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## **Late Sen. Clementa Pinckney Honored With Wilkins Award From Riley Institute At Furman**

GREENVILLE, S.C.—Furman University's Riley Institute has announced that the late South Carolina Senator Clementa Pinckney is this year's recipient of the David H. Wilkins Award for Excellence in Legislative Leadership.

Sen. Pinckney, who also served as pastor of Mother Emanuel African Methodist Episcopal Church in Charleston, was among the nine people killed in the shootings that took place at the church in June. He served in the South Carolina legislature from the age of 23, and represented the 45th District in the state Senate at the time of his death.

Sen. Pinckney's widow, Jennifer, will accept the award.

South Carolina Governor Nikki Haley and Charleston Mayor Joe Riley will also be honored the Riley Institute event when they receive the Wilkins Award for Excellence in Civic Leadership. Haley and Riley will serve as speakers during the program, discussing their collaboration as they worked together during the Emanuel 9 crisis.

The 11th annual awards dinner will take place at the Metropolitan Convention Center in Columbia Tuesday, Jan. 12, 2016 on the first night of the legisla-

tive session.

A reception for all registered attendees will begin at 6 p.m., and the dinner and awards presentation will follow at 7:15 p.m. Tickets are \$125 each and can be purchased by calling 864-235-8330 or visiting the Riley Institute website.

"The Riley Institute strongly believes these choices by the Selection Committee are particularly fitting during a year that has been so challenging for our state," said Don Gordon, executive director of the Riley Institute. "Senator Pinckney's life was characterized by humility, intelligence and a commitment to those citizens left out of the economic mainstream in South Carolina. He worked with colleagues in the Senate and elsewhere for the common good in our state. To honor Governor Haley and Mayor Riley, each of whom demonstrated critical leadership during a time of enormous grief and angst in South Carolina, is also an important decision by the Committee. Their responses to the Emanuel 9 tragedy helped bring healing to our state."

For more information, contact the Riley Institute at 864-294-3546 or e-mail [Jill.Fuson@furman.edu](mailto:Jill.Fuson@furman.edu).



**The late Senator Rev. Clementa Pinckney**



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## FOLKS ABOUT TOWN

**The University of South Carolina** has been recognized as one of the leading universities in the country for improving graduation rates for minority students and ranks in the top five among flagship universities for closing the graduation gap between minority and white students over the past decade according to *The Education Trust Report*.

**Dr. Louis Lynn**, founder of ENVIRO AgScience, has celebrated 30 years as a minority owner.

**David Cha**, with the Richland County Sheriff's Department, has received the Class Leader Award during the South Carolina Criminal Justice Academy Graduation.

**Brian Craven** has been selected as chair of the Children's Trust of South Carolina board of directors.

**William Robinson** has been elected as direc-

tor for AgFirst Farm Credit Bank.

Those who have joined Richland County include **Kevin Bronson**, assistant county administrator for public safety; **Jeff Ruble**, economic development director; and **Liz McDonald**, county assessor.

**Jared Glover** has joined the South Carolina State Museum as public relations manager.

**Midlands Technical College** has been ranked in the top 100 colleges in the United States in terms of African-American students earning associate degrees by *Diverse: Issues in Higher Education*.

**W. Ford Graham** has been appointed to the International Strategy and Trade Division.

Those who received awards at the Lugoff Fire-Rescue Christmas Banquet

were **Captain Michael Stanfield**, Career Firefighter of the Year, and **Mike Puckett**, Volunteer Firefighter of the Year.

**Robyn Rudish-Lanning** has joined the South Carolina Council on Competitiveness as communications coordinator.

**Brigidere General Thomas Mullikin** has been promoted to the rank of major general.

**Thomas Pietras and Christian Stormer**, with Bauknight Pietras & Stormer, have been named as two of the 100 Influential People in Accounting by the South Carolina Association of Certified Public Accountants.

**Ramone Dickerson**, with 2 Fat 2 Fly's Wing City, has been named a 2016 South Carolina Chef Ambassador by Governor Nikki Haley.



