



Dear Member,

The 126<sup>th</sup> Session of the South Carolina General Assembly kicked off on Tuesday, January 14, at the State House in Columbia

Republicans hold a significant majority in each chamber heading into the first year of a two-year legislative session. With a split of 88 Republicans to 35 Democrats in the House and 34 Republicans to 12 Democrats in the Senate.

Returning as House Speaker is Representative Murrell Smith (R-Sumter) while senators welcome back Senator Thomas Alexander (R-Oconee) as Senate President. The 126th Session also includes one of the largest classes of freshman senators in decades. The Senate also has significantly less women, with only two female senators (Tameika Isaac Devine, D-Richland, and Margie Bright Matthews, D-Colleton).

As the session started, The SCEA's dedicated team was front and center to make sure our members were represented at the State House. Rest assured, Mary Rita Watson, Caleb Mickler, Capitol Consultants, along with The SCEA President Sherry East and Executive Director Tom Hudson will be there to advocate on your behalf to strengthen and protect our public schools.

While we have a dedicated team, they cannot do it alone. Now more than ever we need you to reach out to your elected official and share your personal stories. [Please take a moment to look up your Senator and House Representative](#) and introduce yourself.

You can [use this link provided on best practices on how to communicate with your elected officials](#).



*The SCEA Government Affairs Team: MaryRita Watson (Membership Specialist and Lobbyist) and Caleb Mickler (Public Affairs Specialist) in front of our State House off Gervais Street Columbia, SC.*



## Senate Summary

The South Carolina State Senate formally introduced the latest voucher initiative, the “K-12 Education Lottery Scholarship,” which aims to bypass September’s State Supreme Court ruling and utilize the SC Education Lottery to provide public funds for private schools. This is a critical time to engage with your legislators.

### **S.62: Education Scholarship Trust Fund (ESTF)**

[S.62](#), which would allow parents or legal guardians who make approximately \$187,00 or less to use public-dollars to send their child to private or religious schools, was discussed during the first official week of legislative session. It is being fast-tracked for passage by the Senate. If passed it would be funded by proceeds from the state’s Education Lottery. The South Carolina Senate is to reconvene on January 28<sup>th</sup>.

For further details, view any of the clips below.

South Carolina Public Radio: [The State House Gavel: SC Senate starts private school voucher debate](#) by [Maayan Schechter](#), Gavin Jackson, Russ McKinney

South Carolina Daily Gazette: [Voters who approved SC’s lottery never intended it to fund K-12 vouchers, Democrats argue](#) by Seanna Adcox and Skylair Laird

The State: [Students as pawns? SC school choice, voucher debate to return, bring about emotions](#) by Joseph Bustos

### **S.65: Teacher Cellphone Ban**

[S.65](#), filed by Senate Education Chair [Greg Hembree](#) of Horry County and Senator Larry Grooms of Berkeley and Charleston Counties that would if passed not allow teachers to use their phones in the classroom. While there was no movement on the bill this week, teachers have expressed concerns over this bill. We will continue to monitor this and keep you informed.

## House Summary

This week in the South Carolina House of Representatives, a significant development occurred on the last day when Rep. Heather Bauer of Richland County filed articles of impeachment aimed at removing State Treasurer Curtis Loftis from his position following the latest announcement of the \$1.8 billion accounting error.

Additionally, a bill prefiled by Rep. Mike Burns of Greenville County has caught statewide media attention. The bill calls for installing cameras inside the classroom that can be viewed by anyone regardless of residency in the school district or having a child enrolled in that classroom, or for that matter, the school.

### **H.3216: Cameras in the Classroom**

Rep. [Burns](#) bill, [H.3216](#), calls for the installation of cameras in South Carolina classrooms, not only student privacy at risk, but opening the door for "gotcha moments" for educators. According to Rep. Burns, the presence of cameras would prevent "trans stuff or sexual ideology [from being] taught to the students without parents' knowledge by rogue teachers."

For further details, view any of the clips below.

Queen City News: [South Carolina bill proposes requiring cameras in all public school classrooms](#) by Derek Dillinger

WPDE: [SC bill proposes cameras in K-12 classrooms](#) by Caroline Surface.

