

Title: **Rep. Corley arrested, charged with domestic violence**  
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# Rep. Corley arrested, charged with domestic violence

BY MAAYAN SCHECHTER  
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South Carolina Rep. Chris Corley has been arrested after police say he assaulted his wife and pointed a handgun at her.

Corley, 36, who represents Graniteville in Aiken County in the South Carolina House of Representatives, was arrested Tuesday by the Aiken County Sheriff's Office.

Arrest warrants for Corley show he has been charged with first-degree domestic violence and pointing and presenting firearms at a person.

Warrants state Corley, in the presence of an 8-year-old child, did "cause physical harm and injury" to the victim, by "striking her about the head and face with a closed fist and further did, after threatening to kill the victim, point a Smith & Wesson ... handgun at the victim causing her to fear for her life."

Deputies responded on Monday to a home on the 100 block of Sugar Hill Drive in Granite-



Corley

ville, where a woman said Corley, who she identified as her husband, hit her in the face with his fist and said he was going to kill her while children were in the home, police reported.

A police report lists two juveniles.

The woman told deputies Corley was "caught cheating."

According to police, the woman said Corley only stopped assaulting her because he heard kids screaming and noticed blood coming from her head.

Corley, according to the victim, then went to a car, where he came back inside and pointed a handgun at the woman and said he was going to kill himself, and then went into the bedroom.

The woman fled the home with the children to a family member's house across the

## Online

This story will be updated at [northaugustastar.com](http://northaugustastar.com).

street, the report said.

Corley told police that he and the woman got into a verbal argument, because the victim thought he was cheating on her. He said the woman attempted to strike him in the face with her fist, where he then pushed the victim off of him.

Corley said during the push, the woman scratched him in the forehead.

Corley remained in the Aiken County detention center on Tuesday.

A bond hearing has been scheduled for 3 p.m. today.

State Sen. Tom Young, R-Aiken, chair of the Aiken County Legislative Delegation, called the incident, "a very unfortunate situation," and he was praying for both Corley and his family.

House Speaker Jay Lucas' Office said Lucas has been made

aware of the pending charges against Corley and will continue to monitor the situation.

"If and when an indictment is issued, the Speaker will take the necessary action to comply with the law and maintain the dignity of the House of Representatives. Because the matter is still under investigation, further inquiries should be directed to the Second Circuit Solicitor's Office."

S.C. GOP Chairman Matt Moore said, "I trust the legal system to deal with these disturbing charges against Rep. Corley in a timely manner. Until then, our thoughts and prayers are with his wife and children."

A request for comment from Gov. Nikki Haley's Office was not immediately returned.

The sometimes brash and controversial lawmaker has continued to make headlines since he took office in 2014 after easily defeating Democrat Rosie Berry for the House District 84 seat.

Title: **'Making smiles along the way'**  
 Author: BY JENNA-LEY HARRISON [jharrison@journalscene.com](mailto:jharrison@journalscene.com)  
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# 'Making smiles along the way'

Parents still mourn  
son, seek to help  
other families

BY JENNA-LEY HARRISON  
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It's the second Christmas without their only son, his Green Wave jerseys — one football, one baseball — still draped across the dining room chairs inside their Coosaw Creek home.

But Glenn and Sandra Rabon,

parents of Glenn Forrest "Tripp" Rabon Jr., are more than grieving the teen's short life; they are using the time since his passing to actively engage in projects they hope will prevent other families from suffering the same loss that shat-

tered their hearts a year ago.

In the early morning hours of Dec. 23, 2015, the couple were tucked in bed sleeping — 17-year-old Tripp on his way with three friends to Colleton County to go duck hunting. But

the teen never made it home.

Just before 6 a.m. the vehicle carrying the Summerville High

Please see **TRIPP**, Page A5

## Tripp

from A1

School seniors hit water, slid off Highway 64 near Ritter Road, and crashed into a tree.

Tripp died instantly. His parents said passengers who survived the wreck told them that though Tripp wasn't belted at the time of the crash, he was belted up until his final few seconds. Just before the accident, Tripp removed his seat belt to reach in the front of the vehicle to grab his phone, the Rabons said they learned. But a seat belt wouldn't have saved their son's life. They said the crash investigation revealed Tripp was still seated in the vehicle at the wreck scene.

"He was in his seat in the fetal position," Glenn Rabon said.

During a sit-down interview with the Journal Scene earlier this month, the Rabons continued to fight back tears when recalling the accident — the cause of which was determined to be "water on the roadway" by the South Carolina Highway Patrol's Multi-Disciplinary Accident Investigation Team.

Summerville High's leadership class remembered him during a special gathering this month at Herbert H. Jessen Public Boat Landing in Summer-

ville.

The group lit several Japanese paper lanterns, marked them with memories and messages to Tripp, and sent them soaring into the night sky. Perhaps they were hoping to remind themselves of the same inner light Tripp spread with his spirit and smile. In fact, it's his smile that loved ones have said most defined the teen.

His family marked his grave-stone with a fitting message Tripp penned himself: "To be my best and learn the most, making smiles along the way."

