

Title: **Official: McMaster could make SC roads his issue**
 Author: BY CASSIE COPE ccope@thestate.com
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AFTER HALEY

Official: McMaster could make SC roads his issue

■ Whether presumptive Gov. Henry McMaster will support an increase to the state's gas tax to pay for road repairs is unknown.

BY CASSIE COPE
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The head of the S.C. Department of Transportation Commission said Thursday he is eager to learn Lt. Gov. Henry McMaster's position on higher spending on the state's roads and bridges.

Whether McMaster will support an increase to the state's gas tax to pay to repair the state's crumbling roads and bridges is unknown.



McMaster

McMaster is set to become governor if Gov. Nikki Haley is confirmed by the U.S. Senate to become U.S. ambassador to the United Nations. Since

Haley's nomination by President-elect Donald Trump was announced last week, McMaster has been quiet – not responding to media inquiries.

But McMaster could take the lead on addressing the state's crumbling roads and bridges, Transportation commission chairman Mike Wooten said Thursday. "He has a great opportunity to be an 'infrastructure governor,' and we haven't had one in a long time."

After winning a second term, Gov. Haley endorsed a gas-tax increase but only if it were tied to a much larger income-tax cut. Critics said Haley's plan would have

slashed spending on other state services, including education and law enforcement.

Earlier this year, Haley signed a road-spending plan that did not include an increase to the gas tax. However, Haley said that stop-gap plan was "not of the magnitude or sustainability" needed to address the state's highway needs. She added finding a long-term solution would be the state's No. 1 priority when lawmakers return for the 2017 session.

"The governor, in a leadership role, can do great things," Wooten said. "I'm hoping that Gov. McMaster, when he is governor, will do that."

Title: **SC's Harrison making a bid to become the DNC chairman and heal the party's wounds**

Author: BY DAVID LIGHTMAN McClatchy Washington Bureau WASHINGTON

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SC's Harrison making a bid to become the DNC chairman and heal the party's wounds

BY DAVID LIGHTMAN

McClatchy Washington Bureau

WASHINGTON

He wants to become chairman of the Democratic National Committee and help lead the party back from the wilderness.

So far, though, he's just Jaime Who?

"I just don't know him personally," said Teresa Garcia Krusor, a longtime Democratic National Committee member from Kansas.

"Who?" asked Rosalind Wyman of California, another DNC veteran.

As Jaime Harrison seeks to lead the party, the first challenge for the chairman of the South Carolina Democratic Party is simply to become better known.

He'll get his first high-profile chance Friday, when he and three rivals appear before state party chairs from around the country at a Future of the Party Forum in Denver.

Jaime Harrison

Age: 40

Education: Bachelor's in political science, Yale University; law degree, Georgetown University

Experience: Chief operations officer, College Summit; executive director, U.S. House Democratic Caucus; aide to U.S.

State party officials are part of the DNC and get to vote for the new leader.

Harrison faces better-known figures. Rep. Keith Ellison, D-Minn., has emerged as a favorite of the party's liberal wing. He's won the backing of incoming Senate Democratic Leader Chuck Schumer, D-N.Y., and party presidential runner-up Sen. Bernie Sanders, Ind.-Vt.

Also in the mix are Howard Dean, the former party chairman and Vermont governor whose "50-state strategy" is still lauded by party regulars; and Raymond Buckley,

the highly regarded New Hampshire party chairman. Ilyse Hogue, president of NARAL Pro-Choice America, which advocates for abortion rights, is also said to be weighing a bid.

Harrison starts with plenty of goodwill. "He's very well-liked by those who have worked with him," said Krusor.

"He's salt of the earth. There's nothing bad I can say," said Alexandra Gallardo-Rooker, California party first vice chair. But, she conceded, "it's going to be harder for him."

Harrison has to overcome not only his lack of name recognition and his

rivals, but the recent Democratic record in South Carolina.