WDTV: [Cameras in classrooms: New SC bill sparks mixed reviews](#) by Dalfred Jones

### **Legislation of Interest**

**Click here to read more key [legislative education bills](#) where you will find details on the [House Education and Public Works Committee](#) and [Subcommittee](#) assignments along with [Senate Education Committee](#) members.**

Next week, members of both chambers will hold meetings in their respective subcommittees. No legislation is expected to be presented on the Statehouse floor due to many legislators being out of town or returning from the presidential inauguration in Washington, D.C.

### **State Board of Education Regulation 43-170**

The State Board of Education (SBE) last week banned four more books from South Carolina public schools. The five-person member body of the [Instructional Reviews Materials Review Committee](#) voted to keep two books — *Bronx Masquerade* and *The House on Mango Street* — on shelves and in the classrooms where teachers use them for assignments. Those two were held over from a prior meeting.

The four books the committee voted to remove aren't used in classroom lessons, though they are available in some school libraries. They will join seven other books barred from school library shelves since a state regulation forbid public schools from using or allowing students access to books containing "sexual conduct."

As a reminder, this is regulation, 43-170, establishes two main guidelines for instructional materials:

- Age and developmentally appropriate: materials must be "suitable to particular age groups...based on developing cognitive and behavioral capacity typical for the age group." The proposal also states that a material is not age appropriate if it contains visual depictions or descriptions of "sexual conduct" as defined in state statute or if it is considered "indecent" or "obscene" under the broadcast guidelines for the Federal Communications Commission.

- Educationally suitable: the material must be aligned with the "instructional program of the school and district," which means it must be connected to the standards laid out in the Profile of a South Carolina Graduate.

**Legislation of Interest**

Our lobbying partners, Capitol Consultants, have provided further information on legislation that has been filed that may be of interest to you as it relates to education. Please review the information and let us know if you have any comments or concerns.

Wed 1/22 10:00 AM in Gressette Room 105

[S 77](#) (Streaming of School Board Meetings); [S 78](#) (Work Experience Credit for Educators); [S 79](#) (Noncertified Teacher Pilot Program)

<b>H. 3670</b>	<b>SC Trio Day</b>	<b>Rutherford</b>
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Representative Todd Rutherford (D-Richland) introduced a House Resolution to declare Monday, September 30, 2024 as "SC Trio Day in South Carolina", and commend the SC Trio Organization for over 50 years of outstanding achievements and progress to promote awareness, education, and advocacy for Trio personnel and to empower students to become college ready, gain college access, and graduate from an institution of higher learning to become productive citizens.

The resolution was adopted by the House.

<b>H. 3734</b>	<b>Collective Bargaining by Political Subdivisions</b>	<b>Cobb-Hunter</b>
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Representative Gilda Cobb-Hunter (D-Orangeburg) introduced legislation to allow political subdivisions (such as counties and cities) and school districts to engage in collective bargaining with their employees, an association, or labor organization advocating on behalf of its employees.

This bill was referred to the House Education and Public Works Committee.

<b>H. 3740</b>	<b>Paid Military Leave</b>	<b>Mitchell</b>
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Representative Cody Mitchell (R-Darlington) and others introduced legislation to specify school district employees are entitled to military leaves of absence. This bill also increases the paid military leave each year from 15 days to 30 days.

This bill was referred to the House Ways and Means Committee.

<b>H. 3758</b>	<b>Student Expression of Religious Viewpoints</b>	<b>Mitchell</b>
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Representatives Cody Mitchell (R-Darlington) and Richie Yow (R-Chesterfield) introduced legislation to require school districts to establish a limited public forum for student speakers at all school events at which a student is to publicly speak. The district would provide the forum in a manner that does not discriminate against a student's voluntary expression of a religious viewpoint, ensure that a student speaker does not engage in indecent speech, provide a method for the selection of student speakers, and state that the student speeches do not reflect the position of the district.

This bill was referred to the House Education and Public Works Committee.

<b>H. 3759</b>	<b>School Board Elections, Partisan</b>	<b>Pace</b>
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Representatives Jordan Pace (R-Berkeley) and Jay Kilmartin (R-Lexington) introduced legislation to provide that all elected members of the board of trustees for school districts in South Carolina must be elected in partisan elections. This bill also provides filing methods and deadlines for candidates seeking election.

This bill was referred to the House Judiciary Committee.

