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S.C.'s ¹⁴⁸ veterans unemployment rate drops for second year; ranks as nation's 7th best

COLUMBIA — South Carolina's unemployment rate for veterans 18 and older dropped to 3.5 percent in 2014, down from 4.1 percent in 2013, the U.S. Bureau of Labor and Statistics reports. The Palmetto State posted the nation's seventh best rate and is well below the national rate of 5.3 percent.

"We are a proud military state. We support the families of those who are deployed, and we take care of our veterans and help them find work when they come home," said Gov. Nikki Haley. "Working together with businesses, the military community and work-

force partners, we are expanding opportunities for those heroes who sacrifice so much for our families, and we couldn't be prouder to celebrate another drop in our military veterans' unemployment rate."

In the past year, more than 9,000 S.C. veterans were placed in jobs, according to the S.C. Department of Employment and Workforce.

"There are now more South Carolinians working than ever, and we are proud to help those who have so graciously served our country find employment opportunities in the Palmetto State," said Cheryl M.

Stanton, executive director of the S.C. Department of Employment and Workforce (DEW).

The announcement comes nearly a year after the launch of Operation Palmetto Employment, a statewide initiative led by Gov. Haley, in partnership with the S.C. National Guard and DEW. The comprehensive employment

program is designed to help service members, family members and veterans find meaningful civilian careers.

Learn more about employment resources for veterans at operationpalmettoemployment.sc.gov.



Title: **Heed lessons of the Daimler deal rescue**
 Author: BY RON BRINSON
 Size: 49.91 square inch
 Charleston, SC Circulation: 110289

Heed lessons of the Daimler deal rescue

BY RON BRINSON

Two weeks ago, on the eve of Daimler AG's announcement of its 1,200-job manufacturing plant expansion in North Charleston, some Charleston area legislators raised challenging questions about the state's package of financial "incentives" to the German firm.

The 11th-hour inquiry set off alarm bells in Columbia. Any threat of upset to the terms of the Daimler AG package could summarily terminate the deal — with an international press conference and brassy public announcement scheduled in hours. Deal-renegeing is never a good thing in the global marketplace. It can be a credibility kiss-of-death, especially for an ambitious state like South Carolina.



Brinson

So calls were made, anxious meetings were held. Gov. Nikki Haley and Secretary of Commerce Bobby Hitt were in a rapid response mode. Senate President Pro Tempore and Finance Committee Chairman Hugh Leatherman recalls receiving an "emergency" call message that quickly brought him off the Senate floor.

"The question was really straightforward," Sen. Leatherman says. "So was the answer — a commitment made by authorized representatives of our state who are acting within the law will be honored — period! If we were to renege on or try to change a deal unilaterally, we would ruin a bank of credibility that serves our state so well."

And that was pretty much how this dust-up — and possibly embarrassing international fiasco — ended. The Daimler AG announcement went off as planned and construction crews already are at work at the expansion site.

In Washington state, where labor unions cue and control much of the legislative debate and economic development strategies, there's apparently a very different view of good-faith deal-making.

In October 2013, Gov. Jay Inslee signed legislation granting Boeing an incentives package for its Greater Seattle operations valued at \$8.7 billion over the next 27 years. But two months later, the governor publicly lamented that very deal, declaring that he wishes states could reach agreements that would make "illegal" the incentives and subsidies offered in economic development marketing. It is understandable that Gov. Inslee and Washington state labor unions wish the sharpening competition for Boeing prizes would just go away.

South Carolina's remarkable "Boeing Story" proves that Boeing's diverse operations are not welded to Greater Seattle. Global competitiveness gives the giant company options aplenty as it sets its strategic plans. That's an inconvenient truth for the Evergreen State, where Bill

Boeing first set up his airplane manufacturing plant on the Duwamish River in 1910, and a reason Washington state and its union-centric strategic mindset so often seem off-balance and insular.

While states hustle to accommodate Boeing's strategic plans, the company thrives. Its stock increased 30 per cent — in the last 90 days. And Greater Seattle remains Boeing's center of manufacturing action, employing 80,241 workers there in February. Boeing counted 7,723 employees at its steadily expanding South Carolina facilities.

