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Subject: Morning Clips - Friday, December 13, 2013

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Governor Nikki Haley News:

The State: SC Governor: 'We just got our Christmas gift'

<http://www.thestate.com/2013/12/12/3155265/michael-haleys-sc-guard-unit-returns.html#storylink=cpy>

Andrew Shain

Capt. Michael Haley squeezed his son and daughter before reaching over for a long embrace with his wife, S.C. Gov. Nikki Haley, after returning home Thursday from a nearly year-long deployment in Afghanistan. "We just got our Christmas gift," Nikki Haley said after the couple kissed and she wiped away tears. Michael Haley said he felt "terrific" as he and more than 40 other members of a South Carolina National Guard agriculture-training unit were welcomed back to the United States by their families near the Columbia airport.

Associated Press: Gov. Haley's husband returns home from Afghanistan

<http://www.aikenstandard.com/article/20131212/AIK0105/131219768/1015/AIK0105/gov-haley-s-husband-returns-home-from-afghanistan>

Susanne M. Schafer

Gov. Nikki Haley and family brushed aside tears on Thursday as they embraced her husband upon his return from Afghanistan with some 40 fellow South Carolina Army National Guard soldiers. "Terrific!" Capt. Michael Haley said with a broad smile when queried how he felt as friends and reporters snapped photos of him, his wife, 12-year-old son Nalin, and 15-year-old daughter Rena. "We just got our Christmas gift!" said the governor, smiling but also wiping aside tears from both cheeks. The hangar near the Columbia airport rocked with shouts of glee from some 200 friends and family members, who pumped welcome-home signs and waved small American flags as the soldiers walked single-file into the building and then stood at attention for the final ceremony of their 10-month tour.

Greenville News: Michelin ready to roll with new Earthmover tire plant

<http://www.greenvilleonline.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=2013312130011>

Angelia Davis

Race cars and fighter jets accelerate on its rubber, but Michelin North America did its quickest work in building a new plant for its biggest, slowest-moving tires. Pete Selleck, chairman and president of the Greenville-based company, said Thursday that Michelin needed a year, five months and 22 days — record time for the tiremaker — to build its 19th plant in the hemisphere. Called US10, the new plant will begin producing gigantic tires for earth-moving equipment early next year.

Note: Gov. Nikki Haley was unable to attend Thursday's event because her husband, Michael Haley, was returning from Afghanistan, Selleck said. But in a statement, Haley said that Michelin, by its investment of billions of dollars in South Carolina, its creation of thousands of jobs and countless community-focused activities that have enriched lives, "has set a high standard for manufacturing in our state."

Opinion / Editorial Roundup:

Post and Courier: Sentencing reform pays dividends

<http://www.postandcourier.com/article/20131213/PC1002/131219778/1021/sentencing-reform-pays-dividends>

Editorial

Crime's costs aren't confined to the toll imposed on its victims. The government's obligation to enhance public safety by incarcerating - and presumably rehabilitating - criminals requires taxpayer money. But common-sense changes in sentencing policies have been reducing that financial burden across much of the nation in recent years - including here in South Carolina. The state Sentencing Oversight Committee has issued a new report documenting a 2.8 percent decline in South Carolina's prison population from 2012 to 2013 - with an accompanying reduction of \$5.2 million in corrections costs.

Note: State lawmakers and Gov. Nikki Haley should keep that added burden in mind when crafting budget proposals during the next legislative session, which begins next month.

Greenville News: Data show state erred on Medicaid

<http://www.greenvilleonline.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=2013312130008>

Editorial

The chorus of voices is growing that is proclaiming South Carolina erred in rejecting a federally funded expansion of Medicaid as part of the Affordable Care Act. The latest is an analysis by the Commonwealth Fund that shows the state will lose \$807 million in federal funds in 2022 by refusing to expand its Medicaid rolls. The Medicaid expansion was a key to making the ACA work to provide access to affordable healthcare for the nation's poor. Under the law, Medicaid would have been expanded to provide insurance to adults who earn up to 138 percent of the federal poverty level. The federal government promised to cover the added costs of the expansion for three years, with the states ultimately having to pay 10 percent of the additional costs after that.

Aiken Standard: Solar energy needs encouraging in S.C.

