

Title: **Gowdy kicks off the fight for SC endorsements**
 Author: BY ANDREW SHAIN ashain@thestate.com
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THE 2016 PRESIDENTIAL RACE

Gowdy kicks off the fight for SC endorsements

Spartanburg congressman will back Florida Sen. Marco Rubio

Leadership on Benghazi panel boosted Gowdy's popularity nationwide

Scott will endorse next month, Haley's timetable unclear

BY ANDREW SHAIN
 ashain@thestate.com

The major S.C. Republican presidential endorsement race is about to take off.

Last week, candidates fought for backers of former GOP White House hopeful Lindsey Graham soon after the U.S. senator from Seneca left the race. And in previous months, Republican candidates have dotted their campaigns with members of the state General Assembly.

Now one of South Car-

olina's top Republicans is ready to line up formally behind a candidate.

U.S. Rep. Trey Gowdy of Spartanburg will endorse Florida Sen. Marco Rubio on Tuesday in Clinton,

Iowa, the first stop of a two-day swing through the first state to choose presidential favorites, Rubio campaign spokesman Alex Conant said.

The congressman's announcement, along with the shrinking field, should lead to decisions by other

powerful S.C. Republicans, including U.S. Sen. Tim Scott of North Charleston and Gov. Nikki Haley, who have been described as the "crown jewels" of GOP presidential endorsers.

Gowdy's backing could help Rubio with conservative voters in Iowa and South Carolina, where the senator is polling third behind New York billionaire Donald Trump and Texas Sen. Ted Cruz, Winthrop University political scientist Scott Huff-

mon said.

Gowdy, a former prosecutor, won over GOP supporters nationwide for his leadership of the special House panel on the Benghazi attack that questioned Democratic presidential front-runner Hillary Clinton in her role as secretary of state.

"There's a reason why the first appearance is in Iowa," said Walter Whetsell, a S.C. political consultant who worked for form-

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GOWDY

er Texas Gov. Rick Perry's presidential campaign.

And those die-hard conservatives are more likely to go to the polls in the South's first primary on Feb. 20, Huffmon said. "Voters who might have bypassed Rubio might give him a second look," he said. "Hard-

core Republicans see Gowdy for standing up against the Clinton machine, and people who respect Gowdy for that will pay attention."

Gowdy's endorsement of Rubio has led to speculation about whether Scott, who polls find is among the state's most popular Republican politicians, will also back the

Florida senator.

Scott and Gowdy appeared with Rubio at Upstate stops on Dec. 19 — the first time the pair showed up at an event for an individual White House candidate since the presidential town halls they hosted concluded this month.

The appearance was

not a formal sign of support for Rubio, Scott's campaign said.

Scott will not endorse a White House hopeful until after he and House Speaker Paul Ryan, R-Wis., host a forum on poverty in Columbia Jan. 9 that will feature seven presidential candidates, Scott's campaign said. Rubio is scheduled to

attend the event.

Other top S.C. Republicans whose endorsements could help candidates include Graham and U.S. Reps. Jeff Duncan of Laurens and Tom Rice, who comes from a large GOP stronghold in Horry County, Whetsell said.

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The intentions from Haley, perhaps the state's most sought-after endorsement, remain unclear. The governor, whose popularity has grown with her handling of the Charleston mass shooting this summer, has mentioned that she might back a presidential candidate but has not offered a timetable.

"The governor has a real network," Whetsell said.

Huffman said he could see Haley remaining on the sideline with this year's field, which is larger from four years ago when she endorsed Mitt Romney. The governor also is considered a top choice for vice president.

"She has more to lose," Huffman said. "She can say, 'I had to play stateswoman.' "



Gowdy



Rubio

Title: **Upgrade dam program**

Author:

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WHAT OTHERS SAY: EDITORIALS FROM AROUND SOUTH CAROLINA

Upgrade dam program

At an additional cost of \$1.8 million per year, it is difficult to envision a rationale for South Carolina to not improve its dam safety program in the wake of last fall's torrential rains that caused nearly three dozen dams to fail.

A bill presented by South Carolina Speaker of the House Jay Lucas would nearly quadruple the budget for the program that's administered by the state Department of Health and Environmental Control, according to a report by The State newspaper. The department's current budget is about

\$470,000, and it is woefully inadequate.

