



From the  dome — To your  home

A legislative update from the Municipal Association of SC

2022 session
124th General Assembly

Legislative Report

2022 session of the 124th General Assembly

The second year of the 2021 – 2022 regular session of the 124th General Assembly was gaveled to a close May 12, 2022. Legislators then returned to Columbia on June 15 and June 28 to debate and adopt the state budget, conference committee reports and gubernatorial vetoes. The House and Senate passed a sine die resolution, or adjournment resolution, to return to Columbia later in 2022 to consider other specific pieces of legislation.

Bills that did not pass during the regular 2022 session are dead and will have to be reintroduced in the 2023 legislative session to receive any further action.

The state budget

Legislators returned to Columbia on June 15, to adopt the compromise \$38.2 billion budget for fiscal year 2023 and June 28 to vote on Gov. Henry McMaster's 73 vetoes. The budget includes full funding of the Local Government Fund and post-traumatic stress disorder programs.

The final budget includes these items:

- \$12.5 million added to the Local Government Fund base amount. Legislators fully funded the LGF at 5% for FY 2022-2023 in accordance with Act 84, which passed into law in 2019.
- \$37 million to cover 1% of the increase in public employers' retirement system contributions.
- \$750,000 for post-traumatic stress disorder treatment services for law enforcement and first responders. This includes the conference committee's additional \$250,000 in recurring dollars for the SC Law Enforcement Division and SC Labor, Licensing and Regulation for post-traumatic stress disorder treatment services.
- \$4 million in additional nonrecurring funds for tourism advertising.
- \$1 million in nonrecurring dollars to supplement the state's 10 councils of governments.
- \$3.5 million for the Firefighter Cancer Fund.
- \$2 million in additional recurring dollars for the rural stabilization fund for a total of \$12 million.

The final budget also included these provisos:

- An increase in employer State Health Plan premiums of 18.1% as of January 2023. The SC Public Employee Benefit Authority requested this increase, which applies to cities and towns that are on the State Health Plan.
- Removal of the compensation cap for return-to-work retirees in the South Carolina Retirement System and the Police Officers Retirement System after a 12-month break in service.
- Authorization for political subdivisions, including cities and towns, to implement or procure cleaning, sanitization and disinfection services and products that, at a minimum, meet the most current requirements and guidelines issued by the SC Department of Health and Environmental Control to mitigate the impact of any COVID-19 strains, as well as other communicable diseases.
- Creation of the Governor's Law Enforcement Officer of the Year Award. An advisory committee will annually select a state law enforcement officer of the year, a county law enforcement officer of the year and a municipal law enforcement officer of the year. Each winner will be recognized by the Governor and awarded \$10,000 which is not subject to South Carolina income taxes.

Bills passed by the General Assembly

Many of the more than 400 bills that the Association tracked during the 2022 session did not pass. Any bills that did not pass this session will have to be prefiled in December or reintroduced in January and start the legislative process over during the 2023 session. Find all bills the Association tracked for cities and towns during the 2021– 2022 session online at www.masc.sc (keyword: legislative tracking). Several of the most important passed bills are below:

Law enforcement reform

H3050/R246/Act 218 makes changes to current law enforcement practices to improve policies and training for law enforcement agencies. The new law prohibits uncertified officers from policing alone and tasks the SC Law Enforcement Training Council to establish minimum standards for all departments and agencies. The act adds “failure to intervene” and “failure to report” to the definition of misconduct. It also creates a Compliance Division at the SC Criminal Justice Academy to ensure compliance with minimum standards, with accredited agencies exempt from inspections. The act also authorizes the SC Law Enforcement Training Council to assess daily fines against noncompliant agencies and “hold in abeyance” the certification of officers from noncompliant agencies, as opposed to full suspension of the certifications.

Law enforcement reform was one of the advocacy initiatives for cities and towns in 2021 – 2022. For questions about this new law, effective dates and compliance, contact Erica Wright (ewright@masc.sc) at 803.354.4793.

Opioid settlement

H5182/R250/Act 222 is the legislation that implements the \$300 million opioid-related lawsuit settlement entered into by the state, counties and cities. The new law establishes the South Carolina Opioid Recovery Fund and the South Carolina Opioid Recovery Fund Board that allocates the funds that must be spent on opioid abatement strategies. For questions about the disbursement of these funds, contact Joannie Nickel (jnickel@masc.sc) at 803.354.4794.

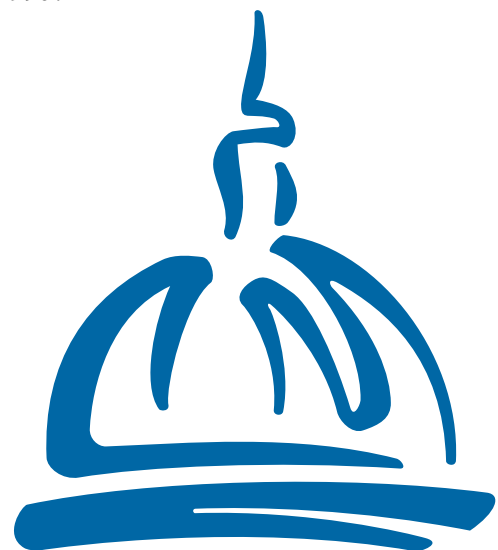
American Rescue Plan Act state allocation

H4408/R213 is a joint resolution of the House of Representatives and the Senate that authorizes the expenditure of federal funds disbursed to the state in the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021. Legislators split the funds between several state agencies to help both state and local governments make improvements to infrastructure, improve broadband access and roads.

Of the total allocation,

- \$454 million directed to the SC Department of Transportation,
- \$400 million directed to the SC Office of Regulatory Staff,
- \$100 million directed to the SC Office of Resilience,
- \$8 million directed to the SC Department of Administration,
- \$104 million directed to the SC Department of Health and Environmental Control, and
- \$900 million to the SC Rural Infrastructure Authority for local infrastructure improvement grants.

