

Title: **Under fire for lack of case workers, DSS has added executive positions**
 Author: BY TIMSMITH The Greenville News
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Under fire for lack of caseworkers, DSS has added executive positions

BY TIM SMITH

The Greenville News
 COLUMBIA

- The state Department of Social Services, which is under orders from lawmakers to hire more caseworkers to help abused children, also has added several executive positions under the agency's new director and now has 18 employees making \$100,000 or more a year.

The agency provided the information to The Greenville News following a state Freedom of Information Act request.

DSS Director Susan Alford, who was hired by Gov. Nikki Haley last December, told members of the Senate DSS Oversight Subcommittee in late August that she is trying to modernize and reorganize the agency, which she said she found understaffed and spread too thin when she arrived.

"DSS is an agency that is recovering from a decade of budget cuts and other issues regarding its organizational structure," she explained then. "We suffer not only from a lack of resources in the department but we also have spread our functions and responsibilities across the department to the degree that it has really interfered with good accountability."

Alford has hired a number of executives since taking office, some into new positions and some into vacant

positions or modified positions. The agency employs about 3,800 workers.

The agency now has 18 staff earning \$100,000 or more a year, according to DSS and the state's salary database.

Alford's annual salary is \$159,130.

After a series of legislative hearings and a stinging audit last year prior to Alford's arrival concerning the agency's handling of child abuse and neglect cases, lawmakers provided more money so DSS could hire hundreds of new caseworkers and staff to lower caseloads.

Lawmakers authorized the hiring of 177 more staff in the current budget year and DSS has asked for \$32.6 million in next year's budget, including money to hire 157 additional staff. Wingo said 146 of the 177 positions have been filled.

The agency currently operates at a budget of \$692 million, but only about \$133 million of that comes from the state's General Fund, according to legislative budget records. Most of the agency's budget comes from the federal government.

Lawmakers have registered concerns in the past about the hiring of supervisors along with casework-

ers because they want the focus to be on lowering caseloads. Some caseworkers still handle 50 or more children each, and a handful handle 100 or more. The agency has set a goal of no more than 24 children per worker.

Sen. Tom Young, an Aiken Republican and chairman of the Senate Oversight Subcommittee, said the panel will address the salary issue at its next meeting.

"The testimony that we have received is that we need more caseworkers on the front lines to reduce caseloads," he said. "While it appears that the agency is making progress and 56 substandard day cares have recently been closed, this new management salary information is troubling in view of the agency's most recent budget request. Again, we will get to the bottom of it."

However, Sen. Joel Lourié, a Columbia Democrat on the panel, said legislators need to give Alford time to manage the agency. He said it is easy to criticize any agency director for adding executive positions.

"At the end of the day, what I am most concerned with is results," he said. "I think if she was coming in and making administrative requests but not adding caseworkers, I think all of

us would be blowing a gasket right now. But the bulk of her requests, the significant majority of her requests, the money is going to add caseworkers and bring down caseloads. If there are some layers of management that are missing to help the agency run more efficiently, I think we owe her that consideration."

Sen. Katrina Shealy, a Lexington County Republican who sits on the panel, said lawmakers are hoping Alford can better organize the agency.

"I think we have to give her that chance to do what she thinks is the best thing," she said. "I'm not going to question what she's done there until I see the outcome. I think we need more caseworkers. I don't think we need more supervisors."

Shealy said the agency has struggled with keeping caseworkers. The agency's turnover rate last year was 39 percent, which has dropped this year.

"We need to be working on that harder than making new positions," she said. "I don't want to tell her how to run the agency because I'm not there on a day-to-day basis. But what I would say is we need to look more at boots on the ground instead of people in supervisory positions."

Title: **HALEY ASKS FEDS TO SPEED UPCROPLOSS PAYMENTS TO FARMERS**
 Author:
 Size: 13.33 square inch
 Rock Hill, SC Circulation: 34688



HALEY ASKS FEDS TO SPEED UP CROP LOSS PAYMENTS TO FARMERS

COLUMBIA

Gov. Nikki Haley wants the U.S. Department of Agriculture to speed up crop insurance payments to farmers who lost their harvests because of last month's historic flooding.

