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South Carolina House of Representatives

Legislative Update & Research Reports

Robert J. Sheheen, Speaker of the House

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Legislative Update

Adult Illiteracy in South Carolina: An Update

Background

In the last issue of the *Legislative Update* we published a report on the efforts of South Carolina in dealing with the problem of adult illiteracy. As noted in that report, our state is making tremendous efforts to combat this situation which cripples so many of our citizens.

Just how tremendous an effort, however, was not fully revealed by our article. The figures which were available for the *Update*, while generally accurate, did not go into enough detail to show the activities South Carolina is undertaking in this area. Thanks to Walter Tobin, Director of the Office of Adult Education in the Department of Education, the *Update* can present even more information about our state's programs to deal with adult illiteracy.

Cost per student: lowest in southeast

One way to measure a program effectiveness is to determine how much money is spent upon each individual participant. Using this factor, South Carolina ranks best in the southeast region.

According to the publication "Adult Education in South Carolina: A Progress Report," the per pupil cost for serving adult students in South Carolina is \$58.46—the lowest in the southeast region.

The funds used for adult education programs include federal allocations and state funds—a distinction that perhaps was not made clearly enough in the recent issue of the *Update*. When the total funds available are compared to the actual numbers served, the cost per pupil breaks down as found in the chart on the following page.

<u>STATE</u>	<u>TOTAL FUNDS ALLOCATED</u>	<u>NUMBER SERVED</u>	<u>COST PER STUDENT</u>
Alabama	\$ 4,428,614	44,162	\$ 100.36
Arkansas	7,326,626	23,729	308.76
Florida	134,147,076	680,000	191.00
Georgia	3,987,346	36,108	110.43
North Carolina	16,640,286	77,590	214.46
SOUTH CAROLINA	5,235,326	69,868	75.13
Tennessee	2,699,911	26,199	103.05

Number of adults served

Another measure of a state's effectiveness in providing adult education is to compare the number of persons who need the service to those who actually receive instruction. Using this criterion, South Carolina is one of the top four states in the entire nation.

A March, 1986 study prepared by the United States Department of Education shows that South Carolina is surpassed only by Florida, Texas, and Indiana in the number of adults who are served in relation to the states' target populations.

This accomplishment should be placed in context of state wealth: Florida, Texas and Indiana are traditionally regarded as "richer" states than South Carolina. Even with recent declines in oil prices, which have hurt the Texas economy, that state is generally able to draw upon a broader fiscal resource base than South Carolina. In essence, South Carolina is doing more with less in this area.

Volunteers and cooperative effort

Aside from money measures, another indication of a state's effort can be seen in the number of volunteers who participate in adult education programs. According to the U.S. Department of Education, South Carolina led the ranks of those states reporting volunteers in their programs.

South Carolina had 3,527 volunteers; Kentucky had 3,000; New York and Tennessee both reported 2,000; and Nebraska claimed 1,025. No other state broke into four figures.

In addition to these volunteer helpers, the adult education programs in South Carolina have established cooperative efforts through adult outreach programs and with adult education programs in private business and industry. These efforts help make the overall effort a more far-ranging and effective one.

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There were 405 adult education outreach centers in South Carolina as of June 30, 1986. They included churches (83 centers); community centers (43 sites); senior citizen organization sites (40 locations); prisons or detention facilities (35 sites). Other centers can be found in nursing homes, vocational rehabilitation sites, S.C. National Guard unit facilities, and facilities of the Highway Department, among other places.

A total of 32 adult education programs are operated in conjunction with private business and industry. These are listed below.

Aiken

Hamburg Industries

Charleston

County of Charleston; City of Charleston

Cherokee

Souffers; Blacksburg Finishing; Southeastern Kusan, Inc.;
Timkin Ball Bearing; Lowenstein; Limestone Plant; Summit Plant

Darlington

Nucor Steel; L'Eggs (Hartsville)

Florence

General Electric; L'Eggs; Fibers; Florence County Public Works;
Hannaco; Celanese Palmetto Plant; Wellman Industries; Shaw Walker

Greenville

Michelin; City of Greenville

Laurens

AVX Corporation; Torrington; General Electric

Marion

L'Eggs; AVM

Marlboro

Hanes

Sumter

Bendix; Campbell Soup; Crescent Tool

York

Duke Power Company

Conclusion

This update on adult education programs in South Carolina was made possible by information from the Office of Adult Education, South Carolina Department of Education. The House Research Office is thankful for their cooperation.

