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IN CASE YOU MISSED IT

Haley reaches 100 days as South Carolina governor

SC State Wire

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COLUMBIA, S.C. (AP) - With her first 100 days behind her, South Carolina Gov. Nikki Haley is renewing a push to streamline state government and put in place job-training measures to encourage people to get back to work.

In an interview with The Associated Press Wednesday, Haley ticked off several early accomplishments: passing legislation that put more House and Senate votes on the record; taking taxpayer cash away from the state's public television and arts operations; and setting in motion plans to deal with a soaring deficit in Medicaid programs and to restructure state government.

"What I love is we set out some goals and we're seeing the goals happen," the Republican said.

Now, she says she wants to focus on goals such as making government leaner by establishing a Cabinet-level Office of Administration

Haley said she will also push during the remainder of the legislative session for joint elections for the lieutenant governor and governor; limiting lawsuit awards; and finding a way to give employers a break from rising jobless benefit taxes needed to cover federal loans for unemployment checks.

"My number one thing is we are not borrowing any more federal money," Haley said. She said she's looking to save money for employers by changing benefits, including limiting unemployment for seasonal workers in the state's tourism industry. "You've got to change up some accountability measures in the people that receive benefits," she said.

And Haley said she favors changes to welfare and jobless benefit programs to encourage people to get jobs. For instance, she plans to roll out a revamped job-training program with the state's Workforce Department this summer.

"We have to train them," Haley said. "We can't just sit there and tell them, 'Sit and wait for a job to come to you.' We've got to get them to want to have jobs. We've got to encourage them to get off the rolls, and so you'll see us get very aggressive on that front.

As for her signature achievement, the on-the-record voting requirements brought a cheering crowd to a packed Statehouse lobby outside her office this month. It capped a three-year fight launched when Haley was a legislator irked about retirement sweeteners for lawmakers.

The measure, approved without a recorded vote, turned into a tussle for Haley and Rep. Nathan Ballentine, an Irmo Republican and House seatmate. Both ended up losing committee assignments after questioning House leadership moves. And Haley made it a central campaign issue.

"We couldn't have done that as two legislators, but when we got the people behind it and when we told the story, people wanted to help," Haley said. "Sometimes you take the bruises - but it's worth it."

Haley said she's happy to see other goals moving to the "done" column. "To the credit of the legislature, they are showing a willingness of trying to get things done. What I've told them is the days of talk are over; the days of results are just beginning," she said.

Other measures of Haley's first months in office are mixed.

Haley is still answering questions about issues raised in the campaign that have followed her into office. That's particularly true of records about her work with a Lexington hospital while in the Legislature, her income and late personal and business tax payments.

Her biggest blowup has been over dumping millionaire donor Darla Moore from the University of South Carolina's board. Haley had already faced criticism for appointing too few minorities in a state where blacks and Hispanics account for a third of the population.

Haley noted that the state's unemployment rate, 9.9 percent in March, is the lowest it's been since January 2009. However, her office has announced less than \$110 million in economic development projects with just more than 550 jobs since taking office.

"It's not small," Haley insisted. "There's more. The problem is the ones that we've done, we haven't been able to announce. ... What I will tell you: it's in the thousands and you will see that quickly. Oh, we've got fabulous news coming."

Meanwhile, Haley plans to fan more anti-union sentiment.

"As much as I talk about being against the unions and a right-to-work state, it's working," Haley said.

"Companies are calling because they know that if I will fight to keep the unions out, then they will have a healthy state to come to when they get here."

In many ways, Haley is the governor whom Statehouse Republicans wanted eight years ago when Mark Sanford became South Carolina's first GOP chief executive with a Republican Legislature in more than century. Hopes were high that the GOP's agenda would move quickly. But Sanford feuded with legislators, and economic development backers complained that he didn't do enough to create jobs.

Haley's office schedules suggest a different approach. About half of her scheduled meetings have been split between legislators and economic development contacts.

Some lawmakers say they appreciate Haley's approach.

Senate President Pro Tem Glenn McConnell was a frequent Sanford target and railed against Sanford's "propaganda pumps" working overtime. "It hasn't been as contentious as it was in the Sanford administration," the Charleston Republican said.

And the time she's spending with legislators is paying off, said Alan Clemmons, a former House colleague of Haley's from Myrtle Beach.

"I can certainly say that, compared with Governor Sanford, she is more engaged in partnering with the Legislature than Governor Sanford ever was," Clemmons said. "She's been fully engaged in the job of governing. That's what we expect from a governor."