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**Subject:** Afternoon Clips – Wednesday, November 30, 2016

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## Afternoon Clips – Wednesday, November 30, 2016

Governor Nikki Haley News:

**The Herald:** Gov. Haley's take on the new Fort Mill headquarters? 'Bigger and better' than she imagined.

<http://www.heraldonline.com/news/local/community/fort-mill-times/article117994923.html>

John Marks

Gov. Nikki Haley is no stranger to Kingsley, having attended groundbreaking and ribbon cutting events at the Fort Mill commerce site before Wednesday. She recalled groundbreaking at LPL Financial all those months ago as she looked over the new headquarters for some 1,400 Carolinas-based employees "and counting," according to the company. "It is bigger and better than anything I could have ever imagined," Haley said. With a \$150 million investment in LPL, Haley said the "entire state is smiling today" with the new opening. "The reason we wanted LPL in South Carolina was we loved the fact that it was a good, quality company that understood that customer service was job number one," she said. "You always look for companies like that, who appreciate the people that they serve and who work hard for the way they serve." Mark Casady, company chairman and CEO, said the 27-acre campus and 450,000 square feet of office space in two buildings will provide employees their best opportunities to succeed. The Fort Mill site is key to maintaining the company mission moving forward, he said.

**Charlotte Observer:** Nikki Haley cuts what could be one of her last ribbons as South Carolina's governor

<http://www.charlotteobserver.com/news/business/biz-columns-blogs/development/article117974663.html>

Ely Portillo

With an oversized pair of gold-handled scissors, LPL Financial and S.C. Gov. Nikki Haley on Wednesday officially opened the company's new Fort Mill campus – in what could be one of the governor's final such ceremonies before becoming U.S. ambassador to the United Nations. Haley was nominated to the post by President-elect Donald Trump last week. A spokeswoman said after the ribbon-cutting that Haley wouldn't be taking questions. LPL Financial's decision to relocate from Charlotte to Fort Mill was one of Haley's successes during her six years as governor, in which she racked up a string of high-profile business recruiting wins such as Giti Tire. "It's a great day in South Carolina," Haley said. "The whole state is smiling today." LPL Financial, which provides back-end services for a network of more than 14,000 independent financial advisers, broke ground on their Fort Mill headquarters in February 2015. The company was one of two Charlotte firms that announced in 2014 they planned to hop the state line to South Carolina to the Kingsley Park development, along with Lash Group. LPL Financial moved about 1,000 employees, Lash Group, 1,200.

**The State:** No apologies from 3 Rec Commission board members whom Gov. Haley is trying to fire

<http://www.thestate.com/news/local/crime/article117985243.html>

John Monk

The three Richland County Recreation Commission members who chose not to resign but to fight S. C. Gov. Nikki Haley's decision to fire them had no apologies when they showed up Wednesday at a hearing called by the governor to give them a chance to say why they shouldn't be fired for gross mismanagement and neglect of duty. During an almost three-hour hearing at the House of

Representatives Blatt Building, the three board members – chair J. Marie Green, vice-chair Barbara Mickens and Thomas Clark – offered spirited defenses, no apologies and said news media reports about events at the Recreation Commission were inflammatory and had made matters worse. In recent days, four board members – Weston Furgess Jr., Wilbert Lewis, George Martin and Joseph Weeks – chose to resign rather than to contest Haley's decision to remove them from office. The hearing was conducted by three Haley-appointed Columbia lawyers with experience in labor and business law: Tommy Lydon, Derrick Williams and Ashley Cuttino.

**WIS:** Board member: Claims against her, others are part of 'conspiracy' to destroy Rec Commission  
<http://www.wistv.com/story/33829919/board-member-claims-against-her-others-are-part-of-conspiracy-to-destroy-rec-commission>

Jeremy Turnage

Three of the remaining members of the Richland County Recreation Commission made their case to keep their jobs during a special panel hearing on Wednesday morning. For three hours, all three offered some degree of defiance as they appeared before a panel of three attorneys who tried to drill down into the way the commission board has handled claims of mismanagement, harassment, intimidation, nepotism and incompetence. Several of those issues were tied to the tenure of former Executive Director James Brown, III who retired under pressure a few months ago. Testifying the longest and probably the most defiant was Green. "Today's actions are the result of a conspiracy to destroy the Richland County Recreation Commission, Mr. James Brown, Mrs. Barbara Mickens and myself, J. Marie Green and to cover up the wrongdoing of those named above," Green said. Green also said she modeled her behavior as a public official after that of Supreme Court Justice Thurgood Marshall.

**WACH:** Commissioner: Actions against Rec Commission are a "conspiracy"  
<http://wach.com/news/local/commissioner-actions-against-rec-commission-are-a-conspiracy>

Tara Petitt

The three remaining commissioners from the Richland County Recreation Commission's board stood before a panel of legal experts Wednesday to publicly defend themselves in a public hearing at the State House. Chairwoman Marie Green, vice-chair Chair Barbara Mickens and Thomas Clark are three of the seven board members accused of several things, including neglecting to investigate claims of nepotism, intimidation and sexual harassment at the agency. Wednesday's hearing was ordered earlier this month by Governor Nikki Haley after lawmakers urged her to remove the board members who supported former agency chief, James Brown. Brown is the target of several lawsuits that allege sexual harassment, bribery and intimidation. In October, Brown was indicted on a misconduct in office charge. The charge accuses Brown of forcing sexual contact on female employees at the Recreation Commission. He retired three days after the indictment and is also charged with intimidating a witness tied to the case. On Wednesday, the remaining commissioners that have yet to step down explained to legal experts why they shouldn't be removed.

**The State:** Favorite traditions: Tree farms and tree lightings in Columbia  
<http://www.thestate.com/entertainment/local-events/article118017388.html>

Lezlie Patterson

Glowing, sparkling, cheerful Christmas trees are such a big part of the holiday season. People decorate every way, from tacky chic to designer glamour. Some sparkle with white lights, and some glisten with blinking, colorful lights. Regardless of the theme, trees are a major way to celebrate Christmas, and many people have created traditions around them. Two popular traditions: cutting down a Christmas tree at a local farm, and attending tree lighting ceremonies. "There are families who have been coming here since the 1980s," said Mary Wessinger of Old Barn Christmas Tree Farm in Chapin. "Parents started bringing their kids, and now those kids are bringing their kids. We even have some grandkids. "It's a family tradition."

**NOTE:** Taking the family to community tree lighting ceremonies is another way to embody the season. Perhaps the biggest of those in the Palmetto State is the Governor's Carolighting. This year

is the 50th annual ceremony. “Each year, Michael, Rena, Nalin and I look forward to this special night when we can invite family and friends from every part of South Carolina to celebrate the holiday season,” Gov. Nikki Haley said in a statement. This year’s Carolighting is Thursday, Dec. 1. Most communities around Columbia have ceremonies as well.

