

## **I-73/74 funds back in budget**

Senate to discuss property value assessment bill

### S.C. LEGISLATURE

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COLUMBIA --The Senate easily overrode the governor's veto of \$1 million for Interstate 73/74 planning on Wednesday, restoring the funds on a 33-9 vote.

In other legislative issues, a bill that would excuse owners of agricultural and undeveloped land from county stormwater fees died in the Senate, but a property value reassessment bill that would cost Horry County governments \$31 million clung to life.

Also, Gov. Mark Sanford signed the immigration bill into law.

"We all know that tourism is the economic engine that drives the state today," said Sen. Hugh Leatherman, R-Florence, asking for the override.

I-73 will be the first interstate highway into Horry County and is in the planning stages. The money is used for planning and engineering.

The stormwater bill was blocked by Sen. Ray Cleary, R-Murrells Inlet, and Sen. Mike Fair, R-Greenville.

Cleary said he will not remove his objection and the bill will not be taken up, even though it passed the House.

The bill would have undercut Horry County's stormwater program, in which the fees charged to all property owners have been used to correct flooding problems, County Council Chairwoman Liz Gilland said.

"For us to take that funding source away from them, I don't think that's fair," Cleary said. The fees should not be a burden on agricultural and other undeveloped land because it is taxed at a lower rate, he said.

Three senators blocked the bill that changes the law on when property is reassessed. The 2006 property tax relief law said property would keep its existing value, capped at a 15 percent increase in five years, unless it changed hands. Newly sold property is taxed at market value.

The bill would allow newly sold property to keep the existing tax value. Supporters of the change in the real estate and development industry say the existing law is stifling sales.

Trying another tactic for passage, House members attached the law change to a Senate bill Wednesday and sent it back to the Senate, where it will come up for discussion today.

Cleary said he is not sure what will happen to the bill.

"The benefit that I think people fail to realize is, we put the tax cap on property," so a buyer has that to rely on, he said.

At the signing of the immigration bill, Rep. Thad Viers, R-Myrtle Beach, was one of a few lawmakers invited to say a few words.

Viers sponsored dozens of immigration bills in the past two years and was on the committee that worked out the compromise measure.