

Title: **Wait-and-see approach on seismic testing, offshore drilling**
 Author: BYMAYAT. PRABHU mprabhu@thesunnews.com
 Size: 37.97 square inch
 Myrtle Beach, SC Circulation: 61238



Wait-and-see approach on seismic testing, offshore drilling

By MAYA T. PRABHU
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Grand Strand elected officials at Wednesday's Coastal Alliance meeting said they think it's best to take a wait-and-see approach instead of immediately taking a position against seismic testing and offshore drilling.

"At this point I'm glad we didn't jump on the negative bandwagon," North Myrtle Beach Mayor Marilyn Hatley said.

Hatley, Surfside Beach Mayor Doug Samples and Horry County Council Chairman Mark Lazarus said they will continue to listen to the debate on seismic testing along the Atlantic coast.

The Coastal Alliance is a group that represents Horry County and cities along the Grand Strand.

Myrtle Beach Mayor John Rhodes was out of town Wednesday and did not attend

the Coastal Alliance meeting. Atlantic Beach Mayor Jake Evans did not voice a position on drilling during the meeting.

The federal Bureau of Ocean Energy Management accepted comments through midnight Monday on what should be included in environmental studies to decide whether areas in the Atlantic are opened to oil and gas development later this decade.

Twenty communities in the Carolinas, including Charleston, are on record against oil drilling, seismic testing or both.

Grand Strand area municipalities did not take a position on offshore drilling before the deadline. Myrtle Beach was poised to consider a resolution opposing seismic testing last week but delayed the discussion.

Several Myrtle Beach City Council members said last week they needed more infor-

mation before they could vote to support or oppose the testing.

"It's too soon to jump on the 'no, not at all, we're not interested' wagon," Hatley said.

Samples also said it was too soon to take a position for or against drilling.

"No one wants to see oil spills, but we're not at that point," he said.

Charleston City Council last week voted to oppose offshore drilling. It is the largest in the state opposing offshore drilling.

U.S. Rep. Tom Rice, R-Myrtle Beach, has said he favors oil exploration, but said he wonders if offshore drilling is practical with prices low and drilling operations on land being closed down. He says states should have a say in where offshore drilling is allowed.

Gov. Nikki Haley also supports offshore drilling and is a member of the Outer Conti-

nental Shelf Governors Coalition, which has a mission statement that says it works to "influence a sensible path forward for the development of America's offshore energy resources."

Drilling proponents say it can help reduce dependence on foreign energy and create jobs and revenue.

Opponents of offshore drilling worry that spills could damage fisheries and the important coastal tourism industry. Supporters say drilling can be done safely and will mean jobs and new revenues.

"Scientists say it could have a negative impact on fish ... but that's just scientific," Lazarus said. "There's no hard evidence. ... We will continue to listen to the debate."

► Contact **MAYA T. PRABHU** at 444-1722 or on Twitter @TSN_mprabhu.

Title: **Plan aims to insure close to 200,000**
 Author: By CASSIE COPE
 Size: 26.19 square inch
 Beaufort, SC Circulation: 11269



Plan aims to insure close to 200,000

The bipartisan effort by a group of S.C. senators would cover the state's working poor.

By CASSIE COPE

The (Columbia) State

COLUMBIA — A bipartisan group of South Carolina senators will introduce a proposal today to allow about 194,000 uninsured state residents to use federal and state dollars to buy private health insurance.

"It's an opportunity to provide health care to close to 200,000 South Caro-

linians who have no health insurance and whose primary source of provider services (otherwise) is going to the ER (emergency room) when they get sick," said state Sen. Joel Lourie, D-Richland, one of four sponsors of the proposal.

Previous attempts to expand the federal-state insurance program for

the poor in South Carolina, as part of the federal Affordable Care Act, have failed. And Republican Gov. Nikki Haley repeated Monday that she would fight the latest Senate attempt as well.

The senators' proposal would cover

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INSURE

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the working poor, those who make too much to be eligible now for Medicaid insurance for the poor but cannot afford to buy health insurance.

"They are too rich to qualify for our existing Medicaid program, but they are too poor to qualify for subsidies in the marketplace," said Rozalynn Goodwin of the S.C. Hospital Association.

Other supporters of the Senate proposal include Sens. Paul Campbell, R-Berkeley; Ray Cleary, R-Georgetown; and John Matthews, D-Orangeburg.

The senators plan to amend the state budget to direct the state Department of Health and Human Services to submit a plan to the federal Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services to create Healthy SC, said Coretta Bedsole, the AARP's associate state director for advocacy.

That program would use fed-

eral dollars and matching state dollars to allow adults earning about \$15,000 a year or less to buy private insurance in the federal health care marketplace, she said.

