

Title: **DHECannouncesdealto cleanup radioactive wastefrom tanksat SRS**
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DHEC announces deal to clean up radioactive waste from tanks at SRS

BY SAMMY FRETWELL
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After years of delays, government agencies reached a deal this week that's intended to jump-start the sputtering clean-up of highly radioactive waste at the Savannah River nuclear weapons plant near Aiken.

The agreement says the U.S. Department of Energy will by 2019 begin operating a treatment plant, as well as use "additional technologies," to clean out more than 40 high-level waste tanks. Those tanks, which are

aging and in some cases cracking, contain deadly refuse created during the nation's effort to produce weapons for the Cold War.

"It gets it back on track, as much as we can," said Shelly Wilson, a Department of Health and Environmental Control regulator involved in negotiations with DOE.

Because DHEC and the Energy Department reached the agreement, the state agency won't pursue fines of up to \$200 million, according to the federal agency. DHEC said the agreement helps avoid litigation between the state and federal gov-

ernment over the delays.

Gov. Nikki Haley's office, as well as SRS critic Tom Clements, said the agreement is encouraging, but they remain skeptical.

Past federal estimates placed the treatment plant, called the salt waste processing facility, in operation by 2009. Other estimates had operations starting in 2011. The most recent milestone for startup was October 2015. DOE officials last summer announced that construction was complete and they have begun testing the plant in preparation for a startup. At the time, DOE said it planned to

begin operating the plant by late 2018.

The cost of the plant has risen to more than \$2 billion today. Early estimates put the cost at closer to \$450 million.

"We are pleased DOE has agreed to accelerate treatment of liquid waste at SRS, but the federal government's track record with other promises they have made isn't a good one, so we will closely monitor DOE's compliance with their end of the bargain," Haley spokeswoman Chaney Adams said in an email.

Clements, who heads Savannah River Site Watch, said DHEC has allowed the Department of Energy "to slip before" on its cleanup commitments.

Title: **2nd pipeline problem could raise gas prices**
 Author: BY RODDIE BURRIS rburris@thestate.com
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2nd pipeline problem could raise gas prices

BY RODDIE BURRIS
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A gas line explosion in Alabama on Monday could soon have a major impact on gasoline prices in South Carolina, according to AAA Carolinas.

The explosion, which killed one person and injured five others, forced the shutdown of two delivery lines to the Southeast that carry major supplies of gasoline to millions of consumers across the region.

It is the second major Colonial Pipeline mishap to occur at the Georgia-

based company in the past two months.

In September, a leak to a line in the same county sent gas prices haywire in South Carolina and elsewhere, touching off shortages that closed pumps and created public panic as up to 336,000 gallons spilled.

Already on Tuesday, just a day after the explosion, gas prices in the Upstate spiked by up to 16 cents a gallon in some locations, according to The Greenville News.

In Columbia, gas prices held steady throughout the day Tuesday, ranging from a low of \$1.79 a gal-

lon to a high of \$2.26 a gallon, according to GasBuddy.com.

That could change quickly.

"If September's shutdown was any indicator of what we should expect, prices are definitely going to spike at the pump," said Tiffany Wright, AAA Carolinas spokeswoman.

"We saw price spikes of 20 to 30 cents in some areas and there were a ton of stations with bagged (pumps) due to shortages."

The September leak resulted in a 12-day shutdown in which several states in the Southeast and

Mid-Atlantic regions, including the Carolinas, experienced shortages at gas stations.

Gov. Nikki Haley declared emergencies in the state during the leak, issuing executive orders that suspended regulations to raise the size and weight of trucks delivering fuel into the state and extending the number of hours delivery drivers could be on the roads.

South Carolina leaders are tracking developments in the latest Colonial Pipeline disruption, Haley's office said Monday, while again reminding motorists not to panic at the pumps.

Title: **Horry County Schools announces plan for Matthew make-up days**

Author: BY AUGUST R. DITTBENNER AUGUST.DITTBENNER@MYHORRYNEWS.COM

Size: 44.48 column inches

Loris, SC Circulation: 1850



Horry County Schools announces plan for Matthew make-up days

BY AUGUST R. DITTBENNER

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Horry County students, parents and teachers can expect to start making up days missed due to Hurricane Matthew as early as the day before Thanksgiving.

