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## West Columbia native puts on his boxing gloves

By Terry Ward  
Lexchront@yahoo.com

State Treasurer Curtis Loftis may be the state's most popular political official.

He attributes that to his success in reforming how state tax money is spent.

The West Columbia native was elected in 2010. He was the first to ever defeat an incumbent, Converse Chellis, in a statewide primary.

Loftis was unopposed and reelected in 2014 with almost 99% of the vote.

Loftis lives not far from Westover Acres where he grew up. He went to Saluda River Elementary School and Northside Middle. He is a graduate of Brookland-Cayce High School and the University of South Carolina.

Loftis traveled a lot in his youth. He spent time in England and was fascinated with the maneuvering and operation of the British Parliament.

As a business man, Loftis has a long and successful run as owner of Home Pest Control.

But the terms in the treasurer's office for Loftis have been anything but a love-fest. He campaigned on a theme of "transparency and accountability." And Loftis is credited with following through.

But it has been "bloody," Loftis said. Specifically, he was speaking of his effort to reform policy related to the state's approximately \$30 billion retirement fund.

"When it gets bloody, ev-

erybody bleeds," Loftis said.

In 2013, Loftis charged that the SC Retirement Systems Investment Commission (RSIC) was paying more than \$300 million a year to Wall Street, but getting low returns on investments.

Loftis said the state was paying top-tier fees, but the pension fund was at the bottom in performance. He also said the RSIC staff pulled in large salaries with big bonuses despite underperforming returns.

The RSIC Board responded by accusing Loftis of bullying. Loftis called the bullying charge "a stunt and a personal attack."

As a result of his stand,

Loftis has been profiled in the New York Times, Bloomberg business news and many other financial publications. There is even a chapter in the college textbook, "Asset Management"

by Andrew Ang, written by Loftis.

While the fight was messy, it had a purpose.

"There have been over 100 important changes" made at the RSIC, Loftis said.

He said there should have always been internal audits at the RSIC.

"Now they have them," Loftis said. "I'm pleased with the outcome."

Voters have supported Loftis' willingness to fight. He had no opponent in the last election. Potential candidates, Democrat or Republican, chose to leave the Treasurer's race alone.

Others have portended a run for governor for Loftis, but he discounts the talk. He said the extraneous issues - that a gubernatorial candidate must address - are not what motivates him as Treasurer.

Loftis also said the fight



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**S.C. Treasurer Curtis Loftis in his office at the Wade Hampton Building on the Statehouse grounds. He has been called the "Happy Warrior." (Terry Ward Photo.)**

he is in now is personally laborious.

He said he spends overtime and weekends studying contracts and looking over policies because the flaws that unfairly cost taxpayers are often hidden - purposely - in the details.

Loftis likes to hunt, hike, camp, and work on his property on the banks of the Saluda River. But he has not

made time for much outside the office lately.

"I don't have time to exercise and I've gained weight," said Loftis. "I've had to buy new clothes twice."

While Loftis expresses

satisfaction with the the reforms being made at the RSIC, there is more to do. The General Assembly is considering a \$48 billion proposal to upgrade the

state's crumbling roads. The 30-year plan, supported by Gov. Nikki Haley, would raise gas taxes.

Loftis opposes the plan. He said it invites abuse and waste. He said consultants, lobbyists and fees paid for other bureaucratic services that do not include infrastructure construction are prevalent.

"I believe in planning," Loftis said at a Statehouse

rally last week. "But I also believe that an extra commitment of \$48 billion tax dollars to a 30-year infrastructure wish list may cause funding crises in the basic functions of government such as education, health care, and security.

"The tax is real. The rest is a promise."

He called the gas tax a "boondoggle." It is a pig in a poke. It is a dog that won't hunt, and no matter how much lipstick you put on that pig, it's still gonna be a pig."

Loftis is putting on his boxing gloves. And if the past is any indicator, it could get messy.

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**THE HERALD OF ROCK HILL**  
*Feb. 22*

**S.C. SENATE PUNTS ON ETHICS REFORM BILL**

Some or all of the state senators who helped defeat an ethics reform bill last week must have something to hide. What else could explain the abrupt end to a nearly three-year effort to enact meaningful changes in the way ethics charges against lawmakers are handled?

It had appeared that this year the stars might finally be aligning for genuine ethics reform. The House, which passed a reform bill two years ago, has passed more reform proposals this year, including an essential measure creating an independent investigative commission to oversee ethics complaints.

