

Title: **They died for me, an utter stranger**
 Author: By GEORGE SALSBERY gsalsberry@lowcountry.com
 Size: 76.26 column inches
 Walterboro, SC Circulation: 5673



They died for me, an utter stranger

By GEORGE SALSBERY
 gsalsberry@lowcountry.com

George Haws slowly rose to his feet, with an assist from Johnny Holmes, chairman of the Colleton County Veterans council and commander of the local Disabled American Veterans chapter.

The 91-year-old rose in response to a request from LCDR Nancy Whitt, U.S. Coast Guard retired, who served as the master of ceremonies for Monday morning's Memorial Day obser-

vance at the waterfall plaza. She asked those in the audience who were veterans of World War II to stand and be recognized.

Haws was among the precious few to rise to their feet.

A member of the U.S. Navy personnel assigned to the European Theater of Operations, Haws served on an amphibious landing craft. He took part in five invasions,

the last one manning one of the hundreds of vessels in the Invasion of Normandy.

Another U.S. Navy veteran, Walterboro resident Charles Rowland, was the keynote speaker for the Memorial Day ceremony.

Rowland told the audience about his recent visit to the memorial to Colleton County's war dead at the waterfall, of reading the names

of the county residents who had given their lives.

He came to realize, Rowland told the audience, that he had never met any of those memorialized on the wall.

"That realization made the moment even more poignant, for in that moment, I understood that those men died for

See MEMORIAL, page 3A

MEMORIAL

Continued from 1A
 me — an utter stranger to them," Rowland said.

"They died not for the government, but for their fellow Americans, fellow South Carolinians, fellow Colletonians," Rowland said.

Colleton County Council Chairman Steve Murdaugh preceded Rowland on the podium, offering the audience

some of the history behind the nation's Memorial Day.

The Rev. Lehman Lyons of the Living Church of God offered the invocation and benediction. Jackie Conyers, an employee of the Veterans Victory House, sang the National Anthem and later performed "Amazing Grace."

The Colleton County High

School NJROTC color guard conducted the presentation and posting of the colors and Girl Scouts from Troop 294 led the audience in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Janet Smith of the Colleton County Veterans Affairs Officer read a Memorial Day proclamation issued by South Carolina Gov. Nikki Haley and

Taylor Dye, a fifth-grade student at Forest Hills Elementary School, read a poem.

The members of the Colleton County Veterans Council conducted the laying of the wreath at the memorial, and the Colleton County Honor Guard conducted a three-round volley and played "Taps."

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SPEAKER. Navy veteran Charles Rowland was speaker for the event.



Photos by GEORGE SALSBERY

HONORED. 91-year-old George Haws was one of the veterans of World War II who was recognized during Monday's ceremony.

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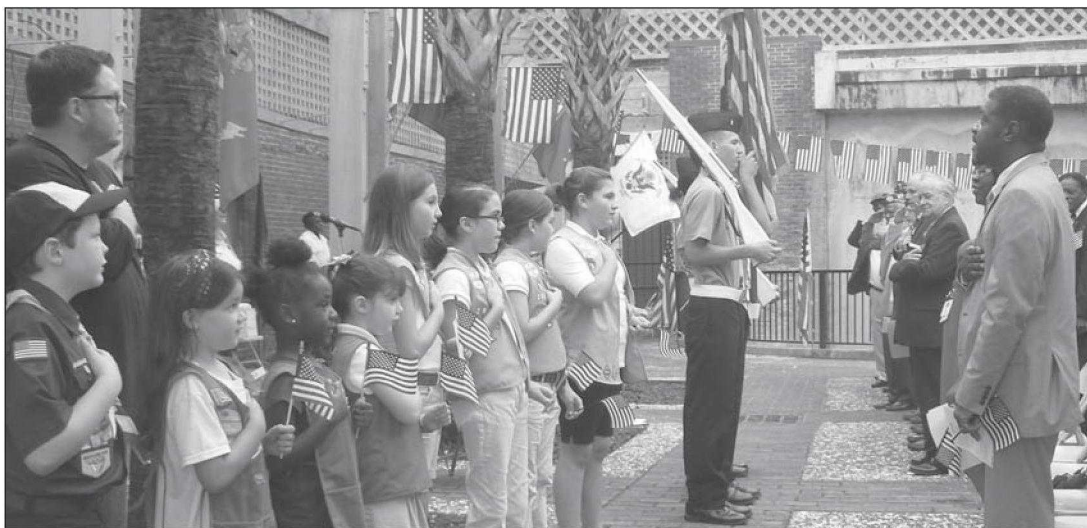


Photo by GEORGE SALSBERY

PLEDGING ALLEGIANCE. Girl and Boy Scouts pledge allegiance to the flag carried by members of the CCHS NJROTC Color Guard at Monday's ceremony.

Title: **Hope again for our farmers**
 Author: HARRY L. OTT JR. Guest Columnist
 Size: 90.21 column inches
 Columbia, SC Circulation: 128564



Hope again for our farmers

HARRY L. OTT JR.
 Guest Columnist

Even though the General Assembly overrode Gov. Nikki Haley's veto of the Palmetto Farm Aid bill with near-unanimous support, for many of our farmers — and for me personally — it was an emotional, bittersweet victory.

I say bittersweet because before we achieved the victory, we had to endure a devastating flood, an unwilling governor and a chorus of misinformed talking points and insults about our farmers. We were told we made bad business decisions. We were accused of seeking bailouts and handouts. And we were told there would be no disaster aid for agriculture.

The emotional toll this rhetoric took on our farming community was as heart-breaking as the flood itself. Multi-generational family farms across the state were put in jeopardy, and our farmers were left wondering

if they could farm another year. As weeks went by and more rain fell, it seemed the gray clouds over our heads would never leave. Our confidence was shaken, and our hope was growing dimmer.

But like farmers do every day of our lives, we rolled up our sleeves and went to work; this time, we went to work on our elected officials in Congress and the General Assembly. Farmers all over the state, regardless of the flood's impact on their farm, came together to educate our elected leaders, invited them to our farms and told them our stories.

We first asked our congressional delegation for federal assistance. With the strong

leadership of U.S. Sen. Lindsey Graham and U.S. Reps. Tom Rice, James Clyburn and Joe Wilson, Congress inserted disaster assistance into December's spending

bill, with some of it intended for agriculture. Even though Gov. Haley ultimately blocked the money intended for S.C. farmers, we would never even have had a chance at any federal aid if it were not for these champions of agriculture.

