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148 What's it like to be a refugee in America?

Those fleeing persecution face a long road to enter the United States

Terrorism fears spur opposition in York County, elsewhere

Financial support is limited, but public welcome can mean everything

BY BRISTOW MARCHANT
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From the moment she set foot in America, Bedrija Jazic was struck by the friendliness of the country – at least the people who met her at the airport from the refugee resettlement agency.

“When you come here, you’ve been through very difficult times,” said Jazic, who landed in Columbia in 1996 after her family fled war in her native Bosnia. “You have to start over where everything is different; you leave your family and friends behind. So to have someone come and welcome you at the airport and say ‘Welcome to South Carolina’ and know they will be here to help you ... that helped tremendously.”

In the 20 years since she came as an international war refugee, the program that helped her start a new life in the United States has become a political flashpoint.

President Obama’s plans to admit 10,000 refugees from the world’s latest devastating conflict – a Syrian civil war with ethnic and religious overtones that has displaced half of the nation’s population of 22 million people – have sparked passionate opposition.

Some fear the masses

fleeing the war could include terrorists from the Islamic State group, which controls large portions of Syria. Thirty state governors – including South Carolina’s Nikki Haley – have asked the federal government not to send Syrian refugees to their states. Multiple counties in South Carolina have also passed resolutions opposing resettlement efforts.

The York County Council approved its own resolution recently. By a 4-3 vote, the council voted to support Haley’s request that refugees fleeing the Syrian civil war not be relocated to South Carolina because of fears terrorists might slip into the country in their midst.

Britt Blackwell, Christi Cox, Michael Johnson and William “Bump” Roddey voted in favor of a motion to halt the resettlement of 10,000 people scheduled to be admitted to the country next year. Bruce Henderson, Robert Winkler and Chad Williams voted against the motion.

The questions being asked include: Who is responsible for making sure the people coming into the country won’t pose a danger to those already here? How do they get approved to enter the country? What happens to them after they get here?

‘THEY DESERVE SYMPATHY’

Jazic, as director of refugee resettlement services for Lutheran Services Carolinas in Columbia, has helped hundreds of foreign families find new homes in this country since 2004. She knows what they need once they get here. Two decades ago her family needed the same help.

Her daughter was 9 months old when the shelling started. Her hometown of Sarajevo, where she taught high school English and her husband was a veterinarian, was attacked by Serbian forces, an assault that lasted four years.

“We were there the entire time,” Jazic said. “There was no water, no power, no food, no wood to burn. But we survived somehow.”

Because of the near constant bombardment and the threat of sniper fire, “when someone left the house, you didn’t know whether they would come home,” she said.

When the siege finally lifted, the family fled to neighboring Croatia, staying at a friend’s home for almost two years.

“We were very lucky, because other people had to stay at the organizing center,” makeshift mass shelters for people fleeing the conflict, she said.

Similar camps house millions today in places such as Jordan, Lebanon and Turkey, countries bordering Syria.

“I sympathize with anyone in any conflict,” she said. “Anyone who has to leave their home, leave everything they’ve ever known, their family, their friends, their life. They all deserve sympathy, from me or anyone else.”

MORATORIUM ON REFUGEES

The York County Council asked county attorney Michael Kendree to write a resolution modeled on a letter Haley sent to the U.S. Department of State in the aftermath of the Nov. 13 Paris terror attacks. It asked that Syrians not be sent to South Car-



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olina.

"While I agree that the United States should try to assist individuals in such dire situations, it is precisely because of the situation in Syria that makes their admission into the United States a potential threat to our national security," Haley wrote.

The language isn't strong enough for Michael Reed, chairman of the Palmetto Christian Defense group based in Columbia.

Reed came to York County in early November to support a resolution by Henderson that would call on South Carolina to suspend refugee resettlement in the state, specifically citing refugees "from North Africa, and the Middle East, including Syria." The resolution died when no other council member seconded the motion.

Reed and other supporters have spoken twice more at subsequent council meetings, calling on York County to adopt the measure. He says a narrower ban on Syrian refugees won't solve what he sees as a looming security threat.

"I think the county council is missing the point," Reed said. "They should call on a moratorium on all refugees."

The Herald interviewed Reed before it was announced that two Syrian refugees had already been resettled in South Carolina this month by Lutheran Services Carolinas. The resettlement, and the possibility of more Syrians entering South Carolina, shows state and local government have little control over a federal resettlement program.

Syrians make up a small portion of the thousands of refugees admitted to the United States each year. Jason Lee, director of World Relief Spartanburg - along with Lutheran Services, one of two nonprofits that assists refugees in South Carolina - said his organization is

unlikely to resettle Syrians in the state because their sister offices in North Carolina and Georgia have more experience handling refugees from the region.

"We just don't have Syrians here," Lee said. "Because the others have served more Syrians, there's more of a population there already."

