

The State Capitol Report

By Rep. Anne Parks
SC House District #12

February 15 - 17, 2022

The House of Representatives amended, approved, and sent the Senate H. 4408, a joint resolution authorizing expenditure of American Rescue Plan Act funds. The legislation provides for the initial allocation of federal funds available to South Carolina under the "American Rescue Plan Act of 2021."

Approximately \$453.5 million is allocated to the South Carolina Department of Transportation to be placed in a separate Transportation Infrastructure Acceleration Account and used to accelerate completion of projects included in the Statewide Transportation Improvement Program. The total allocated to SCDOT represents reimbursement for general fund and Education Improvement Act revenue not collected and motor fuel user fee revenue not collected due to the COVID-19 pandemic as calculated by the Executive Budget Office.

The Rural Infrastructure Authority is allocated \$800 million to be placed in a separate ARPA Water and Sewer Infrastructure Account which must be used to administer and operate three grant programs designed to provide for improvements in water, wastewater, and stormwater infrastructure throughout the state. In each of the three grant programs, units of local government, special purpose districts, commissions of public works, and joint municipal organizations may apply for grants. A unit of local government may apply for a grant on behalf of nonprofit water and sewer systems. The amounts of required local matching funds are based upon the size of the population served by the system.

The Office of Regulatory Staff is allocated \$400 million to be placed in a separate ARPA Broadband Account which must be used to expand broadband infrastructure to households, businesses, and communities in the state that are unserved or underserved by the broadband services which allow for high-speed Internet connections.

The Office of Resilience is allocated \$100 million to be placed in a separate account that must be used to complete stormwater infrastructure projects and acquisitions of property in the floodplain throughout the state to lessen the impacts of future flood events.

The Department of Administration is allocated \$8 million for contracting for professional grant management services of ARPA funds and other federal COVID-19 relief funds.

The House approved and sent the Senate H. 3346, a bill increasing state financial reserve funds. The legislation provides for the state's General Reserve Fund, currently set at five percent of General Fund revenue of the latest completed fiscal year, to be increased each year by one half of one percent until it equals seven percent of General Fund revenue of the latest completed fiscal year. The legislation increases the state's Capital Reserve Fund from two percent of General Fund revenue of the latest completed fiscal year to three percent of such revenues. These statutory provisions are to take effect upon ratification of pertinent amendments to the South Carolina Constitution.

The House amended, approved, and sent the Senate H. 3247, the "Workforce Enhancement and Military Recognition Act". The bill eliminates current limits to allow all military retirement income to be deducted from an individual's South Carolina income taxes.

The House amended, approved, and sent the Senate H. 3348, a bill establishing tax incentives for apprenticeship programs employing veterans and individuals who have been incarcerated for nonviolent offenses. The legislation makes provisions for a tax credit for any taxpayer who employs in an apprenticeship program a newly hired veteran of the U.S. Armed Forces who was honorably discharged or released from such service due to a service-connected disability. The legislation makes provisions for a tax credit for any taxpayer who employs in an apprenticeship program a newly hired individual who was formerly incarcerated for nonviolent offenses. These apprenticeship tax credits may be claimed for no more than three years. The amount of the credit is set at three thousand dollars for each eligible employee for the first year it is earned and is reduced to two thousand five hundred dollars for the second year, and one thousand dollars for a third year.

The House appointed members to a conference committee to address its differences with the Senate on H. 3255, a bill revising qualifications and other provisions governing the licensure and regulation of real estate appraisers to bring these state provisions into alignment with federal standards.

The House amended and returned S. 16 to the Senate. The amendment strikes the bill in its entirety and inserts a new graduation requirement for both traditional and charter school students. Beginning with students entering ninth grade in the 2026-27 school year, a one-half credit course in basic personal finance must be completed to earn a diploma. This does not replace the economics course requirement as required in the original bill. Instead, students will take 6.5 units of elective credit instead of the seven now required. The standards must include the following: basic principles of personal finance; internet safety; use and responsibilities of loans and credit products; health, life, automobile, and other insurance products.

The State Department of Education is directed to collaborate with the Commission on Higher Education, the Council for Economics, and the Financial Literacy Board to develop academic standards for the course. The State Department of Education must monitor and report on the implementation of the course and offer recommendations for improvements. The State Board is required to promulgate regulations to update the state's graduation requirements.

