

Title: **Senators begin roads debate with four days left in legislative session**
 Author: By Cassie Cope ccope@thestate.com
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Senators begin roads debate with four days left in legislative session

By CASSIE COPE
 ccope@thestate.com

COLUMBIA State senators began debating a proposal to repair the state's crumbling roads Wednesday with only four working days left in the legislative session.

However, passage of a proposal this year in the Senate – where at least three factions have uncompromising positions – gets less likely with each day that passes.

Republicans, divided between mainstream party members and members of the libertarian-leaning William Wallace Caucus, and Democrats – the Senate's minority party – all want different outcomes.

Some Republicans have proposed increasing the state's gas tax by 12 cents a gallon over three years and cutting the state's income tax, now capped at 7 percent, by 1 percentage point over five years.

But some Democrats oppose the income tax cut. They argue low-income and retired South Carolinians, who do not make enough to pay income taxes, will have to pay higher gas taxes but will not get any benefit from

the income tax cut, which would save the wealthiest South Carolinians \$60,000 a year.

Meanwhile, libertarian-leaning senators oppose any tax increase.

A three-day filibuster by libertarian state Sen. Tom Davis, R-Beaufort, took a detour Wednesday, when Senate Majority Leader Harvey Peeler, R-Gaffney, maneuvered so senators could pass a proposal to ban abortions at 20 weeks and begin the roads debate.

"My constituents want something done to improve their roads and bridges," Peeler said in a statement. "The business community wants something done with their roads and bridges. ... I have listened, and I am doing everything I can to lead the Senate to a thorough debate of all of our options."

However, Davis could continue his filibuster Thursday, running the clock out on the session before the Senate can send a roads plan back to the House, which passed a pro-

posal in April.

Lawmakers indicated Wednesday they will return to Columbia next month to handle unfinished business.

The session is scheduled to end June 4. But lawmakers have yet to pass a state budget.

The S.C. House voted Wednesday for lawmakers to return to Columbia June 16-18.

During that three-day period, lawmakers would be able to take up the budget, budget-related bills and bills that have passed both the House and Senate. Lawmakers also could take up budget vetoes by Gov. Nikki Haley.

The House proposal also leaves the door open in case legislators do not pass a budget by July 1, the start of the state's fiscal year. If that happens, lawmakers could pass a resolution to fund state government at current levels until a budget passes.

The proposal for legislators to return to Columbia requires approval by the Senate.



Title: **Gov. Haley's upcoming appearance at prayer rally is questioned**
 Author: THE ASSOCIATED PRESS
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Gov. Haley's upcoming appearance at prayer rally is questioned

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

NORTH CHARLESTON— Gov. Nikki Haley has come under criticism for her plan to headline a massive Christian-themed prayer rally next month.

The Post and Courier reports Haley, a converted Methodist, will be the keynote speaker at an event called The Response.

It will be held June 13 at the North Charleston Coliseum in front of up to 10,000 people.

Amy Monsky of the group Secular Humanists of the Lowcountry says Haley's involvement is an endorsement of Christianity over other religions. The American Civil Liberties Union has voiced similar objections.

Louisiana Gov. Bobby Jindal and former Texas Gov. Rick Perry have been met with similar criticisms in the past for speaking at prayer rallies.

Haley's press office says the governor is inviting South Carolinians "of all backgrounds and faiths to join her."

Title: **Haley urges senators to OK Uber ride-sharing**
 Author: Associated Press
 Size: 10.54 square inch
 Rock Hill, SC Circulation: 34688



Haley urges senators to OK Uber ride-sharing

Associated Press

COLUMBIA Gov. Nikki Haley urged senators Wednesday to pass a bill that would allow Uber to continue operating in South Carolina past this summer.

South Carolina risks losing Uber's ride-sharing services entirely if the Legislature doesn't act, Haley said in a letter to senators, which lauded Uber as an "innovative, cutting-edge" company.

"We cannot allow this to happen to us. Uber's departure from South Carolina will be a step backwards for our state, depriving our citizens of safe, reliable trans-

portation and hundreds of jobs," Haley wrote.

