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To:
Date: 9/5/2016 9:44:42 AM
Subject: Clips – Monday, September 5, 2016

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Governor Nikki Haley News:

Associated Press: Soft-spoken, strong-willed SC Sen. John Drummond dies
http://m.apnews.com/ap/db_268748/contentdetail.htm?contentguid=0P9yJvnc
SC State Wire

Former Sen. John Drummond, the soft-spoken, strong-willed World War II veteran who spent more than 40 years at the South Carolina Statehouse, died Saturday. Harley Funeral Home in Greenwood confirmed Drummond's death. He was 96. Drummond got the nickname "Bulldog" not because he was loud, but because he was tenacious and would fight when he thought he needed to. Not long after he came to the then seniority-dominated Senate in 1967, the Democrat from Ninety Six got into a late night fistfight about political districts with one of the chamber's leaders Sen. Rembert Dennis, D-Moncks Corner. Drummond would go on to spend 40 years in the Senate, rising to majority leader in the late 1990s until Republicans took a majority of seats in the chamber in 2000.

NOTE: Gov. Nikki Haley thanked Drummond for his service and said she was praying for his family. "John Drummond was born to serve, and he lived an extraordinary life," Haley said in a statement.

The State: SC Sen. John Drummond remembered as statesman, patriot of bygone era
<http://www.thestate.com/news/politics-government/state-politics/article99955352.html>
Clif Leblanc ad Avery Wilks

The death of former S.C. Sen. John W. Drummond closed the book on a lawmaker who grew up in the segregated South yet pushed progressive ideas and who once took the Confederate flag from the chamber during a sizzling battle to remove the banner from the State House dome. The retired senator from the town of Ninety Six, who served more than four decades in the upper chamber, died Saturday at age 96. The Greenwood County representative also was a decorated World War II pilot captured by the Nazis. "I considered John Drummond to be just a great American and a dedicated South Carolinian and one of the most wonderful senators that we have ever had," retired S.C. Sen. John Land said Sunday. "He was just a special, special South Carolinian. The stamp he put on South Carolina will last forever," said Land, who, like Drummond, is a Democrat and became Senate majority leader. "His time as chairman of the Senate Finance Committee and president pro tempore of the Senate, if you look back on it, is probably one of the most progressive times South Carolina has ever enjoyed."

NOTE: Setzler said he has asked Gov. Nikki Haley to consider flying the State House flag at half-staff. In a statement Sunday, Haley said, "John Drummond was born to serve, and he lived an extraordinary life. Michael and I lift up the Drummond family in prayer and join them in giving thanks for Senator Drummond's sacrifice and service."

Post and Courier : 2018 governor's race starts to loom large after November. So who's going to run?
<http://www.postandcourier.com/20160904/160909733/2018-governors-race-starts-to-loom-large-after-november-so-whos-going-to-run->
Gavin Jackson

Republican-leaning South Carolina probably won't be a major factor in the presidential race, so attention is turning to the 2018 campaign for governor. Incumbent Nikki Haley is constitutionally prevented from seeking a third term, but lots of Republicans are jockeying to succeed her, even with the filing period still 18 months away. The speculative list of those in the discussion remains fluid. Some contenders have started fundraising toward the \$2 million to \$4 million needed to run a credible campaign. Others are traveling the state and taking the temperature of voters, speaking to small groups and building name recognition. The potential field is less clear for Democrats, who haven't fared well in recent gubernatorial elections and still have a way to go in determining their best contenders.

SC Political News:

Associated Press: Deepening pension deficit looms for South Carolinians

http://m.apnews.com/ap/db_268748/contentdetail.htm?contentguid=AfyMhwQw

Seanna Adcox

Four years after South Carolina lawmakers passed a law they hailed as keeping the state's public pension system solvent for generations, they are scrambling to fill a deepening deficit that could affect every taxpayer in the state. While public pensions nationwide are struggling with growing debt, South Carolina's situation has been worsened by investment underperformance. The state's \$28 billion pension portfolio - which 1 in 10 South Carolinians are counting on for their retirement - would be worth about \$4 billion more if returns over the last decade had been on par with other large public pensions, according to an analysis by the state's public benefits agency. Keeping the debt in check will likely require workers in the system and taxpayers to pay hundreds of millions more in future years.