Of the refugees Lee said he has helped resettle in the Upstate, 84 percent are Christians. About 80 percent have fled conflicts in Myanmar and the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

Because refugees are often resettled with family members, Lee says the Upstate has a sizable number of Ukrainians, who fled recent fighting and reunited with those who left after the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991.

Some Middle Eastern refugees in South Carolina came on "special immigrant visas" offered to Afghans and Iraqis who assisted the U.S. military forces in their home countries and now face retribution. Jazic said there is a "growing community" of both nationalities in the Midlands. These refugees are now bringing over their family members.

Lee and Jazic say it's hard to determine an exact number of refugees because agencies don't track them long-term. Lutheran Services helps resettle around 200 people a year, and World Relief assisted 69 people in the past year. An estimated 1.8 million people have entered the United States since the Refugee Act of 1980, according to the charity Bridging Refugee Youth and Children's Services.

Reed says it's too dangerous for the United States to admit refugees without a stronger program to investigate who comes into the country. He said he worries that stopping Syrians alone won't stop terrorists from slipping in from other

countries.

"I favor a moratorium until the vetting problems are addressed and settled," Reed said. "We have no background on these folks and we're going to wind up with something like what happened in France happening here."

HOW THEY GET HERE

Supporters say the investigation process for refugees is already extensive, with most applicants waiting up to two years before they reach the United States.

"Refugees are subject to some of the highest scrutiny of any traveler," said Jazic, who remembers her own investigation.

"You're questioned multiple times by officers asking all kinds of questions. It feels like you're being interrogated," she said. "For people who are already struggling, going through that process can just be additional stress."

Jazic also knows the hardship of waiting. She's processed Burmese people who faced the same conditions as many other refugees when they crossed the border into Thailand and were placed by the government in camps.

"They're in the jungle, they can't leave, they can't work. The schools are all provided in the camp," she said. "You have thousands of people in a dozen square miles. It's not a permanent solution."

Lee said the U.S. Department of State operates nine refugee support centers around the world, where applicants undergo 13 separate health and security screenings before they can be sent to the United States. They undergo biometric checks where DNA and fingerprints are run through databases operated by the international police agency Interpol.

"People complain that there's no database (of Syrians), but there's no database of any refugees," Lee said. "Each one has to do an in-person interview





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with a U.S. Department of Homeland Security agent, and if he doesn't like the way your hair is parted, you can be denied entry."

Once refugees arrive in the United States, public support doesn't last long. Each refugee receives a one-time payment of \$1,125 to set up their new life in a new country. "Reception and placement" services from aid agencies last for the first 90 days in the country. Employment assistance lasts 180 days, or until a refugee is offered the first available job, separate from any public assistance they may be able to draw once they are here.

Refugees are required to pay back the airfare for the flight to the United States. "Delta doesn't have a discount because they're refugees," Lee said.

Both faith-based organizations depend on public support, be it from member churches or just good Samaritans. Lutheran Services seeks out American "mentors" to help their clients adapt to their new country, while World Relief sets up "good neighbor teams" to pro-

vide assistance.

Because the concern over Syrian refugees, both agencies say they have received mostly positive feedback from the community and offers to help.

"When I tell some people we don't help Syrians here, they're disappointed," Lee said.

With Christian organizations helping Muslim refugees resettle, religion is often part of the discussion. Reed, chairman of Palmetto Christian Defense, said the problem is those "raised in the Islamic culture."

"I know someone's going to say I'm the bad guy for pointing that out," Reed said, "but there's a pattern of these incidents coming from people who have an Islamic or Muslim background."

A statement by Palmetto Christian Defense after the Paris attacks said, "Muslims have lands for their people in the Middle East, just as Christians have lands colonized, settled, developed and designed for our people in the western world. It is in everybody's best interest that these two diametri-

cally opposed cultures, governmental structures, religions and people stay separated and in their own respective lands.

"Jesus Christ and the Bible are the pillars of America, not Muhammad, Allah or the Koran," it continued. "One is for Christ, the other anti-Christ."

Reed said he is "not opposed" to a proposal by presidential candidate Donald Trump to stop any Muslim from entering the United States, but he said the plan is "probably not workable."

"Do I hate those people? No, but I love my country enough to take this seriously," he said.

Those who support refugee resettlement work hard against that attitude, whether it's in public forums or in day-to-day life.

"We want to make sure people understand Muslims are coming here to flee terrorists, not to be terrorists," Lee said.

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Lutheran Services Carolinas

Bedrija Jazic is not only the refugee resettlement director at Lutheran Services Carolinas, she also was resettled by the program itself when her family fled from the war in Bosnia 20 years ago.



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**Gov. Haley to reply
to Obama's speech**

Gov. Nikki Haley is ready to record another first.

The Lexington Republican will make her party's



response to the President's State of the Union address Tuesday, Jan. 12.

