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S . C . R E P R E S E N T A T I V E
Jim Harrison
 LEGISLATIVE REPORT
 HOUSE DISTRICT 75 2005-2006 SESSION



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Please Take a Moment to Review this Report...

I have prepared this newsletter to keep you well informed. No public funds whatsoever were used to pay for this report.

Please take a moment to review the reforms I have been working on in state government.

Thank you for the trust you have placed in me. Again, if you have any comments, ideas, questions (or for any other reason) please write or call anytime. My email address is hju@SCStateHouse.net, and my cell phone number is 331-7751. I truly would enjoy hearing from you at any time.



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A PERSONAL MESSAGE



Serving as your State Representative is an honor that I take very seriously.

This session, I was re-elected Chairman of the House Judiciary Committee by both Republican and Democratic members. In that position of leadership, I can represent your values more effectively and be an agent for positive change.

Communicating with my neighbors is an essential part of this process. For that reason, I prepare newsletters every session at my own expense to keep you informed.

With your support and guidance, we have made significant progress. With continued effort, I know we can accomplish even more next year.

After reviewing this newsletter, I hope you'll let me hear from you. Please write or call anytime.

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Education Is Priority Number One

Nothing we do in state government is more important for the future than improving the quality of education in Richland County and throughout South Carolina.

This session, we were able to increase funding for the classrooms — *without* raising taxes. We also focused on school safety, school accountability and early childhood education. Here is a brief outline of accomplishments this session:

School Funding & Teacher Quality

The Education Finance Act is now fully funded. This required an additional \$70 million to be distributed to school districts based on the number of children attending. We also



addressed the critical issue of teacher quality. First, we increased teacher pay to a minimum of \$600 above the southeastern average. Then we fully funded the National Board Certification program to financially reward nationally certified teachers. These reforms should help attract the best teachers to South Carolina's classrooms.

Healthy, Fit and Ready to Learn

To make sure our children are ready to learn, we appropriated \$25.6 million for early childhood programs focusing especially on at-risk children. Additional funds were appropriated (\$14.9 million) for the Education and Economic Development Act, which gives high school children needed preparation and career guidance based on interests and demonstrated skills.

In the area of child health care, we

*Fighting to improve education
continued on page 2*

**AT LAST...PROPERTY TAX
RELIEF IS HERE. See page 2**

Fighting to Improve Education

(Continued from page 1)

increased funding for the Student Health and Fitness Act. Those funds will be used to expand nutrition education, physical education classes and to offer health assessments to school-age children.

We were able to significantly increase funding for classrooms without raising taxes.

Making our Children Safe

School safety was also a big priority for us this session. We set aside \$26 million for a fund to replace outdated unsafe school buses. Because of the high and rising cost of fuel, we also had to

increase funding for fuel prices and parts by an additional \$39.8 million.

Last (but far from least) we addressed the critical issue of school violence. The Safe School Climate Act was also passed this year. This needed reform gives stiffer penalties for violence and requires all violations be reported to authorities. To keep parents well informed, reports of school violence will also be released to the public.

The Property Tax Relief Act of 2006

Finally, home owners have long over-due property tax relief.

Rep. Jim Harrison has been fighting for years to pass meaningful property tax relief for the homeowners of South Carolina. "We have the second highest property taxes in the southeastern U.S.," Harrison said. "The time has come to take some of that burden off the shoulders of homeowners." In the past, however, a coalition of special interests has blocked reform.

Consistent efforts by Rep. Harrison and other reform-minded legislators paid off this year. The General Assembly has passed the Property Tax Relief Act of 2006.

Here is what the new law has accomplished: all property taxes on owner-occupied homes for school operating

funds have been eliminated and replaced by a one-penny increase in sales tax. This will result in property tax bills being slashed by approximately 65 percent. At the same time, the sales tax on groceries was actually lowered from five to three cents and all sales tax is eliminated for a two-day period following Thanksgiving. The new law also caps the growth of property tax reassessments by 15% over any five-year period.

"We were actually able to protect funding for education and lower the sales tax on essentials like groceries by placing a larger share of the burden on sales tax revenue from tourists," Harrison said. "And finally, homeowners have long-overdue property tax relief."



Chairman, House Judiciary

Jim Harrison (above) was re-elected as Chairman of the House Judiciary Committee by a unanimous bi-partisan vote.

Honored by Army Reserve

Representative Harrison, a Colonel in the Army Reserve, was recently awarded the Legion of Merit by the Secretary of the Army. During his 30 years of service, Colonel Harrison was activated for service in Iraq, Haiti and Bosnia. he was awarded the Bronze Star for his service in Iraq.



Check list of Key Reforms

New Legislation Jim Harrison Helped Enact in the 2005-2006 Session

✓ Incentives for New Jobs & Economic Development

Two bills (the S.C. Retail facilities Revitalization Act and the S.C. Economic Development Incentive Act) have created important new tax credits and tax exemptions to help businesses expand and to encourage new businesses to come to South Carolina.

McMaster to enact new legislation to prosecute those who attempt to "price gouge" at times when people are most vulnerable. This consumer protection legislation will help hold down the cost of fuel, food, accommodations and other essential goods and services during emergencies and natural disasters

alternative fuels and alternative fuel vehicles. Other incentives are likely to be introduced next year.

✓ Medical Malpractice Reform

The General Assembly passed important reforms that will hold down the cost of health care by placing

insurance and health care," Jim Harrison said.

✓ Ten Commandments

The House passed a bill that would protect the display of the Ten Commandments in historical context on state property. This measure was intended to counter efforts made in South Carolina and elsewhere to remove the display of the Ten Commandments from courthouses and public schools.

✓ Cracking Down on Sexual Predators

To protect children, the General Assembly passed The Sex Offender Accountability and Protection of Minors Act of 2006" (also known as "Jessica's Law"). This bill is a package of reforms making it easier to prosecute and convict sex offenders, with much tougher penalties for those who prey on children.

NOTE: This is only a partial listing of legislation Rep. Harrison has supported or sponsored during the past legislative session.

✓ Tougher laws on criminal domestic violence

This new law addresses the growing problem of criminal domestic violence with tougher penalties and improved definitions. First and second offences now carry stronger penalties. A third offence becomes a felony with a sentence of up to five years. Even tougher penalties are given when these acts are committed in the presence of a child.

✓ Eminent Domain

A proposed constitutional amendment was passed clearly limiting the "eminent domain" power of state and local government to take property away from private citizens for purposes other than public use.

✓ Price Gouging

Rep. Harrison worked closely with Attorney General Henry



"Jim Harrison is a true leader who brings people together to get things done. He's one of the most effective members of the General Assembly."

S.C. Attorney General Henry McMaster

✓ Alternative Fuel Incentives

New legislation was passed in 2006 providing incentives to encourage consumers to conserve energy and to promote the production and use of

reasonable limits on lawsuits. "This bill protects the rights of those who are injured to obtain relief and at the same time prevents frivolous complaints and unreasonable judgments from driving up the cost of