With farmers running out of options, our efforts turned to the General Assembly. The Democratic and Republican leadership from the House and Senate spearheaded an incredible effort to pass the farm aid bill. The House and

Senate passed H.4717 the first time around with overwhelming, bipartisan supermajorities. They listened to farmers and business leaders. They took the time to under-

stand that agriculture is unlike any other industry in our state. And they set politics aside to help our farmers.

When the governor vetoed the bill despite the strong showing in the General Assembly, it was yet another setback. But farmers don't allow things to die, and we certainly were not going to let the farm aid bill die. The grassroots efforts kicked into high gear. Farmers young and old showed up at the State

SEE FARM, 4C

FROM PAGE 1C

FARM

House and pleaded one last time with the Legislature. It was an incredible sight to see more than 75 farmers in the balcony of the House chamber applauding the 112 legislators who stood up for farmers.

And hearing almost every senator call out "aye" is a sound I will never forget.

As a family farmer who stood shin-deep in flood waters in my own fields, I found it inspiring to see a near-unanimous showing

of support by our state legislators. The farm aid bill has injected new life into the agriculture industry, and our hope for the future now grows brighter. Our farmers will be able to access disaster relief that

will help them survive.

The bill is a lifeline for the agriculture industry, bolstering the backbone of our state's economy.

With the bill's passage,

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we will now turn our efforts to ensure the disaster relief gets to as many flood-impacted farmers as quickly as possible. Farm Bureau is here to assist any farmer who needs help recovering from the flood. We will work with

Clemson University, the state Department of Agriculture and the Farm Aid Advisory Board to ensure transparency and efficiency.

There is hope again for our farmers. We can now move on from the flood

and focus on this year's crops. We are praying for good weather and a bountiful harvest so that we can continue to feed South Carolina.

Mr. Ott is a row crop farmer from Calhoun

County and former House member who serves as president of the S.C. Farm Bureau Federation; contact him at harryott@scfb.org.



JANET BLACKMON MORGAN jblackmon@thesunnews.com

Drew Martin surveys damage to his Horry County soybean field after the October floods. The 2015 crop suffered drought in the spring and then the floods that rotted the beans in the fall.

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GERRY MELENDEZ gmelendez@thestate.com

The October floods left S.C. peanut crops unmarketable.

Title: **New SC Laws: Cellphone fees, education mandates**
 Author: BY SEANNA ADCOX Associated Press
 Size: 43.09 column inches
 Hilton Head Island, SC Circulation: 20015



New SC laws: Cellphone fees, education mandates

BY SEANNA ADCOX

Associated Press
 COLUMBIA

New laws in South Carolina extend taxes to cellphones, require students to learn about America's "founding principles," and fix a quirk in campaign finance law that has entangled many state officials.

The Legislature has passed dozens of measures in the final weeks of its session, which officially ends Thursday. A few of them:

PHONE CHARGES

Cellphone users will share the cost of phone services for rural customers and people with disabilities under a law Gov. Nikki Haley signed Wednesday.

Starting in January, the state's 1 million landline customers will pay less as fees extend to 4.5 million cellphones.

The law implements a Public Service Commission ruling in January that requires cellphone companies to pay into the state's universal service fund.

Landline customers have been paying since the Legislature created the fund in 1996 to ensure

affordable phone service in rural areas, where it's costly to extend and maintain lines.

The law caps payments to so-called telephone "carriers of last resort" and requires audits of how the money's spent.

It also requires cellphone customers to begin contributing toward services for hearing- and speech-impaired residents — a fee not addressed by the commission's ruling.

Currently, landline customers pay 25 cents monthly to ensure nearly 25,000 disabled customers can communicate by phone, plus nearly 3 percent of their bill for rural landlines. That will change to 6 cents and roughly 2 percent, respectively, applied to all phone bills.

CAMPAIGN DONATIONS

People running for office no longer have to abide by a quirky fundraising restriction if they advance to a primary runoff.

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runoff. Previously, they had to wait a week.

Runoffs are held two weeks after a primary. But under prior state law, the runoff cycle — for donation purposes — began seven days after the primary.

For a statewide race, donors can give up to \$3,500 per election cycle.

Before the June 2014 primaries, the South Carolina Ethics Commission issued an opinion reminding candidates about the law and cautioning them not to accept donations that put them over the per-cycle state limit. The seven-day rule is clear, but there's a perceived inconsistency, the commission wrote in opting not to punish violators from past elections.

Candidates in 2010 who had excessive contributions because of the seven-day rule included Haley and her Democratic foe, state Sen. Vincent Sheheen, as well as Attorney General Alan Wilson and his Democratic opponent.

EDUCATION MANDATES

Public schools must

teach the United States' "founding principles" under legislation Haley signed Thursday.

Its preamble stresses the importance of the Tenth Amendment, which says powers not given to the federal government are given to the states or the people.

The law requires the state Board of Education and Education Oversight Committee to include the "principles that shaped the United States" in classroom standards for social studies. It specifies lessons must include the Federalist Papers, the structure of government, the separation of powers doctrine, and freedoms guaranteed in the Bill of Rights.

State law already required instruction on the "essentials" of the U.S. Constitution, the Declaration of Independence and the Federalist Papers.

Another law signed Thursday requires all literacy coaches and teachers from kindergarten through third grade to undergo training in dyslexia before the school year starts in August.

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 Author: BY SEANNA ADCOX The Associated Press
 Size: 44.48 column inches
 Rock Hill, SC Circulation: 34688



S.C. LEGISLATURE

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The Associated Press

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FROM PAGE 3A

LAWS

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"The preservation of our great nation depends on strict adherence to the

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Before the June 2014 primaries, the South Carolina Ethics Commission issued an opinion remind-

SEE LAWS, 8A

10th Amendment and other principles that protect the states and the people from overzealous acts of all branches of the federal government," it reads.

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Title: **Many school proposals die in stalled legislation**
 Author: JAKE CROUSE FLORENCE NEWS
 Size: 49.91 column inches
 Greenville, SC Circulation: 113473



Many school proposals die in stalled legislation

JAKE CROUSE

FLORENCE NEWS

Gov. Nikki Haley laid out some specific policy ideas in her State of the State address in January to aid student success in rural and often impoverished school districts throughout the state. Many of these ideas, however, have yet to be considered or legislated on this session.

Most notably, a plan that would allow a \$200 million-a-year borrowing plan will die in the legislature this session, according to state senators last week. Schools that chose to use the fund would have to repay the loan, but no clear specifics were given for that time

window.

Though her intention was good with this point, says Chesterfield County Superintendent Harrison Goodwin, that program would do little to build new facilities or carry out significant revamping. His previous experience before leading school districts was in school facility construction, so he did some calculations to make his point.