Halfacre

In addition to being the first woman and first second generation American to hold the office, she will be the first South Carolinian to deliver the State of the Union response.

Haley and her family reside in Governor's Grant in Lexington when they're not in the Governor's Mansion.



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S.C. farmers hold out hope for flood relief

BY HAL MILLARD

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Farmers devastated by the October floods hope to see some relief when S.C. lawmakers reconvene next week.

While details must still be worked out, House Budget Chief Brian White (R-Anderson) said prior to Christmas he plans to introduce legislation to help farmers when the legislature gets back to work on January 12.

Lexington County farmers experienced tens of millions of dollars in losses, while farmers statewide experienced losses totaling \$376 million, state officials said.

The House Ways and Means Committee, which White chairs, and its subcommittees have been holding hearings for two months to understand the impacts of the flood, including impacts to the state's lucrative agricultural industry that suffered through drought and historic high temperatures before October's floods pummeled the state.

"While the agricultural crop loss crisis is not the only need arising out of October's flooding, it is one of the most important and time-sensitive, which is why I plan to push for a Palmetto Farm Aid bill as soon as we begin the new legislative session," White said in a statement. "Agriculture is our number one industry and our farmers are in desperate need."

Added White, "Crop insurance is not true insurance and many crops are not insurable, so while it will cover some of the losses, it is an insufficient mechanism for insuring against catastrophic loss arising from a natural disaster.

"There may be some federal government assistance available but these measures fall far short of preventing many of our farmers from losing their farms and liveli-

hoods," White continued. "We must stand up for our farmers to prevent a pillar of the South Carolina economy from collapsing."

State Agriculture commissioner Hugh Weathers told a state Senate panel last month that only about a third of crop losses are expected to be covered by insurance.

That leaves approximately \$250 million in uncovered losses.

Farm groups have urged Gov. Nikki Haley to request assistance for farmers from the state's congressional delegation.

But Haley has resisted, saying the request is for direct cash payments to farmers who chose to be underinsured.

Haley has instead asked the U.S. Department of Agriculture to expedite insurance payments to farmers.

GOP Agriculture Commissioner Hugh Weathers says those payments — even for farmers with top-notch insurance — won't come close to covering their losses.

White said he was stunned by Haley's stance.

"We give away hundreds of millions in incentives every year to other corporations. Now we have farms here at home that have been here for generations, and the governor's saying, 'Too bad. You made a bad business decision,'" White told the Associated Press. "It was a tragedy. That's not a bad business decision. That's an act of God."

White said without some federal aid many S.C. farmers could lose their farms and their livelihoods.

The \$1.8 trillion spending plan Congress passed last week includes \$300 million in federal disaster aid for South Carolina and other states.

But how much will come to South Carolina remains uncertain.

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Gov. Nikki Haley asked to deliver Republican address following the State of the Union



Gov. Nikki Haley

**Contributed by
 SC Gov news**

House Speaker Paul Ryan (R-WI) and Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell (R-KY) announced January 5 Gov. Nikki Haley (R-SC) will deliver the Republican Address to the Nation following the State of the Union on Tuesday, January 12, 2016.

"Nikki Haley has led an economic turnaround and set a bold agenda for her state, getting things done, and becoming one of the most popular gov-

ernors in America," Speaker Ryan said. "In a year when the country is crying out for a positive vision and alternative to the status quo, Governor Haley is the exact right choice to deliver the

Republican Address to the Nation."

"Nikki Haley is a proven leader and committed reformer who believes deeply in the promise of the country we all share," Sen. McConnell said. "Not

only has Governor Haley fought to bring opportunity and prosperity to the people of her state, but she's also demonstrated how bringing people together can bring real results. Governor Haley knows the American Dream and wants to see every American share in it, and we're pleased she will be delivering this year's Republican Address."

"I was honored to be asked by Speaker Ryan

and Senator McConnell to deliver the Republican address to the nation," Gov. Haley said. "This is a

time of great challenges for our country but also of great opportunities. I intend to speak about both."

About Gov. Haley

Governor Nikki Haley, the 116th Governor of South Carolina, is the first female and the first minority governor in South Carolina history

and currently the youngest governor in the country. She was reelected to a second term in November 2014.

Under Governor Haley's leadership, South Carolina's jobless rate hit record lows, the state announced more than 73,000 jobs in 45 of 46 counties, more than 25,000 South Carolinians moved from welfare to work, and the state made

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its largest infrastructure investment in a generation without raising taxes. Governor Haley brought together leaders of both political parties, educators, and the business community to pass landmark education reforms. She has also increased transparency and accountability to state government and delivered tax relief for small businesses, pension reform,

and Medicaid reform.

