

Title: **House to get pair of road plans today**
 Author: By Tim Smith Staff Writer tcsmith@greenvillenews.com
 Size: 37.04 square inch
 Greenville, SC Circulation: 113473



House to get pair of road plans today

By Tim Smith

Staff Writer
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COLUMBIA — Gov. Nikki Haley went behind closed doors with House GOP lawmakers Tuesday to urge them to adopt her tax and roads plan, and legislators said afterward both the governor's plan and a House infrastructure committee bill would be introduced today.

But House Majority Leader Bruce Bannister of Greenville said he expects "dramatic changes" before the House eventually settles on a plan through the committee process.

"Where we start is probably not indicative of where we're going to end up," he said.

The meeting happened as members of Americans for Prosperity South Carolina, a conservative and limited-government group, fanned out to speak to legislators after a pep talk by state Treasurer Curtis Loftis who opposes any plan with a gas tax increase.

Haley first pitched her roads plan last month during her annual State of the State speech to lawmakers. Tuesday's meeting was her first with the majority caucus to discuss her plan since the January speech.

Also speaking to the caucus was Rep. Gary Simrill, chairman of a House infrastructure committee that spent five months working on a plan and assuming Haley would veto any proposal with a gas tax hike.

Instead, Haley surprised legislators by proposing a gas tax increase of 10 cents over three years, provided lawmakers first agree to scrap the current highway commission and re-

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PLANS

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duce the state's income tax from 7 percent to 5 percent over 10 years.

The House infrastructure committee, meanwhile, has proposed a cut in the 16.75-cents-per-gallon gas tax by 6 cents and a new 6 percent excise tax be created on gas at the wholesale level, a combination that would mean 4 cents per gallon more if gas were selling for \$2 per gallon, Simrill has said. A ceiling would be set so that the total tax could never exceed 26.75 cents per gallon.

The proposal also would increase the sales tax cap on vehicles from \$300 to \$500.

Haley has called use of an excise tax "dangerous" and has publicly urged House lawmakers to back her plan.

House Speaker Jay Lucas told *The Greenville News* on Monday that neither plan has yet attracted a consensus.

Rep. Tommy Stringer of Greenville, who is chief sponsor of the governor's plan, said he thus far had about a dozen co-sponsors of the bill. Simrill said last week he had more than 40.

"We have to start somewhere," Stringer said. "Because if we don't start now, it will be another two or three years."

Simrill has called his committee's bill a working document and Bannister echoed that senti-

ment about creating a solution to the state's crumbling infrastructure.

"I expect both of those bills to change dramatically from what they look like when they are introduced," he said. "And I expect the Senate's version coming back to us will be unrecognizable."

Haley spent about 35 minutes before the GOP lawmakers discussing

her plan and answering some questions. Members said she was received warmly and there was no debate in her presence.

"We had a good meeting," was all she would say as she left.

Bannister said House Ways and Means Committee Chairman Brian White wants to talk to members about financial projections regarding the governor's plan but had to leave the meeting early.

He said both Simrill and Haley have been talking for several weeks about a possible meshing of the two bills that would have everyone's support.

"They acknowledged they weren't there yet but that they thought they could get there as the process continues," he said.

Bannister said Haley explained that her income tax reduction would be paid for through revenue growth.

Title: **Advocates say arts education crucial for fixing state's schools**
 Author: By Paul Hyde | Arts writer | phyde@greenvilleonline.com
 Size: 173.13 square inch
 Greenville, SC Circulation: 113473



Advocates say arts education crucial for fixing state's schools

By Paul Hyde | Arts writer | phyde@greenvilleonline.com

An additional \$1 million in funding for the South Carolina Arts Commission could help fix South Carolina's broken public school system, arts advocates say.

The Arts Commission is asking state lawmakers for the money to provide more grants for school programs in music, dance, theater and the visual arts, particularly those in the state's poor, rural school districts.

Arts advocates see the request as part of a legislative fix to a November state Supreme Court order to correct inequities that deny educational opportunity to students in the state's poorer schools.

"We think the arts can be part of the solution," said Betty Plumb, executive director of the South Carolina Arts Alliance.

