

Title: **Winthrop Poll: S.C. favors raising gas tax**
 Author: By Jamie Self jsself@thestate.com
 Size: 54.71 square inch
 Rock Hill, SC Circulation: 34688



Winthrop Poll: S.C. favors raising gas tax

But only if increase used for roads, bridges

By JAMIE SELF
jsself@thestate.com

More than half of South Carolinians say the state should raise its gas tax by 10 cents a gallon to pay for road repairs, according to a Winthrop Poll released Wednesday.

That is, if the money is used exclusively to pay for roads and bridges, and the state's gas prices remain lower than its neighbors'.

Fifty-five percent of 1,109 South Carolinians polled between Feb. 21 and March 1 said they would support raising the gas tax on those conditions. Forty-two percent said they opposed the hike.

The gas tax increase is part of a proposal that Gov. Nikki Haley supports and one that lawmakers are considering.

Haley said in January that she would support the gas-tax increase if lawmakers also would agree to

lower income tax rates by 2 percentage points over 10 years. Her plan would swap about \$3.5 billion in new money for roads for tax cuts totaling \$8.5 billion.

The poll results mark a shift from an October Winthrop poll, when 52 percent of South Carolinians said they opposed a gas-tax increase to pay for roads. But in a later question in that same poll, public opinion shifted to approve an increase after those surveyed were told the state's gas prices would remain below neighboring states even with the tax increase.

In the poll released Wednesday, those surveyed were told the gas tax "would increase the cost of gas in the state, but a gallon of gas in South Carolina would still be

cheaper than a gallon of gas in North Carolina or Georgia. The money raised would be restricted to use for infrastructure, such as repairing roads and bridges."

Public opinion varies widely on the issue depending on the context of the question, said Winthrop Poll director Scott Huffmon.

That is because the public knows very few details about the state's gas tax and road-funding issues, he said.

Bill Ross, executive director of S.C. Alliance to Fix Our Roads, said the poll results show public opinion on a gas-tax hike is "moving in the right direction."

"Most people don't support a tax increase" outright, said Ross,

SEE POLL, PAGE 6A

POLL

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1A

whose group says a gas-tax hike is needed to help pay to repair the state's roads. But told how South Carolina's gas tax would compare to other states, the public can support it, Ross added.

"People just don't understand that other states have moved forward with their

highway funding," Ross said. "It helps them relate to the issue."

But Dave Schwartz of Americans for Prosperity, a limited-government group that opposes raising the gas tax, said the poll question was based on "a big if" — whether lawmakers would keep their promise to spend the money on road repairs.

"There is no guarantee

that, if you pass the gas tax hike, that the money will go to roads and bridges," Schwartz said.

"How would you feel about your gas-tax dollars going to pay (for) bicycle trails and not roads?"

Schwartz said that before lawmakers consider raising the gas tax, they first must reform the way the state decides on transportation

projects and how to pay for them.

A more than \$40 billion list of state transportation needs includes light-rail projects and bike paths, Schwartz said, adding that cost exceeds what drivers should be forced to support.

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Winthrop Poll

The Winthrop Poll, conducted Feb. 21 through March 1, interviewed 1,109 adults living in South Carolina. The margin of error is 3 percentage points. Some highlights:

S.C. POLITICIANS

- Should U.S. Sen. Lindsey Graham run for president?
Registered voters – Yes: 26%; **No: 65.3%**; Republicans – Yes: 34%;
No: 56.5%
- Rating Gov. Nikki Haley's job performance – **Approve: 53.2%**;
Disapprove: 37.1%

S.C. ISSUES

- Should same-sex marriages be legal? Yes: 42.8%; **No: 52.7%**
- Should S.C. pass a law enforcing federal gun restrictions for criminal domestic violence offenders? **Yes: 74%**; No: 19.5%
- Should the S.C. Department of Health and Environmental Control be allowed to offer the HPV vaccine to girls entering the 7th grade? **Yes: 67.7%**; No: 23.7%
- Most important issue facing South Carolina? **Education: 17.9%**;