Results of Membership Poll on Upcoming Issues

Background

During September of this year, *Legislative Update* surveyed the members of the House of Representatives to determine their thoughts on possible upcoming issues for the 1987 session. A total of 58 members returned the survey form—a substantial 46.7% reply. The House Research Office certainly wishes to thank those Representatives who took the time to complete the survey forms.

The results of the survey are presented in this report. Along with the raw numbers, *Legislative Update* gives some discussion to what those numbers might mean in terms of legislator interest in these issues. Please note that this discussion is not concerned about the relative merits of the positions on these issues; Rule 3.7 of the House clearly forbids that. This commentary is on which issues might receive the most attention in 1987.

How the survey was conducted

House members were sent a survey form with 25 potential issues listed on it. Members were asked to rate the importance of each issue for 1987 on a scale of "one" to "five", with "one" being low in importance, "five" being high. There was also a space at the end of the form for members to add their suggestions and comments.

After the cut-off date for returning the forms passed (October 27, 1986), the results were tabulated, using the following two methods.

First, the votes for each issue were counted, according to the level of importance given by the members. For example, for *liability insurance*, the following responses were given: 40 members said the issue was a "5," (very important); 12 members said it was a "4"; three members replied it was level "3" in importance; two members marked it as "2" in importance; and one member said it was very low, a "1" in importance. These results can be displayed best in tabular form:

<u>Possible Issue</u>	<u>How Important Is It?</u>				
	HIGH				LOW
	5	4	3	2	1
<i>Liability insurance</i>	40	12	3	2	1
<i>EIA implementation and funding</i>	30	14	10	2	1

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This example shows how the results for *liability insurance* were recorded. It also shows how members felt about *EIA implementation and funding*: 30 members thought it was a "5" or highly important; 14 thought it was a "4" which was still on the important end of the scale; 10 marked it of middle importance with a "3." Only two members thought it low enough to rate a "2" and only a single member put it down as a "1."

The "votes" for all the other topics were recorded the same way. This allowed us to rank the issues according to one measure of importance: the number of "5" or "very important" votes given to each issue by members.

Overall measure of importance

Second, the replies by members were weighted to determine overall importance. Each issue was assigned a total number of points, determined by how members rated the issue from "one" through "five." For each issue, every "5" response was added up and the total multiplied by 5; every "4" response was added up and the total multiplied by 4; and so forth. When all these totals were added together, the result was a number which could be used to compare the issue to other issues in relative importance.

Since "5" meant the issue was most important, and "1" meant the issue was least important, the higher the total points, the more important the members considered the issue.

Using again the *liability insurance* topic for example: 40 members thought it rated a "5" so we multiply 5 x 40 to get 200 points. Twelve members thought it rated a "4," so we multiply 4 x 12 to get 48. Three members gave it a "3," and 3 x 3 is 9 points. Two members gave it "2" which is 2 x 2 = 4. And one member gave it a "1" which is 1 x 1 = 1. The total number of points for this issue is therefore

$$200 + 48 + 9 + 4 + 1 = 262$$

The same method was used to give total points to all the other issues. For example, with *EIA implementation and funding*:

<u>Possible Issue</u>	<u>How Important Is It?</u>				
	HIGH				LOW
	5	4	3	2	1
<i>EIA implementation and funding</i>	30	14	10	2	1

$$\begin{array}{r} 30 \times 5 = 150 \\ 14 \times 4 = 56 \\ 10 \times 3 = 30 \\ 2 \times 2 = 4 \\ 1 \times 1 = 1 \\ \hline = 241 \end{array}$$

Thus we have two reasons to rate *liability insurance* ahead of *EIA implementation and funding* as an issue of importance to members. First, it received more "5" marks, 40 to 30; second, it received more total points, 262 as compared to 241. All of the other issues were ranked using these two measures. Where there was a difference between the two, the number of "5" prevailed in this list. FIGURE ONE shows the results.