"Ineffective. What's he won?" asked David Woodard, a Clemson-based Republican consultant.

Republicans hold the governorship, both U.S. Senate seats and six of the seven House seats. Democrats thought Gov. Nikki Haley was vulnerable in 2014, after she endured a tense relationship with officials in her own party and was lagging among independents. Then she won by 14 points.

Donald Fowler, a form-

SEE DEMS, 5C

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Author: BY DAVID LIGHTMAN McClatchy Washington Bureau WASHINGTON

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Rep. Jim Clyburn, D-S.C.; principal, Podesta Group, a Washington-based lobbying firm; S.C. Democratic Party chair since 2013

Lives in: Columbia

Family: Married with one son

FROM PAGE 1C

DEMS

er DNC and South Carolina chairman, said there's no favorite yet as members are just getting started considering the candidates.

Harrison will stress his roots. An Orangeburg native, born to a teenaged mother who dropped out of school when he was born, he excelled at school and graduated from Yale University. He interned for Rep. Jim Clyburn, D-S.C., and at age 30 became executive director for the House Democratic Caucus. When Clyburn became House Majority Whip in 2007, he named Harrison his floor director, or top vote-counter.

The job came with challenges. Democrats had regained the House majority after 12 years, and that meant dozens of moderate Southerners who were not always agreeable to the more liberal leadership's policies.

Harrison developed a knack for avoiding ideological disputes, ultimately helping win votes for a host of measures including hate crime and climate change legislation.

Harrison's pitch to Democratic Party officials will involve his ability to organize and count.

"The Democratic Party has to transform itself," he told McClatchy in an interview. "We can't just pop up every two or four years and hope people will support us."

He wants the national party to provide more staff and more financial resources and expertise for state parties, more visibility in communities – similar to the strategy Republicans have employed over the past four years.

The national party, Harrison maintained, has been starving state parties for years, failing to give them enough to hire staff

or even pay bills. That's why DNC members fondly recall Dean's 2005-09 stewardship.

Harrison wants to bring the sort of party-building ideas he used in South Carolina to the national stage.

He's hosted Chair Chats, video interviews with local officials and activists to discuss issues and showcase Democratic talent.

He's organized issues conferences around the state to discuss policy and train activists.

He's launched the Clyburn Political Fellowship program to train hundreds of young people.

The program involves 50 fellows – one from each county, and four statewide – who participate in seminars and training sessions.

They prepare to run for office, manage issue or political campaigns and become active in local and

county politics.

One question he could face with DNC members involves his work with the Podesta Group as a lobbyist.

Harrison has been on unpaid leave from the firm since announcing his chairmanship bid in mid-November.

He stressed that his boss was Tony Podesta, not his brother John Podesta, who ran Hillary Clinton's presidential campaign but has not worked for the group for years.

Harrison is convinced Democrats will understand.

Winning the chairmanship is akin to getting all sorts of House Democrats together on a vote.

"I know what it is to bring people together," he figures.

DNC members want to know more. After all, said Wyman, "he's a new name."



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Jamie Harrison, an attorney and former Jim Clyburn aide, works the crowd at the Democrats' Jefferson Jackson Dinner in 2013.

FILE/THE STATE

Title: **Maybe something will get done**

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Maybe something will get done

It's always interesting to listen to our state legislators in the month or so leading up to a new General Assembly session in Columbia.

If you believe everything that you hear, all the problems in South Carolina are finally going to be addressed and cleared up this time. And I'm sure that's the mantra that's being spread by delegations throughout the state.

But then January comes around and something happens.

The big issues get debated to death and everybody wants their version of the quick fix or nothing. Then hundreds if not thousands of other local, self-serving laws and regulations are passed leaving the big issues in the dust.

And this year, our men and women in the State House will have even less time to get things accomplished since the session that used to run until mid-June is being cut back until mid-May.

Tuesday, a good portion of the Horry and Georgetown delegation attended the Myrtle Beach Area Chamber of Commerce's annual Legislative Luncheon to give their insights and desires for the upcoming session.