Haley asked Secretary Thomas Vilsack in a letter Monday to activate emergency loss adjustment procedures, noting the Oct. 2-5 storm that dumped 2 feet of rain on some areas of the state mere days or weeks before expected crop harvests.

"The process to file and receive payment for claims is slow and cumbersome," Haley wrote. Many farmers "are even required to harvest valueless crops at a significant expense."

Vilsack previously approved a disaster declara-

tion for the state, giving farmers access to emergency, low-interest loans.

But farmers aren't interested in getting deeper in debt. Many of them already had operating loans and now must fix damaged equipment, so they have no cash flow for additional loan payments, said Aaron Wood, an assistant state agriculture commissioner.

How much insurance will help offset farmers' losses is not yet known, but payments aren't expected to even cover their costs.

The state Department of Agriculture estimates direct losses to farmers at more than \$375 million. Total losses to the agriculture industry will likely top \$587 million, Wood said.

— ASSOCIATED PRESS

Title: **Haley seeks faster aid for farmers**
 Author: BY JEFF WILKINSON jwilkinson@thestate.com
 Size: 25.73 square inch
 Columbia, SC Circulation: 128564



AFTER THE FLOOD

Haley seeks faster aid for farmers

BY JEFF WILKINSON
jwilkinson@thestate.com

Gov. Nikki Haley is asking the U.S. Department of Agriculture to eliminate some bureaucratic requirements such as harvesting worthless crops to speed up aid to Palmetto State farmers.

"No South Carolina farmer that entered this fall with proper crop insurance and a viable business should lose that business solely because of this flood," Haley said in a letter to Agriculture Secretary Thomas Vilsack.

Losses in South Carolina's top industry from the flood have swelled to

Requirement to harvesting worthless crops questioned

Governor wants adjusters to declare total losses in the field

\$587 million, the state's agriculture officials have said. Farmers already faced a down year because of a late freeze and a summer drought, officials told the state House Ways and Means committee recently.

But Haley said beleaguered farmers are being required to harvest undervalued crops "at a significant expense," perhaps costing more to harvest the crop than it is worth.

Among other concerns, Haley wrote, are:

- Harvest insurance claim deadlines for cotton, soybeans and peanuts are delaying final adjustments. Haley would like to give adjusters more flexibility to move those deadlines earlier.

- Post-harvest adjustments between a final crop appraisal and actual sales shifts the loss to farmers if the appraisers overestimated the actual

\$376 MILLION

Loss of crops in the field and fall crops unable to be planted

\$99 MILLION

Indirect losses incurred by distributors, retailers and others

\$112 MILLION

Losses to the local economy because of farmers' inability to spend farm profits

value of the crops.

"I ask that loss adjusters be granted the latitude to classify crops damaged to the point of total loss of market value and those that are not mechanically harvestable as total losses while still in the field," Haley wrote.

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Title: **S.C. DSS director adds executive positions**
 Author: BY TIM SMITH tcsmith@greenvillenews.com
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 Rock Hill, SC Circulation: 34688

S.C. DSS director adds executive positions

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which she said she found understaffed and spread too thin when she arrived.

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The new executives include:

- Chief of Staff Joan Meacham – Although the position is new, she replaces Holly Pisarik,

who Haley brought in last year temporarily to serve as a special assistant to the director. Meacham previously worked as a real estate agent with Berkshire Hathaway Homes Service-Myrtle Beach Real Estate. Prior to her real estate job, Meacham had been in state government for almost three decades with the Department of Probation, Parole and Pardon Services and the Department of Juvenile Justice. She retired as the state director of probation, parole and pardon services. Her annual salary is \$114,005.

- Deputy State Director of Administrative Services Barbara Derrick – She previously worked as deputy director of administration for the state Department of Health and Environmental

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DSS

Control and as deputy director of administration at the state Department of Labor, Licensing and Regulation before that. Her annual salary at the new position is \$129,682.

- Ombudsman Pam Bryant – She previously worked as the director of public information with Clemson University Youth Learning Institute, where Alford previously worked. Her salary is \$95,000.