Associated Press : A look at the Legislature's last pension reform law

http://m.apnews.com/ap/db_268748/contentdetail.htm?contentguid=13RRRKEh

SC State Wire

In 2012, legislators passed a pension reform law hailed as keeping South Carolina's system solvent for future generations. But they knew it would be many years before the changes cut into the deficit. Here are some highlights of that law: Many changes apply only to the nearly 75,000 employees hired after June 30, 2012...

Aiken Standard: Senate candidate plans 'long gun' rallies in Aiken, Barnwell and Allendale

<http://www.aikenstandard.com/20160905/160909781/senate-candidate-plans-x2018long-gunx2019-rallies-in-aiken-barnwell-and-allendale>

Christina Cleveland

A U.S. Senate candidate has planned a "long gun rally" at the Aiken County Judicial Center, 109 Park Ave. S.E., this week, one of the several rallies he's held and scheduled at South Carolina county courthouses in trying to create a "paradigm shift" in the country. Bill Bledsoe, of Spartanburg, has filed as a Constitution and Libertarian candidate against incumbent U.S. Sen. Tim Scott, R-S.C. Bledsoe's website says he is holding the "peaceful assemblies," carrying long guns in each of the state's 46 counties as a part of his "Freedom March to the Sea." The Aiken rally is planned for 10 a.m. Saturday. Bledsoe, who said the South Carolina Constitution is being violated, believes the government is seizing and taking people's property, including their guns, illegally. He also believes state lawmakers have passed laws that make this possible and wants to see term limits for elected officials.

Greenville News: Easley pastor, Trump surrogate says he 'overstated' biography

<http://www.greenvilleonline.com/story/news/local/2016/09/03/easley-pastor-trump-surrogate-says-he-overstated-biography/89839874/>

Anna Lee

Mark Burns, an Easley pastor and Donald Trump surrogate, has admitted to falsifying parts of his professional biography after a heated interview with CNN earlier this week. "As a young man starting my church in Greenville, South Carolina, I overstated several details of my biography because I was worried I wouldn't be taken seriously as a new pastor," Burns said in a statement late Friday. "This was wrong, I wasn't truthful then and I have to take full responsibility for my actions." The televangelist who can often be seen introducing Trump at campaign events posted the apology on his social media accounts. He added on Twitter that he's "thankful for a God who looks beyond our faults." Attempts to reach Burns were unsuccessful Saturday. His statement came shortly after his interview with CNN anchor Victor Blackwell, who confronted Burns about the professional accomplishments listed on his church website, including his bachelor's degree from North Greenville University. The site has since been taken down.

SC Agency News:

The State: SC Corrections Department seeks to fill vacancy void with recruiting campaign

<http://www.thestate.com/news/politics-government/article99992087.html>

Cynthia Roldan

A magnetic board inside the S.C. Department of Corrections recruiting office lists every institution the agency runs – and how short they are on manpower at each one. It gets updated every day. On a recent weekday, the agency was about 535 staffers short, down from 728 in January. The small boost in staffing still means dorms are often on lockdown to protect the safety of inmates and correctional officers who are vastly outmanned. Inmates, who are usually free to roam inside their dorms during the day, are restricted to their rooms. But the Department of Corrections is aggressively working to change that. In recent months, the agency has launched an intensive recruiting effort. They've streamlined the hiring process and invested in marketing the agency through billboards, ads on the radio and in newspapers. A television commercial is also in the works. The Legislature also approved a \$1,500 pay bump for SCDC staffers, which boosted starting base pay to \$26,375. The raise, however, wasn't enough to knock the SCDC position from being one of the lowest-paid law enforcement jobs in the state.

