

Title: Can-kicking on S.C.'s 3 biggest problems

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# Can-kicking on S.C.'s 3 biggest problems

## Education, roads and pensions have festered far too long

**T**he true test of political leadership is making the hard, long-term and right decision instead of the easy, short term and wrong decision.

Said differently, do our political leaders genuinely work to solve problems or do they just kick the can down the road?

Unfortunately for our state, kicking the can down the road has been the unofficial sport of the State House crowd for nearly a generation. Can-kicking results from politicians who refuse to look down the road farther than the next election. For too many, making tough decisions is just not in their nature.

The irony is that most politicians face few serious challenges to reelection. In some election years, over 90 percent of incumbents who seek reelection win. Their campaign fundraising is easy in that they have a couple of fundraisers in Columbia and the special-interest groups ante up. The vast majority of funds raised by most members of the legislature is from the State House special-interest folks and not their constituents back home. And once they build up a big war chest, they are less likely to be challenged either in a

primary or a general election.

So let's talk specifics. What does this can-kicking look like in concrete terms?

First is education. I don't think there is anyone in this state who would stand up and make the blanket statement "South Carolina's schools are good." Yes, there are some good schools (even great schools) and there are a lots of dedicated teachers (some are great teachers) and many of our school buildings are new and modern (some are great). But overall our state's schools are failing our children.

There are a multitude of reasons why the schools are failing, but the principle one is simply long-term neglect. Back when Richard Riley was governor from 1978-86, South Carolina was known as one of the nation's leading education-reform states. People came from far and wide to study what we were doing.

(Full disclosure: I serve as president of the SC New Democrats, and Riley was our founder.) But, since then our governors have generally seemed to just care less and less about education – not all, but most.

During the recent recession, South Carolina's legislators cut both K-12 and higher education spending by a greater percentage than any state in the union. And just this week when Gov. Haley said there would be a budget shortfall of \$200 million, she proposed to cut education spending by \$100 million.

Now a lot of our education problems won't be solved by money alone, but ask teachers who reach into their pocket each month (and most do) to buy needed schools supplies for their students if they support these cuts.

Schools don't deteriorate in a few years, and test scores don't fall overnight. It's about long-term neglect.

Second is roads. We have among the worst roads in the country. A recent study found "throughout South Carolina, 46 percent of major roads and highways are in poor condition, a significant increase from 2008 when 32 percent of the state's major roads were

rated in poor condition. Twenty percent of South Carolina's bridges are structurally deficient or functionally obsolete ... (this) costs each S.C. driver as much as \$1,250 per year ... or \$3 billion state-wide."

And yet the legislature refuses to support sensible solutions like raising the gas tax to fix the roads. Our gas tax is among the lowest in the country.

And the problem with roads is not just one of money. Most objective observers would say the Department of Transportation should be renamed the Department of Corruption – and it's been that way for a very long time.

Roads don't deteriorate in a

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few years and systemic corruption does not develop overnight. It's about long-term neglect.

Third is pensions. There are today 558,000 former state employees, teachers and police officers who depend on their state retirement to put food on the table, buy their medicines and sustain them in their daily life. And their pension fund is \$20 billion in the hole – and the hole is getting deeper. Just last year alone, the hole got \$1.4 billion deeper.

Several years back, an analysis found that we were paying exorbitant fees to fund managers to manage the money, among the highest of

any state, and they gave us about the lowest return on investment of any state. This can largely be explained in one word: corruption.

Sen. Kevin Bryan, chairman of a new committee charged with figuring out what to do, called the unfunded pensions “the state's biggest problem of the decade.”

Pension funds don't deteriorate in a few years, and deficits don't grow overnight. It's about long-term neglect.

When Bryan says pensions are the state's biggest problem of the decade, he's right – and he's wrong. Yes, pensions are the biggest problem, but education and roads are the biggest problem as well.

We have three huge “prob-

lems of the decade,” and we have to solve them all at once.

So, back to my opening line – the true test of political leadership is about making the hard, long-term and right decision instead of the easy, short term and wrong decision.

Our political leaders have failed this test – and the question is what will they do now?

