

Title: **on 'life support'**
 Author: By JAMIESELF jself@thestate.com
 Size: 85.87 square inch
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REFORM EFFORTS

Ethics plan on 'life support'

Haley: 'How bad
is the coverup if
these legislators
fight this hard ...?'

By JAMIE SELF
jself@thestate.com

Efforts to toughen South Carolina's two-decade-old ethics laws are on "life support" after more than two years of debate.

That is according to state Sen. Larry Martin, a leading advocate for ethics reform, who failed this week to persuade his Senate colleagues to vote to end the

practice of lawmakers investigating themselves – a top priority of good-government groups and Gov. Nikki Haley.

Another senator all but said the prospects for reform are dead, adding the moment to pass a bill passed this week, when

Martin and others rejected a push to keep lawmakers involved in investigating ethics complaints against fellow legislators but share that task with members of the public.

"That's called a compromise," said Sen. John Scott, D-Richland.

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toughening the state's ethics laws die, the blows dealt those efforts in the Senate likely will be the reason.

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ETHICS

FROM PAGE **A1**

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Rankin also asked his colleagues why they were "being asked to chuck" their authority to investigate themselves as members of the House and Senate ethics committees.

"No disrespect to the governor. This is her issue.

Again, it's the House's issue," Rankin said.

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Those abuses could have been caught more quickly with more effective oversight, reform advocates say.

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The House, which passed an ethics reform bill two years ago, has passed more reform proposals this year, approving 11 out of 18 ethics-related proposals, each addressing a narrow reform.

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Haley immediately threatened to veto any bill "that does not include true independent investigations of elected officials."

"When we allow legislators to investigate themselves, it is a slap in the face to every citizen in South Carolina," Haley said on Facebook.

After hours of debate – veering from topic to topic

– the Senate Wednesday defeated its own sweeping ethics reform proposal. In the end, Martin, the bill's chief architect, voted against his own proposal because it no longer included independent oversight.

After voting against the legislation, Martin said he was "very disappointed, after all the time and effort expended, that we had lost that provision of what I consider to be a true reform."

The remaining proposal, he added, "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."

'THINGS ... THEY JUST DID NOT WANT'

Even after Wednesday's

vote, Martin says he has some hope he can "resurrect" the reform proposal by getting the Senate to reconsider.

"I don't think it's dead," he said. "It's obviously on life support."

But, after two years of reaching the same impasse on who should have the authority to investigate lawmakers, Scott, the Richland Democrat, says there is little desire to continue the fight.

Scott said Martin should have voted for Rankin's compromise, then let the bill go to the House, where debate might have led to the changes that Martin wanted.

"I voted for the bill," Scott said Friday. "I didn't want people to say (Democrats) held the bill up. It represented a

compromise."

As for other senators, "There were things in the ethics bill that they just did not want," Scott said, adding the appetite for revisiting the ethics debate has passed.

Martin still sees his single ethics bill, which makes multiple changes to the state ethics law, as the best shot at passing reforms in this two-year legislative session.

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PRIMARY CHALLENGES?

Some lawmakers clearly have little passion for the issue, contending the only calls for change have come from the media, advocacy groups and the governor.

That needs to change, Martin said, calling on South Carolinians to call their representatives.

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But some reform advocates remain unfazed.

Lawmakers just need a little pressure, said John

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"With the senators coming up for elections next year, they don't want to be vulnerable to primary challenges, which some of them might be facing if they don't get meaningful ethics reform passed," Crangle said.

"This was just the first skirmish in the Senate," he added. "We'll see how they stand up to pressure next week."

Reach Self
 at (803) 771-8658.

ETHICS REFORMS

S.C. lawmakers have reached an impasse over whether they should give up their exclusive power to investigate themselves when accused of violating ethics laws or hand that authority over to an independent panel.

At stake: Gov. Nikki Haley and her legislative allies want to end the practice of lawmakers investigating themselves, as they do now in the House and Senate ethics committees.