Herald-Journal: Future of executions in SC remains uncertain

<http://www.goupstate.com/news/20160903/future-of-executions-in-sc-remains-uncertain?rssfeed=true>

Allison M. Roberts

Like other prison systems across the country, the S.C. Department of Corrections can't purchase the drugs necessary to carry out lethal injections. The drugs are not available in the United States, and European countries — which are strongly opposed to the death penalty — have refused to sell the drugs to American prisons. That means executions in states that rely primarily on lethal injection are now in limbo for the foreseeable future. The long appeals process associated with death penalty cases increases the likelihood that any stockpiled remaining drugs will expire, and few states have acted to reinstate other forms of execution, such as the electric chair or firing squad. While death penalty opponents have welcomed the shift, some victims' families, such as Carol Wright, feel their loved ones have been cheated of justice. South Carolina hasn't executed anyone since 2011, and in 2013 one of the drugs in the state's supply that's needed for a lethal injection expired. Since then, corrections officials haven't been able to obtain the three-drug cocktail used in executions.

Herald-Journal : Death penalty process agonizing for mother of victim

<http://www.goupstate.com/news/20160903/death-penalty-process-agonizing-for-mother-of-victim>

Allison M. Roberts

Kelly Center thinks about the man who killed her daughter at least once a day and wonders if his death sentence will ever be carried out. In 2009, Ricky Lee Blackwell Sr. shot 8-year-old Brooke Center in the head four times while holding her in a headlock. It was an act of revenge, Center said, because Blackwell was mad at his estranged wife and Brooke's father, who were dating. Blackwell was convicted and sentenced to death in 2014, five years after Brooke's murder. Center still is frustrated it took so long for the trial to begin, since it meant that much later a start to the lengthy appeals process that Blackwell is guaranteed. "He did it in revenge because he was mad at his wife and my husband," Center said. "He took it out on an 8-year-old. There's no sense in that. He should die." It could take 15 to 20 years for Blackwell to exhaust his appeals, Center said. But with South Carolina executions on hold due to an inability to obtain lethal injection drugs, there is no guarantee Blackwell's sentence will be carried out.

Aiken Standard: SCDOT to present railroad erosion proposal to Aiken Design Review Board

<http://www.aikenstandard.com/20160904/160909783/scdot-to-present-railroad-erosion-proposal-to-aiken-design-review-board>

Dan Brown

The Aiken Design Review Board will hear the S.C. Department of Transportation's proposal for stemming the tide of erosion in the railroad cut behind The Willcox hotel during Tuesday's meeting. The Design Review Board's meeting begins at 6:30 p.m. in the Aiken Municipal Building's Council Chambers, 214 Park Ave. Aiken's Utilities and Engineering Director George Grinton will present the findings from the Aug. 29 SCDOT public information hearing where a pair of options were presented for public review. "The consensus was Option A by those attending and City staff," Grinton said. "We will present public information hearing findings to the Design Review Board for their input." No vote by the board is required, Grinton said. The presentation is for information purposes only.

SC After Recent Violence:

Post and Courier : As nation ponders community policing, Scott and Gowdy hope S.C. can engage in the debate

<http://www.postandcourier.com/20160903/160909811/as-nation-ponders-community-policing-scott-and-gowdy-hope-sc-can-engage-in-the-debate>

Emma Dumain

During the August congressional recess, 12 U.S. House members — participants in a bipartisan group tasked with restoring trust between police and civilians — dialed into a conference call. U.S. Rep. Cedric Richmond, D-La., provided an update on how his community was doing after Alton Sterling, a black man, was shot and killed by white policemen outside a convenience store in Baton Rouge. U.S. Rep. Hakeem Jeffries, D-N.Y., shared local reactions to the news that the New York City Police commissioner was stepping down. And U.S. Rep. Trey Gowdy, R-S.C., recalled the "homework assignment" he'd given to his working group colleagues: Talk to people you wouldn't normally speak to, Gowdy said. Find someone who has had an experience unlike any you have known. Hours after the conference call concluded, Gowdy was off to follow his own advice. He stepped into the Brookland Baptist Church in West Columbia, joined by U.S. Sen. Tim Scott, R-S.C., and nearly two dozen fellow South Carolinians — half of them from the faith community, half of them with careers in law enforcement; most of them non-white.

