South Carolina Poised to Lead America's AI Future

ASCEND initiative powers innovation with state-owned AI supercomputer, preparing South Carolina to compete in a modern economy.

COLUMBIA, SOUTH CAROLINA, SC, UNITED STATES, September 3, 2025 /EINPresswire.com/ -- SC Representative Jeff Bradley (R-Hilton Head Island), Chairman of the House Regulations, Admin. Procedures, Artificial Intelligence and Cybersecurity Committee, convened lawmakers, higher education leaders, industry experts, and state agencies this past week for the ASCEND Symposium, standing for: Artificial Intelligence for Statewide Competitiveness, Economic Development, and Next-Generation Services Delivery.

The symposium brought together some of South Carolina's most influential leaders to advance a coordinated AI strategy for the state. Presidents and senior leadership from the University of South Carolina, Clemson University, Coastal Carolina University, plus

SC Representative Jeff Bradley is Chairman of the South Carolina House Regulations, Admin Procedures and Artificial Intelligence & Cybersecurity Committee

state technical colleges, joined forces with healthcare innovators like the Medical University of South Carolina, economic development partners such as SC Competes, and representatives from multiple state agencies.

SUPERCHARGING SOUTH CAROLINA'S COMPETITIVENESS
At the center of the discussion was ASCEND, a forward-looking initiative aimed at positioning South Carolina as a national leader in AI-driven research, innovation, and workforce development.

The cornerstone of ASCEND is the creation of a state-owned, sovereign AI supercomputer — a

first-of-its-kind resource in the Southeast. By giving universities, technical colleges, agencies, and private-sector partners shared access to world-class computing power, the state aims to accelerate discovery, fuel innovation, and prepare the workforce for an AI-driven economy.

Chairman Bradley said, "Artificial intelligence is transforming every part of our lives, and South Carolina has an opportunity to lead the way. With ASCEND, we can equip our state with the tools to compete on a global scale, drive economic development, enhance public services, and prepare our students and workers for the jobs of the future. This is about building the infrastructure to take South Carolina into the modern economy and ensuring we stay competitive for decades to come."

South Carolina House of Representatives logo

BROAD SUPPORT FROM LEADERS ACROSS SOUTH CAROLINA

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Leaders from the state's top universities and industries have praised the initiative and Bradley's role in spearheading this effort.

"I applaud and fully support this transformational thinking," said David Cole, President of the Medical University of South Carolina. "I think it's something we need to, and can, lean into effectively as a state."

Echoed James Clements, President of Clemson University: "I'm really thankful for Chairman Bradley's leadership to bring us together in this statewide effort to become a leader in the AI space. The planned infrastructure, the workforce development piece, startup companies, academics, research, how this initiative ties into healthcare — all of this discussion has got me incredibly excited."

ASCEND's vision aligns closely with President Donald Trump's "America's AI Action Plan", which emphasizes unleashing American innovation, avoiding heavy-handed regulations, and preparing
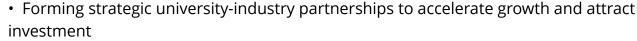
the U.S. workforce for the economy of tomorrow.

EMBRACING PRESIDENT TRUMP'S AI VISION

"South Carolina is embracing President Trump's vision for AI by putting up smart guardrails while moving full speed ahead," Bradley said. "We're unleashing AI's potential to create opportunity, grow our economy, and make our government more efficient — without burdening innovation under layers of regulation."

The symposium highlighted the bold opportunities ASCEND presents, including:

The South Carolina state capitol hosted lawmakers, state agencies and leaders in higher education and industry to design a new initiative to position South Carolina as a national leader in AI-driven research, innovation and workforce development.

• Developing a statewide AI supercomputing resource to power innovation, research, and workforce training
• Forming strategic university-industry partnerships to accelerate growth and attract investment
• Expanding AI-driven student capstone and applied research projects to connect classrooms with real-world workforce needs
• Supporting startup incubators and helping small and medium-sized businesses integrate AI tools into their operations

Bradley noted that this initiative lays the groundwork for South Carolina's competitiveness and growth. He stated that the next steps for advancing South Carolina's AI strategy will include prioritizing high-impact use cases, coordinating efforts across education, industry, and government, and developing a comprehensive implementation plan to maintain the state's leadership in AI innovation.

"South Carolina has the talent, the vision, and the partnerships to lead in this space," Bradley emphasized. "By working together, we can build an AI-ready economy that attracts investment, supports innovation, and improves the lives of our citizens."

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