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148 Lifetime alimony could see reform

BY MICHAELE DUKE
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Lifetime alimony is getting another look. In June 2015, Governor Nikki Haley signed a bill to form a study committee to come up with ways to update alimony laws in South Carolina. The report was submitted December 2015.

Permanent alimony is awarded when there is a sig-

nificant difference between the parties in the divorce. Several other factors can determine the award such as if one party needs to stay home with children or they lack the job training or skills to become self-sufficient.

The committee's report may lead to another bill (H-4029) introduced by several

PLEASE TURN TO **ALIMONY, 3**



Alimony laws could see big changes

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lawmakers. In summary, it will amend the existing law to create the presumption for the award of a lump sum or reimbursement and establish guidelines for awarding alimony based on duration of the marriage among other changes. In addition the law would consider that retirement is a change of circumstance justifying termination when the spouse is eligible to receive social security retirement benefits and provide that the court should decrease an alimony payment if the spouse is entitled to receive certain spousal social security retirement benefits. The court will also have discretion to modify the payment at whatever age the supporting spouse retires.

Behind the legislation is South Carolina Alimony Reform, a non-profit association that seeks to modernize alimony laws through limited duration but keeping it available for those that need it due to physical or mental disabilities.

According to South Carolina Alimony Reform, some of the goals of the legislation are to end alimony at the legal retirement age of the payer; when the recipient's passive or active income or assets exceeds that of the payer; and payments will be scheduled based on length of marital years.

House members, Doug Brannon (R. Spartanburg) and Cezar McKnight (D. Williamsburg and Clarendon) have introduced a bill (H.3019) to amend a section of the existing code to create a rebuttable presumption that a marriage lasting less than 10 years does not qualify for periodic or permanent alimony. Another bill introduced by Brannon allows the award if the spouse first committed adultery after the issuance of a temporary order in an action for divorce. "We're in a fundamentally different time," said McKnight. "When we created the alimony laws we have now, it was probably in the 40s and 50s and the average woman was a homemaker...

This has changed because now in almost every marriage couple, the wife works outside of the home. Even if she doesn't have to she just does."

McKnight added that family court judges would have plenty of leeway when addressing each individual case. "We've got a good cadre of family court judges throughout the state. They know the ends and out of family law and I think every situation is unique so you can't have a one-size-fits-all solution but if you empower the judges we have and give them some flexibility and clear guidelines I think this will be a win-win situation for South Carolina."

In 2011, Massachusetts passed a similar law. The law is supposed to encourage self-sufficiency but the courts have overturned some of the legislature. Florida legislators have also submitted a bill that would in part require judges to consider factors such as a length of marriage and income of both spouses.



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Meet with Governor's Office

Pelzer Heritage Commission members, Town of Pelzer and Anderson County officials recently traveled to the State Capital in Columbia to meet with Governor Haley's Deputy Chief of Staff Joshua Baker. Attending were Pelzer Heritage Commission members Dianne Lollis, Larry Joe Coker, Gilbert Garrett, Kelly Arthur along with Dr. Wayne Fowler from Pelzer Mill Properties Board, newly elected Pelzer Council member Kim Crone Wilson, Anderson County Council member Cindy Wilson, Steve Newton and Michael Forman from Anderson County Planning Dept. The meeting, made possible through Pelzer native, Beth Phibbs, who also attended along with Gail Jeter from CARDNO. A presentation to Mr. Baker was made by Gilbert Garrett, PHC Secretary, in hope of obtaining support from Governor Haley and the state on developing the Pelzer mill properties, now owned by the PHC. Members were encouraged with the meeting.



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148 SC recognized for foreign investment

South Carolina has once again been recognized for achievement in foreign direct investment (FDI). This week, fDi Magazine announced the Palmetto State as its national champion.

"In addition to our highly-skilled, loyal workforce, Team South Carolina continues to work hard to create an unparalleled pro-business environment in all regions of our state, and companies from across the globe have taken notice," said Gov. Nikki Haley. "The fact that South Carolina continues to lead the nation in foreign direct investment speaks to everything we have to offer as a premier destination for business."

"Bringing jobs and investment from across the world into both our state and nation are critical components of Team South Carolina's

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Foreign investments

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economic development strategy," said Secretary of Commerce Bobby Hitt. "With approximately 1,200 international establishments currently operating and employing more than 115,000 workers within our borders, it's clear the strategy is working."