District Superintendent Rick Maxey announced three makeup days Monday at the Horry County School Board meeting. In addition to Nov. 23, students will be expected to attend school on Jan. 2 and Jan. 13.

According to state regulations signed into law by S.C. Governor Nikki Haley in May of 2015, school districts are required to make up three days missed due to inclement weather. If more days are missed, the district is

required to either make up those days or seek waivers to excuse those days.

Horry County students missed seven days of classes, except for students in Green Sea Floyds Elementary and Green Sea Floyds High, who missed eight due to power outages.

"After those three days are made up it is possible for the local board of trustees to waive the next three days with a majority vote of the board," Maxey

said. "If it goes beyond six days -- to seven, eight, nine -- it allows the local board of trustees to vote to ask for a waiver from the state board of education."

Any days beyond the first nine require action by the state legislature, Maxey added.

Maxey pointed out that the district builds three makeup days into the school calendar, but because one of those days, Oct. 10, occurred as the county was reeling from the effects of Matthew it was unusable. The other two days, one in February and one in April, will be "deep into second semester," he noted.

The same state law that outlines how makeup days can be excused also advises school boards to hold makeup days, if possible, during the semester when they were missed.

"All of this happened in first semester," Maxey said. "This is especially important for our high schools that have four-by-four schedules."

In Horry County high schools, students take four classes in the fall semester and four new

ones in the spring semester.

Because of that, if the district waits to make up the missed days students will not receive any instructional time to replace the days that were missed, but will instead have added time in their spring classes.

"In complying with the law, in thinking about making those days up during the first semester and in looking at it from a teacher's perspective, we have an obligation to our students to prepare them for the end-of-class tests that many of them will take," Maxey stated.

In selecting the three dates for making up missed classes, Maxey met with a cabinet that consisted of principals

from elementary, middle and high school grade levels as well as other key district personnel. In the end, Maxey said, everyone reached a consensus.

"We looked at what would provide the least impact as far as schedules were concerned," he said.

Parents, though, he acknowledged, might not like having the day before Thanksgiving or the day after New Year's taken

away from them due to travel plans.

"We understand that people make plans for the holidays," Maxey said. "I do, too. We all do."

But because students in Horry County will miss close to a week's worth of instructional time, Maxey believes that the makeup days are critical.

"Our students are competing with other stu-

dents for admission to colleges across our state, and for scholarships," he said. "Those students didn't miss those days prior to taking their end-of-course tests."

When asked whether he expected families to let students skip some of the scheduled makeup days, Maxey pointed out that the district's attendance policy is clearly stated in the student handbook.

"In elementary and middle school, unless you're a middle schooler taking a high school course, a parent excuse may be utilized for 10 days," Maxey said. "If you're a high school student that's limited to five days."

"That's an individual decision that families have to make," he concluded.

Title: **SOUTH CAROLINA HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES DISTRICT 42**
 Author: By Judith Brown Staff Writer
 Size: 37.2 column inches
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SOUTH CAROLINA HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES DISTRICT 42

Anthony wants to finish what he started in infrastructure repairs

By Judith Brown
 Staff Writer

Mike Anthony, an incumbent in the South Carolina House of Representatives began representing the people of District 42 in 2004 right after Union High won its third football state championship.

"People asked how to get elected and I'd tell them state championships don't hurt," the career educator and coach said, only partly joking.

The Democrat noted that by voting his conscience he has garnered the support of the National Rifle Association, the South Carolina Citizens for Life and other typically conserva-



Mike Anthony

tive groups. He also worked with other Ways and Means committee members when Governor Nikki Haley agreed during last year's session to approve a 10 cent gas tax with all the proceeds going toward a road and bridge repair fund if the 25 members came up with a way to decrease the income tax.

"If we could fix our roads with one swipe, it would cost \$23 billion," Anthony said.

The user fee gas tax would gradually bring in funds from those drivers who use the state's roads and bridges, including those 34 percent who pass through on the state's interstate roads but don't actually live in South Carolina. It's not an instant fix, Anthony said, but it's one that will continue to grow, unlike using the budget surplus, which had been suggested.

The surplus was \$1.3 billion, he said, but it's already dwindled because portions were needed for general fund

costs, such as a 3.5 percent state employee pay raise — their first raise in six years. The Department of Social Services was also overdue for help, he said.

