

...y a tax on preventing a privately owned hotel from generating that extra revenue for the city.

Both public and private parties involved in the discussion advocated the need for a hotel in some form.

I'll agree as soon as the brand-new convention center books a solid year of large, significant conventions and there is not an open room left in town. Until then, this remains an avoidable, costly mistake.

WHIT ASHLEY  
Columbia

## S.C. needs tax income to move forward

Holley Ulbrich, a Clemson University economist, says she doesn't quite understand "what this obsession with reducing the state's income tax is" ("Sanford, House GOP want income-tax cut," Feb. 15). Heck, it's plain as the nose on your face except it's too close to see! Votes, votes, votes!

How can anyone in his or her right mind continue to believe that we can maintain a decent quality of life, one that embraces education, health insurance, safety, jobs, you name it, without any income? I'd like to see any householder continue to pay the bills, keep a roof overhead, feed his family and get to work (if he still has a job) without an income.

The federal government and now the state want to throw money at their citizens and expect them to be grateful for losing support for schools, police officers, public transportation, health insurance. Have we all lost our minds?

Take a look at the article about Siemens' need for educated workers in the same issue. And the president's budget eliminates funding for Even Start, the very ace we need to begin to strengthen educational programs this state.

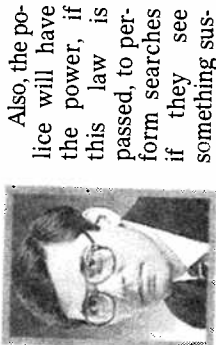
A tax cut puts some temporary cash in our wallets, but how will it go? Wake up, South Carolinians: Your future — and our children's — is on the line!

HEL W. DICK  
Greener

The S.C. Senate is debating primary seat belt enforcement legislation, an attempt to give the police the power to pull a driver over for failing to wear a seat belt without the person being stopped for another traffic violation. Our current secondary enforcement law allows for a charge of failing to wear a seat belt only after another violation is cited, but still requires wearing a seat belt. Everyone should choose to wear a seat belt, because in the majority of accidents it protects you.

But this bill, I believe, is full of problems. With a fine of \$25, we risk creating a "he said, she said" situation, with the police saying you were not wearing your seat belt. This contingency is more probable since there is also a strong likelihood that a person will not fight an offense by driving to court and missing a day of work to contest a mere \$25 fine. Some small towns may consider this new law to be a collection plate for their budgets, as some small towns do with speed traps.

# Seat belt bill gives too much power to government



Glenn F. McConnell

Guest Columnist

Also, the police will have the power, if this law is passed, to peruse searches if they see something suspicious or another law possibly being violated. With few safeguards in place concerning record-keeping for statistical data, it is possible that this new law may be used more often against minorities.

Additionally, the bill allows the police to detain a person solely on the basis that a police officer thought he saw you without a seat belt. Further, the police can create a roadblock, lining you up for many minutes while they check for seat belt violations. When you unbuckle to reach for your wallet, will you be charged?

The bill says your seat belt insurance rates. Our lives are

charge is not a criminal one, but it is silent on the burden of evidence in court. Is it beyond a reasonable doubt or past a preponderance of the evidence? Think about it: Government can now detain you and fine you for conduct not a danger to another person or immediately to you.

This now brings us to the central issue of the creeping assault on our liberty that this type of legislation presents in precedent after precedent. Yes, more important than the technical flaws of the proposed law, the most important issues are the assault on our liberty that this bill represents and the precedents it creates.

We as South Carolinians should always be leery when we are asked to surrender our liberty because someone else says that they know what is best for us.

It is our choices that make us who we are. We should also be careful where the government control is justified because the regulated conduct could affect others' insurance rates. Our lives are

Another argument made by those supporting primary enforcement is that by enacting this law South Carolina will get \$1 million in federal funds. We are being asked to surrender our freedom that was created in the fire of our nation's beginning for essentially a federal bribe. They cite the need to reduce insurance costs but such a law has not reduced rates anywhere.

If left unchecked, the march to make America safer will have you fighting the safety squads as they restrict where you can buy and what you can eat. I hope that during this debate, which will be a seminal moment in defending our personal freedom, that South Carolinians will call their senators and representatives to tell them to stay out of their lives. The police need to spend their time on speeders, drunken drivers, red-light runners and others who pose the real risk.

Mr. McConnell is  
president pro tempore  
of the S.C. Senate.

# Pentagon sees big risks in a warming planet

The thing about global warming is that all you have to do is say those two words and most people's eyelids — like our polar icecaps — start sliding down, down, down.

Mine too. But in a minute, your eyes are going to boiling open so wide, you may not be able to sleep tonight. That's because global warming is suddenly Topic A at two places not normally associated with hugging trees: the Pentagon and the insurance industry.

They have just realized: Hey, if the climate really is going to hell — thanks to willy-nilly burning of fossil fuels — this could mean tidal waves, droughts, searing heat and freezing cold. Not to mention nuclear war. That means global warming is: (1) At least as big a threat to the world as terrorism, and (2) Probably going to cost a whole lot in insurance payouts! Yes, yes, I find realization No.

erage rainfall in Europe plummets — a distinct possibility — we could see massive boatlifts of people attempting to enter America. If India and Pakistan are desperate for the same shrinking source of drinking water, they could go nuclear. If America and China both enter an ice age, they might go to war for Saudi Arabia's oil. Etc., etc., etc.

The Pentagon bigwig who commissioned this report is Andrew Marshall, an 82-year-old legend so wise and experienced that his colleagues call him "Yoda." Marshall released the report's findings to *Fortune* magazine, and his motive seems clear: to goad the business community into taking action, because goading President Bush has gotten nowhere.

To date, Bush has not only pooh-poohed warnings on global warming, he has gone so far as to distort his own EPA's findings. He also refused to sign the Kyoto Ac-

cord on greenhouse emissions, claiming America needed more time to research whether this was a manmade problem.

The Pentagon report says that wasting more time is irresponsible, and manmade global warming is real. And that's what the insurance companies are starting to realize, too.

Swiss Re, a giant company that insures other insurers, has just issued a call to action. Its climate expert, Pamela Heck, says that last summer's European heat wave that killed 19,000 may have been a "glimpse at climate change to come."

In its blockbuster report, Swiss Re estimates that in 10 years, the economic cost of disasters like floods, frosts and famines caused by global warming could reach \$150 billion annually. That's the cost to the insurance industry of a World Trade Center disaster every year.

The way to avoid this horrible scenario is clear, says Jon Coifman, a spokesman for the Natural Resources Defense Council: We must cut way back on our country's carbon dioxide emissions.

"We are about 4 percent of the population and produce about 25 percent of the world's emissions," he says. To pollute less, we need to switch to cleaner, renewable energy sources. We need to build more fuel-efficient cars and trucks. And we need new laws limiting industrial emissions.

Fortunately, there is a global warming bill coming to Congress this spring sponsored by Sens. John McCain, R-Ariz., and Joe Lieberman, D-Conn., that addresses these issues. It came within just seven votes of passing last year. This year, it must pass.

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