Gov. Inslee might have been holding his nose when he signed the \$8.7 billion Boeing package, but his state's back was firmly against the competitive wall. The prize was the Boeing 777x project and where the new jumbo jet would be built. Washington state had many competitors.

For its part, Boeing immediately committed final assembly of the new 777x to its Everett campus, and site work soon began.

But this deal is not quite so sweet anymore. A growing group of Washington state officials want the package reformulated. Rep. June Robinson, D-Everett, demands that incentives be linked to Boeing's Washington state workforce numbers. Her bill would essentially re-state the still-fresh agreement and could have the effect of forcing Boeing to pay millions in additional taxes this year.

Rep. Robinson's initiative is gaining traction in the current legislative session, and it follows union reports that Boeing's workforce was 83,000 when the deal was signed and about 80,000 today. Last October, Boeing said it would move 2,000 engineering jobs from Washington state to Oklahoma City and St. Louis, and that it would manufacture wings and tail assemblies for the 777x at St. Louis. Both Oklahoma and Missouri are big players in the "incentives-based" marketing for economic development.

At a legislative hearing last week, Boeing executive Bill McSherry warned that Robinson's legislation threatens spoilage of Boeing's relationships with its home state. His message for Washington state legislators was pointed: "Changing the incentives now after waiting until after Boeing has invested almost a billion dollars to deliver on our 777x promises threatens to undermine not only our trust in the state but the confidence of all businesses here, and those looking at coming here, that Washington will honor its commitment."

Gov. Inslee hasn't been heard from in this forming debate. The man who otherwise did a nice job of preserving the 777x project for Everett apparently is having deal remorse — and heightened sensitivities to the political clout of his state's labor unions.

Ron Brinson, a North Charleston city councilman, is a former associate editor of this newspaper. He can be reached at rbrin1013@gmail.com.

Title: **S.C. proposal would allow more concealed weapons**

Author:

Size: 85.87 square inch

Columbia, SC Circulation: 128564



S.C. proposal would allow more concealed weapons

The S.C. House soon will decide whether it wants to recognize concealed-weapons permits from all other states in South Carolina.

A bill,

proposed by state Rep. **Alan Clemmons**, R-Horry, would allow an out-of-state visitor with a concealed-weapons permit

issued in their home state to carry a concealed weapon in South Carolina. In return, the proposal would open a number of states up to South Carolinians who hold concealed-weapons permits and would be able to

carry their weapons in those states, Clemmons said.

South Carolina currently has reciprocity agreements with Alaska, Arizona, Arkansas, Florida, Idaho, Kansas, Kentucky, Louisiana, Michigan, Missouri, New Mexico, North Carolina, North Dakota, Ohio,

Oklahoma, Texas, Tennessee, Virginia, West Virginia, and Wyoming, according to the S.C.

Law Enforcement Division.

If the law passes, Georgia is the most significant state that would be opened up to South

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Carolinians with concealed weapons, Clemmons said, adding North Augusta and Aiken residents, who live near the Peach State's border, would benefit.

The House Judiciary Committee passed Clemmons' bill last week.

In the meeting, state Rep. **Rick Quinn**, R-Lexington, said he favors the proposal as long as S.C. residents are given the same rights in other states.

However, Quinn said he is concerned about the possibility that someone who has an out-of-state concealed-weapons permit and is mentally ill — and a danger to themselves or others — could come into South Carolina.

"The question is: 'Do we want to hand somebody that is potentially mentally ill the right to have a concealed carry permit?'" Quinn said.

Clemmons said South Carolina will not be able to prevent the mentally ill or even criminals from

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crossing the state's borders with weapons. However, the law now prohibits law-abiding citizens from traveling to other states with their weapons.

Quinn, who said he supports the National Rifle Association, also asked how many states would not grant reciprocity to S.C. permit holders — allowing them to carry their weapons in those states — even if South Carolina accepted all out-of-state permits.

State Rep. **Weston Newton**, R-Beaufort, said the bill could mean that it is harder for S.C. citizens to carry concealed weapons in South Carolina than residents of other states, which make it easier to get a permit.

"We're holding our citizens to a higher standard, placing more restrictions on their ability to carry weapons in this state, than we're allowing of others," Newton said.

