

Lawmakers spar over jobs bill's effect in S.C.

\$26.1B package - now law - will give state \$282M in aid

By James Rosen - McClatchy Newspapers

WASHINGTON --

U.S. Reps. Jim Clyburn and John Spratt hailed final passage of a jobs bill Tuesday slated to bring South Carolina nearly \$282 million in Medicaid and education funding, but Rep. Joe Wilson branded it a bailout built on more federal debt.

President Barack Obama signed the \$26.1 billion appropriations measure hours after House members returned to Washington from their summer breaks for a one-day special session.

"We can't stand by and do nothing while pink slips are given to the men and women who educate our children or keep our communities safe," Obama said in a Rose Garden ceremony.

The House approved the new spending with a 247-161 vote that broke almost completely along party lines.

Among South Carolina's six House members, Democrats Clyburn and Spratt voted for the measure while Wilson opposed it along with fellow Republican Reps. Henry Brown, Gresham Barrett and Bob Inglis.

Clyburn, the House majority whip, said the bill carries \$143.7 million for South Carolina, saving the jobs of 2,400 teachers and other public school employees while preventing the layoffs of police and firefighters across the state.

"Keeping American jobs at home and saving the jobs of our teachers, cops and firefighters is important," Clyburn said. "It will help keep our communities safe and keep classrooms from getting too big."

South Carolina also is slated to get \$138 million in extra Medicaid funds to provide health care for poor people.

The extra spending is offset in part by increasing taxes on companies that ship jobs abroad.

Inglis, a Travelers Rest Republican who lost his seat in a June 22 GOP primary runoff to 7th Judicial Circuit solicitor Trey Gowdy, said the tax increase hurts companies such as BMW, which opened a plant in Spartanburg in 1996.

"This \$26 billion job stimulus was paid for in part by a job-destroying tax increase on the multinational companies that are creating key jobs in the Upstate," Inglis told McClatchy.

Other Republicans said the measure will drive up the national debt despite an analysis by the nonpartisan Congressional Budget Office finding that it will decrease the federal deficit by \$1.4 billion over a decade.

"It is irresponsible to pass a bailout bill that will eliminate 141,000 new private sector jobs in an already stagnant economy and continue to pile up debt that America clearly cannot afford," Wilson said.

Spratt, the House Budget Committee chairman, said beyond the preserved teachers' posts, the legislation will save 2,300 more jobs in South Carolina.

The jobs, Spratt said, will be split among police, firefighters and emergency responders in the public sector and private sector workers who supply goods or services to state and local governments.

"This bill is a plus for South Carolina because it will save thousands of crucial jobs while ensuring that our children's education will not suffer and that medical coverage will continue for low-income families," Spratt said.

House Speaker Nancy Pelosi called lawmakers back into session after the Senate's surprise vote last week to pass the spending bill.

Sens. Lindsey Graham and Jim DeMint, both Upstate Republicans, voted against the measure.

"The idea of the federal government bailing out the states is, in the long run, a bad deal for federalism and the American taxpayer," Graham said.

The partisan debate over the spending bill framed the larger divide between Democrats and Republicans that will dominate the next few months in congressional campaigns before the November elections.

Spratt, who's being targeted by Republicans, was assailed for his vote by Americans for Limited Government, a GOP-allied group in Fairfax, Va.

"Representative Spratt has voted to kill future private sector growth to save public sector jobs today, all to benefit the most wasteful states and union bosses," said Bill Wilson, the group's head.

The new law extends emergency aid originally provided to the states in the \$787 billion economic stimulus bill that Congress passed and Obama signed into law in 2009.

Gov. Mark Sanford drew national headlines with his failed efforts to use some of that stimulus money to pay off S.C. government debt.

Sanford acknowledged before the House vote Tuesday that he lacks the power to block or divert funding in the new spending bill.

Neal McCluskey, an education analyst at the libertarian Cato Institute in Washington, questioned the Democrats' figures for preserved teaching positions.

"Nobody entirely knows how many jobs are on the line," he said.

David Lightman of McClatchy Newspapers contributed