before the committee shall be decided by a majority vote of those present and voting.
- 3. Proposed Policies and Amendments:** Each steering committee chairman shall present at the Legislative Conference the committee report for the steering committee. No legislative issue shall be considered at the Legislative Conference in December that does not appear in a steering committee report unless two-thirds of those Legislative Committee members present and voting vote to place the issue on the Legislative Committee agenda for consideration.
- 4. Procedural Rules:** **The latest edition of Robert's Rules of Order shall be used to govern the conduct of Legislative Committee meetings.**

B. Legislative Policy Steering Committees

- 1. Committee Membership:** The Legislative Policy Steering Committees' membership composition is as follows: (a) the SCAC Board of Directors; (b) the Legislative Committee members who are either the chairman of the governing body of the county or his/her designee; and (c) not more than 25 county officials who shall be appointed by the President based on the expertise of the county official in the subject matter of the particular steering committee. The President shall make steering committee assignments on an annual basis. The President shall designate a chairman for each of the four steering committees. Steering committee meetings will be held at the call of the President.
- 2. Voting Procedures:** At each steering committee meeting, the committee chairman shall call the meeting to order and carry out the committee meeting agenda. Each committee member has one vote. All matters coming before the committee shall be decided by majority vote of the committee members present and voting.

3. **Proposed Policies and Amendments:** Any committee member may offer a proposed policy or an amendment to an existing Association policy. Any county official may propose a policy issue by submitting it to the Association and asking that it be included on the committee's meeting agenda. The chairman of the committee will call upon members to discuss the proposal as it has been offered. At the conclusion of the discussion, the chairman will call for a vote on the proposal.
4. **Procedural Rules:** The latest edition of Robert's Rules of Order shall be used to govern the conduct of steering committee meetings.

Statement of Purpose for the 2025 Session of the South Carolina General Assembly

The South Carolina Association of Counties hereby affirms its constitutional premise as stated in Article I, Section 2, that, “The purpose of the organization shall be to promote more efficient county government; to study, discuss, and recommend improvements in government; to investigate and provide means for the exchange of ideas and experiences between county officers; to promote and encourage education of county officials; to collect, analyze, and distribute information about county government; to cooperate with other organizations; and to promote legislation to effect more efficient administration of local government in the State of South Carolina.”

The Association believes that counties cannot exist in isolation because their futures are intertwined. We realize that, as the saying goes, “Together we stand, divided we fall.” Our problems are largely the same: if they are to be solved quickly and effectively, all counties must band together to work for the common good. Many common problems exist among South Carolina’s 46 counties, and to solve these problems, cooperation is necessary.

The South Carolina Association of Counties establishes as a principle the goal of providing control of essential services at the level of government most capable of delivering them. Counties cannot be effective partners with the state and federal governments if their primary revenue source, the property tax, is eliminated or further eroded without replacement with revenue sources that are secure and predictable. Any restructuring of responsibilities should be coupled with a restructuring of revenue sources for counties so that the revenue sources are reflective of the economy in the same proportion as those of the state.

The Association believes strongly in maximum local authority consistent with attainment of statewide objectives. County officials recognize their responsibilities to carry out policies formulated by the General Assembly. At the same time, state policymakers should recognize the limitations of the county revenue base and the need for the state to provide the revenue necessary to implement the increasing number of mandates.

We believe that joint cooperative action between county school board members and county council members is essential to the successful delivery of good public education. Comprehensive and efficient human services, including social services, health and mental health programs, are essential to the wellbeing of our society. These services must be clearly defined and adequately funded. State mandated services delivered at the county level should be financed from state revenue sources in order for every citizen of South Carolina to receive a substantially similar degree of service.

The South Carolina Association of Counties has traditionally maintained that its efforts should not be utilized on behalf of individual counties seeking legislative remedy for problems not statewide in nature. The Association staff will direct its efforts toward the support of sound legislation beneficial to the administration of all counties’ affairs, and to the opposition of legislation detrimental to counties.

County Government and Intergovernmental Relations Steering Committee



Joseph R. Branham, Chairman
Chester County Council Chairman

The responsibilities of the County Government and Intergovernmental Relations Steering Committee include issues involving the structure of county government and all matters dealing with intergovernmental relations between counties and county officials and the federal, state, and municipal governments. Also included in the responsibilities of this committee are issues related to health and human service delivery and financing. Specific areas of concern include Home Rule authority, consolidation of political subdivisions, elections, ethics, personnel, indigent health care, indigent legal services, veterans' affairs, libraries, social services, and health boards.

