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Subject: Clips – Christmas Eve, 2015

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Governor Nikki Haley News:

Post and Courier: Clock ticking for ethics reform in South Carolina

<http://www.postandcourier.com/article/20151223/PC1603/151229802>

Maya T. Prabhu

Amid an ongoing corruption probe, South Carolina lawmakers must decide whether to revive a stalled push for ethics reform or continue with a system in which they police their own actions.

Note: For reform proponents, including Gov. Nikki Haley, it seemed last year that the time had come for lawmakers to acknowledge that they should not be regulating themselves through ethics commissions in the House and Senate.

Note: Proponents of reform remain frustrated by the lack of action. “Governor Haley has fought hard for four years for income disclosure, independent investigations of legislative ethics complaints and transparency for lawyer legislators who sue the state — because this is something our administration has long believed needs to happen to ensure good government for the people,” the governor’s press secretary, Chaney Adams, said. “It’s time to finish the job, no more excuses.”

Post and Courier: Palmetto Sunrise: The future of S.C. ethics reform

<http://www.postandcourier.com/article/20151224/PC1603/151229706>

Gavin Jackson

‘Twas the month before session, when all through the Senate, not an ethics bill was stirring, not even those from the House. Several bills were passed by the House to be fair, in hopes that the Senate would soon care. Reworked Christmas stories aside, reporter Maya T. Prabhu delves into whether ethics reform has a future next year.

Note: Gov. Nikki Haley continued her calls for reform throughout the year, including in her inaugural address and in her State of the State address. “Reform our ethics laws, restore the public’s faith in our government. Let’s do it right, and let’s do it now,” she told legislators in January.

The State: Haley skeptical of federal plutonium disposal plan

<http://www.thestate.com/news/local/article51410600.html>

Sammy Fretwell

A federal plan to send toxic, weapons-grade plutonium from the Savannah River Site to New Mexico drew tepid support Wednesday from South Carolina Gov. Nikki Haley, who is pushing the government to get the material out of the Palmetto State.

Note: A statement from Haley spokeswoman Chaney Adams called the proposal “a good thing,” but questioned whether the U.S. Department of Energy will make good on its plan. Last week, Haley threatened legal action against the federal government because it has for years failed to process the plutonium or move it off of SRS.

Note: “This is, obviously, a good thing for South Carolina, but only if the feds follow through on the report and actually move the waste from Savannah River,” Adams said in an email. “The DOE does not have a great track record of keeping its promises to the people of South Carolina, which is why we will continue to push them in every way we can to make sure our state is not a dumping ground for others’ nuclear waste.”

Associated Press: House budget leader: Farmers need help to survive floods

http://m.apnews.com/ap/db_268748/contentdetail.htm?contentguid=9f2dqLSv

Seanna Adcox

The state House’s budget leader says he wants to reassure South Carolina farmers devastated by October’s flooding disaster that the Legislature will help them out. Lawmakers must help farmers survive direct crop losses estimated at \$376 million, said Ways and Means Chairman Brian White. But he is not yet proposing a specific amount for the state to pay.

Note: Earlier this month, hundreds of farmers packed the Statehouse to beg Gov. Nikki Haley to ask for federal money to offset losses. But the Republican governor has refused, saying farmers shouldn't be treated differently than other businesses beyond what's already available, such as subsidized flood insurance.

Note: Haley has instead asked the U.S. Department of Agriculture to expedite insurance payments to farmers. Underinsured farmers shouldn't be bailed out, her office has said.

Note: Asked for a response to White's proposal, a Haley spokeswoman did not directly address it or farmers. "In the wake of historic flooding, the governor and Team South Carolina immediately went to work with federal, state and local officials to take care of everyone who was impacted," Chaney Adams said. "But we know there are still people struggling, who have homes and businesses to rebuild."

Area Development: Swiss Krono Group Plans \$230 Million Manufacturing Plant Expansion In Barnwell, South Carolina

<http://www.areadevelopment.com/newsItems/12-23-2015/swiss-krono-group-barnwell-county-south-carolina213652.shtml>

Swiss Krono Group, one of the world's leading producers of engineered wood products, and its American subsidiary, KronotexUSA Holdings, Inc., will invest \$230 million to build a high-density fiberboard mill and expand its laminate flooring production plant in Barnwell County, South Carolina. The company expects to create 105 new jobs over the next few years.