Research has shown that arts education provides direct and indirect benefits for students, motivating them to work harder and stay in school, and teaching them

about teamwork, leadership and creative problem-solving, among other values.

The arts also enhance other academic subjects, said Bradley Wingate, the Greenville school district's academic specialist for visual and performing arts.

"A teacher may incorporate visual art into history," Wingate said. "Research shows that students who learn materials through those different modes tend to retain the information longer and are more able to apply it when it's taken out of context."

Currently, the Arts Commission spends \$800,000 annually on arts-education grants.

"We think that figure needs to be a lot larger," said Ken May, executive director of the South Carolina Arts Commission. "We have high demand for the funding we al-

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ARTS

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ready provide. We're focused on trying to make sure all students have access to the arts in the school day."

Most arts education classes are funded through local school district revenues. Some poor school districts cannot afford arts education, however, so Arts Commission grants help those districts initiate programs.

"Our state unfortunately has a high rate of poor kids in schools," Plumb said. "The new money would help to level the playing field for children who live in high-poverty schools districts. It's bridging the poverty gap."

"It's a modest amount when you think about all it can do," Plumb said.

New wave of support

County: Greenville

It's uncertain whether the Legislature will embrace the Arts Commission's \$1 million request, but the state agency has an important ally in new Superintendent of Education Molly Spearman, a former music teacher.

"I am fully committed to advancing opportunities for all students in South Carolina to participate in arts-related programs," Spearman said via email.

Spearman said she wants the state to be a national leader in arts education.

"As a former music teacher for over 18 years, I have a deep appreciation for arts education," Spearman said. "I want South Carolina to be seen as a national leader in STEAM education — science, technology, engineering, arts, and math — and we can get there by continuing our partner-

ships with the business community, technical colleges and institutions of higher education across the state."

Spearman served for several years in the past as the chair of the Arts in Basic Curriculum steering committee, which oversees one of the Arts Commission's primary arts education programs.

"It's great to have such a strong advocate for arts education in the position of superintendent," May said. "It's really exciting."

Sen. Vincent Sheheen, a Camden Democrat, said prospects for the Arts Commission's proposal look good this year.

"I think this is a great opportunity to get more arts education funding into our schools," said Sheheen, who is co-chair of the Senate Arts Caucus, a group of lawmakers who advocate for the arts. "The Arts Commis-

sion budget has been shrinking or static for many years. The time is right for an increase."

However, State Rep. Rita Allison, a Lyman Republican who is co-chair of the House Arts Caucus, was skeptical that more money could be found for arts education at a time when other priorities are looming large and Gov. Nikki Haley is calling for big cuts in state spending.

"There's not a lot of new money available," Allison said. "The Arts Commission has been pretty level for quite some time. Whether the Arts Commission's proposal has a chance with everything else on the table — roads and infrastructure, base student cost — that's still a question mark."

Gov. Haley's budget did not include the additional \$1 million for arts

education grants, although she supported current Arts Commission funding, urging that current money be used for arts education.

Haley declined to comment further.

"She did not endorse any new funding, so we'd have to cannibalize existing programs for arts education and that's not desirable or popular with the rest of our constituency," May said.

In addition to arts education, the Arts Commission provides modest grants to arts organizations across the state, including more than a dozen in Greenville.

Plumb said many state lawmakers, however, appear to be willing to provide more money for arts education.

"We've got a lot of support from a lot of legislators," Plumb said. "We really are saying that we want to raise the educa-

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tion level for the total child. There's just no reason for another generation of students to not get the quality education they deserve."

Enhancing local programs

The \$1 million could be used especially to expand or help create arts programs in poor districts, May said.

Arts Commission funding, however, would not be limited to high-poverty districts. Grants through one program — the Arts in the Basic Curriculum (or ABC) initiative — are usually modest: a maximum of \$7,500, May said.

"The money we provide to ABC sites is pretty unrestricted," May said. "It can be used in

any way that advances their curriculum."

Grants may be combined with local money to help a school afford a salary for a band or choral teacher, May said. Or a school might use a grant to introduce a new arts discipline, such as dance. Grants also might be used to bring an artist-in-resident to a school or fund a bus trip to a play, a museum or an orchestral concert.

