

Lexington
County
Chronicle
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Carolina Water battle building

BY HAL MILLARD
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Enough is enough.
Lexington Town Council member Todd Carnes has appealed to Gov. Nikki Haley and state lawmakers through an online petition.

He proposes shutting down Carolina Water Service – arguably the most-loathed and dangerous utility in Lexington County.

He's not alone.
"Enough is enough from this company," Lexington Mayor Steve MacDougall added via Facebook.

For Carnes, MacDougall and many others, the last straw was the utility's discharge last month of improperly treated sewage into the Saluda River from a faulty pipe at its Friarsgate facility in Irmo.

The discharge sent bacteria levels soaring and temporarily closed down popular Saluda Shoals Park to swimmers and boaters. Its effects spread to other area waterways and has forced Riverbanks Zoo to stop using river water for plants and animal ponds.

Asked about Carnes' petition, CWS spokesman Tom Oakley told the *Chronicle*, "CWS will not comment due to pending litigation with the Town of Lexington."

Oakley was referring to a federal suit filed last year against the town that seeks to force it to allow Carolina Water's Interstate 20 wastewater plant access to the town's sewer-transmission line leading to a new and advanced treatment facility in Cayce.

On *Change.org*, Carnes noted that CWS and its Illinois-based parent company, Utilities, Inc., has a long and infamous history of polluting waterways and is responsible for the most such offenses in the state.

Somehow, he said, it continues to operate, despite the company's detrimental impact on the environment, not to mention an abysmal level of service and quality often cited by its customers.

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"Each time they have been found to be in violation by DHEC (Department of Health and Environmental Control), they have generally received a slap on the wrist at best while they continually profit from minimalistic environmental service to our state," Carnes' petition stated.

"As repeat offenders, they should receive significant and punitive fines commensurate with the irreparable harm they are causing in our state rather than a long list of bureaucratic warnings and insignificant fines," Carnes added.

Congaree Riverkeeper Bill Stangler said recently he saw problems at Saluda Shoals at least a month before DHEC issued its Saluda River pollution advisory June 21.

Though Stangler alerted DHEC, the agency said the levels were not yet at dangerous levels required to trigger a warning. DHEC also said it first believed the bacteria spike was a short-term event created by stormwater runoff before eventually discovering CWS was at fault.



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Hey y'all, e pluribus unum

E Pluribus Unum or out of many, one.

This 13 letter phrase became an official part of the Seal of the United States by an Act of Congress in 1782. It was the de facto motto of the United States until Congress officially made In God We Trust the national motto in 1956.

But beyond being simply our unofficial motto, since even before 1782, E Pluribus Unum embodied the very spirit of us as a new country. This simple but profound idea is we are all many -- many different people of different origins, different histories, different religions, different colors, and different races -- but all one, the People of the United States.

If you think about how things have been over the last few thousand years, E Pluribus Unum is a pretty radical concept. For most of human history, we have been dividing people into two groups -- us or them -- and to have a country which recognizes all of the "thems" are all part of "us," well, that's a

big idea.

Various religions, Christianity, Islam, Buddhism, etc. all recognize some sense of "one in the spirit" as the old hymn says, but E Pluribus Unum is about secular institutions -- a government and a county -- a fundamentally different thing.

These types of musings about our national origins and aspirations always seem to obligatorily come forth in newspaper columns such as this one around every July 4th holiday, but there have been several things in the news of late which add poignancy.

So, this past week when so many of us relaxed at the beach or on the lake or by the pool, eating and drink-

ing all the appropriate patriotic food items -- and as Old Glory gently waves nearby in the breeze -- here are a few things to ponder.

There are some new Pluribus in South Carolina these days. There is a new study out this week about who are the new people moving to South Carolina and the re-

sults might surprise you. The fastest growing group of New South Carolinians is Asians.

Though in absolutely numbers they are still small and only make up 2 percent of our state's population, in the last five years the number of Asians in the Palmetto State has grown to more than 20,000 -- an increase during this period of 26 percent. The largest group of Asians came from India. By comparison, Hispanic growth has been 14 percent, American Indians 10 percent, whites 6 percent and blacks 4.4 percent.

It's worth noting that Gov. Nikki Haley comes from an Indian immigrant family.

E Pluribus Unum has never been easy; there have always been tensions between new and old South Carolinians. Beginning in 1670 and for the next 100 years or so, the white folks who settled in

South Carolina were largely similar. The colony was founded from the Atlantic coast and the original white settlers were mostly from England, Episcopal and the families of second (or third or fourth) sons of aristocratic families.

The first sons inherited the manor house and estate, the title and the seat in the House of Lords. Many younger sons came to the New World because their opportunities were limited in the Old.

When the Upcountry was

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founded beginning in the mid-1700s, it was largely by Scots-Irish who came overland down through the Shenandoah Valley and tension grew almost immediately. These new Pluribus were hard scrabble, small farmers and Presbyterians. A prominent newspaper in Charleston called these Scots-Irish "the scum of two nations."

E Pluribus Unum has always been about an aspiration of our greatest hopes over our darkest fears and

from our earliest history (see S.C. and Scots-Irish above) there have always been politicians such as Donald Trump fanning the flames of suspicion, paranoia and fear.

It is nothing new in South Carolina, U.S. or even global history. Throughout U.S. history, we have had politicians who scorned the Germans, Irish, Poles, Jews, Chinese, and Mexicans, and every other "fill in the blank" immigrant group. These voices blame all of "our" problems on 'them' and preach that if it we could go back to how it "was" -- then everything would be OK again. (Make our Colonies Great Again.)

It's ironic for a nation of immigrants to be so susceptible to periodic convulsions of anti-immigrant prejudice ... but we are.

This campaign season -- both in the U.S. with Trump and in the UK with the anti-

immigration hysteria which led to a vote to leave the EU -- there is legitimate reason for concern about the rising fears over hopes.

But, although the fears never totally go away, the hopes do seem to usually win out. Somehow we always seem to be able to rise above our deepest fears and listen to our better angles -- at least up until now.

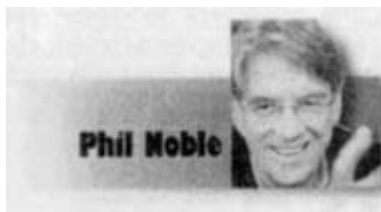
In his short-lived presidential campaign, former Maryland Governor Martin O'Malley had perhaps the best line of the year when he said, "The enduring symbol of America is not the barbed wire fence, it's the Statue of Liberty."

And indeed it is.

O'Malley said it in 16 words; our forefathers said it in 13 letters -- E Pluribus Unum.

We as a people, South Carolinians and Americans, must never forget this -- nor forsake this.

(Phil Noble is a businessman in Charleston and president of the SC New Democrats, an independent reform group founded by former Gov. Richard Riley. His column is provided by the S.C. News Exchange. Contact noble at phil@philnoble.com).



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COMMENTARY 148

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