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THE STATE OF SOUTH CAROLINA
In The Court of Appeals

APPEAL FROM THE ADMINISTRATIVE LAW COURT

RECEIVED

Ralph K. Anderson III, Administrative Law Judge OCT 09 2012

SC Court of Appeals

Case No. 10-ALJ-17-0270-CC

Duke Energy Corporation..... Appellant,

v.

dy

South Carolina Department of Revenue..... Respondent.

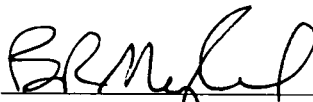
NOTICE OF APPEAL

Duke Energy Corporation (hereinafter "Appellant") hereby appeals the following two orders of the Honorable Ralph K. Anderson III of the Administrative Law Court ("ALC"): (1) Final Order and Decision filed on August 9, 2012 ("Final Order"), a copy of which is attached hereto as Exhibit A; and (2) The ALC's deemed denial of Appellant's Motion for Reconsideration ("Motion") which was filed on August 20, 2012, a copy of which is attached as Exhibit B.

The ALC did not act upon Duke Energy's Motion for Reconsideration within 30 days after its filing and pursuant to ALC Rule 29(D)(2), Duke Energy's Motion For Reconsideration was deemed denied on September 19, 2012.

Thus, pursuant to ALC Rule 29(D)(4), this Notice of Appeal is timely filed within 30 days of the deemed denial of the Motion for Reconsideration.

RESPECTFULLY SUBMITTED,



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October 9, 2012

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THE STATE OF SOUTH CAROLINA
In The Court of Appeals

APPEAL FROM THE ADMINISTRATIVE LAW COURT

Ralph K. Anderson III, Administrative Law Judge

Case No. 10-ALJ-17-0270-CC

Duke Energy Corporation..... Appellant,
v.
South Carolina Department of Revenue..... Respondent.

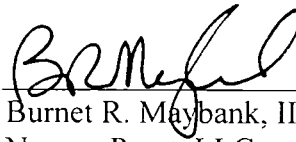
PROOF OF SERVICE

This is to certify that the foregoing Appellant's Notice of Appeal was sent via US
Mail addressed as follows this 9th day of October 2012:

Harry Hancock
Milton Kimpson
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The Honorable Ralph K. Anderson III
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October 9, 2012

BY HAND DELIVERY

The Honorable Jenny Abbott Kitchings
Clerk of Court
South Carolina Court of Appeals
1015 Sumter Street
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RECEIVED

OCT 09 2012

SC Court of Appeals

Re: Duke Energy Corporation v. South Carolina Department of Revenue
10-ALJ-17-0270-CC

Dear Ms. Kitchings:

Enclosed for filing is a Notice of Appeal in the above case. Also enclosed are the following:

Charleston
Charlotte
Columbia
Greensboro
Greenville
Hilton Head
Myrtle Beach
Raleigh

1. Proof of Service of the Notice of Appeal on the Respondent;
2. A copy of the Order which is to be challenged on appeal as well as Duke's Motion for Reconsideration; and
3. Our firm's check in the amount of \$100.00 for filing fee.

We are filing this appeal out of an abundance of caution. In the Final Order issued on August 9, 2012, the ALC granted in part the South Carolina Department of Revenue's ("Department") Motion for Summary Judgment with respect to the Waiver Issue. On August 20, 2012, Duke Energy timely filed a Motion for Reconsideration in accordance with ALC Rule 29(D), appealing the Final Order's granting of the Department's Motion for Summary Judgment. A true copy of the Motion for Reconsideration is attached hereto and incorporated herein by reference. On August 29, 2012, the ALC suspended the Final Order ("Suspending Order") pending a decision on Duke Energy's Motion for Reconsideration. A true copy of the Suspending Order is attached hereto and incorporated herein by reference. The ALC did not act upon Duke Energy's Motion for Reconsideration within 30 days after its

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filing and pursuant to ALC Rule 29(D)(2), Duke Energy's Motion For Reconsideration was deemed denied on September 19, 2012.

Section 1-23-610(A)(1) authorizes judicial review of ALC decisions and mandates that "a *final* decision" of the ALC must be appealed to this Court within 30 days after the aggrieved party receives the final decision and order of the administrative law judge. S.C. Code Ann. § 1-23-610(A)(1) (emphasis added). The 30-day period for appeal is stayed by a timely motion for reconsideration and if no order is filed regarding the motion, the 30-day period begins running from the time the motion is deemed denied. ALC Rule 29(D)(4).

The South Carolina Supreme Court has opined that a *final* decision "disposes of the whole subject matter of the action or terminates the particular proceeding or action, leaving nothing to be done but to enforce by execution what has been determined." See, e.g., *Charlotte-Mecklenburg Hosp. Auth. v. S. C. Dep't of Health & Envtl. Control*, 387 S.C. 265, 267, 692 S.E.2d 894, 895-6 (2010). An ALC order is interlocutory in nature and not immediately appealable "if there is some further act which must be done by the court prior to a determination of the rights of the parties ... [or] if a judgment ... determine[s] the applicable law, but leaves open questions of fact." *Id.*

The Waiver Issue determines the rights of the parties with respect to the tax years 1978-1993 because it dismisses Duke Energy's refund claims for those years and thus, there is no further act to be done by the ALC with respect to Duke Energy's claims for refund for those years. While the determination of the Waiver Issue in the Final Order disposes of Duke Energy's claims for refund for the tax years 1978 through 1993, it has no relevance to Duke Energy's refund claims for the tax years 1994 through 2001, which are part of the same action and remain pending before the ALC. As a result, the ALC's Final Order with respect to the Waiver Issue is not a final decision for purposes of Section 1-23-610 with respect to the tax years 1994-2001 because it does not terminate the proceeding or dispose of the whole subject matter of the action before the ALC.


Therefore, in the event this Court were to conclude that the Final Order constitutes a *final* decision with respect to the tax years 1978 through 1993 for purposes of Section 1-23-610, Duke Energy files this Notice of Appeal out of an abundance of caution to preserve its right to appeal from the Final Order with respect to the Waiver Issue. Should the Court determine that the Final Order is a final decision that is properly before the Court pursuant to Section 1-23-610, Duke Energy respectfully requests that this Court stay further proceedings in this appeal from the Final Order, pending resolution of the remainder of Duke Energy's refund claims for the tax years 1994 through 2001, following the trial which was held before the ALC

The Honorable Jenny Abbott Kitchings
October 9, 2012
Page 3

on September 5-6, 2012. Staying review of Duke Energy's Notice of Appeal will allow this Court to review the ALC Order together with any other issues that might be appealed following the resolution of the entire case by the ALC, thus promoting efficiency, conserving judicial resources, and reducing expense and delay.

Please return one clocked copy to me via our courier.

Very truly yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "BRM/III", written in a cursive style.

Burnet R. Maybank, III

BRM/caa
Enclosures

cc: The Honorable Ralph K. Anderson III
Harry Hancock
Milton Kimpson
John M. S. Hoefler
Tracey C. Green
John Roberts

Exhibit A

**STATE OF SOUTH CAROLINA
ADMINISTRATIVE LAW COURT**

Duke Energy Corporation,)	
)	Docket No. 10-ALJ-17-0270-CC
Petitioner,)	
)	
vs.)	ORDER GRANTING SUMMARY
)	JUDGMENT IN PART AND DENYING
)	SUMMARY JUDGMENT IN PART
South Carolina Department of Revenue,)	
)	
Respondent.)	
_____)	

Appearances:

For the Petitioners: Burnet R. Maybank, III, Esq.; Eric S. Tresh, Esq.; Jeffrey A. Friedman, Esq.; and Maria M. Todorova, Esq.

For the Respondent: Tracey C. Green, Esq.; John W. Roberts, Esq.; Harry Hancock, Esq.; and J. Abraham Gutting, Esq.

This matter is before the Administrative Law Court (ALC or Court) upon a Motion for Summary Judgment filed by Respondent Department of Revenue (Department) and a Cross-motion for Partial Summary Judgment filed by Petitioner Duke Energy Corporation (Duke Energy). The underlying case arises from the Department’s denial of amended corporate income tax returns filed by Duke Energy in 2002 for income tax years 1978-2001.¹ In its Motion for Summary Judgment, the Department contends that prior to the effective date of the Revenue Procedures Act (RPA), August 1, 1995, it lacked authority to extend the limitation period during which a taxpayer could file a refund claim and therefore, as a matter of law, the Forms FS-43 executed by Duke Energy and the Department prior to that time were ineffective in extending the refund-claim filing periods, rendering Duke Energy’s filing of amended corporate income tax returns for tax years ending 1978-1993 untimely.² The Department also contends that Duke Energy, as a matter of law, is a “manufacturer” under the applicable apportionment statute and must therefore use a multi-factor apportionment formula, consisting of property, sales, and

¹ These are the tax periods at issue in this case.

² Both parties stipulate that Duke Energy’s amended return for tax year 1994 was timely filed.

FILED
August 9, 2012
SC ADMIN. LAW COURT

payroll factors, not a single-factor gross-receipts formula.³ The Department further contends that as a matter of law, Duke Energy cannot, in its calculation of corporate income tax owed to South Carolina, include in the apportionment formula the return of principal from its sales of securities and other investment transactions. Finally, Duke Energy, in its Cross-Motion for Summary Judgment, argues that it was required to include in the apportionment formula the return of principal from its sales of securities and other investment transactions.

A hearing regarding these motions was held before this Court on June 26, 2012, in Columbia, South Carolina. For the reasons set forth below, I conclude that the Department's Motion for Summary Judgment as to the timeliness of Duke Energy's amended refund claims for tax years ending 1978-1993 must be granted; that the Department's Motion for Summary Judgment as to whether Duke Energy is considered a "manufacturer" under the applicable apportionment statute must be denied; and that the Department's Motion for Summary Judgment as to Duke Energy's inclusion of the return of principal in its apportionment formula must be granted and Duke Energy's Cross-Motion for Partial Summary Judgment on this issue must be denied.

FACTUAL BACKGROUND

The Department began auditing Duke Energy's corporate income taxes for income tax year ending 1978. That audit was extended a number of times, over a period of years due to the pending results of an audit of Duke Energy by the Internal Revenue Service (IRS), and also due to the health issues experienced by the Department's auditor and changes in the Department's personnel. These extensions were approved by Forms FS-43, each entitled "Field Services Division – Consent to Extend the Time to Assess Tax." The first Form FS-43, executed in August 1988, pertained to the income tax years ending December 31, 1983 and 1984. Significantly, the income tax years ending December 31, 1978 through December 31, 1982 were incorporated into the executed Forms FS-43 in May 1996. Additional Forms FS-43 periodically

³ Between the tax years ending 1978-1993, taxpayers whose principal business in South Carolina was "(a) manufacturing or a form of collecting, buying, assembling, or processing goods and materials within this State, or (b) selling, distributing, or dealing in tangible personal property within this State," were required to apportion their income based on a multi-factor apportionment formula, consisting of property, sales, and payroll factors. S.C. Code Ann. § 12-6-2250 (applicable to tax years after 1995); S.C. Code Ann. § 12-7-1120 (applicable to tax years prior to 1996). In this case, no party argued that Duke Energy engaged in collecting, buying, assembling, or processing of goods and materials within South Carolina, or that Duke Energy engaged in selling, distributing, or dealing in tangible personal property within South Carolina. Therefore, the Court will only focus its discussion on whether Duke Energy was a manufacturer for purposes of Section 12-6-2250.

were executed and additional income tax years added until the execution of the final Form FS-43 in June 2002.

In December 2002, Duke Energy filed amended corporate tax returns for the income tax years 1978-2001 seeking a total refund of \$126,240,645 plus interest.⁴ Duke Energy sought to change the apportionment formula – the mechanism for determining how much income is associated with Duke Energy’s South Carolina’s business activities – to the single-factor gross-receipts apportionment formula instead of the three-factor formula that it had previously used. It also sought to include the gross receipts, including the return of principal, from its sales of securities and other capital investments in the denominator of the gross-receipts formula for tax years 1978-1999.⁵ However, on February 4, 2010, the Department denied Duke Energy’s refund claims, after which Duke Energy filed a request for a contested case hearing with this Court on March 3, 2010.

STANDARD OF REVIEW

Rule 68 of the Administrative Law Court Rules provides that “[t]he South Carolina Rules of Civil Procedure . . . may, in the discretion of the presiding administrative law judge, be applied in proceedings before the Court to resolve questions not addressed by these rules.” ALC Rule 68. Rule 56(c) of the South Carolina Rules of Civil Procedure states that summary judgment is properly granted when the “pleadings, depositions, answers to interrogatories, and admissions on file, together with the affidavits, if any, show that there is no genuine issue as to any material fact and that any party is entitled to a judgment as a matter of law.” Rule 56(c), SCRCF.

“The purpose of summary judgment is to expedite disposition of cases which do not require the services of a fact finder.” George v. Fabri, 345 S.C. 440, 452, 548 S.E.2d 868, 874 (2001). “In determining whether summary judgment is proper, the court must construe all ambiguities, conclusions, and inferences arising from the evidence against the moving party. Byers v. Westinghouse Elec. Corp., 310 S.C. 5, 7, 425 S.E.2d 23, 24 (1992). Because it is a

⁴ This is the amount set forth by the Department. However, Duke Energy stated in its Memorandum in Opposition to the Department’s Motion for Summary Judgment and in Support of Duke Energy’s Cross-Motion for Partial Summary Judgment that the Department’s refund calculations in its Memorandum were incorrect, and that damages would need to be resolved should the Court find in the Department’s favor on any issue.

⁵ For 2000 and 2001, Duke Energy’s original tax returns included receipts from sales of securities in the sales factor in the denominator of the three-factor formula.

drastic remedy, summary judgment should be cautiously invoked to ensure that a litigant is not improperly deprived of a trial on disputed factual issues. Helena Chem. Co. v. Allianz Underwriters Ins. Co., 357 S.C. 631, 644, 594 S.E.2d 455, 462 (2004). However, “when plain, palpable, and indisputable facts exist on which reasonable minds cannot differ, summary judgment should be granted.” Bayle v. S.C. Dep’t of Transp., 344 S.C. 115, 120, 542 S.E.2d 736, 738 (Ct. App. 2001).

S.C Code Ann. § 1-23-600(A) (Supp. 2010) grants jurisdiction to the ALC to hear contested cases under the Administrative Procedures Act. Additionally, Section 12-60-460 grants the ALC the authority to conduct contested case hearings in matters concerning tax assessment and refunds.

DISCUSSION

I. Timeliness of Duke Energy’s Amended Income Tax Return Filings

The Department asserts that Duke Energy did not timely file its request for tax refunds for tax years ending 1978-1993, and therefore this case should be summarily dismissed. Undisputedly, in every instance Duke Energy’s amended tax returns for tax years ending 1978-1993 do not meet the statutory deadline to file its amended tax returns. Duke Energy nevertheless argues that its amended tax returns for the disputed tax years were timely filed because the Forms FS-43 extended the statutory deadlines for filing claims for tax refunds and waived any refund limitation periods. In this case, there is no dispute that both parties executed a number of Forms FS-43 periodically between the years 1988 and 2002. The parties also stipulated in their respective memoranda regarding the motions for summary judgment and in the hearing held before this Court on June 26, 2012 that the Form FS-43 executed on December 19, 1997 for the tax year ending 1994 effectively extended the period for filing a refund claim.⁶

Duke Energy argues that the execution of the Forms FS-43 covering the income tax years ending 1978-1993 extended the deadlines for filing claims for tax refunds and waived any refund limitation periods. Duke Energy also argues that because the Department could order a refund if

⁶ Pursuant to S.C. Code Ann. § 12-47-440 (****), which applied to the tax years ending 1990-1994, the period for filing a refund claim was three years. Moreover, S.C. Code Ann. § 12-6-4970(B), which was also applicable during these years, allowed a three-year time period for filing a refund claim for the tax year ending 1994 which would have begun on March 15, 1995. Therefore, because the filing of the Form FS-43 for the year 1994 was executed on December 19, 1997- after the enactment of the RPA and, and thus before March 15, 1998 - the period for filing a refund claim was still open. Consequently, the extension of the deadline was effective.

it discovered that a taxpayer had overpaid a tax, a penalty, or interest, even after a refund limitation period, this allows Duke Energy to file a claim for a refund after the limitation period. The analysis of Duke Energy's arguments is addressed in three parts: A) Did S.C. Code Ann. § 12-54-80 grant authority to the Department to extend the time to file an amended tax return; B) did S.C. Code Ann. § 12-54-30 authorize Duke Energy to file an amended tax return requesting a refund beyond the statutorily-prescribed timeframe; and C) did the language in the Form FS-43 executed by the Department extend the time for Duke Energy to file an amended tax return?