Gut check: Haley and her allies cannot change the law alone – they need the Senate to pass a reform bill. But, for two years, the Senate has balked.

The vote: Seventeen Senate Democrats and seven Republicans – a majority in the 46-member Senate – voted Wednesday to block the Haley-backed proposal to strip lawmakers of their exclusive right to investigate and punish themselves.



Title: **Check credentials**

Author:

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Check credentials

We seem to be seeing the second chapter of how to select and then appoint someone to serve as commissioner of the Department of Health and Environmental Control. When Gov. Nikki Haley selected the first person to fill this position after her election, she selected someone who obviously had no education or experience in the very complex responsibilities of this department.

Since Catherine Templeton's departure, Eleanor Kitzman has apparently been pegged as the person for the job by the governor, without seeking other applications. That is a departure from the method used for filling such important and complicated roles.

Having served in leadership positions in three states over a period of more than 30 years, I fully appreciate the complexity and importance of health departments. I have never seen anyone appointed to such a position without a background in health care.

One of my earliest metropolitan positions was as deputy health officer for the Birmingham/Jefferson County, Ala., Health Department in the 1960s. At the time I had a medical degree and had spent two years as heart disease control officer for the Alabama State

Health Department, having been assigned there by the U.S.

Public Health Service. When I heard that my superior, the county health officer was planning to retire in a few years, I expressed an interest in his position. I was advised that to be considered I would need board certification in public health and would need my masters degree in public health in order to sit for board certification.

I took leave from my position and obtained my masters degree. I was subsequently appointed health officer of Jefferson County.

I am further disturbed by the many highly-qualified people who opted to leave their jobs with DHEC when they saw the handwriting on the wall with the appointment of Ms. Templeton and her request that all management team members submit their resignations during her realignment of the agency staff and reduction of the number of districts from eight to four.

It is hoped that this entire fiasco will pass someday and we can return to protecting the health and environment of our citizens.

JOE CHAMBERS, M.D.
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Charleston

Title: **On 'life support' or dead?**
 Author: By JAMIE SELF The (Columbia) State
 Size: 58.43 square inch
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On 'life support' or dead?

S.C. Senate stalls on ethics reforms

By JAMIE SELF

The (Columbia) State

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That is according to state Sen. Larry Martin, a leading advocate for ethics reform, who failed this week to convince his Senate colleagues to vote to end the practice of lawmakers investigating themselves — a top priority of good-government groups and Gov. Nikki Haley.

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ETHICS

Continued from 3A

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Title: **Alford must strike the right balance**
 Author:
 Size: 43.86 square inch
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Alford must strike the right balance

We think Gov. Nikki Haley's pick to lead the state's Department of Social Services has the right idea in proposing a comprehensive review of operations at every DSS office in the state. But, if approved by the Legislature, she should act right away to address some pressing problems that already are well documented.

In one of what are likely to be several confirmation hearings, Susan Alford said she wants to visit each county, assess its needs and hear why caseworkers leave the agency. She told the Senate General Committee caseload problems are closely associated to turnover, and she plans to address both by using her experience to probe the department's "ground game" at the county level.

During the daylong county meetings, Alford said she would meet with local law enforcement, solicitors, guardians and caseworkers. She especially hopes to get a sense of how each of the state's 46 counties is handling its responsibilities to care for children.

Alford, 60, appears to have the experience to tackle the job. She has been director of The Girls Center at Clemson University since 2007, a research hub for issues such as teen pregnancy and poor self-esteem. She also worked at the Department of Juvenile Justice for more than 12 years in various director roles and served as director of the state's probation and parole agency.

Alford would replace Lillian Koller, who resigned last year amid calls for her head from members of both parties. Haley was slow in realizing that Koller was in real trouble, attributing the criticism to election-year politics, but Koller resigned a day before the Senate was due to take up a no-confidence vote on her leadership.

Alford said making substantive changes at DSS could take years. She warned lawmakers not to start criticizing the agency if they don't see drastic improvements in the next

year or two.