It is hard to imagine that this legislation would not get the support it deserves. The total cost to recover from the October deluge exceeds \$1 billion. Certainly only a fraction of that would have been prevented had the dams been inspected more routinely, but it seems worth the relatively small cost to make the dams safer. ...

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A spokeswoman for Gov.

Nikki Haley acknowledged after the flood that there's a funding gap in the agency and said that there would likely be more money for the program in the executive budget. That needs to happen.

The reality is, South Carolina gets heavy rains throughout the year. The 1,000-year rain might have been a freak occurrence, but it doesn't mean the state shouldn't be prepared for the next significant rainfall. Ensuring the state's dams are properly inspected, and that more of them are inspected, is simply common sense

– Greenville News

Title: **Upgrade dam program**

Author:

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- Greenville News

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Title: **Lawmaker: 'Viagra bill' counters abortion curbs**
 Author: BY CASSIE COPE ccope@thestate.com
 Size: 49.91 square inch
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Lawmaker: 'Viagra bill' counters abortion curbs

State Rep. Mia McLeod files bill adding obstacles to obtain erectile dysfunction medication

Proposed limits intended to combat attempts to restrict abortion at 20 weeks

BY CASSIE COPE
ccope@thestate.com

A Democratic lawmaker from Richland County acknowledges her proposal to make it more difficult to get medication to treat erectile dysfunction likely will go nowhere. But state Rep. Mia McLeod says she wants to send a message to the GOP-controlled General Assembly about legislating about the

bodies of South Carolinians.

McLeod said her bill – one of the most controversial introduced before the session starts in 10 days – is her way of fighting proposals that would restrict abortions in the state.

“It’s not a joke,” she said.

A top House Republican sees little humor in McLeod’s

bill.

House Majority Leader Bruce Bannister, R-Greenville, compared her proposal to a political cartoon – “Entertaining, but kind of sad that someone would spend the time to draft and introduce that bill.”

McLeod’s proposal won’t

stop GOP-led efforts to limit abortions, including a ban 20 weeks into a pregnancy that is close to final passage.

“The caucus is going to support some pro-life legislation as we have done in the past,” Bannister said.

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BILLS

McLeod knows her bill to limit erectile dysfunction medication – including Viagra and Cialis, part of a \$4 billion-a-year worldwide industry – is a long shot.

“In a male-dominated Legislature is it likely to pass?” McLeod asked. “No.”

But she said her bill as well as the anti-abortion proposals waste lawmakers’ time and energy and taxpayer money.

McLeod has mentioned her conversation-creating bill in fundraising pitches for her 2016 state Senate campaign. She proposes that doctors must clear several hurdles before prescribing erectile dysfunction medication, including:

- Referring a patient to

a sex therapist

- Conducting a cardiac stress test

- Notifying the patient of the drug risks

- Obtaining a notarized affidavit from at least one of the patient’s sexual partners that states the patient has experienced symptoms of erectile dysfunction during the previous 90 days

McLeod said her experience on a special House panel that investigated the state’s two Planned Parenthood clinics this fall motivated her to file her erectile dysfunction bill.

The panel found the S.C. clinics were not involved in donor tissue programs, a source of national political controversy this year, McLeod said.

The committee has not finished working, said state Rep. Gary Clary, a Pickens Republican who chairs the panel. But the investigation found, so far, that no state money is being spent to fund Planned Parenthood.

Another panel of three senators and three state representatives will begin working out the differences on a proposal to prohibit abortions at 20 weeks – instead of the current 24 weeks – soon after legislators return Jan. 12.

Lawmakers on the committee are working out possible exceptions for rape and incest and the definition of fetal anomaly, said state Sen. Brad Hutto, a Orangeburg Democrat who sits on the

panel.

Once a deal is reached, lawmakers will vote again on the bill. If approved, the ban would head to Republican Gov. Nikki Haley’s desk for her signature to become law.

Even if a 20-week ban passes, McLeod expects attempts to restrict abortion to continue.

“I don’t see an end in sight,” she said. “That’s troubling to say the least.”

McLeod’s proposal highlights how some lawmakers advocate for keeping the government out of people’s lives – except when it comes to restrictions for women, Hutto said.

