Friday, April 30, 2010

(Local Session)

~~Indicates Matter Stricken~~

Indicates New Matter

The Senate assembled at 11:00 A.M., the hour to which it stood adjourned, and was called to order by the ACTING PRESIDENT, Senator KNOTTS.

THIRD READING BILLS

The following Bills were read the third time and ordered sent to the House of Representatives:

S. 1323 -- Senators Matthews, Elliott, Malloy, Leventis, Leatherman, Land, McGill and Williams: A BILL TO AMEND TITLE 11 OF THE 1976 CODE, RELATING TO PUBLIC FINANCE, BY ADDING CHAPTER 54 TO ESTABLISH THE “I‑95 CORRIDOR AUTHORITY ACT” AND TO PROVIDE FOR THE COMPOSITION, DUTIES, AND POWERS OF THE AUTHORITY.

By prior motion of Senator LAND, with unanimous consent

**S. 1323--Recorded Vote**

Senator DAVIS desired to be recorded as voting against the second reading of the Bill.

S. 1392 -- Transportation Committee: A BILL TO AMEND CHAPTER 3, TITLE 56 OF THE 1976 CODE, RELATING TO MOTOR VEHICLE REGISTRATION AND LICENSING, TO PROVIDE FOR CERTAIN SPECIALTY LICENSE PLATES; TO AMEND SECTION 56-3-10810, RELATING TO ‘BOY SCOUTS OF AMERICA’ SPECIAL LICENSE PLATES, TO PROVIDE FOR ‘EAGLE SCOUT’ SPECIAL LICENSE PLATES; TO AMEND SECTION 56‑3‑2150, RELATING TO SPECIAL LICENSE PLATES FOR CERTAIN ELECTED OFFICIALS, TO PROVIDE THAT CORONERS MAY BE PROVIDED WITH TWO LICENSE PLATES; TO AMEND SECTION 56‑3‑1240, RELATING TO THE LOCATION ON VEHICLES WHERE LICENSE PLATES MUST BE ATTACHED, TO PROVIDE THAT A FRAME MAY BE PLACED AROUND A LICENSE PLATE UNDER CERTAIN CIRCUMSTANCES; AND TO AMEND SECTION 56‑3‑10410, RELATING TO A SPECIAL MOTOR VEHICLE LICENSE PLATE FOR VETERANS, TO PROVIDE FOR A DISABLED VETERAN SPECIAL LICENSE PLATE.

By prior motion of Senator SCOTT, with unanimous consent

S. 958 -- Senators Knotts, Davis and Rose: A BILL TO AMEND THE CODE OF LAWS OF SOUTH CAROLINA, 1976, BY ADDING SECTION 47‑1‑45 SO AS TO MAKE IT UNLAWFUL TO KNOWINGLY OR INTENTIONALLY CONFINE OR RESTRAIN AN ANIMAL IN A CRUEL MANNER OR KNOWINGLY OR INTENTIONALLY CAUSE SUCH CRUEL CONFINEMENT OR RESTRAINING OF AN ANIMAL, TO DEFINE CERTAIN TERMS IN REGARD TO THE ABOVE, TO PROVIDE PENALTIES FOR VIOLATION, AND TO PROVIDE THAT LOCAL GOVERNMENTS MAY ADOPT MORE STRINGENT LOCAL ORDINANCES GOVERNING THE CONFINEMENT OR RESTRAINING OF AN ANIMAL WITH CIVIL PENALTIES FOR VIOLATIONS.

By prior motion of Senator VERDIN, with unanimous consent

S. 1390 -- Senator Peeler: A BILL TO AMEND SECTION 8‑13‑1308, RELATING TO INFORMATION REGARDING EXPENDITURES THAT MUST BE CONTAINED IN A CERTIFIED CAMPAIGN REPORT, TO DELETE A REFERENCE TO CAMPAIGN FUNDS AND REQUIRE THAT ALL EXPENDITURES BE LISTED IN THE REPORT.

By prior motion of Senator PEELER, with unanimous consent

SECOND READING BILLS

The following Bill, having been read the second time, was ordered placed on the third reading Calendar:

S. 1405 -- Senator Coleman: A BILL TO PROVIDE FOR THE TRANSFER OF QUALIFYING STUDENTS FROM FAIRFIELD COUNTY SCHOOL DISTRICT TO CHESTER COUNTY SCHOOL DISTRICT; TO REQUIRE THE TREASURER OF FAIRFIELD COUNTY TO REMIT CERTAIN FUNDS PER TRANSFERRING PUPIL TO CHESTER COUNTY SCHOOL DISTRICT ON BEHALF OF FAIRFIELD COUNTY SCHOOL DISTRICT; TO PROVIDE FOR THE TIMING OF THE PAYMENT, AND TO REQUIRE THE STATE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION TO PAY THE AMOUNT DUE TO CHESTER COUNTY SCHOOL DISTRICT OUT OF FUNDS OTHERWISE ALLOCATED TO THE FAIRFIELD COUNTY SCHOOL DISTRICT PURSUANT TO THE EDUCATION FINANCE ACT IF THE TREASURER OF FAIRFIELD COUNTY FAILS TO PAY CHESTER COUNTY SCHOOL DISTRICT; TO ALLOW THE CHESTER COUNTY SCHOOL DISTRICT TO CONSIDER THESE PAYMENTS ANTICIPATED AD VALOREM TAXATION; TO REQUIRE THE STATE SUPERINTENDENT OF EDUCATION TO SETTLE ANY DISPUTE THAT ARISES BETWEEN THE DISTRICTS UPON THE IMPLEMENTATION AND ADMINISTRATION OF THE PROVISIONS OF THIS ACT; AND TO PROVIDE FOR THE PAYMENT OF MONIES PREVIOUSLY OWED TO CHESTER COUNTY SCHOOL DISTRICT.