A. Statutory Authority to Extend the Time to File an Amended Tax Return

Duke Energy contends that Section 12-54-80 authorizes a taxpayer to request a refund once an extension is granted pursuant to that provision. Section 12-54-80, which applied to the tax periods prior to August 1, 1995 (the enactment date of the Revenue Procedures Act (RPA)), provided:

If, before the expiration of the time prescribed in this section for the mailing of a notice of assessment, the taxpayer has consented in writing to the mailing of the notice after the time, **notice of assessment may be mailed** at any time prior to the expiration of the period agreed upon. The period so agreed upon may be extended by subsequent agreements in writing made before the expiration of the period previously agreed upon.

S.C. Code Ann. § 12-54-80 (1978) (repealed in 1995) (emphasis added).

In general, when interpreting a statute, the sole function of the Court is to determine and give effect to the intent of the legislature. Hodges v. Rainey, 341 S.C 79, 85, 533 S.E.2d 578, 581 (2000). The starting point in doing so should always be the text of the statute itself. Id. (holding that “[w]hat a legislature says in the text of a statute is considered the best evidence of the legislative intent or will”); Wigfall v. Tideland Utils., Inc., 354 S.C. 100, 110, 580 S.E.2d 100, 105 (2003). In interpreting the text, the plain meaning rule requires that “words must be given their plain and ordinary meaning without resort to subtle or forced construction to limit or expand that statute’s operation.” State v. Leopard, 349 S.C. 467, 471, 563 S.E.2d 342, 344 (Ct. App. 2002). Finally, “[w]here the statute’s language is plain and unambiguous, and conveys a clear and definite meaning, the rules of statutory interpretation are not needed and the court has no right to impose another meaning.” Hodges, 341 S.C. at 85, 533 S.E.2d at 581.

Moreover, in considering this issue, this Court is further bound by the rules of statutory construction relating to tax law. For instance “[a] refund of taxes is solely a matter of governmental grace, . . . and any person seeking such relief must bring himself clearly within the

terms of the statute authorizing the same. . . .” Asmer v. Livingston, 225 S.C. 341, 344, 82 S.E.2d 465, 466 (1954) (internal citations omitted); Guar. Bank & Trust Co. v. S. Carolina Tax Comm'n, 254 S.C. 82, 173 S.E.2d 367 (1970) (“A refund of taxes is solely a matter of governmental or legislative grace and any person seeking such relief must bring himself clearly within the terms of the statute authorizing the same.”). The Court’s analysis in Guaranty Bank, also offers guidance in this case. In Guaranty Bank, the taxpayer claimed it was entitled to recover income tax paid on gain from an involuntary conversion of property. However, the law at the time prescribed a specific timeframe in which the proceeds from the converted property must be reinvested. In construing whether the taxpayer’s claim was timely the Court held that the “statutory language creating exemption from taxation will not be strained or liberally construed in favor of the taxpayer claiming an exemption, and he must, in order to be entitled to such exemption, clearly bring himself within the exemption on which he relies.” 254 S.C. at 89, 173 S.E.2d at 370.⁷ Furthermore, in making that determination, the Court recognized its previous holding that “a taxpayer who seeks to take advantage of a tax deduction must meet the conditions of the statute creating such.” Id.

Here, the plain language of Section 12-54-80 does not establish any authority to extend a taxpayer’s right to seek a refund but rather allowed the Department, with the taxpayer’s consent, to extend the time for it to mail its assessment of the tax owed by the taxpayer. Clearly, when speaking of mailing an assessment, the statute is speaking to an action by the Department. Thus, the plain language of the form extends the timeframe for the Department to mail an assessment to the taxpayer.

Moreover, Section 12-54-80 does not use the word “refund” anywhere within that provision. As explained below, the legislature set forth specific provisions expressing the timeframe to seek a refund for tax years ending 1978-1993. In Spectre, LLC v. S.C. Dep’t of Health & Env’tl. Control, 386 S.C. 357, 372, 688 S.E.2d 844, 852 (2010), the South Carolina Supreme Court held that: “Where there is one statute addressing an issue in general terms and another statute dealing with the identical issue in a more specific and definite manner, the more specific statute will be considered an exception to, or a qualifier of, the general statute and given

⁷ The court in Guaranty Bank, likewise held that “in order for a taxpayer to avail himself of a deduction in the calculation of a tax, he must bring himself squarely within the terms of the statute expressly authorizing it.” 254 S.C. at 89-90, 173 S.E.2d at 370.

such effect.” Here, it is incredulous that the legislature intended to grant an exception to the timeframe to seek a refund without even mentioning the term.

The Court nevertheless recognizes that the **application** of Section 12-54-80 could result in a refund of taxes paid by the taxpayer, but clearly such a refund would occur within the context of fulfilling the purpose of the statute. The purpose of Section 12-54-80 is to provide an option for the Department to extend the time during which the “notice of assessment may be mailed.” If, after the extension of time to make its determination, the Department decided that a taxpayer owed additional taxes, it would notify the taxpayer of that assessment and seek payment based upon that assessment. Conversely, if the Department’s assessment of the taxes owed was less than the taxes proffered by the taxpayer, the taxpayer would be refunded the difference.⁸ However, there is simply no language in Section 12-54-80 that provides that if the Department requests to extend its time to mail a notice of assessment—or determination of the taxes owed—this request, in turn, creates a right for a taxpayer to amend its previous filing and seek a refund upon its revised request.

This Court cannot simply by implication extend the time to file a refund request. Duke Energy must establish a statutory right to make that claim. To the contrary, Duke Energy failed to meet the required timeframes to request a refund for tax years 1978 to 1993. The timeframes for making those refund requests fell into two distinct regulatory periods: 1) 1978 to 1989; and 2) 1990 to 1993.

1. Income Tax Years Ending 1978-1989

The South Carolina Supreme Court set forth in Bass v. State that Section 12-47-440 only applied to property taxes and that “the exclusive remedy for contesting an alleged erroneous assessment of *income taxes* [is] by payment under protest of the tax claimed as illegal and a suit at law for recovery of the sum so paid, in accordance with Sections 65-2661 and 65-2662 of the Code. [predecessors of §§ 12-47-210 and 12-47-220].” 307 S.C. 113, 117, 414 S.E.2d 110, 112 (1992), (internal quotation marks omitted) (emphasis in the original), cert. granted, judgment vacated on other grounds by Bass v. South Carolina, 509 U.S. 916 and abrogated by Harper v. Virginia Dep’t of Taxation, 509 U.S. 86 (1993); see also Perpetual Bldg. & Loan Ass’n of Columbia v. S.C. Tax Comm’n, 255 S.C. 523, 527, 180 S.E.2d 195, 197 (1971). Thus, the

⁸ As addressed more fully below, S.C. Code Ann. § 12-54-30 (****) granted the Department the authority to issue a refund under those circumstances.

timeliness of Duke Energy's refund claims for the years 1978-1989 is governed by S.C. Code Ann. §§ 12-47-210 and 12-47-220 (****).⁹

Sections 12-47-210 and 12-47-220 required a taxpayer who sought to receive a refund of amounts paid to the state to expressly pay the taxes under protest and then institute an action in circuit court within 30 days after payment of the taxes. See S.C. Nat. Bank v. S.C. Tax Comm'n, 297 S.C. 279, 282, 376 S.E.2d 512, 514 (1989). Failure to pay the taxes under protest was fatal to a refund claim. See, e.g., City of Columbia v. Glens Falls Ins. Co., 245 S.C. 119, 139 S.E.2d 529 (1964). Here, there is no evidence that any of the payments for these years were made under protest. And even if the payments were made under protest, no action was filed in circuit court within 30 days after the payment was made. Rather, the refund claims were filed in the ALC well after the 30-day period expired.¹⁰ Therefore, none of the refund claims filed for Duke Energy's 1978-1989 tax years were timely. I thus conclude that the refund claims for the tax years 1978-1989 also are barred from consideration by this Court.

2. *Income Tax Years Ending 1990-1994*

As explained above, in 1992 the South Carolina Supreme Court in Bass held that Section 12-47-440 only applied to property taxes and that the exclusive remedy for obtaining a refund of income taxes was Sections 12-47-210 and 12-47-220 (****). Id. However, the General Assembly thereafter amended Section 12-47-440 to expressly apply to income tax refund claims, but only for tax years beginning in 1990 and later. See Act No. 464, 1994 S.C. Acts, Section 3(B).

⁹ (****) is used in this order in lieu of statutory years because this case involves numerous tax years, and therefore the years of the applicable statutes are equally numerous and varying, and the law applicable during many years was unchanged. The statutory law can be divided into two yearly ranges: 1978-1995 and 1996-2001, as the law regarding this issue did not change during the first range, and then did not change during the second range after the RPA changes in 1995.

¹⁰ There is also an additional reason for concluding the purported extensions of the corporate income tax years 1978-1982 are untimely. These years appeared for the first time on the face of the executed Form FS-43 effective May 30, 1996. Obviously, under either the modern era provisions or the pre-1995 provisions, these extensions were executed well after the refund periods had closed. See S.C. Code Ann. § 12-54-85 (three years from date return filed or two years after date of payment); S.C. Code Ann. §§ 12-47-210, -220 (pay under protest and file claim for refund within 30 days). The only available avenue for reviewing the taxable income of the years 1978-1982 therefore would have been the statutory provisions regarding an assessment based on a determination issued by the IRS. See S.C. Code Ann. § 12-54-85(D)(1); *cf.* S.C. Code Ann. § 12-54-80 (prior law). However, Duke Energy did not establish that the IRS issued a final determination within 180 days of May 30, 1996. Moreover, any extension attributable to an IRS determination in that circumstance would have been limited to the tax issues raised by the IRS. Because the allocation and apportionment issues raised by the taxpayers could not have been at issue in an IRS determination, the purported extensions of the 1978-1982 tax years are untimely for purposes of the issues before this Court.

Section 12-47-440 provides for a three-year period of limitation in which to file a refund claim. Therefore, for the 1990-1994 tax years, Duke Energy was required to file its claims for refund within three years after its corporate income tax return was originally due. It is undisputed that Duke Energy filed its corporate income tax returns based on a calendar year. Thus, the returns and payment originally were due without regard to any extension on March 15th of the following year. S.C. Code Ann. §§ 12-6-4970(B) (effective for tax years beginning after 1995); 12-7-1640 (effective for tax years prior to 1996). The refund periods applicable to Duke Energy under Section 12-47-440 for the income tax years 1990-1994 were therefore as follows:

Income Tax Years	Return Originally Due	Close of Refund Period
1990	March 15, 1991	March 15, 1994
1991	March 15, 1992	March 15, 1995
1992	March 15, 1993	March 15, 1996
1993	March 15, 1994	March 15, 1997
1994	March 15, 1995	March 15, 1998

B Section 12-54-30

In its Post-Trial Brief, Duke Energy nevertheless argues that during the tax years at issue S.C. Code Ann. § 12-54-30 (****) provided a different “mechanism” by which it could file an amended tax return requesting a refund. Section 12-54-30 provided in relevant part that: “If the commission discovers on examination of a return or otherwise that the tax, penalty, or interest paid by any person is in excess of the amount legally due, the commission may order a refund or give credit for the overpayment.” The plain language of Section 12-54-30 permitted the Department to refund amounts discovered on examination of a return. See Anders v. S.C. Parole & Cmty. Corr. Bd., 279 S.C. 206, 305 S.E.2d 229 (1983) (“[T]he Court’s primary function in interpreting a statute is to ascertain the intention of the legislature, and when the terms of the statute are clear and unambiguous, the Court must apply them according to the literal meaning.”). Section 12-54-30 does not reference whatsoever the timeframe for a taxpayer to file a request for a refund. To the contrary, as set forth above, there were specific statutes that articulated the timeframe in which a taxpayer could file for a refund for tax years 1978 to 1993. As aforementioned, the statute which deals with an issue in a more specific and definite manner prevails over a statute which addresses the issue in general terms, Spectre, 688 S.E.2d 844. Furthermore, “[w]hen construing statutory language, the statute must be read as a whole, and sections which are part of the same general statutory law must be construed together and each

one given effect.” Duvall v. S.C. Budget and Control Bd., 377 S.C. 36, 42, 659 S.E.2d 125, 127 (2008).

Thus, Section 12-54-30 allowed the Department to grant relief to a taxpayer if it discovered an overpayment on examination of a return or otherwise, even if a claim for refund would be untimely. It did not, however, change the fact that the taxpayer had to strictly comply with the provisions of the refund statutes if it wanted to file a claim for refund that would be subject to judicial review. See Hodges v. Rainey, 341 S.C. 79, 533 S.E.2d 578 (2000) (“The canon of construction ‘*expressio unius est exclusio alterius*’ or ‘*inclusio unius est exclusio alterius*’ holds that ‘to express or include one thing implies the exclusion of another, or of the alternative.’”). The logic of this interpretation of Section 12-54-30 was reflected in Argent Lumber Co. v. Query, 178 S.C. 1, 182 S.E. 93 (1935), overruled on other grounds by McCall by Andrews v. Batson, 285 S.C. 243, 329 S.E.2d 741 (1985). The Court in Argent Lumber held that under a statute similar to the one in the present case, the taxpayer had no right to judicial review of the Tax Commission’s refusal to grant the taxpayer a refund notwithstanding the Commission’s discovery of overpaid taxes and the Commission’s authority to grant refunds at the time of the tax periods at issue. The reason for this, aside from a lack of statutory authority at the time to compel the Commission to issue a refund of overpaid taxes, was that the taxpayer had failed to comply with the refund statute but instead waited more than ten years after the overpayment and almost four years after the amount of the claim was ascertained to bring suit. Id. at 94-95.

C. Form FS-43

In light of the statutory timeframes for filing an amended return requesting a refund, Duke Energy’s case centers upon the implications of the Department’s Form FS-43. Duke Energy contends that the Forms FS-43 executed in this case allowed it additional time to file a claim for a refund, an extension that would run for more than twenty years in some cases. At the outset, I do not find that the Forms FS-43 authorized a party to seek a refund after the statutory time for filing such a request.

The language contained in the Form FS-43 prior to August 1, 1995 was as follows:

This agreement extends the time **for mailing** the notice of assessment or refund of the above tax **pursuant to the provisions of Section 12-54-80** of the 1976 South Carolina Code of Laws, as amended.

(Emphasis added).