Gov. Nikki Haley, who began pressuring lawmakers in 2012 to adopt ethics reforms, has consistently lobbied for changes, including a measure to end the practices of lawmakers investigating themselves.

Her use of the bully pulpit to push for reforms was a significant benefit to the cause. But, in the end, it was not enough.

The Senate has squelched meaningful reforms for the past two years. Even a watered-down bill died in the Senate last session.

And last week, senators rejected meaningful reforms once again. As before, the apparent stumbling block was a proposal to create an independent investigative panel.

Ethics complaints now are investigated by ethics committees in the House and Senate, meaning that House and Senate members essentially are investigating their own peers. Under the bill sponsored by Senate Judiciary Chairman Larry Martin, R-Pickens, a restructured State Ethics Commission similar to the one approved in

the House, which would have been charged with investigating legislators.

But many senators balked at the change, claiming that problems with lawmakers overseeing their own have been in the House, not the Senate. A majority of senators voted to replace Martin's proposed independent panel with one that featured lawmakers and members of the public.

Martin couldn't stomach the changes and voted against his own bill, saying it no longer included independent oversight. He said the final bill "was so unacceptable I couldn't even vote to send the blooming thing to the House, knowing that I would have a chance to amend it later."

While Martin says the effort to toughen ethics laws that haven't changed in 20 years is not dead, it is "on life support."

The brazenness of senators who openly hijacked proposals to allow an independent commission to review ethics complaints is stunning. It sends the message that many senators consider themselves a privileged class whose actions relating to their public service should not be subjected to scrutiny by disinterested investigators.

Claims that the problems lie in the House, not the Senate, are preposterous. Nothing about senators makes them immune from ethical lapses. They have the same capacity for breaking the law as House members.

What is needed in both houses is transparency and accountability. The public deserves to know where elected officials get their money and where potential conflicts

of interest exist.

And when lawmakers are accused of ethical violations, the public needs the assurance that those accusations will be investigated thoroughly without bias or favoritism.



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## 148 Court of Appeals ruling: 2 hospitals OK

**BY DAN BROWN**  
The Gazette

The South Carolina Court of Appeals has upheld the Administrative Law Court's conclusion that two hospitals can be built in Berkeley County.

The decision stated that the issuance of two Certificates of Need – one to Roper in the Carnes Crossroads community, and one to Trident in Moncks Corner – was the correct decision when the South Carolina Dept. of Health and Environmental Control (DHEC) issued the twin CONs in July 2009.

The dispute between the two hospitals as to how many lo-

cal hospitals could be built in Berkeley County and where, has been ongoing.

The Feb. 18 ruling said the two hospitals would not be in direct competition with each other, and the local market would support the construc-

tion of two hospitals.

According to a news release from the South Carolina State Court of Appeals, on Wed. Feb. 18, the Administrative Law Court supported DHEC's 2009 issuance of a pair of CONs to Roper-St. Francis Berkeley and Trident Medical Center, LLC to build identical 50-bed hospitals 11 miles apart on Hwy. 17A in Berkeley County.

Both Roper and Trident pre-

sented arguments to the Administrative Law Court in Oct. 2014. The ALC decision marks the end of this phase of the legal battle, but Trident has vowed to see their appeal through to the State Supreme Court.

In June, 2009 the South Carolina Dept. of Health and Environmental Control (DHEC) granted both Roper St. Francis and Trident Health permission to build 50-bed hospitals in Berkeley County.

Trident filed suit a month

later contending the Berkeley County market could only support one hospital. Roper St. Francis then filed suit to protect its interests and the legal wrangling began.

In 2012 an Administrative Law Court sided with DHEC's original two-hospital ruling. Trident Health filed an appeal on that ruling shortly thereafter.

In 2013, Governor Nikki Haley suspended funding of DHEC's Certificate of Need (CON) program bringing the Berkeley hospital process to a stand still.

Haley stated in a July, 2014 address to the Moncks Corner Rotary Club that she is not a fan of DHEC or the CON process.

"I think it is a wishing well for hospitals," she said. "Government needs to back out of this

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# Ruling

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and let the businesses compete for their customer base. Hospitals are businesses, and when businesses compete, quality goes up while costs go down.”