Jobs or unemployment: 12.9%; Economy: 9.4%

S.C. ECONOMY

- Direction of S.C. — **Right track: 52%**; Wrong direction: 39.8%
- Condition of the S.C. economy? Very good: 6.7%;
Fairly good: 59.7%; Fairly bad: 25.3%; Very bad: 6.2%
- Is S.C. economy getting better or worse? **Better: 63.3%**;
Worse: 28.4%

U.S. ISSUES AND ECONOMY

- Most important problem facing the U.S.? **Terrorism, ISIS: 10.3%**; Politicians, government: 9.2%; Economy: 9%
- Direction of the U.S.? Right track: 26.1%; **Wrong direction: 67.4%**
- Condition of U.S. economy? Very good: 4.1%; **Fairly good: 51.9%**; Fairly bad: 29.3%; Very bad: 13.4%
- Is U.S. economy getting better or worse? **Better: 51.2%**;
Worse: 40.5%

Inside

Winthrop Poll: 52% of S.C. residents dissatisfied with Obama, **3B**

Title: **Lawmaker floats compromise on roads; Haley threatens veto**
 Author: BY JEREMY BORDEN jborden@postandcourier.com
 Size: 32.86 square inch
 Charleston, SC Circulation: 110289



Lawmaker floats compromise on roads; Haley threatens veto

BY JEREMY BORDEN
jborden@postandcourier.com

COLUMBIA — Raising the gas tax and putting some state roads under local government control are among the compromises that one state senator hopes can thread a political needle to provide more money for South Carolina's ailing roads network.

Sen. Ray Cleary, R-Murrells Inlet, told a Senate transportation subcommittee Tuesday that his plan offers a way to deal with the competing transportation visions proposed by the governor and lawmakers. Gov. Nikki Haley outlined a plan in late January that would phase in a 10-cents-a-gallon hike in the state's gas tax while restructuring the Department of Transportation and reducing the state's income tax from 7 percent to 5 percent over 10 years.

There has been little visible progress in either the House or Senate since then, however.

Cleary said he hopes his plan can appease the governor and bring together other legislators. Cleary said he wants to increase the state's gas tax by 10 cents a gallon immediately — which he calls a user fee because the revenue would only be used



Cleary

for roads. He then proposes several sales tax exemptions and raising the cap on auto sales taxes to generate more money for roads. All told, it would mean about

\$800 million more for roads each year.

While his proposal does not offer an income tax reduction, Cleary wants to eliminate the state's 3 percent income tax on small businesses.

Cleary said he plans to introduce a bill next week and hopes the governor will support it.

"At the end of the day, what's the legacy of this governor?" Cleary asked. "Let this governor go down as the one who fixes infrastructure."

However, Haley's spokeswoman Chaney Adams dashed those hopes immediately.

"Senator Cleary's plan as it stands is a significant tax increase, something the governor has made clear she will veto," Adams said.

The plan is likely to face more opposition. Cleary is proposing making county's responsible for maintaining local roads,

with the promise of additional state funding.

That's likely to be resisted by local officials who don't believe they Legislature will honor its promise of providing more money.

Cleary says the state would provide consistent funding and allow counties to control where the money is spent.

To raise more money for roads aside from the gas tax increase, Cleary's plan would:

- Increase the cap on automobile or boat sales tax. Currently, those sales are taxed at 3 percent up to \$300. Cleary's plan would raise the cap to \$1,400.
- Eliminate numerous sales tax exemptions in the state code. Exemptions to sales tax would remain for food, health care, electricity and newsprint.
- Peg future gas tax increases to go up no more than the cost of inflation every year.

Other members of Cleary's subcommittee said they wanted to take the temperature of their colleagues before deciding where they stand on the plan.