Competitors that emerged from the four regions were South Carolina, North Carolina, Indiana and California. In addition to winning the fDi National Championship over the other three regional champions, South Carolina also scored the highest of all four states on FDI expansions, per capita.

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148 Proposed legislation could affect workers

Bills would raise
minimum wage and
repeal right to work law

BY SEANNA ADCOX
The Associated Press

COLUMBIA — Proposals to raise the minimum wage in South Carolina and repeal an anti-union law have virtually no chance of passing in the Republican-dominated Legislature, but Democrats hope to spark a debate as the nation's attention turns to the first-in-the-South primary state.

Rep. Gilda Cobb-Hunter, who sponsored both bills, said it's time to

discuss living wages in a state that ranks 46th in child poverty, 48th in per capita income and last in union membership.

"We keep hearing all these glowing numbers about how great things are," she said of jobs touted by GOP Gov. Nikki Haley. "Yet we get reports that show we're ranking in the bottom. ... I don't see why we can't at least start talking about the reality of what it means to work in South Carolina on one hand and still be eligible for assistance on the other."

Cobb-Hunter, D-Orangeburg, held a news conference on the bills last week after a House panel officially adjourned debate on both. A second hearing is not expected.

One bill would set the state's minimum wage at \$10.10 an hour. South Carolina is among 21 states where employers can pay as low as \$7.25 an hour, the federal min-

imum since 2009.

Proponents call \$10.10 a start. That's the minimal pay for federal contractors, as per President Barack Obama's 2014 executive order.

"We'll continue to fight for \$15" an hour, said Rachel Nelson of Charleston, who makes \$9 an hour at Hardee's after 10 years as a fast food worker.

The mother of three children, ages 8 to 12, told the House panel she'd like to get off of public assistance, but her paychecks make it impossible.

"With my last check, I was only able to pay my light bill," Nelson said. "Trying to keep a roof over our heads is a constant stresser in my life."

More than 2,600 state employees make less than \$10.10 an hour, or about 4 percent of the state-paid workforce.

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Bills

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Just over half of those employees are considered temporary, according to the Department of Administration. It noted the numbers could be higher since public colleges aren't required to send the agency data on temporary workers.

Rep. Todd Atwater, who sits on the subcommittee, contends raising the minimum wage is bad for the economy because it increases products' cost and eliminates entry-level jobs often filled by high school and college students.

"It hurts the workers they're trying to help," said Atwater, R-Lexington.

The answer, he said, is better training, so students graduate from school with skills that enable them to

get a higher-paying job.

Cobb-Hunter's other bill would repeal the state's right-to-work law.

About half of states have such laws, which means unions can't force employees across an entire worksite to pay membership dues as a condition of employment.

Haley, who frequently lambasts unions, considers the state's low union membership an economic development tool.

About 41,000 people — or just 2.1 percent of South Carolina's workers — belong to unions, leapfrogging North Carolina in 2015 to rank last nationwide, according to a January report by the Bureau of Labor Statistics.

Seth Holzopfel, with the International Association of Firefighters in Myrtle Beach, said the law should be renamed the "right to work for less" — con-

tending it's made South Carolina a virtual sweatshop — or "right to free-load," as it allows people in a union-covered job to receive benefits without paying dues.

As expected, the state's Chamber of Commerce adamantly opposes the proposal.

Mikee Johnson, president of Cox Industries, said it would halt the state's economic momentum.

"We've got to have the jobs before we get the wages. This is one of those things that would stop companies from coming to South Carolina," he said, adding that none of his 500 workers make less than \$10 an hour. "South Carolina workers do not need fewer choices when it comes to how they work every day or added costs forced upon them."

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Presidential candidate Marco Rubio talks to the press Monday before speaking at the FMU Performing Arts Center in Florence.

MELISSA MAY/MORNING NEWS

Rubio high on Gov. Haley, aims to prove his experience

BY JOSHUA LLOYD
Morning News
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FLORENCE — At a presidential primary campaign rally in Florence, U.S. Sen. Marco Rubio, R-Florida, said South Carolina Gov. Nikki Haley — widely considered a

MORE ONLINE

» See a photo gallery and a video at scnow.com.

rising star in the Republican Party — is more than qualified for a spot as his potential running mate.

Rubio said he met

Haley as she was making her first bid for governor and he was making his first run at a U.S. senator's seat.

