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Subject: Clips – Saturday, December 31, 2016

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General Assembly News:

Herald-Journal: Lawmakers scramble to find fixes for state's roads

<http://www.goupstate.com/news/20161230/lawmakers-scramble-to-find-fixes-for-states-roads?rssfeed=true>

Bob Montgomery

From a 10-cent gas tax increase to legalized gambling, lawmakers will again be looking at several proposals to raise billions of dollars in recurring monies to fix the state's crumbling roads and bridges. "No question, we have to address the road needs," said Republican Rep. Eddie Tallon of Spartanburg, the new House assistant majority leader. "However, there are a number of ways it can be done before I say what I'm going to do. Everybody is calling for a dedicated funding stream." State Transportation Secretary Christy Hall has said the DOT needs an additional \$1.5 billion a year over several decades to bring the nation's fourth-largest state-maintained highway system to good condition. Previous attempts to raise the gas tax have fallen flat. Instead, the Legislature ends up passing stop-gap measures that fail to address the Department of Transportation's long-term needs. Last June, Gov. Nikki Haley threatened to veto a gas tax hike, then signed legislation to borrow \$2.2 billion over 10 years for infrastructure — paid back with \$200 million a year in existing fees and vehicle sales taxes. The state's 16-cent gas tax has not changed since 1987.

WIS: 3 years after teen daughter's murder, father asks lawmakers for action

<http://www.wistv.com/story/34157179/3-years-after-teen-daughters-murder-father-asks-lawmakers-for-action>

Chad Mills

Three years ago, a South Carolina teen from Lancaster was murdered by her ex-boyfriend. Her father, Robert Landry, says the same nightmare still haunts him to this day. "You find yourself waking up like in a cold sweat and then going, 'Man, it didn't happen. It couldn't happen.' That's the worst nightmare ever," he said. "How could that have happened? Then, you realize it did and your baby's gone." On December 30, 2013, his daughter, Sierra Landry, was fatally shot in Lancaster by her "on-again, off-again" boyfriend Tanner Crolley, who's now serving a 30-year prison sentence for murder. "Every day we would say to each other, 'It's me and you against the world.' How lonely the world has been without her, because it seems like just me against the world now," Landry, who now lives in Summerville, said. Three years after her death, Sierra's dad is fighting to save the life of other teens in rocky relationships. He wants lawmakers to pass a bill that would give teens easier access to what are called orders of protection. Right now, minors under the age of 18 need a parent's or guardian's permission to get one.

SC Delegation News:

Post and Courier: S.C. business community and allies hope for brighter Ex-Im Bank future in the new year

http://www.postandcourier.com/news/s-c-business-community-and-allies-hope-for-brighter-ex/article_9c22305e-c181-11e6-8d65-c3da0fa74fc7.html

Emma Dumain

South Carolina has lost jobs in the past year, but the state's business community and Capitol Hill

allies are hopeful this downward trend will soon be reversed. The key lies in whether more Republicans in Washington, D.C. — specifically those in positions of influence and power — will come out in favor of the Export-Import Bank, the export credit agency that's designed to give U.S. companies the necessary financing to market their goods to buyers overseas. Some of the biggest manufacturing giants based in South Carolina benefit from the Ex-Im Bank, which helps them secure the business that allows them, in turn, to create jobs in the Palmetto State. The Ex-Im Bank fills in the gap for American businesses by providing them the financing tools when private sector lenders are unable or unwilling to do so. But the 82-year-old bank has been in political peril in recent years, constantly on the chopping block thanks to congressional conservatives who see the institution as "corporate welfare."

SC Political News:

The State: SC consultant helped steer Trump to improbable victory

<http://www.thestate.com/news/politics-government/article123901099.html>

Bristow Marchant

The day after Donald Trump's improbable election victory, the president-elect faced the task of forming a new administration to take over the country's executive branch in two months. Trump needed help, and a S.C.-based consultant who had been with the Trump campaign from the beginning was there with him. "At 6 in the morning, we went to bed," said political strategist Ed McMullen of Charleston. "And, at 8 o'clock, we were back in (Trump) Tower, planning the transition. "The head of McMullen Public Affairs, McMullen has known Trump for years. The political veteran was one of the first to come on board with the Trump campaign. McMullen was chairman of Trump's successful S.C. GOP primary operation, helped plan the Republican National Convention and kept the outsider candidate's ear throughout the general election. After election night, McMullen stuck around as a member of the transition team and a vice chair of the Trump inaugural committee.

