

Title: **Gun reciprocity legislation passes**
 Author: BY CHRISTINA CLEVELAND Aiken Standard
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Gun reciprocity legislation passes

BY CHRISTINA CLEVELAND

Aiken Standard

A bill that would allow South Carolina and Georgia concealed weapons permit holders to lawfully carry between the states was signed by Gov. Nikki Haley.

The bill passed the S.C. Senate by a 35-3 vote Wednesday.

Rep. Bill Hixon, R-North Augusta, the bill's primary sponsor, said Thursday the Senate's vote was the "most wonderful thing" to have happened.

"I had tremendous help from all my House members, the Senate Democrats and Republicans, House Democrats and Republicans, the National Wild Turkey Federation, Congressman (Jeff) Duncan," Hixon said, "Many many people wanted this

done."

Hixon has long said the issue is important to Georgians and South Carolinians who live along the states' border, including his constituents in Aiken County.

Supporters of the bill have also described CWP holders mostly as law abiding and Hixon said Georgia's permit application is more in-depth than the application in the Palmetto State.

Those who oppose the measure have pointed out that Georgia does not require training for permits.

Georgia's law will not change as the state recognizes permits for residents of any state that also recognizes Georgia, Hixon said.

Title: **Ethics reforms stalled after years of debate**
 Author: BY JAMIE SELF jself@thestate.com
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S.C. LEGISLATURE

Ethics reforms stalled after years of debate

House, Senate disagree on when to make ethics investigations public

Independent investigations, income disclosure could be adopted during mid-June session; little progress made on other proposals

House leaders question whether Senate really wants to pass reforms

BY JAMIE SELF

jself@thestate.com

After four years of debate about how to strengthen the state's ethics laws, S.C. lawmakers might pass two changes to the rules governing public officials' behavior later this month.

Maybe.

Dozens of ethics bills have been introduced since late 2012, when Gov. Nikki Haley formed a blue-ribbon committee to evaluate state laws governing how public officials should behave.

But out of the nearly two dozen recommendations made by that panel, only two have a chance of becoming law four years later, when the Legislature wraps up its work during its mid-June veto session.

Critics say the state Senate is

to blame for the lack of progress. The House has passed more than a dozen ethics-related bills, sending them to the Senate, where most have died.

Even if lawmakers give final approval later this month to the two bills near the finish line, good-government groups say the state's ethics laws still will need more work.

"Dark-money disclosure – that is a really serious problem and it's getting worse," said John Crangle with Common Cause of South Carolina, referring to secretive groups that raise war

chests to influence elections but do not disclose their agenda or donors.

Legislators also need to clarify the law dictating how campaign

money can be used and when public officials should abstain from voting because they have a conflict of interest, said Lynn Teague, with the League of Women Voters.

Lawmakers also should be barred by law from forming political action committees that they can use to raise money and dole out campaign contributions to their colleagues. Those committees – now banned by House and Senate rules but not by law – can wield excessive influence over the legislative process, critics say.

SEE ETHICS, 9A

 **MORE INSIDE**

Gov. Nikki Haley signs more than 40 bills into law. **3A**

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ETHICS

FROM PAGE 1A

Even if lawmakers pass the two proposals that could become law when they return later this month, the push for tougher ethics rules will be ongoing, Teague added.

"We can't do what we did after (Operation) Lost Trust and figure that we fixed things," she said, referring to a landmark federal corruption sting of S.C. lawmakers more than two decades ago that resulted in the last major update to the state's ethics laws.

ETHICS BILLS HIT ROADBLOCK

Of the two ethics bills lawmakers still could pass, one proposal would end the practice of state lawmakers exclusively investigating ethics complaints against themselves, shifting investigations to a revamped State Ethics Commission that supporters say will allow independent watchdogs to oversee lawmakers.

Another bill would require lawmakers to disclose some information about their private income.

Differing versions of both bills have passed the House and Senate, and now are being reviewed by a panel of lawmakers tasked with ironing out the two chambers' differences.

But the chances of the bills passing dimmed last week when an apparent agreement on the independent-investigations bill fell apart.

The first signs of that breakdown, said state

House Speaker Pro Tempore Tommy Pope, R-York, came when senators insisted last week on adopting their version of a key part of the investigations proposal.

That insistence surprised Pope, a former prosecutor who is negotiating for the House with senators on the bill.

Earlier in the week, five of the six negotiators had reached agreement on independent investigations. However, one state senator did not attend that meeting.

When State Sen. Gerald Malloy, D-Darlington, rejoined negotiations Wednesday, he asked for more time to share details of the agreement with Senate Democrats. A day later, Malloy said the Senate preferred its version of the proposal. Later that day, the Senate voted 37-1 to insist on its version.

After that vote, Pope expressed frustration at the Senate's position to his House colleagues.

"I don't know where we can go, folks," he said. "We have given and given and given."

But Sen. Larry Martin, R-Pickens, who led the Senate's negotiators, said he still is confident both sides can reach an agreement.

PLACING BLAME

Other state leaders were disappointed with the setback.

House Speaker Jay Lucas, R-Darlington, blamed senators, citing them as the reason the state needs ethics reforms.

"These common-sense reforms passed the House

– overwhelmingly, with bipartisan support – because our chamber understands the importance of this issue," said Lucas, who formed an ethics task force shortly after succeeding House Speaker Bobby Harrell, the Charleston Republican who resigned and entered a guilty plea to campaign finance violations.

"The fact that a few senators' objections prevented these bills from advancing through the legislative process further proves that the people of South Carolina need reforms to hold elected officials accountable and restore the public's trust," Lucas added.

Gov. Nikki Haley's office also urged lawmakers to act.

"Passing independent investigations and income disclosure has been a top priority (of the governor's) for four years and – finally – this year we are closer than ever to getting them over the finish line," said Chaney Adams, Haley's press secretary, adding the House and Senate have made more progress this year than ever before.

"(T)here is no reason or excuse why the people of South Carolina shouldn't be able to celebrate passage of ethics reform this year."

DISAGREEMENT AHEAD FOR ETHICS PROPOSALS

Haley made ethics reform a priority in 2012 shortly after the then-GOP majority House Ethics Committee investigated and dismissed ethics complaints against her related

to when she was a Lexington state representative.

