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Legislature Convenes, Leaves Work to be Done

The House and Senate came back into Session last week to take up a Continuing Resolution to ensure the state government continues to be funded past July 1 and to take up a Sine Die Resolution to allow the Legislature to take up bills past May 14. Unfortunately, the House and Senate could not agree on the Resolutions and left Columbia without an agreement. And, what was meant to be a quick day, was anything but in the Senate, with session lasting over five hours. Conversely, the House was in and out in under 90 minutes.

The controversy came in the Senate as to whether accept the House's version of the Continuing Resolution that included provisions dealing with the embattled Santee Cooper. As a result, the Legislature likely will have to return prior to May 14.

Regardless, here are the highlights of the House and Senate Continuing Resolutions:

The House's Continuing Resolution, H. 3485 does the following:

1. State government to operate at current levels
2. Authorizes state agencies to receive Fed funds for COVID-19
3. Establishes a COVID-19 fund (Gov. must submit plan to Joint Bond Review Committee for review and comment)
4. Directs \$200M to the State Treasurer from the 2019-2020 Contingency Reserve Fund
 - a. \$20M to the Disaster Trust Fund
 - b. \$180M COVID-19 Response Reserve Fund
 - i. Governor may direct reimbursement to local governmental entities and hospitals
 - ii. Governor may direct up to \$15M for the implementation of health and safety measures for the 2020 primary and general elections
5. Authorizes the Superintendent of Education to:
 - a. waive statutory requirements concerning testing, assessments, and reporting
 - b. include all distance learning days to the 180 required days for a complete school year
 - c. keeps teachers' salaries at 2019-2020 levels
6. Restricts Santee Cooper from entering into certain contracts

Senate Measures

The Senate passed H. 3411, its Continuing Resolution that is identical to the House-passed version with the exception provisions related to Santee Cooper. The Senate agreed to an amendment by Senator Larry Grooms (R-Berkeley) and Shane Massey (R-Edgefield) that reduced restrictions on Santee Cooper.

Now what?

There is still no continuing resolution, nor Sine Die resolution. The House and Senate have the option to come back in to take these matters up or Governor McMaster has the authority to call them back into session.

March Dominated by COVID-19, Governor's Executive Orders

In response to COVID-19, the Governor has issued an array of Executive Orders to deal with the virus. Here is a summary of those Executive Orders:

- Executive Order #7: Lifts various commercial transportation restrictions
- Executive Order #8: Declares State of Emergency
- Executive Order #9: Closes public schools, colleges, etc. to March 31
- Executive Order #10: Provides that DHEC and agencies waive regs; suspends dine-in services; suspends any event at public location to March 31; and, initiates coordination of National Guard
- Executive Order #11: Non-essential state employees to work from home; Waives waiting periods for unemployment benefits; extends employer SUTA payments to June 1; allows agency emergency procurement procedures; and, waives restrictions to provide for more room for patients, including Certificate of Need provisions;
- Executive Order #12: Recommends social distancing; and, waives restrictions on curbside delivery of beer and wine
- Executive Order #13: Allows law enforcement to break up crowds of three or more
- Executive Order #14: Requires any traveler from NJ, NY, CT or New Orleans to self-quarantine for 14 days
- Executive Order #15: Confirms previous COVID-19 orders; directs DHEC to do all means necessary to address virus; suspends visitations to correctional facilities; activates National Guard; directs SLED to delete licensing requirements for security companies; reaffirms that price gouging in effect; closes schools through April; authorizes colleges and schools to allow the remainder of the Spring semester to be done so remotely; extends various commercial transportation restrictions; and, provides a fine for not dispersing when ordered by law enforcement
- Executive Order #16: Closes public beaches, ramps, piers, and the like
- Executive Order #17: Closes non-essential businesses (entertainment venues, athletic facilities and activities, and close contact service providers)
- Executive Order #18: Closes additional non-essential businesses (sporting good, shoe, clothing, and furniture stores)
- Executive Order #19: Orders lodging, short-term rentals and the like to cease renting to individuals from NJ, NY, CT
- Executive Order #21: Home or Work Order – essentially a stay at home order
- Executive Order #22: Employer can make voluntary COVID-19 support payment to employees while the employee is receiving unemployment benefits
- Executive Order #23: Extends existing Executive Order by another 15 days

To view the Executive Orders, go to: <https://governor.sc.gov/executive-branch/executive-orders>

BEA Estimates COVID-19 to Cause Revenue Reduction

Last week, the Board of Economic Advisors released its updated budget forecast. The original \$1.9B surplus is now predicted to be \$1.2B less. The BEA plans to meet again May 14 to release a new report.

To view the full report, click here

<http://rfa.sc.gov/files/meetings/BEA%20Meeting%20agenda%20and%20materials%204-9-20.pdf>