Born in Bamberg, the daughter of Indian immigrants, Governor Haley's first job was keeping the books for her family's clothing store – at the age of 13. She went on to graduate from Clemson University with a B.S. degree in accounting. Governor Haley and her husband Michael, a Captain in the Army National Guard and combat veter-

an who was deployed to Afghanistan's Helmand Province, attend Mt. Horeb United Methodist Church in Lexington. The Haleys have two children, Rena, 17, and Nalin, 14. Learn more by visiting her official website or by following her on Facebook and Twitter.

NOTE: The Republican Address to the Nation will be live streamed at <http://gop.gov/SOTU>.

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Interfaith Partners of South Carolina announced the launch of **S.C. Interfaith Harmony Month (January)** December 29, State House Rotunda. During the month of January, many congregations and religious groups will hold special events and services during which they will welcome people who are not members of their group to visit, including Introduction to Nichiren Buddhism, Wednesday, January 13; Women of Many Faiths discussion and refreshments, Thursday, January 14; Teen Interfaith Service Weekend, Saturday, January 16; Baha'i' Open Service, Sunday, January 17; I Shall Not Be Silent Film, Monday, January 18; Facing Fear in Our Houses of Worship, Tuesday, January 19; Native American Winter Storytelling, Wednesday, January 20; Stories of the Prophets From the Holy Qu'ran, Friday, January 22; Musical Shabbat Worship, Friday, January 22; Tree of Life Congregation 120th Anniversary Concert, Saturday, January 23; Opening Season of a Season For Non-Violence, Saturday, January 30; 2016-The Year For Interfaith, monthly starting Sunday, January 31; USC Methodist Student Network program, Sunday, January 31; Dances of Universal Peace, Friday, February 5; and Lights of Nut Pagan Ceremony, Sunday, February 7. For the fourth year in a row, Governor Nikki R. Haley has declared January to be South Carolina Interfaith Harmony Month. Interfaith Partners will host a special presentation on Tuesday, January 19 called "Facing Fear in Our Houses of Worship." 798-8007.



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Haley to give Republican response

Speech after State of the Union won't be governor's 1st time on national stage

COLUMBIA (AP) — After a year when a church massacre and catastrophic flooding put her in the spotlight, Gov. Nikki Haley will get further national exposure when she gives the Republican response to the State of the Union address.

But she's not new to the national stage. In 2012, she spoke at the Republican National Convention and campaigned for past GOP presidential nominee Mitt Romney. She also promoted her 2012 memoir with a national book tour.

On Tuesday, House Speaker Paul Ryan and Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell jointly announced

that Haley will speak for Republicans after President Obama's Jan. 12 speech.

Haley has "demonstrated how bringing people together can bring real results," McConnell said in a statement on her selection. "Gov. Haley knows the American dream and wants to see every American share in it."

The South Carolina-born daughter

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HALEY

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of Indian immigrants is the state's first female and first minority governor.

Haley, who will turn 44 a week after the address, is also the country's youngest governor.

The selection will likely fuel speculation that Haley would join a potential Republican administration in 2017, though she has repeatedly dismissed such questions.

Haley, governor of a state that holds the first presidential primary in the South, becomes the first South Carolinian and third Republican woman ever to give the response.

It's a role typically reserved for a member of Congress. Last year, Sen. Joni Ernst of Iowa gave the response. In 2013, it was Sen. Marco Rubio of Florida, who's now among a crowded Republican field running for president.

It's also an opportunity that can backfire: Louisiana Gov. Bobby Jindal, who abandoned his 2016 presidential bid, was widely panned for what critics said was a less-than-spectacular speech in 2009.

Haley drew wide praise for her leadership after the June 17 slaying of nine black parishioners of historic Emanuel AME Church in Charleston as she conveyed the state's grief and successfully led calls to bring down a Confederate flag that had flown on Statehouse grounds for 54 years.

The nine killed included the church's pastor, state Sen. Clementa Pinckney. The white man charged with killing them could be seen in photos brandishing the rebel flag.



AP FILE PHOTO

Gov. Nikki Haley speaks at the National Press Club in Washington in September 2015. Haley will give the Republican response to President Obama's Jan. 12 State of the Union address.

Since taking office in 2011, Haley has staunchly criticized Obama on everything from health care reform to immigration.

But the two seemed to share a vision, if only partially, after the shooting.

Haley, who attended funerals for all of the massacre's victims, has said the event motivated by "pure hate" will "forever change the way I live my life."

In calling for the flag's removal, she acknowledged the differing views that for years prevented politicians, including herself, from even broaching the subject.

"My hope is that by removing a symbol that divides us, we can move our state forward in harmony," she said.

The bipartisan crowd surrounding Haley during that emotional speech included Republican National Committee Chairman Reince Priebus.

Giving an impassioned eulogy at Pinckney's funeral, Obama too called for the Confederate flag to be removed from places of honor.

Within weeks of the

shooting, legislators approved removing the flag from its 30-foot perch outside the Statehouse and sending it to a museum.