<http://www.aikenstandard.com/article/20131213/AIK02/131219793/1018/AIK02/editorial-solar-energy-needs-encouraging-in-sc>

Editorial

Homeowners, schools and churches can see savings on their power bills, but South Carolina lawmakers must step up and make changes to the state's solar energy laws to do so. There are already a number of bills introduced in the General Assembly that can make that possible and generate benefits throughout the state, including in Aiken County. South Carolina has among the nation's most restrictive laws on the use of solar energy, including what's called "third party leasing." This restricts utilities from leasing solar panels and energy generation equipment to a homeowner or business, which also allows consumers to sell back electricity they don't use to power companies.

Times and Democrat: As Obama cheered abroad, challenge growing at home

http://thetandd.com/news/opinion/editorial/as-obama-cheered-abroad-challenge-growing-at-home/article_474d0f16-639e-11e3-91da-001a4bcf887a.html

Editorial

THE ISSUE: The president's popularity; OUR OPINION: Remaining years will be crucial in defining Obama's legacy; President Barack Obama is not the first U.S. leader to suffer in popularity at home even as he is cheered loudly on the foreign stage. The realities of difficult politics in Washington and a nation filled with unease over the economy and major changes in health care are bound to leave doubters. The latest Associated Press-GfK poll, however, gives Obama cause to worry beyond mere popularity. A clear majority of adults, 56 percent, say "honest" does not describe Obama well. That's worse than his 52 percent rating in an October poll.

S.C. Federal Delegation News:

Greenville News: Upstate GOP congressmen oppose budget deal

<http://www.greenvilleonline.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=2013312130013>

Mary Orndorff Troyan

Upstate Republican congressmen oppose the short-term bipartisan budget deal that passed the U.S. House on Thursday night, saying it wouldn't do enough to cut federal spending. Reps. Trey Gowdy and Jeff Duncan voted against the deal, which is designed to avoid a government funding crisis for the next two years and alleviate some of the automatic sequestration spending cuts that are about to hit the Department of Defense. So did Rep. Mick Mulvaney. The agreement was hammered out by House Budget Committee Chairman Paul Ryan, R-Wis., and Senate Budget Committee Chairwoman Patty Murray, D-Wash.

The State: House members from SC vote 4-3 against budget compromise

<http://www.thestate.com/2013/12/12/3155933/politics-house-members-from-sc.html#storylink=cpy>

Andrew Shain

The South Carolina congressional delegation in the House voted 4-3 against a two-year bipartisan federal budget plan on Thursday night. The House approved the budget by a 332-94 margin. Republicans Jeff Duncan, Trey Gowdy, Mick Mulvaney and Mark Sanford opposed the compromise -- even though the bill contained a gulf oil-drilling provision from Duncan. Republicans Tom Rice and Joe Wilson sided with the delegation's only Democrat James Clyburn.

South Carolina News:

Associated Press: Boeing to shift research jobs to South, Midwest

http://m.apnews.com/ap/db_268748/contentdetail.htm?contentguid=kKrlsTXm

David A. Lieb

Boeing announced Thursday that it is shifting hundreds of jobs to Alabama, Missouri and South Carolina as part of a restructuring of its U.S. research operations over the next two years. The Chicago-based aerospace company said the reorganization will result in fewer research jobs in Washington state and California and is being undertaken to better meet the needs of its commercial airplane, military and space and security units. The announcement comes as those same states, and several others, are competing to assemble Boeing's 777X passenger plane - a much-sought-after facility that could generate thousands of jobs.

Associated Press: SC head accountant faces ethics hearing

http://m.apnews.com/ap/db_268748/contentdetail.htm?contentguid=QIV5KDyS

Seanna Adcox

South Carolina's top accountant is accused of using campaign money to accompany his girlfriend to the Republican National Convention last year. The state Ethics Commission found probable cause last month that Comptroller General Richard Eckstrom violated state ethics law. He faces six charges of using campaign money for personal benefit, according to documents obtained Thursday by The Associated Press. Under state law, ethics complaints stay secret until probable cause is found.

The State: Graham Opponent Reports \$1.4 Million In Debt From Failed Business

http://m.apnews.com/ap/db_268748/contentdetail.htm?contentguid=bfKpTHJt

Jamie Self

State Sen. Lee Bright has at least \$1.4 million in debt related to a failed trucking business. Bright, one of four Republicans planning to challenge incumbent U.S. Sen. Lindsey Graham in June's GOP primary, said he is personally responsible for about \$500,000 of that debt, most stemming from the failure of the trucking business that he started in 1997. Bright, R-Spartanburg, reported his debt and earnings – \$92,911 from January 2012 to August of this year – on a personal finance disclosure that he filed with the U.S. Senate this week and provided to The State. Bright said Thursday that he included all of his firm's debt on his personal disclosure in the interest of transparency.