Probably the most honest, and funniest, part of the whole thing was listening to state Sen. Luke Rankin get in his parting shots to Gov. Nikki Haley.

During the June primary, Haley did everything she could to help Rankin's opponent win. She made personal appearances and got lots of money poured in to the other side, trying to get Rankin out of the Senate.

She did the same thing in a number of races throughout the state, hoping to stack the legislature in her favor. But in most cases, her efforts were in vain.

So Tuesday, Rankin took great delight in saying the one thing he looks forward to the most in January is having a different governor in the Capitol.

For those not keeping up with the latest national news, President-elect Trump has tabbed Haley to be the next ambassador to the United Nations.



**A DIFFERENT
DRUM**

**TOM
O'DARE**

Rankin said that maybe things will get done more efficiently without a constant threat of the governor's veto looming over the building.

And one of those items that faced the veto pen last year was a proposal for a gas tax increase in the state to pay for road and bridge repairs and construction.

To a person Tuesday, each legislator told the huge Chamber crowd

that they expect some kind of gas tax to be imposed in order to get a sustainable funding source for our roads.

South Carolina has one of the lowest gas taxes in the nation already so upping it a bit really won't do that much harm. Just go across the border into North Carolina and the gas price goes up by 20 cents or more because of their higher gas tax.

And oh yeah, their roads are in much better shape than ours. So, South Carolina folks need to decide what they want—lower prices at the pump or terrible roads that cause damage to our vehicles that still cost us.

I did think it was interesting how times have changed. Except for one panelist, Sen. Ronnie Sabb, everyone on the stage was a Republican.

Republicans advocating a tax hike—who'd have thunk it.

Some other issues did come across the table Tuesday besides roads and a gas tax.

Rankin said he hopes to find a constant state funding source for beach renourishment—and that's a good thing.

Just take a look at our beaches after ol' Matthew came through in October and you can see why. Right now, local entities have to rely on the federal government for most renourishment money and that's not ever a sure thing.

Tourism drives our state's economy and the biggest tourism attraction we have is our beach. Unfortunately, legislators in

other parts of the state see renourishment funding as throwing money into the ocean.

Another subject that should be coming up this spring is dealing with mopeds.

State Sen. Greg Hembree who couldn't be there Tuesday has taken this issue as one of his most important topics. Others mentioned it and said they hope something can get done this time to regulate these two-wheeled menaces.

Now I know, a moped might be the only mode of transportation some folks can afford. But it always boggles my mind that nobody wants to do anything to regulate them.

They don't have to be insured; don't need a special license; and they don't go fast enough for main roads.

Hardly a week goes by without a story about a moped-vehicle collision. In fact, as I'm writing this, I just got a news alert about a moped driver being killed in nearby Marion County.

Last year, the legislature wanted to at least require that riders wear protective clothing so they could be seen by other drivers. But the governor vetoed even that.

It makes no sense to let these vehicles go unabated and unlicensed and uninsured.

And you have to wonder why there is a resistance to such a common sense topic.

Like everything else, follow the money.

Not all, but many of the people driving these have lost their licenses to drive regular vehicles, often times for DUI offenses. And that makes them an insurance company nightmare if the legislature starts requiring moped drivers to be insured.

And guess what industry wields quite a bit of power when it comes to influencing elected officials?

I'll leave that up to others to figure out. But it's not hard to do.

Maybe this issue and others will see the light of day before mid-May with a new occupant in the governor's mansion.

A governor who will work with the legislature instead of threatening it will be a breath of fresh air, especially if important legislation finally gets passed.

So to echo Sen. Rankin's heart-felt sentiments, good luck in New York Mrs. Haley.

