



President's Report

2026



CHESTERFIELD COUNTY IN FOCUS

L to R, Row 1: **St. David's Church** was the last Anglican church in South Carolina built before the Revolutionary War. It was used in the war by both the British army and the South Carolina militia as quarters and a hospital.

Dizzy Gillespie was born in Cheraw in 1917. Throughout his musical career, he often introduced himself as "Dizzy Gillespie from Cheraw, South Carolina." The town commissioned a 7-foot bronze statue of the trumpeter and installed it in 2002, marking what would have been his 85th birthday.

Row 2: **Cheraw State Park** was the first state park proposed for South Carolina. It is also one of two Recreation Demonstrations Areas in the state—parks created from overused, barren farmland purchased by the government in the 1930s.

Pageland, known as the "Watermelon Capital of the World," hosts the Watermelon Festival the third weekend in July every year. This year marks the festival's 75th anniversary. The town boasts several water towers painted with the sweet summer treat, celebrating its importance to the community.

Row 3: **Lake Juniper**, a Civilian Conservation Corps project, is the highlight of Cheraw State Park.

The "**Greetings from Pageland**" mural in downtown Pageland was painted after the Town of Pageland was selected as one of several national winners for the Touchstone Energy Cooperatives Main Street Makeover project.

Photos courtesy of the Olde English District Tourism Commission.

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Board of Directors Inside Back Cover

A MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT



Mary D. Anderson

SCAC President

Chesterfield County Council Chairwoman

Dear County Officials,

Strong counties are built on connection—listening to our residents, learning from one another and working together toward a shared vision. Over the past year, I have been reminded time and again that when we stay grounded in those principles, there is no limit to what we can accomplish as county leaders.

It is my privilege to present the 2025–26 President's Report, which highlights another year of meaningful progress for the South Carolina Association of Counties and the 46 counties we serve together.

Our work begins with advocacy. Throughout the legislative session, county officials and SCAC staff remained a strong, unified voice at the State House—tracking legislation, engaging with lawmakers and advancing policies that protect Home Rule. Our aim was to strengthen local government and keep counties' challenges with growth at the forefront.

Your willingness to speak up, share your expertise and represent your communities continues to make a difference.

We also saw continued growth in education and professional development opportunities. From workshops at our Annual Conference to a new Advanced Level Certification with the Institute of Government, county officials across South Carolina demonstrated their commitment to learning and leadership. These programs not only equip us with tools to navigate complex challenges, but they also create opportunities to connect and share solutions across county lines.

Collaboration remains at the heart of everything we do. Whether through the SC Counties Insurance Trusts, scholarship programs or partnerships with organizations and corporate supporters, our collective efforts are delivering real results for counties and the residents we serve. This year, we also celebrated innovation and excellence through our annual awards, recognizing counties that are finding creative ways to address common local challenges.

We have also strengthened how we communicate and engage including expanding our reach through digital platforms and launching a redesigned website that reflects your feedback and enhances access to important resources.

At its core, the Association's strength comes from you—our members—and the relationships we build together. When we listen with intent and work collaboratively, we tell the story of our counties in a way that is both authentic and impactful.

As I've said before, each of our counties is strong on its own, but together, we are something greater. When we come together, we create a fabric of shared purpose that stretches across South Carolina and supports the people we are honored to serve.

I am honored to serve alongside you as we build an even stronger future for all 46 counties together.



We are the collective voice for county government in South Carolina.



Safeguard Home Rule.



Amplify interests of all 46 counties.



Facilitate ways to engage with local delegations.



Track and summarize bills.



Analyze new laws, regulations and court decisions.



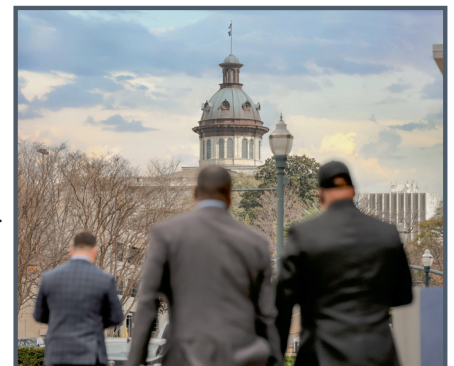
2026 Legislative Session

This year marked the end of a two-year legislative session. Below are some highlights that address key SCAC policy positions and issues of concern to county government.