Other high-profile ethics cases have spurred cries for ethics reform, including cases against former Gov. Mark Sanford, Lt. Gov. Ken Ard, state Sen. Robert Ford and Speaker Harrell. Ard, Ford and Harrell resigned in the wake of ethics investigations. An ethics probe that led to charges against Harrell also continues under the State House dome.

The governor's ethics task force – led by two former S.C. attorneys general – made nearly two dozen recommendations for strengthening the rules that say what public officials can and cannot do.

Those recommendations included requiring public officials to disclose sources of their private income and the amount if that income comes from an organization that lobbies state government or a business that has government contracts.

Lawmakers could pass an income disclosure bill in mid-June. With an independent investigations bill, an income disclosure bill is before House and Senate negotiators.

But ethics watchdogs worry income disclosure might not pass.

Attorney-legislators have pushed back against disclosing the sources of their income, saying they have a duty to keep their clients confidential, Teague said.

The House also has a provision in its income disclosure bill that would require "dark money"



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political groups to disclose their donors.

However, the income disclosure bill will not pass the Senate if it is coupled with a dark-money rule, where there is too much opposition to the idea, said Sen. Martin, who has been a target of the veiled groups and supports requiring that they disclose their donors.

Teague, with the League of Women Voters, said her organization wants "dark money" groups to disclose their donors. But, she added, "we don't want it as a poison pill" that could kill income disclosure for public officials.

Haley's task force also recommended that an independent panel investigate ethics complaints against lawmakers, instead of them policing themselves.

There still is time for the Senate and House to pass

a bill creating independent oversight of lawmakers.

But the two chambers disagree over a key provision of the bill – how long secrecy should shroud an investigation if the State Ethics Commission, which would conduct the independent investigation, decides a lawmaker has violated the state Ethics Act.

The House prefers making public immediately a commission finding that there is probable cause of a violation.

But the Senate wants to let legislative ethics committees review the Ethics Commission's finding and ask for additional investigation before making public an allegation. If, after added investigation, the Ethics Commission reverses its position, finding no evidence that a lawmaker violated ethics laws, the allegation would remain confidential.

Senate negotiators argued that, under their proposal, any final determination by the Ethics Commission that there is reason to think a lawmaker violated the law would become public.

House negotiators disagree.

The Senate's desire to delay making allegations public – and prolong secrecy – will keep legislators under the cloud of suspicion brought on by recent ethics scandals, Pope said, adding the impasse makes him question whether senators really want any ethics reform.

"It makes me feel like, is there really the will (in the state Senate) to have this reform? If there isn't the will to have this reform, that begs the bigger question of 'Why?'"

Jamie Self: 803-771-8658,

@jamiemself

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Ethics reforms going nowhere

Four years after state leaders pledged to update the state's ethics laws, no major reforms have become law. A look at key changes, recommended by a blue-ribbon commission, that have not moved:

- Strengthen penalties for violations of the state ethics laws
- Ban the use of campaign money to pay criminal penalties for violations of the state ethics law
- Adopt greater protections and rewards for whistle-blowers who report government waste, fraud or other abuses
- Shorten the time limit that public bodies have to respond to and fulfill requests for public information, limit the fees that can be charged for searching and copying that information, and provide for enforcement in instances where public bodies drag their feet
- Eliminate the exemption of legislative papers from public disclosure under the state's Freedom of Information Act
- Expand required disclosures of conflicts of interests for public officials, including requiring attorney-legislators to disclose fees when they represent clients in cases where a state agency is an opposing party, and requiring public officials to disclose all fiduciary positions they hold, whether compensated or not
- Extend to two years from one the period a legislator must wait to represent a client for a fee before a state entity after voting to pick a member of that organization
- Expand the definition of lobbyist to require registration and disclosure from people and entities that lobby local governments and other subdivisions of state government

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Banning leadership PACs, but not Great Day?

Ethics reform advocates and Gov. Nikki Haley's ethics task force recommended banning, in state law, lawmakers from setting up political action committees, groups whose spending the lawmakers can direct.

Critics say the organizations allow powerful public officials – and interests that lobby state government – to exceed campaign contribution limits, exerting excessive power over elections and the legislative process.

The House and Senate already have banned the so-called leadership PACs by rule, but not law.

But some ethics advocates say Haley now has a leadership PAC in the form of A Great Day SC, the political group formed to target state Senate incumbents who Haley opposes.

Haley political adviser Tim Pearson runs the political group, which is trying to oust longtime GOP state senators in the upcoming June 14 Republican primaries.

Great Day is an “abuse of power,” said John Crangle of Common Cause of South Carolina, a good-government, watchdog group.

But Great Day differs from a leadership PAC in two important ways, according to the group:

- First, Great Day was set up under federal law as an IRS-designated 527 group, which requires it to disclose its donors and its spending publicly. Current S.C. law requires no disclosure of political groups' activities, making it easy for political groups to form and conceal their activities.

- Also, unlike leadership PACs, Great Day was not set up to give campaign contributions to candidates and cannot do so. Instead, the group is raising money and spending money on ads in some Senate races where Haley has decided to target incumbents and support their opponents.

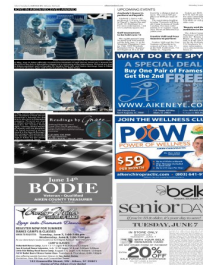
“As governor, (Haley) believes it is not only appropriate but her responsibility to make the voters aware of exactly how well – or how poorly – they are being served by their elected officials,” Pearson said. “She will continue to use every tool at her disposal to make sure the voters know the truth before they cast their votes on June 14.”

Title: **JOYE IN AIKEN RECEIVES AWARD**

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JOYE IN AIKEN RECEIVES AWARD



SUBMITTED PHOTO BY SOUTH CAROLINA ARTS COMMISSION/MOLLY HARRELL

In May, Joye in Aiken officially received the Elizabeth O'Neill Verner Governor's Awards for the Arts in the Arts in Education category at a ceremony at the State House. Pictured are Joye in Aiken president and co-founder Dr. Sandra Field, left, and Janice Jennings, Joye in Aiken executive director, right, with South Carolina Gov. Nikki Haley.