Clearly, when referencing the mailing of the notice of an assessment or refund, Form FS-43 is speaking to an action by the Department. Thus, the plain language of the form extends the timeframe for the Department to mail the notice of a refund or assessment to the taxpayer in keeping with Section 12-54-80. That purpose is reflected by the title of the Form FS-43: “Consent to Extend the Time to Assess Tax.” The purpose also logically flows from the operation of the tax laws. Because a notice of assessment is issued and mailed by the Department, it necessarily follows that Form FS-43 applies only to extend the time in which the Department may issue and mail a notice of assessment or refund that it determines is due. Thus, the refund language in Form FS 43 refers **not** to allowing a taxpayer additional time in which to file a claim for a refund—which, as explained above, the statutory provisions did not permit—but to affording the Department additional time to review the taxpayer’s records and issue a notice of assessment or refund, as it determines appropriate based on a review of the taxpayer’s records.

Furthermore, Form FS-43 does not **infer** that a taxpayer has a right to amend its previous tax filing and seek a refund upon alternative grounds. Duke Energy’s proposition is not supported by a specific statutory grant of the authority to extend the timeframe to file an amended request for a refund. Rather, Duke Energy reasons that the use of the term “refund” in the Form FS-43 language infers the grant of an extension to file its request for a refund. However, Form FS-43 reflects its limited purpose by referencing the time an assessment or refund is allowed “pursuant to the provisions of Section 12-54-80.” As explained above, Section 12-54-80 does not authorize a taxpayer to file a request for a refund outside of the statutes that specifically set forth that timeframe.

Duke Energy nonetheless contends that since the Department agrees that Form FS-43 had that effect for 1995 and later, it must have had that effect before 1995. Duke Energy avers that since the “refund” language is absent in S.C. Code Ann. § 12-54-85(C)(5) (****)— the section with which the RPA supplanted Section 12-54-80 as of August 1, 1995 – that indeed Section 12-54-80 must have also have granted it the right to file an amended tax return seeking a refund.¹¹

¹¹ Duke Energy also pointed out that the Forms FS-43 executed by the Department and Duke Energy from 1996 to 1999, well after the redesignation of Section 12-54-80 as Section 12-54-85, continued to make reference to Section 12-54-80, a statute that no longer existed. And the Forms FS-43 executed by the Department and Duke Energy from 2000 through 2002 incorrectly cited to subsection (C)(5) of S.C. Code Ann. § 12-54-85 instead of subsection (C)(4). Those arguments carry no legal value, but are probative as to the apparent shoddy fashion in which the Forms FS-43 were executed.

the application of Section 12-54-30 in this case, the fallacy of Duke Energy's assertion is referred to as "the fallacy of denying the antecedent" and is illustrated in a hypothetical syllogism as:

If A, then B.

Not A.

Therefore, not B.

Ruggero J. Aldisert, Logic for Lawyers: A Guide to Clear Legal Thinking 160 (National Institute for Trial Advocacy 3d ed. 1997); see also Irving M. Copi, Introduction to Logic 295 (5th ed. 1978).

Stated in terms of syllogism, Duke Energy's arguments proceed as follows:

If Form FS-43 had referenced Section 12-54-30, then that section would be applicable to determining the timeframe for a refund pursuant to Form FS-43.

Form FS-43 did not reference Section 12-54-30.

Therefore, Section 12-54-30 is not applicable to determining the timeframe for a refund pursuant to Form FS-43.

Other courts have also found this reasoning to be faulty. For instance, in Crouse-Hinds Co. v. InterNorth, Inc., 634 F.2d 690, 703 (2d Cir. 1980), the court held that:

The proposition that "A implies B" is not the equivalent of "non-A implies non-B," and neither proposition follows logically from the other. The process of inferring one from the other is known as "the fallacy of denying the antecedent."

634 F.2d at 703 (cited in Logic for Lawyers).

Moreover, logic dictates a conclusion contrary to Duke Energy's assertion. The failure to reference a provision that governs when the Department may issue a refund upon its own initiative does not suggest it is inapplicable. Nevertheless, the failure to reference any statute (including Section 12-54-30) that addresses the authority of the Department to issue refunds profoundly suggests that Form FS-43 was not addressing a taxpayer's authority to amend its tax returns and seek a refund, or the Department's authority to extend the timeframe within which a refund claim could be filed. If Form FS-43 was granting the authority to extend the time to make refund claims, it would not only reference the statute upon which that authority was granted, but would presumably do so with clarity rather than making the reference: "mailing of notice of assessment or refund." To the contrary, Form FS-43 was based upon Section 12-54-80, which governs the time period in which the Department could assess taxes – a provision that says nothing about refunds or extensions of time to file refund claims.

Waiver of a Statute of Limitations

Duke Energy also contends that the Department “waived” the “statute of limitations” for filing a refund. Duke Energy bases its contention upon the language of Form FS-43; upon the alleged grant by Department employees of an extension of the time during which to file a request for a refund; and upon Duke Energy’s belief that the Department’s Revenue Procedures reflected that right. Duke Energy contends that “[f]or years, the Department advised taxpayers that it had in place a policy to execute waiver agreements extending the statute of limitations for both assessments and refunds.”¹²

However, the phrase “statute of limitations” invokes specific case law that is not applicable to this matter. Obviously, this case does not involve a “cause of action” in which the Court must first determine when the statute of limitations begins to run. In other words, it does not involve parties who possess the discretion to control when a cause of action may properly accrue. Rather, this case involves a determination of when the State of South Carolina grants a right to seek a refund pursuant to the existing tax laws. In Dep’t of Conservation v. Co-De Coal Co., 388 S.W.2d 614 (Ky. 1965), the court aptly explained the distinction between a statute of limitations and a statutory timeframe for filing a request for refund from a state. The court noted: “whereas a statute of limitations neither creates nor extinguishes any rights, but merely places a limitation upon the remedy (which can be waived or tolled), a limitation such as the one in question is a condition essential to the existence of the right.” Co-De Coal, 388 S.W.2d at 617 (internal citations omitted). The court added: “The bringing of the action within the limited time is a condition to the exercise of the right, and, if the condition is not complied with, there is neither right nor remedy.” Id. (internal citation and quotation marks omitted).

Indeed, this concept is supported by South Carolina case law. In Labruce v. City of N. Charleston, 268 S.C. 465, 234 S.E.2d 866 (1977), the appellants instituted an action to recover business license taxes paid under protest. The Court recognized that at that time, Section 65-2661 et seq., Code of Laws, 1962, provided the exclusive remedy for the recovery of contested taxes and held that “[s]trict compliance with the conditions precedent is prescribed when one

¹² In its post-hearing brief, Duke Energy alleges that the Department had respected the “waiver” agreements it had with Duke Energy for tax years 1978-1994 by agreeing, in 2002, to offset refunds of its South Carolina corporate income tax for tax years 1978-1994 against the corporate income, license, and sales taxes for those same years, resulting in a net refund owed to Duke Energy. However, this allegation was based on an affidavit referred to as the “Monroe Affidavit,” designated as “Exhibit A,” that was not submitted prior to, or during, the hearing. Therefore, this Court will not consider this information in rendering its decision.

invokes the statutory remedy.” 234 S.E.2d at 867. See also 4 S.C. Jur. Action § 13 (“One who invokes a statutory remedy must bring himself within the statute and comply with the conditions prescribed therein. Moreover, the Court of Appeals recently reiterated this principle, noting that a nonclaim statute (the sort at issue in the present case)¹³ differs from a statute of limitations in that a nonclaim statute creates no enforceable right of action “[u]nless the claim is filed within the prescribed time set out in the statute,” whereas a statute of limitations “creates a defense to an action brought after the expiration of the time allowed by law for the bringing of such an action.” Phillips ex rel. Barnett v. Quick, Op. No. 5003, 2012 WL 2913296 (S.C. Ct. App. filed July 18, 2012) (citing Estate of Decker v. Farm Credit Servs. Of Mid-Am, ACA, 684 N.E.2d 1137, 1138-39 (Ind. 1997).

As a general rule, when a statute creates a new right and at the same time prescribes a remedy for enforcing the right, the prescribed statutory course must be followed by anyone claiming the right.”); 72 Am. Jur. 2d State and Local Taxation § 996 (“Strict compliance with conditions precedent is required to invoke the statutory remedy for recovery of contested taxes.”). When a statute both creates a cause of action and includes a time limit for its commencement, compliance with the time limit is a condition precedent to the maintenance of the action. 54 C.J.S. Limitations of Actions § 31 (updated October 2010). “Such a statutory time limit conditions the existence of the right of action, thereby creating a substantive, rather than procedural, limitation on the right. Bringing suit within the prescribed time is a condition of liability itself, not of the remedy alone.” Id.

Thus, the statutes that grant a South Carolina taxpayer a right to seek a refund are not statutes of limitations but rather conditions precedent to obtain a right to a refund. Accordingly, the courts have not adopted the doctrine of waiver involving tax claims. To the contrary, a refund of taxes is considered “solely a matter of governmental grace, . . . and any person seeking such relief must bring himself clearly within the terms of the statute authorizing the same.” Asmer v. Livingston, 225 S.C. 341, 344, 82 S.E.2d 465, 466 (1954) (internal citations omitted); see also C.W. Matthews Contracting Co., Inc. v. S.C. Tax Comm’n, 267 S.C. 548, 554, 230 S.E.2d 223, 226 (1976); Guar. Bank & Trust Co. v. S.C. Tax Comm’n, 254 S.C. 82, 173 S.E.2d

¹³ A nonclaim statute is one that creates a right of action and provides a time limit on exercising that right. It imposes a condition precedent, as the time element is part of the right of action. 54 C.J.S. Limitation of Actions §33 (updated May 2012).

367 (1970) (holding that the circuit court erred in extending the time periods under the statute because that is a legislative and not a judicial function). Therefore, the South Carolina Supreme Court held in TNS Mills, Inc. v. S.C. Dep't of Revenue, 331 S.C. 611, 623, 503 S.E.2d 471, 478 (1998) that the Department employee's erroneous interpretation of a statute was not binding on the courts, and that Department employees cannot make changes in the refund procedure established by the General Assembly or exceed the authorization granted by a statute. See also Argent Lumber Co., 182 S.E. at 95 (“[T]he agent of the tax commission could not alter, amend, or change the statute law of this state, either orally or by written agreement . . .”). The United States Supreme Court further explained that an employee of the government has no authority to waive or extend a refund period except to the extent authorized by the governing statute. U.S. v. Garbutt Oil Co., 302 U.S. 528 (1938) (Officers of the government have no power to waive statutes of limitations; and Commissioner cannot consider untimely filed returns); see also Dickow v. United States, 740 F. Supp. 2d 231, 237 (D. Mass. 2010) aff'd, 654 F.3d 144 (1st Cir. 2011) cert. denied, 132 S. Ct. 1046 (2012) (“The Executor cannot rely upon the IRS’ failure to advise him of the denial to justify his purported conclusion that his second request had been granted where, as here, the IRS clearly did *not* have the authority to issue such extension.”).

The only case cited by Duke Energy that involved a refund claim was Anonymous Taxpayer v. S.C. Dep't of Revenue, 377 S.C. 425, 661 S.E.2d 73 (2008). However, the relief sought by the taxpayer in that case was based on the contention that the taxpayer's right to retirement benefits was in the nature of a contract. The Supreme Court's discussion of the statute of limitations in Anonymous Taxpayer was predicated upon the taxpayer's argument that there “was a contract providing for continuing performance, thus the limitations period began anew each year.” The Court noted long ago that statutes of limitations could be waived with respect to actions based on contract. See Heyward v. S.C. Tax Comm'n, 240 S.C. 347, 351, 126 S.E.2d 15, 17 (1962) (“We have held that the State may be subject to the doctrine of estoppel in its contractual relations.”). Nevertheless, the Court did not hold that refund claims are in the nature of a contract and, in fact, has held the opposite. See id.; see also C. W. Matthews Contracting Co., 267 S.C. at 554, 230 S.E.2d at 226 (a tax refund claim is created by statute and is not in the nature of a debt collection claim).

In sum, since no employee or agent of the Department has any authority to waive the authorization granted by Section 12-54-80, Form FS-43 could grant no more rights than those

permitted by this statute. Thus, any statement made by a Department employee, either verbally or in writing, agreeing to waive the time to request a refund, which was inconsistent with Section 12-54-80, was outside of that employee's authority. Consequently, I conclude that the Forms FS-43 executed before August 1, 1995, and any other statements, written or oral, given by DOR's employees, were ineffective in extending the statutory filing period for Duke Energy's refund claims or in waiving that period.

Moreover, even under section 12-54-85(F)(1), with the exception of situations where there are changes made to taxable income reported to the IRS, or when the IRS changes a corporation's taxable income, "claims for . . . refund must be filed within three years of the time the return was filed, or two years from the date of payment, whichever is later. If no return was filed, a claim for refund must be filed within two years from the date of payment." S.C. Code Ann. § 12-54-85(F)(1) (1995). Also, "[a] claim for refund can be amended prior to, but not after, the expiration of the time for filing the claim for refund under Section 12-54-85(F)." *Id.* § 12-60-470(H). Read together, these sections lead to the conclusion that once a refund period expires under the terms set forth by the legislature, that period of time cannot be revived by the consent of the Department or otherwise; rather, any amendments **must** be made **prior to** the expiration of the statutory period for filing refund claims. See Am. Legion Post 15 v. Horry County, 381 S.C. 576, 582, 674 S.E.2d 181, 183-84 (Ct. App. 2009) (holding in part that the three-year limitations period under section 12-54-85(F)(1) barred a taxpayer's action seeking a refund). Thus, even after the RPA took effect on August 1, 1995, and the Department received its new power to extend the period for filing refund claims, the Department was unable to use this power to revive refund claims periods that had expired due to the close of the three-year limitations period applicable to the income tax years ending 1990 through 1994 or due to failure to pay under protest and file a claim for a refund within thirty (30) days for the tax years ending prior to 1990.

Equitable Estoppel

Duke Energy similarly asserts that the Department should be estopped from asserting its "statute of limitations." The basis for this contention is that the Department employees purportedly viewed Form FS-43 as waiving the statutory refund limitations period, and that Duke Energy "agreed to the waivers because the Department represented verbally and in writing that the statute of limitations was extended for both tax assessments and tax refund claims."

As with waiver of a statute of limitations, the courts have recognized that the estoppel doctrine is limited in reviewing tax claims. As a general rule, “the doctrine of estoppel will not be applied to deprive the government of the due exercise of its police power, **or to effect public revenues** or property rights, or to frustrate the purpose of its laws or thwart its public policy.” Heyward v. S.C. Tax Comm'n, 240 S.C. 347, 351, 126 S.E.2d 15, 17 (1962) (emphasis added). In the only South Carolina appellate decision touching upon taxation issues and equitable estoppel, the Court of Appeals held that equitable estoppel did not apply to bar a county from asserting the statute of limitations as a defense to refunding admissions fees paid in connection with bingo games. Am. Legion Post 15, 381 S.C. at 583, 674 S.E.2d at 184.

Also, to invoke estoppel in this case, the Department employees must be authorized to change the procedure for obtaining a refund. However, in Texaco, Inc. v. Wasson, the South Carolina Supreme Court explained that the Department was not estopped from assessing additional taxes based on the use of an improper accounting method even though Department employees had expressly and in writing authorized the taxpayer to use that method “until such time as the South Carolina Tax Commission grants permission to change such method.” 269 S.C. 255, 264-65, 237 S.E.2d 75, 79 (1977). Similarly, in TNS Mills, Inc., the taxpayer contended that the Department had the authority to grant a property tax exemption retroactively. Its contention was based in part on a memorandum prepared and issued by a Department employee opining that a recently-enacted statute gave the Department authority to accept exemption applications at any time. The South Carolina Supreme Court rejected that contention, holding instead that “[a]lthough [the employee] believed the Department had the authority to grant retroactive exemptions, and exemptions may have been granted under this erroneous view, neither the Commission nor the courts are bound by his erroneous interpretation.” 331 S.C. at 621-22, 503 S.E.2d at 477; see also S.C. Coastal Council v. Vogel, 292 S.C. 449, 357 S.E.2d 187 (Ct. App. 1987) (“The public cannot be estopped ... by the unauthorized or erroneous conduct or statements of its officers or agents which have been relied on by a third party to his detriment.”).