By prior motion of Senator COLEMAN, with unanimous consent

REPORT RECEIVED

**Findings of Fact**

**Memorandum To: Clerk of the House**

**Clerk of the Senate**

**Re: Committee Hearings - April 20, 2010**

The Committee to Screen Candidates for Boards of Trustees of State Colleges and Universities finds the following candidates for Boards of Trustees qualified. Background reports from the State Law Enforcement Division show no felony charges against any of the candidates.

**Francis Marion University**

2nd District, Seat 3 Mr. Eddie Gunn

**Clemson University**

One Seat, at large

Dr. Ronnie Lee (report published March 16, 2010)

Ms. Weesie Poole

Mr. Neil C. Robinson

Mr. John Warner (report published March 16, 2010)

Respectfully submitted,

Senator Jake Knotts, Chairman Rep. Joan Brady, Vice-Chairman

Senator Thomas Alexander Rep. Lanny F. Littlejohn

Senator Harvey Peeler, Jr. Rep. David Mack

Senator Yancey McGill Rep. Bill Whitmire

COMMITTEE TO SCREEN CANDIDATES

FOR BOARDS OF TRUSTEES

OF STATE COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES

Tuesday, April 20, 2010

10:05 a.m. - 10:45 a.m.

The meeting was conducted on April 20, 2010 at 433 Blatt Building, Columbia, South Carolina, before Lisa F. Huffman, Court Reporter and Notary Public in and for the State of South Carolina.

APPEARANCES:

Senator Jake Knotts, Chairman

Representative Joan Brady, Vice Chairman

Senator Harvey Peeler, Jr.

Representative Lanny Littlejohn

Representative David Mack

Representative Bill Whitmire

Also Present: Sophia Derrick

THURSDAY, APRIL 20, 2010

CHAIRMAN KNOTTS: I will call this committee to screen candidates to the board and trustees of the state college and universities to order. And let -- I want to let everybody go around and introduce themselves from my left to my right.

REPRESENTATIVE WHITMIRE: Okay. Representative Bill Whitmire. I'm District 1, Oconee County.

REPRESENTATIVE LITTLEJOHN: Representative Lanny Littlejohn, Spartanburg and Cherokee County.

VICE CHAIRMAN BRADY: I'm Representative Joan Brady, House District 78 in Richland County and I am Vice Chair.

SENATOR PEELER: I'm Harvey Peeler, Senator from District 15. That's Cherokee, Spartanburg, Union, and York Counties.

CHAIRMAN KNOTTS: And I'm Jake Knotts representative of Senate District 23 in Lexington county. Okay. At this time, we're calling this meeting to order for the purpose of screening Francis Marion University candidates and Clemson University candidates. Candidates to be screened will be Mr. Eddie Gunn for the Francis Marion University, Dr. Ronnie Lee for Clemson, Ms. Weesie Poole for Clemson, Mr. Neil Robinson for Clemson, and Mr. John Warner for Clemson. This is one seat and is an at-large seat. Anything further from any of the candidates?

CANDIDATES: (No response.)

CHAIRMAN KNOTTS: Okay. Just a little bit of housekeeping here as to the wishes of the committee. We have from the Clemson University, we have Dr. Ronnie Lee that was screened at the last meeting where we screened candidates and he dropped out of that seat to run for this open seat here. We also had Ms. Weesie Poole. She was screened at the last committee screening and she also dropped out of that to run for this open seat. And we also had Mr. John Warner who was screened by the committee and dropped out to be able to run for this seat.

The candidate that has not been screened is Mr. Neil C. Robinson. And of course, we'll be screening him and Mr. Eddie Gunn from Francis Marion. I've got a couple new questions and I thought that I'd put it before the committee. As to what I would like to do is I'd like to bring Dr. Ronnie Lee, Ms. Weesie Poole, and Mr. John Warner up since they were already screened at the last committee briefly, and taking consideration the screening that we did last committee and then let them answer the new questions that I have devised to make sure that everybody's been screened for the same thing at this committee meeting. Do I have any objection to that?

COMMITTEE: (No response.)

CHAIRMAN KNOTTS: Okay. No objection. Okay. Well that's we'll do. So the first one to be screened -- I'm starting with Clemson University. And I would like Dr. Ronnie Lee. He was screened previously. If you'll come forward for the purpose of a brief screening and also the screening that was done at the last committee would be entered into the record for the purposes of screening at this time. Would you state your name?

DR. LEE: Ronnie Lee, Aiken, South Carolina.

CHAIRMAN KNOTTS: Okay. Listen, you were previously screened. Are there any changes to the previous screening that we need to know about? And everything the same?

DR. LEE: Yes, sir. No, sir and yes, sir.

CHAIRMAN KNOTTS: Okay. Let the previous screen enter into the record. Is there any objection?

COMMITTEE: (No response.)

CHAIRMAN KNOTTS: Okay. I would like for you to answer the following questions: Mr. Lee, do you have any interests professionally or personally, that would prevent a conflict of interest because of your service on the board?

DR. LEE: No, sir.

CHAIRMAN KNOTTS: Do you now hold any public position of honor or trust that, if elected, would cause you to violate the dual office holding clause of the constitution?

DR. LEE: No, sir.

CHAIRMAN KNOTTS: If your seat is determined by congressional district or judicial circuit, do you reside at the address on your driver's license, voter registration, and property tax statement on a full-time basis? And when I say "property tax statement," that is your four percent claim of residence.

DR. LEE: First Clemson seats are at-large. But regardless, I do answer "yes" to the question.