### **Nikki Haley: UN Ambassador News:**

**Charleston Business Journal:** Lawmakers say Haley’s move to U.N. could be good for state roads  
<http://www.charlestonbusiness.com/news/government/71013/>

Andy Owens

State lawmakers representing Dorchester County said Gov. Nikki Haley’s appointment as U.N. ambassador could mean South Carolina’s infrastructure problems might finally be addressed in the next legislative session. Rep. Chris Murphy, R-North Charleston, said Haley sent mixed messages about raising the state’s gas tax and put in so many stipulations that very little happened in the General Assembly last year. “In fact, I blame her a lot for our inability at the state level to enact a motor-user fuel tax, an increase in the gas tax,” Murphy said Tuesday during a Dorchester County legislative luncheon. “First she was against it, then she surprised everybody by being for it, but then she was for it but then she put these handcuffs on the General Assembly which basically made it impossible from a legislative standpoint to do what we needed to do in South Carolina.” Murphy joined two senators and newly elected Rep. Katie Arrington, R-Summerville, for the Greater Summerville/Dorchester County Chamber of Commerce Legislative Luncheon at Summerville Presbyterian Church.

**Breitbart:** Mitt Romney Flip-Flops: Donald Trump Won, Gives Me Hope For America’s Future  
<http://www.breitbart.com/2016-presidential-race/2016/11/30/mitt-romney-flip-flops-donald-trump-won-gives-hope-americas-future/>

Charlie Spiering

It wasn’t an apology, but former Republican presidential candidate Mitt Romney appears to be embracing President-elect Donald Trump in a stunning turnaround from his days as a prominent leader of the Never Trump movement.

After joining Trump for dinner at Jean-Georges restaurant in New York City, Romney made a lengthy statement to the press pool of reporters, remarking that he had a “wonderful evening” visiting with the president-elect. “These discussions I’ve had with him have been enlightening, and interesting, and engaging. I’ve enjoyed them very, very much,” he said. Romney explained that he was impressed by Trump’s election night speech in which he promised to bring Americans together after a divisive campaign. He also admitted that Trump had won, something that he failed to do as a presidential candidate.

**NOTE:** Romney praised Trump’s transition effort specifically mentioning Nikki Haley’s appointment as ambassador to the United Nations and Rep. Tom Price’s appointment to run Health and Human Services. He also praised Betsy DeVos, Trump’s choice to run the Department of Education.

**Newsweek:** Headed To United Nations, Haley Leaves Mixed Record On Race In SC  
<http://www.newsweek.com/headed-united-nations-haley-leaves-mixed-record-race-sc-526792>

Emily Cadei

For Donald Trump to nominate Nikki Haley—first female governor of South Carolina, second-generation Indian-American, formerly vocal critic of the president-elect’s divisive rhetoric—as his ambassador to the United Nations says very little about his future foreign policy, but a lot about his desire to tamp down his image as a racist and chauvinist. Haley has virtually no international experience. Even supporters are grasping for foreign policy credentials, citing a handful of trade and investment junkets she took to promote South Carolina; her husband’s service with the National Guard in Afghanistan; and—no joke—that she is the child of immigrants. Much more important to Haley’s profile than any overseas travel, however, is her image as a “racial conciliator,” as an Associated Press headline dubbed the 44-year-old. And that stems largely from one act—her

leadership in removing the Confederate flag from South Carolina's Capitol grounds in the days after a white man gunned down nine black parishioners in Charleston in 2015. A week later, flanked by lawmakers from across the political and color spectrum, Haley issued a call to remove the Stars and Bars—a divisive symbol the shooter displayed proudly in photos unearthed on white supremacist websites—from its perch aside the statehouse.

General Assembly News:

**The State:** McMaster's first job as acting governor? Meeting military commanders

<http://www.thestate.com/news/politics-government/article118003358.html>

Bristow Marchant

Henry McMaster won't become South Carolina's next governor until sometime next year. But he will start filling the role Friday. That is when McMaster will preside over a commanders' briefing from the heads of the South Carolina's military bases – a role normally filled by the governor. The annual governor's briefing brings together the commanding officers of all S.C. military installations to discuss issues facing the bases and military personnel in the Palmetto State. McMaster's appearance at the Friday meeting will be the first time the lieutenant governor will be acting in the role of the state's chief executive. Bill Bethea, chairman of the S.C. Military Base Task Force, said the task force hasn't had any interaction with McMaster in his two years as the state's second-in-command. Bethea and task force executive coordinator Charlie Farrell will meet with the lieutenant governor Thursday to "give him a heads up." "I've known the lieutenant governor for many years, but ... this will be our first interaction with him in an official capacity," said Bethea, a Bluffton attorney.

**SC Agency News:**

**The State:** Corrections officer arrested, fired for allegedly attacking inmate

<http://www.thestate.com/news/local/crime/article117947833.html>

Cynthia Roldan

A state correctional officer was arrested and fired from her job for allegedly hitting in the face a handcuffed inmate. Tierra Shante Armstrong, 25, is facing charges of third degree assault and battery. She was booked into the Alvin S. Glenn Detention Center on Wednesday, according to a statement by the S.C. Department of Corrections. Armstrong, of Columbia, is accused of hitting a prisoner "in the face several times," while he was handcuffed on Oct. 1. The arrest warrant states the inmate was "under the custody and control of the officer at the time." The alleged attack happened at Kirkland Correctional Institution, a high-security prison, in Columbia. According to the warrant, correctional investigators arrested Armstrong based on victim and witness statements. Armstrong's date of hire was not immediately available.

**Post and Courier:** Kirkland corrections officer charged with assault of inmate

[http://www.postandcourier.com/news/kirkland-corrections-officer-charged-with-assault-of-inmate/article\\_795d8ec8-b71e-11e6-a23e-4bb9794846bf.html](http://www.postandcourier.com/news/kirkland-corrections-officer-charged-with-assault-of-inmate/article_795d8ec8-b71e-11e6-a23e-4bb9794846bf.html)

Maya T. Prabhu

A S.C. Department of Corrections officer is accused of assaulting an inmate at Kirkland Correctional Institution earlier this year. Tierra Shante Armstrong, 25, of Columbia was charged with third-degree assault. She was arrested Wednesday morning and fired. According to arrest warrants, on Oct. 1 Armstrong hit a handcuffed inmate in the face several times.

**Post and Courier:** Thousands of South Carolinians sign up for Obamacare before it's too late

[http://www.postandcourier.com/news/thousands-of-south-carolinians-sign-up-for-obamacare-before-it/article\\_05c455d8-b718-11e6-8b0e-9350ceeaf6bb.html](http://www.postandcourier.com/news/thousands-of-south-carolinians-sign-up-for-obamacare-before-it/article_05c455d8-b718-11e6-8b0e-9350ceeaf6bb.html)

Lauren Sausser

More than 50,000 South Carolinians signed up for an Obamacare plan in November, even as the health care law's future looks bleak under a Trump presidency and its potential replacement remains

a mystery. By comparison, during the first month of open enrollment last year, about 56,000 customers in this state purchased Affordable Care Act policies. All told, more than 200,000 patients in South Carolina rely on the federal law for coverage and most of them qualify for substantial discounts, based on their income, to lower the price they pay. What those thousands of customers will do when President-elect Donald Trump repeals Obamacare, as he promised on the campaign trail, remains to be seen. Most experts agree, though, that coverage sold for 2017 will likely remain valid through the end of next year, even if Trump and congressional Republicans quickly scrap the law. S.C. Department of Insurance Director Ray Farmer said state law only allows insurance companies to immediately withdraw coverage for two reasons: nonpayment and "material misrepresentation." In other words, patients could lose their coverage mid-year if they stop paying for it or if they lied on their application or committed some sort of fraud, he said.