Women’s health decisions should be left up to the woman, her doctor and her faith, Hutto said.

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By proposing to restrict access to erectile dysfunction medication, McLeod said she wants legislators to think about abortion differently and

broaden discussions to include men's sexual health.

If some lawmakers are going to insist upon regulating some issues of

reproductive rights, then McLeod said, "We should govern it all."

*Cassie Cope: 803-771-8657,
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McLeod

Title: **S.C. faith leaders encourage inclusion among religions**
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 Size: 35.34 square inch
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S.C. faith leaders encourage inclusion among religions

BY CASSIE COPE

ccope@thestate.com

South Carolina religious leaders encouraged inclusiveness on Tuesday after a leading presidential candidate proposed banning Muslims from entering the country and many politicians announced their opposition to letting Syrian refugees resettling in the United States.

Members of Interfaith Partners of South Carolina said they want residents to know the state has a heritage of different religions coexisting.

"We have a very large and very vibrant faith-based state here," said Will Moreau Goins, chairman of Interfaith Partners and representing Native American Spirituality.

During January, Interfaith Partners, which aims to foster understanding and cooperation among religious groups, will hold events encouraging interaction between South Carolinians with different religious backgrounds as part of the fourth Interfaith Harmony Month.

The events range from a Baha'i devotional service to Native American winter storytelling.

Leaders encouraged understanding at a time when Muslims are being singled out based on the acts of extremist groups.

Muslims have lived peacefully in South Carolina for three centuries, said Carl Evans, a Christian and past president of Interfaith Partners. Now, the fear of extremists is feeding suspicion, fear, hostility, hateful speech, and demands for exaggerated scrutiny against an entire religious population, he said reading a statement adopted by the Interfaith Partners board.

For example, leading Republican presidential candidate Donald Trump proposed a temporary ban on Muslim travelers from entering the United States in the wake of attacks in Paris and California.

"Misinformation is rooted in fear that is being spread around our country," Evans said, adding that fear is spread by some presidential candidates for political gain.

Chaudhry Sadiq, a Muslim, said that Trump's narrow-mindedness means the New York billionaire does not deserve to be an American leader. Sadiq said he condemns extremist terrorists who claim to represent Islam.

Evans, a retired University of South Carolina religion professor, said that peace in America depends on people valuing diversity

without perceiving differences as a threat.

In addition, Interfaith Partners welcome Syrian refugees fleeing death and destruction of a civil war in their home country, he said.

S.C. Gov. Nikki Haley has requested that Syrians not be allowed to relocate in the state because of security concerns. However, two Syrian refugees have been resettled in Richland County, and a larger family of 11 refugees is expected to follow.

Haley, who was raised a Sikh but later converted to Christianity, signed a proclamation declaring January Interfaith Harmony Month.

People often fear others who are different or have different customs and traditions, Evans said.

"The way to overcome that, we think, is to cross religious lines to become friends and neighbors of people of other faiths."

Interfaith Partners leaders distressed to hear of retaliation against Muslims

Group backs welcoming Syrian refugees to South Carolina

Events scheduled next month to bring together citizens of different religions

Title: **South Carolina comes through death and destruction with hope**
 Author: BY JEFFREY COLLINS AND BRUCE SMITH The AssociatedPress
 Size: 133.3 square inch
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South Carolina comes through death and destruction with hope

BY JEFFREY COLLINS AND
BRUCE SMITH

The Associated Press
COLUMBIA

The police shooting of an unarmed black man in North Charleston. The killing of nine people during Bible study at a historic African-American church in Charleston. Historic flooding that dropped nearly half the yearly rain fall in less than two days. The Confederate flag flown on the Statehouse grounds coming down after multiple other efforts had failed.

The past year has been one of significant change for

FROM PAGE 3A REVIEW

fly, man," Ronald Smith said.

JOE RILEY

In his 40th and final year as Charleston's mayor, Joe Riley faced his most trying time.

The man who steered the city through Hurricane Hugo in 1989 found his toughest moments on a hot, sticky summer night when what he called "pure, pure concentrated evil" came to a church in his 345-year-old city.