"Our money is often used as startup money for new elements of school's curriculum," May said. "The amount of bang we get out of the money we provide is just unbelievable."

For wealthier districts, such as Greenville County Schools, Arts Commission grants pro-

vide teachers with the freedom to offer creative initiatives.

"It gives teachers the latitude to look at large-scale programs and activities that they probably wouldn't be able to do with local funds," said Wingate. "Local funds are earmarked for specific activities."

Monarch Elementary in Greenville County, for instance, was able to use Arts Commission funding to bring artists-in-residence to the school for music, dance and visual art, Wingate said.

"They work with students and teachers, tailoring a program for whatever is best for the school," Wingate said.

Arts education inspires young people to stay in school, according

to Shannon Kelly, director of advocacy at the National Association for Music Education.

"Music has been correlated with higher attendance and graduation rates," Kelly said. "It's our position that arts education conveys many benefits to students and should be included as a core subject in all schools."

Arts education also encourages creative thinking, problem solving, leadership skills, personal confidence and collaborative skills, said Kelly, whose organization represents more than 100,000 current and former music educators.

Kelly cited a recent University of Vermont study that found that music education in particu-

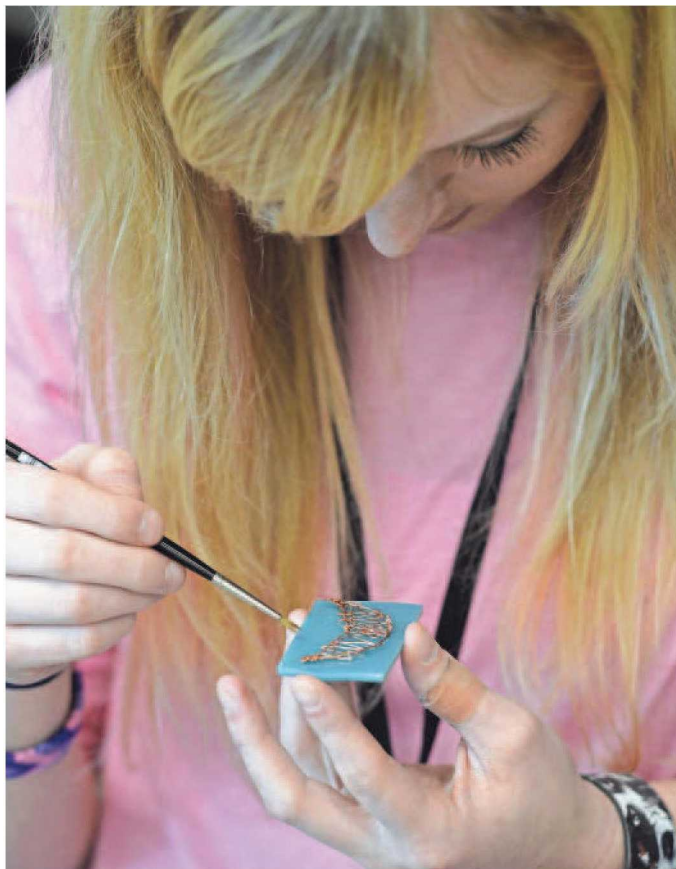
lar improves students' cognitive ability, having a beneficial influence on auditory processing, inferential abilities and ability to focus.

The Atlanta-based South Arts, a research organization, found that Arts Commission grants have helped to raise the quality of school arts programs statewide.

"Schools that do have really robust arts programs are doing that with supplemental state funding," May said. "The basic allotment that school districts provide schools for arts education is not sufficient to address all arts disciplines."

■ For the latest in local arts news and reviews, follow Paul Hyde on Facebook and Twitter: @PaulHyde7.

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BART BOATWRIGHT/STAFF/

Wade Hampton student Julanna Patterson paints metal in a visual arts metals and glass class.

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BART BOATWRIGHT/STAFF/

Eastside senior Jill Edmonds works on a painting at the Greenville County schools' Fine Arts Center.



BART BOATWRIGHT/STAFF

Travelers Rest student Elliot Godfreg, front, and JL Mann student Nicole Fernandes paint glass in a visual arts metals and glass class.