CHAIRMAN KNOTTS: Okay. Well I just wanted to make -- that's a new question we're going to be asking all candidates.

DR. LEE: Yes, sir.

CHAIRMAN KNOTTS: Okay. Any questions from any of the committee members?

COMMITTEE: (No response.)

CHAIRMAN KNOTTS: Okay. Thank you. Do y'all want to vote on one at a time or do y'all want to vote on them as a whole? Do I have a motion?

SENATOR PEELER: Motion for favorable report.

VICE CHAIRMAN BRADY: Second.

CHAIRMAN KNOTTS: I have a motion from the Senator from Gaffney for a favorable report. A second from Representative Brady. Any discussion?

COMMITTEE: (No response.)

CHAIRMAN KNOTTS: No discussion. All in favor say, "Aye."

COMMITTEE: Aye.

CHAIRMAN KNOTTS: Okay. Let it be known it's unanimous. Okay. The next one I'd like to call is Ms. Weesie Poole. Ms. Poole, is anything changed in your last screening --

MS. POOLE: No, sir.

CHAIRMAN KNOTTS: -- that we need to know about at this committee?

MS. POOLE: No, sir. Nothing's changed.

CHAIRMAN KNOTTS: Everything's correct?

MS. POOLE: Yes, sir.

CHAIRMAN KNOTTS: Okay. Do you have any objection to it being entered in the record of the screening for this committee?

MS. POOLE: No, sir.

(Recorded Sworn Statement taken February 18, 2010.)

CHAIRMAN KNOTTS: Okay. If you would, just briefly state why you want to serve on the board.

MS. POOLE: Mr. Chairman, thank you so much for the opportunity to be here today. I appreciate your time.

CHAIRMAN KNOTTS: Would you pull your microphone down a bit? There you go.

MS. POOLE: I'm sorry. Is that better?

CHAIRMAN KNOTTS: Yes, ma'am.

MS. POOLE: I kind of changed what I was going to say after someone spoke before me, but I am a cheerleader for Clemson University. I am a passionate Clemson tiger. I bleed orange and I did not really wear orange-colored glasses until today when I put them on. I will defend Clemson until my dying day. I have been so fortunate to serve on several boards.

I've been on the executive board of the parents council. And I've been on the board of visitors where I chaired the student affairs committee. And so I feel like I've really gotten to know the ins and outs of Clemson and have developed such a love. But I was born a tiger through family. And I've been a lifelong fan and supporter.

I want to see Clemson continue to accept a large percentage of students from the state of South Carolina with affordable tuition for the students and those families. But I do want to see her maintain her standard of excellence and be second to none.

CHAIRMAN KNOTTS: Any member on the committee have a question? Yes, ma'am, Ms. Brady?

VICE CHAIRMAN BRADY: You did allude to the question that I've asked, but just specifically, what would be your position as a board member on tuition increases?

MS. POOLE: Well I think you need to know first, see what federal dollars, research dollars are out there. And if there are none, I could not compromise the quality of a higher education for Clemson students. I had a daughter that graduated. And I know my money was well spent. I would like to keep it affordable, but I wouldn't compromise the quality of education.

CHAIRMAN KNOTTS: Representative Whitmire?

REPRESENTATIVE WHITMIRE: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Ms. Poole, after seeing your maiden name, I'm sure you're infinitely qualified.

VICE CHAIRMAN BRADY: I was going to ask about that.

CHAIRMAN KNOTTS: Okay. Listen to the following questions. I know it's an at-large seat, but we just doing this to make sure we're all right with everything. Do you have interests professionally or personally that would present a conflict of interest because of your service on the board?

MS. POOLE: No, sir.

CHAIRMAN KNOTTS: Do you now hold any public position of honor or trust that, if elected, would cause you violate the dual office holding clause of the constitution?

MS. POOLE: No, sir.

CHAIRMAN KNOTTS: If your seat is determined by congressional district or judicial circuit, do you reside at the address on your driver's license, voter registration, and property tax residential statement on a full-time basis?

MS. POOLE: Yes, sir. I do.

CHAIRMAN KNOTTS: Do you understand that you are prohibited from seeking a commitment until 48 hours after release of this committee's report?

MS. POOLE: Yes, I do, sir.

CHAIRMAN KNOTTS: Okay. Do I have any questions from the committee?

COMMITTEE: (No response.)

CHAIRMAN KNOTTS: Do I have a motion?

REPRESENTATIVE WHITMIRE: So moved.

VICE CHAIRMAN BRADY: Second.

CHAIRMAN KNOTTS: I have a motion and a second. Any discussion?

COMMITTEE: (No response.)

CHAIRMAN KNOTTS: No discussion for a favorable report. All in favor, raise your right hand. Let it be unanimous.

Okay. Dr. Lee, the same question that, of course, you was told -- you answered the question in your last one, but do you understand that you are prohibited from seeking a commitment until 48 hours after release of the committee's report?

DR. LEE: Yes, sir.

CHAIRMAN KNOTTS: Okay. The next person would be Mr. John Warner. Mr. John Warner, you've previously been screened by this committee?

MR. WARNER: Yes, sir.

CHAIRMAN KNOTTS: Okay. Do you have any objections to -- anything to correct in your last screening?

MR. WARNER: No, sir.

CHAIRMAN KNOTTS: Do you have any objection to being made a part of the report for the purpose of this screening?

MR. WARNER: No, sir.

CHAIRMAN KNOTTS: Okay. Answer the following questions: Do you have any interests professionally or personally that would present a conflict of interest because of your service on the board?

MR. WARNER: No, sir.