**Greenville News:** IG: Flood food stamp overpayments might have totaled \$10 million

<http://www.greenvilleonline.com/story/news/local/south-carolina/2016/11/30/ig-flood-food-stamp-overpayments-might-have-totaled-10-million/94675340/>

Tim Smith

Overpayments, including due to fraud, for flood-related food stamp benefits last year may have totaled more than \$10 million and included some state Department of Social Services workers who filed for benefits, according to a report by State Inspector General Patrick Maley. But Maley concluded that DSS was not at fault for the overpayments and that federal guidelines do not require verification of qualifying disaster information provided by applicants. Lawmakers had been suspicious of fraud in some locations, especially Greenville, where more than 12,000 applied for one-time Disaster Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, or D-SNAP, benefits but only 200 applied for Federal Emergency Management Agency aid related to last October's floods. "The state should be fully aware the low D-SNAP application management controls should not be relied upon to prevent applicants claiming a fraudulent qualifying disaster event in lesser hard hit approved disaster areas," the report concludes. "This may have been the case in Greenville and Spartanburg Counties, which clearly had proportionately less disaster damage than other disaster declared counties as indicated by FEMA reporting."

**SC Political News:**

**Post and Courier:** Tim Scott, Trey Gowdy join President-elect Donald Trump transition team

[http://www.postandcourier.com/news/tim-scott-trey-gowdy-join-president-elect-donald-trump-transition/article\\_2cf3cbcc-b711-11e6-aa02-4fbc36c25c92.html](http://www.postandcourier.com/news/tim-scott-trey-gowdy-join-president-elect-donald-trump-transition/article_2cf3cbcc-b711-11e6-aa02-4fbc36c25c92.html)

Maya T. Prabhu and Emma Dumain

U.S. Sen. Tim Scott and U.S. Rep. Trey Gowdy are among a number of people who have been added to President-elect Donald Trump's transition team. Scott, R-S.C., is one of several vice chairmen named and Gowdy, R-S.C., will serve on the executive committee. Their roles are to provide expertise and insight and make recommendations as Trump fills out his administration. "It is an honor to join Vice President-elect (Mike) Pence on the Presidential Transition Team, and I look forward to working with the co-chairs to help build an exceptional administration," Scott said. "I will continue to advocate for policies and people that will bring opportunity to every household across the country, and restore hope where it has been lost. I want to thank President-elect Trump and Vice President-elect Pence for the chance to serve." The job will require participation in more conference calls than in-person meetings, and there's an expectation that members can be as engaged as they want to be. Scott might have a more active role as a vice chairman; Gowdy might choose to play a more passive part.

**Keith Lamont Scott Case:**

**Associated Press:** Prosecutor clears officer in man's death, says man was armed

<http://bigstory.ap.org/a43fd2d6ab2f4b5b979cdb6b3249427b>

A prosecutor on Wednesday cleared a Charlotte police officer in the killing of a black man whose death touched off civil unrest, and he presented detailed evidence to rebut assertions that the slain man was unarmed. Officer Brentley Vinson was justified in opening fire on Keith Scott and won't face charges, Charlotte-Mecklenburg District Attorney Andrew Murray said. In a 40-minute news presentation to news reporters, Murray produced evidence that Keith Scott was armed with a handgun and the officer who killed him feared Scott would shoot. The announcement "profoundly disappointed" Scott's family, but they haven't decided whether to file a lawsuit, their lawyer said. Scott, 43, was killed Sept. 20 in the parking lot of an apartment complex. Much of Murray's presentation centered on the gun and debunking witnesses who said Scott wasn't armed. Murray displayed a store's surveillance video taken shortly before the incident, showing the outline of what appeared to be a holstered gun on Scott's ankle. He said Scott's DNA was found on a Colt .380-caliber semi-automatic handgun recovered at the scene.

**Charlotte Observer:** District Attorney tells why charges will not be brought against Charlotte officer in killing of Keith Scott

<http://www.charlotteobserver.com/news/special-reports/charlotte-shooting-protests/article117921218.html>

No charges will be brought against Charlotte-Mecklenburg Police Officer Brentley Vinson in the September shooting death of a man in University City, District Attorney Andrew Murray announced Wednesday. Keith Lamont Scott, 43, was shot Sept. 20 in a confrontation with officers outside his apartment. "I'm extremely convinced that Mr. Vinson's use of deadly force was lawful," Murray said. Evidence in the case shows that Scott stepped out of his SUV with a gun in his hand, Murray said, and ignored at least 10 commands from the five officers on the scene to drop it. Murray said that Scott bought the gun – a Colt .380 semi-automatic that had been stolen in Gaston County – 18 days before the confrontation for \$100. One bullet was found in the chamber of the cocked gun, the safety was off and Murray said Scott's DNA was found on the grip and slide. The person who sold the gun to Scott admitted to doing so when confronted by state and federal law enforcement, according to a prosecutor's report on the shooting. "The seller said that Scott asked him to find him a weapon because he was having problems with his wife and her family, specifically his nephew," the report said.

**Post and Courier:** District attorney: No charges in officer-involved shooting death of Charleston native Keith Lamont Scott

[http://www.postandcourier.com/news/district-attorney-no-charges-in-officer-involved-shooting-death-of/article\\_2c4f8882-b716-11e6-982a-ab2dc41a5237.html](http://www.postandcourier.com/news/district-attorney-no-charges-in-officer-involved-shooting-death-of/article_2c4f8882-b716-11e6-982a-ab2dc41a5237.html)

Derrek Asberry

The Charlotte police officer who shot and killed Charleston native Keith Lamont Scott will not face charges, the Mecklenburg County district attorney said Wednesday. District Attorney Andrew Murray said officer Brentley Vinson "acted lawfully" and that the shooting was justified. Scott, 43, was shot outside of his apartment during an incident in which police say he was holding a gun. Scott's family said he was not armed. However, at a lengthy news conference Wednesday, Murray displayed a nearby store's surveillance video showing the outline of what appeared to be a holstered gun on Scott's ankle. Body camera and dashcam recordings released earlier by the police department did not conclusively show that a weapon was present and city officials were criticized for the length of time it took to release police video of the shooting. Murray said Scott's DNA was found on a Colt .380-caliber semi-automatic handgun recovered at the scene. Murray shared a Facebook conversation from the man who said he sold the stolen gun to Scott and recognized him from TV coverage after the shooting. The district attorney also discussed police radio traffic where officers talked about the gun before confronting Scott.