In January, the Public Service Commission issued a cease-and-desist order stopping the app-based service offered then in Charleston, Myrtle Beach, Columbia and Greenville. Following criticism from Haley and legislators of both parties, the commission reversed course two weeks later and granted a temporary license through June 30, with the expectation that legislators would deal with the issue.

A bill that allows Uber's continued existence passed the House in March.

Title: **Senate begins road debate and passes abortion bill**
 Author: TIM SMITH STAFF WRITER TCSMITH@GREENVILLENEWS.COM
 Size: 45.26 square inch
 Greenville, SC Circulation: 113473



Senate begins road debate and passes abortion bill

Members also elect
new chief justice

TIM SMITH

STAFF WRITER

TCSMITH@GREENVILLENEWS.COM

COLUMBIA — Finally, the South Carolina Senate has begun debating a road-funding bill.

And in the process the Senate gave final approval to a bill banning abortions for women pregnant more than 19 weeks, sending the bill back to the House.

The action came on a busy day in the Statehouse, as senators and House members elected a new chief justice of the Supreme Court, Costa Pleicones.

Pleicones, 71, and an asso-

ciate justice since 2000, ran unopposed, a year after he lost to current Chief Justice Jean Toal, a childhood friend, who must retire in December. Pleicones must retire in December 2016.

The House-passed bill abortion bill, first authored by Rep. Wendy Nanney of Greenville, contains fewer exceptions than the Senate version, which likely will set up a negotiating committee to work out the differences.

Sen. Lee Bright, a Spartan-

burg County Republican who filibustered the exceptions, has vowed to fight the bill again if it returns to the Senate with the Senate exceptions intact.

The bill's passage came with five days left in the regular legislative session and hope dimming for approval of a road-funding bill.

Senators began debating a roads plan Wednesday follow-

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Debate

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ing passage of the abortion bill, though the move to allow the debate was a temporary one. It was unclear late Wednesday afternoon if the Senate would take any votes or return to the debate Thursday.

Sen. Ray Cleary, a Georgetown County Republican who has pushed for increased road funding, urged passage of a plan raising about \$800 million in additional money for roads, telling the Senate that Georgia recently passed legislation to put \$900 million on a road system he said is already in better condition than the one in South Carolina.

"I think adding this \$800 million makes fiscal sense, is re-

sponsible and will answer the needs of the people," he said.

Although lawmakers started the year listing roads at the top of their agenda, Gov. Nikki Haley, the House and Senate all produced different plans to address the issue.

The Senate Finance Committee passed a plan that would raise about \$800 million for infrastructure, using an increase in the gas tax, last raised in 1987, and fees. But the plan contained no changes in the way highway commissioners are picked nor income tax relief. Haley, who proposed income tax cuts and a change in the way highway commissioners are selected, vowed to veto the plan.

The Senate GOP caucus then announced a plan that would raise about \$700 million more

annually in taxes and fees, as well as a 1 percentage point decrease in income tax and granting the governor the power to appoint highway commissioners.

Some conservatives, including Sen. Tom Davis of Beaufort, argued that there is enough new money in the current budget and future budgets to pay for needed road repairs. He spent three days filibustering a Capital Reserve Fund bill to urge the Senate to approve spending half the amount in that fund for local road maintenance.

Tuesday afternoon, Senate Majority Leader Harvey Peeler collected Senate Republicans to talk about roads.

When the Senate opened

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business Wednesday, Peeler surprised Democrats by moving to go to the roads bill. Democrats, who oppose the Senate GOP plan, attempted to thwart his plans but failed.

The Senate then voted on the abortion bill since it stood in the way of taking up the roads bill.

The current debate centers on the Senate Finance Committee road-funding plan, which many GOP senators oppose because it does not offer tax relief nor reform of the state Department of Transportation.

Title: **Haley to Senate: Allow Uber services**

Author:

Size: 7.28 square inch

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Haley to Senate: Allow Uber services

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South Carolina risks losing Uber's ride-sharing services entirely if the Legislature doesn't act, Haley said in a letter to senators, which lauded Uber as an "innovative, cutting-edge" company.

In January, the Public Service Commission issued a cease-and-desist order stopping the app-based service offered then in Charleston, Myrtle Beach, Columbia and Greenville. Following criticism from Haley and legislators of both parties, the commission reversed course two weeks later and granted a temporary license through June 30, with the expectation that legislators would deal with the issue.