Steering Committee Members

County Representatives:

Beth A. Carrigg, Lexington County Council Chairwoman
Matthew Connelly, Allendale County Council Chairman
Christi Cox, York County Council Chairwoman
Jerry R. Creech, Barnwell County Council Chairman
Detrice Dawkins, Dillon County Council Chairwoman
Robert T. Dunn, Anderson County Council Chairman
S. Todd Friddle, Dorchester County Council Chairman
Herbert R. Sass III, Charleston County Council
Chairman
Michael Vaughn, Chester County Council
Travis Windham, Lee County Council Chairman

SCAC Board Members:

Mary D. Anderson, Chesterfield County Council Vice
Chairwoman
W. Brian Carnes, Lancaster County Council Vice
Chairman
Joseph F. Passiment Jr., Beaufort County Council
Chairman
Brown Patterson, Laurens County Council Chairman
Sammie Tucker Jr., Kershaw County Council
Johnnie Wright Sr., Orangeburg County Council
Chairman

President's Appointees:

Crystal B. Barnes, McCormick County Clerk to Council/Assistant to County Administrator
Dwight L. Bradham, Aiken County Veterans Affairs Officer
Abigail Fuller, Newberry County Library Director
Lynne West, Laurens County Registration & Elections Director
Joanie Winters, Newberry County Attorney

SCAC Staff Contact: Leslie M. Simpson

General Statement of Policy

In November of 1972, the people of South Carolina voted to empower the General Assembly to grant statutory Home Rule powers to county governments. The revised Article VIII (Local Government) to the State Constitution was implemented with the passage of Act No. 283 of 1975 and is known as the “Home Rule Act.” This structural reorganization of government service providers recognized that local elected governing bodies would meet the service needs of their communities in a more efficient and cost-effective manner. The people recognized that counties must be able to respond to changing issues without being limited by inefficient and ineffective restrictions imposed by state law. County government officials recognize that they are directly responsible for and accountable to the people in their communities for raising and allocating revenues to provide the services that their people demand.

In addition to being providers of essential traditional local government services, counties understand their role to help the state administer state programs at the local level. However, counties are charged with implementing costly state and federal mandates without sufficient appropriations or revenue sources to pay for meeting the state’s or federal government’s objectives. Counties oppose the imposition of unfunded or underfunded state and federal mandates because it breaks the line of accountability that connects the implementing government responsible for the program with the cost required to pay for the program.

Counties are mindful of their obligation to protect and preserve the health, safety, and welfare of the citizens of this state. To this end, counties play a vital role in addressing the health and human service needs of the people in their communities. The growing cost of supporting these programs and the restructuring of the role of the federal government through the block grant program are a growing concern of counties.

Policy Positions

County Officers and Employees

County Veterans’ Affairs (CVA) Officers – (1) Support legislation that would provide a CVA officer is an at-will employee of the county legislative delegation and is considered a county employee; (2) Support legislation that would provide that a CVA officer is subject to removal for cause, at any time, by a county delegation; and (3) Support legislation that would provide that the Secretary of South Carolina Department of Veterans’ Affairs may offer recommendations to the county delegation after annual reviews of the local county CVA office.

Funding for County Veterans’ Affairs Offices – Support legislation increasing state aid funding for each county Veterans’ Office.

Local Government Service Managers – Support legislation to allocate State Aid funding in the amount of \$10 million for the Councils of Governments (COGS) to provide “roving” local government services to counties and cities.

Workers’ Compensation and Health Insurance Coverage for Psychological Injuries – (1) Support legislation that would expand funding and healthcare to ensure that there is coverage for all first responders needing treatment for mental injuries; and (2) While SCAC opposes legislation that would amend § 42-1-160 to reduce the standard for mental-mental claims, in the alternative, SCAC would support a compromise reached by stakeholders that requires an employee with mental injuries to be under the care of a treating

physician and only be entitled to a claim for workers' compensation after the treating physician makes a determination that the employee is disabled as a result of a work-related mental injury.

Elections

Consolidating Polling Locations – Support legislation empowering county boards of voter registration and elections to strategically consolidate precincts into a single, more accessible voting location.

Early Voting Tabulation – Support legislation for initiating the voter tabulation process early on Election Day in order to speed up result reporting, reduce delays, and provide timely information to candidates and the public.

Earnable Compensation for Poll Managers/Clerks – Support legislation limiting earnable compensation to certain amounts paid to election managers and clerks related to the South Carolina Retirement System.

Increase Poll Worker Pay – Support legislation amending Budget Proviso 102.2 to increase the compensation to \$200 for poll workers and \$260 for clerks, as opposed to the current compensation of \$135 and \$200, respectively.

Municipal Elections – Support legislation to standardize and consolidate elections on specific dates in March, June, and November and to hold municipal elections in November of odd years.

Freedom of Information Act (FOIA)

Definition of “Public Record” – Support legislation to amend the definition of “public record” in § 30-4-20(c) to provide that a “public record does not include reports, spreadsheets, or compilations that a public body has the hardware, software, or other technological capability to create but has not created or does not have copies of at the time of a public records request.”

Matters Exempt from Disclosure – Cast Vote Records – Support legislation to amend § 30-4-40 to provide that ballot images or “cast vote records” are exempt from disclosure from any election conducted pursuant to § 7-1-10 et seq. This would help ensure that election voting records are kept confidential.

Matters Exempt from Disclosure – Compensation Paid by Public Bodies – Support legislation to amend § 30-4-40(a)(6)(A) to increase the current compensation level threshold due to inflation.

Right to Inspect or Copy Public Records – Support legislation to amend § 30-4-30 to provide that a public body is not required to create a record that does not exist at the time a request is made, even if the public body has the capability to create the requested record.

Using Public Information for Commercial Solicitation – Support legislation to authorize counties and other public bodies to refuse to disclose public information when it is reasonable to expect it to be used for commercial solicitation. Additionally, support the ability to require an affidavit attesting that the information will not be used for such purposes.