In South Carolina, adults who are not disabled and earn \$15,000 or less now are not eligible for Medicaid, with a few exceptions.

Republican Haley says taking federal money to expand the program eventually would lead to an unfunded mandate for the state's taxpayers.

Title: **Family and friends remember Walter Scott**
 Author: BY HARRISON CAHILL hcahill@thestate.com
 Size: 44.64 square inch
 Myrtle Beach, SC Circulation: 61238



Family and friends remember Walter Scott

By HARRISON CAHILL
hcahill@thestate.com

CHARLESTON, SC | A Dallas Cowboys flag adorned Walter Scott's casket Friday for a visitation at the historic Fielding Home for Funerals in downtown Charleston.

The unarmed black man was shot and killed by a white North Charleston police officer last Saturday.

Scott will be buried Saturday after a funeral service that U.S. Sen. Tim Scott, R-North Charleston; U.S. Rep. Jim Clyburn, D-Columbia, and state Sen. Marlon Kimpson, D-Charleston, are expected to attend.

At Friday's funeral-home visitation, Scott was remembered as someone who loved

his family and friends.

James Singleton said he has known the Scott family for years. The 67-year-old resident of North Charleston, a Pittsburgh Steelers fan, said he and Scott often would joke about how well their favorite NFL teams were doing during the football season.

"I'm going to tell him a Cowboys joke when I get in there," Singleton said, outside the funeral home. "It's a hurtful feeling, but he is still in (the Scott family's) heart. He isn't gone, his spirit is still here."

Last Saturday, Scott was pulled over by North Charleston Police Department Patrolman 1st Class Michael Slager

for a broken tail light on the vehicle that he was driving.

A dash-cam video from Slager's patrol car, released by the State Law Enforcement Division, shows Scott fled to a nearby plot of private property. Slager chased, firing eight shots at Scott, striking him in the back several times.

A passerby recorded the shooting, catching Scott's final moments on tape. After the video's release, Slager was charged with murder and fired from the Police Department.

When Scott's mother called to tell him that Scott had been shot, she said: "The police killed my boy," Singleton said

Friday.

"I hollered out on the phone," Singleton added. "I said, 'Oh, Lord no.' I had to catch myself. It hurt a lot of people.

"But the dude who had the tape, I'm glad he had that tape. It showed what really went down."

Zaheerah Shakir, who lives in Charleston, said she came to the visitation to show her respects to a future family member that she never got the chance to know. Shakir said she is the mother-in-law of Scott's would-be fiance.

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FUNERAL

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"I would have met (the Scotts) at the wedding, which would have been happier," Shakir said. "Now, I'll have to meet them at the funeral."

Cynthia Mack, 54, came to the visitation to see the cousin she shared so many family reunions with at James Island County Park. Mack and her 30-year-old daughter, Haqika Lloyd, said Scott was someone who always was a joy to be around.

"He had a good heart and was a good person," Mack said. "We grew up together and did slumber parties at their house."

Mack said the family reunions

included activities for children, frying chicken and eating crab legs. Now, some of those traditions will be in memory of her cousin.

Keysha Brown, of West Ashley, said she has known the Scott family for at least 20 years. Brown, whose mother lives down the road from Scott's mother, said she last saw Scott about two months ago.

"He was a fun person and loved to be around people," Brown said.

Charleston Mayor Joe Riley attended Friday's visitation but, out of respect for Scott's family,

will not attend Saturday's funeral.

"My sense is the family is looking for privacy, and I thought the most dignified and appropriate way ... was to quietly come on behalf of my citizens and pay my respects," Riley said. "It's something we will never forget, but time allows us to cope with the grief and look for and work for a brighter day."

Gov. Nikki Haley also will not attend Saturday's services. But several members of her staff will be there.

"Governor Haley spoke to Mr.

Scott's family, and that's where she believes the focus should be — on lifting them up in prayer and healing," a spokeswoman said Friday.

Funeral services for Scott will be held at 11 a.m. Saturday at the W.O.R.D. Ministries Christian Center in Summerville and are open to the public. Burial will be at Live Oak Memorial Garden at 3093 Ashley River Road, according to Fielding employees.

They added there will be a police escort for Saturday's funeral procession, provided by the North Charleston Police Department.

Title: **CRUDE OIL DOESN'T FIT IN TOURISM ECONOMY**
 Author:
 Size: 49.29 square inch
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EDITORIAL

CRUDE OIL DOESN'T FIT IN TOURISM ECONOMY

Local governments failed to speak for environment

It's perfectly obvious to many people that pumping crude oil offshore in the Atlantic Ocean is not a good match for a tourism economy, so it's troubling that local governments did not speak out for the environment – and the area economic mainstay – when they had an opportunity.

