

Amazon deal clears key hurdle in Senate

By Seanna Adcox

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COLUMBIA — Supporters of a proposal to give Amazon a sales tax collection exemption in exchange for jobs and investment have cleared a key hurdle in the state Senate.

The Senate voted 31-14 today to put the Amazon

deal next on the calendar behind the budget. That met the three-fifths approval needed to avoid sending the proposal through the committee process. There are two weeks left in the regular legislative session.

Republican Sen. John Courson called it a signifi-

cant test vote.

The House voted 97-20 last week to give Amazon a five-year exemption from collecting sales taxes from South Carolina's online shoppers. In exchange, the company promises to create 2,000 full-time jobs and invest \$125 million.

South Carolina Gov. Nik-

ki Haley has told Republican senators to wrap up their budget work and focus on passing tort reform and a bill creating a Cabinet-level Department of Administration.

The Republican governor met with the senators Tuesday behind closed doors. She could be heard

saying that if they're going to vote on Amazon, vote on it and move on. Haley said her priorities for the session's waning days are measures that would limit lawsuit awards and restructure government.

Senators are in their fifth week of debating the 2011-12 budget.