CHAIRMAN KNOTTS: Do you now hold any public position of honor and trust that, if elected, would cause you to violate the dual office holding clause of the constitution?

MR. WARNER: I serve on the South Carolina Venture Capital Authority Board and I would resign if I were elected.

CHAIRMAN KNOTTS: Okay. Say that again so we can.

MR. WARNER: I serve on the South Carolina Venture Capital and Authority Board. And if that were a conflict, I would resign to server on the seat.

CHAIRMAN KNOTTS: Okay. If your seat is determined by congressional district or judicial circuit, do you reside at the address on your driver's license, voter registration, and property tax residency statement on a full-time basis?

MR. WARNER: Yes, sir.

CHAIRMAN KNOTTS: Do you understand that you are prohibited from seeking a commitment until 48 hours after release of the committee's report?

MR. WARNER: Yes, sir.

CHAIRMAN KNOTTS: Okay. Any questions from the committee?

COMMITTEE: (No response.)

CHAIRMAN KNOTTS: No questions from the committee. Do I have a motion?

SENATOR PEELER: Favorable report.

CHAIRMAN KNOTTS: I have a motion for a favorable report from the senator from Gaffney. And --

VICE CHAIRMAN BRADY: Second.

CHAIRMAN KNOTTS: -- a second from Representative Brady. Any discussion?

COMMITTEE: (No response.)

CHAIRMAN KNOTTS: There'll be no discussion. All in favor, raise your right hand. Okay. Let it be unanimous. Thank you.

MR. WARNER: Thank you.

CHAIRMAN KNOTTS: Each of you who just came before the committee, you were sworn under your last screen so we took that into consideration so you're still under sworn testimony. Okay. The next one would be Mr. Neil C. Robinson from Clemson. Mr. Robinson --

MR. ROBINSON: From Charleston.

CHAIRMAN KNOTTS: Thank you. You have not been screened by this committee in the past. So he is up for this screening for the first time. Okay. State your name, sir.

MR. ROBINSON: Neil C. Robinson, Jr.

CHAIRMAN KNOTTS: Okay. Mr. Robinson, raise your right hand. Do you swear to tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, so help you God --

MR. ROBINSON: I do.

CHAIRMAN KNOTTS: -- in front of this committee?

MR. ROBINSON: I do.

CHAIRMAN KNOTTS: Okay. Listen to the following questions for me, please: Do you have any interests professionally or personally that would present a conflict of interests because of your service on the board?

MR. ROBINSON: No, sir.

CHAIRMAN KNOTTS: Do you now hold any public position of honor or trust that, if elected, would cause you to violate the dual office holding clause of the constitution?

MR. ROBINSON: I do not. Let me disclose to you, though, Senator, because it will come up in my testimony that I am chair of the Education Oversight Committee. That committee has been ruled by the Ethics Commission not to be a position of trust or honor. We do not have to file ethics forms. And that was deemed not to be a violation of the constitution. If at some future date that were to change, I would resign from that position in order to serve on Clemson board.

CHAIRMAN KNOTTS: Any questions from the committee?

COMMITTEE: (No response.)

CHAIRMAN KNOTTS: Okay. If your seat is determined by congressional district or judicial circuit, do you reside at the address on your driver's license, voter registration, and property tax statement of residency on a full-time basis?

MR. ROBINSON: I do.

CHAIRMAN KNOTTS: Okay. Do you understand that if you are receiving a favorable report from this committee that you are prohibited from seeking a commitment until 48 hours after release of the committee's report.

MR. ROBINSON: I do.

CHAIRMAN KNOTTS: Do you have any questions about that?

MR. ROBINSON: No, sir.

CHAIRMAN KNOTTS: You fully understand that?

MR. ROBINSON: Yes, sir.

CHAIRMAN KNOTTS: Okay. All right. Mr. Robinson, tell us why you want to serve on the --

MR. ROBINSON: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

CHAIRMAN KNOTTS: Hold on just a minute. Let me -- staff, you did a background on him?

MS. DERRICK: Yes.

CHAIRMAN KNOTTS: Can you give us a report on the background?

MS. DERRICK: A SLED background check?

CHAIRMAN KNOTTS: Yes, ma'am. Of all the background check you did?

MS. DERRICK: All the background checks on all of the candidates were fine.

CHAIRMAN KNOTTS: What about driver's license?

MS. DERRICK: Yes, sir. It was fine. Uh-huh. It was appropriate.

CHAIRMAN KNOTTS: When you say, "fine," you checked with who?

MS. DERRICK: SLED.

CHAIRMAN KNOTTS: And what else?

MS. DERRICK: And what else?

CHAIRMAN KNOTTS: Uh-huh.

MS. DERRICK: What do you mean besides --

CHAIRMAN KNOTTS: Driving record?

MS. DERRICK: Yes. We checked everything.

CHAIRMAN KNOTTS: Okay. Credit checks?

MS. DERRICK: No records whatsoever. Credit report checks. We did family court, all that. Everything was fine.

CHAIRMAN KNOTTS: Okay. So that's what we wanted to know, to make sure.

MS. DERRICK: He's clear.

CHAIRMAN KNOTTS: Okay. Mr. Robinson, if you would, please tell the committee why you would like to serve on the committee.

MR. ROBINSON: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

CHAIRMAN KNOTTS: I mean on the board of trustees.

MR. ROBINSON: I would prefer that. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN KNOTTS: You don't want to serve on this committee.

MR. ROBINSON: I'm really pleased to finally have the opportunity to address the committee however. You know, I think every South Carolinian is proud of Clemson and it's academic reputation. Not only for the stellar education programs that it offers, but for the huge research and economic development support that it provides to business and industry of South Carolina. I know this firsthand because my business is all about promoting, growing the business and industry in South Carolina. My candidacy for this open seat is really based on three distinct qualifications.