<b>S. 199</b>	<b>Student Physical Privacy Act</b>	<b>Climer</b>
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Senator Wes Climer (R-York), Josh Kimbrell (R-Spartanburg), and Matt Leber (R-Charleston) introduced legislation to require every public-school restroom and changing facility accessible by multiple persons to be designed for use only by members of one sex.

This bill was referred to the Senate Education Committee.

<b>S. 203</b>	<b>Optional Leadership Information for Nonprofit and Entities Soliciting Charitable Funds</b>	<b>Walker</b>
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Senator Overture Walker (D-Richland) introduced legislation to include the option for entities to include the demographic data of the executive director, CEO, president, and founder within their articles of incorporation.

This bill was referred to the Senate Labor, Commerce and Industry Committee.



## The SCEA Local Leadership Calls

**WHEN WE STAND TOGETHER TODAY, WE  
CAN CHANGE THE FUTURE FOR TOMORROW.**

**JOIN US VIRTUALLY!** 

You're invited to join the next *Monthly Local Leaders Call* Tuesday, January 21, 2025, at 6:30 PM. This interactive session is a fantastic opportunity to connect, share, and engage with your association's leadership and fellow members.

Here's what you can look forward to:

- **Engage in Discussions:** Learn about what's going on at the local, state, and national levels.
- **Connect with Leaders:** Speak directly with The SCEA President, The SCEA Executive Director, and your local leaders.
- **Celebrate Success:** Highlight your accomplishments and hear about others.
- **Get Involved:** Learn more about opportunities to make a difference in your area.

Your voice matters, and this call is a platform for collaboration, growth, and action. We look forward to your participation by clicking on links below to join.

[https://us02web.zoom.us/meeting/tZckcu6vrzorHdXWTUEUpUUad54haLS4Y51J/ics?icsToken=98tyKuGrpz4tHdWUsR6GRpwqHY\\_4KO3zmH5cgqdlqyvQJhVDVzb3MrcWOrNTI4zp&meetingMasterEventId=kqg3nkAsT22RQuznnACNeA](https://us02web.zoom.us/join/https://us02web.zoom.us/meeting/tZckcu6vrzorHdXWTUEUpUUad54haLS4Y51J/ics?icsToken=98tyKuGrpz4tHdWUsR6GRpwqHY_4KO3zmH5cgqdlqyvQJhVDVzb3MrcWOrNTI4zp&meetingMasterEventId=kqg3nkAsT22RQuznnACNeA)

**Join Zoom Meeting**

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/83957711171?pwd=NXFyMFEzRGhKOVZtVGY0RFVGV2VkZz09>

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**The SCEA Lobby Day 2025**

The SCEA's annual Lobby Day will be held on Wednesday, February 26th. Join fellow active, aspiring, and retired members to advocate for our students, our schools, and our profession at the South Carolina State House!

Lobby Day brings members from across the state together at the state capitol to discuss legislative priorities with elected officials. You won't want to miss this opportunity to make your voice heard!

[CLICK HERE TO JOIN US FOR LOBBY DAY](#)



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### **The SCEA Membership Drive 2025**

The SCEA's membership drive for 2025 needs you! To kick-off the new year, you can get \$25 in '25 for each new member you recruit/refer to the Association. Details are available below

THE  
**SCEA**  
**MEMBERSHIP DRIVE**  
TO KICK-OFF 2025  
Now through March 20th

**GET \$25 IN '25!**

To kick-off the new year, for each new certified member you refer to The SCEA, you will earn \$25!



Membership Application

To ensure proper credit, we encourage you to sign each new membership form as "recruiter" and have the new member enter your name in the form's "referred by" section.

Questions? Contact: [Membership@TheSCEA.org](mailto:Membership@TheSCEA.org) 803-772-6553, option 1

### **January Is School Board Appreciation Month**

January is School Board Appreciation Month. School boards play a crucial role in making decisions that directly impact our work and the education system. The SCEA strongly encourages you to reach out to your school board members.

If your local hasn't already initiated contact, please take the time to introduce yourselves. Consider attending a school board meeting this month to engage in important discussions.

Also, as educators we need to pay close attention to the [South Carolina Department of Education](#) state school board members. Please [refer to this link to find out more about the South Carolina Department of Education State Board Members.](#)