

Title: **Dorchester 2 to vote on June 1 makeup day**  
 Author: BY BRENDA RINDGE [brindge@postandcourier.com](mailto:brindge@postandcourier.com)  
 Size: 12.09 square inch  
 Charleston, SC Circulation: 110289



# Dorchester 2 to vote on June 1 makeup day

BY BRENDA RINDGE  
[brindge@postandcourier.com](mailto:brindge@postandcourier.com)

Dorchester District 2 students will likely not have to make up a school day missed earlier this year for inclement weather.

School was closed on Feb. 24. The board will have a special meeting on Thursday and is expected to vote to forgive the day, officials said.

Officials considered changing June 1 from a teacher workday to a regular school day. Graduations in the district are set for May 30.

The district had scheduled possible make-up days on Jan. 12 and

Feb. 16, but did not have any days planned later in the year.

Berkeley County School District changed a teacher workday on May 20 to a regular school day and Charleston County students went to school on March 27 to make up for the missed day.

On May 7, Gov. Nikki Haley signed a bill to allow school boards to waive up to three make-up days when designated make-up days are used or no longer available.

A district spokesperson on Tuesday had said an announcement on the decision would be made Wednesday.

Title: **Taskforce: Is domestic violence a bigger problem?**  
 Author: BYJEFFREYCOLLINS The Associated Press  
 Size: 33.94 square inch  
 Myrtle Beach, SC Circulation: 61238



# Task force: Is domestic violence a bigger problem?

By JEFFREY COLLINS  
*The Associated Press*

**COLUMBIA** | South Carolina is consistently ranked as one of the worst states in the country for domestic violence, and research by the governor's domestic violence task force has determined the problem might be bigger than originally thought.

The task force found no uniform reporting system for domestic violence. It also found no consistent policies on how police agencies handles domestic violence calls, that no one can definitely say how many domestic violence cases are successfully prosecuted in the state because of limitations to court records, about half of schools don't have any domestic violence education and while there are services available for domestic violence victims, the providers sometimes don't coordinate.

The information stunned Gov. Nikki Haley, who brought together the 136 people across a broad range of law enforcement and social services. She said it emphasized why stopping domestic violence is one of her top priorities in

her second term and it will take a change in culture as much as changes in laws.

"It's a silent crime that continues to go on because people aren't comfortable talking about it," Haley said.

The problems in data collection start with the officer responding to a domestic violence call. The incident reports they fill out can introduce faulty data when crimes aren't reported as domestic violence or sections of the report about the relationship between the suspect and victim are not filled out, said Corrections Department researcher Charles Bradberry, who reviewed the system.

A prime example of the problem is Richland County, which in 2012 had the state's highest crime rate, but its domestic violence rate was 41st out of 46 counties. That doesn't make sense, Bradberry said.

Other counties showed wide fluctuations. Some counties with similar demographics were on opposite ends of

the rankings. And a place like Greenwood County, where the sheriff's office and prosecutors have made fighting domestic violence a priority, is at the top of the rankings because they worked hard

to make sure they get the full scope of the problem, Corrections Department Director Bryan Stirling said.

"We could be worse than is being reported. Until you have uniformity, it is hard to measure something," said Stirling, who was in charge of the criminal justice part of the task force.

The task force found that less than half of police departments use checklists for officers on domestic violence calls, which can mean they forget to take important steps like ask for cell phones or take pictures of injuries, according to surveys sent to all police agencies in the state. About half of them answered the questions, including the sheriff's offices in all 46 counties.

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## PROBLEM

From Page 3A

And when cases do get into court, it's hard to see what happens next. About 62 percent of all first-offense criminal domestic violence cases end with not guilty verdicts, but it is impossible to know if they are found not guilty, accepted a plea bargain or the charges were dropped because South Carolina's case management system only lists the final charge, not the defendant's initial charge, said Sara Barber, executive director of the South Carolina Coalition Against Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault.

Title: **Senatelimitsabortions, steerstowardroadbill**

Author: By CASSIE COPE and ANDREW SHAIN [ccope@thestate.com](mailto:ccope@thestate.com) [ashain@thestate.com](mailto:ashain@thestate.com)

Size: 88.66 square inch

Columbia, SC Circulation: 128564



## THE S.C. LEGISLATURE

# Senate limits abortions, steers toward road bill

Chamber votes to ban abortion  
at 20 weeks of pregnancy

By CASSIE COPE  
and ANDREW SHAIN  
[ccope@thestate.com](mailto:ccope@thestate.com)  
[ashain@thestate.com](mailto:ashain@thestate.com)

The S.C. Senate is a step closer to debating a proposal to raise money to fix the state's crumbling roads after passing a ban Tuesday on abortions at 20 weeks of pregnancy.