In the end, however, Newton — a self-described strong Second Amendment advocate — voted in favor of the bill. "My conflict is holding our folks to a higher standard and appearing to be governing to a lower standard for non-South Carolinians."

Clemmons said every state should have its own standards for issuing concealed-weapon permits. "But — just like driver's licenses — don't exclude a

state just because their standards are (more or less strict) than ours."

Minority Leader **Todd Rutherford**, D-Richland, supported the proposal during the meeting.

"The intent of my vote ... is to make it so that — the fact that one has a firearm and has gone through the process of getting a concealed-weapons permit in whatever state that may be — they're not treated as criminals for simply possessing a firearm," Rutherford said.

Quinn also ultimately voted in favor of the bill.

However, the Lexington Republican said he is working on amendments to address mental health and ensure other states also honor S.C. permits.

HALEY: NOT ANGRY, JUST EDUCATING

Gov. Nikki Haley said

during her re-election campaign last fall that she was angry during her first year in office.

The Lexington Republican said she was angry at the GOP establishment, House Republican leaders and the media. But, she insisted, she got over her anger.

Recently, however, some of that anger has seemed to reappear, as Haley has traveled the state, criticizing legislators in their districts, for opposing ethics reform or proposing new state spending.

But, in an interview with

The Buzz last week, Haley insisted she is not angry.

"For the four years I've been in office, we've always gone to districts and educated (residents) — whether it was on policy, whether it was on the actions of their legislators — this was nothing new."

In February, Haley went to Spartanburg and called out area House members for not backing her tax-swap proposal, the Spartanburg newspaper reported. She also called out state senators from the area for not supporting ethics reform.

Earlier this month, Haley went to Florence, telling a group that Senate President Pro Tempore Hugh Leatherman, R-Florence, is the main reason ethics reform has not progressed, the Florence newspaper reported.

Haley told The Buzz she was only doing her job, educating South Carolinians.

"I don't have a vote upstairs" in the Legislature, she said. "I do have the power of my voice."

'NO, I LOVE Y'ALL MORE ...'

The two 2016 GOP presidential front-runners, Wisconsin Gov. **Scott Walker** and former Florida Gov. **Jeb Bush**, had a chance to flatter S.C. voters last week.

Bush emphasized the Palmetto State's love of America.

He told Gov. **Nikki Haley** playfully after her introduction at Sistercare: "One of the things I'm really disappointed in is that you didn't bring up the fact every time I've been with you, you also said South Carolina is the most patriotic state in the country."

Walker, meanwhile, talked about the official picnic cuisine of South Carolina.

Speaking in Columbia, he talked about his next stop, a barbecue dinner in Greenville.

"I met my wife at a barbecue place; I proposed to her in a barbecue place. We went back to the barbecue place on the night of our wedding. So I love barbecue."

So S.C. voters choose! Do you go with your heart or your stomach?

CAN #PEELERISMS TREND?

State Rep. **Phyllis Henderson**, R-Greenville, (@phyllish21) tweeted an interaction between the S.C. Senate Majority Leader **Harvey Peeler**, R-Cherokee, at an event with Walker.

She tweeted: @harvey-peeler to @GovWalker: "being a democrat in SC is like being lactose intolerant in Wisconsin."

#Peelerisms

Staff Writer **Andy Shain** contributed.

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Title: Carolinas congressmen vary on views for Atlantic drilling
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OFFSHORE DRILLING

Carolinas congressmen vary on views for Atlantic drilling

BY BRUCE SMITH
 The Associated Press

CHARLESTON | The five congressmen representing coastal districts in the Carolinas reflect the opposing views in states where both governors are strong advocates of offshore drilling and almost 20 coastal communities oppose the idea.

The federal Bureau of Ocean and Energy Management is now taking comment on what should be included in environmental studies to decide whether areas in the Atlantic are opened to oil and gas development later this decade.

Gov. Nikki Haley is a member of the Outer Continental Shelf Governors Coa-

lition, which North Carolina Gov. Pat McCrory chairs. The group's mission statement says it works to "influence a sensible path forward for the development of America's offshore energy resources." Drilling proponents say it can help reduce dependence on foreign energy and create jobs and revenue.