## Guest column



Phil Noble is a businessman in Charleston and writes a weekly column for the S.C. Press Association

Title: **EVERY MINUTE COUNTS**  
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# Every minute counts

## Career and Technology Center students learn to save lives through CPR

BY KONSTANTIN VENGEROVSKY

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Culinary arts students at Sumter Career and Technology Center learned how to perform cardiopulmonary resuscitation, how to use a defibrillator and first aid and other life-saving skills on Thursday.

In April, Gov. Nikki Haley signed into law a measure that would require

CPR education as part of high school health courses, according to a release

from the American Heart Association. South Carolina is now the 30th state to mandate the courses. High school students must take a CPR class at least one time during their high school career according to a law that goes into effect in the 2017-18 school year.

Sumter Fire Department Assistant Training Officer Hemby Smith, who also serves as a fire science instructor

at the center, said besides firefighting classes, students in the certified nursing assistants, early childhood education, pharmacology and culinary arts programs are receiving the potentially life-saving training.

"Statistically, for every minute without CPR, the chances of a person surviving a

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heart attack go down by 10 percent," he said.

CPR, especially if performed in the first few minutes of cardiac arrest, can double or triple a person's chance of survival, according to the American Heart Association's website, [www.heart.org](http://www.heart.org).

Each year, more than 350,000 out-of-hospital cardiac arrests occur in the United States, the website states. About 46 percent of people who experience an out-of-hospital cardiac arrest get the immediate help they need before professional help arrives. Almost 90 percent of people who suffer out-of-hospital cardiac arrests die from the incident, according to the website.

On Thursday, culinary arts students were learn-

ing how to perform CPR on a mannequin. They would do chest compressions on the dummy and then, using a one-way valve attached to a mask, they would breathe into the dummy. For every 30 compressions, they would perform two breaths on the pretend patient. In a real-life situation, they would keep doing this cycle until either EMS arrives on the scene, the scene becomes unsafe or they can no longer perform CPR, Smith said.

The students learned how to perform CPR on adults, children and infants, which differ in the amount of pressure applied, Smith said.

Students also learned how to use a defibrillator.

A defibrillator is an apparatus used to control heart fibrillation by application of an electric current to the wall of a chest or heart.

The two-day course will also teach students first-aid skills and the Heimlich maneuver, a procedure used to treat choking upper airway obstructions by foreign objects.

Kia Smith, culinary arts instructor, is participating in the course alongside her students.

"I feel that many people don't realize that a heart attack can happen to anyone, anywhere at any time," she said. "In the food and beverage industry, choking and food allergies are an additional concern. I feel that anyone will be able to potentially save a life with this course."

Britney Odum, an 11th-grade student in the culinary arts class, said the course will help her in multiple ways.

Odum is planning to enroll in nursing school while paying her way through college by working in the food industry.