"The number of days are ticking away rather quickly," said state Sen. Larry Grooms, R-Berkeley, who

expects debate on a road-repair bill to start as early as Thursday.

With only eight legislative days left in the session, the road-repair bill was trapped behind the abortion bill on the Senate's calendar until Tuesday.

Getting to the roads bill

required that the Senate

act on the abortion-restriction proposal. And, after days of threatened filibusters, the Senate finally acted, passing a bill that would bar abortions at the 20th week of pregnancy with exceptions for the life of the mother, and cases of rape, incest or severe fetal

anomaly.

The action came as both abortion opponents and road-repair supporters urged the Senate to act.

A coalition of business leaders filled the State House lobby Tuesday, urging lawmakers to pass a

SEE **ROADS** PAGE A7

## ROADS

FROM PAGE A1

road-repair bill.

"Failure to act now is an indicator that this government is broken," said Cathy Novinger, director of the Palmetto Agribusiness Council. "It would be broken just like our roads and bridges are broken."

Most of the nearly 30 groups represented at the pro-roads-bill news conference — including AAA Carolinas, the S.C. Chamber of Commerce and S.C. Trucking Association — are urging leg-

islators to increase the state's 16.75-cents-a-gallon gas tax to help pay for road repairs. That gas tax, the third lowest in the nation, has not been increased since 1987.

"You use the roads, you pay for the roads," said Eric Dickey, chairman of the S.C. Alliance to Fix Our Roads.

Road repair costs only will rise if the state delays acting, Novinger said.

S.C. Chamber of Commerce chief executive Ted Pitts, a form-

er House member and chief of staff to Gov. Nikki Haley, said the state's business community is united on the need to repair the state's roads. "I'm calling on the South Carolina Senate ... take the time that's required to get through your calendar and deal with infrastructure funding."

The House passed its roads proposal in January 87-20, a large enough majority to override a promised veto from Haley, who wants a big income tax cut to sign off on a gas tax hike.

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Author: By CASSIE COPE and ANDREWSHAIN ccope@thestate.com ashain@thestate.com

Size: 88.66 square inch

Columbia, SC Circulation: 128564

The House proposal would raise roughly \$427 million a year for roads by increasing the gas tax by the equivalent of 10 cents a gallon. That plan would cut income taxes by up to \$50 million.

The Senate Finance Committee's roads plan would raise roughly \$800 million for roads by increasing the gas tax by 12 cents a gallon as well as driver's license fees and other taxes related to driving a vehicle. However, roughly 20 Senate Republicans plan to amend that proposal to cut state income taxes by \$700 million a year and give more control of the Transportation Department to the governor.

Without those additions, the roads bill will die, Sen. Grooms said.

"What's before us is just a straight-up tax increase," the Berkeley Republican said of the Senate Finance Committee proposal.

#### **'THIS IS ON THEIR BACKS'**

The Senate abortion bill passed Tuesday also faces a fight.

The bill includes exceptions to

the 20-week ban that are not part of a bill passed by the S.C. House, setting up a fight in House-Senate conference committee. The proposals would affect less than 30 abortions a year performed in South Carolina, according to state data.

Grooms originally authored an abortion bill that included no exceptions, except for the life of the mother, to the 20-week ban. But he said Tuesday that he would accept a bill with exceptions for rape, incest or severe fetal anomaly to win a 20-week ban.

"This was a victory for the rights of the unborn," he said.

Other Republican senators, who make a majority of the Senate, disputed that statement.

Sen. Lee Bright, a Spartanburg Republican who vowed to filibuster the bill if it included any exceptions, said senators caved in to pressure from S.C. Citizens for Life, which wanted the proposal to move forward.

Bright said pro-life groups think they will be able to win passage of an abortion bill that includes no exceptions. "This is on

their backs now."

Efforts to reach the president at S.C. Citizens for Life were unsuccessful Tuesday.

However, Palmetto Family Council president Oran Smith, who worked with anti-abortion groups on the bill, noted time was running out in the legislative session, which ends June 4. "We need to take what we can get," Smith said. Still, abortion opponents will take a close look at the exception language in the Senate bill, he added.

