



The Morning
News
Florence, SC
Circ. 35092
From Page:
4a
1/3/2016
61050



148

Don't use tax money for Confederate battle flag

The Senate voted 37-3 and on July 10, 2015, South Carolina Gov. Nikki Haley signed a bill into law ordering the removal of the Confederate battle flag from the Statehouse grounds.

While slavery was not the only cause for which the Civil War was fought, it was the focal point to the motivation for secession and war.

The Confederate battle flag has been used by people who are inclined to racial superiority, which causes this flag to be especially offensive to most African-Americans. The Confederate flag is divisive and is almost always viewed as a reminder of the hangings, beatings and senseless killings of our African-American people.

On June 17, 2015, Dylann Roof performed the ultimate massacre that instigated the removal of the Confederate flag from the Statehouse grounds when he murdered nine people during a Bible study at Emmanuel African Methodist Episcopal Church in Charleston, where the Rev. Clementa C. Pinckney, a state senator, served as pastor.

Roof was soon apprehended and charged with the racially motivated slayings. An image of Roof was shown brandishing the Confederate flag, and he later stated, "N ... are stupid and violent." This blatant act of racism is what finally triggered the immediate removal of the Confederate flag from the Statehouse grounds.

Since the flag's removal, it has been proposed that it be housed in the South Carolina Confederate Relic Room and Military Museum. The Board of Commissioners of the

Relic Room quoted our South Carolina lawmakers a ridiculous price to house the flag at \$3.6 million, which is down \$1.7 million from the original cost of \$5.3 million.

This plan is most insulting due to the fact that they want to burden us, the taxpayers of South Carolina, to foot the bill for this Confederate flag to be housed. They want some of the same people who were enslaved by the racist perpetration of the Confederate flag to pay millions of dollars to give it a new home. I, among others, vehemently oppose the plan. If the Confederate

battle flag is housed in the Confederate Relic Room, because of its dire importance, historical value to some and its strong support group, it should be paid for through sponsors and donors, not with taxpayers' money.

African-American people especially do not support or want any of our tax dollars used to fund housing a Confederate symbol that has been used as a racist relic against us for so many years.

There are many other matters of importance that require attention and need funding, such as K-12 education, infrastructure, mental health, Medicaid and others; housing the Confederate battle flag is not one of them.

I call on the citizens of South Carolina to unite, stand together, censure, protest and demand that taxpayer dollars of South Carolina not again foot the bill for another slap in the face by housing this divisive relic. It's time to mobilize and stand together to keep the Confederate battle flag out of our pocketbooks.

PAT GIBSON-HYE MOORE
Florence

The Morning
 News
 Florence, SC
 Circ. 35092
 From Page:
 4a
 12/19/2015
 61050

148
Secessionist gathering authorized Sunday at SC Statehouse

The Associated Press

COLUMBIA — A Statehouse gathering commemorating South Carolina's 1860 secession from the Union will be held Sunday, after state officials reinstated a permit they canceled a week ago.

Gov. Nikki Haley said Friday she asked the state Department of Administration to reinstate the Secessionist Party's reservation.

"The governor believes that the Statehouse grounds belong to all people, whether she agrees with their views or not," said Haley spokeswoman Chaney Adams. "She also believes that people's constitutional rights mean

something, and that certainly includes the rights to free speech and free assembly."

Secessionist Party founder James Bessenger called the permit's reinstatement a victory for the First Amendment. His group had threatened to sue the state.

Bessenger applied Oct. 28 to hold a Sovereignty Day Rally on the 155th anniversary of South Carolina adopting its Ordinance of Secession. Permission for

the rally was granted last month, but the reservation was canceled Dec. 10 after the Department of Public Safety raised security concerns, according to documents from the Department of Administration.

"We have seen what can happen when opposing groups are allowed on Statehouse grounds," DPS spokeswoman Sherri Iacobelli said last week.

Legislators have said state officials didn't use common sense when they allowed the Ku Klux Klan and a group affiliated with the New Black Panther Party to hold overlapping rallies July 18 at the Statehouse, resulting in violence, despite a massive police presence.

