

Title: **Ethics board: Gov. Haley gets luxury box only for business**
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USC Football

Ethics board: Gov. Haley gets luxury box only for business

The Associated Press

COLUMBIA — Gov. Nikki Haley can watch the University of South Carolina Gamecocks from a free luxury football suite only if she is conducting state business, the State Ethics Commission decided Wednesday.

The commission's advisory opinion is a revision from last September, when the board unanimously said the university can continue its longstanding practice of providing free tickets to the box to whoever occupies the governor's mansion, calling it a gift to the office rather than Haley

herself. While last fall's opinion said state business — such as courting company executives or hosting out-of-state dignitaries — should be a priority for the 16 tickets, it allowed for personal use.

"A caveat we put in the opinion recognized that sometimes there won't be a big company you're trying to woo to South Carolina that's going to need these tickets," said agency attorney Michael Burchstead, referring to a paragraph that read, in part, "we are not advo-

ating for the tickets to go to waste."

Commissioner Frank Grimball said he's concerned about weakening state ethics law that's specifically meant to limit lawmakers' entertainment by lobbyists, especially since the suite's perks include free food and drinks. He said others may take advantage of the exception.

The issue is that the tickets' value far exceeds legal limits on how much agencies that lobby state government can individually give elected officials. Those limits are \$60

daily and \$480 dollars yearly. State law provides an exception for events directly related to state or local economic development.

"I think our job is to protect the act," Grimball said. "Why not direct the governor to follow the act?"

He cast the lone no on the revised opinion, which limits the box's use to "state-related purposes."

Grimball called that wording too vague and

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argued unsuccessfully that the tickets should be used only for economic development.

How much the gift is worth is unknown.

USC spokesman Wes Hickman has said the university can't put a price tag on the tickets, provided for decades, because the governor's office has a private suite on a level otherwise reserved for news media,

the visiting athletic director and others who don't pay.

According to the Gamecock Club website, season tickets for non-suite seats directly beneath the press box cost at least \$1,665 each. Leasing a 24-ticket suite that's located between the end zones exceeds \$100,000.

The governor personally attended two of six home games last year and three of seven in 2014, said Haley spokeswoman Chaney Adams.

Like previous admin-

istrations, Adams said, Haley has used the suite for state business "because there's no better way to showcase the great things going on in our state."

Haley attorney Butch Bowers, who had no objection to the revised opinion, said the box is sometimes used for state business without Haley attending. But the governor's office couldn't detail who has used the suite or why.

The opinion is limited to Gamecocks football tickets. The school also

provides the governor's office four season tickets to men's basketball games.

Clemson University, Haley's alma mater, provides the perk differently. Clemson board members and others individually provide the governor football suite to the Tiders' home games. Haley listed the worth of each of the 10 suites as \$3,200 in her 2016 "statement of economic interest," submitted in March. Officeholders are required to list gifts, their value and who gave them in the annual disclosure.



Haley

Title: **Thank you for investing in Barnwell County**

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Our Voice

Thank you for investing in Barnwell County

"It's a great day in South Carolina!"

That's the greeting you will hear every day when you call a state agency.

It also sums up the July 13 festivities at Swiss Krono's Barnwell County facility.

That was the day officials ceremoniously broke ground on an expansion of the facility that produces wood laminate flooring. From the company's top executives who flew in from Europe to South Carolina Gov. Nikki Haley to local dignitaries, many officials were on hand to celebrate the occasion.

The occasion puts the company's investment of \$230 million and promise of 105 new jobs one step closer to becoming reality.

We appreciate Swiss Krono's continued investment in our state, specifically right here in Barnwell County. They have proven their commitment to manufacturing a quality product while providing good jobs for our residents.

Swiss Krono is not just a good business member. They are also good community advocates.

This is not only evidenced by the investment for the expansion, but the company donates to many organizations in the community. They recently donated the profits of their annual golf tournament – more than \$6,000 – to the Ashleigh Place girls group home. They have also donated flooring produced at the plant to numerous groups, such as the YMCA and Blackville senior center.

Many of their employees live here in Barnwell County, being good neighbors and infusing their paychecks into the local economy.

The impact is life-sustaining and enhancing for Barnwell County.

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While some people focus only on recruiting new industries to the area, it's important to care for our existing ones.

As Swiss Krono has shown, existing industries have a lot to offer. And when they succeed and expand, so does our county.

We thank those decision-makers at Swiss Krono for investing your funds, your faith and your future in Barnwell County.

This is a great event in South Carolina and Barnwell County.

If you look across Barnwell County, there are many businesses – large and small – accomplishing great things.

One such enterprise is Anovotek, which also operates the Edisto Outdoors store in downtown Barnwell.

These local entrepreneurs has developed a proprietary method for treating apparel with a mosquito repellent technology. They recently treated the USA Olympic swim team's clothing and will soon treat the water polo team's clothing as well.

This treatment is important in protecting the athletes against the Zika virus which is transmitted by mosquitoes, particularly in Brazil where the 2016 Summer Olympic Games are being held in August.

We appreciate Don Alexander and the rest of the crew at Anovotek for their commitment to finding new solutions to help people. Like Swiss Krono, the Alexander family has shown their commitment to Barnwell County by creating opportunities, products, jobs and investment in our community. They have renovated two historic buildings in downtown Barnwell that were sorely in need of repairs.

They continue to reinvest in the Barnwell County community. We understand there are more good things to come.

These are just two examples of how Barnwell County is part of the global economy. Companies from all over the world have chosen to invest in us. Our people have chosen make a difference in the world through new ideas and new technologies.

It's a great day in Barnwell County.

