

Title: **DHEC needs funding to protect health, safety**
 Author:
 Size: 48.20 square inch
 Columbia, SC Circulation: 128564



EDITORIAL

DHEC needs funding to protect health, safety

RIVERS THAT AREN'T being monitored often enough for us to know whether the fish are safe to eat. Air-monitoring equipment that's so broken-down that officials don't know whether it's safe to issue permits for new industry. Underground storage tanks and abandoned gold mines that aren't being cleaned up to stop gasoline and acid and metals from leaching into the groundwater. And the giant hazardous waste dump on the shore of Lake Marion that we can't even monitor properly, much less shore up to prevent water contamination of unimaginable proportions.

It shouldn't surprise anyone that the state Department of Health and Environmental Control — the agency charged with making sure we have clean water to drink and clean air to breathe and that the people who cook our meals and provide our medical care don't infect us — says it doesn't have the money to do its job. We slashed its budget from \$169 million in 1998 to \$107 million today. That's a 37 percent reduction. A 37 percent reduction that doesn't even factor in the inflation and growing population that make it cost more to do the job the agency was doing eight years ago. Yet we didn't reduce what we expected the agency to do.

We saw rather dramatically the result of such cuts in October, when the floods washed out dams that hadn't been inspected as they should have been or repaired as they ought to have been, because DHEC didn't have the inspection staff or the enforcement staff to make sure our public-safety laws were obeyed.

If DHEC is spending money wastefully — and any bureaucracy is going to, whether it's in the public sector or the private sector — then it absolutely is appropriate to try to get that under control. And to the extent that this is what former

DHEC Director Catherine Templeton did as she oversaw the defunding of the agency (the budget dropped as low as \$83 million at one point), we applaud her work.

But as *The State's* Sammy Fretwell reports, Ms. Templeton's successor, Catherine Heigel, has told the Legislature she needs an additional \$35 million just to cover the basics. That still would be \$27 million less than the agency received in 1998, when there were fewer people and businesses in South Carolina and everything (except maybe gasoline) cost less.

We've seen no reason to believe that Ms. Heigel, a former Duke Energy executive who was hand-picked by Gov. Nikki Haley to run the agency, is a spendthrift, or a shill for the bureaucracy. It's more reasonable to think she's a professional who put her reputation on the line and then discovered that the agency she inherited simply does not have the resources to do the job state law requires it to do. As she told lawmakers last month, it is her job to at least make them aware of the problems — which a lot of people believe Ms. Templeton declined to do for political reasons.

Even Gov. Haley has requested an \$18 million budget increase, which suggests there's some serious underfunding, given her preference for cutting taxes to paying for government services.

We can debate whether the state should be in the business of inspecting the strength of dams and the purity of river water and the safety of restaurants and whether it should limit how much pollution manufacturers can spew into the air and take on the task of cleaning up hazardous sites that have been abandoned by bankrupt owners. But there should be no debate on this: Once the state decides to do those things, it is obliged to *do them*. Well.

Title: **DHEC needs funding to protect health, safety**

Author:

Size: 48.20 square inch

Columbia, SC Circulation: 128564

DHEC isn't the only agency that sustained massive cuts to its funding without corresponding cuts to its responsibilities, and it's not the only one that is still struggling. The Department of Social Services leaps to mind, and there are others, and our Legislature needs to handle them the same way it needs to handle DHEC:

If the state is not going to guarantee that the water is safe to drink, it needs to let people know that they drink it at their own risk. If the state is not going to hold companies to the pollution standards set in state law and regulations, it needs to just stop spending our money on a program that promises to do that but doesn't.

We believe the state ought to be working to protect the public health, by regulating how much our environment can be despoiled and making sure people who are paid to handle our food and our medicines are doing so safely, and we expect that most South Carolinians feel the same way. That means we have to pay for the equipment and the people who do that important work.

Title: **Agency's future to be part of roads debate**

Author: BY CASSIE COPE AND TIM FLACH ccope@thestate.com, tflach@thestate.com

Size: 31.31 square inch

Columbia, SC Circulation: 128564



INFRASTRUCTURE BANK

Agency's future to be part of roads debate

BY CASSIE COPE
AND TIM FLACH

ccope@thestate.com,
tflach@thestate.com

Changes to the controversial S.C. Transportation Infrastructure Bank will be part of the road-repair debate that state senators are preparing to have.

State Sen. Ray Cleary, R-Georgetown, said the future of the Infrastructure Bank will be debated in addition to tax increases, tax decreases and

changes to the Transportation Department's structure.