- Interim Deputy State Director of Child Welfare Taron Davis – The position formerly was titled deputy state director of human services. Davis previously worked as a DSS attorney. Davis' current salary is \$109,222 but

an agency spokeswoman said that is because of an adjustment due to her interim appointment. Her base salary, she said, is lower than \$100,000.

- Director of Communications and Legislative Affairs Karen Luchka Wingo – She previously worked as a partner with Fisher & Phillips LLP, a national business law firm. Her annual salary is \$100,000.

- Director of Adult Advocacy Jessica Hanak-Coulter – She previously worked as Deputy Director of Human Services at DSS. Her annual salary is \$100,000.

The agency now has 18

staff earning \$100,000 or more a year, according to DSS and the state's salary database. In addition to those above, they are: Anita Khetspal, a child psychiatrist, and Herbert Spencer, psychiatrist, both paid on an hourly basis; Anthony Catone, general counsel, \$135,000; Amber Gillum, deputy director economic services, \$121,890; Katie Morgan, child support services director, \$119,610; David Lawson, director of information technology, \$115,963; Stephen McCauley, information security director, \$114,000; Funneaser Jacobs, director of human resources, \$113,642; William Bray,

director of finance, \$109,134; Jose Encarnacion, Information Technology Manager II, \$106,012; Gwendolyn Babb, attorney, \$100,628; and J. Daniel Edens, procurement director, \$100,000.

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State Sen. Tom Young, R-Aiken, chairman of the Senate Oversight Subcommittee, said the panel will address the salary issue at its next meeting.

"The testimony that we have received is that we need more caseworkers on the front lines to reduce caseloads," he said.

"While it appears that the agency is making progress and 56 substandard day cares have recently been

closed, this new management salary information is troubling in view of the agency's most recent budget request.

"Again, we will get to the bottom of it."

However, state Sen. Joel Lourie, D-Columbia, a member of the oversight panel, said legislators need to give Alford time to manage the agency. He said it is easy to criticize any agency director for adding executive positions.

"What I am most concerned with is results," he said. "If she was coming in and making administrative requests but not adding caseworkers, I think all of us would be blowing a gasket right now. But the bulk of her requests, the significant majority of her requests, the money is going to add caseworkers and bring down caseloads."

"If there are some layers of management that are missing to help the agency run more efficiently, I think we owe her that consideration."

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there until I see the outcome. We need more caseworkers. I don't think we need more supervisors."

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Alford has reorganized the child welfare division within the agency. Previously, Hanak-Coulter served as deputy director of human services and oversaw both child welfare and adult protective services. She now serves as the director of a new adult advocacy division. The title of deputy director of human services has changed to deputy director of child welfare. Davis oversees a reorganized child welfare division under which regional leaders now report as well as officials overseeing child welfare operations and compliance. The regional leaders will now supervise county DSS directors.

"That's going to create a much higher level of accountability," Alford told senators concerning the child welfare reorganization.

Alford said she wants to raise the attention on vulnerable adults, which she said previously had become "marginalized" at the agency.

She said Derrick will be responsible for finance, procurement, human resources and information technology services in the agency. Previously, she said, the managers of those services reported directly to the agency's director.

Alford also wants to make sure caseworkers and other employees are working on the jobs they were hired to do, she said. Because of a lack of resources in the past, caseworkers were working on adult protection and licensing cases in addition to child welfare cases.

"What I'm trying to say is, the folks who are hired to do certain functions are doing many other functions," she told senators. "And until we can get that stabilized and get enough staff in place - to where folks are doing the jobs they were asked to do and provide the kind of supervision they were asked to do - we won't be able to become the agency that we need to be."

Title: **Haley to officials: Speed up flood aid**
 Author: TIM SMITH TCSMITH@GREENVILLENEWS.COM
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Haley to officials: Speed up flood aid

Agricultural losses
from flooding could
be \$587 million

TIM SMITH

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COLUMBIA - Gov. Nikki Haley is asking federal agriculture officials to speed up the process of getting aid to flood-stricken South Carolina farmers, saying responses to claims are slow and a requirement that farmers harvest ruined crops is an unnecessary burden.