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**Brian Craven**



**Kevin Bronson**



**Jeff Ruble**



**Liz McDonald**



**Captain Michael  
Stanfield**



**Mike Puckett**



**Robyn Rudish-Laning**



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**Five Points Rotary  
Club honors  
Gov. Haley with  
a tee shirt**

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**Gov. Nikki Haley  
holds the t-shirt pre-  
sented to her.**

**Contributed by Five  
Points Rotary Club**

The Five Points Rotary Club sold t-shirts to create awareness and raise money for SC Flood Victims. Rotarians throughout District 7770 helped. Five Points Rotary Club President Jill Michels presented Governor Haley a "SC. A Small State with a Big Heart" t-shirt to acknowledge her leadership and encouragement to the people of South Carolina.

Five Points Rotary Club member Mary Gasque and husband, Ken Gasque, designed the shirt and came up with the slogan. The Five Points Rotary board elected to give the money to Harvest Hope Food Bank. President Jill will present a check for \$3,500 the first of the year.



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# 148 625 jobs may go

## Sumter's military population hit hard

**BY JEFF WILKINSON**

[jwilkinson@thestate.com](mailto:jwilkinson@thestate.com)

U.S. Army Central in Sumter will cut about 625 jobs at Shaw Air Force Base by Oct. 1 because of continued reductions in the military after 14 years of war.

Although the command group is responsible for the planning and execution of the wars in the Middle East and Afghanistan, Lt. Gen. Michael Garrett said he has been ordered to reduce his staff by 25 percent. Most of the cuts will be at the Sumter base.

He plans to reduce by 54 percent the number of military personnel at his Shaw Air Force Base headquarters out-

side Sumter as well as 12 percent of the civilian workers and contractors there.

"We'll have to prioritize our efforts," said Garrett, who took the reins of U.S. Army Central — formerly called Third Army — just three weeks ago. "We'll be able to execute, but it won't be to the level we are now."

The cuts would reduce staff at the headquarters to 539 soldiers and 73 civilians, Garrett told Gov. Nikki Haley on Wednesday during her annual commanders briefing with the S.C. Military Base Task Force. Haley appointed the task force to protect military jobs in the state.

Haley heard from commanders of the state's eight military installations and S.C. National Guard.

The installations are Shaw; McEntire Joint National Guard Base near Eastover; the Army's Fort Jackson in Columbia; Joint Base Charleston; Marine Recruit Depot at Parris Island; Marine Corps Air Station Beaufort; Naval Hospital Beaufort; and U.S. Coast

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## CUTS FROM PAGE A1

Guard Station Charleston.

Once a year, Haley meets with the commanding officers of all military bases and organizations in the state.

Budget cuts were the main theme Wednesday for many commanders. Haley, a Republican who has been mentioned as a possible vice presidential candidate, said she would work with the state's Congressional delegation to prevent further cuts.

"We want to reverse what is coming from the feds," she said.

### 'SO OLD ... SO YOUNG'

A study by University of South Carolina determined that the military pumps \$18.3 billion a year into the state's economy.

But those jobs and their economic impact are in jeopardy if more cuts to the military occur.

The Pentagon already has implemented \$487 billion in cuts to take place during the next decade, caused in part by the end of combat operations in Iraq and the drawdown of troops in Afghanistan. But another \$600 billion in cuts during the next 10 years could be required beginning Jan. 3 because of the federal debt-ceiling standoff in 2011 called the sequester.

The sequester, combined with the Ar-

my's drawdown plans, would leave the service with 420,000 soldiers in seven years. The Army had a wartime high of 518,000.

Maj. Gen. Mark Kelly, commander of Ninth Air Force, also based at Shaw, said the Air Force has already slashed equipment and personnel. He said it would be hard to complete missions in a time of "budget trauma."

"Never have our aircraft been so old and our airmen so young," he said.