First, significant background of professional accomplishment as a real estate and economic development attorney. Second, a dedication to improving public education opportunities for every child in South Carolina. And third, an abiding love and appreciation for Clemson University and the future and promise that it holds for all South Carolinians. While my real estate development legal practice spans the United States, most of my practice has been in South Carolina with an emphasis on large, commercial recreational and resort real estate developments. I represent the Ports Authority in its real estate matters and I represent the largest land owners in the state.

I recently represented the joint venture between the MeadWestvaco and the Rockefeller Group that brought 1.1 million square foot Tire Kingdom distribution center to Berkeley County. And I'm on the legal team representing Boeing Aircraft, which negotiated the deal with South Carolina to bring the Dreamliner 787 Assembly Plant to North Charleston. I currently serve as designee of Clemson University to the Clemson Real Estate Foundation Board, which oversees the I-CAR Research Campus in Greenville as well as other real estate holdings of Clemson. And I'm Clemson's designee to Pate Foundation Board which oversees Clemson's substantial real estate holdings and research in Georgetown County. My passion for education grew from my legal experience in economic development.

Literacy and technology are now simply prerequisites for gainful employment. About 12 years ago, I brought together a group of the largest employers in the Charleston area and formed the Charleston Education Network. This group has re-engaged the business community with the public school district and significant positive changes have been achieved since that time. In 2005, Senator Glenn McConnell appointed me to the South Carolina Education Oversight Committee. I was recently elected chair of that committee, which as you know, was composed of legislators, educators, and business leaders, who together provide an independent oversight and accountability to South Carolina's public schools.

As for Clemson, my connections run long and deep. I graduated in 1966. I was president of the Inter-Fraternity Council. I was selected Outstanding Senior of my graduating class. Since that time, I've supported the alumni association every year and I'm a life donor to IPTAY. I served on the Humanities Foundation Board, two terms as president of the Clemson Advancement Foundation, and currently serve on 5 Clemson Boards including the Board of Visitors.

Last year, in 2009, I was selected to receive the Distinguished Service Award, which is Clemson's highest honor awarded to an alumnus. Clemson has been in the Lowcountry for over a decade with the school of architecture teaching design and preservation courses in historic Charleston. Several years ago, the need for a permanent Charleston facility led to negotiations for a site on which to construct a new architecture center. I assisted Clemson in lengthy negotiations with downtown neighborhoods and preservation associations and finally was able to secure a highly desirable site of Meeting Street directly across from the College of Charleston for this center and also some of the funding for that acquisition. Around the same time, I facilitated meetings and coordinated negotiations between Clemson and Senator McConnell, Mayor Summey of North Charleston, and the Ports Authority, resulting in the largest gift ever to Clemson consisting of the Lash(ph.) research laboratory, a dry dock on the Cooper River, and 80 acres of the former navy base.

This property was appraised at 49 million dollars and became the site of the Clemson Restoration Institute. Recently, I have assisted Clemson in raising $750,000 dollars in less than a day for a matching grant application. And within two weeks after that, working with key legislators of the Ports Authority, City of North Charleston, and the Navy Base Redevelopment Authority, I secured the funds and additional property valued at $53 million dollars as a match, which resulted in the award of the $45 million-dollar Department of Energy Grant, the largest grant ever received by either Clemson or the State of South Carolina for construction of the world's first off-shore wind turbine drive training facility. With the success of this facility, it is very likely that a major manufacturing facility will follow at the navy base.

In closing, I would just like to emphasize that Clemson needs board representation along the coastal counties. All of the currently elected Clemson trustees and all of the other candidates for this open position are from the Upstate or the Midlands. I have offices in Charleston, Hilton Head, and Myrtle Beach. And I regularly work with legislators, agencies, and businesses that can promote and assist the huge opportunities that face Clemson in the Low country and along the coast. Clemson will soon realize over 150 million dollars in assets in the Greater Charleston area, all of which have been given to the school, yet there's no elected trustee east of Columbia.

The Charleston alumni area has the second highest alumni base of anywhere in the world. To that end, I respectfully submit my qualifications for the open trustee seat for your consideration. Thank you. And I'll answer any questions.

CHAIRMAN KNOTTS: Any questions from any of the committee? Ms. Brady.

VICE CHAIRMAN BRADY: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. And I did ask this question of the other candidates at the initial screening. So Mr. Robinson, I will ask you as well. Your position regarding tuition increases at Clemson? Briefly, please.

MR. ROBINSON: Having a son that's about to graduate, I am keenly aware of the tuition impacts on families. And to me that would be a source of last resort. There are really three basic ways to gain revenue for a supported institution. And that's from the legislature, from gifts and grants, and from tuition. Those are three key areas.

I would like to think in Clemson's case, being a land-grant college that we can perhaps generate a fourth source of revenue. And that's to find ways to utilize some of the 30,000-plus acres that Clemson owns as revenue-producing properties. And if I'm elected, that will be one of the foremost things that I want to attempt to do is to try to find additional sources of revenue using the resources that Clemson has and keep the tuition rates to an absolute minimum.

CHAIRMAN KNOTTS: Any other question?

REPRESENTATIVE WHITMIRE: Thank you, Mr. Robinson, for your service to our state. I'm not a Clemson graduate, but I live in Oconee County, so I'm sure around a lot of orange. What I hear from a lot of parents and students, they're concerned that this new vision that Clemson has now seems to be leaving the in-state students behind. In other words, there's not as many in-state, in their opinion, not allowed to get into Clemson as they feel they should be. Do you have any opinion on that?