General

County Elector Challenges and Hearing Time Frames – Support legislation to amend § 7-5-230 to specify that the hearing must be scheduled within 10 business days.

Intergovernmental Relations

County Border Realignment Consent Agreement – Support legislation aimed at establishing an alternative consent procedure for annexing a section of a county resulting from a boundary clarification.

Municipal Annexation and Adhesion Contracts – Support legislation that would grant legal standing to county governments to challenge municipal annexations within their jurisdiction. Further, support legislation that would require all municipal annexation, including enclave annexation, by referendum as follows:

- Support legislation prohibiting pre-facto and post-facto adhesion contracts.
- Provide a procedure for municipal deannexation in a manner similar to county boundary changes.
- Create a mechanism to freeze revenue from business licenses upon the annexation of a business by a municipality in the same manner that local hospitality taxes are treated when annexation occurs.
- Grant legal standing to counties for all annexations within their jurisdiction.
- Require municipalities to notify counties of proposed annexations. Notice should be given in time for the county to actively participate and provide input into the proposed annexation.
- Require municipalities to conduct a study to analyze and mitigate the potential impact of proposed annexations on the delivery and level of service of public services and facilities, in order to assure that adequate public services and facilities will be available to serve development after annexation.
- Prohibit the creation of enclaves (donut holes) and provide incentives for municipalities to not create enclaves. The incentives would not require approval from landowners that would be affected by the annexation.
- Strengthen the Priority Investment Act (enacted in 2007 to improve the local government comprehensive planning process) by mandating that any municipal annexation that violates the Act would result in a reduction of the Local Aid to Subdivision funds the municipality receives.

Land Use, Natural Resources and Transportation Steering Committee



Charles T. Edens, Chairman
Sumter County Council

The responsibilities of the Land Use, Natural Resources and Transportation Steering Committee include growth policies, environmental issues, as well as transportation and other infrastructure issues. Specific areas of concern include issues related to land use; zoning and building code programs; solid and hazardous waste management programs; water resource systems; air quality; wetlands; energy conservation; eminent domain; parks and recreation; and state/federal transportation funding programs, to include “C” funds.

Steering Committee Members

County Representatives:

- Evert Comer Jr.**, Bamberg County Council Chairman
- Steven R. Harper**, Lancaster County Council Chairman
- Alice G. Howard**, Beaufort County Council
- A. Manning Lynch**, Spartanburg County Council
Chairman
- Robert B. McClain**, Abbeville County Council Chairman
- Chuck Moates**, Greenwood County Council Chairman
- James Moore**, Saluda County Council Chairman
- Steven D. Murdaugh**, Colleton County Council Chairman
- L. Martin Sauls IV**, Jasper County Council Chairman
- Columbus Stephens**, McCormick County Administrator
- Dan Tripp**, Greenville County Council Chairman
- Anthony Woods**, Marlboro County Council Chairman

SCAC Board Members:

- John Q. Atkinson Jr.**, Marion County Council Chairman
- Dr. Alphonso Bradley**, Florence County Council
- Barbara B. Clark**, Jasper County Council Vice
Chairwoman
- Larry Haynes**, Bamberg County Council
- Dwight L. Stewart Jr.**, Clarendon County Council
Chairman
- Cecil M. Thornton Jr.**, Calhoun County Council

President’s Appointees:

- J. Shawn Brashear**, Florence County Director of Planning & Building
- Danny R. Bright**, Union County Council
- Danny Knight**, Horry County Solid Waste Authority Executive Director
- Jose Luis**, Lancaster County Council
- Andrea N. Melocik**, Charleston County Planning & Zoning Deputy Director
- Virginia Merck-Dupont**, Lancaster County Attorney
- Steve Thigpen**, Charleston County Deputy Administrator – Public Services
- Nicole Workman**, Chester County Attorney

SCAC Staff Contact: John O. Wienges Jr. and Avery D. Upchurch

General Statement of Policy

South Carolina's counties have played a vital role in maintaining natural resources, governing the wise use of land, and making public infrastructure decisions. Protection of natural resources must be a shared effort between the state and local governments. Counties recognize the importance of Home Rule and community input regarding land use, natural resources, and infrastructure decisions and have traditionally opposed statewide legislation that would preempt community input and solutions tailored to local situations involving these matters. County officials acknowledge their responsibility to carry out policies formulated by the General Assembly regarding matters of statewide concern. To that end, if state law mandates that local governments assume new or expanded responsibilities, the General Assembly should provide adequate guidance and funding to accomplish legislative aims.

Policy Positions

Land Use

Counties and municipalities are the only entities vested with the jurisdiction to adopt and enforce zoning ordinances, development regulations, and other land use measures. County governments encourage adequate open space that contributes to the quality of life of our citizens by providing recreational opportunities, enhancing air and water quality, and preserving and protecting South Carolina's unique natural beauty. Local communities are best able to understand the most beneficial use of land. To that end, local citizens require and expect local governments to establish and enforce local land use and zoning ordinances. The South Carolina Association of Counties believes that the state and other outside entities should avoid interfering in local land use matters.

Affordable Housing – (1) Support legislation providing statewide tax benefits for affordable housing or local incentives to developers and landowners; (2) Oppose legislation that would impose limits on impact fees and tap fees.