"I would like to see some bill move," said Sen. Darrell Jackson, D-Hopkins. "I want it to pass, not just to be filed."

Reach **Jeremy Borden** at 708-5837.

Title: **Suspended president of S.C. State sues school**
 Author: By Seanna Adcox Associated Press
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 Rock Hill, SC Circulation: 34688



Suspended president of S.C. State sues school

Four-year contract says he
can only be fired for cause

By SEANNA ADCOX
Associated Press

COLUMBIA The suspended president of financially troubled South Carolina State University sued the school Tuesday for breaking his contract and asked the court where he filed suit to block his expected firing.

Thomas Elzey sued S.C. State in Orangeburg County court a day before trustees were set to meet privately to get legal advice amid ongoing turmoil involving South Carolina's only public historically black university, which is wrestling with escalating debt. Last week, the trustees put Elzey on paid leave and promised to have more information on his fate Wednesday.

Under a four-year contract, which extends to summer 2017, Elzey can be fired only for cause. The lawsuit notes the suspension occurred less than two weeks after the board publicly backed him, despite legislators' calls for his removal, and that trustees gave him a satisfactory review last summer.

Breaking his contract without cause would cost \$428,000, which includes \$30,000 for unused vacation, according to an estimate from state economic advisers, dated Tuesday.

S.C. STATE

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1B

board temporarily in charge of the university until it gets out of debt. The measure also requires the board, chaired by Gov. Nikki Haley, to fire Elzey.

Also on Tuesday, senators voted to give priority status to Senate President Pro Tem Hugh Leatherman's version of the idea, clearing the way for floor debate Wednesday. That fast-tracked proposal would create a new, five-member board to oversee S.C. State, with its members appointed by Leatherman and other GOP leaders. Elzey would not necessarily be

fired.

Sen. Gerald Malloy, D-Hartsville, objected, saying five white, Republican legislators should not decide all appointees to the historically black school. He said alumni should be more involved.

But Sen. Darrell Jackson, D-Columbia, asked his colleagues to support the measure.

"The time has come for us to do the right thing and move all the personalities and all the egos out of the way," said Jackson, whose nephew is a junior at S.C. State.

A compromise between

Elzey's lawsuit seeks more than that. While giving no specific amount, it asks for lost wages and benefits, as well as compensation for the ordeal's emotional distress and embarrassment.

"We did try to resolve this prior to filing the complaint, and our efforts were not successful," said his attorney, Nancy Bloodgood of Charleston.

S.C. State spokeswoman Sonja Bennett-Bellamy said the school had no comment on the ongoing legal matter.

Elzey is supposed to be paid \$305,400 this year, with \$173,400 funded by taxpayers and \$132,000 by the school's foundation. He also receives a \$25,000 annual housing allowance and is entitled to six weeks of paid vacation, according to the Budget and Control Board.

The lawsuit seeks to maintain Elzey's paid-leave status until the lawsuit is resolved.

Meanwhile, the Legislature moved closer to firing all trustees.

A House panel advanced a measure Tuesday to the full Ways and Means Committee that would put the state's financial oversight

the versions could be difficult.

Rep. Gilda Cobb-Hunter, D-Orangeburg, said Leatherman's plan swaps "one set of good ol' boys with another." That punts the problem further down the road, said Rep. Jim Merrill, R-Charleston.

Both measures were introduced to replace a House panel's short-lived proposal to temporarily close the school for a massive overhaul.

S.C. State owes more than \$11 million in unpaid bills, despite receiving \$7.5 million from the state in the last year in separate bailouts.

SEE S.C. STATE, PAGE 6B

Title: **Suspended president sues school**
 Author: By SEANNA ADCOX The Associated Press
 Size: 28.98 square inch
 Hilton Head Island, SC Circulation: 20015



SC STATE FINANCIAL WOES

Suspended president sues school

By **SEANNA ADCOX**
 The Associated Press

COLUMBIA — The suspended president of financially troubled South Carolina State University sued the school on Tuesday for breaking his contract and asked the court where he filed suit to block his expected firing.