State Budget

The \$15 billion FY 2026-27 state budget, anticipated to be finalized in conference committee in July, included these SCAC policy positions:

- Full funding to the **Local Government Fund**, with an increase of over \$15 million statewide since last fiscal year.
- A minimum of \$200,000 per county in **Aid to County Libraries Allotment**, up from \$150,000 the year before.
- Funding for **affordable** and **workforce housing**.
- Increasing the **homestead exemption** to \$75,000 or \$150,000 based on years of residency (in Senate version only).
- CTC funding for **road projects** (\$100 million in the House and \$200 million in the Senate).



*The state budget had not yet been finalized by conference committee as of this report's print deadline. SCAC members will be updated via legislative alerts.

Tracked

1,000+ bills



Testified at

30+ subcommittee meetings



Advocated for

45+ policy positions across
60 bills in 2025-26



2,140+

people received the weekly
Friday Report legislative
update



174

county officials attended
**Counties Connect:
A Legislative Action Day**



Legislation Passed



Streamlining the **business personal property tax filing process** by requiring that all returns for business personal property be filed with the South Carolina Department of Revenue.



Increasing **poll workers' take-home pay** by exempting certain compensation paid to poll managers and clerks from gross income for income tax and South Carolina Retirement System purposes.



Standardizing how disputes are handled in primary elections and establishing consistent **dates for municipal elections**.



Allowing **residential improvement districts** to be created between counties and municipalities upon consent from both governing bodies.



Modernizing the South Carolina Department of Transportation (SCDOT) including abolishing the SCDOT Commission and current County Transportation Committees (CTC) and requiring local legislative delegations to appoint CTC members; adding ethics and residency requirements for CTC members and exempting certain purchases for road construction projects from the procurement code. All language that would have allowed SCDOT to transfer roads to counties and cities was removed from the bill before it was passed.



Increasing penalties for and requiring **restitution to law enforcement agencies** for harassing, injuring, maliciously torturing, killing or shooting into a vehicle occupied by a **police animal**.



Adding **stroke** as an occupational disease in the list of conditions qualifying for benefits in the course of employment under the South Carolina Workers' Compensation Law for **firefighters**. This only applies when the employee is actively fighting fires or taking part in a rescue or training exercise that involves strenuous physical activity or 24 hours thereafter.



Restricting counties and cities from requiring property owners to connect to **public water systems** unless there is a public health emergency. Political subdivisions operating a water system must create a registry for all property owners using a well where water service is available. Property owners must register the well with the political subdivision.



An SCAC policy position.

Legal Assistance & Research

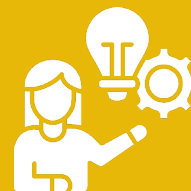
We work with county attorneys to provide informal opinions and in-depth research on legal issues important to county officials.

Legal staff also:

- Worked with several counties to explore future Capital Project Sales Tax referendums,
- Presented statutory updates to land use planning statutes to the NC/SC Chapters of the American Planning Association,
- Provided risk management training on state ethics issues.

25

hours of customized in-person training programs to elected and appointed officials in **8** counties



COLLABORATE

We convene thought leaders, help county officials forge connections and offer programs to assist in cost savings.



South Carolina Counties Insurance Trusts



Debt Collection



Corporate Partner Program



Annual Awards



Scholarships to High School Students

South Carolina Counties Insurance Trusts

By South Carolina Counties for South Carolina Counties



42

Counties in Workers' Compensation Trust



28

Counties in Property & Liability Trust
Added Bamberg, Georgetown and Oconee counties
in 2025

