



Title: **Senate starts roads debate with filibuster**
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Senate starts roads debate with filibuster

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COLUMBIA - The Senate began its long-awaited debate on roads with a filibuster by the same senator who last year killed chances of a vote on a roads bill by staying at the podium.

Sen. Tom Davis, a Beaufort Republican, told his colleagues Wednesday that he is convinced the Senate will not pass meaningful reform of the state Department of Transportation this year, some-

thing he asked for last year in his successful filibuster.

His said his aim is to "educate" the Senate on the need for reform at DOT and the State Infrastructure Bank and is prepared to talk well into the night.

"At some point in time I suspect maybe this General Assembly will decide they have heard enough of me," Davis said when asked if he would block a vote.

"But I've got a lot of say."

Davis challenged the Senate to find 24 votes, the number needed to stop his filibuster, whenever senators were ready to vote on a gas tax increase or on a restructuring plan which he predicted would not go far enough.

See ROADS, Page 4A

Roads

Continued from Page 1A

By late afternoon Wednesday, the Senate had not moved to sit him down.

Davis' complaint is that the Legislature still wants to control DOT. He said he is tired of settling for weak reform.

"I feel it's sort of like Groundhog Day," Davis told the Senate. "We've been up here having this debate when it comes to constitutional officer restructuring. We had this debate when it came to the Department of Administration. We had this debate when it came to ethics reform. We never get away from the system that is responsible to individual legislators and move toward to one where there is true accountability."

Davis said the "gold standard" for him for accountability at DOT would be for the state's transportation secretary to be appointed by the governor, confirmed by the Senate and then allowed to run DOT and manage its projects and expenditures.

Currently, the secretary manages DOT but is limited on decisions without the approval of the DOT board.

That board is made up of eight commissioners, seven of whom are elected by legislative delegations in each congressional district. The eighth is appointed by the gover-

nor.

He said the state needs direct accountability, where those who make decisions are directly accountable to voters. That means, he said, that the governor, who is accountable to voters, controls the agency without sharing that authority with legislators.

Gov. Nikki Haley has asked for the current system to be scrapped. The House passed a roads bill last year that gives the governor the authority to appoint the highway commissioners.

But the issue has tied the Senate in knots. The Senate Transportation Committee this year passed a plan that would allow the governor to appoint commissioners nominated by the state's regional Council of Governments, who would then be screened by a legislative committee and then confirmed by the Senate.

Some senators have predicted that plan stands no chance of passage.

Davis said the restructuring should be simple and move away from legislative control and regional interests.

"As long as you have a system that motivates commissioners to look out for their own little turf of the state, you're never going to have a statewide highway plan that serves the people of South Caroli-

na," he said.

Sen. Marlon Kimpson, a Charleston Democrat, said he feels passionately about roads.

"We want to get something done," he told Davis. "And we certainly don't want to repeat what happened last year."

Davis responded that as a result of his filibuster last year, lawmakers agreed to send more than \$200 million from surplus funds to county transportation committees.

"By standing in the well of the Senate last year," he said, "a consensus was formed. I also think because I'm in the well of the Senate now, we have a much better chance of getting real reform to DOT, real reform to the State Infrastructure Bank and reliance upon existing resources before we tax South Carolinians with the gas tax."

Sen. Shane Massey, an Edgefield Republican, told Davis he thinks it is better for the Senate to start voting on reforms than listening to a filibuster.

"I don't know how we address potential solutions unless you give up the podium," Massey said.

Sen. Joel Lourie, a Columbia Democrat, proposed allowing the Senate to vote on his plan as a template while others searched for ways to solve the DOT reform issue first through amendments.

Lourie said he doesn't agree that DOT restructuring is more important than funding roads.

Title: **Bills would raise minimum wage, repeal right to work law**
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Bills would raise minimum wage, repeal right to work law

SEANNA ADCOX

ASSOCIATED PRESS

COLUMBIA - Proposals to raise the minimum wage in South Carolina and repeal an anti-union law have virtually no chance of passing in the Republican-dominated Legislature, but Democrats hope to spark a debate as the nation's attention turns to the first-in-the-South primary state.

Rep. Gilda Cobb-Hunter, who sponsored both bills, said it's time to discuss living wages in a state that ranks 46th in child poverty, 48th in per capita income and last in union membership.

"We keep hearing all these glowing numbers about how great things are," she said of jobs touted by GOP Gov. Nikki Haley. "Yet we get reports that show we're ranking in the bot-

tom. ... I don't see why we can't at least start talking about the reality of what it means to work in South Carolina on one hand and still be eligible for assistance on the other."

Cobb-Hunter, D-Orangeburg, held a news conference on the bills last week after a House panel officially adjourned debate on both. A second hearing is not expected.

One bill would set the state's minimum wage at \$10.10 an hour. South Carolina is among 21 states where employers can pay as low as \$7.25 an hour, the federal minimum since 2009.

