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## WEEK IN THE LEGISLATURE

S.C. budget keeps most of Strand's allocations  
In approval stage, House digs in heels over reforms

By Zane Wilson - The Sun News

COLUMBIA --Negotiations restored most of the money for Horry and Georgetown county projects in the \$7.4 billion state budget except \$5 million for Interstate 73/74 and a cut of \$1 million in funds for beach drainpipe removal.

The budget still has not been approved because the House refused to act until there is agreement on tax relief, Department of Transportation reform and workers' compensation reform.

As the session came to a close Thursday, an agreement was reached on workers' compensation reform, but the DOT bill was still in limbo.

Lawmakers hope to finalize the bills and the budget when they come back into session June 19.

Legislators were close to agreement on tax relief. At issue is whether \$86 million in income tax cuts should be for everyone, as the Senate proposed, or the top earners, as the House and governor proposed.

Rep. Tracy Edge, R-North Myrtle Beach, tried several attempts to get the \$5 million in long-term financing for I-73/74 back into the budget but the Senate balked.

The House plan allocated \$5 million a year so the money could be used to issue bonds to start building the road that will link the Myrtle Beach area to its first interstate.

On Thursday, Edge also attached the House version of a bill that allows local governments to cut boat taxes to a development tax credit bill. The Senate had not acted on the boat tax bill, and members refused to accept the addition, so a committee of three members from each chamber was appointed to work out the differences.

Edge said he is convinced the tax cut on boats will make a huge difference in Horry County, attracting new boat owners and companies.

Boats are currently taxed at 10.5 percent of their value, with the local millage rate applied to that value. The bill allows counties to cut the rate to 6 percent.

Edge, who served on the conference committee on the budget, was named to the conference panel for the bill that includes the income and grocery tax cuts but not the boat tax measure.

#### CCU board bill

A bill allowing Coastal Carolina University's board to meet in other places besides Conway passed on Thursday. Rep. Liston Barfield, R-Aynor, had been working on the measure for several weeks.

It also clarifies that any property held in its name is under CCU's control.

"Does that mean they can go meet in the Bahamas if they want to?" Rep. Rex Rice, R-Easley, asked. Barfield said he didn't know about that, but that the board should be able to meet in Myrtle Beach if it wants to. There was no objection to the bill.

#### Autism coverage

Gov. Mark Sanford vetoed a bill requiring insurance companies to cover certain types of treatment for autism and related diseases, and both chambers overrode the veto; 43-0 in the Senate and 114-0 in the House.

Sen. Dick Elliott, D-North Myrtle Beach, was the main sponsor of the bill. He said it means that hundreds of children who could not be served will be helped by coverage.

Sanford said he objected to mandating coverage for specific health problems. Such mandates contribute to higher costs for other insured patients, he said.

Also, there are other ways to help families that have a member with the disorder, including special educational programs, he said in his veto message.

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#### At a glance

Budget compromise allocations:

Tourism promotion | \$20 million

Coastal Carolina University | \$15.7 million

I-73/74 | \$1 million

Beach renourishment | \$5 million

Beach drainpipe removal | \$4 million

Sales tax exemption for Hard Rock Park ride purchases | \$3 million

Myrtle Beach General Aviation Terminal replacement | \$2 million

Cherry Grove Inlet dredging | \$1 million

Shared Care | \$500,000

Conway stormwater project | \$230,000

Sea Haven | \$100,000

S.C. Hall of Fame | \$25,000

Atlantic Beach promotion | \$225,000

Murrells Inlet community center renovation | \$235,000

Horry County Parks | \$300,000

Burgess Center | \$185,000

Horry County Health Department | \$200,000

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