The latest decision is simply one more domino in the six-year dispute as it is likely, even with the ruling, that Berkeley County won’t see a new hospital until 2018.

Trident CEO Todd Gallati has remained steadfast in his company’s position and remains hopeful of a resolution.

“We are taking it one step at a time at this point,” Gallati said in Oct. 2014. “As we have main-

tained from the beginning of this process, two new identical 50-bed hospitals near each other on the same road in the same zip code will not thrive or serve the community in the right way. We think the court will see these two applications as competing and ask DHEC to make a choice between the two.”

Representatives from both companies have agreed this dispute could go all the way to the state’s Supreme Court.

Gallati has long maintained if the law courts approved the building of both hospitals, Trident will not build theirs.

Trident’s proposed hospital is slated to be built on a vacant parcel of land adjacent to its Moncks Corner Medical Center location on Live Oak Drive in Moncks Corner.

The Roper St. Francis facility is planned for construction 11 miles down Hwy. 17A in the Carnes Crossroads community of Goose Creek.

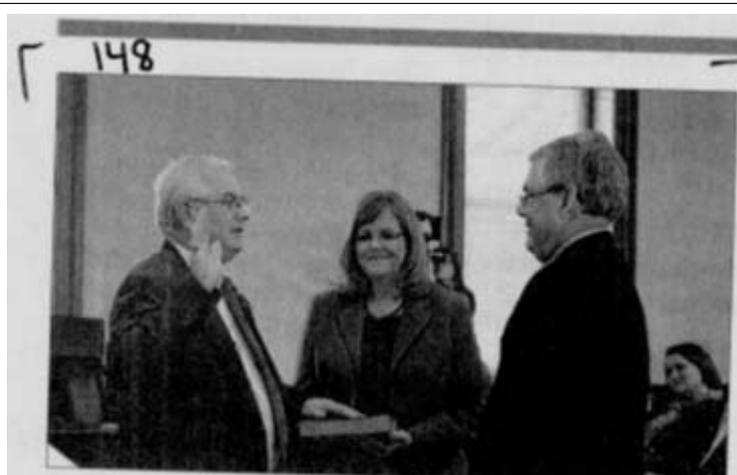
Roper’s position is the exact opposite, with CEO David Dunlap maintaining the growing Berkeley County market could support two hospitals and to let the two hospitals compete for Berkeley County’s business.

“We agree with DHEC’s position in approving both hospitals,” Dunlap said in a July, 2009 statement when the dispute shifted to the court system after both companies filed suit. “Berkeley County can support two hospitals, ours in Goose Creek and Trident’s in Moncks Corner.”

In Oct. 2014, Dunlap continued to believe Berkeley County could support two hospitals.

“We believe the residents of Berkeley County deserve to have their healthcare needs met,” he said in a written statement. “There are plenty of people to support both hospital projects, and our teammates at Roper St. Francis are eager to expand into such a vibrant and growing area.”

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Lindsay Street/Gazette

**Butch Henerey takes the oath of office as Interim Berkeley County Sheriff Feb. 20.**

## **Henerey takes the reins of Berkeley Sheriff's Office**

**BY LINDSAY STREET**  
 The Gazette

Retired Berkeley County Sheriff Chief Deputy Butch Henerey is now officially interim sheriff for the county after a swearing-in ceremony Friday, Feb. 20.

After Judge Markley Dennis swore him in at the Berkeley County Courthouse in Moncks Corner, Henerey addressed a crowded courtroom.

"We will have (the office) prepared for when the newly elected sheriff when he takes office," Henerey said.

He added that he would not

participate in the special election for sheriff.

Earlier in the week, Gov. Nikki Haley issued an executive order naming Henerey as interim sheriff. Henerey takes over after Chief Deputy Rick Ollic had assumed responsibilities of sheriff for nearly two weeks.

Elected officials and law enforcement leaders from the Lowcountry were present at Friday's ceremony.

It was a warm occasion, despite the circumstances causing it. On Dec. 28, then-Sheriff

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## Henerey

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Wayne DeWitt was arrested and charged with a hit-and-run and DUI. He was indicted on the charges by a grand jury Feb. 10. He resigned his position Feb. 4, sparking a special election. The special general election will be June 9.

Supervisor Bill Peagler opened the ceremony

"I got my wish," he said, joking that at Henerey's retirement ceremony last year

he wished he could have more time working with the law officer.

