



From the Dome to Your Home

Legislative Report

2024 session of the 125th General Assembly



Municipal Association
of South Carolina

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The second year of the 2023 – 2024 regular session of the 125th General Assembly was gavelled to a close May 9, 2024. However, legislators returned to Columbia twice in June under the sine die resolution to elect a justice to the SC Supreme Court, vote on conference committee reports and adopt the state budget.

The state budget

House and Senate members returned to Columbia in June to adopt the \$42.2 billion budget conference report.

Included in the final budget are the following items relevant to cities and towns:

- \$13.8 million added to the Local Government Fund base amount. The legislature fully funded the LGF at 5% for FY 2024-2025 in accordance with Act 84, which passed in 2019;
- \$200 million in onetime nonrecurring funds to county transportation committees, also known as CTCs, for secondary and low-volume primary roads;
- \$750,000 for post-traumatic stress disorder treatment services for first responders;
- \$107 million to cover the state's share of a projected 11.8% increase in premiums for the State Health Plan (see proviso 108.6 below);
- \$3 million in recurring dollars to fund the Volunteer Strategic Assistance and Fire Equipment program, or V-SAFE program;
- \$12 million to the Rural County Stabilization Fund;
- \$1.1 million for tourism promotions;
- \$10 million for destination-specific grants;
- \$30 million to the SC Office of Resilience for disaster relief;
- \$1 million in nonrecurring funds to supplement the state's 10 councils of governments;
- \$3.8 million in recurring dollars for the Firefighter Cancer Fund;
- \$18 million to the SC Conservation Bank for Grant Funding;
- \$1 million in one-time dollars for the Serve and Connect law enforcement community connection program;
- \$100 million for the Bridge Acceleration fund;
- \$100 million for the Bridge Modernization fund;
- \$2 million for SC Parks, Recreation and Tourism for tourism development;
- \$1 million with the SC Department of Transportation for a statewide road litter program;
- \$11.4 million for the Water Quality Revolving Loan Fund match through the SC Rural Infrastructure Authority;
- \$16 million in funds for the Rural Infrastructure Fund;
- \$15 million in one-time dollars for the Statewide Water and Sewer Fund;
- \$2.54 million towards the Alternative Transportation Program through the SC Department of Mental Health;
- \$1 million to the SC Department of Administration for first responders' 800MHz communication modernization; and
- \$11.5 million to the SC Election Commission for election operations.

Provisos of Interest

Health Insurance Premium Increase: 108.6.

Of the funds authorized for the State Health Plan pursuant to Section 1-11-710(A)(2) of the 1976 Code, an employer premium increase of 11.8% and a subscriber premium increase of zero percent will result for the standard State Health Plan for Plan Year 2025. Notwithstanding the foregoing, pursuant to Section 1-11-710(A)(3), the SC Public Employee Benefit Authority may adjust the plan, benefits, or contributions of the State Health Plan during Plan Year 2025 to ensure the fiscal stability of the plan.

Return to Work: 108.16.

A. For compensation earnings during the current fiscal year, the earnings limitation does not apply if a member of the Police Officer Retirement System has not been engaged to perform services for a participating employer in the system or any other system provided in Title 9 for compensation in any capacity, whether as an employee, independent contractor, leased employee, joint employee or other classification of worker for a period of at least 12 consecutive months subsequent to retirement. The exemption provided under this provision does not apply unless the member first certifies to the system that he satisfies the requirements for the exemption. If members inaccurately certify that they satisfy the requirements for the exemption provided in this provision, they are responsible for reimbursing the system for any benefits wrongly paid them.

B. For compensation earnings during the current fiscal year, the earnings limitation does not apply if a member of the South Carolina Retirement System has not been engaged to perform services for a participating employer in the system or any other system provided in Title 9 for compensation in any capacity, whether as an employee, independent contractor, leased employee, joint employee or other classification of worker for a period of at least 12 consecutive months subsequent to retirement. The exemption provided under this provision does not apply unless the member first certifies to the system that he satisfies the requirements for the exemption. If members inaccurately certify that they satisfy the requirements for the exemption provided in this provision, they are responsible for reimbursing the system for any benefits wrongly paid to them.

