



## 2008 Legislative Update

# Rep. Laurie Funderburk

**SC House District 52**  
**KERSHAW COUNTY**

**EDUCATION:** The General Assembly passed legislation eliminating the Palmetto Achievement Challenge Test (PACT) and replacing it beginning in 2009 with new end-of-year accountability tests that feature quicker results with useful diagnostic information to help teachers meet the instructional needs of students. Subjects tested for accountability are unchanged and are English/language arts, mathematics, science, and social studies. In addition, the new law revises the content of annual school report cards to make them more useful for parents and the communities tracking schools' performance. By moving to a better system of accountability, South Carolina will improve the quality of instruction and learning in our schools.

**IMMIGRATION:** In response to growing concerns over illegal immigration and in the absence of action on the federal level, the General Assembly passed a law that, among other things, requires every employer to participate in the federal e-verify program or verify a worker's legal status by using a S.C. driver's license; requires any company receiving a public contract to employ legal workers; and requires the validation of citizenship in order for an individual to be eligible to receive public benefits. Even with the passage of this law that primarily imposes additional regulations for business hiring in our state, immigration remains in the jurisdiction of the federal government, which is the only entity that can enforce immigration laws.

**PAYDAY LENDING:** Despite the efforts of many Members of the General Assembly to regulate further the payday lending industry or to ban it altogether, a bill that passed the Senate addressing the issue stalled in a House subcommittee. According to the S.C. Applesseed Legal Justice Center, payday lenders made more than 4.3 million loans in our state in 2006 alone. While these loans, secured by a future paycheck, are limited to \$300 each, the borrower pays a charge of \$15 per \$100 borrowed. This charge translates into interest rates of about 391% APR. These loans prey mostly on low-income and fixed-income people and the elderly. Both Georgia and North Carolina banned the practice outright several years ago.

## BUDGET HIGHLIGHTS:

Full funding of the Education Finance Act with \$94.5 million, for a base student cost of \$2,578.

\$20.8 million is included for school bus operations.

\$3.3 million is included for textbooks.

The Public School Child Development Education Pilot Program is funded with \$15.7 million.

\$12 million is included for summer schools.

Full funding of the LIFE, HOPE, and Palmetto Fellows Scholarship programs.

\$3 million is appropriated to the Center for Accelerated Technology, which works with businesses locating in South Carolina and technical colleges in order to provide training for workers.

\$2.5 million is provided for the Hydrogen Grants program at the South Carolina Research Authority.

\$4.5 million for the Light Rail broadband, high-speed optical research network at the state's research universities.

1% State employee pay increase is provided with \$19.9 million. State Health Insurance Plan increases are funded so as to provide for no premium increases or reductions in benefits.

\$2.9 million is appropriated for the Home and Community Based Services Programs for senior citizens such as Meals on Wheels.

\$2.4 million is provided for the purchase of vaccines for under-insured children.

\$2 million is appropriated to the Department of Health and Environmental Control for the Best Chance Network early detection breast and cervical cancer screenings.

\$1 million is included for the Critical Needs Nursing Initiative.



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**CIGARETTE TAX:** Members of the General Assembly joined in a bipartisan effort to pass a cigarette tax plan that would have increased the availability of healthcare to uninsured South Carolinians. The House and Senate approved, but the Governor vetoed H. 3567, a bill that would have raised the tax on a pack of cigarettes from 7 cents to 57 cents. The 7-cent cigarette tax in South Carolina is the lowest in the nation and has remained unchanged since 1977. The national average cigarette tax is \$1.13 per pack. The legislation provided for one-half of the revenue to be used for premium assistance for employees of small businesses and the other half for a Medicaid match to insure low-income families and uninsured children. In addition, \$5 million was provided for smoking cessation programs and \$1 million to market South Carolina-grown products. Estimates suggest as many as 200,000 South Carolinians who cannot afford health insurance would have been covered under this plan. Efforts to address this critical issue will likely resurface next legislative session.

**DUI REFORM:** The General Assembly approved legislation that enhances the penalties for driving under the influence. H. 3496 provides a new, graduated system of penalties for DUI convictions and removes many technical requirements of the law that make enforcement confusing and difficult. The revised legislation also requires suspension of the driver's license of a convicted individual for the period of imprisonment plus three years when great bodily injury occurs and five years when a death occurs. The Governor signed the bill into law on April 15, 2008.



### **PROTECTING OUR VALUES AND TRADITIONS**

***A life-long resident of Kershaw County, Laurie understands our values and traditions and has a proven record of protecting them. As a member of the House Agriculture, Natural Resources and Environmental Affairs Committee, Laurie works to protect and preserve our natural resources for generations of South Carolinians to come. In addition, Laurie serves as Secretary of the recently formed SC General Assembly Sportsmen's Caucus that advocates for the protection of our hunting, angling, and outdoor recreation heritage in the Palmetto State. Laurie is a strong supporter of education, our public schools, and policies that promote a healthy South Carolina.***

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***THANK YOU for the privilege & opportunity to serve as Your Representative in the SC General Assembly.***