The cities of Myrtle Beach and North Myrtle Beach, the towns of Surfside Beach and Atlantic Beach and Horry County government should have joined 20 communities in the Carolinas, including Charleston, and gone on record against offshore oil production. The U.S. Bureau of Ocean Energy Management received thousands of comments.

Instead, elected officials in the Coastal Alliance, which includes Horry County and coastal municipality leaders, say they will take a wait-and-see approach on seismic testing and offshore drilling. Wait and see what?

Supporters of offshore drilling, including Gov. Nikki Haley and U.S. Rep. Tom Rice, point out the economic benefits (jobs and new revenue) from offshore oil production. Opponents voice concerns about a disaster such as the Deepwater Horizon explosion in 2010 and its devastating impact on ocean fish and wildlife, beaches and wetlands.

Taylor Damonte of the Clay Britain Jr. Center for Resort Tourism at Coastal Carolina University tracks occupancy rates, an important economic indicator. Oil spills are among the factors (along with weather, prices, advertising, etc.) impacting lodging demand, Damonte notes. The 2010 Gulf of Mexico disaster helped Grand Strand vacation occupancy rates. The opposite likely would be the case with an oil spill here – tourists would go to the Gulf Coast instead of here.

"No one wants to see oil spills, but we're not at that point," Surfside Beach Mayor Doug Samples notes in explaining his position that it's too soon to take a position for or against drilling. That may be, but it is not too soon to be on record for the protection of the environment and the economy.

Proponents of offshore oil production may have fallen behind the curve. A few years ago, the U.S. was much closer to needing Atlantic Ocean crude oil. Fracking, the controversial method of extracting oil from shale, has greatly increased U.S. oil production, to the point of having more oil than storage tanks. New, massive natural gas discoveries also suggest that there is much more time to po-

tentially develop offshore oil production.

Offshore energy from ocean winds and the eventual need for producing potable water from the ocean are also factors. Clean electrical power would go directly, via under-ocean cables, from offshore wind turbines into the power grid.

Oil would have to be transported ashore and then to a refinery and Horry County is some distance from a refinery.

Potable water and clean electricity from offshore winds, in addition to many valid environmental concerns, should trump discussion of offshore oil.

At a Coastal Alliance meeting, County Council Chairman Mark Lazarus spoke about potential concerns about damage to fisheries. "Scientists say it could have a negative impact on fish ... *but that's just scientific.*" [Our emphasis.] "There's no hard evidence. ... We will continue to listen to the debate."

The science is the key to that "hard evidence" and any debate must include attention to scientific research.

Another key to the debate: remembering that the ocean environment and tourism are inextricably entwined.

Title: **\$34M body camera bill gaining traction in S.C.**
 Author:
 Size: 52.08 square inch
 Myrtle Beach, SC Circulation: 61238



\$34M body camera bill gaining traction in S.C.

When they return to Columbia Tuesday, some lawmakers plan to fast-track a bill requiring all S.C. law enforcement officers to wear body cameras.

Spurring lawmakers on is the shooting death of an unarmed man last weekend by a North Charleston police officer, who now faces murder charges.

Introduced earlier this year, the body camera bill already was gaining momentum.

State Sen. **Brad Hutto**, D-Orangeburg, said his committee has held three hearings on the proposal and will hold its fourth this week.

Hutto hopes to balance the logistical issues surrounding the proposal – including training and the cost of storing recordings – with the varying needs of law enforcement agencies.

State Senate budget writers also will have to figure out how to pay for the proposal, which could cost \$34 million for the program's first two years, according to a state budget office projection. Two-thirds of that cost could fall on local governments.

Senate Judiciary Committee chairman **Larry Martin**, R-Pickens, said he will push for the state to help local governments pay for those costs.

"If the state's going to require it, I don't know how we can pass that requirement back on local governments and

not fund it," Martin said. "I don't favor doing that."

Enacting a statewide body camera law poses challenges that will take time to resolve, he added. "It's a huge hurdle to overcome to set that thing up and pay for it with the stroke of a pen."

Haley campaign has \$371,000 to spend

S.C. Gov. **Nikki Haley** cannot run for governor in 2018 when she reaches the state's two-term limit.

But she still has about \$371,000 in her 2014 campaign account – of \$8.4 million raised – that she can spend on office-related expenses, according to campaign finance records filed Friday with the state.

Those records show Haley raised no money in 2015's first quarter but spent \$169,000. The bulk of that money went to Salt Box Strategies, the company that Haley's political adviser, Tim Pearson, operates.

If Haley wanted to, she could continue raising money – even though she cannot run for governor in 2018. And if her donors permit, she could transfer that money to another state contest or a federal one, S.C. Ethics Commission executive director **Herb Hayden** said.

But, again and again, Haley has demurred when asked about her national ambitions.