"We were both big underdogs, so I've always been a huge fan of her

See **RUBIO**, Page 3A



Audience members listen to presidential candidate Marco Rubio speak Monday at the FMU Performing Arts Center.



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Rubio

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career trajectory," he said during an interview before an appearance Monday at the Francis Marion University Performing Arts Center. "If she wants to continue in public service, there's no doubt that no matter who our nominee is, she will be at the top of the list for various jobs – from vice president to cabinet to whatever it is she's thought about doing. I think she's someone that could very well run for president one day herself."

During a question-and-answer session, an audience member raised concern over Rubio's short time as a senator, drawing comparison to Barack Obama, "the other one-term senator we had as president."

Rubio told the crowd of approximately 600 people at the Francis Marion University Performing Arts Center that his short time in Congress doesn't equate to a lack of necessary experience.

"Barack Obama's issue is not that he was a one-term senator, because he now has seven years of presidential experience," Rubio said. "If experience was the problem, he would have gotten better. He's gotten worse."

Rubio said remaining GOP candidates with more time in office — such as former Florida Gov. Jeb Bush and Ohio Gov. John Kasich — don't have the foreign affairs experience to keep America safe.

"National security and foreign policy, that is the No. 1 obligation of a president," Rubio said. "I have more foreign policy experience than virtually everyone on the Republican stage of that debate combined."

Rubio said his experience on the intelligence committee will lead him to better judgment calls on foreign affairs. He referenced his work on Hezbollah sanctions, human rights violations in Venezuela, legislation to stop global human trafficking and counter-terrorism.

"Foreign policy is warning about ISIS before ISIS happened and warning about what ISIS would become when they first



Presidential candidate Marco Rubio signs autographs after speaking at the FMU Performing Arts Center.

happened," he said. "I have been dealing with these modern-day national security issues for the last five years in a way that no one else in this race has done or is willing to do."

U.S. Sen. Tim Scott and U.S. Rep. Trey Gowdy, both South Carolina Republicans in support of Rubio, were also at the event to stump for the Florida senator.

Many of the people in attendance have decided on Rubio as their candidate going into the South Carolina Republican primary on Saturday.

Beverly Spears, a Florence resident and former FMU professor, said she wasn't completely sold on the idea of a Rubio nomination, but his performance on Monday solidified her decision.

"I didn't know I was going to be so impressed with his answers today," she said. "I prefer him to the others, because I really feel that he can bring the country together. He's had all the right experiences, and we can't deal without that kind of experience."

John Taylor, a Conway native, said he likes Rubio because of his willingness to address issues that other candidates will not.

"He's got a plan to handle ISIS that others just don't seem to have," Taylor said. "He's charismatic, talented and smart. We need somebody who knows how to talk with leaders from around the world in an even-mannered way, and I think Rubio can do that."



Title: **Sen. Hugh Leatherman blamed for roads delay**
 Author: BY JEFFREY COLLINS Associated Press
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Sen. Hugh Leatherman blamed for roads delay

BY JEFFREY COLLINS

Associated Press

COLUMBIA — Gov. Nikki Haley said the president of the South Carolina Senate is holding a bill to get more money to roads “hostage” because he wants to keep as much control as possible on how highway money is spent.

But fellow Republicans in the Senate said that accusation was too simplistic because there are a number of groups, from the most liberal Democrats to the most conservative Republicans, combining to stop action on the bill.

Haley’s comments at a news conference Wednesday continued a long-standing feud between the GOP governor and Sen. Hugh Leatherman, a Florence Republican, who not only runs the Senate but

also is chairman of the Senate Finance Committee that deals with the budget. Haley went to a chamber of commerce event in Florence last year and with Leatherman in attendance,

blamed him and a few Democratic lawmakers for stopping ethics reform.

Leatherman was the only senator singled out in Haley’s comments Wednesday.

“He is holding hostage our roads in the name of power, and that’s one of the worst things you can ever do,” Haley said. “The senators need to get strong and listen to their constituents.”

Leatherman was on the Senate floor when Haley spoke and was not immediately available to respond to the

governor.

But Sen. Larry Martin said the criticism is unfair. Blame can be put on several groups, including conservative senators against a gas tax increase and Democrats not happy with the tax cut component of a proposed roads bill, the Pickens Republican said.

Haley wants additional money for roads, but she has demanded any increase in the state’s gas tax, unchanged in almost 30 years, be balanced with a reduction in other taxes. She also wants to abolish the legislatively appointed board that helps run the Department of Transportation.