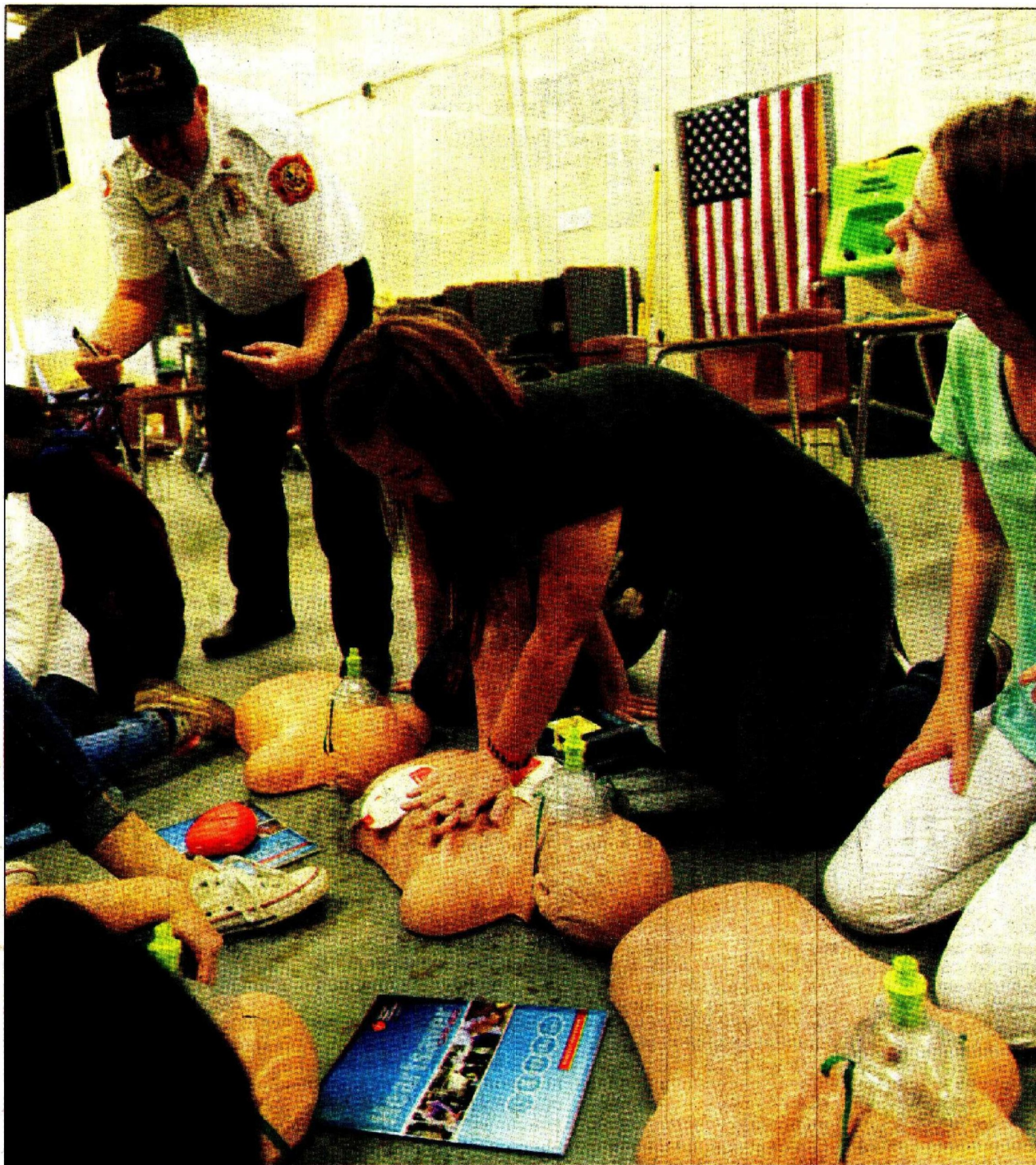
"In nursing, CPR is a required skill to have; in the food industry, knowing how to perform it could save someone's life," she said.

Chris Fickens, an 11th-grade student in the firefighter II course, was assisting the culinary arts students on Thursday.

"CPR is an essential skill to have because even if EMS or first responders arrive on a scene within minutes after someone has a heart attack, it might be too late to save a life," he said.



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RICK CARPENTER / THE

SUMTER ITEM

**Capt. John Jolly of Sumter Fire Department, above left, explains how electric currents go through a person's body while Madison Dunton administers CPR to a dummy on Thursday and Victoria King, right, listens to Jolly's explanation.**

Title: **State, local 2016 students lag behind in required ACT test**  
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# State, local 2016 students lag behind in required ACT test

*First year test  
was required for  
all students*

From release

COLUMBIA – ACT released its 2016 Condition of College and Career Readiness Report for the Class of 2016 on Aug. 24.

South Carolina's 2016 high school graduates earned an overall composite score of 18.5 compared to an average of 19.8 in the 20 states that require the test.

South Carolina's 2016 graduates were the first to reflect the 100 percent participation requirement in college and career readiness testing.

This requirement, enacted through legislation and signed into law by Governor Haley on May 30, 2014, directed that beginning in the 2015-16 school year, all high school juniors take

the ACT and WorkKeys to better identify college and career preparedness.

All 20 states that made the switch from a student-selected test to a state-required one, noticed a similar decrease in scores in their first 100 percent testing cohort report.

## Local results

Chesterfield County's 2016 graduates scored beneath the state average in the overall composite score and in each tested area.

In a reflection of the first senior class required to take the ACT testing, the Chesterfield County School District saw their scores lag slightly behind the

state average, the school system said in a news release.

In the composite of the four tested areas – English, math, science and reading – the district scored 17.1. The state average was 18.5.

Chesterfield County Superintendent of Schools Dr. Harrison Goodwin pointed out that the number of county students who took the test was nearly three times higher than in 2015.

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GOODWIN