Credit Unions: 117.185.

For Fiscal Year 2024-25, a federal or state credit union that is headquartered in the state may act as a qualified public depository for deposits held by a municipality if the population of the municipality is less than 5,000, the municipality is not part of a federally recognized metropolitan statistical area, is located at least 10 miles from a bank or credit union branch, and occupies and supports a full-service branching facility in the defined area. The credit union must comply with all other provisions of SC Code Section 6-5-15, and its deposits must be insured by the National Credit Union Share Insurance Fund.

Stay in the loop with the Association

The Municipal Association of SC has several ways for local elected officials to stay in the loop with action in the General Assembly.

- Read general background information on legislative topics in the monthly *Uptown* publication and get more detailed information in the *City Connect* blog.
- The Association's legislative tracking system allows for detailed searching of specific bills and daily legislative activity. *From the Dome to Your Home* is emailed out every Friday during the legislative session to recap the week's legislative action with details on bills and action needed from local elected officials.
- Every week during the legislative session, the *City Quick Connect* podcast brings listeners the prior week's legislative action coupled with interviews and discussions with the legislative team.
- Follow the Association and the Association's legislative team on X for real-time notification of legislative happenings and Association news and resources.

Local hate crimes ordinances

15 cities and towns have passed local ordinances with enhanced penalties for hate crimes. For more information on local hate crimes ordinances, visit www.masc.sc (keyword: hate crimes).

Bills passed by the General Assembly in 2024

From extending the SC Abandoned Buildings Revitalization Act tax credit to benefits for firefighters, the General Assembly passed several bills that directly affect cities and towns and the different ways local leaders govern and make decisions. The Municipal Association tracked more than 400 bills during the 2023-2024 session. For a complete list of passed bills impacting cities and towns, visit www.masc.sc (keyword: legislative tracking). Several of the passed bills from the 2024 session are highlighted here.

South Carolina Constitutional Carry/Second Amendment Preservation Act of 2024 | H3594 (R121, A111)

H3594 allows anyone age 18 or over to carry a handgun without a concealed weapons permit or training. The bill also prohibits people who have been convicted of a crime that is punishable with a maximum imprisonment of over a year to possess a firearm.

Definition of video service | H3782 (R105, A104)

H3782 amends the definition of video service in relation to franchise authority to include direct to satellite and streaming services. The bill was amended to clarify that streaming services and other services delivered over the internet are not subject to franchise fees.

Telecommunicator CPR | H4867 (R224, A179)

H4867 requires all 911 telecommunicators that provide dispatch for medical emergencies be trained in telecommunicator cardiopulmonary resuscitation. The bill also requires continuing education to be completed annually and covers government entities under the SC Tort Claims Act.

Non-resident firefighters | S728 (R189, A163)

S728 changes the definition of firefighter in the Firefighter Cancer Health Care Benefit Plan to include non-residents of South Carolina who work in the state as eligible for benefits under the plan. The bill includes employees at SC State Fire and was amended to begin in July 2021.

Abandoned Buildings Revitalization Act extension | S1021 (R197, A169)

S1021 extends the SC Abandoned Buildings Revitalization Act to 2035 and increases the amount of the maximum earned tax credit to \$700,000. This bill was also amended to include an income tax credit for shortline railroad reconstruction or replacement expenditures.

Recovery Housing | S445 (R183, A160)

S445 requires the SC Department of Alcohol and Other Drug Abuse Services to approve a credentialing entity to develop and administer a voluntary certification program for recovery housing operating within local governments. The certification requirements must be based upon nationally recognized standards and requires DAODAS to publish a registry of all certified recovery houses on its website, and update it every 60 days.