"There are a lot of agencies that that have been hurting for some time," he said. "You can't count on these surpluses when you have to take care of state agencies."

Anthony feels a commitment to finish the work of infrastructure funding that was derailed last session by a filibuster that prevented the Senate from voting on the bill, but he hopes now that he can return to the House District 42 seat to finish this and other important legislation.

He notes that one of the most positive trends has been the drop in unemployment in Union and Laurens counties.

"At one time Union was 24 percent unemployed and now it's 6.2 percent," Anthony said. "There's been a lot of progress made."

Title: **'Haves' still beating 'have-nots'**

Author:

Size: 5.42 column inches

Hilton Head Island, SC Circulation: 20015



'Haves' still beating 'have-nots'

Thanks to pressure from Gov. Nikki Haley and Rep. Mark Sanford, the federal government will pick up a large portion of the tab for debris removal from affluent areas on Hilton Head Island. Can these folks be considered part of the 47 percent of "takers," per Gov. Mitt Romney?

Meanwhile, Haley refuses to allow Medicaid expansion, even though it would be totally funded by the feds through 2020. This leaves thousands of our citizens without medical care. Per usual: Haves, 1; have-nots, 0.

*- Mike Devine
Bluffton*

Title: **A somber S.C. reflects on race as trials begin**
 Author: BY ALAN BLINDER NewYorkTimes
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IN THEIR OWN WORDS

A somber S.C. reflects on race as trials begin

BY ALAN BLINDER
New York Times
CHARLESTON

Seventy-four days separated the fatal bursts of gunfire: the eight rounds a white police officer fired at Walter L. Scott, a black man in North Charleston, and then the shots that killed nine black churchgoers at the Emanuel African Methodist Episcopal Church.

And now, seven days separate the trials of the officer, Michael T. Slager, and of Dylann S. Roof, a white supremacist accused of carrying out the church killings.

Jury selection in the state trial of Slager, who was fired after the shooting, began Monday; one week later, the same process is scheduled to begin in the federal case of Roof. Prosecutors, who are seeking the death penalty for Roof, rebuffed his offer to plead guilty.

In separate interviews, five South Carolinians reflected on the looming trials; how the killings reshaped this region, its policies and its views on race; and the decision to remove the Confederate battle flag from the grounds of the South Car-

olina Statehouse.

The interviews have been condensed and edited.

The Rev. Joseph A. Darby

Presiding elder, Beaufort District of the African Methodist Episcopal Church, and first vice president, Charleston branch of the NAACP

I think people are waiting to see what happens with the trials. On the one hand, you've got two very cut-and-dry things that happened. There should be very little question of how these trials are going to come out. Then you look at Eric Garner. You look at Tamir Rice. You

look at George Zimmerman and Trayvon Martin.

Guilty verdicts will mean that justice will

be done. I don't minimize the impact of a white police officer being found guilty for killing a black man, but it doesn't mean that's suddenly going to happen in all cases.

I don't think anybody's

expecting that the bells will ring and the angels will sing and suddenly the walls of race will fall. For some idiots, the walls will get a little bit stronger.

Nikki R. Haley

Governor of South Carolina

There was a time where those tragedies haunted me, and I think they always will to a point. But more what I take away from those is how the people of South Carolina responded and, more important, how the families responded.

During the time was hard. The anniversaries were hard, and now going through the trials will once again be hard. It's going to be difficult to hear it again and to get the details out again and all of that.

But I think people will once again be reminded of the love and grace that was shown by all of the families in all of those cases. That, I think, was the defining moment for

so much of what happened.

I refuse to believe that the country didn't take anything away from it. We felt it, and it was the entire country that watched it. And I think that the reason that people are frustrated about everything that's going on now is because they saw that goodness, and they saw that if it can happen in South Carolina, it can happen everywhere.

Thomas P. Lowndes Jr.

Lawyer and Civil War re-enactor

The police officer thought he was doing his duty and doing his job. Did it right, did it wrong, the jury will decide. That's

a distinction: You've got Roof, who sits in a church, a place of peace, a place of tranquility, with a number of people wanting to do good, and he gets up and shoots them.

He's in a category by himself. I don't think there's anybody else other than Hitler

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that might be in that same category.

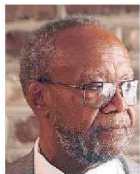
This was such a horrendous act, but the battle flag didn't cause a demented mind like that to do it. He would have done it anyway.

