



2011 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 the 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 revenue reductions. Nevertheless, those bills that do not deal with funds should be emphasized.

Legislation Engineers Favor

Tort Reform – Legislation will be introduced early in the session to establish reasonable limits on punitive damages, strengthen the 8-year statute of repose. Other additional important business issues are included. The House Republican Caucus has this issue as a top priority and 18 senators have signed on to co-author two tort reform bills in the Senate. These bills do not require additional state funds.

Qualification Based Selection – The engineering organizations 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, some school districts and local governments of a certain size. This legislation, if passed should help curb bidding from local governments.

Remove the SC State Board of Registration for Professional Engineers and Surveyors from SC Department of Labor Licensing and Regulation - In 2010 legislation was introduced to remove the engineers and surveyors licensing boards from LLR, along with other professions including certified public accountants, Realtors and pharmacists. Engineers are looking for legislators to reintroduce this legislation. Changes in LLR's operations and structure have hurt the ability of the registration board to function well.

Changes to the State Procurement Code – Registered engineers, architects and contractors worked with the State Engineer's Office and state agencies to suggest modifications to the State Procurement Code. Engineers support the legislation proposed by the State Budget and Control Board and the State Engineer.

Waiving Professional Development Hours for military on overseas duty or combat zone duty – Engineers are seeking legislative sponsors to introduce legislation for registered engineers and surveyors and other registered professionals to relieve those on military duty of acquiring professional development hours while overseas or in a combat zone.

Disaster Assistance Trust Fund – A bill to address professional liability and workers' compensation coverage for volunteers along with other disaster assistance issues was introduced in 2009. Engineers are looking for legislators to re-introduce this legislation, and they support this legislation because it is the vehicle that would allow the SCSPE Volunteer Engineers Corps to operate statewide and its members be covered for professional liability and workers' compensation. This legislation has additional cost to the state; consequently, it may be difficult to find sponsors and pass this session.

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. Furthermore, appointees to the Workers Compensation Commission should be familiar with business issues and the Senate should give qualified candidates fair and reasonable approval hearings.

Legislation Engineers Oppose

Standard Public School Plans – The engineering community joins its architectural brethren opposing any requirements for standard architectural plans for public schools to which all construction must comply. These standard plans would be the property of the State Department of Education. Legislation calling for these standard school plans was introduced in 2010 but did not advance.

False Claims Act – Practically every year false claims act legislation is introduced. A false claims law is potentially harmful to businesses; it creates an incentive for lawsuits to target companies that do business with the government. Engineers do not support this legislation.

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