She also could run for governor again, once she has been

out of office for four years.

Consider the example of Haley's old pal and predecessor, former S.C. Gov. **Mark Sanford**.

Sanford, R-Mount Pleasant, reclaimed his 1st District congressional seat in 2013. But if he ever decides to run for the Governor's Mansion again, he'll have a pretty plump financial cushion to start with.

Sanford has about \$1 million left in his gubernatorial campaign account, according to his campaign finance report filed Friday.

PAC-ing up for Rubio

Veteran S.C. political strategist **Warren Tompkins** and pollster and media consultant **Jon Lerner** are teaming up to support **Marco Rubio's** White House ambitions, which the U.S. senator from Florida is expected to announce Monday in Miami.

Tompkins has worked on seven previous GOP presidential primary campaigns – from **Ronald Reagan's** to **Mitt Romney's**. Lerner advised Haley and Sanford through four winning races for governor.

Word is Rubio could be planning a trip to South Carolina on April 22 – nine days after he becomes the third major GOP candidate to formally announce a White House run, following U.S. Sens. **Ted Cruz** of Texas and **Rand Paul** of Kentucky.

Graham watch 2016

U.S. Sen. **Lindsey Graham** gets to enjoy some golf Monday when the RBC Heritage tees off in Hilton Head. But later in the week, the Seneca Republican will share turf with potential 2016 White House foes.

The senator snagged the honor of being the keynote speaker Thursday night at the anti-abortion Susan B. Anthony List's annual Campaign for Life gala and summit in Washington, D.C. Graham is lead sponsor on a bill, which has gone nowhere, to ban abortion after 20 weeks of pregnancy.

The 2016 GOP contender most likely to be verbally flogged by Graham? Paul, who also will speak to summit attendees but was assigned to the morning speaker's spot. **Carly Fiorina**, a former Hewlett-Packard chief executive also considering a presidential run, will run the microphone as the gala's "Mistress of Ceremonies."

Next Saturday, Graham will join a host of other 2016 White House prospects in Nashua, N.H., for the "First in the Nation Republican Leadership Summit."

THE BUZZ

The Buzz is a weekly look back at state politics by reporters at The Columbia State.

Title: **Manufacturing still powering S.C. economic recovery**
 Author: BY JEFF WILKINSON jwilkinson@thestate.com
 Size: 106.95 square inch
 Myrtle Beach, SC Circulation: 61238



Manufacturing still powering S.C. economic recovery

BY JEFF WILKINSON
jwilkinson@thestate.com

COLUMBIA SC | Manufacturing has powered the recovery in South Carolina since the end of the Great Recession in 2009, and is continuing to post strong numbers in investment and job growth even as other industries begin to flex their muscle.

Manufacturing job growth in South Carolina rose 13.5 percent from January 2011 – the beginning of Gov. Nikki Haley's administration – to December 2014. That is nearly double the 7 percent average of all other Southeastern states.

However, economists warn that the rate of growth could level off as companies slow their post-recession expansion and skilled workers become harder to find. Also, a stronger dollar and rising interest rates would have a negative affect on the state's export-heavy industries, as they will cause the prices of cars, planes and tires to rise overseas.

"Anytime you have pent up demand coming out of a recession, there will be a leveling-off period," said

University of South Carolina economist Joey Von Nessen.

South Carolina's post-recession highs in manufacturing employment and investment came in 2011. Job growth posted gains for the first time since the beginning of the recession – 3.5 percent growth – and investment logged its biggest gain – \$4.71 billion, according to the state Commerce and Employment and Workforce departments.

Since then, manufacturing job growth slowed to 2.3 percent in 2012, 2 percent in 2013 and 2.46 percent in 2014, calculating yearly averages. Capital investment has remained very strong, however, but at slightly lower levels – \$3.28 billion in 2012, \$4.46 billion in 2013 and \$4.42 billion in 2014.

Those investment numbers are powered by recent big-time announcements such as last year's Giti

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RECOVERY

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Tire plant in Chester and its promised 1,700 jobs. And already this year, Chrysler subsidiary Daimler announced the conversion of its Charleston assembly plant to a full-fledged manufacturing plant, touting 1,300 jobs.

Also, another "whale," as recruiters call big manufacturing plants, may be surfacing. South Carolina is said to be in the hunt for a Volvo auto manufacturing plant, although Com-

merce officials won't comment on their efforts.

"I don't think it's going to slow down a bit," Commerce secretary Bobby Hitt of Charleston, a former BMW executive, said of manufacturing job growth. "We've got a lot of jobs out there that are going to hit."

Pro-business environment

But other sectors of the economy are catching up with manufacturing in South Carolina,

as those industries finally ramp back up after the recession.