FIGURE ONE

<u>Possible Issue or Topic</u>	<u>How Important Is It?</u>					<u>TOTAL POINTS</u>
	<u>HIGH</u> 5	4	3	2	<u>LOW</u> 1	
<i>Liability insurance</i>	40	12	3	2	1	262
<i>EIA implementation and funding</i>	30	14	10	2	1	241
<i>The "Drug Problem"</i>	30	13	8	1	2	229
<i>Economic forecasting measures</i>	24	18	11	2	2	231
<i>Tax conforming</i>	23	11	14	3	4	211
<i>Workers' Compensation review</i>	22	15	8	5	5	209
<i>Hazardous waste management</i>	21	12	18	3	2	215
<i>Infrastructure bank</i>	21	13	13	7	3	213
<i>Medical malpractice</i>	21	16	7	6	5	207
<i>Long term care for the elderly</i>	20	20	10	3	3	219
<i>Gasoline tax increase</i>	17	12	11	3	13	185
<i>Teenage pregnancy prevention</i>	16	23	10	5	1	213
<i>State-run primaries</i>	15	13	12	7	8	185
<i>Local government finance</i>	14	11	18	3	8	182
<i>Farm and agricultural protection</i>	12	14	19	7	4	191
<i>Community services for the elderly</i>	11	22	15	5	3	201
<i>Pornography</i>	10	14	16	7	8	176
<i>Research funds for higher education</i>	10	12	17	6	8	169
<i>Tax assessment of rural property</i>	10	10	16	12	8	170
<i>Changing annexation procedures</i>	10	11	13	4	16	157
<i>Lease-purchase</i>	9	21	17	3	6	192
<i>Mandatory seat belt law</i>	9	6	13	6	20	140
<i>Lottery</i>	9	5	9	4	27	127
<i>Pari-mutuel betting</i>	8	4	8	6	28	120
<i>Eminent domain</i>	3	12	23	9	7	157

Suggestions from members

In addition to checking off the issues listed on the survey form, members had the chance to give their own thoughts and ideas on topics which the House might face in 1987. Their responses covered the waterfront, and included some intriguing thoughts--which can be found on the next page.

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On question 26, "Other," House members were asked to respond to: "Issues which you feel will be important in 1987." A variety of replies came in, which are grouped here according to category. [Please note: these are direct quotations from member responses, not editorial comment from *Legislative Update*!]

Economic Development

- I would hope that infrastructure banking would include water and sewer projects
- We should be able to serve needs of agriculture and industry by utilizing the export facilities at the Ports Authority
- Water and sewage in rural areas

Automobiles: insurance, safety, laws

- Increase minimum auto insurance: Auto liability insurance review; Seriously consider a no-fault plan; Abolish contributory negligence
- Do away with shaded windshields
- DUI laws toughened

Government operations (including legislature)

- Shorten the session
- Serious review of study committees effectiveness
- Efforts to reduce spending, especially in legislative section
- Have Senate and House finance committees meet and prepare budget; eliminate Budget and Control Board hearings
- Make O&M Committee and General Services accountable for outlandish expenditures or money for renovating and refurbishing Blatt Bldg
- Eliminate unnecessary committees and study committees and task forces; standing committees should handle at least 90% of matters pertaining to their respective areas of responsibility
- Abolish aeronautics committee and assign duties to transportation committee
- Do we need two reserve funds?
- More attention to waste in state government
- Budget shortfalls
- Tort reform for all professions
- Remove judges who refuse to convict and put in jail DUIs and drug pushers & addicts
- Prohibit bingo games on Sunday

The elderly

--A method to give assistance "in home" to the elderly versus putting them into an institution until and unless absolutely necessary. The in home assistance to many elderly often is more pleasing and the cost is often much cheaper than a nursing home. The retired or semi-retired skilled nurse and trained social workers that are still mobile would be a good beginning pool of personnel to initially draw from. It would often give supplemental retirement income to many who need it. This group under proper management and coordination blended together with community volunteers can provide a much needed service to the "in home" elderly with a low price tag. We simply need seed dollars to get the program rolling.

Education

--Teacher problems: certification, incentive pay, recruitment
--Streamline Education Improvement Act
a. Full funding for programs that affect teachers and students
b. More attention and monitoring of the administrators in elementary and secondary education

Insurance

--The insurance issue is very important and the state should protect our citizens from the insurance industry but until an insurance committee is formed and no industry people are put in charge--nothing will be done. I have no hope for this being dealt with. What a shame.

Analysis: What the survey shows

A glance at the survey results would seem to indicate three really major issues for 1987: liability insurance, EIA implementation and funding, and the "drug problem." Each of these items received a large number of "5's," indicating members considered them very important.