Proponents call \$10.10 a start. That's the minimal pay for federal contractors, as per

President Barack Obama's 2014 executive order.

"We'll continue to fight for \$15" an hour, said Rachel Nelson of Charleston, who makes \$9 an hour at Hardee's after 10 years as a fast food worker.

The mother of three children, ages 8 to 12, told the House panel she'd like to get off of public assistance, but her paychecks make it impossible.

"With my last check, I was only able to pay my light bill," Nelson said. "Trying to keep a roof over our heads is a constant stresser in my life."

More than 2,600 state employees make less than \$10.10 an

See WAGE, Page 4A

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“We keep hearing all these glowing numbers about how great things are. Yet we get reports that show we’re ranking in the bottom. ... I don’t see why we can’t at least start talking about the reality of what it means to work in South Carolina on one hand and still be eligible for assistance on the other.”

REP. GILDA COBB-HUNTER,
 RESPONDING TO GOV. NIKKI HALEY’S OUTLOOK ON JOBS

Wage

Continued from Page 3A

hour, or about 4 percent of the state-paid workforce. Just over half of those employees are considered temporary, according to the Department of Administration. It noted the numbers could be higher since public colleges aren’t required to send the agency data on temporary workers.

Rep. Todd Atwater, who sits on the subcommittee, contends raising the minimum wage is bad for the economy because it increases products’ cost and eliminates entry-level jobs often filled by high school and college students.

“It hurts the workers they’re trying to help,” said Atwater, R-Lexington.

The answer, he said, is better training, so students graduate with skills that en-

able them to get a higher-paying job.

Cobb-Hunter’s other bill would repeal the state’s right-to-work law.

About half of states have such laws, which means unions can’t force employees across an entire worksite to pay membership dues as a condition of employment.

Haley, who frequently lambasts unions, considers the state’s low union membership an economic development tool.

About 41,000 people — or just 2.1 percent of South Carolina’s workers — belong to unions, leapfrogging North Carolina in 2015 to rank last nationwide, according to a January report by the Bureau of Labor Statistics.

Seth Holzopfel, with the International Association of Firefighters in Myrtle

Beach, said the law should be renamed the “right to work for less” — contending it’s made South Carolina a virtual sweatshop — or “right to freeloader,” as it allows people in a union-covered job to receive benefits without paying dues.

As expected, the state’s Chamber of Commerce adamantly opposes the proposal.

Mikee Johnson, president of Cox Industries, said it would halt the state’s economic momentum.

“We’ve got to have the jobs before we get the wages. This is one of those things that would stop companies from coming to South Carolina,” he said, adding that none of his 500 workers make less than \$10 an hour. “South Carolina workers do not need fewer choices when it comes to how they work every day or added costs forced upon them.”

Title: **Bush, Kasich campaign in Golden Strip**
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Bush, Kasich campaign in Golden Strip

AMANDA COYNE

THE GREENVILLE NEWS

Hundreds of voters got up bright and early to see Gov. Jeb Bush in Fountain Inn less than 12 hours before the presidential candidate hit the debate stage.

"My debate prep is hanging out with my four grandchildren," Bush said at the relaxed town hall, which was filled with a standing room only crowd in the 420-person capacity Younts Center theater.

Bush spoke to the crowd about his record promoting school choice and voucher programs in Florida, his plans for

the military and the Department of Veteran's Affairs and rebuking Republican frontrunners Donald Trump and Sen. Ted Cruz before turning to the crowd for questions.

Bush seemed relaxed and confident fielding questions on topics, including abortion, health care and Supreme Court appointments.

One woman was trying to decide between Bush and Gov. John Kasich and asked Bush to give her reasons she should support him. The former Florida

governor dinged Kasich for expanding Medicaid in Ohio under the Affordable Care Act while praising South Carolina Gov. Nikki Haley for refusing Medicaid expansion.

Up the road at Mutt's BBQ in Mauldin, Kasich got the endorsement of beloved former Clemson quarterback Tajh Boyd at a midday rally. Boyd said Kasich's campaigning in New Hampshire won him over.

"Gov. Kasich is for the people," Boyd said, before leading the crowd in a Clemson cadence count.



PHOTOS BY LAUREN PETRACCA/STAFF

Presidential candidate John Kasich invites Ginny Hoddy, 7, of Simpsonville to the stage during a rally at Mutt's BBQ in Mauldin on Saturday.

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**Republican presidential candidate
John Kasich talks to the crowd
Saturday.**

Title: **In Florence, Bill Clinton touts wife's bipartisan work, experience**
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In Florence, Bill Clinton touts wife's bipartisan work, experience

JOSHUA LLOYD
 MORNING NEWS

FLORENCE - At a Hillary Clinton campaign event in Florence on Saturday night, former Democratic President Bill Clinton said his wife's record shows she's willing to work with Republicans on tough issues make real progress.