Last week, state agricultural officials told lawmakers agricultural losses from last month's flood could total \$587 million, almost double what was first thought.

Particularly hit hard, officials said, are peanut, soybean and cotton crops, as well as timber harvesting.

Agriculture is the state's biggest industry.

In a letter dated Monday to U.S. Agriculture Secretary Thomas Vilsak, Haley wrote her office has received information from farmers that the process for handling the farmers' claims is "slow and cumbersome" and that they are being

asked to harvest "valueless" crops at "significant expense."

"No South Carolina farmer that entered this fall with proper crop insurance and a viable business should lose that business solely because of the flood," she wrote.

Haley said her office asked and Vilsak approved granting South Carolina farmers affected by the flood access to emergency loans and emergency conservation funds through the Farm Service Agency. Farmers also are relying on crop insurance, she wrote.

But bureaucracy and problems are preventing aid from getting to farmers, she said, who need certainty about next year.

"Accordingly, I am requesting your assistance to expedite this process and bring certainty to hundreds of small businesses across South Carolina," she wrote.

One particularly burden-

some requirement is that farmers harvest flooded and ruined crops, she wrote.

Haley asked that crop adjusters be able to write off such crops as total losses while in the field.

"Farmers who understand their crops and likely losses

may be more comfortable certifying that they have destroyed their crops than going through the time and effort to bring valueless crops to harvest," Haley wrote.

Farmers already faced a horrible year because of a late freeze and a summer drought, Assistant State Agriculture Commissioner Clint Leach told lawmakers last week.

"They are to the point of desperation," he said.

The flood from record rains killed 17 people, closed more than 500 state roads and bridges

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Aid

Continued from Page 3A

and displaced thousands.

Much of the financial cost for repairing damage from the flood has not yet been tallied or released.

Agriculture officials, however, say they do have estimates and the damage has shaken farmers and those who make their living off of agricultural products, statewide. They said while they talked to members of the state's congressional delegation and to federal agriculture officials, the industry now is in "crisis."

"Any effort to improve the speed and efficiency of programs and services available to farmers will greatly improve South Carolina's recovery effort and increase the likelihood that each affected

small business will be operating this time next year," Haley wrote.

Leach told lawmakers his agency has surveyed the damage and talked to farmers.

"Our industry has been hit very hard," he said. "Our farmers are in deep despair. We're hearing from them constantly."

He said according to a study done for his agency by a retired Clemson economics professor, losses in the field, primarily from soybeans, peanuts and cotton, amount to \$329 million, with another \$46 million in losses from plantings that could not occur, \$114 million in lost wages for 3,500 jobs, and millions more in indirect

costs.

Farmers, he said, are not interested in obtaining low-interest loans, the aid being offered by the federal government. That's because farmers have gone a year without much income, officials said, some already had operating loans and they have no cash flow to pay for additional debt.

Aaron Wood, an assistant agriculture commissioner, told the panel that while many farmers have crop insurance, it's inadequate for a natural disaster like this flood.

"People think if farmers just had crop insurance that will save the day," he said. "Well that's not true."

He said there was no

level of insurance farmers could purchase that would cover just the input costs for their crops. That's primarily because crop prices are so low this year.

Also, he said, crop insurance doesn't cover tree losses and the state is expecting to lose 5 percent of its peach trees due to the flood. The state is the No. 2 producer of peaches in the nation.

"Farmers need to be paid now," he said.

Wood said farmers are frustrated by the bureaucracy and depressed.

"Losing a home is bad," he said. "But losing a job and income potential is hopeless. This is a food and economic security emergency."

Title: **Domestic violence rips apart families in SC**
 Author: ALAN WILSON
 Size: 44.17 square inch
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Domestic violence rips apart families in SC

GUEST COLUMN

ALAN WILSON

Each October, the South Carolina Attorney General's Office hosts the annual Silent Witness Ceremony, which honors the fatal victims of domestic violence. October is National Domestic Violence Awareness month, and serves as a time of pause and reflection, but it's also a time for us to realize the progress we have made.