Currently, lawmakers select seven members of the board, one from each congressional

district, with an eighth chosen by the governor. Leatherman backed a plan that would expand the board to 10 members, with local government councils picking three candidates from which the governor would pick her appointee.

Haley said that plan would leave South Carolina with its current poor system where lawmakers trade highway money for favors on other legislation.

“Every tax dollar matters, and if the legislature is demanding they control those tax dollars, we will never see a good solid roads plan,” the governor said.



ONLINE

For an extended version of this story, go to aikenstandard.com

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AP PHOTO/JEFFREY COLLINS

South Carolina Sen. Hugh Leatherman, R-Florence, left, and Sen. Harvey Peeler, R-Gaffney, right, listen to a filibuster on a roads bill in the state Senate chamber Wednesday in Columbia. Gov. Nikki Haley blamed Leatherman for the delay on the bill, saying he wants lawmakers to keep control of how highway money is spent.

Title: **Nikki Haley: Donnie Myers 'should resign'**
 Author: BY MAAYAN SCHECHTER mschechter@aikenstandard.com
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Nikki Haley: Donnie Myers 'should resign'

BY MAAYAN SCHECHTER
 mschechter@aikenstandard.com

Donnie Myers, the lead prosecutor in the fatal officer-involved shooting case against former North Augusta police officer Justin Craven, received criticism



Haley

State House reporters on Wednesday, Gov. Nikki



Myers

Wednesday from the state's highest elected office after his arrest in February on his second DUI charge.

Speaking to South Carolina

Haley said Myers, the 11th Circuit Solicitor, and Richland County councilman Kelvin Washington, both jailed

recently for drunken driving, should resign, Columbia-based newspaper *The State* reported.

"When you look at any elected officials that believe they are above the law, there's a problem," Haley told reporters, including *The State*. "I think they both should resign. Our office is looking at options."

Myers was arrested Feb. 22 after a S.C. Highway Patrol trooper responded to Old Chapin Road and Beech Creek Road in Lexington just before 8 p.m. to investigate a single-vehicle collision.

The responding trooper found a 2007 Lexus, later identified as belonging to Myers, that had been traveling west on Old Chapin Road and attempted to make a left turn onto Beech Creek Road. The vehicle ran off the roadway, striking a utility pole, according to a collision report.

Myers was placed under arrest for DUI after failing the standardized field sobriety test and transported to the Alvin S. Glenn Detention Center in Richland County, where he was offered a data-master breath test, resulting in a 0.09 percent blood alcohol content, above the state's 0.08 percent legal limit.

This is Myers' second DUI charge. In 2005, he pleaded guilty to driving under the influence, and in 2012, was charged with having an open container of alcohol in his car. Myers was only issued a ticket in the latter offense.

Myers, with the 11th Judicial Circuit, which covers portions of Edgefield, Lexington and Saluda counties, is the lead prosecutor in the case against former North Augusta Department of Public Safety officer Justin Craven, who is charged with fatally shooting 68-year-old Edgefield County resident

Ernest Satterwhite Sr., in February 2014.

Satterwhite was reportedly unarmed at the time of the shooting.

Haley has the power to remove both Myers and Washington from office if they are indicted.

Myers' first court date is set for 9 a.m. March 21 in Lexington.

Maayan Schechter is the digital news editor with the *Aiken Standard*. Follow her on Twitter @MaayanSchechter.

What do you think?

Comment on this story at www.aikenstandard.com, write to Opinions, *Aiken Standard*, Box 456, Aiken, S.C. 29802 or send an email to editorial@aikenstandard.com.

Title: **10 things gov. could have said to Trump**
 Author: BY DAVID LAUDERDALE
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BY DAVID LAUDERDALE

10 things gov. could have said to Trump

S.C. Gov. Nikki Haley took the high road when Donald Trump attacked her on Twitter.

It was probably a sound strategic move, knowing he would not know his way around there.

"Bless your heart," Haley tweeted back when the GOP presidential leader sent this out: "The people of South Carolina are embarrassed by Nikki Haley!"

She could have embarrassed herself by calling him a pissant, or some other appropriate Southern put-down.

But "Bless your heart" is the high road because it is a put-



JOHN BAZEMORE AP

Nikki Haley

down in disguise.

Down South, it would often be followed by a sweet little explanation. Such as:

"He can't hep it. Dr. Brush dropped him when he was bawn."