After a call at 9:30 p.m. June 17, Riley hurried to historic Emanuel AME Church where nine black parishioners had been shot and killed during a Bible study.

In the days following, Riley again became the face of the historic city, comforting victims, attending funerals

South Carolina. Here are a series of snapshots about the key moments and players in 2015:

WALTER SCOTT

Before his death was shown around the world and he became a symbol of the ongoing debate over police shootings of unarmed African-Americans, Walter Scott was just a 50-year-old forklift driver at a warehouse and a father behind on his child support payments.

He was pulled over on April 4 for a broken brake

light by North Charleston Officer Michael Slager. People go to jail all the time in South Carolina for missing child support payments and Scott, who was behind on his, called his mother from his car to say he might need her help getting bail.

Moments later, he ran from his car and around the corner. Slager ran after him toward a vacant field. A passer-by captured what happened next on his cellphone. The video showed Slager firing eight shots at

Scott's back. Scott was struck by several bullets and fell.

The shooting happened in a city whose officers faced years of accusations of mistreating minorities.

Scott's family called for calm, especially after Slager's swift arrest, saying they did not want Scott's memory soiled by violence.

A co-worker of Scott said at the time it was a fitting tribute. "He wouldn't hurt a

SEE REVIEW, 4A

als and being a voice of calm.

"I knew that in this incident everything I did, everything I said, had to be perfect," to ensure calm prevailed, Riley said.

The city - and indeed the whole nation - seemed to come together in the wake of the shootings, with thousands gathering on sweeping Ravened Bridge over the Cooper River in a show of unity several days later. President Obama and other dignitaries traveled to Charleston to pay their respects for those who died. More than \$5 million has been donated by thousands of people to help support the victims' families and fund college scholarships for Charleston-area students.

Riley has made it clear that he will continue to work on the issue of gun violence

after he leaves office.

"We do not want to encroach on law-abiding citizens' rights to own a gun but we must prevent guns from falling into the wrong hands," Riley said at an event earlier this month at Emanuel to announce a new effort to curb gun violence.

The suspected killer in the Charleston shootings, Dylan Roof, was able to buy the gun that was used in the shootings because of a record keeping problem that prevented federal officials from disqualifying him before a three-day deadline expired.

RUSSELL OTT

Russell Ott knew that the Confederate flag flying outside the South Carolina statehouse had to come down, and it had to come

down now - not later.

The eyes of the nation and the world were squarely focused on his place of work and the little known 37-year-old House member who took over his dad's seat back in 2013 was having trouble believing what was happening. He hadn't made a passionate speech imploring his colleagues to let go of the symbol of a bygone era, but he firmly believed it was time for it to happen and he didn't want to see the legislature and the state blow their chance of having it happen and risk looking like fools or obstructionists.

Gov. Nikki Haley had said less than a week after the slayings at Emanuel AME Church that the flag should come down and the state Senate had reached the same conclusion.

Title: **South Carolina comes through death and destruction with hope**
 Author: BY JEFFREY COLLINS AND BRUCE SMITH The AssociatedPress
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But as the sun set on July 8, the people who wanted the flag removed were stunned. Flag supporters in the house suddenly appeared to have enough votes for an amendment to the bill backed by Haley and the Senate that would postpone its passage, keeping the rebel banner flying outside the chambers. The flag supporters wanted a guarantee that the flag would be sent to a museum and they were willing to hold up the process for it, even if it meant going against the rising tide of support to bring it down.

Ott has been around the Legislature but never before had been a key figure. He lobbied for farmers for nearly a decade before replacing his dad and in three years had been the sponsor of one bill that has become law – creating a migratory waterfowl committee. But he knew parliamentary rules and he

knew there was an arcane, rarely used way that he could get the flag supporters what they wanted and also keep the state on pace to bring the banner down.

His goal was simple. The longer the debate went on, the more likely it was that the whole process would get derailed.

He and his colleagues went to work, twisting arms, holding last minute votes and watching the clock tick past midnight to allow them to vote on the final measure during a new day.

At 1 a.m. the bill finally passed. On Friday July 10 the flag finally came down. In South Carolina, however, the debate over the fate of the flag still rages on.