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BART BOATWRIGHT/STAFF

Mauldin senior Vivian Parcell works on a painting at Greenville County schools' Fine Arts Center.

Title: **Take domestic violence seriously**

Author:

Size: 59.05 square inch

Greenville, SC Circulation: 113473

THE GREENVILLE NEWS EDITORIAL

Take domestic violence seriously

South Carolina has one of the highest rates of domestic violence in the country and what generally are considered some of the weakest laws both to protect the victim and punish the offender. Some dedicated legislators are matching words of concern with actions designed to start changing the culture in our state by creating stronger laws that reflect the seriousness of criminal domestic violence.

State Sen. Larry Martin, a Pickens Republican who chairs the Senate Judiciary Committee, is leading the effort in his legislative body to create tougher penalties for criminal domestic violence (CDV) and lessen the possibility that offenders can repeat or escalate their violence. The bill championed by Martin made it through the Senate Judiciary Committee in short order, and now it is up to the full Senate to pass this law.

At the same time similar legislation is being considered in the S.C. House of Representatives. Legislation in the House also would enhance criminal penalties for domestic violence, reform bond provisions and improve educational efforts in this area. The legislative process often culminates with either the laws coming out of one chamber being adopted or the stronger of the bills being amended to incorporate parts of the other chamber's bill.

What's important is that the toughest piece of legislation make it through the state Legislature this year so that the new law can start better protecting victims by proving this state takes domestic violence seriously. Martin's bill is a strong and comprehensive one, and it has as co-sponsors a number of well-placed state senators including Mike Fair and Ross Turner of Greenville.

South Carolina has been in the top 10 states, and really at the

very top, for more than a decade when it comes to deaths due to criminal domestic violence. It was No. 1 two years ago, only to lose that terrible distinction to Alaska in the most recent numbers. Both women and men are victims of domestic violence although far more women die or are injured than men.

Martin's bill would make some sensible changes — so sensible that it's appropriate to question why they haven't been adopted in previous years. For starters his bill would revoke gun ownership rights for 10 years for many domestic violence offenders.

Granted, Louisiana adopted such a law last year and the results six months after it was implemented show the law restricting gun ownership has had little impact to date. Martin is eager to note it will take time for such a law to start producing positive results.

Martin's bill also would increase jail times and fines associated with CDV offenses. Of equal importance it would create a tiered system for charging CDV offenders, and that would give prosecutors much-needed options to make the charge fit the level of abuse. His bill also would put more teeth into protection orders that now in reality offer little protection to the victim.

Not all victims of domestic violence are women. Last week a physiology professor at the University of South Carolina was shot and killed by a woman who has been identified as his ex-wife. Professor Raja A. Fayad was killed in the Arnold Public Health Research Center at USC, and his death has deeply touched students and colleagues. Sung-hee Kwon then shot herself in what police called a murder-

suicide.

Nationally 72 percent of the

victims of murder-suicides involved an intimate partner, and more than 90 percent of victims of murder-suicide were female, according to studies cited by the National Center on Domestic and Sexual Violence. When there is a firearm in the home a domestic violence assault is 23 times more likely to result in death than an assault using another weapon or bodily assault, Becky Callahan, executive director of Safe Harbor, wrote in an op-ed last month. Safe Harbor is a nonprofit organization dedicated to helping victims of domestic violence, and it has voiced support for Sen. Martin's bill.

More than new, tougher laws are needed to protect victims of domestic violence in South Carolina. Gov. Nikki Haley has put together a task force charged with helping disrupt our state's generational cycles of domestic abuse. Haley said her group will focus more on community-level solutions, and its work easily could take the entire year.