Hilton Head Island is the latest coastal community to go on record opposing drilling, joining 18 others in the Carolinas. Opponents worry oil spills could harm the environment and coastal tourism.

A look at where the five coastal congressmen stand:

U.S. Rep. Walter Jones, R-N.C.

Jones' district runs from Greenville to the Outer Banks and southwest to Wilmington. He says any decision on drilling off North Carolina should be made by the people of the state – not Washington – and the state should receive a fair share of energy revenue. He urged the Bureau of Ocean and Energy Management to hold an additional public hearing this

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DRILLING

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month so more people could be heard. They were. Some 670 people attended last Monday in Kill Devil Hills, the most for any public meeting the agency has held.

U.S. Rep. G.K. Butterfield, D-N.C.

Butterfield's district reaches from Durham then along the state's northern edge to the western end of Albermarle Sound. He and 52 other members of Congress wrote Interior Secretary Sally Jewell this

month asking the Atlantic be put off-limits to drilling. They noted drilling would "threaten the economic and ecological productivity" of states and at

current consumption rates, Atlantic offshore oil would provide only five months of energy.

U.S. Rep. David Rouzer, R-N.C.

Rouzer's district runs from near Raleigh south to the coast and the South Carolina line. He supports oil and gas exploration saying increased production will keep prices low, encouraging growth and meaning

less oil revenue for the Islamic State and other terror groups. Government revenue will also help pay for coastal infrastructure, he says.

U.S. Rep. Tom Rice, R-S.C.

Rice's north coast district includes Myrtle Beach. He favors oil exploration. "I don't know how you can make an intelligent decision about what you're going to do if you don't know what's there," he says. But he wonders if offshore drilling is practical with prices low and drilling operations on land being closed down. He says states

should have a say in where offshore drilling is allowed. "I have always put a condition on my assent that it not be near tourism areas," he says.

U.S. Rep Mark Sanford, R-S.C.

Sanford's district runs from northeast of Charleston to the Georgia state line. A strong conservationist, he has opposed drilling in the past. "My perspective continues to evolve," he says. He sees no problem with exploring to at least see how much oil is offshore. "That's where we have been but not further than that."

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By BRUCE SMITH Associated Press file photo

Mark Sanford, R-S.C. (right) speaks at a meeting of the federal Bureau of Ocean Energy Management in Mount Pleasant, to take public comment on opening areas off the Atlantic coast to drilling for oil and natural gas.

Title: **HOW DO YOU PASS A GRAND COMPROMISE? TRY TO**
 Author: BYCINDIROSS SCOPPE
 Size: 75.79 square inch
 Myrtle Beach, SC Circulation: 61238



EDITORIAL

How do you pass a grand compromise? Try to

By CINDI ROSS SCOPPE

Recently, I wrote about my long-held contention that we can improve education in South Carolina by taking the best ideas from across the political spectrum and putting them together to craft a grand compromise. But in the poisonous political environment that has engulfed our nation, this can seem like an impossible dream.

I was reminded of how pervasive this poison is last month, when I read a letter to the editor defending the 2010 declaration by U.S. Senate Republican Leader Mitch McConnell that his top goal was to make Barack Obama a one-term president. "Why would any party that just lost a presidential election not do everything in its power to make the winner a one-term president?" the writer asked, and as I read those words, I suddenly realized that there are people who honestly do not know how destructive that approach to government is – or how historic it is. People who honestly do not know that no congressional leader had said such a thing in modern history. Maybe many have thought it – and certainly the opposition party has been moving more in that direction with each new president – but they didn't say it.

The tradition in this nation – in any functioning democracy – is for the party out of power to play the role of loyal opposition, with an emphasis on loyal. That means that when your side isn't in charge, you still fight for your ideas, but in the context of respect for the voters' decisions – and in the context of governing, not merely

politicking. So when the majority proposes an idea you dislike, you work to amend it so it'll be a little less dislikable.

And yes, lots of you are rolling your eyes right now, but I'm writing about this because here in South Carolina, we recently saw two very clear examples of how this can work – indeed, of how my grand education compromise can come about.

