



2010 Engineers' Legislative Issues

The engineering community is interested in numerous issues relating to business as well as the health, safety and welfare of our citizens. The following bills and issues are important.

The state of economy has much to do with what we may expect from our Legislature. Those bills which add or transfer funds are likely not going to pass in a year when the State is facing continued drops in revenue. Nevertheless, those bills that do not deal with funds should be emphasized.

Positive Legislation Engineers are For

Tort Reform – S.350/H.3489. Establishes reasonable limits on non-economic and punitive damages, strengthens the 8-year statute of repose. Other additional important business issues are included. Currently in House and Senate Judiciary Committees. Engineers support these bills. These bills do not require additional state funds. (See the SC Civil Justice Coalition Brochure.)

Disaster Assistance Trust Fund – H. 3501. Among other issues, this bill is the vehicle to address professional liability and workers' compensation coverage for volunteers. Currently in the House Ways and Means Committee. Amendments must be made to reach the volunteer engineers' goals. Engineers support this legislation. This legislation has additional cost to the state; consequently, it may remain in committee this session.

Vehicle Sales Taxes to be Directed to SC Highway Fund and SC Transportation Infrastructure Bank – S.101/H.3414. This legislation if passed moves revenue collected by vehicle sales taxes from the State's General Fund to the SC Highway Fund and the SC Transportation Infrastructure Bank and would provide additional funding for roads and bridges. These bills are currently in the Senate Finance Committee and House Ways and Means Committee. Engineers support this legislation. The State's General Fund is severely lacking, legislators are not going to consider reallocating existing funds to the SC Highway Fund, but highway funding is still important to engineers.

Qualification Based Selection – ACEC-SC and SCSPE are working on having bills introduced to strengthen qualification based selection in South Carolina at all political subdivision levels. Currently, the State Procurement Code established QBS for state agencies and school districts and local governments of a certain size. This legislation, if passed should help curb bidding from local governments.

Workers' Compensation Reform – Currently there is no pending legislation on workers' compensation reform; nevertheless, engineers want to see reasonable

guidelines placed on workers' compensation claims that are fair to both employee and employer.

Negative Legislation Engineers are Against

Standard Public School Plans – H.3462. This bill, if passed, requires three standard architectural plans for elementary, middle and high schools to which all construction must comply. These standard plans would be the property of the State Department of Education. Currently in the House Education and Public Works Committee. Engineers do not support this legislation.

False Claims Act – S.320. This bill, if passed, is potentially harmful to businesses; it creates an incentive for lawsuits to target companies that do business with the government. Currently in the Senate Judiciary Committee. Engineers do not support this legislation.

Engineering Contacts

The American Council of Engineering Companies of South Carolina (ACEC-SC) is composed of 80 engineering firms employing more than 3,000 engineers, surveyors, architects and support staff. These firms are located throughout the state and range in size from one person shops to multinational ones.

The South Carolina Society of Professional Engineers is composed of about 500 individual engineers who work in industry, construction, private practice, government and education. They are employed throughout the state. There are seven local chapters, covering the state that meeting frequently.

The American Society of Civil Engineers – South Carolina is an organization of more than 1,500 members. The organization also has local chapters and hold meetings.

Joe S. Jones is the registered lobbyist for the American Council of Engineering Companies of South Carolina, the South Carolina Society of Professional Engineers and the South Carolina Society of Professional Land Surveyors.

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