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In May, Joye in Aiken received the Elizabeth O'Neill Verner Governor's Awards for the Arts in the Arts in Education category. Pictured are Joye in Aiken president and co-founder, Dr. Sandra Field, right, meeting Darius Rucker of Hootie and the Blowfish. The band received a Verner Award in the Special Recognition category. Also pictured is Zee Homoki, who nominated Joye in Aiken for the award with her husband, Steve.

Title: **S.C. power brokers flex their muscles in June primary**
 Author: BY JAMIESELF jself@thestate.com
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S.C. power brokers flex their muscles in June primary

Top races attract the governor, business and education leaders

S.C. Chamber of Commerce backing 26 lawmakers in primaries

Business group also taking on Upstate firebrand Lee Bright

BY JAMIE SELF
 jself@thestate.com

Candidates are on the homestretch to the June 14 political primaries with some attracting more help – and opposition – than others from power brokers on high.

S.C. business leaders are backing 26 legislators – 19 Republicans and seven Democrats – in primary races, including three opposed by Republican Gov. **Nikki Haley** and a group supporting her political agenda.

The Good Government Committee, the political arm of the S.C. Chamber of Commerce, has donated to state Senate President Pro Tempore **Hugh Leatherman**, R-Florence; state Sen. **Wes Hayes**, R-York; and state Rep. **Stephen Goldfinch**, R-Georgetown, who is running for the state Senate.

Chamber chief executive **Ted Pitts** said Thursday that Goldfinch, Hayes and Leatherman performed well on the chamber's voting scorecards and, as a result, have his group's backing.

In at least three primary races, that support pits Haley against the business

group and Pitts, a former chief of staff to Haley.

The governor is traveling the state to endorse GOP candidates who are opposing Hayes, Goldfinch,

Leatherman and one other longtime state senator, **Luke Rankin**, R-Horry. A pro-Haley political group, A Great Day SC, also is running ads against the incumbents and for Haley's primary picks.

Some at the State House were scratching their heads last week when Haley came out against Hayes, wondering why the GOP governor would go on the offensive against a fellow Republican who – unlike Haley's other targets – is unlikely to say a cross word about anyone.

Hayes, too, said he was surprised, adding he sees himself as an ally to Haley on ethics and education issues.

But Hayes, a legislator of three decades, also has picked up more campaign reinforcements that could help him against the Haley attacks.

Last week, a group of educators – led by state Superintendent of Education **Molly Spearman**, a Republican who has worked closely with Haley to push the governor's education agenda – endorsed Hayes, calling him “a tireless supporter of public education in our state.”

“His conservative, common-sense leadership in the South Carolina Senate has

enabled true education reform and allowed for high-quality opportunities for students, parents and educators,” Spearman said in the endorsement.

The chamber's Good Government Committee also is cranking up its onslaught against the re-election of state Sen. **Lee Bright**, R-Spartanburg.

In radio ads against the second-term incumbent, the chamber group accuses Bright of holding state government “hostage,” blocking money for roads, aid for farmers and worrying about which bathroom transgender people choose to use.

In one radio ad, a re-enactment of a hostage situation, one man accuses Bright of “shutting everything down with a bill to mandate which bathroom people can use.”

“Son, this is Spartanburg,” another man replies. “We got that figured out up here.”

A GREEN DAY IN SOUTH CAROLINA

Green groups are celebrating a series of victories in the Legislature, something they don't often experience in one year.

Lawmakers voted with environmentalists on more than a half-dozen pieces of

legislation. Among those were legislation to stop oil pipeline companies from seizing people's land, a bill to block new development from moving closer to the ocean, and a bill to restrict coal ash disposal in some landfills. The Legislature also did not pass a bill, opposed by conservationists, that would have limited pollution lawsuits by citizens.

“A lot of these things are kind of common sense,” said **Ann Timberlake**, director of the Conservation Voters of South Carolina, which coordinates environmentalists' efforts in the Legislature. “They make sense to people, and they make sense to businesses.”

The only big loss for environmentalists was the 11th-hour failure of lawmakers to approve enhanced tax breaks for solar energy projects. The measure could have helped lure a solar farm to a hazardous-waste dump, located next to Lake Marion, to help defray the public's cost of maintaining that closed landfill.

BUZZ-WORTHY EXIT

Amid a string of exit speeches by lawmakers retiring from office last week, state Sen. **Joel Lourie**'s stood out.

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The Richland Democrat took the opportunity to roast his colleagues, including a couple of highlights that didn't make it into print a day later.

Calling out "a few of (his) peeps," Lourie pulled off a decent impersonation of state Sen. **John Courson**, R-Richland, a de-facto historian of the state's Republican political revolution and

its leaders.

"I'm not sure how I can go a week without hearing stories about **Strom Thurmond** or **Ronald Reagan** or **Barry Goldwater**, but I'm going to do the best I can," Lourie said, imitating Courson's drawl.

After calling Senate Minority Leader **Nikki Setzler** "the glue that holds this body together," Lourie took a playful swipe at the Lex-

ington Democrat, drawing big laughs with "a little story about Nikki."

"So Nikki will call you, and the first thing he'll say: 'We never had this conversation,' " Lourie said.

"Sure it's never happened to anyone in here. And then he'll back it up with, 'Just between you and me,' and then - when he tops it off with, 'Don't say I said this' -

he will then tell you something you read on Fitsnews two days ago!"

To the Spartanburg Republican who Lourie says tried to convert him from Judaism: "Sen. **Lee Bright**, what can I say about you? Well, that's about it."

Cassie Cope and Sammy Fretwell contributed. Jamie Self: 803-771-8658, @jamiemself



Bright



Haley

Title: **Agency acted as victim advocates after funding cut**
 Author: BY AUDREY HUDSON ahudson@thesunnews.com
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HORRY COUNTY POLICE DEPARTMENT

Agency acted as victim advocates after funding cut

Former detective accused of sexually assaulting rape victims says he tried to help victims

Department now using federal grants to pay for victim advocates

BY AUDREY HUDSON
 ahudson@thesunnews.com

Former Horry County Detective Allen Large says he was trying to help women whose rape cases he was assigned to investigate by bringing them groceries and medicine, giving rides to court hearings, paying for hotel rooms, and helping them find jobs.

Such assistance is typically provided through a police department's victim advocates, but until last year, the Horry County Police Department did not employ advocates and that responsibility was left to the

agency's detectives, says Sandra Rhodes, former police chief.