**Michael Slagger Case:**

**Associated Press:** The Latest: Prosecutor says trust the video, not the defense

[http://m.apnews.com/ap/db\\_268748/contentdetail.htm?contentguid=dqQCnsjD](http://m.apnews.com/ap/db_268748/contentdetail.htm?contentguid=dqQCnsjD)

SC State Wire

Solicitor Scarlett Wilson is urging jurors in the Michael Slager murder trial to ignore what she calls defense attempts to divert attention from the cellphone video that shows the officer shooting Walter Scott five times in the back. "You've seen lots of smoke and you have seen lots of mirrors" she said after the defense made its closing arguments. Slager's lawyer said Scott attacked the officer and got control of his stun gun, making him fear for his life. But Wilson showed jurors pictures of Slager with his radio and earpiece still in place after the shooting. She said "that is not the sign of a violent, throw-down, life-threatening fight." She accused Slager of inventing a story about the fight, and said his fellow officers "bought everything he said that day, hook, line and sinker." Wilson said "our whole criminal justice system rides on the back of law enforcement," and because of that, "they have to be held responsible when they mess up."

**Associated Press:** Prosecutor to jury: Believe bystander's video, not fired cop

[http://m.apnews.com/ap/db\\_268748/contentdetail.htm?contentguid=iH1sglML](http://m.apnews.com/ap/db_268748/contentdetail.htm?contentguid=iH1sglML)

Bruce Smith

A white police officer who fired eight shots at the back of an unarmed black motorist during a foot chase should be convicted of murder or manslaughter, a prosecutor argued Wednesday after a monthlong trial. Malice, the evidence required for a murder conviction, had to be in officer Michael Slager's mind the instant he fired at the back of Walter Scott, who at that point was running away, Solicitor Scarlett Wilson argued. Five bullets struck Scott's body, felling him at a distance of dozens of feet. Manslaughter, a lesser charge the judge added Wednesday at the prosecution's request, requires proof the killing was done in the heat of passion, after being provoked. But even if Slager felt provoked because Scott resisted being repeatedly stunned by a Taser, she said that doesn't justify killing him.

**Associated Press:** Prosecutor: Murder or manslaughter, fired officer is guilty

[http://m.apnews.com/ap/db\\_268748/contentdetail.htm?contentguid=iH1sglML](http://m.apnews.com/ap/db_268748/contentdetail.htm?contentguid=iH1sglML)

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**Associated Press:** Prosecutor says trust the video, not the defense

[http://m.apnews.com/ap/db\\_268748/contentdetail.htm?contentguid=dqQCnsjD](http://m.apnews.com/ap/db_268748/contentdetail.htm?contentguid=dqQCnsjD)

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**Post and Courier:** Jurors visit Walter Scott shooting site, will hear final arguments

[http://www.postandcourier.com/news/jurors-visit-walter-scott-shooting-site-will-hear-final-arguments/article\\_90316bd0-b6b8-11e6-bf45-8f86c5788b5e.html](http://www.postandcourier.com/news/jurors-visit-walter-scott-shooting-site-will-hear-final-arguments/article_90316bd0-b6b8-11e6-bf45-8f86c5788b5e.html)

Andrew Knapp

For a month, jurors sat through testimony about Walter Scott's death. They watched and re-watched a video of North Charleston officer Michael Slager shooting eight times until Scott stopped running and fell face-first into the spot of grass where he died. On Wednesday, they piled into two vehicles and visited that site. By the end of the day, they were expected to get their first opportunity to discuss what they've learned during Slager's murder trial and decide his fate. The jurors will then hear closing arguments at 1 p.m. that could stretch for three hours. They will eventually be tasked with finding a verdict on one of two charges: murder or voluntary manslaughter. In their deliberations, Presiding Circuit Judge Clifton Newman said the jurors will get instructions on the requirements of a self-defense claim and on how to consider whether Slager's force was reasonable in making an arrest. If they find it was reasonable, he said, they must acquit Slager. Newman approved the manslaughter count earlier Wednesday after hearing arguments from opposing attorneys. The defense had fought the move. The charge carries between two and 30 years in prison, compared with murder's 30 years to life behind bars.

### **Dylann Roof Case:**

**Associated Press:** Judge: Roof's request to represent himself not rashly made

[http://m.apnews.com/ap/db\\_268748/contentdetail.htm?contentguid=M1kDBzI8](http://m.apnews.com/ap/db_268748/contentdetail.htm?contentguid=M1kDBzI8)

Meg Kinnard

Dylann Roof, the white man charged with the shooting deaths of nine black parishioners at a South Carolina church, is being allowed to represent himself because he didn't make the decision rashly and understood the consequences of his actions, a judge wrote in court documents unsealed Wednesday. In a 10-page order, U.S. District Judge Richard Gergel wrote that Roof met the standards required for self-representation, even though he called the defendant's decision to act as his own lawyer "very unwise." Roof, 22, was "alert, focused and confident" when he asked the court to act as his own lawyer, a decision that was not "rashly made," Gergel wrote. "Defendant's decision to forego (sic) the services of the nation's foremost capital defense attorneys is, in the Court's view, unwise, but the law does not permit the Court to reject Defendant's assertion of his constitutional right to represent himself because it is foolhardy," the judge wrote.

**The State:** Judge says Dylann Roof is highly intelligent, did not decide to represent himself 'rashly'

<http://www.thestate.com/news/local/crime/article117959588.html>

Cynthia Roldan

The man facing the death penalty for allegedly killing nine black parishioners at a Charleston church strongly opposed a move by his attorney to have his competency evaluated. A redacted opinion order by U.S. Judge Richard Gergel that was unsealed on Wednesday, revealed Roof was against his attorneys' request to delay the trial to determine if he was mentally fit. The order also said Roof's request to represent himself was not a decision that was not "suddenly or rashly made." Throughout the order, Gergel said Roof was warned repeatedly that it was "strategically unwise" for him to represent himself. Roof raised the issue at the end of his competency hearing on Nov. 22, according to the order. "Is there any way that someone could write a document that would take away all responsibility from my lawyers, but still keep them as my lawyers and then they could do whatever I say, but they wouldn't have any responsibility, and then I could sign it," asked Roof, according to the order. Roof then made the request formally on Sunday. On Monday, he confirmed to the court he wanted to represent himself.