A final, ceremonial vote on the Senate bill is expected Wednesday.

Bright tried to convince lawmakers they should not allow any exceptions. He filibustered the bill last week and, on Tuesday, brought to a State House news conference women who said they either were conceived during a rape or impregnated by rapists.

"This is a pro-life state," Bright said at the news conference. "If these babies aren't allowed to survive, then these politicians shouldn't survive their re-elections."

## **WHAT'S NEXT?**

*With only eight days left in the regular legislative session, state senators have two major issues on their calendar:*

### **RESERVE SPENDING**

The Senate next will take up a bill to authorize the state to spend \$85 million in reserve money for various projects. The bill received preliminary approval last week, but lawmakers agreed to reserve the right to change it later.

### **ROAD REPAIRS**

Republicans, who make up a majority of the Senate, offered a fourth major road-repair plan two weeks ago. It would raise \$800 million a year for roads through higher gas taxes and cut state income tax rates by 1 percentage point, or \$700 million a year. The Senate plan also would give control of the Transportation Department to the governor. The proposal is an effort to meet Gov. Nikki Haley's three requirements for a roads bill. If the Senate OKs the proposal, the next challenge will be reaching consensus with the House, which has passed smaller tax hikes and tax cuts. The final stop will be getting approval from Haley, who wants an income tax cut twice as large as the Senate proposal.

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Size: 88.66 square inch

Columbia, SC Circulation: 128564



TRACY GLANTZ/TGLANTZ@THESTATE.COM

**Cathy Novinger, director of the Palmetto  
Agribusiness Council, speaks at the State House Tuesday.**

Title: **Cabinet directors' salaries increasing**

Author:

Size: 14.26 square inch

Charleston, SC Circulation: 110289



## State briefs

### Cabinet directors' salaries increasing

COLUMBIA — Five of Gov. Nikki Haley's Cabinet directors will collectively see their salaries increase by about \$62,000, as per the Republican governor's recommendations.

The Agency Head Salary Commission on Tuesday set salaries for six of Haley's appointees who were confirmed by the Senate this year. Only the salary for the Department of Revenue's director remains unchanged at \$153,000. Rick Reames, confirmed in March, had been acting director since last July.

The approved increases range from less than \$4,300 to nearly \$27,000. Each followed Haley's recommendation letters to the panel. None gave any specific rationale.

The last paragraph of each said the director is "well suited for the position, and the salary request is in line with" her or

his "experience and demonstrated qualifications."

She said she leaves such decisions to the agency. "There is one thing I don't get involved in, and it's that," she said.

The commission also approved the salary range for new positions created by last year's government restructuring law, which was seen as a huge victory for Haley.

The law divided the duties of the Budget and Control Board, which will officially cease to exist July 1.

Its director, Marcia Adams, currently makes nearly \$193,000. Most of that agency's duties will transfer to the new, Cabinet-level Department of Administration, which Adams will also lead.

Adams' new salary will range between \$185,500 and \$287,500. The authority director's salary will range between \$166,100 and \$257,500.



Title: **Domestic violence task force reports 'inconsistency' in S.C.**  
 Author: BY JEREMY BORDEN [jborden@postandcourier.com](mailto:jborden@postandcourier.com)  
 Size: 27.59 square inch  
 Charleston, SC Circulation: 110289



# Domestic violence task force reports 'inconsistency' in S.C.

BY JEREMY BORDEN  
[jborden@postandcourier.com](mailto:jborden@postandcourier.com)

COLUMBIA — South Carolina law enforcement officers and prosecutors lack consistent policies and training to effectively combat domestic violence across the state, according to an initial finding by Gov. Nikki Haley's domestic violence task force.

The 136-member task force's presentation on Tuesday didn't delve into specific examples — more analysis is expected to be done for a report to be released Aug. 6.

Haley appointed the task force in the wake of The Post and Courier's "Till Death Do Us Part" series on domestic violence, which showed that hundreds of women have died over the past decade while the state has done little to stem the tide.

The task force's initial report showed big differences in how communities deal with domestic violence. One of the more troubling aspects, Haley

and others said, is that data appears flawed and unreliable. She pushed task force members to find out why and come up with solutions.

"What keeps me up at night is all of the unanswered questions," Haley told reporters after the meeting.