The problem with how Large tried to help some women — now part of lawsuits filed against him and the police department — is that the jobs he urged two of those rape victims to pursue were as participants in sexual fetish videos called catfighting that paid \$2,000 per video.

"They were doing things that were illegal, that were drug related, that were prostitution, they

were stripping," Large said in a

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VICTIM

taped deposition. "I just told them that there's an opportunity, that all I could do is point them in the direction."

Large admits that the groceries he brought one woman included alcoholic beverages, and that he drove her into North Carolina to pick up medicine at a pharmacy, which a lawyer defending the woman suggested in the deposition was actually narcotic drugs.

Large is also accused in lawsuits of sexually assaulting the two women. One incident allegedly occurred when he provided her transportation to a court hearing. Large has not been criminally charged.

He has denied the claims of sexual assault.

Large said during the deposition, taped in March and obtained by The Sun News, that he was the primary contact for victims at the police department because the agency no longer had victim advocates.

Large said he's provided assistance to numerous victims over the years — men and women — whether it was paying for a hotel room or giving them money to pay electricity bills.

One of those hotel stays Large admitted to was in Asheville, North Carolina, for himself and a victim of

domestic violence. The next day, he videotaped the woman in a catfight.

At least four officers within the Horry County Police Department are under investigation by the South Carolina Law Enforcement Division, an inquiry that began after Rhodes reported the officers to the state agency for investigation.

Large was fired by Rhodes on July 31 after an investigation of sexual assault claims, and Rhodes confirmed during a rare interview with The Sun News that another officer under investigation is former Detective Daryl Williams, who resigned in 2014.

After 23 years with the police department, Rhodes took early retirement last month, saying she wanted to spend more time with her son. Rhodes said an agreement with the county to pay \$60,000 into her state retirement fund so she could collect benefits was part of a mutual agreement with the county.

One of the lawsuits against the county was amended this week to name Rhodes as a defendant, claiming she was aware of prior sexual assault claims against Large and that he should not have been investigating or meeting with

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female victims.

Funding for victim advocates was eliminated before Rhodes became chief in 2012, but she reestablished the position in 2015 with two advocates, and hired two more this year with federal funding provided through the Victims of Crime Act. The federal funding began in October.

County officials have applied for a new grant of more than \$200,000 to fund those positions through Sept. 30, 2017, and also pay for training and vehicles, said Lisa Bourcier, Horry County spokeswoman.

According to the Horry County victim advocates' website, those officials will now be "providing assistance in applying for compensation benefits and other available financial, social services and counseling assistance."

Victim advocates will also accompany victims to court proceedings, and provide transportation if needed, the website says.

Bridget Daly Musteata, president of South Carolina Law Enforcement Crime Victim Advocates, says it's the advocate's job to focus on the victim, so police officers can focus on solving the crime.

With specially trained advocates, victims feel more comfortable and can get their specific needs met. Advocates protect the well-

being and legal interests of crime victims, and increase the likelihood that victims will cooperate with law enforcement through the criminal process to put offenders behind bars, Musteata said.

South Carolina police and sheriff departments began employing victim advocates after the Victims and Witnesses' Bill of Rights was passed by the state legislature in 1984. Gov. Nikki Haley created a task force this year to ensure the rights and needs of domestic violence victims are being met.

"Horry County is behind — they don't even have domestic violence shelters," Musteata said. "Victims don't have the resources there that are necessary, and it's the largest county in the state.

"As far as on-scene responses, you guys are a little behind the ball," Musteata said.

Large said during his deposition that victim advocates were rehired only after state officials paid a visit to Horry County Police officials, including Rhodes, and were "chewed" for not complying with the law.

"We didn't have one for a long time, and once that meeting happened" two people were hired, said Large, who had trouble recalling the advocates' names.

"We're required to check off that (hiring) on the list

and give them a copy,"

Large said of the state official's demands.

Rhodes declined to discuss the case surrounding Large, or his sworn deposition, but said that former Police Chief Johnny Morgan did not eliminate the victim advocate positions, she said the funding just wasn't available.

Asked who instead provided victim services, Rhodes responded: "The detectives were doing that. They were also investigating crimes, so it's a little bit difficult, and I think that our victims were not receiving the services that they actually deserved as victims, and that's the reason it was such a priority for me."

James Moore III with the law firm Evans Moore, represents the two women who have filed the lawsuit against the Horry County Police Department. When Large was assigned to their cases to investigate their reports of sexual assault, the former detective quickly dismissed their reports, but continued to keep contact with the women, after which the victims say Large sexually assaulted them, Moore said.

"Their cases were dismissed as unfounded so quickly, I'm not sure there was time for involvement from victim advocates.

"But, having had a barrier between Large and the victim surely would have im-

pacted the outcome and prevented what happened," Moore said.

Audrey Hudson:
 843-444-1765,
 @AudreyHudson

“

... HAVING HAD A BARRIER BETWEEN LARGE AND THE VICTIM SURELY WOULD HAVE IMPACTED THE OUTCOME AND PREVENTED WHAT HAPPENED.

James Moore III, lawyer

“

VICTIMS DON'T HAVE THE RESOURCES THERE THAT ARE NECESSARY, AND IT'S THE LARGEST COUNTY IN THE STATE.

*Bridget Daly Musteata,
 president of South Carolina
 Law Enforcement Crime
 Victim Advocates*

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Haley puts new bills in motion

S.C. Gov. Nikki Haley signed more than 40 bills Friday, a day after legislators sent them her way

Dozens more could become law within the week, as the Legislature passed a slew of bills in the session's final days

While the session officially ended Thursday, legislators will return June 15 to take up Haley's vetoes

BY SEANNA ADCOX
 The Associated Press
 COLUMBIA

New laws signed by Gov. Nikki Haley shorten the legislative session, allow South Carolinians to carry concealed guns in Georgia and block petroleum companies from taking people's land for a pipeline.

Those are among more

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BILLS

uary-to-June session for 20 years, but prior proposals kept dying in the Senate. Proponents say shortening the session saves taxpayers money in legislators' per diems for food and lodging, plus mileage, and could encourage more people to seek the job.