Note: "To have a great international company like Swiss Krono Group continue to grow, succeed and invest in our state proves that the Team South Carolina approach to economic development is working. This \$230 million investment, and the 105 new jobs it will create, is a real reason to celebrate, and we look forward to seeing the impact that this company will continue to have across our state," Governor Nikki Haley said.

S.C. General Assembly News:

Associated Press: Little notice for meeting to cut Confederate flag costs

http://m.apnews.com/ap/db_268748/contentdetail.htm?contentguid=OARduf3t

Jeffrey Collins

The group responsible for coming up with a plan to display the final Confederate flag that flew over South Carolina's Statehouse has cut the display's estimated cost by a third at a sparsely attended meeting. The State newspaper reported (<http://bit.ly/22pPnGT>) that the Confederate Relic Room and Military Museum Commission on Tuesday reduced the estimated cost of the display from \$5.3 million to \$3.6 million.

Post and Courier: Cost of Confederate flag museum display shaved to \$3.6 million

<http://www.postandcourier.com/article/20151223/PC1610/151229781>

Maya T. Prabhu

Lawmakers say a revised plan cutting more than \$1 million from a proposed display of the Confederate battle flag that was removed from Statehouse grounds this summer still is too high a price tag for South Carolina taxpayers. The S.C. Confederate Relic Room and Military Commission on Tuesday approved presenting a \$3.6 million plan to the General Assembly to construct the display.

Opinion / Editorial Roundup:

Post and Courier: Santee's solar opportunity

<http://www.postandcourier.com/article/20151224/PC1002/151229723>

Editorial

Santee Cooper went the extra mile to keep Century Aluminum open last week, at least for the short term. The public utility should similarly put forth a greater effort in its solar power plan. Though a step forward, the package of solar incentives recently approved by Santee Cooper's board of directors doesn't go far enough to achieve the stated goal of encouraging solar power among its residential customers.

Post and Courier: Charleston and Florence: sympatico

<http://www.postandcourier.com/article/20151224/PC1002/151229722>

Editorial

Tourism is booming. Developers are on the hunt for property to build on or repurpose. Some locals are complaining that they can no longer afford to live there and that the mayor's strategy for handling growth isn't enough.

S.C. Federal Delegation News:

Post and Courier: Tim Scott takes on Obama, Guantanamo in “Night before Christmas” spoof

<http://www.postandcourier.com/article/20151223/PC1603/151229747>

Schuyler Kropf

T'was two days before Christmas and U.S. Sen. Tim Scott let the White House know that even Santa Claus could be drafted into the Guantanamo Bay row. South Carolina's junior Republican senator on Wednesday issued his own version of the classic “Night Before Christmas” tale with the words rewritten and geared to the fight over closing the U.S. military's terror-detainee camp in Cuba.

McClatchy DC: How South Carolina congressmen rank by wealth

<http://www.mcclatchydc.com/news/politics-government/congress/article51324980.html>

Vera Bergengruen

While South Carolina counts four millionaires among its congressional delegation in the nation's capital, the state's congressmen don't come close to matching the wealth of many of their colleagues. The nine lawmakers' net worth ranges from \$167,500 to \$4.5 million, according to an analysis of their financial disclosure forms by the Center for Responsive Politics.

South Carolina News:

Post and Courier: Slager's attorneys ask for public funding for expert witnesses

<http://www.postandcourier.com/article/20151223/PC16/151229803>

Christina Elmore

Private attorneys for Michael Slager hope to use taxpayer dollars to pay expert witnesses to examine evidence in his case. The request came to light Wednesday during an expedited hearing in Charleston County and raised questions about the possibility of his case being assigned to a public defender, given the former North Charleston officer's indigent status.

Post and Courier: Botany Bay beach's rapid erosion a red flag for Lowcountry's treasured islands

<http://www.postandcourier.com/article/20151223/PC16/151229757>

Bo Petersen

Go straight to the beach, the greeter tells a visitor at the Botany Bay Plantation Wildlife Management Area gate. It won't be there in an hour. With more than two hours to go until high tide, the wash already is moving into the rim of skeletal hardwoods and dead palmettos that not long ago stood in full leaf or frond 100 feet or so from the ebb and flow.

Post and Courier: SC Legal Services hires attorney to help victims of wage theft recover money

<http://www.postandcourier.com/article/20151224/PC0301/151229992>

Hanna Raskin

Low-income workers in Charleston County who've been illegally shorted pay or benefits can now take advantage of the state's only Wage Recovery Program, an outgrowth of the Charleston Area Justice Ministry's yearlong effort to address the rampant problem.

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