



The Republican Caucus

PRESS OFFICE

Phone: (803) 734-3334 • Fax: (803) 734-9953 • www.schousegop.com • e-mail: info@schousegop.com

James H. Merrill
Majority Leader

J. Adam Taylor
Assistant Majority Leader

Alan D. Clemmons
Secretary-Treasurer

Charles M. Cannon
Executive Director

Jason C. Zacher
Communications Director

February 1, 2005
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

For More Information:
Jason Zacher
(803) 734-3334

House Approves Third Palmetto Pledge Item

COLUMBIA – Voters will have a chance to decide whether the governor should appoint the superintendent of education and the secretary of state under the provisions of a bill passed by House Republicans Tuesday.

The strong victory means more than half of the Republican Caucus's Palmetto Pledge has been sent to the Senate in three weeks.

"This item required unity on the part of the Republicans, and the support of many Democrats, since we needed more votes than we had members," said Majority Leader Jim Merrill. "The people of this state are behind a common-sense, conservative agenda."

House Speaker David Wilkins also applauded the Republican House members.

"In just three weeks, we have passed a major jobs creation act, charter schools and now constitutional officer restructuring," Speaker Wilkins said. "We are well on our way to passing our bold agenda and moving South Carolina forward."

Wilkins said passage of the bill was not a personal attack on current Secretary of State Mark Hammond, a Republican, or Superintendent of Education Inez Tenenbaum, a Democrat, but said allowing the governor to appoint the positions will bring further consolidation to state government.

"It's important that our state's chief executive be accountable for one of the most important issues facing our state – public education," Wilkins said. "We don't need competing budgets, philosophies and politics slowing down our progress in education."

Democratic leaders blustered on the floor, saying the people should have the chance to vote for the offices. The Republican Caucus believes the bill gives voters exactly that opportunity. The vote on the amendment would be in the next general election in 2006.

"We're giving the people the option of choosing for themselves," Merrill said. "We're giving the power to the people."

The House Republican Caucus was joined by nearly 20 Democrats, who were needed on the vote because the change requires a constitutional amendment, meaning 83 votes were needed. There are 74 Republicans in the House and the bill passed by a vote of 90-30.

After third reading, the bill will be sent to the state Senate.

###