"It was his personal mission statement for leadership class," Sandra Rabon said.

### 'Political problem, not a road problem'

While the Rabons are concerned about the condition of the road where Tripp lost his life, they said they are most upset about the condition of all roads across the state and how the Department of Transportation is not operating as efficiently and responsibly as it should.

Simply put, it's a systematic problem in the family's mind.

"The DOT doesn't function right," Glenn Rabon said. "There's a whole lot of negligence by the DOT surrounding Tripp's accident."

One of the family's goals is to urge DOT to create a prioritized list of substandard infrastructure. They charge that over the years the state organization has used too much funding on beautification efforts rather than safety fixes and proper upkeep.

Last month, Gov. Nikki Haley sat down with the Rabons to hear their plea. The hurting parents said she shared similar uneasiness about DOT but explained she has no authority over it. She did encourage the Rabons to use social media to spread word about their worries.

"Haley doesn't run the DOT; it's run by a board so you have a matrix organization trying to fix stuff across the state," Glenn Rabon said.

And what "stuff" is receiving priority—and by whom—has piqued the family's curiosity. They said they believe legislators are giving top priority to projects and line items in their own individual districts. "It's a political problem, not a road problem,"

said Emily Rabon, Tripp's oldest sister and a teacher at Ashley Ridge High School.

In addition, the Rabons said they're tired of hearing "money" as a solution to their concerns. Sandra Rabon believes the solution to certain road fatalities is simpler than that. "It's just people doing their job," she said of DOT.

Her husband echoed her thoughts. "The response we are getting from the DOT is, 'Yeah, we agree with you, we need more money,' but my argument isn't that," Glenn Rabon said. "People throw money at problems, but sometimes it's not the root problem; it's the system, and in our case that wouldn't have helped Tripp. It would have been someone caring and doing their job."

The Rabons are now trying to enact legislation to change how DOT operates, in addition to devising a phone application. In cooperation with a software company, the family is reviewing a prototype. Similar to an Amber alert, it would notify a user—when driving—of any nearby roadway obstacle: crash, flood, stalled vehicle.

According to Tripp's second

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sister Lydia Rabon, people can update the app by reporting safety hazards they spot while traveling. The family would also like for law enforcement and DOT to update the app with information only they receive.

The Rabons are also working on a third related initiative. Through the nationwide non-profit BRAKES—short for “Be Responsible and Keep Everyone Safe”—and the help of Dorchester District Two, they are offering a two-day driving school and crash avoidance class for teen drivers.

The event is scheduled for February. A drag racer started the nonprofit after he lost his two sons in a car crash in 2008. For more information or to register for the upcoming class, visit [putthebrakeson.org](http://putthebrakeson.org).

Last month the Rabons used [change.org](http://change.org) to start a petition for new state legislation, “Tripp Rabon’s Law.” In less than a month, it’s received nearly 6,000 signatures. The petition is addressed to seven state officials including Haley, five local legislators, and Robby Robbins, DOT commissioner for the 1st Congressional District.

The petition states “it’s time to take action” to fix state roadways. Why? They are “literally killing people.”

“No more meetings, audits, reports, or studies,” the petition says. “(Tripp’s) time on Earth was cut short due to no fault of his own—only the hazardous conditions of the South Carolina roads were to blame.”

The Rabons said it’s taken them months to act—to gain enough strength to start living again and thinking positively after their loss. The couple admitted to not leaving the house for months after Tripp’s death, and choosing not to put up a Christmas tree this year, since he was the one who put it up last

year.

Yet they want to prevent deaths and save others from suffering their same emotional pain.

“The thought of someone else going through what we’ve been through,” Sandra Rabon said, shaking her head at the thought. “You live with (the grief) every second of every day.”

### What do officials say?

In addition to Haley, Sen. Sean Bennett, R-Dorchester, shares some of the same sentiments about DOT as the Rabons. In fact, he met with the family earlier this month.

“They share some of the concerns and frustrations that many of us feel about the bureaucracy that is DOT,” Bennett said.

He said “road repair and improvement” is “at the heart of” Tripp’s crash. Bennett said last year the Senate had a plan to reform DOT, but the plan was blocked “by out of state interests” and people who misrepresented it.

However, in the spring the state agency did make some changes—changes Bennett said he hopes “can have an impact on most of the Rabons’ concerns.”

What remains an issue in the senator’s mind is the need for a dedicated funding source for transportation infrastructure reform. But with the help of Sen. Paul Campbell, R-Berkeley, and a few other legislators, Bennett said he’s already pre-filed a related bill for the upcoming legislative session. The comprehensive tax reform package, if passed, would add \$700 million in dedicated funding to road repair. Though the bill would raise the motor fuel user fee by 12 cents, it would also lower other taxes as a result.

“This, combined with the governance reforms of last year, would be a game changer,” Bennett said.

According to Robbins, Tripp’s

accident is “very familiar” to him, but he’s unable to go into much detail. He did offer the family his personal condolences and assured the Journal Scene that the DOT as a whole is thinking about the local family. Robbins said his own daughter was a close friend of Tripp’s.

