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## Bathroom laws not needed

This is in response to the letter by Jane McLendon, printed 5/12/16, "Make restrooms more secure." She was writing, as have others before her, against the federal government's lawsuit against North Carolina's recent bathroom laws. And she called for cameras in public restrooms or the elimination of multi-toilet restrooms because "public restrooms can be a dangerous place."

But where is the proof that citizens are being systematically attacked in public restrooms by transgender assailants? Where is the proof that our current laws against assault, battery, and rape are so ineffective that we need new state laws targeting just transgender citizens?

Even Gov. Haley, who is no friend to the LGBT community,

said she would not sign similar bills because there is no evidence of a problem.

Then McLendon said, "Why do Americans let the minority on most issues rule? I was raised and taught that the majority ruled on any issue." And as a solution, she said, "Maybe we should have all issues voted on by the people and for the people."

Contrary to popular belief, the United States is not a democracy and as proof, I give you James Madison: He outlined how all democracies, where all issues were voted on by the people, have consistently devolved into chaos. He explained that a republic, which became our form of government because of him, allows elected officials to become a buffer against the tyranny of the mob. And this is still important today: Everyone is in a minority over some issue and our form of

government stops the ever-shifting majority from taking away your rights, freedom, and property with a simple vote of those citizens present.

And no, our system still isn't perfect; it's just better than everything else.

So, are minorities like the LGBT community ruling most issues? Clearly not. There have been LGBT people for long as there have been people, but those citizens have historically kept their true selves hidden or faced abandonment, imprisonment, and death. Only now can these neighbors stand up, be themselves, and demand equal treatment under the law.

And best of all, their rights don't take away from your rights, unless you think you have the right to get your way all the time.

**CHARLES TRANT**  
Florence



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**Do you support Gov. Haley's  
decision to veto the S.C. Farm Bill?**

- » Yes
- » No

**VOTE ONLINE:** Visit our Facebook page, [www.facebook.com/MorningNews](http://www.facebook.com/MorningNews) or [scnow.com](http://scnow.com) to vote. Look for results — and a new question — in this space on Wednesday!



# 148 Local school districts, government officials respond to federal transgender letter

BY JAKE CROUSE  
Morning News  
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FLORENCE – School districts in the Florence area are considering ways to respond to a letter from the Obama administration on how to accommodate transgender students. Some officials have already made statements saying they intend to follow federal regulations.

A national debate over transgender rights, sparked by the passage of House Bill 2 (HB2) in North Carolina, led the Obama administration to send the letter May 13 to schools across the nation.

The letter, coauthored by representatives of the Education and Justice Departments, aimed to give “significant guidance” on how schools can best tailor their policies to be in compliance with Title IX laws and how federal departments intend to review cases pertaining to gender-based discrimination in school districts.

A number of area school districts and officials have made statements in response to letter and larger issue of transgender accommodations.

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JAKE CROUSE/MORNING NEWS

**Some feel that single-unit unisex bathrooms provide the simplest solution for transgender individuals, but many feel that it is still a form of discrimination.**





# Trans

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Audrey Childers, public information officer for the Darlington County School District, says her district intends to follow all federal regulations as it always has.

A statement released by the district reads, "The Darlington County School District is committed to providing a safe, inclusive and respectful environment for all of our students. We will continue to comply with all federal laws and regulations."

Neil Vincent, superintendent of Florence County School District 2, says his district will handle the matter in a similar way. He says the district considers the "needs of students on a case-by-case basis" and will use "all available resources as appropriate."

Florence County School District 1 has attempted to bolster its "safe and respectful environment" by making two single-unit restrooms available for students "that would provide the greatest possibility for privacy should there be any students who choose to use them," according to director of information services Pam Little-McDaniel. School officials placed "proper signage" outside them this week.

The letter addresses the use of single-unit bathrooms in schools, noting that schools "may not require transgender students ... to use individual-user options when other students are not required to do so," but adds that these facilities may be used for "all students who seek additional privacy."

Many school districts in the Pee Dee have yet to make statements regarding the letter.

However, the transgender bathroom debate is not limited to schools.

Last month, Sen. Lee Bright, a Republican from Roebuck, proposed legislation that would prevent local ordinances from allowing transgender individuals to use "multiple occupancy bathroom[s]" that do not correspond with the sex printed

on their birth certificates.

Florence Mayor Stephen Wukela opposed that bill, which ultimately failed to pass. He made the trip to the state Capitol to testify at a subcommittee hearing on April 13.

"In the city of Florence, our

bathrooms are just fine [and] they don't require any state supervision or regulation whatsoever," he remarked at the meeting, noting that he had to leave "major issues behind" like infrastructure, public works and city budget structuring in order to "talk about bathrooms" at the hearing.