So far, Fort Jackson has dodged severe budget cuts. The Army had asked former commander Maj. Gen. Bradley Becker to prepare a plan to lose 3,100 jobs — half of the staff at the nation's largest training base.

But in July, the Army announced only 180 job cuts at the fort. Ironically, the fort's new commander, Maj. Gen. Roger Cloutier, had led a "listening tour" of all domestic military bases and was involved in the final decision on service-wide cuts.

The 180 jobs "won't have a significant impact on our mission ... it could have been worse," he said Wednesday, but added that "managing the uncertainty

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(of potential future cuts) ... gives me pause.”

#### **BUILDING HALF EMPTY**

U.S. Army Central is the ground component of U.S. Central Command, based in Tampa, Fla., which controls all military personnel and operations in Egypt, the Middle East and Southwest Asia.

U.S. Army Central moved to a new headquarters building in Sumter from Atlanta’s Fort McPherson in 2011. It also has a headquarters in

Camp Arifjan, Kuwait, where the commander and senior staff spend much of their time.

There are about 340 soldiers at Camp Arifjan, who are often shuttled between there and Sumter.

“The cuts will take place at both locations, and it will be at the discretion of the commander and operational requirements (to determine) how many soldiers he has at each location,” Col. Carl Marotto, U.S. Army Central’s chief of public affairs, said after the meeting. He added that the cuts have already started.

“Positions that would normally be filled have started to not be filled,” he said. “The reduction will take place

through natural attrition as soldiers leave and get new assignments, retire or separate from service.”

Garrett is the overall commander of Operation Inherent Resolve, the war against the Islamic State. Col. Bryan Hilferty of Sumter — a former public affairs chief for Third Army — said he was surprised the cuts were going forward in light of the conflicts in Syria, Iraq and Afghanistan, which all have to be fought by U.S. Army Central.

“We’ve got three wars going on over there and now the building is going to be half empty,” he said.

The absence of those soldiers, workers and their families is expected to hurt the Sumter area’s economy.

“We have a brand-new facility there,” said retired Air Force Maj. Gen. William “Dutch” Holland of Sumter, a member of the task force and a former commander of the Ninth Air Force, which is based at Shaw. “The question is what other missions we bring in there to replace those jobs.”

But former Sumter mayor Stephen Creech, also a task force member, said the area will absorb the cuts. Unlike Shaw airmen, many of the Army soldiers assigned there are often deployed to Kuwait and haven’t moved their families to Sumter, he said.

“I’m not going to say this won’t hurt,” he said. “But it’s not going to be devastating.”

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#### **MILITARY JOBS IN S.C.**

**\$18.3 million**

Economic impact of the military in the state

**625**

Number of jobs to be cut at U.S. Army Central Command at Shaw

**180**

Number of jobs to be cut at Fort Jackson



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## 148 + 234 Lawmakers back plea for aid

S.C. Senate committee: Farmers need federal funding after floods

**BY JIM HILLEY**

jim@theitem.com

The top state agriculture official and a South Carolina Senate committee agreed that the state should request federal money to offset the damage from flooding in October, but Gov. Nikki Haley has said she will not treat farmers differently from other small business owners when asking for federal dollars. But the governor has asked the federal government to expedite payment of crop insurance claims.

On Monday, S.C. Agriculture Commissioner Hugh Weathers told the Special Senate Committee Regarding Flood Relief Efforts that crop insurance would only cover about \$125 million of the estimated \$376 million in direct damage to farm operations. Many farmers are hoping either the federal or state government can provide some type of relief to make up the remaining \$251 million.

Weathers said the crop insurance program passed as

part of the 2014 Farm Bill is complicated and not fairly balanced.

"If every farmer had picked the best crop insurance available it would not have covered the costs of putting the crop in the ground," he said.

Farmers were told after the Oct. 3-5 flood not to disturb crops until they had been inspected by insurance adjusters, but even after that time more rain degraded crops even more, something insurance won't cover.

The commissioner told the committee he and other farm advocates had been working "feverishly" with the state's congressional delegation to get money included in the Omnibus Budget bill that will be voted on Friday.