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Both measures were introduced to replace a House panel's short-lived proposal raised Feb. 10 to temporarily close the school for a massive overhaul.

Title: **Recycler helping rebuild old mill town**
 Author: By Roddie Burris The State rburris@thestate.com
 Size: 33.63 square inch
 Greenville, SC Circulation: 113473



Recycler helping rebuild old mill town

Recleim invested
\$4.6M to convert
Aiken Co. facility

By Roddie Burris

The State

rburris@thestate.com

GRANITEVILLE — A 2-year-old startup company here is joining the state's expanding recycling industry and simultaneously helping to rebuild a former mill town belted by a dying business and a staggering railroad accident a decade ago.

The company, Recleim, has invested \$40.6 million to convert a once-vacant cotton mill to a first-of-its-kind recovery facility in North America. The recycling plant that opened Friday is expected eventually to provide about 200 jobs to the Graniteville area.

Recycling has had a growing influence in the Palmetto State. An economic impact study released last year by the College of Charleston showed significant gains in recycling-linked jobs and business since 2006.

Between 2006 and 2014, recycling doubled

its annual economic impact in South Carolina to \$13 billion, up from \$6.5 billion in 2006, or a 5 percent annual growth, according to the study.

More than 520 recycling-related companies were located in South Carolina last year, breeding 22,500 attributable jobs, which paid an average salary of \$40,203, the study found.

In addition, state and local governments reaped \$329 million in taxes from recycling businesses in each of those years, the report stated.

Graniteville — headquarters to the sprawling former Graniteville Co. mill system — was socked decades ago by the U.S. textile industry's collapse. The town is still recovering from a 2005 freight train derailment that spilled 11,500 gallons of chlorine into the air.

Choking fumes killed nine people and brought Graniteville to a standstill.

"Graniteville, you deserve this," Gov. Nikki Haley told a crowd gathered for the recycling plant's formal opening. "This is a good quality company. Yet, while this is a big deal for Aiken County, and this is a big deal for South Carolina — this is a big deal for our country."

Rep. Chris Corley, R-Aiken, a lifelong resident, said the plant opening reminded him of the Graniteville of his youth. "I can remember when this was hustling and bustling, and it hasn't been like that much lately," Corley said.

Recleim is a high-tech company operating a 110,000-square-foot plant that disassembles household appliances into components and recycles the

metals. Plant officials said they can recover 95 percent of the components while the national standard is about 70 percent.

Recleim's plant also recycles vending machines and heating-and-cooling systems — turning them into reusable plastic, aluminum, copper, steel and pellet foam.

That keeps waste away from landfills and other forms of environmental degradation, officials said. Recycling one refrigerator or freezer has the same environmental effect of taking two automobiles off the road for a year, officials said.

Recleim draws applications from a 350-mile radius, as recycling becomes an expected norm locally and nationally, especially among millennials, said Douglas Huffer, president and general manager.

Title: **Plan would raise \$800M annually for roads**
 Author: By Jeffrey Collins Associated Press
 Size: 32.55 square inch
 Rock Hill, SC Circulation: 34688



Plan would raise \$800M annually for roads

Sen. Cleary would raise taxes, fees, end exemptions

By JEFFREY COLLINS
 Associated Press

COLUMBIA A senator put in charge by his colleagues to find a way to raise more money for South Carolina roads said Tuesday he has a plan that will put up to an additional \$800 million for the state's highways and bridges.

Sen. Ray Cleary's plan raises the state's gas tax 10 cents and allows it to continue to increase with inflation. It also raises the sales tax cap on automobile purchases from \$300 to \$1,400, eliminates dozens of sales tax exemptions and increases the fees for car registrations and drivers' licenses.

All of his ideas would cost the average driver in South Carolina about \$65 more per year, said Cleary, a Republican.