In addition, the authority that Duke Energy itself cited supports a conclusion that the Department is not estopped from rejecting actions taken by its employees that are not authorized by statute. Duke Energy cited Quail Hill, LLC v. County of Richland and quoted the following language from that case: “A governmental body is not immune from the application of the doctrine of estoppel where its officers or agents act within the proper scope of their authority.”

387 S.C. 223, 236, 692 S.E.2d 499, 506 (2010) (italics omitted). However, Duke Energy only quoted the first part of the pertinent language. The entire relevant passage was quoted by the Court as follows:

A governmental body is not immune from the application of the doctrine of estoppel where its officers or agents act within the proper scope of their authority ... The public cannot be estopped, however, by the unauthorized or erroneous conduct or statements of its officers or agents which have been relied on by a third party to his detriment.

Quail Hill, 387 S.C. at 236, 692 S.E.2d at 506 (italics in original) (quoting DeStefano v. City of Charleston, 304 S.C. 250, 257-58, 403 S.E.2d 648, 653 (1991)). That passage followed the Court's recognition at the beginning of the paragraph: "As a general rule, estoppel does not lie against the government to prevent the due exercise of its police power or to thwart the application of public policy." Id. (quotation marks omitted).

Following the above precedents, the Court ultimately held that: "For reasons ... discussed [in the opinion], we believe the Court of Appeals erred in reversing the circuit court's grant of summary judgment to County as to Quail Hill's claim of equitable estoppel." Id., 387 S.C. at 237, 692 S.E.2d at 506. In other words, the Supreme Court in Quail Hill affirmed that the government was not estopped from contesting erroneous statements made by its staff. See id., 387 S.C. at 238, 692 S.E.2d at 507 ("[W]e agree with County's argument that the RU zoning classification was a mistaken statement of law and, thus, could not be used to estop County from enforcing it."). That holding is entirely consistent with the holdings of Texaco, Heyward, and TNS Mills and, in fact, relies on the same rationale stated by the Court in Heyward – that the government cannot be estopped from exercising its police power. Compare id., 387 S.C. at 236, 692 S.E.2d at 506 (discussing police power rationale for not applying estoppel to governmental entities) with Heyward, 240 S.C. at 351, 126 S.E.2d at 17 (holding that "estoppel will not be applied to deprive the government of the due exercise of its police power, or to effect public revenues or property rights").

Thus, I conclude that the Department is not estopped from invoking the correct refund limitations period, even if Department employees believed they had the authority to allow the taxpayer to extend the time in which a claim for refund could be filed. This court clearly does not wish to shield a governmental agency from the doctrine of equitable estoppel where its agents **act within the scope of their authority**. Rather, this Court recognizes that however

Duke Energy seeks to characterize the evidence presented in response to the Department's summary judgment motion, the Department's employees did not have the authority to create an unauthorized refund procedure. Moreover, execution of Forms FS-43 by Department employees can provide the taxpayer with no greater remedies than those provided by the governing statutes for refund claims and the like. It is upon these principles that the court in Phillips held that "[w]hile equitable principles may extend the time for commencing an action under statutes of limitation, **nonclaim statutes impose a condition precedent to the enforcement of a right of action and are not subject to equitable exceptions.**" Supra. (citing Estate of Decker, 684 N.E.2d at 1139) (emphasis added).

In fact, even if estoppel was applicable here, Duke Energy failed to set forth a genuine issue of material fact as to its meeting those requirements. "To prove estoppel against the government, the relying party must prove: (1) the lack of knowledge and of the means of knowledge of the truth of the facts in question; (2) justifiable reliance upon the government's conduct; and (3) a prejudicial change in position." S.C. Dep't of Transp. v. Horry County, 391 S.C. 76, 83, 705 S.E.2d 21, 25 (2011). Furthermore, "[o]nce the party moving for summary judgment meets the initial burden of showing the absence of a genuine issue as to any material fact, the nonmoving party may not simply rest on the mere allegations contained in the pleadings." Grant v. Mount Vernon Mills, Inc., 370 S.C. 138, 142, 634 S.E.2d 15, 17 (Ct. App. 2006). "Rather, the nonmoving party must come forward with specific facts showing there is a genuine issue for trial." Id. (quoting Peterson v. W. Am. Ins. Co., 336 S.C. 89, 94, 518 S.E.2d 608, 610 (Ct.App.1999)). Here, there is no dispute that Duke Energy could have referenced the governing refund statutes and learned that Department employees cannot extend the time periods set forth in the applicable refund statutes. See Am. Legion Post 15, 381 S.C. at 583, 674 S.E.2d at 184. Moreover, I do not find that the Form FS-43 misinformed Duke Energy that it could file an amended tax return requesting a refund after the statutory timeframe.

Equitable Tolling

Duke Energy contends that the Department should be equitably tolled from requiring Duke Energy to comply with the statutory time frame within which to file a refund because the Department's employees induced Duke Energy to file belatedly. In support of this remedy, Duke Energy contends that it agreed to the waivers because the Department represented that the statute of limitations was extended for both tax assessments and tax refund claims.

“[T]he doctrine of equitable tolling may be applied to toll the running of the statute of limitations.” Hooper v. Ebenezer Sr. Servs. & Rehab. Ctr., 386 S.C. 108, 115, 687 S.E.2d 29, 32 (2009) (quoting 54 C.J.S. Limitations of Actions § 115 (2005)). As explained above, however, the statute requiring that refunds be filed within specific timeframes creates a condition precedent to seeking that remedy and thus is not subject to the equitable remedies for statutes of limitations. See Phillips, *supra*. Thus, equitable tolling is not a proper remedy in this case. Cf. United States v. Brockamp, 519 U.S. 347 (1997) (holding that the statutory limitations period on tax refund claims under the applicable provision of the Internal Revenue Code does not authorize equitable tolling).

Even if, *arguendo*, equitable tolling could apply here, in Hooper, the South Carolina Supreme Court explained that “equitable tolling is a doctrine that should be used sparingly and only when the interests of justice compel its use.” 386 S.C. at 117, 687 S.E.2d at 33. Here, however, in an attempt to invoke this extraordinary remedy, Duke Energy submitted affidavits and deposition testimony that reference the belief by Department employees that Duke Energy could seek a “refund” based upon extensions granted by the executed Forms FS-43. However, those affidavits do not contain an averment by any Department employee that he or she specifically stated to a Duke Energy representative that Duke Energy’s time to seek a “refund” was extended by Form FS-43. More importantly, there is no reference that any Department employee stated that Duke Energy could file an amended tax return seeking a refund based upon a new basis. Nor is there any sworn testimony by a Duke Energy representative that he or she was misdirected by a Department employee.

Therefore, I conclude that equitable tolling does not lie in this case.

Conclusion

Finally, the context of Duke Energy’s request is important in recognizing the proper resolution of this issue. Duke Energy asserts that there are disputed facts regarding this issue because some of the Department’s employees viewed Form FS-43 as extending the period during which a taxpayer could seek a refund. However, statements to that effect do not answer the issue in this case. This case is **not** simply about whether Duke Energy can seek a refund based upon a tax review that had been held open pending the Department’s determination of the proper tax to assess. Rather, Duke Energy originally filed as a manufacturer using the three-factor formula. Now, it seeks a refund, not based upon the initial filing, but based upon an amended tax return

using the single-factor gross-receipts apportionment formula – an entirely different basis. Duke Energy’s amended return also now includes the gross receipts from the sale of its securities and other capital investments, which further includes the principal.

Duke Energy interprets Form FS-43 as not only allowing it to question its initial filing but as allowing it to file a new (amended) tax return and claim an entirely new basis for a refund. The plain reading of the tax statutes and review of the affidavits and deposition testimony submitted by Duke Energy fail to establish a genuine issue of material fact regarding the request of Duke Energy. In other words, though there are statements regarding the right of Duke Energy to seek a refund, no evidence was presented that any Department employees interpreted Form FS-43 as allowing a taxpayer to file **an amended return** on an **entirely different basis** than the original return and then seek a refund based on that amended return.¹⁴ Therefore, the Department’s Motion for Summary Judgment as to the issue of the timeliness of Duke Energy’s amended income tax return filings is granted.

II. Apportionment Method

The next issue is whether Duke Energy is a “manufacturer” and therefore required to use the multi-factor apportionment formula pursuant to S.C. Code Ann. § 12-6-2250 (****) (applicable to tax years after 1995)/ Section 12-7-1140 (applicable to tax years prior to 1996); or whether Duke Energy was required to use the single-factor gross-receipts formula pursuant to Section 12-6-2290 (****) (applicable to tax years after 1995)/ Section 12-7-1190 (applicable to tax years prior to 1996). Duke Energy argues that it is not a manufacturer, even though it filed its original corporate income tax returns under this status. Duke Energy contends that it is actually a seller of services, and therefore amended its tax return filing using the single-factor gross receipts formula.

During the tax periods at issue, taxpayers whose principal business in South Carolina was “(a) manufacturing . . . goods and materials within this State . . .” had to apportion their income using a three-factor formula composed of property, payroll, and sales. S.C. Code Ann. § 12-6-2250 (applicable to tax years after 1995); S.C. Code Ann. § 12-7-1140 (applicable to tax years prior to 1996). All other taxpayers (except certain specific industries not relevant here) had to

¹⁴ Review of the record does not even establish the validity of the Form FS-43 agreements for tax years 1978 through 1983. In fact, Duke Energy has even conceded that it has not located the executed Form FS-43 agreements for tax years 1978 through 1983.

apportion their income using a single-factor gross-receipts apportionment formula. S.C. Code Ann. § 12-6-2290 (applicable to tax years after 1995); *Id.* § 12-7-1190 (applicable to tax years prior to 1996). “Manufacturing” is not, and was not during the tax periods at issue, statutorily defined for South Carolina apportionment law purposes.¹⁵

Based on the record, I find that genuine issues of material fact exist necessitating an evidentiary hearing as to whether Duke Energy, based on its activities within the State, falls under Section 12-6-2250 as a “manufactur[er],” or whether Duke Energy is a seller of services, or otherwise falls under none of the above-categories, and is therefore required to apportion its income to South Carolina based on the single-factor gross-receipts apportionment formula pursuant to Section 12-6-2290 (applicable to tax years after 1995)/ Section 12-7-1190 (applicable to tax years prior to 1996). Accordingly, the Court denies the Department’s Motion for Summary Judgment with respect to this issue.

III. Gross Receipts

The final issue is whether Duke Energy was allowed, in its calculation of corporate income tax owed to South Carolina, to include in the apportionment formula the return of principal from its sales of securities and other capital investments. Duke Energy argues that “gross receipts” in the gross receipts factor of the denominator of the single-factor gross-receipts apportionment formula and “sales” in the sales factor of the denominator of the three-factor apportionment formula include the entire amount of return capital from a sale of securities or other capital investments, **including the return of principal**. The Department, however, argues that gross receipts and sales include only the net proceeds from sales of securities or other capital investments.

South Carolina law provides that a taxpayer required to apply the single-factor gross-receipts apportionment formula must do so “using a fraction in which the numerator is gross receipts from within this State during the taxable year and the denominator is total gross receipts from everywhere during the taxable year.” *See* S.C. Code Ann. § 12-6-2290 (****) (applicable for tax years beginning after 1995); *see also id.* § 12-7-1190 (****) (applicable for tax years

¹⁵ “Manufacturing” is not statutorily defined, but it is discussed in Columbia Ry., Gas & Elec. Co. v. S.C. Tax Comm’n, 134 S. C. 319, 132 S.E. 611 (1926), a case in which the South Carolina Supreme Court held that a company engaged in the business of generating electricity was properly considered a “manufacturer” for purposes of a particular statute that imposed a corporate income tax on “a corporation engaged in the business of manufacturing.”

prior to 1996).¹⁶ “Gross receipts” was not defined for South Carolina apportionment law purposes during the tax periods at issue.

For purposes of the multi-factor apportionment formula¹⁷ the sales factor consists of “[t]he ratio of sales made by such taxpayer during the income year which are attributable to this State to the total sales made by such taxpayer everywhere during the income year” S.C. Code Ann. § 12-7-1170 (****) (for tax years prior to 1996).¹⁸ The term “sales” includes: “(1) rentals from tangible personal property located in this State which are not separately allocated; and (2) sales of intangible personal property and receipts from services if the entire income-producing activity is within this State. If the income-producing activity is performed partly within and partly without this State, sales are attributable to this State to the extent the income-producing activity is performed within this State.” Id.¹⁹

“The language of a tax statute must be given its plain ordinary meaning in the absence of an ambiguity therein. . . [I]f a legislative intent is clearly apparent from the language of the statute there is no occasion for resort to the rule of statutory construction.” Beach v. Livingston, 248 S.C. 135, 139, 149 S.E.2d 328, 330 (1996) (internal citation omitted). “If the statute is ambiguous, however, courts must construe the terms of the statute.” S.C. Energy Users Comm. v. S.C. Pub. Serv. Comm’n, 388 S.C. 486, 491, 697 S.E.2d 587, 590 (2010) (internal citation omitted). “A statutory provision should be given a reasonable and practical construction consistent with the purpose and policy expressed in the statute.” Lockwood Greene Eng’rs, Inc. v. S.C. Tax Comm’n, 293 S.C. 447, 449, 361 S.E.2d 346, 347 (Ct. App. 1987). “When faced with an undefined statutory term, the term must be interpreted in accordance with its usual and customary meaning.” Id. at 492, 697 S.E.2d at 590 (internal citation omitted). “Courts should

¹⁶ Even though the Court finds as a matter of law that Duke Energy’s filings of tax refund claims for tax years ending 1978-1993 were untimely, and thus will not be considered here, the filing for tax year 1994 was timely, and thus statutes applicable to tax years prior to 1996 will be discussed.

¹⁷ Section 12-6-2250 (applicable to tax years after 1995) and Section 12-7-1140 (applicable to tax years prior to 1996).

¹⁸ For tax years after 1995, S.C. Code Ann. § 12-6-2280 (****) similarly provides that: “The sales factor is a fraction in which the numerator is the total sales of the taxpayer in this State during the taxable year and the denominator is the total sales of the taxpayer everywhere during the taxable year.”

¹⁹ For tax years after 1995, S.C. Code Ann. § 12-6-2280 (B) (****) similarly provides that the term “sales in this State” includes sales of goods, merchandise, or property received by a purchaser in this State. The place where goods are received by the purchaser after all transportation is completed is considered the place at which the goods are received by the purchaser. Direct delivery into this State by the taxpayer to a person designated by a purchaser constitutes delivery to the purchaser in this State.”

not merely consider the language of the particular clause being construed, but the undefined word and its meaning in conjunction with the purpose of the whole statute and the policy of the law.” Id. Finally, “[s]tatutes should not be construed so as to lead to an absurd result.” Kennedy v. S.C. Ret. Sys., 345 S.C. 339, 351, 549 S.E.2d 243, 249 (2001) (internal citation omitted).

Here, there is no genuine issue of material fact with regard to the Gross Receipts Issue. The sole question of law is whether Duke Energy could include the return of principal from its sales of securities and other investment transactions as part of the sales or gross receipts factors in the apportionment formula. This is a novel question in South Carolina, but is not unprecedented in some of our sister States.