"School construction right now is going between \$150-\$165 per square foot," he said. "You could build 1,212,000 square feet (with the \$200 mil-

lion-a-year plan). For a school the size of Cheraw High School, you could rebuild eight schools, and that's not much considering the number of schools in the state."

Florence County 5 Superintendent Randy Smiley wonders how rural and often impoverished school districts that Haley aims to help could even afford to accept the borrowed money.

"While developing a \$200 million borrowing program for school districts sounds good, it will only work if those districts can afford to pay the money back once the

funds are allocated," he said. "For most of the Abbeville districts, the millage rates are very low, requiring a large tax increase to generate funds for debt service."

Goodwin gave a more specific scenario to illustrate the same point.

"A million (dollars of taxes) in Chesterfield County for facilities would raise about \$200,000. A million in Marion County probably does not raise \$80,000," he said. "Many

See SCHOOLS, Page 8A

Schools

Continued from Page 3A

people are already poor, so how are you going to tax them two and a half times more (to pay back the loan)?"

Goodwin points to another issue that Haley addressed in her proposals, one which he says is more vital to good education than facilities: teacher quality and retention.

One measure Haley suggested would have provided a \$15 million fund to recruit teachers to serve in rural school districts that have a high rate of turnover. The program would pay back \$7,500 in student loans if a new

graduate in education were to teach in a district with a teacher turnover rate averaging 12 percent or higher over the past five years.

According to data put out by the South Carolina Center for Educator Recruitment, Retention, and Advancement, 25 school districts meet or exceed the 12 percent rate of teacher turnover, with single-year rates as high as 33.8 percent in some districts.

Some districts offer the loan-forgiveness plans if new education graduates sign to teach in their

district, and similar plans have been used by the State Department of Education in the past decade.

Another solution proposed by Haley would fund 10,000 remote "hot spots" that would provide Internet access in homes of impoverished students so that they could advance their studies while at home or while on the bus, depending on transportation time. That issue has yet to reach legislative consideration.

The conversation about funding for rural school district revitalization stemmed

from a court ruling in 2014. The case, Abbeville v. State of South Carolina, was first heard in 1993, and included every school district in the Pee Dee region except Darlington County among a 40-district list of plaintiffs.

After nearly two decades of deliberations and rehearings, the 2014 decision handed down by the state Supreme court found that the state had not provided the opportunity for a "minimally adequate education" implicit in its Code of Laws. The court charged the General Assem-

bly to come up with a system to address the issue by November 2015, but eventually gave in to time concerns from legislators and pushed emphasis toward the end of the 2016 legislative period, which ends in June.

A number of bills have been working their way through the General Assembly this year to address some issues in rural district education. One bill signed by Haley on May 23



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created an Office of Transformation that specialized in solutions for these districts. Another currently moving past its third rehearing would have the State Department of Education develop a system for providing assistance by the end of the calendar year, and run a professional development efficiency study that would allow districts information to see where they need more or less resources devoted.

Smiley, however, says that constant bypassing of and stalling on legislation, even those bills that may not work in his opinion, are taking the hardest toll on the future of South Carolina.

“Districts such as ours should not have to continue to wait till the legislature gets around to funding our most precious asset — our children,” he said.

Title: **Pickens County gets first female resident judge for family court**
 Author: RON BARNETT RBARNETT@GREENVILLENEWS.COM
 Size: 27.43 column inches
 Greenville, SC Circulation: 113473



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RON BARNETT

RBARNETT@GREENVILLENEWS.COM

Pickens County has a new Family Court judge.



Karen Roper

She is the first woman to be appointed by the General Assembly as a resident judge for Pickens County.

Roper is an attorney and founding partner of Roper Law Firm in Pickens. She will leave the law practice upon assuming her duties on the bench.

"I am delighted to have this opportunity to serve my community," she said. "I am humbled by the trust placed in me by the General Assembly, particularly the members of our local delegation, and will work diligently to ensure the Family Court continues to

support and encourage our families."

A native of Valdosta, Georgia, Roper received her undergraduate degree from the University of Georgia and her law degree from the University of South Carolina.

She established Roper Law Firm in 1997, with a focus on family law litigation. Her husband, attorney Ken Roper, joined the firm in 2001.

In addition to her legal work, she has served in various leadership roles with civic organizations in the community, including the Cannon Memorial Foundation Board, Leadership Pickens County, First Steps, Prevent Child Abuse, and the Pickens Women's Association.

Gov. Nikki Haley appointed Roper to the Anderson-Oconee-Pickens Mental Health Board in 2014.

As judge, Roper will preside over cases primarily in the 13th Judicial Circuit, covering Pickens and Greenville counties, but also will hear cases throughout

the state as assigned by South Carolina Court Administration.

The Family Court has exclusive jurisdiction over all matters involving domestic relationships and decides cases concerning marriage, divorce, separation, custody, visitation rights, termination of parental rights, adoption, child support, alimony, division of marital property, name changes, and juvenile matters.

Judicial candidates are screened through the Judicial Merit Selection Commission and undergo a law examination, interviews with the South Carolina Bar and the Upstate Citizen's Committee, and a public hearing before the Commission. After qualification and nomination, judges are elected by members of the South Carolina General Assembly.

Karen and Ken Roper are the parents of two sons, Carson and Hampton, who attend Pickens High School. She and her family are members of Pickens Presbyterian Church, where she is an Elder and Trustee.

Title: **New SC Laws: Cellphone fees, education mandates**
 Author: BY SEANNA ADCOX Associated Press
 Size: 43.09 column inches
 Beaufort, SC Circulation: 11269



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BY SEANNA ADCOX

Associated Press
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New laws in South Carolina extend taxes to cellphones, require students to learn about America's "founding principles," and fix a quirk in campaign finance law that has entangled many state officials.

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Title: **Handicapping the Republican primary for House District 81**
 Author: BY GARY BUNKER Columnist
 Size: 54.09 column inches
 Aiken, SC Circulation: 19635



COLUMN

Handicapping the Republican primary for House District 81

BY GARY BUNKER
 Columnist



Bunker

The June 14 House District 81 Republican primary hasn't captured the public imagination. This election so far fails my time-tested "water cooler test" based on whether

an issue is spontaneously brought up at the office. Is anyone paying attention?

This is a shame because four earnest, well-meaning and reasonably informed candidates are in the race: attorney Chris Austin, business owner Bart Blackwell, former financial planner and MBA student Jeremy O'Donnell and Realtor KT Ruthven.

Two questions present themselves: What differentiates the candidates? And can the race be handicapped?