Aiken Standard: Proposed defense act calls for \$360M for MOX facility

<http://www.aikenstandard.com/article/20131213/AIK0101/131219803/1004/proposed-defense-act-calls-for-360m-for-mox-facility>

Derrek Asberry

Congressional negotiators OK'd \$360 million this week for the Savannah River Site's MOX project for the new fiscal year in its defense act proposal. The figure is \$40 million more than the \$320 million fiscal year 2014 budget request. MOX's budget recommendation is included in the fiscal year 2014 National Defense Authorization Act, which was hammered out this week between the U.S. House and Senate Armed Services Committees. The Act still must be approved by both the full Senate and the House. The House was expected to take up the issue Thursday night. The Act is essential to funding the United States military.

Aiken Standard: Rep. Taylor seeks study of schools' federal funding

<http://www.aikenstandard.com/article/20131213/AIK0101/131219782/1004/rep-taylor-seeks-study-of-schools-federal-funding>

Rob Novit

Over the course of the 2013-14 school year, the Aiken County School District will receive more than \$13 million from the federal government, and S.C. Rep. Bill Taylor, R-Aiken, wants to know more about those funds and the millions of dollars more statewide. Taylor is proposing that the S.C. General Assembly create a Federal Education Funding Study Committee that would explore the efficiency and transparency of federal education spending. South Carolina's K-12 schools are getting more than \$864 million from the federal government in the current year – about 11 percent of the schools' total funding. The federal government primarily serves special education services, school lunch services and Title I programs – a program that targets schools with large percentages of children eligible for free lunch.

Local News:

Florence Morning News: Leatherman underscores commitment to Florence's school readiness pilot
http://www.scnow.com/news/education/article_9ef08b40-637f-11e3-879a-001a4bcf6878.html

Ellen Meder

Sen. Hugh Leatherman reaffirmed his commitment to improving education for Florence's youngest children and got to personally hand over the first check to prove it. Florence School District 1 officials and board members attended a press conference Thursday during which Leatherman turned over the \$295,000 — in both a ceremonial cardboard check and a more cashier-friendly pocket-sized version — which represents half of the \$590,000 he got the Legislature to budget to back the district's school readiness plan as a pilot for the state.

Associated Press: Panel endorses Interstate 26 tree cutting

http://m.apnews.com/ap/db_268748/contentdetail.htm?contentguid=GMkPAFoP

A planning committee has approved plans by the state transportation department to cut most of the trees in the median of Interstate 26 from I-95 to Summerville. The Post and Courier of Charleston reported (<http://bit.ly/1gulhuD>) that a committee of the Berkeley-Charleston-Dorchester Council of Governments voted 4-2 this week to recommend approval of the \$5 million project. Officials hope the removal of the trees will reduce the number of car-tree collisions on the highway.

Florence Morning News: Florence County's new VA office moves ahead, courthouse still a ways off
http://www.scnow.com/news/politics/article_4359361c-639b-11e3-8ff1-001a4bcf6878.html

Gavin Jackson

Movement on another penny sales tax project took shape at Thursday's Florence County Council meeting as well as new movement on design plans for a new county courthouse complex. The county will have the money in hand next year to go forward with the \$1.2 million new Veterans Affairs county administration building thanks to the capital project sales tax referendum passed by voters last month while the \$36.5 million needed for a new county courthouse is not in the county's budget. Council gave the county authority to negotiate with a property owner for two parcels of land, costing \$19,800, near the Florence National Cemetery.

National News:

Associated Press: GOP struggle widens as Boehner rebukes hard right

http://m.apnews.com/ap/db_268798/contentdetail.htm?contentguid=afYlkzs4

Charles Babington

The Republican establishment's much-anticipated pushback against the tea party wing is underway. House Speaker John Boehner made that clear Thursday, when he renewed his denunciation of groups that try to defeat GOP incumbents they consider too willing to compromise with Democrats. Some Republican loyalists wonder what took so long. The U.S. Chamber of Commerce recently took steps to help mainstream Republicans in party primaries, but Boehner's high-profile outburst will move the effort to the GOP's front burners.

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