Title: **Haley to visit Beaufort County**

Author:

Size: 4.34 square inch

Beaufort, SC Circulation: 11269



Haley to visit Beaufort County

Gov. Nikki Haley will end this week with a visit to the city of Beaufort, where she will join local officials for a media briefing following a Beaufort County Emergency Management Division hurricane preparedness meeting.

The annual briefing is scheduled for 3 p.m. Friday at 2001 Duke St.

She will arrive in Beaufort County following similar events in Horry and Charleston counties.

Title: **Road bill debate underway**
 Author: By SEANNA ADCOX The Associated Press
 Size: 28.67 square inch
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LEGISLATURE

Road bill debate underway

The Senate leapfrogs a filibuster on a separate bill so lawmakers can address funding issues.

By SEANNA ADCOX

The Associated Press

COLUMBIA — With just four days left in South Carolina's regular legislative session, the Senate finally began debating a bill to fund road and bridge construction.

Senate Majority Leader Harvey Peeler used a rare procedural motion to leapfrog a filibuster on a separate bill, enabling the Senate to officially — after weeks of talking about it — take

up the issue that business leaders and lawmakers of both parties have called a top priority for the session.

Peeler, R-Gaffney, said that when he took the podium Wednesday to make his motion, "I was the only senator who knew what I was going to do."

But progress on the bill is still far from certain.

Sen. Sean Bennett, R-Summerville, explained a proposed compromise that

many Republican senators hope will escape Gov. Nikki Haley's veto pen. It links an increase in the state's gas tax — which would be the state's first since 1987 — to a reduction of the state's personal income tax. The proposal would reduce the state's tax collections by \$700 million annually once fully

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SESSION

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implemented in five years. That's about half the cut Haley wanted. But some Republicans in the chamber oppose any gas tax hike. Democrats, meanwhile, oppose tying the road bill to an income tax cut.

Minority Leader Nikki Setzler, D-West Columbia, said the proposal would give a big tax break to the wealthy, while poor people would be forced to

spend more on gas.

Meanwhile, the House Wednesday approved a resolution creating a special session from June 16 through June 18. By law, the regular session must end at 5 p.m. on June 4, but the Legislature is far from having a state budget for the fiscal year starting July 1.

Debate over how to fund road and bridge construction has blocked the Senate from completing its proposed budget package. The so-called capital reserve bill usually travels in

tandem with the budget plan for tax collections.

But Sen. Tom Davis, R-Beaufort, has been filibustering the bill that spends one-time surplus money because he opposes raising gas taxes. When the Senate meets today, that filibuster is likely to resume.

Adding to the debate is the potential that legislators will have an additional \$400 million to spend after state economic advisers meet Friday. The state's tax collections are higher than expected.

Title: **Invest 'surplus' in backlogged needs**

Author:

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EDITORIAL

Invest 'surplus' in backlogged needs

Years of offering “I owe you’s” shouldn’t lead to new spending when a fresh stack of money comes into the coffers.

The General Assembly, however, seems stuck with this mentality of using a recently discovered \$400 million budget surplus in that way rather than paying back those that they’ve shortchanged for years.

This unexpected budget surplus needs to be wisely invested in items that the General Assembly has neglected for too long. Lawmakers shouldn’t see this revenue merely as a quick fix to fulfill needs that are politically expedient, which is the mindset seemingly taking shape. S.C. Gov. Nikki Haley has said she would like to see this money invested in one of three areas – paying down the state’s debt, providing some form of income tax relief or funding for the state’s roads and bridges.

This wish list from the governor certainly carries political weight, but shouldn’t take precedent over the growing list of items the legislature has failed to properly fund, especially since the recession hit in 2008. Some of this money is going to fulfill these needs, but not nearly in proper size and scope. On May 7, the Senate decided unanimously to dedicate the then expected non-recurring supplemental dollars for one-time bonuses for state employees, to aid local ice storm clean-up efforts, including Aiken County and for road resurfacing needs.

However, with this additional revenue, the most responsible way forward would be to fully fund commitments to other public bodies. Just recently, Aiken County Council took the initial step in possibly implementing a millage rate increase because of this lack of funding from the state.