Obama also called for gun control in eulogizing Pinckney, and Pinckney's widow stood with Obama on Tuesday as he unveiled his plan to use presidential powers to tighten control and enforcement of firearms in the U.S.

He insisted it was possible to uphold the Second Amendment while doing something to tackle the frequency of mass shootings in the U.S.

But Haley has defended gun rights and previously criticized Obama as overreaching his authority.

She holds a concealed carry permit, and she posted a picture on social media in 2013 of the handgun her husband gave her for Christmas.

Haley said she was honored to be asked to deliver the address.

"This is a time of great challenges for our country but also of great opportunities. I intend to speak about both," she said.

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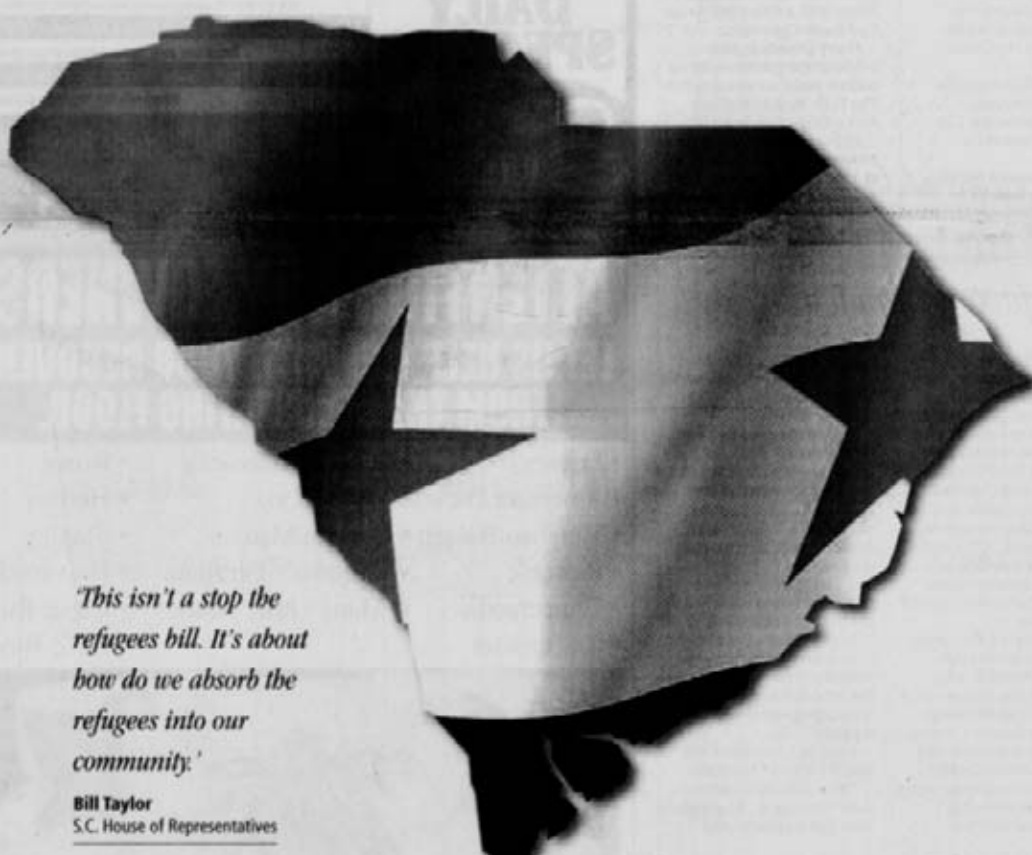
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How should South Carolina address Syrian refugees?



'This isn't a stop the refugees bill. It's about how do we absorb the refugees into our community.'

Bill Taylor
S.C. House of Representatives

Some bills regulate resettlement, others hinder it

BY MICHAEL SMITH
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Recent terror attacks here and abroad have prompted South Carolina lawmakers to file a slew of legislation aimed at regulating, and in some cases, outlawing refugee resettlement in the Palmetto State.

Six bills were filed in the S.C. House and Senate during the prefilling period that ran from Dec. 2 to Dec. 10, all by Republican lawmakers.

While most of the bills severely limit resettlement outright, one bill stops sort of a virtual ban and instead calls for mechanisms regulating potential refugee resettlement in South Carolina.

Rep. Alan Clemmons, R-Myrtle Beach is the lead sponsor of House Bill 4396, also known as the Refugee Absorptive Capacity Act, which creates a state office to handle refugee resettlement. It would operate under the state's Department of Social Services.

Clemmons couldn't be reached for comment. Reps. Donna Hicks, R-Spartanburg and Bill Taylor, R-Aiken are listed as bill cosponsors. "This isn't a stop the refugees bill," Taylor said. "It's about how do we absorb the refugees into our community?"

The bill calls for quarterly meetings between local and state officials to plan and coordinate refugee resettlement.

It also calls upon stakeholders to fashion written policies spelling out how refugee resettlement would function at the local level.

