

Title: **Road improvements**  
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## Road improvements

Not surprisingly, reforming the state Department of Transportation and improving the state's infrastructure lead the agenda the (S.C.) Chamber shared in a recent meeting with the Editorial Board.

On this, the Chamber is definitely on the right track, joining the chorus of voices calling for an increase in the state's gasoline tax along with DOT reform that brings more accountability to infrastructure decisions.

The Chamber hasn't identified a specific figure for an increase in the gasoline tax that hasn't been raised since 1987, but it says the state needs to find an additional \$600 million a year for its infrastructure budget.

It would be encouraging to hear the Chamber advocate for a tax increase without the corresponding income tax cut that Gov. Nikki Haley has proposed and many legislative Republicans support. Instead, the Chamber says income tax relief is politically vital to passage of a gas tax increase.

Such a plan may be an acceptable fallback position, but it would be preferable to hear business leaders emphasize the

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importance of fixing the state's substandard highways, period.

– *Greenville News*

## How we talk

Charleston has been named the most courteous city several times. New analysis suggests those good manners are used throughout South Carolina, the most courteous state.

If, indeed, we pepper our language with “please” and “thank you” more than other states, perhaps that explains why we're the third-slowest-speaking state. ...

Marchex, an analytics firm that conducted the studies, does note that the fastest-talk-

ing are not necessarily the wordiest. That distinction goes to New York, followed by California and New Jersey. South Carolina is chatty, too, but can't keep up with those.

The least wordy? Oklahoma, Kansas and Wisconsin.

We also are in the middle of the pack when measured for profanity. Somewhere between Washington and Massachusetts, where they are comparatively swear-free, and Ohio and Maryland, where they turn the telephone lines blue.

The Atlantic's online site reported on these studies recently and surmised that talking slowly is sometimes equated with being inferior intellectually. But perhaps we take our time speaking because South Carolina isn't as impatient as people in Kentucky, Ohio and North Carolina, who top that list.

– *Post & Courier*  
 Charleston

Title: **S.C. women deserve an equal-pay law**  
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## GUEST VIEW

## *S.C. women deserve an equal-pay law*

By The Herald Editorial Board

While Gov. Nikki Haley is predictably conservative on most issues, she sometimes is willing to go against the grain, such as when she recently helped lead the effort to bring down the Confederate flag that had flown on the grounds of the Statehouse. We suggest that she now consider leading the charge to pass equal pay protections for women in South Carolina.

Haley, who, as a woman politician, has experienced gender discrimination in her public life, should be sympathetic to the plight of underpaid women in the state's workforce. And as the state's governor, she is uniquely positioned to make the case for South Carolina women.

The Lilly Ledbetter Fair Pay Act of 2009, which made it easier for women to challenge discriminatory pay in court, was the first bill President Barack Obama signed into law. As reported on Friday, the seventh anniversary of the law, South Carolina ranks as one of only four states in the nation without an equal-pay law.

The others are Alabama, Mississippi and Utah, although Utah introduced equal-pay legislation this

month.

Comparing the pay of men and women can be difficult, even when they have similar jobs. Nonetheless, the disparity is so wide in many cases that the only logical culprit is gender discrimination.

Women in South Carolina make 80 cents for every dollar that similarly employed men make, according to the National Partnership for Women and Families. That comes to a difference of \$8,272 a year.

For women of color, the gap is wider. African-American women make 57 cents for every dollar a white man makes in South Carolina, while Hispanic women make 48 cents.

Opponents of an equal-pay law in the state fear that it could have a negative impact on small businesses, although we can't understand how allowing small businesses to discriminate against women employees is a worthwhile benefit. Some opponents no doubt have an aversion to the equal pay law simply because it is championed by the federal government – and specifically by Obama.

Another possible reason the law has not gained traction in the state is because the Legislature is so

heavily dominated by men. South Carolina has only 22 women in the state House and only one in the Senate, or about 13.5 percent of all legislators, which is among the lowest in the nation.

In Colorado, by contrast, women occupy 42 percent of the seats in the state Legislature, the highest percentage in the nation.

Some South Carolina lawmakers have tried to push equal-pay legislation. Charleston Rep. Leon Stavrakis, a Democrat, introduced a bill that would make it illegal for a state agency to "discriminate against an employee on the basis of gender" by paying a woman less than a man for the same work as long as they are equally qualified. But the bill has been stalled for more than a year.

Someone such as Haley might be able to break the logjam. She is a Republican and, with her final term as governor ending this year, she has nothing to lose politically.

Ironically, despite the widespread opposition to equal-pay legislation in the Legislature, it is extremely popular with voters. A 2014 Winthrop University poll found that three out of four South Carolinians are in favor of such a law.