SLED Chief Mark Keel attended the ceremony and spoke to the audience. He called Henerey a "man of integrity."

"Butch Henerey is the person to give instant credibility to this office," Keel said.

Clerk of Court Mary Brown spoke last.

"Your word is your word, and that means something," she said.

Henerey told the media that his first priority is getting the

budget in order. He said the person coming in in June will be at a "disadvantage" and that he plans to have the agency in order "to get him in the saddle real fast."

Henerey said no staffing changes are expected at the agency at this time.

When asked if DeWitt left the office in good shape, Henerey replied:

"The agency is strong. Wayne DeWitt ran this office for 20 years. During that time, this office became a nationally accredited agency. I think that speaks for itself."



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# 148 Unemployment rate drops for second year

South Carolina's unemployment rate for veterans 18 and older dropped to 3.5 percent in 2014, down from 4.1 percent in 2013, the U.S. Bureau of Labor and Statistics reported. The Palmetto State posted the nation's seventh best rate and is well below the national rate of 5.3 percent.

"We are a proud military state. We support the families of those who are deployed, and we take care of our veterans and help them find work when they come home," said Gov. Nikki Haley. "Working together with businesses, the military community and workforce partners, we are expanding opportunities for those heroes who sacrifice so much for our families, and we couldn't be prouder to celebrate another drop in our military veterans' unemployment rate."

In the past year, more than 9,000 South Carolina veterans were placed in jobs, according to the SC Department of Employment and Workforce (DEW).

"There are now more South Carolinians working than ever, and we are proud to help those who have so graciously served our country find employment opportunities in the Palmetto State," said Cheryl M. Stanton, executive director of the SC Department of Employment and Workforce (DEW). "Our team continues to work one-on-one with veterans every day and is cultivating relationships with businesses to market veterans as great hires."

This announcement comes nearly a year after the launch of Operation Palmetto Employment, a statewide initiative led by Governor Haley, in partnership with the SC National Guard and DEW. The comprehensive employment program is designed to help service members, family members and veterans find meaningful civilian careers.

Learn more about employment resources for veterans at [operationpalmettoemployment.sc.gov](http://operationpalmettoemployment.sc.gov).

To find a SC Works center for employment opportunities near you, visit [dew.sc.gov/directory](http://dew.sc.gov/directory).

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# Expert Machine And Fabrication Expanding Dillon County Operations

*Company Investing \$2.6  
Million Investment To  
Relocate To Larger Facility,  
Adding 25 New Jobs*

Expert Machine & Fabrication, LLC a manufacturer of various engineered and fabricated products is expanding its operations in Dillon County.

The company will be investing \$2.6 million in the expansion, adding an expected 25 new jobs over five years in Latta.

"Dillon County is quickly becoming a place where businesses grow and people prosper. We are very happy to be a part of the growing Latta community and providing more jobs for its citizens," said Expert Machine & Fabrication owners Teddie and Elizabeth Williams.

Founded in 1999, the family-owned Expert Machine & Fabrication manufactures products primarily for the housing industry.

The company also serves the military, manufacturing and

electrical industries.

To meet increased customer demand from these industries, Expert Machine & Fabrication has decided to relocate to a new, larger facility in Latta.

"It's exciting to see a local, family-owned company, like Expert Machine & Fabrication, grow after doing business in South Carolina for 15 successful years," said Gov. Nikki Haley.

"The company's decision to invest and create new jobs in Dillon County is a reason to celebrate in the local community, and we look forward to watching them continue to succeed here moving forward," Gov. Haley continued.

The new, 21,000-square-foot facility, located at 109 Academy Street in Latta, is nearly triple the size of Expert Machine & Fabrication's existing site, allowing the company the opportunity to upgrade its

existing equipment and add new equipment to its operations.

The addition of 25 new employees over the next five years will more than triple its workforce to 36.

Hiring for the new positions is expected to begin in early to mid-2015.

"Here in Dillon County our goal is very simple, and that is for every single citizen who wants a job to have one. We are extremely pleased with the announcement today because it represents more jobs and more opportunities for our citizens," said Dillon County Council Chairman T.F. "Buzzy" Finklea, Jr.

The Rural Infrastructure Authority has approved a \$75,000 grant to Dillon County to assist with the cost of real property improvements.