The Pee Dee region has not had threats of transgender discrimination lawsuits in schools, but a case in Horry County earlier this year brought the conversation closer to the area.

The Transgender Law Center threatened lawsuits against the Horry County School District after a transgender student, referred to in correspondence as "R" for anonymity, was suspended in January for using a boys' restroom, which corresponds with the student's gender identity. The school district later retracted that suspension and allowed R to use the boys' restroom.

In a statement shared on its website, the Transgender Law Center praised the guidance letter, saying that transgender students "just want to be able to go to school, be with their friends, and get an education without having to worry about being singled out and made to feel different."

Many state officials, however, are not on board with the new directive.

Despite her belief that South Carolina does not need a bill like HB2, Governor Nikki Haley said the state "also [doesn't] need President Obama imposing a one-size-fits-all policy from Washington."

State Attorney General Alan Wilson said he is working with other attorney generals to see "what steps should be taken" to allow local and state governments to create their own policies.

"The threat of lawsuits as well as the withholding of educational funding for all of our

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children is not the proper approach," he said. "All children have a right to a safe and respectful environment where they can focus on their education."

At risk over this issue is a large portion of federal funding

for public schools in the state. South Carolina receives funding from the federal government on the assurance that it will comply with all federal law including Title IX, which bars discrimination on the basis of sex.

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# 148 Leatherman says plan for South Carolina's roads will work

BY JOSHUA LLOYD  
Morning News  
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FLORENCE – When the state's Senate, House and governor couldn't come to a consensus on a viable road repair bill this year, the likelihood that South Carolinians would see any type of solution to fix the state's notoriously shoddy roads system seemed grim.

Last month a new plan emerged

that could give a \$4 billion boost for road projects over the next 10 years.

The state Senate passed, at the behest of Finance Committee Chairman and Senate President Pro-tempore Hugh K. Leatherman Sr., a plan that would give \$2.2 billion from the State Infrastructure Bank upfront for roads.

Leatherman said South Carolina Department of Transportation

Secretary Christie Hall told him a one-time shot of \$2.2 billion would free up the department by near that amount to use on road repairs – meaning about \$4 billion total.

“We're talking about \$4 billion that will be instantaneous, if we can get it together with House and the Senate conference committee,” Leatherman said. “I think we will.”

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JOSHUA LLOYD / MORNING NEWS

**South Carolina Senate President Pro-tempore Hugh K. Leatherman Sr. speaks to hundreds of state employees gathered for the annual meeting of the Florence County chapter of the South Carolina State Employees Association on Friday on the campus of Florence-Darlington Technical College.**



# Roads

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The plan prioritizes the replacement of 400 failing bridges across the state, but also includes interstate and rural road fixes. The funding would not cover construction of new roads.

The plan includes a finance-style payback of some \$200 million a year taken from fines and user fees collected by the Department of Motor Vehicles. That figure would be combined with

a portion of the state's vehicle purchase sales taxes over a 10-year payback period to the State Infrastructure Bank.

Leatherman said he came up with the plan after realizing that an increase in the state's gas tax wasn't going to be an option this year. He wanted a "shot in the arm" for the state's roads.

Leatherman said this plan isn't meant to be a long-term fix, but it's something to get started.

"We've got to come back and get a recurring stream of money to fix our roads every year," Leatherman said.

Critics, including Gov. Nikki Haley, have said in the past that Leatherman and the State Infrastructure Bank holds too much power over which roads gets fixed in the state - accusing him using his authority on the bank and the Finance Committee to direct money to Florence County roads.

Leatherman said that despite past criticisms, he gets the feeling that support for this particular plan has been well received in Columbia and he's confident it will pass.

"This is going to work," he said.

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# 148 Legislative turtles are enough to make some run for office

**T**here's so much frustration with politics as usual that maybe this is the year for grassroots candidates who are trying to win without big piles of money.

Anybody with a lick of common sense has got to be more than a little annoyed by what's been going on in the Statehouse. Just look at the recent week as GOP lawmakers, knowing a primary is just three weeks away, trotted out the always divisive abortion issue to throw a little red meat to voters and prove their "conservative credentials." At issue is a ban on abortions after 19 weeks, a measure that opponents are shouting is unconstitutional and scary because it will harm women (not to mention that men again are making decisions about women's bodies).

Then there was Gov. Nikki Haley's nonsensical veto of a \$40 million package of aid for the state's farmers who were smashed down by last year's flooding. The tone-deaf governor, who hands out incentives to corporate interests as if they were party favors, dug in her heels and said the state didn't do bailouts. Yeah, right. At least the legislature didn't have any of it, overriding her veto by landslides in the House and Senate.

