

RILEY POPE & LANEY LAW

Under the Dome Legislative Update
April 17, 2026
15 – 2026

- ***Monuments bill moves to the House***
- ***Senate Medical Affairs ups the ante***
- ***12 days remain in the session; tougher to pass bills not already on the move***

Week 14 – Monuments bill moves to House; Controversial bills advance

The Senate and House of Representatives met in regular statewide session this week, with the Senate passing S.508 expanding protections for historic monuments and the House concurring to the Senate amendments on H. 4756, which regulates bathroom use in K-12 schools and higher education institutions based on biological sex. The bill now heads to Governor McMaster, who is expected to sign H.4756 into law. Speaker of the House Murrell Smith (R, Sumter) noted that any House bills not passed by the end of next week will likely not see a path to enactment this year. Senate Majority Leader Shane Massey (R, Edgefield) also indicated the window for contested bills on the Senate calendar or controversial legislation is closing.

Senate Medical Affairs – Action on Two Controversial Bills

The Senate Medical Affairs Subcommittee on S.1095, a total abortion ban bill introduced by Senator Richard Cash (R, Anderson) received extensive testimony on Tuesday and continued on Wednesday with intense Subcommittee debate on the bill. Most thought a total abortion ban bill would not be debated this session after indications by leadership of both chambers, but some have speculated a deal was struck to bring S.1095 to the table – a claim denied by Senator Cash. If enacted as drafted, S.1095 proposes to remove existing exceptions for rape, incest, and fatal fetal anomalies and introduces fines and prison time for physicians and the provider team, creating significant legal uncertainty for OB/GYN departments and emergency care providers. One OB/GYN physician testifying noted alarming statistics regarding physician recruitment and standard-of-care protocols for complex pregnancies.

S.1095 was voted out to the full Medical Affairs Committee, which began deliberations on Thursday. Time ran out with Committee members being called to the Senate session, and S.1095 was carried over to be considered by the full Committee next Tuesday at 9:00 am before the Senate convenes for budget debate. The Medical View: OBGYNs warned that reclassifying certain miscarriage and hemorrhage meds as controlled substances could cause life-threatening delays, especially in rural areas. They also noted that restrictive laws are making it harder to recruit new doctors to SC.

DHEC Clean-Up Bill amended with Vaccine Language

On Wednesday, Senator Shane Martin (R, Spartanburg) amended the DHEC clean-up bill with vaccine "informed consent" language, as well as definitions for "vaccine" and "Gene Therapy," to the dismay of many who have been trying for two years to pass clean-up language since DHEC was split into the Department of Environmental Services and the Department of Public Health. Whether or not the amendment language is germane to the original bill is an issue carried over to the Senate floor for debate if/when the Senate considers second reading on the bill.

Next Tuesday: Senate Budget on the Floor

Senate floor debate of the FY 2026-27 state appropriations bill and 2025-26 Capital Reserve Fund will begin next Tuesday, April 21st at 12:00 noon. Key components of the Senate Finance Committee plan:

- *Income Tax Reduction: Allocates $308.7 million to reduce the individual income tax rate from 6.0% to 5.21%.*
- *Property Tax Relief: Provides $247.6 million in additional property tax relief (S. 768).*
- *Homestead Exemption: Includes a $120 million transfer from the Homestead Exemption Fund to bolster relief efforts.*
- *Teacher Salaries: Invests $78.5 million in "State Aid to Classrooms" specifically for teacher salary increases.*
- *School Choice: Allocates $23.2 million for the Education Scholarship Trust Fund.*
- *Rural Support: Provides $50 million for Rural and Charter Capital Funding to address infrastructure needs in high-poverty districts.*
- *Tuition Freezes: Millions are allocated across nearly every state institution (e.g., $7.2M for USC Columbia, $6.1M for Clemson, $1.5M for The Citadel) specifically to offset the need for tuition increases.*
- *Campus Security: A major focus on safety, including $10 million for SC State University for police department and security enhancements.*
- *Health Sciences: Significant investment in medical infrastructure, such as $15 million for a new Pharmacy Building at the USC Health Sciences Campus.*
- *Judicial Modernization: $10 million for a Case Management System Modernization and funding for new Circuit and Family Court judges.*
- *SLED & Public Safety: Includes $6.9 million for 800MHz radio expansion and $4 million for a "Logistics Security Initiative."*
- *Correctional Facilities: Focuses on staff retention with $7 million for filling vacancies and $12 million for deferred maintenance at state prisons.*
- *Capital Reserve Fund: Utilizes $387.3 million from the Capital Reserve Fund for one-time major projects.*
- *Conservation: Significant nonrecurring funds are directed toward natural resource protection and state park improvements.*

Differences between the House-Passed Budget (3/11/26) and the Senate Finance Committee Recommendations (4/8/26).

Tax Reductions and Revenue Shifts

- *The Senate version is significantly more aggressive on immediate tax relief due to updated revenue forecasts:*
- *Income Tax: The Senate explicitly funds an income tax rate reduction from 6.0% to 5.21%, costing $308.7 million in recurring funds. This is a primary driver of the Senate's spending structure.*
- *Property Tax Relief: The Senate version includes a massive $247.6 million allocation for property tax relief (S. 768) and a $120 million transfer from the Homestead Exemption Fund.*

Copyright 2026 © Riley Pope & Laney, LLC. All rights reserved.