“My heart goes out to the Rabon family. ... There is nobody on the DOT not sharing in the (their) grief,” Robbins said.

“I am not at liberty to comment on the accident or the legislation,” Robbins said. “If a bill is offered in either the House or Senate, I am certain that I, along with Secretary Hall, will discuss its contents with the sponsor.”

Robbins said he believes DOT Secretary Christy Hall “is doing everything she can to make S.C. roadways the best they can be” and that the organization is “running a whole heck of a lot better than it did four to five years ago.”

### The impact of one

Tripp’s classmates have since turned 18, graduated from high school, and many completed a semester of college.

They are home for the holidays and chatting about memories they’ve already made at Clemson, Tripp’s dream school. Though he was accepted, he never read the letter. His family said it arrived in the mail shortly after his death.

In the last year, not a day goes by that each of his sisters and parents don’t encounter a Tripp picture or memory. Sandra Rabon, in particular, said texts and calls from his friends bombard her phone nearly daily, and it warms her heart to know the impact her son had on so many.

“We’ve had so much support it’s just been unbelievable,” Sandra Rabon said. “People tell us story after story about how he changed their lives (so) we start-

ed writing them down.”

The Rabons pointed out one commonality among the messages and memories. Most start with the same phrase: “Tripp was so excited about ...”

Some friends have even marked their bodies with Tripp’s

favorite Bible verse—Ecclesiastes 3. The verse is also etched on his gravestone.

Tripp’s friendliness transcended cliques and championed the underdog, his family said, because more than loved ones—his girlfriend Molly included—he loved God, and sought to shine a light of faith. “I always told him, ‘Make someone smile today,’ and he literally took that to heart,” Sandra Rabon said.

Most memorable to Tripp’s family now is a class project he turned in days before the accident.

It featured a timeline with major life moments, some from his past and some yet to happen.

He wrote that he planned to attend Clemson and marry his high school girlfriend. He also marked the year he’d win the lottery and start his own business as an engineer, like his dad—a future goal Glenn Rabon was proud to see.

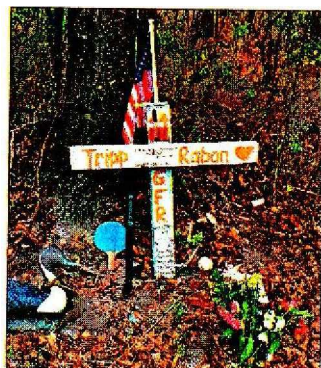
Tripp also hoped to live long and die peacefully — predicting his death in the year 2098, sitting in a rocking chair, at the age of 99.

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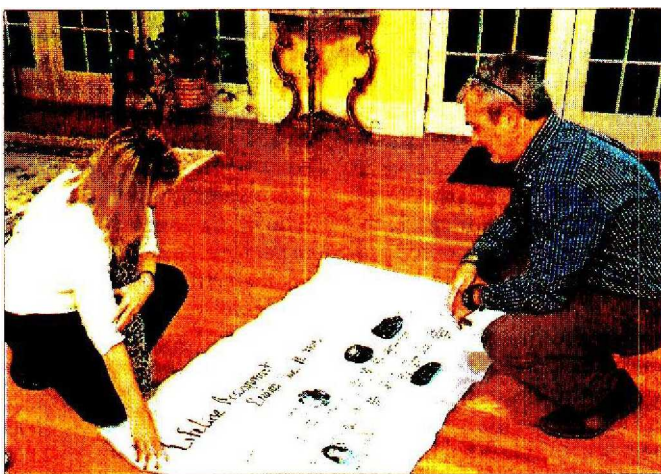
CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

**Tripp was a Summerville High School baseball and football player.**

JENNA-LEY HARRISON/  
JOURNAL SCENE

**A cross displayed at the Colleton County crash site where Summerville teen Tripp Rabon died in December 2015.**

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JENNA-LEY HARRISON/JOURNAL SCENE

**Inside their Coosaw Creek home, Tripp's parents Sandra and Glenn Rabon look over a class project, a timeline of their son's life, the teen turned in at school just days before his untimely death.**

Title: **Hurricane Matthew: Recovery continues**

Author: BY LIZ BLOOM JASPER COUNTY SUN TIMES liz.bloom@jaspercountysun.com

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## MOMENT OF 2016

# Hurricane Matthew: Recovery continues

## \$1.2 million grant will go to improve shelter

BY LIZ BLOOM  
 JASPER COUNTY SUN TIMES  
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Hurricane Matthew was the story of the year, and the county continues to recover.

After the October Category 2 storm, South Carolina Gov. Nikki Haley, who has since been named UN Ambassador for the Trump Administration, declared Jasper County a disaster area, making it eligible for federal FEMA Public Assistance (PA) and Individual Assistance (IA) funding. Jasper had more than 1,000 people register with FEMA.

The effects have been longstanding. The county is still working on cleanup and other recovery efforts.