The flag, to me, represents the Army of Northern Virginia, and that was their battle flag. It represents, to me, the soldiers who made the sacrifice on this side, and I think that deserves to be honored.

The flag coming down was just spontaneous, and I disagree with it. I disagreed with it then. There will be other symbols that somebody else will probably use to try to kill a bunch of people, but I don't think that's an answer. I don't think that stops this kind of a mind.

I'll be interested to see how they resolve whether Roof's going to be executed or not. I just don't think he needs to be on this earth. He needs to go to where he's supposed to be. I feel that way, and I never have felt that way quite so much in any situation where there's a trial and there's a question of execution. I'll be glad, and I think everyone else will be glad, when it's over.

Andrew J. Savage III
 Defense lawyer for



Darby

Slager, and lawyer for the Emanuel survivors and many family members

A crisis creates recognition of problems that we don't necessarily want to talk about. Racial issues, whether we admit it or not, dominate our lives wherever we live in this country, and not just in times of crisis.

The South, particularly the middle- and upper-middle-class South, has always prided itself on politeness. So it's unpleasant to speak about racial divides, because it's much easier not to face the reality of how race relations embed themselves in almost every decision we make every day.

It came home in two very violent episodes in 2015. In many ways, I'm happy about it. Not that 10 people had to die to have these trials happen, but I'm grateful that there was a motivation for everybody to get out from under the bed and to face the reality. Not that somebody's threatened next week in church, not that somebody in the minority community is going to be

shot next week, but to say: 'Hey, what about our prisons that are full of minorities? What about the educational system that doesn't accommodate all sectors of the community?'

We can't pat ourselves on the back that taking down the flag is more than being symbolic. It's almost like having a black president and patting yourself on the back and saying, 'Oh boy, aren't we a wonderful country?' We don't want this reaction to these horrible events to be symbolic and not have real meaning and change for everything.

Maybe this is just one little prick for the community that stimulates long-term, material change, and not just window-dressing.

Anthony Scott

Brother of Walter Scott

It's going to be a tough time for Charleston, and we must remain calm and let justice play itself out.

The biggest test will not be Roof's trial, but Slager's, because they're trying to get him off. I definitely think hate was involved in both, and coming from both of those individuals. I think that we will see, based on these

trials, exact-

ly the character of the people of Charleston, South Carolina.

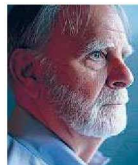
We're ready to go. I know it's

going to be long. I know it's going to be draining - physically, mentally, all of that. But we're ready for it. We're ready to face it.

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Haley



Lowndes



Scott



Savage

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TRAVIS DOVE NYT

The Emanuel African Methodist Episcopal Church in Charleston. The federal trial will begin for white supremacist
Dylann Roof, who killed nine black churchgoers at the church in Charleston.

Title: **Putnam, Brown face off for House District 10**
 Author: AMANDA COYNE THE GREENVILLE NEWS
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■ ■ ■ ■ ELECTION 2016

Putnam, Brown face off for House District 10

AMANDA COYNE

THE GREENVILLE NEWS

State Rep. Joshua Putnam is facing Democrat Anna Brown in the Nov. 8 election for House District 10.

Putnam first won a special election in 2011 to represent the district that spans parts of Greenville, Pickens and Anderson counties, including Piedmont, where Putnam lives, and Easley, where Brown lives.

While the 27-year-old landscaping supervisor is currently the youngest member of the state House, he's already earned two subcommittee chairmanships in his five years in the Legislature, heading the Public Safety Subcommittee and the Executive Subcommittee of the House Legislative Oversight Committee.

The Republican incumbent cites road and infrastructure repairs as one of the most pressing issues in the state. It also is the topic his constituents say they're most concerned about. A bill was passed that could free \$4 billion in funds for the state Department of Transportation to use for repairs in June but was not seen by legislators or Gov. Nikki Haley as an ideal solution. Putnam said the move is "a starting point" for fixing the problem, but it must be built upon in coming ses-

sions.

Putnam also hopes to continue working on traditional Republican issues: preventing tax increases, minimizing the impact of government on people's everyday lives and encouraging business growth.