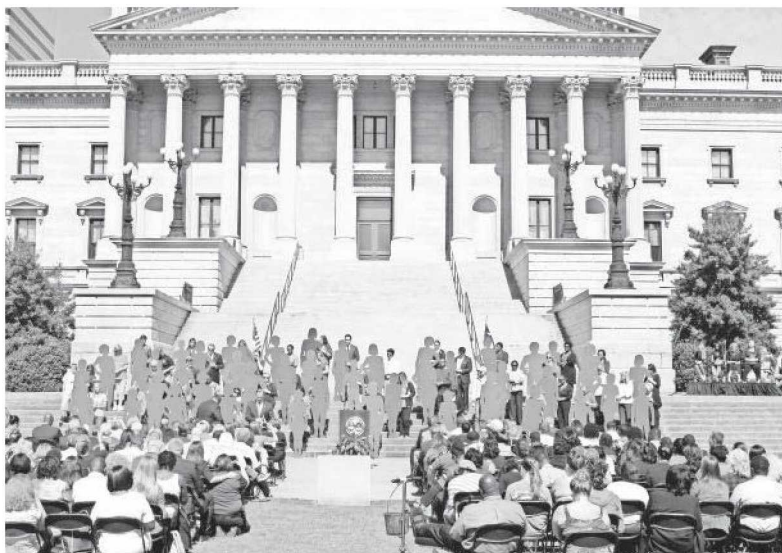
Domestic violence should be addressed both through changes in state law and attempts to shift attitudes in our state. A lasting solution will require substantive changes in both law and culture, and a good start is approval of the bill making its way through the state Senate.

Title: **Take domestic violence seriously**

Author:

Size: 59.05 square inch

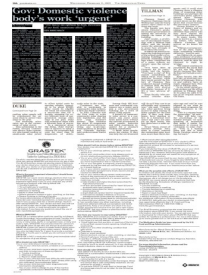
Greenville, SC Circulation: 113473



JEFFREY COLLINS/AP

Volunteers held up silhouettes in October representing the 46 people in South Carolina killed by a loved one at the 17th annual Silent Witness Domestic Violence ceremony.

Title: **Gov: Domestic violence body's work 'urgent'**
 Author: By Seanna Adcox Associated Press
 Size: 39.06 square inch
 Greenville, SC Circulation: 113473



Gov: Domestic violence body's work 'urgent'

By Seanna Adcox
 Associated Press

COLUMBIA — Gov. Nikki Haley told members of her domestic violence task force Tuesday to take the problem personally, saying if their effort fails, people die.

The Republican governor led the first meeting of the group she created last month to come up with recommendations for stemming South Carolina's generational cycles of domestic abuse.

She told more than 40 people gathered at the Department of Juvenile Justice that their task involves evaluating how people respond to victims, not how the victim thinks.

"Part of changing the culture is to stop trying to figure out how the victim thinks. We're never going to fully understand the victim because we don't live in their shoes," Haley said during the 30-minute meeting. "It's not about why; it's about our response."

The group's final report is not due until Dec.

"We have no option to fail, because if we fail, someone dies."

GOV. NIKKI HALEY

31. But Haley laid out deadlines calling for interim reports due over four phases.

South Carolina has long ranked among the nation's worst states in violence against women.

"If you think you don't know anyone involved in a domestic violence situation, you're not being honest with yourself," Haley told the group. "We have no option to fail, because if we fail, someone dies."

The task force's members represent wide-ranging fields, including law enforcement, courts, churches, health care, social services and cosmetology.

Domestic violence survivor Elizabeth Gray said she endured years of abuse from her ex-husband before getting away through the help of Sistercare in 2010. He was arrested just once — for breaking a restraining order — de-

spite 13 police reports and more than 30 incidents, she said.

"There are a lot of cracks in the system," said the West Columbia mother of two, who's on the task force and hopes more survivors share their stories with the group. "It's very easy to get into an abusive relationship. It's very hard to get out."

Haley created the task force after legislators advanced their own proposals for curbing the problem. Haley reiterated her stance Tuesday that no legislation will solve it.

The Senate Judiciary Committee voted overwhelmingly last month to advance Chairman Larry Martin's bill to the Senate floor for debate. A House study committee, created last August, introduced its proposal last month. Both bills would create tiered penalties for abusers, giving

prosecutors more options.

Martin's bill also seeks to prevent known abusers from having easy access to guns. He believes that's critical to reducing the state's dismal death statistics, saying lawmakers have studied the issue to death over the last decade, and it's time to get serious.