The 2026-27 start date recognizes that students currently enrolled in high school have already created individual graduation plans, so the bill, if amended, will not require them to fit a new course into their schedule. The starting date gives the State Department time to develop curricula, identify instructional materials, and train additional teachers. It also provides the State Board time to promulgate changes to its graduation regulations.

H. 4944 regarding Coastal Carolina University's board of trustee's meetings was taken up, read the third time, and ordered sent to the Senate. This bill relates to meetings of the Coastal Carolina University board of trustees. The bill provides that mandatory notice of board meetings must be sent either electronically or through the United States mail to each trustee not less than five days before each meeting.

The Senate informed the House that it non-concurred in the amendments proposed by the House to S. 203 on the subject of the removal of school district trustees and filling of vacancies. The House insisted on its amendments. The Chair appointed Reps. Felder, Brittain, and Alexander to the committee of conference on the part of the House.

The House considered Senate amendments to H. 3211, legislation to extend the authority of the Joint Citizens and Legislative Committee on Children through December 31, 2030. Ex officio members will now include the directors of the departments of Alcohol and Other Drug Abuse Services, Health and Environmental Control, Health and Human Services, as well as the director of the Office of South Carolina First Steps to School Readiness. After the House adopted the Senate amendments, this bill was enrolled for ratification.

Ella Arnold makes her ceramics in Lincoln Co, sells in McCormick



Ella Arnold fell in love with ceramic arts decades ago and now creates all kinds and colors of ceramic creations on display and sale at the MACK Artisans Guild & Gift Shop at 218 S. Main St. Arnold lives in Lincoln Co., but has been one of the leading artisans at the MACK Guild and Gift Shop since 2006. -StocktonPhoto

By Bob Stockton

Ella Arnold is a very successful ceramics artist with a large case of her wares on display at the McCormick Artist Council at the Keturah Guild & Gift Shop on Main Street. Ceramics, however, was not her first pursuit.

"I'm from North Carolina and majored in art at the University of South Carolina," said Arnold, who now lives in the Soap Creek area of Lincoln County.

"There was no ceramics department at USC at the time, so it was many years later that I took a continuing education class at Augusta College, and the minute my hands hit the clay, I knew it was my medium," Arnold said.

Subsequently, she has studied under well-known ceramists and at Arrowmont. When Bob Timberlake was actively marketing, her works were featured in his catalogue and store. She now does a lot of sales through the internet site, Etsy.

She's been involved with the MACK Artisans Guild since 2006 when she visited the Artisans Shop @ the Keturah (it has now relocated to 218 S. Main St.)

"Prior to coming to Lincolnton, I lived in Augusta," Arnold said. "When I visited the MACK, the artists encouraged me to join. When I came up to the Soap Creek area, it was country life on the lake, very outdoorsy, but it's a bit more civilized now."

She has a studio at home where she works by herself, but loves working with the other artisans at the shop, meeting people and selling at the shop.

Arnold prides herself not only on the beauty of her pieces, but most are functional. While a client can buy a piece off her shelf in the shop, she can make custom pieces with glaze to order. She makes custom dinnerware, serving pieces and garden pieces.

The process is not quick and easy. She prepares the clay, "throws" the piece, lets it dry, trims it, then lets it dry again, fires it in a kiln, then lets it cool, waxes the bottom, glazes it, then gives it a final firing.

"I make my own glazes," she said. "They are lead-free, and the pieces can be used in an oven, microwave and dishwasher. I do everything possible to meet customer needs, and their happiness is very important to me."

If a customer cannot find something they like in the Artisans Shop, Arnold's made-to-order pieces usually take two- to four-weeks to complete.

"I hope everyone loves using them as much as I enjoy making them," she said.

The MACK Artisans Guild & Gift Shop features quality handcrafted items including jewelry, cards, pottery, fine art and more. Last year, to support the MACK's rehabilitation efforts at the Keturah, the shop moved to its new quarters on S. Main.

The shop is operated entirely by local artists and volunteers, and they welcome new members. The MACK continues to expand opportunities to regional artists and provides access to high quality artisans goods.