Title: **Local delegation gives insight to new session**
 Author: BY TOM O'DARE TOM.ODARE@MYHORRYNEWS.COM
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Local delegation gives insight to new session

Entire panel listed roads as top priority

BY TOM O'DARE

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There were a couple of things very obvious Tuesday afternoon at the 2016 Myrtle Beach Area Chamber of Commerce Legislative Luncheon.

One, every legislator present favors a gas tax as a funding source for road and bridge repairs in South Carolina.

And two, state Sen. Luke Rankin is Gov. Nikki Haley's biggest cheerleader in her quest to be the next ambassador to the United Nations.

Three senators-Rankin, Ronnie Sabb and Stephen Goldfinch and five state representatives-Alan Clemmons, Greg Duckworth, Jeff Johnson, Russell Fry and Lee Hewitt told

the huge crowd gathered at the Horry-Georgetown Tech Conference Center their visions for the upcoming legislative session beginning in January.

The entire panel listed roads as a top priority and all agreed that a gas tax is necessary to provide the

money for the road improvements. Clemmons said a gas tax is needed to provide a long-lasting sustainable funding source for roads and bridges.

Johnson said he agreed with Clemmons but he wanted to see a tax credit for South Carolina residents tied to the new tax.

Saying it was time to switch the responsibility for paying for new roads, Goldfinch said tourists should pay the biggest portion of road funding, not teachers or firefighters.

Rankin said South Carolina is the laughing stock in the Southeast when it comes to paying for roads.

As to implementing a gas tax to pay for it, "We'd be stupid if we didn't," he said.

Goldfinch said he was looking forward to passing some new rules

See LUNCHEON, Page 10A

LUNCHEON from Page 1A

change in the Senate that should get legislation through a lot faster.

Rankin said what he was looking forward to the most in January was Gov. Haley becoming the UN ambassador.

During his recent re-election bid, Haley worked hard for his opponent and he made it clear he still isn't happy with that move.

"A new governor will change the Columbia atmosphere dramatically," he said. "It will help advance legislation in the General Assembly."

Duckworth pointed out the need for legislators to be more decisive this session because the General Assembly won't meet as long as they have in the past.

He said the session will be cut short by

almost four weeks this time.

Johnson said he will work to alleviate problems that local areas have had the last two years with flooding issues.

Fry said he had spent long hours this summer studying ways to battle the heroin and opiate epidemics that have ravaged the state.

"We need to tweak our laws in this area to fight this growing problem," he said.



TOM O'DARE | THE HERALD

Members of the Horry and Georgetown legislative delegations met with Myrtle Beach Chamber of Commerce members Tuesday afternoon.

Title: **Haley's appointment reveals Trump's focus on results-driven governance**

Author:

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THE GREENVILLE NEWS EDITORIAL

Haley's appointment reveals Trump's focus on results-driven governance

"Start spreading the news, I'm leaving today, I want to be a part of it, New York, New York." South Carolina Gov. Nikki Haley knows and perhaps has recently listened to this Frank Sinatra jazz standard. The cabinet-level appointment by President-elect Donald Trump of Gov. Haley as United States Ambassador to the United Nations provides a perspective on the Trump administration's governance philosophy.

After U.S. Senate confirmation, Gov. Haley will relocate to U.N. world headquarters in New York City. Gov. Haley's role as U.S. Ambassador to the U.N. is a permanent voting representative to the intergovernmental organization of 193 member states. Each member state convenes within the U.N. General Assembly. The U.S. Ambassador to the U.N. is a significant diplomatic arm of U.S. foreign policy.

The U.S. is one of five permanent members of the U.N. Security Council, the others being Britain, China, France and Russia. The Security Council also includes ten non-permanent member states. Angola, Egypt, Japan, Malaysia, New Zealand, Senegal, Spain, Ukraine, Uruguay and Venezuela comprise the current non-permanent Security Council membership. These seats are filled on a rotating basis.

The General Assembly's major functions are to promote peacemaking activities, security and the well-being of world nations. The U.N. also monitors economic and humanitarian needs and human rights violations and acts on health crises that endanger populations of member states and health crises that reach beyond the borders of

origination.