Citizens and the local government

have worked hard to help lessen the impact of the storm. Pastor Henry Criss of Faith Ridgeland worked with Voluntary Organizations in Active Disaster (VOAD) and other emergency relief organizations to help individuals recover.

"We discovered needs in Jasper County and identified that not all were disaster driven needs - things like food and housing security," Criss said. "We want to build back better, a more resilient recovery, to not just get things back to how they were, but better and more prepared."

Criss has helped residents get access to food, or find temporary housing while housing repairs were

being done, or register people with FEMA. Each person has unique needs and the county as a whole has its own set of needs.

"We're trying to ensure no one is falling through the cracks. There's no one-size-fits-all solution," Criss said. "In Jasper there was not a lot of impact (in comparison to Beaufort) and individual impact differs from total impact. There's great need, but not necessarily disaster driven, just disaster exacerbated."

While Criss and local organizations help relieve the individual needs, Jasper County government is working to repair the county as a whole, focusing

SEE HURRICANE, PAGE 6

## Hurricane

FROM PAGE 1

on debris removal.

### \$1.2 million grant

The county has two contracts for debris removal, one for direct debris cleanup with Crowder Gulf, and another for debris management to supervise the debris cleanup. The county has held these contracts since Jan. 2014 and at the Dec. 5 council meeting, voted to exercise a two-year contract extension.

"When there's an event like that (Hurricane Matthew), they are activated and they help remove debris to clear roadways throughout the county. And that's on county and private roads," County Administrator Andrew Fulghum said. "Once those roads are cleared the debris is placed in the right

of way of the road — that process was very quick for Jasper County. The next step is that the state DOT, who also has a debris removal contract that kicks in.

"The state then approached us, and then they remove all the debris in the right of way and off of state roads. That process is taking all of that debris to use the county owned property at Cypress Ridge Industrial Park. They are stockpiling all of that debris at

Cypress Ridge. They then are going to chip it on site, leave some for firewood. And then anyone who wanted to use that can come get it for free."

Debris removal has been the biggest problem. Fulghum said those who didn't chop and break down debris themselves struggled with what to do with it. But the debris removal problem in Jasper was not nearly the size

of that in Hilton Head or Bluffton. Jasper County did not apply for FEMA funds for debris removal on county and private roads. FEMA funds that the county applied for were used to pay salary and overtime costs for emergency services workers and cleanup of state roads.

The debris removal is ongoing and workers from the state are still clearing road right of ways.

The county recognizes the need for preparation. Ridgeland-Hardeeville High remains a storm and evacuation shelter - it was activated during Hurricane Matthew. The county recently received a \$1.2 million grant to make improvements to the shelter to ensure all utilities work and so it can house more people; be used for those with special needs, such as medical needs; and for animals.

Title: **Hurricane Matthew: Recovery continues**  
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The current maximum occupancy at the school is 1,100, but the grant would allow up to 5,000 (general population) and 250 for medical needs. It also will be pet friendly.

“Chief Wilbur Daley’s deputy, Russell Wells, has been working on that a good year prior to the event (Hurricane Matthew) and it has been funded,” Fulghum said. “They are in the process of getting that together which involves serious generation of the facility and providing storm shutters to make the

building even more secure — simple things like that. The effort to really beef up that shelter is something we are continuing to work on.”

The county has been working on a review of the hurricane, headed by Chief Daley, to understand what went well and what can be improved in regards to emergency response and disaster prep for Jasper.

The county has met with local neighborhood community leaders from the more rural areas in the county, Levy and Tarboro. The county has recog-

nized the need for a stronger digital presence to improve communication.

During the storm the power outage made receiving news and updates difficult. Most people relied on cell phones to access news from sites such as Facebook, Twitter or the Jasper County Sun Times website.

Council chairman Marty Sauls hosted several FacebookLive sessions during the storm.

Going forward the county plans to develop that digital presence.



