

House vote overturns veto to keep I-73 money

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COLUMBIA --The House on Tuesday overrode Gov. Mark Sanford's veto of the \$1 million annual allocation for Interstate 73/74 on a 108-12 vote.

There was little discussion, as there was when the other vetoes were taken up. House members sustained 17 of the governor's 69 budget vetoes for a total of about \$2.5 million.

Sanford vetoed about \$72 million in the \$7 billion budget, saying he was trying to restore funds to pay for school bus fuel and reserves taken from the Medicaid fund.

The Senate will take up the vetoes today. Both sides must override or a veto is upheld.

The I-73/74 money was put in the budget five years ago for engineering and planning and to show federal officials the state's commitment to the project. The highway, which will be Horry County's first interstate link, is the state's top priority for new construction.

"We're relieved at such a strong show of support for I-73," said Brad Dean, president of the Myrtle Beach Area Chamber of Commerce and director of the National I-73/74 Corridor Association.

The large margin in favor of the funding shows the federal government the state is still committed to the road and to finding its share of the money, he said.

In other action Tuesday, Sen. Ray Cleary thanked colleagues for saving the taxpayers of Horry County some money.

He said the Horry County Schools board adopted a budget Monday with no tax increase after learning the required local tax match had been suspended for this year.

Cleary inserted the one-year provision in the budget after several attempts at bills in both the House and Senate had failed. The legislation aimed to remove the "maintenance of effort" rule that can dock school districts some of their state money if they do not raise enough tax of their own to match it.

The rule is considered unenforceable by some, especially after the 2006 law was passed that uses a 1 percent sales tax to pay for school operations statewide.

Horry County Schools did not need the tax increase but some members feared they had to raise taxes or risk losing some state money. Cleary said he will keep raising the issue until the law is changed.