● A reciprocity agreement with Georgia will make it easier for South Carolinians with concealed weapon permits to travel back and forth. The law was sought mainly by residents in Aiken County, who drive daily into Augusta, Georgia. Advocates argued not having reciprocity with the state's

than 40 bills Haley quickly signed Friday, a day after legislators sent them her way. Dozens more could become law within the week, as the Legislature passed a slew of bills in the session's final days.

While the session officially ended Thursday, legisla-

tors will return June 15 to take up Haley's vetoes.

Here's a look at some of the laws that took effect Friday:

● Future legislative sessions will end three weeks earlier, on the second Thursday in May, unless a bad economy causes the

state's revenue forecasters to reduce their estimates. South Carolina's regular legislative session is the 13th longest among states. The House, which wanted to cut even more weeks, has been trying to shorten the Jan-

SEE BILLS, 3C

western neighbor is a real inconvenience. The law creates an exception to prior law barring state law enforcement from recognizing permits from states that don't have at least the same requirements to carry a concealed gun as South Carolina. Georgia doesn't require training for its permit.

● Private, for-profit companies can't acquire land for a petroleum pipeline through eminent domain. The law specifies only public utilities have the right to take property for public use, after giving the owners

money. It was driven by residents' fears of losing their land to an underground pipeline planned to run from Belton to Jacksonville, Florida. The Palmetto Pipeline was cancelled earlier this year after Georgia passed a temporary moratorium on pipeline companies using eminent domain.

● Former students who didn't graduate solely because they didn't pass the high school exit exam can still petition their school board to retroactively receive a diploma. The law erases the previous deadline of Dec. 31, 2015. As of Dec. 1, 6,000 people had re-

ceived such diplomas. The last exit exam was taken in 2014. Earlier that year, legislators abolished the test and replaced it with two considered more useful to students' future success, with scores that can go on work resumes or college admissions applications.

● Terminally ill patients gain access to medicines being tested in clinical trials. The so-called "Right to Try Act" allows a doctor to prescribe medication that's in the first phase of the U.S. Food and Drug Administration's approval process. Similar laws have been passed in at least 28 other



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states. Access is limited to people with a terminal illness who have exhausted all options approved by the FDA and can't enroll in a trial. Available medicines must have passed basic safety testing.

● South Carolinians are encouraged to “roll up their sleeves and lend a hand to make a positive difference in our great state.” The law declares the third Saturday in May as the South Carolina Day of Service.

Title: **SC power brokers flex muscles in June primary**
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THE BUZZ

SC power brokers flex muscles in June primary

Top races attract the governor, business and education leaders

S.C. Chamber of Commerce backing 26 lawmakers in primaries

Business group also taking on Upstate firebrand Lee Bright

BY JAMIE SELF

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three opposed by Republican Gov. **Nikki Haley** and a group supporting her political agenda.

The Good Government Committee, the political arm of the S.C. Chamber of Commerce, has donated to state Senate

President Pro Tempore **Hugh Leatherman**, R-Florence; state

Sen. **Wes Hayes**, R-York; and state Rep. **Stephen Goldfinch**, R-Georgetown, who is running for the state Senate.

Chamber chief executive **Ted Pitts** said Thursday that Goldfinch, Hayes and Leatherman performed well on the chamber's voting scorecards and, as a result, have his group's backing.

In at least three primary races, that support pits Haley against the business group and Pitts, a former chief of staff to Haley.

The governor is traveling the state to endorse GOP candidates who are opposing Hayes, Goldfinch, Leatherman and one other longtime state senator,

Luke Rankin, R-Horry. A pro-Haley political group, A Great Day SC, also is running ads against the incumbents and for Haley's primary picks.

Some at the State House were scratching their heads last week when Haley came out against Hayes, wondering why the GOP governor would go on the offensive against a fellow Republican who – unlike Haley's other targets – is unlikely to say a cross word about anyone.

Hayes, too, said he was surprised, adding he sees himself as an ally to Haley on ethics and education issues.

SEE THE BUZZ, 12A

FROM PAGE 3A

THE BUZZ

But Hayes, a legislator of three decades, also has picked up more campaign reinforcements that could help him against the Haley attacks.

Last week, a group of educators – led by state Superintendent of Education **Molly Spearman**, a Republican who has worked closely with Haley to push the governor's education agenda – endorsed Hayes, calling him “a tireless supporter of

public education in our state.

“His conservative, common-sense leadership in the South Carolina Senate has enabled true education reform and allowed for high-quality opportunities for students, parents and educators,” Spearman said in the endorsement.

The chamber's Good Government Committee also is cranking up its onslaught against the re-election of state Sen.

Lee Bright, R-Spartanburg.

In radio ads against the second-term incumbent, the chamber group accuses Bright of holding state government “hostage,” blocking money for roads, aid for farmers and worrying about which bathroom transgender people choose to use.

In one radio ad, a reenactment of a hostage situation, one man accuses Bright of “shutting

everything down with a bill to mandate which bathroom people can use.”

“Son, this is Spartanburg,” another man replies. “We got that figured out up here.”

A GREEN DAY IN SOUTH CAROLINA

Green groups are celebrating a series of victories in the Legislature, something they don't often experience in one year.

Lawmakers voted with

Title: **SC power brokers flex muscles in June primary**
 Author: BYJAMIE SELF jself@thestate.com
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environmentalists on more than a half-dozen pieces of legislation. Among those were legislation to stop oil pipeline companies from seizing people's land, a bill to block new development from moving closer to the ocean, and a bill to restrict coal ash disposal in some landfills. The Legislature also did not pass a bill, opposed by conservationists, that would have limited pollution lawsuits by citizens.

"A lot of these things are kind of common sense," said **Ann Timberlake**, director of the Conservation Voters of South Carolina, which coordinates environmentalists' efforts in the Legislature. "They make sense to people, and they make

sense to businesses.

The only big loss for environmentalists was the 11th-hour failure of lawmakers to approve enhanced tax breaks for solar energy projects. The measure could have helped lure a solar farm to a hazardous-waste dump, located next to Lake Marion, to help defray the public's cost of maintaining that closed landfill.

BUZZ-WORTHY EXIT

Amid a string of exit speeches by lawmakers retiring from office last week, state Sen. **Joel Lourie**'s stood out.