Opinion/Editorial:

Post and Courier: A lack of legislative competition

<http://www.postandcourier.com/20160904/160909765/a-lack-of-legislative-competition>

Editorial

The election season has been tumultuous at the national level, from the nominating process to the ongoing charges and countercharges between Democrat Hillary Clinton and Republican Donald Trump. By contrast, since the primary elections, the state legislative races have been muted to the point of obscurity. That's not because our politicians are particularly genteel. It's because there are so few contested races. Fewer than 25 percent of the General Assembly seats at stake this year feature candidates from the two major parties. Thus, more than three-quarters of the legislative incumbents are getting a free ride. And that situation doesn't necessarily reflect broad public appreciation of our lawmakers. A 2015 Winthrop University poll put public approval rating of the Legislature at 45 percent. (In contrast, Gov. Nikki Haley's approval rating is 59 percent.) So the lack of competition — and ultimately, accountability — reflects the skill of legislative gerrymandering that increasingly provides safe seats for Republicans and Democrats.

Post and Courier: New nuclear plants vital to S.C. energy needs

<http://www.postandcourier.com/20160905/160909753/new-nuclear-plants-vital-to-sc-energy-needs>

Editorial: Michael N. Couick

The consumers' advocates at the Office of Regulatory Staff have approved an important agreement that will have a positive effect on millions of South Carolina electricity users, and we hope the state Public Service Commission will agree. The agreement was reached between SCE&G and a number of parties, including electric cooperatives, that intervened in an SCE&G request to the PSC regarding construction contract changes for two nuclear power units being built near Columbia. The agreement grew out of SCE&G's request for a so-called "fixed price option," which the utility claimed would provide more construction cost-certainty for a project that has gone several billion dollars over budget so far. Opinions have appeared on these pages opposing the request. That opposition ignores one undeniable need: the nuclear units simply must be built. The 1.3 million residents who use power provided by electric cooperatives cannot afford to strand billions of dollars of unproductive concrete and steel already in the ground near Jenkinsville. We must find the best way to finish building the units while limiting their costs.

South Carolina News:

Associated Press: Amtrak train hits vehicle on tracks in South Carolina

http://m.apnews.com/ap/db_268748/contentdetail.htm?contentguid=FXLaRisk

SC State Wire

An Amtrak train was delayed after hitting a vehicle that was on the tracks in South Carolina, north of Charleston. Amtrak spokeswoman Christina Leeds told The Associated Press in an e-mail early Monday that there were no injuries to the train's passengers or crew and that the train was delayed for three hours before continuing north. She says the collision happened Sunday at 11:05 p.m. It was not immediately known if anyone in the vehicle on the tracks was injured.

Post and Courier: 13-year-old with cystic fibrosis is one of the top female surfers in S.C.

<http://www.postandcourier.com/20160905/160909853/13-year-old-with-cystic-fibrosis-is-one-of-the-top-female-surfers-in-sc>

I'm not a surfer but I've covered enough "small wave" contests on Folly Beach in the past decade to

know good carving when I see it. And a month ago at the Governor's Cup of Surfing state championship, a girl, who was easily 10 years younger than regular top contenders, caught my eye not only for her aggressive pursuit of waves but for how she attacked them. My judgment was affirmed when Bree Labiak, who turns 13 today, became the runner-up to the defending state champion, 23-year-old Savannah Bradley of James Island. In addition, Labiak finished first in shortboard and longboard divisions. Bree says she was "stoked" at how she surfed during the Governor's Cup and, in classic surfer form, tried to plug two of her sponsors. "The Governors Cup was a challenge especially going up against older, more experienced surfers like Samantha, but I felt like I was on with my surfing that day," says Bree.

Local News:

Associated Press: Deputies: Man kills wife, then himself in Columbia

http://m.apnews.com/ap/db_268748/contentdetail.htm?contentguid=JxMdUrA5

SC State Wire

Richland County deputies say a man with a history of violence against his wife stabbed her to death before killing himself. Sheriff's Department spokeswoman Sgt. Brittany Scott told media outlets that the woman's brother called 911 on Sunday morning after going to check on his sister at her Columbia home and finding their bodies. Scott says deputies have a history of responding to domestic violence complaints against the husband. Authorities say the woman died of stab wounds and it appeared the husband died from asphyxiation, although autopsies have been ordered on both people. Their names were not released.