Cleary asked fellow senators to use an amendment that he and state Sen. Joel Lourie, D-Richland, co-sponsored as a template for the Senate debate.

The proposal includes roughly \$665 million in tax hikes to repair roads,

to be phased in over three years, and nearly \$400 million in tax cuts for individuals and businesses, to be phased in over four years. The plan also would change the structure of the commission that oversees the Transportation Department, giving the governor slightly more control of the now legislatively controlled

agency.

Lourie called the plan a package of trade-offs that will require all sides in the Legislature — as well as Gov. Nikki Haley — to “give a little bit.”

He described the proposal as “a starting point,” warning “there's plenty in here you won't like.”

SEE BANK, 7A

FROM PAGE 3A

BANK

However, Lourie added, it's vital to reach a deal to repair the state's roads.

Earlier Wednesday, the Senate Finance Committee heard from leaders of the Infrastructure Bank, which has been criticized for being driven by politics and not the state's road needs.

The proposal introduced Wednesday would send \$237 million, raised from sales taxes on vehicle sales, to the Infrastructure Bank to expand and improve interstates. The proposal also would

add two more members, to be appointed by the Senate majority and

minority leaders, to the board that oversees the Infrastructure Bank.

After weeks of on-and-off road-repair discussions centering on tax hikes, tax cuts and the Transportation Department's oversight, critics of the Infrastructure Bank said they are relieved to see its future will be part of the debate. “We're encouraged by the interest of the senators to reform the (Infrastructure Bank),

and the general agreement that we do not need two separate transportation agencies with two separate transportation plans,” said Coastal Conservation League head Dana Beach.

Beach — whose group opposes construction of new roads — supports abolishing the bank, created in 1997 to finance major transportation projects, including Charleston's Ravenel Bridge.

Critics say the Infrastructure Bank amounts to a “shadow” Trans-

portation Department.

“It seems like we have a lot of different power centers,” said state Sen. Tom Davis, R-Beaufort, who also opposes the bank. Davis said the state lacks coordination among road agencies, including the Transportation Department, Infrastructure Bank, county transportation committees and counties with local-option sales tax programs for roads.

Title: **Christie, Fiorina end bids for presidential nomination**
 Author: Associated Press
 Size: 38.90 square inch
 Columbia, SC Circulation: 128564



Christie, Fiorina end bids for presidential nomination

Associated Press
 NASHUA, N.H.

New Jersey Gov. Chris Christie dropped out of the race for the Republican nomination for president “without an ounce of regret” on Wednesday, a day after his disappointing sixth-place finish in New Hampshire’s primary.

“While running for president I tried to reinforce what I have always believed — that speaking your mind matters, that experience matters, that competence matters and that it will always matter in leading our nation,” Christie wrote on his Facebook page and in an email to supporters. “That message was heard by and stood for by a lot of people, but just not enough and that’s OK.”

Campaign spokeswoman Samantha Smith said Christie shared his decision with staff at his campaign headquarters in Morristown, New Jersey, late

Wednesday afternoon, and also called donors and other support-

ers to give them the news.

At his New Hampshire watch party Tuesday night, Christie told supporters he was heading home to

New Jersey to “take a deep breath” and decide what to do next. But he spoke of his campaign in the past tense at one point and cancelled a Wednesday event in next-to-vote South Carolina, suggesting the end was near.

Christie dropped out of the race the same day that Carly Fiorina announced on social media that she, too, was calling it quits. The former chief executive of Hewlett-Packard won just 4 percent of the vote in New Hampshire.

Christie had 7 percent.

“While I suspend my candidacy today, I will continue to travel this country and fight for those Americans who refuse to settle for the way things are and a status quo that no longer works for them,” Fiorina wrote in a Facebook statement.

“I will continue to serve in order to restore citizen government to this great nation so that together we may fulfill our potential,” the statement said.

Fiorina, 61, entered the Republican primary in April. She promoted herself as an outsider with business experience and argued that as the lone woman in the GOP field she was best positioned to oppose likely Democratic nominee Hillary Clinton. After a standout performance in the first undercard debate, Fiorina rose to the mainstage and soared in the polls in the fall. But her momentum quickly stalled and by the end of the year she had dropped back down.

Christie had been banking on a strong finish in New Hampshire and spent more than 70 days campaigning in the state, holding well-received town halls and meet-and-greets, as well as racking up a long list of notable endorsements from state legislative leaders in New Hampshire.



