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**Index-Journal:** Ah, poetic justice for Jake Knotts

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Editorial

The following views, compiled by the Associated Press, are the opinions of the various newspapers represented and do not necessarily reflect the opinion of the Index-Journal.

The 2012 election will be remembered in South Carolina as the one in which nearly 250 candidates were thrown off the ballot because of a technical violation in filing financial interests reports.

Incumbents weren't generally affected because they routinely are required to file those reports as sitting officials.

The fact the S.C. Supreme Court's decision inadvertently served to protect incumbents added insult to injury.

The court case was initially brought by political associates of state Sen. Jake Knotts, R-Lexington, presumably to derail opposition to the legislative veteran in the Republican primary. The senator's opponent, Katrina Shealy, ran strong against Knotts in the 2008 primary.

As a result of the court ruling, Shealy was among those who lost a place on the ballot. And she was among those who managed to get back on the ballot for the general election via the arduous petition route.

So there is no small irony Knotts was the sole incumbent S.C. legislator defeated by a petition candidate in the election.

It is testament to Shealy's commitment to seek election to the Senate, despite the obstacles.

But she got some help along the way. The state Republican Party, tired of being embarrassed by Knotts, broke tradition and endorsed the petition candidate.

In 2010, Knotts brought embarrassing national attention to the state by calling then-GOP gubernatorial candidate Nikki Haley a "raghead," an aspersion related to her Indian-American ethnic background.

Also that year, he was reprimanded by the Senate Ethics Committee for accepting excessive campaign contributions and sloppy record-keeping.

As a senator, Knotts routinely opposed legislative reforms, most recently threatening to hold up a bill to allow party candidates for governor and lieutenant governor to run as a ticket. Knotts was able to move the effective date of the change to 2018.

That revision evidently was inserted so Haley couldn't name her running mate, should she decide to run for re-election. ...

Incidentally, a political action committee associated with Haley contributed to the Shealy campaign effort for the District 23 seat.

Every little bit helped Shealy surmount the odds and win election to the Senate, where she will be the sole woman when sworn in to replace Knotts.

Call it poetic justice.

- Nov. 10, The Post and Courier of Charleston

On Savannah River dredging

Many points are up for debate about dredging the Savannah River, but one point should not be: South

Carolina should have a say in the project given its potential impact on our natural resources. That say comes in the form of the water quality certification the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers wants to circumnavigate in the interest of starting as soon as possible the work to deepen the river from 42 feet to 47 feet for more than 30 miles.

It also could come in a permit through the state's Pollution Control Act. The corps plans to dump dredge spoil, potentially contaminated with toxic materials, on the site of the proposed deep-water port in Jasper County.

The S.C. Supreme Court has now made clear who should speak for South Carolina on dredging in the lower Savannah River - the state's Savannah River Maritime Commission.

The court ruled in no uncertain terms the Department of Health and Environmental Control had no right to negotiate terms for a water quality permit with Georgia and corps officials. That job belongs to the commission, as laid out in the 2007 law creating the commission.

DHEC staff a year ago turned down the corps' water quality certification, citing in part potential damage to endangered wildlife and critical wetlands. But Gov. Nikki Haley asked the DHEC board she appointed to reconsider the staff decision. Staff and Georgia officials negotiated a settlement in a matter of hours, and the DHEC board promptly approved it.

An egregious aspect of the Haley-prompted negotiations was that key state agencies that provide valuable input for such permits were shut out.

The permit conditions included money to inject oxygen into the Savannah River where the dredging occurs. Georgia also agreed to transfer as much as 1,690 acres of salt marsh to the state South Carolina as compensation for freshwater wetlands that will be affected.

That offers no help for the Savannah Wildlife Refuge, a tidally influenced freshwater wetland system that already has suffered from previous dredging projects.

Environmental groups and the Maritime Commission, which had opposed the water quality permit, challenged DHEC's right to negotiate the agreement, leading to the Supreme Court decision. ...

Haley's intervention, the last-minute negotiations and the DHEC board's approval of the water quality permit all amount to inappropriate maneuvering in a project with serious environmental consequences. So, too, is the corps' request for an exemption. ...

- Nov. 9, The Island Packet of Hilton Head Island

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