Associated Press: Body found at Edgefield County dump IDed as missing woman

http://m.apnews.com/ap/db_268748/contentdetail.htm?contentguid=hY8BENJo

SC State Wire

Authorities say the body of a woman found at a trash dump in Edgefield County is a Ridge Spring woman missing for more than two months. Saluda County deputies said in a news release that a task force has been created to help figure out who killed Nancy Lott. Authorities say Lott's body was found Aug. 12 at the dump which takes trash from Aiken, Edgefield and Saluda counties. Deputies did not say how Lott was killed. Authorities did release a profile of her possible killer, saying the suspect will likely follow all media coverage now that Lott's death has been announced and ask friends and others if they have been contacted by law enforcement.

Associated Press: SC officer who killed unarmed teen fired 13 months later

http://m.apnews.com/ap/db_268748/contentdetail.htm?contentguid=8q3HsNaM

SC State Wire

A police officer who wasn't charged in the shooting death of an unarmed South Carolina teen is being fired from the force more than a year after the incident. Seneca Police Chief John Covington said in a short statement that Mark Tiller was being terminated and would stay on the payroll until Friday. He refused to give a reason, calling it a personnel matter. A state prosecutor didn't press charges against Tiller for the July 2015 killing of 19-year-old Zachary Hammond, saying while Tiller might have made a bad decision heading toward Hammond's moving car, the officer had less than three seconds to react and broke no law. Federal authorities are still investigating. Hammond's family released a statement saying they are glad Tiller will no longer be a police officer.

Herald- Journal: Online threats made against Byrnes High, Jewish, Muslim students

<http://www.goupstate.com/news/20160903/online-threats-made-against-byrnes-high-jewish-muslim->

students?rssfeed=true

Zach Fox

Spartanburg County Sheriff's deputies are investigating threats made against Jewish and Muslim students at Byrnes High School. Additional law enforcement officers will patrol Byrnes High School over the next several days after the threats, which contained vulgar and violent language, were reported to deputies. "We are taking it very seriously," said Spartanburg School District 5 Superintendent Scott Turner. "I was very alarmed when I saw the posts and how vile some of the language was, and how direct the threats were, not only against our students but the families of our students." The threats included Nazi language and imagery, Facebook screenshots show. In addition to the violent, threatening language, the posts included pictures of someone wearing a gas mask, and images of Nazi medals and a knife adorned with a swastika.

Associated Press: Online threat to kill Jewish, Muslim students at SC school

http://m.apnews.com/ap/db_268748/contentdetail.htm?contentguid=5PbKxLjZ

SC State Wire

Authorities say they are investigating online threats to kill Jewish and Muslim students at a South Carolina high school. Spartanburg School District 5 said in a news release that a Byrnes High School student reported the threats Friday evening. The threats said Byrnes High would be attacked Tuesday and included pictures of a person in a gas mask and a knife with a swastika on the handle. Superintendent Scott Turner says Spartanburg County deputies are patrolling the school the holiday weekend, and there will be security sweeps and extra officers on hand when school returns Tuesday. The sheriff's office says it is investigating the threats, but no arrests have been made. Byrnes High has about 2,300 students and is one of the largest high schools in South Carolina.

Associated Press: Head custodian becomes a positive role model for boys

http://m.apnews.com/ap/db_268748/contentdetail.htm?contentguid=ZR4NO6l2

SC State Wire

Not one child walks by Max Bohn without saying "hello," giving him a high five and asking when he's coming to visit his or her classroom. Bohn, 70, a retired site manager for an industrial equipment supplier, is head custodian at Cherryvale Elementary School. But to many students at the school, he is much more than that. Bohn decided to make a career change about nine years ago when the company he was working for moved out of state. He mentors boys at the school and has set up a rewards system in which he brings candy to students in a few of the classrooms for good behavior each week. Children at the school look up to him as a role model. "I feel like a grandfather to 400 children," he said. "They have changed my life. And God has changed my heart." Bohn is currently mentoring five boys. He meets with them three days a week, during their lunch hour and outside of the classroom. They eat lunch together and discuss the boys' classwork. They also talk about any behavioral issues the boys may have had and how to resolve those issues. He also works on improving their reading skills.