Under Martin's proposal, an abuser could not possess a gun while under protective orders, and those convicted of domestic violence could not possess a gun for a decade after their sentence is served. Some first-time offenders could undergo counseling to avoid that penalty.

The ban is already federal law, which would require federal prosecution. State and local law enforcement can't enforce it without a corresponding state law.

More than 36,000 people annually report a domestic violence incident to law enforcement agencies around South Carolina, according to the state attorney general's office.

Title: **2 plans to fix SC roads to be introduced**
 Author: By JEFFREY COLLINS The Associated Press
 Size: 31.62 square inch
 Beaufort, SC Circulation: 11269



2 plans to fix SC roads to be introduced

By JEFFREY COLLINS
 The Associated Press

COLUMBIA — Legislation offering two different ways to raise more money for South Carolina roads will be introduced in the House this week, House Majority Leader Bruce Bannister said Tuesday.

The bills released today will include both Gov. Nikki Haley's plan to increase the state's gas tax by 10 cents and reduce income tax rates by 2 percentage points over 10 years and a special House committee's idea to cut the gas tax while adding a sales tax on fuel, Bannister said after House Republicans met behind closed doors for 90 minutes.

Both plans would raise an additional \$400 million a year for highways and bridges.

Haley was invited to the caucus meeting and promoted her plan for more than 30 minutes.



The Associated Press

Members of Americans for Prosperity listen as South Carolina Treasurer Curtis Loftis speaks at a Statehouse rally against raising the gas tax on Tuesday in Columbia. House leaders are still writing a bill to raise more money for South Carolina roads.

Bannister said she was received warmly. But he said members decided it was best to put both plans on the table. He had no prediction which one

might get more support.

"We'll see tomorrow what the sponsors look like," the Republican from Greenville said.

Bannister also said chances

are if any road funding bill makes it into law this year, it won't look anything like what is proposed Wednesday since the Senate has yet to weigh in.

Plenty of competing voices are calling for more money for roads. Business leaders want something done this year. Democrats don't like Haley's idea of linking the gas tax increase to an income tax reduction.

Conservatives rallied at the Statehouse Tuesday saying they can't support a gas tax increase.

Americans for Prosperity state director Dave Schwartz told a rally of about 70 people that potholes and crumbling bridges make it obvious roads need fixing, but his group can't be sure lawmakers will spend any extra money from a gas tax increase properly.

"We don't trust that the money is going to go a specific way," Schwartz said.

Title: **Don't tie gas tax hike to income tax reduction**
Author:
Size: 7.75 square inch
Beaufort, SC Circulation: 11269



Don't tie gas tax hike to income tax reduction

Why would a state income tax reduction for the richest of our citizens be a prerequisite for increasing the gas tax?

Gov. Nikki Haley demands this reduction or promises to veto a simple gas tax increase.

I believe Haley and the South Carolina legislature should begin to improve our infrastructure with the money she proposes to give to the wealthiest of our citizens.

Isn't it wonderful that our citizens can enjoy driving to work and church while still having some of the lowest wages in the country?

Isn't it also true that many travelers to Florida from New England and the Midwest help out by deferring their fuel purchases until they reach our wonderful state?

John R. Davenport
Okatie

Title: **DHEC chief candidate goes before Senate on Feb. 19**

Author:

Size: 10.54 square inch

Columbia, SC Circulation: 128564



DHEC chief candidate goes before Senate on Feb. 19

State senators will screen the candidate to run South Carolina's environmental and health agency at a hearing next week in Columbia.

The Feb. 19 hearing for Eleanor Kitzman will be held at 9:30 a.m. at the Senate's Gressette office building. The S.C. Department of Health and Environmental Control board last month picked Kitzman to succeed Catherine Templeton.

But Kitzman's nomination has drawn criticism because she has little apparent background in environmental or health issues, having served as insurance commissioner in South Carolina and Texas.

She is a political ally and campaign donor of Gov. Nikki Haley, who appointed the DHEC board. The board did not seek applications from other potential candidates and already has given Kitzman a temporary job with the agency. Several state senators on the screening committee have said she faces intense questioning during the hearing.

