

Title: **Taking the tweezers to unnecessary regulation**  
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 Size: 41.69 column inches  
 Pawleys Island, SC Circulation: 5136



## State government

# Taking the tweezers to unnecessary regulation

BY ELISABETH ALLEN

Smith's Barber Shop in Landrum was founded in 1909 and still operates as a family-run store. Snazzy's Barber & Beauty in Aiken recently celebrated its 40th anniversary as one of the oldest African-American-owned businesses in the area. These shops have served their clients faithfully for decades, but are now subject to an increasing amount of state regulations placed on barbers and cosmetologists.

When entering into the barber or cosmetology fields, workers are faced with 51 or 26 regulations, respectively. Barber rules vary from the application for a barber school and the dimensions of that school, to clean paper covering each headrest for each new client and the prohibition of torn upholstery. They even require individuals applying for a barber license to complete a chest X-ray. All of these regulations are enforced by the Board of Barber Examiners, which is a public body. Not included here are regulations for braiding hair or using chemical relaxers, each of which require sepa-

rate licenses.

Cosmetology rules are even more onerous. The state mandates that cosmetology schools maintain a certain number of hair dryers, manicure tables, and even dry erase boards. Their entire curriculum is mapped out, down to how many hours spent tweezing, with no room for deviation. All salons must have an EPA-registered hospital-level disinfectant to clean their tools. They must also launder used towels in 140 degree water for at least 15 minutes.

According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS), South Carolina barbers are some of the lowest paid in the country by annual mean wage. With the extensive training required, annual fee that accompanies licensure, registering to be a barber shop, and the multitude of regulations in the shop, there is little incentive for people to become barbers or to open up their own business. The BLS found that S.C. cosmetologists and hairdressers are among the lowest paid in the country as well.

Regulation in these two fields has ramped up in recent years. In the previous

legislative session, a law was passed that required barber schools and instructors to obtain a license from the Board of Barber Examiners. Before that law, the code simply required that barber colleges and teachers be registered with the board, and that teachers have three years of experience and pass an exam. This new law added a fee and more paperwork to open a barber school. It also gave the board full control over the school curriculum. In the session before that, the legislature passed what are now the regulations on cosmetology educational requirements and salon licensure.

Despite the staggering amount of rules to follow to pursue a profession or open a business in these fields, the General Assembly continues to propose further regulations. Lawmakers also want to regulate offshoot industries like the hair-removal process known as electrology. The most recent proposal was the Electrology Practice Act, which would create an Electrology Licensure Committee and require electrologists to become licensed. Becoming an

electrologist would mean completing 600 hours of instruction and practice, fees for licensure and examination, and inspection of the facilities where one is practicing.

All these regulations are supposed to promote public safety. But a client isn't likely to be harmed by torn upholstery or a cosmetologist who hasn't completed the requisite number of tweezing hours. Whatever the intent, the outcome is the same: unnecessary hindrances to low-income practitioners and would-be practitioners, and higher prices for everyone. People of limited means simply cannot afford the time and costs necessary to meet all these requirements, which means fewer people will enter these fields and those who remain have every reason to keep prices high.

A more reasonable policy is to remove as many of these state-promulgated burdens as possible, and let the private sector figure out how to regulate manicures and haircuts.

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