Nolan Wiggins, the Department of Administration director who authorized the rallies, told legislators in July the decision came down to people's free speech and assembly rights under the

First Amendment.

But legislators faulted the agency for not even asking the opposing groups to rally on separate days or at least several hours apart.

No other group has applied to rally Sunday. Officials have not specified

what other groups have threatened to demonstrate.

Bessenger said threats of violence from others should not preclude his group's ability to gather.

"This was about the government not bowing down to radicals threatening violence," he said. "This was about whether the government would set a precedent to be influenced, hijacked or blackmailed by threats."

Bessenger said his group has nothing to do with hate.

The 27-year-old Army veteran said he founded the Secessionist Party in April out of frustration with Democrats and Republicans. The group's platform includes abolishing the U.S. Department of Education, allowing South Carolina to deport anyone who is not in the country legally and opposing all gun control efforts.

Although the party is named for secession — and Bessenger says the party would welcome South Carolina's secession from the U.S. — he says he doesn't expect that to happen and won't push for it.



The Morning
News
Florence, SC
Circ. 35092
From Page:
2c
1/2/2016
61050



148 SC faith leaders encourage inclusion among religions

BY CASSIE COPE
The State
ccope@thestate.com

COLUMBIA — South Carolina religious leaders encouraged inclusiveness Tuesday after a leading presidential candidate proposed banning Muslims from entering the country and many politicians announced their opposition to allowing Syrian refugees to resettle in the United States.

Members of Interfaith Partners of South Carolina said they want residents to know the state has a heritage of different religions coexisting.

"We have a very large and very vibrant faith-based state here," said Will Moreau Goins, chairman of Interfaith Partners and representing Native American Spirituality.

During January, Interfaith Partners, which aims to foster understanding and cooperation among religious groups, will hold events encouraging interaction among South Carolinians with different religious backgrounds as part of the fourth Interfaith Harmony Month.

The events range from a Baha'i devotional service to Native

American winter storytelling.

Leaders encouraged understanding at a time when Muslims are being singled out based on the acts of extremist groups.

Muslims have lived peacefully in South Carolina for three centuries, said Carl Evans, a Christian and past president of Interfaith Partners. Now, the fear of extremists is feeding suspicion, fear, hostility, hateful speech, and demands for exaggerated scrutiny against an entire religious population, he said, reading a statement adopted by the Interfaith Partners board.

For example, leading Republican presidential candidate Donald Trump proposed a temporary ban on Muslim travelers from entering the United States in the wake of attacks in Paris and California.

"Misinformation is rooted in fear that is being spread around our country," Evans said, adding that such fear is spread by some presidential candidates for political gain.

Chaudhry Sadiq, a Muslim, said Trump's narrow-mindedness means the New York billionaire does not deserve to be an American leader. Sadiq said he

condemns extremist terrorists who claim to represent Islam.

Evans, a retired University of South Carolina religion professor, said peace in America depends on people valuing diversity without perceiving differences as a threat.

In addition, Interfaith Partners welcomes Syrian refugees fleeing the death and destruction of a civil war in their home country, he said.

S.C. Gov. Nikki Haley has requested that Syrians not be allowed to relocate in the state because of security concerns. However, two Syrian refugees have been resettled in Richland County, and a family of 11 refugees is expected to follow.

Haley, who was raised a Sikh but later converted to Christianity, signed a proclamation declaring January Interfaith Harmony Month.

People often fear others who are different or have different customs and traditions, Evans said.

"The way to overcome that, we think, is to cross religious lines to become friends and neighbors of people of other faiths."



The Morning
News
Florence, SC
Circ. 35092
From Page:
6a
1/1/2016
61050



148
**Haley to blame for legislators
not increasing gas tax**

All people loyal to South Carolina and concerned about the state's future should recognize the utility of the Morning News' remarks Saturday on the need for a gasoline tax increase to help address highway infrastructure needs.