Higher Education: The "Tuition Mitigation" Shift

- *While both versions support Higher Ed, the Senate Finance version utilizes a specific Tuition Mitigation strategy:*
- *Tuition Freezes: The Senate allocated nearly $60.7 million in recurring funds across almost every public college (e.g., $7.2M for USC, $6.1M for Clemson) specifically to keep in-state tuition flat.*
- *Capital Projects: The Senate added or increased funding for high-profile projects:*
  - *USC Columbia: $15M for a new Pharmacy Building.*
  - *Clemson: $7.5M for a NextGen Computing Complex.*
  - *S.C. State: $10M for specialized police and security enhancements.*

K-12 Education

- *The House focused heavily on the per-pupil funding formula, while the Senate added specific line-item priorities:*
- *Teacher Salaries: The Senate version allocates $78.5 million for salary increases via State Aid to Classrooms.*
- *Scholarship Program: The Senate provides $23.2 million for the Education Scholarship Trust Fund.*
- *Rural Infrastructure: The Senate includes $50 million for Rural and Charter Capital funding, a notable increase over initial House regional proposals.*

Public Safety & Criminal Justice

- *Corrections (SCDC): The Senate added $7 million for filling critical staff vacancies and $12 million for deferred maintenance to stabilize prison facilities.*
- *Law Enforcement (SLED): The Senate moved the $6.9 million 800MHz service contract from the Department of Administration directly to SLED and added $4 million for a Logistics Security Initiative.*
- *Judiciary: The Senate funded $10 million for a modern Case Management System and established a Rural County Courthouse Stabilization Fund.*

2026 Legislative Meetings and Important Dates

Scheduled Live Broadcasts link
Click this link for all notations of Live Broadcast
Archive Video
All Live Broadcasts are Archived here for later viewing

Tuesday, April 21st	
Senate convenes in Statewide Session – Budget Debate - **FY 2026-27 State Appropriations, H.5216 (Senate Finance version)** - **FY 2025-26 Capital Reserve Fund, H.5217**	12:00 noon – Live Broadcast
House convenes in Statewide Session	12:00 noon – Live Broadcast
FULL Senate Medical Affairs Committee on S.1095 - S.1095, Unborn Child Protection Act	9:00 am 105 Gressette – Live Broadcast

Copyright 2026 © Riley Pope & Laney, LLC. All rights reserved.

Wednesday, April 22nd	
Senate convenes in Statewide Session – Budget Debate - **FY 2026-27 State Appropriations, H.5216 (Senate Finance version)** - **FY 2025-26 Capital Reserve Fund, H.5217**	Time TBA – Live Broadcast
House convenes in Statewide Session	10:00 am – Live Broadcast
Thursday, April 23rd	
Senate convenes in Statewide Session – Budget Debate - **FY 2026-27 State Appropriations, H.5216 (Senate Finance version)** - **FY 2025-26 Capital Reserve Fund, H.5217**	Time TBA – Live Broadcast
House convenes in Statewide Session	10:00 am – Live Broadcast

Future Legislative Meetings

Wednesday, April 22nd	
Senate Legislative Oversight Subcommittee - South Carolina ETV and Public Radio	10:00 am 209 Gressette – Live Broadcast

Budget Schedule through Sine Die Adjournment

- Senate Floor Budget Deliberations	Week of April 21st
- *Additional floor debate if necessary*	Week of April 28th
- Budget Conference Committee	Week of May 5th
- Conference Report to the Governor	Week of May 12th
- Sine Die Adjournment of the General Assembly	Thursday, May 14th at 5:00 pm

State Agency Meetings of Interest

Copyright 2026 © Riley Pope & Laney, LLC. All rights reserved.

South Carolina Revenue and Fiscal Affairs Office **State Board of Economic Advisors** • **Tuesday, May 19th – Web Conference at 10:00 am** **Monthly General Fund Revenue Reports** ---- **Forecast Data** **Local Government Finance Reports / Legislative Fiscal Impact Statements**	9:00 am unless otherwise noted Web Conference Meeting Agenda and Materials BEA Information Page
South Carolina Department of Health and Human Services **Medical Care Advisory Committee (MCAC)** • **Tuesday, May 12th** • **Tuesday, August 11th** • **Tuesday, November 10th**	10:00 am unless otherwise noted DHHS – 1801 Main Street Columbia, SC 29201 - Link for Meeting Materials

South Carolina General Assembly

Session Dates: Tuesday, January 13, 2026 – Thursday, May 14, 2026

The annual session of the South Carolina General Assembly begins on the second Tuesday in January and runs through the second Thursday in May. The Senate and House of Representatives meet in statewide session on Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday each week unless otherwise decided by the Senate President and Speaker of the House. The 2026 session is the second year of the 126th biennial session. Any legislation not achieving passage by 5:00 pm on Thursday, May 14th is null and void unless specifically included in the Sine Die Resolution. **2026 is an election year for the Governor, constitutional officers and the House of Representatives.

Governor: Henry McMaster (R)
Lieutenant Governor: Pamela Evette (R)

House/Senate Party Breakdown:
House: 88 Republicans / 36 Democrats / 0 Independents
Senate: 34 Republicans / 12 Democrats / 0 Independents

Leadership of the General Assembly:
President of the Senate: Thomas Alexander (R)
Speaker of the House: Murrell Smith (R)

Copyright 2026 © Riley Pope & Laney, LLC. All rights reserved.

RILEY POPE & LANEY, LLC
2838 Devine Street
Post Office Box 11412 (29211)
Columbia, South Carolina 29205
Telephone 803-799-9993 Facsimile 803-239-1414
www.rplfirm.com

Theodore D. "Ted" Riley – triley@rplfirm.com (803) 622-7261 M
Hobart O. Trotter, Jr. – htrotter@rplfirm.com (803) 622-7263 M
Tara P. Boone – tboone@rplfirm.com (803) 422-4399 M

Copyright 2026 © Riley Pope & Laney, LLC. All rights reserved.