MAJ. GEN. ROBERT LIVINGSTON

It was the most important mission of South Carolina National Guard commander

Maj. Gen. Robert Livingston's life, directing thousands of soldiers and civilians during South Carolina's historic floods.

Livingston was a true soldier working with Gov. Nikki Haley to carry out her wishes and by her side when she gave the public updates.

But people around the state left little doubt that Livingston's preparation in the days and years before the floods, and his decisive action as the disaster unfolded, prevented a terrible situation from being so much worse.

"We were rescuing people at the same time we were putting things together back in Columbia," Livingston said.

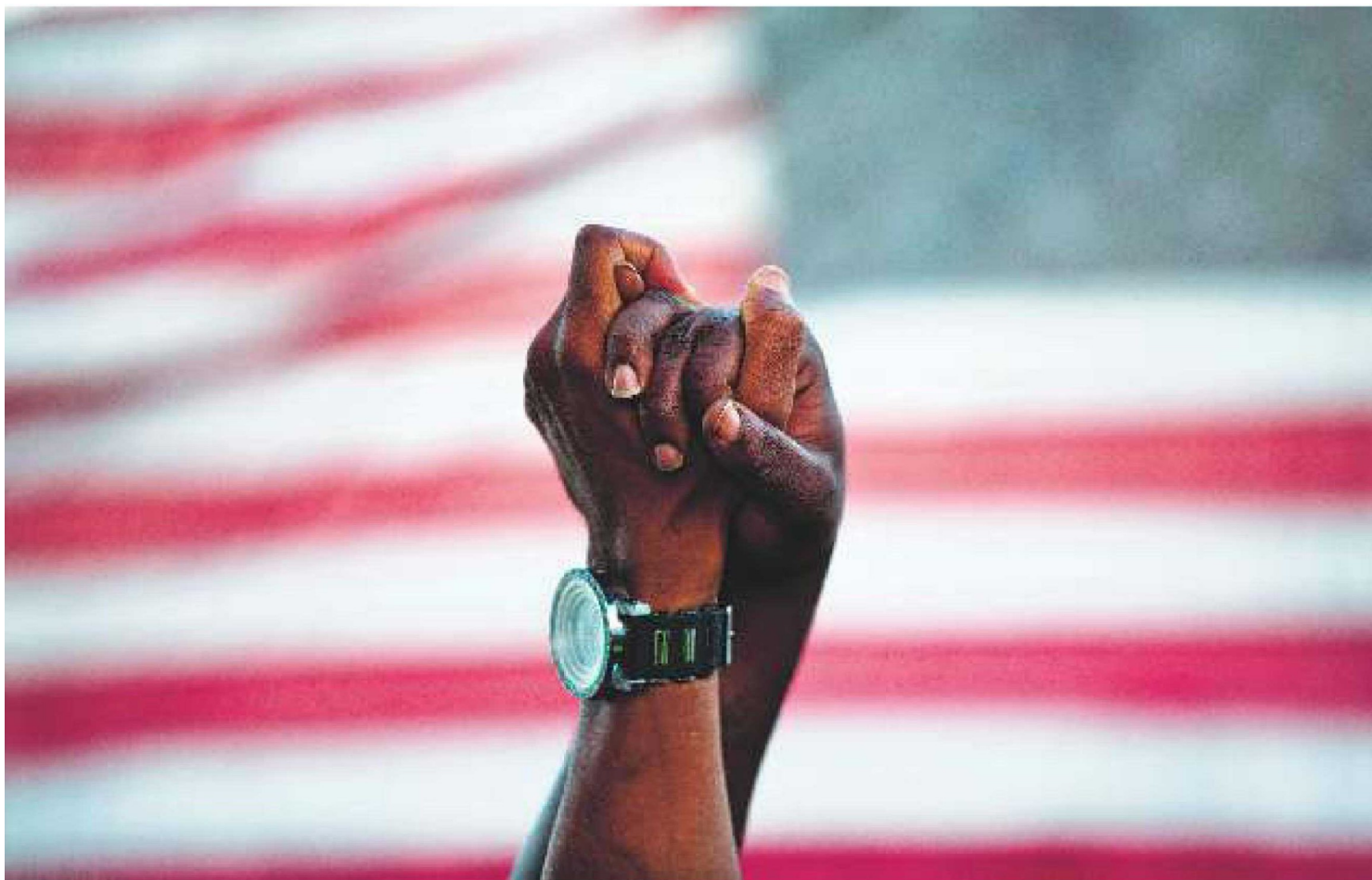
Livingston helped get clean water into the pipes at Columbia hospitals worried about how many critically ill patients might die if they had to close and move them. His soldiers saved dozens of lives

with air and boat rescues and helped repair washed out roads and bridges. They averted what would have been a disaster on top of a disaster by keeping Columbia's water system running and water coming from almost 400,000 taps by fixing a canal breach and laying pipe to get water into the treatment plant.

