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REGULAR SESSION BEGINNING TUESDAY, JANUARY 11, 2011

TUESDAY, MARCH 1, 2011

**Tuesday, March 1, 2011
(Statewide Session)**

PP. 15-19

Expression of Personal Interest

Senator McCONNELL rose for an Expression of Personal Interest.

**Statement by Senator McCONNELL
Concerning Redistricting**

Members of the Senate - I want to update you today on the upcoming redistricting process. I have been notified that South Carolina should receive the official results of the 2010 census by the end of the month, probably sooner. Once the census results are received, we will begin the redistricting process. We know already our state will receive an additional congressional seat as the result of our population growth. The more detailed population data we receive this month will tell us the extent to which our Senate districts are malapportioned. As you are aware, the Senate has the responsibility of proposing and passing legislation to draw the boundaries of South Carolina's congressional districts and the State Senate's 46 districts.

We do a lot of important work in this chamber. Along with these important tasks, we must work conscientiously to ensure that the people of South Carolina receive fair and equitable representation in their state and federal governments. To accomplish this, we must devote our attention to listening to our constituents and making wise decisions about how these districts should be drawn.

District boundaries must accommodate the needs of our constituents and meet the requirements of federal law. Specifically, South Carolina is a "covered jurisdiction" under Section 5 of the Voting Rights Act, which means that prior to a change in a voting practice being implemented, it must be submitted to either the United States Attorney General, or the United States District Court for the District of Columbia, for preclearance. For example, when we pass a law changing precinct lines or polling places, it must be precleared before the new precinct boundaries or polling places may be used in an election. Similarly, the redistricting plans we pass must be precleared before candidates may file and run for election in the new districts.

As you may know, the Constitution requires that districts have approximately equal population and they must also comply with the Voting Rights Act. The courts have also recognized the importance of "traditional redistricting principles," or reasonable state policies which

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may be followed in drawing district lines. In the past, the Senate has sought input from citizens, interest groups, and government officials to determine the criteria and state policies to follow in drawing district lines. These criteria will guide us and help us justify our redistricting decisions. I advise that we should again implement a process to establish these criteria for ourselves and for those wishing to submit plans for our consideration.

As has been done in previous redistricting cycles, I have appointed and will rely on a subcommittee to begin our work on the redistricting process. The focus of this subcommittee's efforts will be to:

- (1) receive information in public forums about what traditional redistricting principles should be used and what areas are perceived as communities of interest;
 - (2) adopt the standards to be used as criteria and the procedures by which plans may be submitted for consideration;
 - (3) hold additional hearings later to receive plan proposals;
- and
- (4) recommend proposed Senate and congressional plans to the Judiciary Committee.

I have directed my staff to schedule eight public hearings to be conducted throughout the State during the months of March and April. At these forums, the subcommittee will gather information about how citizens see themselves and the areas in which they live, and about the factors they feel are important in how their districts are redrawn. In particular, the subcommittee will be seeking specific information about existing "communities of interest" which should be taken into consideration when drawing districts. This information will be important for the preclearance submission and may be relied upon if the plans are challenged in court.

The first public hearing is tentatively scheduled to take place on Monday, March 28th in Myrtle Beach. The other hearings will be held in Aiken, Rock Hill, Greenville, Beaufort, Columbia, Florence, and Charleston. All of the hearings, except for the one in Columbia and the one in Greenville, will be held at a local technical colleges. The Columbia hearing will be held in the Gressette Building.

Additional information about the hearings and the redistricting process will be posted to the Senate's redistricting website, which is now online and is linked to the Senate's legislative website. We will also use our website to make announcements about the process, make data publicly available, and provide other useful information.

I hope that you all will take an active part in the redistricting process. We need every member's involvement, and this is how you may help!

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First, please assist the staff in locating your residence. By now, a staff member should have given each of you a map which asks you to verify where you live in your district. If you have not already responded to this request, please do so as soon as possible.

Second, encourage your constituents to become involved in the process. My office will be notifying the media and statewide groups that have expressed an interest in the process, but we also need your help to get the message out to local groups about the hearings. I hope that each member will be able attend the public hearing in your area so that you can listen to the concerns of your constituents.

We have a unique opportunity to show the people of South Carolina that the Senate cares about their concerns and will focus on drawing fair and representative Senate and congressional districts. We must work together on these plans and not allow the task to become mired in controversy or caught up in partisan backbiting. You are all my friends. At times we may disagree, but at the end of the day we must still be friends. Therefore, we must conduct this process with grace and respect.

The 2011 redistricting process will be a superb opportunity to show other jurisdictions how this difficult task should be handled. I want us to provide an example of civility and thoughtfulness and show that, here in the Senate, we truly place the best interests of South Carolinians over partisan politics.

Mr. President, I would ask unanimous consent to hand out the tentative public hearing schedule I mentioned in my remarks that will be posted on the website.

Redistricting Public Hearing Schedule for 2011

(tentative)

Monday, March 28, 6:30 p.m.

Horry-Georgetown Technical College, Myrtle Beach
(To receive information about Dillon, Georgetown, Horry, Marion, Marlboro and Williamsburg Counties)

Tuesday, March 29, 6:30 p.m.

Aiken Technical College, Aiken
(To receive information about Aiken, Allendale, Bamberg, Barnwell, Hampton, Lexington, Edgefield, McCormick, Orangeburg and Saluda Counties)

Wednesday, March 30, 6:30 p.m.

York Technical College, Rock Hill
(To receive information about Cherokee, Chester, Chesterfield,

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Fairfield, Kershaw, Lancaster, Newberry, Union and York Counties)

Thursday, March 31, 6:30 p.m.

Greenville County Council Chambers, Greenville
(To receive information about Abbeville, Anderson, Cherokee,
Greenville, Greenwood, Laurens, Oconee, Pickens, Spartanburg and
Union Counties)

Monday, April 4, 6:30 p.m.

Technical College of the Low Country, Beaufort
(To receive information about Beaufort, Colleton, Hampton and
Jasper Counties)

Tuesday, April 5, 6:30 p.m.

105 Gressette Senate Office Building, Columbia
(To receive information about Calhoun, Clarendon, Fairfield,
Kershaw, Lexington, Newberry, Orangeburg, Saluda, Richland and
Sumter Counties)

Wednesday, April 6, 6:30 p.m.

Florence-Darlington Technical College, Florence
(To receive information about Chesterfield, Clarendon, Darlington,
Dillon, Florence, Georgetown, Horry, Lee, Marion, Marlboro,
Sumter and Williamsburg Counties)

Thursday, April 7, 6:30 p.m.

Trident Technical College, Charleston
(To receive information about Beaufort, Berkeley, Charleston,
Colleton, Dorchester, Georgetown, Hampton, Jasper and Orangeburg
Counties)

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On motion of Senator LARRY MARTIN, with unanimous consent,
the remarks of Senator McCONNELL were ordered printed in the
Journal.

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