Finally, after two years of vowing major changes to fix and maintain the state's potholed roads and decaying bridges, state lawmakers are putting final touches on a plan that is little better than half a haircut -- it kicks the can down the road to getting real infrastructure fixes because it tries to borrow the state's way out

of the problem of not investing enough money for roads for the last two decades.

With all of this going on, education is getting underfunded. The state hasn't really dealt with tens of thousands of poor people without real health care. There's been too much foot-dragging with reforming ethics laws, despite the toppling of the state's number two and three elected officials in recent years.

It's enough to, say, make you want to run for office to smack incumbents on the side of their heads.

"I ain't blaming a single person in Columbia because we're the folks who keep electing these folks," said Great Falls resident Mike Fanning, a Democrat who faces state Sen. Creighton Coleman, D-Winnsboro, in the June 14 primary. "They're doing what we have asked them to do because we keep re-electing them for doing it.

"If every time my dog chews on my sofa and I give him a cookie, he's going to tear up my sofa," said Fanning, long a critic of the state's billions of dollars of tax exemptions for special interests. "If every election, candidates keep resurrecting tired, old, divisive issues right before a primary and we keep electing them, then we deserve what we're getting, which is movement on nothing."

Duncan Mayor Lisa Cooley Scott is one of three Republicans trying to unseat state Sen. Lee Bright, the Spartanburg County legislator who has created a lot of





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enmity recently for trying to push through a bill to make people use bathrooms associated with their birth gender.

"Frankly, I'm sick and tired of us basically having an empty chair in Columbia," said Scott, a 53-year-old licensed social worker who runs a family real estate company. "He's made some gestures of things. They're celebrity headline-grabbing things that are not important issues and he hasn't addressed important issues."

She said she was running for Senate to do real work on real problems that real people have, such as fixing crumbling infrastructure with dedicated, recurring revenue and improving workforce development.

"Between Donald Trump and some of the people in our legislature, we have some very divisive factors going on, not only in our state, but in our country. We need to be united and coming together instead of fighting each other."

South Carolina is fortunate to have some serious legislators who tackle big problems. But they keep getting stalled by legislative turtles who want us to keep our eyes on the hole, not the doughnut. Let's keep the serious ones and throw out the turtles.

Andy Brack is editor and publisher of Statehouse Report. He can be reached at [brack@statehousereport.com](mailto:brack@statehousereport.com).



**Andy Brack**  
 Statehouse Report

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# FMU and Florence go well together

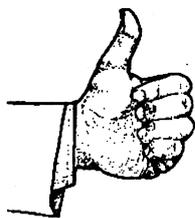
**T**humbs up to Francis Marion University. Members of the Florence Rotary Club were treated to an excellent speech Monday by FMU President Fred Carter, who is responsible for much of our thriving state university's recent success. In typical fashion, Carter gave the credit to



others. It's part of his endearing style.

Carter deserves more credit than he wants to take, but the support he has orchestrated is the reason why FMU is thriving. Florence is blessed to understand and appreciate the dividends that can come from a special town-and-gown relationship. Carter credits state government, particularly our local delegation, the Drs. Bruce and Lee Foundation and the city of Florence. "I'm delighted to tell you that other cities are very, very envious of that process, because we found a way to make that combination to work in this area," Carter said. All of them have been very good for FMU, but FMU in turn has been very good for the city, county and region. As Carter noted, when he first spoke to the Rotary Club 16½ years ago, he was asked if there was any way to make FMU more involved in the Florence community. "During those 16½ years, we've been able to shorten the distance, the six miles between the campus and downtown," Carter said as he spoke at Victors restaurant in the heart of downtown. He noted that the campus now is one block south, one block west and soon will be 1½ blocks northwest of Florence's city center. Carter highlighted one mission of the university, "and one probably in which I take the most pride," he said. "The university, when it was created 46 years ago, was created with a purpose: to be the geographic center for a lot of the cultural and economic activity that existed in what was then a fairly barren region. ... I'm very, very proud to say that, with the support of a lot of people in this room, the university has probably never shone more brilliantly than being able to essentially serve as that support of, not just in regard to activities that occur on campus but to the outreach programs that the university provides across the region." The key has been outstanding leadership.

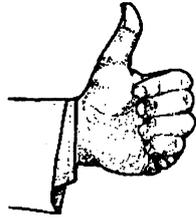
Thumbs up to The School Foundation. Where would Florence School District One be without this nonprofit organization? On Monday, the foundation announced that it will distribute \$114,006.36 in grant awards to district schools for the 2016-2017 school year. Public money pays the big bills for the school. Taxpayers account for the meat and potatoes of a budget. What The School Foundation provides is gravy. Grants go toward well-thought-out initiatives that enhance education in classrooms. The grant writers were recognized at a Monday reception. They deserve the recognition. Putting a grant application together is hard work, and it's an art form. Communication skills are critical.