Law enforcement agencies across the state deal with domestic violence in markedly different ways, and more training and resources are needed to combat the crime, the task force found. For example, many 911 centers don't have a checklist for dealing with domestic violence calls, and 85 percent of those surveyed do not document acts of choking. Whether someone has been strangled is considered key for law enforcement to know because they could die weeks after it happens, or it could indicate troublesome violence to come.

The discussion also centered on flaws with the state's domestic violence statistics, as reported previously by The Post and Courier. Leaders on

the issue say it's difficult to assess how bad the problem in the state really is and makes finding solutions elusive.

"The situations as we thought they were could be actually worse than they are," Haley said. "That puts more urgency behind it ... and gives us more reason to look into it."

The task force delved into questions regarding domestic violence services offered, education in schools and how the crime is dealt with in different areas of the state.

Also on Tuesday, the S.C. House reintroduced a Senate domestic violence reform measure that would toughen penalties and require education in elementary schools. A compromise has been hashed out between House and Senate leaders behind the scenes. House proponents of the bill hope to fast-track the compromise and plan to push for a vote Thursday, moving the bill to the Senate with just days left in the 2015 legislative session.

Title: **Opponents of offshore oil, gas exploration appeal DHEC testing approval**  
 Author: BY BO PETERSEN bopete@postandcourier.com  
 Size: 21.23 square inch  
 Charleston, SC Circulation: 110289



# Opponents of offshore oil, gas exploration appeal DHEC testing approval

BY BO PETERSEN  
 bopete@postandcourier.com

A Shem Creek commercial fishing business, three coastal towns and two environmental groups are appealing a recent decision by state regulators to approve the first permit application to use seismic guns to search for oil and natural gas offshore.

The S.C. Department of Health and Environmental Control gave its go-ahead earlier this month to Spectrum GEO, the first of at least five companies that have asked for DHEC approval.

But advocates for the S.C. Environmental Law Project, Coastal Conservation League and Oceana said DHEC skirted a law requiring a public hearing if more than 20 people or a public official requests one, and the agency did not notify them of the decision.

The league — along with the cities of Charleston, Beaufort and Folly Beach, the S.C. Wildlife Federation and Abundant Seafood — has asked the DHEC board to review the staff approval. Appeals are a required first step to legally contest decisions. If the board upholds its staff, a

lawsuit could be filed in state Administrative Law Court.

The issue cuts to the heart of coastal life, where people and interests are divided between exploring for potential economic benefits or curbing exploration to protect marine life and a billion dollar tourism economy. DHEC could derail a permit if it finds the work disrupts the coastal environment or economy.

In seismic tests, loud air guns are fired repeatedly underwater to read “echoes” from the bottom geology. The tests can open the way for drilling.

More than 300 people requested a public hearing. DHEC spokesman Jim Beasley said that instead of holding its own hearing, the agency took part in an early April federal hearing held in North Charleston.

More than 50 coastal municipalities and organizations have opposed exploration and drilling, including at least 18 in South Carolina. U.S. Rep. Mark Sanford, R-S.C., also has publicly come out in opposition. But Gov. Nikki Haley, as well as the majority of state and congressional lawmakers, have publicly supported the testing.



Title: **Dorchester 2 students might have school June 1**  
 Author: BY BRENDA RINDGE [brindge@postandcourier.com](mailto:brindge@postandcourier.com)  
 Size: 15.03 square inch  
 Charleston, SC Circulation: 110289



# Dorchester 2 students might have school June 1

BY BRENDA RINDGE  
[brindge@postandcourier.com](mailto:brindge@postandcourier.com)

Dorchester District 2 parents will find out Wednesday if their children have to go to school the Monday after seniors are set to graduate.

June 1, which was originally set to be a teacher workday, might have to become a make-up day for the inclement weather day taken on Feb. 24.

The district's three high schools — Summerville, Fort Dorchester and Ashley Ridge — have graduation ceremonies planned for May 30.

The district had scheduled possible make-up days on Jan. 12 and Feb. 16, but did not have any days planned later in the year.

"I can tell you right now that my kids won't be there that day," said parent Kelly Vaughn.

"We already made plans to go out of town."

Berkeley County School District changed a teacher workday on May 20 to a regular school day and Charleston County students went to school on March 27 to make up for the missed day.

The county legislative delegation has sponsored a bill asking Gov. Nikki Haley to forgive the day, school district officials said.