These issues were followed in the survey by a mid-range of items, from economic forecasting measures through long term care for the elderly. Finally, there are the rest of the potential issues, which seem to decrease in importance for members.

However, a brief examination of each possible issue should reveal more insights as to what the key points might be, and where the debate in the House might lead during 1987 (and perhaps into 1988).

The following commentary is based primarily upon the results of the survey of House members, and is in no way an official prediction of the actions and activities of the South Carolina House of Representatives during its 1987-88 session.

Liability insurance

Clearly an important issue on the minds of Representatives and their constituents, liability insurance has been a topic of concern for several years now. Many businesses and organizations are finding insurance difficult to obtain, costly to purchase. A liability insurance "crunch" has developed, and the question is what to do about it.

Insurance industry groups support "tort reform" measures that would limit damage awards in trials, eliminate punitive damages (except for the state), and otherwise reduce the financial costs of liability claims. Opposing this are those who feel that lawsuits are not to blame, but rather, the practices of the insurance companies.

Outlook: a legal and financial issue with many technical and emotional aspects. Insurance law is a complicated area, and the problem is national in scope, so this could be a two-year matter for the General Assembly.

EIA implementation and funding

One of the basic roles of the legislature is its oversight function—determining how well state government is operating. Clearly, many members feel their duty to keep in touch on the activities of the Education Improvement Act.

Most frequently cited in this area: the status of building funds for school districts; overall achievements under the Act; and the possibility of revenue short fall in the 1% set aside from the sales tax.

Outlook: There appears—as of now—to be no single, over-riding issue where the EIA is concerned, which would suggest that the Legislature will be operating primarily in its oversight mode.

The "drug problem"

When the membership survey went out, the news media and the Reagan Administration were keeping drugs in the headlines. Early returns said drugs were highly important as an up-coming issue; surveys returned later on, however, began to place drugs lower on the agenda for members.

Outlook: clearly a problem, drugs are not the major problem for the S.C. General Assembly. We already have some of the toughest drug laws in the nation, so the only real alternative action is to appropriate more funds for drug enforcement and drug treatment. However, state funds are tight, and the Congress recently allocated a multi-million dollar war on drugs, so there may be reason for the legislature to mark time on this issue for 1987.

Economic forecasting measures

Each year the General Assembly writes an appropriation bill based on revenue estimates from the Board of Economic Advisors. This year, just before the general election, an announcement was made that the revenue estimate had erred, and there would be a shortfall of several million dollars. As the song goes, "Would you believe that this happens more often than not?" In five out of the past six years, actual revenues have not met the projected growth.

Outlook: Is there any way for the economic forecasts to be more in line with actual revenue collections? That's the question which many legislators would like answered. Much will depend upon the technical sides to the matter, such as the instruments and variables used to gauge state economic health. Along with gathering the best possible information, of course, is interpreting it.

Tax conforming

The federal income tax has been "reformed" by the Congress. It was only two years ago that South Carolina changed its tax code and forms to be in line with the federal system--should we do it again? What impact would it have on 1) state revenues and 2) tax payers? (State Treasurer Patterson has already gone on record voicing his concerns about the tax package--see the October Update.)

Outlook: Many observers are still puzzling over the tax reform package that the 99th Congress left as its legacy. It may take a while before the full impact of the changes can be measured. Conforming state laws and tax codes, while of interest to legislators, may be approached by them gingerly in 1986.

Workers Compensation review

The South Carolina Workers Compensation program celebrated its 50th anniversary in 1986. That same year a subcommittee of the House Labor, Commerce and Industry Committee began closed-door hearings on the operations of the system, including how it determines awards to injured persons and the amounts it gives them.

Outlook: Legislative oversight at its most important and complex. The House members who responded to the survey found this

issue pertinent: it ranked in the top ten in overall importance. Any speculation here, however, must be set aside in deference to the LCI Committee's hard work, and future actions and reports.

Hazardous waste management

Environmental issues have become increasingly noticeable and popular in recent years, and the General Assembly has taken the lead in this vital area of public policy, and the survey indicates the issue will be alive in 1987. Unfortunately, the survey failed to distinguish between the number of different topics combined under the umbrella of "hazardous waste management." For example, there is in-state generated waste vs. out-state generated waste. There are contrasting methods of treatment, and the matter of treatment as opposed to disposal—which is most appropriate, and for what kinds of waste?