— *Sammy Fretwell*

Title: **Koon gets Haley's help in sheriff's race**
 Author: By TIM FLACH tflach@thestate.com
 Size: 26.81 square inch
 Columbia, SC Circulation: 128564



Koon gets Haley's help in sheriff's race

Governor throws support behind GOP hopeful

By TIM FLACH
 tflach@thestate.com

Jay Koon's bid to become Lexington County sheriff got a boost Monday as Gov. Nikki Haley signaled her support.

Haley and husband, Michael, gave Koon a \$250 donation that State Ethics Commission records say is the couple's second personal contribution to a candidate in their home area since July.

The Haleys "believe Jay Koon is the right person with the right experience to continue to move Lexington County in the right

direction and make the Sheriff's Department once again a source of pride," Haley spokeswoman Chaney Adams said.

Koon is one of four Republicans on the March 3 primary ballot that will determine who becomes sheriff since no one else is running.

He has the backing of interim Sheriff Lewis McCarty, a Haley appointee serving until the new sheriff takes over.

Koon is assistant Lexington town police chief

but was on loan as a top aide to McCarty for more than four months last year.

It's exciting to receive help from a state leader who "cares deeply about Lexington and only wants what is best for its residents," Koon said.

Haley is a former state representative from the county and still sends her children to schools there.

Others in the GOP contest are Richland County Deputy Justin Britt, criminal justice instructor Ed Felix and West Columbia

Police Chief Dennis Tyndall.

The contest will provide the steadily growing county of 275,000 residents with its first new sheriff in two generations, with the winner serving through 2016.

It comes after former Sheriff James Metts stepped down in mid-December after 42 years in office before pleading guilty to a federal misconduct charge.

Reach Flach at (803) 771-8483



Haley



Koon

Title: **Pleicones again in running for S.C. Supreme Court chief justice**
 Author: BY JEREMY BORDEN jborden@postandcourier.com
 Size: 55.95 square inch
 Charleston, SC Circulation: 110289



Pleicones again in running for S.C. Supreme Court chief justice

BY JEREMY BORDEN

jborden@postandcourier.com

COLUMBIA — One of South Carolina's Supreme Court associate justices is again seeking to become the court's next chief justice.

If he remains the only candidate, Costa Pleicones would likely succeed Chief Justice Jean Toal when she steps down later this year. Pleicones, 70, would only remain in the position for about a year if elected by a majority of the General Assembly before hitting the mandatory retirement age of 72. The election is expected to take place in May.

There aren't any other challengers so far for Pleicones, who has served on the Supreme Court since 2000. He previously served as an enlisted serviceman and lawyer for the U.S. Army, as a public defender in Richland County and as a Circuit Court judge.

The full General Assembly elects Supreme Court justices, the same as all other judges in the state.

"My understanding of this system puts me in a better position

than anyone to lead the court at this time," Pleicones said. He said one goal would be to reform the state's bar exam for budding lawyers, which takes three days. Most states have gone to a two-day exam, he said.

House Minority Leader Todd Rutherford, D-Columbia, who is often very involved in judicial elections, said lawmakers are waiting to see whether others will also jump into the race. Associate Justice Donald Beatty also would be a good candidate but is widely expected to take a federal court seat opening, Rutherford said.

Rutherford predicted that if Beatty or another justice or judge jumped into the race it could mean a number of candidates would challenge Pleicones. Essentially, Rutherford said that if other candidates sense a fractured vote they could seize the opportunity.

All have deep friendships and ties in the Legislature. "You would see the support go in a lot of different directions,"

Rutherford said.

Beatty and Toal did not return requests for comment.

Toal beat out Pleicones for chief justice last year during a contentious race. Many felt that Toal had backed out on a promise to step down, which Toal denied. Lawmakers were put in the difficult spot of having to pick sides.

"Chief Justice Toal and I get along well and have gotten along well for 50 years. It was never a vitriolic or nasty thing," Pleicones said.

Toal, who was widely seen as someone who has generally sided with the Legislature, wraps up her tenure on the heels of two important decisions that bucked that trend. Last year, Toal and the rest of the court sided with Attorney General Alan Wilson in a widely watched battle between the attorney general and former House Speaker Bobby Harrell, R-Charleston.