Weathers was asked by Senate President Pro-Tempore Hugh Leatherman if he had personally requested Gov. Nikki Haley to ask for the money, but Weathers replied

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# FARMERS

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he had only been able to speak to the governor's staff.

"In her request last week, agriculture was not included," Weathers said.

Weathers said he was told by the congressional delegation the state's chief executive needs to make clear her support for the aid to farmers or it will not be looked on favorably in Washington.

Weathers said he had communications with the governor through her staff and they responded, saying she was going to go ahead with what she had requested.

When Leatherman asked if Weathers had submitted a revised budget for the Agriculture Department to the governor including the \$250 million, Weathers answered, "No."

The senator suggested that would be the proper way for the commissioner to proceed.

Leatherman said he did not want the executive budget to come to the General Assembly without including the Agriculture Department's request for flood relief.

"Start with the governor," he said.

Weathers said he had not come to make a specific request; he came to

make the committee aware of the plight farmers were in.

Sen. Thomas McElveen, D-Sumter, asked Weathers if there would be a local match to any relief included in the U.S. House's Omnibus bill, but Weathers did not know.

Newly elected President of the South Carolina Farm Bureau Harry Ott assured the committee there would be no match required.

Ott said farms are different from most small businesses.

"We plant our crops in the spring; we spend all year so we can make money one month a year, but we have nothing to sell," Ott said.

"I am here specifically to ask you to help us get the governor to request this money," Ott said. "This is as seri-

ous a thing as I have ever dealt with in my life."

Ott said South Carolina families who have been farming for genera-

tions will be watching their farms being sold on the courthouse steps.

"Haley talks about Team South Carolina," Ott said. "We need her help and your help."

After hearing the testimony from Weathers and Ott, the committee voted to draft a letter to the governor asking her to support the request for relief money for farmers.



Sen. Thomas McElveen, D-Sumter, listens to South Carolina Agriculture Commissioner Hugh Weathers at the meeting of the Special Senate Committee Regarding Flood Relief Efforts on Monday in Columbia.

JIM HILLEY / THE SUMTER ITEM

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**Sen. Scott hears from businesses, farmers hurt by flood**

**BY JIM HILLEY**  
jim@theitem.com



**SCOTT**

U.S. Sen. Tim Scott held a Senate subcommittee on small business and entrepreneurship hearing Friday in Columbia

City Hall. At the hearing, Jeremy Cannon, a Turbeville farmer, told Scott and others in attendance that after a summer of drought, he still had hopes of "finishing in the black" at his family's 1,700-acre farm.

"Twenty inches of rain washed all remaining hope away," Cannon said.

Cannon said he is not sure people realize how it has affected the farm community.

"Without crops there is nothing to sell," he said.

He said the most crop insurance will cover is 80 percent of a farmer's crop losses, with the average farmer getting 70 to 75 percent.

He said that with current low commodity prices, it is only about half of what farmers need.

Cannon, who has acted as the unofficial spokesman for the South Carolina farm community, said farming was his only livelihood.

"This is my heritage and my family," he said. "Throw out a lifeline."

Scott listened intently and expressed his concern as he listened to Cannon, S.C. Chamber of Commerce President and CEO Ted Pitts and Michael Marsha, owner of Forest Lakes Fabrics in Columbia, testify about their damage from the floods and their experience with government agencies.

"A lot of folks are very anxious about

their ability to recover without some assistance," he said.

The senator said Congress had been able to restore \$3 billion to the crop insurance fund, but what is unclear is how that will affect payments to South Carolina farmers to cover losses from the floods.

Pitts said damage in the state is nearing the \$1.5 billion mark.

"No part of the state economy hasn't been hit," he said.

Pitts said he was especially troubled by how the floods devastated the agriculture industry.

"Agriculture affects all aspects of the economy," he said.

After the hearing, Cannon said the congressional delegation has been working to put money for farmers in the budget.