**Post and Courier:** Dylann Roof trial judge found accused killer highly intelligent

[http://www.postandcourier.com/charleston\\_sc/dylann-roof-trial-judge-found-accused-killer-highly-intelligent/article\\_35dfb694-b719-11e6-82ad-1f849d85769b.html](http://www.postandcourier.com/charleston_sc/dylann-roof-trial-judge-found-accused-killer-highly-intelligent/article_35dfb694-b719-11e6-82ad-1f849d85769b.html)

Jennifer Berry Hawes and Abigail Darlington

Dylann Roof is highly intelligent and objected to his defense team raising recent questions about his mental competency, according to a judge's newly unsealed order that allowed the accused Emanuel AME Church shooter to represent himself. U.S. District Judge Richard Gergel wrote that he found Roof has an "extremely high IQ" and no cognitive impairment. Gergel, who is presiding over Roof's federal death penalty trial, verbally granted Roof's request to represent himself on Monday just as jury selection was set to begin. The written order provides more detail about Roof's prior competency hearing and Gergel's reasons for allowing Roof to act as his own attorney. "While repeatedly asking Defendant to confirm his desire to represent himself, the Court closely observed Defendant's demeanor. Defendant was alert, focused, and confident as he expressed his resolve to represent himself," Gergel wrote in the redacted version of his order released Wednesday. The judge also noted that Roof opposed his attorneys' recent questions about his mental competency, which led to a new psychiatric evaluation of him. Gergel then held a closed-door competency hearing on Nov. 21 and Nov. 22 and on Friday found Roof competent to stand trial.

### **Serial Killer Todd Kohlhepp:**

**Greenville News:** Arizona police narrow their focus in Kohlhepp investigation

<http://www.greenvilleonline.com/story/news/crime/2016/11/30/arizona-police-narrow-their-focus-kohlhepp-investigation/94677908/>

Michael Burns

Police in Tempe, Arizona, are focused on "a few cases" preceding Todd Kohlhepp's arrest in 1986 and his release from prison after a kidnapping conviction in 2001 as they investigate his potential involvement in at least one unsolved shooting in that state. The 45-year-old Moore resident has been charged with murder in the deaths of seven people in Spartanburg County, according to warrants. He also faces two charges of kidnapping, one for the abduction of Kala Brown, the Anderson woman who was found chained inside a metal container near Woodruff. It was her discovery that sparked the investigations over the last month that a serial killer could have been living undiscovered in the Upstate. "We're still waiting on additional information from Spartanburg as we continue to look through our cases," said Tempe police Sgt. Josie Montenegro. "Spartanburg is obviously dealing with a large-scale investigation, and we don't want to impede their work."

### **Wildfires Across Southeast:**

**Associated Press:** Tennessee mayor talks of re-opening city after wildfires

[http://m.apnews.com/ap/db\\_268748/contentdetail.htm?contentguid=PbDd1jU](http://m.apnews.com/ap/db_268748/contentdetail.htm?contentguid=PbDd1jU)

SC State Wire

Buddy McLean watched from a deserted Gatlinburg street as flames surrounded his 26-acre hotel nestled in the mountains of eastern Tennessee. There was nothing he could do. The Lodge at Buckberry Creek was one of hundreds of buildings destroyed in the area by a deadly wildfire fanned by hurricane-force winds. The blaze killed four people, injured dozens more and turned a usually bustling tourist destination into a ghost town. Thousands of people were displaced Wednesday, nervously awaiting word of when they can get back in the city to see if they still have homes. "I have 35 employees," McLean said. "All of them lost their jobs overnight." There were severe thunderstorm warnings for the area as a line of storms moved across the Southeast. Those storms spawned suspected tornadoes in parts of Alabama and Tennessee, killing five people and injuring more than a dozen.

**Associated Press:** The Latest: Mayor says Tennessee wildfires have killed 7

[http://m.apnews.com/ap/db\\_268748/contentdetail.htm?contentguid=TKJApsg4](http://m.apnews.com/ap/db_268748/contentdetail.htm?contentguid=TKJApsg4)

SC State Wire

A Tennessee mayor says three more bodies have been recovered after the wildfires in the Great Smoky Mountains, bringing the death toll to seven. Sevier County Mayor Larry Waters said Wednesday that officials believe more than 400 buildings have been damaged in the county. He also

noted that three people who were trapped after the wildfires Monday night have been rescued. He did not go into details about the rescue, and said authorities have not positively identified the dead. He says search-and-rescue missions are ongoing.

**Associated Press:** The Latest: Pastor's church damaged, tombstones knocked over

[http://m.apnews.com/ap/db\\_268748/contentdetail.htm?contentguid=Jni1qBaY](http://m.apnews.com/ap/db_268748/contentdetail.htm?contentguid=Jni1qBaY)

SC State Wire

After the drought, floods, fires and now tornadoes, Pastor Roger Little says he wonders if God is trying to get America's attention. Little is pastor of Rosalie Baptist Church in northeast Alabama, where an apparent twister strike early Wednesday is being blamed for three deaths. The storm tore into Little's church, severely damaging a classroom wing and lifting off part of the sanctuary roof. He says the winds even knocked over headstones in the cemetery out back. Church member Steve Hall says the scene in the grave yard looks like the Rapture occurred, referring to an end-times belief of many Christians. Rosalie is an unincorporated area located about 115 miles northeast of Birmingham. Little says a path of damage started at the community welcome sign and includes three churches that were hit along the main highway.

**Associated Press:** Rain helping contain wildfires in South Carolina

[http://m.apnews.com/ap/db\\_268748/contentdetail.htm?contentguid=s1HdEh2D](http://m.apnews.com/ap/db_268748/contentdetail.htm?contentguid=s1HdEh2D)

SC State Wire

Authorities say rain is helping contain wildfires in South Carolina's northwestern corner, but clean-up efforts will continue for weeks. A release Wednesday from the Pinnacle Mountain Fire Joint Information Center says more than 60 percent of the wildfire is contained, though it still covers 10,560 acres. Table Rock State Park in Pickens County reopened Tuesday. Other than a few trails, its facilities and roads are open. No injuries have been reported from the fires in South Carolina. Authorities say firefighting crews are not being sent to South Carolina's lines for a second consecutive day due to wet roads, slick terrain and soaked ground. Air operations are suspended as well. At least four people have died in wildfires in Tennessee, which have destroyed more than 150 buildings there.

**Sun News:** Little River couple evacuated during Gatlinburg wildfires found safe in Rocky Top

<http://www.myrtlebeachonline.com/news/local/article117898688.html>

Elizabeth Townsend

As the Tennessee wildfires drew nearer, a Little River couple vacationing in the Gatlinburg area checked into a local shelter, but then their communication with their children stopped. And their daughter was getting worried. Suzanne Garber said her parents, Raymond and Carolyn Saldi of Little River were staying at their timeshare when they were evacuated from their hotel Monday night. She and her family were with them until Sunday when they returned home, she said. But at 1 a.m. Wednesday, Garber said the last she had heard from her parents at 10 a.m. Tuesday was that they had been evacuated to a local shelter and were then moved to a new shelter as the fires grew closer. Kind strangers shared water with them as they were stuck in traffic, and they made it to the latest American Red Cross shelter where they were fed. But Garber said they never registered on the Red Cross' "Safe and Well" page, and she was getting worried with no word from her parents as of 1 a.m. Wednesday.