About 650 people gathered in the commons area of the Smith University Center at Francis Marion University for the "Fighting for Us Rally," to listen to Bill Clinton's stump speech for Hillary.

"The reason Hillary should be president is not just because she's been secretary of state, and a senator, and a first lady, and knows more about domestic and foreign policy than anybody you could possibly vote for," he said. "The real reason is in a troubled time you need a world-class change maker,

someone who can figure out how to make the best out of every situation."

He said his Hillary has a proven record of reaching across party lines for progress, giving examples of her work with Republican leaders such as U.S. Senators Lindsey Graham and John McCain on veteran's affairs and other GOP leaders after Hurricane Katrina in 2005.

Clinton also praised South Carolina politicians and Republican Gov. Nikki Haley for the swift removal of the Confederate flag from statehouse grounds after the murder of nine black parishioners in Charleston.

"South Carolina, after that horrible tragedy, gave the country an incredible gift," Clinton said. "We got to watch democracy come alive again."

In light of the death of Supreme Court Justice Antonin Scalia, Clinton said America needs a

president who will nominate justices who will move the nation forward.

"We've got to elect a president who will say 'I want to put people on the Supreme Court who will expand voting rights, not shrink it,' " he said. "Basically, I want to put people on the Supreme Court who read the Constitution in a way that allows us all to be treated equally under the law and we can move forward together."

During the rally, Clinton halted and called for a doctor after a supporter near the stage apparently fainted. She quickly regained consciousness and Clinton took that chance make the situation a talking point.

"Give her a hand. That's a metaphor for my message about the economy," he said. "Even when you're down, as long as you can get back up you've got a shot."

Title: **Personality contest overwhelms issues**
 Author: MARK BARRETT MBARRETT@GANNETT.COM
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Personality contest overwhelms issues

MARK BARRETT

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If the Republican presidential primary were a television show, it might look like a combination of "The Bachelor" and "Meet the Press."

Voters are making choices among the candidates as much on personalities as stances on issues, experts say, partly because there is little separation

among the contenders in the GOP field on key topics.

"There's not much difference on any policy," said David Woodard, a political science professor at Clemson University. "They're all pro-life, for lower taxes, less government. ... It does get down to personalities, people you

like and like seeing on TV."

Who South Carolinians like in the Feb. 20 Republican primary could make a big difference in winnowing the GOP field, and Woodard said Saturday's debate at the Peace Center could

See ISSUES, Page 8A

Issues

Continued from Page 8A

about," he said.

Even though he said the economy is still a bigger concern for South Carolina voters, Woodard said military ties in the state lead to more interest in foreign policy and veterans issues than in most parts of the country.

But while some of those voters want to see a more confrontational foreign policy, something all of the Republican candidates endorse, some have seen first-hand the difficulties involved in changing a nation by military means and may be more skeptical of saber rattling, he said.

"I don't think there's a desire to go out and try out our new planes or something" in the Middle East, Woodard said.

Woodard, who is also a pollster and has worked with Republican politicians, said the balance in the race means a moment like Rubio's stumble in the New Hampshire debate or an exchange in Saturday's debate in Greenville could tip the South Carolina primary one way or the other much as a 2012 presidential debate did.

That's the year South Carolina broke its streak of always giving the primary victory to the even-

tual Republican nominee.

Ironically, it came down to a character issue. Moderator John King of CNN kicked off the questioning in a debate held in North Charleston a week before the 2012 primary by asking former U.S. House Speaker Newt Gingrich if he wanted to respond to allegations by an ex-wife that he had asked her for an "open marriage" that would allow him to continue an affair with a staffer.

Gingrich denied the story and ripped into King, decrying the "destructive, vicious, negative nature of much of the news media" and saying he was "appalled that you would begin a presidential debate on a topic like that."

Cheers broke out in the audience and, Woodard said, "In that one week, it completely turned (the race) around." Gingrich won South Carolina, but Mitt Romney went on to win the nomination.

Four years later, Woodard said the volatility of the race in the state means he's staying away from making predictions.

"I can't pick a winner. They're going to have to run the campaign," he said.

How much should Uncle Sam get?

All the Republican presidential candidates want to lower tax rates and simplify the tax code, but as anyone who has ever filled out a Form 1040 knows, the devil is in the details. And, how to balance the federal budget following the cuts is another question.

What candidates are saying about taxes

Jeb Bush: Would reduce the number of personal income tax brackets to three with rates of 28 percent, 25 percent and 10 percent. (The current top rate is 39.6 percent.) He wants to increase the standard deduction and lower the corporate tax rate from 35 percent to 20 percent.