Safety & Risk Management Awards

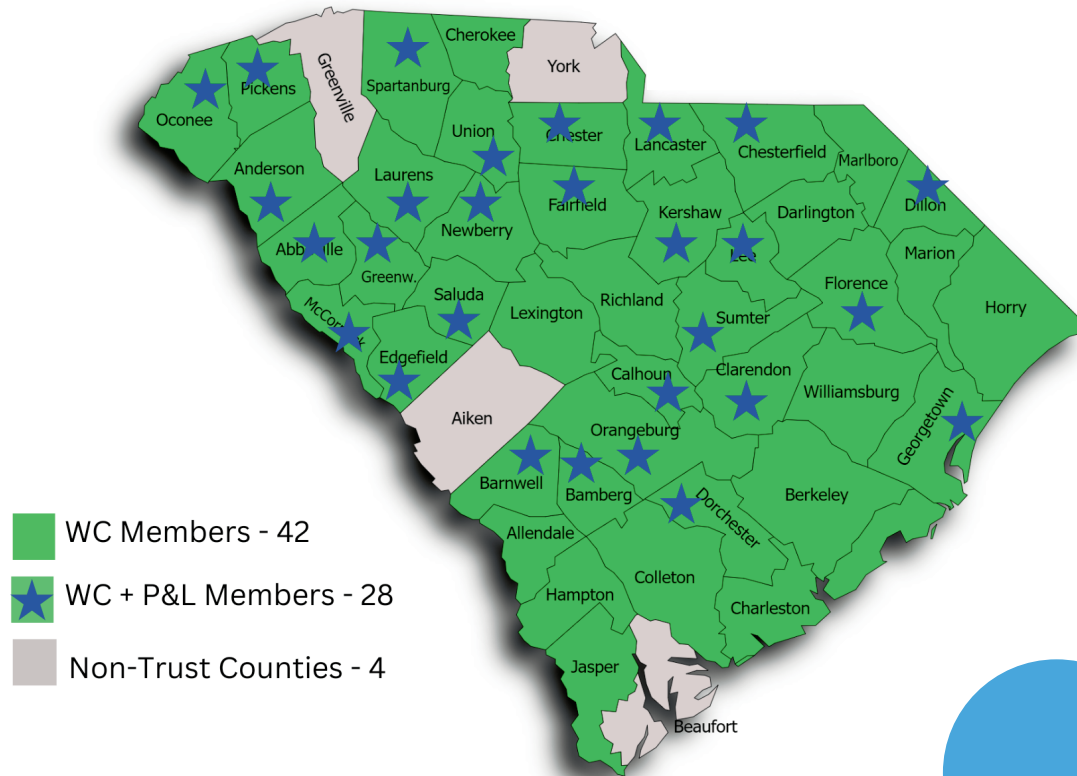
18 Counties received awards in 2026

9 Awards presentations made to county councils

Training

10 Staffing needs assessments conducted for county detention centers

115 Risk management classes conducted in 23 counties reaching **3,240** staff



“Keeping our roads safe is one of the most important parts of law enforcement. This training gives our deputies the tools to respond with speed and precision while protecting themselves and others,” Jasper County Sheriff Chris Malprus on Driving Concerns for First Responders. “We’re grateful to the South Carolina Association of Counties for providing this valuable instruction.”

Debt Collection Programs

We help county entities in two debt collection programs administered by the South Carolina Department of Revenue. The Setoff Debt Collection Program and the Government Enterprise Accounts Receivable (GEAR) Program help counties recover unpaid liabilities which would otherwise go uncollected.

257

Participants in the Setoff Debt Program

47

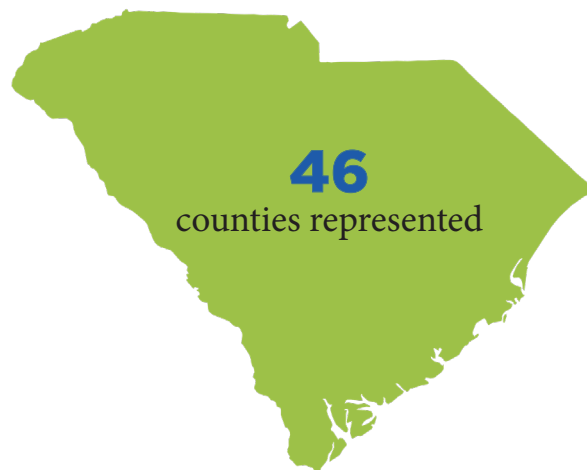
Participants in the GEAR Program

~\$72 million

Returned through Setoff Debt

~\$23 million

Returned through GEAR



Scholarships

The SCAC Board of Directors annually awards scholarships to graduating high school seniors who plan to attend a South Carolina college or university. Recipients are selected based on an essay, grades, school activities and community involvement.