Additionally, the U.N. seeks to prevent external and internal military conflicts among nations. The U.N. will support military intervention to prevent escalating military crises as a method toward ensuring global peace. More importantly, the U.S. doesn't require any U.N. approval for U.S. international actions. The U.S. acts unilaterally based on U.S. foreign policy interest.

As a voting member of the Security Council within the General Assembly, the U.S. often leads or dissents on U.N. issues and resolutions. Other member states will follow the U.S. vote. The U.S. holds this distinction by maintaining strong global leadership, influence and international allied cooperation.

Gov. Haley brings vital decision-making and executive experience for a big-picture view of geo-political issues to the U.N. Negotiating and providing a communicative voice to all nations before the U.N are crucial traits Haley possesses and will utilize effectively.

U.S. foreign policy is defined by the U.N. Ambassador before the General Assembly. Gov. Haley will consult with ambassadors and representatives of member states. The new U.N. Ambassador will listen to concerns of other nations and adopt and execute international issues that meet within the U.S. foreign policy framework. Gov. Haley will travel between New York City and Washington, D.C., to consult with U.S. agencies and departments that are essential to the U.S. diplomatic mission.

South Carolinians, as well as many people across the United States and internationally, are pondering why Haley was chosen as U.N. Ambassador. The

Trump administration wants a clear and convincing voice for U.S. foreign policy before the U.N. Incidentally, Haley doesn't hold any preferences or publicly known beliefs on U.S. foreign policy. Formulating and executing foreign policy requires caution and foresight. The mechanics of foreign policy require the best tools and actions for results. Conversely, representing U.S. foreign policy at the U.N. requires tact and consistency.

Haley, as governor, performed executive-level negotiations with international companies on major economic development projects for South Carolina. Additionally, Gov. Haley led emergency disaster response with constructive outcomes for S.C. constituents. The ability to interpret, define needs and act appropriately are qualities that highlight Gov. Haley's abilities as U.N. Ambassador.

The Trump administration is vetting several former governors and municipal chief executives. The selection of former Governor of Indiana Mike Pence as Vice-President illustrates this effort. Other considerations include former governors Mitt Romney and Rick Perry and former New York City Mayor Rudy Giuliani. Each is a former chief executive. The Haley appointment underscores this trend.

Furthermore, the Trump administration appointments are pure decision makers and problem solvers, as opposed to ideologues and long-time federal bureaucrats. Gov. Haley's appointment reveals that the Trump administration is focused on results-driven governance. The offices of the President of the United States are being filled with experienced chief executives.

Title: **Haley's appointment reveals Trump's focus on results-driven governance**

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utives.

Once Haley officially exits the governor's mansion in Columbia as U.N. Ambassador, she may sing the end of the Sinatra song: "These little town blues, are melting away, I'm gonna make a brand-new start of it, in

old New York. If I can make it there, I'm gonna make it anywhere. It's up to you New York, New York."

Christopher Rogers, MPA, as an Adjunct Professor of Political Science at Trident Technical College in Charleston.

**Christopher Rogers**

Guest Columnist

Title: **Haley: \$64M needed to cover Matthew costs**
 Author:
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State news briefs

Haley: \$64M needed to cover Matthew costs

COLUMBIA — South Carolina Gov. Nikki Haley plans to seek about \$64 million in next year's budget to cover damage to the state from Hurricane Matthew not covered by federal emergency aid.

The governor's office released estimates Wednesday that found the state has to pay about \$33.5 million for items such as debris removal, damage to public buildings and infrastructure, as well as evacuations along the coast.

The estimates find the state is also on the hook for \$30.4 million to cover damage to roads not covered by federal aid.

The governor's office said figures were not yet available for a total estimate of public and

private damage caused by the October storm.

Five people died, some 870,000 were left without power, and 350,000 evacuated as the storm scoured the state's coastline.