Bills in Conference Committee

The adjournment, or sine die, resolution allows bills that are in conference committee to continue to be debated after the adjournment date. At the end of the regular session on May 9, the Municipal Association was tracking two bills – S1017, the property tax exemption bill, and S577, a bill that included military TIF language, that were assigned a conference committee.

A conference committee was assigned and scheduled for S1017. The meeting was canceled, however, and the committee members could not come to an agreement between the House and Senate versions of the bill. Because no action was taken, the bill is dead for this year and must be reintroduced in a new legislative session.

A conference committee was assigned for S577, a bill that was amended to include the military tax increment financing language. The conferees did not meet in a formal meeting, but agreed to a conference report that excluded language from H4552, the military TIF bill. The conference report for S577 was adopted without the military TIF language. Because that portion was removed, a military TIF bill will have to be reintroduced in a new legislative session.



Legislative Session by the Numbers

4,300+

Subscribers
to the weekly
legislative
report

From the Dome to Your Home

10,600+

listens to
City Quick Connect
podcast tracks

11,400+

Twitter
impressions from
the **Advocacy**
team

414

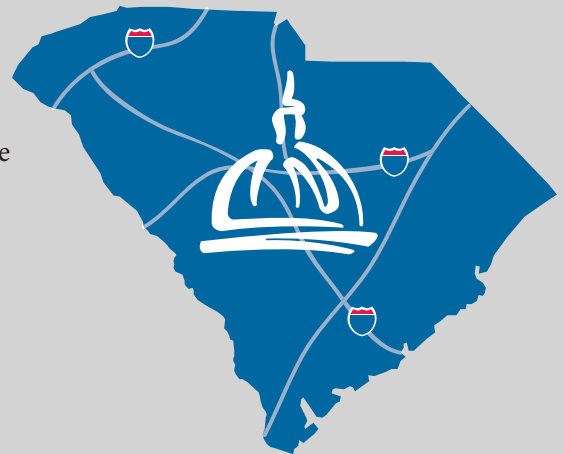
Tracked bills impacting **SC cities
and towns**

Advocacy Initiative Building Day

Join Municipal Association of SC staff for a day of advocacy discussion and agenda building on Wednesday, September 25, in Columbia. Choose from the morning or afternoon session, with lunch included for both, to share ideas about legislation and priorities for cities and towns in the 2025 – 2026 legislative session. There is no cost to attend. Registration and details about the day will be emailed after the Annual Meeting.

Save the Date

September 25, 2024
Cooperative Conference Center
Columbia, SC





Federal Advocacy

The Municipal Association of SC hosted its fourth trip to Washington, D.C., in June 2024. These trips serve as an opportunity for the Association to continually nurture positive relationships with South Carolina's two senators and nine representatives, along with members of their staff.

The trip began with the Association's annual dinner with legislative directors, senior advisors and deputy chiefs of staff of SC's nine congressional offices. These dinners have proven valuable as the staff members in attendance serve as an immediate point of contact for Association when questions arise concerning federal legislation.

While typical Washington visits include meetings with members of South Carolina's congressional delegation, Association staff and board members devoted this trip to meeting with federal agencies, including the U.S. Department of Energy and the U.S. Department of Infrastructure, that currently have federal funding available to cities and towns through the Bipartisan Infrastructure Plan and the Inflation Reduction Act. The team also met with the White House Office of Intergovernmental Affairs to explore how best to engage directly with the White House administration regarding local government decisions.

Municipal Association Legislative Staff

Casey Fields

Manager for Municipal Advocacy
803.933.1256 (cfields@masc.sc)

Todd Glover

Executive Director
803.354.4788 (tglover@masc.sc)

Mary Catherine Lawton

Research and Legislative Analyst
803.933.1244 (mlawton@masc.sc)

Joannie Nickel

Legislative and Public Policy Advocate
803.354.4794 (jnickel@masc.sc)

Erica Wright

Legislative and Public Policy Advocate
803.354.4793 (ewright@masc.sc)