Much of the debate on a roads solution focused on the organizational structure of the Department of Transportation and what revenue sources could be utilized to fund repairs. Brown said in an email that those issues should be secondary to finding a new and immediate way to put infrastructure repairs in motion.

Brown, a parole officer and community specialist with the state Department of Juvenile Justice, believes education is the most pressing issue facing the state, citing a recent ranking that placed South Carolina 43rd in the country for education quality. She cites her experience working in the DJJ and the Department of Social Services as advantages she would have as a legislator, understanding how state agencies function and what they need from the General Assembly.

That experience also informs her priorities, were she to serve in the state House. Brown wants to decrease the

number of kids who have to go through the juvenile justice system and continue working to decrease the rate of domestic violence in South Carolina.

Brown did not criticize Putnam's tenure in the House.

"I'm sure that Josh Putnam has served and represented the people of the district to best of his ability," Brown said. "However; there is always room for change, growth, new ideas, new direction and a new focus."

"I'm sure that Josh Putnam has served and represented the people of the district to best of his ability. However; there is always room for change, growth, new ideas, new direction and a new focus."

ANNA BROWN

HOUSE DISTRICT 10 CANDIDATE

Title: **Upstate gas prices soar after pipeline explosion in Ala.**
 Author: KIRK BROWN INDEPENDENT MAIL
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Upstate gas prices soar after pipeline explosion in Ala.

KIRK BROWN
INDEPENDENT MAIL

Gas prices are soaring in the Upstate for the second time in less than two months because a major pipeline that supplies fuel to millions has been shut down again.

Regular unleaded gas was selling for \$2.05 per gallon at the Spinx store on North Main Street in Anderson, up from \$1.89 per gallon on Tuesday morning. Similar increases were seen at QuikTrip stores and other gas stations throughout the Upstate.

Gas

Continued from Page 3A

in the Southeast and along the eastern seaboard.

Gas deliveries to some stations already have been reduced by 15 percent, said Gregg Laskoski, a senior petroleum analyst with GasBuddy.com.

Motorists could see a repeat of September's price increases of 20 to 25 cents per gallon, said AAA Carolinas spokeswoman Tiffany Wright. Those increases occurred after the same pipeline sprung a leak, spilling between 252,000 and 336,000 gal-

The spike in gas prices was triggered by an explosion Monday afternoon in a remote section of the Colonial pipeline near Helena, Alabama. One person was killed and five others were injured when a piece of dirt-moving equipment called a track hoe struck the pipeline, igniting a fire that was still burning Tuesday.

It is unclear how high gas prices will climb. Much will depend on how soon the Colonial gasoline pipeline returns to ser-

vice.

According to a statement issued by the company Tuesday afternoon, the gasoline pipeline is expected to remain shut down "for the remainder of this week." An adjacent pipeline that transports diesel and jet fuel has resumed operation.

The 5,500-mile pipelines, which reach from Texas to New Jersey, supply more 2.5 million barrels of fuel daily to 13 states

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lons of gasoline in the same Alabama county.

Numerous stations temporarily ran out of gas in September. Wright warned that parts of the region could see shortages again.

The Ingles store on S.C. 81 north near Anderson ran out of regular unleaded gas on Tuesday night, an employee said.

As lines formed at some stations, AAA Carolinas, South Carolina Gov. Nikki Haley and gas station owners urged people to avoid panic buying.

In September, Wright said, the crisis worsened

when people started buying gasoline at an "abnormal rate."

The same thing could happen now, she said.

"It is a knee-jerk reaction," Wright said.

South Carolina officials are monitoring fuel-supply issues and Haley's office has been in contact with Colonial, said Chaney Adams, the governor's spokeswoman.

"What's important is that consumers continue to purchase fuel as they normally would," Adams said.

Spinx, which oper-

ates 81 convenience stores in the state, issued a statement Tuesday that said the company feels "comfortable that we will be able to keep supply to stores provided our customers maintain a normal level of demand."

QuikTrip spokesman Mike Thornbrugh also urged his company's customers to stay calm.

"The last thing we need right now is a run on gas," he said.

Follow Kirk Brown on Twitter @KirkBrown_AIM

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KEN RUINARD/INDEPENDENT MAIL

Gas tankers enter the Buckeye terminal Tuesday while cars, seen in the mirror, drive into Belton on S.C. 20.