The legislature shouldn’t act as if this is a one-time gift that can only be spent on new, one-time expenditures.

Haley has already indicated that the legislature’s decision concerning the surplus is “precedent-setting” as the economy improves and officials foresee

more surpluses in the years to come.

The greatest sign of leadership would be fulfilling the promises that have been broken for too many years, particularly mandates placed on local governments, school districts and our state’s colleges and universities.

Lawmakers are apparently more apt toward using these dollars for something new, whether it be paying down the debt, providing income tax relief or injecting a one-time shot of money for roads and bridges. They should instead be doing what they are supposed to be doing rather than passing something new and likely creating other promises that can be broken.

By some indications, the legislature will use this so-called surplus solely as a one-time fix for roads. This has become clearer after the Senate hit at an impasse in the budget process when S.C. Sen. Tom Davis, R-Beaufort, brought a challenge to the legislature’s Capital Reserve Fund bill, which is intended to fund urgent capital project needs. Davis has argued that this “surplus” could be used to fund infrastructure needs, negating the need to increase the state’s gas tax to fund such projects.

This is myopic on two levels. First, the Senate shouldn’t use this as an excuse to put off the tough decision-making needed to raise taxes or fees to fix roads and bridges through a long-term infrastructure bill. Second, it allows the legislature to continue to shirk state law by not fulfilling their responsibilities to other bodies, particularly with the local government fund.

The governor’s reasoning that this is a “precedent-setting” decision is correct, but she’s striking the wrong tone when it comes to what lawmakers should do.

This is a chance for the General Assembly to not only give the state, but also other public entities, a clearer outlook and a more solid economic footing in the years ahead rather than the unpredictably that exists now.

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Author:

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AP PHOTO/JEFFREY COLLINS

South Carolina Gov. Nikki Haley surrounds herself with Republican lawmakers as she talks about what she would like to do with \$400 million in extra revenue the state is expected to get at a news conference on Tuesday in Columbia. The governor said the legislature needs to provide a tax cut, pay off debt or fix the state's roads and bridges with the extra revenue.

Title: **Clemson's Swinney backs out of event**
 Author: By CASSIE COPE The (Columbia) State
 Size: 53.01 square inch
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Clemson's Swinney backs out of event

Legislator, student group asked the Clemson football coach to stay away from group that opposes same-sex marriage.

By CASSIE COPE

The (Columbia) State

Clemson University football coach Dabo Swinney said Wednesday that he will not attend a Palmetto Family Council event next week after a state Democratic leader protested his appearance because the organization opposes same-sex marriage.

Clemson football coach Dabo Swinney said Wednesday that he will not attend a Palmetto Family Council event next week in Columbia. Swinney canceled after a state Democratic leader protested his appearance because the organization opposes same-sex marriage.

"(A)fter much thought, in order to avoid a distraction for the team

SWINNEY

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In a statement, Palmetto Family Council board chairman Reese Boyd III said Wednesday "recent false attacks from some angry liberal leaders in South Carolina have cast doubt on our organization, who we are and what we stand for."

Boyd said it was the organization's intent to recognize Swinney's accomplishments, "specifically the great work of his foundation, serving as a great role model and for the strong testimony of his personal relationship with Christ."

Boyd said the group understands "Swinney's reluctance to engage in, or respond to, petty political attacks, and we certainly appreciate his principled leadership on and off the field."

The event, "Celebrating Family," will be held at the Beaufort County Courthouse in Beaufort.

and the entire football program, I've decided it is in the best interests of all involved that I not attend the event," Swinney said in a statement.

Swinney said he had no association with the Palmetto Family Council, which has named him its "South Carolina Family Champion of 2015," inviting him to receive the award at a June 2 event.

"I had no idea that I was being invited into a political controversy," Swinney said. "It was my understanding that the nomination and selection for this award was based on the work done by our All In Foundation, and the difference it is making in our community."

Swinney said his participation in the

event "has been perceived incorrectly as an endorsement of certain viewpoints and has entered the political arena."

"I have been and continue to be very open about my personal beliefs," said Swinney, an outspoken Christian. "However, I do not inject those beliefs or the work of the foundation into the political process."