Another aspect of hazardous waste management might be called "prevention"—dealing with the waste by not allowing it to be produced in South Carolina. But where does such prevention stand in the way of economic development? Just where is that elusive balance between economics and environment?

Outlook: Any and perhaps all of these subissues could be considered by the General Assembly in 1987, but priority will most likely go towards dealing with existing hazardous waste conditions, and hazardous waste disposal/treatment sites.

Infrastructure bank

Infrastructure includes roads, bridges, water and sewer lines, and other physical facilities needed for modern life. There are three major problems with infrastructure: it has to be built; it has to be repaired; and eventually, it has to be replaced. These problems lead, inevitably, to the One Great Problem of Government: It Has to be Paid For.

South Carolina needs to upgrade its infrastructure. The survey of members showed strong concern about water-related infrastructure, especially in the rural areas of our state. However, these are the very areas which are often least able to afford the capital outlays needed. What's the solution?

One proposal is an "infrastructure bank," which would have the means to provide money to local and county governments to meet their infrastructure needs. This would help governments avoid the necessity of a steep tax hike, or long-term bonded indebtedness. This sketchy description sounds good, but obviously there would be a number of details to be worked out.

Outlook: Respondents to the survey are clearly interested in doing something to improve the infrastructure situation in South Carolina. The infrastructure bank was merely one suggested method--and certainly not the only one. Whatever the chosen vehicle, this topic seems likely to be in the "top ten" for discussion in 1987.

Medical malpractice

In the survey, twelve issues received total points of 200 or more; medical malpractice weighed in at 207 points. This is no flash-in-the-pan issue, but one which has been simmering for several years. There seem to be a few basic topics which recur whenever the problem of medical malpractice is debated.

First, doctors (and to some extent, insurance companies who provide coverage for them) claim that medical malpractice suits have reached epidemic proportions, and that damage and punitive awards by juries have become so astronomical as to be ridiculous.

Second, because of these awards, insurance companies insist they must raise their rates. Because of the raised rates, and the prospect of a court case, doctors are claiming they may have to refuse new patients or leave high risk areas of medicine. According to recent news reports, for example, doctors in several South Carolina counties are refusing to deliver babies because of the malpractice lawsuit risks.

Third, patients, patient-rights groups, and many lawyers, contend that malpractice suit awards have almost nothing to do with increased insurance rates. The huge award makes news because it is so rare, these people would say; the wide-spread panic over excessive awards is a myth.

Fourth, this same group would insist that limitation of damage awards, and shortening the time for the statute of limitations would deprive patients who have been injured of their rights under the law.

Outlook: House members marked this issue as an important one in the survey, and are likely to deal with it in the session ahead. That much seems clear. What is not clear at present is what methods might be advanced to remedy the situation.

There could be "tort reform," putting a cap on awards, shortening the statute of limitations, eliminating punitive damages, and so forth. There could be a "malpractice pool," set up, perhaps similar to the Workers' Compensation pool, which could fund settlements. Obviously, there could be other suggestions not mentioned here.

Long term care for the elderly

This is an issue on which the survey revealed strong feelings among members: only six respondents placed it on the lower end of the spectrum in importance. The question is not whether the elderly need long term care, but what kind of care, and how to pay for it. One member added some interesting suggestions on this topic (see page 8); others were equally concerned.

Outlook: issues such as this can put legislators in a difficult position. On the one hand, they don't want to be seen as being "against old people." On the other hand, they realize the constraints imposed by budgetary considerations, especially during uncertain economic times. This is an area where innovative ideas could be a boon to the General Assembly.

Gasoline tax increase

Last year the Department of Highways and Public Transportation requested an increase in the gasoline tax; the legislature didn't go along with the idea. According to the Department, money is seriously needed for upkeep and construction on our highway system; according to many in the General Assembly, more precise information needs to be presented on the use of this money.

Outlook: members who responded to the survey were split on this issue, with a relatively larger number (13) placing it low on the scale of importance. On the other hand, 17 ranked it as very high, and 12 as high. Whether there is a gas tax increase or not, there's likely to be considerable debate about the issue.

Teenage pregnancy prevention

Representatives seemed to agree that this is a topic of some importance for 1987--the issue scored a total of 213 points. It's likely that agreement ends there. The issue of how to go about preventing or reducing teenage pregnancies is one loaded with moral, emotional, social, legal and even religious overtones.