KEN RUINARD/INDEPENDENT MAIL

Cars drive by the 7-Eleven station on Brown Road and U.S. 76 in Belton on Tuesday.

Title: **State DSS pressed to finish child support project**
 Author: TIM SMITH TCSMITH@GREENVILLENEWS.COM
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State DSS pressed to finish child support project

TIM SMITH

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COLUMBIA - Gov. Nikki Haley and a group of senators are pressing the state Department of Social Services to finish a long-overdue child support enforcement system project before its scheduled roll-out completion in three years, to save millions of dollars in federal penalties.

But DSS officials say they are as yet unsure whether accelerating the project makes good financial sense or would put too much risk on the agency.

Also Tuesday, DSS officials told senators that Anderson and Spartanburg counties remain "hot spots" for caseload problems and officials hope more workers and some caseload management consulting will address the problem.

The Senate DSS Oversight Committee has been pressing DSS since earlier this year to somehow shorten the time it will take to get the child support enforcement system, which has been in the works since the 1990s, operational.

South Carolina remains the only state not to have an automated child support enforcement system up and running in response to a 1988 federal law. The state now does the work manually and while that work has been lauded, officials say the new system will connect with more agencies and is ex-

pected to boost enforcement actions against deadbeat parents.

The project has thus far incurred \$134 million in federal fines, though previous vendors have paid about half of that,

said Jimmy Early, who has been overseeing the project for DSS for the past year. He said earlier this year the agency expects to pay another \$63 million in fines before the project is complete and running statewide.

Early told senators Tuesday that the project should be finished in October of 2018, when three counties will then begin a pilot program after which the rest of the state will see the system. The fines don't stop, he said, until the state sends a letter saying the system is complete and installed. Early said officials are looking at whether deployment can be shortened or whether additional staff could speed up testing. But he said he does not want to see the new computer system rushed before it has been adequately tested.

"The worst thing we could do is to deploy the system before it's ready," he said.

Sen. Tom Young, an Aiken Republican who chairs the panel, pressed Early for a solution.

"There has got to be a way to accelerate this," he said. "The question is what do you need?"

DSS Director Susan Alford said the agency has been meeting with the maker of the system, Xerox, for months over ideas to speed the project up. She said that also is the focus of Haley, who meets with agency officials each month.

"It's the first question she asks and it's the last question she asks," Alford said.

She said the governor is looking for a proposal that would not require the agency to ask lawmakers for more money.

"We haven't come up with a figure yet because the estimates we have receiving so far, at least to me, do not appear to meet that test," she said.

Alford said one of the issues is if the project accelerates, that could place more risk on the agency. And while preventing a year of fines could help, officials would have to spend more to speed up completion.

"The issue is how much money that is going to take," she said. "I don't have a price tag right now. We're debating the price tag."

The system is actually two projects, one to create an automated child support system and the other to create a case management system for the courts that can be used in each clerk of court's office. The child sup-

See DSS, Page 11A

DSS

Continued from Page 3A

port system has a myriad of components and requirements by the federal government, each of which must be tested. Officials demonstrated the new system Tuesday to give senators an idea of how it will work.

Last year, officials

decided to abandon developing a system from scratch and entered into a contract with Xerox to copy the system used in Delaware, which is also used in some other states.

The cost of using that system is \$137.5 million, though most of that will be paid for with federal funding.

For every year the project is not certified as up and running by the federal government, the state incurs between \$10 and \$19 million in fines, Early said. The fines are actually federal monies due the agency that are withheld.

Last year, officials announced that Hewlett-Packard Corp., the

previous vendor on the project, had agreed to pay the state \$44 million and the state had agreed to pay HP \$5 million to settle a contract dispute. The state terminated its contract with HP in 2014 and each side blamed the other for delays. The dispute wound up before a state procurement officer in trial-like hear-

ings that lasted for months before the two sides agreed to mediation.

HP was the third vendor on the project. Early said the state will use some of the hardware and work product developed by HP.

The system also will make participation easier for businesses with



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employees paying child support and allow the state to connect faster and easier with authorities in other states when searching for parents who owe child support, they said.

Young said he would like DSS to present options for accelerating the project when the panel meets next in early December. Alford said she should be able to do that after talking the issue over with Haley.

Outgoing Sen. Joel Lourie, a Columbia Democrat, noted that Alford inherited the project and that previous directors have for years promised the system would be completed.