**Hurricane Matthew Recovery:**

**Associated Press:** Gov. Haley: \$64M needed to cover state's Matthew damage

[http://m.apnews.com/ap/db\\_268748/contentdetail.htm?contentguid=XBCpoMhi](http://m.apnews.com/ap/db_268748/contentdetail.htm?contentguid=XBCpoMhi)

SC State Wire

South Carolina Gov. Nikki Haley plans to seek about \$64 million in next year's budget to cover damage to the state from Hurricane Matthew not covered by federal emergency aid. The governor's office released estimates Wednesday that found the state has to pay about \$33.5 million for items

such as debris removal, damage to public buildings and infrastructure, as well as evacuations along the coast. The estimates find the state is also on the hook for \$30.4 million to cover damage to roads not covered by federal aid. The governor's office said figures were not yet available for a total estimate of public and private damage caused by the October storm. Five people died, some 870,000 were left without power, and 350,000 evacuated as the storm scoured the state's coastline.

**The State:** Hurricane Matthew damage will cost state \$64M

<http://www.thestate.com/news/politics-government/article117985193.html>

Avery G. Wilks

Hurricane Matthew will cost the state of South Carolina almost \$64 million, even after the federal government picks up most of the October disaster's bill, S.C. Gov. Nikki Haley's office said on Wednesday. The Republican governor plans to ask that state lawmakers include that \$64 million in next year's budget, her office said. Matthew, which briefly made landfall in South Carolina as a Category 1 hurricane, caused nearly \$341 million in public damage here, according to estimates provided by the governor's office. About \$100 million of that was to state-owned roads. Federal programs will cover most of those costs. But state government still is on the hook for \$30.4 million in damage to state roads and \$33.5 million in damage to public buildings and other infrastructure, debris removal costs and the cost of emergency protective procedures – including evacuations. Officials could not yet estimate the storm's damage to private households or businesses. But its damage to public assets will prove smaller than the historic October 2015 flooding, according to the governor's office's estimates.

**Post and Courier:** South Carolina expected to spend \$64 million on Hurricane Matthew damages

[http://www.postandcourier.com/news/south-carolina-expected-to-spend-million-on-hurricane-matthew-damages/article\\_c7b0b1a0-b736-11e6-9d54-0b6f2cf524d0.html](http://www.postandcourier.com/news/south-carolina-expected-to-spend-million-on-hurricane-matthew-damages/article_c7b0b1a0-b736-11e6-9d54-0b6f2cf524d0.html)

Maya T. Prabhu

Gov. Nikki Haley is expected to ask for nearly \$64 million in next year's budget to cover the cost of damage caused by Hurricane Matthew in October, her office said Wednesday. The state is expected to pay \$33.5 million for costs incurred by counties and municipalities for debris removal, damage to public infrastructure and emergency procedures, which includes evacuations. The state will have to pay another \$30.4 million to repair damage to state-owned roads. The governor's office said there was about \$341 million in public damage caused by the Category 1 storm which made landfall near McClellanville on Oct. 8. Federal assistance programs require the state to cover 25 percent of that cost. State officials did not know the total cost incurred by private citizens and businesses, and likely won't for several months. Of the nearly 44,000 applications for FEMA individual assistance submitted, a little more than 10,000 applicants have received \$32.6 million in relief. Still, the hurricane will cost the state less than the October 2015 historic flooding, which carried a state government price tag of \$121 million.

**Associated Press:** Agency seeks \$5M for dam safety following Hurricane Matthew

[http://m.apnews.com/ap/db\\_268748/contentdetail.htm?contentguid=BDgFVo77](http://m.apnews.com/ap/db_268748/contentdetail.htm?contentguid=BDgFVo77)

SC State Wire

South Carolina's environmental agency is requesting more than \$5 million for dam safety following Hurricane Matthew. The State newspaper of Columbia reports Wednesday (<http://bit.ly/2fQH2eo>) the Department of Health and Environmental Control wants \$2.3 million to stabilize or tear down about two dozen dams damaged last month and about \$3 million to inspect other dams. That follows \$3 million legislators gave the agency this fiscal year to boost dam safety following historic flooding in October 2015. The request is part of the agency's budget proposal for 2017-18. It says "two disasters in two years" have strained the dam safety program's already limited budget. At least 70 state-regulated dams burst amid flooding from the two events. Hundreds more were damaged. South Carolina's program has been one of the nation's most poorly funded.

South Carolina News:

**Post and Courier:** Justice Department takes an interest in S.C.'s 'disturbing schools' law

[http://www.postandcourier.com/news/justice-department-takes-an-interest-in-s-c-s-disturbing/article\\_5d0c3936-b714-11e6-9568-8f196ca059d4.html](http://www.postandcourier.com/news/justice-department-takes-an-interest-in-s-c-s-disturbing/article_5d0c3936-b714-11e6-9568-8f196ca059d4.html)

Paul Bowers

The U.S. Department of Justice has taken an interest in a lawsuit challenging South Carolina's "disturbing schools" law, a prohibition on "obnoxious" behavior that police disproportionately enforce against African-American students, data shows. Five days after The Post and Courier published an investigation of the law's impact on Aug. 5, the American Civil Liberties Union helped four arrestees and the local nonprofit group Girls Rock Charleston file a federal lawsuit challenging the constitutionality of the law's "broad reach and arbitrary and discriminatory enforcement." On Monday, the Department of Justice filed a statement of interest in the case. "Many students who are or will become productive members of society could be characterized as behaving in an 'obnoxious' or 'boisterous' manner, each of which is prohibited under the criminal statutes challenged in this case," the filing says. "Protecting children's developmentally appropriate behavior from being inappropriately, arbitrarily, and discriminatorily criminalized is an important duty of the Department."

**Post and Courier:** Study ranks South Carolina drivers third worst in nation

[http://www.postandcourier.com/news/study-ranks-south-carolina-drivers-third-worst-in-nation/article\\_c9779a80-b669-11e6-958f-cf5db67f00c1.html](http://www.postandcourier.com/news/study-ranks-south-carolina-drivers-third-worst-in-nation/article_c9779a80-b669-11e6-958f-cf5db67f00c1.html)

Gregory Yee

Rural roadways, speeding and careless driving could be making South Carolina among the deadliest states in the nation for drivers. An annual report by the company CarInsuranceComparison.com using data from the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration ranked the state's drivers third worst in the nation. It cites statistics for roadway fatalities, speeding and careless driving, among other factors. The study, which is in its fifth year, has placed South Carolina among the nation's top five worst states for the past four years. "We want this to be a battle cry to let people know you need to be on guard," said Josh Barnes, a spokesman for the company, which analyzes driver safety and automobile insurance data to compile consumer advice articles. "There are things you can do. "South Carolina's ranking as having the third worst drivers in the nation is no surprise to Larenda Logan.

**The State:** Fort Jackson to hold public meeting on potential repairs to dams damaged in October 2015 flood

<http://www.thestate.com/news/local/article117942848.html>

Paul Osmundson

Fort Jackson will hold a public meeting next month to discuss the environmental assessment for alternatives to repairing Semmes and Legion lakes, which were damaged in the historic October 2015 floods. The meeting will be Dec. 14 held at the Columbia Scottish Rite Center, 7230 Garners Ferry Road, beginning at 6:30 p.m. The meeting will have two purposes: inform the public of the potential environmental impacts of the alternatives being evaluated and seek the public's feedback about proposed repairs. The fort said in a news release that the meeting is not a forum for discussing the storm. Because of on-going litigation, "Fort Jackson officials are not able to address any questions regarding last year's storm at this time," the news release said.