S.C. House Minority Leader Todd Rutherford, D-Richland, said last week Swinney should not appear at the event for the conservative organization, which opposes same-sex marriage and abortions, and often aligns with Republicans.

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lies 2015," will go on as scheduled, Boyd said.

Democrat Rutherford applauded Swinney's leadership on "this very important issue," adding it is a testament to his character.

"This is a sign of the significant progress the state of South Carolina has made with respect to tolerance and equal rights," Rutherford said in a statement. "I hope others follow Coach Swinney's lead in standing up to groups like the Palmetto Family Council who seek to make discrimination legal and acceptable."

S.C. Equality, a gay rights organization, also applauded Swinney.

"Clemson students, alumni, faculty and staff come from all walks of life, and we rely on role models like Coach Swinney

to show the world that South Carolina's community leaders will not stand for intolerance and hate," said Jeff Ayers, interim executive director of S.C. Equality.

In an interview last year, Swinney said he had gay teammates while a wide receiver at Alabama, according to a CBS Sports article.

"Those are personal decisions that people have to make," Swinney said in the interview. "I mean everyone will be judged one day, but it's not up to me to judge somebody."

S.C. Republicans, who control the state House and Senate, said Wednesday they supported Swinney.

Gov. Nikki Haley, a Clemson graduate, knows Swinney well, said spokeswoman Chaney Adams. "He is a kind and generous

man who does a great deal of good with his foundation in South Carolina, and that should be the focus as opposed to invitations he accepts or doesn't."

Senate Majority Leader Harvey Peeler, R-Cherokee, said Swinney's decision was his personal choice, adding Rutherford had made too big of a deal out of the event.

State Rep. Gary Clary, R-Pickens, who graduated from Clemson in 1970, praised Swinney as a football coach and community member. "Coach Swinney is a man of great character and faith, and I know that he's thought long and hard about this and prayed about the decision that he would make."

South Carolina athletics director Ray Tanner previously has spoken to the Family Council, according to its website.

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Author: By CASSIE COPE The (Columbia) State
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The council recognized Tanner's foundation for its work on behalf of "economically and medically disadvantaged" S.C. children, USC spokesman Wes Hickman said last week.



Swinney



Title: **BUDGET DEBATE HEATS UP**
 Author: JEFFREY COLLINS Associated Press
 Size: 40.92 square inch
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BUDGET DEBATE HEATS UP

Haley: Spend extra \$400M on tax cuts, debt or roads

JEFFREY COLLINS
 Associated Press

COLUMBIA — South Carolina lawmakers and the governor are heading toward a showdown in the final two weeks of the General Assembly's session over how to spend an extra \$400 million.

Republican Gov. Nikki Haley weighed in Tuesday, saying that while she didn't have specific instructions, they better spend the money on tax breaks, state debt payments, or fixes to

roads and bridges.

"If they did any of those three things, that's a great use of taxpayer dollars," Haley said at a news conference surrounded by about 25 Republican lawmakers.

Haley wouldn't give details, but the infusion of about \$400 million could doom any proposal to raise the state's gas tax this year.

"This is \$400 million. If roads are that urgent, wouldn't that be the immediate need?" Haley said. "You'd say do that, and that takes all the tax increases off the table."

The governor invited two of the Legislature's more conservative members to speak at her news conference. One was Sen. Tom Davis, the Beaufort Republican who is filibustering a bill to spend some of the extra money this week, saying South Carolina has enough extra money to fund roads

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HALEY

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 without a tax increase.

The other was Rep. Tommy Stringer, who said that if the state spends most of the extra money on roads this year, it gives lawmakers more time to

come up with a long-term plan on road funding.

"\$400 million buys us a lot of time," Stringer, R-Landrum, said.

The extra money comes through economic growth and additional tax revenue. The

Board of Economic Advisers will meet Friday to confirm whether the \$400 million estimate by Haley and others is on the mark.

House Ways and Means Committee Chairman Brian White plans to introduce a bill

this week so the entire House and Senate would have a chance to weigh in on how to spend the money instead of just a conference committee of six legislators. That will likely require a special session after the Legislature adjourns June 4.



NIKKI HALEY