"South Carolina continues to lead the nation's manufacturing





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## **FAST FACTS**

- **Expert Machine & Fabrication, LLC is expanding its operations in Dillon County.**
- **\$2.6 million investment to create 25 jobs.**
- **Expert Machine & Fabrication, LLC was founded in Latta in 1999.**
- **Part of the Latta community for 15 years, Expert Machine & Fabrication, LLC is relocating to a larger facility, located at 109 Academy Street.**

renaissance, and today's announcement by Expert Machine & Fabrication, LLC reinforces that notion. We congratulate Expert Machine & Fabrication on all of their success and look forward to supporting them as they continue to thrive in our state," said Secretary of Commerce Bobby Hitt.

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**NAACP inducts new president**

**BY KATHY ROPP**  
KATHY.ROPP@MYHORRYNEWS.COM

The lone remaining charter member of the Conway Branch of the NAACP was recently installed to his second term as president of the local organization.

Dr. Kenneth E. Floyd Sr., a Conway native, says he doesn't have his calendar filled with issues for the year, but will tackle civil rights issues as they come before the group.

However, he does already know that the group is interested in looking into the hiring practices of the City of Conway, Horry County and Horry County School District.

Floyd, who has pastored churches in North Carolina and in Horry and Marion counties in South Carolina, says he plans to collect data from those three governmental entities before he presents his concerns to them. However, he said, "It's a fact that they're discriminatory in their hiring practices. We'll be getting data from them. We're taking a close look at that data to make sure that we're getting our fair share of the jobs that come through Horry County."

"We've got well qualified people and it appears at this point that there are other races being hired at three times the rate of minorities," he said.

Floyd says people of all races should be concerned about the good ole boy system that allows people to hire their friends, instead of the most qualified people.

"We don't want anybody to give us anything, just be fair across the board, and it's a fact that they haven't been fair and that's why the NAACP has to stay on top of things like that to make sure," he said.

Floyd was unanimously

elected president of the Conway group in November of 2014, but was only recently installed due to post-election issues, which have now been resolved.

The other officers elected, along with Floyd, were Mrs. Teretha B. Anderson, secretary; Vivian S. Wilson, treasurer; and Walter Dozier, first vice president.

The group met on the grounds of the Horry County Memorial Library in Conway under the live oak trees with a sprinkling of rain falling to cast their votes for Floyd and the rest of the slate, according to Ann Anderson.

Floyd says he'll serve as president for at least two years.

He remembers being among the folks who helped organize the Conway Branch back in 1975. He remembers attracting an overflow crowd to Cherry Hill Missionary Baptist Church, but everybody didn't join because it wasn't popular back then to belong to the NAACP, Floyd said.

Many of the people were afraid they'd lose their jobs if they joined, he said.

The group was headed up by older people and school teachers with contracts. People with public jobs and others working in the private sector stayed behind the scenes, he said.

Floyd says he came up through the ranks and served as vice president when the Rev. H.H. Singleton was president.

He says he agreed to run for president again because he has always felt compelled to look out for the less fortunate.

"It is my calling as a gospel preacher, and...I feel if we be

about what Jesus was about, then at the end, we have eternal life," he said, adding that

Jesus' mission was to take care of the less fortunate and downtrodden.

Floyd comes from a family of "firsts." He was kin to Samuel P. Floyd Sr., Conway's first black police officer, and is a cousin of Dr. Preston McKeever-Floyd, a longtime professor of religion and philosophy at Coastal Carolina University, who was one of the first five students to desegregate Conway High School.

Another cousin Jimmy Floyd is a retired CHS assistant principal, and another cousin was the late Katie Daniels, who retired from the Horry County Clerk of Court's office.

Floyd is a supporter of President Barack Obama and doesn't like that some people seem to want him to fail.

"They said that they will do all that they can to see him fail, but you see, when you got

God on your side, you don't fail. Right will prevail in the end," he said.

He is not a supporter of Governor Nikki Haley and particularly of the state's recent suggestions about what to do about financial problems and reports of substandard education at S.C. State, a traditionally black college in Orangeburg.

Floyd theorizes that all universities have financial problems, but state officials seem interested in supporting only Clemson University and the University of South Carolina.

"They don't have the best interest of those kids at heart. If they did, they'd never talk about closing that school," he said.

He believes S.C. State is turning out some of the best engineers in the state.

The 64-year-old says the Lord put him here for a reason and he just wants to do his will instead of doing nothing.