In 2014, business and professional services grew 18,200 jobs, compared with manufacturing's 8,900, although many of its jobs are temporary positions offered by companies still too leery of the future to pull the trigger on full-time workers.

Leisure and hospitality jumped to third, adding 7,100 jobs, as consumers had enough

confidence in the economy to begin spending money on vacations and eating out, and businesses started beefing up their travel budgets.

Construction showed a mini-comeback in 2014 by adding 2,100 jobs; and, a recovered housing market means more demand for manufactured products, from refrigerators and dish washers to heating and air conditioning systems.

"You can't pick one industry

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in the Southeast anymore," said College of Charleston economist Frank Hefner, saying the recovery is progressing in pretty much the same manner throughout the South.

While some industries are catching up, don't look for a downturn in manufacturing, experts say.

"I don't think we're going to see a decline because of trends that transcend South Carolina," Von Nessen said.

Increasingly, companies are choosing to build new plants and expand in the South, where labor is cheaper, unions are almost nonexistent and the climate, both business and meteorological, is favorable.

Recently, BMW opened a plant in Mexico for the same reasons, said Lewis Gossett, president and CEO of the S.C. Manufacturers Alliance.

Hitt added that what separates South Carolina from the rest of the pack is the port of Charleston. He said that South Carolina has become the nation's leading producer and exporter of tires, has created an entirely new aviation cluster with Boeing, and is growing its established automotive industry with BMW and Daimler – much of it directly related to the port.

"All the numbers are going in the right direction," he said.

But Von Nessen warned that a stronger dollar and rising interest rates "are something we have to be on the lookout for. On the margins, all that has a negative impact on export activity."

Lean, mean operations

Is the state's success in creating manufacturing jobs outpacing its ability to train workers to fill them?

"The problem we are going to run into is the skill gap for

people who are technically savvy for the jobs that are being created," Hefner said. "I don't know how we are going to overcome that."

Hitt responded that while the "labor force is something we have to work on all the time," the state's track record shows that when the rubber meets the road, South Carolina technical schools and apprentice programs can deliver the workers.

"Twenty years ago when BMW came here we didn't have any automotive workers," he said. "Boeing has 7,500 people working there and (when it was recruited) we didn't have any aviation workers. We're inventing new sectors in this state and its not lost on our education community. We have young people coming out of our high schools and two-year colleges and four-year universities every day."

Workers following the jobs here from other states also will help bridge the skill gap, Hitt said.

Gossett agreed.

"Frank's concern is valid," he said of the College of Charleston economist. "But we've had tight labor markets before. The good news is we are going to meet that need as we have in the past. And every part of the country has trained workers who need jobs. There is going to be in-migration."

Gossett doesn't buy the premise that companies have exhausted their post-recession expansion plans. He said most companies have concentrated on making their plants more efficient with less workers, and now will be forced to expand as the economy improves and demand for products increases.

"We are talking about some lean, mean operations that are poised to be more profitable

and productive than they ever have been," the manufacturers' alliance executive said. "And that's when you see hiring."

Biggest jobs announcements since 2011

- **2,000 workers** 2013 Boeing expansion, Charleston
- **1,700 workers** 2014 Giti Tire plant, Chester
- **1,620 workers** 2011 Continental Tire plant, Sumter
- **1,300 workers** 2015 Daimler expansion, Charleston
- **1,000 workers** 2012 BMW expansion, Spartanburg
- **800 workers** 2014 BMW expansion, Spartanburg

SOURCE: S.C. Department of Commerce

Manufacturing capital investment and jobs in South Carolina

- **2006** \$1.98 billion, 253,780 workers
- **2007** \$3.57 billion, 249,324 workers
- **2008** \$3.61 billion, 242,200 workers
- **2009** \$2.15 billion, 213,866 workers
- **2010** \$3.71 billion, 207,826 workers
- **2011** \$4.71 billion, 215,137 workers
- **2012** \$3.28 billion, 220,119 workers
- **2013** \$4.46 billion, 224,533 workers
- **2014** \$4.42 billion, 230,067 workers

SOURCE: S.C. Department of Commerce, SC. Department of Employment and Workforce

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BY KIM KIM FOSTER-TOBIN *The (Columbia) State file photo*

A worker at the Continental plant in Sumter grades the quality of any irregular tires and discards those not up to standards.



BY KIM KIM FOSTER-TOBIN *The (Columbia) State file photo*

Visual inspections are part of the quality control program at Sumter's Continental tire plant.

Title: 'sbodycamerabil –howwillpayforit?

Author:

Size: 63.86 square inch

Columbia, SC Circulation: 128564



State's body camera bill – who will pay for it?

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man last weekend by a North Charleston police officer, who now faces murder charges.

Introduced earlier this year, the body-camera bill already was gaining momentum.