The first approach to this issue was taken by New Jersey in Am. Tel. and Tel. Co. v. Dir., Div. of Taxation, 194 N.J. Super. 168, 476 A.2d 800 (App. Div. 1984). In that case, the New Jersey Supreme Court concluded that the inclusion of gross or full revenues from the short-term sale or redemption of investment paper in the denominator of the receipts fraction of the apportionment formula would lead to “absurd results” in that such inclusion would greatly distort the amount of business the taxpayer did within and without New Jersey and would thus defeat the intent and purpose of the apportionment statute. Id. at 172, 476 A.2d at 802. Both Indiana and Arizona have adopted similar rationales to the one used by the New Jersey court. See Sherwin-Williams Co. v. Ind. Dept. of State Revenue, 673 N.E.2d 849 (Ind. Tax 1996) (holding that “‘gross receipts’ for the purpose of the sales factor includes only the interest income, and not the rolled over capital or return of principal, realized from the sale of investment securities”); Walgreen Ariz. Drug Co. v. Ariz. Dep’t of Revenue, 209 Ariz. 71, 97 P.3d 896 (App. 2004) (holding that the return of principal from the type of short-term investments at issue was not includable in the sales factor denominator).

The other approach to this issue was taken by Tennessee and California.²⁰ In Sherwin-Williams Co. v. Johnson, 989 S.W.2d 710 (Tenn. App. 1998), the chancellor had followed the same reasoning employed by the New Jersey and Indiana courts (and later the Arizona court), holding that “to include the principal in the sales factor denominator would distort the extent of Sherwin-Williams’ business activities in Tennessee and other states in which it does business

²⁰ South Carolina’s apportionment provisions, like those in New Jersey, Indiana, Arizona, Tennessee, and California, are based on the Uniform Division of Income for Tax Purposes Act (UDITPA).

and defeat the intent and purpose of the [apportionment] statute. . .” and that “the amount of return of principal on the sale or redemption of interest bearing securities related to its, [sic] working capital investments should not be included in the denominator of the sales factor.” Id. at 714. The Tennessee Court of Appeals, though finding the chancellor’s holding “logical and appealing,” nevertheless decided not to follow the “absurd result standard.” The court instead concluded that:

An absurd result is not necessary, for in spite of the plain language of the [sales factor statute], the commissioner may opt for a different scheme of assessment whenever the resulting apportionment does not fairly represent the taxpayer’s business in this state. The very absurdity of the result sought . . . lays a sound basis for the implementation of [the alternative apportionment method statute].

Id. at 714-15.

The California Supreme Court, in Microsoft Corp. v. Franchise Tax Bd., quoted this passage with approval as it went on to hold that “gross receipts” is not limited to net proceeds. 39 Cal.4th 750, 763, 139 P.3d 1169, 1177 (2006). Referencing California’s alternative apportionment method, the court concluded that “[t]he UDITPA contains an equitable relief provision so that, in cases where application of the statutory sales definition results in excessive distortion, an ‘absurd result’ may be avoided.”

After considering the two lines of reasoning set forth by our sister States, I conclude that the law of South Carolina favors the view expressed by the courts in New Jersey, Indiana, and Arizona.

As the Tennessee Court of Appeals correctly noted, “[i]f the words of a statute plainly mean one thing they cannot be given another meaning by judicial construction.” Johnson, 989 S.W.2d at 714-15 (internal citation omitted); see also Denman v. City of Columbia, 387 S.C. 131, 138, 691 S.E.2d 465, 468 (2010) (“Under the plain meaning rule, it is not the Court’s place to change the meaning of a clear and unambiguous statute.”). However, to rearrange the order of the court’s sentences, “This sound rule . . . is met by the equally well settled rule that: . . . ‘It is presumed that the legislature enacting a statute did not intend an absurdity, and such a result will be avoided by this court if the terms of the statute admit of it by reasonable construction.’” Johnson, 989 S.W.2d at 714 (internal citations omitted).

Alternative Apportionment Method

The Tennessee and California opinions rely upon the presupposition that “an absurd result is not necessary” because the Department “may opt for a different scheme of assessment

whenever the resulting apportionment does not fairly represent the taxpayer's business in this State." Microsoft, 39 Cal.4th at 763, 139 P.3d at 1177 (quoting Johnson, 989 S.W.2d at 715). South Carolina indeed has a similar provision. S.C. Code Ann § 12-6-2320(A) (2002) provided that:

If the allocation and apportionment provisions of this chapter **do not fairly represent** the extent of the taxpayer's business activity in this State, the taxpayer may petition for, or the department may require, in respect to all or any part of the taxpayer's business activity, if reasonable: separate accounting;

- (1) the exclusion of one or more of the factors;
- (2) the inclusion of one or more additional factors which will fairly represent the taxpayer's business activity in the State; or
- (3) the employment of any other method to effectuate an equitable allocation and apportionment of the taxpayer's income.

(Emphasis added).

I nevertheless find that the California and Tennessee cases, in relying upon this statutory option, miss an important distinction between the court's roles of statutory construction and application of the alternative apportionment provision. Though the alternative relief provision exists as a mechanism to correct problems caused by the application of the standard apportionment statutes (see Media Gen. Commc'ns v. S.C. Dep't of Revenue, 388 S.C. 138, 694 S.E.2d, 525 (2010)), the standard application statutes should not be so construed as to encourage excessive distortion simply because the alternative relief provision exists to remedy that distortion. In applying the principles of statutory construction, the court's function is, in part, to construe statutory law to avoid an absurd result. Ventures S.C., LLC v. S.C. Dep't of Revenue, 378 S.C. 5, 9, 661 S.E.2d 339, 341 (2008) ("[T]he Court will reject the plain meaning of the words used in a statute if it would lead to an absurd result. . . ."). If, as here, the proposed construction of a statute reaches an absurd result, our courts should recognize that absurdity and end the inquiry.

On the other hand, the function of the alternative apportionment provision is quite different. The alternative apportionment provision should be utilized only when the standard apportionment statute does not operate sensibly in a given case. As the Florida Supreme Court pointed out in Roger Dean Enters, Inc. v. State, "[t]here is a very strong presumption in favor of normal three-factor apportionment and against the applicability of the relief provisions. . . . Departures from the basic formula should be avoided except where reasonableness requires."

387 So.2d 358, 363 (internal citations omitted). Further, in St. Johnsbury Trucking Co. v. New Hampshire, the New Hampshire Supreme Court, in addressing very similar statutory language, held that:

The statutory provisions require that the three-factor formula will be used for apportioning business profits, and an alternative formula may be used if the statutory method of apportionment “does not fairly reflect the extent of the business activities of a business organization within this state.” The legislature has, therefore, specified that an alternative formula **is the exception**, and the party who wants to use an alternative formula accordingly has the burden of showing that the alternative is appropriate.

118 N.H. 209, 212, 385 A.2d 215, 217 (1978) (emphasis added).²¹

In this case, to interpret the standard apportionment formula to include the return of principal in either the sales factor or gross-receipts factor of the denominator would engender an absurd application of the standard apportionment statute simply because another statute exists which allows for another means of accounting when the standard apportionment statute does not “fairly represent the extent of the taxpayer’s business activity in this State.” In other words, such an interpretation would create the very absurdity that courts are to avoid in their statutory construction. Rather than having Section 12-6-2320(A) available as a remedial back-up, a corporation would have nothing to lose and everything to gain by adding the return of principal to the denominator and thereby reducing the amount of taxes owed to South Carolina, regardless of whether the numbers accurately reflected the corporation’s business activity within and without the State. As a result, the alternative apportionment statute, which was intended to be a remedy held in reserve for the relatively infrequent occasion that the standard formula did not result in a fair representation, would then become a standard follow-up to the application of the standard apportionment statute. Indeed, both statutes would become standard, because distortion of business activity representation would be fostered on the front end (through the principal-inclusive standard apportionment formula) so that it could, and necessarily would, be dealt with on the back end (through the alternative apportionment formula).²²

²¹ The following states have followed the holding in St. Johnsbury Trucking: Idaho - Union Pac. Corp. v. Idaho State Tax Comm’n, 83 P.3d 116, 120 (Idaho 2004); and Kentucky - Ruby Const. Co., Inc. v. Dep’t of Revenue, 578 S.W.2d 248, 253 (Ky. Ct. App. 1978).

²² In its Memorandum in Opposition to the Department’s Motion for Summary Judgment and in Support of its Cross-Motion for Partial Summary Judgment, Duke Energy argues that the definitions of “sales” and “gross receipts” set forth in S.C. Code Ann. § 12-6-2295 (2007) (effective for tax years beginning after 2006), shows the Legislature’s intent to make a “drastic” change to the existing law based on its various inclusions in, and exclusions

Of course, this “best-case scenario” assumes that the Department will be able to detect when a business is including principal in the standard apportionment formula and will be able to pursue those cases. In reality, however, limited resources would dictate the exercise of more discretion in the application of the alternative apportionment method. Consequently, much, if not all, of the smaller amounts of tax revenue that the State would have received would become avoidable by including principal in the standard formula and hiding behind the newly-targeted “bigger fish” that would be including more principal in their formulas. In the aggregate, these small amounts, which the State would otherwise have gained but would instead lose through undetected inflation of the denominator and consequent underestimation of the taxes owed to the State, will equate to a rather sizeable sum lost to the State. Thus, the distortion that inevitably results from the inclusion of principal in the standard apportionment formula will pose problems for the Department and South Carolina, regardless of the size of the distortion. This potential for abuse by corporations and the futility of going through this extra-step process needlessly is reflected in a finding by the Arizona Court of Appeals that in most of the cases that the taxpayer cited to support the inclusion of the return of principal in the sales factor denominator of the standard apportionment formula, the courts “nonetheless approved exclusion of the principal from the sales factor denominator pursuant to their states’ version of UDITPA’s ‘relief provision’ [, i.e., alternative apportionment method].” Walgreen, 209 Ariz. at 901-02, 97 P.3d 896 at 76-77 (citing Union Pac. Corp. v. Idaho State Tax Comm’n, 139 Idaho 572, 83 P.3d 116, 122 (2004); Am. Tel. & Tel. Co. v. State Tax Appeal Bd., 241 Mont. 440, 787 P.2d 754, 757-58 (1990); Johnson, 989 S.W.2d at 715). Microsoft, which was decided two years after Walgreen, can be added to this list, as it applied California’s alternative apportionment method statute to

from, the definitions of “sales” and “gross receipts” that had previously not existed. According to Duke’s argument, therefore, these inclusions and exclusions did not apply prior to the enactment of Section 12-6-2295. One of the inclusions would be “**net gain** from the sale of property used in the trade or business[, such as] **intangible property** used in the trade or business . . .” (Section 12-6-2295(A)(4) (emphasis added)), and one of the exclusions is the “repayment, maturity, or redemption of the **principal** of a loan, bond, or mutual fund or certificate of deposit or similar marketable instrument . . .” Id. (B)(1) (emphasis added). According to the Supreme Court in Duvall, 377 S.C. at 46, 659 S.E.2d at 130: “When the Legislature adopts an amendment to a statute, th[e] Court recognizes a presumption that the Legislature intended to change the existing law. **Nonetheless, a subsequent statutory amendment may also be interpreted as clarifying original legislative intent.**” (Internal citations omitted) (emphasis added). In this case, the inclusion and exclusion quoted above demonstrate that the Legislature intended to exclude the return of principal from the sale of securities and other capital investments in the apportionment formula. In light of all of the reasons discussed above as to why the return of principal was excluded from the apportionment formula prior to the enactment of Section 12-6-2295, it is evident that the Legislature intended Section 12-6-2295 to clarify the existing law.

“fairly represent the extent of the taxpayer’s business activity in this state” after the court included principal in the sales denominator of its standard apportionment formula.²³ Thus, any benefits from this principal-inclusion method seem to be vastly outweighed by the great cost of revenue that this State would face through continuous underestimation of taxes due to distortions.

Logical Definition of Gross Receipts

The term “gross receipts” does not plausibly include the return of principal from the sale of securities and other capital investments. “Gross income”, at least in the context of self-employment or self-owned businesses, is defined as “gross receipts minus ordinary and necessary expenses required for self-employment or business operation. . . .” Spreeuw v. Barker, 385 S.C. 45, 65, 682 S.E.2d 843, 853 (Ct. App. 2009) (citing S.C. Code Ann. Regs. 114-4720(A)(4) (Supp. 2008)). This definition would logically apply to other types of businesses, too. According to this definition, gross receipts equal gross income plus ordinary and necessary expenses of business operations. The South Carolina Supreme Court in Roper v. S.C. Tax Comm’n, Title 65-Section 251 of the 1952 Code of Laws of South Carolina also defined “gross income” as: “the **income** of a taxpayer **derived from** . . . interest, rent, dividends, **securities**, or **the transaction of any business carried on for gain or profit**” 231 S.C. 587, 598, 99 S.E.2d 377, 382 (1957) (emphasis added); see also S.C. Code Ann. § 12-7-415 (****) (adopting the Internal Revenue Code’s (I.R.C.) determination of gross income with modifications specified in Section 12-7-430 (which are not relevant here)); I.R.C. § 61(a) (****) (generally defining corporate gross income as “all income from whatever source derived” and covering many of the same categories mentioned in Roper)²⁴; S.C. Code Ann. § 12-6-1110 (****). The Court went on

²³ Paradoxically, the court went on to justify this decision to apply the alternative method statute because it was “unable to accept, even for a moment, the notion that more than 11 percent of [taxpayer’s] entire unitary business activities should be attributed to *any* single state solely because it is the center of working capital investment activities that are clearly only an incidental part of one of America’s largest, and most widespread, businesses.” This rationale highlights the precise reason why principal from the sale of securities and other capital investment activities should not be included in the standard apportionment formula in the first place: the inclusion of principal causes distortions as to the amount of business activity actually performed in a State, which, in turn, have to be remedied.

²⁴ Nowhere in South Carolina’s statutory law or in the federal statutory law adopted by South Carolina is principal from investments listed as part of gross income. In fact, principal would later be excluded in S.C. Code Ann. § 2295(B)(1) (2007), which became effective for tax years after 2006. Also, it is worth noting that even in the context of child support, gross income does not include principal in the return from the sale of investments. Indeed, the inclusion of “capital gains” in the list of items considered part of gross income for child support purposes

to point out that “the word ‘income’ as used in a tax statute, is to be taken in its ordinary sense of gain or profit.” *Id.* (reaffirmed as “well-settled” in *Scott v. S.C. Tax Comm’n*, 262 S.C. 144, 148, 202 S.E.2d 854, 856 (1974)). Because gross income includes “all income,” and income, being gain or profit, excludes principal, then gross income necessarily excludes principal. Therefore, the only remaining question is whether “ordinary and necessary expenses of business operations” includes principal.

Principal, by definition, cannot be an expense of a business operation. Since ordinary and necessary business expenses are subtracted from gross receipts to yield gross income, and neither business expenses nor gross income include principal, it is impossible for gross receipts to include principal. Put another way, because gross receipts are equivalent to gross income plus ordinary and necessary business expenses, and neither gross income nor business expenses include principal, gross receipts, being the sum of those two parts, cannot include principal.²⁵ Inversely, Duke Energy contends that the principal is a component of the gross receipts it received. If gross receipts were also a component of gross income, then, according to Duke Energy’s argument, gross income must include principal. However, inclusion of principal in gross income would create an absurd result. Generally, the taxable income of a business is its gross income minus any deductions that are allowed by state law.²⁶ Principal is not an item that is specifically excluded from gross income. *See* 26 U.S.C.A. Subt. A, Ch. 1, Subch. B, Pt. III. Thus, the logical extension of Duke Energy’s argument is that taxable income includes the

necessarily implies the exclusion of principal from the return of investment sales. *See* S.C. Code Ann. Regs. 114-4720(A)(2) (2012).