Anthony Garzilli/Jasper County Sun Times

**Trees on the side of the road have been a familiar post-storm sight.**

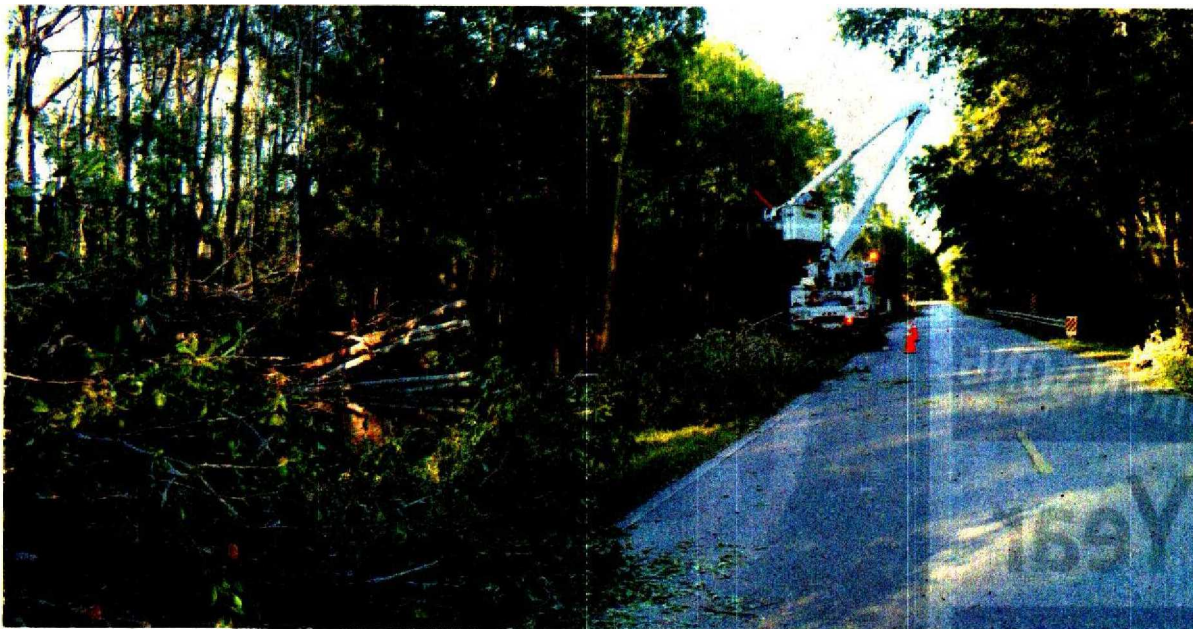
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Photo special to Jasper County Sun Times

**Hurricane Matthew ripped through the county in October. The county is still recovering. A \$1.2 million grant will go toward improving the shelter at Ridgeland-Hardeeville High.**

Title: **Hurricane Matthew: Recovery continues**  
Author: BY LIZ BLOOM JASPER COUNTY SUN TIMES liz.bloom@jaspercountysun.com  
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Siobhan Egan/Special to Jasper County Sun Times

**Downed power lines were repaired after the storm. Much of the repair work focused on debris removal.**

Title: **Deputies say state representative beat wife and pointed gun at her**  
 Author:  
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# Deputies say state representative beat wife and pointed gun at her

COLUMBIA (AP) — A South Carolina House member who rebuked his colleagues in a Christmas card for lacking morals when they took down the Confederate flag is accused of beating his wife and pointing a gun at her, deputies said.

Officers in Aiken County charged Rep. Chris Corley with a pair of felonies that could send him to prison for up to 15 years after he attacked his wife during an argument over his infidelity late Monday night at their home in Graniteville, according to a police report.

The couple's young children were there, and the wife took the family to her mother's house across the street after Corley threatened to kill her, then said he would kill himself, the report said.

Corley's wife said he stopped hitting her only after noticing she was bleeding and hearing the children screaming, deputies said.

Corley told officers his wife tried to punch him after accusing him of cheating, and the police report noted a

scratch on his forehead.

Corley is charged with first-degree criminal domestic violence, which carries up to 10 years in prison if convicted, and pointing a firearm at a person, which has a maximum sentence of five years. Neither charge has a minimum punishment.



**CORLEY**

A judge set Corley's bond at \$20,000 and ordered him to not contact his wife. Corley didn't talk about the charges during his brief hearing Tuesday afternoon.

The 36-year-old Republican lawyer was just elected to a second term.

Corley's arrest comes after a legislative session where lawmakers strengthened punishments for domestic violence. Gov. Nikki Haley made it a priority to reduce the state's high rate of women killed by men who know them. Corley voted for the legislation.

House Speaker Jay Lucas promised

in a statement to take action if Corley is indicted. By state law, Corley must be suspended from the House if indicted on a felony charge.

Corley may be best known in the House as a staunch defender of the Confederate flag. After the flag was removed from Statehouse grounds in July 2015, Corley sponsored a bill for a statewide vote on whether to return it. The bill went nowhere. He also sent a Christmas card with the Confederate flag on it to Republican lawmakers in 2015 after the flag came down suggesting they "ask for forgiveness of all your sins such as betrayal," calling it a joke in his smart-aleck style. Democrats got a card with a photo of his children.

Corley's holiday card started with: "May your Christmas be filled with memories of a happier time when South Carolina's leaders possessed morals, convictions and the principles to stand for what is right."

Title: **Possible corruption charges loom over 2017**  
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## SC Legislature

# Possible corruption charges loom over 2017

BY SEANNA ADCOX  
 Associated Press

COLUMBIA — Following the 30-count indictment of a former state House majority leader, questions over who else may face corruption charges will loom over the 2017 legislative session.

The misconduct and ethics charges announced Dec. 14 against 16-year veteran GOP Rep. Jim Merrill — the first since former Speaker Bobby Harrell pleaded guilty and resigned more than two years ago — ended all speculation that lawmakers could breathe easy.

And prosecutor David Pascoe made clear he's not done.

"This is still an ongoing investigation," he said in his Dec. 14 statement.

He repeated that to a judge on Thursday, when Merrill was allowed to remain free from jail without paying a bond.

Merrill, majority leader from 2004 to 2008, is accused of illegally profiting from his position. The indictments allege his public relations and political consulting firm, Geechie Communications, collected more than \$1 million between 2002 and 2016 from clients who hired him because of his office. That includes \$276,600 the GOP caucus paid his company for political mailers and ads.