Possible tornadoes track south of I-85 in Carolinas

GREENVILLE — A series of severe storms tracked from Greenville through Charlotte, North Carolina, damaging some homes and knocking down trees. No injuries were reported.

Tornado warnings were issued Wednesday evening as the storms rapidly moved just

to the south of Interstate 85.

The National Weather Service says trees fell on several buildings and homes in Simpsonville. Tree damage was reported in Chester and York counties.

The weather service also says at least one building was damaged in south Charlotte and a tractor trailer was blown over.

DOJ files statement of interest in 'disturbing schools' law

CHARLESTON — The U.S. Department of Justice has filed a statement of interest in a lawsuit that challenges South Carolina's "disturbing schools" law, which makes it a crime to

act in an obnoxious manner on school grounds.

The *Post and Courier* of Charleston reports that the law was written nearly a century ago to protect girls' schools from intruders. The law has since been used to arrest students in South Carolina schools.

In August, the American Civil Liberties Union helped file a federal lawsuit challenging the constitutionality of the law. The plaintiffs are seeking a court order that would stop police from enforcing the disturbing schools law.

The DOJ's filing on Monday states that it's the department's duty to protect children's behavior from being criminalized.

Title: **McMastermeeting military leaders ashe readies to becomegovernor**
 Author: BYBRISTOW MARCHANT bmarchant@thestate.com
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McMaster meeting military leaders as he readies to become governor

BY BRISTOW MARCHANT
bmarchant@thestate.com

Henry McMaster won't become South Carolina's next governor until sometime next year. But he will start filling the role Friday.

That is when McMaster will preside over a commanders' briefing from the heads of South Carolina's military bases – a role normally filled by the governor.

The annual governor's briefing brings together the commanding officers of all S.C. military installations to discuss issues facing the bases and military personnel in the Palmetto State. McMaster's appearance at the Friday meeting will be the



McMaster

first time the lieutenant governor will be acting in the role of the state's chief executive.

Bill Bethea, chairman of the S.C. Military Base Task Force, said the task force hasn't had any interaction with McMaster in his two years as the state's second-in-command.

Bethea and task force executive coordinator Charlie Farrell will meet with the lieutenant governor Thursday to "give him a heads up."

"I've known the lieutenant governor for many years, but ... this will be our first interaction with

him in an official capacity," said Bethea, a Bluffton attorney.

Outgoing Gov. Nikki Haley – who will leave office if her nomination to become U.S. ambassador to the United Nations is confirmed – has been active on military issues for the past six years, Bethea said, and the task force is looking forward to working with McMaster in the same vein.

"We're delighted to have the opportunity to have him there. It gives the base commanders a chance to get to him right out of the box," Bethea said.

The task force is made up of appointed members from communities that host military bases, and

meets regularly with command officers from Fort Jackson, Joint Base Charleston, Marine Corps Air Station Beaufort, Recruiting Station Parris Island and Shaw Air Force Base, as well as the S.C. National Guard.

The task force's primary mission is to ward off potential base closures by the federal government, but it also serves as a forum for issues affecting service members, veterans and military retirees.

One focus of the task force, currently, is assistance for military children who have to change schools when their parents redeploy, Bethea said. "It's not a national defense-oriented issue, but it's a morale-oriented issue."

McMaster's office did not return a request for comment ahead of Friday's meeting.

Title: **Decking the Governor's Mansion halls for the holidays**
Author:
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Decking the Governor's Mansion halls for the holidays

Columbia Garden Club, which has decorated the Governor's Mansion for Christmas every year since 1981, is putting the final touches this week on the home in downtown Columbia.

Gov. Nikki Haley, first gentleman Michael Haley and their children, Rena and Nalin, invite South Carolinians to join them for a Christmas Open House on Monday from 5:30-7:30 p.m.

The event is free; no reservations are required. But the first family asks that guests consider bringing canned goods to be donated to Harvest Hope Food Bank. The donations will be collected at the home's entrance.