State Sen. **Brad Hutto**, D-Orangeburg, said his panel has held

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SEE **BUZZ** PAGE **A11**

THESTATE.COM

Watch U.S. Rep. Mick Mulvaney praise GOP presidential hopeful Rand Paul

BUZZ

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gistical issues surrounding the proposal — including training and the cost of storing recordings — with the varying needs of law enforcement agencies.

State Senate budget writers also will have to figure out how to pay for the proposal, which could cost \$34 million for the program's first two years, according to a state budget office projection. Two-thirds of that cost could fall on local governments.

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Rubio

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GRAHAM WATCH 2016

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join a host of other 2016 White House prospects in Nashua, N.H., for the "First in the Nation Republican Leadership Summit."

The Republican White House hopeful headlining the two-day conference is Wisconsin Gov. **Scott Walker**.

NO ENDORSEMENTS FOR PAUL IN S.C.

Paul got a warm welcome at the USS Yorktown in Mount Pleasant Thursday, continuing his multi-state, I'm-running-for-president tour.

But he did not leave with the kind of endorsements that fit nicely in email blasts and mail pieces.

In a video that he pre-recorded, U.S. Rep. **Mick Mulvaney**, R-Indian Land, said his close friend Paul would

**Paul**

"make a tremendous president" and encouraged supporters to join the campaign.

Sanford, the Lowcountry congressman who introduced Paul, said he has "long endorsed" Paul's limited-government ideas and belief in "life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness," Bloomberg News reported.

But Sanford also stopped short of using the "e" word – sought after despite its questionable power.

"It was not a formal endorsement but stay tuned," Sanford told Bloomberg after the event. "I don't think I will stay neutral over the long run."



The Buzz

Jamie Self

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Title: **Education, ethics, roads still demand action**

Author:

Size: 45.41 square inch

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Education, ethics, roads still demand action

SCHOOLS THAT aren't teaching kids what they need to know to get good jobs and help our state prosper.

Legislators who don't have to tell us who's footing their bills — or whose interests they're protecting when they pass bills — and who get to decide for themselves whether they are complying with ethics laws.

Roads pocked by potholes that swallow up our cars, a piece at a time, while road decisions are made by vote-swapping boards that by design have a parochial perspective.

These are the problems that everyone agreed our Legislature had to fix this year. They are the problems our legislators promised us they would fix this year.

But nearly two-thirds through the 2015 General Assembly, with legislators set to return from their Easter break on Tuesday to begin the final, frantic stretch of the session, there are no fixes in sight.

Legislators might expand some reading, pre-K or other education programs, and that could well pay off, but there's no indication that they will undertake any of the gov-

ernmental or educational reforms that we need to help fix what the Supreme Court determined was an unconstitutional failure to provide all children a decent education. Instead, legislative leaders have punt-ed reforms to next year. At best.

The House has passed legislation that requires elected officials to tell us where they get their income, gives regulators more tools to enforce the ethics law and lets an independent body investigate legislators. But reformers in the Senate killed their own bill after a majority of senators bastardized it with an amendment that let legislators serve on a panel that would investigate legislators.

The roads impasse is even more daunting. The Senate is pursuing a much larger tax increase than the House, and President Pro Tem Hugh Leatherman is adamantly opposed to the reform measures that are among Speaker Jay Lucas' top priorities. But those differences could be resolved. The problem is that rather than simply opposing a tax increase to pay for the \$1 billion or so a year we need to make our roads safe, Gov. Nikki Haley now

says she will veto any plan to fix our roads that doesn't slash taxes by more than \$1 billion a year. Seriously. And a mere third of either body can sustain a veto.

The inability of the Legislature to get any traction on any of these items would be bad enough if these were the only big problems facing our state. They are not. They are simply the ones that most insiders agreed to put at the top of the list.

We also need our legislators to overhaul a tax system that is more loophole than whole, streamline a mangled mass of independent state agencies and give governors more control over them, reform a judicial-selection system that leaves judges beholden to legislators and a grand-jury system that gives judges too much authority over criminal investigations, fix a child-protection system that fails to protect children and a domestic-violence law that fails to protect women from domestic violence, and free cities and counties from the central-government shackles in which the Legislature keeps them bound.

And the clock is ticking: Twelve weeks down; eight to go.

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Focusing on manufacturing in S.C.

Experts expect conference/expo to offer exchange of ideas,
 new pathways to improve manufacturing in the state

By RODDIE BURRIS
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Some of the titans of manufacturing in South Carolina and experts from across the Southeast gather in Greenville this week for a two-day conference and expo where key aspects of that business sector will be examined.

Keynote speakers including some of the leading manufacturers in the state are scheduled to speak, including Michelin North America president and CEO Pete Selleck and Boeing chief legal counsel Mark C. Fava.