NOTE: McMullen's presence helped raise South Carolina's profile with those in Trump's orbit. "I think the reason why you see so many high-profile positions going to South Carolina, whether it's Nikki Haley (as U.S. ambassador to the United Nations) or Mick Mulvaney (as director of the Office of Management and Budget) or Tim Scott and Trey Gowdy on the transition team ... a lot of that has to do with Ed," said Bill Stern, a Columbia real estate developer and friend of McMullen's. "Mr. Trump relies on him, calls him, has meetings with him."

Savannah River Site/MOX News:

Aiken Standard: \$100M fine starts over in South Carolina legal battle over MOX at Savannah River Site

http://www.aikenstandard.com/news/m-fine-starts-over-in-south-carolina-legal-battle-over/article_b15305b6-ca00-11e6-ac84-2fc65410c92b.html

Thomas Gardiner

The legal saga surrounding plutonium disposition and construction of Savannah River Site's MOX facility began nearly a year ago and will begin a new chapter as the calendar turns to 2017. S.C. Gov. Nikki Haley initiated legal action against the U.S. Department of Energy on Jan. 26, 2016. She sent a letter to State Attorney General Alan Wilson to "initiate litigation on behalf of the state of South Carolina against DOE." That lawsuit is still active. That letter was generated after the Energy Department failed to meet deadlines and fulfill obligations to the state regarding plutonium currently stored at the Savannah River Site. Of the approximately 13 metric tons of plutonium stored at Savannah River Site, a little more than half was part of an international agreement to permanently demilitarize plutonium. In the agreement with Russia, the U.S. pledged to process the material through the Mixed Oxide Fuel Fabrication Facility at SRS. Plutonium processed through the facility would be mixed with natural uranium, creating fuel for commercial nuclear power plants that could not be used for nuclear weapons purposes.

Opinion/Editorial:

Sun News: Area S.C. senators optimistic about new legislative session

<http://www.myrtlebeachonline.com/opinion/editorials/article123567719.html>

Editorial Board

Three area state senators are optimistic that 2017 could be a year of legislative progress, with a positive impact for Horry County and the Grand Strand. When the General Assembly convenes this month in Columbia, "it will be a new session, a new year and a new atmosphere," Sen. Luke Rankin of Myrtle Beach told The Sun News Editorial Board. Rankin has served in the S.C. Senate since 1993. Greg Hembree of Little River was re-elected in November to a second four-year term and Stephen L. Goldfinch Jr. was elected a senator after serving in the House. The new atmosphere to which Rankin alludes is the leadership of Lt. Gov. Henry McMaster, who will become governor if Gov. Nikki Haley is confirmed by the U.S. Senate as ambassador to the United Nations. Haley has bipartisan support and her nomination by President-elect Donald Trump is expected to be confirmed. All three senators expressed optimism for a better working relationship between the legislative and executive branches, Rankin and Goldfinch being more outspoken on that topic.

South Carolina News:

WLTX: SC Religious Leaders Share Hopes for New Year

<http://www.wltx.com/news/local/sc-religious-leaders-share-hopes-for-new-year/380745643>

Janae Frazier

In South Carolina, 2016 has had its fair share of devastating natural disasters, political divisiveness and violence. Members of the Interfaith Partners of South Carolina agree the new year has to be about unity and love for us to see a better 2017. "With the help of God and with the help of all of the good people of faith all over this city and country, we'll be able to galvanize ourselves and make way for a new dawn, a new beginning, a new day," Rabbi Jonathan Case said of his hope for the new year. "We've got to shift the focus so that it's cool to be good to each other, to be caring. Compassion is not a sexy thing but it's key to our survival," Pagan Priestess Holli Emore explained. "Protecting Mother Earth and the sacredness of Mother Earth and all of our natural resources is something that's very innate with Native American spirituality," Dr. Will Moreau Goins said. "So it's that kind of thing that we can continue to offer to all the globe."