I participated on the panel quizzing the candidates at the May 17 Aiken County Republican Party forum. There was unanimity in response to several questions.

All four favored the override of Gov. Nikki Haley's farm bill veto, a higher priority on road maintenance over new construction, increased appropriations for the Local Government Fund, term limits and greater governmental transparency.

Likewise, there was gen-

eral agreement to reform or overhaul the S.C. Department of Transportation. Ruthven went beyond the others in proposing the abolition of the State Infrastructure Bank.

To better encourage small business, opinion was diverse though nothing necessarily in opposition to one another. Blackwell pointed out that South Carolina ranks 37th out of the 50 states in a Tax Foundation index for business. He favored business friendly tax and regulatory reforms.

Austin advocated capital gains tax cuts and increased homestead exemptions to put more money in the hands of consumers. Ruthven credited low taxes for attracting residents to Aiken.

O'Donnell, who pledges to put the truth above politics, questioned how these tax cuts would be funded. Furthermore, he wanted to transition state pensions into a defined contribution plan.

The greatest area of disagreement was over taxes. Ruthven was dead set against any increase in the state gasoline tax. He thought additional road maintenance funding should come out of SCDOT restructuring and reprioritizations.

Austin wouldn't rule out a gas tax hike, but only if it was offset with tax cuts elsewhere. Blackwell sought SCDOT reforms and cost savings first, but didn't rule out

tax increases if necessary.

Lastly, O'Donnell favored a 5 cents per gallon increase. He proposed a plan where the additional revenue would save the state \$1 billion in interest versus borrowing schemes for road improvements without a tax hike.

Lastly, there were clear differences regarding the City of Aiken's hospitality tax. Blackwell, former chairman of the Greater Aiken Chamber of Commerce, reiterated his support for both the hospitality tax and the 2014 1-cent tax for school construction. Since the legislature allows municipalities to levy the hospitality tax, not taking advantage of the opportunity would be to "leave money on the table."

Ruthven, conversely, remained adamantly opposed to the hospitality tax. He fought passage of this tax because it would have initially funded a parking garage for a private hotel. Austin and O'Donnell expressed more measured opposition to the tax.

But how will this play out with the voters?

District 81 extends geographically from Graniteville, down Richland Avenue, and through the Silver Bluff Road and Whiskey Road corridors on Aiken's Southside.

It's a Republican district. But unlike the rest of Aiken County, Marco Rubio

edged past Donald Trump in February's presidential primary – particularly in the voter-rich Woodside and Gem Lakes precincts. Its Republicanism is slightly more "establishment" than "populist."

Absent polling, numerous Republican insiders think a runoff election is likely. The consensus is that Ruthven will come out on top, with Blackwell as his likely opponent.

This makes sense. Ruthven can draw support from Realtors, conservative activists and party regulars. As former chairman of the Aiken County Republican Party, he publicly opposed the hospitality tax and Syrian refugee resettlement in the state. Ruthven believes his long standing relationships with other legislators will give him a head start once he takes office.

Blackwell, however, has a strong network among the local business community from his Chamber of Commerce activities. Blackwell thinks his relevant experience in business and the United States Air Force puts him ahead of his three more youthful competitors.

Should Austin and O'Donnell be written off? Certainly not. O'Donnell hopes his experience and formal training in finance and economics will resonate with voters. Austin points to his "new perspectives and

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Size: 54.09 column inches
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different ways of thinking” as reasons to vote for him. Austin’s deep roots in the community are another factor in his favor.

In a four-way race, the unexpected may occur. Ruthven may be the nominal

front-runner, but victory belongs to whoever works the hardest to bring out the vote June 14.

Gary Bunker is a former member of Aiken County Council.

Title: **Cellphone fees, education mandates among new South Carolina laws**
 Author: BY SEANNA ADCOX The Associated Press
 Size: 47.27 column inches
 Myrtle Beach, SC Circulation: 61238



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The Associated Press
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The law caps payments to so-called telephone "carriers of last resort" and requires audits of how the money's spent.

It also requires cellphone customers to begin contributing toward services for hearing- and speech-impaired residents – a fee not addressed by the commission's ruling.

Currently, landline customers pay 25 cents monthly to ensure nearly 25,000 disabled customers can communicate by phone, plus nearly 3 percent of their bill for rural landlines. That will change to 6 cents and roughly 2 percent, respectively, applied to all phone bills.

CAMPAIGN DONATIONS

People running for office no longer have to abide by a quirky fundraising restriction if they advance to a primary runoff.

A law Haley signed Wednesday allows candidates to ask donors who maxed out their giving for a primary election to donate the next day for the runoff. Previously, they had to wait a week.

Runoffs are held two

weeks after a primary. But under prior state law, the runoff cycle – for donation purposes – began seven days after the primary.

For a statewide race, donors can give up to \$3,500 per election cycle.

Before the June 2014 primaries, the South Carolina Ethics Commission issued an opinion reminding candidates about the law and cautioning them not to accept donations that put them over the per-cycle state limit. The seven-day rule is clear, but there's a perceived inconsistency, the commission wrote in opting not to punish violators from past elections.

Candidates in 2010 who had excessive contributions because of the seven-day rule included Haley and her Democratic foe, state Sen. Vincent Sheheen, as well as Attorney General Alan Wilson and his Democratic opponent.

EDUCATION MANDATES

Public schools must teach the United States' "founding principles" under legislation Haley signed Thursday.

Its preamble stresses the importance of the Tenth Amendment, which says

powers not given to the federal government are given to the states or the people.

"The preservation of our great nation depends on strict adherence to the Tenth Amendment and other principles that protect the states and the people from overzealous acts of all branches of the federal government," it reads.

The law requires the state Board of Education and Education Oversight Committee to include the "principles that shaped the United States" in classroom standards for social studies. It specifies lessons must include the Federalist Papers, the structure of government, the separation of powers doctrine and freedoms guaranteed in the Bill of Rights.

State law already required instruction on the "essentials" of the U.S. Constitution, the Declaration of Independence and the Federalist Papers.

Another law signed Thursday requires all literacy coaches and teachers from kindergarten through third grade to undergo training in dyslexia before the school year starts in August.

Title: **SC'S LOST DECADE**
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SC'S LOST DECADE

Recession, politics cripple effort to rebuild state

RISE OF THE GOP, IMPACT OF THE GREAT RECESSION

When Mark Sanford took office as S.C. governor in 2003, all of Palmetto State government – the S.C. House, state Senate and Governor's Mansion – were controlled by Republicans for the first time.

Sanford entered office preaching limited government.

Time and again, he said the size of government – in dollars – should not increase more than the sum of inflation and population growth, or 6 percent a year, whichever was less.

