



# LEGISLATIVE ADVOCACY CONFERENCE

DECEMBER 6-7  
**2025**

CHARLESTON  
MARRIOTT

## Agenda

### Friday, December 5

- 3:30 – 6:30 p.m.      **Registration** ..... Lobby
- 5:30 – 7 p.m.        **SC Caucus of Black School Board Members Meeting** ..... Opal room  
*This meeting is open to all participants.*

### Saturday, December 6

- 7:30 – 8:30 a.m.      **Registration and breakfast break**.....Crystal foyer  
*Co-Sponsored by **Duff Freeman Seibert, LLC***
- 8:30 – 10 a.m.        **First general session** .....Crystal ballroom

#### **Welcome and Purpose**

**Scott T. Price**, *SCSBA Executive Director*

**Charles Govan**, *SCSBA President, Darlington County School District*

#### **Legislative roundtable of K12 and other issues**

Join us for a must-attend roundtable session featuring key state legislative leaders who will share their perspectives on the top issues likely to shape the 2026 legislative agenda, with a focus on K12 education. Lawmakers from both the House and Senate will offer political insights, address questions on the pressing education topics up for debate and discuss how school board members can be effective advocates for their districts.

**The Honorable Shane Martin**, *member of the Senate Finance Committee and its K12 Finance Subcommittee; chairman of the Senate Corrections and Penology Committee.*

**The Honorable Russell Ott**, *member of the Senate Agriculture and Natural Resources Committee, Senate Family and Veteran's Services Committee and Senate Judiciary Committee.*

**The Honorable Neal Collins**, *member of the House Ways and Means Committee and its Public Education Subcommittee; chairman of the Property Tax Ways and Means Subcommittee; and member of the House*



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*Ethics Committee. He is also a member of the S.C. Education Oversight Committee.*

**The Honorable Terry Alexander**, *second vice chairman of the House Education and Public Works Committee and its K12 Education Subcommittee; and second vice chairman of the House Regulations, Administrative Procedures, Artificial Intelligence and Cybersecurity Committee. He is also a member of the S.C. Education Oversight Committee.*

**Moderator: Scott T. Price**, *SCSBA Executive Director*

10 – 10:15 a.m. **Beverage break**.....Crystal foyer  
*Co-Sponsored by **Halligan Mahoney & Williams, P.A.***

10:15 – 11:15 a.m. **Second general session**.....Crystal ballroom

## **What's on Everyone's Agenda? Priorities Across the Education Spectrum**

What's keeping education advocates up at night—and what are they pushing hardest for in 2026? In this fast-moving roundtable, advocates from state education organizations share the big issues they're championing for teachers, school administrators, and students. This session offers a front-row seat to the conversations shaping next year's education landscape.

**Ryan Bailey**, *Director of Membership and Communications, S.C. Association of School Administrators (SCASA)*

**Ian Headley**, *Deputy Superintendent, S.C. Department of Education (SCDE)*

**Dena R Crews**, *President, S.C. Education Association (SCEA)*

**William Bowers**, *Lobbyist, Capitol Information Affiliates representing the S.C. High School League (SCHSL)*

**Patrick Kelly**, *Director of Governmental Affairs, Palmetto State Teachers Association (PSTA)*

**Moderator: Debbie Elmore**, *SCSBA Director of Governmental Relations*

11:15 – 11:30 a.m. **Beverage break**.....Crystal foyer  
*Co-Sponsored by **Boykin & Davis, LLC***



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11:30 a.m. – 12:30 p.m. **Third general session** .....Crystal ballroom

**Class is in session: Inside the state K12 budget process**

This session offers a behind-the-scenes look at how South Carolina's K12 education budget is developed—from revenue projections to the final budget proposal. Attendees will gain a clearer understanding of where the money comes from, how much is already committed by law and what we may see in 2026.

**Grant Gibson, MPA**, *Assistant Director for Tax Policy Senate Finance Committee*

**Moderator: Tim Rhodes**, *SCSBA President-elect, Abbeville County School District*

12:30 – 1:30 p.m. **Lunch** (*Included in registration*) .....Emerald ballroom

2 – 5 p.m. **Delegate Assembly** .....Crystal ballroom  
(*Delegates are asked to sign in at 1:45 p.m.*)

Representatives of the school boards governing South Carolina's districts will convene for the association's annual business meeting to elect officers and adopt the association's 2026 legislative resolutions.

5 p.m. **SCSBA Board of Directors meeting** .....Emerald salon one  
*This meeting follows the annual business meeting and is open to all participants.*

## Sunday, December 7

7:30 – 8:30 a.m. **Registration and breakfast break** .....Crystal foyer

8:30 – 9 a.m. **Closing general session** .....Crystal ballroom

**Welcome**

**Scott T. Price**, *SCSBA Executive Director*

**Address by 2026 SCSBA President**

**Tim Rhodes**, *SCSBA President, Abbeville County School District*



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9 - 10 a.m.

## **Inside the Beltway: Federal K12 Education Update**

Get the latest from Capitol Hill in a briefing led by a seasoned Washington, D.C. K12 education insider. This clear, no-spin session breaks down the current federal landscape for K12 education—what's moving, what's stalled, and what's next. Stay ahead of the curve by understanding how federal developments could affect schools, programs and services. Presenting will be:

**Peter Oppenheim**, *Principal, Todd Strategy Group, Washington, D.C.*

**Moderator: Tim Rhodes**, *SCSBA President, Abbeville County School District*

10 - 11 a.m.

## **The Great School Board Debate!**

Don't duck out early! You'll want a front row seat for the closing session featuring two sharp-witted teams of school board members who will go head-to-head in a fast-paced, interactive debate on three hot-button education issues likely to hit the legislature in 2026:

- Should school personnel be armed to defend campuses?
- Should charter, homeschool, and Governor's School students have access to public school programs?
- Should school board elections be partisan?

But this session is not just for the debaters. The audience can weigh in, offer quick-fire commentary, and vote on the winning team for each round.

### Team A:

**Karla Kelley**, *Vice Chair, Pickens County School Board*

**Melvin Stroble**, *Chair, Lancaster County School Board*

**Mike Wilson**, *Member, Anderson One School Board*

### Team B:

**Marva Cannon**, *Chair, Williamsburg County School Board*

**Phil Leventis**, *Member, Sumter County School Board*

**Anne Pressley**, *Secretary, Greenville County School Board*

**Moderator: Vernie Williams**, *Partner, Halligan Mahoney & Williams, P.A.*

**Timekeeper: Jacelyn Arradaza**, *SCSBA Administrative Assistant*

11 a.m.

## **Closing remarks**

**Tim Rhodes**, *SCSBA President, Abbeville County School District*