He's accused of being a lobbyist and sponsoring legislation beneficial to two clients — one of which became law.

Ten of the counts accuse him of not reporting income from clients who lobby state government on 2008-2013 annual cam-

paign disclosure reports.

Merrill adamantly denies doing anything illegal. His attorneys point to opinions issued by the House Ethics Committee and Attorney General Alan Wilson saying it's not illegal for a legislative caucus to hire and pay a majority leader's business.

"For over 20 years, his vocation and livelihood have been in the field of advertising, direct mail, and public relations," their statement said.

But those opinions are just that — nonbinding interpretations of the law. They don't have weight in court.

And Pascoe said Thursday Merrill overcharged the House

See **ETHICS**, Page 3A

## Ethics

From Page 1A

GOP caucus for work he essentially sent himself. While Merrill told investigators he added a "modest markup," evidence shows it was "more like 50, 75, sometimes over 100 percent," Pascoe said.

Though Wilson handed the Harrell case to Pascoe in 2014, citing a conflict, it's been just five months since the state Supreme Court gave Pascoe permission to continue. Wilson, a Republican, tried to fire Pascoe, a Democrat, in March, saying he lacked the authority to open a

state grand jury to investigate beyond Harrell. The justices disagreed.

"How many other people will be criminally charged before it's all over with?" said John Crangle of Common Cause, who's been pushing for ethics reform for 30 years. "It's hard to predict."

But Crangle said he's heartened to finally see state law enforcement willing to take on Statehouse corruption, rather than leave that to federal prosecutors. A 1990 FBI investigation called Operation Lost Trust resulted in 27 convictions or guilty pleas of state legislators and lobbyists on charges including bribery, extortion and obstruction of justice.

The Legislature passed ethics laws in the operation's wake but left plenty of loopholes that remain decades later.

Two so-called reform laws passed earlier this year — after four years of debate — made few changes. None address lobbying or any other jobs South Carolina's part-time legislators can or can't do.

Some of the accusations against Merrill are reminiscent of allegations Gov. Nikki Haley successfully sidestepped in 2012, when the then-GOP-dominated

House Ethics Committee twice cleared her, and the state Supreme Court ruled that legislators, not courts, should handle citizen complaints against elected representatives.

A late GOP activist had accused Haley of lobbying for two employers while a House member and not reporting the income on campaign disclosures.

But Haley repeatedly argued no law required her to report that money, since her employer had contracts with state agencies, not the House itself.

The State Ethics Commission agreed. Haley also argued her work didn't meet the state's legal definition of lobbying.

Another part of Haley's defense was that other legislators do it. Failing to dismiss the complaint, the committee was warned, would open a Pandora's Box.

"Indeed, Gov. Haley's business activities and conduct are commonplace in the Legislature and were always consistent with the law," said her lawyer, Swatti Patel. To find otherwise, she said, would "impugn the integrity" of many other legislators and corporate partners.

At the time, some critics called the statement a threat.

Title: **S.C. school superintendent should be appointed**  
 Author:  
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## THEIR VIEW

### S.C. school superintendent should be appointed

Molly Spearman, South Carolina's elected superintendent of education, has no illusions about her job being on the state ballot and, in fact, she supports making the position appointive and part of the governor's cabinet.

Spearman, a former legislator and before that a classroom music teacher and assistant principal, has joined Gov. Nikki Haley in urging legislators to support legislation setting up a statewide referendum.

The S.C. Constitution makes the education superintendent elective, so voters' approval is necessary to change the position to appointive.

In 2014, South Carolina voters approved amending the constitution to take the adjutant general off the ballot. South Carolina continues to popularly elect more positions than other states. The commissioner of agriculture, for example, is still elected.

Only 13 states elect a superintendent of education.

For one example, Illinois made its "superintendent of public instruction" appointive with approval of an updated constitution following a 1970 constitutional convention.

The Haley-Spearman letter came prior to the governor being chosen ambassador to the United Nations by president-elect Donald Trump. This appointment is subject to U.S. Senate approval, which is expected.

With that, Lt. Gov. Henry McMaster will become governor for the remaining two years of Haley's term.

The letter to lawmakers points out the current divided leadership structure: "Instead of moving the state forward with a common vision for education priorities, this divided leadership structure can result in incompatible positions, a lack of coordination and fragmented accountability for failures in our Pre K-12 education system."

The superintendent oversees the 82 school districts in the state, and a \$2.4 billion budget.

In the past, governors and education superintendents have been of different political parties. Gubernatorial candidates may address "education on the campaign trail, but they have very little power to make any of it happen," says Sen. Chip Campsen of Charleston. Campsen has legislation to place the question before voters. This year the House approved a joint resolution for a referendum, but it was blocked in the Senate.

"It is time," Spearman says. "Discussions have been going on for more than 50 years. We've debated it a long, long time."