MR. ROBINSON: Well I think that's a terrific question and one that concerns me greatly. I am advised -- and I haven't seen the data yet to be able to say this with certainty, but I'm advised that about the same percentage of students today are South Carolinians as has been historically the pattern. The percentage really hasn't changed much. Because the number of students has grown, however, that means that there are probably more out-of-state students. But percentage-wise, I understand it's about the same.

From a vision standpoint, you know, I think this whole idea of being top 20 is a great thing. I'd like to be in the top of whatever you're participating in. But that shouldn't be the goal. If we do the right things and end up in the top 20, that's wonderful. But to say that everything's going to be focused just to be in the top 20 is not the proper view.

REPRESENTATIVE WHITMIRE: That's what I hear all the time.

MR. ROBINSON: We're going to look at that. If I'm elected, we'll look at that.

REPRESENTATIVE WHITMIRE: Okay.

REPRESENTATIVE LITTLEJOHN: Mr. Robinson, my question is very similar to what Mr. Whitmire had for us: educating South Carolina students versus educating out-of-state students. And I think you pretty well answered that in your philosophy as far as meeting the 20 top best schools in the nation, but could you maybe elaborate a little bit more on educating our local students versus the out-of-state students?

MR. ROBINSON: We have a lot of really good South Carolina students, you know. Every year, we're participate in this reporting of what the schools are doing. And we have a number of really qualified students that can perform in schools anywhere in the United States. So my goal is to keep those students in state.

REPRESENTATIVE LITTLEJOHN: Okay.

MR. ROBINSON: We don't want them going off because the odds are if they go off to school, there's a chance that they won't be coming back here to work. So I'm all for giving every South Carolina student the highest opportunity to try to attend Clemson University. And if not Clemson, certainly one of our other state institutions. But it is a key thing to face at Clemson today is to, you know, what that mix should be between in-state and out-of-state students and what the rigor should be in the admissions process.

REPRESENTATIVE WHITMIRE: Okay.

SENATOR PEELER: Mr. Chairman, if there are no other questions, I move a favorable report.

CHAIRMAN KNOTTS: I've got one question. Mr. Robinson, I see on here that you're a member of Nexsen Pruet. Other attorneys have performed legal services for Clemson. If you're elected to the board, you don't intend to represent Clemson?

MR. ROBINSON: No, sir. Everything that I have done for Clemson has been pro bono. I never charged them a fee. We do provide some environmental services and all, but I would recuse myself and not provide any legal services for Clemson.

CHAIRMAN KNOTTS: The other thing is I have the same concerns that has been raised previously by other members of the committee concerning the in-state students. I got a call from a guy about a month ago. Finished number one or either number two from the University of South Carolina in engineering. And he had trouble getting into Clemson. Of course, I think it's been worked out now. I think his records, I think, wasn't the cause of Clemson not accepting him. His records was sent to the undergraduate instead of the graduate.

MR. ROBINSON: I heard about that case.

CHAIRMAN KNOTTS: You did?

MR. ROBINSON: Yes, sir.

CHAIRMAN KNOTTS: Okay. I think that's been worked out now. But I do share the same concerns that the previous question was about making sure that our students in South Carolina are at the head of the class when it comes to trying to get into Clemson if they qualify.

MR. ROBINSON: Yes, sir.

CHAIRMAN KNOTTS: Because that's a state college, state-supported. And we really need to look after our own. Any other questions?

SENATOR PEELER: Mr. Chairman, I must be better about keeping my mouth closed because when you told me that story, I started to have a smart remark, but I'm going to save that smart remark.

CHAIRMAN KNOTTS: I had one too.

SENATOR PEELER: Did you say that he finished number one at Carolina and couldn't get in Clemson?

CHAIRMAN KNOTTS: That's exactly what I said.

SENATOR PEELER: There's no other questions, I move for a favorable report.

CHAIRMAN KNOTTS: Thank you. Okay. Any second?

REPRESENTATIVE LITTLEJOHN: I second.

CHAIRMAN KNOTTS: I have a second by Representative Littlejohn. Any discussion?

COMMITTEE: (No response.)

CHAIRMAN KNOTTS: All in favor say, "Aye."

COMMITTEE: Aye.

CHAIRMAN KNOTTS: All opposed?

COMMITTEE: (No response.)

CHAIRMAN KNOTTS: May it be unanimous. Thank you, Mr. Robinson. Okay. Yes, sir.

MR. LEE: I have a request. Can I read a quote from Thomas Green Clemson.

CHAIRMAN KNOTTS: State your name. State your name.

MR. LEE: Ronnie Lee, again. I hope I'm not out of line, but in light of the sentiments we all have about Clemson exists to educate its students, I found this quote from Thomas Green Clemson that I think is -- kind of shares the visions we have. It says, "I trust. I do not exaggerate the importance of such an institution for developing the material resources of the state by affording to it's youth --" that's the key word.

"It's youth" refers to the state. "by affording to its youth the advantages of scientific culture." So even Thomas Green Clemson will wished that the institution exist to educate our own.

CHAIRMAN KNOTTS: Thank you. Okay. Let me -- any objections to the ones that's been screened with a favorable report being excused?

SENATOR PEELER: Mr. Chairman, I've got a question.

CHAIRMAN KNOTTS: Yes, sir.

SENATOR PEELER: The date's been set for the election of these trustees?

CHAIRMAN KNOTTS: No, sir.

SENATOR PEELER: When would you think?

MR. DERRICK: It's either the 12th or the 19th, the 12th or 19th of May.

SENATOR PEELER: I'm just figuring we may get out of here a little earlier this year, which is -- we just want to be cognizant of it. We won't be here to be able to vote on it if we --

CHAIRMAN KNOTTS: We'll get it as early as possible.