She might could have thrown a little elbow by saying, "So sweet of you to speak on South Carolina's behalf, kudzu mouth."

Here's a Top 10 list of Southern responses to rude Yankees that Haley might have chosen:

- Delta is ready when you are.
- You ain't so many you can't be counted.
- Come back to see us, you hear?
- God don't like ugly.
- Fiddle-dee-dee.
- Might could.
- Well hush my mouth.
- Do what?
- You eat with that mouth?
- You lie!

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Title: **Senate Republicans force votes on bill**
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ROAD REPAIR FUNDING

Senate Republicans force votes on bill

Proposal would take \$400 million out of general budget for roads without raising gas tax

Conservative officials had been filibustering

300 amendments mean it could be a while before a vote on whole bill

BY JEFFREY COLLINS

Associated Press

COLUMBIA

Republicans in the South Carolina Senate decided Wednesday to begin forcing votes on a bill to get more money to the state roads.

Republicans united for a cloture vote after appearing to get behind a proposal that would take \$400 million out of the general budget and put it toward roads without raising the state's gas tax.

Although the 24-16 vote along party lines about 6:30 p.m. Wednesday started the process in motion, it could be a while before any vote on the whole bill. Senate rules give members 20 minutes to debate an amendment, and Senate President Pro Tem Hugh Leatherman

said earlier this week there were 300 amendments to the bill to be heard.

Democrats were furious at the move and warned they would take as much time as allowed, not caring if they stalled the state budget and any other bills.

"I don't know how long we are going to stay here, but it's a while," said state Sen. Brad Hutto, D-Orangeburg. "Now we got ourselves into a parliamentary snafu that will take days, weeks, months."

Republicans forced the issue after weeks of inaction. Conservative senators were filibustering to stop a gas tax increase but suddenly stopped to take up an amendment that

provided extra highway money without raising the gas tax and would allow the governor to appoint all eight members of the Department of Transportation's board.

"We have to fix the way we fix roads before we give them more funding," said Sen. Larry Grooms, R-Charleston.

When Lt. Gov. Henry McMaster ruled that amendment could not be considered, Republicans moved to limit debate. A similar amendment will be heard later.

The action took place hours after Gov. Nikki Haley said Leatherman was using his position as president of the Senate to hold the roads bill hostage.

"He is holding hostage our roads in the name of power, and that's one of the worst things you can ever do," Haley said. "The senators need to get strong and listen to their constituents."

Leatherman was on the Senate floor and not immediately available to comment. But he voted for the cloture motion.

Haley's comments at a news conference Wednesday continued a long-standing feud between the two Republicans. Haley went to a chamber of commerce event in Florence last year and with Leatherman in attendance, blamed him and a few Democratic lawmakers for stopping ethics reform.

Title: **Senate Republicans force votes on bill**

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JEFFREY COLLINS AP

State Sens. Hugh Leatherman, R-Florence, left, and Harvey Peeler, R-Gaffney, right, listen to a filibuster on a roads bill in the state Senate chamber on Wednesday.

Title: **Governor says elected officials arrested on DUIs should resign**
 Author: BY ANDREW SHAIN ashain@thestate.com
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Governor says elected officials arrested on DUIs should resign

BY ANDREW SHAIN

ashain@thestate.com

COLUMBIA

S.C. Gov. Nikki Haley said Wednesday that Richland County councilman Kelvin Washington and 11th Circuit Solicitor Donnie Myers, both recently arrested on drunken driving charges, should resign.

"When you look at any elected officials that believe they are above the law, there's a problem," she told reporters at the S.C. State House. "I think they both should resign. Our office is looking at options."

Haley can remove them

from office only if they are indicted on a crime of so-called "moral turpitude," a broad legal term for acts that violate society norms.

Myers was arrested last week for drunken driving after the S.C. Highway Patrol responded to a car accident where Myers' car had run off the road and hit a utility pole.

Myers was arrested for driving under the influence in 2005, pleading guilty to the charge. In 2012, Myers was charged

with having an open container of alcohol in his car.

Efforts to reach Myers were unsuccessful Wednesday.

Richland County Councilman Kelvin Washington was charged with felony drunken driving after he crashed into another car Saturday night near Hopkins. The 22-year-old driver of the other car was taken to the hospital with serious injuries.

Washington's attorney, Michael Duncan, declined to comment Wednesday.