"A lot of the guys who were doing a lot of discussion had built roads and dams and things like that down in Ecuador and Honduras and places like that back in the 1980s and 90s," Livingston said. "They understood building structures in less than ideal conditions."

Now Livingston laughs that he has another set of problems, created by well-meaning South Carolinians who poured kindness at his soldiers for weeks through an outpouring of food.

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DAVID GOLDMAN Associated Press

In this June 2015 photo, people join hands against the backdrop of an American flag as thousands of marchers meet in the middle of Charleston's main bridge in a show of unity after nine black church parishioners were gunned down during a Bible study in Charleston.

Title: **Offshore oil drilling brings constant problems**
 Author: By Ed Yaw
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OTHER VOICES

Offshore oil drilling brings constant problems

By Ed Yaw

The oft-used quote, sometimes attributed to Albert Einstein, goes, "Insanity is doing the same thing repeatedly, while each time expecting a different outcome."

Oil drilling off the coast of California produced massive spills resulting in disasters all along the shore. Drilling is now banned off California's coast but producing wells continue to seep oil into the coastal waters, resulting in tar balls on the beaches and oil slicks on the water.

Unsightly oil platforms still mar the ocean views along with oil tankers lined up to fill their holds from filling platforms. Poorly maintained oil pipelines along the coast continue to rupture, spilling their contents into the ocean. Refineries along the coast pollute the

air, the land, and the waters around them. And California is not reaping huge financial gain from all of this activity.

The Gulf of Mexico experiences constant oil spills and disasters. The oil jobs promised by the American Petroleum Institute have been evaporating due to the worldwide glut of crude oil. The untold riches promised the Gulf States have never materialized, and in fact, the poverty rate in the states bordering offshore drilling has increased in the past ten years.

Now the oil companies want the Atlantic Coast opened to offshore drilling. Our politicians and local proponents of offshore drilling are dancing a gleeful jig anticipating the great wealth and thousands of jobs that this is supposed to bring

to our state. "Drilling offshore can be safe if it is done right," they say over and over again.

And when the disasters begin, when the tourist industry is decimated, when our coastal property values tank, and when it finally sinks in that the wealth promised to the state by the oil companies is

not forthcoming, Gov. Nikki Haley, U.S. Rep. Tom Rice, U.S. Sen. Tim Scott, state Rep. Stephen Goldfinch, and all of the other proponents of offshore drilling can plead "insanity" for trying to promote oil drilling off our coast while expecting a different outcome than that experienced by the rest of the country.

The writer lives in North Litchfield Beach.



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WHAT OTHERS SAY: EDITORIALS FROM AROUND SOUTH CAROLINA

Upgrade dam program

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The reality is, South Carolina gets heavy rains throughout the year. The 1,000-year rain might have been a freak occurrence, but it doesn't mean the state shouldn't be prepared for the next significant rainfall. Ensuring the state's dams are

properly inspected, and that more of them are inspected, is simply common sense

- *Greenville News*

Make teacher evaluations meaningful

(S.C. Education Superintendent

ent Molly) Spearman's office says instead of "high-stakes testing," student growth will be measured throughout the year as part of teachers' evaluation.

Clearly students should be tested during the year to ensure that they are learning adequately. And clearly their progress on those tests is in part a reflection of their teachers' performance.

But the system must ensure that testing throughout the year is rigorous and that it measures how well each student is learning. And "high-stakes" tests must not be disregarded, as they are, after all, an indication of student progress. At the end of the year, if a student has not shown expected progress, his teacher should be held partly accountable.