SENATOR PEELER: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

CHAIRMAN KNOTTS: That would be -- we'll put in a resolution to do that and I'll notify each and every one of you. Okay. Members of the Clemson University that have been screened, y'all are free to leave. And remember, you cannot seek a commitment from anyone in this state legislature, house or senate, until 48 hours after we release our report. You got it? Okay. Thank you.

We now have the Francis Marion is Mr. Eddie Gunn for the 2nd District, Seat 3.

MR. GUNN: Hello, Mr. Chairman, members of the committee.

CHAIRMAN KNOTTS: Mr. Gunn?

MR. GUNN: Yes, sir.

CHAIRMAN KNOTTS: State your name, please?

MR. GUNN: William Edward Gunn.

CHAIRMAN KNOTTS: Okay. And raise your right hand, please? Do you swear to tell the truth, the whole truth to this committee, so help you God?

MR. GUNN: Yes, sir. I do.

CHAIRMAN KNOTTS: Okay. Answer the following questions.

MR. GUNN: Yes, sir.

CHAIRMAN KNOTTS: Mr. Gunn, do you have any interests professionally or personally that would present a conflict of interest because of your service on the board?

MR. GUNN: No, sir.

CHAIRMAN KNOTTS: Do you now hold any public position of honor or trust that, if elected, would cause you to violate the dual office holding clause of the constitution?

MR. GUNN: No, sir.

CHAIRMAN KNOTTS: If your seat is determined by congressional district or judicial circuit -- and you yours is -- do you reside at the address on your driver's license, voter registration, and the property tax statement of residence on a full-time basis?

MR. GUNN: Yes, sir. I do.

CHAIRMAN KNOTTS: Do you understand that you are prohibited from seeking a commitment until 48 hours after the release of the committee's report?

MR. GUNN: Yes, sir.

CHAIRMAN KNOTTS: Okay. Any questions from the committee?

COMMITTEE: (No response.)

CHAIRMAN KNOTTS: Okay. Mr. Gunn, if you would, please briefly state to us why you are interested in serving on this board.

MR. GUNN: Thank you, Mr. Chairman, members of the committee. I grew up in Florence, South Carolina. My early formative years as a proud graduate of McClenaghan High School which no longer exists, but watched the development of this small University in Eastern Florence develop into two-year campus of the University of South Carolina. Until it became Francis Marion College in 1970, and then later Francis Marion University, I've watched this school grow from a hand full of students that used to meet in the public library to a beautiful campus on 400 acres at a pristine Pee Dee area. I'm proud of the heritage of Pee Dee area, proud to have been a son of the Pee Dee and would like to give back to the community in some small way. And I feel like that my public service experience will lend itself towards making some significant contributions. Prior to my entry in the public service, however, I was an educator in the public and independent schools of Horry County and watched young folks grow up, finish high school, go on to secondary education and achieve great things. And I would like to have this opportunity to give back.

CHAIRMAN KNOTTS: Okay. Any questions from any of the committee? Representative Brady.

VICE CHAIRMAN BRADY: I'm going to ask you the same question.

MR. GUNN: Sure.

VICE CHAIRMAN BRADY: I ask all the candidates regarding tuition increases. And also how are your two daughters, Mae Todd and Chesley? And they are cute girls.

MR. GUNN: I'll take the second question first. They are both doing great. Representative Brady, I'm pleased to say that Francis Marion has a history of having one of the lower tuition rates in the state. I think they've been very judicious in applying any tuition increases. One of the reasons I think that this is done is that so many of the students who attend Francis Marion University are first generation college students. A significant portion of the student body comes from 50 miles around Florence, of course, from the Pee Dee area. There's a high minority population. And Francis Marion University has one of the highest minority student body of any public university in this state. We're certainly providing a significant service to people in that area of the state that otherwise might not be able to afford it. So we have to be careful about making any significant tuition increases that would impact them.

VICE CHAIRMAN BRADY: Okay.

CHAIRMAN KNOTTS: Any other questions from any members?

SENATOR PEELER: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Eddie, how would you answer this question if someone posed a question, "Would there be a conflict or do you see some conflict with your Budge and Control Board and your service on the board?"

MR. GUNN: Sir, thank you for asking that. In the event that an issue involving Francis Marion University were to arise and the job that I hold as Chief-of-Staff at Budget and Control, I would certainly step aside and recuse myself on that and not participate in that decision. Since I don't have a vote on the board, it wouldn't be hard for me to do. But I would at any time a policy matter, then I -- I'd leave that to Frank.

CHAIRMAN KNOTTS: Any other questions?

COMMITTEE: (No response.)

SENATOR PEELER: Favorable report.

CHAIRMAN KNOTTS: Okay. Thank you, Mr. Gunn. At this time, the committee has been offered a favorable report by the Senator from Gaffney.

VICE CHAIRMAN BRADY: Second.

CHAIRMAN KNOTTS: And a second by Representative Brady from Richland. Any discussion?

COMMITTEE: (No response.)

CHAIRMAN KNOTTS: No discussion. Then all in favor say, "Aye."

COMMITTEE: Aye.

CHAIRMAN KNOTTS: Therefore, we've had a favorable report. Do you understand fully that you cannot seek a commitment until 48 hours --

MR. GUNN: Yes, sir.

CHAIRMAN KNOTTS: -- after the committee presents its report?

MR. GUNN: I do.

CHAIRMAN KNOTTS: Okay. Thank you, sir.

MR. GUNN: Thank you, Senator.

CHAIRMAN KNOTTS: Any other?

COMMITTEE: (No response.)

CHAIRMAN KNOTTS: Okay. I move that this committee -- I adjourn this committee until -- go ahead, Representative Brady.