²⁵ For examples in the I.R.C. of exclusion of principal from gross receipts, *see* I.R.C. § 165(g)(3)(B) (****) (in the context of determining whether a corporation is affiliated with a taxpayer, “in computing gross receipts for purposes of [calculating the percentage of gross receipts that have come from particular sources], gross receipts from sales or exchanges of stocks and securities shall be taken into account *only to the extent of gains* therefrom.”) (emphasis added); *id.* § 1362(d)(3) (in the context of a small business corporation’s termination of its election to be an S corporation, where its passive investment income exceeds twenty-five percent of gross receipts for three consecutive taxable years and the corporation has accumulated earnings and profits at the close of each of those years, when capital assets (other than stocks or securities) are disposed of, “gross receipts from such dispositions shall be taken into account *only to the extent of the capital gain net income* therefrom[;] and in the case of sales or exchanges of stock or securities, gross receipts shall be taken into account *only to the extent of the gains* therefrom.”) (emphasis added); and *id.* § 1244 (in the context of calculating the percentage of gross receipts from particular sources for determining whether “stock” means stock in a domestic corporation for determining losses on small business stocks, “gross receipts from the sales or exchanges of stock or securities shall be taken into account *only to the extent of gains* therefrom.”) (emphasis added).

²⁶ I.R.C. § 63(a) (****).

principal and the gain. Consequently, taxpayers would be taxed not only upon the specific gains from the principal but upon the return of the principal itself.²⁷

Furthermore, a corporation's South Carolina gross income and taxable income is computed as determined under the I.R.C. with the modifications as provided in the South Carolina Tax Code. See S.C. Code Ann. §§ 12-6-580 (****) and 12-7-415 (****). The I.R.C. provides that except in the case of individuals who do not itemize deductions, "taxable income" is defined as "gross income minus the deductions allowed by this chapter (other than the standard deduction)." I.R.C. § 63(a) (****); see also U.S. v. Foster Lumber Co., 429 U.S. 32, 36-37 (1976) (recognizing this definition for taxable income as applicable to the corporate respondent in that case). For the reasons given above, gross income does not include principal. Consequently, principal cannot be included in taxable income, the remainder of gross income following deductions (other than the standard deduction). Indeed, because principal is also not a deduction allowed by state law, principal cannot even be included in the calculation of taxable income.²⁸

Therefore, because income is the gain or profit realized from principal, gross income, and thus taxable income, necessarily exclude principal.

Logical Definition of Sales

It is equally implausible to include principal from the sale of securities and other capital investments in the definition of "sales" for purposes of the standard apportionment formula. A major difference between the Tennessee case and the present case is that Tennessee's standard apportionment statute defined "the term 'sales' to include all **gross receipts** of the taxpayer not otherwise allocated under the Excise Tax Law." Johnson, 989 S.W.2d at 713 (emphasis in original). Likewise, the California standard apportionment statute included "all gross receipts" in the definition of "sales." South Carolina's standard apportionment statute defines the term

²⁷ In light of the above analysis, the application of the holding in Roper v. S.C. Tax Comm'n, 231 S.C. 587, 99 S.E.2d 377 (1957) is even more pertinent.

²⁸ It is worth noting that in Foster Lumber Co., the U.S. Supreme Court reasoned that the inclusion of "gains derived from dealing in property" as part of "all income from whatever source derived" in the definition of gross income under I.R.C. Section 61(a) meant that taxable income, which includes gross income according to Section 63(a), also therefore included capital gains as well as ordinary income, in the absence of a specific exclusion of capital gains. 429 U.S. at 37. The Court's inclusion of capital gains impliedly excludes principal from gross income and thus taxable income.

“sales,” but this definition does not include “gross receipts.”²⁹ Instead, under its definition of “sales,” “[i]f the income-producing activity is performed partly within and partly without this State, sales are attributable to this State to the extent the **income-producing** activity is performed within this State.” (Emphasis added). This phrase “income-producing” is used to modify “activity” several other times in the definition of “sales.” “Income” means “an actual gain or actual increase of wealth.” See Scott v. S.C. Tax Comm’n, 262 S.C. 144, 148-49, 202 S.E.2d 854, 856 (1974) (Bussey, J., dissenting) (citing 85 C.J.S. Taxation 1096, p. 730). This emphasis on income production suggests that principal is excluded from the definition of “sales.”³⁰ Moreover, this limitation of “sales” to the net income derived therefrom is not a novel interpretation. Indeed, our own Supreme Court has approved of an apportionment formula “whereby [a business’s] sales, payroll, and property in South Carolina were divided by its national **net** sales, payroll, and property.” See Eastman Kodak Co. v. S.C. Tax Comm’n, 308 S.C. 415, 416, 419, 418 S.E.2d 542, 542, 544 (1992) (holding in part that safe harbor lease transactions that were part of a corporation’s business “were properly included in the denominator of the apportionment formula in computing [that corporation’s] national **net income** from payroll, property, and sales.”) (emphasis added). The Supreme Court in Texaco, Inc. v. Wasson, referring to S.C. Code Ann. § 12-7-1140 (****), the immediate predecessor to Section 12-6-2250 (****), further noted that “[u]nder the [three-factor] apportionment method, a corporation’s entire **net income** is apportioned to this state by applying to that entire **net income** a percentage based on the ‘three-factor formula’ of property, payroll, and sales in this state to the corporation’s total property, payroll, and sales.” 269 S.C. 255, 259, 237 S.E.2d 75, 76 (1977) (emphasis added). The Court also noted that this apportionment was of the “**net income**” remaining after the direct allocation of certain items listed under Section 12-7-1120 (****) (currently Section 12-6-2220 (****)). Id. at 266, 237 S.E.2d at 80 (emphasis added). Using this

²⁹ “Sales” and “gross receipts” were later further defined together by S.C. Code Ann. § 12-6-2295 (2007) (effective for tax years beginning after 2006). However, the years at issue here are 1978-2001. Further, because the Court finds as a matter of law that the refund claims filed for tax years ending 1978-1993 are untimely, the only years that will be considered for the gross receipts issue will be tax years ending 1994-2001.

³⁰ Though Duke Energy is a nonresident corporation, it is worth noting that South Carolina taxable income for nonresident individuals, nonresident trusts, nonresident estates, and nonresident beneficiaries include only amounts attributable to, among other things, “income from intangible personal property, including annuities, dividends, interest, and gains that is derived from property employed in a trade, business, profession, or occupation carried on in this State.” It is interesting that nowhere is “principal” mentioned as an inclusion in taxable income.

interpretation and limiting the sales factor in the denominator of the three-part apportionment formula to net income is the more sound application of the apportionment formula.

The conclusion in this case is further supported by the fact that in the context of consolidated returns filed by multiple corporations conducting business within and without the State, the returns included in the sales factor of the standard apportionment formula must “contain such other information necessary to compute the **net income** of each taxpayer properly attributable to the state so that South Carolina can impose a tax on the taxpayers concerned.” Emerson Elec. Co. v. Wasson, 287 S.C. 394, 396-97, 339 S.E.2d 118, 120 (1986) (discussing S.C. Code Ann. § 12-7-1570 (****) (for tax years prior to 1996), the predecessor of § 12-6-5020 (****) (for tax years after 1996)) (emphasis altered). This infers that when a single corporation also conducts business within and without the State, its net income only, and not principal, is included in the sales factor for purposes of apportioning the amount of corporate income taxes the State could impose on that corporation. See, e.g., Eastman Kodak Co., 308 S.C. at 416, 418 S.E.2d at 542 (Kodak included only the net income in the sales factor in the denominator of the apportionment formula).

Criticism of the “Absurd Results Standard”

The California Supreme Court in Microsoft criticized the proponents of the “absurd results standard,” in part, because “[i]n each case, the same language governs both sales of off-the-shelf products and sales of securities. *AT&T* [(the New Jersey case)] and its progeny offer no explanation why in one instance that language should require inclusion of gross proceeds and in the other require inclusion of only net proceeds.” 39 Cal.4th at 763, 139 P.3d at 1177.³¹ Nevertheless, the resolution of this issue has been clarified in South Carolina by the Supreme Court’s holding in Hay v. Leonard, 212 S.C. 81, 46 S.E.2d 653 (1948).

Hay involved a challenge to the validity of Charleston County’s levying an annual license tax for the privilege of engaging in each and every business and occupation in Charleston County, except in the City of Charleston. In reaching its decision, the South Carolina Supreme Court explained the reason why merchandise, or “off-the-shelf products,” includes gross proceeds in its taxation, and the Court’s reasoning suggests why the sale of securities would not include gross proceeds. The Court explained: “the [license] tax is not on the property itself; it is

³¹ This is the first of the “two problems” that the California Supreme Court had with the “absurd results” cases. The second problem will be discussed in the immediately-following paragraph.

on the **privilege of dealing with it**. The value of such privilege is measured by the gross receipts therefrom, and this is a familiar and valid method of ascertaining such value.” *Id.* at 97, 46 S.E.2d at 660 (emphasis added). A merchant is required to possess a license in order to have the privilege of dealing in merchandise; and the tax is on this privilege, not on the merchandise. This is why “[t]he sale of all merchandise includes previous taxation” *Id.*; see also *State ex rel. Roddey v. Byrnes*, 219 S.C. 485, 514, 66 S.E.2d 33, 45 (1951) (“In general, the sales tax [,a form of excise tax], is [, like a license tax,] an imposition upon the privilege of the business of selling at retail and measured by the amount of business done”). The sale of securities is altogether different in that a license is not required to purchase or sell securities,³² and no sales tax is imposed upon the sale of securities.³³ Therefore, here there exist no “privilege” grounds upon which to include principal in the gross receipts, as the value received from the sales of the securities for tax purposes would be measured by the capital gains, not by the principal. The principal would consist of the business’s “idle cash” that would presumably have been taxed already.

Conclusion

This Court hereby follows New Jersey, Indiana, and Arizona in adopting the “absurd results” approach to interpreting South Carolina’s standard apportionment statute and therefore rejects Duke Energy’s attempt to include the return of principal in the denominator of the standard apportionment formula. In sum, the alternative apportionment formula exists to remediate any nonsensical application of the standard apportionment formula. However, that remediation should not be the result of a court’s addition, through its failure to apply the rules of statutory interpretation, of a component to the standard apportionment formula that neither exists in the statute nor was intended by the Legislature. The absurdity that the alternative apportionment formula is intended to remediate is when a taxpayer follows the standard apportionment formula but the result is nevertheless an unfair representation of the extent of the taxpayer’s business activity in the State. Construing the purpose of the alternative provision to avoid an absurd use of the standard apportionment statute clearly could open the door to the abuse of the standard apportionment statute and an excessive need to apply Section 12-6-

³² This statement does not include securities brokering.

³³ Capital gains tax is imposed upon the sale of securities (assuming a profit is made from the sale). This tax is imposed on the profit, or “gains,” made on the capital originally invested, not on the returned principal.

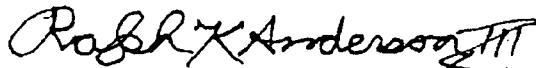
2320(A). Furthermore, to use the alternative apportionment provision as a means to avoid absurdity resulting from an interpretation of the standard apportionment provision that is not envisioned by the tax laws places upon the State a burden of policing tax returns that simply should not exist.

Importantly, it is not the amount of distortion that determines absurdity here. If it was, then there would exist an issue of material fact in this case, and indeed in every such case, as to the amount of distortion that would result from the inclusion of principal, and a hearing would be necessary to obtain facts whereby the degree of distortion could be measured so as to determine whether the results of principal inclusion would be absurd in this case. But such a case-by-case determination is not necessary where, as here, principal cannot, as a matter of law, be included in sales or gross receipts for purposes of the standard apportionment formula. Thus, no hearing is necessary on the gross receipts issue, and the Department's Motion for Summary Judgment as to this issue is therefore granted for the reasons set forth above.

ORDER

THEREFORE, IT IS HEREBY ORDERED that: (1) the Department's Motion for Summary Judgment with respect to the Timeliness Issue is **GRANTED**; (2) the Department's Motion for Summary Judgment with respect to the Apportionment Method Issue is **DENIED**; and (3) the Department's Motion for Summary Judgment with respect to the Gross Receipts Issue is **GRANTED**, and Duke Energy's Cross-Motion for Partial Summary Judgment as to this same issue is therefore **DENIED**.

IT IS SO ORDERED.

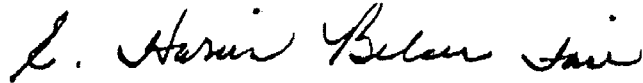


Ralph K. Anderson, III
Chief Administrative Law Judge

August 9, 2012
Columbia, South Carolina

CERTIFICATE OF SERVICE

I, E. Harvin Belser Fair, hereby certify that I have this date served this Order upon all parties to this cause by depositing a copy hereof, in the United States mail, postage paid, in the Interagency Mail Service, or by electronic mail to the address provided by the party(ies) and/or their attorney(s).



E. Harvin Belser Fair
Judicial Law Clerk

August 9, 2012
Columbia, South Carolina

Exhibit B

STATE OF SOUTH CAROLINA
ADMINISTRATIVE LAW COURT

DUKE ENERGY CORPORATION,

Petitioner,

vs.

SOUTH CAROLINA DEPARTMENT OF
REVENUE,

Respondent.

Docket No.: 10-ALJ-17-0270-CC

**DUKE ENERGY'S MOTION FOR
RECONSIDERATION OF THE
COURT'S ORDER GRANTING THE
SOUTH CAROLINA DEPARTMENT
OF REVENUE'S MOTION FOR
SUMMARY JUDGMENT AS TO THE
WAIVER AND GROSS RECEIPTS
ISSUES**

Pursuant to Rule 29(D) of the Rules of Procedure for the South Carolina Administrative Law Court and Rule 59(e) of the South Carolina Rules of Civil Procedure, Duke Energy Corporation ("Duke Energy") respectfully submits this Motion for Reconsideration in connection with the Court's Order of August 9, 2012, ruling *inter alia* that, as a matter of law, (1) Duke Energy's refund claims for the tax periods 1978-1993 were untimely, and (2) Duke Energy is not permitted to include its gross receipts from sales of securities in the denominator of its apportionment formula ("Gross Receipts Issue").

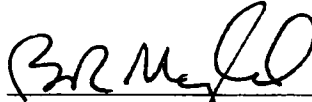
As more fully set out in the attached Memorandum of Authorities filed contemporaneously herewith, Duke Energy respectfully submits that the Court should reconsider its ruling with respect to (1) the Waiver Issue because an evidentiary hearing is necessary to resolve the material facts in dispute with respect to that issue, and (2) Gross Receipts Issue because Duke Energy is entitled to a judgment as a matter of law on

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that issue as South Carolina law requires Duke Energy to include all of its receipts from sales of securities in apportioning its income to South Carolina.

Respectfully submitted this 20 day of August 2012.



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STATE OF SOUTH CAROLINA
ADMINISTRATIVE LAW COURT

DUKE ENERGY CORPORATION,

Petitioner,

vs.

SOUTH CAROLINA DEPARTMENT OF
REVENUE,

Respondent.

Docket No.: 10-ALJ-17-0270-CC

DUKE ENERGY'S MEMORANDUM
OF AUTHORITIES IN SUPPORT OF
ITS MOTION FOR
RECONSIDERATION OF THE
COURT'S ORDER GRANTING THE
SOUTH CAROLINA DEPARTMENT
OF REVENUE'S MOTION FOR
SUMMARY JUDGMENT AS TO THE
WAIVER AND GROSS RECEIPTS
ISSUES

INTRODUCTION

Pursuant to Rule 29(D) of the Rules of Procedure for the South Carolina Administrative Law Court and Rule 59(e) of the South Carolina Rules of Civil Procedure, Duke Energy Corporation ("Duke Energy") respectfully requests that the Court reconsider its Order of August 9, 2012, ruling that, as a matter of law, Duke Energy's refund claims for the tax years 1978 through 1993 are untimely ("Waiver Issue"), and Duke Energy is not permitted to include its gross receipts from sales of securities in the denominator of its apportionment formula ("Gross Receipts Issue").