Certainly the agency's operation deserves an in-depth evaluation such as this. Alford no doubt is on the right track in trying to get at the root causes of high turnover rates. Once she's has identified why so many people leave the agency, she can begin to seek sensible remedies.

But Alford does not have to start from scratch on this effort. The Senate already has produced an improvement plan after a year's worth of bipartisan hearings investigating child deaths, excessive caseloads and turnover.

Among other things, the plan, released in October, calls for adding 221 child welfare positions this fiscal year.

Many of the agency's problems, especially regarding child welfare, have been common knowledge for years, in fact, decades. A federal class action lawsuit was filed Jan. 12 against Haley and DSS, saying a lack of health care and other basic services is endangering children in the system.

The complaint alleges Haley and DSS are responsible for drastic foster home shortages, too many caseloads for workers and a failure to provide children with basic health care. The lawsuit also alleges that child maltreatment while in foster care is not adequately investigated, and inaccurate data masks a much higher rate of abuse and neglect than the state reports to the federal government.

Whatever the outcome of the lawsuit, it raises red flags. And in light of the seriousness of the allegations, action should be taken right away.

We hope Alford, if approved for the job, will find a reasonable balance between thoroughly investigating the agency's operations while also acting quickly to ensure children in the system now are being well cared for. Children who aren't getting proper care can't afford to wait years for a change.

— Feb. 8, *The Herald, Rock Hill*

Title: **Graham's consideration of 2016 upends SC**
 Author: By BILL BARROW AND PHILIP ELLIOT Associated Press
 Size: 62.46 square inch
 Greenwood, SC Circulation: 16494



Graham's consideration of 2016 upends SC

By **BILL BARROW**
AND PHILIP ELLIOT

Associated Press

COLUMBIA — South Carolina voters often think of themselves as presidential tie-breakers, enjoying their prime role as the next to cast ballots after Iowa's caucuses and New Hampshire's primary.

But what if there's a ringer in the race?

The state's senior senator, Republican Lindsey Graham, is flirting with running for president, an idea some initially saw as so unlikely that many thought his longtime Senate buddy John McCain was joking when he mentioned it the first time.

Graham is serious, launching a campaign-like organization and starting to lay the groundwork for a bid. He gave a well-received speech to the influential Republican Jewish Coalition last week in Washington. Next week, he is scheduled to visit California to meet with donors and then head to Iowa.

His potential entry into the race has put his state's political talent into a holding pattern. As they wait for Graham to decide whether to run in a state carried by every GOP nominee since 1980, with Mitt Romney's loss to former

House Speaker Newt Gingrich in 2012 the lone exception, they're debating among themselves whether he can — or should — mount a national campaign.

"Everything's kind of frozen here right now, waiting to see what he'll do," said Warren Tompkins, a longtime Republican operative who ran South Carolina campaigns for President George W. Bush and Romney in 2012.

Added Tompkins' sometimes adversary, Richard Quinn, who ran McCain's 2000 campaign in the state: "I've been

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with (Graham) since he ran for Congress in '93, and whatever Lindsey does this cycle, I'll be in his corner."

Such loyalty shouldn't be viewed as a harbinger of Graham coasting to an easy win in South Carolina, however. Iowa Gov. Tom Vilsack was one of the first candidates to enter — and then leave — the 2008 campaign, and Romney, who owns a vacation home in New Hampshire, came up short that same year in his adopted state's primary.

South Carolina is deeply conservative in the "upstate" around Greenville and Spartanburg, less so near the state capital of Columbia, with a coastline that's home to thousands of retirees and members of the military who have moved from elsewhere, bringing their brand of GOP politics with them.

"When you come to South Carolina and win, it means you've checked off all the boxes: social conservative, fiscal con-

servative, strong defense, all of it," said Katon Dawson, a former state party chairman who backs former Texas Gov. Rick Perry in 2016.