"It's most important to understand and reach out to local communities should [resettlement] occur and figure out how this would work," Taylor said.

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Refugees: Legislators file bills aimed at fleeing Syrians

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H. 4396 and other refugee bills come amid a backlash from more than half the nation's governors concerning Syrian refugee resettlement.

The opposition comes following ISIS-led attacks in Paris that killed 129 and injured 352 in November. ISIS has boasted it plans to disguise terrorists as Syrian refugees.

President Barack Obama, however, strongly supports welcoming refugees and scolded state governments opposed to it. Among the governors opposed is S.C. Gov. Nikki Haley.

Haley has stopped short of calling for an outright ban on refugees, as other governors have espoused. Her Nov. 16 letter to U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry, though, asked the Obama administration to reconsider resettling refugees in South Carolina, citing security concerns.

"While I agree that the United States should try to assist individuals in such dire situations, it is precisely because of this situation in Syria that makes their admission into the United States a potential threat to our national security," the letter said. "For that reason, I ask that you honor my request and not resettle any Syrian refugees in South Carolina."

H. 4396, the bill filed by Clemmons, Hicks and Taylor, places several conditions on resettlement. It essentially nullifies some tenets of Shariah law by saying women have the same opportunities as men in all services provided, including job placement services.

The bill also allows for a moratorium on refugee resettlement in certain instances, mainly when the community lacks the capacity to handle refugees. Any moratorium would first require a public hearing by the local government requesting it, and it could only last one year. H. 4396 has been referred to the House Judiciary Committee.

"I would hope every legislator would view this as a support for their local communities to get knowledge and go to the stakeholders," Taylor said.

A review of other bills, however, shows not every state lawmaker is embracing potential refugees.

None of the anti-refugee bills specifically turns away Syrians or other refugees from South Carolina, though at least four bills have been filed that make resettlement virtually impossible for anyone coming here.

House Bill 4488, for example, bars state agencies from assisting with or participating in "the resettlement of refugees in South Carolina pursuant to a refugee resettlement plan." It prohibits the expenditure of public funds to facilitate refugee resettlement, and also prevents the state from accepting federal funds for resettlement.

Rep. Michael Pitts, R-Laurens and Rep. Greg Delleney, R-Chester co-sponsored the legislation.

A similarly worded Senate bill was filed by Sen. Kevin Bryant, R-Anderson.

Reps. Christopher Corley, R-Graniteville and Harry "Chip" Limehouse, R-Charleston, have filed additional anti-refugee bills. Corley's bill merely states "no state funds may be used to assist the United States Refugee Resettlement program." The Limehouse bill prohibits public officials from using "any asset to assist in the relocation of Middle Eastern refugees."

H. 4477 applies to all departments of state government and its political subdivisions, including counties, cities and school districts. The bills have been referred to the House Judiciary Committee.

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Flood watch hit a lot of homes in the Belle Grove subdivision of Carolina Forest, which saw several homes severely damaged during the October storm that dumped one to two feet of rain in many areas of Horry County. Several state lawmakers have profiled bills designed to generate additional aid for South Carolina flood victims.

FILE PHOTO BY MICHAEL SMITH | MICHAEL.SMITH@MYHORRYNEWS.COM

BY MICHAEL SMITH
MICHAEL.SMITH@MYHORRYNEWS.COM

Horry County flood victims recovering from the October storms could receive further relief, according to several bills pending in the state legislature. In all, six bills—five in the House and one in the Senate—were filed during the prefiling period that

opened Dec. 2 and closed Dec. 10. "I'm encouraged from what I've heard and seen in my colleagues and you've seen some of that in the prefiling," said Rep. James Smith, D-Columbia. "It's a very cooperative effort between the governor's office and various agencies."

The 2016 session officially begins in January. Any of the pending bills would require three readings in both houses before heading to Gov.

Nikki Haley's desk. The bills are largely in response to the October floods caused by historic rainfall in various South Carolina counties.

Some parts of Horry County received nearly two feet of rain. More than 200 homes were damaged by

the floods, according to county estimates.

Dozens of homes in Carolina Forest and Forestbrook were damaged, including several in the Belle-

Grove subdivision. Some residents of the Carolina Forest subdivision reported eight inches or more of water inside their home during the storm's peak.

Widespread flooding was also reported in Conway. Flooding was particularly severe along the Waccamaw River, which spilled its banks and remained under a river flood warning through much of November, according to the National

Weather Service in Wilmington, N.C.

While all the bills are aimed at helping flood victims, a bill filed Thursday by House Minority Leader Rep. Todd Rutherford, D-Columbia, is the most comprehensive. It's also the most expensive.

Rutherford's bill proposes creating a \$326.5 million fund within the

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Flood: Several bills propose aid for victims

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governor's office. Its purpose would be to provide grants to individuals or families impacted by the floods.