Better cohesion between the governor and superintendent is one of the advantages of an appointed superintendent. Spearman and Haley have a good working relationship, but Spearman can see where that might not be the case. Running a statewide campaign is costly and it may be more difficult to find qualified candidates.

Currently, no qualifications are required for superintendent candidates, and qualifications would be added for an appointed superintendent, as well as Senate approval, which may be helpful in passing legislation in 2017. The General Assembly has long held the lion's share of power, and legislators typically don't want to give the governor more power.

It is indeed time for this modest piece of reform in governance and we urge area legislators to support placing the question on the ballot.

— The (Myrtle Beach) Sun News

Title: **County GOP chair invites you to get, involved**

Author:

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# County GOP chair invites you to get involved

It is with great pleasure that I write to you as the new chairman of the Lancaster County Republican Party. Our outgoing chair, Brandon Newton, did an excellent job in leading the Lancaster GOP to record heights in the 2016 elections, and I look forward to him representing our county in the S.C. House of Representatives.

As your new chairman, I will continue the good work of the Republican Party in working for a better Lancaster County. But if we want this country, state and county to thrive, we must all get involved, become educated and take action.

To help give you opportunities to become more informed and involved, I invite you to attend the monthly Republican Party meetings. We meet every month on the fourth Thursday at 7 p.m. at Mike Williams Builders, 1351 Charlotte Highway, Lancaster. These meetings usually last around an hour. Our next meeting will be Jan. 26. Please make plans to attend.

To help keep the public informed, we also share information about local, state and national political goings-on via our Facebook page, [www.facebook.com/LCRPVIEW](http://www.facebook.com/LCRPVIEW)S.

Each meeting will have speakers who will help us understand the issues and the workings of our government. Each presentation includes a question-and-answer session. In addition to the guest speakers, many

county and state public officials and representatives attend these meetings, giving you a chance to meet them and discuss issues of concern to you.

The Jan. 26 speaker will be Chad Connelly, the RNC faith engagement director and former South Carolina GOP chairman. He will do an outstanding presentation.

The year 2017 will have much change with Gov. Nikki Haley and our own Congressman Mick Mulvaney joining the Trump team. This will create opportunities for candidates to visit our meetings, thus giving us a chance to meet and talk with them about issues.

A new president is taking office and working with Republican majorities on Capitol Hill, and this year's session of the General Assembly is under way.

There is much taking place – and many opportunities for you to get informed and involved. Your involvement can help make a difference for a better future for our country, state and nation, so please attend an upcoming meeting.

You will be glad you did!

## GUEST COLUMN



Allen N. Blackmon is chairman of the Lancaster County Republican Party.

Title: **As Gov. Haley joins Trump, a Trump supporter succeeds Haley**  
 Author: The Associated Press  
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# As Gov. Haley joins Trump, a Trump supporter succeeds Haley

The Associated Press

COLUMBIA — If South Carolina Gov. Nikki Haley is confirmed as President-elect Donald Trump's pick for United Nations ambassador, her successor will be an entrenched veteran of the state's GOP who as attorney general decided not to prosecute then-Gov. Mark Sanford for his spending after his disappearance to rendezvous with his mistress.

Lt. Gov. Henry McMaster, a 69-year-old known for his ability to disagree affably, would get the job he's long wanted in the governorship. His leadership offers a sharp contrast in style if not in substance from Haley, the daughter of Indian immigrants and the nation's youngest governor at 44, who hasn't hesitated to publicly bash legislators who differed with her.

McMaster also was the nation's first statewide officeholder to back Trump for president, in an endorsement before the state's first-in-the-South presidential primary. The move stunned political observers, but McMaster's support never wavered, despite Democrats' calls to withdraw it.

He told The Associated Press last month he never regretted the endorsement.

"No ma'am, the more it went on, the more confident I was he was the man for the job," he said in his characteristic, genteel drawl. He's revealed little about what he would do as governor, and his office said he wasn't available for

an interview.

But as a savvy political insider, McMaster has forged strong relationships statewide.

He's "a commonsense conservative — very reasonable, never abrasive," said House Judiciary Chairman Greg Delleney, R-Chester. "He's a realist, and he's a gentleman, and I think he's going to work with the General Assembly to get things done."

Legislators hope McMaster's entry could finally lead to passage of a comprehensive road-funding bill. Haley's threats to veto anything with a gas tax increase stymied efforts for years.

Questioned by reporters after a meeting earlier this month, McMaster said, "We will make progress, great progress," but gave no specifics.

In the 2010 GOP primary, Haley trounced McMaster and two other better-known men partly by running against the "good ol' boy" network. Yet days after taking a 32-percent-age-point beating, McMaster endorsed Haley with an exuberant "I'm all in!" and has been a close ally since. Beyond campaigning with her statewide, he arranged a series of private meetings between Haley and skeptical business leaders a week after she publicly chided the state Chamber of Commerce as a fan of bailouts and corporate welfare.

Bakari Sellers, a Democrat who lost to McMaster in the 2014 lieutenant

governor's race, contends McMaster "exemplifies the good ol' boy network in South Carolina."