SPARTANBURG HERALD-JOURNAL

S.C. Gov. Nikki Haley and N.J. Gov. Chris Christie at a Spartanburg event in 2014

Title: **Christie, Fiorina end bids for presidential nomination**
Author: Associated Press
Size: 38.90 square inch
Columbia, SC Circulation: 128564



DAVID GOLDMAN Associated Press

Carly Fiorina speaks at a campaign
event in Goffstown, N.H.

Title: **S.C. sues over unfinished nuclear fuel project**
 Author: By Meg Kinnard Associated Press
 Size: 30.53 square inch
 Georgetown, SC Circulation: 8446



S.C. sues over unfinished nuclear fuel project

BY MEG KINNARD

Associated Press

COLUMBIA, S.C. — South Carolina has again sued the federal government over an unfinished project to convert nuclear weapons components into reactor fuel, saying in a lawsuit filed Tuesday that the Obama administration has acted unconstitutionally in failing to complete the mixed-oxide facility by a Jan. 1 deadline.

“The federal government has a responsibility to follow through with its promises,” state Attorney General Alan Wilson said in a statement. “The Department of Energy

has continually shown disregard for its obligations under federal law to the nation, the state of South Carolina and frankly the rule of law.”

Federal officials declined to comment on active litigation.

The program is intended to turn weapons-grade plutonium into commercial nuclear reactor fuel to fulfill a nonproliferation deal with Russia.

Under the agreement, Russia and the U.S. agreed to dispose of at least 34 metric tons apiece of weapons-grade plutonium, enough material for about 17,000 nuclear warheads, which would then be turned into commercial nuclear reactor fuel.

The project at the Savannah River Site, along the South Carolina-Georgia border, is years behind schedule and billions over its original budget.

Because the facility wasn’t operational by a Jan. 1 deadline, the federal government was supposed to remove 1 metric ton of plutonium from

South Carolina or pay fines of \$1 million a day for “economic and impact assistance” — up to \$100 million yearly — until either the facility meets production goals or the plutonium is taken elsewhere for storage or disposal.

The suit also seeks daily fines of \$1 million and the plutonium removal.

The lawsuit has been expected. Last month, Gov. Nikki Haley told Wilson that she wanted to sue, also warning Energy Secretary Ernest Moniz in December that the state would be forced to sue if his agency didn’t start making payments. A clause in the law, however, makes the fine “subject to the availability of appropriations.”

The Obama administration has gradually scaled down funding for the project, pro-

posing to mothball it in 2014, citing cost overruns and delays. That prompted a lawsuit, with the state saying the fed-

eral government had made a commitment to South Carolina and couldn’t use money intended to build the plant to shut it down.

The state dropped the suit when the administration committed to funding the project through that fiscal year. But the administration has since said it’s searching for an alternate, less expensive way to dispose of the plutonium, like immobilizing it in glass or processing it in different kinds of reactors.

In his budget submitted Tuesday, President Barack Obama included minimal funding for the mixed-oxide fuel project.

Title: **Berkeley resolution opposes housing Gitmo detainees**
 Author: Associated Press
 Size: 13.64 square inch
 Georgetown, SC Circulation: 8446



Berkeley resolution opposes housing Gitmo detainees

Associated Press

Berkeley County is on record opposing the housing of detainees from Guantanamo Bay.

Local media outlets report that Berkeley County Council unanimously passed a resolution Monday opposing bringing detainees to the Consolidated Naval Brig in Hanahan.

Closing the Guantanamo prison is a top priority of the Obama administration. A Defense Department team has surveyed sites in Colorado, South Carolina and Kansas as places to bring the detainees.

The Berkeley County resolution has no force of law. But County Supervisor Bill Peagler says passing

it was important because bringing detainees to Hanahan would put people and the local economy in danger.

Gov. Nikki Haley and state Attorney General Alan Wilson are among other South Carolina leaders who also oppose bringing detainees to Hanahan, about 15 miles north of Charleston.

Title: **Panel OKs \$40 million in flood aid for farmers**
 Author: BY CASSIE COPE ccope@thestate.com
 Size: 60.45 square inch
 Columbia, SC Circulation: 128564



Panel OKs \$40 million in flood aid for farmers

Agriculture industry lost nearly \$400 million in historic flooding

Maximum grant would be \$100,000

Farmers need assistance to plant more crops, Farm Bureau president says

BY CASSIE COPE

ccope@thestate.com

The S.C. House's budget panel approved using \$40 million from a reserve account Wednesday to offer state aid to farmers whose crops were washed away during October's historic flooding.