The State: 8 Richland 1 schools recognized as among healthiest in nation

<http://www.thestate.com/news/local/article99977162.html>

Eight Richland 1 schools have been recognized as being among the healthiest nationwide. The district leads the state this year in the number of schools named as winners of the prestigious National Healthy Schools Award. Brockman Elementary, in Forest Acres, is one of only 14 schools in the nation – and the first in South Carolina – to receive the National Healthy Schools Gold Award, which is the highest honor bestowed by the Alliance for a Healthier Generation. Bronze Award winners include Carver-Lyon Elementary, Columbia High, Dreher High, Edward E. Taylor Elementary,

Gadsden Elementary, Horrell Hill Elementary and Pine Grove Elementary schools. The awards were announced by the Alliance for a Healthier Generation, a national organization founded by the American Heart Association and the Clinton Foundation. Its goal is to reduce the prevalence of childhood obesity and to empower children to develop lifelong healthy habits.

Post and Courier: Folly poised to be first to ban polystyrene coolers, cups from beach

<http://www.postandcourier.com/20160904/160909724/folly-poised-to-be-first-to-ban-polystyrene-coolers-cups-from-beach>

Prentiss Findlay

This city is poised to become the state's first seaside community to ban polystyrene coolers and food-and-beverage containers, balloons and plastic bags from its sandy shores. City Council member Pennell Clamp, who proposed the ban with council member Dale Stuckey, said a prohibition on single-use plastic bags at retail outlets — that already received preliminary approval — did not go far enough. "The objective is to keep the plastic out of the ocean. You can't keep the plastic out of the ocean if you allow plastic on the beach," he said. Clamp said about 75 percent of the plastic that ends up on the beach is brought in by visitors. He expects beachgoers will comply with the new rule if the city puts up signs at beach walkways advising of it. Plastic bags used to pick up pet waste at the beach would be allowed, he said.

Presidential Election 2016:

Associated Press : Clinton and Trump courting Ohio voters on Labor Day

<http://bigstory.ap.org/44abd5ca309a4264959ee83c53db4ece>

Ken Thomas and Steve Peoples

Donald Trump and Hillary Clinton are making competing Labor Day pitches in Ohio, setting the stage for a critical month in their testy presidential campaign. The Republican real estate mogul is joining running mate Mike Pence at a morning round-table discussion with union members in Cleveland. The Democratic nominee plans to arrive in the city for a Labor Day festival with union leaders and workers. Trump is also expected to campaign at a fair in Youngstown, Ohio, in a nod to the state's role as a make-or-break proving ground for Republican presidential candidates. No Republican has won the White House without winning Ohio and Trump is trying to overcome some splintering in the state party, which was supportive of Ohio Gov. John Kasich during the presidential primary. While Labor Day has traditionally been the kickoff to the fall campaign, both Clinton and Trump have been locked in an intense back-and-forth throughout the summer.

Associated Press: The Latest: Clinton debuts new Boeing 737 campaign plane

<http://bigstory.ap.org/ecf73bbac9b645bc8e7bf30173d581e7>

Hillary Clinton is traveling aboard a new Boeing 737 campaign plane for the first time this Labor Day. Clinton was flying to events in Ohio and Illinois on Monday in a light blue-and-white campaign plane with her press corps. The plane has Clinton's slogan "Stronger Together" on the side and her "H" logo on the tail. Clinton has traveled mostly by private jet during the campaign and has not held a formal news conference with journalists since December 2015 in Iowa.

Tropical Storm Hermine News:

Associated Press: Hermine lingers off shore continuing its unsafe storm surges

<http://bigstory.ap.org/2d881aa340314e82ba33359677aedb60>

Ben Finley

Hermine continued Monday to twist hundreds of miles off shore in the Atlantic Ocean and was expected to keep swimmers and surfers out of beach waters because of its dangerous waves and rip currents on the last day of the long holiday weekend. "We're not looking at a landfall," said Dennis Feltgen of the National Hurricane Center on Sunday, adding Hermine is just sitting and pushing the water up along the coast making storm surge a great concern. It was expected to stall over the water before weakening again. Governors all along the Eastern Seaboard announced emergency preparations. A tropical storm warning was in effect from New York's Long Island to Massachusetts. Tropical storm-force winds were possible Monday in New Jersey. Gov. Chris Christie warned that minor to moderate flooding was still likely in coastal areas and said the storm will cause major problems, even as it tracks away from land.