The Richland Democrat took the opportunity to roast his colleagues, including a couple of highlights that didn't make it

into print a day later.

Calling out "a few of (his) peeps," Lourie pulled off a decent impersonation of state Sen. **John Courson**, R-Richland, a de-facto historian of the state's Republican political revolution and its leaders.

"I'm not sure how I can go a week without hearing stories about **Strom Thurmond** or **Ronald Reagan** or **Barry Goldwater**, but I'm going to do the best I can," Lourie said, imitating Courson's drawl.

After calling Senate Minority Leader **Nikki Setzler** "the glue that holds this body together," Lourie took a playful swipe at the Lexington Democrat, drawing big laughs with "a little story about Nikki."

"So Nikki will call you, and the first thing he'll say: 'We never had this conversation,' " Lourie said.

"Sure it's never happened to anyone in here. And then he'll back it up with, 'Just between you and me,' and then - when he tops it off with, 'Don't say I said this' - he will then tell you something you read on Fitsnews two days ago!"

To the Spartanburg Republican who Lourie says tried to convert him from Judaism: "Sen. **Lee Bright**, what can I say about you? Well, that's about it."

Cassie Cope and Sammy Fretwell contributed. Jamie Self: 803-771-8658, @jamiemself



Title: **Naive optimism crashes into legislative reality**

Author:

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CINDI ROSS SCOPPE
ASSOCIATE EDITOR

Naive optimism crashes into legislative reality

WEDNESDAY was the worst. Up until Wednesday, I was holding on to this naive optimism that this time things would be different. Think Charlie Brown charging toward the football.

This time, I told myself, the Legislature would actually reform the unaccountable, parochial Transportation Commission, and put the governor in charge. Not like back in 2007, when lawmakers pretended to do that but really didn't, and Mark Sanford, for probably the only time in his life, decided to take a barely partial win and declare victory.

This time, I had honestly come to believe that the Legislature was actually going to pass a real ethics-reform bill. Not one that made legislators tell us where they got their money and made special interests tell us where they got *their* money to influence our votes, but at least one that would let an independent panel investigate legislators' ethics.

Smaller but still important reforms seemed possible — dare I say likely? — in other areas as well: a bill to make police obey the law that requires them to turn over dash-cam video after shootings, a bill to make local governments start obeying the open-records law, a bill to make cities and counties start obeying

the constitution by holding elections every time there's supposed to be an election.

Oh yes, I was in full *dum spiro spero* mode.

Then I read the roads bill that the Senate had passed Tuesday night and that the House was about to swallow rather than giving up all that road-repair money it included. And oh was it a masterwork. By which I mean a masterwork in sabotage. Very cleverly crafted to look, to the casual reader, as though the governor would be in charge — when in fact she might very well have less control than governors have had since the *faux* reform of 2007. (It is so bad that it merits its own column, which you can read on Tuesday.)

Yes, that's bad, I told myself, but we still have ethics.

Then Sen. Gerald Malloy decided to sabotage what looked to the optimistically naive like an agreement between House and Senate negotiators on the ethics bill. The previous day, Senate negotiators had agreed to a key House demand: that all the details and documents of independent investigations into legislators' ethics be made public once investigators decide there is probable cause that the law has been violated.

But Sen. Malloy had missed the Tuesday meeting, and now he would have none of this trans-

parency stuff. He insisted on maintaining the original Senate plan: It should be up to the House or Senate Ethics committee to decide whether there was probable cause, he said, and thus to decide when the investigation is made public. Or not.

Now, the governor and the League of Women Voters signaled that they could live with this, but for the life of me, I cannot see how this could be called independent oversight or even, in any meaningful way, independent investigations. This isn't giving the public any reason to believe that legislators are no longer sweeping ethics violations under the rug. As the League puts it, reform has to mean that enforcement is either completely independent or completely transparent.

The *coup de grace* did not involve legislation, but it could have deep repercussions in the Legislature, and it told us something deeply troubling that I had very nearly convinced myself was no longer the case. Gov. Nikki Haley, who was out campaigning against Republican senators while reformers were frantically trying to salvage what she claimed were her priorities, added a new and unexpected target on Wednesday: Sen. Wes Hayes.

I could understand why she went after Hugh Leatherman

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and Luke Rankin; they had been working to undermine those priorities and, at least in Mr. Leatherman's case, to gig her whenever he could. But Wes Hayes? Mr. Ethics? Really? His sin, apparently, was supporting a bond bill for college construction and voting to raise the gas tax — before he backed off and voted to pay for road repairs by raiding the state's general fund. Something several Senate Republicans and most House Republicans also did.

So much for the idea that the governor had become less of a

political opportunist and more of a governor. So much for the idea that she cares about ethics reform or reforming the Transportation Commission or, really, anything other than slashing taxes.

(Note to self: Be sure to check with the folks at the S.C. Chamber of Commerce to see if they'll be coming to the aid of Mr. Hayes, one of their consistent supporters. After all, as much as our state would be improved by the absence of their targeted Sen. Lee Bright, it would suffer immensely more from the absence of Sen. Hayes.)

The good thing about getting so thoroughly disabused of my naivety on Wednesday is that I wasn't at all disappointed on Thursday when the Legislature left town without passing the dash-cam bill or the public-records bill or the election bill (which the Senate also sabotaged), or when the ethics reforms officially fell apart.

OK, so maybe I was disappointed. But not surprised.

Ms. Scoppe can be reached at cscoppe@thestate.com or at (803) 771-8571.

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AND OH WAS IT A MASTERWORK. BY WHICH I MEAN A MASTERWORK IN SABOTAGE.



Title: **Ethics reforms stalled after years of debate**
 Author: BY JAMIE SELF jself@thestate.com
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Ethics reforms stalled after years of debate

BY JAMIE SELF

jself@thestate.com

After four years of debate about how to strengthen the state's ethics laws, S.C. lawmakers might pass two changes to the rules governing public officials' behavior later this month. Maybe.

Dozens of ethics bills have been introduced since late 2012, when Gov. Nikki Haley formed a blue-ribbon committee to evaluate state laws governing how public officials should behave.

But out of the nearly two dozen

recommendations made by that panel, only two have a chance of becoming law four years later, when the Legislature wraps up its work during its mid-June veto session.