Outlook: A Governor's task force addressed this issue earlier in the year and its recommendations were soon in the midst of controversy. If this issue comes up in 1987, there will be considerable debate as to the role (if any) of the state in dealing with unwanted teenage pregnancies, and just what methods would be generally acceptable to achieve that goal.

State-run primaries

Should the state election commission take over the operation of party primary elections? Our poll didn't reveal the answer to that

question, but it did show that there was more than passing interest in the subject: the majority of respondents indicated they considered the issue worth a "4" or "5"—that is, on the high side of importance.

The issue was raised during last session, and received considerable attention. Passage of a mechanism for state-run primaries seemed blocked, finally, by the issue of funds—where they came from, how they were spent, and so forth.

Outlook: If the funding issue can be resolved, this matter could again move ahead through the General Assembly.

Local government finance

A bill was introduced in 1986 that would have given municipalities and counties the power to levy taxes. These would have included sales taxes, income taxes, payroll taxes, and taxes such as those on admissions and coin-operated devices. The measure did not pass.

Local governments have traditionally relied on the property tax to raise their own funds, and for state monies and federal revenue sharing to make up the rest. Revenue sharing is gone, and local governments may feel state funds to be uncertain, given economic conditions. The ACIR supports local government finance act, but traditionally in South Carolina the state has jealously guarded its taxing powers.

Outlook: The membership survey ranked this issue at the midpoint in terms of importance, but the results were weighted towards the upper--that is, the more important--end of the scale. What the poll fails to tell us is whether members think the issue is important because it's good or because it's bad.

Farm and agriculture protection

This issue almost broke the 200 point mark on the survey—it came in at 191. The devastating drought of 1986 focused attention on our state's farmers and their condition and made the public aware of the importance of agriculture to South Carolina. The question is: what can the General Assembly do that could assist farmers?

Crop insurance programs are operated by the federal government, and there has been suggestion that the state set up a similar operation. To date, however, no other state has done this. Bills were introduced last session to ease the mortgage foreclosure pressure that many farmers have felt over the past few years; renewed interest in this type of legislation could surface in 1987.

Outlook: House members are definitely interested in this issue, and that interest could be translated into some form of action in 1987. The hitch is what sort of action? In an international economy, an individual state is limited in its responses to many factors affecting agriculture. In the past, however, the General Assembly has found ways to encourage new developments in South Carolina farming—including aquaculture, for example. Similarly innovative programs in protecting existing agricultural operations might be devised in 1987.

Community services for the elderly

This topic also broke the 200 point mark on the survey, indicating that members were definitely interested in the issue. As might be expected, the key to this topic is not the providing of community services for the elderly, but the means to pay for those services.

Outlook: The high score on the survey shows that members want to do something about this. Perhaps the suggestion by one member that applies to long term care for the elderly (page 8) could be adapted for community services as well.

Pornography

This issue gathered a total of 176 points, so it seems to be relatively important to House members. The hard questions, however—just what is meant by pornography, and just what can be done about it? Those are the sort of questions which the survey was not designed to answer (and perhaps rightly so, since those are the answers the Legislature alone can determine).

Outlook: North Carolina recently enacted some new pornography legislation which has aroused some interest in this state. It is possible that similar bills could be introduced during 1987 here in South Carolina.

Research funds for higher education

Some of our institutions of higher education are seeking money to undertake more research; the putative benefit of this research will be greater economic development in South Carolina.

Outlook: The survey score indicates that House members are interested. Action on this topic will probably depend upon the specifics of research proposed, and the likelihood of tangible benefits from it.

Tax assessment for rural property

Last session the General Assembly passed a bill that put a freeze on the tax rates on agricultural land. It provided that, for 1986 and 1987, agricultural real property must be evaluated for ad valorem taxes according to the 1985 guidelines. The bill also required the Tax Study Commission to review these tax guidelines on agricultural land, and make recommendations for changes by March 31, 1988.

Outlook: Owners of agricultural land are unhappy about the rates, feeling they are unfair. Several counties are also unhappy about the rates, and for the same reason: they are not fair. The difference is that one group thinks the rates are too high, the other believes they are too low. The 1988 date for the freeze extension and new recommendations may mean no action on this issue during the 1987 session.