Balcony Inspections – (1) Oppose legislation requiring counties to perform inspections of residential balconies and buildings; (2) Support legislation moving balcony inspections under the South Carolina Department of Labor, Licensing and Regulation's purview.

Data Centers – Oppose legislation that would prohibit a county from providing incentives for data centers.

Disposal of Lithium-ion Batteries – (1) Support legislation or regulations providing disposal guidelines for lithium-ion batteries; (2) Support legislation to provide state oversight with manufacturer or distributor participation in the disposal process.

Disposal of Rooftop Solar Panels – (1) Support legislation or regulations by South Carolina Department of Environmental Services providing disposal guidelines for rooftop solar panels in landfills; (2) Support legislation to provide state oversight with manufacturer or distributor participation in the disposal process.

Expansion of Broadband – Support legislation to continue to push broadband access for everyone.

Flood Maps and Building Code Requirements – Support legislation that would provide relief from the Limit of Moderate Wave Action (LiMWA) line requirements and restrictions on development within watersheds.

Funding for Industrial Site Readiness – Continue to support funding mechanisms that would aid in developing pad-ready industrial sites, buildings, and infrastructure upgrades to help recruit additional industrial development.

Lot Cleanup – Support legislation giving counties the authority to clean up both structures and lots and recover the costs associated with the cleanup from the property owner on the tax bill.

Preemption of Land Use Measures – Oppose legislative preemption of local zoning or other restrictions on local land use regulation.

Short Term Rentals – Defining Terms to Close Loopholes – Support legislation that would tighten definitions by distinguishing between “short-term renters” vs. “roommates.”

Waste Tires – Support legislation that would address the increasing cost of waste tire disposal that county governments are currently facing, including, but not limited to: (1) Increasing the current \$2 advanced recycling fee; (2) Eliminating the current \$150/ton cap to allow counties across the state to address their local cost of disposal.

Natural Resources

The task of preserving and maintaining South Carolina’s natural resources encompasses numerous areas of concern and involves the exercise of authority by federal, state, and local governments. Since counties are charged with the task of balancing various interests, local community input and decision-making needs to be preserved. Counties have long recognized that efforts to ensure clean water and air and to protect wetlands transcend governmental boundaries. These efforts require close cooperation between federal, state, and local governments. To that end, the Association of Counties, and those directly impacted counties, should be included in any decisions concerning state and federal efforts to protect natural resources.

Energy Generation and Accessibility – Support legislation to promote an increase in energy production and accessibility to meet the increasing demand for power across the state.

Solid Waste Flow Control – (1) Oppose legislative efforts to undermine counties’ authority to address their responsibilities regarding the disposal of solid waste; (2) Support legislation providing counties with increased flexibility and accessibility to solid waste disposal.

Transportation and Other Infrastructure

As communities across South Carolina grow, many counties are faced with increasing stress on public infrastructure. This has accelerated the demand for new and expanded airports, roads, bridges, water and sewer systems, and solid waste disposal. Counties should take a proactive role in determining the direction of infrastructure and should be included in decisions at the state level affecting local infrastructure.

Infrastructure Definitions – Support legislation that would make the state definition of infrastructure match the federal definition and would add solid waste to the definition of infrastructure.

Transfer of Roads from South Carolina Department of Transportation (SCDOT) to Counties – Oppose legislation that would require a mandatory transfer of roads from SCDOT to local governments.

Transportation Infrastructure Project Funding – Support legislation providing alternative funding sources and methodologies that would expedite project delivery for transportation infrastructure projects.

Uniform Process for the Dedication of Roads to Local Governments – Support legislation that would provide for a statutory scheme of road dedication in order to provide legal certainty and a uniform process for local governments.

Public Safety, Corrections and Judicial Steering Committee



*Julie J. Armstrong, Chairwoman
Charleston County Clerk of Court*

The responsibilities of the Public Safety, Corrections and Judicial Steering Committee include issues relating to the funding and administration of law enforcement; corrections and jails; the judicial system; fire and life safety programs; and emergency disaster preparedness. Specific areas of concern include issues related to law enforcement; adult and juvenile detention; the court system, including clerks of court and registers of deeds, magistrates, and probate judges; E-9-1-1 service programs; fire protection services; emergency medical services; and emergency preparedness programs.

Steering Committee Members

County Representatives:

Chris Bowers, Pickens County Council Chairman
Hattie Burns, Chesterfield County Council
Jeff Carroll, Laurens County Council Vice Chair
Matthew Durham, Oconee County Council Chairman
Bobby C. Hudson, Darlington County Council Chairman
Todd Johnson, Newberry County Council Chairman
James T. McCain Jr., Sumter County Council Chairman
Louis R. Morant, Georgetown County Council Chairman
Douglas Pauley, Fairfield County Council Chairman
Phillip G. Russell II, Union County Supervisor/Chairman
Julie P. Stutts, Aiken County Register of Deeds
Albert Talbert, Edgefield County Council Vice Chairman
Latisha Walker, Orangeburg County Council
Kelvin C. Washington, Williamsburg County Supervisor/
Chairman

President's Appointees:

Johnathan W. Bryan, Sumter County Attorney
Doug Bryson, Spartanburg County Emergency
Management Director
James C. Campbell, Sumter County Clerk of Court
Tonia M. Capers-Jones, Allendale County Detention
Center Director
Brandon Ellis, Georgetown County Emergency Services
Director
Mario Formisano, Dorchester County Deputy
Administrator for Public Safety
Brian Hester, Chester County Administrator
John C. Hicks, York County Chief Jail Administrator
Theo Lane, Greenwood County Council Vice Chairman

SCAC Board Members:

Cam Crawford, Horry County Council
Waymon Mumford, Florence County Council
William E. Robinson, Allendale County Council Vice
Chairman

Amy McCulloch, Richland County Probate Judge
Timothy L. Nanney, Greenville County Register of Deeds
Bobbi Jo O'Neal, Charleston County Coroner
D. Keith Smith, Allendale County Probate Judge

SCAC Staff Contact: Kent Lesesne

General Statement of Policy

One of the primary responsibilities of government is to protect its citizens from those who threaten their life, liberty, and property. County government resources are being strained to the limit to provide sufficient law enforcement, to deal with the escalating complexities and backlog in the judicial system, and to cope with the crises in jail overcrowding and juvenile crime. Many of these responsibilities fall on the counties as state mandates with either inadequate or no state funding.

County government officials feel that the critical issues facing our counties cannot be solved in a vacuum, but only through partnerships with the federal, state, and local governments; the private sector; volunteer organizations; community groups; and others. The state must take a leadership role in examining the causes of crime so that we do not have to continually build more jails, to find better methods to deal with high recidivism rates, and to make improvements in a judicial system that moves at a less-than-acceptable pace and has not adequately kept up with societal changes. The federal and state governments must not only support these efforts through strong leadership, but sufficient financial support must be provided if we are to solve these issues and improve the quality of life of all South Carolinians.

Policy Positions

Corrections

There must be an equitable relationship between the state and the counties for the growing demands of adult and juvenile incarceration. The “get tough on crime” policies enacted in recent years have compounded the problems of jail overcrowding, insufficient staffing, inadequate funding, and increased violence. Continual expansion and construction of jails are poor and unacceptable answers to jail overcrowding. The state and federal governments must provide financial support and alternatives to incarceration if we are to make any headway in the criminal justice system.

Amending the Safekeeper Statute – Support legislation to amend § 24-3-80, the Safekeeper Statute, which would authorize a general sessions court to issue a safekeeper order to transfer an extraordinary security risk prisoner in a pretrial detention facility to the custody of the South Carolina Department of Corrections.

Assaults on Public Employees – Support legislation to reinstate § 16-3-630 dealing with the assault on state and local correctional facility employees, and to reinstate § 16-3-635 dealing with the assault on emergency medical service providers, firefighters, and home health workers.

Cell Phones in Jails – Support legislation that would aid in the elimination of cell phone use by inmates.

Juveniles in Local Detention Facilities – Support legislation to amend the S.C. Constitution to change the age of juvenile offenders from “under the age of 17” to “under the age of 18.”

Medicaid Benefits for Former Inmates – Support legislation to authorize the South Carolina Department of Corrections and local detention facilities to suspend, rather than terminate, Medicaid benefits for inmates so that these benefits can resume immediately upon release, and to provide that any benefit received by a pretrial detainee prior to conviction cannot be suspended until a guilty verdict is rendered.

Operation of Vending Facilities by Commission for the Blind within Detention Centers – Support legislation that encompasses the compromise language of S. 1017 of 2020 that would only allow blind persons to operate vending machines outside of the secured areas of a detention facility or within if those operations began prior to this legislation.

Judicial

The operation of the court system is a function performed by counties in their role as an arm of state government. More than 250,000 cases were pending in circuit and family courts at the end of August 2023. This workload, as well as increased demands on county judicial staff and resources, has put a strain on county government finances. The state must look at methods to address the overload in the judicial system and to stop mandating additional requirements without providing sources of funding. Counties should not be the last in line to receive their portion of fines, fees, assessments, and surcharges.

Deed Standardization – Support legislation that would establish uniform standards for deeds as well as a non-compliance fee if the deed does not meet the proposed statutory requirements.

Expungement for Pardoned Offenses – Support legislation that would allow someone who has received a pardon and has had no additional criminal charges for at least five years from the date of the pardon to petition for an expungement.

Probate Judge Qualifications – Oppose any legislation that would require a person running to become a probate judge to be an attorney.

Law Enforcement Officers/Judicial Privacy – (1) Support legislation to amend Act 56 of 2023 to require law enforcement and members of the judiciary that are requesting that their personal information be redacted to specify which documents contain their personal information. Also, the redaction should be limited to online documents only. (2) Amend § 30-4-40 of the Freedom of Information Act to exempt the disclosure of the redaction form containing the personal information of law enforcement officers, judges, and any other public employees or personnel that may be authorized to have their personal information redacted from public records.

Public Safety

Public safety services continue to be one of the largest budget items for South Carolina counties. Growth and changes in our communities have necessitated additional expenditures for first responder services including fire and rescue, emergency management and response, and law enforcement at a time when staff and resources are in short supply. High incidences of crime along with implementation of homeland security safeguards at the federal and state level both have placed additional demands on law enforcement and emergency services personnel.

