

To residents of [REDACTED]

It seems that today's buzz-word in the world of politics is "change." I really believe that what we really need is to reform the way government operates so that it is more responsive to our citizens' needs and is more efficient in the way it operates. We need to be looking beyond this year or the next - what we need is a long range plan to improve the way state government does business.

I have recently helped organize the new "Reform Caucus" in the State Legislature. This bipartisan group of senators and representatives is dedicated to enacting much-needed reforms to change the way state government operates, so that services can be provided as efficiently as possible, and be able to pass savings back to the taxpayers. Our goal is to define a plan for reform and to pass as many of these reforms as possible this year and next.

As the first step toward making these important changes a reality, we have drafted an outline of the most critical items we hope to address. The following proposals are a part of our "Blueprint for Reform". I would appreciate hearing any feedback you might wish to share on these proposals or, of course, any other proposals that might be considered by the legislature.

## BLUEPRINT for REFORM

**Reform #1: Require full disclosure for all campaign spending by corporate funded non-profits or 527's.** Corporate-funded special interest groups from outside our state continue to exploit campaign funding loopholes to exert financial influence on our state government. Any communication from any such group which mentions the name of any candidate within 45 days of any election should be subject to the same disclosure requirements as candidates and committees.

**Reform #2: Online Disclosures for all Campaigns, PAC, and Lobbyists.** Allow the public to have more access to campaign finance and lobbying information by requiring all campaigns, PAC's and Lobbyists to file all disclosures and reports online. (NOTE: These requirements now exist for members and candidates for the Senate and House of Representatives.)

**Reform #3: Ban Taxpayer-funded Lobbyists.** State agencies which receive public funds should be prohibited from employing lobbyists to influence any state or local governmental bodies.

**Reform #4: Trim "pork" spending by replacing the Competitive Grant Program with a Local Economic Stimulus Re-Investment Pool.** To insure that government funds are used in the best interest of our state, eliminate the current grant program. Require all future investments from Local Economic Stimulus Re-Investment Pool to be accompanied by an Economic Impact Estimate to insure effective and efficient use of tax funds.

**Reform #5: Judicial reform.** The courts of the state should be mandated to update rules of evidence and procedures, which are currently based on traditions of the 17<sup>th</sup> century English judiciary.

**Reform #6: Public Election of the State Insurance Commissioner.** Affordable, accessible insurance continues to be a major challenge in our state. To make the insurance industry as accountable as possible to South Carolina consumers, we should allow the public to elect the State Insurance Commissioner.

**Reform #7: Truth-in-bidding/no change orders.** When operating on taxpayer funds, it is critical to get the highest quality and greatest efficiency out of the fewest dollars. Unfortunately, some companies offer the lowest bid on a project, but then run up costs later with change orders and hidden fees. The State of South Carolina should implement a strong truth-in-bidding policy to reduce costly change orders and keep costs within approved budgets.

**Reform #8: Performance Audits to find and eliminate inefficiency and duplication.** Periodic performance audits of each agency and program should be conducted to ensure that legislation is having the intended effect. Outside auditors can also best assess programs for inefficiency and duplication.

**Reform #9: Five-year planning to set long-term goals and priorities.** Successful businesses cannot operate without long-term plans; neither should government. We should restructure our budgeting process to recognize agreed upon long-term priorities, and then develop funding strategies to meet those needs. Government cannot and should not be all things to all people. By setting priorities, programs meeting the basic needs of our citizens can be more adequately funded before tax dollars are allocated for less-essential programs. We must make sure that our most important programs are funded adequately first.

**Reform #10: Use technology to broadcast meetings of all governing boards and commissions.** While state agency meetings are usually open to the public, it is simply not feasible for most citizens to attend all meetings that are important to them. Just as SC House and Senate sessions are currently broadcast live via internet, state agency meetings and cabinet meetings should be made available to the public in the same way. Many important decisions regarding the disbursement of funds, as well as new rules and regulations, are made by agencies. Internet technology can now allow taxpayers be able to fully be informed of decisions which will affect their lives and pocketbooks.

Again, I would appreciate hearing your ideas, opinions, suggestions or criticism on any or all of these reform proposals. Working together with other members of this new, informal, bi-partisan caucus of legislators, we can make giant strides to reform our state government.

It is an honor and a privilege to serve you as your voice in the State House. Please let me know if I can help you on any matter. Thank you.