VICE CHAIRMAN BRADY: Mr. Chairman, I was just curious about the position that vacated with the death of Michael Mungo. Are we going to try to do that screening or what the process is for that?

CHAIRMAN KNOTTS: We're going to try our best to get the screening out and get it done, voted on before we go home or possibly come back for vetoes. We've included that to have a vote to make sure that that position is filled is soon as possible by the general assembly.

VICE CHAIRMAN BRADY: Timewise, would it be possible to coordinate it with this upcoming election?

CHAIRMAN KNOTTS: No, ma'am. We can't. We've looked at that. Staff and I looked at it and I also talked with leadership in the Senate and leadership in the House. And due to the time frame requirements that we have to have the application and then people can apply it out. We have to put it out for 30 days, at which time, we've already put it out and they would get it as soon as it closed, I will convene this committee as soon as possible to screen the candidates and then we'll expedite as soon as possible the report so that they can take the 48 hours they need to after that to get the commitments. So we're hopefully, we're going to get it done as soon as possible.

VICE CHAIRMAN BRADY: And one more question, sir.

CHAIRMAN KNOTTS: Does any -- does everybody agree with that.

COMMITTEE: Okay.

VICE CHAIRMAN BRADY: And regarding this election, when are we going to know whether it's the 12th or the 19th. Again, is that something you need to check on?

CHAIRMAN KNOTTS: We will make that decision shortly. And we'll have a resolution sent to the House.

MS. DERRICK: We're actually going to have it up in the same time as -- what else is left? Public Service Commission? It's going to be all together.

CHAIRMAN KNOTTS: Yeah, we'll have -- we're going to coordinate for that, make sure it's all together. So we won't have to have two joint assemblies.

VICE CHAIRMAN BRADY: We love having you all.

CHAIRMAN KNOTTS: Why did you all boo us last time?

SENATOR PEELER: Mr. Chairman, I don't know if this is the proper venue, but I had a question about the possibility of numbered seats for the Clemson Board of Trustees. I don't know whether that's in the will or whether it's in their by-law or whatever. But I was just curious about that since the board of trustees -- the non-life members -- I understand that they are. But I was just curious if staff would check into that for me and number those seats. I know they're statewide, but like this last election, it was the three top vote getters and I was just curious about numbered seats.

MS. DERRICK: It actually would have to be legislation introduced. They're in the process of trying to do that with Citadel as well. So it would have to come legislatively.

CHAIRMAN KNOTTS: Senator from Gaffney, I applaud your statement on that, but you heard testimony today that the only thing the Midlands got is the majority of people on the Clemson Board. So you know, y'all got the Senators from Washington, y'all got every other term. Y'all got the governor, lieutenant governor, somebody all the way from Charleston, even Gaffney, Spartanburg.

SENATOR PEELER: I'm not talking about geographic mode.

CHAIRMAN KNOTTS: I know. I'm just joking. I'm being facetious.

SENATOR PEELER: Okay. I was just thinking if one of these candidates was fortunate enough to be elected and they did a good job, they should be able to run on a vote. If they did a bad job, in turn, somebody would go for that numbered seat. And I'm just curious and wonder why it's set up like that.

CHAIRMAN KNOTTS: I don't know but we do have it by -- now is Clemson all at-large?

SENATOR PEELER: Yes, sir.

CHAIRMAN KNOTTS: Oh, okay. Okay. That might be something to look into to.

SENATOR PEELER: And not change the at-large portion. Just allow that seat to be numbered.

CHAIRMAN KNOTTS: If you do that, you're going to have -- will you make them all -- they could live anywhere in the state and run for a numbered seat?

SENATOR PEELER: That's right.

CHAIRMAN KNOTTS: Okay.

SENATOR PEELER: Surely -- maybe -- maybe they can tell us. Neil, do you know?

MR. ROBINSON: There are six at-large elected seats and there are seven life seats. The six at-large are just at-large. And I'm not certain whether the will provides that they be -- I think they provide that they be at-large, but they wouldn't prevent what you're talking about, Senator, having numbered seats.

MR. WARNER: The will doesn't mention it at all.

SENATOR PEELER: To me, that would make -- I'm not asking for your opinion one way or the other, but it would just seem to me like that would be a better way to do it. Keep it at-large, but if you have a trustee doing a good job because now, you may have ten people running for three seats and it's cumbersome.

CHAIRMAN KNOTTS: Well let's check -- we in the Midlands would be proud to let y'all have the governor, lieutenant governor, and all that. We just -- we're proud of our seats on the Clemson board. As probably equal.

MS. DERRICK: Y'all actually got four for that -- Mr. Mungo's seat already.

CHAIRMAN KNOTTS: Ma'am.

MS. DERRICK: You got four.

CHAIRMAN KNOTTS: We got four?

MS. DERRICK: So far. Uh-huh. And the deadline's May 12th. I would like to screen them May 13th if we can.

CHAIRMAN KNOTTS: Okay. Well I'll tell you what we'll do. Any objection, to setting the next screening for May 13th.

MS. DERRICK: Which will be the day after our deadline.

CHAIRMAN KNOTTS: Okay. We will screen them on May 13th. I'll call the committee back. We'll adjourn until May 13th.

VICE CHAIRMAN BRADY: That's my birthday so I'll expect cake. All right.

CHAIRMAN KNOTTS: Committee is now adjourned.

(Adjourned at 10:45 a.m.)

\* \* \*

**ADJOURNMENT**

At 11:35 A.M., on motion of Senator SETZLER, the Senate adjourned to meet next Tuesday, May 4, 2010, at 12:00 Noon.

\* \* \*