The examples came from former Gov. Dick Riley, a Democrat who also served as education secretary under Bill Clinton, and former state Education Superintendent Barbara Nielsen, a Republican, who were invited to testify at the first meeting of the special panel that House Speaker Jay Lucas assembled to come up with a response to the state Supreme Court's order to start providing an adequate education to all children in South Carolina.

What was striking was how many suggestions Mr. Riley made that could have come from Republicans and how many suggestions Dr. Nielsen made that could have come from Democrats. Well, it was striking if you don't realize that the best ideas from both parties have a lot more to do with pragmatism than partisanship or ideology, as too many people seem not to.

Clearly, Mr. Riley thinks the state needs to spend more money to educate poor children, but that wasn't the focus of his remarks. After urging the committee to start by inventorying what's working in S.C. schools (an inherently conservative idea), he talked about the importance of making

sure children can read, and read well, by the end of the third grade.

Mr. Riley told panelists they needed to find a way to provide personalized instruction for students.

And he urged them to focus on building – and using – public support, particularly in the form of school-community partnerships. "You will be amazed by how many resources are in a community that never have been tapped to support education," he said, and he could have been channeling Gov. Nikki Haley's much-ridiculed call for churches and other community groups to get to work fixing our schools. As much as critics derided it as a convenient out for a governor who, at the time, was doing nothing to support public education, it's an idea that holds much promise, particularly if we can strip it of its partisanship and focus on what people of faith owe to the least of these, as the state's Roman Catholic, Episcopal, Lutheran and Methodist churches are working to do.

Dr. Nielsen hewed to more predictably Republican themes, and prescriptive solutions – streamlining a tangle of separate budgets, conducting audits to determine where the money is going, insisting on zero-based budgeting – that reminded me of her work with the libertarian S.C. Policy Council. But it was all presented in the context of paying teachers more – a lot more – and with the clear implication that while you don't throw money willy-nilly at this or any problem, more money likely is needed to make the changes she suggests.



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Indeed, it was Dr. Neilsen – not Mr. Riley, not former Democratic Education Superintendent Inez Tenenbaum – who made some of the most impassioned comments about the urgency of investing in poor children in poor school districts, as she spoke of the outrage of teachers who make so little that they qualify for food stamps and urged panel members to be guided by these questions: “Would I put my child in this district or in this school? If not, then whose child should have to go there?”

In essence, the message from both

Mr. Riley and Dr. Nielsen was this: Yes, we need to spend more, which Republicans don’t generally want to do, but we also must be much more rigorous about making sure we spend it in the right way, which Democrats too often resist, and we must understand that government alone won’t solve our problem.

Of course it’s never easy to move from such generalities to a specific plan, but when you think of it in those terms, it’s hard to see how any reasonable person could disagree with that set of generalities. The problem is

that we don’t usually think of it in those terms: We think of it in terms of Republican ideas vs. Democratic ideas, which is a guaranteed route to gridlock.

Fortunately, there are still people here in South Carolina, and not just *former* elected officials, who can see past that and work past that. Those are the people who can create solutions to our problems – if we’ll let them.

The writer is an editorial writer for The State newspaper in Columbia.

Title: **Dismiss suit over kids' basic needs, DSS argues**
 Author: By MEG KINNARD The Associated Press
 Size: 42.16 square inch
 Columbia, SC Circulation: 128564



Dismiss suit over kids' basic needs, DSS argues

Case accuses state agency
of endangering children in its care

By MEG KINNARD
The Associated Press

Social services officials are seeking dismissal of a lawsuit accusing South Carolina's child welfare agency of endangering children in its care.

"Plaintiffs' claims are nothing more than a veiled attempt at asking this Court to instruct the Governor and the Director how to manage the Department and to order the South Carolina General Assembly to allocate additional funds to the Department," attorneys for the Department of Social Services wrote in court papers filed this week.

Attorneys for director Susan Alford also said federal courts have no jurisdiction over the issues. The children mentioned in the suit, they noted, all have active family court cases, and it's there that complaints should be handled. In a separate filing, Gov. Nikki Haley says she should be dismissed from the case because she doesn't oversee DSS and only appoints its director.

