



# South Carolina House Democratic Caucus

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## **House Democrats Unveil 2010 Legislative Agenda**

[COLUMBIA, SC] – With our state suffering the worst economic recession in 75 years, more than 600,000 people out of work, and with a half billion dollar budget deficit, the people of South Carolina want lawmakers to focus on solving our systemic problems. The House Democratic Caucus will take action that will focus on keeping our budget balanced responsibly, rebuilding South Carolina's economy, improving our schools and rooting out corruption in our government.

“South Carolina continues to be challenged by tough economic times and repeated disappointments at the hands of the Republican majority. South Carolina Democrats will take the lead in reinforcing accountability and ethical standards within state government,” said Minority Leader Harry Ott.

The House Democratic Caucus agenda includes:

### **Transparency and Ethics Reform**

With a year of scandals, and of moral and ethical corruption, strengthening our ethics laws and having a more open government is the Democrats' top priority. South Carolinians need to be able to trust that elected officials are not using their positions for personal gain. We must have accountability and transparency from our leaders to balance our budget and rebuild our economy. Democrats will push to make legislators more accountable to the people by closing loopholes in disclosure requirements.

### **Rebuilding our Economy**

Rebuilding South Carolina's economy and creating the jobs of the future is a priority for 2010. South Carolina must become a leader in promoting new energy industries in the state as a way to diversify and rebuild our economy. Democrats will push legislation to provide tax credits for home-grown energy. This will lower the cost of energy, promote job growth and at the same time encourage more development of domestic energy sources. This helps keep South Carolinians employed while also reducing dependence on foreign oil. Democrats also believe that we must do a better job of preparing our workforce for new jobs by reforming unemployment agencies, streamlining workforce development programs and improving K-12 and higher education.

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## **Tax and Budget Reform**

More Fiscal Responsibility – For seven years, the Board of Economic Advisors has miscalculated the amount of money needed for critical budget items, and then when there is money remaining at the end of the budget cycle, the Republican majority has spent that money on pet projects. Democrats will fight to suspend all excess expenditures bills until we gain a 10% reserve fund. Setting aside these reserve funds is the responsible thing to do in these tough times.

'Nickel and Dimed' by Hidden Taxes - Republicans always claim that cutting taxes is good for both families and businesses. Instead, what they have done is raise hidden taxes on families and businesses by disguising these taxes as fee increases. Cutting taxes and encouraging agencies to raise fees is dishonest and it hurts hard working families and keeps businesses from creating jobs. House Democrats will introduce legislation to push for accountability and openness in how fees are charged, as well as eliminate the ability of agencies to increase fees without a legislative vote.

Responsible Tax and Budget Reform – After years of irresponsible Republican tax policies, across the board budget cuts and a restricted Tax Re-Alignment Commission, Democrats will push for more responsible tax reform and budgeting. It is immoral to treat effective and ineffective budget items in the same way. Republicans should stop shifting legislative responsibility to the Budget and Control Board for across the board cuts. Democrats will push for targeted cuts that keep funding the good programs and eliminate wasteful programs that do not work. We also must have real tax reform in South Carolina. The best way to do this is to extend the Tax Re-Alignment Commission and analyze the entire tax code, not just sales taxes.

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