



Written by [Raven Clabough](#) on July 25, 2011

South Carolina Considers Eliminating Lt. Gov. Position

In an effort to save taxpayer dollars, South Carolina lawmakers are considering the possibility of eliminating the position of Lieutenant Governor. The proposal comes as the state's Lieutenant Governor Ken Ard (pictured at left) is in the midst of an ethics investigation for misuse of campaign funds.

According to two South Carolina legislators, eliminating the position could save taxpayers \$1 million a year.

Democratic Senate Minority Leader John Land noted that the position had political power at one time, as the Lieutenant Governor once was responsible for appointing Senate members of conference committees. But since the Senate took that power from the Lieutenant Governor, Land asserted, That alone is proof that we don't think it's a necessary office, and the man does not have enough to do. I see no reason to continue that office at all.



The State website reports:

Now, the lieutenant governor holds a part-time job that pays \$45,000 a year. He presides over the Senate and is in charge of the state Office on Aging and its \$35 million-a-year budget.

The Palmetto State has had eight lieutenant governors. Seven went on to lose bids to become governor; one lost a congressional race. The office usually is ignored by the governor, the Legislature and, to a large extent, the public leading many to wonder whether the office is needed at all.

Former Lieutenant Governor Andre Bauer asserts that the position is still useful, however.

I would say that something is going to happen with the lieutenant governors office, commented Neal Thigpen, a political science professor at Francis Marion University and a longtime observer of South Carolina politics. This whole episode will give considerable impetus to Haley getting that constitutional amendment voted on (and passed) ... on the state Senate side.

Still, last week Senator Land and Republican Senator Larry Martin introduced a bill to abolish the office of Lieutenant Governor in order to save money. The legislation designates the head of the Senate as the emergency Governor.

According to *The Blaze*, the move is not unprecedented:

As of now the National Lieutenant Governors Association, which among other activities gathers at least two times a year to recognize the importance of the arts to the United States economy and



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organize trips to embassies so lieutenant governors can meet international diplomats, reports that all but seven states have specific lieutenant governor positions. Three Arizona, Oregon and Wyoming designate the secretary of state as their states No. 2 constitutional officer. The remaining four Maine, New Hampshire, Tennessee and West Virginia designate the president of the Senate as the successor-in-waiting to the governor if needed.

Pointing to the controversy surrounding Ard, Martin observed:

Once you get outside of the notoriety of Ken Ard and what has happened and I truly regret that, dont mean to take anything away from his campaign and what he had to offer the state as a lieutenant governor by saying this ... probably very few people knew who he was or is. In my way of thinking, thats not the best way to accomplish filling the governors office if something should happen to the governor.

Ard has been [charged](#) with using \$2,500 in campaign funds to meet with U.S. Senator Lindsey Graham in Washington, D.C. He has also been accused of purchasing \$3,000 worth of entertainment items using taxpayer dollars. Asserting that he had been invited to South Carolinas Southeastern Conference Championship football game in his capacity as Lieutenant Governor, Ard spent \$280 in lodging and \$168 for two tickets. It was later revealed that no invitation had been extended.

South Carolina Governor Nikki Haley states that she would like to make the position relevant again. She is hoping to see the state legislature and voters pass an amendment that would allow gubernatorial candidates to choose their running mate so that voters can elect the Governor and Lieutenant Governor. Haley made this one of her focal points during her first session, and her spokesman Rob Godfrey notes:

Similar to other states, it would be a partnership, working together to recruit jobs, pass legislation, and move South Carolina forward. It simply does not make sense to have two people with two different agendas at the top of our executive branch. Restructuring the ticket at the top will only add to further accountability for the people of the state.



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