Continued devolvement of programs at the local level has resulted in more flexibility, but insufficient funding to address these critical needs.

911 Charges – (1) Support adjusting 911 charges for inflation. (2) Support telecommunications equipment being an allowable expense for 911 charges so long as the equipment is for 911 centers or public safety answering points.

Coroner Qualifications – Support legislation to amend the coroner qualifications found in § 17-5-130 by: (1) Deleting the provision in § 17-5-130(A)(2) that allows a candidate to run for coroner if they are “enrolled in a recognized forensic science degree or certification program to be completed within one year of being elected to the office of coroner;” (2) Adding a provision that requires a candidate to submit a sworn affidavit along with supporting documents at the time of filing certifying that they meet the qualifications to serve as a coroner.

Cremation Permits – Oppose H. 3017 and any legislation that prevents coroners from charging a fee for cremation permits.

Hazard Mitigation Cost-Sharing – Support legislation that addresses mitigation cost share with the following provision: When the President of the United States has declared a major disaster to exist in the state and authorized implementation of the Hazard Mitigation Grant Program (HMGP), matching funds to cover up to 25% in non-federal share of eligible HMGP-funded projects will be provided from state funds. Once the Federal Emergency Management Agency has awarded an HMGP project and authorized federal funding to the state, reimbursement on non-federal share under this subsection will be administered by the South Carolina Emergency Management Division concurrent with reimbursement of federal share funds in accordance with HMGP regulations and policy.

Increasing Emergency Medical Technicians (EMT) – Support legislation to provide state reimbursement to counties who have paid tuition assistance for EMT and paramedic training.

Law Enforcement Officer Pay/Training – Support legislation to provide state funding for increased local law enforcement pay and to authorize regional local law enforcement training and certification.

Non-Emergency 911 Calls – Support legislation similar to § 16-17-225 to make it a criminal offense to knowingly make a non-emergency 911 call.

Revenue, Finance and Economic Development Steering Committee



Jason P. Phillips, Chairman
Anderson County Treasurer

The responsibilities of the Revenue, Finance and Economic Development Steering Committee include issues relating to the ad valorem tax system, to include assessment, collection, and administrative functions; Local Option Sales Tax and other specific authorizations for local use of sales taxes; business license taxes; service and user fees; franchise fees; State Aid to Subdivisions' Local Government Fund; lease-purchase financing; Fee-in-Lieu-of-Tax Agreements; and economic development incentive programs.

Steering Committee Members

County Representatives:

- Marvin Bishop Jr.**, Cherokee County Administrator
- Ben Connell**, Kershaw County Council Chairman
- Johnny Cribb**, Berkeley County Supervisor/Chairman
- Willard Dorriety Jr.**, Florence County Council
- Johnny Gardner**, Horry County Council Chairman
- James E. Haigler**, Calhoun County Council Chairman
- Dr. Roy T. Hollingsworth Jr.**, Hampton County Council Chairman

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- Tim Harper**, Dillon County Administrator
- Charles T. Jennings**, McCormick County Council Chairman
- Herman G. "Butch" Kirven**, Greenville County Council
- Jesica Mackey**, Richland County Council Chairwoman
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- Phillip M. Taylor Sr.**, Colleton County Vice Chairman

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- A. Watts Huckabee Sr.**, York County Council
- Robert McLean**, Anderson County Assessor
- James H. Messervy Jr.**, Dorchester County Auditor
- Gary M. Mixon**, Sumter County Administrator
- Barry Spivey**, Horry County Assistant County Administrator
- Dr. Anna Maria Tabernik**, Beaufort County Council
- Brad Valentine**, Union County Auditor
- Kevin V. Yokim**, Florence County Administrator

SCAC Staff Contact: Owen A. McBride

General Statement of Policy

The South Carolina Association of Counties is committed to the concept of Home Rule. It is only by allowing the citizens of the state's counties and communities to govern themselves by electing their own local governing bodies, that local communities are able to tailor the governmental services available to each community's individual needs and wishes. An integral part of providing services for the community is the ability to both adequately fund and fund in a fair and balanced manner the services provided.

In the same manner that no two communities want or need the same services or level of services, no two communities need or want the same package of revenue-raising measures. The South Carolina Association of Counties is committed to providing a menu of revenue-raising mechanisms to ensure that local governments can provide the services and levels of service that citizens demand and expect. By allowing each community a range of revenue-producing mechanisms, each community is better able to fund public services in a manner that is fair and balanced for that particular locality.

The South Carolina Association of Counties believes that no matter what revenue-raising mechanisms are used, the mechanisms must be fair to both the individual taxpayer and the community of taxpayers as a whole. Efficiency, manageability, and stability of the revenue sources used must also be factors in determining the proper method of funding locally-provided services.

Policy Positions

Airplane Situs – Support legislation to create a situs element for the taxation of aircraft based on the aircraft spending a majority of its time in a South Carolina county and removing the December 31 loophole on aircraft classified as tangible property.

Annual Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV) Registration Fees – Support amending § 56-3-610, et seq., to apply an annual vehicle registration fee by the DMV that is revenue neutral and support language requiring all counties to be compliant with the latest version of the County Issuance of Decals and Registrations System (CIDRS-2).

