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**Gov. Haley proclaims April Sexual Assault Awareness Month**

From release

The S.C. Coalition Against Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault (SCCADVASA) has announced that Gov. Nikki R. Haley has issued a proclamation recognizing April as Sexual Assault Awareness Month.

Sexual Assault Awareness Month calls attention to the fact that sexual violence is widespread and can impact every person in the community. SCCADVASA urges citizens of

S.C. to join their voices and efforts with others around the nation to recognize the severe impact of sexual violence in communities.

Increased awareness of sexual assaults will help break the silent anguish victims often face and provide the crucial resources and aid they need as they work towards overcoming the abuse they have experienced.

In 2015, SCCADVASA's sexual assault organizations pro-

vided services to 5,152 individuals, 2,354 of whom were under the age of 18. A national survey by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) showed that nearly one in five women (22 million) have been raped at some time in their

lives. Nearly one in two women and one in five men have experienced other forms of sexual violence at some point in their lives. Sexual violence transcends the stereotypes of victims and offenders and takes

place across communities, often in places where people feel safest.

Sexual Assault Awareness Month is an opportunity to shine a light on this critical public health issue and to learn how everyone can become active in prevention, education, speaking out against harmful attitudes and behaviors and supporting survivors on their road to healing.

Experiencing sexual violence breaks a person's trust

and feelings of safety in any community.

"Sexual assault is one of the most devastating crimes in our society today, with victims often suffering lifelong pain from physical injury and serious emotional trauma," said Gov. Haley in her proclamation.

To learn more regarding Sexual Assault Awareness Month or to support your local sexual assault organization, visit [www.scsaysnomore.org](http://www.scsaysnomore.org).

# 148 statehouse report

OPINION by Andy Brack

## Soul of Legislature May Be Up for Grabs in June

Filing has closed for the 2016 election year, and just over half of the 170 seats in the South Carolina General Assembly have only one candidate — all incumbents, except for one seat where a newcomer has no challenger at all.

At first blush, it might seem like business as usual for our legislative elections thanks to past gerrymandering of districts that protected parties, favored incumbents and tamped down opposition to help the status quo. But a closer analysis shows something else is going on — a battle for the soul of the Legislature in the state Senate.

Of the 46 seats in the Senate, 17 senators are running unopposed — 10 Republicans and seven Democrats, including some for whom you might think opposing parties would scramble to find challengers. Examples include Democratic Sens. Vincent Sheheen and Brad Hutto, who are continuing thorns in the sides of the GOP and its governor, Nikki

Greenville City Council member Lillian Brock Flemming in the Democratic primary; the winner will face a Republican challenger.

More traditional challenges of Senate incumbents also exist. In November, voters will be able to decide whether long-time Democratic Minority Leader Nikki Setzler of Lexington or senior Republican John Courson of Columbia will return.

Yes, something serious is going on — a battle for the heart of the state Senate. The June 14 primary should clarify which side will prevail — unless the incumbency advantage (money, media exposure, more) trumps the philosophical battle fueled by dark money and angst. In the Year of Voter Anger, it's tough to predict.

In the House, don't look for as much change, especially as 26 Democratic incumbents and 43 GOP current officeholders face no opposition. Fourteen incumbents — about split evenly between the two parties — face

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Haley. On the Republican side, high-profile senators like Danny Verdin, Chip Campsen and Tom Davis got byes. You would think somebody might run against them, but with those seats safe, those who could run must figure, "Why?"

But a baker's dozen of Republican senators face primary opposition, sometimes from more than one candidate. At the top of the list is President Pro Tem Hugh Leatherman of Florence, who has two challengers, including a county party chair. Also facing challengers are moderates who sometimes conflict with the hard right William Wallace caucus in the Senate — Judiciary Chair Larry Martin of Pickens, Banking and Insurance Chair Wes Hayes of Rock Hill, Ethics Chair Luke Rankin of Conway and veteran Paul Campbell of Goose Creek.

But wait, it's not only the moderates who believe they've been targeted by right-wingers and who are facing challenges. So do some of the more conservative members of the Senate, including Kevin Bryant of Anderson, Mike Fair of Greenville and Lee Bright of Roebuck, who has drawn three primary opponents including former state Rep. Scott Talley.

There also are some Democratic Senate squabbles, such as the Charleston rematch between former Sen. Robert Ford, who was unseated after ethics problems by incumbent Sen. Marlon Kimpson, seen as a rising star. In Greenville, Sen. Karl Allen will again face

only primary opposition. Nineteen incumbents of 124 members have general election opposition only.

Perhaps the most interesting House races will be for the 13 open seats. Six Democrats are vying for longtime Rep. Grady Brown's Bishopville seat. The primary winner has no GOP challenger. Three Democrats, one Republican and one Libertarian want the Columbia House seat held by Mia McLeod, who is running for Sen. Joel Lourie's open seat. Republicans are likely to pick up the Charleston seat held by Democratic Rep. Mary Tinkler, who is running for a county office instead of the House. (That seat was held by disgraced House Speaker Bobby Harrell.)