NOTE: It's the fifth year in a row, Governor Nikki Haley has declared January South Carolina Interfaith Harmony Month.

Local News:

The State: Get-home-safely service available to Midlands-area New Year's Eve revelers

<http://www.thestate.com/news/local/crime/article123912199.html>

Teddy Kulmala

New Years revelers in Lexington who party too hard Saturday can rely on a new service to take themselves – and their cars – home safely. The rides come from 11 towing companies through an arrangement organized by town police. It's a plan that developed as police looked for more ways to keep inebriated drivers off the road, according to Cpl. Cameron Mortenson. Tow truck operators are filling a void since there are no taxis regularly stationed in the community of 25,000 residents, he said. The service, with its \$100 flat fee, also ends concern about the inconvenience of temporarily abandoning a vehicle, he said. The cost of a DUI arrest and conviction averages about \$10,000 per person, Mortenson said. "Above that, there could be the loss of a life. You certainly can't put a price on that," he said. In Columbia, free or reduced-fare taxi rides are available around many holidays and major events. No one keeps track of usage in Lexington, but the service is beneficial, Mortenson said.

The State: Dutch Fork Elementary has growing appetite for reducing food waste

<http://www.thestate.com/news/local/article123845824.html>

During a recent lunch at Dutch Fork Elementary School, fourth grader Madison Shipman walked among the tables, picking plastic forks and wrappers from her classmates' trays. She put them in the black bucket she held labeled "LANDFILL." "We get the plastic stuff and everything the worms can't eat," she said. Shipman is one of two class helpers that aides students in discerning what gets thrown in the trash and what doesn't. Plastic forks and wrappers? Landfill. Half-eaten apples and leftover salad? Compost. Water bottles and cans? Recycling. Since implementing the sorting process in the cafeteria at the beginning of the school year, Dutch Fork Elementary, which is an environmental science magnet school, has reduced its trash from breakfast and lunch from 27 bags to one per day. "The kids have learned that what would've before gone to a landfill and been completely useless can be used for something else," said Amy Umberger, Dutch Fork's resident scientist and compost coordinator.

WIS: Sumter residents concerned about yellow water <http://www.wistv.com/story/34155521/sumter-residents-concerned-about-yellow-water>

Carolina Patrickis

Residents in Sumter want to know why they have yellow water coming out of their faucets. Sumter's Public Works Department says the water is safe to drink and it's normal. However, several residents in both the Winter Park and Hidden Bay neighborhoods say they aren't taking any chances as their frustrations with the water issues continue to grow. "This is water straight out of our faucet from Tuesday night," Monica Oxendine, a Hidden Bay resident said. Friday the water coming out of the tap was clear. "You never know when it may turn yellow," Oxendine explained. "You could be in the shower and it just turns." A handful of residents, including Oxendine, say they just aren't sure what the water will look like from one day to the next. "One day it can be clear and then in just a few hours it can be yucky and nasty," Stephanie Disher, a Winter Park Neighborhood resident said.

Independent Mail: 2016 one of driest ever in the Upstate

<http://www.independentmail.com/story/news/local/2016/12/30/2016-one-driest-ever-upstate/96008064/>

Abe Hardesty

Just one year after heavy October rains made it impossible for some Upstate growers to harvest fall crops, Tom Garrison pondered a new problem as he looked ahead to 2017. The ground, too wet to plant winter crops a year ago, no longer has an excessive moisture problem. That left the Denver Downs manager concerned about a drought as he harvested collard greens on his farm near Sandy Springs. "Last year at this time, we had a surplus of water in the soil. That caused all sorts of problems with harvesting fall crops and planting winter ones," Garrison said. "But the extra moisture helped this year, when we had the driest fall that I can remember." It makes the rainfall total of the next three months unusually important, Garrison said. "It makes you worry about next summer. If we don't get some rainfall this winter, who knows what the ground will be like when it gets hot and dry."