"It's a lot less than that to get a front-end alignment," said Sen. Joel Lourie, D-Columbia.

Cleary said his bill, which will be filed this week, will

net somewhere between \$700 million and \$800 million a year – about twice the \$400 million that plans by the House and Gov. Nikki Haley would raise. Leaders at the Department of Transportation have said \$400 million is enough money to keep the state's roads in their current condition. The DOT has said closer to \$1.5 billion a year is needed to get South Carolina roads to good condition by 2040.

It is vital to make sure South Carolina roads get enough money for decades and that's why his target is so much higher than other plans, Cleary said.

"Do you want us to fix it with a Band-Aid and come back in four years for more, or do you want us to fix it for good?" said Cleary, R-Murrells Inlet.

Senate leaders asked Cleary to begin studying

roads more than two years ago and he has diligently held subcommittee meetings to discuss all sorts of plans. How much support this bill will get is hard to say. Cleary said he let Haley's staff know

he was going to file the plan and didn't hear back. He said he hasn't had any substantial discussions with the governor about roads in the past two years.

In her State of the State speech in January, Haley backed a plan to raise the gas tax by 10 cents, but only if it was paired with a reduction in the state's income tax rates. In the past week, she has said she is willing to negotiate that more. Leaders of the House continue to talk to the governor.

Cleary said he is willing to negotiate too. His plan does not include restructuring DOT, which the House and Haley have made priorities.

Instead, Cleary said his bill would turn over more than half of the over 40,000 miles of state roads over to counties and split about \$160 million to maintain them. Counties could raise their sales tax by a penny for roads, and the state would give them more money.

Putting fewer roads under DOT's management would allow the agency to drastically cut its staff and act as its own restructuring plan, Cleary said.

The senator also said he hoped Haley would be flexible, saying she could be remembered like former Gov. Carroll Campbell was for restructuring state government or former Gov. Dick Riley for improving education.

"I think this governor would be great if she went down as the governor who fixed our infrastructure," Cleary said.

Title: **Suspended president sues school**
 Author: By SEANNA ADCOX The Associated Press
 Size: 28.67 square inch
 Beaufort, SC Circulation: 11269



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Sonny Reel Named New Clerk of Court

Robert Norris/*The Advertiser*



Governor Nikki Haley has appointed Sonny Reel as Edgefield County's new Clerk of Court. Reel replaces Shirley Newby who retired Friday, Feb. 6. Probate Judge Bobby Peeler as been the acting Clerk of Court as the County waited for Governor Haley to make her appointment. Reel is currently employed with the Edgefield County Sheriff's Office. Reel was sworn in as Clerk of Court, 4:00 p.m., Friday, February 13, in the Probate Judge's offices, in Edgefield.

Lake City News
 & Post
 Lake City, SC
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¹⁴⁸ Sen. Sabb updates constituents on statehouse activities

The 121st session of the S.C. Senate assembled at noon on Jan. 13. I was welcomed into the Senate and in accordance with the provisions of Rule 35, the privilege of the floor was also extended to my family. Sen. Leatherman was elected President Pro Tempore by acclamation.

Other elections ended with the following results, Jeffrey Stephen Gossett elected as Clerk of the Senate, John Othniel Wienges elected as Reading

Clerk, the Rev. Dr. James I. St. John elected as the Chaplain and James R. Melton elected as

Sergeant-at-Arms by acclamation.

All pre-filed bills were introduced and referred to the appropriate committees for consideration.

"Our challenge is that South Carolina continues to be the kind of place where it doesn't matter where you grew up nor does it matter what you grew up with," senators said.

The second Inauguration of the One Hundredth Seventeenth Governor of South

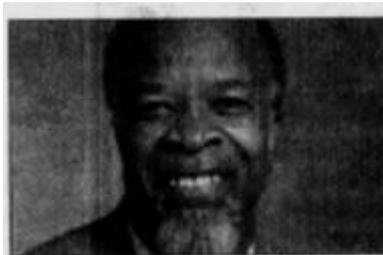
Carolina, Nikki R. Haley, and the Inauguration of the Lt. Governor, Henry D. McMaster, and

our Constitutional Officers took place on Jan. 14.