Graham has not faced a serious challenge on his home turf in years. Dawson, who ran a super PAC that helped Graham easily dispatch a bevy of tea party challengers on his way to an easy re-election last fall, summed up the challenge: "Can he get folks here at home to look at him as something bigger than a senator?"

Graham has said he plans to assess his viability outside South Carolina, suggesting he will not run if he can't raise money and establish a network of support in Iowa and New Hampshire.

"I know him pretty well, and I don't think he would get into this if he weren't giving it serious thought," Quinn said. "He would do extremely well in South Carolina, and I think he would exceed expectations elsewhere."

A fierce critic of President

Barack Obama's foreign policy, Graham could have his biggest impact in forcing his Republican rivals to discuss foreign policy and military affairs. Vague assessments of foreign threats, such as that posed by Islamic State group militants, will not be sufficient in head-to-head debates with Graham, who is a skilled debater after years of frequent appearances on the television networks' Sunday political talk shows.

"I am still standing, talking directly to the people at home and to the nation about what I think we need to win," Graham said in an interview this week, discussing the threats from Islamic State fighters in Iraq and Syria. "I'm not trying to calculate my answers and find some middle ground politically. I'm trying to win."

Graham's potential entry into the race may have stalled the state's talent from taking sides in the presidential sweepstakes for the moment. But the rest of

the large GOP field is eager to contest the state.

Perry has made several trips to South Carolina. Louisiana Gov. Bobby Jindal, Wisconsin Gov. Scott Walker and New Jersey Gov. Chris Christie all helped their South Carolina colleague, Nikki Haley, raise money for her successful re-election campaign last year, and Christie returned for her inauguration in January.

Texas Sen. Ted Cruz recently addressed the state tea party convention, while Walker and Florida Sen. Marco Rubio are both planning trips soon.

"It's still early," Tompkins said. "There's time for all of this to play out."

Pushed on his timeline for deciding on the race, Graham turned away from a reporter this week on Capitol Hill and walked away with a chuckle. "You'll be the first to know," he said with a broad smile.

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ASSOCIATED PRESS

Sen. Lindsey Graham, R-S.C. speaks Jan. 28 on Capitol Hill in Washington.



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 Size: 76.88 square inch
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Failure to compromise
may have killed effort,
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By JAMIE SELF
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Key players in the debate

■ **Gov. Nikki Haley.** Declared ethics reform a top priority in 2012, after being cleared of ethics complaints alleging she violated state ethics laws while a Lexington state representative.

■ **Senate Ethics Chairman Luke Rankin,** R-Horry. Led Republican opposition to the bill in 2013 and again Wednesday, saying the S.C. House, not the Senate, has problems policing its own members.

■ **Sen. Larry Martin,** R-Pickens. The Haley ally has tried repeatedly to rally senators to pass ethics reform. The proposal rejected Wednesday still could be revived, Martin hopes.

■ **House Speaker Jay Lucas,** R-Darlington. Has pushed ethics reforms as a top priority as a way to restore the public's trust in government after former House Speaker Bobby Harrell resigned during an ethics scandal.

Title: **Lawmakers confirm Alford to lead DSS**

Author:

Size: 4.49 square inch

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Gov. Nikki Haley's pick to lead South Carolina's embattled Department of Social Services has been confirmed by state lawmakers. The state Senate voted unanimously on Thursday to confirm Susan Alford as the agency's new director. Haley picked Alford to fill the vacancy left when former director Lillian Koller resigned last year. Her departure came amid questions about high turnover, heavy caseloads and children dying on the agency's watch. — AP

Title: **Pickens board prepares for fight**
 Author: By Ron Barnett Staff writer rbarnett@greenvillenews.com
 Size: 58.59 square inch
 Greenville, SC Circulation: 113473



Pickens board prepares for fight

County schools get funds for supplies

By Ron Barnett

Staff writer

rbarnett@greenvillenews.com

EASLEY — Clark Webb pointed at a rumpled dollar bill laying on a conference table surrounded by huge stacks of budget documents and said, “See that dollar? You know what this represents?”