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## New officers

COURTESY

**The Conway Branch of the NAACP recently inducted its new slate of officers. They are Dr. Kenneth E. Floyd Sr., president; Mrs. Teretha B. Anderson, secretary; Mrs. Vivian S. Wilson, treasurer; and Walter Dozier, first vice president.**

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**Gov. Haley's \$29,000 football tickets and higher ed reform**

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I love this state, I really do — and that's why I get so frustrated when we can't do the obvious right thing for stupid reasons. (Like, say, \$29,000 worth of free football tickets — but more on that in a moment.)

It seems to happen a lot and the current prime example of this is how higher education in this state is run, or probably more accurately, not run. S.C. State has been in the news lately but they are only the latest and best example of the need for a statewide governing body that effectively — and the key word is effectively — oversees higher education in the state.

What we have now is the S.C. Commission on Higher Education and it's just not working. There are some very competent and diligent folks on the Commission but the problem is they really don't have much power to actually do anything.

Dr. Layton McCurdy was Dean of MUSC for 11 years and Chairman of the Higher Education Commission from 2005-2008, and his comments in a recent column pretty much sum up the problem: "Still we do not have a coordinated system that emphasizes the value to the state rather than the benefit to the individual institution... Rather we operate under the philosophy that states, 'If you've got one, I want one.'"

Someone described what happens now as "policy by football tickets." What this means is that the big schools like USC and Clemson have a huge alumni base that can be mobilized and they have high-paid lobbyists walking around the Statehouse lobby handing out football tickets to state decision makers. Unfortunately, this is a pretty good summary of what happens.

And in case you're tempted to dismiss all this football stuff as "small potatoes," just take a quick look at Gov. Nikki Haley's latest ethics filings, where you'll find that she declared more than \$29,000 worth of Clemson football suites and tickets as gifts in 2014 alone.

Another big part of the problem is how the boards of the public colleges and universities are chosen. It's done by the legislature, so if you want to be on a board you have to repeatedly go up to Columbia and

convince enough legislators to vote for you. What you get is a bunch of folks hanging around the lobby looking for legislators like a pack of teenage boys with overactive hormones at the high school dance,



**PHIL NOBLE**

looking to pounce on the next pretty girl that walks by.

Lots of people who would make great college trustees don't want to go through the personal humiliation of the process and just won't get involved. So, who you have getting chosen are people who have a high threshold for personal rejection, or who are the brother, sister, friend or barber or someone who knows someone who can call in a favor from some key legislators.

And once they get on the boards, most of them stay a long time — some for more than 40 years. So much for new ideas and fresh perspectives. So what's the answer? There is an obvious, proven solution — a board of regents — but it doesn't have much chance of happening in South Carolina any time soon.

A board of regents has the responsibility to look at higher education based on the needs of the whole state and then has the teeth to enforce their policies. Today, 39 of the 50 states have some sort of board of regents. Though they go by lots of different names — curators, governors, overseers, regents, trustees, or something — they all have the same function of overseeing their state's higher education system. Among those states where the board of regents seem to be doing an effective job are, you guessed it, Georgia and North Carolina.

The problem with such a straightforward, obvious solution is that no one in a position to make this needed change wants it to happen.





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The legislators like the current system because they have the power to appoint the college and university boards, and they like having people (i.e. board candidates) hanging round kissing their ring (or some other body part), telling them how great they are. Plus, they get all the good tickets for the football games — or in the case of Gov. Haley, the football suites.

The big colleges and universities like the system because they have lots of their alumni in the legislature to look after them. Also, if they get in a jam, they can mobilize their alumni, as some alum is bound to be the crucial legislator's fishing buddy, girlfriend or law partner.

A couple of years ago the presidents of USC, Clemson and MUSC were all lined up at a table in front of a state Senate committee and they were asked by Sen Gerald Malloy if they were going to at least talk about a board of regents...and they all three sat silently and did not say a word. One observer called it "the silence of the lambs."

And this isn't a partisan issue, as both fair minded Democrats and Republicans have pushed for a change. Mark Sanford at least talked a good game about reform but he never got anywhere, as the legislators didn't much like him to start with and then Sanford got lost on the Appalachian Trail and that pretty much killed any chance of real reform.

So, there you have it: a big problem with an obvious solution that won't ever happen because of petty politics and narrow interests — and football tickets.