Ben Carson: Wants what he calls a true flat tax — "no deductions, tax shelters or loopholes" — with a rate of 14.9 percent. That would eliminate popular deductions like those for home mortgage interest and charitable contributions. Income from stock sales, dividends and interest would not be taxed at all and those with incomes below 150 percent of the poverty level would make only a small tax payment.

Ted Cruz: Favors a flat

tax with one rate of 10 percent and says he would do away with the Internal Revenue Service in its current form. Businesses would pay a 16 percent flat rate. Critics say Cruz's business tax amounts to a value-added tax that would be passed on to consumers without their knowledge, a charge Cruz denies.

John Kasich: Would reduce the number of tax brackets to three, with the top rate at 28 percent. He says he would keep current deductions for charitable giving and mortgage interest and set the capital gains tax rate at 15 percent, which is what middle-income taxpayers pay now. (Wealthiest taxpayers pay more.) Kasich wants a 25 percent corporate tax rate.

Marco Rubio: Says there should be three personal tax rates: 15 percent, 25 percent and 35 percent, with the highest rate applying to individuals with \$150,001 or more in income and couples with \$300,001 or more. He would retain the mortgage interest and charitable deductions but eliminate many others and would end all taxes on dividends, capital gains and interest. The business tax rate



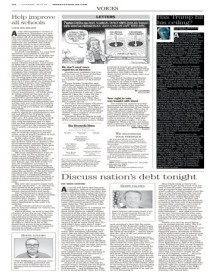
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would go from 35 to 25 percent. less than \$25,000 and married couples making less than \$50,000 paying no tax. Other rates would be 10, 15 and 25 percent. Trump promises elimination of deductions and other tax breaks most often claimed by the very wealthy, but outside analysts say his plan would amount to a major tax cut for the rich. He would cut the corporate tax rate to 15 percent.



Marco Rubio speaks at the Faith and Family Presidential Forum at Bob Jones University on Friday.

Title: **Has Trump hit his ceiling?**
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Has Trump hit his ceiling?

MICHAEL GERSON
COLUMNIST

As Donald Trump's GOP opponents descend on South Carolina, they are running smack into a phenomenon. In this state, Trump is riding a wave of adulation more common for rock stars, faith healers or South American dictators. His rallies run into the thousands — some in excess of 10,000 — with cars parked for miles down the side of roads leading to venues. South Carolina Lt. Gov. Henry McMaster — who recently endorsed Trump — describes a woman waiting eight hours without eating to keep her place in the front of the crowd, and promptly fainting when Trump's speech began.

What explains this level of enthusiasm? Trump's South Carolina co-chairman Ed McMullen explained Trump's appeal this way: "He is the alpha male who says exactly what is on his mind."

A revealing description. Trump is running an exceptionally visceral campaign. His goal is not so much inspiration of the country as domination of his opponents. And it has generally worked. They respond to his attacks, hush when he shushes them and envy his huge ... poll numbers.

Trump appeals fairly broadly in South Carolina. There are lots of angry, rural white males at his rallies who feel disadvantaged in our economy and overlooked in our politics. This is mixed here (as elsewhere) with baser motives. On racial matters, according to one senior South Carolina Republican, Trump is using "not a dog whistle, but a train whistle." His Muslim immigration ban was announced

in Charleston Harbor, aboard the *USS Yorktown* aircraft carrier. And the Trump campaign's willingness to associate with Jake Knotts, the former state senator who famously called Gov. Nikki Haley a racial epithet, has been taken as a signal.

In South Carolina, Trump is encouraging elements of the party for which old times are not forgotten, clearly complicating Haley's attempt to reform and modernize the GOP. And everyone I spoke with in South Carolina who wasn't paid by one of the candidates believes Trump will win.

Republicans unreconciled to the Trump dynasty comfort themselves with one scenario. After the shock of early Trump victories wears off, some candidate in a winnowed field will rise and restart the race. "Trump," this mythic figure will argue, "has won some early primaries in the South. But he has a ceiling of support — just 35 percent in the GOP. So, here I am." At that point, the spigots of Republican money will open.

All of which depends on two questionable assumptions. First, I can remember when Trump's ceiling was supposedly 25 percent. After a series of victories, it may rise again. Second, this scenario assumes that any of the mainstream candidates are capable of cutting the alpha down to size.



Title: House likes Haley school chief idea**Author:****Size: 6.82 square inch****Greenville, SC Circulation: 113473**



House likes Haley school chief idea

COLUMBIA - The governor could appoint South Carolina's top educator under legislation approved by the House.

The measure sent to the Senate on Thursday would ask voters whether the state superintendent should continue to be elected or chosen by the governor.

Gov. Nikki Haley is pushing for the change. She says it's critical that the governor and superintendent work together on a shared education agenda. Haley says she works with first-term Superintendent Molly Spearman as a team, but that hasn't been the case with previous officeholders.

If voters approve the constitutional amendment, the last election for superintendent would be in 2018.