This year marked our 18th annual ceremony. In 2014, 39 South Carolinians lost their lives as a result of domestic violence, 29 females and 10 males. Sadly, these are just the deaths we are aware of. During the ceremony, I read aloud the names and the stories of these 39 individuals as friends and family members carried silhouettes to the steps of the Statehouse. It is never easy and honestly it is one of the most difficult parts of being attorney general; however, my hope is that one day we will no longer have a need for this ceremony, as the number of lives lost to this heinous crime will be zero.

One of the stories I read this year was Janice Hackett's. Ms. Hackett, from Greenville, was stabbed to death in her home by her former live-in boyfriend, Sylvester King. Her body was found by her minor son. She was just 42 years old.

Domestic violence affects us all. No one is above being a victim. It's a tragedy that a child would have to not only

lose a parent to such a heinous crime, but live with the mental image of the crime scene in his head.

Far too often, children are unfortunately witnesses to these heinous crimes. Children who witness violence in their home are affected in ways similar to children who suffer abuse themselves. A child who grows up in an abusive home is more likely to believe that beating your spouse, or being beaten by your spouse, is normal. As a society, we need to realize that when children witness constant abuse in the home, it creates a sense of normalcy that is extremely dangerous and will only extend the cycle of violence.

This past year, our state came together in a big way to take a stand against domestic violence once and for all. Attention turned into action. We started the year by making a statement as sheriffs, police chiefs, solicitors, victims' advocacy groups, state law enforcement leaders, constitutional officers and members of the General Assembly called for domestic violence reform.

In June, Gov. Nikki Haley signed into law a comprehensive domestic violence reform bill that includes increased accountability for offenders, establishes community-based domestic violence coordinating councils, and requires prevention education for middle and elementary school students.

The new law allows prosecutors to consider aggravating factors when determining punishment. For instance, if a victim is pregnant or if a child witnesses the crime a prosecutor can use that information to elevate the charges. While we can never erase such a tragic scene from a child's mind, this is a step in the right direction putting us closer to breaking the cycle of domestic violence.

The focus must now be on consistent implementation if we are to stay on the road to meaningful change. The Attorney General's Office is proud to be a part of the Governor's Domestic Violence Task Force and is committed to making our state a better place to live, work and raise a family.

Each September, the Violence Policy Center releases a report detailing domestic violence statistics in each state. Currently, our state is still ranked as the number one state for women killed by men. While this statistic is based off of data from 2013, it is heart-breaking and unacceptable. It is important to seek comfort in knowing that we have made progress, and that these new laws will help us more appropriately combat this crime, however, we cannot lose focus and forget that there is still more to be done. Together we can make a difference and create a better, safer tomorrow for South Carolina.

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Alan Wilson is the South Carolina attorney general. For information, scag.gov.

Title: **Rally against ISIS draws a crowd**
 Author: ROMANDO DIXSON RDIXSON@GREENVILLENEWS.COM
 Size: 27.59 square inch
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Rally against ISIS draws a crowd

ROMANDO DIXSON

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Ali Alkelani stood on the curb of Main Street near East Coffee Street, helping hold up a sign that said, "Muslims Against Isis."

He said he and other Muslims have found that people are tying them to ISIS in the aftermath of the terrorist attacks in Paris.

"This is something we're really against," Alkelani said. "We believe ISIS is a terrorist organization. And the Muslims, they have nothing to do with ISIS. So we as Muslims, we condemn the ideology and acts of ISIS. So we're here to say we have nothing to do with ISIS."

The Islamic Society of Greenville organized the rally in downtown Greenville, and Alkelani, one of its members, made and distributed signs.

Ted Morrison, of Greenville, learned about the event at the beginning of church Sunday at St. Giles Presbyterian

and decided to support it. He held a sign that read "Stop ISIS not refugees."

"Let's be realistic: We're all immigrants," Morrison said. "And I think that we do disservice to hospitality and community if we reject people who are different than us. And in this case, they would be people who are refugees from hostility. Gosh, these people are really yearning to breathe free. And we're America. We're supposed to support those who are seeking freedom."

No one openly disagreed with Morrison's sign downtown Sunday. However, refugees have been a hot topic statewide and nationally.