"I think the money is going to be available for the farmers; now we have to see if the governor is going to request the money or not," Cannon said. "The ball is in Gov. Nikki Haley's court. If the governor doesn't request it, we are never going to get it."

The South Carolina Senate subcommittee on the flooding will meet at 10 a.m. Monday in Room 105 of the Gressette Building, 1101 Pendleton St., on the Statehouse grounds in Columbia.

State Sen. Thomas McElveen, who is on the subcommittee, said he was unsure if any state money should come from the state budget or a bond bill.

"All I know is the money has to come from somewhere to get people some relief," he said.

Agriculture Secretary Hugh Weathers is among those expected to testify at Monday's hearing.



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## Stockton's View

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# Governor blasts county government

By Bob Stockton

Once again McCormick County government is in the headlines and on TV, and not in a good way.

Three weeks ago, a nearby daily newspaper published a story about a lawsuit being brought by a contractor bidding on a spec building for the county's industrial park. The contractor protested the selection process to award the bid.

A S.C. Department of Commerce grant had been awarded to cover the cost of the building, but that grant was withdrawn because of the lawsuit.

County Administrator Columbus Stephens acknowledged the procurement controversy. He said that the county attorney would be responding to the lawsuit and "put together a case to defend the county."

The county has until January to respond, and that seemed to be the status of the issue until then. All that changed with Governor Nikki Haley's visit recently for the McCormick Chamber's Women in Business Luncheon.

Governor Haley did not address the issue at the Chamber luncheon until she invited questions from the audience. The first question was about jobs in McCormick, and she began her answer talking about the BMW, Mercedes Benz and Volvo automotive plants in other counties.

She acknowledged that McCormick ranked 45th among S.C.'s 46 counties in job growth, but said that Hickory Knob was the state's second most popular state park and is investing in golf course improvements.

Then she zeroed in on the spec building grant issue. "You need new county leadership," was her first sentence, and she expanded her criticism of our county government.

"The commerce department awarded a \$1.2 million grant for a spec building here," Haley said.

"The county did not follow the cor-

rect procedure to award the building contract.

"The state had to pull the grant because the county did not follow the rules. If you want change, change your leadership," Haley said.

This newspaper has criticized county government previously and is not going to hammer it again now. We do not know all the details of the awarding of the spec building contract, the lawsuit and the withdrawal of the grant.

One thing, however, is crystal clear: McCormick County government's reputation is not ready for prime time in Columbia.

Countless future jobs and \$1.2 million depend on how the county defends itself with the spec building contract lawsuit, reapplies for a spec building grant and renews the contract awarding procedure.

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**Governor in Town to Recognize  
SGMS Student De'Shaun Booker**



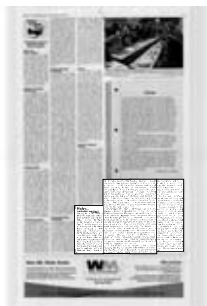
**De'Shaun K. Booker**, 8th grade student at St. George Middle School addresses the crowd during Governor Nikki Haley's visit recently. \_\_\_\_\_ *Eagle-Record Staff Photo*

**by Eagle-Record Staff**

An afterschool writing program at St. George Middle School led to a visit Thursday from Governor Nikki Haley and the establishment of a program statewide to recognize law enforcement officers and work to bond them with school children at an early age. De'Shaun Booker, an eighth grader at the school, penned a letter in the after school program calling for change ( read De'Shaun's letter on page 4) and decided after the fact to send it to the Governor. Governor Haley said she read the letter, was ... *See HALEY Page 4*



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## Haley...

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touched by it and found it profound, especially coming from a thirteen year old boy. Haley invited De'Shaun to the Governor's mansion April 21 and the rest is history. That trip led to De'Shaun being introduced to Bob Beres and Williamson of the SC Highway Patrol, who took De'Shaun under their wing and began what they call a mentoring program of the young student, whisking him to Patriot's Point, touring the Boeing Plant and attending the graduation of the SC Highway Patrol Academy.