WLTX: Downtown Building Fire Sparked By Welding Equipment

<http://www.wltx.com/news/local/downtown-building-fire/380804624>

The Columbia Fire Department said they were working a building fire in downtown Columbia Friday night, resulting in roads being closed. The fire department said that they were working a fire around 8:30 p.m. at a building being renovated to become a six-lane bowling alley, near Taylor and Main Streets. Firefighters said the fire started after radiant heat from welding ignited wood inside the building. Brick Lewis with the Columbia Fire Department said there was not yet an estimate on damages. Firefighters said the Nickelodeon Theater was evacuated as a precaution, but no one was hurt. Firefighters said the scene is now under control, and all roads were reopened before midnight.

The State: Police think same two men held up several Columbia-area businesses

<http://www.thestate.com/news/local/article123863049.html>

Jeff Wilkinson

A string of five armed robberies in six days in Richland and Lexington counties have law enforcement

officials thinking the crimes are linked. Three convenience stores, a general store and motel were robbed between Dec. 22 and Wednesday. In one robbery on Christmas Eve, the thieves told the victim "Merry Christmas" as they left the store. In four of the five holdups, two robbers were involved – armed black men of medium build wearing masks. In the other, a single gunman with the same description was involved. Kevin Cornett, police chief in Springdale where the motel robbery occurred, said the two Lexington County robberies were almost certainly committed by the same two people; and, in all five "I think everything looks the same. There are a lot of similarities in all of them."

Aiken Standard: Spotlight put on mental health after Carrie Fisher's tragic death

http://www.aikenstandard.com/news/spotlight-put-on-mental-health-after-carrie-fisher-s-tragic/article_848e496a-cd0b-11e6-b2f3-ef0ec8359cf8.html

Dan Brown

With the global spotlight focused on the passing of "Star Wars" icon Carrie Fisher this week, the spotlight also shines on Fisher's lifelong battle with mental illness. Fisher died Tuesday at the age of 60, a day after going into cardiac arrest on a flight from the United Kingdom to Los Angeles. Fisher was one of the first to bring her battle and recovery from alcohol and drug addiction, and mental illness, to the forefront of the public eye. With her passing, she has shown others there is hope for those who suffer from similar afflictions. In Aiken County, there is help for residents seeking treatment for addiction, alcoholism and mental illness. Jeff Waddell, director of adult outpatient services at Aiken-Barnwell Mental Health Services at 1135 Gregg Highway in Aiken, said there are programs and treatment options available for anyone suffering from mental illness that don't require waiting two months for an appointment.

President-elect Trump News:

Associated Press: Trump's praise of Putin could signal a new day for US policy

<http://bigstory.ap.org/article/0628dad4b9984961a15d112ca0f4450e/trumps-praise-putin-could-signal-new-day-us-policy>

Moscow is hoping Donald Trump will reconsider the sanctions the U.S. is levying in response to its finding of election hacking, a wait-and-see strategy bolstered by the American president-elect's own approving words for Russian President Vladimir Putin. Putin has essentially put relations with the U.S. on hold until Trump replaces President Barack Obama on Jan. 20. Though his foreign minister encouraged him to slap back at Washington for the sanctions imposed by Obama, Putin decided that Russia wouldn't immediately retaliate. "Great move on delay (by V. Putin)," Trump wrote Friday on Twitter. "I always knew he was very smart!" Praise for a longtime adversary at odds with a sitting American president is remarkable for a president-elect — and the latest signal that U.S.-Russia relations, among other policies, could be getting a makeover from Trump.

Associated Press: Grand Old Party? Donald Trump remaking GOP in his image

<http://bigstory.ap.org/article/bdb3ca7c46d448138a7bed06dc9f6e83/grand-old-party-donald-trump-remaking-gop-his-image>

For eight years, a leaderless Republican Party has rallied around its passionate opposition to President Barack Obama and an unceasing devotion to small government, free markets and fiscal discipline. No more. On the eve of his inauguration, Donald Trump is remaking the party in his image, casting aside decades of Republican orthodoxy for a murky populist agenda that sometimes clashes with core conservative beliefs. Yet his stunning election gives the GOP a formal leader for the first time in nearly a decade. The New York real estate mogul becomes the face of the party, the driver of its policies and its chief enforcer. Despite their excitement, Republican loyalists across the country concede that major questions remain about their party's identity in the age of Trump.