More than two dozen governors last week signaled that they would prevent Syrian refugees from settling in their states, USA TODAY reported. They are concerned refugees seeking to relocate to the United States might have terrorist ties after reports surfaced that one of the

attackers in the Paris attacks may have entered France as a Syrian refugee.

Governor Nikki Haley, in a letter to Secretary of State John Kerry, questioned the ability of federal agents to thoroughly vet Syrian refugees and asked that no Syrians be sent to South Carolina.

Anchia Kinard, of Simpsonville, happened to be walking through downtown and noticed the rally. She said she agreed with it and was encouraged to see so many cultures represented.

"I wouldn't expect to see this in Greenville," she said.

Akan Malici, an associate professor at Furman, addressed the crowd, calling ISIS an enemy of humanity. His eyes watered as he spoke about how Muslims have been killed by ISIS and are fleeing for safety.

"It means so much to us that you are all here," he said.

Title: **Make ethics reform a top priority**

Author:

Size: 42.47 square inch

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THE GREENVILLE NEWS EDITORIAL

Make ethics reform a top priority

No parents should settle for a D-minus on their child's report card, not if they have hopes of that child succeeding not just in that class but in the world that lies before him or her.

Yet South Carolina lawmakers have seemed perfectly content with scores consistently that low – or lower – on the report card for government ethics laws. It's inexcusable.

The state ranked 36th among the 50 states in a report that demonstrated most states have room to improve their ethics laws. The highest grade given was a C.

Sure our state's grade is up from an 'F' the year before on the Center for Public Integrity report, but that's no thanks to any meaningful reform here.

For three years running, the South Carolina Legislature has stubbornly refused to hold itself accountable by passing ethics reform with any teeth. It consistently tries to weaken tough reforms, limit who can hold lawmakers accountable or simply refuse to be governed.

Why would it reform ethics laws, when the report calls state ethics laws a "Wild West" of loose laws and accountability where elected officials can do what they want with virtual impunity.

The report said South Carolina has a high "enforcement gap" between its ethics laws and how they are carried out; that it discourages citizens from requesting public information by charging excessive fees or threatening

to punish people who make "excessive" requests; and that it has too much in unregulated political contributions.

We have frequently weighed in on these failures, and will again and again until they are fixed.

One of the most significant shortcomings in the state's ethics laws is that legislators are accountable only to themselves. Last session, senators killed a bill that would have created an independent body to investigate ethics complaints against both houses, saying it was the House that had the ethics problem.

Such logic defies understanding. The Senate is not uniquely able to police its own ethics. It only makes sense that a body with no ties to the Legislature would be able to better investigate complaints in both houses. A system where lawmakers judge themselves is fertile ground for favoritism and manipulation.

Also on the priority list for the upcoming session should be a requirement that legislators fully disclose all the sources of their personal income. Taxpayers need to know who is paying elected leaders and how that might affect their votes.

These loose ethics laws are breeding some serious problems. Among the ethics investigations in the state:

Lt. Gov. Ken Ard was indicted on seven counts of ethics violations related to his 2010 campaign and resigned in 2012. According to the investigation, he used campaign money for foot-

ball tickets, clothes and a flat-screen TV. He also funneled more than \$150,000 in his own money to his campaign, apparently to make his bid for lieutenant governor appear stronger.

House Speaker Bobby Harrell was indicted in September 2014 on ethics charges. Prosecutors accused Harrell of using campaign funds on his private airplane, personal travel or for goods or services for friends and family. He was sentenced to six years in prison, which was suspended to three years of probation.

Former state Sen. Robert Ford of Charleston pleaded guilty in January to misconduct in office, forgery and two counts of ethics violations. Prosecutors alleged that Ford committed 350 ethics violations including converting campaign funds for personal use.

The list goes on. It's a roll call that should embarrass South Carolina lawmakers enough to tighten up what people around the country recognize as a bad system.

Upstate Sen. Larry Martin has been a leader in the push for ethics reform. He and Gov. Nikki Haley and others need to continue to put pressure on our state's elected leaders so meaningful ethics reform is passed early in the upcoming session.