The gift shop is open Monday through Saturday from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. For more information, call 864-852-3217 or e-mail mccormickarts@gmail.com



Black History made in McCormick County

On Feb. 2, 1987, Mr. George Reid made history as the first Black sheriff in McCormick County and served many years after that. Reid was 33 when he no longer had to daydream about polishing a sheriff badge and began to wear one – and he wore it proudly. Reid, a process server in the sheriff's department, polled 1,228 votes, or 52 percent, against 1,120 votes, or 48 percent, for coroner Jack Keown in the Democratic primary election. Reid was unopposed in the Feb. 17 general election and he replaced Jimmy Gable. Reid began as head of the sheriff department with a staff that consisted of 12 people. -Submitted by Kittye Craig - Jackson

Messenger Mail

Response to David Flom's article

David Flom's article, "And throw away the key," in last week's issue of the *Messenger* is certainly consistent with the narrative of the progressive media that has – for the most part – unjustifiably attacked Donald Trump from the day he was elected President in 2016.

We need not go into a general debate over this narrative regarding the former president – enough has been said over the past five years by me and others on this – but, I would like to address the points Mr. Flom raises in his most recent letter.

First, the truth of the allegations that Trump destroyed or mishandled official documents is a matter that is yet to be decided. Nevertheless, the analogy with Hillary Clinton's behavior is, of course, both ludicrous and instructive. Clinton's transgressions were electronic and documents were clearly transmitted to unauthorized persons, while there is no such evidence, to my knowledge, that any of the Trump documents were so disclosed. Further, the decision not to prosecute Clinton for far more serious infractions than Trump's – even if proved – is a good precedent showing just how insignificant the matters are in question.

Second, there is no credible evidence that Trump asked any state officials to change vote totals without a legitimate rationale for doing so. Trump's pleas merely asked that state election officials follow their own laws, rules and regulations in determining voter eligibility, and to declare invalid those votes that he and his legal staff believed were cast or counted improperly. A full accounting of Trump's statements and allegations are provided in Molly Hemingway's 2021 book *Rigged – How the Media, Big Tech and the Democrats Seized Our Elections*.

Third, prominent legal scholars have essentially ridiculed allegations that Trump overstepped his first amendment rights or committed sedition in his Jan. 6 speech at the White House. Alan Dershowitz, for example – the eminent legal scholar on First Amendment rights under the constitution (and definitely no supporter of Trump) – assesses these allegations in his 2021 book, *The Case Against The New Censorship – Protecting Free Speech from Big Tech, Progressives, and Universities*. His findings are that Trump's speech – was fully within his First Amendment rights, did not constitute sedition, and clearly encouraged any protest to be carried out "peacefully and patriotically." He also subsequently directed that "there be an orderly transition [of administrations] on Jan. 20."

I would suggest that Mr. Flom explore more scholarly and less partisan treatises on these issues than those available from the mainstream media, which still largely refuses to acknowledge that the Clintons and the Democratic Party initiated and funded the fake Steele dossier.

-Chuck Cook

Birthdays/Wedding Anniversaries

February 25 - Kathryn G. Edmonds, Alfonzo Hardy, Retanya Bland, Angie White, Rus Quattlebaum, Allison McMillan, Melissa Cochrane, Savannah Durham, Scottie Morgan, Jane Rhoads, Sara Lagree, Josh Walker.

February 26 - Rockia C. Bell, Kendall Leverette, Mary Beckwith, Willie Joe Bottoms, Pamela B. Collins, Nicholas Bergadon, Jacob Slay.

February 27 - Don Parnell, Roy Smith Jr., Brad Davis, Caroline Callan, Chris Gable, Devin Terrell Chiles, Ciara Smith.

February 28 - Joe Collier, Earl Jones, Mark McKinney, Mr. and Mrs. Darrell Newby, Kasey Morgan, Kenneth Young, Tel Bell, Bo Young, Jean Adams, Bob and Judy Bowman, Jack Hastings, Temeulla Walker.

March 1 - Joey Dorn, Kristy Wates, James Johnson Jr., Jean Thompson, Ricky and Gwen Chiles, Leroy and Michelle Kelly, Sandy Brown, Janisha Key, Dick Balogh, Sydney Thornton.

March 2 - Jackie P. Brown, William H. Wideman, Benny Garrett, Samantha J. Walker, June Winger, Tommy and Cathy Bertzfield, Chris and Melissa Gable, Jack and Madeleine Toland.

March 3 - Susan B. McKinney, Judell Jennings, Selena Jordan, Jack and June Haffeman, Kingman Miller.



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