Teachers have traditionally been assessed by their principals and peers. That would be a bit like a company deciding what to pay a salesman based on how his coworkers think he's done instead of how much he has sold.

- *Post & Courier Charleston*

Buckle up

The S.C. Department of Public Safety reports that as of Dec. 20, 918 people have been killed on South Carolina highways, compared to 786 deaths during the same time period in 2014.

That is an increase of nearly 17 percent, and deaths are up in

every category of accident.

Through midnight Dec 20, 113 pedestrians have died compared to 104 in 2014, 128 motorcyclists have died compared to 87 and 14 bicyclists have died compared to 14.

And in the face of the danger, too many people continue ignoring the single most important thing they can do to stay alive in a crash: wearing a seat belt. SCDPS reports that of the 612 motor vehicle occupants who have died in 2015, 312 were not wearing seat belts. Statistically, up to half of the 312 would be alive today if they had buckled up.

To be certain, there is something that just does not hit home about numbers and statistics. Tell people that 2-1/2 people a day are dying on the roads and the impact is not as dramatic as asking a person to weigh the question posed in an SCDPS campaign: How many traffic fatalities are acceptable in your family?

The answer is zero but too many people are finding themselves dealing with the loss of friends and family.

- *Times & Democrat Orangeburg*

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Title: **New law cuts sales tax on construction items**
 Author: BY SEANNA ADCOX Associated Press
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New law cuts sales tax on construction items

BY SEANNA ADCOX
 Associated Press

COLUMBIA — A new law written to assist Habitat for Humanity's home-building mission might be a boon in South Carolina's post-flood rebuilding efforts.

The law that took effect New Year's Day allows charities that build or renovate homes for needy families to buy those construction materials free of sales tax. When they passed the exemption overwhelmingly in June, legislators could not have foreseen the benefit to a state ravaged by historic flooding months later.

The measure's main sponsor, Rep. Garry Smith, said he introduced it because it didn't make sense to tax the work of a charity that seeks to build homes and hope in communities.

"Obviously, we had no idea anything like that would happen," Smith, R-Simpsonville, said of the October storm. "If it does provide some benefit to people who have lost their homes, that's great. Every little bit does help."

Greg Thomas, director of the state's association for 36 Habitat affiliates, called the law's timing "an absolute blessing."

While the state sales tax is 6 percent, local taxes push it to at

least 7 percent in most counties.

Eliminating that cost on construction materials will save Habitat between \$2,500 and \$4,000 for each home built. Ordinarily, Habitat affiliates build roughly 100 homes and repair another 100 annually statewide, Thomas said.

"That's extra that could be used for additional repairs on other homes, particularly in this flood period and disaster-response time," he said.

It's unclear how much the law could help flood victims.

How the exemption applies might help explain that. The law defines needy as individuals or families making up to 80 percent of their county's median income. In hard-hit Richland County, for example, household income needs to be less than \$39,000; in Charleston County, less than \$41,000; in Clarendon County, less than \$21,200, according to census data.

"It's almost poverty-level folks, so if you're a middle-income family with damage, those homes aren't eligible," Thomas said.

For Habitat-built homes, determining eligibility isn't an issue. Since the charity acts as the mortgage company, the family's financials are reviewed before approval. But it's an uncomfortable question for post-flood

work, which often involves mold remediation and new flooring, insulation, and dry wall, Thomas said.

"Without having a charitable organization ask, 'How much money do you make?' you have to go on the value of the home and make assumptions," he said.

Flood victims in the 24 counties covered by October's emergency declaration have until Monday to register with the Federal Emergency Management Agency for federal assistance. But that aid is limited.

As of Dec. 27, FEMA had inspected nearly 81,300 structures for damage, resulting in \$78 million in approved aid for 26,108 applicants. That's an average of less than \$3,000 per family. The maximum grant a family can receive is \$33,000, according to the agency.

The One SC relief fund, which Gov. Nikki Haley launched in November, awarded \$500,000 to 13 charities in its initial round of grants announced Dec. 21, with each receiving between \$25,000 and \$150,000. Those charities, including two Habitat affiliates, are providing an additional \$2.5 million total from other sources to rebuild or remove mold from about 350 homes, said JoAnn Turnquist, president of Central Carolina Community Foundation, which is housing the fund.