"Henry's been around a very long time. He's the status quo," said Sellers, a former state House member. "Courageous and visionary are not adjectives you use to describe Henry McMaster."

Other longtime political adversaries applaud McMaster's impending move.

"Henry is somebody who wants to do the right thing and move the state forward," said former state Democratic Party Chairman Dick Harpootlian, who's not one to pull punches. "If a good ol' boy means somebody who remembers his friends and has a genial approach to governing, then I would take that as a compliment. He's not going to rant and rave and pick fights. He's not going to denigrate people publicly."

McMaster began his political career in 1973 as an aide to then-U.S. Sen. Strom Thurmond. He led the state Republican Party for 10 years, while the GOP took control of the Legislature.

He frequently boasts of being President Ronald Reagan's first appointment for U.S. attorney in 1981 and launched "Operation

Jackpot," an investigation into international drug smuggling that resulted in more than 100 convictions.

As state attorney general, he created a task force of officers posing as children

to catch online sex predators and built an attorney network to prosecute criminal domestic violence. In 2010, he helped lead a multi-state challenge of President Barack Obama's health care overhaul that allowed states to opt out of its intended Medicaid expansion — as South Carolina has steadfastly done.

In 2009, McMaster asked the state Ethics Commission to investigate Sanford after his disappearance to rendezvous with his mistress in Argentina brought scrutiny to his travels.

After Sanford paid \$74,000 to resolve 37 civil charges, McMaster opted not to pursue criminal charges, saying Sanford's use of first-class tickets, travel on state aircraft and questionable campaign reimbursements didn't rise to a criminal level — and it was time for the state to move on.

A month after that announcement, McMaster lost to Haley.

Legislators say his decades-long relationship with many of them is an asset. GOP Senate Education Chairman John Courson, who met McMaster while at the University of South Carolina in the 1960s, said it helps that McMaster "understands the personalities in the Senate."

"Across the board, among Democrats and Republicans, everybody is excited about him coming in — with the belief that he will have a desire to get things done and the ability to do

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so," said House Minority put out yard signs for Mc- he said. "Really, he's about  
Leader Todd Rutherford, Master. building strong relation-  
D-Columbia. "I think people who say ships and treating people  
Rep. James Smith, D-Co- he's a good ol' boy are miss- with respect and working  
lumbia, said as a college ing what Henry's all about," for the future of our state."  
student in the 1980s, he

Title: **If governor becomes ambassador, a Trump supporter succeeds Haley**

Author:

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# If governor becomes ambassador, a Trump supporter succeeds Haley

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SEE **McMASTER**, PAGE A5

## McMASTER FROM PAGE A1

offers a sharp contrast in style if not in substance from Haley, the daughter of Indian immigrants and



Lt. Gov. Henry McMaster of South Carolina nominates Donald Trump as the Republican candidate for president during the second day of the Republican National Convention in Cleveland on July 19.

AP FILE PHOTO

Title: The Sun News of Myrtle Beach on Molly Spearman, South Carolina's elected superintendent of education  
 Author:  
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## **The Sun News of Myrtle Beach on Molly Spearman, South Carolina's elected superintendent of education**

Molly Spearman, South Carolina's elected superintendent of education, has no illusions about her job being on the state ballot and, in fact, she supports making the position appointive and part of the governor's cabinet.

Spearman, a former legislator and before that a classroom music teacher and assistant principal, has joined Gov. Nikki Haley in urging legislators to support legislation setting up a statewide referendum. The S.C. Constitution makes the education superintendent elective, so voters' approval is necessary to change the position to appointive.

In 2014, South Carolina voters approved amending the constitution to take the adjutant general off the ballot. South Carolina continues to popularly elect more positions than other states. The commissioner of agriculture, for example, is still elected. Only 13 states elect a superintendent of education.

The Haley-Spearman letter came prior to the governor being chosen ambassador to the United Nations by president-elect Donald Trump. This appointment is subject to U.S. Senate approval, which is expected. With that, Lt. Gov. Henry McMaster will become governor for the remaining two years of Haley's term.

The letter to lawmakers points out the current divided leadership structure: "Instead of moving the state forward with a common vision for education priorities, this divided leadership structure can result in incompatible positions, a lack of coordination and fragmented accountability for failures in our Pre K-12 education system." The superintendent oversees the 82 school districts in the state and a \$2.4 billion budget.

In the past, governors and education superintendents have been of different political parties. Gubernatorial candidates may address "education on the campaign trail, but they have very little power to make any of it happen," says Sen. Chip Campsen of Charleston. Campsen has legislation to place the question before voters. This year the House approved a joint resolution for a referendum, but it was blocked in the Senate.

"It is time," Spearman says. "Discussions have been going on for more than 50 years. We've debated it a long, long time."

Currently, no qualifications are required for superintendent candidates, and qualifications would be added for an appointed superintendent, as well as Senate approval, which might be helpful in passing legislation in 2017. The General Assembly has long held the lion's share of power, and legislators typically don't want to give the governor more power.

It is indeed time for this modest piece of reform in governance, and we urge area legislators to support placing the question on the ballot.