If approved, farmers could recover up to 20 percent of their loss — up to \$100,000 — via a grant, money that would not have to be repaid.

The state's agriculture sector suffered losses of almost \$400 million because of the flood. Crop insurance is expected to cover only about a third of those losses, state Agri-

culture Commissioner Hugh Weathers has said.

House Ways and Means Committee chairman Brian White, R-Anderson, sponsored the grant proposal, which passed his committee unanimously.

The payouts from grants and crop insurance combined could not exceed 100 percent of a farmer's loss.

In addition, eligible farmers must have lost at least 40 percent of a crop because of the flood and be located in a county declared a disaster.

The grant program would be administered by a seven-member board,

chaired by Weathers.

"Agriculture is a unique business plan," said Farm Bureau president Harry Ott, former House minority leader.

Farmers spend money on crops from January to September hoping to profit from the fall harvest. October is the state's biggest harvest month, Ott said, adding crops were mature in the field when the historic flood occurred.

"We lost the vast majority of our crops in the field," Ott said, adding farmers need assistance now so they can afford to put more crops in the

ground for next fall.

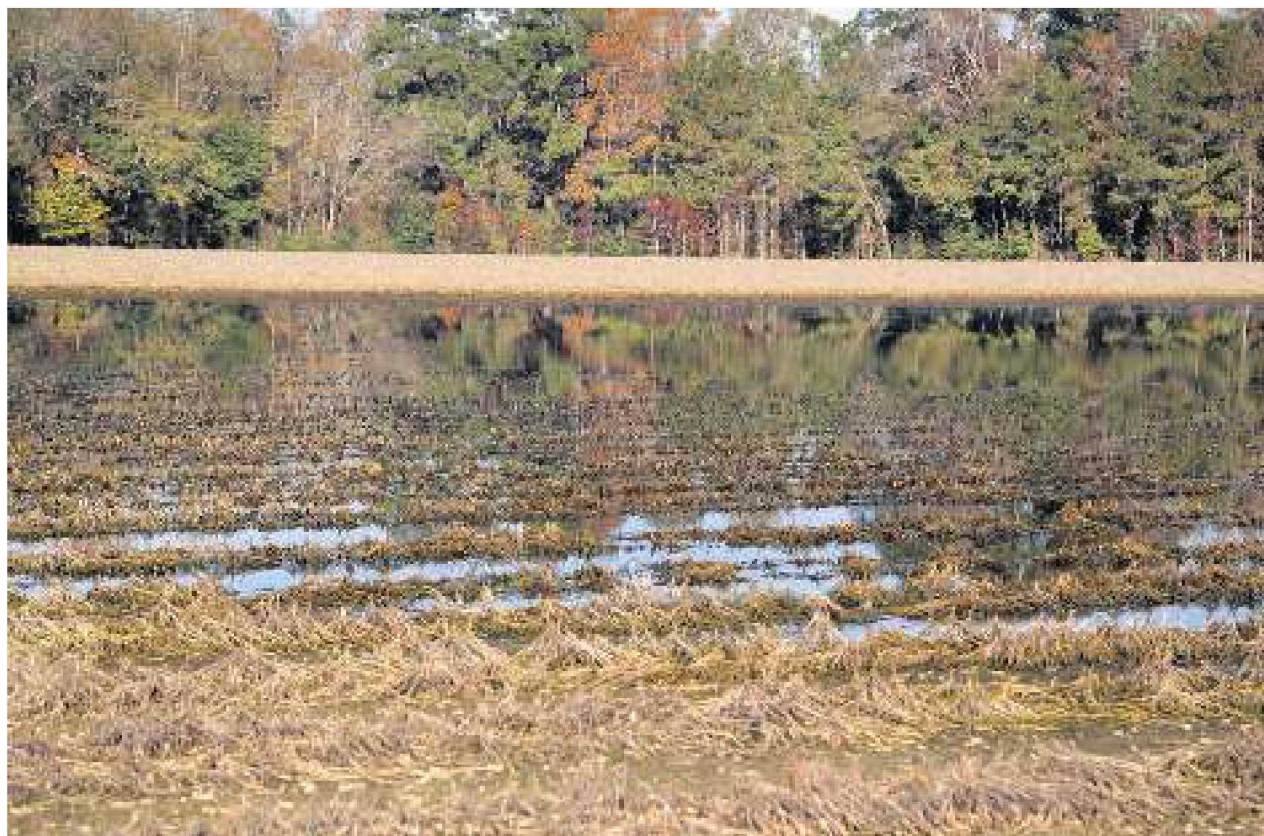
The proposal next moves to the full S.C. House, which is off next week.