By some measures, our state's colleges and universities are sliding backwards, but who cares, right? The football teams are doing great... and Gov. Haley and the legislators are sitting right there on the 50 yard line cheering them on.

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Phil Noble is a businessman in Charleston and is President of the SC New Democrats, an independent reform group founded by former Gov. Richard Riley to bring big change and real reform.  
 phil@scnewdemocrats.org  
 www.SCNewDemocrats.org

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**Army listens to Haley, SC residents on possible Fort Jackson cuts**

The Associated Press

COLUMBIA — South Carolina Gov. Nikki Haley reminded an Army delegation Thursday that as a military spouse, she is part of a community that values Fort Jackson and wants to continue supporting its soldiers in the face of budget cuts that could slash its workforce in half.

"I am a spouse of a soldier that deployed," Haley told the delegation, speaking of her husband, Michael, who deployed for a year to Afghanistan as a member of the South Carolina Army National Guard.

"We want you to understand that Fort Jackson is part of our family," the governor said, arguing that the Army's largest training site is more to the state than a source of jobs and federal financial input.

"There's never a soldier or vet-

eran that we want to be in need," Haley said, leading a series of speakers who touted the community's military-friendly history and the strength of its ties to the 100-year-old installation and its 7,000 soldiers and civilians.



Haley

Fort Jackson is the Army's largest training installation. It puts 45,000 soldiers through basic combat training every year, which is more than half of all new Army soldiers and more than 60 percent of its female soldiers.

Each year, another 30,000 attend advanced military training classes or military specialty schools on the installation, such as those for chaplains, drill sergeants and military financial or human resource officers.

The economic blow of the potential cuts would amount to a loss of 8,000 jobs in the region around the Columbia-based installation and a loss of \$189 million annually to the local economy, according to a University of South Carolina Moore School of Business study described several times by the Fort Jackson boosters.

Brig. Gen. Roger Cloutier, who led the Army delegation, met Thursday morning with Columbia Mayor Steve Benjamin and others concerned about the cuts.

Opening the Thursday afternoon community "listening session," Cloutier told the hundreds of attendees who filled the pews of a local Baptist church, "Your voices matter. Not a single decision has been made."

The one-star general said he expects the Army to make a deci-

sion on the potential cuts in late spring with an announcement coming early summer. Because of the pressure of the budget cuts, the reductions could begin by Oct. 1, he said.

If the Congressionally approved cuts go ahead as planned, the Army has said it would have to slash troops from 500,000 to 420,000 soldiers and severely shrink installations such as Fort Jackson.

Some supporters argued to the team that instead of making cuts at Fort Jackson, the Army should consider closing down smaller basic training sites at installations in other states — such as Fort Benning in Georgia, Fort Leonard Wood in Missouri and Fort Sill in Oklahoma — and bring all basic training organizations to Fort Jackson.

"Making basic combat training the one and only job of the





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commanding general at Fort Jackson would improve the training and bring it to the highest level possible," said retired Army Col. Kevin Shwedo, the former deputy commander at Fort Jackson, and current head of the South Carolina Department of Motor Vehicles.

Kathy Dent, a Columbia resident who works with nonprofit organizations that support soldiers and their families, said her family was one of the original groups that helped donate land to found the Army installation nearly 100 years ago.

"My message is that Fort Jackson supports this community and this community supports Fort Jackson," she said. "I know many veterans who have trained at Fort Jackson who come back here to settle down because they loved it during the time they did their training here."

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**Carolinas brace for new wintry blast**

The Associated Press

**GREENVILLE** — Janet Robinson was trying to stay one step ahead of a storm that threatened to dump up to 8 inches of snow across the Carolinas.

So she made a trip late Wednesday morning to a Greenville, South Carolina, grocery store and picked up the staples — milk and bread — then grabbed batteries for her flashlights and candles in case she loses power.

The store was packed and items were flying off the shelves, she said.

"I guess everyone was watching The Weather Channel," said Robinson, the 35-year-old mother of two.

Across the Carolinas, people braced for a new storm just one day after a wintry blast of snow and ice caught much of the region by surprise. Tuesday's storm closed schools and businesses and created treacherous driving conditions that led to hundreds of accidents.

Forecasters say Wednesday's storm threatens to do the same.

In South Carolina, the National Weather Service says up to 8 inches of snow could fall in the Upstate.

In North Carolina, up to 8 inches of snow was expected in the mountains and up to 6 inches of snow across much of the rest of the state.