**Post and Courier:** Boeing's first 787-10 Dreamliner moves into final assembly

[http://www.postandcourier.com/business/boeing-s-first---dreamliner-moves-into-final-assembly/article\\_783a3a74-b70e-11e6-a5c8-4be7d9a0bb2d.html](http://www.postandcourier.com/business/boeing-s-first---dreamliner-moves-into-final-assembly/article_783a3a74-b70e-11e6-a5c8-4be7d9a0bb2d.html)

David Wren

Boeing Co. moved two major fuselage sections for the first 787-10 to its North Charleston final assembly plant on Wednesday, a production milestone for the newest and largest member of the Dreamliner family. During a ceremony for Boeing employees, the mid-body and aft cabin structures were rolled into the final assembly building. The third section of the plane, the forward fuselage, is

being made at Spirit Aerosystems in Wichita, Kansas. The three pieces will be assembled and the plane moved to the adjacent flightline for testing in 2017. Delivery is scheduled the following year. While the earlier 787-8 and 787-9 models are built in North Charleston and a second Boeing campus in Everett, Wash., the 787-10 will be built exclusively by Boeing South Carolina because the mid-body is too large to transport to the West Coast. "This is a watershed day for the company, the state and the region," said Darrel Larson, the build integration leader for Boeing's 787-10 program. "This airplane will only be built here in North Charleston. Pieces will continue to be built around the globe in our supply chain, but the 787-10 will only fly out of North Charleston."

Local News:

**Associated Press:** 20-year-old Goose Creek man found dead in vehicle

[http://m.apnews.com/ap/db\\_268748/contentdetail.htm?contentguid=myXoF1Fe](http://m.apnews.com/ap/db_268748/contentdetail.htm?contentguid=myXoF1Fe)

SC State Wire

Authorities say a shooting in Berkeley County left a 20-year-old Goose Creek man dead and a woman injured. Berkeley County Chief Deputy Coroner George Oliver says he found Nicholas Bradley Valentine dead in the back of a vehicle after being called to the scene about 10:30 p.m. Tuesday. Oliver says a woman driving the vehicle was hospitalized with a gunshot wound to her shoulder. The car had bullet holes in its doors and windshield. He did not specify how many. The coroner's office says an autopsy is being conducted Wednesday.

**The Herald:** Second Chester man paroled for 1973 killing that police now say he did not commit

<http://www.heraldonline.com/news/local/news-columns-blogs/andrew-dys/article117797193.html>

Andrew Dys

Ray Charles Degraffenreid calmly sat down Tuesday in front of a camera that beamed his face to the South Carolina parole board in Columbia. He spoke from the Broad River prison where he has been for 39 years for a killing he has always denied. His mental state has deteriorated. He said these words: "I am innocent." The parole board then voted 5 for parole, with just one against – chairman David Baxter. Degraffenreid is the second man in two months to be paroled for the 1973 killing of Chester clerk Claude Killian. Police now say neither man committed that crime. Yet both spent almost four decades in prison. Joshua Kendrick, the lawyer for Degraffenreid, called the parole board decision "outstanding." Degraffenreid, who parole officials and Kendrick say has deteriorated mental capacity from years in prison, will undergo testing and other release requirements and will be freed to a place outside prison where he can get care, Kendrick said. Release will take at least several weeks, parole spokesman Pete O'Boyle said.

**Post and Courier:** North Charleston police advisory panel moves forward, opponents refuse to participate

[http://www.postandcourier.com/news/north-charleston-police-advisory-panel-moves-forward-opponents-refuse-to/article\\_3271bae8-b70f-11e6-a663-8b50d5431390.html](http://www.postandcourier.com/news/north-charleston-police-advisory-panel-moves-forward-opponents-refuse-to/article_3271bae8-b70f-11e6-a663-8b50d5431390.html)

Diane Knich

North Charleston is gathering names of candidates for a new panel to address citizens' police complaints but some civil rights groups and local residents are refusing to sign up. The National Action Network, the North Charleston NAACP, The Coalition - People United To Take Back Our Community, and local activists all say they won't have anything to do with the city's Citizens' Advisory Commission on Community-Police Relations. They plan to continue to monitor police actions on their own, and are considering whether to form their own committees. They also will consider organizing protests to draw attention to police actions. North Charleston City Council earlier this month gave final approval to the new commission. But some doubt it would bring the kinds of changes they think the city needs, largely because it doesn't have subpoena powers like some similar groups in Atlanta, Miami and elsewhere. Mayor Keith Summey has opposed granting such powers.

**Independent Mail:** Majority of Medshore Ambulance Service to be sold to Tenn. company

<http://www.independentmail.com/story/news/local/2016/11/30/majority-medshore-ambulance-service-sold-tenn-company/94680176/>

Nikie Mayo

Greg Shore, the chief executive officer of Medshore Ambulance Service, plans to sell the majority of the company he has owned for more than 40 years. Shore confirmed to the Independent Mail on Wednesday that he is entering a deal with Priority Ambulance, a national company headquartered in Knoxville, Tennessee. He said Medshore will retain its name and that he will retain a minority ownership stake in the company. He declined to say how much of the company he would still own. Shore said he expects the deal to close sometime next month. Medshore Ambulance Service is based in Anderson. The company operates in 17 South Carolina counties and is a \$25 million a year business, Shore said. "We believe that we can double that to a \$50 million business in the next three to four years, but I can't do it alone," he said. "We need to have access to capital without going to the bank and personally guaranteeing every note. Priority will give us access to capital that we don't have now and will help us grow."

**Independent Mail:** Former Clemson President Lennon dies

<http://www.independentmail.com/story/news/2016/11/30/former-clemson-president-lennon-dies/94680390/>

Mike Eads

Max Lennon, who served Clemson as president from 1986 to 1994, has passed away, according to the university. "During Lennon's presidency, Clemson experienced unprecedented growth and success in research and private fundraising," said current President Jim Clements in an email to the campus. "The university's research expenditures quadrupled and academic fundraising more than tripled. Clemson also began and completed its first capital campaign during his tenure." Clements also pointed out Lennon's role in developing several campus institutions, including the Brooks Center, Sullivan Wellness Center, Garrison Arena, the Fluor Daniel Building and Clemson's partnership with the Greenville Hospital System, as well as "degree programs such as packaging science and landscape architecture." Lennon's time at the helm was also marked with controversy, including the forced resignation of football coach Danny Ford in 1990 after the NCAA charged his program with 14 rules violations.