Last year, two advocacy groups – Children's

Rights and the South Carolina Appleseed Legal Justice Center – sued DSS and Haley, saying the agency failed to provide 11 children with basic health care and the right kind of attention.

One 16-year-old girl has been through at least a dozen placements in about eight years, according to the lawsuit, and was told by a caseworker that she was in a group facility because the agency didn't have enough foster homes. Other children were reportedly denied necessary therapy for months, abused by caretakers and kept from siblings also in the system.

According to the lawsuit, South Carolina's caseloads can be two or three times those of national and state standards, with some caseworkers having 60 or 70 children at a time.

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SUIT

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The lawsuit echoed findings in an October Legislative Audit Council report, which said DSS relied heavily on unreliable data, failed to request extra money and ignored growing problems.

The audit also said the agency didn't do enough to ensure children are placed in safe homes.

The audit also found DSS failed to properly investigate abuse allegations and child deaths.

DSS said last fall it was aware of problems and welcomed any help it can get.

Alford was easily confirmed earlier this year to lead the agency. Amid bipartisan calls for her ousting, former director Lillian Koller resigned last year,

insisting for years she didn't need additional money or manpower.

In this year's budget request, the agency had sought for its child-welfare division money for 277 additional employees – 73 percent of them caseworkers and supervisors. It also requested money for 35 additional vulnerable adult caseworkers and 22 more people to inspect daycare

providers.

The House's budget proposal, approved last week, pays for less than half the requested additional child-welfare workers. The House plan instead funds 120 caseworkers total, as well as the 22 daycare inspectors. But the proposal doubles employees' pay raises.

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Title: **DSS: Lawsuit over S.C. kids' basic needs should be dismissed**
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 Size: 35.34 square inch
 Myrtle Beach, SC Circulation: 61238



DSS: Lawsuit over S.C. kids' basic needs should be dismissed

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State officials want dismissal of a lawsuit accusing South Carolina's child welfare agency of endangering children in its care, saying the case is an attempt to force the court system to get involved in the agency's funding.

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A look at where the five coastal congressmen stand:

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BRUCE SMITH - AP

Opponents of opening waters off the Carolinas coast to oil and natural gas exploration hold signs in Mount Pleasant on March 11.

Title: **Report: Poor children lag behind despite 4K**
 Author: BY JAMIE SELF jself@thestate.com
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Report: Poor children lag behind despite 4K

By JAMIE SELF
 jself@thestate.com

HOPKINS Sitting on her mother's lap, McKenzie Jackson lists the Carolinas, the Gulf states and ends with a drawn-out pronunciation of "Arkansas."

At their Hopkins home Wednesday, Alisha Jackson was quizzing her daughter on what she has learned in 4-year-old kindergarten at Gadsden Elementary School. McKenzie attends that program

for free, thanks to the state's 4K program for low-income children.

The state's free 4K program has been a life-changer, Alisha Jackson says. Saving \$150 a week on child care, she said, helps her take her daughter on trips so she can "experience more things in life." McKenzie's early start in school also means she will not be farther behind next year, her mother says.

But a new study has some education advocates questioning whether the state's decade-old, \$65 million-a-year 4K program, free for impoverished children, is succeeding.

The study for the S.C. Education Oversight Committee compared how poor children who enrolled in 4K during the program's first four years performed later on standardized tests.

The study found:

■ Poor children in poor districts who enrolled in 4K were more likely to pass end-of-year exams in math and reading than poor children in those districts who did not attend 4K.

■ But, even after attending 4K, SEE 4K, PAGE 2B

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the success rate of those impoverished students was no better than that of poor children in wealthier districts that do not have the state's free 4K program.

■ Success rates of students in the K4 program varied dramatically from school district to school district. Students in some districts did well, with almost 90 percent passing the state's third-grade math test. But performance was dismal in others, with less than 1 in 10 passing.

■ Poor children who enrolled in 4K had "consistently lower" achievement levels on state tests than did all students statewide.

Despite "modest academic gains," the state's 4K program is "not closing the (academic achievement) gap" between impoverished students and other S.C. students, Oversight Committee executive director Melanie Barton told a state Senate panel Wednesday.

"(W)e remain concerned that we are not succeeding with this at-risk population of young people," she said.