H. 4569 identifies two revenue sources—\$86.75 million from the 2014-2015 contingency fund and \$239.8 million in unobligated funds, also from 2014-2015, which the bill says have been certified by the Board of Economic Advisors.

Rutherford couldn't be reached for comment.

Only the governor would be authorized to issue grants to victims, and grants would be available through June 2017, according to the bill.

H. 4569 has been referred to the House Ways and Means Committee.

Most of the other flood bills create various funds and tax credits providing additional benefits to flood victims.

Rep. Beth Bernstein, D-Columbia and Smith are listed as cosponsors of a bill that creates a South Carolina Disaster Relief Fund within the state budget.

H. 4506 establishes the fund as separate from the general fund. Revenues in the fund would be used by the state's adjutant general to operate a grant program for victims of natural disasters, such as the October floods.

Grants would be capped at \$10,000 per household.

The bill also amends the state's tax code by adding a charitable contribution option on state returns for taxpayers wishing to donate to the fund.

Smith and Bernstein also cosponsored a bill that would give qualifying flood victims a 10 percent tax credit on any aid they received from the Federal Emergency Management Agency.

H. 4503, which applies to FEMA aid received in 2015 or 2016, can only be claimed once, but it can be carried forward for up to five years.

Both H. 4503 and H. 4506 have been referred to the House Ways and Means Committee.

Two other bills filed by Rep. Chip Huggins, R-Columbia, address property tax bills. H. 4449 delays by two months the tax penalty schedule for properties damaged during the October floods.

Homeowners must provide proof of receiving federal aid from FEMA to qualify for the reprieve.

H. 4453 would compel counties to reassess properties damaged during the floods.

In some circumstances, property owners would qualify for refunds if their property was sufficiently devalued.

Flood victims, under the bill, would also qualify for the two-month tax penalty reprieve in H. 4449.

Sen. Kevin Bryant, R-Anderson has filed legislation aimed at making it more difficult to sell vehicles with undisclosed flood damage.

S. 924 requires sellers to disclose in writing to buyers a statement defining any vehicle damaged in a flood as a "flood vehicle."

Bryant said he prefiled the bill after receiving input from

several constituents concerned about flooded vehicles being sold as lemons.

"I just wanted to make sure the consumers knew what they were getting," Bryant said. "That information ought to be provided in the sale. That was the motivation behind that bill."

The bill further defines a flood vehicle as any motor vehicle "that has been submerged or partially submerged in water causing damage to the body, engine or transmission."

Violators of the law would be guilty of a misdemeanor.

Convictions would result in a \$200 to \$500 fine or up to 30 days in prison for a first offense. Subsequent offenses carry fines of \$500 to \$1,000 or a year in prison.

S. 924 has been referred to the Senate Transportation Committee.

Additional relief is available through other sources as well.

The South Carolina Realtors has set up a relief fund through its Realtor Relief Foundation.

Flood victims may qualify for up to \$1,000 in aid to cover either monthly mortgage expenses or costs associated with temporary shelter for victims displaced by the flood. The deadline to apply is Dec. 31.

Flood victims can find an application at the following link: <http://bit.ly/1UtOVCg>.

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148 What's in a name? Everything

By **JORDAN COOPER**

Guest column

Our government names are sometimes an indicator to how we are positioned to be treated, which is wrong.

People think about them after we place pick-up orders at restaurants. People think about them when we apply for jobs. People think about them when we go through traffic checkpoints and will call booths.

However, when you walk across a stage for graduation to shake hands with your school's headmaster or president, more names are botched with no chance to repeat pronunciation.

It has to be painful for someone like former New York Giant Atiim Kiambu Hakeem-Ah "Tiki" Barber, Salma Hayek or our S.C. governor Nimrata Nikki Randhawa Haley, to hear a school official mispronounce their names and move on to the next one quicker than the next contestant at your local spelling bee.

Especially after considering the fact that the student has worked for about 20 years to receive the distinction of getting their diploma or degree.

It cuts the student and their families short of the esteem they deserve for their family member graduating. We must be mindful of all cultures and not

be content with properly pronouncing only names of primary English-origin.

English is the most spoken language in America, but not the official one. So, again, we need to have the most qualified people at hand to say our graduates' names at commencement ceremonies.

Hence, I would ask that schools hire a pro bono linguist for each graduation ceremony for high school and university graduates around America.

We cannot discriminate whose name is dictated correctly. We all need our names to be given the courteous, careful consideration of the articulation when we speak them. It will show humongous integrity from schools to implement this idea.

Jordan Thomas Cooper is the first African-American to serve in both the governor and lieutenant governor's office, and in the inspector general's office in S.C. He is the second black presidential campaign speechwriter in American history. E-mail him at cooperjt5@gmail.com.