THESTATE.COM: See more photos

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PHOTOGRAPHS BY SEAN RAYFORD online@thestate.com

Noelle Faulkner, left, and Joan Danforth decorate a mantle in a living room at the Governor's Mansion on Wednesday in Columbia. A holiday drop-in at the mansion, decorated by the Columbia Garden Club, is Monday.



Denise Degenhart places a decorative bird in a hallway at the Governor's Mansion.

Title: **HurricaneMatthewwill be \$64 millionhit toSC budget**
 Author: BY AVERYG.WILKS awilks@thestate.com
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Hurricane Matthew will be \$64 million hit to SC budget

BY AVERY G. WILKS
 awilks@thestate.com

Hurricane Matthew will cost the state of South Carolina almost \$64 million, even after the federal government picks up most of the cost for the October disaster, S.C. Gov. Nikki Haley's office said Wednesday.

The Republican governor plans to ask that S.C. lawmakers reflect that \$64 million in next year's budget, her office said.

Matthew, which briefly made landfall in South Carolina as a Category 1 hurricane, caused nearly \$341 million in damage to public property, according to estimates provided by the governor's office. About \$100 million of that damage was to state-owned roads.

Federal programs will cover most of those costs. But state government still

is on the hook for \$30.4 million in damage to state roads and \$33.5 million in damage to public buildings and other infrastructure, debris removal costs and the cost of emergency protective procedures, including evacuations.

Officials could not yet estimate the storm's damage to private households or businesses. But the hurricane's damage to public assets will prove smaller than the historic October 2015 flooding, according to estimates by the governor's office.

Haley's office estimated last year's flooding would cost the state \$114 million.

However, lawmakers spent roughly \$150 million in state money on

flood costs, including \$40 million in grants to S.C.

farmers that Haley unsuccessfully opposed.

Still, the \$64 million will knock a dent in the added \$446 million that legislators will have to spend next year.

That total includes \$139 million reserved for one-time costs — like building projects — if the state closes its books with a surplus. The state's next budget will take effect July 1.

Hurricane Matthew caused \$52 million in insured crop losses and \$32 million in lost or displaced tourism revenue for downtown Charleston, Hilton Head Island and the Grand Strand, according to Haley's office.

The Federal Emergency Management Agency has paid out \$32.6 million to affected families, and the

U.S. Small Business Association has offered \$25.1 million in low-interest recovery loans to S.C. families and businesses.

FEMA's National Flood Insurance Program has paid out an estimated \$28.1 million to S.C. policy-holders, and private insurance companies have paid out an estimated \$541.2 million for storm-caused damage, according to the estimates.

Twenty-five roads across the state remain closed, down from 481 immediately after the storm.

Staff writer Cassie Cope contributed to this story.

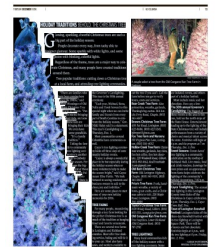
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Title: **HOLIDAY TRADITIONS BEHOLD, THE CHRISTMAS TREE**

Author:

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HOLIDAY TRADITIONS BEHOLD, THE CHRISTMAS TREE

Glowing, sparkling, cheerful Christmas trees are such a big part of the holiday season.

People decorate every way, from tacky chic to designer glamour. Some sparkle with white lights, and some glisten with blinking, colorful lights.

Regardless of the theme, trees are a major way to celebrate Christmas, and many people have created traditions around them.

Two popular traditions: cutting down a Christmas tree at a local farm, and attending tree lighting ceremonies.

"There are families who have been coming here since the 1980s," said Mary Wessinger of Old Barn Christmas Tree Farm in Chapin. "Parents started bringing their kids, and now those kids are bringing their kids. We even have some grandkids. "It's a family tradition."

Taking the family to community tree lighting ceremonies is another way to embody the season. Perhaps the biggest of those in the Palmetto State is

the Governor's Carolighting. This year is the 50th annual ceremony.