Assessment Ratios – Oppose a reduction in the assessment ratio of classes of property that would negatively impact county finances.

Auditor and Treasurer Qualifications – Support legislation to require certain qualifications for the office of county auditor and county treasurer. These qualifications for office include:

- (A) a four-year bachelor's degree from an accredited post-secondary institution; or
- (B) at least five years of experience as an employee in the county auditor, treasurer, or finance office in this state; or
- (C) at least 10 years of experience in the fields of law, finance, or accounting.

Also support requiring that an auditor or treasurer attend a 40-hour training session that the Department of Revenue establishes. Failure to complete the course would result in the auditor or treasurer forfeiting \$5,000 of their state salary supplement each year until the course is completed.

Capital Project Sales Tax Committee – Support legislation to amend the composition of the Capital Project Sales Tax Committee to increase the number of representatives from six to seven and to provide that the seventh member be appointed by county council from a municipality not otherwise represented on the Committee.

Childcare Tax Credits/Incentives – Support statewide incentives for childcare centers and oppose unnecessary regulations disincentivizing the operation of childcare centers.

Class Action Lawsuits – Support legislation affirming that class action lawsuits against taxing authorities in the state are prohibited.

Condemnation Notification – Support legislation to require notification to the county tax assessor when property is condemned.

County Insurance Premium Taxes and Franchise Fees – Support legislation allowing counties the same authority as municipalities in imposing both insurance premium taxes and franchise fees in the unincorporated areas of the county.

Delinquent Tax Sales Online – Support legislation to allow counties to conduct delinquent tax sales online.

Department of Revenue Disputes – Support legislation to confirm that the Revenue Procedures Act governs disputes with local government taxing and fee-imposing authorities for such things as property taxes and road maintenance or other fees or uniform service charges. Also, support legislation prohibiting the Administrative Law Court from staying or preventing a political subdivision charged with the duty in the collection of taxes, from acting to collect a tax, whether the tax is legally due or not.

Farm Structures Tax Exemption Relief – Support legislation that would help alleviate the financial burden that the farm exemption in Act 236 of 2022 placed on counties. Such legislation should define who qualifies as a producer in § 12-37-220(B)(14) and ensure that producers file a Schedule F with their federal income tax return to report income and expenses of their farming business.

Homestead Exemption – Support legislation to increase the current \$50,000 threshold if the outcome is revenue neutral for counties. Also, support legislation to require that a qualifying dwelling for purposes of the homestead exemption also meet all requirements for the 4% special assessment ratio and be receiving the 4% special assessment ratio.

Impact Fees – Support legislation allowing South Carolina counties to broaden the allowable scope of impact fees, and to make them more flexible and easier to impose and administer.

Legal Residence for Foreign Nationals – Support legislation to clarify who qualifies for the 4% assessment ratio when it comes to foreign nationals and legal residency.

License Plates – Support legislation to require the name of the county where a vehicle is registered to be placed on license plates issued by the DMV.

Local Government Fund – Support the current Local Government Fund formula with a yearly increase in the fund corresponding with the growth in the state general fund, up to 5%.

Local Option Infrastructure Funding Limitations – Support legislation to amend the Code to allow for the imposition of local school taxes enacted by the General Assembly, a Local Transportation Tax, and any other penny tax enacted pursuant to Title 4, Chapter 10, or a combination of any of the above.

Local Public-Private Partnership – Support legislation to provide tools to counties to enter into public-private partnership agreements.

Local Sales Tax Flexibility – Support legislation to:

1. Extend the list of allowable uses of Capital Project Sales Tax revenue for purchasing capital assets such as fire trucks, street and sanitation equipment, etc.;
2. Amend the definition of transportation facilities set out in § 4-37-30(A)(1)(a)(i) to match the definition set out in the bipartisan infrastructure law that was passed by Congress in 2021 to allow for the revenue of a local Transportation Sales Tax to be used for a broader range of projects; and
3. Extend the imposition time of the Capital Project Sales Tax to up to 12 years.

LOST Plus Educational Penny – Support legislation repealing or amending the Code to allow for the imposition of a Local Option Sales Tax in addition to an Educational Sales Tax, regardless of the amount of each tax.

Low Income Reporting Requirements – Support legislation requiring yearly reporting by property owners qualifying for the property tax exemption in § 12-37-220(B)(11)(e) of the S. C. Code in order to continue to receive the exemption.

Magistrates' Salaries – Support increasing magistrates' salaries as long as the legislation doing so is revenue positive and the salaries remain decoupled from circuit judges' salaries.

Masters in Equity Judicial Retirement - Oppose legislation allowing Masters in Equity to participate in the Judges and Solicitors Retirement System as a result of the increased financial burden this would place on counties.

Mental Health Funding – Support legislation to increase the amount of state revenue going to increase mental health awareness and to repair the state's mental healthcare system.

Municipal Capital Projects Sales Tax – Oppose legislation creating a Municipal Project Sales Tax.

Online Public Notice – Support legislation allowing for online publications to meet the requirement of public notice.

Out-of-State License Plates – Support legislation to ensure that nonresidents pay their property taxes upon establishing a domicile in this state or operating a vehicle for more than 150 days in South Carolina, except for active-duty military.