Court-ordered reforms

The dilemma of how to close the achievement gap — the gap between the performance of children statewide

and poor children on the state's standardized tests — has been at the heart of South Carolina's education debate for two decades.

The 4K program was created in 2006 in response to a judge's order that South Carolina must do more for preschool-aged children in poor, rural school districts. Those districts sued the state in 1993 for more state support.

The 4K study also comes during a push for new reforms, ordered by the state Supreme Court.

The K4 review has left some supporters disappointed.

While the program "has been helpful, it's not a panacea," said state Sen. John Matthews, D-Orangeburg. "We have not seen the gains that we thought we were going to see."

The study sheds light on just how much worse off poor children in poor districts are than their peers in wealthier districts, Matthews said. Those poor students tend to fail more often because, he said, "Most of them live in poor homes, then you send them to poor schools in a poor district."

'Do we need to do more?'

The report also comes on the heels of a dramatic expansion of the 4K program.

During the last two years, state lawmakers more than doubled the number of children served by the 4K program to 12,500. They also more than tripled the program's budget to \$65 million, not including about \$10 million left over from last year.

Now, however, the program's quality must be improved before lawmakers expand it again, as some want to do, Barton says.

Teachers in the 4K program need more training, Barton said. Elementary teachers also must change the way they instruct, building on what students learn in 4K instead of repeating that instruction in lower elementary grades. Lawmakers also should set higher standards for the private day care centers and public schools that take part in the 4K program, rewarding programs that raise students' success rates.

But not all policy advocates see 4K as the best use of state dollars.

The 4K program will not leave students better off if they attend failing schools with failing leaders, said Ellen Weaver, president of the Jim DeMint-backed Palmetto Promise Institute, a conservative think tank.

"It's a mistake to put all of

this money into developing a (prekindergarten) program ... if we're putting these kids into systems and schools that are consistently under-performing," Weaver said.

Advocates say the 4K program is succeeding.

Dan Wuori of S.C. First Steps, which oversees part of the program, said gains by 4K students have been "substantial," given how far behind children in extreme poverty are when they enter the classroom.

While poor 4K participants still lag behind children statewide, they are bridging the achievement gap, he said, by outperforming poor children in high-poverty districts that do not have 4K.

For example, nearly 73 percent of poor children who had gone to 4K passed the state's standardized reading test at the end of the third grade. That compares to 67 percent of poor children in poor districts who did not go.

And, while the success rate of students who had gone to 4K lagged the statewide average by 6 percentage points, the success rate of poor students in poor districts who did not go to 4K was even lower, lagging the statewide average by 12 percentage points.

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 Author: BY JAMIE SELF jself@thestate.com
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Still, Wuori added, "If the question is, 'Do we need to do more than just 4K to really talk about closing the achievement gap,' then the answer is yes."

4K outcomes vary

Barton said the gains poor children in 4K make are good but "modest." Children in the state's highest-poverty districts are, on average, only performing at the same levels of poor children statewide, she said.

The impact of 4K on poor children also varies widely from district to district, signaling a need for more accountability in some programs, she said.

Some school districts saw 4K successes.

For example, two-thirds of the poor children in the Clarendon 2 school district who did not enroll in 4K passed the state's third-grade math test. But participating in 4K

increased the passage rate of poor children in that district to 88 percent, based on an analysis by The State newspaper.

Other districts saw no difference in results.

In the Berkeley school district, 1 in 3 poor children failed the state's math test at the end of the third grade whether they had gone to 4K or not.

Some districts' 4K programs seemingly hurt participants.

In the Florence 4 district, only 8 percent of 4K participants passed the same third-grade math test, less than the 15 percent who passed without attending 4K in the four years that the study reviewed.

Successful districts are innovating outside the classroom, finding ways to reach parents and families in their communities, Barton said.

One district helps parents

find family doctors, for example. In another district, grocery stores are putting up signs helping parents use shopping to practice identifying objects, words and colors.

State Sen. Wes Hayes, R-York, who chairs a Senate panel that oversees K-12 spending, agrees with Barton that the program now must focus on quality.

High-quality 4K can make a "huge difference" for students, Hayes said. But, he added, "Just simply having a program with poor quality may not, in the long term, do much good."