"I can tell you after 18 years, I see the light at the

end of the highway," he said. "It's not pretty and I appreciate the fact that we are all pushing as hard as we can. But it's important to know this is one of many new problems and challenges this administration has taken on. We all want it done as quickly as possible but for the first time ever, I leave here thinking it's going to get done."

Agency caseload management

Also Thursday, Alford gave an update on the agency's caseload management, saying while officials are seeing progress, there were 73 workers handling more than 50 children each, an increase in the last report to senators. The agency's standard is no more than

24 children per worker for the areas of assessment and family preservation.

She said Anderson and Spartanburg are "hot spots" for caseload problems.

Anderson, she said, has a new director but seven vacancies. DSS plans to add second- and third-shift workers in 2017. The county also will get the addition to two caseworker positions, she said.

Spartanburg County's numbers have increased since the last time the agency briefed senators, Alford said. She said DSS had to change the leadership in that county and has an interim director. DSS is adding two new caseworkers as well as second- and third shift workers, as well, she said.

The agency also is sending Casey Family Programs, a national child welfare foundation, to both counties to research why the caseloads are increasing and to work with officials on caseload management.

Overall, she said, about 47 percent of DSS workers have 24 children or less. She said it is likely the agency will request funding for more workers for next year and that she expects further caseload spikes as a centralized intake system is rolled out to the rest of the state, since the system makes it easier for people to report complaints of abuse and neglect.

"These are not where they need to be," she said of the caseloads. "But they are about halfway there."

Title: **\$1 million spent on school buses for hurricane evacuation**
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\$1 million spent on school buses for hurricane evacuation

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COLUMBIA - The operation that sent hundreds of Greenville County school buses to the North Charleston Coliseum to evacuate people from Hurricane Matthew but wound up only taking residents from a nursing home cost the state almost \$1 million, according to estimates provided to *The Greenville News* by the state Department of Education.

The total includes the cost of drivers and bus aides, fuel, meals and hotels for personnel from Greenville, Lexington and Richland school districts, as well as the cost of an incident management team from the state Forestry Commission.

The plan had been to send hundreds of buses to North Charleston for a one-day operation to cart as many as 7,500 of those who wanted to evacuate to Upstate shelters on the Wednesday before the hurricane's arrival that Saturday.

But because of a number of factors, including a desire by many Charleston-area residents not to leave and a rule that local shelters had to be at least half full before evacuees could be bussed to Greenville, no

individual evacuees ever boarded the buses, which sat idle for two days.

About 24 Greenville buses were used eventually to evacuate residents of a nursing home, but the majority of buses returned to their school systems without carrying evacuees.

"When local requests for assistance come in, as the state prepares for a storm, we listen to the needs of local officials," said Chaney Adams, press secretary for Gov. Nikki Haley. "In the aftermath of a storm, state officials always consider what worked and what didn't, and that informs what can be handled better during the next state of emergency."

The operation used about 300 buses, at least 200 of them from Greenville County, which supplied about 300 drivers, bus aides and maintenance personnel, officials said. The Greenville buses were escorted to North Charleston by Greenville County deputies.

Ryan Brown, a spokesman for the Department of Education, said using school buses for a hurricane coastal evacuation is part of the state emergency plan be-

cause the buses are owned by the state.

He said at the time the evacuation plan was crafted, Matthew had just torn through Haiti and was a strong Category 4 storm.

"At the time that was decided, we were planning for the worst," he said. "It would have been a much worse situation had we been hit with a massive hurricane and not had enough buses there. I think being overly prepared was the right decision and something we supported."

State Department of Education officials estimate that \$954,779 was spent on the school bus evacuation operation. That includes driver compensation, fuel, state and local area staff time, travel expenses, and other costs, said Ryan.

He said the agency has not yet received itemized claims from the school districts. Brown said officials have not calculated any indirect costs, such as students missing school in Greenville County from the lack of buses.

The State Forestry Commission estimates it spent about \$34,256 for its incident management team to work at the col-

iseum, of which \$21,000 was above the normal costs of staff working at the agency, a spokesman said. He said 19 employees worked in the operation.

National Guard personnel also were at the coliseum site to help check in evacuees. Their costs were not included in the estimates.

Most of the costs are expected to eventually be covered by the federal government.