FACTUAL AND PROCEDURAL BACKGROUND

The South Carolina Department of Revenue ("Department") filed a Motion for Summary Judgment ("Department's Motion") asking this Court to rule, *inter alia*, that, as

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a matter of law, (1) Duke Energy's refund claims for the tax years 1978 through 1993 are untimely, and (2) Duke Energy was permitted to include only the net proceeds from sales of securities in its South Carolina corporate income tax apportionment formula. Duke Energy filed a Reply and Cross-Motion for Partial Summary Judgment (Duke Energy's Cross-Motion) opposing the Department's Motion and asking this Court to rule, *inter alia*, that (1) genuine issues of material fact exist regarding the Waiver Issue that necessitate an evidentiary hearing, and (2) Duke Energy was required to include the entire proceeds from such sales of securities in its apportionment formula.

A hearing on the Department's Motion and Duke Energy's Cross-Motion was held on June 26, 2012. At the hearing, each party presented arguments in support of its position regarding the Waiver and Gross Receipts Issues.

On June 29, 2012, this Court held a telephone conference and informed the parties of the Court's decision (1) to grant the Department's Motion with regard to the Waiver Issue and to deny the Duke Energy's Cross-Motion with respect to the same issue, and (2) to grant Duke Energy's Cross-Motion with regard to the Gross Receipts Issue and to deny the Department's Motion with respect to the same issue. With regard to the Gross Receipts Issue, the Court further informed the parties that at the evidentiary hearing currently scheduled for September 4-10, 2012, the Department will have an opportunity to argue that South Carolina's alternative apportionment provision may apply and will have an opportunity to present evidence to support its position that the inclusion of the principal in Duke Energy's apportionment formula was distortive.

However, on August 9, 2012, this Court entered the Order in this summary judgment proceeding *granting* the Department's Motion with regard to the Gross Receipts Issue. The Order provided the following bases for its decision:

1. The inclusion of the principal from sales of securities in the standard apportionment formula would encourage excessive distortion or inevitably result in distortion.
2. The inclusion of the principal from sales of securities in the standard apportionment formula would produce an absurd result because it would lead to inevitable distortion and thus an increased application of the alternative apportionment statute.
3. "Gross Receipts," as used in the gross-receipts formula, does not include the principal from sales of securities because such amounts are not included in "gross income"/"taxable income."
4. "Sales," as used in the sales factor under the multi-factor apportionment formula, does not include the principal from sales of securities because "net income" excludes such amounts.

In the transmittal electronic mail of this Court's Order, the clerk of the Court noted:

Though Judge Anderson requested Duke Energy to submit a Proposed Order granting summary judgment to Duke Energy regarding the gross receipts issue, after further research and consideration he decided that the proper decision was to grant summary judgment to the Department.

For the reasons discussed below, Duke Energy respectfully moves this Court to vacate its Order and issue an order denying the Department's Motion with respect to the

Waiver Issue and granting Duke Energy's Cross-Motion with regard to the Gross Receipts Issue.

STANDARD OF REVIEW

Rule 29(D) of the Rules of Procedure for the South Carolina Administrative Law Court and Rule 59(e) of the South Carolina Rules of Civil Procedure, provide that the Court may grant a motion for reconsideration as a means to correct alleged errors, reconsider a possible misapprehension of an earlier argument, or revisit a previously raised argument. *Elam v. S. Carolina Dep't of Transp.*, 361 S.C. 9, 22, 602 S.E.2d 772, 779 (2004). As set forth below, this motion should be granted.

ARGUMENT AND CITATION OF AUTHORITY

I. The Court Erred in Concluding that Duke Energy's Refund Claims for the Tax Periods 1978-1993 Are Untimely as a Matter of Law.

The Department entered into an agreement with Duke Energy to extend the statutory period of time that the Department could assess tax and Duke Energy could seek a refund. The agreement between the Department and Duke Energy to waive the statute of limitations was reached verbally and in writing. Whether the Department agreed to extend the time for Duke Energy to file refund claims is a question of fact. *City of N. Myrtle Beach v. Lewis-Davis*, 360 S.C. 225, 235, 599 S.E.2d 462, 466-67 (Ct. App. 2004). Form FS-43 authorizes the Department to extend the statute of limitations for assessments *and* refunds. Thus, the existence of the Waivers, their effect, and their impact on the arguments raised by the Department are all factual issues that need to be determined as part of an evidentiary hearing before this Court.

Furthermore, the Department is estopped from arguing that Form FS-43 has no effect. Moreover, the statute of limitations was tolled during the tax years at issue and

Duke Energy's refund claims for the tax years 1978 -1993 should be allowed as timely. Accordingly, for these reasons and the reasons stated in Duke Energy's Cross-Motion, Duke Energy respectfully request that the Court amend its Order with regard to the Waiver Issue and conduct an evidentiary hearing to resolve the material facts in dispute with regard to that issue.

II. The Court Erred in Concluding that Duke Energy Is Not Permitted to Include the Principal from Sales of Securities in Its Apportionment Formula.

1. The Court Erred in Concluding that the Inclusion of the Principal from Sales of Securities in the Standard Apportionment Formula Would Encourage Distortion or Inevitably Result in Distortion.

In determining the meaning of the term "gross receipts" and "sales," the Order stated that including the principal from sales of securities in the sales factor denominator or the gross-receipts factor denominator is improper because, in part, it would "inevitably" result in "distortion," "distortion of business activity representation," and "continuous underestimation of taxes due to distortions." ALC Order at 29-30. The Court reasoned that if all of the receipts from sales of securities were includable in the standard apportionment formula, "a corporation would have nothing to lose and everything to gain by adding return of principal to the denominator and thereby reducing the amount of taxes owed to South Carolina," which the Order qualified was a "potential for abuse by corporations." *Id.*

This analysis is misplaced. The only issue before the Court was whether, as a matter of law, the principal realized from sales of securities was included in the standard apportionment formula. Whether the inclusion of the principal results in distortion is an entirely separate and inherently factual question, to be addressed only after the standard

apportionment formula results have been determined. *See generally Media Gen. Commc'ns., Inc. v. South Carolina Dep't of Revenue*, 388 S.C. 138, 147-48, 694 S.E.2d 525, 529 (2010). In other words, distortion falls under the second part of a two-part analysis. Under part one, if a transaction is a "sale"/"gross receipt" for purposes of the sales factor/gross-receipts factor of the standard apportionment formula, then it must be included in the taxpayer's apportionment formula. If such an inclusion is found to distort the revenue generating activities of the taxpayer, then part two of the analysis - the alternative apportionment statute - provides a specific mechanism for parties to deviate from the standard apportionment provision. *See CarMax Auto Superstores West Coast, Inc. v. South Carolina Dep't of Revenue*, 397 S.C. 604, 611, 725 S.E.2d 711, 714 (S.C. Ct. App. 2012).

Notably, the Court itself recognized this two-part analysis during the summary judgment hearing:

The Court: Well, when you say it does not provide a reasonable basis, is that analysis more one that should be made in the **second stage** of – by this case or is that one that is more – I know you're going to say "yes," so it's more proper in determining what the statute says.

...

The Court: Because if it does result in something that's absurd, then you would find that the apportionment – the standard apportionment formula is one that should not be used and it would invoke the statute to allow you to use the more appropriate formula, is that not ...

...

Mr. Greene: If – yeah. If you – for instance, if you reach that conclusion, that gross receipts covers these types of transaction, the return of somebody's principal within 30 days is a gross receipt, it has to be added to the apportionment basis, then yes, we would go to the **next step**.

(Testimony Trans. 141:17-:23; 143:15-:18; 143:23-144:4; 144:5-:11, Exhibit A (emphasis added).)

In its Order, however, the Court subsumed distortion arguments (part two of the inquiry) into its analysis of the standard apportionment formula (part one of the inquiry) and held that “distortion [would] inevitably result[] from the inclusion of principal in the standard apportionment formula.” ALC Order at 29.

Not only is the Court’s analysis in direct conflict with South Carolina law, but it also renders South Carolina’s alternative apportionment statute set forth in S.C. Code Ann. section 12-6-2230 meaningless. The alternative apportionment statute is a “relief mechanism,” which authorizes a party to apply an alternative method to “effectuate an equitable apportionment of the taxpayer’s income” when the standard apportionment formula does not fairly represent the taxpayer’s business activities in the State. *Media Gen. Commc’ns*, 388 S.C. at 151, at 531. The Court’s reasoning presumes that the inclusion of principal is inherently distortive and the Court’s remedy of that distortion was its limited construction of the standard apportionment formula. The Court, thus, imputed an alternative apportionment mechanism into the standard apportionment provision. That was not, and could not have been, the intent of the Legislature in enacting both statutes.

South Carolina canons of statutory construction mandate that a statute must be construed in a manner that “no word, clause, sentence, provision or part shall be rendered surplusage, or superfluous, for the General Assembly obviously intended the statute to have some efficacy, or the Legislature would not have enacted it into law.” *CFRE, LLC v. Greenville County Assessor*, 395 S.C. 67, 74, 716 S.E.2d 877, 881 (2011) (internal

quotations omitted). The standard apportionment formula statutes are intended to provide a reasonable representation of taxpayers' business activities in South Carolina. S.C. Code Ann. § 12-6-2210. The alternative apportionment statute is intended to provide a remedy for any inequities that may result from the application of the standard apportionment statute. Contrary to the Court's suggestion, the application of alternative apportionment cannot be said to constitute mere "futility of going through this extra-step process needlessly." ALC Order at 29. The Court is required by South Carolina law to apply the standard apportionment statute in a manner that gives full effect to the legislative intent of enacting the alternative apportionment statute and does not render it meaningless. *CFRE*, 395 S.C. 67, 716 S.E.2d 877. Therefore, the Court should reconsider and amend its holding.

2. The Court Erred in Holding that the Inclusion of the Principal from Sales of Securities in the Standard Apportionment Formula Would Produce an Absurd Result.

i. The Order erroneously determined that the inclusion of the principal in the standard apportionment formula produces an absurd result because it is inherently distortive.

The Court's Order determined that the inclusion of the principal from sales of securities in sales factor or gross-receipts factor denominator would produce an absurd application of the standard apportionment formula because it would lead to inevitable distortion of business activity representation. ALC Order at 28. The Order appears to conflate the "absurd result" analysis under the standard apportionment method and the distortion analysis under the alternative apportionment method.

As discussed above, a determination of distortion is inherently a factual issue to be addressed only **after** the standard apportionment formula results are determined. *Media*

Gen. Commc 'ns., 388 S.C. 138, 694 S.E.2d 525; *CarMax Auto Superstores*, 397 S.C. at 611, 725 S.E.2d at 714. The Court must first apply South Carolina's apportionment provisions – including a calculation of the sales factor. Distortion is determined only after the apportionment results are calculated. See *CarMax Auto Superstores*, 397 S.C. at 611, 725 S.E.2d at 714.

This Court's application of its view of statutory construction – that a statute should not be interpreted to produce an “absurd result” – presupposes that the inclusion of the gross receipts in the apportionment factor is absurd. Concluding that inclusion of all of the receipts from the sales of securities produces an absurd result requires a factual inquiry of the nature of the taxpayer's activities in South Carolina, a comparison of that activity to the apportionment results (with and without gross receipts), and a factual finding that such a comparison produces an absurd result in most if not all cases. None of these steps were followed by this Court.

Duke Energy's inclusion of all of its gross receipts does not produce an absurd result or otherwise contradict the purpose of the standard apportionment statute. And certainly there is no evidence that including all of the receipts from sales of securities in the sales factor or gross-receipts factor denominator produces an absurd result in most, if not all, cases. The purpose of the standard apportionment formula is to reasonably represent the proportion of taxpayers' business carried on within South Carolina. S.C. Code Ann. § 12-6-2210; *Eastman Kodak Co. v. South Carolina Tax Comm 'n*, 308 S.C. 415, 419, 418 S.E.2d 542, 544 (1992). In fact, the standard apportionment formula is intended to only provide a “rough approximation” of the income attributable to business activity in each state. *Covington Fabrics Corp. v. South Carolina Tax Comm 'n*, 264 S.C.

59, 66-67, 212 S.E.2d 574, 577-78 (1975). This Order contains no analysis regarding why including all receipts from sales of securities in the gross-receipts/sales factor denominator is distortive or at a minimum does not (or could not) roughly approximate a taxpayers' business activity in South Carolina.

Duke Energy's sales of securities were conducted as part of its ordinary business operations. And as Duke Energy can prove at trial, and its experts have testified during depositions, including all of its receipts in its sales factor denominator using the standard apportionment formula reasonably represents the proportion of its business carried on in South Carolina. Thus far, there has been no evidence whatsoever to show that including all of the receipts from sales of securities in the sales factor denominator produces an absurd result for Duke Energy or any other taxpayer.

A court is permitted to deviate from a statute's plain language only when "the result would be so patently absurd that it is clear that the Legislature could not have intended such a result." *Harris v. Anderson County Sheriff's Office*, 381 S.C. 357, 363, 673 S.E.2d 423, 426 (2009) (internal citations and quotations omitted). The South Carolina Supreme Court has cautioned that "[a] merely conjectural absurdity is not enough; the result must be so patently absurd that it is clear that the General Assembly could not have intended such a result." *South Carolina Dep't of Revenue v. Blue Moon of Newberry*, 397 S.C. 256, 261, 725 S.E.2d 480, 484 (2012); *see also South Carolina Coastal Conservation League v. South Carolina Dep't of health & Envrtl. Control*, 2003 SC ENV LEXIS 12 (S.C. Admin. L. Ct. 2003) ("To justify a departure from the letter of the law ... the absurdity must be so gross as to shock the general moral or common sense. And there must be something to make plain the intent ... that the letter of the statute is

not to prevail.’ Indeed, an adjudicating body should be less than quick to depart from the meaning of literal language when the controversy between the parties arises from differing views on policy. A provision ‘is not absurd merely because it does not comport with one’s notion of what constitutes good policy.’” (citing *Crooks v. Harrelson*, 282 U.S. 55, 59-60 (1930), and *Chapman v. Higbee Co.*, 319 F.3d 825 (6th Cir. 2003)).

In *Blue Moon of Newberry*, the South Carolina Supreme Court refused to adopt the Department’s restricted interpretation of the plain language of a regulation promulgated by the Department, which permitted the sale of alcoholic beverages by nonprofit organizations only to “bona fide guests of members of such organizations.” 397 S.C. at 258, 725 S.E.2d at 482. The regulation provided that “bona fide guests” are those “who accompany a member onto the premises or for whom the member has made prior arrangements with the management of the organization.” *Id.* The Department took the position that the term “bona fide implies that the guest have some degree of familiarity or camaraderie with the member.” *Id.* at 263, 484. The court rejected the Department’s view on the grounds that “the plain language of the regulation contains no support of this, and the ordinary definition of bona fide does not require it.” *Id.* at 264, 485. The court opined that to adopt the Department’s position would constitute an “improper narrowing of the regulatory definition based on some notion of what a bona fide guest *should* be, not what the regulation actually provides. For us to do so therefore would require the abdication of our role as the interpreter of a regulation and the assumption of the position of a drafter.” *Blue Moon of Newberry*, 397 S.C. at 264, 725 N.E.2d at 485 (emphasis original; internal citations omitted). Similarly in the instant

case, the Court should not restrict the meaning of “gross receipts” and “total sales” when the language of the statute does not contain or require any limitations.