Critics say the state Senate is to blame for the lack of progress. The House has passed more than a dozen

ethics-related bills, sending them to the Senate, where most have died.

Even if lawmakers give final approval later this month to the two bills near the finish line, good-government groups say the state's

ethics laws still will need more work.

"Dark-money disclosure – that is a really serious problem and it's getting worse," said John Crangle with Common Cause of South Carolina, referring to secretive groups that raise war chests to influence elec-

SEE ETHICS, 6A

➔ MORE INSIDE

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ETHICS

tions but do not disclose their agenda or donors.

Legislators also need to clarify the law dictating how campaign money can be used and when public officials should abstain from voting because they have a conflict of interest, said Lynn Teague, with the League of Women Voters.

Lawmakers also should be barred by law from forming political action committees that they can use to raise money and dole out campaign contributions to their colleagues. Those committees – now banned by House and Senate rules but not by law – can wield excessive influence over the legislative process, critics say.

Even if lawmakers pass the two proposals that could become law when they return later this month, the push for tougher ethics rules will be ongoing, Teague added.

"We can't do what we did after (Operation) Lost Trust and figure that we fixed things," she said, referring to a landmark federal corruption sting of S.C. lawmakers more than two decades ago that resulted in the last major update to the state's ethics laws.

ETHICS BILLS HIT ROADBLOCK

Of the two ethics bills lawmakers still could pass, one proposal would end the practice of state lawmakers exclusively investigating ethics complaints against themselves, shifting investigations to a revamped State Ethics Commission that supporters say will allow independent watchdogs to oversee lawmakers.

Another bill would require lawmakers to disclose some information about their private income.

Differing versions of both bills have passed the House and Senate, and now are being reviewed by a panel of lawmakers tasked with ironing out the two chambers' differences.

But the chances of the bills passing dimmed last week when an apparent agreement on the independent-investigations bill fell apart.

The first signs of that breakdown, said state House Speaker Pro Tempore Tommy Pope, R-York, came when senators insisted last week on adopting their version of a key part of the investigations proposal.

That insistence surprised

Pope, a former prosecutor who is negotiating for the House with senators on the bill.

Earlier in the week, five of the six negotiators had reached agreement on independent investigations. However, one state senator did not attend that meeting.

When State Sen. Gerald Malloy, D-Darlington, rejoined negotiations Wednesday, he asked for more time to share details of the agreement with Senate Democrats. A day later, Malloy said the Senate preferred its version of the proposal. Later that day, the Senate voted 37-1 to insist on its version.

After that vote, Pope expressed frustration at the Senate's position to his House colleagues.

"I don't know where we can go, folks," he said. "We have given and given and given."

But Sen. Larry Martin, R-Pickens, who led the Senate's negotiators, said he still is confident both sides can reach an agreement.

PLACING BLAME

Other state leaders were

disappointed with the setback.

House Speaker Jay Lucas, R-Darlington, blamed senators, citing them as the reason the state needs ethics reforms.

"These common-sense reforms passed the House – overwhelmingly, with bipartisan support – because our chamber understands the importance of this issue," said Lucas, who formed an ethics task force shortly after succeeding House Speaker Bobby Harrell, the Charleston Republican who resigned and entered a guilty plea to campaign finance violations.

"The fact that a few senators' objections prevented these bills from advancing through the legislative process further proves that the people of South Carolina need reforms to hold elected officials accountable and restore the public's trust," Lucas added.

Gov. Nikki Haley's office also urged lawmakers to act.

"Passing independent investigations and income disclosure has been a top priority (of the governor's) for four years and – finally – this year we are closer than ever to getting them over the finish line,"

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said Chaney Adams, Haley's press secretary, adding the House and Senate have made more progress this year than ever before.

"(T)here is no reason or excuse why the people of South Carolina shouldn't be able to celebrate passage of ethics reform this year."

DISAGREEMENT AHEAD FOR ETHICS PROPOSALS

Haley made ethics reform a priority in 2012 shortly after the then-GOP majority House Ethics Committee investigated and dismissed ethics complaints against her related to when she was a Lexington state representative.

Other high-profile ethics cases have spurred cries for ethics reform, including cases against former Gov. Mark Sanford, Lt. Gov. Ken Ard, state Sen. Robert Ford and Speaker Harrell. Ard, Ford and Harrell resigned in the wake of ethics investigations. An ethics probe that led to charges against Harrell also continues under the State House dome.

The governor's ethics task force – led by two former S.C. attorneys general – made nearly two dozen recommendations

for strengthening the rules that say what public officials can and cannot do.

Those recommendations included requiring public officials to disclose sources of their private income and the amount if that income comes from an organization that lobbies state government or a business that has government contracts.

Lawmakers could pass an income disclosure bill in mid-June. With an independent investigations bill, an income disclosure bill is before House and Senate negotiators.

But ethics watchdogs worry income disclosure might not pass.

Attorney-legislators have pushed back against disclosing the sources of their income, saying they have a duty to keep their clients confidential, Teague said.

The House also has a provision in its income disclosure bill that would require "dark money" political groups to disclose their donors.

However, the income disclosure bill will not pass the Senate if it is coupled with a dark-money rule, where there is too much opposition to the

idea, said Sen. Martin, who has been a target of the veiled groups and supports requiring that they disclose their donors.

Teague, with the League of Women Voters, said her organization wants "dark money" groups to disclose their donors. But, she added, "we don't want it as a poison pill" that could kill income disclosure for public officials.

Haley's task force also recommended that an independent panel investigate ethics complaints against lawmakers, instead of them policing themselves.

There still is time for the Senate and House to pass a bill creating independent oversight of lawmakers.

But the two chambers disagree over a key provision of the bill – how long secrecy should shroud an investigation if the State Ethics Commission, which would conduct the independent investigation, decides a lawmaker has violated the state Ethics Act.

The House prefers making public immediately a commission finding that there is probable cause of a violation.

But the Senate wants to let legislative ethics committees

review the Ethics Commission's finding and ask for additional investigation before making public an allegation. If, after added investigation, the Ethics Commission reverses its position, finding no evidence that a lawmaker violated ethics laws, the allegation would remain confidential.

Senate negotiators argued that, under their proposal, any final determination by the Ethics Commission that there is reason to think a lawmaker violated the law would become public.