Good government advocates and others feared that if Wil-

son was not allowed to pursue a criminal ethics investigation into Harrell, legislators would have effective immunity from prosecution for such crimes. The court, including Toal, decided Wilson did have that authority. In the end, Wilson handed over the case to another prosecutor and Harrell pleaded guilty to ethics-related charges.

In November, Toal also decided for rural-area schools in the landmark case of Abbeville County School District vs. State of South Carolina, which education advocates say has deep civil rights implications. The 21-year-old lawsuit had languished for years, and advocates say they hope the decision will mean a better education for those in impoverished, rural schools. The Legislature and Gov. Nikki Haley have criticized the decision.

Toal has also been credited with updating and modernizing the court system's docket and case-management system, moving paperwork online into a more transparent format.

Title: **Pleicones again in running for S.C. Supreme Court chief justice**
Author: BY JEREMY BORDEN jborden@postandcourier.com
Size: 55.95 square inch
Charleston, SC Circulation: 110289



FILE/AP

South Carolina Supreme Court Associate Justice Costa Pleicones



Title: **State schools chief warns of lower test scores with new, timed tests**
 Author: BY CYNTHIA ROLDAN croldan@postandcourier.com
 Size: 38.44 square inch
 Charleston, SC Circulation: 110289

State schools chief warns of lower test scores with new, timed tests

BY CYNTHIA ROLDAN
croldan@postandcourier.com

COLUMBIA — South Carolina's schools chief warned Monday that test scores will likely drop this year with students taking an unfamiliar test.

State Superintendent of Education Molly Spearman told members of the Education Oversight Committee she is "particularly concerned" over how students will perform on a series of tests that will now be timed.

"If you look at test results whenever a new test is implemented, the scores are going to dip," Spearman said. "It takes awhile for the teachers to get used to the new standards and also, the students to the new style of test. I have confidence in our students that they're going to do really well, but I just want to call attention to the public that this happens in any state that you look at."

South Carolina fully implemented the Common Core standards statewide for the

2014-15 school year. But former Superintendent of Education Mick Zais pulled South Carolina from the Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium, which was set to test the Common Core standards this year.

Since then, the Legislature passed Act 200, which called for the rewrite of the state's standards in an effort to move away from Common Core, after they came under fire in a number of states as a way to nationalize education and standardize curriculum at the state level.

Act 200 also banned the state from using tests by Smarter Balanced, forcing the Department of Education to find a replacement test in a few months. Teachers now have a compressed amount of time to familiarize themselves with the exams.

"We just need to realize that there's a lot of change going on in the assessment area," Spearman said. "It's a big change for us this year."

The state will be conducting three different tests based on grades: third- through eighth-graders will take the ACT Aspire, which measures student

performance. Eleventh-graders will take the ACT WorkKeys — which measures the job readiness level of students who want to head for the workforce after high school — and the college entrance exam ACT Plus Writing.

EOC Executive Director Melanie Barton echoed Spearman on the possibility of test scores dipping. Barton said the tests will be a different experience for students who are not used to being timed.

"The timing is going to be an issue," she added. "You've got to get your thoughts — let's go — you've got to write it. But tests are shorter. That's a good thing."

In other business, the new math standards will be introduced to the Board of Education on Wednesday for first reading, Spearman said.

Writing teams have been working since the passage of Act 200 to rewrite the state's English language arts and math standards. The ELA standards were introduced in January to the board.

Barton also said the EOC is evaluating the technological divide between school districts as the state moves to end-of-year

testing that's fully online. Just three school districts have a computer, laptop or tablet for every student, Barton said. That represents 4 percent of districts statewide.

Her agency plans to release results of a survey on districts' technological capabilities later this month. Beginning in 2017, students must take end-of-year tests online.

To prepare for that, legislators committed last year to spending about \$30 million annually for three years. Gov. Nikki Haley's budget proposal for the upcoming fiscal year includes the second installment.

Spearman is requesting up to \$350,000 of that to hire employees who could travel to rural districts to provide technological expertise.

The Associated Press contributed to this story.

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Spearman