The governor's spokesman did not immediately return a call for comment.

The district will make an announcement on Wednesday, district spokesman Pat Raynor said.

Reach **Brenda Rindge** at 937-5713 or @brindge on Twitter.

Title: **Senators OK new limits on abortion**  
 Author: BY CYNTHIA ROLDAN [croldan@postandcourier.com](mailto:croldan@postandcourier.com)  
 Size: 48.67 square inch  
 Charleston, SC Circulation: 110289



# Senators OK new limits on abortion

Fight over exceptions fails to stall S.C. bill

BY CYNTHIA ROLDAN  
[croldan@postandcourier.com](mailto:croldan@postandcourier.com)

COLUMBIA — South Carolina lawmakers voted Tuesday to tighten restrictions on abortions — prohibiting the procedure after 20 weeks of pregnancy — overcoming a leading abortion foe's vow to block exceptions for rape, incest and severe fetal abnormalities.



**Bright**

Sen. Lee Bright, R-Roebuck, had threatened a filibuster to block a vote on the bill, but senators outmaneuvered him by voting, instead, to end debate on the bill. Sen. Larry Grooms, R-Charleston, another abortion foe, said that strategy



## Poll

Do you think the state Senate made the right decision by including exceptions for rape, incest or severe fetal anomaly in the 20-week abortion ban bill? Go to **postandcourier.com/polls** to vote.

Please see **ABORTION**, Page A8

# Senators OK new limits on abortion

**ABORTION**, from A1

was adopted after the state's largest anti-abortion advocacy group, South Carolina Citizens for Life, threw its support behind the bill rather than have it defeated because of the dispute over adding exceptions.

The bill passed the Senate 37-7. If approved on a third vote, the ban heads back to

the House, which already has passed the bill without the exceptions. The differences would have to be ironed out in a conference committee for the bill to go to Gov. Nikki Haley for her signature.

Bright had earlier held a news conference in the Statehouse at which he was joined by several national activists who, like him, opposed exceptions to restric-

tions on abortions. Two of the women who backed his objections said they were conceived through rapes, and a third gave birth after she was raped as a young teenager.

The only exception Bright said he was willing to allow was to save the life of the mother.

Afterward, a frustrated Bright chastised his colleagues for

spending months on an environmental bill but only hours on the abortion measure.

"We spent probably eight hours on this bill," said Bright. "We spent two months on the Pollution Control Act. It is very rare that a contentious special order bill goes this quickly."

Grooms called the bill a partial victory for abortion-rights opponents even with the excep-

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 Size: 48.67 square inch  
 Charleston, SC Circulation: 110289

tions.

"Everything about this bill is tough," Grooms said. "Even with the exceptions passed out of (the Senate), a number of lives will be saved."

Abortion-rights supporters planned to try to block the bill if the exceptions hadn't been included. Sen. Brad Hutto, D-Orangeburg, said he'd prepared more than 170 amendments, which would've taken days to get through with less than two weeks remaining in the legislative session this year. Hutto was among the seven senators who voted against the 20-week abortion ban.

South Carolina's American

Civil Liberties Union Executive Director Victoria Middleton denounced the Senate's action, issuing a statement saying the second-trimester abortion ban is governmental interference in a private matter.

"Today's debate showed that the goal of some South Carolina politicians is to limit a woman's access to abortion as a legal medical option," Middleton said.

"The measure does nothing to improve health outcomes for families and could have a chilling effect on doctors seeking to give their patients the best medical care possible."

Before the vote, another op-

ponent, Sen. Marlon Kimpson, D-Columbia, reminded colleagues they are not doctors and they could be infringing on constitutional rights.

"Politics should not drive medical decisions," Kimpson said. "We are not medical experts. If we pass this bill, I suspect that we will have a legal challenge on our hands."

Bright's hard line was supported by national activists Rebecca Kiessling, a 45-year-old Michigan lawyer, and Juda Myers of Texas, who founded Choices For Life, which assists rape victims who want to deliver their babies.

Kiessling, president of Save

the 1, an abortion-rights opponent, said her mother twice sought an illegal abortion after being raped and becoming pregnant, but ultimately decided to give birth to her.

"I did not deserve the death penalty for the life of my father," Kiessling said. "You punish rapists and not babies."

Reach **Cynthia Roldan** at 708-5891.