Selleck captured state lawmakers' attention earlier this year when, while in the capital city, he described South Carolina's roads as "a disgrace" and warned that future manufacturing expansions in the Palmetto State could be in jeopardy unless lawmakers addressed the issue.

Michelin, a top international tire maker in the leading U.S. tire-making state, is a \$10.6 billion-a-year company that operates in six states. It employs more than 8,500 workers in South Carolina, more than four times more than anywhere else,

according to the company's website.

Also, South Carolina has been the top tire manufacturer in the United States for the past three years, according to the state's Commerce Department.

Boeing is transforming the state's aerospace and aviation industries by producing its 787 Dreamliner passenger planes at a new plant in North Charleston, where it has invested \$2 billion and hired 7,500 employees, who are working off a jetliner backlog order of more than 1,000 planes.

The company, however, is fighting off a highly public, neophyte unionization effort of its machinist workers that, if successful, might have a major impact on the company's future operations in the Palmetto State, some labor experts say.

The Greenville conference also will feature keynote addresses by Gov. Nikki Haley, S.C. Secretary of Commerce Bobby Hitt and Greenville Technical College president Keith Miller. The meeting has been sold out for weeks, organizers said.

Manufacturing in South Carolina, once almost the exclusive domain of textile operations, has itself been transformed in the past 20 years as the state has developed a surging automotive sector led by Upstate international carmaker BMW, the leading automobile exporter in the United States through the Port of Charleston.

Manufacturing accounted for about 10 percent of the state's workforce in 2011, and more than 16 percent of South Carolina's gross domestic product, according to the state Commerce department. Manufacturing is a key sector of the state's economy, Hitt said, and anytime the state can bring manufacturing entities together in one place, it bodes well.

The Greenville conference will offer eight panel discussions, a manufacturing suppliers exposition, a community job fair and a career fair for high school students.

Among the panel discussions is one

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EXPO

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that explores South Carolina's continuing need for a skilled workforce, which experts say is necessary to attract manufacturers and prepared them to succeed.

Workforce development panelists expected to speak at the conference include South Carolina Tech-

nical College System president Jimmie Williamson, Superintendent of Education Molly Spearman and Employment and Workforce executive director Cheryl Stanton.

"Every time I hear a new (jobs) announcement, I cheer," Williamson said. "Then I realize we must

provide the workers." South Carolina's ReadySC program has been successful in putting workers in initial stages of readiness required to attract companies to the state and get them up and running, he said.

ReadySC is part of the technical college system

and is backed by longer-term programs designed to help workers in the state achieve associate and bachelor's degrees, Williamson said. South Carolina also has a highly-touted apprenticeship program, which puts workers in direct experience with needed job skills and training.



Fava

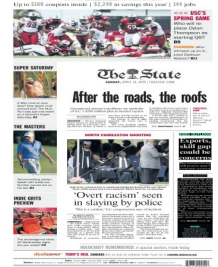


Hitt



Selleck

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JOB'S OUTLOOK

Exports, skill gap could be concerns

But manufacturing still powers state's economic recovery

By JEFF WILKINSON
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Manufacturing has powered the recovery in South Carolina since the end of the Great Recession in 2009, and is continuing to post strong numbers in investment and job growth even as other industries begin to flex their muscle. Manufacturing job growth in South Carolina rose 13.5 percent from January 2011 – the beginning of Gov. Nikki Haley's administration – to December 2014. That is nearly double the 7 percent average of all other Southeastern states. However, economists warn that the rate of growth could level off as companies slow their post-recession expansion.

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INSIDE:

Powerhouse manufacturers gather in Greenville this week to discuss common concerns. Business, B14

RECOVERY

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sion and skilled workers become harder to find. Also, a stronger dollar and rising interest rates would have a negative affect on the state's export-heavy industries, as they will cause the prices of cars, planes and tires to rise overseas.

"Anytime you have pent up demand coming out of a recession, there will be a leveling-off period," said University of South Carolina economist Joey Von Nessen.

South Carolina's post-recession highs in manufacturing employment and investment came in 2011. Job growth posted gains for the first time since the beginning of the recession – 3.5 percent growth – and investment logged its biggest gain – \$4.71 billion, according to the state Commerce and Employment and Workforce departments.

Since then, manufacturing job growth slowed to 2.3 percent in 2012, 2 percent in 2013 and 2.46 percent in 2014, calculating yearly averages. Capital investment has remained strong, however, but at slightly lower levels – \$3.28 billion in 2012, \$4.46 billion in 2013 and \$4.42 billion in 2014.

Those investment numbers are powered by recent big-time announcements such as last year's Giti Tire plant in Chester and its

promised 1,700 jobs. And already this year, Chrysler subsidiary Daimler announced the conversion of its Charleston assembly plant to a full-fledged manufacturing plant, touting 1,300 jobs.

