



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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### **FRESHMAN LEGISLATORS INTRODUCE BI-PARTISAN PLAN FOR MAJOR STATE GOVERNMENT REFORM**

(Columbia, S.C.)- A bi-partisan group of twenty-six freshman members of the South Carolina House of Representatives and the South Carolina Senate introduced a bold plan today to reform state government. Lawmakers from across the state called for the adoption of a new state constitution. Bills introduced in both bodies seek to replace the legislatively-dominated and antiquated framework of the South Carolina Constitution of 1895. In the most ambitious reform effort since Gov. Carroll Campbell's restructuring work in the early 1990s--and the first such endeavor led by the legislature--the plan unveiled today will result in an improved, more transparent, and more efficient state government that is accountable to the people.

The 1895 Constitution, the seventh in South Carolina history, was notoriously borne out of "Pitchfork" Ben Tillman's explicit motivation to elevate the power and influence of white South Carolinians at the expense of black citizens. The resulting state government structure diffused responsibility throughout the General Assembly and subjugated the executive and judicial branches of government to the legislature. The legacy of Tillman's effort continues to shackle us today.

Today's initiative seeks to restore balance in state government. South Carolina's governor must have the authority and control to lead the executive branch through a cabinet form of government that is not dominated or micromanaged by the legislature. Likewise, the judiciary must be an equal branch of government that is appointed with participation from both the executive and legislative branches. Reforming state government will reduce the legislature's outsized influence and restore three, co-equal branches of government.

The bills introduced today propose a ballot referendum for South Carolina's citizens to call only for a state constitutional convention; this process cannot in any way, whatsoever, limit the freedoms and liberties guaranteed under our United States Constitution.

House Freshman Caucus Chairman, Rep. Micah Caskey (R-West Columbia) said, "Not a day passes in South Carolina without some headline owing to the structural rot of our system. It is time to treat the disease, not just the symptoms. We must stop pretending that the status quo is acceptable. The day has come for South Carolina to revitalize its outmoded and outdated system -- it is time to write a new state constitution. We need to overhaul and rebuild state government so that people can be held accountable."

Sen. William Timmons (R-Greenville) added, "South Carolina state government is broken, inefficient, and controlled by a few powerful legislative leaders. The General Assembly must lead the way to restore confidence and reform state government."



Rep. William Cogswell (R-Charleston) said, “The state government in South Carolina needs to be brought into the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The electorate deserves more accountability and better efficiency coming out of Columbia, and getting rid of an anachronistic constitution rooted in nothing we should be proud of is a necessary first step. This is not a political stunt. We as freshmen legislators are both erudite and unjaded in our efforts and intend to see this through. Though it might take years to implement, the time is now to begin the process.”

Rep. Jason Elliott (R-Greenville) said, “South Carolina is a legislatively dominated state. No one currently serving in state government is responsible for mess created by the Constitution of 1895. However, each member of the SC House and Senate can work now to reform state government to create a functioning and co-equal legislature, executive and judiciary. South Carolinians deserve an ethical, transparent and efficient state government.”

Also, Rep. Will Wheeler (D-Bishopville) said, “South Carolina's constitution is no model for efficiency and effective government. We can do much better. As to the motive and intent with which it was drafted, during the darkest days of this State's history, we cannot do worse.”

Rep. Nancy Mace (R-Daniel Island) also added, “There is no better time than the present to visit this issue with the voters of South Carolina to look at our state constitution, and look at ways for the General Assembly to operate more efficiently and more importantly with better checks and balances.”

Rep. Josiah Magnuson (R-Campobello) added, "We are taking the call for government reform to a new level of seriousness. A state constitutional convention is not the same as a U.S. Article V Constitutional Convention. The U.S. Constitution isn't the problem but in South Carolina I do believe our state constitution at least contributes to the fact that everything is run by boards and commissions and no one can truly be held responsible."

To date, only “freshman” members have been involved in this effort. More co-sponsors are expected in the coming weeks.



The following first-term members of the South Carolina House and South Carolina Senate introduced this historic plan:

- Sen. Richard Cash (R-Piedmont)
- Sen. Mike Fanning (D-Great Falls)
- Sen. Stephen Goldfinch (R-Murrells Inlet)
- Sen. Mia McLeod (D-Columbia)
- Sen. Rex Rice (R-Easley)
- Sen. Scott Talley (R-Spartanburg)
- Sen. William Timmons (R-Greenville)
  
- Rep. Katie Arrington (R-Summerville)
- Rep. Lucas Atkinson (D-Marion)
- Rep. Lin Bennett (R-Charleston)
- Rep. Micah Caskey (R-West Columbia)
- Rep. William Cogswell (R-Charleston)
- Rep. Sylleste Davis (R-Moncks Corner)
- Rep. Jason Elliott (R-Greenville)
- Rep. Cal Forrest (R-Monetta)
- Rep. Rosalyn Henderson-Meyers (D-Spartanburg)
- Rep. Lee Hewitt (R-Murrells Inlet)
- Rep. Nancy Mace (R-Daniel Island)
- Rep. Josiah Magnuson (R-Campobello)
- Rep. Rick Martin (R-Newberry)
- Rep. Tim McGinnis (R-Myrtle Beach)
- Rep. Brandon Newton (R-Lancaster)
- Rep. Marvin Pendarvis (D-North Charleston)
- Rep. Michael Rivers (D-St. Helena Island)
- Rep. Ivory Thigpen (D-Columbia)
- Rep. Will Wheeler (D-Bishopville)

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