Farm groups have urged Gov. Nikki Haley to request assistance for farmers from the state's congressional delegation. But Haley's office has balked, saying the request is for direct cash payments to farmers who chose to be underinsured.

Haley is asking the federal government for \$140 million to repair flood-damaged housing.

Cassie Cope: 803-771-8657, @cassielcope

Title: **Panel OKs \$40 million in flood aid for farmers**
Author: BY CASSIE COPE ccope@thestate.com
Size: 60.45 square inch
Columbia, SC Circulation: 128564

GERRY MELENDEZ gmelendez@thestate.com

Water still covered a large portion of a peanut crop at a Holly Hill farm in December.

Title: **Obama's budget would pull the plug on Savannah River Site in 2017**
 Author: BY VERABERGENGRUEN vbergengruen@mcclatchydc.com
 Size: 28.83 square inch
 Myrtle Beach, SC Circulation: 61238



Obama's budget would pull the plug on Savannah River Site in 2017

BY VERA BERGENGRUEN

vbergengruen@mcclatchydc.com

WASHINGTON

The costly mixed oxide project at Savannah River Site would be terminated in 2017 under President Barack Obama's proposed budget released Tuesday, angering South Carolina lawmakers, who say the administration is breaking its promise to build and support the facility.

The half-built facility, which is intended to turn weapons-grade plutonium into fuel for nuclear reactors, is 70 percent complete but billions of dollars over budget and years behind schedule.

The site in Aiken, S.C., employs 2,000 people. It is part of a nonproliferation agreement with Russia that calls for the two countries to dispose of 34 metric tons of weapons-grade plutonium. The administration has said it will instead go for a cheaper alternative, called downblending, to honor the agreement with Russia.

The budget, which spans the administration's priorities from fighting the Islamic State to criminal justice restructuring to education, is unlikely to be passed by the Republican-

controlled Congress. Even so, South Carolina lawmakers have made it clear they're going to challenge the Obama administration's attempted shutdown of the mixed oxide project, known as MOX.

Gov. Nikki Haley had previously threatened to sue the Department of Energy

for its failure to meet a Jan. 1 deadline to begin removing the plutonium from the state, asking the state's attorney general, Alan Wilson, to take legal steps and collect a \$1 million daily fine. The lawsuit was officially filed Tuesday.

"The federal government has a responsibility to follow through with its promises," Wilson said in a statement. "The Department of Energy has continually shown disregard for its obligations under federal law to the nation, the state of South Carolina and frankly the rule of law. This behavior will not be tolerated."

The 2000 agreement with Russia stated the MOX plant

specifically as the method through which the plutonium would be disposed, and changing it could cause problems.

"To secure their consent we would probably have to give on other issues like the tight inspections - and that would be really damaging, because, at the end of the day, this agreement is about making sure the Russians destroy their plutonium and don't recycle it or leave it around unsecured," said Andrew Koch, senior vice president for defense and homeland security at Scribe Strategies, a Washington-based public relations and lobbying firm.

He said Russia is not likely to look favorably on the change.

There have long been warning signs that the Obama administration intended to pull the plug on the project. Last year a high-profile Department of Energy report explored the cost of alternatives. It concluded that sending downblended plutonium to a repository in New Mexico could save the government \$400 million annually.

Energy department officials said they found that it would require \$800 million a year to properly fund MOX, which was originally projected to cost \$1.7 billion.

Title: **S.C. county passes resolution against housing Gitmo detainees**
 Author: Associated Press
 Size: 10.69 square inch
 Myrtle Beach, SC Circulation: 61238



S.C. county passes resolution against housing Gitmo detainees

Associated Press

MONCK'S CORNER

Berkeley County is on record opposing the housing of detainees from Guantanamo Bay.

Local media outlets report that Berkeley County Council unanimously passed a resolution Monday opposing

bringing detainees to the Consolidated Naval Brig in Hanahan.

Closing the Guantanamo prison is a top priority of the Obama administration. A Defense Department team has surveyed sites in Colorado, South Carolina and

Kansas as places to bring the detainees.