On Thursday, Governor Haley, her entourage and representatives from the Highway Patrol, including Williamson and Beres, along with Dorchester County deputies and St. George Police Chief Brett Camp attended a luncheon in De'Shaun's honor at the middle school in St. George. Also in attendance were District 4 board chairman Dr. Kenneth Jenkins, Superintendent Dr. Morris Ravenell, District 4 Board Members, St. George Mayor Anne Johnston, Representative Patsy Knight, County Councilman Willie R. Davis and several St. George Council members. Haley posed for pictures with district 4 staff and faculty and was swept into the cafeteria, teeming with students for the occasion. The governor spoke of respect between folks of all races and politics, pointing out that "we all bleed red, regardless of our color." She told the story of receiving De'Shaun's letter and the effect it had on her and vowed to take her "lunch buddies" program statewide to establish a better relationship between students and law enforcement. SGMS Principle Jeffery Thompson, who officially welcomed

the governor, recognized De'Shaun and pointed out that there were many other students throughout the district whose talent and character were worthy of recognition.

De'Shaun later told *The Dorchester Eagle-Record* he was motivated to write his letter to Governor Haley in the aftermath of the police shooting of Walter Scott in North Charleston. He pointed out that the controversy following the tragedy did little in his eyes to "solve or change the situation between the police and the community." To De'Shaun, it all boils down to mutual understanding, respect and taking responsibilities for one's on actions.

As part of the luncheon, Governor Haley called several of the law enforcement officers on hand to step to the microphone and tell a bit about themselves. In this way, the Governor sought to show the students that all were humans, with families and hopes and dreams, much as themselves.

For his part, De'Shaun, son of Latrena Elmore, said later he was nervous when he first traveled to Columbia to meet with Governor Haley, but quickly responded to her warmth and kindness and the two hit it off. He added that he enjoyed his classes after school, which are run by Brenda Chestnut, and focus on building character and leadership skills in the children. He said he would like to attend the University of Georgia School of Law and become a lawyer to help other people. In the short term, the 13 year old has his sights set on attending the Governor's School in math and science. The community would do well to take notice of this serious and modest young man. The Governor already has.





**Governor Nikki Haley chats with students** during lunch at St. George Middle School during her visit to meet 8th grader De'Shaun K. Booker after the SGMS student sent the following letter to her.

*Photo by Eagle-Record Staff*

### ***Change***

We as a Black community tend to complain about how America is run, we tend to complain about who is in power, but we never make the attempt to change it. We never get up and take a stand. We sit on our recliners and our little comfy chairs. We watch television and we talk to our families about what happened. We tell them that the government needs to do something about it. Well if that's the case, then we need to start trying. We should start trying. We should start by talking to our youth and work our way up to our black men and black women. I know that I'm a child and if I can see this problem then I know that we all can.

We need to stop the white on black crime; better yet we need to stop the black on black crime. When something as this happens, we black folk tend to be enraged and start riots and protest, but it's not helping any. It's only making the problem worse.

We are demonstrating what other people say we are, a bunch of people who act like a bunch of hooligans. I know some people are civilized, but they based us on the majority of the people who



|  |                                                   |
|--|---------------------------------------------------|
|  | are acting very uncivilized. We need to straight- |
|  | en up. We need to start doing better. We blacks   |
|  | must make a change.                               |
|  | De'Shaun K. Booker                                |
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## 148 + 59 Drilling foes take petition to governor

Opponents of offshore oil and gas drilling will present petitions from business owners to Gov. Nikki Haley next week calling on her to remove the state from a federal leasing proposal. It's one more step in a campaign to raise awareness and try to influence the state's lawmakers, said Peg Howell, founder of the group Stop Offshore Drilling in the Atlantic or SODA.

The federal Bureau of Offshore Energy Management is due to present a proposal for offshore exploration and leasing in the first quarter of 2016. It presented a draft this year.

Every municipality along the South Carolina coast has adopted a resolution opposing drilling. (The town of Pawleys Island omitted gas from its resolution.) In spite of that, Howell said she spoke with a commercial fisherman in Murrells Inlet this week who told her he wasn't aware of the proposal for offshore drilling.