**The State:** Columbia to see near-record high temperatures Wednesday

<http://www.thestate.com/news/weather/article117902843.html>

Jane Moon Dial

While you may want to carry a light rain jacket Wednesday, leave your warm winter coats at home. The National Weather Service predicted today's high in Columbia will be about 81 degrees today. Columbia set its record high of 82 degrees for Nov. 30 in 1991, NWS reported. The record low for today is 19 degrees, set in 1959. Columbia will be mostly cloudy Wednesday and will have a 30 percent chance of precipitation with a chance of showers and thunderstorms in the afternoon. Gusts were predicted to be as high as 30 mph. NWS also reported officials lifted the burn ban in the state's Piedmont counties that had been in place since Nov. 19.

**Greenville News:** Tornado warning issued for Greenville, Laurens, Spartanburg counties

<http://www.greenvilleonline.com/story/weather/2016/11/30/greenville-anderson-tornado-warning/94689432/>

Romando Dixson

The National Weather Service has issued a tornado warning for Greenville County, central Spartanburg County and northwestern Laurens County. The warning is in effect until 5:30 p.m. Wednesday. A storm was near Simpsonville about 4:55 p.m. and moving east at 55 mph. Drivers reported sheets of rain falling on Interstate 385 and Interstate 85 with limited visibility. There are also reports of power outages and fallen tree limbs in Simpsonville. The storm is expected to be near Moore and Roebuck around 5:10 p.m., Croft State Park and Cedar Springs around 5:20 p.m. and Pacolet around 5:30 p.m. All Greenville County Schools located south of Interstate 85 in the tornado

warning zone are sheltering in place, the school district said. Any students, employees, or parents who are on school property for after-school programs or athletic practices are sheltered. Parents are encouraged to stay safe at home or work and not leave to pick up their children. Any buses that are currently on the road south of 85 are seeking shelter at the nearest school or building, Greenville County Schools spokeswoman Elizabeth Brotherton said.

### **President-elect Trump News:**

**Associated Press:** The Latest: Trump sticking with 'swamp' as he fills Cabinet

<http://bigstory.ap.org/161f6790d68741fb9fa860de407dc43d>

President-elect Donald Trump promised to "drain the swamp" in the nation's capital. Instead, he's diving right in. Trump is so far tapping people with deep ties to Washington and Wall Street as he fills out his Cabinet, turning to two power centers he vilified as greedy, corrupt and out of touch with Americans. Two of Trump's early picks are wealthy financial industry insiders. Elaine Chao, his pick for transportation secretary and an accomplished political figure in her own right, is married to Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell, blending family and political power in a way Trump criticized campaign rival Hillary Clinton for. Jeff Sessions, Trump's pick for attorney general, has spent two decades in the Senate, and Tom Price, his health and human services nominee, is a six-term congressman.

**Associated Press:** Conflict rules hardly the same for president, others

<http://bigstory.ap.org/a34a2cf351004020a4faac646a780664>

Rep. David McKinley has sold his West Virginia engineering and architecture firm, but it still bears his name — and that earned the Republican congressman a rebuke from the House Ethics Committee. President-elect Donald Trump has built an international property management, real estate and branding business around his name. There appears to be no consequence for that. When it comes to ethics, not all government employees are regulated equally. What's a serious matter for a second-term congressman with a small business has no equivalent for a president with a multibillion-dollar empire. The government's legislative and judicial branches are governed by well-established rules, but there's far less clarity about what a president can and cannot do. Conflict of interest provisions are generally looser, though Democrat Jimmy Carter, Republican George W. Bush and many other recent presidents took care to separate themselves from their businesses. Trump tweeted Wednesday that he would announce next week his plans to step back from his company while he is president. He wrote that "legal documents are being crafted which take me completely out of business operations."

**Associated Press:** House Democrats re-elect Pelosi as leader despite discontent

<http://bigstory.ap.org/02beb5e7f2454893b33ae8bb00e57d2a>

House Democrats re-elected Nancy Pelosi as their leader Wednesday, ratifying the status quo in a changing Washington despite widespread frustration over the party's direction. That disenchantment manifested itself in 63 lawmakers supporting Pelosi's opponent, Ohio Rep. Tim Ryan, in the secret-ballot vote. That was by far the largest defection Pelosi has suffered since she began leading House Democrats in 2002. Still, the California lawmaker had declared ahead of time that more than two-thirds of the caucus was supporting her, and she won almost exactly two-thirds with 134 votes. It was a testament to her vote-counting skills and to her ability to hang onto power even in dark days for Democrats, as they confront a capital that will be fully controlled by the GOP next year. "I have a special spring in my step today because this opportunity is a special one, to lead the House Democrats, bring everyone together as we go forward," Pelosi said after the vote, appearing elated in her victory. She disputed the suggestion that she might be concerned about the defections she suffered. "They weren't defections, I had two-thirds of the vote," Pelosi said, repeating "two-thirds, two-thirds" to a group of assembled reporters.

World News:

**Associated Press:** Pilot told Colombia controllers 'no fuel' before crash

<http://bigstory.ap.org/d8efaf518a954120a026b84868b7ce05>

The pilot of the chartered plane carrying a Brazilian soccer team told air traffic controllers he had run out of fuel before crashing into the Andes, according to a leaked recording of the final minutes of the doomed flight. In the sometimes chaotic audiotape from the air traffic tower, the pilot of the British-built jet could be heard repeatedly requesting permission to land due to a "total electric failure" and lack of fuel, before slamming into a mountainside late Monday. A female controller could be heard giving instructions as the aircraft lost speed and altitude about eight miles from the Medellin airport. Just before going silent the pilot said he was flying at an altitude at 9,000 feet. The recordings, obtained by several Colombian media outlets, seemed to confirm the accounts of a surviving flight attendant and a pilot flying nearby who overheard the frantic pleas from the doomed airliner. These, along with the lack of an explosion upon impact, point to a rare case of fuel running out as a cause of the crash of the airliner, which experts say was flying at its maximum range.

**Associated Press:** Cubans line streets as Fidel Castro's ashes begin journey

<http://bigstory.ap.org/083cbae6a0544b01a76cf7e34f9fe179>

Surrounded by white roses and drawn by a green military jeep, Fidel Castro's ashes began a more than 500-mile (800-kilometer) journey on Wednesday across the country he ruled for nearly 50 years. Just after 7 a.m., an honor guard placed a small, flag-draped cedar coffin under a glass dome on a trailer behind the Russian jeep. Thousands of soldiers and state security agents saluted the 90-year-old leader's remains as they rolled slowly out of Havana's Plaza of the Revolution and the cortege made its way to the Malecon seaside boulevard and east into the countryside. Tens of thousands of Cubans lined the path of the funeral procession, which retraced the path of Castro's triumphant march into Havana nearly six decades ago. Many waved flags and shouted "Long may he live!" Others filmed the procession with cell phones, a luxury prohibited in Cuba until an ailing Castro left power in 2006 and his younger brother Raul began a series of slow reforms. The ashes will be interred Sunday, ending a nine-day period of mourning that saw the country fall silent as thousands paid tribute to photographs of Fidel Castro and sign oaths of loyalty to his socialist, single-party system across the country on Monday and Tuesday.

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