### **Palmetto Politics**

To stay up-to-date on South Carolina politics, go to **palm ettpolitics.com** or download the **Palmetto Politics app** for iOS or Android.

Title: **Moody's: Volvo to really rev up auto sector in S.C.**  
 Author: BY DAVID WREN dwren@postandcourier.com  
 Size: 103.07 square inch  
 Charleston, SC Circulation: 110289



# Moody's: Volvo to really rev up auto sector in S.C.

## Predicts economic output will rise to \$4.8B with Berkeley plant

BY DAVID WREN

dwren@postandcourier.com

South Carolina already more than doubles the national average when it comes to the impact automobile manufacturing has on the state's economy.

But last week's decision by Volvo Cars to build its first U.S. plant in Berkeley County will further boost the state's standing to \$4.8 billion in annual economic output, according to credit-rating firm Moody's Investors Service.

The \$500 million plant will anchor

the Camp Hall Industrial Campus near Ridgeville, with construction starting later this year.

The Volvo plant — along with Daimler AG's announcement in March that it will build a \$500 million facility in North Charleston to build Sprinter vans — “further strengthens South Carolina's already healthy auto manufacturing sector,” which accounts for 3.1 percent of the state's gross domestic product compared to the national average of 1.5

percent, according to Moody's.

“Volvo's announcement comes as many global carmakers are building new factories in Mexico rather than the U.S. to take advantage of lower labor costs and low export costs through free-trade agreements,” Moody's analyst Edna Marinelarena said in the report. “However, South Carolina is bucking this trend with auto manufacturing growth that has

Please see **VOLVO**, Page B3

### Inside

No concerns filed regarding Volvo wetlands application. **C3**

## Volvo to rev up auto sector in S.C.

**VOLVO**, from B1

outpaced the national rate since 2008, in part owing to its low unionization rate, willingness to provide economic incentives and attractive transportation infrastructure.”

Bobby Hitt, the state's commerce secretary who with Gov. Nikki Haley dined with Volvo Car Group CEO Hakan Samuelsson this week, said his agency has made a strategic decision to target the auto sector.

“We wanted to look at automobile manufacturing because sales in the industry were back to their 2007 and 2008 levels, and the projections are for pretty strong growth over the next five years, which would require new capacity,” said Hitt, a former executive at BMW's

Upstate plant. “So we were trying to look at those companies we thought would be looking for capacity expansions and growth, and how we might get in front of them. We put a strategy together for that and along came Volvo Cars. It was pretty remarkable timing for us.”

A study by College of Charleston economist Frank Hefner shows the Volvo plant will generate \$11.3 million in annual state and local taxes as construction winds down in 2017. At full production of 100,000 vehicles per year, no later than 2024, the plant will generate nearly \$72.4 million in annual taxes. That would double if Volvo builds a second production line at the site, which will depend on market conditions.

In addition to increased tax revenue, Berkeley County will

provide water and sewer service to the Volvo factory, which will generate \$10 million in impact fees and more than \$1.3 million per year in additional operating revenue, according to the report.

The county has offered Volvo an agreement that replaces the plant's property taxes with a lower, negotiated fee, so the county will primarily benefit from sales taxes generated by the plant and its workers.

Moody's said the Volvo plant, which will start with 2,000 workers and may double the number by 2028, will have a positive impact on credit ratings for both the county and the state, which already have the analyst firm's highest-quality, lowest-risk ratings.

BMW's expansion, along with announcements from Volvo and Daimler, which will create

1,360 jobs, have “South Carolina's employment recovery ... outpacing that of the nation,” Marinelarena said in the report, adding that Moody's “deems the state one of the top performers in employment growth in the South.”

BMW's plant in Greer accounts for most of South Carolina's auto manufacturing output, with 8,000 workers and a \$1 billion expansion plan to ramp up production to 450,000 vehicles per year from its current 300,000.

South Carolina ranks No. 1 in the nation in exports of passenger automobiles, with \$9.2 billion worth exported through the Port of Charleston. All told, South Carolina's automobile industry has a \$27.1 billion annual economic impact, according to the state Commerce Department, with more



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than 57,000 people employed  
by the industry's manufactur-  
ers and suppliers.

Reach **David Wren** at  
937-5550 or on Twitter at  
@David\_Wren



FILE/AP

Shown at the North American International Auto Show this year, Volvo Car Group CEO Hakan Samuelsson had lunch with Gov. Nikki Haley in Washington, D.C., on Monday, one week after the company announced plans for a \$500 million plant in Berkeley County.