National News:

Associated Press: The Latest: Obama says he understands Kaepernick's protest

<http://bigstory.ap.org/aeab9baadab74fa2a7380e5a02cddfbf>

President Barack Obama says the NFL quarterback who is refusing to stand for the national anthem is the latest in a long line of professional athletes who have exercised their constitutional right to make a statement about social issues. The president was asked at a news conference Monday about Colin Kaepernick's protest gesture. Obama said he has no doubt that the San Francisco 49ers player is sincere and "cares about some real, legitimate issues." Kaepernick has been heavily criticized since starting his silent protest. He's said it's not an anti-American gesture but a means to bring attention to racial injustice. Obama says he hasn't paid close attention to the matter. But he adds approvingly that Kaepernick has generated more national conversation about "issues that need to be talked about."

World News:

Associated Press : Obama, Putin, agree to continue seeking deal on Syria

<http://bigstory.ap.org/f27a9d409db04e4a9cc1aa3ffdd77c40>

Kathleen Hennessey

President Barack Obama said Monday the U.S. and Russia have not given up on negotiations that could stem the bloodshed in Syria, but acknowledged leaders are challenged by "gaps of trust" between the rival powers. Significant sticking points remain in the negotiations over a creation of an unlikely U.S.-Russian military partnership focusing firepower on "common enemies" in Syria, Obama said. He acknowledged that a flurry of diplomacy at an economic summit and a 90-minute meeting with his Russian counterpart, Vladimir Putin, earlier Monday did not yield a breakthrough. "Given the gaps of trust that exist, that's a tough negotiation," Obama told a press conference closing the Group of 20 summit. "We haven't yet closed the gaps." Obama didn't detail the trouble spots, although he suggested the U.S. has concerns about Russia holding up its end of the bargain and enforcing the terms. Any deal would depend on Moscow using its influence with Syrian President Bashar Assad to persuade the Syrian leader to ground planes and stop the assault on opposition forces. Obama said the aim was to reach "meaningful, serious, verifiable cessations of hostilities in Syria."

Associated Press: Multiple bomb blasts in Syrian cities kill at least 43

<http://bigstory.ap.org/76e86f4be40a47e2b713c3cc5795ea96>

Albert Aji

A string of bombings, including a suicide attack claimed by the Islamic State group, struck in and around several Syrian cities on Monday, killing at least 43 people, mainly in government-controlled areas. The SANA news agency reported blasts around the coastal city of Tartus, the central city of

Homs, the suburbs of the capital Damascus, and the northeastern city of Hasakeh. The attacks were timed closely together, but authorities have not determined whether they were linked. The IS group claimed responsibility for the blast in Hasakeh. Areas controlled by President Bashar Assad's forces have seen several bombings and other attacks during the country's five-year civil war, with many claimed by Al-Qaida-linked militant groups. One of Monday's attacks took place in the heavily guarded suburb of Sabbourah, marking a major security breach. SANA said the attack killed one person, while the opposition-run Syrian Observatory for Human Rights said three people were killed.

Associated Press: Chinese President Xi Jinping announces close of G-20 summit

<http://bigstory.ap.org/8091cec1a7654fea8d8005d9ab351d05>

Chinese President Xi Jinping has announced the close of G-20 summit in the eastern city of Hangzhou, saying it contributed to encouraging new progress in boosting global growth. Xi said agreements had been reached on reforms to global financial institutions, combating international tax evasion practices and fighting corruption. In a statement to international media at the summit's close on Monday evening, Xi said that under future cooperation guidelines, those who have committed economic crimes will have nowhere to hide. He said the summit would also go down as a milestone in transitioning the G-20 from a crisis-management mechanism to one geared toward aiding in the long-term management of the global economy.

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