Associated Press: Trump sends New Year wishes to all, even his 'many enemies'

<http://bigstory.ap.org/article/3cc7e56c71bc49978823ce54f318f6cd/trump-sends-new-year-wishes-all-even-his-many-enemies>

President-elect Donald Trump has an unusual New Year's message for his Twitter followers. He is wishing a "Happy New Year to all, including to my many enemies and those who have fought me and lost so badly." Trump adds, "they just don't know what to do," ending his message with the word, "Love!" The president-elect will be spending his New Year's Eve at his private Mar-a-Lago club in Palm Beach, Florida. He'll be throwing a private party that is expected to draw hundreds of guests, including action star Sylvester Stallone.

National News:

Associated Press: Revelers bid adieu to a year of conflicts, celebrity deaths

<http://bigstory.ap.org/article/f09d6efbbfdb48e9825f0198a4114903/revelers-honor-late-celebrities-2016-era-chaos>

As 2016 draws to a close, revelers around the world are bidding a weary adieu to a year filled with political surprises, prolonged conflicts and deaths of legendary celebrities. How people are ushering in the new year...

NOTE: Las Vegas: More than 300,000 visitors are expected to descend on Las Vegas for an extravagant New Year's Eve celebration. Nightclubs are pulling out all the stops with performances from DJ Calvin Harris, rappers T-Pain and Kendrick Lamar and artists Drake and Bruno Mars. The city's celebrity chefs have crafted elaborate prix fixe menus complete with caviar and champagne toasts. An eight-minute fireworks show will kick off at the stroke of midnight, with rockets launching from the tops of half a dozen casinos. Federal officials have ranked the celebration just below the Super Bowl and on par with the festivities in Times Square. FBI and Secret Service agents will work alongside local police departments that are putting all hands on deck for the big night.

Associated Press: List: Ban 'echo chamber,' 'post-truth,' 'bigly' and 'dadbod'

<http://bigstory.ap.org/article/79ca6db0bc9e4f529863ed2f102f42e0/list-ban-echo-chamber-post-truth-bigly-and-dadbod>

You, sir, (or ma'am): Focus, if you will, on a historic, on fleek listicle containing words nominated for bigly banishment. But don't convene a town hall meeting or get your dandruff up in the echo chamber over them. Northern Michigan's Lake Superior State University on Saturday released its 42nd annual List of Words Banished from the Queen's English for Misuse, Overuse and General Uselessness. The tongue-in-cheek, non-binding list comes from suggestions to the Sault Ste. Marie school. It includes "you, sir," "focus," "town hall meeting," "historic," "echo chamber," "on fleek," "bigly," "listicle" and "get your dandruff up," seemingly a substitute for "dander," its hair and skin kin. "Bigly" also made Merriam-Webster's Top 10 for 2016. President-elect Donald Trump was fond this year of saying "big league" but making it sound like "bigly."

Associated Press: Obama lines up a meeting with lawmakers, a speech in Chicago

<http://bigstory.ap.org/article/0fcffa69b71c473bb662069b1293bbd9/obama-lines-meeting-lawmakers-speech-chicago>

Eager to stop Republicans from destroying his signature health care law, President Barack Obama and Democratic lawmakers will meet next week to try to forge a common strategy. Obama also plans a major valedictory speech in Chicago, his hometown, shortly before his presidency ends. Obama will travel to the Capitol on Wednesday morning for the meeting with House and Senate Democrats, according to an invitation sent to lawmakers. The White House is casting it as an effort to unite Democrats behind a plan to protect the law, known as the Affordable Care Act, before Republicans have a chance to settle on their own plan for repealing it. Democrats are on edge over the future of the ACA, given the GOP's disdain for "Obamacare" and President-elect Donald Trump's vows to gut it. Though Republicans are united behind the notion of repealing the law, they're split over how best to replace it. Some want to strip out unpopular provisions while leaving others intact, while other Republicans prefer a start-from-scratch approach.

