

EXECUTIVE ORDER NO.

2025-38

WHEREAS, on September 25, 2025, after Lawson B. Watson waived his right to prosecution by indictment, the United States Attorney for the District of South Carolina filed an Information in the Spartanburg Division of the United States District Court for the District of South Carolina charging Lawson B. Watson with Wire Fraud Conspiracy in violation of 18 U.S.C. § 1343; and

WHEREAS, on October 30, 2025, Lawson B. Watson pled guilty to Count 2 of that Information, which charged him with Wire Fraud Conspiracy in violation of 18 U.S.C. § 1343; and

WHEREAS, article VI, section 8 of the South Carolina Constitution provides that upon indictment by a grand jury or waiver of such indictment of any officer of the State or its political subdivisions who has the custody of public or trust funds for embezzlement or the appropriation of public or trust funds to private use, “the Governor shall suspend such officer and appoint one in his stead, until he shall have been acquitted,” and “[i]n case of conviction, the position shall be declared vacant and the vacancy filled as may be provided by law”; and

WHEREAS, article VI, section 8 of the South Carolina Constitution further provides that “[a]ny officer of the State or its political subdivisions . . . who has been indicted by a grand jury for a crime involving moral turpitude or has waived such indictment . . . may be suspended by the Governor until he shall have been acquitted” and “[i]n case of conviction the office shall be declared vacant and the vacancy filled as may be provided by law”; and

WHEREAS, Lawson B. Watson, as a member of the Reidville Area Fire District, is an officer of the State or its political subdivisions; and

WHEREAS, under South Carolina law, moral turpitude “implies something immoral in itself, regardless of whether it is punishable by law as a crime,” involves “an act of baseness, vileness, or depravity in the private and social duties which a man owes to his fellow man, or to society in general, contrary to the accepted and customary rule of right and duty between man and man,” or otherwise includes conduct “contrary to justice, honesty[,] and good morals,” *State v. Horton*, 271 S.C. 413, 414–15, 248 S.E.2d 263, 263–64 (1978); *see also Baddourah v. McMaster*, 433 S.C. 89, 112, 856 S.E.2d 561, 573 (2021) (“Under South Carolina’s moral turpitude

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framework, we focus ‘primarily on the duty to society and fellow man [that] is breached by the commission of the crime.’”); and

WHEREAS, in addition to the foregoing authorities, section 8-1-110 of the South Carolina Code of Laws, as amended, requires that upon the indictment of any officer who has the custody of public or trust funds on charges of embezzlement or the appropriation of public or trust funds to private use, “the Governor shall suspend such officer and appoint one in his stead until he shall have been acquitted by the verdict of a jury” and “[i]n case of conviction the office shall be declared vacant and the vacancy filled as may be provided by law”; and

WHEREAS, upon consideration of the circumstances presented, to include the particularized facts alleged in the Information and the statutory definition and classification of the offense, the undersigned has determined that Lawson B. Watson has been convicted of a crime involving “embezzlement or the appropriation of public or trust funds to private use,” “a crime involving moral turpitude,” or both, for purposes of article VI, section 8 of the South Carolina Constitution; and

WHEREAS, for the foregoing reasons, and in accordance with article VI, section 8 of the South Carolina Constitution and section 8-1-110 of the South Carolina Code of Laws, the undersigned is authorized to declare a vacancy on the Reidville Area Fire District; and

NOW, THEREFORE, by virtue of the authority vested in me as Governor of the State of South Carolina and pursuant to the Constitution and Laws of this State and the powers conferred upon me therein, I hereby declare Lawson B. Watson’s seat on the Reidville Area Fire District vacant. This Order is effective immediately.

**GIVEN UNDER MY HAND AND THE
GREAT SEAL OF THE STATE OF
SOUTH CAROLINA, THIS 30th DAY OF
OCTOBER 2025.**

HENRY DARGAN MCMASTER
Governor

ATTEST:

MARK HAMMOND
Secretary of State