On Jan. 21, the Senate Judiciary Committee voted to move the Ethics Bill and the Criminal Domestic Violence Bill to the full senate. Later that evening the Senate and House members assembled for the sole purpose of attending the State of the State, given by the Governor.

As always, if you have concerns or needs please contact my administrative assistant. Thank you for the opportunity to serve. Office telephone is 803-212- 6032; e-mail is ronniesabb@scsenate.gov; You may also contact my District 32 Director, Demar Roberts, at demar@sabblaw.com

Provided by Sen. Ronnie A. Sabb, (D-32, Berkeley, Florence, Georgetown, Horry, Williamsburg Counties)



Ronnie Sabb
 Senator's Update



The Belton and
Honea Path
News-Chronicle
Belton, SC
Circ. 3969
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61270



Legislative Updates

by State Rep. Mike Gambrell

The House of Representatives made significant progress on regulatory reform, updating public safety laws, and protecting the unborn last week.

Government red tape and over-regulation burden job creators and stifle small business start-ups – I hear this repeatedly from business owners here in our district. We passed a regulatory reform law in the House placing a sunset provision on all future regulations. Many regulations are outdated, and this new measure would give an automatic expiration to regulations five years after implementation. This ensures an ongoing review of our regulations and provides the business community's opportunity to have input. The bill now heads to the Senate, and I hope they will join us in lending a hand to the businesses and innovators that drive our state's economy.

Last week I mentioned that the Pain-Capable Child Protection Act cleared a significant hurdle. I am pleased to report my colleagues joined me in giving final passage to this important bill. The House passed this same legislation last year, but the Senate failed to pass it. I will continue to use every opportunity given to me to support the right to life of the unborn in South Carolina.

We took additional steps last week to pass the next set of ethics reform legislation – part of our larger ethics reform package. We passed the Whistleblower and Public Employee Protection Act providing public employees legal protections and substantially increased financial incentives for reporting unethical behavior when your tax dollars are on the line. I was also proud to support H 3195 which tightens and clarifies our existing ethics statutes. The act also gives guidance to elected officials about the proper use of political campaign dollars.

We continue to discuss the best path forward to fix our ailing road system. On Wednesday, the two highly-discussed proposals – one resembling Governor Nikki Haley's plan and one from the House Transportation Infrastructure & Management Ad-Hoc Committee – were placed into bill form. Both bills head to the House Ways and Means Committee where work will begin to find common ground. If you have not yet taken the chance to share your thoughts with me on this important matter, I encourage you to take a moment to do so today.

One of the core functions of a limited government is providing for the safety of our children and otherwise vulnerable adults. All too often during the heat of our South Carolina summers, we see news reports of children who have died while trapped or locked inside hot vehicles. My House colleagues and I supported a measure that would give certain legal protections to bystanders who rescue those trapped inside sweltering cars and trucks.

Congratulations to head coach Russ Tysl and the BHP boy's basketball team on winning the school's first-ever region basketball championship.

It was my pleasure to speak to the Crescent High School Seniors on Friday.

Good luck to local angler Casey Ashley as he competes in this week's Bassmaster Classic on Lake Hartwell.

Congratulations to all BHP football players who signed Scholarships with colleges.

As always, thank you for the privilege of serving you in Columbia. If I can ever be of assistance to you, or if you have ideas on issues you want me to share with the rest of the General Assembly, please don't hesitate to contact me at: Michael W. Gambrell, Member of SC House of Representatives; MikeGambrell@schouse.gov; 803-734-2947 (Columbia office); 864-260-4025 (Anderson office); 864-369-0613 (home phone); 864-844-3614 (cell phone); mwgambrell@bellsouth.net.