Congratulations to the writers whose grants will be funded. To date, The School Foundation has distributed \$1,091,355.76 in funds to FSD1. Much of that money comes from "Dancing with the Stars." We all know how entertaining that event can be, but don't lose sight of its purpose.

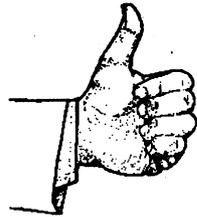
Thumbs up to the S.C. House and the S.C. Senate for overriding Gov. Nikki Haley's veto of the \$40 million Farm Aid bill. House Speaker Jay Lucas summed up our sentiments well.



"The South Carolina House recognizes the unprecedented loss our farmers experienced last October and understands the economic impact at stake if these concerns are ignored," Lucas said Tuesday in a prepared statement. "Governor Haley's factually inaccurate justification for vetoing the Farm Aid bill is inconsistent with South

Carolina values. When Governor Haley petitioned the federal government for flood relief assistance last fall, she included homeowners and small businesses but intentionally ignored our farmers' plea for help by leaving them out of the request. Because of the governor's refusal to advocate on behalf of our state's largest industry, the General Assembly was forced to take action. The Farm Aid bill establishes a verified grant process that will assist our farmers with the rebuilding process. This program provides our agriculture industry with state disaster assistance that has already been afforded to small businesses and homeowners by the federal government."

Thumbs up to the Florence City Council for unanimously approving the first reading of an ordinance that would regulate for-profit donations bins in Florence, wrote Walter M. Sparrow,



the director of the Florence County Disabilities Foundation. The foundation operates five thrift stores in Florence County, two of which are within the city of Florence, and the others are located in Lake City, Johnsonville and Scranton. "These thrift shops help provide training and employment opportunities for over 35 individuals with life-

long disabilities, as well as more than half of our Foundation's annual operating budget," Sparrow wrote. "This issue is county wide, and I encourage Florence County and the other municipalities within the county to also pass a similar ordinance. By having a unified effort, we will be able to help regulate these for-profit donations bins, which benefit private individuals. Florence County Council and local municipalities of Florence County have been avid supporters of local nonprofit organizations that help people in need and the passing of this ordinance countywide will allow us to continue to provide the necessary funding to assist local citizens."

Thumbs up, thumbs down is a regular feature of the Morning News and appears each Saturday on our Opinion page. We seek nominations for both good and bad deeds from our readers. Send nominations to us by email at [letters@florencenews.com](mailto:letters@florencenews.com). Be sure use the word "thumb" in the subject and include a contact number. Thumbs can also be mailed to us c/o The Morning News, 310 S. Dargan St., Florence, S.C., 29506.

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## <sup>148</sup> Pay raise the main focus at state employees meeting in Florence

BY JOSHUA LLOYD  
Morning News  
jlloyd@florencenews.com

FLORENCE — South Carolina transportation workers, social service employees and thousands of other daily state function laborers paid by the state are hoping to see a 4 percent pay raise next fiscal year.

This sentiment set the tone for the annual meeting of the Florence County chapter of the South Carolina State Employees Association on Friday afternoon on the campus of Florence Darlington Technical College.

The South Carolina Senate has proposed a 4 percent pay raise for state employees, while the House budget plan proposes 2 percent.

Carlton Washington, executive director of the South Carolina State Employees Association, said state employees haven't

had many pay raises in the past decade -- none since Gov. Nikki Haley took office in 2011.

"South Carolina is at the bottom of the totem pole in terms of how it pays its state employees," he said. "The 4 percent proposal is really important to these employees."

Francis Feagin, vice president of the association's Florence chapter, said she remembers a time when state employees received regular pay raises to offset cost-of-living increases and medical care increases. She said that time has gone but this 4 percent proposal is a good start.

"We've been given a lot of hope," she said. "It's really been tough because a lot of state employees make so little. It seems like we've been forgotten."

Association President Pat Lawter said that for the past decade, state

employees have been asked to do more work for less pay.

"The people who are out in the trenches, in the DMV, doing social services, who are being asked to do more with less," Lawter said. "The state's population has gone up but the number of state employees has gone down dramatically."

Senate President Pro Tempore Hugh K. Leatherman Sr. was the keynote speaker for the event. He told hundreds of state employees gathered for the luncheon that he would fight to make sure they got their fair share.

"State employees are the greasiest asset this state has," he said. "They've gone far too long without any increase in pay. What we're trying to do is catch them back up, which isn't going to be easy, but we'll stay after it."





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JOSHUA LLOYD / MORNING NEWS

**Hundreds gathered for the annual meeting of the Florence County chapter of the South Carolina State Employees Association on Friday on the campus of Florence-Darlington Technical College.**



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**Do you support Gov. Haley's  
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» Yes  
» No

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