For questions about the allocations and grants, contact Erica Wright (ewright@masc.sc) at 803.354.4793.



Electronic waste

H4775/R268/Act 234 extends the state's electronic waste management program. The law requires all television and computer monitors to be recycled, and allows counties and solid waste authorities to participate in the program. Cities located in a county that does not participate may join with another county that does. The law maintains the existing landfill ban on electronics and convenes a stakeholder group in 2026 to prepare a report for review in 2027. The law sunsets in 2029. For questions about the new electronic recycling law, contact Joannie Nickel (jnickel@masc.sc) at 803.354.4794.

Service fees

S984 was introduced at the beginning of the legislative session to resolve the issue arising from the SC Supreme Court decision Burns vs. Greenville County Council. This court decision prohibited counties, cities and towns from enacting a service fee. This bill was ultimately stopped in the House.

However, S233/R252/Act 236, a property tax bill, was amended to include the same language from S984. That language was adopted in conference committee and signed by the governor. For questions about the service fees bill, contact Scott Slatton (sslatton@masc.sc) at 803.933.1203.

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 Twitter for real-time notification of legislative happenings and Association news and resources.

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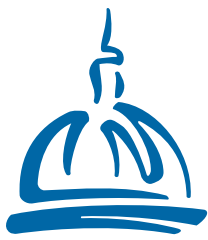
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Legislative Session by the Numbers

4,100+

Subscribers to the weekly legislative report

From the Dome to Your Home

15,000+

listens to **City Quick Connect** podcast tracks

6,300+

website views of **From the Dome to Your Home**

446

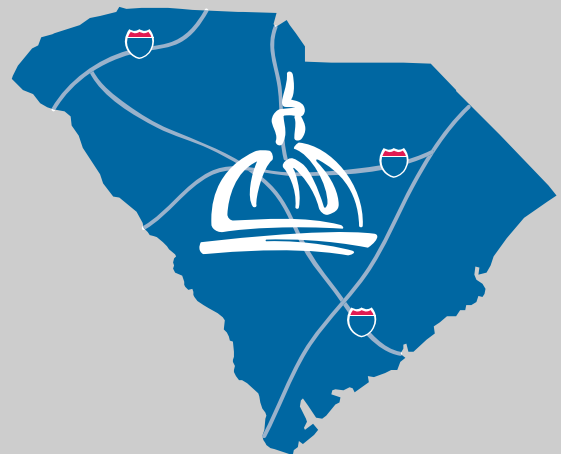
Tracked bills impacting SC cities and towns

Hold the date for Regional Advocacy Meetings

Municipal officials will have 10 opportunities to attend a Regional Advocacy Meeting around the state this fall. The conversations that happen during the Regional Advocacy Meetings play a key role in shaping the Municipal Association's Advocacy Initiatives, and this fall's sessions will serve as a time to plan for the entire 2023 – 2024 two-year legislative session.

Each meeting begins at 11 a.m. and concludes by 1 p.m. with lunch. There is no charge for the meetings, but registration is required for an accurate head count for lunch and handouts. To register, visit www.masc.sc (keyword: RAM). For more information, contact Casey Fields at cfields@masc.sc or 803.933.1256.

- September 6 – Rock Hill Operations Center, Rock Hill
- September 7 – Walterboro Wildlife Center, Walterboro
- September 8 – Manning Fire Department, Manning
- September 13 – The Edition at the Hartsville Museum, Hartsville
- October 5 – The Arts Center of Greenwood, Greenwood
- October 11 – Rollins Edwards Community Center, Summerville
- October 12 – C.C. Woodson Recreation Center, Spartanburg
- October 13 – Building and Development Building, Conway
- October 19 – Cayce City Hall, Cayce
- October 20 – Lessie B. Price Aiken Senior and Youth Center, Aiken





Federal Advocacy

Building Relationships in Washington

The Municipal Association of SC has expanded its focus on advocating for the interests of South Carolina's cities and towns at the federal level, and already the effort has improved engagement with the state's congressional delegation.

A key part of this effort has been the establishment of a dedicated congressional liaison — a role assigned to Erica Wright, who joined the Association's staff as a legislative and public policy advocate in April 2020. She has since nurtured relationships with the staffs of both of South Carolina's senators and each of its seven representatives. "Having these direct relationships positions us to have a front-row seat and direct involvement in legislation that impacts cities and towns, and we are already seeing this happen," Wright said.

Outreach with municipalities

The passage of the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act, or CARES Act, highlighted the need for strong federal relationships when many cities and towns brought questions about reimbursable expenses to the Association.

In March 2021, Congress passed the American Rescue Plan, a massive emergency relief bill that provides \$65.1 billion to municipal governments nationwide to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic. The Municipal Association worked to help cities and towns understand the parameters that the law creates for using the funds, and it helped the SC Department of Administration obtain needed information from the nonentitlement cities so they could draw their funds from the state.

The Association partnered with the White House Office of Intergovernmental Affairs to host an infrastructure briefing and listening session with South Carolina cities and towns. That session provided an opportunity for the state's local leaders to learn about the American Jobs Plans, and share their local infrastructure needs and priorities with White House staff.

Outreach with the congressional delegation

In 2022, the Association held quarterly meetings with the congressional delegation and it will host opportunities in each home congressional district for city and town officials to engage more directly with their senators and representatives. Congressional briefings provide a unique opportunity for local officials to learn about federal legislation that impacts their municipality directly from their U.S. Representative while connecting with other municipal leaders in their Congressional District.

18 outreach events to better connect city and town leaders to the Congressional delegation and their staff.