

## 2017 South Carolina Senate Scorecard Key

1. **Election for President Pro Tem #1 – [December 6, 2016](#)**. Former Governor Haley’s nomination as US Ambassador to the United Nations set off a chain reaction in the State House. Lieutenant Governor Henry McMaster ascended to the Governor’s mansion but who would fill McMaster’s former office remained a mystery because of Hugh Leatherman’s defiance of the constitution. At the time, we made the following statement: “Leatherman is putting his own political agenda ahead of his Constitutional duties. His decision to resign as Senate President in order to sidestep one of the main obligations of that office is proof enough that his only concern is his grip on power. He cares little about the Constitution and his actions personify the worst of politics as usual. The South Carolina Club for Growth Foundation will score the vote for Senate President and we urge all Senators to vote NO to Leatherman.” In short, Leatherman told his fellow Senators and the public that he would never fulfill the obligations of Senate Pro Temp and would resign to avoid becoming Lieutenant Governor. Any Senator who voted for Leatherman as President Pro Temp was complicated in circumnavigating the Constitution. The preferred vote was NO. Unfortunately, Leatherman was elected 36-9.
2. **Election for President Pro Tem #2 – [January 25, 2017](#)**. After a constitutionally questionable round of musical chairs which saw Leatherman elected President Pro Temp, then resign, Kevin Bryant elected President Pro Temp, and Bryant becoming Lt. Governor, Senator Harvey Peeler challenged liberal Republican Hugh Leatherman for Senate President Pro Temp. The preferred vote was for PEELER. Unfortunately, Leatherman was elected 28-16.
3. **Internet Sales Tax – [January 31, 2017](#), 2<sup>nd</sup> Reading**. S. 214 is typical South Carolina tax policy – overly complicated, perplexing, and burdensome to consumers and businesses. A Bloomberg BNA article on the proposal noted that “most large internet retailers terminated their affiliate referral programs” in states where similar legislation passed. Furthermore, the state Revenue and Fiscal Affairs office said additional revenue would be modest, at best. While questions on additional revenue exists, it is certain this bill would increase the tax and regulatory burden for online businesses and consumers. The preferred vote was NO. Unfortunately, the bill passes 38-5.
4. **Defined Contribution Plan – [March 1, 2017](#). To Adopt Amendment Number 18**. This amendment would require all new government employees to switch from a defined benefit plan to a defined contribution plan. Time Money Magazine explains it like this: “A defined benefit plan, most often known as a pension, is a retirement account for which your employer ponies up all the money and promises you a set payout when you retire. A defined contribution plan, like a 401(k) or 403(b), requires you to put in your own money” except in this case the “employer” is the taxpayer. Defined benefit plans are more costly for taxpayers. Fortunately, this amendment passed the Senate 28-18 but was ultimately excluded from the final pension “reform” deal.
5. **Pension Reform – [April 5, 2017](#). To Adopt the Conference Report on H. 3726**. S. 394 and H. 3726 did nothing to fix South Carolina’s broken pension system. Instead, S. 394 threw good money after bad by authorizing a YEARLY \$826 million tax increase on taxpayers. This is addition to the BILLION dollar annual contribution taxpayers make to support the fledgling fund. The preferred vote was NO. Unfortunately, the Senate adopted the conference report 33-7.
6. **Gas Tax Amendment – [April 25, 2017](#). To Lay on the Table Amendment Number 9D**. Senator Larry Grooms introduced an amendment that would allow South Carolina drivers to receive a tax rebate on the gas tax increase that they paid during the year. This sounds good but in reality, the amendment was a smoke and mirrors tactic intended to help the massive gas tax pass. Grooms amendment would require drivers to submit receipts, file additional forms, and adhere to burdensome regulations to receive

the rebate. This amendment was intended to give the illusion of a tax rebate without providing any relief. The preferred vote was YES to tabling. Unfortunately, the effort failed 16-26.

7. **Gas Tax – [May 8, 2017](#). To Adopt the Free Conference Report.** Among other taxes and fee, this bill increased the gas tax by 12 cents, increased the vehicle sales tax, nearly doubled the vehicle registration fee, increased the tax cap on recreational vehicles, and created a new fee on fuel-efficient cars. Simply put, this bill amounted to one of the largest tax increases in South Carolina history. But perhaps the most disappointing thing about this bill is that it will do little to fix our roads because the monies collected can be used on bond debt. The preferred vote was NO. Unfortunately, the Senate adopted the conference report 32-12.