“That’s what we’ve got.”

Webb, executive director of finance for the Pickens County School District, had the school board’s attention with that.

“Y’all can divide it up anyway you want but there ain’t another dollar.”

He went on to explain that his dollar bill represented the \$105 million the district has to work with in this year’s budget, after some addition and subtraction of state and local funds.

The district came out on the plus side after the numbers were tallied and was able to add \$516,620 to its mid-year spending plans. The biggest chunk of that — \$315,500 — went for classroom supplies in schools that saw their supply budgets slashed during the Great Recession.

But Webb’s point was that all the changes in the state budget for education this year, which added nearly \$2 million into one pot while taking away nearly that much in other pots, had little overall impact on the district’s financial situation.

The net gain was \$198,000, he said.

“There’s no money tree,” he said. “When I look out there in

the parking lot, all I see is a trash can.”

Thus began the budget process for Pickens County Schools for the fiscal year that starts in July, and it promises to include plenty of drama.

Board members are divided on whether to raise taxes, which haven’t been hiked for operations, other than for reassessment, since 2003.

Highly motivated partisans on both sides of the issue have lined up to put pressure on the board.

Anti-tax hike advocates point to the increase in the tax millage for debt service in 2007 from the

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BUDGET

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districtwide construction program and say they’re taxed enough already. Counting that, the total millage has increased from 130.9 in 2005 to 165.2 this year.

They put the onus on the state, saying if only the Legislature would fund the Education Finance Act at the level the law calls for, the district would be fine without increasing the tax burden of county property owners.

The county’s legislative delegation has said it

doesn’t expect to do that this year but rather will aim its efforts, and any available money, at fixing roads.

Education supporters who back a tax hike say the district badly needed those new schools built after the 2007 bond issue and blame the board for not planning ahead in maintaining the schools that didn’t get rebuilt.

They also complain that technology in the schools is crumbling and teacher pay is lagging that of surrounding districts.

Tempers flared during a work session on teacher pay this week.

During the recession, the state gave districts a waiver that allowed them to freeze teacher pay for two years. Pickens County hasn’t restored the cuts, leaving its teachers “two steps” on the pay scale behind where they’re supposed to be.

“On average, teacher pay in Pickens County is \$800 to \$2,880 behind surrounding districts,” said board member Alex Saita, who has fought against

raising taxes. “We are confident we’ll be able to fund the standard pay raise for next year, and we hope to narrow the pay gap a bit as well.”

Superintendent Danny Merck hasn’t made a budget proposal yet, but Webb said it would cost at least \$800,000 to make up one step in teacher pay, and more than \$1 million if classified staff are included.

If Gov. Nikki Haley’s education budget is approved as written, Pickens County stands to have a net gain of \$620,000 in the

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Author: By Ron Barnett Staff writer rbarnett@greenvillenews.com

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base student cost, Webb said.

Based on the state formula that factors in population growth and inflation, the district could raise taxes by 1.65 mills to cover increasing operating costs, he said.

Since the law that reduced property taxes in exchange for an increase in sales tax went into effect in 2007, the district could have raised taxes for operations by 19.65 mills, which would have put an additional \$5.3 million in this year's operating budget, according to district figures.

One of the district's standard guidelines for its operations budget, most of

which goes to pay salaries, is to make it balance without a tax increase, Webb said.

"This school district has always come with a balanced budget, and we're the only one in the surrounding area that's done it," he said.

The mid-year budget amendment approved Monday eases the pain of past cuts some.

The district's 25 schools will be dividing up \$315,500 under a formula based on the number of students in each school.

Another \$101,320 will go for calculators needed for testing in middle and high schools and \$40,000 for supplies in the career and technical education

center.

The board also approved \$48,500 for repair and maintenance of activity buses and \$11,300 for computer tables and chairs for the science, technology, engineering and math program at Liberty Middle School.