State Rep. Rita Allison, R-Spartanburg, who chairs education committees in the House, said the 4K report proves that improving education is "not all about money. You can continue to spend the money, but you've got to delve into where the problems are and solve them."

Reforms in the budget

Improving 4K students' academic success is more pressing now than ever, education advocates say.

Starting in the 2017 school year, third graders who fail the state's standardized test for reading face being held back a grade for reading-intensive instruction.

The retention plan is part of a new law that requires a statewide focus on literacy.

In last year's budget, Republican Gov. Nikki Haley pushed lawmakers to spend \$30 million on reading coaches for all elementary schools and more money for summer reading camps.

But state Sen. Vincent Sheheen, D-Kershaw, a longtime advocate of expanding the free 4K program to all S.C. children, said House budget writers are undercutting programs aimed at ensuring third graders are reading on

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grade level.

In her proposal for the state's fiscal year that starts July 1, Haley recommended spending an additional \$13 million for more reading coaches and summer reading camps. However, the House approved only about half that amount.

That House action is "more of the same" by a state government that fails yearly to fund public education at levels recommended by state law, Sheheen said.

'We are saving a life'

South Carolina has about 42,000 4-year-olds who, like McKenzie Jackson in Hopkins, meet federal definitions for living in poverty – qualifying for Medicaid or free or reduced-price lunches.

The state's 4K program now serves about 30 percent of those children in 60 school dis-

tricts, up from 34 districts in 2012. Richland 1's Gadsden Elementary, where McKenzie attends 4K, was included in the state's expansion.

Principal Monica Owens-Carter said leadership, resources and reaching families early on have helped Gadsden Elementary narrow the achievement gap.

Ninety-seven percent of Gadsden's students live in poverty, but the school received a "good" rating on last year's state report card, an accomplishment shared by only six other schools with similar poverty rates. (More than 160 schools like Gadsden scored average or below on that report card; only one scored "excellent.")

The state's 4K dollars allowed Gadsden to use federal money for technology and other 4K upgrades, Owens-Carter said. A Montessori

program for 3-year-olds also helps children early, Owens-Carter said.

"Oftentimes, if our kids don't come to the school, they sit at home on the couch," she said. "When we are opening our doors to the 4-year-olds and the 3-year-olds, I think, at that moment in time, we are saving a life."

Is 4K succeeding?

A new study found:

- Poor children in poor districts who enrolled in 4K were more likely to pass end-of-year exams in math and reading than poor children in those districts who did not attend 4K.

- Even after attending 4K, the success rate of impoverished students was no better than poor children in wealthier districts that do not have the state's free 4K program.

- Success rates between students in the 4K program varied dramatically. Students in some school districts performed well, with almost 90 percent of students passing a state test. But results were dismal in others, with less than 10 percent passing that test.

- Poor children who enrolled in 4K had "consistently lower" achievement levels on state tests than did all students statewide.



THE STATE

Alisha Jackson puts a backpack on her daughter McKenzie before school at Gadsden Elementary.

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Matt Walsh - The State

Janet Sumter writes the days of the week on a whiteboard for her 4K class at Gadsden Elementary.

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Carolinas' congressmen have varied views on oil drilling

By **BRUCE SMITH**

The Associated Press

CHARLESTON — The five congressmen representing coastal districts in the Carolinas reflect the opposing views in states where both governors are strong advocates of offshore drilling and almost 20 coastal communities oppose the idea.

The federal Bureau of Ocean and Energy Management is now taking comment on what should be included in environmental studies to decide whether areas in the Atlantic are

opened to oil and gas development later this decade.

Gov. Nikki Haley is a member of the Outer Continental Shelf Governors Coalition, which North Carolina Gov. Pat McCrory chairs. The group's mission statement says it works to "influence a sensible path forward for the development of America's offshore energy resources." Drilling proponents say it can help reduce dependence on foreign en-

ergy and create jobs and revenue.

Hilton Head Island is the latest coastal community to go on record opposing drilling, joining 18 others in the Carolinas. Opponents worry oil spills could harm the environment and coastal tourism.

MORE INSIDE

For a look at where the five coastal congressmen stand, go to **4A**.