Over the two days, dozens of residents appeared at the coliseum hoping to be bused to Greenville County shelters but were sent to local shelters instead. Some of those told *The News* then that they were frustrated at not being able to leave the Lowcountry before the hurricane hit.

Mike Bozzo, incident commander for the state Forestry Commission's incident management team at the coliseum, said at the time local shelters were less than 10 percent full.

"The weather doesn't seem threatening so people are not seeing the need to evacuate," he said then. "A lot of people have evacuated on their own as the interstates

showed the last couple of days."

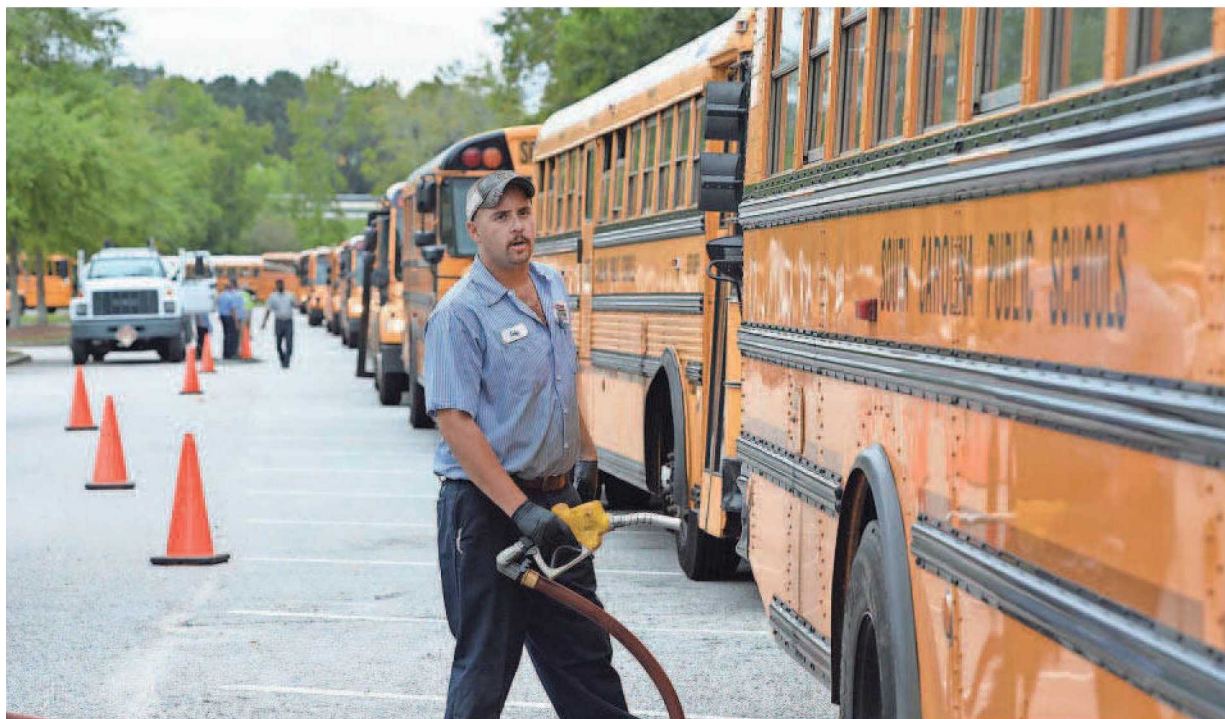
Greenville bus drivers who could not stay more than a day were given the option of leaving that Wednesday evening and some did. But most stayed.

"In a response of this magnitude, state leaders must plan for the worst, hope for the best, and adjust the plan as needed," said Elizabeth Brother-ton, a spokeswoman for the Greenville County Schools. "The fact that our drivers' mission was altered reflected changes in our state's response based on the hurricane's track, so we are not at all disappointed that shelters in Charleston were able to open and meet most of the area's evacuation needs locally."

She said while it was inconvenient that drivers expected to return home Wednesday afternoon and instead were asked to stay for an undetermined period of time, the district was kept informed of developments and were able to swap out personnel.

"Drivers who could not stay because of other commitments were able to return to Greenville," she said.

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HEIDI HEILBRUNN/STAFF

Greenville County Schools buses are fueled up and checked after arriving at the North Charleston Coliseum in preparation for Hurricane Matthew evacuations of Charleston residents.