Two years later, then-S.C. House Speaker David Wilkins, R-Greenville, touted the success of South Carolina's Republican revolution. Adjusted for inflation, state spending had increased by less than 4 percent since Republicans had taken control of the S.C. House a decade earlier in the early '90s.

Said Wilkins, "We changed the theme from, 'How do we generate more revenues to grow government?' to 'How do we reduce revenues to shrink government?'"

Republicans also continued their push – started in the late '80s under late GOP Gov. Carroll Campbell – to give the governor control of state agencies. That, they argued, would make government more business-like and efficient. Also, if a state agency that reported to the governor blew up, voters would have someone to hold accountable – the governor.

Three years later, the Great Recession struck, slashing state revenues and the size of state

government.

State general fund spending plummeted, falling to \$5.1 billion in 2010-11 from \$6.6 billion in 2007-08. Agencies that depend on the general fund – including K-12 education – saw their budgets whacked. Per-pupil K-12 spending in the general fund dove, plummeting to \$1,880 in 2011-12 from \$2,578 in 2008-09.

In the wake of the recession, state agencies that could raise fees fared better than agencies dependent on the general fund. For instance, colleges dramatically increased the amount they charged for tuition to offset the loss of state money.

Today, it is no secret that state agencies dependent on the general fund are underfunded.

Several state agencies – including Health and Environmental Control, Juvenile Justice and Social Services, agencies now controlled by the governor – have struggled with inadequate funding for years.

● **Education.** In the early 1990s, South Carolina's rural schools sued the state, alleging they were underfunded. In 2014, the S.C. Supreme Court agreed. Seeking re-election in 2014, Republican Gov. Nikki Haley, who grew up in rural South Carolina, took up their cause. This year, she decried decaying rural schools – where, she said, roofs leak and mold grows in unsafe structures.

● **Social Services.** After several children died while in the care of Social Services, a legislative investigation two years ago revealed some workers at the agency were carrying caseloads more than twice the nationally recommended norm. Social Services leaders also told legislators that, because of low pay,

they could not hire enough new workers to replace the employees who were quitting because of overwhelming work loads.

● **Transportation.** For two years, legislators have debated growing complaints about the condition of South Carolina's crumbling roads and bridges. Road-repair advocates have pointed to a solution: Raise the state's gas tax, the third-lowest in the nation, so that it is closer to the higher gas taxes of neighboring North Carolina and Georgia, giving the Department of Transportation more money to maintain roads. But the Republican lawmakers who control the Legislature – wary of defeat in low-turnout primaries, dominated by GOP activists who loathe tax hikes – have kicked the can down the road. For two sessions, legislators have debated the structure of the state's road agencies and raided the state's general fund – money

that otherwise could go to schools or Social Services – to make small down-payments on road repairs. Raiding the general fund – normally not used to pay for roads – is a stop-gap measure, not a solution, GOP leaders acknowledge. But, they add, a long-term solution will have to wait until next year.

● **Health and Environmental Control.** Last October, 31 state-regulated dams failed in a historic rain storm, causing tens of millions of dollars in damage. The collapses followed shrinking spending on dam inspections by the Department of Health and Environmental Control. For years, that program's budget – one of the most poorly funded in the country, according to the Association of State Dam Safety Officials –

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hovered around \$200,000 or less. After October's dam-busting rains, DHEC asked for \$595,000 more to increase its dam-safety staffing.

● **Juvenile Justice.** Earlier this year, a Columbia detention facility for youth offenders was wracked by riots. In response, Department of Juvenile Justice leaders told legislators that trouble recruiting and high turnover had led to a large number of vacancies among corrections officers who were supposed to control the facility. Among the vacancies: police chief and an anti-gang expert.

SEE NEEDED, 12A

SC'S REPUBLICAN REVOLUTION

Republicans have controlled South Carolina's Legislature and Governor's Mansion since 2003. During that period, the GOP has had three consistent goals - consolidating its power, giving the governor more power and lowering taxes.

TAKE POWER

FROM PAGE 11A

NEEDED: BETTER PRIORITIES? OR MORE MONEY?

GOVERNING FROM CRISIS TO CRISIS

After a crisis, lawmakers and Haley have agreed to spend money.

Last year, for example, legislators agreed to boost the pay of Social Services caseworkers. This year, almost three decades after the rural schools sued, the S.C. House agreed to borrow money to help those schools build new facilities. Senators may do so next year. This year, legislators also are promising to increase the pay of juvenile corrections officers, more money to add dam inspectors and proposing increased spend-

Republicans took control of the S.C. House in **1994**. Today, they hold almost two-thirds of the seats there.

The GOP took control of the Senate in **2001**. Today, they hold 24 of 46 seats.

The governor's mansion has been held by Republicans since **2003**, and **25 of the past 29 years**.

Meanwhile, S.C. Democrats lost their last statewide office - Education superintendent - in **2010**.

GIVE THE GOVERNOR MORE POWER

Starting with the late Carroll Campbell, Republicans slowly have won battles to give the governor more control - and the Legislature less control - over the administration of state government.

The vision is twofold.

No. 1. Legislators would give up direct control over agencies and, instead, exercise an oversight role,

ensuring the agencies were doing what they are paid to do. However, legislators only established oversight committees last year.

No. 2. Voters would have someone - the governor - to hold directly accountable for the promised more efficient, business-like operation of state agencies.

Has the restructuring produced the promised results?

You decide.

Three of the state's most troubled agencies - Health and Environmental Control, Juvenile Justice and Social Services - now are controlled by the governor. But voters have not held the governor - recently re-elected - accountable for those problems. Also, legislators this year are debating proposals to give the governor control of another troubled agency, the state Transportation Department.

However, legislators can claim their oversight helped

uncover many of the problems at Social Services and Juvenile Justice.

LOWERING OR RESTRAINING TAXES

Shortly after his election in 2002, Republican Gov. Mark Sanford began pushing the idea of a cap on state taxes.

Looking to slow the growth in state government, Sanford said state taxes should not go up more than 6 percent a year or the sum of population growth plus inflation.

Since 2007-8, the state's general fund spending has gone up a total of 6.8 percent, less than 1 percent a year. Meanwhile, the state's population has grown by 11 percent and inflation has totaled about 15 percent. Combined the two have averaged about 3 percent a year over the last nine years.

By Sanford's standard, that's a brilliant success, particularly considering that tax relief grew 20.8 percent during that period.

ing on roads, albeit from the general fund budget.

"There seems like there's always a crisis somewhere, and that's the one that gets the attention first," said state Sen. Harvey Peeler, R-Cherokee, a member of the Senate's budget-writing Finance Committee.