Protection of Delinquent Taxpayers – Support legislation to:

1. Amend § 12-51-130 to require a statement signed by the owner of record immediately before the end of the redemption period acknowledging that the owner has been advised that they are entitled to claim any tax sale overage.
2. Add § 30-4-40 (20) allowing a public body to exempt from disclosure the identity or personal identifying information of anyone who bids at a delinquent tax sale unless the bidder consents in writing to the release of such information in a manner satisfactory to the delinquent tax collector who conducted or was responsible for overseeing the conduct of the sale where the bidder's information was obtained; provided, however, that upon the expiration of the redemption period, the identity of the successful bidder of the sale at issue shall be subject to release.
3. Add § 40-5-400 to clarify that any assistance offered or provided for a fee, consideration, or compensation to anyone in the collection of a tax sale overage shall constitute the practice of law.

Protection of Delinquent Taxpayers (cont'd) – Oppose legislation requiring the clerk of court or register of deeds to require an affidavit from a delinquent taxpayer stating the amount, if any, of overage generated by a tax sale and acknowledging that the grantor has either received the overage or has at least been advised of the overage.

Public Deposits in Credit Unions – Support legislation to allow local governments to use credit unions for public deposits.

Public Hearing Prior to Referendum – Support legislation to remove the public hearing that is currently required to be conducted prior to a referendum for a local transportation sales and use tax under Section 4-37-30.

Return to Work – Support legislation removing the \$10,000 earnings limitation and reducing the time an employee must remain out of work before they can return to work.

Short Term Rentals – Support legislation requiring the remittance of local accommodations taxes on short term rentals to counties.

South Carolina Retirement System – SCAC understands the dilemma facing the state with regards to the unfunded liability of the retirement system; however, any fundamental change to the system must not affect promises made to current employees and retirees in the existing state pension system. SCAC supports having county government be involved in the administration of any new system. If the state decides to go to a defined contribution plan, SCAC supports county governments being allowed to develop and operate their own independent defined contribution plan.

Tiny Homes – Support legislation that would standardize the treatment of tiny homes for taxation, inspection, and code enforcement.

Titling of Boats and Motors – Oppose any legislation that would title boats and motors together in a way that would negatively impact county finances.

Tort Claims Act – Although SCAC believes the current tort claims limits are appropriate, SCAC staff will monitor any amendments and ensure county interests are protected to the greatest extent possible.

Volunteer Firefighter Retirement – Support statewide incentives for volunteer firefighters, including but not limited to, retirement benefits.



SC LEGISLATIVE SESSION

Key Dates

Second Tuesday in January: Session begins

Jan.

Counties Connect: A Legislative Action Day

This conference enables all county officials to become better informed about SCAC's legislative program. On Feb. 19, Counties Connect will include a legislative briefing from SCAC staff and an opportunity to meet with Representatives and Senators at the State House. The Association will host a reception for members of the S.C. General Assembly that evening. Institute classes including the Council Chairperson's Workshop will be held the following day, Feb. 20.

Feb.

Second Thursday in May: End of session

Sine Die is the day the legislature adjourns for the year. The General Assembly almost always passes a Sine Die Resolution at some point during the year. This resolution identifies legislation that can be taken up after the sine die date. The state budget is usually included in the resolution.

May



SOUTH CAROLINA
ASSOCIATION OF COUNTIES

LEGISLATIVE ALERTS

Want to be the first to know about important legislative updates? Sign up for our SMS messaging service and receive real-time alerts straight to your phone!

TEXTS FROM SCAC

- Be proactive
- Stay informed
- Make your voice heard

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Advocate. Educate. Collaborate.

SCAC has a strong resume

As members of the SC Association of Counties, all 46 counties, elected officials and employees have access to SCAC's programs and services. Here are some of our offerings designed to build connections, share information, and help counties to better serve their citizens.

ADVOCATE for County Government

- Monitor legislation moving through the SC General Assembly
- Publish weekly updates during the session via the *Friday Report*
- Send Legislative Alerts when bills require immediate action
- Provide Legislative session wrap-ups and the annual *Acts that Affect Counties* publication
- Work through the county attorney to resolve legal issues that affect county government operations.

COLLABORATE to Assist Counties

- SC Counties Workers' Compensation and Property & Liability Trusts
- Setoff Debt Program
- Competitive purchasing discounts
- Online Career Center



SCAC works for YOU

EDUCATE and Build Knowledge

- Host conferences including:
 - Annual Conference in August
 - Fall Advocacy Meeting in October
 - Legislative Conference in December
 - Counties Connect: A Legislative Action Day in late winter
- Present the Institute of Government for County Officials – a certificate program with classes offered several times a year
- Offer the Local Government Attorneys' Institute—an annual source for CLE credits
- Provide Orientation for Newly Elected Council Members—held in even-numbered years
- Produce training for planning and zoning officials
- Conduct research and offer technical assistance
 - Property Tax Report—published annually
 - Wage and Salary Report—published every other year
 - Technical research bulletins and surveys
 - Online forum discussions for county officials
- Host our Annual Awards program showcasing counties' successes
- Communicate regularly through:
 - The monthly County COMPASS e-newsletter;
 - Our quarterly County Focus magazine;
 - Social media channels; and
 - The SC Counties events app

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