Three open Republican House seats to watch include those held by veterans Kenny Bingham of Lexington, Jenny Horne of Summerville (who is running for Congress) and Chip Limehouse of Charleston. Each will feature primary and general contests.

More than usual, this year's field of legislative candidates offers more choices in districts throughout the state. Despite the advantages of incumbency, it's healthy for voters in a democracy to have more than the same old candidates. The unhealthy exception? The open Georgetown House seat where a brand new candidate has no opposition at all. That's just plain sad. ■

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## 148 THEIR VIEW

### Law's hurtful words need to be fixed

South Carolina's perpetual ranking in the top 10 nationally when it comes to domestic violence is tragic enough. Now, not only does the state frequently hit the No. 1 and No. 2 spots in the ranking, it also fails to adequately protect domestic violence victims who are in same-sex relationships.

A woman who tried to get a protective order against her former fiancée, also a woman, was denied the order because the relationship seems to run counter to the state's domestic violence law, which defines household members as a spouse, former spouse, people with a child in common or men and women who are living or have lived together. Nothing in the law stipulates unmarried same-sex couples.

The matter has rolled up the ladder and in the state's Supreme Court where, it is hoped, the high court will determine what can be done because the state's domestic violence law appears to be wholly unconstitutional as it — unintentionally, perhaps — discriminates against same-sex couples. While same-sex couples are now legally recognized following last year's U.S. Supreme

Court ruling, the clear waters get a bit murky when it comes to domestic violence cases, thanks to the law's language.

A solution exists involving our language. As an Associated Press story noted last week, the Ohio Supreme Court adopted gender-neutral references in family court cases. Similarly, California and Massachusetts changed the language in their laws to ensure the laws protect all couples.

South Carolina appears to be taking genuine steps in addressing the over-present domestic violence mark it bears so boldly and vividly. Gov. Nikki Haley's task force and lawmakers are, thankfully, taking the issue seriously. It is a statewide problem that will require statewide work, from law enforcement through the judicial system where domestic violence criminals land.

While that is good, it is not good enough, as made evident by this one woman's case, and the cases like hers that most surely will follow. We hope and trust lawmakers and the state's high court will work in concert to address this wrinkle that is leaving some state residents unprotected by laws that are supposed to be written to protect all residents.

The playground saying that "sticks and stones may break my bones, but words can never hurt me" don't ring true in this case. Domestic violence hurts enough people already. Let's not allow words in our state's laws to cause further hurt.

— The (Greenwood) Index-Journal



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## STATE HOUSE REPORT FROM REP. ANNE J. THAYER House District 9

Dear Friends,

Increased funding to patch and repair our roads and bridges was top priority during the budget debate in the SC House of Representatives. A sizeable portion of the debate focused on various approaches to road funding as we voted on next year's state budget which takes effect July 1.

The House budget calls for \$415 million ADDITIONAL dollars to be spent on improving our state's roads. This is in addition to the state gas tax revenues which go directly to SCDOT. Here's a breakdown of the additional funding:

\$316 Million to the State Highway Fund

- \$135 million for paving, rehabilitation, resurfacing, and/or reconstruction of the Primary Road System
- \$100 million transfer of fees and fines from DMV
- \$65.68 million from transfer of remaining Motor Vehicle Sales Tax Revenues in the General Fund
- \$15.32 million more from General Funds
- \$50 Million to the County Transportation Committees
- Funds to be distributed to CTCs

according to the formula in statute and used solely on state-owned secondary roads

- Roughly 67% increase over the annual CTC Allocation
- \$49 Million to SCDOT for Flood-Related Road Repairs
- \$37.3 million directly to SC DOT
- 11.7 million to EMD to SC DOT for FEMA match

In the Senate:

The SC Senate approved a state registry of refugees, just one day after terrorists bombed a Brussels airport and subway station, killing more than 30 people and injuring another 250. The Senate voted 39-6 to start the registry, which could be the first of its kind in the nation. The proposal still needs approval from the House. Registry backers said they are concerned terrorists could enter the state under the guise of being refugees. Several dozen refugees entered South Carolina last year, and an estimated 200 will arrive in the state this year. New York is the only other state considering a refugee registry.

The Governor's Office:

Gov. Nikki Haley told the federal government this week to either stop Japanese shipments of plutonium from going to the Savannah River Site or reroute the plutonium so that it doesn't enter South Carolina. She says she doesn't want SC to become a "permanent nuclear dumping ground." Reportedly, ships carrying 331 kilograms of weapons-grade plutonium from Japan will soon dock at the Charleston Naval Weapons Station before the plutonium is sent to the Savannah River Site and deposited in Aiken County.

Lastly great things that are happening in SC: Black Water Barrels LLC establishing in Bamberg with a \$3.6 million investment and 57 jobs over the next 5 years; Cypress Creek Renewables investing \$120 million in Solar projects. The construction will create 40-60 positions. Installation will be complete by the end of 2016 and 14 megawatts will power 2800 homes; D & W Fine Pact is expanding in Laurens with a \$20 million project that will create 60 jobs; and 3i Produce will establish in Lancaster with a \$3million investment and 100 jobs.

As always, I appreciate the opportunity of serving you.  
Rep. Anne Thayer