That's part of the problem, said state Rep. Gilda Cobb-Hunter of Orangeburg, ranking Democrat on the House's budget-writing Ways and Means Committee.

"We are reactionary as a Legislature," said Cobb-Hunter. "We don't do enough prevention spending. We wait until a

crisis."

After crises at her cabinet agencies, Gov. Haley said she

has reacted swiftly to find out what went wrong and how best to fix it. Lawmakers have agreed to spend more money at her recommendation, she says.

In an interview with The State newspaper, Haley said it's her responsibility to take care of her cabinet agencies. "I have to take care of them. I'm very hands-on. If there's a crisis, I have to lead on how to handle it."

Republicans blame problems at state agencies, in part, on waste and mismanagement. The solution, they add, is not more

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spending but more effective management of those agencies, including those now controlled by fellow Republican Haley.

"You've got to have people at the head of the agency who are capable of managing people and money, and they're paying attention to things," said Senate Majority Leader Shane Massey, R-Edgefield.

Others point the finger directly at Haley.

Asked about failures at state agencies, Senate President Pro Tempore Hugh Leatherman of Florence, a Republican but Haley foe, asked, rhetorically, "The agencies that have had problems – are they cabinet agencies?"

Haley said she accepts responsibility for how her agencies perform. Asked whether it's her responsibility to prevent crises from occurring, Haley said, "That's my hope ... to prevent something bad from happening."

But, she added, "When something happens, it's not about the problem. It's how quick are we going to fix it."

Democrats say Republicans are starving agencies to avoid raising taxes that could cost them elections.

"So many of our state agencies are now dysfunctional – a disgrace," state Sen. Vincent Sheheen, D-Kershaw, said recently. "I'm very sad about our state government. Sixteen years of Sanford and Haley have pretty much broken it."

"Republicans in the State House lack the backbone to get the job done," said House Minority Leader Todd Rutherford, D-Richland. "And why?"

"Because they are responsible to 15 percent of the people who live in their districts, that 15 percent that vote in primaries. That is the reason why they are scared to death to do their jobs."

"We can educate our children, fully fund local government and pay for our roads at the same time if we simply do

our jobs. We are asking that Republicans be more concerned with doing their jobs than keeping their jobs."

NEEDED: PRIORITIES, NOT SPENDING?

Lawmakers have spent most of this year talking about how to spend a windfall in tax dollars that added more than \$1 billion to the state's general fund, sending it to a record high.

The general fund – where individual and business income taxes and sales taxes are funneled – has grown by 6.8 percent since 2007-08, the fiscal year before the Great Recession. But that increase has been outpaced by growth in the state's population – 11 percent – and inflation – totaling about 15 percent.

Put another way, through its general fund, the state was spending \$100 to pay for services for 100 residents in 2007-08. Today, it is spending about \$91, in inflation-adjusted dollars, to pay for services for 111 residents.

One S.C. economist attributes the unwillingness of voters and state leaders to support more spending to a shift in attitudes about government, starting in the 1980s.

"It goes back to the emergence of an anti-government ideology that government is bad," said Holley Ulbrich, a retired Clemson University economics professor and senior fellow at the Strom Thurmond Institute. "Government isn't bad."

"Government just is."

Ulbrich said talk about making government more efficient goes only so far.

"Service industries (including most state government services) have limited potential for increases in productivity," Ulbrich said. "How do you increase the productivity of a public-school teacher? Put more kids in their class?"

Technology has improved, making some jobs more efficient, the economist said. "(But) we've also demanded more accountability, more security," which increases the demand for more workers.

"There's only so much blood you can get out of a turnip. There's only so much work you can get out of an employee, and that hasn't changed a lot."

But Senate Majority Leader

Massey said the state should not be hasty to increase its spending.

"I don't think that the population growth by itself necessarily means you've got to have government growth," he said.

Instead, Republicans say the state needs to set priorities, rather than spend more money.

Lawmakers are part of the problem, says former Gov. Sanford. Their narrow focus prevents wider discussions of shifting priorities, added the Republican, now a congressman from Charleston. "Everyone guards their territory very jealously."

Some agencies – including Juvenile Justice and Social Services – have a tough time winning more state money because they lack the powerful lobbying interests that other agencies can call on, Sanford said.

"There's no constituency for poor, impoverished kids," he said. "They have no one fighting for them."

There also is little focus.

For example, in 1985 and then again in 2006, while Sanford was governor, the Legislative Audit Council found Social Services had no policy for limiting its workers' caseloads. The council found the same problems again in 2014.

LOWERING ALREADY LOW TAXES

One focus, however, has been consistent – lowering taxes.

Last year, Haley said she would support a gas-tax increase

Title: **SC'S LOST DECADE**
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 Columbia, SC Circulation: 128564

to help pay for road repairs only if lawmakers agreed to reform highway spending and cut income taxes by a far larger amount. She billed it as the largest tax cut in state history.

In an interview with The State earlier this month, Haley said a tax cut was the right thing to do, given the amount of money lawmakers had on hand to spend.

"When you have a billion dollars in new money last year, and \$1.3 billion in new money this year, what was irresponsible was we overcharged the taxpayers," Haley said. "It doesn't mean, 'Oh, quick, spend it. ... Which agencies aren't at the (spending) level prior to 2008?'"

"You say, 'How can we give it back to the people so that they can spend it – so that they can improve the economy?'"

Haley also says S.C. income taxes remain too high.

"We are now the highest income tax state in the Southeast," Haley added. "I am feeling it in trying to recruit jobs, in talking to CEOs. ... They always ask about the 7 percent tax (rate)."

Since the recession, the General Assembly has put a priority on property tax relief, which has risen by more than 20 percent, or \$111 million.

"We take almost \$600 million off the top (in state spending) for the property-tax relief fund," Democrat Cobb-Hunter said. "A few years ago, we, as a General Assembly, said, 'You know what? It is more important to us that we provide taxpayer-homeowner relief than it is for us to

fund education or fix our roads.' That has become a sacred cow."

Earlier this month, Senate leader Leatherman put the cost of tax relief even higher, telling senators the budget proposal for the state's fiscal year that starts July 1 includes about \$1.3 billion in tax relief, most of it for homeowners.

Still, many South Carolinians think they are overtaxed or taxed enough already, the acronym of the GOP's Tea Party faction.

They are not, when compared to residents of other states, according to the conservative-leaning Tax Foundation.

The Tax Foundation issues an annual report, ranking states – 1 through 50; the higher the number, the lower the taxes – on taxes.