Also, another "whale," as recruiters call big manufacturing plants, may be surfacing. South Carolina is said to be in the hunt for a

Volvo auto manufacturing plant, although Commerce officials won't comment on their efforts.

"I don't think it's going to slow down a bit," Commerce secretary Bobby Hitt of Charleston, a former BMW executive, said of manufacturing job growth. "We've got a lot of jobs out there that are going to hit."

BROADER RECOVERY

But other sectors of the economy are catching up with manufacturing in South Carolina, as those industries finally ramp back up after the recession.

In 2014, business and professional services grew 18,200 jobs, compared with manufacturing's 8,900, although many of its jobs are temporary positions offered by companies still too leery of the future to pull the trigger on full-time workers.

Leisure and hospitality jumped to third, adding 7,100 jobs, as consumers had enough confidence in the economy to begin spending money on vacations and eating out, and businesses started beefing up their travel budgets.

Construction showed a mini-comeback in 2014 by

adding 2,100 jobs; and, a recovered housing market means more demand for manufactured products, from refrigerators and dish washers to heating and air conditioning systems.

"You can't pick one industry in the Southeast anymore," said College of Charleston economist Frank Hefner, saying the recovery is progressing in pretty much the same manner throughout the South.

While some industries are catching up, don't look for a downturn in manufacturing, experts say.

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"I don't think we're going to see a decline because of trends that transcend South Carolina," Von Nessen said.

Increasingly, companies are choosing to build new plants and expand in the South, where labor is cheaper, unions are almost nonexistent and the climate, both business and meteorological, is favorable.

Recently, BMW opened a plant in Mexico for the same reasons, said Lewis Gossett, president and CEO of the S.C. Manufacturers Alliance.

Hitt added that what separates South Carolina from the rest of the pack is the port of Charleston. He said that South Carolina has become the nation's leading producer and exporter of tires, has created an entirely new aviation cluster with Boeing, and is growing its established automotive in-

dustry with BMW and Daimler - much of it directly re-

lated to the port.

"All the numbers are going in the right direction," he said.

But Von Nessen warned that a stronger dollar and rising interest rates "are something we have to be on the lookout for. On the margins, all that has a negative impact on export activity."

LEAN AND MEAN

Is the state's success in creating manufacturing jobs outpacing its ability to train workers to fill them?

"The problem we are going to run into is the skill gap for people who are technically savvy for the jobs that are being created," Hefner said. "I don't know how we are going to overcome that."

Hitt responded that while the "labor force is something we have to work on all the time," the state's track record shows that when the rubber meets the road, South Carolina technical schools and apprentice

programs can deliver the workers.

"Twenty years ago when BMW came here we didn't have any automotive workers," he said. "Boeing has 7,500 people working there and (when it was recruited) we didn't have any aviation workers. We're inventing new sectors in this state and its not lost on our education community. We have young people coming out of our high schools and

two-year colleges and four-year universities every day."

Workers following the jobs here from other states also will help bridge the skill gap, Hitt and Gossett said.

Gossett believes companies will expand with an improving economy and greater demand for products.

"We are talking about some lean, mean operations that are poised to be

more profitable and productive than they ever have been," he said. "And that's when you see hiring."

BIGGEST JOBS ANNOUNCEMENTS SINCE 2011

2,000 workers

2013 Boeing expansion, Charleston

1,700 workers

2014 Giti Tire plant, Chester

1,620 workers

2011 Continental Tire plant, Sumter

1,300 workers

2015 Daimler expansion, Charleston

1,000 workers

2012 BMW expansion, Spartanburg

800 workers

2014 BMW expansion, Spartanburg

SOURCE: S.C. Department of Commerce

CLIMBING OUT OF THE RECESSION

Manufacturing investment and jobs numbers since the end of the recession almost 5 years ago.

LOW POINT

\$2.15 billion investment,
213,866 jobs in 2009

CLIMBING OUT

\$3.28 billion investment,
220,119 jobs in 2012

HIGH POINT

\$4.42 billion investment,
236,800 jobs in 2014

MANUFACTURING CAPITAL INVESTMENT AND JOBS IN SOUTH CAROLINA

2006

\$1.98 billion, 253,780
workers

2011

\$4.71 billion, 215,137
workers

2007

\$3.57 billion, 249,324
workers

2012

\$3.28 billion, 220,119
workers

2008

\$3.61 billion, 242,200
workers

2013

\$4.46 billion, 224,533
workers

2009

\$2.15 billion, 213,866
workers

2014

\$4.42 billion, 230,067
workers

2010

\$3.71 billion, 207,826
workers

SOURCE: S.C. Department of Commerce,
SC. Department of Employment and
Workforce