"Especially in the economy we have now, it's just nice to have extra to be able to buy things for the classroom teachers so they don't have to spend money out of their pocket," said Tim Mullis, principal of Liberty Middle.

His school, the last middle school in the district to have a Gateway to Technology program, has been operating it on folding ta-

bles. The money the board approved Monday will give the program "a more permanent setup," he said.

"We're expecting a lot of great things out of this," Mullis said. "It's a very hands-on program that keeps students actively engaged, so for us to be able to have this program and now have the proper furniture to house it is going to be great."

The mid-year infusion of cash comes from a legal settlement with the city of Clemson, better than anticipated local taxes coming in, and an overall increase in state funds since last summer, Webb said.

First reading of the district budget is scheduled for April 27.

Title: **Want good government in S.C.? Sue**

Author:

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Want good government in S.C.? Sue

THE DIRECTOR of one of the advocacy groups that sued Gov. Nikki Haley and the Department of Social Services said they aren't seeking damages; they just want the state to fix the broken system that has been allowing children to be killed and abused.

I know what you're thinking: It shouldn't take a court challenge. Why not just ask the Legislature and governor to reform DSS?

Good thinking. That's the way our government should work. But, unfortunately, that's not the way we do things in South Carolina. Too often in the Palmetto State, if you want leaders to reform poorly performing, poorly funded and poorly supported agencies and services, you've got to sue.

Our republic might be a government of laws, but our state is governed by lawsuits.

For years, that's been the sad and shameful remedy. South Carolina's leaders are notorious for engaging in neglect and foot-dragging rather than taking bold or even moderate steps to address glaring, ruinous conditions that threaten this state's people and quality of life. If they do act, it's often in such an incremental fashion that you're reluctant to celebrate. Then you embrace it, realizing that's about as good as it gets.

Or you sue.

It ought not be that way, but it is, which is why we've seen one frustrated group after another sue to bring change.

That's what's at the heart of the federal class action lawsuit filed against DSS last month by the national advocacy organization Children's Rights, the S.C.

Appleseed Legal Justice Center and Columbia attorney Matthew Richardson.

"We are tired of the Band-Aid

approach," Appleseed's Sue Berkowitz said. "DSS has had numerous problems for decades, and they have been reported by LAC (the Legislative Audit Council), and the agency has not taken the steps to protect the children under their care."

Among other things on a long list of grievances, the lawsuit alleges that Gov. Haley and DSS are responsible for drastic foster home shortages, excessive caseloads for agency workers and a failure to provide children with basic health care.

The lawsuit is but the latest aimed at getting good government for South Carolinians through the courts because of our failed legislative and executive leadership.

Prisons and schools

Around the same time the DSS lawsuit was being filed, the state's prison system was agreeing to set aside several million dollars to help improve the treatment of mentally ill inmates in its care, as part of the settlement for a 10-year lawsuit. The agreement between the Department of Corrections and the nonprofit Protection & Advocacy for People With Disabilities came a year after a judge ruled the agency is failing to care for mentally ill prisoners.

Circuit Judge Michael Baxley ruled early last year that the state long has treated mentally ill inmates poorly and ordered it to clean up its act. The ruling wasn't surprising. For years, our state's "lock 'em up and throw away the key" approach led to unacceptable neglect, as legislators passed laws that increased the inmate population without providing sufficient funding to help Corrections officials deal with overcrowding, rehabilitation and inmate care.

The neglect prompted the 2005 lawsuit that led to Judge Baxley's ruling, in which he said treatment given to S.C. inmates suffering serious mental illness is so substandard that it's unconstitutional.

Believe it or not, Corrections initially wanted to appeal the ruling but decided to negotiate a resolution after Bryan Stirling took over as new prisons director.

While all of these conditions that have prompted outside forces to seek legal remedies to bring reform are inexcusable, the fact that the state fought for decades to keep from offering quality education to all students is among the most unconscionable.