South Carolina ranks in the

top half only in "sin" taxes, including its taxes on beer, wine and liquor.

● The state's overall tax burden for state and local government ranks 42nd. State individual income tax collections rank 35th of 43 states with such a tax.

● Corporate tax collections rank 39th of 46 states with such taxes.

● Sales tax collections rank 33rd of 46 states with such taxes.

● Property taxes rank 46th.

Despite those comparatively low taxes, more cuts could be on the way.

Lawmakers now are considering a proposal to exclude military retirement benefits from state taxes. Estimates say the bill could shave \$18 million a

year from the state's tax revenues, money that otherwise could go to roads or schools.

Instead of cutting more taxes, Cobb-Hunter says the state should look at eliminating some of its hundreds of tax exemptions, which reduce the state's tax revenues by \$3 billion each year.

Those tax exemptions have been studied at least three times

in recent years. Each time, the study recommended that many of the exemptions be eliminated. Most recently, in 2010, a commission recommended repealing, amending or modifying more than 60 of the state's 80-plus tax exemptions. But, as happened at the end of the previous studies, legislators did not act.

"Everybody starts screaming and hollering, 'My ox is being gored,' " Cobb-Hunter said. "It's time to gore some oxen."

Democrat Cobb-Hunter says the GOP-led Legislature has done a bait-and-switch on taxpayers. Lawmakers have cut some taxes but raised the regressive sales tax as well as fees and fines – for everything from cars to fishing licenses, she said.

SEE 'IF PEOPLE...', 13A

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**WHEN SOMETHING HAPPENS,
IT'S NOT ABOUT THE
PROBLEM. IT'S HOW QUICK
ARE WE GOING TO FIX IT.**

Gov. Nikki Haley

FROM PAGE 12A

'IF PEOPLE ... ARE SATISFIED ... IT WILL NEVER CHANGE'

**'ASKING ... A WHOLE LOT
MORE ... FOR LESS'**

Collected outside the general fund, fees and fines, which includes college tuition payments, have risen by 40 percent since 2007-08 – six times faster than

the tax collections that make up the general fund.

But those higher fees do not help state agencies that depend on the state's general fund for money.

Several – including Health and

Environmental Control, Juvenile Justice and Social Services – have told legislators they need more money and staffing after cutbacks in the wake of the Great Recession.

Today, however, the general

Title: **SC'S LOST DECADE**

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Size: 468.87 column inches

Columbia, SC Circulation: 128564

fund pays for almost 15 percent fewer employees – 5,015 fewer positions – than it did in 2007-08.

“We are asking state employees to do a whole lot more work for less,” Cobb-Hunter said. “How can you do justice to a (Social Services) caseload that is ... twice what the recommendation is? Our workers are spread too thin.”

And state workers are paid too little, leaders at Juvenile Justice and Social Services have told lawmakers.

“Children are dying because we’re not paying enough (to retain caseworkers),” House Minority Leader Rutherford said.

Democrat Rutherford said the heads of state agencies that report to Republican Gov. Haley – including Juvenile Justice and Social Services – have been afraid to ask for more money.

“The reality is what we kept hearing from agency heads is that they were told, by the governor’s office, not to ask for more money,” Rutherford said. “They don’t want to look like the governor is asking for more money that she is unwilling to pay for by raising any taxes or fees.

“As Gov. Haley exits office, I hope this hangs around her neck like an albatross with what she did to the government and the state of South Carolina. Because all she did was try to underfund everything for years to say she never raised taxes, and we’re going to be paying for that the rest of our lives.”

Even some Republicans agree.

“The previous governor – Sanford – and maybe this governor (Haley) would not allow the cabinet agencies to ask what they felt like they needed,” Senate leader Leatherman said earlier this month.

Haley said she never tells agency heads not to ask for more money.

Each year, Haley says she sits

down with the directors of cabinet agencies to come up with a “game plan” for their agency’s budget and how to make improvements.

“We’re very involved in what we’re going to work on,” Haley said of her staff. “When we submit the budget, there is no reason to ask for more money because we came up with it together.

“Ask my directors,” she said. “If I threw money at them, they don’t necessarily want money. They want results, because that’s what they care about.”

Yet two of Haley’s cabinet directors – at Social Services and Juvenile Justice – testified before legislative committees that their staffing is not adequate. After last fall’s flooding, another agency the governor controls – Health and Environmental Control – asked for more money to double the staffing of its dam-safety program.

‘LOOK AT HOW WE DO BUSINESS’

Part of the solution?

Time, says Senate leader

Leatherman, the Florence Republican who also heads the Senate budget-writing committee.

Coming out of the recession, Leatherman notes the state had less money to spend. “So, we had to do more with what we had.”

However, if the state’s economy continues to grow and create jobs, spending might get back to prerecession levels. But, Leatherman added, it won’t be next year or in the short term.

Other Republicans insist higher spending is not the answer. Instead, legislators need to do a better job of prioritizing state spending and overseeing state agencies, they say.

“There are certain things money can’t buy,” said Haley, adding she’s been a “hands-on” executive, meeting with agency heads, getting “on the ground”

at state agencies to talk to front-line workers and helping leaders improve programs.

“I show up. I find out what the problem is. If there is ever an incident that happens, I sit down and find out what’s happened.”

Haley described her involvement at Social Services after child-welfare advocates raised questions about children dying while in the agency’s care. She said she took a similar course of action at Juvenile Justice after recent riots.

“I don’t look as much at the dollar as I look at the result,” she said. “We have 15 percent less state employees than we had when I started.

“To me, they’re working smarter.”

GOP lawmakers say they are taking a similar approach.

Last year, the General Assembly formalized its oversight role, starting House and Senate committees to review all state agencies, a process that could take years, but should help lawmakers better determine priorities.

“We need to look at how they do business,” Senate Majority Leader Massey said, referring to state agencies. “And figure out where the services are going to be.”

Now, lawmakers do not get a full view of agencies and their spending during annual budget meetings, Massey said.

“It’s limited to a brief discussion in a subcommittee hearing about: How much money do you need to do certain things?” Massey said. “We haven’t really gotten into policy very much. We haven’t looked under the hood very much. It’s a long-term process to get that changed, because it’s a culture change.”

Better oversight would give lawmakers more knowledge about the agencies requesting money, Massey said. And the result could require some in-

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vestment, he added.

"We've got to do a better job of paying our employees and ensuring the sustainability of the retirement system and the benefit packages that we offer," Massey said. "But I don't know that that means the government needs to bring in more money from the citizens. It may mean that we just need to do a better job of prioritizing what we have."