As Chaney Adams, a spokeswoman for Gov. Nikki Haley said in a recent *Greenville News* report, "It's time to finish the job, no more excuses."

Let's hope that message sinks in.

Title: **Haley approval rating 15th best in nation**
 Author: ANDREW SHAIN ASHAIN@THESTATE.COM
 Size: 14.57 square inch
 Greenville, SC Circulation: 113473



Haley approval rating 15th best in nation

ANDREW SHAIN
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Gov. Nikki Haley has the 15th-highest approval rating among governors nationwide, a new poll found.

The Lexington Republican, in the middle of her second term, received a thumbs up from 60 percent of the 1,174 registered South Carolina voters surveyed, according to the poll, released by Morning Consult on Tuesday.

Haley's disapproval rating — 33 percent — ranked 23rd nationally among the 50 governors.

Republican Massachusetts Gov. Charlie Baker was the nation's most liked governor, receiving a 74 percent approval rating from voters in his state.

With a 26 percent approval rating, Republican Kansas Gov. Sam Brownback finished last.

Haley fared better than her Republican neighbors.

Georgia Gov. Nathan Deal has a 57 percent approval rating in his state, while North Carolina Gov. Pat McCrory garnered 51 percent.

Among the 2016 Republican presidential candidates:

Ohio Gov. Kasich fared best at 17th, getting a 59 percent approval rating in his state.

New Jersey Gov. Chris Christie was 45th with 40 percent favorability — tied with a former White House hopeful, Wisconsin Gov. Scott Walker.

Louisiana Gov. Bobby Jindal, who dropped out of the presidential race this week, ranked next to last at 35 percent.

The polls nationwide were taken from May through November.

Title: **ISIS dominating presidential politics**
 Author: JAMIE SELF JSELF@THESTATE.COM
 Size: 77.19 square inch
 Greenville, SC Circulation: 113473



ISIS dominating presidential politics

JAMIE SELF

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COLUMBIA - Terrorist attacks that killed 129 people in Paris on Friday are driving the presidential debate, at least temporarily, political experts say.

Those attacks — claimed by Islamic State, a terrorist organization that state residents cited in March as a top problem facing the nation — could thrust foreign policy and immigration to the top of the presidential debate.

Thursday marks the 100-day-count-down to the state's Feb. 27 Democratic presidential primary.

State GOP voters will go to the polls a week earlier, on Feb. 20.

That gives South Carolinians a long time to decide what issues matter most to them, experts said, adding the holidays could shift voters' focus to other issues. But the attacks have proven that "terrorism is less of an abstraction and it's clearly an ongoing threat," said Win-

ISIS

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and said he would "re-engage" the U.S. military in the region.

The Paris attacks have amplified ongoing GOP criticism of President Obama's foreign policy.

Democratic presidential candidates, who previously had focused their campaigns on issues at home, also have tacked toward foreign policy.

Then, the Paris attacks "cast a somber pall over the (Democratic) debate," Winthrop's Kedrowski said.

"They had to start with foreign policy and homeland security, when they would have rather been talking about domestic policy."

'In their backyard'

The Paris attacks seem to have given a lifeline to one presidential bid.

Last weekend, Graham, one of the most hawkish voices on U.S. national foreign policy, moved quickly on the national TV circuit, sharing his vision for a strong military response to the attacks. "We're going to fight ISIL in their backyard, or we're going to fight ISIL in our backyard," the senator said.

The attacks also could impact the

throp University political scientist Karen Kedrowski.

Economic issues usually drive campaigns, said Clemson University political scientist Dave Woodard said. But this campaign cycle could be different, he added.

"We've had very few elections that were about war and peace," he said. "I'm wondering if foreign policy might play a larger role this year. It's not something that's going to go away."

Polls nationally and one in South Carolina suggest that Woodard may be right.

In a March Winthrop Poll, 10.3 percent of South Carolina residents ranked terrorism and ISIS — or the Islamic State — as the most important problem facing the nation, surpassing politicians and government, and the financial crisis for the first time.

CNN found that, nationally, nine in 10

campaigns of political outsiders with no experience in elected office, such as Donald Trump and Ben Carson, and isolationists in the presidential fray.