Petition drives among business owners and the public at large are a way to educate people, Howell said. And, she added "it's getting people to connect with state and federal officials."

Close to 400 business owners signed petitions that will be presented to the governor. They were the work of Goffinet McLaren of Litchfield, a SODA member, and Alice Morrissey of Sullivan's Island, who heads Don't Drill SC - Lowcountry.

They will be joined by Howell, Rick Baumann of Murrells Inlet Seafood, Sandra Bundy, a Murrells Inlet Realtor, and other business people at the governor's office. Haley's schedule calls for her to be in Spartanburg.





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S.C. General Assembly 32 + 1 + 148

Lawmakers would get more done if they spent less time in session

BY CECILIA BROWN

Editorialists and commentators have chastised the South Carolina legislature relentlessly for failing to get anything done during the 2015 session. In fact, though, they did plenty of work.

This year our legislature met from January to July, and during that time 1,336 bills were filed between the House and Senate. Of those, 131 were passed by lawmakers. In addition, 950 resolutions were filed, and all but 64 of those passed.

The question, of course, is this: How many of these were actually worth legislators spending over half a year in Columbia?

The length of South Carolina's legislative session has consequences. Studies have found that professional, full-time legislatures are more prone to pressure from lobbyists – and this translates into higher spending and more favors for special interests.

Consider this year's attempt to deal with roads. There are two ways to devote new revenue to roads: raise taxes or cut spending. But lobbyists – in this case, lobbyists working for companies and industries that would benefit from additional spending on roads – aren't going to urge lawmakers to pay for new road projects by cutting other parts of government. They're going to urge tax hikes. And thanks to South Carolina's long legislative session, they had plenty of time to do it. In the end, thanks to citizen groups raising the alarm, they weren't successful. That's a rarity, unfortunately, and tax hike supporters are sure to be back in January.

According to one media account, toward the end of session legislative leaders even tried to prevent the Board of Economic Advisers from publicizing a revenue surplus, presumably on the grounds that a surplus would undermine the argument for a tax hike. That simply couldn't have happened without a lengthy session.

Or take ethics reform. The year began with a few good proposals, but the longer they sat in committees, the longer lawmakers had to water them down or amend them with insidious

provisions. A bill to reform the state's Freedom of Information law gained a provision allowing government agencies to take citizens to court for filing "frivolous" FOIA requests. A bill to require elected officials to disclose their sources of income eventually included a provision loosening requirements on disclosing government income. And so on. The longer the session went on, in other words, the more pointless these bills became.

Or consider the debate over the bond bill. House lawmakers introduced a bill to issue bond debt and use the money for a variety of largely unnecessary

projects connected to state colleges and universities. It would have been difficult for lawmakers to pass such a controversial bill within the confines of a short session. As it was, though, they were able to introduce the bill; then take it off the floor when the Policy Council and (separately) Gov. Haley raised objections; then find ways to pay for the new projects through the General Fund; and then spend much of the rest of the session trying to figure out how to pass the bond bill anyway, which they were almost able to do.

In short: our excessively long session gave the State House complex – lawmakers, lobbyists, consultants, various special interests – plenty of time weakens reform, make tax hikes more likely, and spend every last available dime of revenue.

What should a session-shortening bill look like? A sensible reform would be to mandate an end to sessions by the second Friday in April, making each one last roughly 90 calendar days, and holding session every two years. This would encourage lawmakers to use their time – and our money – more wisely.

Members of the House argue that they pass a bill every session to shorten a session but Senate ignores it. That may be technically true, but this year, anyway, the bill they passed was anemically weak. The House of Representatives passed a bill that cut a mere 10 days off a

session. The Senate's bill would have shortened session by three months. It wasn't passed, but at least it was wor-



thy of passing.

Our legislature's job is to ensure that citizens' rights are protected. After they do that, they should go home. More time leads to more mischief.



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