"Each year, Michael, Rena, Nalin and I look forward to this special night when we can invite family and friends from every part of South Carolina to celebrate the holiday season," Gov. Nikki Haley said in a statement. This year's Carolighting is Thursday, Dec. 1.

Most communities around Columbia have ceremonies as well.

Cayce's tree lighting ceremony kicks off three days of com-

munity holiday events.

"Cayce is always a wonderful place to be but especially during the holiday season when so many volunteers help to make the season bright," said Cayce mayor Elise Partin. "We look forward to seeing residents and business owners to add to the cheer, joy and festivities."

Here are some places to start some of your own holiday memories for 2016.

TREE FARMS

For many people, meandering through a tree farm looking for the perfect Christmas tree is as much of the tradition as hanging tinsel and favorite ornaments.

There are several tree farms in Lexington and Richland counties. Most offer free shaking service, baling and will tie it to your car. Most also have saws, and workers available to

cut the tree if you can't. Call the farm before you go to verify hours, costs and services.

Bear Creek Tree Farm: Also poinsettias, wreaths, garlands, Thanksgiving cactus. 564 Amicks Ferry Road, Chapin. (803) 345-5607

Browns Christmas Tree Farm: 430 Pat Road, Lexington. (803) 622-0686, (803) 622-5245, bjbrown53@msn.com

Fox Tree Farm and Nursery: 133 Virginia Pine Lane, Lexington. (803) 356-4052

Hollow Creek Tree Farm: Christmas wreaths, garlands, hay rides, free hot coffee, free hot chocolate. 228 Windmill Road, Gilbert. (803) 892-3662, RealTreesMakeScents@gmail.com

Old Barn Christmas Tree Farm: Old Lexington Highway, Chapin. (803) 345-9119, (803) 345-5607

Price's Tree Farm: Fresh, hand-made wreaths, a variety of bows, great crafts, and a Christmas cabin to visit. 228 Maple Road, Lexington. (803) 356-4005

Title: **HOLIDAY TRADITIONS BEHOLD, THE CHRISTMAS TREE**

Author:

Size: 82.46 column inches

Columbia, SC Circulation: 128564

Taylor's Christmas Tree Farm: 1129 Windy Road, Gilbert. (803) 892-3311, seangtaylor@msn.com
Old Congaree Run Tree Farm: Free hayrides. Lower Richland (Old Congaree Run). (803) 787-2783

TREE LIGHTINGS

Many local communities kick off the holiday season with a tree lighting ceremony. Some are isolated events, and others part of a holiday festival.

Most include music and hot chocolate. Here are a few:
The 50th annual Governor's Carolighting: The biggest of

these events in the area is this one, held on the north steps of the State House. Entertainment leading up to the lighting of the State Christmas tree will include performances from a variety of choirs and musical talent across the state. *Festivities will begin at 6 p.m. and the program at 7 on Thursday, Dec. 1. Free*

Sweet Seasons: Forest Acres' tree lighting is a community celebration on the rooftop of Richland Mall. Live music, food and drink vendors, drawings for door prizes and an appearance from Santa helps celebrate the lighting of the community's holiday decorations. 7:30 p.m.

Thursday, Dec. 1. Free.

Cayce Treelighting: The annual tree lighting in this Lexington County town kicks off the Christmas in Cayce celebration. *6 p.m. Thursday, Dec. 1, Cayce Town Hall. Free.*

Town of Lexington Snowball Festival: Lexington kicks off the three-day Snowball Festival with its tree lighting at Lexington Square Park. There will be s'mores and hot chocolate. *Festivities begin at 6 p.m., with the tree lighting at 8 p.m. Friday, Dec. 2. Free.*

— LEZLIE PATTERSON,
SPECIAL TO GO COLUMBIA



ROB THOMPSON File photo

A couple select a tree from the Old Congaree Run Tree Farm in Eastover.

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