169

Applicants

\$5,000

One President's Scholarship, a one-time award given to a student from Chesterfield County, the SCAC President's home county

\$60,000

Twelve Board of Directors Scholarships, one-time awards given to students in Abbeville, Anderson, Cherokee, Colleton, Darlington, Dorchester, Fairfield, Greenville, Greenwood, Jasper, Marlboro, and McCormick counties

\$65,000 total in scholarships

Awarded to students in **13** counties



Corporate Partner Program

In its sixth year, our Corporate Partner Program offers a way for businesses and organizations to connect with county officials at events and through SCAC publications.

We have **55** corporate partners contributing more than **\$200,000**.



Cheraw State Park is a source of pride for Chesterfield County residents. Children in the town of Cheraw collected pennies to help buy the original land for it. Today it offers outdoor activities including walking, canoeing and fishing. It's also home to a championship golf course, which the Audubon Society recognizes as a certified wildlife sanctuary.

Photos courtesy of Discover SC (left) and Olde English Tourism District (right).

EDUCATE

We offer resources to develop skillful and informed county leaders, well-equipped to serve the public.



Institute of Government for County Officials



Online tools and publications



E-Learning



Research and surveys

Institute of Government for County Officials

32

Level I graduates

42

Level II graduates



296 County officials attended an Institute course in person or online, representing **46** counties

45 County councils with at least one Institute graduate

100% of Darlington County and Orangeburg County council members are Level I and II graduates

Advanced Knowledge. Elevated Leadership.



The Association expanded its flagship education program, the Institute of Government for County Officials, with a new Advanced Level Certification. Classes debuted at the 2026 Annual Conference.

Designed for experienced county leaders, the Advanced Level Certification delivers in-depth coursework and peer-driven learning that strengthens leadership skills, deepens practical knowledge and equips participants to confidently navigate today's most complex governance challenges.

All county officials are welcome to take Advanced courses; however, those who have graduated from Level II or are within six hours of graduation can get started on Advanced Level Certification.



Council Chairperson's Workshop

29
Attendees

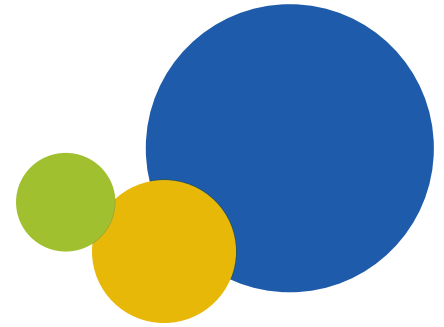
Local Government Attorneys' Institute

165 Attorneys attended the November 2025 event for CLE credit

Resources, Technical Assistance, Research & Surveys

9 Topical surveys were conducted on:

- Acceptance of State Roads
- Animal Control
- County Stormwater Programs
- Data Center Ordinances
- Landfill Relief
- Redrawing Congressional District Maps Fiscal Impact
- Subdivision Roads Acceptance
- Virtual Bond Hearings
- Water and Sewer Systems



FY 2026 Wage and Salary Report



This year's report presents the results of our biennial survey of **203** positions in county government. Forty-two counties (**91%**) responded. Wage data for each of the positions includes number of hours worked per week, number of employees in the position, pay range, midpoint of the range or actual salary and the percent spread of the salary range.



The Pageland Watermelon Festival was started in 1951 to promote local farmers and has been celebrated for 75 years this year. Events include a parade, watermelon-eating contests, seed-spitting contests, beauty pageants and carnival rides.

Photos courtesy of Discover SC.