The Berkeley County resolution has no force of law. But County Supervisor Bill Peagler says passing it was important because bringing detainees to Hanahan would put people and

the local economy in danger.

Gov. Nikki Haley and state Attorney General Alan Wilson are among other South Carolina leaders who also oppose bringing detainees to Hanahan, about 15 miles north of Charleston.



Title: **Justgo aheadand pass a roads bill**
 Author: By The HeraldEditorial Board
 Size: 34.25 square inch
 Rock Hill, SC Circulation: 34688

OUR VIEW

Just go ahead and pass a roads bill

By The Herald Editorial Board

Discussing what kind of roads bill the Legislature should pass might be futile when the Senate seems dead-set against passing any roads bill at all. Nonetheless, we agree with state Sen. Creighton Coleman, D-Winnsboro, who contends that passing a bill would be easier if paying for road repairs could be unlinked from income tax reform.

Coleman, whose district includes parts of Chester and York counties, said last week that combining the two issues is folly.

"We can debate income tax reform, but let's get the roads fixed. Tying them together will prolong it tremendously. Let's put politics aside and do what's right," he said.

Senate Majority Leader Harvey Peeler, R-Gaffney, whose district also includes parts of York County, is equally frustrated but takes a different approach to linking other issues to a roads bill. He argues that for any bill to have a chance of passing, it will have to include tax relief to offset an increase in the gas tax as well as restructuring of the S.C. Department of Transportation.

Gov. Nikki Haley has pledged to veto any legislation that increases gas taxes unless it also drastically cuts income taxes

and overhauls the DOT.

The House passed a bill last year that could avoid the governor's veto. A similar bill that would raise roughly \$800 million a year for roadwork by increasing the gas tax – which hasn't been raised since 1987 – and increasing vehicle sales taxes and license fees is in special debate status in the Senate.

But because of the antiquated rules of the Senate, debate on the bill has been stalled by opponents. And stalling this bill essentially has brought the business of the Senate to a standstill – preventing action on other crucial priorities such as ethics reform, educational equity and reform of the judicial selection process.

One argument is that the way to begin to dislodge this logjam would be for Democrats to acquiesce to Haley's demand to cut the state's top income tax rate to 5 percent from 7 percent over a 10-year period. But there are good reasons not to do that.

Foremost among them is the fact that most of the income tax relief would go to the state's wealthier taxpayers while the burden of higher gas taxes would hit low-income residents the hardest, taking a higher percentage

of their disposable incomes.

Another problem is that the proposed income tax, when fully phased in by 2025, would deplete state revenues by \$1.4 billion a year. That would be offset somewhat by projected growth each year, but not enough to fully replace lost income tax revenue. And the cost of the tax cut would be far higher than the money raised through an increased gas tax and other fees.

There is no good reason to drastically cut the state's income tax rate. No evidence suggests that doing so would enhance the state's ability to attract new business investment, as proponents claim.

What almost surely would deter business growth is bad roads. As Coleman asserts, senators need to pass a roads bill and then deal with the issue of income tax reduction and reforming the DOT in separate legislation.

But that's not likely to happen. Too many senators worry that they would have to pay a political price for raising the gas tax without offsetting tax cuts.

We wonder what political price they will pay for not fixing the state's roads.

Title: **Road improvements**

Author:

Size: 14.88 square inch

Myrtle Beach, SC Circulation: 61238



Road improvements

Not surprisingly, reforming the state Department of Transportation and improving the state's infrastructure lead the agenda the (S.C.) Chamber shared in a recent meeting with the Editorial Board.

On this, the Chamber is definitely on the right track, joining the chorus of voices calling for an increase in the state's gasoline tax along with DOT reform that brings more accountability to infrastructure decisions.

The Chamber hasn't identified a specific figure for an increase in the gasoline tax that hasn't been raised since 1987, but it says the state needs to find an additional \$600 million a year for its infrastructure budget.

It would be encouraging to hear the Chamber advocate for a tax increase without the corresponding income tax cut that Gov. Nikki Haley has proposed and many legislative Republicans support. Instead, the Chamber says income tax relief is politically vital to passage of a gas tax increase.

Such a plan may be an acceptable fallback position, but it would be preferable to hear business leaders emphasize the importance of fixing the state's substandard highways, period.

- Greenville News

“

**IT WOULD BE
PREFERABLE TO HEAR
BUSINESS LEADERS
EMPHASIZE THE
IMPORTANCE OF
FIXING THE STATE'S
SUBSTANDARD
HIGHWAYS, PERIOD.**