Title: **Swiss Krono breaks ground on expansion**
 Author: LAURA J. MCKENZIE Publisher laura.mckenzie@morris.com
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Swiss Krono breaks ground on expansion

LAURA J. MCKENZIE
Publisher
laura.mckenzie@morris.com

Swiss Krono ceremonially broke ground July 13 on an expansion that is expected to create 105 jobs in Barnwell County.

The company is investing \$230 million to build a high-density fiberboard (HDF) mill and expand its laminate flooring production, creating 105 new jobs over the next few years. The Barnwell plant was originally opened in 2005 as Kronotex but the company has recently undergone rebranding as Swiss Krono.

South Carolina Governor Nikki Haley participated in the groundbreaking, saying, "This is a celebration for South Carolina."

A native of neighboring Bamberg County, Gov. Haley said she "understands the sweetness of the people in rural South Carolina" and the "community continues to support" Swiss Krono.

While temperatures soared over 100 degrees outside, the event was held inside an air-conditioned tent next to the Swiss Krono plant located in the South

Carolina Advanced Technology Park in Snelling. Laminate flooring produced at the plant spanned beneath the feet of em-

ployees, company officials and dignitaries attending the event. A "sandbox" was created next to the speakers' stand for the

formal groundbreaking to keep everyone from having to go out in the sweltering heat.

Ines Kaendl-Benes, president

of the Swiss-Krono board of directors, said her father, Austrian

See SWISS KRONO, 8A

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Swiss Krono: *Company plans to invest \$230 million, add 105 new jobs*

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entrepreneur Ernst Kaindl, founded the company in 1966 which "now sells product in 90 countries worldwide". She said the expansion was a "wonderful way" to celebrate the company's 50th anniversary.

Kaindl-Benes said the expansion "presents an important strategic investment for the company" and "will make Swiss Krono a powerhouse" in the industry.

Zeb Portanova, president and CEO of Swiss Krono, thanked Haley and others who helped make the expansion a reality.

"I have to say thank you. South Carolina is the most friendly state I have ever worked in," said Portanova.

He said the expansion will allow the company to "vertically integrate", buying timber "right here in South Carolina" and giving them the ability to more closely control quality.

The company currently purchases HDF from other companies in Alabama and Canada.

According to a company news release, "This expansion will allow Swiss Krono USA to produce

300,000 cubic-meters of HDF per year, which the company will use for laminate flooring manufacturing operations and sell to furniture, cabinet, fixture, door and other wood-based manufacturers. In total, the project will increase the company's annual laminate flooring capacity by an additional 8 million square-meters."

Locally, Southern Carolina Alliance (SCA) CEO Danny Black said the groundbreaking is "a glorious event" for the region.

Black said the decision to site and expand in Barnwell County involved numerous partners coming together. He thanked not only the Swiss Krono officials, but also the County Council, the SCA board, the U.S. Department of Energy who gave park property in 2000, the Barnwell County Economic Development Commission (including interim EDC executive director Jim Gambrell who negotiated expansion), SCANA Corporation, and the S.C. Dept. of Commerce.

Company officials were welcomed by Barnwell County Council Vice Chairman Keith Sloan, S.C. Rep-

resentative Loney Hosey and S.C. Senator Brad Hutto.

Sloan agreed with the governor, saying that it was a "great day in South Carolina and fantastic day in Barnwell County."

"We appreciate the confidence of Kronotex," said Sloan who also thanked their employees.

Hutto noted the expansion is "the largest capital investment ever" in the history of the Southern Carolina Alliance. The SCA region includes Barnwell, Allendale, Bamberg, Hampton, Jasper and Colleton counties.

He said the plans to expand have taken "a lot of hard work over a lot of years" by company officials, SCA and Barnwell County Economic Development Commission as well as economic partners.

"Back then, they had the vision of what we are going to see take place today."

Norman Voss, former CEO of the Barnwell plant and current Swiss Krono board of directors member, was credited by Portanova as being the "godfather of the flooring industry" who worked to make the expansion a reality.

He spoke to Ernst Kaindl about putting the plant here initially and then was the motivator behind the expansion, said Portanova.

Kenny Jackson, Senior Vice President for Economic Development, Government and Regulatory Affairs, SCANA Corporation was also among those at the groundbreaking. "SCE&G is pleased that Swiss Krono has broken ground on the company's new HDF plant in Barnwell County. SCE&G has provided electric service and natural gas service to Swiss Krono's existing laminate flooring plant for over a decade, and we look forward to serving the new HDF plant. We were pleased to partner with the S.C. Department of Commerce, the Southern Carolina Alliance, the Barnwell County Economic Development Commission and many other allies to help make this project a reality."

The company expects HDF operations to begin by the summer of 2018. Once completed, this expansion will increase KronotexUSA's Barnwell County workforce to 275 employ-

ees. Those interested in applying for one of the new positions should visit the

company's online page at www.swisskronousa.com/careers.

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Pictured L-R: Danny Black, CEO of Southern Carolina Alliance; Max Von Tippelskirch, CMO of Swiss Krono Group; Roland Kovacic, CTO of Swiss Krono Group; Keith Sloan, Barnwell County Councilman; Representative Lonnie Hosey, SC District 91; SC Governor Nikki Haley; Ines Kaindl, Chairwoman of Swiss Krono Group; Zeb Portanova, CEO of Swiss Krono; Senator Brad Hutto, SC District 40; Norm Voss, Swiss Krono Group Board Member; and Kenny Jackson, Sr. VP of SCANA.

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Jonathan Vickery/Managing Editor

Zeb Portanova, president and CEO of Swiss Krono USA, along with his wife, Barbara, and their two daughters, ceremonially break ground on the expansion of the Barnwell County plant on July 13.