As 2014 came to a close, the state Supreme Court finally ended a two-decades-old lawsuit over the issue. Frankly, the poor districts seeking relief never should have had to sue state leaders, whose job is to provide an education for all of our children.

But having seen generation after generation of students neglected, they saw no alternative.

We all know our state hasn't offered a quality education to all students. We all know that what ZIP code you live in dictates the kind of schools you attend. We all know that we need to better educate our children in order to provide businesses and industry with a steady flow of competent workers. Yet, the Legislature failed — refused? — to do the right thing and take steps to ensure that students had access to quality schools no matter where they live. Instead of putting money and energy into exploring ways to improve schools, lawmakers paid lawyers to fight the lawsuit seeking to improve kids' educational opportunity.

In November, the Supreme Court ruled 3-2 that South Carolina failed to provide children in poor, rural districts with the ade-

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quate public education required by the S.C. Constitution. Instead of recommending specific actions, the court ordered lawmakers and the school districts to craft a plan to address problems such as weak rural tax bases, aging facilities and the difficulty of recruiting quality teachers to rural areas.

The Supreme Court allowed this case to languish far too long. Yet even after it finally ruled in favor of the school districts, the governor and others sought to get the court to rehear the matter. Really? That's how backward we are in South Carolina. Yes, Gov. Nikki Haley had led the charge last year to begin making changes that would aid poor school districts. But while that was a positive step in the right direction, it was a small one. The court pointed out the obvious in saying the state *and* the districts have much work to do. Why not just move on and let your actions speak rather than continue a fight that, if you won, would undermine your supposed good intention?



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And juvenile justice

Finally, you might recall that the Department of Juvenile Justice at one time had become a warehouse for young offenders, a place where youths not only learned to become hardened criminals but were exposed to outrageous abuse.

Things were so bad that in 1990, attorney Gaston Fairey filed a lawsuit on behalf of six juveniles alleging chronic mistreatment. In 1995, U.S. District Judge Joe Anderson placed DJJ under court supervision and urged the agency to correct problems. But reports of juveniles being physically or sexually assaulted by other youths or staff continued. While the directors bore much of the responsibility for improving conditions, the governor and the Legislature provided little leadership and support in pushing for change.

It wasn't until 2003 — 13 years after the lawsuit had been filed — that change came. That's when then-Gov. Mark Sanford select-

ed Bill Byars, a former family court judge, to head DJJ. Mr. Byars made it a priority to improve the conditions at the agency and, more importantly, to have a positive impact on the lives of juveniles. He outlined improvements and went to work on them, gaining the admiration and backing from Mr. Fairey. By the end of 2003, Judge Anderson lifted his 1995 order, saying DJJ had made dramatic improvement.

But why did that take a lawsuit? And why so long? What is it about South Carolina that we can't get some of the most important things right unless we're forced to? We'll spend hundreds of thousands, even millions of dollars in legal fees fighting against changes that are needed to improve the present and future of our state and its citizens.

You'd think we'd have learned by now, right? Don't count on it.

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Alford sails through confirmation as the new director of DSS

BY JEREMY BORDEN
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COLUMBIA — The S.C. Senate unanimously confirmed Susan Alford as the new head of the troubled Department of Social Services on Thursday.

After Alford, 60, was nominated by Gov. Nikki Haley to lead the agency in December, senators initially expressed reservations about her qualifications and the thoroughness of the candidate search. But Alford sailed through confirmation hearings and assured senators that she would work hard and keep an open mind on substantial reforms in the wake of a Senate investigation into

DSS practices.

Lillian Koller, the last **Alford** director of

DSS, resigned under fire amid allegations of mismanagement, unworkable case loads and reports of the deaths of dozens of children within its system. The investigation is ongoing.

Alford formerly headed the Youth Learning Institute's Girl's Center at Clemson University.

Prior to that, she served for 13 years as an administrator at the state Department of Juvenile Justice and began her career as a frontline child advocate with the Lexington County Department of Youth Services.