House Ways and Means Committee chairman Brian White,

R-Anderson, said he is conducting a review of budget priorities to avoid shortfalls in case of another economic downturn. He expects to finish in time for next year's session.

"We are trying to get away from (being) reactionary," said White, whose committee writes the House's version of the state budget. "A lot of it goes around salaries. Instead of hiring more, let's pay what we have."

"State agencies say, 'We need more people,'" said White. "That might be the case, but let's look at the turnover rate. Let's retain them."

Already, White says he knows one area where more money is needed.

"Next year, you're going to have to look at the gas tax," he said. "You're going to have to look at other things to get a steady revenue stream" for road repairs.

'WE HAVE FAILED THE PEOPLE'

Democrat Rutherford says that sounds like more of the same.

For 15 years, Republicans have talked about running government more like a business, and eliminating waste and fraud.

"I have challenged those people to find out where those inefficiencies are, to find out where that fraud is," Rutherford said. "Is government perfect? Absolutely not. Is private industry perfect? Absolutely not. Perfection is found only in God. For the rest of us, we have to suffer and make do with what we have. ..."

"We have failed the people of South Carolina," he said. "Right

before the Great Recession and now, we have all this money and what did we do? We let taxpayers down. We raided the general fund to pay for roads, and now we can't pay for anything else."

Democrat Cobb-Hunter says the state should raise taxes.

"If people in this state are satisfied with driving on bad roads, with having poorly educated children, it will never change," she said. "What the public has got to understand is that they have to hold us accountable and stop falling for the okie-doke."

Former staffer Andrew Shain also contributed

“

WHAT THE PUBLIC HAS GOT TO UNDERSTAND IS THAT THEY HAVE TO HOLD US ACCOUNTABLE AND STOP FALLING FOR THE OKIE-DOKE.

State Rep. Gilda Cobb-Hunter, D-Orangeburg

FAILING MOTORISTS AND BUSINESSES

For two years, legislators have debated how to pay to repair S.C.'s crumbling roads and bridges. This year, they are poised to take money from the state's general fund — which pays for schools, child safety, dam safety and other services — to make a down-payment on the billions needed for roads. It won't be enough, lawmakers acknowledge, but a long-term fix will have to wait until at least next year.



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Columbia, SC Circulation: 128564



Sanford



C MICHAEL BERGEN mbergen@thestate.com

FAILING POOR SCHOOLS

In 1993, poor schools sued the state, saying they were underfunded. Two decades later, the state's highest court agreed. This year, the S.C. House has passed a proposal to borrow up to \$200 million to help those schools. Senators could act next year.

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SC'S LOST DECADE: WINNERS AND LOSERS

A series of state agencies now are saying they can't do their jobs because of underfunding. But there have been budget winners since 2007-08, too. A look at some of the winners and losers (unadjusted for inflation of about 15 percent during that period):

WINNERS

+ 63%

Total increase, counting **federal and state money**, for the state Department of Transportation. Funding for the agency has increased to \$1.6 billion from \$1 billion, including a \$49.9 million increase in money from the state's general fund.

+ 20.8%

\$111.2 million increase in spending in the state's general fund for property tax relief

+ 19.1%

\$182.7 million increase in general fund spending for Medicaid, the joint federal-state insurance program for the poor and disabled

+ 1.8%

Increase - to \$104.5 million from \$102.7 million - in general fund spending for Juvenile Justice, the state's corrections system for juveniles; however, total spending by the agency, including federal money, has **decreased by 8 percent**

LOSERS

- 3.9%

Drop in general fund spending for the S.C. Department of Social Services, the agency responsible for - among other things - the safety of endangered children

- 10.3%

Drop in per-student state funding of K-12 education to **\$2,200** in 2015-16 from **\$2,476** in 2007-08. While they now get less money per pupil, K-12 schools have about **37,000 more students today** than in 2007-08. K-12 schools do get money from other sources, including the federal government, a penny added to the state's sales tax for schools in the '80s and a small part of the profits from the S.C. lottery, started in 2002.

- 10.7%

Drop in general fund spending for the state Highway Patrol, **down \$5.6 million** from 2007-08; the patrol has **17 percent fewer troopers on the road today** than in 2007

- 14.9%

Fewer state employees paid from the general fund, **down 5,015** from 33,721 in 2007-08; other state employees are paid by federal dollars and from fees and fines, including tuition payments

- 24%

Drop in general fund payments to local governments - counties and cities - for services they provide for the state

- 24.9%

Drop in general fund spending on higher education, **down \$207 million** from 2007-08; S.C. colleges do have other sources of income, including federal grants and tuition and fee payments by students

- 27%

Drop in general fund spending for the S.C. Department of Health and Environmental Control, the agency responsible for - among other things - regulating dams; however, total spending at the agency, including federal money, has **increased by 4.1 percent**



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**FAILING CHILDREN**

After its caseworkers dropped by almost 20 percent — with some overseeing more than 100 children, more than twice the recommended work load — Social Services told legislators it needed more than 200 new staffers. Meanwhile, the mother of five slain Lexington County children (above) sued the agency, saying it had failed repeatedly to intervene to ensure their safety.



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UNDERSTANDING SC'S BUDGET

The state of South Carolina's budget is complex. Start with the question: How big is it? The answer is not simple. S.C. legislators and the state's governor spend six months every year debating the state's general fund budget, made up largely of revenues from corporate and individual income taxes and the state's sales tax. But the state also gets money from the federal government, and from fines and fees. And those revenues exceed the general fund. A look at the state's three revenues streams, what they include and how they have changed since 2007-08.

+ 6.8%

*Increase in the general fund – made up of corporate and individual income taxes, and 4 cents of the state's 6-cent-on-the-dollar sales tax. The general fund totaled **\$7 billion** in 2015-16 and made up **29 percent** of total spending, down from **33 percent** in 2007-08.*

+ 18%

*Increase in federal funds, including federal money for Medicaid, education and transportation. Federal spending totaled **\$8.1 billion** in 2015-16 and made up **33 percent** of total spending, down from **34 percent** in 2007-08.*

+ 40%

*Increase in "other funds," including court fines, hunting and driving licenses, park admission fees, college tuition payments, the education lottery, part of the sales tax and a host of other sources. Other funds totaled **\$9.4 billion** in 2015-16, making up **38 percent** of total spending, up from **33 percent** in 2007-08.*

+ 21%

*Increase in total spending – general funds, federal money and "other funds" – to **\$24.5 billion** in 2015-16 from **\$20.3 billion** in 2007-08. During that same period, South Carolina's population increased **11 percent** and inflation totaled **about 15 percent**, or a combined **26 percent**.*