United Nations News:

Associated Press: Sporadic fighting mars second day of Syria cease-fire

<http://bigstory.ap.org/article/0ed482f2ed8c4b31a5a5cbc80a13a3b8/syrian-activists-say-no-let-fighting-outside-capital>

Parts of Syria saw continued fighting Saturday, on the second day of a nationwide cease-fire intended to pave the way for peace talks between the government and the opposition in the new year. Activists reported pro-government forces were pressing on several fronts against two strategically-located opposition pockets around the capital, Damascus, while Russia's military deployment to Syria reported twelve cease-fire violations it blamed on rebels Friday. Russia is a key ally of the Syrian government. Nevertheless, the Russian and Turkish brokered truce held for the most part on a day marked by rain and overcast skies, preserving the possibility for peace talks in the Kazakhstan capital of Astana in the second half of January. The U.N. Security Council is scheduled to meet at 11 a.m. EST (1600 GMT) to vote on a resolution to endorse the cease-fire and roadmap to peace beginning with a transitional government for the country.

Associated Press: UN Security Council to vote on Syria cease-fire agreement

<http://bigstory.ap.org/article/f3ec62a621054f98839de5caf69face7/un-security-council-vote-syria-cease-fire-agreement>

The U.N. Security Council will vote Saturday on a resolution that would endorse the cease-fire agreement in Syria brokered by Russia and Turkey, and reiterate support for a roadmap to peace that starts with a transitional government. The resolution also calls for "rapid, safe and unhindered" access to deliver humanitarian aid throughout the country. And it looks forward to a meeting in late January between the Syrian government and opposition in Kazakhstan's capital Astana "as an important part of the Syrian-led political process facilitated by the United Nations." Russia and Turkey are on opposing sides of the Syrian conflict: Moscow along with Iran provides crucial military support to Syrian President Bashar Assad, while Turkey has long served as a rear base and source of supplies for the rebels. Divisions in the Security Council between Russia and the veto-wielding Western powers — the U.S. Britain and France who support the moderate opposition and demand that Assad steps down — have blocked action to end the war, now in its sixth year.

Associated Press: Ban Ki-moon buoyed by climate accord but laments conflicts

<http://bigstory.ap.org/article/0795f0eee7f048779ffd428957e228e3/ban-ki-moon-buoyed-climate-accord-laments-conflicts>

Ban Ki-moon ends 10 years at the helm of the United Nations lamenting the "fires still burning" from Syria to South Sudan but buoyed by a global agreement to combat climate change and new U.N. goals to fight poverty and inequality. As a final act before his term ends at midnight on New Year's Eve, the secretary-general will push the button starting the descent of the glittering 11,875-pound ball in New York's Times Square in the countdown to 2017's arrival. At that moment, former Portuguese prime minister Antonio Guterres will start his tenure as United Nations chief for the next five years. Looking back at his stewardship of the United Nations at a farewell news conference earlier this month, Ban told reporters "this has been a decade of unceasing test."

World News:

Associated Press: 3,000 years ago, it ruled the Mideast, now blown to pieces

<http://bigstory.ap.org/article/9609e2be12c941eaa63f56b8beaf8e78/3000-years-ago-it-ruled-mideast-now-blown-pieces>

The chilly December wind whipped rain across the strewn wreckage of a city that, nearly 3,000 years ago, ruled almost the entire Middle East. Rivulets of water ran through the dirt, washing away chunks of ancient stone. The city of Nimrud in northern Iraq is in pieces, victim of the Islamic State group's fervor to erase history. The remains of its palaces and temples, once lined in brilliant reliefs of gods and kings, have been blown up. The statues of winged bulls that once guarded the site are hacked to bits. Its towering ziggurat, or step pyramid, has been bulldozed. The militants' fanaticism devastated

one of the Middle East's most important archaeological sites. But more than a month after the militants were driven out, Nimrud is still being ravaged, its treasures disappearing, imperiling any chance of eventually rebuilding it, an Associated Press team found after multiple visits in the past month.

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