The Department further argued that a broad interpretation of the term “bona fide guest” would “‘eviscerate’ the purpose of the regulation, which is to limit those who may consume alcohol on the premises of private clubs,” and produce “an absurd result as it [will] effectively allow[] a private club to be open to the public.” *Id.* at 265, 485. The court acknowledged that the plain language of the regulation “may permit some organizations to push the envelope on what it means to be ‘private,’” but it nevertheless concluded that “we are not convinced the result is so absurd that we can ignore the regulation’s plain language.” *Id.* The court agreed with the lower court’s dissent:

If the Department of Revenue has an issue with how the regulation itself defined “bona fide guest,” then it may promulgate a new regulation as appropriate upon proper notice to the public. Until then, other businesses which follow the unambiguous language of the regulation should not be punished as a result.

Id. at 265, at 485.

Corporate treasury departments that sell securities on a regular basis are not a new phenomenon. And the Department has not argued that Duke Energy’s sales of securities are in any way special or unique. Instead, the Department (and this Court) takes issue with the fact that the inclusion of principal from Duke Energy’s sales of securities in its apportionment formula “does nothing more than artificially inflate the denominator of either the sales factor or gross receipt factor and thereby decrease the amount of income subject to tax in South Carolina.” Resp. Mem. In Supp. of Motion for Sum. Judg. At 34; ALC Order at 28. Not only is there no requirement that taxpayers pay the *most* taxes as discussed in section 2.iii below, but the South Carolina’s highest court has rejected this

reasoning. In *Eastman Kodak Co. v. S.C. Tax Comm'n*, 308 S.C. 415, 420 (1992), the South Carolina held that in apportioning its general business income from photography equipment and film processing to South Carolina, Kodak properly included receipts from safe harbor leasing transactions¹ in the denominator of its apportionment formula. Similar to Duke Energy's treasury function transactions, the safe harbor leasing "was a means of gaining working capital and increasing cash flow for all of plaintiff's business operations." *Id.* at 418-9 (quoting *National Service Industries v. Powers*, 98 N.C.App. 504, 391 S.E.2d 509 (N.C. App. 1990)). The South Carolina Tax Commission (now the Department) pointed out that "[t]he result is that Kodak, despite having virtually no safe harbor presence in South Carolina seeks to reduce its South Carolina taxable income by over 33% in 1984 and by over 90% in 1985." Tax Comm'n Brief. at 21 (Exhibit B); see also Richland County Ct. of Common Pleas at 25 (Exhibit C). The South Carolina Supreme Court disagreed with the Tax Commission (and the lower court) and held that:

This Court has held that the apportionment formula is a reasonable basis for establishing the income tax of corporations which, like Kodak, do business on a multistate level. *Covington Fabrics v. S. C. Tax Comm'n*, 264 S.C. 59, 212 S.E.2d 574 (1975). Since the safe harbor lease transactions were a part of Kodak's general business, they were properly included in the denominator of the apportionment formula in computing Kodak's national net income from payroll, property, and sales. The fact that a very small percentage of the leased assets are located in South Carolina is accounted for in the numerator of the apportionment formula in which Kodak's payroll, property,

¹ "These transactions ... allowed one corporation to transfer tax benefits to another corporation in the following scenario: One corporation (the lessee) needs special assets, generally equipment, but cannot utilize the related investment tax credits and depreciation deductions. The lessee corporation seeks a relationship with another corporation (the lessor, here Kodak), who makes an initial payment on the asset, then leases it back to the lessee. The lessee makes all other payments on the asset and retains legal title; however, the lessor utilizes the tax benefits associated with the asset." *Eastman Kodak*, 308 S.C. at 417.

and sales in this state are computed. Therefore, the apportionment formula reflects a “reasonable representation” of Kodak’s business in this state.

Id. at 419.

Similarly, Duke Energy’s sales of securities are connected with its trade or business and the Department has not argued otherwise. Thus, the inclusion of the principal from sales of securities in Duke Energy’s apportionment formula does not produce a result that is so absurd to require the Court to ignore the plain meaning of the apportionment statutes. *See Capco of Summerville, Inc. v. J.H. Gayle Constr. Co.*, 368 S.C. 137, 144, 628 S.E.2d 38, 42 (2006) (“However, although we are troubled by this result, we are not at liberty to rewrite the statutes, and any amendment must come from the Legislature.”)

Presumably, the South Carolina Legislature was troubled by the inclusion of the principal in the sales factor, which led to its changing the statute to exclude receipts. In 2007, the South Carolina Legislature substantially changed the apportionment formula by defining, for the first time, the terms “gross receipts” and “sales” and statutorily providing a list of transactions that are included in the gross-receipts/sales factor at gross, at net, or not at all. S.C. Code Ann. § 12-6-2295. This legislative change made clear that the sales of securities are excluded from the factor entirely. This Court’s conclusion that “it is evident that the Legislature intended Section 12-6-2295 to clarify the existing law” cannot withstand a challenge as the Department (and this Court) allowed the sales of Duke Energy securities to be included at net – not excluded all together as the statutory regime now requires.

- ii. **The Order erroneously determined that the inclusion of the principal in the standard apportionment formula would lead to an increased**

application of the alternative apportionment formula and thus an absurdity.

The Order reasoned that the inclusion of the principal from sales of securities in the standard apportionment formula would produce an absurd result because the alternative apportionment statute would “become a standard follow-up to the application of the standard apportionment statute.” ALC Order at 28. The Order’s reasoning is misapplied. Whether the inclusion of the principal in the **standard apportionment formula** produces an absurd result does not require evaluation of the **alternative apportionment statute**.

The Order’s reasoning was also based on the mistaken presumption that the inclusion of the principal in the apportionment formula would always result in distortion. As discussed above, the determination of distortion is a factual inquiry which cannot be presumed to exist as a matter of law. Thus, the alternative apportionment provision would come into play only in unusual circumstances when, after conducting a factual analysis, the inclusion of the principal in the standard apportionment formula does not fairly represent (or is not a rough approximation of) the in-state business activities of a specific taxpayer, for a specific period.

Not only is the Order’s analysis misapplied, but it is impermissibly based on grounds not raised by the parties. The South Carolina Supreme Court has held that a trial court lacks authority to grant relief *sua sponte* on a ground not raised by a party. *See, e.g., State v. Dicapua*, 383 S.C. 394 (2009); *Southern Ry. Co. v. Coltex, Inc.*, 285 S.C. 213 (1985). The South Carolina Supreme Court allows courts to act *sua sponte* in very limited circumstances, typically involving the propriety of a court’s subject matter jurisdiction: “It is well settled that, but for a very few exceptional situations not present

here, an appellate court cannot address an issue unless it was raised to, and ruled upon by, the trial court.” *Smith v. Phillips*, 318 S.C. 453, 455 (1995); *Lewis v. Local 382, IBEW*, 335 S.C. 562 (1999); *see also Lake v. Reeder Constr. Co.*, 330 S.C. 242, 248 (Ct. App. 1998) (“[L]ack of subject matter jurisdiction can be raised at any time, can be raised for the first time on appeal, and can be raised *sua sponte* by the court.”).

The alternative apportionment argument contained in the Order (i.e., the function of the alternative apportionment provision and the effect of the inclusion of the principal in the standard apportionment formula on the alternative apportionment provision), a factual inquiry, was not raised by either party during the extensive briefing or at the summary judgment hearing. ALC Order at 26-30. In its Order, the Court devoted more than three pages to a discussion focusing on the notion that including the principal from sales of securities in Duke Energy’s standard apportionment formula would lead to an increased application of the alternative apportionment statute and thus result in an absurdity. ALC Order at 28. This Court’s line of reasoning is *sua sponte* decision-making and thus, Duke Energy respectfully asks the Court to vacate this portion of the Order.

- iii. The Order erroneously determined that the inclusion of the principal in the standard apportionment formula would produce an absurd result because it would have negative impact the State’s revenue collection and threaten administrative convenience.**

In reaching its decision that including all receipts in the standard apportionment formula leads to an “absurd result,” the Court stated that a holding to the contrary would produce “continuous underestimation of taxes” and “equate to a rather sizeable sum lost to the State.” ALC Order at 29-30. The Court also stated that the Department might not be able to detect [lost revenue] due to its “limited resources.” *Id.* The Court further

engaged in a cost benefit analysis and held that “any benefits from this principal-inclusion method seem to be vastly outweighed by the great cost of revenue that this State would face through continuous underestimation of taxes due to distortions.” ALC order at 30. Each of these bases by the court are inappropriate and irrelevant in determining the meaning of the statute.

First, the Department has not submitted any evidence to this court that including the gross receipts from the sales of securities in the sales factor denominator would produce a continuous underestimation of taxes. Indeed, in many cases, depending on the size of the taxpayer, the location of its business operations, the type of industry it is in, and a variety of other factors, including all of the taxpayer’s gross receipts will fairly reflect its business activities. The plain meaning of a statute is not absurd simply because it results in less tax being paid. There is simply no rule of statutory construction that requires that taxpayers pay the *most* taxes. In fact, the Fourth Circuit has cautioned that:

“It cannot be said that giving effect to the plain meaning of the language would bring a result that is irrational or absurd, however much we may disagree with its necessity or wisdom. We have no right to fetter a broad provision with conditions not expressed and not essential to the execution of the law, for courts are not free to rewrite legislative enactments to give effect to the judges’ ideas of policy and fitness or the desirability of symmetry in statutes.”

United States v. Shirah, 253 F.2d 798, 800 (4th Cir. 1958).

With regard to the Department’s “limited resources”, it is unclear why the Department’s resources to test for distortion as part of its standard audit processes should be relevant when interpreting a statute. This is especially true in cases where there has been no showing that simply applying the standard apportionment formula and including

a taxpayers gross receipts produces anything but a fair reflection of most taxpayers' business activities in the State.

Furthermore, none of the above arguments were raised by the parties in their briefs or at the hearing and thus, it was improper for the Court to consider the administrative convenience and revenue implications to the State *sua sponte*.

3. The Court Erred in Interpreting the Meaning of “Gross Receipts” Based on the Definition of “Gross Income.”

The Court erroneously determined that “gross receipts” excluded the principal from sales of securities because “gross income, and thus taxable income, necessarily exclude principal.” ALC Order at 32. “Gross receipts” as used in the apportionment statutes and gross income/taxable income discussed by the Court relate to two entirely different tax concepts. A taxpayer’s “gross income”/“taxable income” determines the total amount of money that can be subject to tax. *Media Gen. Commc'ns*, 388 S.C. at 145, 694 S.E.2d at 528. In contrast, “gross receipts” as used in the South Carolina income apportionment provisions determines the **portion** of that “gross income”/“taxable income” upon which the taxpayer would be subject to tax in South Carolina where business income is generated. *Id.* To describe the concepts colloquially, if gross income/taxable income is a cake, the gross-receipts apportionment provision would determine how many slices of the cake South Carolina is entitled to.

The South Carolina apportionment formula is designed to represent the extent of Duke Energy’s business activities in South Carolina. The Court’s reliance on the definition of “gross income”/“taxable income” in construing “gross receipts” results in a construction not intended by the Legislature.

As the Court correctly notes, “gross income” equals gross receipts expenses and other deductions, and “taxable income” equals gross income less any deductions allowed by state law. If “gross receipts” for purposes of the apportionment statute were interpreted to exclude expenses and all deductions granted by the State, then the apportionment formula would not be a reasonable representation of a taxpayer’s business activities in the State as two identical businesses may be entitled to different deductions (e.g., economic development deduction). Accordingly, the Court’s reliance on “gross income”/“taxable income” to limit the definition of “gross receipts” as used in the apportionment statute was an error.

Additionally, this chain of reasoning was not advanced by the parties in their briefs or during the summary judgment hearing and thus, it was improper for the Court to raise this issue *sua sponte*.

4. The Court Erred in Interpreting the Meaning of “Sales” Based on the Principle of “Income-Producing Activity.”

The Court concluded that the principal from sales of securities was excluded from the term “sales” because the definition of the term contained the following language: “[i]f the income-producing activity is performed partly within and partly without this State, sales are attributable to this State to the extent the income-producing activity is performed within this State.” ALC Order at 33. The Court focused on the term “income” from the phrase “income-producing activity” and held that because income means “an actual gain or actual increase of wealth,” then sales must mean “net” sales. ALC Order at 33.

At the outset, “income-producing,” as used in the sales factor statute, is a cost-based sourcing principle applied in sourcing receipts to South Carolina for purposes of determining the numerator of the apportionment factor. The concept of income-producing activity has no bearing on the definition of “total sales” and whether the principal from sales of securities should be included in the sales factor denominator.

The Court cited to *Texaco* in support of its holding. Once again, however, the Court appears to conflate the concept of taxable income with the concept of apportioning income. The *Texaco* court was clear that “a corporation’s entire net income is apportioned to this state by **applying** to that **entire net income a percentage** based on the ‘three-factor formula’ of property, payroll, and sales in this state to the corporation’s total property, payroll, and sales.” *Texaco, Inc. v. Wasson*, 269 S.C. 255, 259, 237 S.E.2d 75, 76 (1977). The *Texaco* court’s reference to “net income” is a reference to the cake, and not how much of the cake South Carolina is entitled to. It is the “percentage” the court referenced that would actually determine how much of the cake would be attributed to South Carolina. The definition of “sales” in the instant case is only relevant for purposes of determining the apportionment “percentage,” and not the taxable “net income.” In other words, net income is the base to which the apportionment formula is applied to, to determine the portion of the base South Carolina is entitled to tax. Therefore, the concept of “net income” has no relevance to the issue before the Court here, i.e., the definition of “sales” for purposes of the apportionment statute.

The Court also relies on *Eastman Kodak Co. v. S.C. Tax Comm’n*, 308 S.C. 415, 418 S.E.2d 542 (1992). However, this case is simply irrelevant. The issue before the *Eastman Kodak* court was whether receipts from certain transactions were business

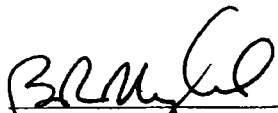
income and thus includable in the apportionment formula denominator, or non-business income and thus allocable. The court held that the receipts at issue constituted business income and were properly includable in the apportionment formula. The Court correctly noted the use of the phrase “net sales, payroll, and property” by the *Eastman Kodak* court. However, the court used the same phrase two additional times without the term “net.” *Id.* at 419. Moreover, the issue of whether the receipts from the transactions were included at “gross” or “net” was not before the Court.

Further, this argument was not raised in the briefs of either party or during the hearing and therefore, it was improper for the Court to raise this issue *sua sponte* and rely on it in making its decision.

CONCLUSION

For all of the above reasons, the Court should grant Duke Energy's Motion for Reconsideration and vacate its prior opinion as reflected in its Order with respect to the Waiver and Gross Receipts Issues.

Respectfully submitted this 20 day of August 2012.



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STATE OF SOUTH CAROLINA
ADMINISTRATIVE LAW COURT

DUKE ENERGY CORPORATION,

Petitioner,

vs.

SOUTH CAROLINA DEPARTMENT OF
REVENUE,

Respondent.

Docket No.: 10-ALJ-17-0270-CC

CERTIFICATE OF SERVICE

The undersigned, being an employee of Nexsen Pruet, LLC, hereby certify that on the 20th day of August, 2012 the following document were served upon the following by hand delivery:

1. Duke Energy's Motion for Reconsideration of the Court's Order Granting the South Carolina Department of Revenue's Motion for Summary Judgment as to the Waiver and Gross Receipts Issues; and
2. Duke Energy's Memorandum of Authorities in Support of Motion for Reconsideration of the Court's Order Granting the South Carolina Department of Revenue's Motion for Summary Judgment as to the Waiver and Gross Receipts Issues.

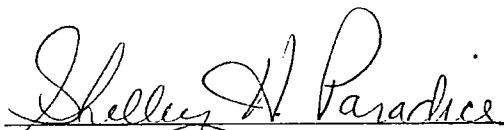
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SC Court of Appeals



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August 20, 2012
Columbia, South Carolina

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