Changing annexation procedures

Annexation procedures began to be eased in 1985 and 1986 when the General Assembly made changes in the percentages of property owners needed to sign annexation petitions and vote in annexation elections. There are still some changes which were proposed, but not passed, which could make it simpler and faster for municipalities to bring in more territory (and therefore more taxpayers and increase in their tax base).

Outlook: There were only a few issues on the survey which scored in double digits on the lowest end of the scale; this was one of them. Sixteen members said that a change in annexation procedures rated only a "1"—that is, very low in importance. This could mean trouble for possible action in this area. On the other hand, ten members gave the issue the highest possible rating—a "5"—and ten gave it the next highest—a "4." Perhaps the swing vote lies in those members who feel like the thirteen respondents who placed them in the mid-range of importance—the thirteen members who decided it rated a "3."

Lease-purchase for state government

This issue came close to breaking the 200 point barrier (192 total points) and twenty-one members gave it a "4," which shows a fairly high level of importance. If the matter comes up during 1987, the key points likely to be raised are these:

1) Just what sort of lease-purchase arrangements are being discussed? Physical facilities such as buildings and other capital projects? Equipment? Something else? 2) What types of lease arrangements would be available, and which would be most beneficial

to the state? 3) Just how is this supposed to save the state and taxpayers money, and how much will it save?

These are specific questions which would have specific answers, depending upon the type of lease-purchase plans proposed.

Outlook: From the relatively high rating in total points this issue gained, it appears that the House members are willing to consider new methods of providing for the operation of state government. It would seem, therefore, that lease-purchase is a good candidate for discussion and possible action in 1987-88. On the other hand, the particulars of any such plan would be vital to its fate.

Mandatory seat belt law

The federal government is pushing for states to enact such laws, but response has been mixed. South Carolina legislators who answered our poll generally found this issue low in importance; specific reasons weren't given, but many people feel that mandatory laws infringe on individual rights. On the other hand, there is the argument that seat belts save lives and reduce injuries, thus keeping insurance and medical costs lower for everybody.

Outlook: This legislation has been introduced into the House before and came up for debate, but stopped right there. While the poll indicates little real interest in the issue, a concentrated effort could bring it to the attention of the General Assembly.

Lottery

Most House members who responded to the survey thought a state lottery was quite unimportant as an issue in 1987. There is considerable opposition to the idea for a variety of reasons: moral--gambling is wrong; social--poor people would spend too much of their money on lottery tickets; fiscal--lottery funds are not dependable enough for state government operations. On the other hand, supporters would like to see lottery money earmarked for specific uses--generally education or health care.

Outlook: If the answers by House members are any indication, the wheel of fortune will not be spinning any time soon in South Carolina.

Pari-mutuel betting

This issue received the lowest total points from legislators. Twenty-eight members put it last on their agendas in level of

importance. There is some support among horse breeders and racing fans to allow pari-mutuel betting in South Carolina, but not many people seem to be listening to them.

Outlook: Chances for action on this topic in 1987--a longshot at best.

Eminent domain

Eminent domain is the power of the state to condemn private land for public use. In 1986 the General Assembly considered, but did not pass, legislation that would have consolidated and simplified such procedures in South Carolina. The member survey shows that few Representatives place this at the head of their list of items, but many put it right in the middle.

Outlook: This is the sort of practical, unsensational legislation that is important but often unnoticed by the public. Unless there is some unexpected outcry ("Arbitrary Confiscation! Property Owners Claim") this issue seems likely to move ahead through the legislative process.

Conclusion

This survey of House members was designed to get their opinions on a number of possible issues for the upcoming session. Obviously, there were some topics which were missed--tourism, for example, or the problems associated with development and population growth along our coastal areas. There were other topics which could have been refined better--a more complete definition of "infrastructure bank," comes to mind.

However, the survey does give a general idea of the broad concerns of the S.C. House as it prepares to enter its 1987-88 session. Certain topics are clearly at the forefront of the legislative agenda--liability insurance, for example, or a continued interest in quality education. Other issues, while perhaps often reported in the popular press, are not as vital to House members--pari-mutuel betting and a state lottery clearly seem to fall into this category. Finally, the suggestions and comments by House members responding to the survey show a wide range of interests in state issues.

One last note: the House Research Office has conducted this survey and presented its results to help the members of the House prepare for the upcoming session of the South Carolina General Assembly. Thanks and appreciation are extended to those members who responded to the survey for their time and effort.