Communicate & Engage



63

targeted messages
in 2025-26



54%

average open rate

*Industry average
open rate is 32%*

Social Media



2,459 followers
up 510 in past year



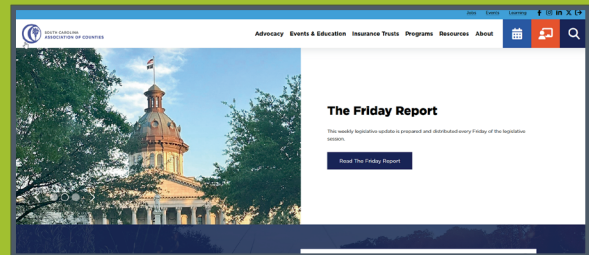
1,812 fans
up 505 in past year



552 followers
up 9 in past year



197 followers
up 105 in past year



Online Glow-Up

- A redesigned sccounties.org launched in November 2025.
- Improvements were based on user survey, input from members.
- The site features the same great content, now more visual and accessible.

Accolades

The Home Rule 50th Anniversary video received an award from the International Association of Business Communicators/ South Carolina chapter in 2025 highlighting it as a top communications project in the state.



CELEBRATE

Annual Awards Program

SCAC's annual awards program—featuring the J. Mitchell Graham Memorial Award and Barrett Lawrimore Memorial Regional Cooperation Award—continues to honor the best in county government.

- 6 counties competed in the J. Mitchell Graham Memorial Award category.
- 7 counties representing four regional cooperation projects competed in the Barrett Lawrimore Memorial Regional Cooperation Award category.

See more photos from the 2025 Awards Luncheon at scounties.smugmug.com.



Left to Right: Row 1: Chester County, Dorchester County, Edgefield County, 2025 J. Mitchell Graham Memorial Award Winner Spartanburg County. Row 2: Georgetown County, Richland County, Spartanburg County. Row 3: 2025 Barrett Lawrimore Memorial Regional Cooperation Award Winners Greenville and Pickens counties; Berkeley, Charleston and Dorchester counties; Fairfield County; Georgetown County; Greenville and Pickens counties. Photos courtesy of county applicants. Award photos by Travis Bell.



There is a statue of Dizzy Gillespie on the town green in Cheraw, and his homesite has been made into a park to honor the musician as well. Gillespie was born here on Oct. 21, 1917, and lived here until his family moved to Philadelphia in 1935. The house no longer exists, but there is a historical marker at the site detailing Gillespie's life and achievements. The park features stainless steel benches and artwork, including a sculpture of his famous bent trumpet.

Photos courtesy of Olde English Tourism District.

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Executive Director

Timothy C. Winslow

Deputy Executive Director and General Counsel

Joshua C. Rhodes

Senior Director of Operations

Anna B. Berger

SCAC Staff Members

sccounties.org/staff

LEADERSHIP

President



Mary D. Anderson
Chesterfield County
Council Chairwoman

2025-26 OFFICERS

“When we come together — rural and urban, large and small — we create something greater than the sum of our parts. We create a fabric of leadership, unity and a special shared purpose that stretches and covers South Carolina.”

~ President Anderson

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Dorchester County
Council Chairman

Second Vice President



Cecil M. Thornton Jr.
Calhoun County
Council Vice Chairman

Third Vice President



W. Brian Carnes
Lancaster County
Council Chairman

Secretary



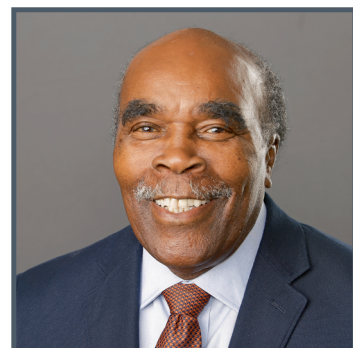
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Sumter County
Council Member

Treasurer



Julie J. Armstrong
Charleston County
Clerk of Court

Immediate Past President



William E. Robinson
Allendale County
Council Chairman

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Administrator

Terms Expire 2027

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Council Member

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Sammie Tucker Jr.
Kershaw County
Council Member

SC Counties Insurance Trusts Chairman

Cecil M. Thornton Jr.
Calhoun County
Council Vice Chairman

NACo Board Representative

Waymon Mumford
Florence County
Council Member



**SOUTH CAROLINA
ASSOCIATION OF COUNTIES**

Local Leaders. Statewide Strength.®

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