A frequent target of Graham is U.S. Sen. Rand Paul of Kentucky, who has stood out in the field as a critic of military spending and hawkish military proposals. The Paris attacks also could impact the debate on immigration, another issue of growing importance to Republicans, concerned that terrorists will exploit weaknesses in U.S. border security to launch an attack. A group of governors, including Gov. Nikki Haley, Tuesday joined Republican presidential candidates in calling on the U.S. Department of State not to resettle Syrian refugees in their states.

Meanwhile, the Democratic candidates say they back the United States accepting Syrian refugees if their backgrounds are vetted properly.

"It does seem like public opinion is with the Republicans in terms of closing the borders, closing off access to these refugees and having very stringent requirements for allowing them into the country," said Kyle Kondik with the Uni-

Americans see ISIS as a serious threat, up from seven in 10 more than a year ago.

For some Palmetto State leaders and presidential candidates, the Paris terrorist attacks are a call for action for the United States to deploy ground troops to defeat the Islamic State.

After the attacks, U.S. Sen. Lindsey Graham called on the United States and its Arab allies to form a regional army to go on the offensive against ISIS. The Seneca Republican, who is running for the GOP nomination for president, citing his foreign policy experience, told CNN the U.S.-led force would "pull the caliphate up by the roots."

Speaking in Columbia on Tuesday, GOP presidential hopeful Jeb Bush called the conflict "the war of our times"

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versity of Virginia's Center for Politics.

Being tough on immigration "isn't new for the GOP," said Kondik. "The difference is that Trump is willing to go places with his rhetoric that other candidates have not been willing to go. As Trump moves the debate right, he moves other candidates with him."

Democrats tack

Speaking from the G-20 international summit in Turkey, Obama said it would be a "mistake" for U.S. ground troops to enter Syria and "temporarily clear out ISIL."

"If you do not have local populations that are committed to inclusive governance and who are pushing back against ideological extremes, then they resurface," Obama said.

On fighting ISIS, Democrats want to take a more "hands-off" approach and "want other countries to take the lead," Kondik said.

For example, Saturday in Iowa, the Democratic candidates responded to ISIS and the Paris attacks by speaking in broad strokes about the need for U.S. leadership but not advocating for U.S.

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troops to be involved in the fighting.

Democratic frontrunner Hillary Clinton said she sees using U.S. ground troops as a last resort. But, she added, ISIS "cannot be contained. It must be defeated," signaling a step away from Obama's containment policies.

Defeating ISIS, she said, "cannot be an American fight, although American leadership is essential."

Sanders called for U.S. leadership in ridding the planet of ISIS, but restated any U.S. involvement must come after a big buy-in from allied countries in the region.

Kondik of Virginia said Sanders' tone has shifted since the Paris attack.

"Sanders tried to sound a bit more hawkish than he has in the past, but it didn't come off as particularly credible to me," Kondik said, adding, "It's just not

part of his DNA."

Rising concerns about terrorism does not mean it is the only issue that voters — in South Carolina and nationally — will care about when the 2016 elections roll around, Kondik noted.

"The broader question is: Does this stay important in American politics or does it fade in importance?"

'Boots on the ground'

Some state residents say they want a strong U.S. military response to ISIS.

"The strategy has to be to destroy ISIS and show leadership in the world because people don't have trust and confidence in us," said retired Maj. Gen. James Livingston, a Medal of Honor recipient from Charleston.

"Because of our delays and not taking action ... we walked ourselves into the

only action (left to take) and that's to put boots on the ground."

Other South Carolinians say the United States should not rush to put its troops in harm's way.

Bree Maxwell, the president of the South Carolina Young Democrats and a military spouse, said the Paris attacks have not changed her mind about U.S. involvement in fighting ISIS.

The United States tends to "jump into a situation and create enemies," she said, adding other countries should respond.

As for sending U.S. troops overseas to fight ISIS in large numbers, Jessica Reardon of Columbia said only something "really, really awful" happening in the United States would convince the public to support that move.

"It's going to take something here for people to really get behind it again."