House negotiators disagree.

The Senate's desire to delay making allegations public – and prolong secrecy – will keep legislators under the cloud of suspicion brought on by recent

ethics scandals, Pope said, adding the impasse makes him question whether senators really want any ethics reform.

"It makes me feel like, is there really the will (in the state Senate) to have this reform? If

there isn't the will to have this reform, that begs the bigger question of 'Why?'"

Jamie Self: 803-771-8658, @jamiemself

Title: **Ethics reforms stalled after year of debate**
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Ethics reforms going nowhere

Four years after state leaders pledged to update the state's ethics laws, no major reforms have become law. A look at key changes, recommended by a blue-ribbon commission, that have not moved:

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- Strengthen penalties for violations of the state ethics laws
 - Ban the use of campaign money to pay criminal penalties for violations of the state ethics law
 - Adopt greater protections and rewards for whistle-blowers who report government waste, fraud or other abuses
 - Shorten the time limit that public bodies have to respond to and fulfill requests for public information, limit the fees that can be charged for searching and copying that information, and provide for enforcement in instances where public bodies drag their feet
 - Eliminate the exemption of legislative papers from public disclosure under the state's Freedom of Information Act
 - Expand required disclosures of conflicts of interests for public officials, including requiring attorney-legislators to disclose fees when they represent clients in cases where a state agency is an opposing party, and requiring public officials to disclose all fiduciary positions they hold, whether compensated or not
 - Extend to two years from one the period a legislator must wait to represent a client for a fee before a state entity after voting to pick a member of that organization
 - Expand the definition of lobbyist to require registration and disclosure from people and entities that lobby local governments and other subdivisions of state government

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Banning leadership PACs, but not Great Day?

Ethics reform advocates and Gov. Nikki Haley's ethics task force recommended banning, in state law, lawmakers from setting up political action committees, groups whose spending the lawmakers can direct.

Critics say the organizations allow powerful public officials – and interests that lobby state government – to exceed campaign contribution limits, exerting excessive power over elections and the legislative process.

The House and Senate already have banned the so-called leadership PACs by rule, but not law.

But some ethics advocates say Haley now has a leadership PAC in the form of A Great Day SC, the political group formed to target state Senate incumbents who Haley opposes.

Haley political adviser Tim Pearson runs the political group, which is trying to oust longtime GOP state senators in the upcoming June 14 Republican primaries.

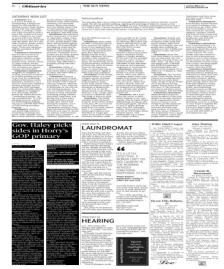
Great Day is an “abuse of power,” said John Crangle of Common Cause of South Carolina, a good-government, watchdog group.

But Great Day differs from a leadership PAC in two important ways, according to the group:

- First, Great Day was set up under federal law as an IRS-designated 527 group, which requires it to disclose its donors and its spending publicly. Current S.C. law requires no disclosure of political groups' activities, making it easy for political groups to form and conceal their activities.
- Also, unlike leadership PACs, Great Day was not set up to give campaign contributions to candidates and cannot do so. Instead, the group is raising money and spending money on ads in some Senate races where Haley has decided to target incumbents and support their opponents.

“As governor, (Haley) believes it is not only appropriate but her responsibility to make the voters aware of exactly how well – or how poorly – they are being served by their elected officials,” Pearson said. “She will continue to use every tool at her disposal to make sure the voters know the truth before they cast their votes on June 14.”

Title: **Gov. Haley picks sides in Horry's GOP primary**
 Author: BY AUDREY HUDSON ahudson@thesunnews.com
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Gov. Haley picks sides in Horry's GOP primary

BY AUDREY HUDSON
 ahudson@thesunnews.com

Gov. Nikki Haley on Friday endorsed Scott Pyle over incumbent Luke Rankin for the Republican state Senate primary, prompting a backlash of criticism from local officials who say she's trying to stack the upper chamber with lawmakers who will side with her in future disputes.

During a news conference for Rankin following Haley's endorsement of his opponent, Republican State Reps. Kevin Hardee, Alan Clemmons and Horry County Council Chairman Mark Lazarus said the governor had no business interfering with Horry County elections during a party primary, which will be held June 14.

Rankin said that while he agrees with the governor on many issues, he stood up to her by overriding her veto of a bill to extend the Myrtle Beach sales tax, used to promote the Grand Strand to tourists as well as provide a tax break to some property owners.

Rankin also voted to override Haley's veto of a recent farm aid bill that was intended to provide \$40 million in relief aid to farmers impacted by recent floods.

"I believe we can sum up this election in a very few

words," Lazarus said. "Gov. Haley is mad at Luke Rankin because she can't always control him."

Rankin says that the threats coming out of the governor's camp is "we will run someone against you if you don't do what we say."

"This is extremely unusual," Rankin said.

Rankin says Haley is misrepresenting his record on other issues, including his opposition to Common Core, and his vote against pay raises for lawmakers.

"She is trying to pull one over on Horry County," Rankin said.

Haley has made several endorsements in the Republican primaries for state senators this week.

She endorsed GOP challenger Reese Boyd over incumbent state Sen. Stephen Goldfinch during an event Tuesday in Georgetown; endorsed newcomer Wes Climer over state Sen. Wes Hayes of Rock Hill; and is throwing her support behind Richard Skipper over state Sen. Hugh Leatherman of Florence in that contest.

Haley is campaigning against Rankin and other Republicans, calling them "career politicians" who have "lost their way."

"Scott Pyle is a businessman, not a career politician, and we can count on him to cut taxes, rein in government spending and hold the career politicians accountable to the people," Haley said in a statement.

Hardee says that Haley doesn't know Horry County voters very well, and pointed to her opposition against presumptive Republican presidential nominee Donald Trump, who won 50 percent of the Horry County vote during the February primary.

"She attacked Donald Trump the same way she's attacking Luke Rankin now," said Hardee. "The election results show she was wrong then, and she's wrong today — the people of Horry County make up their own minds."

Audrey Hudson:
 843-444-1765,
 @AudreyHudson

Haley is endorsing several candidates before June 14 election

State Sen. Luke Rankin says she is misrepresenting his record

Local officials say Haley wants to stack the legislative deck with personal picks