Title: **SC doesn't need a gas-tax hike to fix its roads and bridges**

Author:

Size: 55.8 square inch

Hilton Head Island, SC Circulation: 20015

# SC doesn't need a gas-tax hike to fix its roads and bridges

There are three weeks left in the legislative session, and the drum-beat in Columbia for a massive gas-tax increase is now deafening; all the major lobbying groups are crying in a single chorus: "Higher taxes to fix our roads!"

The House has obliged, passing a bill to raise taxes by \$360 million annually. And the Senate Finance Committee almost doubles down, jacking up that tax increase to \$708 million annually.

As the House bill as amended is about to be debated by the full Senate, here is where I stand, and why.

As a threshold matter, I reject the premise — wrongly considered gospel by many — that insufficient funds are being appropriated.

Total annual spending for our transportation infrastructure in 2009 (my first year in the state Senate) was \$1.051 billion. In the budget passed by the Senate a couple of weeks ago, it is \$1.627 billion, an increase of 54.8 percent.

Yes, our roads and bridges are in bad condition, but that's because spending decisions are made by a politically motivated and legislatively controlled state agency.

(More on that below.)

Even if one concedes more money is needed, however, that does not mean higher taxes are necessary.

Existing revenues are sufficient if we have the political will to spend them wisely.

For example, the Senate recently passed a budget appropriating an additional \$69 million for roads and bridges. In addition, that budget includes a supplemental section (which appropriates tax revenue anticipated but not yet certified) providing an additional estimated \$100 million.

In other words, instead of simply spending the additional revenue on

special projects (as we usually do), we prioritized this year and spent taxpayers' money on actual needs.

And we will have opportunity to do the same in future budgets since the state Board of Economic Advisors projects that the average amount of recurring annual growth in General Fund revenues over the next 10 years will be \$355 million. If just 30 percent of this annual growth is dedicated to roads and bridges, then after four years we will have increased transportation spending to the level targeted by Gov. Nikki Haley — without raising taxes.

In the remaining weeks of this year's session, instead of debating massive gas-tax hikes, the legislature should focus on structural reforms to the S.C. Department of Transportation, the state agency that makes the expenditure decisions.

Capital outlays by the SCDOT for new transportation projects in recent years have been more than triple the amount spent on repairs and maintenance, and that's a direct consequence of the SCDOT commissioners being elected by lawmakers.

There's a reason South Carolina has the fourth-largest state highway system in the nation; no politician ever held a ribbon-cutting for a pot-hole-filling initiative.

The necessary structural fix here is to have the governor appoint all of the SCDOT commissioners in order to establish a clear line of accountability for expenditure decisions.

Better still, abolish the commission and have expenditure decisions made by a Cabinet-level Secretary of Transportation, appointed by and directly accountable to the governor. That way, the

voters can hold an official elected statewide directly accountable for the wise or unwise spending of their money.

Also, any serious plan to address our state's transportation situation must include devolving control over some roads to local governments. According to research published by the S.C. Policy Council, there are about 65,800 miles of roads in South Carolina, and 63 percent of them are controlled by the state. By way of comparison, the average state DOT controls only 19 percent of roads in other states.

The fix here is for the state to transfer a significant portion of those road miles to local governments, along with an appropriate share of existing gas-tax revenue.

The Policy Council correctly summarizes the benefits of this: "Local governments would have better knowledge than a centralized entity of local road conditions. Further, local governments' proximity and accountability to the citizens who use the roads in their borders would provide them an incentive not to neglect rural or residential roads that currently receive little attention from DOT."

Currently, they can simply blame the state — with some justification. Road devolution would take away that excuse."

This is where I stand on the transportation plans the legislature will be debating over the final weeks of session (which ends at 5 p.m. June 4). Things will be moving very fast at the Statehouse, and my decisions along the way will be guided by the principles and concepts discussed above.

Tom Davis represents Beaufort County in the state Senate. His email address is [tom@senatortomdavis.com](mailto:tom@senatortomdavis.com).



Title: **SC doesn't need a gas-tax hike to fix its roads and bridges**

Author:

Size: 55.8 square inch

Hilton Head Island, SC Circulation: 20015



**SEN. TOM DAVIS**

Special to The Island Packet  
and The Beaufort Gazette