North Carolina Gov. Pat McCrory declared a state of emergency. Many parts of North Carolina received 1 to 3 inches of snow Tuesday, though much of that melted Wednesday during a period of sunshine and above-freezing temperatures.

Two people died in separate weather-related crashes Tuesday when their cars slid off roads and struck trees.

South Carolina Gov. Nikki Haley issued a state of emergency for 31 counties in

**SC STATE OF EMERGENCY**

Gov. Nikki Haley has issued a state of emergency for 31 counties in South Carolina as forecasters predict several inches of snow in the Upstate.



Haley

Counties in the state of emergency are: Abbeville, Aiken, Anderson, Calhoun, Cherokee, Chester, Chesterfield, Darlington, Dillon, Edgefield, Fairfield, Florence, Greenville, Greenwood, Kershaw, Lancaster, Laurens, Lee, Lexington, Newberry Marlboro, McCormick, Oconee, Orangeburg, Pickens, Richland, Saluda, Spartanburg, Sumter, Union and York.

South Carolina. The declaration directs state agencies to begin coordinating to respond to any emergencies and to help local governments. It also places some South Carolina National Guard members on duty to help.

Haley said she wants everyone in the Upstate to leave work or school by 5 p.m. Wednesday, go home and stay there.

Sgt. Michael Baker, spokesman for the North Carolina Department of Public Safety, said they're also urging people to stay off the roads.

"If we get what's anticipated tonight and tomorrow morning, it's going to be very hazardous as far as travel is concerned," he said.

And that's what Robinson was doing — getting out early.

"You never know what's going to happen. You don't want to be driving in the snow. It's too dangerous," she said.

Just ask John Fletcher. A 19-year-old student at Greenville Tech, he was driving





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in a shopping center parking lot Tuesday morning, when his car slid and narrowly missed hitting a pole. "It was close," he said. If it gets bad, he hopes his classes will be cancelled.

Stores in both states were filled with shoppers looking for items to help them get out of a snowy jam.

"The majority of what we have had, heaters, pipe wrap, insulation and stuff like that, is just about sold out. We do have basic insulation, but nothing for frozen pipes or anything like that," said Chris Herrin, assistant manager of a Lowe's Home Improvement Store in Winston-Salem, North Carolina.

The store sold out of its ice melt, but Herrin said he expected to get at least six pallets worth in the afternoon, which could be between 600 and 800 bags.

Highway transportation crews in both states were treating roads and bridges with sand, salt and brine.

N.C. Department of Transportation Department spokesman Steve Abbott said they're optimistic they'll be able to get most of the main roads cleared quickly — even in the western part of the state where places like Boone have been hard hit.

Abbott had a suggestion for drivers: If the weather is as bad as advertised, don't drive.

"We're urging people to stay off the roads, in part, because having people stay off the roads means our plow trucks can get through much faster," he said.

But for many, the snow and ice is starting to get to them.

"It's frustrating. You live in North Carolina so that you don't have to deal with it very often. Seems like last year and this year, it's getting us," said Trent Maner, who moved to Winston-Salem from Charlotte two years ago.

## PEE DEE WEATHER DELAYS

*A winter weather advisory is in effect for Darlington, Marlboro and Dillon counties in South Carolina and for Robeson, Bladen and inland Pender counties in North Carolina through noon today.*

*No ice or snow accumulation is forecast within the Pee Dee with the exception of northern Marlboro County which could receive less than .05 inches of ice, according to a bulletin from the National Weather Service in Wilmington, North Carolina.*

*A number of schools and other institutions in the Pee Dee region are on delayed schedules today because the weather:*

### SCHOOLS

► **Darlington County School District** will operate on two-hour delay. Morning session of half-day 4K canceled. Afternoon session of half-day 4K as planned

► **Dillon County School District 3** will operate on a two-hour delay for students and an one-hour delay for faculty and staff.

► **Dillon County School District 4** will operate on a two-hour delay for students and a onehour delay for faculty and staff.

► **Emmanuel Christian School** in Hartsville will operate on a two-hour delay.

► **Excellent Learning Preschool** will operate on a two-hour delay.

► **Faith Christian Academy** in Cheraw will operate on a two-hour delay.

► **Florence-Darlington Technical College** will operate on a two-hour delay.

► **Florence School District 1** will operate on a two-hour delay.