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148 Reeves plans run for Dorchester County coroner

Former county official, law enforcement officer adds name to list of candidates

BY JENNA-LEY HARRISON

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While the coroner's sole responsibility is to determine cause of death, whoever fills the elected seat also must have an endless supply of compassion and empathy.

Givhans resident and former county council vice chairman Wayne Reeves said God has specifically given that emotional reserve to him. That's why he's planning to add his name to the list of other individuals running for Dorchester County coroner.



Reeves

"The coroner's office is much bigger than saying (that) someone's dead," Reeves said. "If you look at it as just that, then you'll be a robot."

From responding to numerous fatal crash scenes as a law enforcement officer to counseling "hundreds" of church members as a pastor and balancing budgets on county council, Reeves said he has the compassion, experience, leadership and education to best carry out the role of coroner — a position that a local firefighter, sheriff's deputy and funeral home director are also vying for.

However, Reeves said he isn't concerned with the competition; he's focused on his own campaign.

"My campaign is about the people of Dorchester County; it's not about who my opponents are," Reeves said.

Chief Magistrate Katrina L. Patton is currently filling the coroner position as interim. She assumed the job Oct. 1 after a grand jury indicted former coroner Chris Nisbet on a misconduct in office charge. The charge was filed against him after a SLED investigation for an August incident in which police said Nisbet pulled a gun on his unarmed neighbor. Gov. Nikki Haley suspended him from office the same day he was indicted.

Reeves said he's known Nisbet for years and has nothing but respect for him. He also said he doesn't see a need to change how the coroner's office operates, should he win the seat,

or create a more diverse staff "for the

sake of diversity." He's more concerned about employing "qualified" individuals, regardless of their race or gender.

The spark that lit the flame

Reeves said it took October's "1,000-year flood" to solidify his desire to run for coroner. He said it was the need for increased compassion during that time that struck him, wanting to change the robotic response to disaster that he saw. More specifically, Reeves said there's a "void in county government to generally show compassion and serve the people."

"So many things that weren't happening because...we've become like robots," he said.

Reeves even gained national attention during the flood when he and another person helped retrieve a coffin the rain had unearthed in a cemetery near his home. He said a similar incident happened years earlier at the same location. Numerous news outlets contacted him about the strange stint. Top reporters stemmed

from MSNBC, Fox News and CNN, to name a few.

In the days after the flood, he asked friends and family how they felt about him running for coroner; the response was 100 percent positive.

"After the flood, I started asking people what they thought. After getting nothing but positive remarks, I just talked to more and more people," Reeves said.

Since then, he said, he's met 1,000 people one-on-one, but he's just getting started. Reeves said he hopes to meet at least 10,000 people by June 14 — the Republican primary — by doing things the grassroots way. He said he plans to walk through neighborhoods and knock on doors. After all, involvement in the community is what he's done his whole life, specifically through volunteer work with the North Charleston Jaycees.

"Our political arena has gotten so out of kilter with the way things are done and not done, and I'm going back to (door-to-door), he said.

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Coroner

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Born in Ridgeville, Reeves said he was just a 1-year-old when his father died in a logging-truck accident, and his mother was left to care for him and his seven siblings. Growing up, Reeves always worked at least three jobs at a time to support his family, and he continued to do so even after he married and had his own children.

For a number of years, Reeves used the role of a police badge to care for others. He spent three years with the South Carolina Highway Patrol, one year

with Holly Hill police and five years as a Charleston County detention officer. Another five years he served as a volunteer game warden.

"It's a brotherhood. ... You're able to do a lot of good. ... There's always victims and people who need help," he said.

Reeves has also worked in the private sector and in construction, including building two local barbershops: Buddy's Barber & Hairstyling in Ladson and Central Avenue Barber & Styling in Summerville.

From 1982 to 1988, he served on county council as vice chair — with his two biggest contributions during that time related to Dorchester County emergencies, calling himself "a safety-conscious" person. He said he worked with council to bring 911 to the area and secure

countywide fire protection. Reeves was additionally part of the Public Works Committee during his council service.

For the last 13 years, he's pastored various congregations but is currently head of a 50-member flock at Knightsville United Methodist Church. He believes with "hundreds" of hours of grief counseling under his belt, he has the experience and training to properly empathize with families of the deceased.

"Most of my learning came from hands-on," he said.

But even if Reeves wins the coroner race, his first priority will still be his church.

"I've always been a pastor. I'm not going to give up on my calling," he said.

His heart expands well beyond his local community to

include people groups on other continents. His years of overseas missions include stories of walking the African plains at night in search of villages and sharing the Gospel in impoverished Haiti.

"God has used me in so many ways to touch so many people," he said.

Reeves also boasts a doctorate degree from Covington Theological Seminary in Georgia, where he also earned his undergraduate and master's degrees.

Reeves is married to his wife Diane, and the couple has two children and seven grandchildren.

For more information on his background and campaign, visit his website, ReevesforCoroner.com.

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