However, I believe your "thumbs down" comment does a disservice to the General Assembly.

In the previous session, state legislators, led by Senate President Pro Tempore Hugh Leatherman and the Senate Finance Committee, made every possible effort to craft a measure enabling progress on that issue.

That was defeated chiefly because Gov. Haley threatened to veto any related bill not tied to a decrease in income tax, despite studies indicating that South Carolinians already pay less in income taxes than in many states. For example, the state Revenue and Fiscal Affairs Office has ranked South Carolina's effective tax rate the 10th-lowest among states with an income tax.

I enthusiastically agree that if South Carolinians do not get a gasoline tax increase in the upcoming session, somebody most certainly deserves a very conspicuous and decisive "thumbs down."

And it's not the General Assembly.

DALE M. RHODES
Richmond, Virginia

The Morning
News
Florence, SC
Circ. 35092
From Page:
4a
1/1/2016
61050

148 Combating abuse of prescriptions

Most doctors will be required to use database

The Associated Press

COLUMBIA — Most doctors in South Carolina will soon be required to consult a statewide database of patients' medical history as a way to combat the state's rampant prescription painkiller problem.

The changes will direct any doctor who wants to bill either Medicaid or the state health plan to use the database that's been voluntary since 2008, said Christian Soura, director of the state's Department of Health and Human Services.

Announcements will likely go out in February on the mandate, which starts April 1, he told The Associated Press.

The South Carolina Medical Association supports the change, but "there will be some doctors unhappy about yet another step thrown into the mix," said its CEO, state Rep. Todd Atwater.

"Some say it will slow me down another minute and half I don't have, but really?" said Atwater, R-Lexington. "Sometimes you have to have a little inconvenience to do the right thing and get some of these opioids off the streets."

The mandate will come three years after Inspector General Patrick Maley recommended it in a report, describing high-prescribers as either motivated by money or naively helping "doctor shoppers." In re-

sponse to his report, Gov. Nikki Haley created the Prescription Drug Abuse Prevention Council, which similarly concluded one year ago that mandating the database's use is key to combatting abuse of OxyContin, Percocet and other opioids.

Similar mandates enacted in New York and Tennessee in 2012 resulted in drops of 75 percent and 36 percent, respectively, a year later in patients seeing multiple doctors for the same drugs, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's 2014 Vital Signs report.

That report ranked South Carolina 11th highest nationwide in prescribing painkillers, with 102 prescriptions written for every

100 people.

"When you look at the impact of other states with similar policies, it's harder to say, 'I don't want to spend another minute or two in front of the computer,'" Soura said of doctors' decreasing resistance.

Technology improvements to the database were also critical to gaining their support and — according to officials — the reason for delaying the mandate.

A law passed in June 2014 required pharmacists to report daily on the controlled substances they sell, to ensure the database is regularly updated. But a clause specified that doctors and pharmacists don't have to actually consult it before prescribing or dispensing medicine.

According to the council's report six months later, just 21 percent of South

Carolina's prescribers had registered for the Prescription Monitoring Program and few of them actually used it.

Officials say that's partly because registering required filling out paperwork, getting it notarized and mailing the application to DHEC. And only the prescribing doctor had a login to access the database.

Under improvements that went live Nov. 23, doctors can register online and set up an account for a delegate, such as a nurse, to run the queries. The new system also summarizes patients' prescription history, calculates their daily opioid dose and generates an alert if their prescriptions already exceed the recommended amount, said Lisa Thomson, DH-

EC's drug control director.

The changes were "about making the system user-friendly and not disrupting work flows," said Bryan Amick, pharmacy director at the state's Medicaid agency and a member of the Prescription Drug Abuse Prevention Council.

South Carolina will join 29 states that require doctors or pharmacists to consult a prescription database in at least certain circumstances. Nevada was the first to do so in 2007. Such a database exists in every state except Missouri, according to the National Alliance for Model State Drug Laws.

The decree will affect the vast majority of doctors in South Carolina.

